



JDiBrief – Crime

Street Robbery: IMPLEMENTING RESPONSES (4 of 5)

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The situations that give rise to street robbery hotspots are complex and vary across places and times. Tactics and strategies that respond to a street robbery problem should be selected with the circumstances in mind. Responses should therefore be intelligently matched to the context of the crime problem. Good quality analysis should be able to reveal the contextual details of your local robbery problem so that you may disrupt it.

Robbery is a mobile crime which is frequently over in minutes. It is challenging for police agencies to investigate and detect such crimes. Some types of robbery might be more detectable than others - it is these offences where enforcement activities should be specifically targeted. Some evidence exists that high visibility patrols reduce street robbery incidents, although such tactics are costly and are not sustainable long-term. Helping victims to report robbery swiftly increases the chance of apprehending the offender.

Alternatives to enforcement also need to be considered. Protecting potential victims at specific places and times through awareness campaigns may reduce the risk of victimisation. Done sensitively, such campaigns can also send a reassurance message. Protecting victims is best achieved when it is complemented by tactics which also target the offenders or places – a ‘multi-pronged’ approach is said to work well (although can be difficult to evaluate once finished).

Highly targeted responses that look to disrupt the situational mechanisms causing a problem can be effective in reducing street robbery. For example, painting personal (defensible) space around ATMs in yellow paint has shown promise in reducing robberies at cashpoints.



Themes that result from analysis might be youth on youth robberies, or robberies associated with the night-time economy, or robberies associated with specific land uses (e.g. transportation). Specific responses to tackle these themed problems work best when the police align their efforts with key partner agencies (e.g. schools, leisure complexes, housing). Any activities should also be done in conjunction with local policing teams as these often have the best understanding of the local context.

A key issue for offenders is the ability to dispose of the property they steal locally and swiftly if they are to optimise the rewards of their crime. Similarly, any offender looking to convert their stolen goods into drugs will need to be close to their drug dealer. For these two reasons it is commonly believed that the locations where robbery happens are proximal to stolen goods markets and drugs markets. Market reduction approaches to reducing robbery are therefore believed to offer genuine potential in reducing offences. Little has been documented about the effectiveness of this particular suite of tactics however.

Evaluating whether a response has worked in the way it was intended is an important way of generating knowledge about ‘what works’.