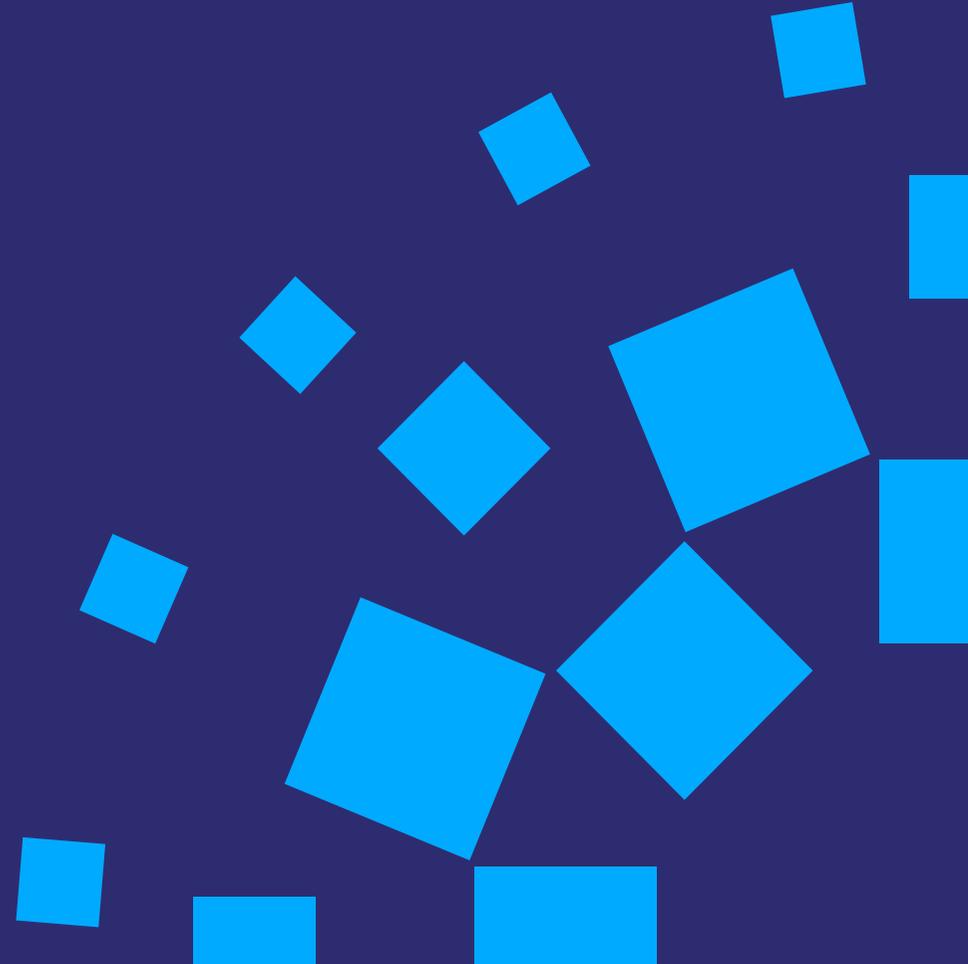


# Safer Streets Neighbourhood crime factors

**2021**



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College of Policing Limited  
Leamington Road  
Ryton-on-Dunsmore  
Coventry  
CV8 3EN

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# Domestic burglary

## Offenders – who commits burglary?

- Offenders are mostly **young** and **male**.<sup>1</sup> 25% of offenders convicted of burglary were 16-24, 57% were 25-39, and 86% were male.
- They offend close to **where they live** and on their regular **travel routes**.<sup>2</sup>
- Repeat offenders often choose houses they've already burgled, as they know the house well, know what there is to steal and know the exit routes.<sup>3,4</sup>



## Victims – who is most at risk?<sup>5,6</sup>

- Households with little or no **security**.
- **Social renters** (260% higher than owner occupiers).
- **Single parents** (245% higher risk than a household of two adults without children).
- Asian and Mixed/Chinese/Other ethnicity households.
- The **poorest section of society** are disproportionately affected by domestic burglary. They are less likely to have at least basic security and are less likely to have home contents insurance.<sup>7</sup>

## Time – when do the offences happen?

- Mostly on **weekdays** – 30% of domestic burglaries happened at the weekend and 70% on weekdays.
- In the **evening** and at **night** – 39% occurred in the morning or afternoon, while 61% occurred in the evening or at night.<sup>8</sup>

## Location – where do most offences occur?

- Neighbourhoods lacking social cohesion and stability, as neighbours may be less alarmed by strangers and subsequently might not intervene.<sup>9</sup>
- Places with high social disorganisation, such as areas with ethnic heterogeneity.<sup>10</sup>
- Areas of houses with open access to roads and footpaths hold a higher risk of burglary.<sup>11</sup>

### Repeat victimisation

- Burglaries cluster in space and time. Once a burglary has occurred, many more may occur in the days following.<sup>12-15</sup>
- Houses are four times more likely to be burgled if they have been burgled before.<sup>16</sup> The risk of burglary for the houses nearby is also raised.<sup>17,18</sup>
- The risk is raised for two months after the initial burglary – the highest risk is in the first week.<sup>19</sup>
- Houses in areas of higher deprivation are at an increased risk of repeat victimisation.<sup>20</sup>
- Repeat and near-repeat domestic burglaries are often committed by the same offender.<sup>21,22</sup>

### How do offenders select their target?

In interviews, convicted offenders<sup>23</sup> have stated that they look for:

- **occupancy** – burglars often check for occupancy before committing an offence<sup>24</sup>
- **surveillance** – burglars prefer houses where there is more cover and less natural surveillance from neighbours
- **accessibility** – burglars prefer housing on through routes or where there were multiple entry and exit routes
- **security** – burglars consider the quality of the security present and may be deterred by high-quality alarms, locks and gates

### Method – how are the offences committed?

- 70% of offenders entered through a door and 25% through a window.
- 38% of these incidents involved a lock being forced open.
- 21% of incidents occurred through an unlocked door or window.<sup>25</sup>

Entry methods often depend on location and property type. In Liverpool, prior to an alley gating scheme, 72% of burglaries occurred via the rear of the property. After alley gating was installed, this number dropped to 37%.<sup>26</sup>

### Prevention – an offender's perspective

From interviews with convicted offenders,<sup>27</sup> the **most effective strategies to stop offenders** were:

- large windows at the front of the property
- anti-snap locks
- ADT burglar alarms (not other brands)
- true cul-de-sacs
- houses opposite, facing the property
- open property boundaries

# Vehicle crime

## Vehicle crime trends

- From the mid 1990s onwards, vehicle crime reduced,<sup>28</sup> reaching a low of 350,000 offences in the year ending March 2015.
- The striking rate of reduction is thought to be due, at least in part, to improvements to vehicle security.
- Vehicle crime is now rising, with 468,315 crimes recorded in the year to March 2019 – up 2% on the previous year. This is largely driven by a rise in the theft of motor vehicles (up 8%) which has reached its highest level for nearly 10 years.<sup>29</sup>

## How are the offences committed?

- In recent years there has been a change in how offences of theft of vehicles are committed. In the year ending March 2010 47% of thefts of vehicles involved the offender forcing the lock whereas in the year ending Mar 2020 this accounted for only 14% of thefts of vehicles.<sup>30</sup>
- The recent increase in theft of vehicles is, in part, being driven by keyless car crime where criminals can bypass keyless technology in as little as 20 seconds.
- This exploitation of keyless entry systems, which allows drivers to open and start their cars without removing the key from their pocket, is called '**relay attack**'.<sup>31</sup> Criminals use a device to capture the signal from the car to the key and trick the car into thinking the key is close so it unlocks and starts.<sup>32</sup>
- In the year ending March 2020, manipulation of the signal from a remote locking device accounted for 36% of all thefts of motor vehicles a significant increase compared to the previous year which is the first year that this method has been recorded.<sup>33</sup>
- However, despite these changes in patterns, there are still a similar proportion of thefts of vehicles where the door of the vehicle was not locked. This accounted for 24% of thefts of vehicles in the year ending Mar 2010 and the the same in the year ending Mar 2020.<sup>34</sup>



# Patterns in vehicle crime

## Repeats and near repeats

- Both theft of motor vehicles (TOMV) and theft from motor vehicles (TFMV) cluster in space and time but clustering is greater with TFMV.
- Just under 40% of TFMV took place within 14 days and 400 metres of a previous incident.
- For TOMV, 10% of incidences occurred within 14 days of a previous incident nearby.<sup>35</sup>

## When do vehicle thefts occur?

- Around two-thirds of TFMV happen during the week. TOMV are more evenly spread.
- Around 80% of both TOMV and TFMV take place during the evening or night.<sup>36</sup>
- Exterior fittings (hub caps, wheel trims or number plates) and valuables are most frequently stolen in TFMV.

## Location – where do most offences occur?

- Households in urban areas compared to rural areas – the Metropolitan Police Service, Greater Manchester Police, West Yorkshire Police and West Midlands Police recorded 40% of the total police recorded vehicle offences.<sup>37</sup>
- Car parks, especially those close to shopping centres and long residential streets are most commonly targeted.<sup>38</sup>
- Offenders generally felt that less affluent areas were more suitable for offending because the built environment was less likely to include well-positioned CCTV, heightened security against criminals, and ‘eyes on the street’.<sup>39</sup>
- However, when a high-value vehicle is stolen to order, affluent areas are often targeted and environmental security was perceived to be less of a deterrence.
- Three-quarters of both TOMV and TFMV occurred at homes with vehicles parked on the street or semi-privately.<sup>40</sup>



## Offenders

- Vehicle crime offenders are not a homogeneous group. Research<sup>41</sup> has identified the following groups: alert opportunists and active searchers.
  - Other research<sup>42</sup> has separated offenders into:
    - those addicted to drugs or alcohol who steal to feed their habit
    - sober offenders who are more risk averse
  - Offenders under the influence often take greater risks when offending, and are more likely to commit acts of near repeat victimisation.<sup>43</sup>
- Both addicted and sober offenders said they preferred to offend in less affluent areas because there are often fewer ‘eyes on the street’.<sup>44</sup>
  - Offenders suggested the following situations were attractive: long roads with lots of parked vehicles, roads with cover along one side and places where there are fewer passers-by.<sup>45</sup>

## Victims

Research<sup>46</sup> suggests that risk factors for vehicle crime victimisation include:

- households using or owning three or more cars
- households where disability affects daily life
- households using or owning two cars
- separated or divorced households
- social renters
- residents of terraced or semi-detached dwellings

Location risk factors:

- socio-economically disadvantaged community
- high population density



## Target selection

Interviews with 20 convicted vehicle crime offenders<sup>47</sup> said they targeted:

### Opportunistic crime

- Cars with valuables showing, including work vehicles with tools in.
- Cars in less affluent areas with fewer security features, and less CCTV and street lighting.
- Vehicles outside student houses.
- Areas where they previously offended successfully.
- Long roads with lots of parked vehicles and fewer passers-by.<sup>45</sup>

### Stolen to order

- Expensive vehicles in affluent areas.

## Crime prevention

### Preventing opportunistic crime

- Cars with central locking plus an electronic immobiliser, and often an alarm, were up to 25 times less likely to be stolen than those without security. The effect is greater than expected from the individual contributions of those devices, and is attributed to interaction effects.<sup>48</sup>
- Parking in well-lit areas or areas with CCTV.<sup>49</sup>
- Raising public awareness of safety.<sup>50</sup>

### Preventing car key 'relay attack'<sup>51</sup>

- Keeping car keys well away from external doors or windows.
- Turning off the signal overnight or keeping the keys in a signal-block pouch.



# Cycle crime

## Offenders<sup>52</sup>

- Most offenders are young males.
- Cycle theft is often an ‘entry crime’ to more serious offences.

In terms of offender motivation, they steal:

- **to joyride** – these offenders tend to be young (under 16) and will steal any bicycle for pleasure
- **for cash or drugs** – these offenders take advantage of available opportunities in order to return a profit
- **to order** – these offenders tend to be more organised and target specific bikes

## Location<sup>53</sup>

- In semi-private locations near the victim’s home, including outside areas on the premises and garages, gardens and sheds.
- In areas of high incivility.
- In urban areas.
- Schools, university campuses and transport hubs.

## Victims – who is most at risk?<sup>54</sup>

Some demographic groups are more likely to be victims of bicycle theft:

- full-time students
- younger adult (16 to 34) households
- households with incomes less than £10,000
- households living in flats or maisonettes

## Nature of cycle theft<sup>55</sup>

- Bicycle theft is a low-volume offence, accounting for 2% of police-recorded crime and 5% of crime covered by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).<sup>56</sup>
- Since March 2012, bicycle theft has been declining.<sup>57</sup>
- In around 40% of bicycle thefts, the bike was locked by a chain, cable, shackle, D-lock or similar.<sup>58</sup>
- Near-repeat offences are common. Following an initial cycle theft, the risk of cycle thefts occurring at locations nearby is elevated for a period of around four weeks.



**Method – how are the offences committed?<sup>59</sup>****Lifting:**

- Thieves lift the bike and lock over the top of the post the bike is secured to.
- If the post itself is not anchored securely and it can be lifted clear of the bike and the lock.

**Picking:**

- For locks requiring keys, thieves can pick the lock open.

**Unbolting:**

- Thieves can undo bolts and quick-release mechanisms.
- If a cyclist locks a bike by the wheel alone, then it may be all that is left when the cyclist returns.
- If a cyclist locks only the frame, then a thief can remove a wheel or wheels.

**Levering:**

- Thieves use the gap between the stand and the bike from a loosely fitted lock to insert tools, such as jacks or bars, to lever the lock apart.
- Thieves can also use the bike frame as a lever, by rotating it against the stand or other stationary object to which it is locked. Either the bike or the lock will break.

**Cutting:**

- Thieves can use tin-snips, bolt cutters, hacksaws and angle grinders to cut their way through locks and chains to steal bicycles.

**Striking:**

- If the chain or lock is touching the ground, thieves can use a hammer and chisel to split the securing chain or lock.

**Four interventions have been identified to address cycle theft<sup>60</sup>**

## Improving the security of cycle parking facilities:

- increased natural surveillance in areas of poor visibility
- increasing flow of passers-by
- repositioning businesses such as taxi ranks

## Improving the registration of bicycles and increasing the difficulty of disposing of stolen bikes:

- ultraviolet pens
- radiofrequency identification tags
- disrupting stolen bike markets

## Interventions designed to detect offenders in the act.

- ‘Bait bikes’ with tracking systems left unsecured, to catch offenders stealing the bike. This also provides knowledge of where stolen bikes are disposed.

## Interventions seeking to improve how cyclists lock their cycles.

- Education campaigns informing cyclists of recommended practices concerning the types of locks to use and the manner with which they should be applied.

# Robbery

A person commits robbery if, in the course of stealing or attempting to steal from someone, they use force or the threat of force.

## Offenders<sup>61</sup>

- Offenders are predominantly male (over 80%).
- Most offenders are aged between 16 and 24.
- Only about 7% of offenders are estimated to be 40 or over.
- Most are unknown to the victim (between 70% and 91%).
- Most offenders were not thought to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Where Office for National Statistics data is quoted, an average over the past five years is used if available.

## Victims – who is most at risk?

- Victims are more likely to be male (70%) than female.<sup>61</sup>
- Younger adults (aged 16 to 34) are more likely to be victims.<sup>61</sup>
- The most frequently stolen items are cash/wallets, phones, laptops, jewellery and drugs.<sup>63</sup>
- Victims are likely to be distracted, not ‘tuned in’ to their surroundings or vulnerable, for example:
  - talking on their phone
  - looking lost
  - young adults using ATMs alone at night
  - young adults under the influence of alcohol<sup>63</sup>
- School-aged and retired victims were most likely to be offended against during the daytime.<sup>64</sup>

## Location – where do offences occur?

- Personal/street robbery is concentrated in metropolitan areas, with three forces (Metropolitan Police Service, Greater Manchester Police and West Midlands Police) accounting for around 60% of offences.<sup>62</sup>
- Robbery is more spatially concentrated than other property crime.<sup>63</sup>
- It can be concentrated around businesses that stay open late and make mostly cash transactions (eg, convenience stores, bars, fast food restaurants, or that provide cover or opportunities to loiter for potential offenders (eg, bus stops, train stations, ATMs).<sup>63</sup>
- Robbery has also been found to be concentrated around drugs markets and red light districts.<sup>63</sup>
- Offences predominantly happen in daylight (56%).<sup>61</sup>

### Method – how are the offences committed?

- Street robbery is favoured for being quick and profitable but other motivations include: anger, power and status enhancement, peer influence, thrill-seeking, revenge and collecting debts.<sup>63</sup>
- Robberies are often opportunistic rather than planned.
- Offenders prefer victims they can intimidate or overpower.<sup>63</sup>
- Analysis found four different methods used by attackers: ‘blitz’, ‘**confrontation**’, ‘con’ and ‘snatch’ robberies. The most frequent is confrontation where offenders approach victims with immediate verbal demands. Violence is possible but not necessary.<sup>64</sup>
- Robberies were most commonly committed by two or more persons acting together (55% in 2019/20).<sup>61</sup>
- Younger male victims were more likely to be targeted by groups of offenders, and females by a lone offender.<sup>64</sup>
- In the past five years, **weapons** were used in around 25% of robberies – the most common weapon being a knife.<sup>61</sup>
- Robbery accounted for 44% of all offences involving a knife or sharpened object.<sup>62</sup>

### How to tackle robbery

**Analysis** – Good quality analysis should reveal the contextual details of a local robbery problem to enable the identification of appropriate tactics that could disrupt it. Tactics work best when the police align their efforts with key partner agencies (eg, schools, leisure complexes, housing).<sup>63</sup> Examples of tactics include:

**Hotspot policing** – There is some evidence that high-visibility policing in hotspot areas can reduce robbery, but this is expensive and better results are achieved if problem-solving occurs in parallel.<sup>65</sup>

**Awareness campaigns** – Protecting potential victims through targeting awareness campaigns at specific places and times. This is best complemented with tactics that also target the offenders or places.<sup>62</sup>

**Environmental design** – street lighting and removing hiding places.<sup>65</sup>

**Market reduction approaches** are promising for reducing robbery offences in theory but are untested.<sup>63</sup>

See **Popcenter** for more tactics.

# Theft from the person

A person commits ‘theft from the person’ if they steal property while the property is being held or carried by the victim. This includes snatch thefts and stealth thefts (where the victim is unaware of the offence being committed, for example pickpocketing).

## Offenders

- Offenders are predominantly male (**76%**).
- Offenders tend to be older than robbery offenders, although the majority are aged between **16 and 39**.<sup>66</sup> Some research suggests an average age of **32**.
- Offenders are prepared to travel relatively long distances (up to **17 miles**) to hot spot areas to commit theft from the person.

## Victims: Who is most at risk?

- In contrast to robbery, females are more likely to be victims than males.
- Younger adults (**aged 16 to 34**) tend to be more likely victims than older adults (**35 and over**)<sup>67</sup>. Since 2000 there has been an increase in school-age victims. This may be related to electronic goods ownership.
- Students and tourists are more likely to be victims of theft from the person.

## Time: When do offences happen?

- **Two-thirds** of offences occur during the day. During the week, theft from the person is mainly a mid-afternoon offence, whereas at the weekend it switches to the night-time.
- Theft from the person is only slightly more likely to occur on a weekend when people are more likely to be out shopping, at entertainment venues and/or out at night<sup>68</sup> (equivalent to around **15% per weekend day compared to 14% per weekday**).

## Location: Where do most offences occur?

- Theft from the person tends to be concentrated in urban areas and on public transport.
- The Metropolitan Police, Greater Manchester Police, West Yorkshire Police and British Transport Police account for **50% to 60%** of recorded theft from the person offences, reflecting the volume of incidences that occur on public transport.
- The most common location for thefts from the person is in the street, although inside or outside shops, supermarkets and entertainment venues are also common locations.

## Methods

### How do offenders select their target?

- Victims tend to be chosen based on vulnerability, for example being on their own, distracted or under the influence of alcohol.
- An attractive victim is someone who presents low risk and reasonable reward and someone who appears to have money or other valuables, such as students and tourists carrying cameras, phones and cash.
- Pedestrians who seem to be distracted/using a phone may appear less alert, more vulnerable/unaware of their surroundings.

### How are the offences committed?

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) divided theft from the person into two categories.<sup>69</sup>

- **Stealth:** Where the victim is unaware of the offence being committed. For example, pickpocketing accounts for **between 50% and 60%** of all CSEW theft from the person incidents.
- **Snatch:** Where some degree of force is directed at the property, not the victim.<sup>70</sup> In contrast, snatch theft typically only comprises **between 10% and 20%** of all theft from the person incidents.

## Response

### Offender-oriented responses

- **High-visibility patrols** deter offenders from approaching victims. This removes the risk for victims and opportunity for offenders.
- **Use intelligence to target areas** where there are repeat offenders to increase the likelihood of apprehension. Closely monitor entertainment venues, public transport services and the outside or inside of shops where offenders may loiter.
- **Disrupt the stolen goods market:** reduce the rewards for offenders by disrupting the networks they may use to 'fence' non-cash items. Work with local businesses and communities to identify potential networks/groups.
- **Make staff aware** that peak times and locations in establishments and on public transport may be exploited by offenders. Ask them to be vigilant during these times, maybe offering training on what to look out for.

### Victim-oriented responses

- Protect potential victims from offenders at specific places and times through awareness campaigns and by using media outlets to disseminate prevention messages to those who are most at risk.

### Encourage people to:

- never leave their bag, mobile phone or valuable items exposed in public
- avoid talking on their mobile phone or listening to music in public, especially while walking alone at night
- be alcohol aware and drink responsibly
- not to keep all valuables in one place
- be careful when using cash machines (eg, don't count money in the street)

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## About the College

We're the professional body for the police service in England and Wales.

Working together with everyone in policing, we share the skills and knowledge officers and staff need to prevent crime and keep people safe.

We set the standards in policing to build and preserve public trust and we help those in policing develop the expertise needed to meet the demands of today and prepare for the challenges of the future.

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