APPLICATION: This case study provides an illustration of how a police force and Community Safety Partnership (CSP) have used the hypothesis testing crime analysis approach. Following an 18% rise in residential burglaries over the winter of 2010/11 in Oldham, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and the Oldham CSP initiated a hypotheses testing crime analysis approach to better understand the reasons for the increase. The overview did not show any clear seasonal pattern to the burglaries, but certain areas of Oldham had experienced bigger increases than others. The following four hypotheses were determined:

1. The increase in burglary is attributable to an increase in burglary offenders living in Oldham as a direct result of an increase in prison releases
2. The increase in burglary has been driven by an increase in gold jewellery thefts, particularly in Asian neighbourhoods
3. The increase in burglary is attributable to a decrease in the effectiveness of "cocooning" in Oldham, leading to a higher level of repeat and near-repeat victimisation
4. The increase in burglary is attributable to an increased opportunity for burglars to offend in the early evening due to the extended hours of darkness over the winter.

In summary, there was little evidence to support the first two hypotheses. Analysis for hypothesis 3 determined that repeat victimisation levels had fallen, but near repeats had increased to explain 1 in 5 of the additional burglaries.

Figure 1 shows the results of the analysis conducted to test hypothesis 4. Comparing the time of day that burglaries were committed in Winter months to those in Summer months revealed that the difference in offending between midday and 9pm explained the entire burglary increase. This trend was also seen over the previous three years.

This finding led the CSP to refine their Autumn crime awareness programme so that it was more specific to those communities at risk of burglary. One of the core tactics used was directing neighbourhood police officers to visit the properties within 100m and within 24 hours of a recently burgled property. There, Officers asked residents to report any suspicious behaviour and provided practical crime prevention advice that helped minimise their heightened risk of burglary (e.g. leaving a light on if out mid-afternoon to early-evening). It was felt that by speaking to residents it was more likely that the message would resonate. The presence of officers on the streets also helped to deter offenders. This programme began in October 2012, and was considered to be the main reason for a 25% reduction in burglary over the 2012/2013 winter period, and in effect flattening much of the burglary peak between midday and 9pm that had been evident in the previous years.