

Item A

Some minority ethnic groups are over-represented in crime statistics according to various sources. Some sociologists point to public perceptions of certain minority ethnic groups such as African-Caribbean and Pakistani males as one reason for this. Other sociologists suggest that these groups are disproportionately focused on by the authorities.

However, other sociologists would suggest that these figures are correct and that the reason these groups are over-represented is due to their economic circumstances and the areas they live in.

Applying material from Item A, analyse two ways ethnic minority groups may be over-represented in crime statistics (10)

One way in which ethnic minority groups may be over-represented in crime statistics is due to institutional racism. Item A suggests that Pakistani and African-Caribbean males are 'disproportionately focused on by the authorities' as the police often make judgements about the involvement of minority ethnic groups in criminal activities due to ill-formed stereo-types based upon the 'canteen culture' of the police. Evidence for this was found by the McPherson Inquiry following the death of Stephen Lawrence, a young black male who was attacked by a gang of white youths. The inquiry found that the Metropolitan Police operated by principles that were designed to put minority ethnic groups at a disadvantage. Furthermore, the Black and Asian Officers Association of the Metropolitan Police advised minority ethnic groups from joining the force as it had a culture of institutional racism. This has led to accusation of racially motivated 'stop and search' policies that disproportionately target minority ethnic groups and becomes a form of selective law enforcement. This leads to more arrests for minority ethnic groups as the police focus most of their resources on areas inhabited by African, Caribbean and Pakistani groups, and as a result causes them to be over-represented in crime statistics. However, some sociologists such as right realists, would argue that the inadequate socialisation of these groups leads to them being more likely to commit crime and so the police focus on these areas in order to reduce criminal activity.

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A second reason for the over-representation of minority ethnic crime is put forward by left realists. They suggest that ethnic minority groups are more likely to be disproportionately involved in criminal behaviour, but this is a result of the way society treats them. Minority ethnic groups are most likely to experience limited economic circumstances (Item A) which forces them to turn to crime in order to make ends meet. Furthermore, 'public perceptions' (Item A) lead to the marginalisation of these groups and particularly for young males into subcultural groups whereby status is derived from criminal and deviant behaviour. Furthermore, Lea and Young suggest that the structure of society limits the opportunities for these groups to achieve financial success and therefore they are often located in areas of relative deprivation where they are more susceptible to becoming victims of crime. However, right realists would suggest that minority ethnic offending is down to both cultural and physiological differences between minority ethnic groups and the wider population and that their lack of integration leads them to be excluded from opportunities in society.