



# JDiBrief – Crime

## Street Robbery: SUMMARY (1 of 5)

Author: Lisa Tompson, UCL Jill Dando Institute

Street robbery is a crime which is a major source of fear among the public. It is defined here as the use or threat of force to steal property from a person in public space. Street robbery concentrates at specific times, in particular places, and happens to certain types of people. The *routine activities* of both offenders and victims, and the timing of these, can assist us in interpreting these patterns in robbery.

**OFFENDERS:** International research has determined that most offenders for street robbery are young (under 30 years) and male. In some places there appears to be a greater representation of persons from ethnic minorities and deprived backgrounds, but this is not universal and may be interrelated. From an offender's perspective, street robbery is favoured for being quick and profitable – it nets cash as well as goods and drugs. Through interviews with offenders it has been found that they largely make rational decisions in the crime event, based on cost-benefit reasoning.

**VICTIMS:** An attractive victim for street robbery is one who presents a low risk and a reasonable reward. Offenders prefer victims they can intimidate, subdue or overpower, and in most cases look for a victim who is likely to be compliant. Overall, robbery victims tend to be classed as young (under 30 years). In the UK there has been an increase in the proportion of victims who are school age since the beginning of the new millennium. There are also particular goods which are most frequently stolen (known for their specific qualities as CRAVED items). These are cash and purses/wallets, small electronic goods (mobile phones, cameras, mp3 players, and laptops), jewellery and drugs.

**PLACES:** Street robbery is more spatially concentrated than other property crime; the areas where robbery concentrates are small and well distinguished. Specific types of land use and facilities attract motivated offenders and suitable victims. Businesses which stay open late and make mostly cash transactions (e.g. betting shops, laundrettes, convenience stores, bars, fast food restaurants), or which provide cover or opportunities to loiter for potential offenders (e.g. bus stops, train stations, ATMs) can increase the risk of robbery occurring. Robbery has also been found to concentrate around drugs markets and red light districts.

**IMPLEMENTING RESPONSES:** Good quality analysis should guide crime prevention and detection efforts. Tactics and strategies that respond to a street robbery problem should be selected with the context in mind:

- Some evidence exists that high visibility patrols can reduce street robbery incidents as a short-term tactic.
- Protecting potential victims at specific places and times through awareness campaigns may reduce the risk of victimisation.
- Highly targeted responses that look to disrupt the situational mechanisms causing a problem can be effective.
- Market reduction approaches to reducing robbery are believed to offer good prospects for reducing offences, but little has been documented about the effectiveness of these tactics.
- Evaluating whether a response has worked in the way it was intended is an important way of generating knowledge about 'what works'.