



JDiBrief – Crime

Street Robbery: ANALYSIS (3 of 5)

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Research and analysis of street robbery in a number of countries has found the following general trends:

OFFENDER: From arrest records it has been determined that most offenders are young (mid-teens to late-20's) and male. In some places there appears to be a greater representation of persons from ethnic minorities, but this is not universal, and likely reflects the composition of the particular areas which the data are taken from. Offenders often (but not always) come from deprived backgrounds.

Interviews with offenders have revealed that robberies are often opportunistic rather than planned. Street robbery is favoured for being quick and profitable – it nets cash as well as goods and drugs. Aside from economic reasons, motivation to commit robbery ranges from anger, entertainment power and status enhancement, peer influence, thrill-seeking, revenge and collecting debts. Offenders make rational decisions during the robbery event based on cost-benefit reasoning.

TARGET/VICTIM: An attractive victim 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. People who are distracted or not 'tuned in' to their surroundings (e.g. talking on their phone, who look lost or who are impaired in some way) are more likely to be compliant victims.

On the whole, robbery victims tend to be classed as young (under 30 years old), however older persons can also be vulnerable to victimisation. Since the turn of the millennium there has been an increase in the number of UK victims that are school age. It has been suggested that this increase is related to electronic goods ownership.

There are also particular goods which are most frequently stolen. These are cash and purses/wallets, small electronic goods (mobile phones, cameras, mp3 players, and laptops), jewellery and drugs. Such 'hot products' can be characterised by the acronym CRAVED; they are concealable, removable, available, valuable, enjoyable and disposable.

PLACE: Street robbery is more spatially concentrated than other property crime; the areas where robbery concentrates are small and well distinguished. Places with compelling robbery opportunities form hotspots as multiple offenders operate within them.

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. Drug markets and red light districts attract people looking to make cash purchases, and such people may be distracted and reluctant to report crime to the police, thus making good targets. Poorly lit roads, alleyways, subways and other areas not easily visible to guardians can be vulnerable to robbery. Pedestrian density may be related to robbery levels. Some research has found that a medium level of pedestrian density is a factor related to a greater risk of victimisation, but other research findings contradict this assertion.