# Impact of Conservative Rule on Crime and Justice in Britain



### Changes in Crime and Justice in Britain Under Conservative Rule

Over 14 years of Conservative Party governance, significant shifts have occurred in the justice system in England and Wales.

**Court System Backlogs**

The court system has seen unprecedented delays, with the backlog of crown court cases increasing substantially. As of last year, cases taking longer than a year had risen from 7.2% to 28.3%. The effects are particularly severe for jury trials, which have seen an increased backlog by 40%, impacting the number of individuals in prison awaiting trial and victims withdrawing from cases.

**Rape Prosecution Rates**

Since the mid-2010s, charge rates for rape have seen a notable decline, with many cases being dropped due to victims withdrawing, exacerbated by long wait times and pandemic-induced backlogs. Recently, there's been a minor recovery in charge numbers, but the percentage remains low despite an increase in reported cases.

**Legal Aid Cuts**

Legal aid has faced significant cuts, with real-term spending reducing by 38% between 2010 and 2016. This has resulted in more unrepresented defendants and fewer legal aid providers, adversely affecting vulnerable populations.

**Prison System Struggles**

The prison system has grappled with overcrowding and staff retention issues. The prison population has grown by almost 3% since 2010, while certified normal accommodation has only increased by 2%. Nearly half of the officers who left last year had been in service for less than three years.

**Policing Numbers**

The Conservative government has added 18,320 police officers since March 2020, nearing its 20,000 target. However, this represents only a 2.6% increase from 2010 figures. Policing numbers had been decreasing yearly until a minor uptick starting in 2018.

**Crime Trends**

Despite the justice system's challenges, overall crime has decreased. The ONS Crime Survey highlights a continued fall in traditional crime rates, which have more than halved since 2010. Fraud and computer-related crimes, measured since 2017, have also seen a decline.

**Rape Case Delays**

A record high in court backlogs for rape cases has been observed, with the number of cases awaiting trial nearly doubling between 2021 and 2023. The shortage of lawyers specializing in sexual offenses has been a major contributing factor, with significant delays causing distress among victims.

These developments offer a multifaceted view of the changes within the justice system over the past 14 years of Conservative rule, each aspect affecting the overall landscape of crime and punishment in Britain.