

Trust in Criminal Justice: A Comparative European Analysis

Abstract:

This module examines public trust in criminal justice. Most EU Member States assess their crime policies narrowly, by reference to crime rates, detection rates and reconviction rates. It is important to do so, but it is equally important to assess whether citizens trust their institutions of justice. Public trust in justice is crucial to the rule of law, and governments need good survey-based indicators of this trust. Without such indicators, there is a risk that criminal policies will be skewed towards short-term, repressive measures which in the long term erode the legitimacy of the institutions of justice. The module will capture information on trust, legitimacy, cooperation and compliance in relation to criminal justice. It will also test theories of institutional legitimacy. Tyler and colleagues argue that in the US the legitimacy of the police and courts depends centrally on fair and respectful treatment by justice personnel. Beetham and Robinson and Darley suggest that congruence of values, and perceived effectiveness, may be as important. Applying such theoretical work in the European arena, this module offers a pathbreaking and authoritative comparative study of public perceptions of justice.

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