RESEARCH ON REPEAT VICTIMISATION IN SCOTLAND:

FINAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

Background

Over the past decade, interest in the issue of repeat victimisation has grown in research and policy-making circles to varying degrees within the United Kingdom.


“Important conclusions justified by the research to date are that victimisation is the best predictor of victimisation; that when victimisation recurs it tends to do so quickly; that high crime rates and hot spots are as they are substantially because of rates of repeat victimisation; that a major reason for repetition is that offenders take later advantage of opportunities which the first offence throws up; and that those who repeatedly victimise the same target tend to be more established in crime careers than those who do not.” (p.v).

Gaining knowledge about the factors which lead to repeat victimisation is, therefore, an effective crime management (crime prevention and detection) tool (see Chenery et al, 1997), which can inform police targeting of the small proportion of people and places suffering the highest proportion of crime, as well as those who perpetrate them.

The present research confirms that what has been found elsewhere also applies to Scotland, but it also addresses new issues relating to repeat victimisation.

Aims and Methods

The present research has three main aims.

*To establish the levels and nature of repeat victimisation in Scotland*

Existing data from victimisation surveys and from police crime management systems were used to estimate the level and identify the nature of repeat victimisation in Scotland. The Scottish Crime Survey (SCS) provided information on the concentration of victimisation in Scotland, both reported and unreported. The second source on the extent of repeat victimisation was police recorded crime data for the three police divisions participating in the research. Although both sources of data have their disadvantages, together the survey data and force data provide the best information available on the levels and nature of repeat victimisation in Scotland.
To determine experiences of repeat victims

Although there is now a sizeable body of research in the United Kingdom on repeat crimes, particularly housebreaking (first by Forrester et al., 1988); theft of and from motor vehicles (Mayhew et al., 1993); domestic violence (Hanmer & Stanko, 1985); and bullying (Whitney & Smith, 1991), there is less research on repeats of different crime types against the same target and which identifies the crime reduction implications. The present study addressed that shortcoming and also examined the nature and impact of chronic victimisation, an issue which has only recently been highlighted in research on repeat victimisation.

Although only a relatively small proportion of the population are repeat victims, research has suggested that they experience many different crime types, sometimes on a daily basis. It is known that they endure many more crimes than come to the attention of the police and there is research evidence to show that they suffer more from their experiences than most other crime victims (Shaw, 1997; Shaw, 2000). Far from getting used to crime, chronic victims suffer many emotional side-effects even when victimisation episodes appear individually trivial. That a series of apparently trivial events can have such an impact on victims is of crucial importance to inform appropriate police and victim support responses to incidents that may otherwise be dismiss as relatively insignificant.

The results of interviews with repeat victims provided the material for these issues to be addressed in the present study.

To explore the links between repeat victimisation and repeat offending

Research evidence suggests that those who repeatedly target the same victim (person or place) are more established in criminal careers and are responsible for a large proportion of repeat crime (Ashton et al., 1998; Gill & Pease, 1998; Pease, 1998). Research to identify the specific characteristics of these offenders, therefore, has potentially important implications for both crime prevention and crime detection. If the characteristics and methods of target selection of specific offenders could be identified from past repeat crimes, this information would enable the police to target known prolific offenders by reference to the types of crime they are likely to commit in the future.

In the present study, interviews with repeat offenders addressed these issues.

Main findings

The levels and nature of repeat victimisation in Scotland

Scottish Crime Survey (SCS) data show the familiar repeat victimisation phenomena found in previous research on repeat victimisation. Crime is disproportionately suffered by repeat victims. The probability of becoming a victim again increases as the number of prior victimisations increase.
Three key measures of crime were calculated: concentration incidence and prevalence.

Crime concentration (victimisations per victim) is greatest in areas of highest crime in Scotland. This point is important because prevention could be facilitated by attention to repeat victimisation because it automatically takes one to areas of highest crime, with a natural focus (crime prevention and victim support) on intervention with the victims and their immediate surroundings. This factor contributes to the fact that an area is high in crime.

The analysis of incidence shows the unsurprising fact that the highest crime areas are very much higher in crime than other areas.

In terms of prevalence, there is a steadier increase in the proportion of people and households victimised. Even in the highest crime areas, only some 20% of people suffer a personal crime, and less than 30% suffer a property or a vehicle crime. Thus high crime areas are not areas in which everyone is victimised.

SCS data consequently show the familiar repeat victimisation phenomena: crime being disproportionately suffered by repeat victims; increasing probability of becoming a victim again as the number of prior victimisations increase; and the concentration of repeat victims in areas of highest crime.

The familiar appearance and time course of repeat victimisation are also in evidence in Scottish police data. If a house is going to be broken into again after one housebreaking, it will probably happen soon after the previous one. The same is true of sequences of motor vehicle crime and of assault.

The analysis also showed a concentration of victimisation on the same side of a street as a home previously broken into (defined in the research as the ‘penumbra’ of risk). The extent of the ‘housebroken side of the street’ phenomenon is such that it merits attention in the dissemination of housebreaking help and advice.

Cross-crime type analyses showed that there was some predictability in sequences of crime, with some crime types being better predictors than others. A first incident of assault best predicts future victimisation of the same type, and violence following housebreaking happens three times more often than statistically expected. Housebreaking followed by vehicle crime was also identified as a common occurrence.

**Repeat victims in Scotland**

Far from getting used to crime, chronic victims suffer many emotional side-effects even when victimisation episodes appear individually trivial. In the worst cases, the effect on victims is social exclusion. Anger is a common response to repeat victimisation, particularly from victims towards the perpetrators. There is also a social impact which, in
the worst cases, leads to social exclusion. Many chronic victims withdraw either partially or completely from any social contact during the worst periods of victimisation.

That a series of apparently trivial events can have such an impact on victims is of crucial importance to inform police and victim support responses to incidents that may otherwise be dismissed as relatively insignificant. Indeed, relatively trivial incidents may lead to more serious crimes.

**Repeat offenders in Scotland**

The majority of prisoners interviewed said they went back to the same target. If an offender decides to go back to the same target, it is likely to be soon after the last time they were there. Many reasons were given by offenders for returning to the same target, including the ease of previous visits, laziness and the knowledge that they had left items which they wanted. Offender accounts support previous research evidence concerning the phenomenon of ‘virtual’ repeats, where very similar or identical people or places are repeatedly targeted. Offenders often target the same side of the street instead of going across to other properties or vehicles on the opposite side of a street.

**Structure of the report**

Chapter 1 summarises what is known about repeat victimisation and sets out the aims of the present research project.

Chapter 2 describes the methods used and problems faced and overcome during the research.

Chapter 3 describes evidence for repeat victimisation from the Scottish Crime Survey.

Chapter 4 examines repeat victimisation in the recorded crime data of three Scottish police forces involved in the research: Central Scotland, Strathclyde and Tayside.

Chapter 5 presents the results of in-depth interviews with repeat victims. They were asked about the crimes which had happened to them, the circumstances and the effects.

Chapter 6 addresses the targeting practices of repeat offenders, interviewed in two Scottish prisons. They were asked about how they went about targeting and the extent to which they returned to the same target.

Chapter 7 concludes the report, summarising the individual chapters and making recommendations. Readers are directed to the conclusions of the individual chapters for a more comprehensive list of conclusions and the implications for police and other agencies in practice.
Chapter 1 - Review of literature on repeat victimisation and repeat offending

1.1 Repeat victimisation

“Repeat victimisation occurs when the same person or place suffers from more than one criminal incident over a specified period of time” (Home Office, 1994, p.2)

The ‘specified period of time’ is generally a ‘rolling period of one year’ but that is for reasons of convenience, not principle. Pease (1998) argues that the definition should vary with crime reduction purpose, the strengths of the approach being lost if applied mechanically.

1.1.1 Time course

Much work on repeat victimisation has concentrated on domestic housebreaking. When housebreaking occurs, this either flags or creates the risk of a repeat. The risk decreases after the first month but rises again somewhat four to five months later, when goods have been replaced by insurers. The time course of other offence types resembles that for domestic housebreaking, but lacks the insurance-related ‘bump’.

1.1.2 Relevance of repeat victimisation to different crimes & targets

Victimisation is, for most practical purposes, the best predictor of further victimisation. As Home Office findings outlined in Table 1.1 point out, victims of crime across different crime types experience victimisation on a repeated basis.
Table 1.1: The extent of repeat victimisation

**Racial attacks** - 67% of the families were multi-victims. (Sampson and Phillips, 1992)

**Domestic violence** - estimates that only 10% involved an isolated event and that the other 90% involved systematic beatings, often with escalating violence. (Hanmer and Stanko, 1985)

**Domestic burglary** - once a house has been burgled its chance of repeat victimisation was four times the rate of houses that had not been burgled before. (Forrester et al, 1988)

**Motor vehicle theft** - a quarter of respondents experienced more than one incident. 8% of victims accounted for 22% of the incidents measured in the three surveys. (Mayhew et al, 1993)

**Crime against small businesses** - 39% of businesses were found to have been re-burgled at least once in a year. (Tilley, 1993)

**Crime on industrial estates** - on the worst estates, businesses could expect to be victimised five times per year. (Johnston et al, 1991)

**School burglary and property crime** - 98% of the total crime recorded by thirty three schools on Merseyside were repeat crimes. (Burquest et al, 1992)

**Bullying** - a study of a comprehensive school in Sussex showed that 9 -10% of pupils had been bullied weekly or more. (Yilmaz, cited in Whitney and Smith, 1991)

[Source: Home Office, 1994, p.14]

The Home Office findings go on to outline several features of repeat victimisation which are thought to offer the opportunity to develop improved crime prevention initiatives in order to deter offenders (see Table 1.2).
Table 1.2: What do we know?

Certain facts about repeat victimisation make it an attractive focus for crime reduction initiatives. We know that it is:

- **real** - evidence suggests certain people and certain spaces are chronically victimised.
- **predictable** - victimised people or dwellings are more likely to be victimised again.
- **rapid** – victimisation, when it recurs, typically does so within a short time period.
- **widespread** – The repetition of racial attacks and domestic violence is intuitively obvious. Less obvious is the well-documented repetition of housebreaking, car crime, assault, fraud and criminal damage.
- **devastating** - the cumulative effect on people can be debilitating, particularly when suffered by more vulnerable members of the community.
- **increasing** - recent work has found that during the 1980's large increases in crime were due mainly to victims being victimised more often, rather than to more non-victims becoming victims.
- **under-recorded** - official data under-records the extent of repeat victimisation. This is particularly so when reporting levels are low.
- **costly** - the hidden and long term costs are high. Immediate intervention is cost-effective.

[Source: Home Office, 1994, p.3]

1.1.3 The impact of repeat victimisation

Little attention has been given to the impact on victims of repeated crime. Recent work has suggested the extent of such impact to vary, but often be considerable (Shaw, 1997). The emotional response to repeat victimisation, may be compared to that of bereavement in both extent and sequence (Shaw, 2000). Repeat victims may grieve for the control over their life which chronic victimisation represents. Anger is a significant and neglected response of victims in general (Ditton et al, 1999). Chronic victims are sometimes very angry indeed.
Farrell and Pease (1997, p.106) give “first thoughts on a victim support policy for repeat victims”, but focus mainly on the role of Victim Support in the dissemination of crime prevention advice. They speculate that “the impact upon the victim of a repeated occurrence ... may be cumulatively greater than from a single occurrence” (Farrell and Pease, 1997, p.106).

1.1.4 Repeat victimisation in Scotland

Although the 1990s has seen increased research into repeat victimisation, no specifically Scottish research has been carried out. Nothing suggests that the same patterns would not apply, but direct evidence has been lacking. Some tantalising snippets from the Scottish Crime Surveys (SCS) are all we have. For example, Anderson and Leitch (1996) report that

 “…just over one in four respondents had been the victim of at least one survey crime during 1992, with an average of 1.7 incidents per victim...Two thirds (65%) of victims of household crimes experienced only one incident during 1992 but almost one in five (19%) had been victimised twice and 16% three times or more …repeat victims of both personal and household crime accounted for a disproportionate amount of …crime ...80% of repeat victims of a personal crime accounted for 23% of all incidents of personal crime, while 16% of multiple victims of household crime accounted for 40% of all such incidents” (p14).

In a similar vein, MVA (1998) note that “the 6% of victimised households which had experienced three or more incidents of housebreaking accounted for 23% of all housebreaking incidents recorded” (p23) and that the “11% of victims who had experienced three or more incidents accounted for 25% of the motor vehicle crimes” (p29). As for violence, 17% of the people who had experienced violence “had experienced two violent crimes and 13% had experienced three or more. The 13% of victims who had experienced three or more violent crimes accounted for 29% of the incidents of violence recorded by the SCS” (p36).

It does seem, therefore, that evidence from the SCS gives an initial glimpse of the extent of repeat victimisation in Scotland, as well as the high incidence of crime experienced by a small percentage of the population.

1.2 Repeat offending

Turning to the issue of repeat offending, it has been argued that there should be a greater “integration of offence explanations and offender explanations” (Bottoms and Wiles, 1997, p.343). Previous research on repeat victimisation has shown that victimisation predicts further victimisation. In the case of repeat offenders, past criminality predicts future criminality (Sherman, 1997). The question is, however, how can we combine these facts? At present, the little that is known about the repeat targeting practices of prolific
offenders only concerns housebreaking. As such, there is room for greater study of this relationship between repeat offenders and repeat victims and for different crime types. For example, after the success of the *Biting Back* scheme in Huddersfield, the following statement was made.

“In the writers’ view, the next stage is to integrate fully repeat victimisation and offender career information, so that the fact of repetition can aid the detection process more directly. Offender profiling and repeat victimisation are approaches which if brought together fully would advance the understanding of both” (Chenery et al, 1997, p.vi)

In *Straight from the Horse’s Mouth*, Ericsson (1995) reports on “interviews with 21 convicted multiple burglars” (p.23). Consistent with Korthals Altes’ (1989) work in the Netherlands, Ericsson’s interviewees admit that they often go back to burgle the same property: “76% said they had gone back to a number of houses after a varying period of time to burgle them between 2 and 5 times” (p.23). Seventy-five per cent of those who returned said it was to steal more things (not a surprising answer for housebreakers). Half knew that they had left behind things worth stealing. One in four of the returners went back when they knew that goods would have been replaced on insurance. One in four anticipated finding unhidden cash. Consequently, three target characteristics were identified in Ericsson’s work: easy accessibility; familiarity; and low risk of detection.

The time course of repeat offending does not emerge from Ericsson’s work:

“The research finding that the risk of a repeat is very high immediately after a burglary and then drops rapidly was not strongly indicated here, which might suggest that attractive targets constantly re-attract burglars or that repeatedly burgled houses are situated within the burglar’s routine activity areas.” (Ericsson, 1995, p.24)

However, the question of why housebreakers do not return is addressed in her research:

“The motives given by the remaining burglars for not going back were that it was superstitious, unnecessary, unsecure or that it would mean pushing one’s luck.” (Ericsson, 1995, p.23)

In cases where a housebreaker is not willing to risk his/her chances again, Ericsson found that offenders told others of the house, and they would go back instead:

“Forty per cent of those who claimed that they had not and would not return to burgle a house again said that they shared information with others.” (Ericsson, 1995, p.23)

In conclusion, Ericsson (1995) acknowledges that “additional research might be suggested on the time course and housing variations [of repeat burglary]” (p.24), as well as on
“whether the time course of burglary is conditional on type of burglar…. There are also research questions on the implications of attempted crime... and on the relationship with crime hot spots” (ibid.).

1.3 Conclusions

Previous research has shown that victimisation predicts victimisation, and there is a time course whereby repeats tend to happen quickly. These facts are robust, at least across the crime types studied.

However, there are a number of issue on which we know very little. For instance:

- repeat victimisation of the same home or person across different crime types;
- the impact of repeat victimisation on victims;
- whether the same offenders are responsible for repeat crimes; and;
- the targeting practices of repeat offenders.

1.4. Research Aims

This research has three aims in relation to these deficiencies in current knowledge.

Aim 1: To analyse existing data to determine the levels and nature of repeat victimisation in Scotland

The research sets out to yield information about the extent of repeat occurrences in Scottish recorded offence data. Analysis will also be undertaken of victimisation data reported in the SCS. Taken together the data offer a usable guide to the level and nature of repeat victimisation.

Aim 2: To gather information about repeat victims.

The aim this part of the research is to establish:

- the links between repeat victimisation of different crime types against the same target (person or place);
- the nature and impact of chronic victimisation comprising a series of events.

There is now a sizeable body of research in the United Kingdom on repeats of the same crime, particularly housebreaking (first by Forrester et al., 1988); theft of and from motor vehicles (Mayhew et al., 1993); domestic violence (Hanmer and Stanko, 1985); bullying (Whitney and Smith, 1991); and assault. However, there is an absence of information on
repeats of different crimes against the same target. This aspect of the research findings will have application beyond Scotland.

Finally, while only a relatively small proportion of the population are repeat victims, they seem to be ‘versatile’ in the types of crimes they experience. Establishing the extent and nature of such chronic victimisation is, therefore, valuable both to the process of informing appropriate police responses to events, which may be regarded individually as insignificant, while also offering greater insight into the experiences of victimisation as we currently understand them.

**Aim 3: To gather information about perpetrators of repeat offences**

This part of the research is concerned with determining the distinctive characteristics/targeting practices of those who perpetrate repeated crimes against the same victims and places. If it became possible to know the characteristics/targeting practices of specific offenders by referring to the repeat crimes which they had committed in the past, and, therefore, what they were likely to commit in the future, known prolific offenders could be targeted by reference to the types of crimes they commit.
Chapter 2 - Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how the study was structured, and problems characteristic of this kind of research. Those prepared to take the soundness of the approach on trust should skip to Chapter 3. Those for whom this chapter contains insufficient detail, a fuller account of the work is available on request from the first author.

The study involved: analysis of official data from the Scottish Crime Survey (SCS) and police recorded crime data, as well as interviews with repeat victims and repeat offenders. Starting in March 1998, work was carried out within selected divisions in three Scottish police forces: Falkirk: Central Scotland Police; Maryhill: Strathclyde Police; and Dundee: Tayside Police. These areas were selected because of the diversity of policing environments they provide.

Each of the three forces participating in the research appointed a force liaison officer. Each force liaison officer selected a Division and a divisional liaison officer. The dynamics of the individual divisions in terms of the approach to crime management, and therefore the precise nature of the liaison for the research, varied. Formal feedback to forces, through the liaison officers, was provided via two progress reports: one at the end of September 1998; a second at the end of March 1999. Presentations of some preliminary results were made in October 1998 and June 1999 in Maryhill and in November 1998 at Falkirk.

One aspect which should be mentioned is the role of Divisional Commanders in the research and the way in which their engagement with the research topic was reflected in the day-to-day progress of the research. The visibility of the Divisional Commanders varied. For example, there was contact early on in the research with Falkirk Division’s Sam Muir, who enthusiastically communicated the uses of the research both within the police and also the wider community, particularly the local Council. Similarly, Maryhill Division’s Commander, Colin McKerracher, and later his replacement, was very keen to support two seminars which took place at the Division on the preliminary results of the research, the analysis of their data on specific repeat crimes and some initial feed-back on the interviews. Robert Sutherland, Divisional Commander at Dundee, was also very supportive. All the Divisional Commanders signed a letter which was sent to repeat victims for interview (discussed below).

Maryhill

The Divisional headquarters at Maryhill is situated in the centre of Maryhill itself. The Division has diverse housing stock, from high-rise tower blocks, and poor council stock, to detached middle-class residential areas. Maryhill is the commercial and shopping centre. Adjoining areas have many drug and crime problems, with some persistent young offenders. On the night before one visit a total of six vehicles were stolen, left and burnt
in just one street in the Division. Across the Division are wealthy areas. There are a number of University Halls of Residence within the Division which suffer the common problems of waves of criminal activity, particularly housebreakings.

**Dundee**

Divisional Headquarters is within Force Headquarters in the centre of the City. Some areas within the Division have difficult economic, social and physical conditions. Some high-rise flats remain, although many have recently been demolished. Many of the lower-rise flats, which used to have interlocking corridors and many offending families, have also been refurbished. Dundee has a high student population, many housed in the growing number of renovated mills. Such housing is also popular amongst young professionals in the City. High quality housing is believed to attract criminals from adjoining areas.

**Falkirk**

Divisional headquarters is located in the town centre, from whence the Division’s extensive Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system operates. A bustling commercial centre is surrounding by outlying residential areas of varying standards.

### 2.2 Measuring repeat victimisation

Establishing the extent of repeat victimisation is not easy. Victim surveys, such as the SCS, may lead respondents to include repeated events which, upon further examination, may turn out not to have been crimes. People may also telescope, that is include in their recall events which took place before the period about which they were asked for their experiences. On the other hand, they may forget, regard as part of everyday life, or exclude for reasons of embarrassment, crimes which they really suffered. There is no evidence suggesting that the victimisation survey overstates the extent of repeat victimisation, although such evidence would be extremely difficult to gather.

Data from the SCS were analysed. These data form a rich supply of relatively untapped material and provide a representative sample from the whole population of Scotland, in particular the recently published 1996 SCS. No detailed analysis on repeat victimisation has been carried out before. Such an approach offers an overview of repeat victimisation within all force areas in Scotland and therefore makes the current research applicable not only to the participating forces but also to other Scottish police forces.
The problems attending the recognition of repeats in recorded crime data are numerous. First, repeat victims are less inclined to report crimes to the police. There are many possible reasons for this including:

- Bad experiences with criminal justice agencies when reporting previous crimes.
- Becoming resigned to the probability that no perpetrator will be identified.
- Fear when threatened with reprisals by perpetrators of earlier crimes.
- Concern that frequent report to the police may affect future insurability.

Even if a crime is reported to the police, there are obstacles to its identification as a repetition of an earlier crime. These include the non-recording of events reported as crime (as victim surveys suggest happens in a non-trivial number of cases), and the (often trivial) mis-recording of addresses and locations. This has been found to be a major factor in the crime information systems of English forces, and was also found in Scottish data. In a recent study of bank and building society robberies in the Metropolitan Police Force area the problems included:

- The inconsistent use of major street names; for example ‘Charlton High Street’ was sometimes recorded in that way, with area identifier being left blank; sometimes it was recorded as ‘High Street’, sometimes ‘High St.’. ‘Broadway’ was sometimes prefaced by ‘The’ and sometimes not. Sometimes ‘Ealing Broadway’ was the street name, sometimes ‘Broadway’ (or ‘The Broadway’) was the street name, with ‘Ealing’ the area name;

- The inconsistent or wrong use of street numbers or house names (‘The Cottage’, ‘Oak Cottage’, ‘Oak Cottages’ etc.).

2.3 Obtaining police recorded crime data

Data were obtained from the crime recording systems in participating divisions. This had to fit in with other commitments of police computer departments, which resulted in delays. The analysis focused on crimes and offences most prone to repeats: housebreaking; assault; and theft of and from motor vehicles, using data from the beginning of May 1997 to the end of April 1998. These data contain as many fields as possible on the nature of the crime experienced and details of the victim/complainant.

Information on incidents (crimes and offences) to which the police are called are entered differently in the three divisions. There are many ways in which (for example) address accuracy may be compromised. This means that the process of data checking and modification is extremely time-consuming. It is crucial to recognise this point. No police crime system we have yet encountered will yield measures of repeat victimisation that are not gross distortions, without massive editing and checking. Even after editing, the revealed extent of repeat victimisation will be an under-estimate. For example, where there
was more than one complainant for a particular incident, only the first named complainant was used. This, and other conventions, will contribute to the under-representation of repeats in the analysis to follow.

2.3.1 The one-month pilot

This phase of the research involved all police officers within Dundee and Falkirk divisions. During this phase, the original proposal suggested that officers attending a crime (specifically housebreaking, vehicle crime and assault) would ask victims whether any events during the preceding year might have been linked to the present crime. Such events might include disputes, assaults, threats and unexplained occurrences. It was decided subsequently that officers should ask this, and other questions, for all incidents of victimisation they attended. A sample with such potential linkages were selected for follow-up interviews. Although it was hoped that the liaison officers would be able to attend these and other victim interviews, in the event this was not practical.

2.4 Victim interviews

There were two ways in which repeat victims were identified for interview: from the analysis of recorded crime data, using the methods described above; and using the 1-month pilot. A number of repeat victims were also known offenders. It was important to seek advice from the liaison officer as to whether or not it was appropriate to proceed to interview. In some cases advice was given to withdraw some victim/offenders from the pool of potential interviewees.

In-depth discussions took place concerning the best way to contact repeat victims selected through the existing recorded crime data before contact was made.

Of those identified by the questionnaires which were completed during the 1-month research pilot, 50 per cent of repeat victims agreed to be interviewed. For the sample derived from the recorded crime data, the response rate was 30 per cent. Forty interviews with repeat victims were completed in total between the three divisions. Originally 43 people were interviewed, however, 3 people who were selected as repeat victims from the recorded crime data turned out not to be repeat victims and were subsequently removed from the sample (the fact that they appeared to be repeat victims was a recording error). The average duration of the interviews was one hour. A number took much longer, as people became involved in talking about their experiences. Many said that they had found the experience a helpful one and that it was good to talk to somebody who would just listen. Each took place in a room in the appropriate police station.
2.5 Offender interviews

As anticipated, the offender focus of the research required much consideration. Three methods of accessing offenders were explored in depth and discounted, before it was decided to proceed through the Scottish Prison Service. Governors in Saughton and Perth prisons were contacted for consent. Prisoners were asked to participate who had been:

- convicted of the crimes of housebreaking and/or motor vehicle crimes;
- persistent offenders over their last two years at liberty.

The process of target selection, as it relates to repeat crimes, was the main focus of the interviews with offenders - that is, why offenders return to the same targets. Although the main aim was to learn about repeat target selection - which targets criminals go back to, when and why - much more information about offending in general was included.

Offender interviews, thirty-two in total, took place in May 1999. A similar format to the victim interviews was be followed: a semi-structured questionnaire, lasting an average of one hour.

2.6 Summary

This research has employed both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. For reasons outlined elsewhere in this report, using official data alone does not provide a completely accurate picture of repeat victimisation. Survey data and recorded crime data each have their shortcomings but together they provide the best available way to address the extent and nature of repeat victimisation in Scotland, supported with material from in-depth interviews with repeat victims and repeat offenders.
Chapter 3 - Repeat victimisation in the Scottish Crime Survey

3.1 Introduction

The analysis of the Scottish Crime Survey (SCS), reported below, illustrates the kind of perspective on repeat victimisation that victimisation survey data offers. Readers not interested in technical issues of measurement are advised to skip to Section 3.6.

There is no perfect tool to identify the extent of repeat victimisation. Police data of recorded crime misses events which are not reported to the police; which are reported to them but not recorded as crime; or are recorded as crime but with inconsistencies in the key fields used in defining repetition, so that matching routines miss them. One thus turns to the SCS for a complementary view of repeat victimisation.

Victimisation surveys have their own shortcomings: experiences are invited to be drawn from a specific time frame; victims may telescope events so that crimes against them about which they tell the interviewer may have taken place before the time frame; some incidents reported as crimes may turn out not to have been crimes. This has consequences for whether one takes data from the main questionnaire or the victim questionnaire as the more reliable. The main questionnaire contains fuller numbers of events, however, the victim form will exclude non-crimes claimed to be ‘victimless’, such as drug use and consensual but illegal sex; these types of offence will appear in recorded crime data, but not in victimisation surveys.

Consequently, as crime surveys lack details of crime sequences which allow one to discern patterns over time and space, in respect of repeat victimisation, the defects of police recorded crime data and of victimisation surveys make each different from, not better than, the other. Once one is reconciled to the fact that there is no perfect method which will reveal the extent of repeat victimisation, one turns to the more important issue of whether the phenomena revealed by both methods have enough in common to form the basis of crime control strategies. In brief, the pertinent question concerns not the extent of repeat victimisation but whether the shape of the problem is discernible from contrasting methods, thus inviting confidence in the basic parameters of the problem on which a crime control strategy may be founded.

3.2 Analyses presented

Information used in this report is primarily drawn from the main questionnaire of the SCS. The more detailed information about offence and offender characteristics, where known, are to be found in the victim form. The central thrust of what follows concerns how crime is distributed across places and individuals as assessed from four sweeps of SCS. The report does not seek to replicate the analysis of SCS contained in the report Main Findings from the 1993 Scottish Crime Survey (Anderson and Leitch, 1996) nor those of

Once one takes repeat victimisation as a starting point, all victimisation data take on a somewhat different hue. Features of a data set hitherto regarded as unproblematic prove to have problems; overlooked features of design have new meaning; unconventional styles of analysis become appropriate. We believe that this is the first main report of British victimisation survey data to be written exclusively from a repeat victimisation perspective, although the reports from British victimisation surveys (see for example Mayhew et al., 1993) have increasingly incorporated analyses of repeated crime against the same victim(s). Similarly, although the United States’ national victimisation survey operates a panel design, whereby data from the same people are used in respect of five successive six-month risk periods, the phenomenon of chronic victimisation has been overlooked until very recently in analyses of the US data (Miller et al., 1996).

3.3 The basic dimensions of crime

There are three complementary measures of crime experience: incidence; prevalence; and concentration.

Incidence refers to the number of crime events suffered per head of population. It is the measure typically incorporated in official publications about the extent of recorded crime and is the one conventionally conceived and described as the ‘crime rate’.

Crime prevalence refers to the proportion of people (or places) available to be victimised who (or which) are victimised. Crime prevalence is often taken as the measure used in statistical modelling of crime risks (see for example Miethe and Meier, 1994).

The third, and grossly neglected, variable is concentration, which refers to the number of victimisations per victimised person (or place). The neglect of concentration is extraordinary, given the extent to which crime proves to be concentrated, once the data are looked at in this way. Its neglect is also detrimental for the understanding of crime patterns, in that concentration is greatest in areas of high crime. Indeed, concentration is arguably the primary reason why areas suffer much crime (Trickett et al., 1992). In addition, the neglect of concentration is misguided in that only this type of measure identifies the places and people in most immediate need of policing and other crime preventive resources. Combining data from extremely different places to yield an average measure of crime is to remove the most useful fact about crime for those seeking to prevent it, namely its extreme and predictable concentration on certain people and places.

If analysis of repeat victimisation does anything, it must surely alert compilers of conventional criminal statistics to the vacuity of what they are doing for crime control (and arguably for social accounting) purposes. This is in no way to criticise those compilers personally: the United Kingdom enjoys a richer supply of crime data, more competently presented, than any nation known to either of the writers. Government
statisticians of crime simply inherit an approach and a cast of mind to which crime concentration is marginal. The tribute to them is that it is possible to use the data which they have gathered to get a grasp, however imperfect, on what is happening in terms of crime concentration.

3.4 Weighting

The tables presented in the body of the text use appropriately weighted data except where stated otherwise. Experience of data weighting in the British Crime Survey (BCS) in England and Wales and in the data used here shows that weighting almost never makes more than a trivial difference. A valid case could be made for the use of unweighted data in all cases, for two reasons.

- The purpose of weighting is to make data sets approximate more closely to the population to which generalisation is desired. When what is to be conveyed concerns the range of human experience rather than some notional general state, the argument for weighting becomes flimsy;

- Weighting data precludes valid testing of statistical significance, for example by changing within-group variation artificially.

3.5 Artificial limit on victimisation experiences

Not only has repeat victimisation been long neglected in official crime statistics, but the design of victimisation surveys has, until recently, paid scant attention to the phenomenon, by restricting the number of victimisation forms per respondent and the imposition of a maximum number of events per ‘series’ victimisation.

The suggested limit to the number of offences per series in the Technical Report to the SCS 1996 is five and the conventions used have been adapted to capture more detail of what happens to repeat victims (MVA, 1998). These changes make the use of filter questions in the main questionnaire an even more attractive option, since they permit some crude comparisons across time.

Experience with similar analyses of other victim surveys suggests that the reliability of respondents’ claims of very frequent victimisation are difficult to assess. The limit of five victim forms per respondent limits the amount of repeat victimisation recorded by the SCS (see Genn, 1988 for a discussion of these issues), but the use of main questionnaire filter questions may overcome this problem to some extent as they allow for more frequent victimisation (see Trickett et al, 1992). The disadvantage of using filter questions is that some purported victimisations ‘disappear’ when more detail is requested of the respondent. One view is that victims over-report until they are required to be specific. Another view holds that the circumstances of the interview (e.g. in the presence of the perpetrator, or due to a process of learning that additional interview time is required) leads to the non-report of real events when detail comes to be required.
3.6 Distribution of repeated property victimisation in Scotland

Tables 3.1 to 3.4 present the distribution of all property victimisation reported in each of the four sweeps of the SCS\(^1\).

**Table 3.1. Number of victimisations, proportion of households and proportion of household crimes captured, SCS 1982 (unweighted n =5031)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of victimisations</th>
<th>Prop. of households</th>
<th>Prop. of crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.2. Number of victimisations, proportion of households and proportion of household crimes captured, SCS 1988 (unweighted n =5050)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of victimisations</th>
<th>Prop. of households</th>
<th>Prop. of crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.3. Number of victimisations, proportion of households and proportion of household crimes captured, SCS 1992 (unweighted n =5030)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of victimisations</th>
<th>Prop. of households</th>
<th>Prop. of crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.4. Number of victimisations, proportion of households and proportion of household crimes captured, SCS 1996 (unweighted n =5036)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of victimisations</th>
<th>Prop. of households</th>
<th>Prop. of crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) In all tables, decimal places have been removed for proportion of households, except where rounding would be to zero. In some tables this may mean that percentages do not sum to 100.
These tables show that between 35 and 40 per cent of all property crimes reported in SCS relate to between 3 and 4 per cent of respondents who were victimised three or more times in the course of a year. There is remarkable consistency over time and across countries generating very similar data.

Another way of presenting this data is to show the probabilities of at least one extra victimisation during the risk period used in SCS. In this model, everyone starts the year unvictimised. The first transition is to being victimised once. Looking at the 1982 data, 19 per cent of households were subject to property crime at least once. Of those victimised at least once, 37 per cent went on to be victim to crime on at least one more occasion during the year. Of that proportion, 43 per cent went on to be victims at least once more, and so on. Figure 3.1 shows the transition probabilities thus calculated for all four sweeps of SCS. It should be noted that the probability should tend to decline, since with every additional crime, the risk period for the next is less. Thus, a first crime has twelve months in which to occur, a second crime has the period between the first crime and the end of the year, the third has the period between the second and the end of the year, and so on.

Figure 3.1 shows the probability that property crime victims will be victimised again during the remainder of the year. It shows that probability to increase steadily, and to be remarkably consistent across sweeps of the SCS. Because of the relatively large numbers of property crimes captured, the lines are very smooth, even towards the right of the figure, where they are based on quite small numbers. This trend is not to be expected for an analysis of personal crimes, whose numbers captured by SCS sweeps are, thankfully, quite small.
A third (and possibly the simplest) way of depicting repeat victimisation is by presentation of concentrations, i.e. the number of victimisations suffered per victim. This is presented as Table 3.5 below. Concentration rates seem to be very stable over all four sweeps of SCS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sweep</th>
<th>Property Crime Concentration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.7 Distribution of repeated crime against the person in Scotland

Tables 3.6 to 3.9 present the distribution of all personal victimisation captured in each of the four sweeps of the SCS.

#### Table 3.6. Number of victimisations, proportion of respondents and proportion of personal crimes captured, SCS 1982 (unweighted n =5031)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of victimisations</th>
<th>Prop. Of households</th>
<th>Prop. of crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Table 3.7. Number of victimisations, proportion of respondents and proportion of personal crimes captured, SCS 1988 (unweighted n =5050)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of victimisations</th>
<th>Prop. Of households</th>
<th>Prop. of crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Table 3.8. Number of victimisations, proportion of respondents and proportion of personal crimes captured, SCS 1992 (unweighted n =5030)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Victimisations</th>
<th>Prop. Of households</th>
<th>Prop. of crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.9. Number of victimisations, proportion of respondents and proportion of personal crimes captured, SCS 1996 (unweighted n =5036)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of victimisations</th>
<th>Prop. Of households</th>
<th>Prop. of crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These tables show that a high proportion of personal crime is suffered by around 1 per cent of respondents to SCS. There is a degree of consistency across time in that proportion, and across different countries generating very similar data.

A different way of presenting the data is to present the probabilities of at least one extra personal victimisation during the risk period used in SCS. In this model, everyone starts the year unvictimised. The first transition is to being victimised once. Looking at the 1982 data, of the total number of respondents, 7 per cent were subject to personal crime at least once. Of those victimised at least once, 19 per cent went on to be victim to personal crime on at least one more occasion during the year. Of that, 29 per cent went on to be victims at least once more. Figure 3.2 shows the transition probabilities thus calculated for all four sweeps of SCS. It should be noted that the probability should tend to decline, since with every additional crime, the risk period for the next is less. Thus, a first crime has twelve months in which to occur, a second crime has the period between the first crime and the end of the year, the third has the period between the second and the end of the year, and so on.
Figure 3.2 shows the probability that personal crime victims will be victimised again during the balance of the year. It shows that probability to increase steadily, and to be remarkably consistent across sweeps of the SCS, subject to the fluctuations one would expect given that the trends here are based on smaller numbers than was the case in the analysis of property crime.

It is important not to be naïve about the circumstances relating to the concentration of personal victimisation. Some repeat victimisation will relate to, for example, domestic violence. Other repeat victimisation will relate to people who are members of a subculture of violence in which they may be attacked one day and attackers the next. The violence may be a by-product of a drug market, gang and soccer affiliations, and other such situations. However one might question their victim status, it is within these groups that the problems of violence lie. To neglect them is both to misrepresent the problem and to forego attempts at remedy and reconciliation, perhaps through a problem-solving approach.

To repeat the final exercise undertaken with property crime data, Table 3.10 shows the measures of concentration of personal crime (i.e. victimisations per victim) by SCS. It is intriguing in suggesting that there is a steady increase in the concentration of violent crime over the period covered by the surveys, so that in 1982 victims were reporting 1.3 incidents each in contrast to 1.7 in 1996. To elaborate, 75 per cent of the increase in incidents of violence captured by SCS was attributable to an increase in the number of incidents which victims described, and only 25 per cent to an increase in the number of those who fell victim to violence. Put in that way, the problem of violence is increasingly one of repeated violence rather than an increase in the prevalence of victimisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sweep</th>
<th>Property Crime Concentration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the consistency in patterns across time in relation to property crime, it may be useful to combine particular crime types across years to generate samples large enough to analyse meaningfully. Data are therefore presented for housebreaking, and for thefts of and from motor vehicles.
3.8 Housebreaking

Table 3.11 looks at the distribution of housebreakings, combining data from the four sweeps of SCS.

Table 3.11. Number of housebreakings, proportion of households and proportion of housebreakings captured, SCS 1996 (unweighted n =20156)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of victimisations</th>
<th>Prop. of households</th>
<th>Prop. of crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data show that the 0.2 per cent of households suffering three or more housebreakings represents 17 per cent of all housebreakings. Those suffering two housebreakings accounted for a further 17 per cent of all housebreakings.

Turning to look at the transition probabilities between housebreakings, Figure 3.3 shows the familiar rising line, with break-ins associated with an increased probability of subsequent break-ins.

Finally, the concentration rate for domestic housebreaking is 1.27. Put simply, this suggests that for every four homes broken into over the course of a year, there are five reports of housebreaking. Other data (e.g. Trickett et al, 1992, Johnson et al, 1997) show that the bulk of these repeats are in high crime areas.
3.9 Thefts of motor vehicles

Table 3.12 shows thefts of motor vehicles has the lowest level of repeats of crimes examined. This is unsurprising given that some 40 per cent of cars are not recovered, and thus their availability for being taken again is limited. Nonetheless, 19 per cent of victims had two or more vehicles taken during the course of one year. Again avoiding naïveté, the role of insurance fraud for this crime type, should not be understated.

The concentration for this crime type is 1.13, suggesting nine car thefts for every eight victims of car theft during the course of a year.

Table 3.12. Number of thefts of vehicles, proportion of households and proportion of thefts of vehicles captured, Scottish Crime Survey 1996 (unweighted n =20155)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of victimisations</th>
<th>Prop. of households</th>
<th>Prop. Of crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.4 shows the familiar increase in probability of at least one additional event as number of prior offences increases.

![Figure 3.4 Transition probabilities between thefts of motor vehicles](image-url)
### 3.10 Thefts from motor vehicles

Table 3.13 summarises the distribution of thefts from motor vehicles across households, showing 4 such crimes per 3 victimised households and 20 per cent of such crime being suffered by households suffering at least 3 such crimes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of victimisations</th>
<th>Prop. of households</th>
<th>Prop. Of crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that risk increases with the number of prior crimes experienced is shown in Figure 3.5.

### 3.11 Area differences

Reference has already been made to the notion that crime concentration (victimisations per victim) is greatest in areas of highest crime. Evidence of this occurring is illustrated in Figures 3.6-3.8 below. The point is important because of the claim that prevention is facilitated by attention to repeat victimisation, because it automatically takes one to areas of highest crime, with a natural focus (crime prevention and victim support) for intervention with the victim and his or her immediate surroundings. For Figures 3.6-3.8, which use 1996 SCS data, the sampling points (from each of which a notional fifteen respondents were recruited) for the SCS were ranked in terms of total property, vehicle and personal crime. These were then divided into deciles, from the 10 per cent least...
victimised areas, through the next least victimised area, to the most victimised 10 per cent. The three key measures of crime were calculated, i.e. incidence, prevalence and concentration. Figure 3.6 presents the data for incidence, Figure 3.7 for prevalence, and Figure 3.8 for concentration. Previous research suggests that areas high in crime are high in the number of victimisations per victim, and indeed that this concentration of victimisation contributes to the fact that an area is high in crime.

Figure 3.6 shows the typical distribution of crime, with the proportion of crime increasing dramatically between the eighth and tenth decile. This shows that the areas highest in crime are where much more crime is concentrated than other areas. It corresponds with everyday experience, too, that vehicle crime is especially concentrated in these high crime areas.
Figure 3.7 shows a somewhat steadier increase in the proportion of people and households victimised. Even in the worst areas, only some 20 per cent of people suffer a personal crime, and less than 30 per cent suffer a property or a vehicle crime. Thus high crime areas are not areas in which everyone is victimised.

Figure 3.8 shows that what substantially characterises high crime rate areas is the number of victimisations per victim: those suffering personal crime in high crime areas suffer an average of three over the course of a year; those suffering crime against their property over twice each; and those whose vehicles are subject to crime suffer an average of almost three events per year in the areas where crime is most concentrated.

Perhaps a helpful way to express this is to say that if the areas with the highest levels of crime had the same number of people victimised as now, but at a rate (concentration) of an average Scottish area, crime in those areas would fall to below half of their present levels.

3.12 Cross-crime type repeats

Classifying people into those who had been victimised not at all, once, or more than once by property crime; those who had been victimised not at all, once, or more than once by personal crime; and those who had been victimised not at all, once, or more than once by vehicle crime reveals that those victimised more than once by one crime type were also more likely than statistically expected to be victimised more than once by another crime type. The association (Cramer’s V) was closest for property and personal crime, but still substantial and statistically reliable for the other two linkages.
3.13 Conclusions

SCS data show the familiar repeat victimisation phenomena: crime captured being disproportionately suffered by repeat victims; increasing probability of becoming a victim again as the number of prior victimisations increase; and the concentration of repeat victims in areas of highest crime. With appropriate caution about the defects of SCS as a data source, but supplementing these analyses with analysis of police recorded data, we find repeat victimisation to be a robust phenomenon worthy of providing one platform among others for preventive effort. The subtleties of the approach, for example using repeat victimisation as a means of taking one into a crime cluster with a mandate to do something, and many citizens keen for it to be done should be stressed. This chapter is intended to provide a context to demonstrate the relevance of the approach in Scotland.
Chapter 4 - Repeat victimisation in police recorded crime data

4.1 Introduction

Readers not interested in the data collection process and what it yielded should skip to section 4.3., where analysis begins.

Data for this chapter were collected from one division within each of the three study areas and relate to events recorded between May 1997 and April 1998. Data were requested in respect of serious assault, domestic housebreaking and vehicle crime. The victim/complainant address was included, and this is how repeats were defined. This is uncontroversial when it is crime against the dwelling which is in question, but less so when vehicle and personal crime is involved. One’s car may be stolen or one may be assaulted outside the division of residence. Further, these crimes have lower rates of report to the police than housebreaking. Nonetheless, the data set is first analysed as a whole, to see the extent to which crime clusters around those resident at particular addresses.

The data supplied varied in some respects, but will be reported much as supplied. Complainants with postal addresses outside the three areas being studied were excluded. This is because visitors are not likely to be available for repeat victimisation within an area. For Maryhill, those with postal addresses in other parts of Glasgow were included in the sample, due to difficulties in defining geographical boundaries for roads which extend beyond Maryhill, and may lead to a lower rate of repetition in respect of violence and vehicle crime. The lack of precise correspondence between the areas in what was supplied is not an obstacle. The general patterns are the same across areas.

First, individual area analyses are carried out, before areas are combined for some fuller analysis by offence type. It should be stressed that the data with which we were supplied was not intended for the kind of analysis to which we subjected it. After going through it many times, we still found problems (e.g. ‘X Road’ and ‘X Road North’ being given as the location of a crime, with the complainant being the same, and ‘1 Xbrook’ and ‘Xbrooke Rd’ having a complainant with the same name). In short, even ignoring the basic problem of non-report to the police, data such as these will never yield precise information about levels of repeat victimisation. In this report, offenders, victims, a victimisation survey and police data all yield information, in an attempt to see the issue in the round.
4.2 Crime categories

Table 4.1 shows the nature of the crime data upon which the repeat victimisation analysis was based, by study area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime type</th>
<th>Dundee</th>
<th>Falkirk</th>
<th>Maryhill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housebreaking (dwelling)</td>
<td>1307</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housebreaking (non-dwelling)***</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempt housebreaking (dwelling)</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempt housebreaking (non-dwelling)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft of motor vehicle</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>n/s</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft from motor vehicle</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>292*</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted theft of motor vehicle</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>n/s</td>
<td>211**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted theft from motor vehicle</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>n/s</td>
<td>n/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious assault</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reported serious assaults are thankfully rare. In few cases were serious assaults repeated against the same residents, and little further separate analysis of this group will be undertaken. Although the Falkirk data will be analysed, the large number of cases from there which lacked Scottish Office codes, and the large number which turned out to be duplicates, limits its meaningfulness.

4.3 Repeats: a general analysis

Clearly, the data sets from the three force areas were generated in different ways, and it would be inaccurate to treat the results as reflecting exactly the same phenomena in each study area. Rather than try and address the diversity of the data, we use all the data with which we have been supplied in general analyses of repeats at the household level and, later in the report, the street level. This is the case with the exception of out of area

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2 Note:

n/s - not separately supplied

Maryhill data came as verbal descriptors, the other areas as Scottish Office codes. This dataset also included 38 road traffic accident offences and twenty-eight offences of culpable and reckless conduct.

*Falkirk sent cases which were ‘theft by OLP from motor vehicle’. Falkirk also informed us of 997 cases of petty assault in the period and 2804 cases without Scottish Office codes.

**Maryhill combined attempted theft to and from motor vehicles. Dundee data included 1652 cases of theft to motor vehicles.

***It is assumed that housebreaking non-dwelling refers to sheds, garages and the like, rather than to break-ins at commercial premises.
victims, and an anomaly in the Falkirk data. The Falkirk data contained 479 cases where there was alleged to be more than one offence at the same address on the same day. In one case there were eleven offences at the same address on the same day. While same day repeats do happen, these were excluded as duplicates, so that the level of repeats in Falkirk is understated to the extent that same day repeats really do happen.

Table 4.2 shows the extent of repetition of crimes victimising residents of the same address (those residing at same street number in the same street). This includes all data supplied by the police service in respect of all crime types. Those who were, for example, broken into once and assaulted once (perhaps elsewhere within the town/city) will be included as repeat victims. The data show that between 10 per cent (Falkirk) and 18 per cent (Dundee) of households suffered 2 more crimes. The distribution of repeat victimisation within and across crime types will be discussed later in this report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of crimes suffered</th>
<th>Dundee</th>
<th>Falkirk</th>
<th>Maryhill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>3707</td>
<td>3221</td>
<td>1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than Six</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.1 Probability of repetition

Another approach is to consider the probability of a repetition after a given number of prior victimisations (to establish the probability of not being a victim to the probability of being a victim, our liaison officers supplied figures on the number of households in the areas).

Figure 4.1 shows the probability of transition between not being a victim of crime and being a victim once; being a one-off victim and two (or more) crimes happening; being a victim twice and three (or more) victimisations occurring, and so on. It should be noted, however, that observations for two (or more) and three (or more) transitions are based on a small number of cases and should be treated with caution. That said, the upward trend is clear and similar for each of the three areas, with each crime making a further crime more likely. As a point of fact, the shape of the curve should be the opposite, as after each victimisation there is less time for another victimisation to occur, since the remainder of the risk period becomes shorter. As such, given constant risk of victimisation, the proportion of those victimised should decline. The fact that there is an increase, however,

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3 Note
The numbers of households in Table 4.2 is less than in Table 4.1 because of missing address information in some cases.
and the conclusion that each crime ‘boosts’ the likelihood of further victimisation and/or ‘flags’ a more extreme risk group, is consistent with earlier research (see Pease, 1998 for ‘boost’ and ‘flag’ account explanations).

Figure 4.1 Probability of at least one more victimisation by number of priors

![Graph showing probability of 1+ more victimisations by number of priors for Dundee, Falkirk, and Maryhill.]

Table 4.3 shows the minimum number of repetitions. These are minimum figures because ambiguous locations within dwellings (tenements) were not included as repeats. For example, an individual address suffering twice but described as ‘Up Right’ in one case and ‘2/1’ in the other was treated as a non-repeat. Also, cases where there was an exact location within a building for one offence but not for the other (for example ‘2/1, 14 McNeish St’ in the first and ‘14 McNeish St’ in the second) were also excluded. This has a particularly marked effect on the Maryhill figures, where it is thought that higher numbers of multiply occupied dwellings increase the scope for ambiguity.

Table 4.3. Minimum number of victimisations per household, by area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of crimes suffered</th>
<th>Dundee</th>
<th>Falkirk</th>
<th>Maryhill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>3910</td>
<td>3259</td>
<td>2170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than six</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2 shows the change in probability of repetition for these dwellings. To summarise and restate, by a process known to understate repeats, using a data set known to understate repeats, the probability of repetition with prior victimisation does increase, despite diminishing risk periods within which victimisation may occur.
4.4 Housebreaking, motor vehicle crime and assault

To avoid the proliferation of tables in the following analysis, which addresses housebreaking, motor vehicle crime and assault for the three study areas, minimum estimates are not given. Table 4.4 and Figure 4.3 show housebreaking. Table 4.5 and Figure 4.4 vehicle crime and Table 4.6 and Figure 4.5 assaultive crime for the three study areas. For each crime type considered, even given the underestimates inherent in this type of analysis (and the resulting reduction in numbers which makes graphical presentation incomplete) the data show that around 10 per cent of households suffering housebreaking, vehicle crime or assault suffered two or more such crimes during the period represented.

Table 4.4. Number of housebreakings suffered per households, by area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housebreakings suffered</th>
<th>Dundee</th>
<th>Falkirk</th>
<th>Maryhill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>1480</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.3 Probability of at least one more housebreaking by number of priors

![Probability graph showing the relationship between prior housebreakings and the probability of at least one more housebreaking. The graph includes lines for Dundee, Falkirk, and Maryhill areas.]

Table 4.5. Number of vehicle crimes suffered per household, by area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vehicle crimes suffered</th>
<th>Dundee</th>
<th>Falkirk</th>
<th>Maryhill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>2459</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than six</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.4 Probability of at least one more vehicle crime by number of priors

![Probability graph showing the relationship between prior vehicle crimes and the probability of at least one more vehicle crime. The graph includes lines for Dundee, Falkirk, and Maryhill areas.]

36
Table 4.6. Number of assaults suffered per households, by area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assaults suffered</th>
<th>Dundee</th>
<th>Falkirk</th>
<th>Maryhill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 The time course of repeats

If a repeat occurs, a key question to address is when it is likely to happen. Looking at (minimum) repeats against residents in the same building, the numbers for any offence are as shown in Figure 4.6, with the bulk of offences coming within two months of the preceding event.
The next question is to consider whether the time course is similar for all offence types. Since the numbers become too small to make for smooth curves, in this case and throughout the chapter from this point, data from all three areas are combined. The increased numbers also allow for a technical refinement - the slope of the curve may be artificially increased because the data are time-censored, i.e. where the first crime against an address is late in the year covered by the data, the amount of time remaining can only include swift repeats. To offset distortion, addresses are only included where a victimisation event occurs within the first six months of the period covered by the data, and repetitions during the six months after a victimisation only are included.

Figure 4.7 shows, despite the difficulties described earlier, the basic repeat victimisation that repeats tend to occur relatively swiftly. For all the crime types represented, most subsequent offences happen within two months of a prior offence.

![Figure 4.7 Time course of repeat offences, by type of offence](image)

The analyses described so far support previous research on repeat victimisation. However, part of the purpose of the Scottish study was to take us beyond that which is already known. New findings on repeat victimisation are now presented.

### 4.6 The penumbra of risk?

In the earliest repeat victimisation based housebreaking prevention programme (Forrester et al, 1988), a major element of the work involved protections to adjoining dwellings, known as ‘Cocoon Watch’. Following on from this, unpublished research, by Steve Everson of West Yorkshire Police, showed how domestic housebreakings committed by the same offender appear to cluster on the same street. Thus, how housebreakings are distributed within a street may suggest a penumbra (shadow) of risk, with the prudent crime preventor taking action in neighbouring houses as well as that victimised.
We found that some 30 per cent of all repeat housebreakings on a street (excluding repeats to the same address) were within 6 numbers either way of an address victimised by housebreaking.

The method of establishing this is complicated. To establish the penumbra of risk, we first looked at the distribution of numbers of houses on streets where dwellings had been broken into once and compared this with the distribution of first housebreakings on streets hosting more than one housebreaking. The numbers were not reliably different (either by t-test, or Mann-Whitney test, or t-test after log transformation) suggesting that homes repeatedly broken into were probably not disproportionately sited on longer streets.

On the basis of this, all first housebreakings (whether or not they were the only housebreaking on that street in the data set) were divided into two groups randomly, and the differences in street numbers between random pairs used as a baseline. These were compared with differences in street numbers of an nth and n + 1th housebreaking. The question was whether housebreakings next to each other in a sequence were more similar than randomly paired street numbers. Once one excludes repeats to the same house, they were not. Although some 30 per cent of all repetitions within a street (excluding repeats to the same address) were within six numbers either way of an address victimised by housebreaking, this seems to be more a result of the relatively short length of streets than a concentration of risk. In its policing implications, this may not be a major problem. We know that repetition to the same dwelling is disproportionately high. We know that 30 per cent of other housebreakings will occur to homes with street addresses plus or minus six of the victimised dwelling, i.e. to people who may well know the victim of housebreaking. That means that victimisation can be used to galvanise near neighbours into action, even if they are not more at risk than those living at the other end of the street.

4.7 The housebreaking side of the street?

If a housebreaking is of a home with an even number, on over two-thirds of occasions (68 per cent) the next housebreaking on the street will also be of an even number. The same applies to odd-odd sequences. The suggestion is that the penumbra of risk extends down the same side of a street more than across it. There may be administrative reasons to be cautious, for example where the boundaries of a police area extend down the middle of a street. However, the disproportion is such as to merit further investigation, particularly since it supports offenders’ description of their target search patterns presented elsewhere in this report. In fact, looking street by street (at those streets which have suffered more than one housebreaking), 81 per cent of all housebreakings take place on the side of the street most victimised by housebreaking.
4.8 Cross-crime type repeats

One of the aims set out in the research proposal was to address the issue of cross-crime type repeat victimisation. Broadly, it is known that repeat victimisation of one crime type increases the susceptibility of the victim to repeat victimisation of other crimes.

The simplest way of addressing this question is by looking at how likely particular sequences of crimes are. In Table 4.7, the rows indicate the crime suffered, and the columns the next crime suffered. The chance figure is 1.0. For example, assault after housebreaking, at 2.9, is almost three times as likely as one would expect. Housebreaking after car crime, at .52, is half as likely as one would expect.

Generally, though, the same crime will repeat. For example, taking crimes which follow vehicle crimes, other vehicle crimes are nearly 30 per cent above the level of expectation with a ratio of 1.29. Housebreaking following housebreaking, at 1.86, is not far short of double the expected rate.

| Table 4.7. Sequences of repeat victimisation across different crime types |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                 | Assault (n)   | Housebreaking (n) | Car crime (n) |
| Assault (n-1)   | 14.45         | .64              | .19           |
| Housebreaking (n-1)         | 2.90         | 1.86            | .53           |
| Car crime (n-1)         | .67          | .52             | 1.29          |

Thus while there are crossovers, most repeats lie within the same crime type. There is specialisation in victimisation. Of particular interest is the fact that assaultive crime shows the highest odds ratios, i.e. further violence is particularly likely to be flagged by earlier violence. However, housebreaking-violence and vehicle crime-violence sequences are more likely than sequences in the opposite direction, perhaps indicating a violent second phase of a grudge being worked out, or a violent confrontation with supposed perpetrators of the earlier crime. Although not common, housebreaking-vehicle crime and vehicle crime-housebreaking sequences are of interest in the light of interviews with offenders who report finding car keys during housebreakings which they later use to steal a car.

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1 Table 4.7 presents odds ratios, i.e. the probability of an ‘nth’ offence of a particular type after an ‘n-1th’ offence of a particular type, relative to its expected value given the distribution of offences overall. Given the total amount of each crime type suffered, the proportions of offences following each crime type should be predictable, if there is no relationship between the crimes. Expected values were calculated by assuming the distribution of offences after a particular offence was the same as the overall distribution. Observed values were then expressed as a ratio to the expected levels.
4.9 Conclusions

The familiar appearance and time course of repeat victimisation were in evidence in police crime data. In more original analyses, there was shown to be a concentration of victimisation on the same side of a street and in the vicinity of a home previously broken into. The extent of the ‘housebroken side of the street’ phenomenon is such that it merits attention in distributing housebreaking help and advice.

Cross-crime type sequences showed that there was some predictability in sequences of crime, with assaultive crime best predicting future victimisation of the same type, and with victimisation by violence following housebreaking some three times more often than one might expect.
Chapter 5 - Repeat victim accounts

5.1 Introduction

The aim of the interviews with repeat victims was to address in greater depth two issues:

- repeat victimisation of different crime types against the same target and to identify the crime reduction implications which stem from this.
- the nature and impact of chronic victimisation comprising a series of apparently trivial and unconnected events.

This chapter presents interview data from repeat victims, supplemented by discussion of other aspects of repeat victimisation. Chapter 2 explains how the sample was drawn. The themes presented here are representative of the whole sample. The issues raised were widely articulated.

Some of the repetition experienced by some repeat victims is chronic, that is they have suffered a particularly large number of crimes where the number of incidents are often too numerous to recall. These are people who have typically suffered many different crime types, often at the hands of people they know, as the accounts below illustrate. Table 5.1 presents a breakdown of the crime types experienced, to give an idea of the levels of cross-crime type repeat victimisation. To respect confidentiality, all the names have been changed. Any references made to particular people, places and police forces have also been removed.
Table 5.1: Crime types experienced by the interview sample over a two-year period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Vehicle</th>
<th>Personal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Six</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Three</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
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5.2 Time course of repeat victimisation

The analysis of official data, the Scottish Crime Survey (SCS) and police recorded crime data, has already given quantitative evidence to show that the time course of repeat victimisation is steep. If a repeat crime is going to happen, it will most likely happen soon after the first offence. This section gives examples from repeat victims to exemplify this. For chronic victims, most victimisations come hard on the heels of the last.

- The housebreakings which Henry experienced took place in March, August, October and December 1998.

- The damage to and thefts from Pauline’s Vauxhall Nova all took place between August 1997 and February 1999. The incident in August 1997 was a one-off, but the other crimes all took place within one month of the last, including a series of nine incidents when the locks were tampered with during December 1998.

- Rachael’s car, a Rover, was stolen twice. Although the car was stolen from a different place each time, the time between thefts was short. The first took place in September 1997 and the second in November 1997.

- Lewis’s car was stolen while parked outside his home. Three months prior to that the car was damaged. As with Rachael, the two incidents happened in different places.

- Irene suffered around twelve incidents of theft from her motor vehicle within one year. There were particular periods within this time when a number of incidents have been concentrated in time. For example, in February 1999 three incidents happened “within one week of each other”. On other occasions a bag was stolen from the car and the glove compartment broken into. She also had a tax disk stolen.

For chronic victims, separate but linked incidents may take place almost every day.

- Kevin said that there are sometimes periods of quiet when his neighbour does not cause any trouble but then the problems start again. This he links with periods of increased use of drink and drugs. The incidents usually happen on a Friday or Saturday night, although sometimes they take place during the week as well.

- Some the incidents of vandalism of which Emily has been a victim have happened within one week of each other. The others have occurred frequently since September 1998.

- Jim said that things happen regularly and he could not recall specific dates. In early 1998, there was vandalism to his car and a stolen car was dumped in his yard; during October/November 1998 he was harassed by “travelling people” living nearby; in November/December 1998 the garage at the back of his home was broken into; at the
same time his workshop was also broken into and also his caravan; in February/March 1998 tools from his van were stolen.

5.3 Repeat victimisation of different crime types

As the analysis of official data has shown, victimisation across crime types is common. There was evidence to support this notion in the victim interviews. The specific context of crimes stemming from neighbour disputes is one example of this. Another important example is housebreaking followed by vehicle crime. The interview material here supports this link.

- Richard has had a number of different crime types happen to him over a short period. Between February and November 1998 he experienced two housebreakings. Before that he experienced racial abuse when he was out at night in his local area. Prior to that he had his car vandalised on a number of occasions. The housebreakings in particular seem to have had an effect on him. At the time, he said that he could not sleep at night. He said he was “panicking” at the thought that they might come back. He and his family were at home on one occasion when the housebreaking was carried out. He said that it made them all feel “very scared”.

  “We thought we had to make sure that someone was in all the time – (we) did this until an alarm was put in … feel more comforted now”

- As well as the many car crimes she has suffered, Pauline has also experienced a housebreaking during the same period. She was out taking her car to a garage to be repaired from a previous crime. When she returned, after a couple of hours, the house had been broken into. She thought she knew who had carried out the housebreaking and went to his house the following week but did not find any of the items which had been stolen. She said she was “… hysterical, but the police didn’t take any notice”. Furthermore, although her nephew was charged with the crime, she received no communication from the police about how matters would proceed. The damage to and thefts from her vehicle might have been committed as a grudge against her involvement of the police.

- Jim has been the victim of many different crimes which he thinks are being committed by a group of travellers, mainly theft of property and vandalism. On one occasion, he had his house broken into and items stolen from his car in the same incident. He said there were a number of keys which went missing, for his house, caravan and car.

- Herbert has been a repeat victim of a number of different crimes over a short period of time, for which he thinks travellers living in a camp near to his home are responsible. Other people in the area had problems around the same time so these are not isolated incidents against one person. On the most recent occasion there was a break-in at his yard, which is situated near to a travellers camp which “has been there for years”, and
a generator was taken. On another occasion his trailer was taken and his portakabin broken into. There have also been other attempted crimes against his property.

- Gabbi had mainly suffered repeat car crime. She was more concerned with the housebreaking which she suffered in December 1997. This was around the same time that two of the car crime incidents had happened. Another person’s flat in the same block had also been broken into on the same night. On this occasion, the crime prevention officer gave some advice. Different windows were suggested and improvements to lighting in the communal area also recommended, as Gabbi’s flat is situated on the ground floor. A fence to restrict access to the side of the house was also thought to be a security measure to consider. However, Gabbi’s concern about security is not being taken seriously by the managers of the site.

“The managers of the flats are dragging their feet. They don’t return ‘phone calls and letters. Other people are not as motivated because they are not as vulnerable. It doesn’t affect them”

Some people living in properties for which there is a manager responsible for issues such as security, are having significant problems trying to get action to improve security. Not only has there been evidence of this in relation to council owned residential properties, but also from managers of privately owned properties.

- As well as two incidents regarding his car, Lewis has also had two other different crimes happen to him during the last two years. The first was when two young men approached him and started talking to him. They began to hit him. They also assaulted his girlfriend. The men have pleaded guilty to assaulting Lewis’ girlfriend but have failed to turn up in court on a number of occasions, so the court process has not yet been concluded. The second incident, within only a few weeks of the assault, was a housebreaking when he was at home with his parents but left the door ajar. Two jackets were taken from the entrance.

5.4 Street repeats: vehicle crime

Analysis of official statistics found that criminals often target streets on the same night and tend to target one side of a street. The notion that crime risk spreads down one side of a street, rather than across it, has not been raised before to our knowledge. It appears to be especially true for vehicle crime. Chapter 6 considers this method of targeting through interviews with offenders. Specific examples of vehicle crime are presented here.

- Harry’s car was vandalised along with eighteen other cars on his street. The wing mirrors on all the cars had been bent in the same direction. Feet were used on the door panels. Some wing mirrors were kicked off completely. Other people had been affected but had not reported the incident to the police.
• The most recent crime which happened to Daniel was vandalism to his car, a Vauxhall Cavalier. The tail-gate was scratched with a coin. Seven or eight cars parked next to his were also vandalised on the same occasion.

• Bernard spoke about one time when his car was broken into, although nothing was taken. As with a number of other reports of car crime in the interviews, this was not the only target on that street on that night. He said that there were other vehicles stolen or damaged in the street.

• Pauline is one of a number of repeat victims who own a Vauxhall. She has been chronically victimised. Nine other cars were also broken into on the same night on her street.

• Kath said that her car had been damaged whilst parked across the road from where she lives. The mirrors were smashed and vandalised and although it was also broken into, nothing was taken. Others on the street were also broken into.

There is a useful distinction to be made here. Although repeated vehicle crime experienced along whole streets is determined by area characteristics, some of the vehicles here were also targeted in other locations and therefore the vehicle itself is the risk indicator. Some types, for example Vauxhall cars, appeared to be particularly vulnerable.

5.5 The nature of chronic victimisation

Some repeat victims suffer so many crimes that it is impossible for them to separate out incidents and to recall exactly what has happened to them and when. Many of the examples are not happening to people who are in dispute with neighbours or being victimised at the hands of people who have a grudge against them. Whole streets are being repeatedly targeted by criminals. The interviews with repeat offenders support this.

• Brian and Barbara could not remember the exact number of events, but said that the following had happened to them, giving the approximate number of times each incident had happened: four side mirrors had been take; one windscreen smashed; four to five number plates taken. These were just examples which they recalled from the top of their heads. In all, they estimated that they had experienced around twenty incidents in the space of two months prior to being interviewed. They had only lived in the area for eighteen months. This was severely affecting their quality of life.

• One night, all the vehicles parked in Dominic’s street were damaged in some way. He said that the types of items being taken makes him think that people are taking specific items from cars for a reason.

“I’ve not seen specific things like that stolen … it gives you the idea that they’re using it as a spare parts kit for theirs”
• On many occasions Roger has had his car damaged. It was taken once. Another time items were stolen from it. It is a Vauxhall Astra.

• Jim has had many incidents happen in and around his home during the last two years. The most recent was when his home was broken into. There have previously been “too many incidents to count”. They mainly involved thefts from his home or vehicles while parked outside him home, although he has also suffered at the hands of vandals.

• The most recent incident which Pam experienced, as part of the victimisation at the hands of her neighbours, was a housebreaking and vandalism of her car, on the same evening. Prior to this, she has had items stolen from her car and other occurrences which have, overall, made her life almost unbearable.

“...There’s been lots of problems linked with him: noise; windows smashed; music; banging; shouting at two o’ clock in the morning and one time a lot of them came out with baseball bats ... I’ve had sleep disturbance ever since it started”

5.6 Lead-up to incidents

One of the aims of the interviews was to address the extent to which repeat victims recognise a lead-up to incidents. Whilst a number did, others did not identify a clear lead-up but had ideas about the general context within which they were being repeatedly victimised, for example issues in the area in which they live. The thoughts articulated here often indicate who the victims think are responsible for the crimes committed against them and the location, which they link with their repeat victimisation.

5.6.1 Specific links

• Henry had a very clear idea about the lead-up to the housebreakings which happened. He said he is “forever chasing them away from the close”, ‘them’ being a group of young people who congregate in the area around his flat. These young people seem to be a problem in the area in general and Henry alleges it is the same group each time who break into his home.

• Emily saw two children run away from the scene. They live in a hostel for homeless people round the corner from where Emily lives. There are often children hanging around. Drunks congregate around the entrance which is near the entrance to the tenement where Emily lives.

“...[they] use the wall outside as a toilet ... the drunks sit at the bottom of the stairs and I’m scared of them throwing bottles through – this is what happened before. I wish someone would move them on. The police know but the CCTV doesn’t cover that bit – the station and the alleyway on the back of the shops behind the building. About eight drunks loiter there most nights to
drink because there’s an old carpet they can sit on … Similar things would happen. I’d come down the next day and the windows would be smashed or cracked. A cracked one would always end up being put through again”

This is a literal example of the ‘Broken Windows’ phenomenon (Kelling & Coles, 1997) where vandalism which is left is read as an invitation to criminals to carry on victimising the person and property.

- Irene has suffered twelve incidents of damage to and theft from her car in the recent past. She recalled something happening twice, on separate occasions, just before the first incident took place.

  “A person knocked twice on the door to ask if I was going to sell the car. It was just before the crimes and I think it was connected with the crimes”

She has also experienced other different crimes during the same period, two break-ins to her garden shed, both in April 1998, which also makes her suspicious of the person.

- Amanda remembers a lead-up to some of the incidents of car crime which she has suffered, she thinks, at the hands of a group of young people who play football in the area in front of the flats in which she lives. Just before her car was stolen she saw “some people in the car park nodding towards the car – it was the only car in the car park”. She recognised one of the young people to be from the area and suspects him of responsibility for the other incidents.

  “I felt I was being victimised after a second time – is it worthwhile having a car? I was more angry than after the first one. I would have killed them, one in particular who is the bully … it’s a quiet area – very little happens and that’s the reason for them stealing cars around our bit”

- Harry made a direct link between criminal activity in the area and the use of a building at the end of his road as a club. There are periods during which the club is not being used. At these times Harry said there are never any such problems in the area. When the club re-opens, however, the problems start again.

- Christopher identified a group of young people who use a path at the back of the flats as an area to meet during school breaks and after school has finished. He thinks they meet at night and “cause a lot of commotion and noise”. He links the crimes to them as they have to walk past the garages which have been broken into to get to the path where they meet.

  “I always have it in my mind that they might be walking past the garages and seeing what is in there to take”
5.7 Under-reporting of repeat crimes to the police

The examples shown here illustrate the extent to which repeat crimes are under-reported, that official data vastly underestimate the existence of repeat victimisation. The examples also indicate reasons why repeat victims are reluctant to report more crimes to the police. Whatever these reasons, if the issue of reporting crime to the police is not addressed, recorded crime data will always provide only a partial picture.

5.7.1 Individual level of under-reporting

- Although Brian and Barbara are well known to the police because of the crimes which they have reported, the police still only have a partial picture. When asked why they decided not to report all crimes to the police, Barbara acknowledged that they should have reported them all but they did not want to trouble the police because they knew that the crimes they were suffering were relatively less serious.

  “They seemed trivial … but we should have done … (we) didn’t want to rock the boat”

- Henry said that he is afraid to report all the incidents to the police:

  “I’m worried about reporting them for fear of being called ‘grass’. They’ve smashed people’s windows who ring the police … instead, I’m going to crack up or slap ‘em the police can’t do anything anyway”

- Dominic is another repeat victim of car crime who has not reported everything to the police, although most of the ten incidents have been reported.

If a victim of vehicle crime reports an incident to the police, it is likely that they will have experienced more similar incidents in the past, and possibly the recent past (this may be the final straw for them which led them to reporting this particular incident to the police, not because it is the first one but because they have been experiencing incidents like this for some time) and are therefore likely to experience more crimes in the future. They are also likely to need financial advice, especially if they are uninsured or insured but still having to pay out large sums of money to contribute to repairs because they decide not to claim.

5.7.2 Community level

There are numerous examples of repeat victimisation mentioned elsewhere in this chapter where the repeat victim is not the only repeat victim on their street.

- Herbert is distressed to find that the local council continue to supply services to a travellers’ camp near where he lives. Incidents have occurred with regularity, starting
with the theft of a trailer in August 1997; another incident took place in December 1997; three in January 1998; one in November 1998 and two in December 1998; other incidents took place between January and March 1999. Herbert said that he tries to report to the police everything which happens to him. Although other units near his are also being targeted frequently, not all of them are reporting incidents to the police. The extent of repeat victimisation in the area will be vastly under-represented in police recorded crime data.

The issue of under-reporting of repeat victimisation is huge. The issue of the inaccurate recording of incidents on police systems is a less significant issue but nevertheless contributes to the inaccurate representation of repeat victims on official data.

5.8 Impact of repeat victimisation

5.8.1 Impact of repeat sequences

Repeat victims typically do not get used to being victims. During sequences of crimes, the effect becomes greater and the emotional and physical impact worse. With every repeated episode any recovery from the last episode is wiped away and the trauma of victimisation is fresh again. The evidence presented below supports research which suggests that the successive sequence of responses to repeat victimisation is like a bereavement process (Shaw, 2000) where victims go through various stages after each incident. This is true of relatively trivial crimes as well as those which society perceives as more serious.

Anger

- Brian and Barbara have both been affected by a series of incidents as a whole. The impact has been severe on both of them but in different ways. Barbara said that it has been affecting her health lately and that she has to lie down to recover now after each incident. She has high blood pressure because of what has been happening and finds that she feels ill when something new happens. They both said that the impact had worsened as the number of incidents increased. They “used to pass it off” but this is impossible now. Brian said that he has been showing more aggression in general because of his anger. He is determined not to move home. Because he has taken this stand, he gets more and more angry each time something happens because he feels there is nothing they can do.

- Charles said that it is becoming harder to accept what is happening. The fact that the same things keep happening make it harder to deal with. He feels differently at different times. He said:

  “When they are worse crimes, I feel worse”

- Daniel said that his thoughts have changed, particularly because the cost of the damage seems to have increased with successive victimisations. He said:
“The more it happens, the more frustrated you get … the more angry …”

• Stan said that the incidents have become more difficult to deal with. He directly related this to the type of crime of which he has been a repeat victim – housebreaking. He said:

  “I think it’s harder with housebreaking because they were in the house, because they pulled everything out to get to stuff”

• Bernard said that it gets harder for him to deal with because of the anger he feels towards the criminal justice system and the way he feels that society is not punishing those who are persistent offenders. He said:

  “You know it’s going to come round to you. You feel that that’s what goes… In the back of your mind you know that something’s going to happen because it happens to others … (you’re) one of many … there are too many ‘goodie goodies’. A kick in the backside – that’s the biggest deterrent … we’ve taken police authority away and teacher’s authority away”

• Henry said that the impact of the crimes has got worse. He is getting more and more angry each time it happens. He said he has threatened the local council that he will report them to the local newspaper because of what he perceives as their apathy towards victims of crime.

• When asked more about how the incidents have become harder to deal with, Pauline said that she has a “big fear that burglary will happen”. Pauline’s fear of crime is thus transferred to housebreaking from the repeat car incidents which she has been suffering.

• Dominic said that this anger has not diminished with each incident, but he has become more angry when he has been victimised again. Not only does evidence from the interviews suggest that anger has as great an impact on people’s lives as fear but that this anger also surfaces with every victimisation, and often increases each time, to make the overall impact greater with every subsequent victimisation.

Almost without exception, the interviews revealed strong negative attitudes to the perpetrators of the crimes they had suffered. Anger was the dominant feeling with many victims also articulating fear of those involved. Anger reflected the lack of justice victims felt, the practical inconvenience of crimes suffered and the theft of property which had been honestly worked for, among other things. Even when recalling the incidents which had happened to them, these feelings of anger were still very strong.

• Harry said that he felt both angry and upset towards the people who had carried out the crimes. He said:


“If I had seen them doing it, I would have attacked them. It’s frustrating that the police can’t do anything about it”

• Daniel said that he felt angry after the incident at the “inconvenience and cost”. When he thinks back to it, he still feels angry and said:

“If I found out who it was…”

• It would be difficult to overstate the extent to which Henry is angry towards the perpetrators of the repeat housebreakings which he has experienced. He was furious at the interview, not helped by the fact that he was clearly under the influence of alcohol. The interview was terminated early because of the way in which he was getting more and more agitated as he recalled what had happened to him. Part of this anger was clearly because of the frustration he felt towards the criminal justice system and the treatment of young offenders. He said:

“Nothing can be done because they’re too young”

He was also very angry because of what he described as the lack of communication towards him as a victim regarding the progress of his case. This view was articulated many times.

• Rachael said that she was angry towards the perpetrators of the crimes she experienced, two thefts of her car. In particular, she said that the first time it happened she was particularly angry as the criminals caused damage amounting to £1500. She said that she still feels angry now, although she rationalised it and was able to treat it with humour.

• After the incident in which Emily’s flat was vandalised by two young children living in the flat above her, and when the mother of the children threatened her, Emily was afraid for her personal safety. She shares the flat with another female friend, also a student at University, and she felt that they were both vulnerable.

“I was frustrated and it was annoying. I was frightened in case someone was going to kick the door in”

Since then, her feelings have changed. She now feels very annoyed because her father has had to pay for the damage to the property, which he bought for her when she went to University.

“It’s deliberate vandalism for no reason … we’ve got to pay for it”

• Tony has been able to rationalise the many incidents of car crime and break-ins to his garage. The fact that his elderly, blind, wife is a focus in his life, and that he wants to
be able to put the incidents behind him and lead a quiet life, allows him to be philosophical. Nevertheless, he is still angry towards the perpetrators.

“I was angry for having to pay for the repairs myself … the garage and the garden are my domain. I’ve seen it happen so often… there’s someone wanting wing mirrors. I’ve put it out of my mind now… and got on with things”

• Herbert has been the victim of crimes believed to have been committed by a group of travellers living locally. The police have carried out raids and have found stolen goods there. He feels angry towards the people who have been carrying out crimes against him as there is a Portakabin which he used to work in but is not able to now. He now has to work from home. The location is at the end of a cul-de-sac and this has been recognised as part of the problem. The perpetrators can easily come and go without being seen.

5.8.2. Impact on feelings of safety

• Dominic, who has experienced many incidents of vandalism to and theft of parts of his car, is being affected more. The repeat crimes suffered have been having an impact on his perception of the area as a whole. Dominic commented:

“... every time I hear of anything in the neighbourhood…”

His own victimisation has made him more aware of crime happening to other people and he has become more sensitive as a result.

When he was asked about how safe he feels his response supports the notion that repeat victims do not get used to victimisation. Although there are a small number who do, very few repeat victims become philosophical about what happens to them. For most repeat victims, the impact of victimisation becomes greater with victimisation. The terrible fact, from the analysis of recorded crime and survey data earlier in this report, is that prior victimisation also increases the risk of further victimisation. So, as the risk of revictimisation increases, so too does its impact.

“It’s a stupid male pride thing … but I would worry about my wife if she was by herself. The first time you become a victim of crime it’s O.K., but the second and third time you get really annoyed … there’s anger right at the time, when it happens, but it tends to temper down to annoyance more than anything else”
Although Henry seems to be intimidated by the youths whom he alleges are responsible for the housebreakings he has suffered, he said that he usually feels safe immediately after what happens and even when a few days have passed. However, he does not feel safe leaving his home. Whenever he goes out, he worries about the safety of his home, particularly because some work has still to be carried out by the local council to repair window frames which were smashed in the most recent incident. There were a number of examples of apparent local authority inaction which added to the distress, and vulnerability to further victimisation. Henry has taken steps to improve security at his own expense. He claims that the reason the council gave for not repairing these was because they say he is behind on his rent payments. He said:

“I need to be three months clear of rent before they’ll do the repairs”

5.8.3 Social impact

The frequent incidents happening to Roger’s car, including vandalism and thefts, happened shortly after his grandmother died when he had marital problems. The effect was devastating. If all this was not enough to deal with, the children who had been found tampering with and vandalising his car began to threaten and torment Roger after he reported them to the police. The overall impact became too much.

“…it led to the break up of our marriage …we had one argument after another”

Paul has had a small number of minor car crimes happen to him. Similar to some of the victims interviewed, his thoughts about what has happened to him are focused on the sense of a lack of justice, where many perpetrators escape unpunished from committing minor offences such as the ones he has experienced.

“The police are not taking enough notice of trivial crimes …there should be more praise to beat policemen for solving trivial crimes – (there) should be more points for the bobby in solving ‘small’ crimes …if there’s no action against the perpetrators, you explode”

Given the evidence in this chapter concerning the impact of relatively trivial crimes on repeat victims and Paul’s comments below, which were widely articulated, the police response to incidents which appear to be trivial should perhaps be reconsidered.

“because it’s only a minor thing, the police don’t get any brownie points …the management in the police concentrate on more serious crimes”

Amanda was clearly troubled when talking about the repeat incidents of car crime she has suffered in the recent past. The young people who she suspects of carrying out the crimes are also intimidating her in another way and causing a nuisance to the whole
neighbourhood, when they play football and bang the ball up against the side wall of the flats in which she lives.

“They give you abuse when you ask them to move on. There’s a constant noise of banging against the wall, even though I’m in a top-floor flat. It started about four years ago when one family moved in – a man with three boys. Eight to eighteen-year-olds all play football. It’s a twenty-five yard long street. Lots of people come to the area to play football. The police move them on a lot. Most of the parents are teachers or lecturers. You expect them to be able to deal with kids. None live on the street itself, though”

All of this has a demoralising and disempowering influence on Amanda.

“You just end up saying ‘what can you do?’ You can’t keep thinking about it, or you’d drive yourself crackers… until the next time… it just becomes an acceptable part of life, that you seem to be getting targeted”

• Sharon’s family is being victimised with astonishing frequency by their neighbours, with many different crime types making up the sequence of victimisation. The victimisation has included: assaults on her children; death threats; stones being thrown at their windows; nails in car tyres and banging on the adjoining walls. Other people in the street are also being abused in a similar way, although Sharon’s family is suffering most. During summer, the situation seems to be particularly bad because the family spend more time outside and torment them when they are coming and going. The problems have been going on since the offending family moved in. Sharon said that the neighbourhood was a peaceful one before they moved into the area. During one particularly bad period, Sharon said:

“My husband slept downstairs for a while. There were death threats and they said ‘you’re going to get it’”

Everyday life has become a strain.

“You feel so nervous that you watch all the time – even when you’re hanging out your washing …I put my head to the wall and think ‘if they’re in bed, it’s O.K. – I can sleep’… I go out for a couple of hours in the morning and then go back to bed … ‘d move if I could afford”

People like Sharon do not distinguish everyday life from their victimisation because this is their everyday life. It wears them down physically and mentally and leads to their social exclusion.

5.8.4 Impact on health
• The impact of the many incidents which Jim has suffered is obvious when he talks. He was extremely upset when talking about his experiences in the interview and the stress being caused by the repetition of the crimes was immense.

“I’m on anti-depressants and tablets for when I get too angry …there are health effects …there’s been a poor response from the police …I’ve no insurance as of last week …I’m trying for Social Security benefits”

He said that the crimes were getting more and more difficult to cope with.

“They’re getting much harder …(the) first time I thought ‘oh well’ …when someone asks me to do something, I can’t do it …the children of the criminals laugh at me …I’m suffering depression – don’t know how I’m going to feel… Victim Support don’t know how to help…”

• The impact of the repeat car crimes experienced by Kath is clear. She has already been described as likening the invasion of privacy as “emotional rape”. When she reflected on the incidents, the way she articulated the impact was no less evident. The impact is as great each time it happens.

“The police don’t ask how you’re feeling. They just focus on the insurance and practical side. You feel very vulnerable – they should be careful what they say. You go through the same feelings again each time … it doesn’t last as long, the more it happens …but the initial impact is the same… disbelief, anger… and then you accept it and move on”

Kath still likened what she experiences each time as “a form of bereavement”. Such accounts will hopefully help agencies respond better to repeat victims, such as the police and Victim Support.

“The first reaction is denial… it’s a grief process… your own death and loss … (you) can’t help but take it personally – it’s part of your property… you identify with them… upset, shocked, angry, wanting justice… and then financial things and (then you) think ‘oh well, it’s only a car”

For those who experience high levels of emotion through their experiences, either trivial or non-trivial, life can become unbearable. For those people who suffer different responses: such as anger; frustration that criminals get away unpunished with what they have put them through; concern about the financial implications, and so on, the impact can make their life a living nightmare.

For a sub-group of the victims interviewed, repeat victimisation is only one aspect of a chaotic life. Repeat victimisation is part of a wider crisis which is having both a physical and mental effect on their quality of life.
• It is consistent with other repeat victims that the impact of the crimes which Roger has experienced, although relatively trivial, has had a dramatic impact on him. He has a number of incidents happen to his car, including damage and on one occasion it was stolen.

“It’s one thing after another… you don’t know what’s going to happen next… you just have to accept that you’ve had a lot of bad luck… it’s got harder and is getting me down… my Granny had just died at the time… it gets me more depressed… I was angry as I’d just split up with my wife… annoyed that things like that have happened… it all started building up”

• Michelle’s repeat victimisation is just one of a number of issues with which some repeat victims have to deal. The awful coincidence of stressful events happening at the same time is almost too much to bear for some people. This is not to be melodramatic. It is to paint the picture as the reality which exists for some victims. In Michelle’s case both her parents had recently died within ten weeks of each other. The theft of family heirlooms in the housebreakings has, almost literally, broken her heart. To say that she was in a desperate state in the interview would be an understatement. She is no way along the path to recovery neither emotionally nor physically. In fact it is probably realistic to say that although the physical scars are healing (she was sexually assaulted during one of the housebreakings) the emotional scars seem to be getting worse.

“They attacked me – hit me on my face… I thought they were going to rape me. They burst through the door at night… I couldn’t sleep for three weeks after. They never caught anyone. I wasn’t insured, so I couldn’t claim”

Each day brings with it deeper emotional pain. The deaths of close members of her family were part of that emotional pain but the housebreakings were at the centre of the crisis she is going through now.

• As well as suffering repeat victimisation, Tim also appears to be facing other issues. He seemed to be quite isolated and said that he had few friends in the area. He was clearly extremely unhappy and very depressed about the crimes, which he was still suffering at the time of the interview. Jim linked the unhappiness directly to the crimes he has experienced.

“I have black-outs. One time I realised I had left my car at the health centre. I’ve been on anti-depressants for about one year. I was in relationship counselling… I still went for about twelve weeks after my partner and children left. I waited nine months to get an appointment… it all effects sleep patterns – I hear noises”

Jim is one example of the way in which repeat victimisation, for some people, is almost the last straw. Often happening at the same time as other stressful incidents, such as the
break-up of a relationship, the effect is devastating. The appearance of these people during
the interview, the strain and the emotion, said it all.

5.8.5 Lifestyle changes

The crime prevention measures used by victims have already been mentioned. These
measures, and the overall impact of repeat victimisation, have led to whole lifestyle
changes in some cases. In the less severe cases this makes life less practical. In the more
serious cases, life is almost put on hold.

- The repeat victimisation they have been suffering has had a dramatic effect on Brian
  and Barbara’s lifestyle. They recalled two main ways in which they have changed their
  behaviour because of what has been happening: they only leave their home to go
  shopping, in-between school times; every morning and last thing every night they go
  out and check the car.

- Charles said that he does things differently now. Whenever he has to return his golf
  equipment to his shed, he waits until there are no children in the street.

- Though the crimes which have happened to Daniel are not serious, he said that the
  repetitive nature of the crimes has affected his lifestyle. He said:

  “Any time I hear a noise, I always check… I’ve tuned the alarm to ultra-
  sensitive”

- Although Steven said that he feels as safe as before, the crimes have had a big impact
  on his lifestyle because of the financial repercussions. Even though he has had to claim
  on his insurance to pay for the repairs carried out to customers’ cars, he has still had to
  take on some of the financial burden himself, in addition to paying for repairs to his
  own car, when his own car has been targeted, so as not to lose his ‘no claims bonus’
  on his insurance.

  “I’ve not a penny to rub together. I’m living with my family – I can’t afford to
  leave home. Horrible”

- Stan talked about the way in which his lifestyle is affected by what has happened to
  him. He said that it is his personal safety which has been affected, rather than the
  safety of his property.

- Bernard has become more protective towards his children, who are six and eleven, in
  terms of knowing their movements. He said:

  “I want to know where they’re going and that they’ll be back in one hour”
Pauline said that her lifestyle has been affected immensely by what has happened. She said:

“It has affected me at work…I feel frightened now. I make sure all the doors and windows are locked. I always lock the doors when I’m at home alone”

Dominic easily put the many incidents of vandalism against his car into perspective, but he said that the incidents are affecting the quality of life of both him and his wife.

“I think we’re probably going to move because of it …away from where we grew up”

Michelle’s lifestyle has changed since three housebreakings in close succession in October, November and December 1998. She is on medication for nervous problems which were triggered by the first housebreaking and perpetuated by the other two housebreakings. She is taking Diazepam and “ended up in hospital” because she could not cope. She was distraught recounting the incidents during the interview and had clearly been drinking. Even aspects of everyday life cause her great distress.

“Sometimes I get on the bus …three stops… have got to get off – want to get back home. I worry when I go out – there’s only a Yale lock on the door. I stay in a lot of the time. I’ve stopped seeing friends unless they come to see me at home”

The isolation, emotional trauma and fear was tangible.

The main impact on Dominic’s lifestyle, of the thefts which he has experienced from his car, is when he realises that he has forgotten to remove the radio from this car when he is lying in bed. He said he cannot sleep once he has realised this.

“Sometimes I forget to remove the radio panel… I have to get up out of bed now. I’m constantly thinking about it”

Jim’s victimisation is having a dramatic and devastating effect on his lifestyle, both in terms of his concern for his property and his personal safety.

“I just take a day at a time… I worry about personal safety. They petrol-bombed the house next to me …I feel like a second-grade citizen anyway …I worry that I’ll get so angry I’ll do something… it’s bad when I would end up the person in trouble”

He is becoming more and more isolated from society.

“I locked myself in the house to forget about the world… I felt like running away …still do now”
5.9 Implications for the routinisation of police help/advice

Many repeat victims feel that the police cannot help them. Some were disappointed with the response of the police, others accepted that the police are not always in a position to be able to prevent crimes from happening again. Many thought that the police, as with society in general, are powerless. Either way, the approach to giving crime prevention advice to repeat victims perhaps should be reviewed. A minority of repeat victims had strong negative feelings about the police response to their case. Many other repeat victims simply have low expectations of what the police can do to help them. Other examples show where the police response made a positive difference. The examples below reflect both sentiments and show that these responses are applicable to different types of repeat crimes.

- Henry was one of the interviewees who was not pleased with the police response. He said that the police were not very helpful, that they did not visit him for a long time after the incidents had been reported and that they gave no advice.

- Pauline also thought that the police were unhelpful and that it seemed to be

  “...a matter of course for them... they treated it as mundane. It is very personal and sometimes they didn’t take it into account. They just came in and took the details ...they haven’t even been here to take fingerprints, yet”

- The police visited Harry approximately half-an-hour after a repeat car crime incident was reported. However, the police are clearly not receiving the full story on the incidents happening in this street as he was the only person to report the incident. Coincidentally his neighbour saw the police in the street the morning after and then reported the damage to his vehicle. Had the police not been at the scene, the incident would have remained unreported. This has implications for the nature of the response of the police to incidents affecting whole streets. If the presence of the police encouraged another victim to report the incident, then this would give the police a more accurate idea of the extent of repeat victimisation on such streets. If house-to-house enquiries were cheaper, repeated events which affect many people in a street may be clarified.

- Brian and Barbara said that the police visited within ten minutes of being called. Advice was given. It was suggested that they park their car in a nearby street and take the hedge down which blocked their view of the street. However, Brian and Barbara did not want to do either of these things. Despite finding the police very helpful and “very comforting”, they considered their crime prevention suggestions impractical. They did not want the inconvenience of having to park their car in a different place, and having to walk further to their home, and did not want to give up the privacy offered by the high hedge in front of their home. The police also suggested that they
move, given the effect that the stress was beginning to have on both of them, but they are do not want to move.

- Charles said that the police visited about three hours after the incident had been reported. The police were considered helpful, but no crime prevention advice was given. He said:

  “They just said ‘there’s a lot of it going on’”

- Steven said the police attended around two hours after one repeat crime had been reported. They advised installing cameras at both ends of his workshop but Steven said that was “no good”. Given that the workshop was being rented from the managers of the units on the small industrial estate, the police also spoke with the estate manager regarding the use of a guard dog and the overall management of the premises. Steven believes he knows what would enhance the security of his unit but does not own the site. He identified measures but the manager would not implement them. “He might have felt differently if it had happened at home”. Steven said:

  “I would’ve preferred more down to earth advice – less costly…”

- The police visited within fifteen minutes of the first housebreaking which Stan reported. Stan and his fiancée asked whether it would be a good idea to fit an alarm. The police officer replied ‘sometimes they’re more bother than they’re worth’. Other crime prevention advice was given. Blinds and timer lights were suggested. Although they found the police helpful, Stan said

  “…there was the impression that they felt they couldn’t do much about catching the thief and getting the goods back. I got the impression they knew who they’d been”

Lack of advice does not appear to be adversely affecting repeat victims’ attitudes towards the police. They do not appear to expect the police to be able to help. There are ways in which repeat victims can be helped and this is a central thrust of many successful schemes aimed at tackling repeat victimisation in the United Kingdom.

- Christopher did receive some crime prevention advice from the police in the form of a booklet. They discussed the security of his garage with him. However, Christopher said that he thought the cost of implementing the security measures would have outweighed the benefits. Given that he was not keeping much in the garage at the time, decided not to take up expensive security measures. While he was reasonably happy with the response of the police, Christopher said that he thought the area needed a greater police presence.

  “… they (the police) only do as much as they can. I would like to have the police around at school time”
There are clearly police officers who are not even giving low-level advice, but it should be recognised that many officers are doing so. It is difficult, when the advice seems reasonable, (and in some cases it clearly was not) when the victim does not want to adapt what they do to help prevent crimes happening again. This still leaves the same problem of repeat victimisation in either of the two scenarios: whether impractical or no crime prevention advice has been given; or whether the victim has chosen to ignore the advice. Either way, police resources are still being called to attend repeat incidents against the same victims. If advice has been given but not heeded, the victim and the officer need to work together to identify at least one possible and realistic measure.

5.9.1 Crime prevention measures taken by repeat victims

Many victims reported doing something to try and improve their own security and/or the safety of their belongings.

- While Brian and Barbara rejected the suggestions which the police made regarding the safety of their car, they bought two different alarms and a lock. This did not reduce the number of incidents happening to them.

- Although only his garden shed had been broken into, Charles said that he was “thinking about putting CCTV on the premises”. He has already secured the shed by putting new bolts on the door and has put curtains up in the shed.

- Steven has tried to do something to try and reduce the risk of further victimisation. Every day he spends twenty to thirty minutes putting as many cars into the workshop as possible. Many of the cars which he cannot fit into the workshop are parked under a spotlight in the yard outside. He said: “There’s no way of securing the yard any better”. He has stopped locking cars outside in an attempt to reduce the amount of damage done. However, he said that the perpetrators are vandalising the cars anyway. The cameras which he did install did not cover the whole front of the yard. Offenders got over the fence via a different route. Steven was concerned about the additional costs which the cameras caused. He said that after they had installed one camera at the front, the back of the property became more vulnerable. A second camera was installed at the back of the property. It costing him £120 each month for the cameras in addition to the costs of having to carry out additional repairs to cars in vandalised whilst at the garage.

- Pauline bought a ‘Krooklok’ but could not afford to install an alarm. She was very critical of the police. She was annoyed about yet another cost of being a victim.

- Rachael now parks in a different place in the car park at the sports centre where her car was stolen. She also puts a lock on the steering wheel. She leaves the parcel shelf off to show that there is nothing worth stealing in the car.
• Dominic began removing part of his car radio each night.

• Gabbi

  “…moved the car parking space. Originally, I used a space which I could see the car from the flat, but it was right next to the gate. Now, I park nearer other cars and further into the car park, although there’s no vision onto it through the (flat) window”

• Alison fills in a log whenever anything happens; sends reports to the local school when she sees any of the pupils causing a nuisance; she has a noise signal inside her house when a light sensor outside is activated and has recently installed double glazing after a housebreaking.

  “I get used to it happening. I don’t get disillusioned about it – I just do as much as I can to try and stop it happening again”

5.10 Conclusions

Two main aims of the research were to establish:

• the links between repeat victimisation of different crime types against the same target (person or place) and to identify the crime reduction implications which stem from this.

• the nature and impact of chronic victimisation comprising a series of apparently trivial and unconnected events.

The remainder of this chapter summarises the main findings, from this chapter, in addressing these two questions. They do not encompass all the issues discussed.

5.10.1 Different crime type repeats

• Chapter 4 demonstrated that if a repeat crime is going to happen, it is most likely happen soon after the prior offence. The interviews confirmed that this is true for repeat victims, and for different crime types. Indeed for chronic victims, by definition, most victimisations come hard on the heels of the last.

• Research on repeat victimisation until now has largely concentrated on repeat victimisation of one crime type. The examples in this chapter have shown that people often experience different crime types. The specific context of neighbour disputes is one example of this, where relatively trivial incidents are also part of an on-going series of more serious victimisations. Another cause of repeat victimisation of different crime types is disorder and crimes perpetrated by young people.
• Interview evidence supports analysis in Chapter 4 to show that, for some repeat victims, housebreaking has been followed by vehicle crime. There is also a cross-over between housebreaking and assault.

• For some repeat victims who are experiencing many different crime types, particularly those living in rented properties, managers in both public and private housing sectors are not dealing with issues of security effectively.

• Many of the examples of repeat victimisation of different crime types are not happening to people who are in dispute with neighbours or being victimised at the hands of people who have a grudge against them, although some are. Indeed, whole streets are being repeatedly targeted.

• One of the aims of the interviews was to address the extent to which repeat victims recognise a lead-up to incidents, with the implications this has for crime prevention. The lead-up to repeat incidents comes in various forms for some repeat victims. For example, the periodic use of particular buildings in areas for some repeat victims have been recognised as a precursor to the onset of a period of victimisation. For others, relatively trivial incidents or disorder are a predictor to more serious crimes, although disorder is a form of victimisation in itself.

• The examples shown here show the extent to which repeat crimes are under-reported, that official data vastly underestimate the existence of repeat victimisation.

Implications/recommendations

This phase of the study has several implications for police practice. The recommendations presented are not exhaustive but define what we consider to be the key ones.

• Given the time-course of repeat victimisation, crime prevention measures must be deployed swiftly, and neighbours should be made aware of what has happened, that it may happen again and that their own properties and/or vehicles may be at risk.

• Incidents which individually appear to be trivial may hide chronic victimisation of an individual household or the local community.

• There needs to be a greater awareness of the link between housebreaking followed by vehicle crime.

• Co-operation is essential to deal with repeat victims who experience problems in having their property secured, or its security enhanced.

• The notion that crime risk spreads down one side of a street, rather than across it, should be a key aspect which police officers bear in mind when attending an incident. In particular, it should encourage the co-operation of local Neighbourhood Watch
schemes and, where these do not exist, encouraging the formation of the ‘Cocoon Watch’ approach.

- More attention should be given to the lead-up to incidents. Where the periodic use of particular buildings in areas for some repeat victims have been recognised as a precursor to the onset of a period of victimisation, discussions should be encouraged between officers and proprietors to identify possible solutions.

- Serious consideration needs to be given to encouraging the reporting of more crime and disorder to the police.

- Police training programmes should emphasise that an apparently single and random crime may be part of a sequence of linked events.

5.10.2 Nature and impact of chronic repetitions

- The impact of repeat victimisation is distinctive. These victims do not get used to being victims of crime. During sequences of crimes, the effect becomes greater and the emotional and physical impact worse.

- Anger is a common response to repeat victimisation, particularly towards the perpetrators.

- Repeat victimisation often has a profound impact on feelings of safety.

- There is also a social impact which, in the worst cases, leads to social exclusion. Many chronic victims withdraw from social contact during the worst periods of victimisation.

- Incidents which appear trivial on the surface have a significant impact on repeat victims. These are often minor disorders but because they are often part of a sequence of more serious crimes, they have an impact individually which is out of proportion to the severity of the individual incidents.

- The health of chronic victims may suffer, making it difficult or impossible for them to cope with other life crises.

- Many repeat victims have low expectations of what the police can do to help them.

Implications/recommendations

- Police officers on the ground could be more aware that repeat victims do not get used to being victims of crime and the implications this has for sensitivity in individual cases.
• Although feelings of personal safety may be affected, the fact that anger is a common response might help officers predict how victims might react on arrival at an incident. Given the recent focus on fear as a dominant response, the recognition of anger is a necessary corrective.

• The social exclusion experienced by some chronic victims is of great concern. The police cannot deal with this alone and this is where the partnership approach should be the framework for dealing with these needs to improve the network of support for chronic victims. These partners might include healthcare professionals and other social services.

• That apparently trivial incidents have a large impact on repeat victims is indisputable. Contact with these victims from any agencies should bear this in mind and act accordingly to deliver support and crime prevention advice, where appropriate.
Chapter 6 - Repeat offender accounts

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 described how the sample was obtained and the structure of the interviews. A copy of the interview schedule can be obtained from the first author. The interviews were semi-structured. Thirty-two male offenders in two Scottish prisons were asked about how they went about targeting and the extent to which they returned to the same target. Initially, they were asked to recall an offence which they remembered well: how they selected the target; whether or not they carried out the offence alone; what items, if any, were stolen; the extent to which the offence was planned in advance; and the methods which they employed in carrying out the offence. If this was a repeat offence they were asked to recall the series of offences against that same target. If it was not, they were asked to talk about a time when they had targeted a person or place more than once. Each offender then gave information (where applicable) about two other targets to which they had returned, how many times they went back to each, and the time lapse between offences. Pseudonyms are used.

In brief, offenders do return. Arthur said:

“Hundreds of times I’ve been back during the last 1-2 years”

When asked about how many times he went back, Gary said “just as many as you need”. The majority of offenders reported going back to the same target. A minority said they never went back (see Figure 6.1).

Of course, if a target is selected at time 1 and is unchanged at time 2, it will remain an attractive target. Thus the issues of target selection and repeat victimisation cannot be cleanly separated. However, the need to maintain the focus of this report requires the restriction of this chapter to repeat victimisation targeting specifically. The data on target selection generally will be published elsewhere.
The story was the same for different crime types – offenders do go back to the same target.

- Matt said that he often goes “joyriding, to pass the time of day”. He claimed to have targeted one street “at least fifty” times in the last two years.

- In 1998, Shaun targeted one location “eight times in the space of a week”. Shaun said:

  “…I rattled 15-20 motors… dumped some of the stuff and went back …(the) next night and rattled it …for a week… and then they caught us …they were waiting for us… it was actually quite funny …6-7 jumped on us… it was just greed”

He said that the location was appealing because they knew the layout, what was inside and they found that they could not manage everything the first time round. On the whole, Shaun said he frequently goes back to the same target.

  “A couple of times I never went back …but you get greedy”

Large country homes seem to be vulnerable to repeat crimes for a number of different reasons.
• Wayne said he always goes back.

   “If it’s a big house and I’ve got a small van …I go back and hire a van because
   no-one’s going to expect you to go back again”

• Phillip had been to one Hall of Residence on many occasions. He said that he had
  been back there about thirty times in one year.

• Matthew returned to one place on two occasions, the second only a few hours after
  the first housebreaking. The first time the alarm went off, so he “went for the walk for
  a while in between” and then went back.

• In the space of two weeks, Shaun went back five times to one property. He said:

   “I got a good turn and kept on hitting it …I just keep going until I get caught,
   basically”

• One target was clearly unoccupied. Darren guessed that the owners were on holiday.
  He went back to retrieve the items he did not manage to take on the first occasion. He
  said

   “…the blinds were up all the time – I knew it was empty, you just know it’s
   empty”.

• Karl targeted one property on two occasions during April and May 1998. He took
  goods valued £17,000 in total.

• David said that he “used to (break into the same house) five times a week”. Cumulatively,
  he said he stole from the house around twenty times which made him around £300 each week. David said that he always goes back to the target once he has
  targeted it successfully before. As with many criminals who say they ‘always’ go
  back’, he said:

   “… it’s probably what got me caught”

• Although Michael also returns to targets, he said:

   “It depends what is in the house …I try and get everything the first time… if
   I’m disturbed, I often go back”

• Phillip targeted a theatre. He would go through the public entrance and into the
  dressing rooms. Access was easy, and was able to gain entry into the performers’
  rooms without being challenged. This was usually in the late afternoon, at about
  5.30pm. He did this in winter, when it was dark at this time, which made the ‘job’ even
  easier.
• Arthur targeted two car parks of one hotel chain on many occasions. Both were “easy” but CCTV caught him. The location appealed to him because, he said, “it’s been like that for years”. The unresponsiveness of the hotel to the need for crime prevention measures made it easy – he knew that nothing would have changed.

• Michael went back about twenty times and would target the same specific locations within the hotel, in particular the car park:

  “…offices and boots of cars, because they only take an overnight bag out if they’re staying only one night …they leave the rest of the stuff in the car”

6.2 Time course of repeat targeting

There is an identifiable time course of risk of repetition after an initial victimisation. What has been relatively lacking in research has been the evidence for this from offenders. This section supports the notion of a period of risk for different offence types. If an offender decides to go back to the same target, he is likely to do it soon after the last time he was there.

• The target was rented accommodation where Leslie noticed that a coin meter was kept on top of the television. He said that there were other items he could have taken but that he “wanted a quick one”. He targeted the same property twice in three months.

• Matthew broke into the same home three times during 1992. He returned to this property four years later. The reason he gave was “laziness”. He could not be bothered to find other targets. This had been a successful target for him. Those interviewed remember where they have been successful for a long time.

• Gerry broke into a house on five occasions. The sequence of events went as follows:

  • Gerry found money in the base of a man’s bed, amounting to £10,000-15,000;
  • Six months later, he broke in again and found £300 in a biscuit tin;
  • Two months later, he found no money, having left this period of time between one and another to give the man “time to build money up”;
  • Two months later Gerry targeted the house again but again came away with nothing;
  • On the final occasion, one year later, Gerry was successful again. He said that the inside had changed, but for the better from his point of view. There was a top-of-the-range hi-fi and other electrical goods worth £1,000.

Gerry did not go back after this because the owner bought an Alsatian dog. Before the dog appeared, there were times when he wanted to go back, but said that he wanted to wait for the man to accumulate some more money. When he wanted to go back but didn’t, Gerry simply went somewhere else.
Although Tim could only remember once going back to the same target, the sequences of the offences supports the notion of a time course. He broke into a property on three occasions. The money was in the same place each time. He left two to three months between each incident. He went back because he “wanted to see if they had changed anything”. The owners had not changed anything and each trip was productive.

Arthur said he targets one property “a couple of times a week for a month and then I stop and go back”. He said there were occasions when he intended to return but did not. This was because he realised he had “done it too much – so I leave it for a while”. Other times there is no clear rationale. He said that sometimes he just has a “sixth sense” and decides to leave it.

Carl visited a property twice. On the first he “went in and there was money lying around”. Two months later, he took electrical equipment. He said he returned to the same target because he knew what was inside.

**Large country homes**

Large properties in the countryside appear to be particularly vulnerable because of the low levels of surveillance in private and extensive grounds. These locations not only allow offenders to return many times to carry out ‘research’ on the property before they actually carry out offences, as described above, but also enables them to return to take more items.

Wayne repeatedly targeted a big private house. He went back three times within twenty-four hours.

Michael went back to a property on four occasions on the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th of February 1999. The sequence of events occurred as follows:

- 5th – wrote down details;
- 6th – details of people coming and going;
- 7th – confirming details of people coming and going;
- 8th – knew the layout exactly by then and so went through with the break-in.

Phillip visited a property on two occasions, in consecutive days, in 1997. He took wardrobes, two cabinets and furniture (chairs). He said that there were occasions where they intended to go back but was unable to as there was “nothing left in it” when he had finished, including building materials. He said they “take pipes first and then boilers and strip the rest”. He always sells the items on the same day and “drop(s) stuff off before going home”.

Wayne carried out one housebreaking between 7.00pm-8.00pm and went back again twice, each within a couple of hours of the other. He said
“You have more of a chance of getting stopped after 10.00pm, so do it early evening… it took most of the night – finished at 4.00am… got a couple of hours rest… and took to contact once the morning traffic started – less chance of getting caught in rush hour traffic”

**University Halls of Residence**

- Shaun targets a University college car park “every day”. He either steals cars and goes joyriding or steals items from them.

- Phillip said that he mainly chooses different rooms in student flat development in a University Hall of Residence, but sometimes goes to the same room the day after if he thinks he has left something, or leaves it until a “couple of months after”.

- When asked exactly when he went back, Carl said

  “I usually go back twice – usually all just the same …a couple of months after (they) just come into mind … a lot of student places”

**Schools**

- Phillip was part of a group which repeatedly targeted a school. The group went to the school three times, one day after the other. Each time they went, they saw items which could be taken the next time. Because it was a school, they thought it was unlikely that the break-in would be noticed. This enabled them to make visits in close succession. After the first time they knew the layout and the contents. They stopped going back when there were “lights on – never went back after that”.

**Thefts of/from motor vehicles**

- David stole a car for a period of “a couple of months”:

  “I took it every night for about 1 week, until he got rid of it and then got another and I stole that too”

- Shaun’s campaign went on for a couple of months at a time in the summers of 1996 and 1997. He said “we were jumping around in that area”, going back twenty times. He said they “stole twenty cars and broke into a couple of hundred …then would just dump it or smash it”. They stopped because they were not getting enough money from what they were doing. He said they caused “half and half damage” when they smashed and dumped the vehicles “ …not meaning it, sort of thing, …or chased by the police …and then bolt”.

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• Arthur said someone drives him to offence locations. When he has found a location where there are a number of cars he likes, he takes the first car, drives away and then goes back, “twenty minutes (later) at the most”.

6.3 Reasons for returning

Many reasons were given by offenders for returning to the same target, including the ease of previous visits, laziness and the knowledge that they had left items which they wanted.

Repeats thefts of motor vehicles

• Having targeted a lorry park for a year, Gareth and his friends “knew what the script was”, that there were no lights, no security and that they were unlikely to be seen. They decided to see what was contained in the wagons – and stole it. He said that they looked again “just out of curiosity”. He said that the keys to the wagons were placed for the drivers on the top of the wheels, for collection the day after.

• Matt has been to the same street around thirty times in the last two years because of the “choice of cars, performance-wise”. When Matt is in the centre of one Scottish city, he always knows where to go to get a car.

“Whenever we’re in the centre, we always have an idea where to go… not (the) X Street area because there are too many people around”

Repeat housebreaking

• Matthew said the reason he returned to a target was “drunkenness and laziness”. The first time the alarm went off and he was unable to finish what he was doing. The factors which made the property a good target first time still were relevant, i.e. there was no-one at home, the alarm did not evoke a response from the neighbours and the offence was expected to be profitable.

• Darren went back to retrieve the items he did not manage to take first time. When he returned the fourth time, he said he had “just a feeling that there was something we missed”.

• The reason why David kept on returning was because he “knew they (the victims) weren’t ‘phoning the police’”.

• Michael said he went back because, on the first occasion, he took a lot of CDs and if he went back he said he knew there would be “either a new resident or a replacement of the CDs”.
• Phillip kept going back to a theatre because he knew the layout; what was inside and that it was an easy target. He “just walked in… (there were) all open doors to the dressing rooms”.

Gary kept returning to the same theatre car park because

“…you’re more reassured that you’ll avoid discovery than on a random basis”

6.4 Specific repeat themes

6.4.1 Repeats of different crime types: housebreaking and car theft

• Matthew said that he had taken a car as well as breaking into a house on the same occasion a number of times.

“I have used the car and broken into the house quite a number of times”

• After a repeat housebreaking, approximately twenty against the same address, David stopped going back. Somebody saw him in the victims’ car. He took the car keys from the mantelpiece three to four times and would take it out for a drive for one to two hours, until the petrol ran out, and then return it in the early hours of the morning undamaged. Quite how a car can be returned exactly at the point when the petrol is about to run out is questionable, though, and for this reason the exact details of this example should perhaps be treated with caution.

6.4.2 Virtual repeats

In virtual repeats, similar or identical people or places are targeted. The similarity means that the offender can carry out the offence knowing the layout prior to entering the premises and may, in some circumstances, know exactly what they can expect to find inside. One example used in past research is petrol stations, where the layout is often exactly the same. There were a number of types of targets which can be addressed in this way.

Similar housing on the same street

• Matthew broke into a neighbouring house of a property he had already successfully targeted because he said it was an “easy area”. When asked what he meant by this, he said he thought to himself “that was easy, so next door might be easy”.

• Gerry commented about targets which he considers in the same way as others. He said that if he breaks into one type of house and there is another like it in the same block he knows what to expect. He said “if I got the window open, I know it’s going to be exactly the same”. As well as repeatedly targeting similar types of property,
Gerry also adopts repeat patterns in terms of the sequence of events which lead up to him carrying out the offence, as follows:

- “First, try and take a stock-check”. He walks around to see what he would like to take and what it is realistic to take;

- “Then, make two exits”, although he says that he tends only to open the inner doors so that no draught is created which might wake up the residents as they sleep, if he breaks in during the night.

In the example which Gerry gave, the sequence after this was altered because, although the items had been take to one of the exits, he claimed that the neighbour started working on his car and so he had to stay in the house longer. (This, Gerry said, caused him inconvenience and boredom which he claimed he alleviated by looking at the bills on the kitchen table out of interest, to see how much it cost to live in such a house. He claimed he also helped himself to snacks from the fridge as he waited).

- When he does return to the same target, Darren said that houses in the “same scheme”, or local housing project area, are appealing because “some houses have got certain types of windows or doors … easy access”. He said that if he is disturbed he does not go back. He tries to “rub fingerprints down, but when (you’re) on ‘smack’, you don’t care”.

Caravans

- All the caravans which Gareth targeted were similar or identical. Once one caravan had been broken into he knew he could break into other caravans. They were appealing as targets in at least three ways: first, they were against almost exactly the same targets; second, the same types of goods were considered to be inside the properties, in this case televisions; third, many of them were in the same area of the caravan park – in the quieter areas (which are the most appealing for a holiday location) which were near the perimeter of the park and which offered concealment from both formal (security guards) and informal surveillance.

The modus operandi used in this case should be noted. A simple fork was used to gain entry into each caravan. This caused little or no damage. A return was made very soon after the initial entry, sometimes less than 12 hours later. The combination of knowing that the owner was unlikely to return, given the evidence to that effect from the pre-offence surveillance, and the lack of evidence of tampering of the lock (which would not alert the security staff to anything), made the return very easy.

Identical circumstances

- Leslie said that he targets an area many times. He prefers to target large houses within these areas and makes use of the opportunity created by people’s routine activities. He
targets houses where he sees people returning home from work – especially young women. He watches them return, anticipates (from previous surveillance) that the first thing they do is put the kettle on for a drink and leave their bags in the entrance, many times without locking the door, steals the bags and runs away. He remarked that he is astounded at the same set of circumstances occurring in the same area time and time again and again.

Student flats

- Once Phillip has broken into one student flat he knows the format of all the others. He said “I know the layout of the whole place”. He always enters flats during the afternoon, when he knows students are likely to be out. He tends to go for Fridays more than other days of the week and says “I don’t normally do Saturday and Sunday because students are more likely to be in their rooms”. Even when he knows there is someone in the flat, but not in their room, he is not deterred. Phillip said that students leave their rooms unlocked for long periods, for example if they are watching television in the communal living area. He gave some reasons for returning to the same location:

  “Just pure confidence …I know it’s that easy ….students are very careless …(they) leave all their personal belongings out …(they) don’t lock doors”

Supermarkets

Many of the examples of virtual repeats were supermarkets, which often have a similar layout from branch to branch.

- Trevor repeatedly targets a well-known range of supermarkets. He said these are good for stealing alcohol because the alcohol is not protected by a ‘bandit’ screen. He has targeted a particular off-licence chain on many occasions for the same reason.

- Matthew targeted a supermarket three times a week “for about three months”. This was one of the top supermarket chains. He was stealing six bottles of whisky each time and would “talk to the security guards to put them at ease”. He only stopped targeting that store because, on the last occasion, he “got chased and got into a fight”. He went back because: he knew the layout; what was stored inside; and that it was, quite simply, “easy”. He would return although “you know you’ll get caught eventually, but it’s a risk you take”.

- Gerry targeted a store which is part of the “biggest chain of grocery stores in the North of England”.

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Darren within one chain of stores steals:

“…coffee - usually go for big jars - £7 each… bacon - £1 a pack… steal to order for Christmas … I wear 2 jackets to stuff the goods down… get half price for all of these …I used to do certain runs – sometimes a bacon run, sometimes a coffee run…”

He knew the layout. This store was an easy target, so it was possible to go back time after time. Identical goods would be found in each individual store in the chain. On one occasion he did go back but did not commit another offence because

“the bird in the shop knew me… she was on my tail the whole time”

When this happened, Darren would simply go somewhere else. He “always knew where to go”. Many offenders have a back-up target if initial targets are not successful.

6.4.3 Repeat homophobic crime

There was only one instance of homophobic repeat targeting from the interviews. The extent to which this victim is being targeted, however, is such that it is worth individual attention.

- Karl repeatedly ‘hits’ a gay man living in one Scottish city centre. Karl justifies his constant and chronic victimisation because the victim is gay and wealthy. Karl alleged that the target sexually assaults boys, homeless children and child prostitutes. This, in Karl’s opinion, makes him a legitimate target. Karl says that he stalks him, even when he is in prison, as people carry out offences on his behalf.

“(The) guy’s a queer… I’m stalking him, even in here …he’s worth thousands and thousands”

Since September 1998, Karl and friends have been targeting the man very frequently. He says they “normally go every month and take his money”. The man is ready with the money and there is a significant hand-over every month. While a couple of them watch out, another knocks on the door to make sure it is safe. Karl and his group are aware that what they are doing is risky. Karl says he watches for at least 10 minutes beforehand “in case he’s paying someone to take me out …make a call on a mobile and then walk and talk at the same time” as he is approaching the property.

Karl knows that the money will be waiting for him each time he goes. From his point of view, the repeated and successful targeting in the past of the same person has proved profitable and therefore there is no reason to alter the pattern of criminal activity.
6.4.4 Streets as repeats

There are a number of examples of the repeated targeting of particular streets.

- Neil targeted one street many times. He stole three cars in one night. He said
  
  “I drive round and if I feel it’s rubbish, will dump it and drive until I find another one”

- Gerry said that he “went back to the same street, having seen what was there, after committing other crimes”.

Targeting the same side of the street

There is evidence to support the statistical analysis of recorded crime data that criminals are more likely to go down one side of the street than cross over to the other side. Offenders admitted that they indeed did target the same side of the street.

- Carl targeted three other properties which were on the same side of the street. When asked why he targeted in this way, he said
  
  “… (it was) not necessarily because it was easier – just the way it was”

- Matthew said that he had also targeted the same side of the street before although, regarding all the properties, “not at the same time, though” as he sees that as “too risky”.

- Matt walked down one side of the street on his way home from a night out and considered targets along the way.

- Shaun has a well thought out routine which he adapts from crime scene to crime scene. He said
  
  “I normally do one side of the street at a time …(you) can pretend to be drunk and fall into them and get a good look as well …I sometimes go to another street and then go along back the other side of the original street”

6.4.5 Repeat racial crimes

Although, as with homophobic repeat crimes, there was only one example which came out of the interviews it is again worth attention because of the serious nature of the offences being carried out. It is also worth pointing out that it is the same offender who has been repeatedly carrying out the same offences against both targets.
• Karl is repeatedly perpetrating crimes against the owners of a shop in one Scottish city. This shop is run by Pakistanis. Karl is highly racist and uses this to justify the repeated targeting of these people. He collects money from them every two weeks because “they sell stuff to white people” which stops him from controlling that specific area. Even though he is in prison, he is collecting the money regularly through an associate.

6.4.6 Repeat ‘grudge’ offences

• Gerry conducted, for some time, a grudge campaign. The father of his ex-girlfriend had done or said something to upset him and this is how he justified the crimes.

Although the exact sequence of the events could not be remembered, Gerry gave the following examples. He committed upwards of twenty crimes against the same man and his property:

• Set fire to the man’s house;
• Burnt his shed down;
• Housebreaking: took all the kitchen fittings; stripped the house completely; took all the double-glazing out. Although he admits this was a revenge campaign, Gerry sold all the items on for cash and so therefore still made the incidents ‘profitable’;
• Filled the kitchen with horse manure;
• Stole three cars;
• Blew up two cars, which Gerry described as “just a little thing”…”.

The reason why he stopped is that Gerry said the man “got his own back”.

6.5 Reasons for not returning

There were a small number of offenders who do not return.

• Lewis said “I never go back”. He said that it is “too risky, in case the police catch you”.

• Another repeat offender, Stan, also has never targeted the same property more than once. He said

  “I don’t agree with going back – if you can’t do a good enough job the first time …no point in going back to it”
Housebreaking

- Wayne and a friend targeted the same house on two other occasions in May 1997 and May 1998. He targeted the safe and took jewellery and guns. It was appealing after the first time because he said he knew what was inside the property. There was no time when he intended breaking and but did not go through with it as he said he “emptied the place” the last time. There was nothing to go back for.

- Jim had not committed an offence before against a property he talked about. He said:

  “Going back is too dodgy”

- Although Matthew could think of examples where he had gone back to the same place, generally he said “I tend not to go back, but if it’s really good, (I) might do”. He said that it’s “too risky, unless (I’m feeling a) complete head-case”, that is feeling very sure of himself due to drink/drugs.

- Michael said on one occasion

  “I wanted to go back in January but there were lots of police around … so I think someone had already done the flats … too many police around”

- Karl intended to commit another housebreaking against the same property but did not go through with the offence. Karl said that he was concerned that the elderly householder might have a heart attack and that, (ironically, given the nature of some of the other crimes he has committed), he did not want to cause the death of the man.

- Phillip said that one target, a hotel restaurant, appealed to him because he knew the layout and what was inside. There were times when he intended to return but did not go through with the offence. This was because there were people around. On one occasion, he said that there were people in the conservatory having a meal and could see the main door of the hotel. He said “I took off because I thought people would see me”. When this happened, Phillip said that he went somewhere else to commit a crime. Phillip is a classic example of a repeat offender with a drug habit whose life is a constant cycle of drug use and crime to feed that drug use, though. Although he did not return to the example described above, he said, when asked how often he goes back to the same target:

  “Most of the places I’ve targeted I’ve gone back to”

- Stewart said it is “too risky” to go back more often than that.

- Phillip said there were times when he did consider going back to the same target, a theatre, but did not “when the front doors would be locked … not enough public in the place … too many staff around”. Physical security barriers and a high degree of
natural surveillance all prevented him from carrying out other crimes. On these occasions, he has gone somewhere else. Generally speaking, he said that if he is caught, he does not go back generally but that it depends. If he can think of a different way of doing the same crime he said he would go back.

- David said he went back to steal from a public house

  “…every weekend for about a year and then got greedy and they found out”

He said there were times when he intended to return but did not because they had increased security by putting nails and wire on the windows.

**False morality**

- Jonathan said he never returns to the same target:

  “I never go back to the same place twice… it’s just superstition to me …I never believe in hurting people twice …but there’s a thrill in doing it …it’s just for the money …I can’t get a decent job, so you have to get something to live”

As the rest of this chapter has shown, however, the majority of offenders do return to targets. Many of the ones referred to in this section give reasons why they stopped going back after a series of returns. As the examples show, those who never went back at all were in the minority.

### 6.6 Conclusions

- Offenders do go back to the same targets.
- Repeat offenders by different crime types go back to the same target.
- If an offender decides to go back to the same target, they are likely to do it soon it soon after the last time they were there.
- Many reasons were given for returning to the same target, including the ease of previous visits, laziness and the knowledge that they had left items which they wanted.
- Offenders often return to the same target at a time which fits in with their own routine activities. Others make special, sometimes long distance, journeys to go back.
- Some offenders return because of a grudge.
- The poor entrance security systems in many tenements in Scotland are used by offenders to commit offences and to return to the same locations.
• Analysis of recorded crime data showed a high cross-over between crimes types occurred with a housebreaking followed by the theft of a motor vehicles at the same address. Some offenders interviewed had carried out such offence sequences.

• Specific types of housing are targeted repeatedly by criminals: large houses in the country which are not overlooked and can lay empty for long periods of time; student accommodation; poor quality council flats and other types of flats with shared entry systems.

• Specific car parks adjoining cinemas, hotels and town/city centre car parks provide rich pickings for criminals time after time.

• The offender accounts support previous research evidence concerning the phenomenon of virtual repeats, where very similar or identical people or places are repeatedly targeted. Specific models of cars are targeted time and time again by repeat offenders, in different locations. Many models of Vauxhall car were cited as frequently targeted; similar housing on the same street/housing estate; student hall of residence accommodation; and particular chains of stores where goods are shelved in the same positions from store to store.

• Offenders often target the same side of the street.

Implications/recommendations

• All the evidence above illustrates that by profiling the individual characteristics/targeting practices of specific offenders in individual forces, by referring to the repeat crime which they had committed in the past and therefore what they were likely to commit the future, police forces can target known prolific offenders by reference to the types of crimes they are liable to commit. Offenders who repeatedly target properties ‘self-select’.

• Given that an offender will return to the same target soon after the previous visit, police surveillance techniques can be targeted better through the more focused use of mobile surveillance equipment.

• The poor entrance security systems in many tenements has been identified as a significant problem. Shared entrances should be made more secure.

• A review is encouraged of the repair programme offered by student landlords, local authorities and universities. Pressure should be put on universities to alert students and landlords to security considerations.

• The repeated victimisation of car parks remains common. Secured car parking should be encouraged.
• Stores which are part of a chain should be encouraged to consider varying layout; crime prevention advice should be given more frequently to victims of car crime, particularly Vauxhall owners, given the high levels of theft of and from this make of car (the Home Office’s 1997 Car Theft Index shows that many models of Vauxhall are in the ‘Red’ risk group, with high levels of thefts per 1000 such cars on the road).

4 For example, for some models of Vauxhall manufactured between 1995-1996, 72 in 1000 such cars were stolen in 1996.
Chapter 7 - Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, some of the main findings from the research in Scotland - the analysis of official data and repeat victim and repeat offender accounts – are summarised. Readers are directed to the individual chapters for the more detailed conclusions in relation to the different aims of the research. The sections are presented in the same order as the preceding chapters: addressing the evidence for repeat victimisation from the Scottish Crime Survey (SCS) first; followed by the extent and nature of repeat victimisation shown in recorded crime data; accounts given by repeat victims; and, finally, the evidence that repeat offenders do go back to the same target.

For the specific recommendations in relation to each of these sets of conclusions, readers are directed to the relevant section in the appropriate chapters, to avoid repetition.

This research supports evidence carried out elsewhere in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States on repeat victimisation as well as reporting new findings original to this study in Scotland. It also addresses repeat targeting practices of offenders. It considers victim and offender perspectives simultaneously.

7.2 Repeat victimisation in the Scottish Crime Survey

SCS data show the familiar repeat victimisation phenomena found in previous research on repeat victimisation. Crime is disproportionately suffered by repeat victims. The probability of becoming a victim again increases as the number of prior victimisations increase. Past victimisation predicts future victimisation.

With appropriate caution about the defects of SCS as a data source, but supplementing these analyses with analysis of police recorded data, we find repeat victimisation to be a robust phenomenon in Scotland. The prevent of repeat victimisation offers a crime management tool with good potential.

7.3 Repeat victimisation in police recorded crime data

The familiar appearance and time course of repeat victimisation are in evidence in Scottish police data. If a house is going to be broken into again after one housebreaking, it will happen soon after the previous one. The same is true for motor vehicle crime and assault.

There was shown to be a concentration of victimisation on the same side of a street as a home previously broken into. The ‘housebroken side of the street’ merits attention in distributing housebreaking help and advice.
Cross-crime type sequences showed that there is some predictability in sequences of crime, with assault best predicting future victimisation of the same type, and with victimisation by violence following housebreaking happening some three times more often than one might expect. Housebreaking followed by vehicle crime was also identified as an issue.

7.4 Repeat victim accounts

7.4.1 Different crime type repeats

- If a repeat crime is going to happen, it is most likely happen soon after the prior offence for repeat victims, both in respect of the same and for different crime types. Crimes happen particularly quickly for chronic victims.

- For some repeat victims experiencing many different crime types, particularly those living in rented properties, managers are not dealing with issues of security effectively.

- Lead-ups to repeat incidents come in various forms. For some, relatively trivial incidents or disorder are a predictor to more serious crimes.

7.4.2 Nature and impact of chronic victimisation

- The impact of repeat victimisation is distinctive. Repeat victims do not get used to being victims of crime.

- Anger is a common response to repeat victimisation.

- Repeat victimisation has a profound impact on feelings of safety.

- There is also a social impact which, in the worst cases, leads to social exclusion.

- Incidents which appear trivial on the surface have a significant impact on repeat victims.

- For many chronic victims, the general health is suffering together with their emotional well-being.
7.5 Repeat offender accounts

- Offenders admit returning to the same targets.
- Repeat offenders by different crime types go back to the same target.
- If an offender decides to go back to the same target, it is likely to be soon after the last time they were there. However, the longest delay between repeats by the same person was four years.
- Many reasons were given by offenders for returning to the same target, including the ease of previous visits, laziness and the knowledge that they had left items which they wanted.
- The poor entrance security systems in many tenement buildings in Scotland is used by offenders to commit offences and to return to the same locations.
- A number of the offenders interviewed had carried out housebreakings followed by vehicle crime.
- Specific car parks adjoining cinemas, hotels and town/city centre car parks provide rich pickings for criminals time after time.
- The offender accounts support previous research evidence concerning the phenomenon of virtual repeats, where very similar or identical people or places are repeatedly targeted.
- Offenders often target the same side of the street instead of going across to other properties or vehicles on the opposite side of a street.
7.6 Concluding comments

In the recently published *Repeat Victimisation: taking stock, Pease (1998)* identified a number of ‘next steps’ for research and practice on repeat victimisation:

“The immediate next step should be the improvement of police computer systems to identify repeats … Traditionally, crime prevention and detection have been treated as separate entities. Focusing on repeat victimisation draws the two functions closer together … Information on offender, victimisation event and place need to be brought together more systematically to enable preventive strategies of this kind to be formulated more effectively”

(Pease, 1998, p.25-31)

This report goes some way towards addressing the nature and extent of repeat victimisation in Scotland from the SCS and recorded crime data; the extent and nature of repeat victimisation of different crime types and the impact of crime on chronic victims; and the repeat targeting practices of the most prolific offenders. We hope this research will enable forces to address these issues more effectively in the future: the identification of repeat victimisation through recorded crime data and the improvements which need to be made to allow these analyses to take place routinely; and that the evidence presented through the report will be persuasive in encouraging forces to address both repeat victim and repeat offender targeting practices simultaneously.
References


