

# Advanced Crime Prevention Concepts – Repeat Victimisation

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## Introduction

There is now considerable evidence which demonstrates that crime is not evenly distributed across geographical locations, victims, targets or time. Some locations, some victims, some targets and particular times (time of day, days of week, months of the year) experience greater levels of crime than others. The following data demonstrates how crime tends to cluster and how particular individuals or households are repeat victims:

- “The top 10% of LGAs in NSW... account for more than 2/3s of the robberies that occur in NSW”<sup>i</sup>
- “30% of burglaries in Waverley... occurred in just 13 streets”<sup>i</sup>
- “Crime surveys typically reveal that some 40 per cent of crimes against individual people and against households are repeats, that is, committed against targets already victimized during the same year, with variation by crime type and place”<sup>iii</sup>

With this increased understanding of the importance of repeat victimisation has been increased focus on this topic.

Based on this work, a number of assertions are now generally accepted in relation to repeat victimisation:

- “Revictimisation of the same target, when it occurs, most often occurs quickly;
- The bulk of repeat victimisation seems to be the work of the same offenders;
- The highest rates of repeat victimisation are found for personal crimes such as domestic violence, sexual assault, abuse of elders and children, racial attacks and bullying. These are contexts in which the same targets remain available across time, often in private space;
- High rates of repeat property victimisation are typically found to characterise crimes against businesses. Commercial burglary, robbery and shop theft are prominent examples;
- Rates of repeat victimisation are greater in high crime areas;
- Most repeat prevention programmes have focused on domestic burglary. There is an urgent need to broaden the research base”<sup>iv</sup>.

## Exercise

1. Why might particular houses be repeatedly victimised?
2. Why might certain individuals suffer from repeated victimisation?
3. What are the benefits derived from preventing repeat victimisation?

## Prospective Mapping

The ‘discovery’ of repeat victimisation has triggered various attempts to gain a greater understanding of the dynamics of offending and the factors contributing to elevated risk of crime for particular individuals, households and locations. One feature of this research has been the identification of virtual repeats or the victimisation of similar locations. In the case of residential burglary, it has been shown that “... risk of victimisation is communicable, with properties within 400 metres and, particularly, on the same side of the street as a burgled home at an elevated risk for up to two months after an initial event”.<sup>v</sup> This work has resulted in the development of prospective or predictive mapping software (known as ProMap). Even without access to this software, prospective or predictive mapping concepts can aid attempts to prevent crime with limited resources. The following case study by Farrell and Pease demonstrates how simple mapping techniques and an understanding of repeat victimisation can deliver good results.

### Operation Cobra (developed by former Inspector Alan Edmunds, Metropolitan Police)

The initial analysis undertaken by Inspector Edmunds involved using the street as the unit of analysis, rather than a house or person. From the analysis, it was found that 1 per cent of streets hosted 10 per cent of vehicle crime and 13 per cent of streets accounted for half of all crime. The tactics employed by Inspector Edmunds involved simply talking to people living or working on the streets, analysing the problems and taking appropriate remedial action. By engaging the local residents who knew the nature of the issues, relevant responses were able to be mounted.

In the first nine months of Operation Cobra, the number of vehicles stolen declined by 25 per cent, and there was a 33 per cent reduction in thefts from vehicles. This reduction was not experienced elsewhere in the force area.<sup>vi</sup>

## Exercise

1. What data is required to develop repeat victimisation strategies?
2. How can the findings that there is an elevated risk of repeat and near repeat victimisation for homes within 400 metres (especially on the same side of the street) of a burgled home over a 2-month period be used to prevent crime?

### Repeat Victimisation Typology developed by Farrell and Pease

	Target	Location	Offender
<b>Spatial Repeat</b>	Same household, person, vehicle, business, target	Spatially near repeats; hot spots; risky facilities	Same offenders repeating offence at same place
<b>Temporal Repeat</b>	Quick repeat against same target (e.g. domestic violence)	Quick repeat not necessarily by same offenders (e.g. looting of a prone store by different people)	Quick repeat by same offender(s), as is often the case in domestic violence
<b>Crime-type Repeat</b>	Same crime-type against same targets (e.g. robbery)	Continued drug dealing in a narrowly defined area	Repeat drive-offs
<b>Tactical Repeat</b>	Virtual repeat using same tactic leads to hot products	Same tactic facilitated by same place (e.g. theft and pickpocket at a street market)	Repeat offending using same tactic

<sup>i</sup>Weatherburn, D. (2004) **Law and Order in Australia: Rhetoric and Reality**, The Federation Press, Annandale, page 94.

<sup>ii</sup>Weatherburn, D. (2004) **Law and Order in Australia: Rhetoric and Reality**, The Federation Press, Annandale, page 94.

<sup>iii</sup>Farrell, G. and Pease, K. (2008) ‘Repeat Victimisation’, in Wortley, R. and Mazerolle, L. (eds) **Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis**, Willan Publishing, Devon, page 123.

<sup>iv</sup>Farrell, G. and Pease, K. (2008) ‘Repeat Victimisation’, in Wortley, R. and Mazerolle, L. (eds) **Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis**, Willan Publishing, Devon, page 123.

<sup>v</sup>Bowers, K.J.; Johnson, S. D. and Pease, K. (2004) ‘Prospective Hot-Spotting: The Future of Crime Mapping?’, *British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 44, No. 5: 641-654.

<sup>vi</sup>This case study has been replicated from Farrell, G. and Pease, K. (2008) ‘Repeat Victimisation’, in Wortley, R. and Mazerolle, L. (eds) **Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis**, Willan Publishing, Devon, page 129.