

Growing population and urbanisation: 1550-1650 population doubled from 2.4 million to 4.1 million. Most people continued to live and work in the countryside. 1750 – 20% of population lived in towns. London = largest and busiest city in Europe.

Growing inequalities between rich and poor: More prosperous but still inequality. Population growth: food prices increased, wages fell and unemployment. 1590s = harvest failure so people moved to towns for work.

Travel: People began to move in search of work - drovers herded cattle and sheep - carriers to cloth to the towns. 1600s – start of road-building, used by stagecoaches to transport goods and people - normal for people to travel with valuables

Technological change – the printing press: transformed people’s lives and multiple copies of books and pamphlets could be made quickly and cheaply. growth in literacy – people could read local and national news and be more informed. 1641 onwards – broadsheets first emerged 1750 = 4 daily newspapers in London and 30 in different towns across the country.

Religious changes and Puritans: 1530s onwards = Protestant Reformation brought religious change . people had to follow official state religion chosen by the monarch (Protestantism). late 1500s Puritans emerged – tried to enforce higher standards of behaviour sinful acts condemned - drinking, gambling, dancing, swearing.

Growing power of the state (government): Under Tudor monarchs (1485-1603) the power of the state grew - Henry VIII insisted on “Your Majesty”. Parliament introduced new laws - people’s lives more closely controlled by the government.

Power of the landowners in the countryside: Landowners played important part running the country - in each county landowners were MPs, JPs and enforced the law. 1660 onwards as king had limited power, large landowners more powerful.

Civil War 1642-1648 King vs Parliament: disagreement over ruling of England, King defeated and executed January 1649 people suffered as battles fought across the country – thousands killed. England a republic, Oliver Cromwell and Puritans governed

Crime dramatically increased mid-16th-mid 17th centuries, particularly amongst the poor. Vagrancy, witchcraft, smuggling and highway robbery emerged as new crimes. In Elizabethan England (1558-1603) printed pamphlets and leaflets sensationalised crime and gangs.

Vagrancy Caused by failed harvests and fall in demand for cloth. Those living in poverty = no choice - leave their village and become vagrants. Sensationalised by printed press – accused of committing thefts, assaults and murders. Reality – few vagrants were criminals; many travelled alone or in twos or threes, desperate for work.

Moral Crime Growing Puritan beliefs - moral crimes: drinking, swearing, sexual immorality, not attending church, scolding in public

Witchcraft Medieval times = few cases of witchcraft. 1500-1650 widespread belief in magic and the devil giving powers to witches through familiars (spirits in the form of small animals which fed on witch’s blood.) Usually single elderly women who quarrelled with a rich villager. Accusations of causing harm – death of animal or sickness of a child. C16th / 17th harsh new laws against witchcraft introduced. Witchcraft trials increased: famines of 1580’s and 1590s; chaos of Civil War – Puritan areas. Early 18th century – witchcraft trials decreased - new scientific ideas about the world emerged.

Smuggling Smugglers secretly brought goods into the country without paying high taxes. Smuggling gangs would bring these goods across the Channel and landers would bring them ashore on small boats - included respectable people who disliked paying taxes and poor people who could earn money through smuggling.

Highway Robbery C17th / 18th roads were built and travel increased. Wealthy were targets as they often carried their money and jewellery with them as no banks. Highway robbers later portrayed as romantic gentlemen thieves, in reality they were often brutal thugs.

Continuity from the Medieval period	Change from the Medieval period
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No police force – communities continued to police themselves. - Prosecutions – decision to prosecute someone was made by individuals. - Hue and Cry – continued to be raised by the local constables and the people were expected to join in. - Law enforcement – administered by unpaid and amateur officials such as JPs, constables and churchwardens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watchmen – patrolled the streets and arrested drunks, vagabonds and criminals. - JPs role extended – an important change – dealt with criminals at petty sessions. - Decline of office of sheriff, manorial courts and church courts.

There was some continuity in the use of punishments between Medieval and Early Modern periods, such as execution. New types of punishment were introduced to deal with the changing nature of crime and the lack of police force.

	Type of offences	Organised/administered
Assizes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serious crimes/capital offences - murder, manslaughter, highways robbery, burglary, grand larceny (stealing goods 12d.+), witchcraft and rape. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Country divided into 6 circuits - Each circuit visited by 2 judges twice a year. - Dealt with 'capital offences' which carried the death penalty
Quarter Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less serious crimes – petty theft - Extra powers – licensing ale houses, regulating local sports and arresting vagrants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administered by JPs - Visited each county every four times a year.
Petty Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drunkenness and minor violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JPs met regularly in local areas to cope with the increased amount of work.
Manorial Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Played an important role in controlling behaviour of tenants on individual manors: - Let their animals stray - Stole wood from the common - argued with neighbours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 17th century = became less important as the Petty Sessions gradually took over their work.
Church Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Played an important role monitoring Christian behaviour: - church attendance - sexual offences - drunk on Sunday - swearing at neighbours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survived the Reformation - Active late 16th and early 17th centuries.

Public Humiliation: Became widespread as crimes such a vagrancy increased.
Pillory: offender's head and arms were put in wooden frame and they were pelted with rotten food, stones and excrement - used for those who traded unfairly or committed sexual offences
Stocks: arms and feet were placed in heavy pieces of wood and locked in position - people were pelted with rotten food, spat on, insulted or kicked
Scold's bridle: a heavy iron frame locked onto a woman's head, a projecting spike pressed down on the tongue
Cucking stool: disorderly women, scolds and dishonest tradesmen were paraded around on a cucking stool
Ducking stool: offender tied to a chair and repeatedly lowered into a river or pond, used on suspected witches

Prisons: Less common form of punishment
 Still mainly used to hold those in debt or awaiting execution
 1531 Gaol Act – forced JPs to build prisons where needed
 Bridewells (houses of correction) a new form of punishment - introduced to help tackle the vagrancy problem - prisoners were forced to work or were punished if they refused to do so
 1609 Vagabond Act forced JPs in every county to build a bridewell

Bloody Code: Increased capital offences as people were hanged for minor crimes
 Introduced 1688 to 1820 – the threat of hanging was intended to be a strong deterrent
 No police force to protect property so MPs used their parliamentary power to pass to frighten people into obeying the law
 1723 Black Act made poaching deer, rabbit and fish a capital offence
 By 1820 = 200 capital offences (compared to 50 in 1688), most were for crimes against property
 However, number of hanging decreased; assize judges often unwilling to pass a sentence of hanging for minor crimes