

Chapter 1

Introduction: what's to be done?

This book is about ways of preventing crime. It has been written with students, practitioners and policy-makers in mind, although some of the material may also be of interest to general readers. By the end of the book students should have a good idea of the major approaches used to try to prevent crime. They should also be able to reflect critically and constructively on the kinds of circumstances in which the various approaches might most fruitfully and ethically be applied. Practitioners and policy-makers should likewise have obtained a good grasp of major approaches to crime prevention. They should be better able to think through how, where and why differing methods of crime prevention can and should be used in developing policy and practice to deal with present and future crime problems. General readers may feel cheated. Many will already have strong, confidently-held views about the causes of crime and about what should be done about it. By the end of the book, I rather hope that they will feel less certain. I also hope they feel more informed in their thinking.

This book differs from sister texts that also discuss crime prevention. There is an important politics and sociology of crime prevention, which tries to explain why crime has come to be seen as a major issue and why particular policies and practices have come to be adopted to deal with it. This is not the subject of this short book. There are others that address crime prevention in these terms. There are also catalogues of 'what works' in crime prevention,

which attempt to draw together robust research findings about what policies and practices have been found to work and not to work in preventing crime. Again this is not the focus of this book. Finally there are useful descriptions of what is done in policy and practice terms by way of crime prevention. This book has little to say on this. On the politics and sociology, interested readers are referred, for example, to Hughes (2007) and Koch (1998). For 'what works' catalogues and rationales, for them, readers are referred to Sherman *et al.* (1997) and Perry *et al.* (2006). For descriptions of what is and has been done in crime prevention policy and practice, see Hughes *et al.* (2002) and Tilley (2005).

I have written this book in the belief that students, policy-makers and practitioners need to have a strong grasp of the thinking behind the strategies and tactics that are used to try to prevent crime. The general reader, of course, helps shape orientations to crime policy through the ballot box. I hope that some will read this book in order that more ethical and effective preventive activity might emerge from a more informed public debate. Students need to be able to engage fully with the theories at work in crime prevention for obvious reasons. In order to assess, criticise, explain, interpret and apply crime prevention ideas they need to have a good understanding of them. This book aims to provide at least an overview, though it will become clear that students will need to look further if they are to appreciate the details. Policy-makers and practitioners also need to understand the ideas, but for more pragmatic purposes. As Kurt Lewin famously put it more than half a century ago, 'there's nothing so practical as a good theory' (1951: 169). This comprises a major premise behind the current text, to which I now turn.

Why does crime prevention need theory?

There are three answers to this question. First, theory is inescapable. Our every action is premised on assumptions and expectations about how the world works and how others will behave. These are 'folk theories' that we have to depend on to get by. Banks, telephones, police services, local authorities and universities, for example, all function in and through the assumptions that each working within them and each making use of them takes for granted. We work on the assumption (i.e. with the theory that) we will be paid. We pass over (and receive) money on the assumption

that the tokens will have value and be exchanged for goods we wish to consume. We carry cards and use them in shops against assumptions about the operation of a banking system. When efforts are made to prevent crime they embody assumptions that may or may not be true, or true enough, to produce intended outcomes. And what may be true or true enough one day may not be so on another. This again reflects our experience in everyday life. Banking systems do not always work as expected. The theories they embody are not immutable or infallible. This shows when there are runs on them. Crime prevention activities likewise embody fallible theories that need to be explicated and made available for test and critical scrutiny if they are to be understood and improved.

The second reason theory is important is that in important respects crime problems are complex and changing. In unchanging conditions it might be possible to establish 'what works' and apply it in the reasonable expectation that what produced a preventive impact in one place and at one time would also produce the same effect at another place and at another time. For many crime problems this will not be the case. New motivations, new opportunities, new methods and new crime types mean that crime problems are apt to change by place and time. Even the same crime type may mask huge variations in method and motive. The types of people involved in crime vary widely. Moreover, in time both offenders and victims change and adapt to each other as well as to new conditions that emerge and furnish fresh crime and prevention opportunities. We will say much more about diversity and change in crime and its significance for prevention later in the book. Suffice it now to say that theory is needed to guide the policy-maker and practitioner towards what could be expected to produce preventive benefits in unfamiliar surroundings. Well-tested and well-formulated theories provide for informed thinking about what to do.

The third reason has to do with the values at stake in the policy and practice of crime prevention. This book begins by assuming that crime prevention is a worthwhile, not to say inescapable, concern. The very definition of crime implies classes of behaviour that are deemed so undesirable they are made unlawful. Efforts at preventing predatory behaviour by others who pose threats are not confined to humans and can be found throughout evolutionary history. Moulding people to conform to sets of expectations regarding what is deemed proper conduct has always formed part of social life, as has the issue of what to do when some fail to conform. For all these reasons crime prevention as an activity and interest is

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taken as a given. All methods used to prevent crime, however, raise normative questions that students need to understand, that policy-makers and practitioners need to recognise and consider, and that the traveller on the Clapham Street omnibus would do well to reflect on in coming to a view about what he, she, the government or any agency should do to try to prevent criminal behaviour.

In exploring the theories implicated in crime prevention, this book will pay particular attention to the *mechanisms* through which preventive outcomes are achieved, the means of their activation and the contexts needed for these preventive processes to operate. When we ask about 'mechanisms' we are asking about *how* interventions produce changes. This is not always obvious.

'Motor projects' were popular in the late-1980s and early-1990s. The details differ widely. Many involved the probation service (Martin and Webster 1994). These 'motor projects' were intended to prevent a range of car crimes. They involved providing young offenders with experience of working on 'bangers' and then driving them. What it was about them that could prevent which offenders from committing which crimes was not clear. Consider the following possible mechanisms:

- They provided a legitimate outlet for individuals who were determined to drive cars and who would otherwise steal them to do so;
- They provided a legitimate opportunity for individuals to drive cars who would otherwise drive illegally, for example without road tax or insurance;
- They provided contact with adult non-offenders who acted as mentors who attendees would not want to disappoint by offending;
- They provided skills and interests that offenders followed up at their leisure rather than committing crime;
- They provided pause for thought about the consequences of taking cars leading offenders to decide not to do so again. These consequences might include those for the offenders themselves, for example a criminal record or for others, for example pedestrians at risk from unskilled drivers of stolen vehicles;
- They provided a deterrent against future crime among those obliged to attend as part of a court order.

It is also possible that crime prevention measures might unintentionally promote crime. Thinking again about motor projects, another set of possibilities emerges.

- They appear so enjoyable that they encourage vehicle related crime as a means of obtaining a place in the project;
- They bring together groups of more and less experienced offenders who learn from one another and thereby become more skilful and more prolific offenders;
- They create groups whose members are able to work out better justifications for their criminal behaviour;
- They create peer groups whose members work together, learn to trust one another, and become better-networked offenders;
- They stimulate increased interest in cars and hence attendees' desires to drive them, which can only be satisfied through stealing them.

It may, of course, be that any or all of these crime-preventing and crime-producing mechanisms might be activated but that the mechanisms *actually* activated will depend on the nature of the attendees, and of the projects and the ways in which they are run. Those circumstances that are relevant to the mechanisms which are activated comprise the *context*. In any particular project the outcomes that are produced will be a function of the balance of mechanisms activated in that context among those touched by the intervention, some of which may be preventing crime and some of which may be fostering it.

Students of crime prevention need to be able to identify and analyse major crime prevention mechanisms and the kinds of condition required for their activation. In deciding what to do about existing and upcoming crime problems policy-makers and practitioners need to have a sufficient grasp of general intended and unintended context-mechanism-outcome patterns to make an informed judgement about what strategies and tactics to try. The general public may be less likely to endorse or resist proposals that have face validity if they have a better appreciation of the diverse ways in which crime prevention measures may produce wanted and unwanted effects. Students, policy-makers, practitioners and the public need also to recognise the values at stake in different forms of crime prevention. Given that there are no forms of crime

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prevention which pose no ethical challenges, all will need to recognise the need for trade-offs and for measures to minimise risks of injustice, inequity and divisiveness in the implementation of particular strategies, as well as their outcome effectiveness.

The term 'crime prevention'

This book is called *Crime Prevention*: but it is not the only term used to describe the matters covered in it. 'Public safety', 'crime reduction', and 'community safety' have also been used at various times and places to refer to similar concerns, although the meaning of these terms may also encompass fear of crime and sources of risk to person and property other than from crime, and these are not focused on here. This book is strictly about *crime* prevention. In Britain the designation 'crime prevention' has in the past conventionally been associated with the work of the police, the use of security measures recommended by the police, and neighbourhood watch schemes run by the police. Indeed in the past specialist police 'crime prevention officers' were trained at a police-run (though Home Office-funded) 'Crime Prevention Centre' to deliver this service¹. For the purposes of this book, however, *prevention* is taken to refer to a much wider range of methods to try to avert crime, in several of which the police play either no part at all or only a very minor one. The preferred original title for this book was *Preventing Crime, Promoting Safety*. *Crime Prevention* was in the end chosen for its brevity, for its familiarity and for its common noun meaning.

Outline of the book

There are two key questions for crime prevention. The first relates to the focus of preventive efforts, 'where is crime prevention needed?' or 'where are crime prevention efforts likely to produce most benefits?' The second relates to what to do to address the identified needs or priorities, 'what measure or measures are most likely to deal with the issue most effectively, efficiently and ethically?' The remainder of this chapter briefly describes some major crime patterns that can inform decisions about where to direct crime prevention efforts. The following four chapters outline and discuss the main approaches to crime prevention, paying particular attention to the mechanisms, contexts and outcomes associated

with them, and the ethical issues at stake with their use. Chapter 2 takes approaches associated with the criminal justice system. Chapter 3 takes approaches attempting to deal with individual criminality. Chapter 4 takes approaches that attempt to deal with social conditions producing criminal behaviour. Chapter 5 takes approaches that focus on reducing opportunities for crime.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 move away from discussion of the differing approaches to crime prevention. Chapter 6 discusses the chronic problems encountered in implementing crime prevention initiatives. This is clearly important for policy-makers and practitioners, since many failures in prevention may be attributed to implementation weakness, and an understanding of the conditions for successful implementation should help strengthen what is put in place. There is a growing literature that tries to explain why implementation disappointments are widespread. Students need to be familiar with this if they are properly to understand what comes to be delivered in crime prevention and how this affects the results produced. The general reader may find implementation dull. Improved understanding of the challenges involved in implementing crime prevention programmes might, however, help set more realistic expectations about what can be achieved.

Chapter 7 discusses evaluation. The chapters leading up to it will make clear that our understanding of what works in what way, for whom, and in what circumstances in crime prevention, is quite limited. For some approaches the theory and research is much stronger than it is in others. Evaluation methodology is highly contested. Chapter 7 considers what kinds of evaluation activity are needed to improve the theories that are embedded in crime prevention programmes, on the grounds that only this can lead to better policy and practice. It is important that policy-makers and practitioners, who contract evaluations and develop and deliver projects and programmes that draw on their findings, understand methodology well enough not to be bamboozled by what is presented to them either by way of results or by way of proposals to conduct particular evaluation studies. Students need to have some grounding in evaluation methods if they are to be able sensibly to read, interpret and synthesise research literature relating to crime prevention strategies.

The final chapter of the book briefly draws together and recapitulates the main themes of earlier chapters in the form of twelve key propositions. The remainder of this introductory chapter is devoted to outlining major patterns of crime that suggest where

crime prevention interventions are likely to have their largest pay-off. These describe what have been referred to as the crime 'squeaks' which need greasing (Farrell and Pease 1993; Hough and Tilley 1998). To continue the metaphor, the chapters on approaches describe types of grease, the one on implementation methods of applying it, and that on evaluation finding out what kind of grease is needed for what type of squeak.

Crime patterns for crime prevention

Crime is highly patterned. It is not randomly distributed. Directing preventive efforts would be more difficult if this were not the case. The following briefly describes the patterns found in relation to space, time, victims, targets and offenders. A general description is provided in each case followed by some data that illustrate what tends to be found. Readers interested in more details on national patterns are referred to national and international statistics websites. For England and Wales, the Home Office has a wealth of data that can be downloaded.

Spatial patterns

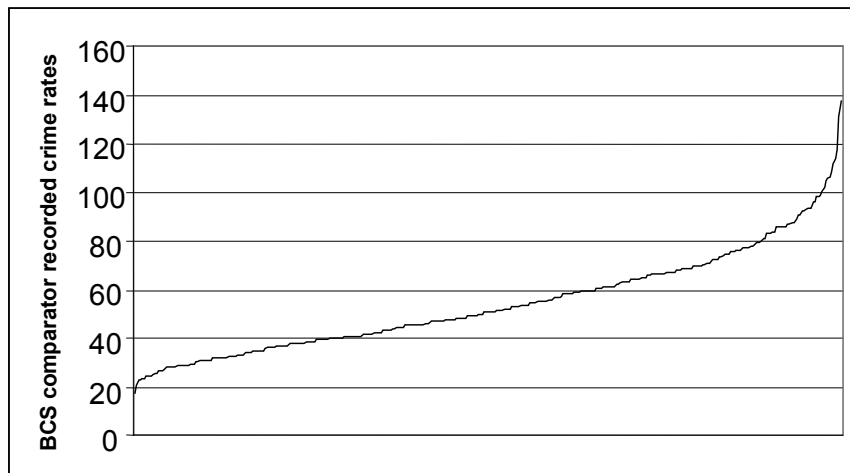
Geographically, at whatever level crime patterns are looked at, crime tends to be highly concentrated in particular places. Crime levels vary by country. Within countries cities tend to have higher crime rates than elsewhere because they bring together large numbers of people, some of whom will wish to commit crime, large numbers of crime targets of various kinds, and a relatively high level of anonymity. Cities thus furnish many opportunities for the offender to act covertly, or without being noticed or disturbed, as they commit their crimes. Table 1.1 shows the prevalence rates for ten crimes combined by country and major city for ten countries. It shows substantial variations by country. It also shows that in almost all cases the major city has a higher rate than that found overall. The exception is Australia where only a small proportion of the population does not live in one city or another, and here it appears that Sydney's rate is very similar to the national rate.

Figure 1.1 shows the variations in recorded crime rates across 372 local authority areas in England and Wales in 2006–7, for comparable offences that are also measured in the British Crime Survey². Nottingham had the highest rate at 138 per 1,000 residents.

Table 1.1 Overall annual ten-crime prevalence rates by country and major city 2004/5

Country	Capital/Major City	Country rate %	Capital rate %
Australia	Sydney	16.3	15.9
Belgium	Brussels	17.7	20.2
England and Wales	London	21.8	32.0
France	Paris	12.0	17.8
Hungary	Budapest	10.0	12.6
Ireland	Dublin	21.9	25.7
Italy	Rome`	12.6	16.6
Spain	Madrid	9.1	13.7
Sweden	Stockholm	16.1	22.6
USA	New York	17.5	23.3

Note: Data taken from van Dijk *et al.* (2007), based on international crime victimisation surveys in 2004 or 2005. The ten crimes include theft of a car, theft from a car, car vandalism, theft of a motorcycle, theft of a bicycle, burglary, attempted burglary, robbery, theft of personal property, sexual offences against women and assaults and threats.

**Figure 1.1** BCS comparator recorded crime rates per 1,000 population for 372 Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership areas England and Wales 2006–7

Note: Comparator offences include those relating to violence against the person, sexual offences, robbery, domestic burglary, theft of and theft from a motor vehicle, and interference with a motor vehicle.

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At the bottom was Teesdale at 17 per 1,000 residents. The national rate was 61 per 1,000. The ten per cent of local authority areas with the highest rates of crime accounted for a quarter of all crime in England and Wales. The ten per cent with the lowest rates accounted for only 2.5 per cent of the total.

Variations in levels are also found within local authorities. Crime is concentrated in particular wards. Figure 1.2 shows this for domestic burglary for all wards in Nottingham in 2006–7 (wards have an average population of 14,000). Figure 1.2 also shows the national rate and the rate for all of Nottingham³. It is clear that all Nottingham wards approach twice the national rate, but the highest wards have three times the rate of the lowest in the city. Within wards crime is concentrated in particular neighbourhoods, as shown in Figure 1.3 which indicates variations in rate for all wards with an overall rate of more than 25 per 1,000 residents (the ‘superoutput areas’ referred to in the figure have an average population of some 1,500 residents).

Within small areas crime is also concentrated in some locations and on some targets. Individual repeat victimisation is discussed below. For domestic burglary the heightened risk for the burgled property has been found to extend outward, but to diminishing degrees, to nearby properties (Bowers and Johnson 2005; Johnson *et al.* 2005; Johnson and Bowers 2007). Here patterns of concentration by place and time are predictable, which is clearly important for allocating preventive efforts.

While patterns of geographical concentration can be observed, it is important to unpack them and to realise that patterning at one level does not necessarily explain patterning at another. If a crime map is drawn of a city, it will generally be found that city centres have a high concentration of a wide range of offences. Across residential areas, neighbourhoods that are poorer generally tend to have higher levels of crime than those that are better off. But this does not mean that the relatively poor people within them are also at higher risk than their fellow residents who are rather richer. Rather, it may be, and is indeed found to be the case, that the better off living in poorer neighbourhoods suffer more crime than the poorer people within those neighbourhoods (Bowers *et al.* 2005; Tseloni *et al.* 2002). It is not hard to understand why: the better off in poorer neighbourhoods have more to steal. Both the city centre and poor area concentration patterns can be explained by the proximity of likely offenders to attractive crime targets.

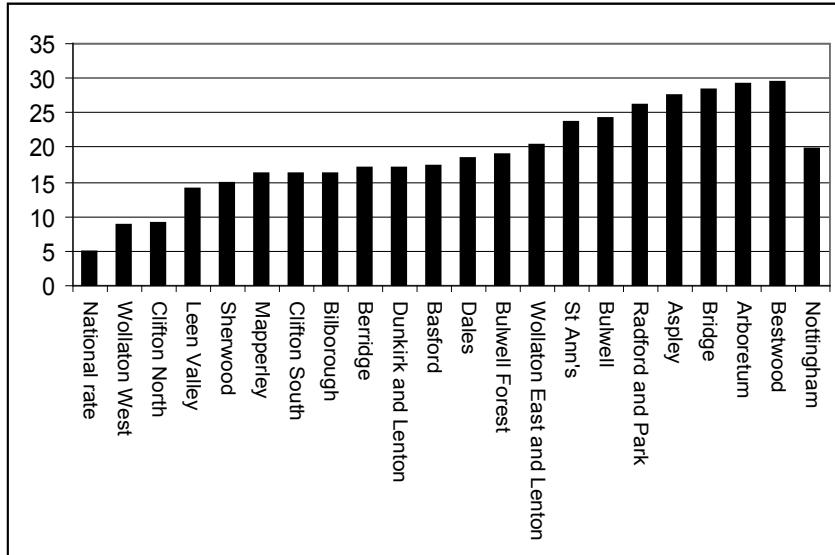


Figure 1.2 Rates of recorded burglary per 1,000 population by ward in Nottingham 2006-7

Source: Nottingham ward figures calculated from local city council data. Available at [http://www.nomadplus.org.uk/newreportsxml.asp?report=Policing %20and%20Public%20Safety&sub=](http://www.nomadplus.org.uk/newreportsxml.asp?report=Policing%20and%20Public%20Safety&sub=).

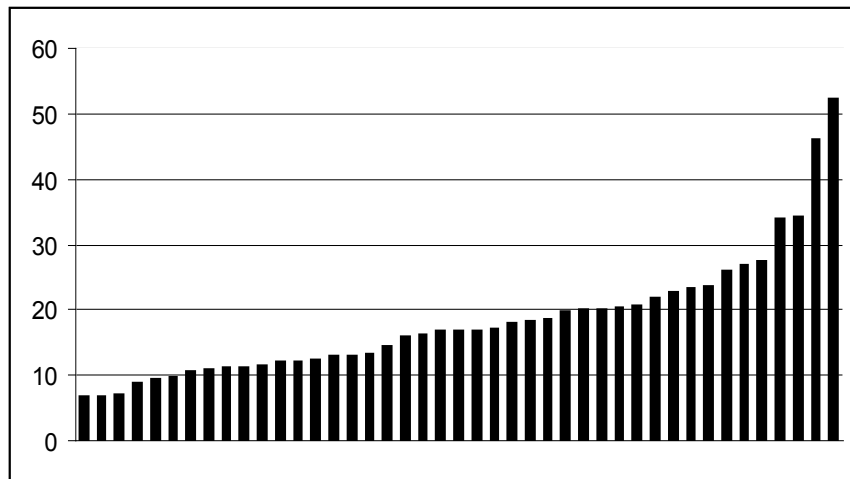


Figure 1.3 Census superoutput area variations in burglary per 1,000 population in the five highest burglary rate wards in Nottingham in 2006-7

Source: Calculated with data from <http://www.nomadplus.org.uk/stats.asp>.

Temporal patterns

Crime is unevenly distributed by time as well as by place. It varies by time of day, time of week and time of year. Motor mowers, for example, tend to be stolen in the spring. Children's bicycles tend to be stolen around Christmas. Youth disorder tends to take place around Hallowe'en. Alcohol related violence tends to take place late at night. Shop thefts often tend to take place at lunch times. Domestic burglaries through open doors and windows tend to happen in hot weather. Relatively few crimes tend to be committed between 4am and 12 noon. Local patterns may be produced by local circumstances. In some university towns, for example, there are traditions of end of year celebrations that include drinking, disorder and minor vandalism.

Temporal patterns are produced in various ways: by the supply of and demand for stolen goods (for example stolen lawn mowers), by seasonal events (for example Christmas, Hallowe'en), by weekly leisure patterns (for example drinking at weekends), by work patterns (for example fewer shop workers during many other workers' lunch times), by the weather (for example domestic burglary through insecure doors and windows), and by sleep patterns (the relative lack of crime incidents when most have gone to bed and few offenders are ready to begin their days).

As an example, Figure 1.4 shows the temporal patterns for street robbery and snatch theft for under and over sixty-year-olds in Nottingham for the three years from October 1999. It is clear that few offenders or victims are about during the early morning. Older victims are more readily available during the day and younger ones at night when there are relatively fewer old people available from whom to steal.

Victim patterns

Across a wide variety of crime types, those who have been victims of crime once have been found to be at heightened risk of a further crime. If they experience two crimes, they are at still higher risk of a third. And so on. The risks increase with the number of crimes experienced. Moreover the risks are at their highest in the immediate aftermath of a crime. They then fade.

This general pattern has been found for both property crime and personal crime. It has been found for individuals, households and businesses. It has been found for high-volume crimes and for low-

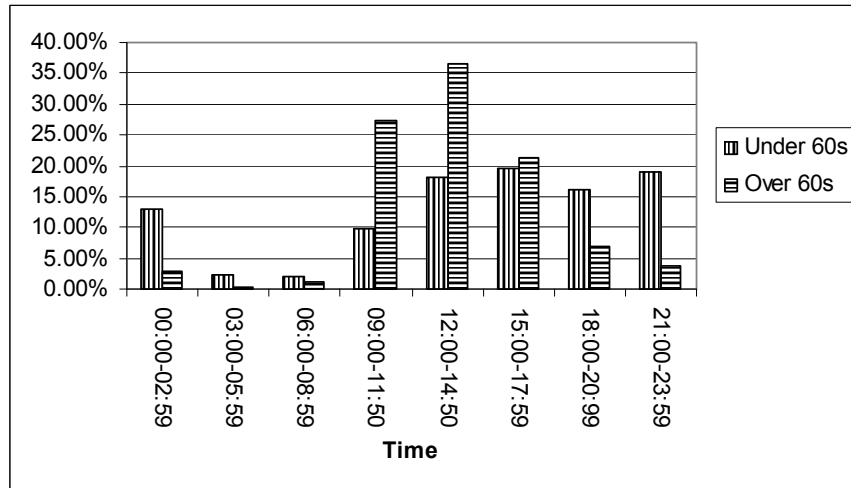


Figure 1.4 Times of street robberies and snatch thefts in Nottingham, October 1999–September 2002

Source: Nottingham recorded crime data.

volume crimes. It has been found in rural areas as it has in urban areas. It has been found for all countries where the research has been undertaken.

Table 1.2 shows, as an example, the pattern of repeat commercial burglaries in Hartlepool, in North-East England, using a rolling year beginning January to December 1990, each first incident at an address being tracked forward for twelve months to see whether and how many further incidents took place. This shows that of the 1,125 businesses identified, 22 per cent suffered at least one commercial burglary. Of those who suffered one commercial burglary, 40 per cent suffered at least one more and so on. It is clear that risk increases with the number of incidents. Figure 1.5 shows the time course for the repeat incidents in Hartlepool, dividing the year during which repeats could occur into five equal periods. In accordance with the pattern found in many other places and for many other offences the initial risk is high but then falls over time.

As a rule, if we want to predict where and when a particular crime will take place our best bet is to look at those who have suffered one or more crimes in the days and weeks immediately after they experienced that crime. This still does not necessarily

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Table 1.2 Hartlepool recorded business burglary repeat patterns
January 1990–December 1991

All businesses	1125	100%
Businesses having one or more burglary/ies	250	22%
Businesses having two or more burglaries	97	40%
Businesses having three or more burglaries	47	48%
Businesses having four or more burglaries	27	57%
Businesses having five or more burglaries	17	63%

Note: Data drawn from Tilley (1993c).

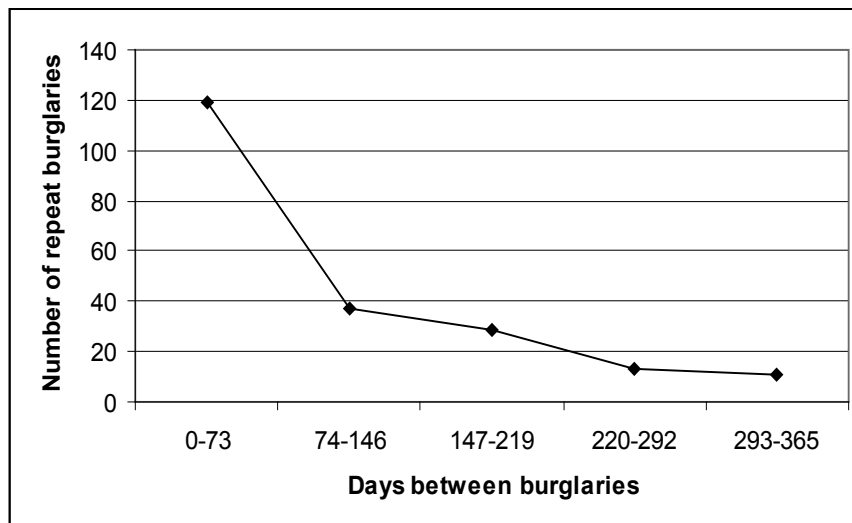


Figure 1.5 Days between repeat commercial burglaries in Hartlepool,
January 1990–December 1991

Note: Data drawn from Tilley (1993c), recorded crime data.

make a particular crime at a particular time and place very probable, however. Suppose that there is a one in twenty chance of experiencing a burglary in a given year. Suppose that in the week following the burglary the probability of being burgled increases by a factor of ten. This would yield a one in two chance of being burgled over the year. However, a one in two chance over a year amounts to roughly a one in a hundred chance over the week. For that week those who had not experienced a burglary would face a burglary risk of around one in a thousand.

There are two broad ways in which repeat patterns may be generated. The first is that the crime event itself increases the risk of a subsequent crime. The second is that those who are repeatedly victimised have some attribute that makes them at especially high risk of being targeted by offenders.

One crime can precipitate another in a variety of ways: the offender can go back to take goods he or she was unable to take the first time; the offender knows how to commit the crime and get away with it so returns to a known opportunity; the offender may tell another criminal about the opportunity for the crime; the offence may have left a property insecure in a way that renders it open to further crime; the crime may have been intrinsically rewarding thus reinforcing the offender's behaviour which is repeated (as, for example, in domestic violence); or the crime may spark a feud in which two parties offend against one another, turn by turn.

It is clear that risks of crime victimisation vary quite widely. Some are at much higher risk than others because of who they are, what they do, or where they are. Those who are young, sharing tenanted accommodation, male, single, unemployed, and living in deprived areas of cities, for example, live much crime-riskier lives than those who are older, owner-occupiers, female, gainfully employed, married and living in the country. Clearly, vulnerability within the relatively high-risk group could be substantially increased by more particular aspects of individual members' lifestyles. In relation to domestic burglary, for example, these aspects of lifestyle could include: living in a particularly crime-prone property and neighbourhood, being careless about security, owning the kinds of goods that offenders look out for, providing open-house for parties attracting those known to be offenders, leaving the property empty for long and predictable stretches of time, and so on. We would expect not just that more of those living the riskier lives experience crime but that more would also be repeat victims.

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Table 1.3 Household types with high rates of domestic burglary, 2006/7 BCS

	All burglary	With entry ¹	Attempts ²	Unweighted base
	% victims once or more			
Age of household reference person				
16-24	6.7	4.0	2.9	1,604
25-34	3.7	2.0	1.8	6,021
35-44	2.8	1.6	1.2	9,463
45-54	2.9	1.7	1.3	8,953
Household type				
Household reference person under 60:				
<i>Single adult and child(ren)</i>	5.5	3.3	2.5	2,422
<i>Adults and child(ren)</i>	2.6	1.5	1.2	10,391
<i>No children</i>	3.1	1.8	1.4	17,595
Household income				
Less than £10,000	3.4	2.1	1.4	8,095
Tenure				
Social renters	4.1	2.4	1.9	7,883
Private renters	3.9	2.3	1.8	5,463
Household reference person employment status				
Unemployed	6.0	3.2	3.3	500
Economically inactive	2.5	1.6	1.0	17,955
<i>Student</i>	6.4	4.7	1.9	403
<i>Looking after family/home</i>	5.4	3.3	2.2	1,793
<i>Long-term/temporarily sick/ill</i>	5.1	2.8	2.4	2,186
<i>Other inactive</i>	4.4	3.2	1.6	451
Household reference person occupation				
Never worked and long term unemployed	3.4	2.3	1.2	1,063
Full-time students	5.1	3.1	2.1	740
Not classified	4.7	2.1	2.8	523
Accommodation type				
Terraced house	3.1	1.9	1.4	12,294
Flat or maisonette	3.2	1.8	1.6	5,186
Other accommodation types	3.9	3.3	0.6	232
Area type				
Urban	2.8	1.7	1.2	35,407
Number of years at address				
Less than 1 year	4.6	2.6	2.2	4,579
1 year, less than 2 years	3.2	1.9	1.4	2,962
Level of physical disorder				
High	5.1	3.2	2.1	2,572
Level of home security				
None	22.5	16.4	6.9	181
ALL HOUSEHOLDS	2.5	1.5	1.1	47,027

1 'Burglary with entry' refers to cases where premises were entered whether or not anything was stolen.

2 'Attempts' refer to cases where there was clear evidence of a physical effort to enter but it was unsuccessful.

Source: Adapted from Nicholas *et al.* (2007: 89).

Table 1.3 shows the attributes of households that are at higher than national risk of domestic burglary, according to British Crime Survey findings.

It is perfectly possible that high rates of repeat victimisation result both from links between series of events and from variations in susceptibility to crime of the sort captured in Table 1.3. Research findings, however, indicate that repeat events are very often linked to one another. One event leads to another, in particular as prolific offenders return to familiar crime haunts: why look elsewhere when there are known rewards and proven methods? The implications of repeat patterns for crime prevention and detection are clear. These include the allocation of limited preventive resources to those who have already been victimised and some direction of proactive efforts at detection on those premises that are, for a short while, at especially high risk (Farrell and Pease 1993). We return to this in later chapters.

Target patterns

Some goods are stolen at a much higher rate than others. Cash is always popular. Jewellery is generally also well-liked by thieves. Large refrigerators and washing machines are not stolen in large numbers. Thieves take what they can transport inconspicuously and either use themselves or dispose of easily. This explains why small, accessible, lightweight, high-value, anonymous goods that can be sold on to consumers, who either do not know or do not care that they are stolen, are taken at a high rate. Mobile phones are a good example at the time of writing. But any new good that comes on to the market that has the right attributes will be stolen in large quantities. Once the market is saturated, rates of theft will fall. As portable, high-value, anonymous goods become aspirational, especially to the young and impecunious, they become ideal targets for theft. At a point when they cease to be fashionable, or once they become commonplace, thefts of them will decline. Think, historically, of silk handkerchiefs and pocket watches.

Table 1.4 shows the goods stolen in domestic burglaries in 2006–7, according to the British Crime Survey. It shows that small, anonymous, and high-value items tend to be preferred presumably because they are relatively easy to carry and dispose of.

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Table 1.4 BCS findings on items stolen in domestic burglary 2006/7

Items	Percentage of burglaries with loss where item taken
Purse/wallet/money etc.	45
Jewellery	25
Electrical goods/cameras ¹	24
Computer/computer equipment	23
Mobile	16
Handbag/briefcase/shopping bag	12
CDs/tapes/videos/DVDs	12
Clothes	8
Documents	7
House keys	7
Car keys	5
Food/toiletries/cigarettes	5
Vehicle/vehicle parts	4
Tools/work materials	3
Bicycle/bicycle parts	2
Garden furniture	1
Sports equipment	1
Household items/furniture	1

¹Electrical goods/cameras' includes televisions, videos, stereos, cameras, MP3 players and DVD players.

Note: Unweighted base 509.

Source: Crime in England and Wales 2006/07: Supplementary Tables: Nature of burglary, vehicle-related theft, personal and other household theft, vandalism, and violent crime. Available at: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/crimeew0607_tables_bvv.html.

Offender patterns

Men commit crime at a much higher rate than women. A low level of criminal behaviour is quite normal among males in early adolescence. As the title of one volume states, *Everybody Does It*, where the 'it' is crime (Gabor 1994). Loosening of direct parental control and oversight, biological development, and increasing amounts of time spent with peers who are in a similar situation conspire to create a context in which some degree of criminal behaviour is very widespread, though continuing ties to school and home for most mean that the volume of crime committed is modest.

At the same time, a relatively small number commit a very large number of crimes, and a few have extended criminal careers. Higher-rate offenders and those with longer criminal careers tend to start their criminal careers earlier than more occasional offenders. For these there are more deep-seated sources of criminality.

The 2003 Crime and Justice Survey took a random sample of around 12,000 people aged ten to 65 in England and Wales and asked them about their offending behaviour (Budd *et al.* 2004). This found that just over four in ten reported having committed at least one of a selection of twenty 'core offences'⁴. Four per cent had committed a 'serious offence' (see Note 4 in the Endnotes). Men were found to commit crime at a higher rate than women: for example thirteen per cent of males as against seven per cent of females had committed a core offence in the previous year. The peak age for offending was 14–17 for males and females for both property offences (17–25% of males and 10–13% of females in this age-range had committed one or more property offences in the previous year) and violent offences (30–33% of males and 15–18% of females had committed one or more violent offences in the previous year). The rate of involvement in crime dropped dramatically as age increased (three and one per cent prevalence rates respectively for property crime for men and women aged 46–65, and one per cent for both for violent offences). Of the large numbers committing offences only a very small proportion were found to commit crime prolifically. The research concluded that two per cent of the sample and 26 per cent of the previous year's offenders accounted for 82 per cent of all the offences included in the research.

A variety of 'risk factors' are associated with higher probability of significant levels of involvement in criminality. These include:

- Poor concentration;
- Poor school attainment;
- Poor parental supervision, erratic and harsh discipline, and child abuse;
- Broken homes, especially without affectionate mothers;
- School disorganisation;
- Criminal, antisocial and alcoholic parents;
- Socio-economic deprivation, notably large families, low family income and poor housing;

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- Opportunities to offend;
- Taking drugs;
- Regularly drinking alcohol;
- Exclusion from school;
- Friends or siblings who offend;
- Living in a disorganised and deprived neighbourhood;
- Poor social skills.

The more risk factors that are present the greater likelihood of criminal involvement, and in particular participation in violent crime. This issue will be returned to in some detail in Chapter 3.

Changes in patterns

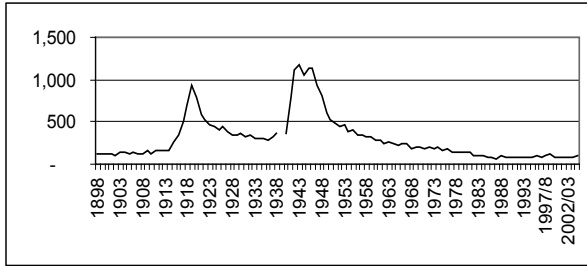
Many crime patterns are fairly constant. Those relating to age and sex of offenders, repeat victimisation, target choices for theft, and spatial offending patterns appear to be universal. They help make sense of some longer term crime trends. In most industrialised societies there was a steady increase in property crimes from the end of the Second World War till the early- to mid-1990s. This can largely be explained in terms of the increasing supply of those kinds of goods that are especially popular among thieves, and alterations in patterns of everyday life. Increases in wealth, alongside technological developments, created a proliferation of relatively small, anonymous, high-value, portable items, that were either intrinsically enjoyable or were craved by those who were finding them hard to afford. Increases in female participation in the labour market, growing levels of urbanisation, increases in numbers of single-parent families, improvements in personal transportation, and decreases in the need for domestic chores as a result of labour saving devices freed those most liable to be involved in crime from those controls that may have inhibited them in the past, or provided protection to otherwise vulnerable property. In short, more goods to pinch, fewer controls on those most apt to take them, and reduced oversight of possessions that are attractive to thieves will, other things being equal, produce more crime. The implication of this paragraph is that crime levels increased in response to social and technological developments that were, in many other ways, highly desirable.

There are, however, also quite sudden changes in pattern, some of which have obvious sources, and some not. Panel 1 of Figure 1.6 shows rather stark recorded bigamy trends in England and Wales from 1898–2005. The spikes clearly coincide with the two world wars where the results of temptation and opportunity created by the movements of many men are quite obvious. Panel 2 shows growth and then decline of the US homicide rate from 1950–2005. The normal age curve for criminal behaviour is shown in Panel 3, which shows the ages of all known homicide offenders from 1980–2004. There is a massive spike in the late teens and early twenties. Panel 4 distinguishes changes in rates of homicide from 1980–2004 for three age bands: those aged fourteen and under; those aged fifteen to 22; and those aged 23 and over. Panel 4 shows that, while rates for the younger and older age bands remain much the same, there is a substantial rise in the middle group from the later 1980s to early-1990s, followed by a fall through the mid- to late-1990s. This accounts for much, though not all, of the change in the latter part of the trend shown in Panel 2. As with bigamy, the trends are marked. Yet the explanation is not nearly so obvious, and is much debated.

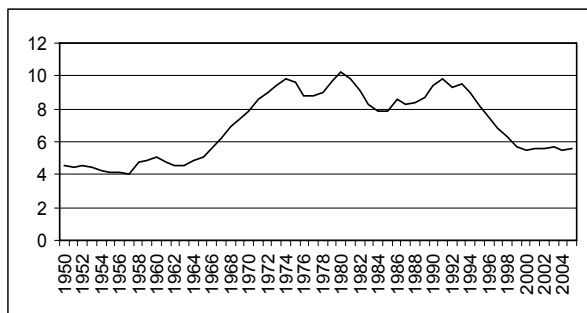
Conclusion

The latter part of this chapter has described, in rather broad terms, some major patterns showing where crime problems are concentrated. It has also shown that these patterns can change. Within local areas, analysts look at these patterns in much greater detail, drawing on a range of local data, some from the police and some from other agencies, to identify particular local crime and disorder problems to decide where, when and in relation to whom preventive efforts are most needed. Nationally, analysts may track changes in crime problems to identify emerging issues that call for preventive attention at a national level. We return to the identification of problems calling for preventive attention in the final chapter. Meanwhile in the next four we explore different approaches to prevention, which suggest what can be done in relation to identified problem patterns.

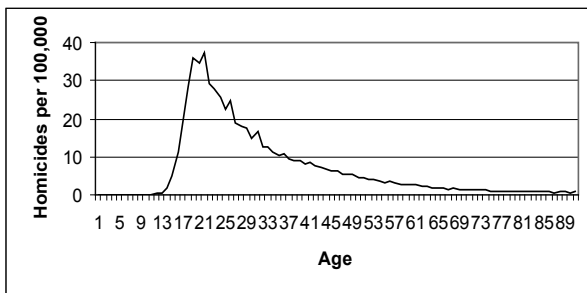
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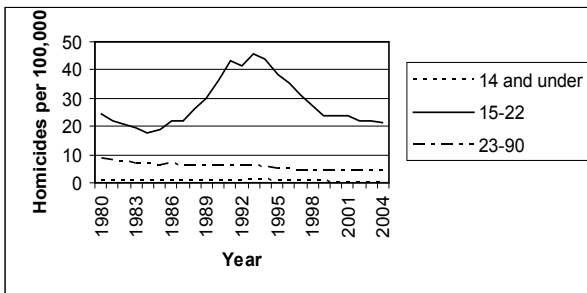
Panel 1: Bigamy in England and Wales 1898–2005



Panel 2: US homicide rate 1950–2005



Panel 3: US homicide rate by age 1980–2004



Panel 4: US homicide rates by age group 1980–2004

Figure 1.6 Changes in crime patterns

Exercises

1 Take any crime prevention measure, for example increased lighting, CCTV, burglar alarms or mentoring for young offenders, and list as many mechanisms that you can think of that might increase or reduce crime. Try to think through the circumstances in which the positive and negative effects are most likely to be produced.

2 Take any crime problem that is of particular interest to you, for example shootings, shop theft, commercial robbery, or drug trafficking and, using internet sources, try to find as much as you can about patterns that might inform the targeting of preventive efforts.

3 Write a brief crime biography or autobiography. An example is given in Appendix A, where Norman Storey's tale is told. You, or your subject, cannot, of course, be treated as representative of any group. However, the exercise will help you develop a better feel for crime and crime prevention, especially if you make comparisons with the crime (auto)biographies of others in your group and return to your account as you read later chapters of this book.

Further reading

For an overview of international crime patterns using sweeps of the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS), see Van Dijk, J., van Kesteren, J. and Smit, P. (2007) *Criminal Victimization in International Perspective: Key Findings from the 2004–2005 ICVS and the EU ICS*. The Hague: Boom Juridische Uitgevers.

For recent British Crime patterns, see Nicholas, S., Kershaw, C. and Walker, A. (2007) *Crime in England and Wales 2006/7*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 11/07. London: Home Office.

On repeat victimisation, see Farrell, G. and Pease, K. (2001) *Repeat Victimization*. Crime Prevention Studies Volume 12. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press.

On offender attributes, see Budd, T., Sharp, C. and Mayhew, P. (2004) *Offending in England and Wales: First Results from the 2003 Crime and Justice Survey*. Home Office Research Study 275. London: Home Office.

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For methods of examining patterns of crime, in particular those that are spatial and temporal, see Chainey, S. and Ratcliffe, J. (2005) *GIS and Crime Mapping*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

Websites

Home Office Research Development Statistics (RDS) <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/>

Scottish crime data <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/15730/3320>

US Bureau of Justice Statistics <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>

Australian crime data <http://www.aic.gov.au/stats/>

New Zealand crime data <http://www.stats.govt.nz/people/justice-crime/crime.htm>

Canadian crime data <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection-R/Statcan/85-205-XIE/85-205-XIE.html>

Many police services around the world also publish data on local crime patterns on the internet.

Notes

- 1 This Home Office Crime Prevention Centre was initially based at Staffordshire Police Headquarters, and ran from 1963. The operation moved to Easingwold in North Yorkshire as the Crime Prevention College in 1996. It ceased specifically to be a police training facility and came also to serve many other agencies. It then became the Crime Reduction College and was finally re-named the Crime Reduction Centre in 2003. It was closed in 2005.
- 2 Comparator offences include those relating to violence against the person, sexual offences, robbery, domestic burglary, theft of and theft from a motor vehicle, and interference with a motor vehicle.
- 3 Nottingham had not only the highest rate of recorded crime for all BCS comparator crime. It also had the highest rate specifically for domestic burglary.
- 4 The core offences were domestic burglary*, commercial burglary*, theft of a vehicle*, attempted theft of a vehicle, theft from the inside of a vehicle, theft from outside a vehicle, attempted theft from a vehicle, thefts from

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work, from school, from the person*, other theft and shoptheft, criminal damage to a vehicle and other criminal damage, robbery of an individual* or a business*, assaults with injury* and without injury and selling class A* and other drugs. The eight marked with an asterisk were deemed serious for the purpose of the research.