

Measures to reduce repeat victimisation – burglary

Using repeat victimisation approach to target allocation of resources to reduce residential burglary.

First published

29 September 2023

Effect scale	Quality of evidence				
	Effect Impact on crime	Mechanism How it works	Moderator Where it works	Implementation How to do it	Economic cost What it costs
 Overall reduction	 Very strong	 Low	No information	 Strong	No information

Focus of the intervention

Targeting repeat victimisation provides a means of allocating crime prevention resources in an efficient and informed manner. These initiatives share a focus on preventing homes that have recently been burgled (or are near to a recently burgled home) from being burgled again in the near future, because they are at increased risk of re-victimisation.

Initiatives that have been used as part of a repeat victimisation approach to reduce domestic burglaries include:

- [Neighbourhood Watch](#)
- provision of crime prevention advice
- property marking
- target hardening (increasing the security of a property)

- cocoon watch (provision of crime prevention advice, support and guidance to neighbours and surrounding addresses of burgled properties)

This narrative is based on one meta-analytic review covering 19 studies. Of these studies, 11 were conducted in the UK, five in Australia and three in the USA.

Effect – how effective is it?

Overall, the evidence suggests that initiatives to prevent repeat victimisation of residential burglary have reduced crime. The specific crime outcomes covered by the review are reductions in repeat offences at the same locations and the overall levels of crime.

The meta-analysis found that overall, initiatives to prevent repeat victimisation of residential burglary led to a reduction in crime in areas where the initiatives were implemented, compared to those that did not receive the interventions.

The review also concluded that appropriately targeted situational prevention measures – for example, target hardening and neighbourhood watch – were the most effective methods to reduce repeat residential burglaries. The effectiveness of these crime prevention measures increased as the level of implementation of the interventions increased.

How strong is the evidence?

The review was sufficiently systematic that most forms of bias that could influence the study conclusions can be ruled out.

The evidence is taken from a systematic review covering 19 studies. The review demonstrated a high-quality design in terms of a transparent and well-designed search strategy, the calculation of appropriate effect sizes, and analysis of heterogeneity. The review showed attention to issues around dependency and assessed the influence of unanticipated outcomes on the size of the effect.

However, the review did not sufficiently assess the risk of publication bias and did not consider inter-rater reliability or the influence of statistical outliers on their findings.

Other factors that may affect the strength of the review findings relate to the quality of the studies that were included in the review. In some cases, the groups that received the intervention were not comparable to the areas that did not. In others, the eligibility criteria for receiving the intervention

were unclear. Implementation failure was also identified as an issue in some primary studies, meaning that only a small number of households in the treatment group actually received the intervention.

Mechanism – how does it work?

Initiatives to prevent repeat burglary are assumed to reduce crime by:

- identifying residential properties that have been subject to previous offences and therefore face increased risk of re-victimisation
- implementing schemes that make it more difficult for subsequent offences to take place

The decision to target properties for increased protection attempt to reflect the decisions of offenders to target the same or nearby properties for burglary. Some properties are flagged by offenders as being more attractive targets for burglary – for example, because of their layouts, access and geographical locations, or signs of wealth.

Offender knowledge of and familiarity with specific properties are 'boosted' as a result of them having carried out a burglary. This can lead to further offences being committed by the same offender (or others if the offender's knowledge is shared or if the same property is flagged as a target by someone else).

Initiatives to prevent repeat victimisation involve the identification of such 'boosted' properties and the implementation of suitable interventions to prevent further offences taking place. However, these potential mechanisms were not empirically tested.

Moderators – in which contexts does it work best?

The review did not examine under what conditions or for what population groups the intervention might work best for residential burglary crime outcomes.

Implementation – what can be said about implementing this initiative?

Some details relating to implementation are provided within the review, with authors providing details of the components that are required for projects to be effective.

They suggest the following.

- Projects are likely to require measures to be implemented in at least one fifth of targets for a measurable crime reduction effect to be recorded. Greater levels of implementation leads to greater crime reduction effects.
- Recruitment, training and retention of staff who are responsible for the implementation of the interventions, to prevent implementation failure occurring due to capacity and capability issues.
- Clear lines of communication between partner agencies involved in implementing the crime reduction initiatives are required throughout the lifespan of the project.
- Suitable methods to combat resistance from residents to implementing burglary reduction initiatives are necessary.
- Good data quality is required to fully understand whether the project has been successful.

Economic considerations – how much might it cost?

The review did not mention the costs of initiatives to reduce repeat domestic burglary, and no formal economic analysis was provided.

General considerations

- This review is based on studies that were published between 1988 and 2005. More studies may have been published since this time.
- None of the studies used a randomised approach to the allocation of comparison and intervention areas. Some attempt was made to match treatment and control areas to compare crime rates. But a risk remains that any effect found could be as a result of core differences between the groups chosen, rather than the effectiveness of the interventions implemented.

Summary

There is evidence that focusing on repeat victimisation as an approach to combatting burglary reduces crime.

Appropriate targeted situational crime prevention measures – for example, target hardening and Neighbourhood Watch – were found to be the most effective methods to significantly reduce repeat residential burglaries.

Initiatives to prevent repeat victimisation involve the:

- identification of properties that are likely to be attractive to burglars
- implementation of suitable interventions to prevent further offences taking place

Several implementation issues were discussed for preventive initiatives, including staff retention, breakdowns of communication, inflexibility and resistance to measures.

The review did not examine under what conditions or for what population groups the intervention might work best for residential burglary crime outcomes.

Additional evidence is required to identify and understand economic costs and benefits of these initiatives.

Reviews

Preventing repeat victimisation: A systematic review

Reference

Grove LE and others. 2012. '[Preventing repeat victimization: A systematic review.](#)'
Brottsförebyggande rådet/The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention.

Summary prepared by

This narrative was prepared by the College of Policing and was co-funded by the College of Policing and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). ESRC grant title: 'University Consortium for Evidence-Based Crime Reduction'. Grant reference: ES/L007223/1.

[Return to the toolkit](#)

Tags

- [Crime reduction](#)
- [Neighbourhood policing](#)