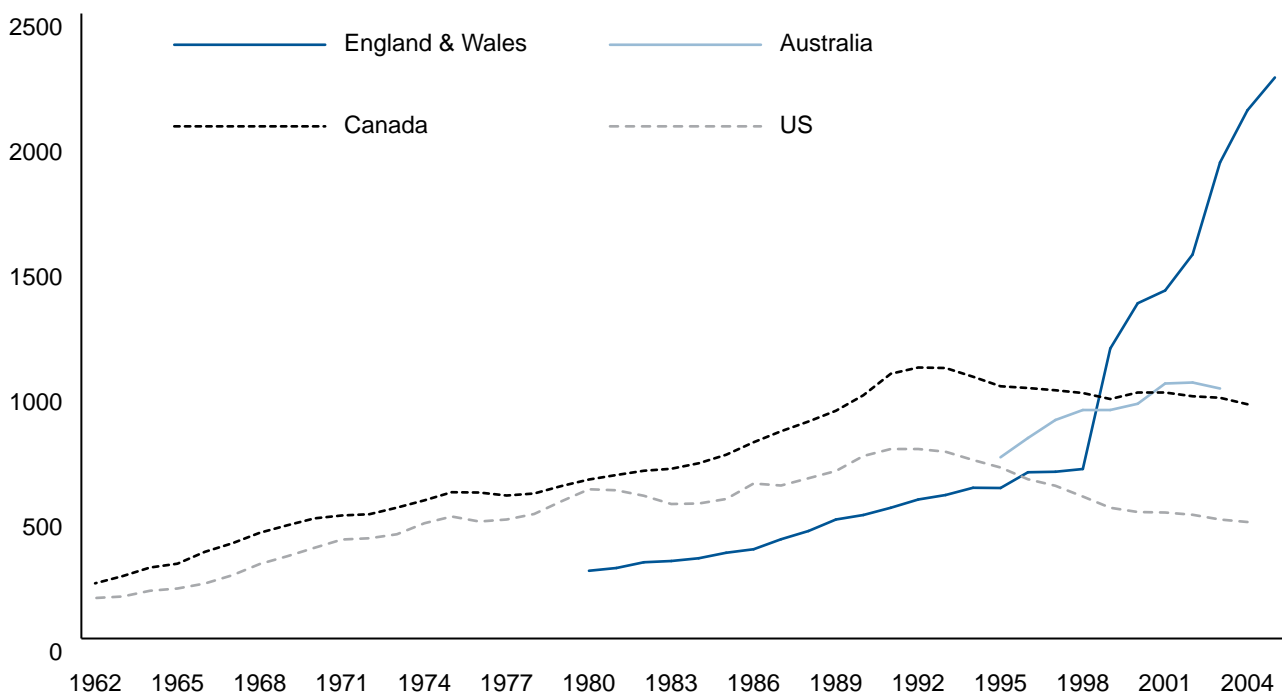


Comparing international trends in recorded violent crime

The way in which crime is recorded varies across jurisdictions and over time, so comparing crime rates between countries (and, sometimes, within a country) is not necessarily an accurate indicator of differences in actual levels of crime in those countries. Similarly, crime rate trend data in a single jurisdiction are not necessarily reflective of trends in actual levels of crime. Changes in rates of recorded crime may be the result of changes in the way crime data are collected, or changes in the proportion of victims reporting criminal offences to police. The figure below shows a dramatic increase in recorded violent crime in England and Wales between 1998 and the present. Rather than indicating a sharp rise in actual violence, however, this increase is largely the direct result of major changes to the way crime data are recorded in the England and Wales. First in 1998 and then again in 2002, amendments were introduced to include a broader range of offences, to promote greater consistency, and to take a more victim-led approach where alleged offences were recorded as well as evidence-based ones. The changes affected recorded violent crimes more than property or other crimes. Incremental changes over time in recording procedures in the United States, Canada and Australia may also have influenced recorded violent crime trend data in these countries.

Trends in recorded violent crime in England and Wales, the United States, Canada, and Australia, rate per 100,000 persons, 1962–2004



Note: Violent crime comprises homicide, assault, sexual assault and robbery. Time periods charted reflect the availability of consistent, nationwide data for each country.

Sources: US Bureau of Justice Statistics 2003. *Source book of criminal justice statistics*; FBI. *Uniform Crime Reporting Program*; Statistics Canada. *Uniform crime reporting survey*; ABS. *Recorded crime, Australia*; UK Home Office. *Crime statistics for England and Wales*.