

**Home Office Research Study 269**

# Distraction burglary amongst older adults and ethnic minority communities

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# Foreword

The Home Office set up the Distraction Burglary Taskforce April 2000. The aim of the Taskforce was 'To tackle distraction burglary and thereby improve the quality of life of vulnerable communities through a co-ordinated national partnership initiative within England and Wales.' A wide range of partners became involved in the taskforce including the police, local authorities and agencies, utility companies and organisations with a responsibility to deliver services to older and vulnerable people.

To gain a better understanding of the extent of distraction burglary and the effects of being a target of this crime, the Taskforce commissioned two research studies. The first study concentrated on people over the age of 60, who are victimised most frequently. The second study looked at minority ethnic communities, who appear to be targeted less frequently by distraction burglars. This report presents the results of these two studies.

The findings of this report will be of interest to all organisations working with older victims of distraction burglary, and specific vulnerable groups. The practical recommendations cover advice on dealing with victims of distraction burglary to ensure that the victim is given sufficient support to limit the impact of the crime, and also how to raise awareness of the crime without raising fear of crime. The Good Practice Guide, produced by the Taskforce, already incorporates many of the recommendations suggested in this current study.

Peter Edwards  
Chair, Distraction Burglary Taskforce

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# Summary

The description of distraction burglary used by the Distraction Burglary Taskforce is “a type of burglary whereby the method of entry is by trick rather than typical forced or sneak entry”. White older adults are assumed to be the prime targets of distraction burglary, with Home Office statistics reporting 19,400 distraction burglary offences against older adults in 2001/02 (Home Office, 2002). The British Crime Survey reports that entry was gained through false pretences in 6% of burglaries, and in 6% the offender gained entry by pushing past the person who opened the door (Flood-Page and Taylor 2003). These figures may under-estimate actual levels of distraction burglary due to under-reporting and problems in the classification of offences. Under-reporting may be particularly prevalent amongst minority ethnic communities. The research reported here looked at the extent and the effect of distraction burglary on the over-60s and minority ethnic communities. The report gives recommendations on raising awareness, reducing vulnerability and reducing the impact of a distraction burglary incident.

Anecdotal evidence from previous research and stereotypical beliefs about victims point to several factors which appear to increase the likelihood of being a target and a victim of distraction burglary. Potential risk factors fall into two categories:

- Environmental risk factors (e.g. home in poor state of repair, front door not visible to street);
- Psycho-social risk factors (e.g. impaired mobility; cognitive impairment; compliance; loneliness; isolation; doorstep behaviour and home security; and the persuasiveness of the offender).

Ethnic minority communities report higher levels of worry about crime than white communities. Older people have similar levels of worry for most crime types to those of other age groups despite having lower levels of victimisation, which may have an impact on quality of life. Older victims of a range of crimes generally report a negative impact of the crime on aspects of physical functioning, lifestyle, physical health and mental health, although the degree of impact is unknown. However, no specific evidence is available concerning the impact of distraction burglary on older adults or people from minority ethnic communities.

To begin to build evidence concerning distraction burglary, the Home Office Distraction Burglary Taskforce funded two research studies:

- One study focused on white older adults, thought to be the primary victims of distraction burglary. This study examined risk factors associated with being a target and a victim of distraction burglary, the impact of distraction burglary on victims, and how awareness of distraction burglary could be raised.
- The other study focused on Asian and African-Caribbean communities. This investigated the extent of distraction burglary in these communities, and their experiences of distraction burglary.

## Methodology

### Distraction burglary and older adults

Two hundred and fifteen participants aged 60 or above were recruited for the study across three groups (see Table 1). Participants were interviewed at two time points, approximately one month post-incident (for Groups 1 and 2) and approximately three months after the first interview. Group 3 participants (those who had not experienced crime) at the first interview were asked about the previous month.

**Table 1. Participants in the research.**

Group	Description	No of participants at time 1	No of participants at time 2
1	Victims of distraction burglary	75	60
2	Repellers of an attempted distraction burglary	45	27
3	Older adults with no experience of crime	95	69

Participants in Groups 1 and 2 had all reported a distraction burglary crime or a suspicious incident to the police. Group 3 participants were recruited via ‘snowball’ sampling i.e. friends or relatives of participants in Groups 1 and 2. Where a snowball sample failed to be generated, participants were then recruited via health centres and day centres.

### Distraction burglary and ethnic minority communities

There were few recorded incidents of distraction burglary amongst minority ethnic communities. For this reason, both distraction burglary victims and repellers were identified through a community outreach programme. This included first language leaflet drops to

20,000 households, and an extensive publicity campaign including posters in local shops, health, community and religious centres, features in community newsletters and media presentations targeted at local Asian and African-Caribbean community groups. Interviews were conducted with 66 Asian adults (6 victims, 25 repellers, 35 non-victims) and 60 African-Caribbean adults (2 victims, 24 repellers, 34 non-victims).

Both studies used similar semi-structured interviews (see box). In addition, focus groups were also conducted with 33 Asian and 19 African-Caribbean adults. These addressed issues such as distraction burglary victimisation, risk, impact, reporting, and recommendations for individual and community action to stop distraction burglary.

### **Topics covered in the semi-structured interviews**

- Participant characteristics (gender, age, ethnicity).
- The distraction burglary incident (e.g. characteristics of the incident and the caller, views about the cause of the incident, satisfaction with police response).
- Environmental risk factors (e.g. housing type, tenure and location, indicators of vulnerable resident).
- Psycho-social risk factors (e.g. physical functioning, memory, social support, loneliness, compliance, doorstep checking behaviours, doorstep etiquette).
- Impact (e.g. depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, quality of life, physical health, fear of crime).
- Tackling distraction burglary (awareness, ideas for stopping distraction burglary).

### **Risk factors for older people**

Within the older victim sample there appeared to be two distinct profiles:

- those who let the burglar in (56 per cent of victims)
- victims where perpetrators gained entry uninvited (44 per cent).

The study used these sub-groups of victims for analysis throughout. Multivariate analysis was used to identify the main risk factors that were associated with being a victim or target of distraction burglary.

### **Victims where the caller gained entry uninvited**

The main risk factors identified were:

- problems with mobility and activities of daily living
- receiving more visits from professional carers than from friends
- holding doorstep etiquette beliefs likely to place them at risk, such as always believing a caller's ID to be genuine.

These victims may habitually leave doors unlocked or open for carers to gain entry to their home, placing them at greater risk of uninvited callers gaining entry.

### **Victims where the caller was let into the home**

The risk factors identified were:

- receiving fewer regular visitors
- believing the caller's story rang true
- fewer doorstep checking behaviours pre-incident.

### **Environmental indicators**

Significant risk factors for being a target of a distraction burglary incident or attempt included:

- neglected gardens and outside maintenance
- surrounding houses being in poor condition
- the front door not being visible to the street or neighbours.

Participants performing fewer checking activities pre-incident were also likely to be targets of both distraction burglary incidents and attempts, although victims increased their checking routines post-incident to an equivalent level to other groups.

Cognitive impairment, compliance and loneliness were not risk factors for targeting or victimisation. Few participants across all groups, including non-victims, reported signs of dementia, compliant personalities or extreme loneliness, so no conclusions can be drawn about this.

## **Impact of distraction burglary on older people**

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the impact of distraction burglary because no data was collected pre-incident. Nonetheless, some conclusions could be drawn.

- Victims reported higher post-traumatic stress disorder scores than repellers. Victims who let in the offender experienced the greatest level of initial trauma, although this had reduced by the second interview (four months after the incident). Where the caller gained entry uninvited, victims took longer to recover from the initial trauma than those who let in the offender.
- There was substantial variation across the groups on all mental health indicators. However, 40 per cent of victims and repellers reported that the incident had had a significant impact on their quality of life.
- Few general mental health problems in terms of anxiety or depression were reported in any participant group amongst the over-60s, suggesting that a distraction burglary did not have an impact on mental health, apart from the initial trauma mentioned above.
- Few participants reported any changes in physical health post-incident, and uptake of health services did not generally increase.
- Participants reported greater concern over national and local crime than those interviewed for the British Crime Survey (Kershaw et al, 2001). Victims reported the greatest fear of crime where the offender gained entry uninvited. Participants reporting a more sustained impact of the crime on their quality of life were more likely to believe that the incident was due to bad luck or that they felt like a puppet in the burglar's hands i.e. more helpless.

## **Minority ethnic communities and distraction burglary**

### **Rates of reporting distraction burglary**

Over the past five years, Avon and Somerset Constabulary recorded that only three victims from a total of 312 distraction burglaries were from Asian or African-Caribbean communities and none of the recorded repellers of distraction burglary was from minority ethnic groups. A further 11 victims and 49 repellers of distraction burglary from ethnic minority communities were identified through the community outreach programme.

Although these rates are proportionally low compared with white communities, suggesting a lower level of victimisation amongst minority ethnic communities, the figures do indicate that

there is still some under-reporting. Asian participants suggested that they are more likely to inform family than report the crime to the police, as they appeared to believe the police would not act. Preserving family honour was not seen as a major factor in non-reporting.

### **Rates of victimisation**

Participants suggested a number of reasons for the apparent lower rates of victimisation amongst minority ethnic communities:

- many Asian households are occupied by more than one person at high risk times;
- Asian women in particular are very aware of door checking procedures and will not open the door at all if they are suspicious of the caller; cultural and religious factors may determine aspects of this behaviour;
- African-Caribbean people will often demand to see a caller's ID;
- both African-Caribbean and Asian people are willing to leave callers on the doorstep with the door closed whilst the ID is checked.

It should be noted that these suggestions are based only on the views of the 126 participants of this study.

### **Awareness of distraction burglary**

#### **The over-60s study**

Sixty-eight per cent of victims and repellers said they were aware of distraction burglary before the incident, largely through newspapers and television. Just over a third (35 per cent) of participants remembered receiving a warning message about distraction burglary. Most of these messages were general warnings rather than providing specific advice about how to reduce vulnerability. Participants suggested giving more specific advice about distraction burglary, such as not opening the door to strangers, using a door chain or lock and checking callers' ID. They also suggested raising awareness through television advertising and face-to-face warnings from professionals.

#### **The minority ethnic communities study**

In contrast, Asian and African-Caribbean participants reported little awareness of the term 'distraction burglary' – awareness campaigns appeared to have very little impact. Specific ideas to raise awareness of distraction burglary amongst minority ethnic communities included:

- making use of local community groups, older adult groups and health and religious centres to deliver information through verbal and visual media;
- inviting the police to give advice through community facilitated functions.

Both studies explored suggestions about how to reduce distraction burglary. Ideas for stopping distraction burglary ranged widely, including changing the behaviour of potential targets (e.g. don't open the door to strangers), changing home security (e.g. have door chains fitted) and broader national action (e.g. more police patrols; tougher sentences).

Asian and African-Caribbean communities recommended that strong messages should be promoted within the relevant communities (e.g. to be careful when opening the door) and to public, private and voluntary services (e.g. visits should be pre-arranged) to reduce distraction burglary.

## **Recommendations**

The following findings stemmed from the research findings. They are aimed at professionals working with victims of distraction burglary, partnerships looking to reduce distraction burglary and those working with older people.

### **Raising awareness**

- Awareness raising campaigns should incorporate specific warning messages rather than general cautions. Changes in behaviour should be encouraged through making the distraction burglary message more explicit.
- A "keep the door locked" message could also help reduce other forms of burglary such as walk-in burglaries.
- Awareness raising campaigns should encourage active learning, such as role playing, to help enforce messages and make learning more effective.
- Self-confidence and feelings of personal control over victimisation should be promoted to minimise future vulnerability by giving advice on how to deal with potential distraction burglars.
- Campaign strategies should meet the needs of particular communities, and could include the effective use of local media. More focused local campaigns could use local community resources.
- Reporting of attempted and successful distraction burglary incidents amongst all communities should be encouraged.

The findings from these two studies challenge many of the assumptions made by professionals concerning the process of distraction burglary, the nature of a typical victim and the impact of the crime on victims. Thus, awareness raising campaigns also need to take place amongst professional groups working with victims and older people.

### **Reducing vulnerability**

- Environmental and external property indicators of a vulnerable resident (e.g. neglected gardens and outside maintenance) could be minimised by encouraging home owners and landlords to carry out external repairs, helping them seek financial and practical support where necessary.
- Registers of reputable tradespeople may also help to reduce the extent of rogue trader crime. Agencies aiming to promote and maintain the independence of older people living in their own homes, together with local councils, could take a lead in these two areas.
- Poor mobility as a vulnerability factor amongst older adults could be minimised if professionals who visit older adults encourage them to keep their exterior doors locked. This could be coupled with the introduction of gadgets, such as an entryphone system, or monitored remote door entry system, which enable the older person, or central control centre, to check who is at the door and unlock it remotely after checking the caller's identity. Outreach teams supporting older persons temporarily (e.g. after a fall) might consider buying gadgets that can be left temporarily with a person and removed when the person's circumstances change and there is no longer a risk.
- Isolation could be reduced by developing social networks reaching people either in their own homes or in community settings, such as day centres with an explicitly social function.
- Calls from utility companies or professionals should be arranged in advance, with a specific date and time of appointment, in the first language of the resident. Once at the property, an agreed consistent "doorstep code" should be employed by the visiting agency, so this practice becomes familiar and predictable.

### **Reducing impact**

For the relatively small proportion of victims and repellers experiencing serious trauma as a result of the distraction burglary incident, the assessment and prolonged intervention for physical and mental health problems should include:

- Police personnel informing the victims GP to ensure a vulnerable victim receives continued support and higher levels of supervision. Disclosure of information under Section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 states that information can be shared for the purposes of preventing further crime.
- police or Victim Support administering a brief assessment of the likely impact of the crime on the victim, triggering routine referral onto other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies where necessary
- identifying “slips in behaviour” in doorstep security that resulted in the crime instead of shifting blame entirely to the perpetrator. This could reduce feelings of helplessness and encourage changes in future behaviour to reduce future vulnerability.



Distraction burglary is currently the focus of considerable Home Office and police activity, yet relatively little research evidence is available concerning this crime. This chapter will provide a background to the research studies described in this report. Current definitions of distraction burglary will be discussed and existing research will be reviewed concerning the prevalence of distraction burglary, potential risk factors for victimisation and the impact of distraction burglary on victims.

## **Defining distraction burglary**

The Distraction Burglary Good Practice Guide (2001) (Distraction Burglary Taskforce, 2001) defines distraction burglary as:

a type of burglary whereby the method of entry is by trick (own italics) rather than typical forced or sneak entry (Section 2, p 2).

The Good Practice Guide also notes incidences of “tricking” older people where a “bogus” property repairer charges inflated prices for unperformed/shoddy work. The offender may assume the identity of an official (e.g. water board, electricity board, police), a salesperson or workman (e.g. door to door sales, gardener, property repairer), or use various miscellaneous guises (e.g. feigning illness, asking for a glass of water, pretending to be a family friend of a neighbour). These crimes are also referred to as bogus caller or artifice crime.

Operation Litotes (2001), covering South West England, for intelligence purposes, has defined distraction burglary as:

Any crime involving a trick, action or falsehood that enables a dwelling to be entered with intent to steal or property is stolen (burglary) or where a person is deceived into parting with property, which as payment is disproportionate to goods or services delivered.

With effect from April 2003, distraction burglary will be included in the recorded crime series as a sub heading within the burglary category. This defines distraction burglary as:

Any crime where a falsehood, trick or distraction is used on an occupant of a dwelling to gain, or try to gain, access to the premises to commit burglary.

## Official statistics

Official distraction burglary statistics generally indicate that the majority of victims are older adults, most of whom in the UK are currently white (Warnes, 1996). Older adults are therefore assumed to be the primary victims of this type of crime. 1999 Home Office statistics (Home Office, 2000) report 16,000 offences of distraction burglary against older people over a one-year period. This rose to 19,400 for 2001/02 (Home Office, 2002). According to the British Crime Survey (1998), in households where participants were aged 60 or over, 14 per cent of successful burglaries involved false pretences compared with six per cent in people under 60 (Budd, 1999); separate data on distraction burglary using a wider definition, as suggested by Operation Litotes, are not available from the British Crime Survey. Official crime statistics and victimisation studies have shown that with respect to almost every kind of crime, older people are victimised less often than younger people (e.g. Mawby, 1982). This pattern is reversed with distraction burglaries; the average age of victims is 81, with few such crimes reported for younger people (Home Office, 2000).

It has been suggested that recorded crime statistics may significantly under-estimate the actual number of distraction burglaries committed, as offences remain undetected or unreported due to the embarrassment of victims, failure to identify missing valuables from the home, and/or police procedures which mis-classify the crimes (Steele, 2000).

Furthermore, very little is known about the prevalence of distraction burglaries within the Asian and African-Caribbean communities. Avon and Somerset Constabulary (2000) report only five per cent of distraction burglary victims being from visible ethnic minority groups. However, Clancy et al (2001) report that ethnic minority groups are at greater risk of experiencing domestic burglaries and vehicle theft, and that even after having controlled for factors such as area of residence, age, social class and income, those from the Indian ethnic group have a greater risk of burglary than predicted. Modood et al (1997) in a national survey confirmed that ethnic minority communities in the UK report higher rates of property crimes, assaults and harassment. However, no information from community surveys with ethnic minority communities is available for distraction burglary. Under-reporting may be possible. For example, within the Asian community (see Chowdhry and Walker, 1993), anecdotal evidence suggests that crimes are often not reported to the police for reasons such as distrust of the police, the reporting process itself, fear of repercussions from offenders and the effect of victimisation on "izzat" (honour) and "gharki" (family honour).

## Risk factors

Various hypotheses have attempted to account for variations in apparent rates of victimisation. These can be broadly classified into environmental and psycho-social risk factors and tend to be generalised from other types of crime and anecdotal in nature, rather than evidence-based.

There is a particular paucity of evidence concerning environmental risk factors. In interviews, offenders report targeting properties in a poor state of repair, with front doors not visible to the street, and where there was no evidence of a caring community such as neighbourhood watch stickers (Steele, 2000).

Many assumptions have been made about psycho-social risk factors for distraction burglary victimisation, although again little evidence exists. Such risk factors are thought to include:

- Impaired mobility – research evidence suggests that older people with mobility problems are at greater risk of burglary (O’Neill et al, 1989; Jones, 1987), because they are more likely to leave their doors unlocked or ajar.
- Cognitive impairment – police personnel often report encounters with confused older victims, but only 20 per cent of people aged 80-85 years have a diagnosable dementia (Alzheimer’s Society, undated). This may be less of a risk factor for minority ethnic communities in the UK as they have a relatively young age structure (Warnes, 1996).
- Compliance – Gudjonsson (1989) has highlighted the power of compliance, and suggested that more compliant people become victims of distraction burglary and less compliant people repel attempts.
- Loneliness – police and community focus groups have suggested that more lonely older people may be particularly vulnerable to distraction burglary (Thornton and Barlow, 2000). Older people may be more susceptible to loneliness than younger counterparts because of declining physical health, loss of social activities, and loss of life-time partners (McInnis and White, 2001).
- Isolation – Steele (2000) reported that isolated older people are particularly attractive targets to offenders. Murphy (1996) has suggested a reduced vulnerability to distraction burglaries amongst Asian communities given the increased likelihood of Asian elders to live in larger households with younger family members.
- Doorstep behaviour – O’Neill et al (1989) suggested that older people have a more trusting attitude to callers. Jones (1987) also noted how older people as a

group are particularly susceptible to “fraudulent entry” and suggests this vulnerability is linked to culturally determined doorstep behaviours. Older people, brought up in the early part of the 20th century, will have lived in “safer”, more open communities, where crime was less common (Home Office, 2001).

- Persuasiveness of the caller – it is possible that victimisation is partly determined by the skill of the caller who either convinces the victim or raises their suspicions, although there is no current evidence on this issue.

## **The impact of distraction burglary**

Despite the prevalence of distraction burglaries, no research evidence exists concerning the specific impact of distraction burglary on victims' physical and mental health, fear of future crime and perceived quality of life. Most of the available evidence concerns the impact of domestic burglary on both adults and older adults. However, the impact of distraction burglary may be greater than the impact of domestic burglary, as this crime incorporates both a burglary and a deception.

The following sections draw on existing research focusing on crime and older people or people from ethnic minorities.

### **Impact on fear of crime**

According to Lee (1982) older people are more likely than younger people to evince high levels of fear but at the same time, are less likely to be victimised by most types of crime. This does not necessarily indicate that fear of crime among the elderly is somewhat “irrational,” however it does suggest that the problems created by fear of crime may be largely independent of the incidence or distribution of crime itself. (p 655).

According to findings from the most recent British Crime Survey:

Older people have similar levels of worry for most crime types to those of other age groups despite their lower levels of victimisation. (Chivite-Matthews and Maggs, 2002 p1).

Asian respondents to the British Crime Survey (2000) reported a higher than average fear of crime, although African-Caribbean respondents registered an average response (see also Clancy et al, 2001).

Victimisation can have serious consequences upon fear of crime, with 75 per cent of older victims reporting an increased and prolonged fear of crime after becoming a victim (Berg and Johnson, 1979). Fear of crime itself can have a serious impact on individuals. Studies demonstrate that social isolation can result from fear of crime (Young and Stein, 1990; Hayes and Burke, 1987), and social isolation is associated with higher levels of loneliness (McInnis and White, 2001). Both social isolation and loneliness have been shown to be key predictors of symptoms of depression and anxiety in older people (Prince et al, 1997).

### **Impact on functioning**

Research with adult victims generally documents a range of negative outcomes following all types of criminal victimisation, including mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder and depression (Boudreux et al, 1998), and greater utilisation of health services (Koss et al, 1991). However, factors such as coping strategies (Datillio and Freeman, 2000) and actual and perceived social support (Cutrona and Russell, 1990) can moderate the relationship between the experience of crime victimisation and health outcomes.

Little research has focused on the impact of crime on older victims. Concerning physical health, there is mixed evidence regarding whether older people suffer more injury, or more serious injury, following victimisation. For example, Blumberg (1979) found marginally lower rates of all injuries among those aged 65 and over, except for theft, for which older people were slightly more likely to suffer from serious injury. Feinberg (1977) also found that criminal attack increased older victims' problems with pre-existing health conditions (e.g. heart and blood pressure problems).

Crime has also been shown to negatively impact on the behaviour of older victims. This includes their ability to be self-sufficient and to perform activities of daily living (cooking, housekeeping etc.) (Feinberg, 1977; McClelland et al, 1980). In addition, Berg and Johnson (1979) found that more females and individuals over 60 reported hyper-vigilance, avoidance of crime and lifestyle restrictions after victimisation.

Financially, victims aged 60 and older have reported a much greater sense of loss than younger victims (Berg and Johnson, 1979). Given that older adults taken as a whole have the least income at their disposal as compared with other age groups (Wetzels et al, 1995), Hirschel and Rubin (1982) suggest that the "theft of a purse containing an entire month's rent can present a danger to the older individual's very existence".

Victimisation can also have a range of damaging emotional consequences. Research has shown that becoming a victim of crime can shatter the assumptions that people hold about themselves and the world around them. To some extent people live their lives with the attitude that crime will not happen to them. When it does, crime victims can feel that they have been singled out for misfortune, and may then feel vulnerable and unsure about the future (Janoff-Bulman, 1985). Crime victims are 1.5 times more likely to be depressed and 2.7 times more likely to report being suicidal, and individuals experiencing multiple victimisation are at greatest risk of suicide (Sorensen and Golding, 1990). Post-traumatic stress symptoms (to the extent where a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder is made) have also been widely reported in the crime impact literature (e.g. Riggs et al, 1995).

While an extensive literature exists concerning the psychological effects on victims of serious crime such as assault or rape, there is comparatively little research on the effects of less serious crime involving property rather than the person, such as burglary or car theft. Waller (1984) argues that "Trauma from residential burglary is one of the most frequent and forgotten in criminal justice...as serious trauma will occur in approximately 1 in 20 cases". Maguire (1980) concurs: "Residential burglary produces a damaging impact on the health and peace of mind of a considerable proportion of victims" (p220).

From the 2001 British Crime Survey (Kershaw et al., 2001), in response to domestic burglary 82 per cent of burglary victims felt that they had been emotionally affected by the incident, including "very much" for 29 per cent of people and "quite a lot" for 27 per cent. Those who had experienced burglary with entry reported being more affected emotionally than those who had experienced attempts. Women were more likely than men to report problems sleeping, fear and tearfulness.

Brown and Harris (1989) suggest the trauma caused by domestic burglary is due to an invasion of the person's "safe territory". Residential burglary involves a gross violation of a person's "primary territory", and threatens their sense of control and feelings of security. As older people spend a larger proportion of their time within their home (Sixsmith, 1990), the home assumes more importance, and an intrusion upon this space can have even more devastating consequences. Certainly Maguire (1980) noted how lone female victims (through bereavement or divorce) and older victims were more likely to experience acute stress following victimisation.

Specific evidence concerning the impact of victimisation on older people is scarce. One study (Feinberg, 1977) has noted that before a crime incident 20 per cent of older crime victims reported feelings of nervousness, increasing to 73 per cent immediately after the

incident and reducing to 68 per cent at two months follow-up. Eight per cent of the sample reported sleeplessness prior to the incident, rising to 56 per cent after the incident (Feinberg, 1977). Mawby (1983) notes that existing feelings of vulnerability in older people can be reinforced following crime victimisation. Donaldson (2003) reports that older people who are burgled decline in health faster than non-victims of similar age and that the impact of burglary is typically great.

Finally, there is a lack of evidence concerning the impact of crime on people from minority ethnic communities in the UK, although Clancy et al (2001) report that within age groups, sexes and geographic areas with a high proportion of minority ethnic communities, minority respondents were consistently more likely to express anxiety about burglary and robbery than white respondents.

## **The current studies**

A national Distraction Burglary Task Force was set up by the Home Office in 2000 to develop a national strategy to tackle distraction burglary. With ministerial commitment, the Task Force consisted of private, statutory and voluntary sector partners. The Task Force published a Good Practice Guide (Distraction Burglary Task Force, 2001) which provided information in respect to preventing and detecting this crime. The Guide included examples of potential security devices that might protect against distraction burglary (including a door bar and spy-hole) and the Guide also launched the STOP, CHAIN, CHECK awareness raising campaign.

The two studies reported here were commissioned to inform the ongoing work of the Task Force. As the introduction has demonstrated, there are substantial gaps in the evidence base for distraction burglary, which these studies begin to address.

## **Distraction burglary and older adults**

The first study focused on improving the evidence-base concerning distraction burglary and white older adults, using the wider definition of distraction burglary used by Operation Litotes. This study compared adults aged 60 or over across three groups:

- victims of distraction burglary;
- older adults who had repelled a distraction burglary attempt;
- older adults who had not experienced a distraction burglary attempt.

Participants in the study were interviewed twice, approximately one month after the distraction burglary incident and approximately three months after the initial interview. The non-victimised older adult group were also interviewed twice. A wide range of environmental and psychosocial risk factors were investigated, including:

- characteristics of the immediate environment and the person's home;
- physical and cognitive functioning;
- social support;
- compliance;
- doorstep behaviour;
- fear of crime;
- people's experiences of the distraction burglary incident.

This information was used to identify risk factors associated with being a target of a distraction burglary attempt, and to identify risk factors associated with being a victim rather than a repeller of a distraction burglary attempt.

The first study also investigated the impact of the distraction burglary incident on a range of outcomes for older adults, including:

- physical functioning and cognitive functioning;
- physical health;
- mental health;
- fear of crime.

Finally, this study explored the views of participants on their current awareness of distraction burglary and how distraction burglary can be reduced.

### **Distraction burglary and ethnic minority communities**

The second study focused on investigating the extent of distraction burglary amongst ethnic minority communities. The initial aim of the study was to identify whether distraction burglaries were rare or generally underreported within the Asian and African-Caribbean communities. Individual interviews and focus groups with victims, repellers and non-victims from Asian and African-Caribbean communities were carried out to explore communities' experiences of and attitudes towards distraction burglary and other "trust" crimes, and ideas for crime prevention and awareness strategies.

## Structure of the report

This report relates the methods, major findings and conclusions from the two studies. Chapter 1 has covered the context and relevant existing evidence. Subsequent chapters are as follows:

- Chapter 2: Methods used by the two studies
- Chapter 3: Distraction burglary victimisation amongst older adults
- Chapter 4: Risk factors for the targeting and victimisation of older adults
- Chapter 5: The impact of distraction burglary on older adults and how older people think distraction burglary should be tackled
- Chapter 6: Experiences of distraction burglary amongst ethnic minority communities
- Chapter 7: Conclusions and recommendations



### **Distraction burglary and older adults**

#### **Pilot study**

A pilot study (Thornton and Barlow, 2000) concerning distraction burglary and older adult victims was first conducted in Salford using a semi-structured interview schedule. Participants had been victims of distraction burglary in the previous 36 months. Sixteen victims of distraction burglary (13 females and 3 males) from 51 to 90 years of age (mean age 77.4) agreed to participate and were interviewed face to face. The main findings of the pilot study suggested that as a group victims did not demonstrate any marked cognitive impairment; were neither over-trusting nor lonely; felt under no obligation to let doorstep callers in; and were suspicious, but feared challenging the caller.

#### **Design of the first study – older adults**

The first study used a quasi-experimental, multi-method design. Analysis was conducted on the basis of one between-participants factor (victims vs. repellers vs. non-victim comparisons) and one within-participants factor (Time 1 approximately one month post-incident vs. Time 2 approximately four months post-incident).

#### **Participants**

Two hundred and fifteen participants aged 60 or above were recruited for the study across three groups – victims of distraction burglary, those who had successfully repelled potential offenders, and a third group who had not been targeted (see Table 2.1). Interviews were conducted at two time points, approximately one month post-incident (for Groups 1 and 2) and approximately three months after the Time 1 interviews. Group 3 participants at Time 1 interviews were asked about the previous month. Project time constraints resulted in fewer Group 2 participants being followed up than participants in other groups.

**Table 2.1: Participants in the older adult study**

Group	Description	No of participants at time 1	No of participants at time 2
1	Victims of distraction burglary	75	60
2	Repellers of an attempted distraction burglary	45	27
3	Older adults with no experience of crime	95	69

Participants in Group 3 (non-victim comparisons) were excluded if they reported any crime in the twelve months prior to Time 1 interviews. Although participants were not excluded if they were of non-white ethnic origin, all participating victims and repellers were white; consequently white non-victim older adults were recruited for Group 3.

Four geographical locations were selected as sampling points to obtain a cross-section of participants living in rural and urban settings, although the representativeness of participants of the population nationally is unknown. All four sites were within daily travel distance of the base for the study (Salford) and offered police co-operation with the identification of participants for the project. These sites were East Lancashire, Leeds, Salford and Derbyshire. Although numbers in specific groups across the four sites were too small to allow statistical comparison, there were no obvious differences apparent across the sites.

### **Ethical approval**

For research projects potentially involving National Health Service patients across five or more health authority areas, ethical approval must be sought from a Multi-centre Research Ethics Committee (MREC). Ethical approval was gained from the West Midlands MREC. Though there were no research sites situated within the Midlands, each regional MREC will consider multi-site ethical approval for any geographical region. This particular MREC committee was chosen as it reviewed ethics forms at a time convenient to the Home Office study. Local Research Ethics Committees (LRECs) in each participating health authority area were informed of the research project.

### **Measures**

A semi-structured interview was used containing both standardised measures (i.e. 'tick list' assessment tools that have been evaluated on large samples and shown to reliably measure any given construct e.g. loneliness) and measures specifically designed for the study. The interview was largely structured, with some semi-structured components to allow for free recall of the distraction burglary incident and the opportunity for participants to express their ideas for preventing distraction burglary.

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The interview was designed to cover the following areas (information on standardised measures used is presented in Appendix A; other measures were developed for this study):

Participant characteristics:

- gender, age and ethnicity.

The distraction burglary incident:

- day and time of incident;
- participant alone in home at time of incident;
- bogus identity used;
- process of the distraction burglary incident;
- participant feelings about the caller throughout the incident;
- caller use of ID;
- participants' attributions about the cause of the incident;
- participant satisfaction with police response.

Potential risk factors for being targeted for distraction burglary:

- environmental risk factors:
  - housing type, tenure and location;
  - visibility of front door to neighbours and street (rated by interviewers);
  - indicators of vulnerable resident (e.g. aims and adaptations, neglected décor and garden) (rated by interviewers).
- psycho-social risk factors:
  - physical functioning (e.g. mobility, sensory impairments, problems with activities of daily living);
  - cognitive functioning (memory);
  - social support (visitors to home);
  - loneliness;
  - compliance;
  - doorstep checking behaviours (self-report and rated by interviewers);
  - doorstep etiquette (e.g. beliefs about keeping a caller on the doorstep).

Measures on the impact of the incident:

- depression;
- anxiety;

- post-traumatic stress disorder;
- quality of life;
- physical health (GP records pre-incident and post-incident and questionnaire):
  - medication use;
  - use of health services;
  - physical health status;
- fear of crime.

Tackling distraction burglary:

- awareness
- ideas for stopping distraction burglary.

## **Procedure**

As previous data concerning distraction burglary and older adults were not available, it was not possible to conduct statistical power analyses (i.e. a calculation of the number of research participants needed to demonstrate a significant difference between two variables) concerning sample size. Although the sample sizes within each group are sufficient to reveal robust statistical differences, it is recognised that the generalisability of the findings to a national population is questionable. This is due to the relatively small sample sizes obtained, the selection of sites in the study, and potential biases resulting from the recruitment procedures employed.

Participants in Groups 1 and 2 were identified via police databases, with all participants having reported a distraction burglary crime or a suspicious incident to the police. Where a suspicious incident was reported, the crime details were scrutinised by the research team to assess whether the caller could indeed have been genuine. It often proved difficult to check authenticity and in those cases, the participant's level of suspicion (i.e. high enough to inform the police) was taken as sufficient information regarding the credibility of the caller. An identified officer in each site searched the relevant force database and made first contact with all older adults reporting a distraction burglary or relevant suspicious incident in the time frame required by the study, either face to face or by telephone. At this point potential participants' consent was sought to release their contact details to the researchers. Exclusions were made if the participant was physically unwell. All other identified victims and repellers were asked to participate. Data was not collected on drop-out rates at this stage, though qualitative responses for refusals to engage included: feeling that they had nothing meaningful to contribute; not wanting to recount the incident again; and being advised by relatives to refuse.

As this crime may be under-reported, additional attempts to obtain extra participants for Groups 1 and 2 were made, using posters displayed in public buildings, shops, post offices etc., advertising the research study and asking for people to come forward. No victims or repellers came forward as a result of the posters.

Group 3 participants were recruited via snowball sampling. This was conducted via friends or relatives of participants in Groups 1 and 2. Participants were also recruited via health centres and day centres. The timescale of the project and ethical issues concerning data protection and cold calling precluded the use of procedures to match the groups on socio-economic or housing criteria. The use of snowball samples from Group 1 and Group 2 participants was designed to maximise the likelihood of group matching on these variables, and additional recruitment procedures were conducted in the same four geographical areas as the sites used for recruiting participants in Groups 1 and 2.

On receiving participant consent, further details regarding the study were posted out by the researchers. An interviewer then contacted the participant via telephone (where possible) and an interview time and date arranged. Participants were informed that interviews could be conducted over two sessions to reduce participant fatigue, although this was never requested. During the interview participants were also asked for consent to allow the researchers' access to their GP records at Time 2.

At Time 1, Groups 1 and 2 (victims and repellers) were administered the full interview. Group 3 participants (non-victims) were not asked questions concerning the incident or administered the post-traumatic stress disorder scale. At Time 2, as well as the exclusions mentioned above, Group 3 participants were not asked the attribution questions or the police response questions (see Appendix A for a table detailing the measures used with each participant group at each time point).

Approximately three months after the Time 1 interviews participants were contacted again by letter and telephone to arrange Time 2 interviews. Where possible the same interviewer conducted both interviews. Also at Time 2, letters were posted to the GPs of consenting participants. Contact was made one week later to arrange to view the GP records.

### **Distraction burglary and ethnic minority communities**

This study consisted of two phases:

- investigating extent of distraction burglary in Avon & Somerset amongst minority ethnic communities;
- investigating experiences of the crime and ideas for stopping distraction burglary amongst minority ethnic communities.

### **Gauging the extent of distraction burglary amongst minority ethnic communities**

The research into the experiences of distraction burglary amongst ethnic minority communities was conducted within Avon and Somerset Constabulary, concentrating in particular on the Bristol area. Several strategies were employed to try to maximise the identification of distraction burglary incidents amongst these communities.

Asian and African-Caribbean victims of distraction burglary who had reported the crime were identified by the police from their crime records. This covered eight districts within the Bristol area. The victims identified were then contacted by letter. Asian participants were classified by their spoken language, and were sent a copy of the letter in English, as well as in four different Asian languages (Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi and Gujarati).

In a bid to investigate the extent of distraction burglaries within the Asian and African-Caribbean communities which may not have been reported to the police, a large scale community outreach programme was commissioned, to recruit participants to the research. The programme included first language leaflet drops to 20,000 households, an extensive poster campaign in local shops, health and religious centres and community groups, and prominent features on community newsletters and local television and radio. The programme was supported by a series of presentations to local Asian and African-Caribbean community groups, community safety talkback sessions delivered to invited audiences and personal meetings with prominent and influential community and religious leaders. All work was undertaken by Asian or African-Caribbean staff.

Victim Support and Bristol City Council were also approached to provide relevant information about victimisation. Victim Support referrals classify distraction burglary under the umbrella term of burglary / robbery, and therefore referrals specifically concerning distraction burglary could not be identified. As Bristol City Council only had the 1991 census (Census ONS, 1991) available to identify ethnic group residency, it was perceived that the demographic information obtained would be out of date.

## **Experiences of distraction burglary and ideas for stopping distraction burglary**

Participants identified through the methods outlined above took part in the research through either semi-structured interviews, or participation in a focus group.

Individual interviews were conducted with 66 Asian adults (6 victims, 25 repellers, 35 non-victims) and 60 African-Caribbean adults (2 victims, 24 repellers, 34 non-victims). The interview schedule employed was very similar in content to that used in Study 1 (see above and Appendix A for details), but including additional items on religion and language spoken.

Interviews took place either at the home of the participant or at a venue of their choice. Where appropriate, observations of the participants' accommodation and doorstep behaviour were made. Participants not interviewed at home provided information about their accommodation.

All interviews with African-Caribbean participants were conducted in English. Interviews with Asian participants were conducted either in English or in one of four Asian languages; Urdu (12 participants), Bengali (one participant), Punjabi (seven participants) and Gujarati (11 participants).

In addition, 33 Asian focus group participants and 19 African-Caribbean focus group participants were identified through the community outreach programmes. As a consequence of self-selection age and gender were not controlled. Recruitment of Asian participants was undertaken in participants' first language (predominantly Urdu), and recruitment of African-Caribbean participants was conducted in English. No specific explanatory information relating to the definition of distraction burglary was released prior to confirmation of recruitment.

Six focus groups were conducted between October 2000 and March 2002. Each focus group lasted between 1½ and 2 hours. The focus group meetings were conducted in community venues in different locations around Bristol, and facilitated by researchers from African Caribbean and Asian communities. Where appropriate, facilitators used follow-up questions to probe more specifically. Issues concerning distraction burglary victimisation, risk, impact and reporting were discussed, as well as issues concerning recommended individual and community action to stop distraction burglary.

## **Methodological limitations**

### **Sampling**

In the first study gaining older adult victims and repellers of distraction burglaries was largely dependent on the co-operation of the police, meaning that unreported distraction burglary incidents are virtually absent from these samples. For ethical reasons, the sampling method for non-victims did not involve individual matching of victims/repellers to non-victims. Although the characteristics of the groups were broadly similar, the groups may have been different on factors not measured by the study. Relatively high refusal rates across all groups may have also resulted in a biased sample.

The sample sizes were sufficient for statistical analyses, but differential recruitment rates and the decision to sub-classify victims into two groups resulted in unequal sample sizes across groups. Larger sample sizes more equally distributed across groups would certainly increase the statistical power and generalisability of the study.

In the second study, a range of strategies were used to gain the views of victims, repellers and non-victims from ethnic minority communities. Each of these methods (police records, community outreach, and consultation with local councils and victim support schemes) is prone to bias. Because so few victims of distraction burglary were identified, it was impossible to make quantitative comparisons among victims, repellers and non-victims. Furthermore, by necessity classification into victim versus repeller was made through self-report, although detailed analysis of the narratives of participants resulted in some exclusions from these classifications.

### **Measures**

Although standardised measures suitable for older adults were used where possible in the first study, some measures had not been extensively used with older adults and some measures had to be developed for this study. Although these measures were piloted, and showed expected relationships with other variables and predictable changes over time, their reliability and validity have not been explicitly tested.

The interview and focus group procedures used in the second study and reported on here were qualitative and thus tailored to participants, although the very nature of qualitative methods reduces exact replicability of procedures.

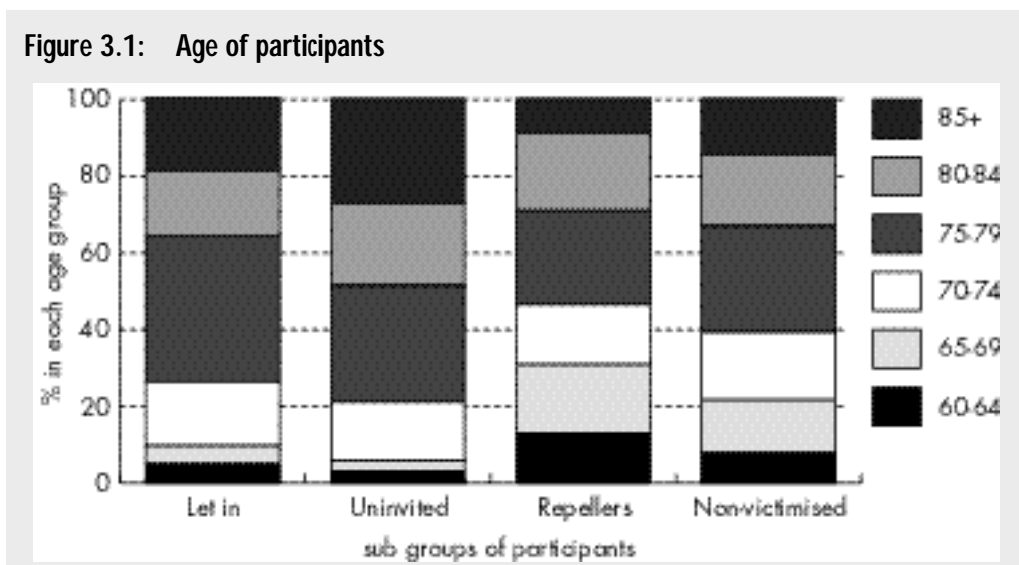
This chapter investigates findings concerning distraction burglary victimisation amongst older adults. The characteristics of participants, aspects of the distraction burglary incident, participant satisfaction with police response and participants' attributions concerning the cause of the distraction burglary incident are outlined.

## The participants

While analysing the data, it was noted that there were fundamental differences in participant characteristics, risk factors and impact measures depending on how the distraction burglar gained entry. The crucial difference seemed to be whether the caller was let in to the home, or initially gained entry to the home uninvited. Thus, for the purpose of most subsequent analyses the victim sample was subdivided into these two sub-groups.

Most of the sample (70%) was female, with an average age of 76 years (see Figure 3.1). There were no differences across groups in terms of gender or occupation (see Appendix B, Table B.1 for more details). Victims where the caller gained entry uninvited were older than repellers or non-victims.

**Figure 3.1: Age of participants**



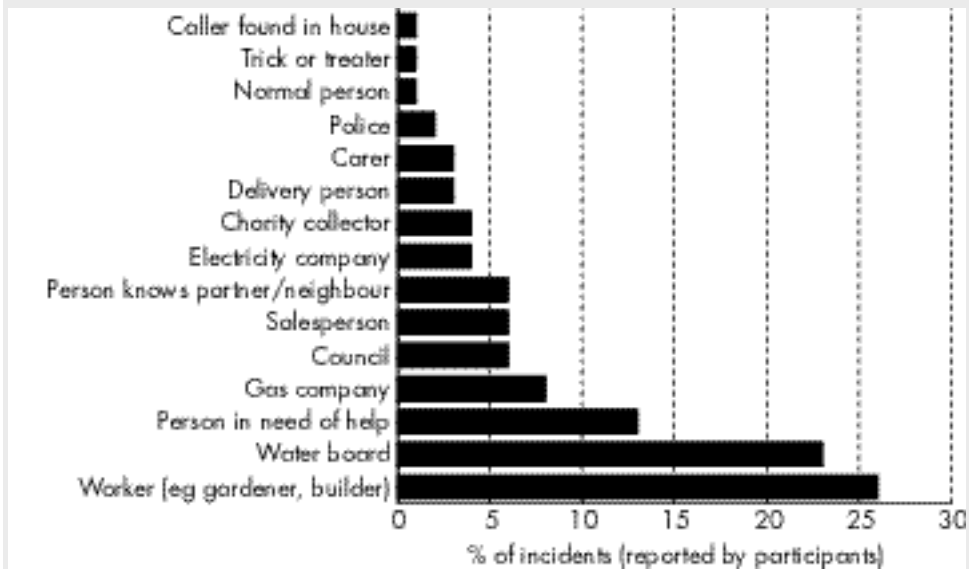
### The distraction burglary incident

Due to a lack of research evidence, it was important to gain a detailed picture of the process of distraction burglary incidents involving older adults.

Across the whole sample, most distraction burglary incidents occurred on weekdays between 6am and 6pm (85%). However, the repeller group was more likely to experience the incident between 6pm and 12am than both victim groups (31% versus 8%, let in group and 4%, uninvited group). Most participants had not experienced distraction burglary previously (82%) and were alone at the time of the incident (77%).

Callers used a wide range of bogus identities to attempt to gain entry to the home (see Figure 3.2), the most frequent guises being waterboard officials, workers such as gardeners, builders and plumbers, and people in urgent need of help. There were no significant differences across groups.

**Figure 3.2: Form of bogus identity used in distraction burglary incidents**



There were, however, consistent differences between groups in terms of the process of the distraction burglary incident. Figure 3.3 summarises the mode of entry for the 44 per cent of victims where the caller came in uninvited and Figure 3.4 summarises how participants felt during the distraction burglary incident (see Appendix B, Table B.2 for more details).

Figure 3.3: Mode of entry by the distraction burglar when uninvited

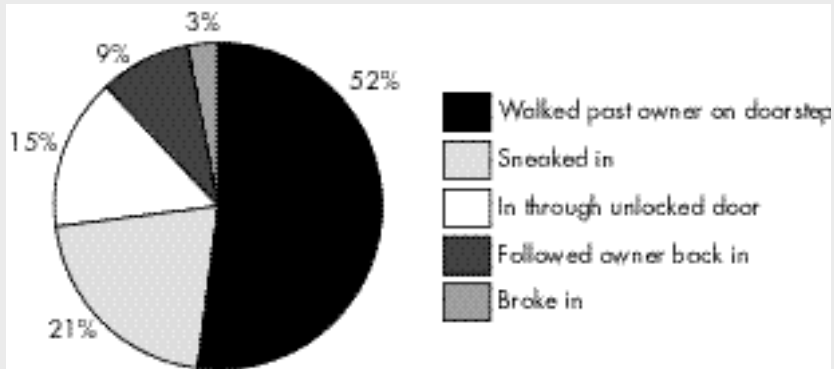
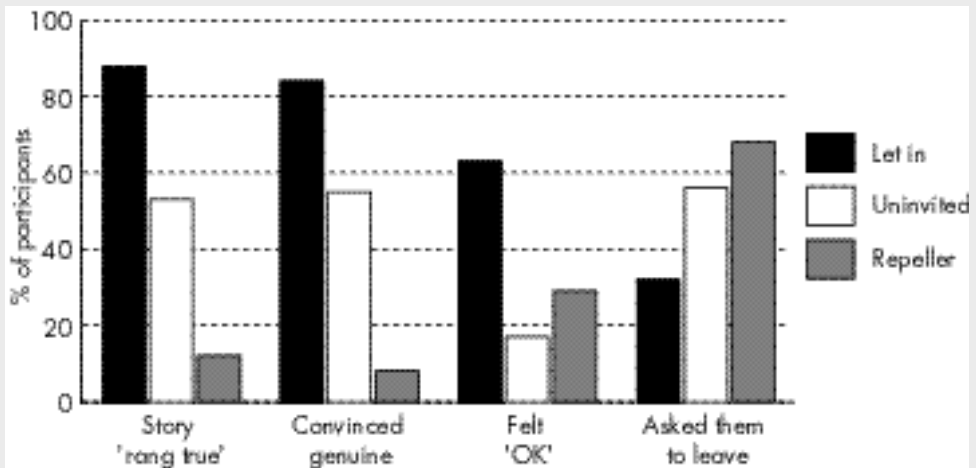


Figure 3.4: Participant perceptions of the distraction burglar



Most victims where the caller was let in to the property were initially convinced the caller was genuine (84%) and initially felt at ease and not suspicious (79%). Most also felt that the caller's story rang true (88%), compared with around half of victims where the caller gained entry uninvited (53%). Most participants in this group were not suspicious even when the caller was in the home (63%). A minority of participants in this group asked the caller to leave (32%), with most participants not suspecting something was wrong until after the caller had left or not suspicious at all (62%).

The process of distraction burglary was somewhat different for victims where the caller gained entry uninvited. Most of the callers to the homes of this group gained entry by walking into the home uninvited when the participant was on the doorstep (52%), although

significant proportions of callers gained entry by sneaking into the home (21%) or entering through an open or unlocked door (15%). Around half the participants in this group were initially convinced the caller was genuine (55%) and initially felt at ease and not suspicious (52%). Once the caller was in the home, only a minority of participants reported not being suspicious (17%). Just over half the participants in this group asked the caller to leave (56%). Victims in this group were most likely to suspect something was wrong when the caller was in the home (50%) and after the caller had left (34%), with a significant minority of participants suspecting something was wrong before the caller had entered the home (16%).

The repeller group reported a very different experience of the incident. Repellers were most likely to suspect something was wrong before the caller had entered the home (54%). Only 20 per cent of callers gained entry to the home, with 5 per cent being let in and 15 per cent coming in uninvited. All uninvited callers gained entry by walking into the home uninvited when the participant was on the doorstep. Only a minority were initially convinced the caller was genuine (8%), felt their story "rang true" (12%) and initially felt at ease and not suspicious (21%). Most repellers asked the caller to leave (68%), which most callers did.

Across the sample, few participants (14%) asked to see identification of the caller; few callers (6%) offered any. Overall, only a minority of participants (12%) saw any form of ID from callers. Although the number of participants was too small to allow statistical comparisons between groups, it appeared that the repeller group was more likely to ask for ID (23%) than either of the victim groups (8%, let in group and 7%, uninvited group).

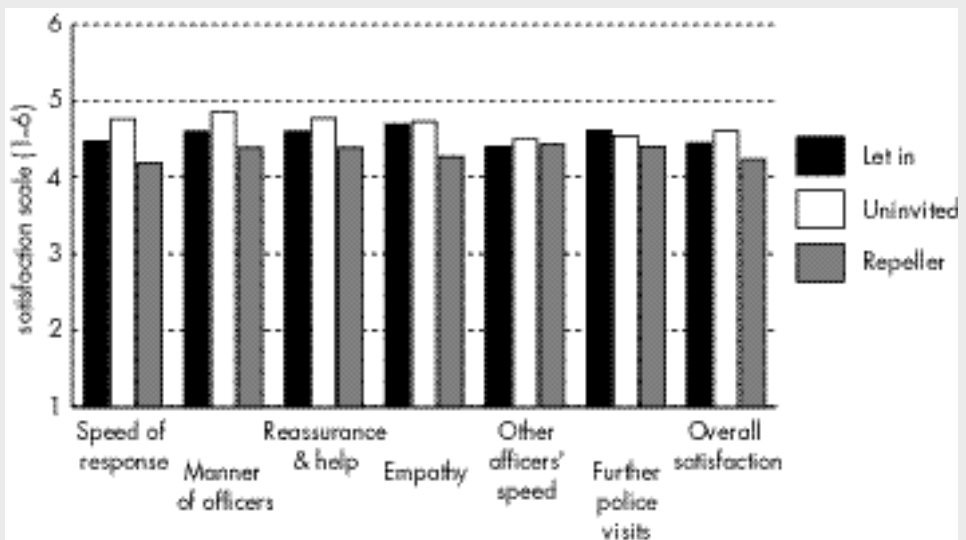
Analysis of open response questions exploring setting factors which might influence the behaviour of participants on the doorstep (e.g. the weather, what the participant was doing before/due to do after the incident, similar workmen in the area) yielded no differences across groups.

## **Police response**

Across the groups, most participants themselves (63%) contacted the police at some point after the callers had left the home; for a substantial proportion of the participants either a family member (19%), friend or neighbour (13%) contacted the police. Only 5 per cent were not reported to the police. This high rate of reporting is not surprising as the majority of participants were recruited from police records of incidents.

At Time 2, victims and repellers were asked about their satisfaction with various aspects of the police response to the incident. As Figure 3.5 shows (see Appendix B, Table B.3 for details), very high rates of satisfaction with all aspects of police response were reported by all groups, with little differences in satisfaction between groups.

**Figure 3.5: Satisfaction with police response (1=minimum satisfaction, 6=maximum satisfaction)**

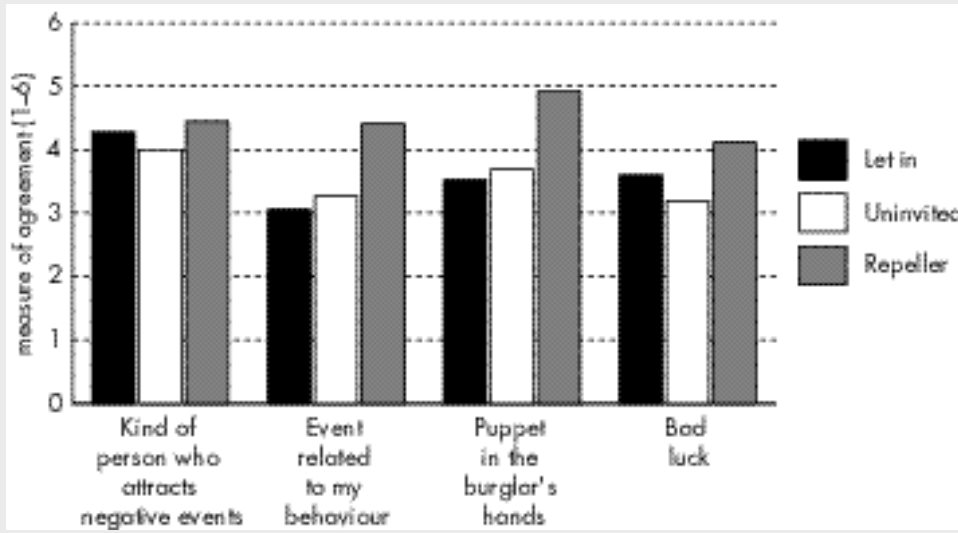


### Attributions of the distraction burglary incident

Victims and repellers were asked at Time 2 about their perceptions of the causes of the distraction burglary incident (see Figure 6 and Appendix 2, Table 4 for more details). Participants overall were most likely to agree that the distraction burglary incident was related to their own behaviour and least likely to agree that they were the kind of person who attracts negative events.

Both victim groups were more likely than the repeller group to agree that the incident was related to their behaviour and that they felt like a puppet in the burglars' hands. Victims where the caller gained entry uninvited were the most likely of the three groups to agree that the incident was due to bad luck, though it is unclear as to why this should be the case.

**Figure 3.6: Attributions concerning the distraction burglary incident (1=strongly agree, 6=strongly disagree, 3.5=neither agree nor disagree)**



### Summary

To summarise, characteristics of the victims' experiences appeared to be closely associated with the offender's mode of entry. Where the victim let in the offender, they were more convinced of their genuineness, more at ease whilst they were in the property and rarely asked them to leave. Conversely where the offender gained entry uninvited, victims were more suspicious, ill at ease and over half asked them to leave.

Most participants were satisfied with the police in respect to their response time, their manner and their level of empathy.

Finally both victim groups were more likely than repellers to feel that the incident was related to their behaviour and were more often left feeling like a puppet in the burglar's hands.

Several risk factors have been suggested for distraction burglary, although previous research evidence is lacking. This chapter begins by discussing potential environmental and psychosocial risk factors, and closes by determining which risk factors are most strongly associated with targeting and victimisation. To identify those factors that may be contributing to the deception of older adults in the instance of distraction burglaries, Group 1 data was compared with Group 2 data and Group 3 data.

To analyse the impact that distraction burglary may have on victims, Time 1 data was compared with Time 2 data within each group. Group 3 data accounted for non-victimised adults within the studied age groups.

### **Environmental characteristics and risk factors**

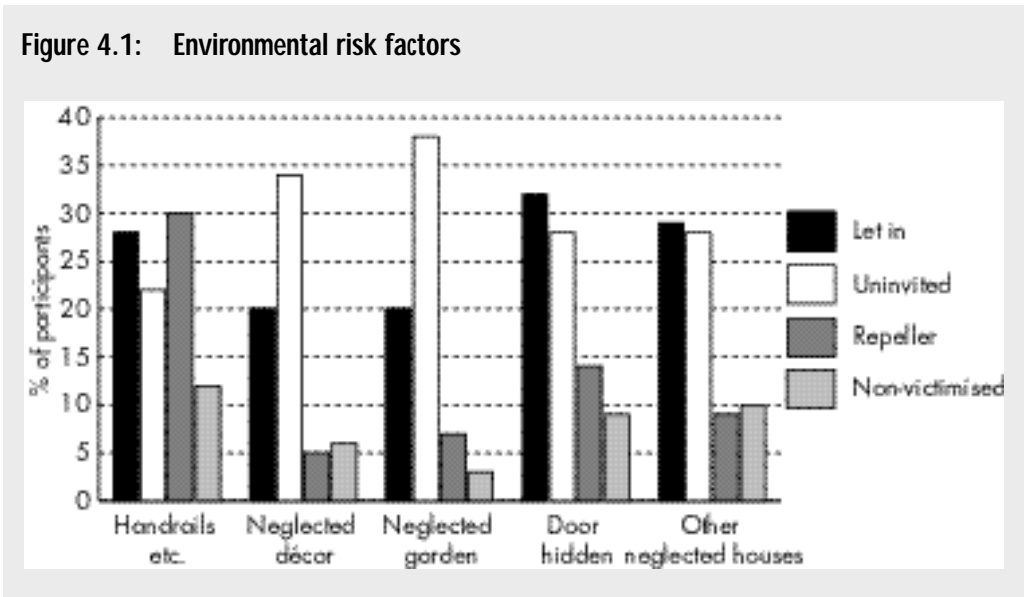
A wide range of environmental risk factors has been hypothesised to influence the targeting of potential distraction burglary victims, with those showing differences between groups presented in Figure 4.1 (see Appendix B, Table B.5 for more details). It is important to note that differences in recruitment procedures across the participant groups may partly account for any differences found, and therefore this analysis should be interpreted with caution.

Participants lived in a range of housing types, although most occupied houses (66%). Just over half of homes were owner-occupied, with most of the rest being rented from local authorities. Both victim groups were less likely to be owner-occupiers and more likely to be renting from local authorities than repellers and non-victims. Most participants (61%) lived alone, although many (29%) lived with a partner. Non-victims were least likely to be living alone.

For the purposes of this research, a number of measures were used as indicators of the residents' vulnerability. Some of these are presented in Figure 4.1 and include the installation of handrails and signs of neglect. For most participants (65%), there was at least one apparent external indicator of a vulnerable resident. Victims where the caller gained entry uninvited were particularly likely to have homes with a neglected garden or exterior décor and no burglar alarm compared with victims where the caller was let in, than repellers or non-victims. There were no differences across groups in the presence of handrails/other adaptations or neighbourhood watch stickers.

Most participants lived in a quiet street (60%) with surrounding homes in good condition (65%). Both victim groups were more likely to live in homes with surrounding homes in poor condition than repellers and non-victims. For approximately half the participants, their front door was visible to neighbours (56%); this was more likely amongst non-victims. Both victim groups were also more likely to have a door with poor visibility to the street than repellers and non-victims.

**Figure 4.1: Environmental risk factors**



**Psycho-social risk factors and characteristics**

A wide range of psycho-social risk factors have been hypothesised for targeting and victimisation. These will be discussed in turn.

**Physical functioning**

There were no differences across groups in terms of the presence of hearing or visual impairments; 71 per cent of the total sample reported hearing impairments and 64 per cent visual impairments.

Just over half of respondents (53%) reported no mobility problems; substantial numbers reported moderate (37%) or severe (10%) mobility problems. Victims where the burglar gained entry uninvited reported significantly more severe mobility problems (30%) than other groups (let in victims 17%, repellers 7%, non-victims 2%).

### Activities of daily living

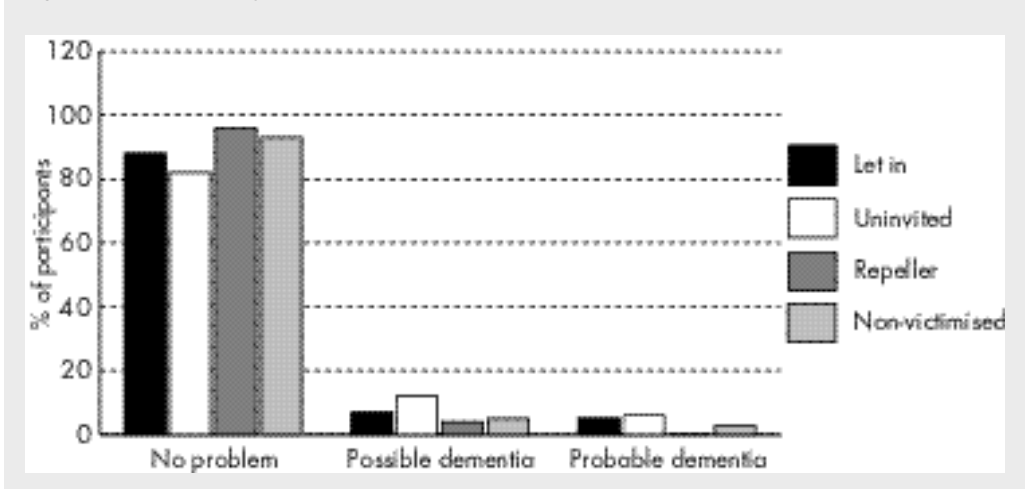
At Time 1, most participants reported that the following activities were at least fairly difficult: more vigorous activity (83%), lifting and carrying groceries (53%), bending or stooping (58%), walking up several flights of stairs (70%) and walking half a mile or more (63%).

Both victim groups (let in mean=26.44; uninvited mean=27.55) reported more difficulties than the non-victim group (mean=21.67) in total activity problems, with the uninvited group reporting significantly more difficulties than non-victims. In addition, victims where the burglar gained entry uninvited reported more moderate activity and total activity problems than repellers.

### Cognitive functioning

At Time 1, Figure 4.2 (see Appendix B, Table B.6 for more details) shows that the vast majority of participants (93%) were found to have no cognitive problems, with no significant differences across groups.

**Figure 4.2: Memory problems**



### Social support and loneliness

Participants were asked to report the number and type of visitors to their home on an average week. Overall participants received most visits from family members, followed by neighbours and friends. Most participants were unlikely to receive visits from workers/tradespeople (8.6%) or meals on wheels (5.7%), although a significant proportion of participants (26%) received at least weekly visits from a welfare professional/carer. On average, four visitors per week and moderately low levels of loneliness were reported.

Participant groups did not differ in either reported loneliness or whether they received visits from family/neighbours. However, both victim groups reported fewer visits from friends (28.2%, let in group and 25%, uninvited group respectively) and fewer visitors overall (mean=2.85), particularly compared with the non-victim group (mean=4.76). Furthermore, victims who had let in the caller were more likely to receive regular visits from welfare professionals/carers (45%), particularly compared with the non-victim group (16%).

### **Compliance**

Compliance refers to a person's level of submissiveness or assertiveness – someone who is more compliant is more susceptible to exploitation by another (Gudjonsson, 1989: p536). There were no between-group differences in compliance, and individual variation was seen in response to the compliance questionnaire (see Appendix B, Table B.7 for details). Overall levels of compliance were moderate, but respondents in each group reported scores across almost the full range of possible scores.

### **Doorstep etiquette and doorstep checking behaviour**

All respondents were asked a series of questions concerning doorstep etiquette; that is, beliefs about the correct etiquette when an unknown caller arrives on the doorstep (see Appendix B, Table B.8 for more details). Interpretations of participants' responses must take into account that the victims' and repellers' doorstep etiquette beliefs might have been influenced by their experience of a distraction burglary attempt.

Respondents on average did not hold strong beliefs about doorstep etiquette likely to lead to callers gaining entry. However, most agreed that visitors should not be left on the doorstep, and many assumed that if a caller had ID then they would be genuine.

There were some differences between groups. Victims where the caller gained entry uninvited were more likely than other groups to think it was rude to close the door on a caller, and more likely to think that they had to answer the door to a caller. Reflecting these specific differences, this group reported generally higher levels of 'risky' etiquette beliefs, for example most likely to agree that it is rude to ask a caller for ID (mean total doorstep etiquette=24.67, range 1-48) compared to all three other groups at Time 1 (let in victims mean=21.4; repellers mean=21.27; non-victims mean = 22.07).

All participants reported less "risky" doorstep etiquette beliefs at Time 2 compared with Time 1, indicating a change over time. Victims where the caller gained entry uninvited

continued to report more “risky” doorstep etiquette beliefs than non-victims. There was also an interaction effect: victims where the caller gained entry uninvited and non-victims reported more changes in doorstep etiquette than victims who had let in the caller and repellers.

Respondents were also asked (via a checklist, see Box 4.1) about the number of checking behaviours they used before opening the door to a caller. At the Time 1 interviews, victims and repellers were asked about their doorstep checking behaviours both before the distraction burglary incident and currently. Non-victims were asked about their current doorstep checking behaviours in their Time 1 interview. Current doorstep checking behaviours were examined for all participants at Time 1 and Time 2. In addition, interviewers also completed a checklist of the number of doorstep checking behaviours they had observed before interviews began at both Time 1 and Time 2.

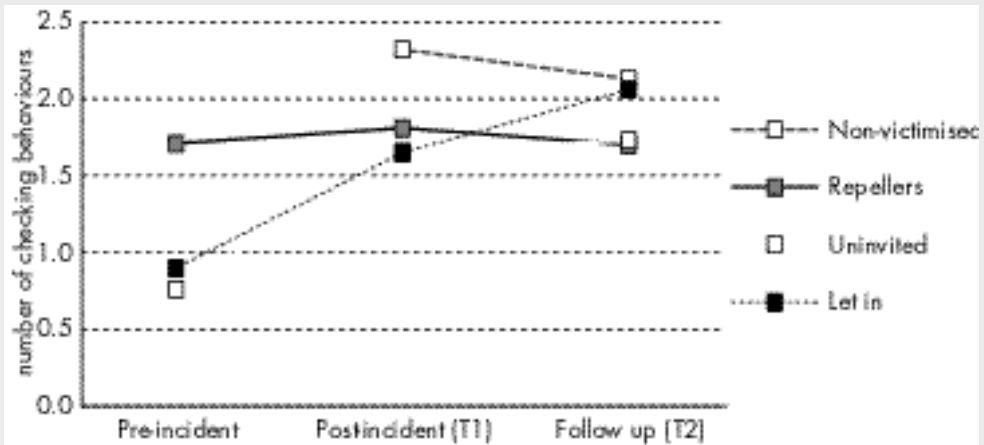
#### **Box 4.1 Door checking behaviours**

Respondents were asked to say which of the following they did if someone knocked on their door:

- answer intercom
- look through the front window
- look through the spy hole
- open the internal door
- call out through the door
- put the chain on the door
- ask for identification
- open the front door
- anything else

Figure 4.3 presents the mean number of reported checking behaviours both pre- and post-incident for victims and repellers, combined with Time 1 reports of checking behaviours for the non-victim group.

**Figure 4.3: Number of reported doorstep checking behaviours**



Overall, participants reported using fewer than two checking behaviours before opening the front door at Time 1. Pre-incident, both victim groups reported using fewer checking behaviours than both the repeller and non-victim groups, although there was no difference between groups post-incident. Consistent with this, both victim groups reported significant increases in their checking behaviour from pre-incident to post-incident; there was no change in checking behaviours for the repeller group. These findings were corroborated by the checking behaviours observed by interviewers.

Both reported and observed checking behaviours were stable from Time 1 to Time 2, with few differences between groups and no interaction effects.

### Prediction of targeting and victimisation

This chapter has reported a number of differences in personal characteristics, housing circumstances, physical and psycho-social well being and doorstep behaviour between groups. As mentioned earlier, some of these differences may be partly attributable to differences in recruitment and sampling strategies across groups. To investigate which particular risk factors were most important for being a target or a victim of distraction burglary, a series of logistic regressions was conducted. In this case, logistic regression identifies which combination of risk factors is most likely to predict whether a person is a target or not, or whether a person is a victim or not.

First, risk factors most strongly associated with being a target of distraction burglary were investigated, by comparing targets (victims and repellers) with non-targets (non-victims). Four risk factors were identified by the logistic regression as being most predictive of being a target, correctly classifying 79.5 per cent of participants:

- having a door not visible to neighbours (Wald=10.34,  $p=0.001$ );
- being surrounded by other houses in a poor condition (Wald=5.72,  $p=0.017$ );
- having a neglected garden (Wald=4.00,  $p=0.046$ );
- reporting fewer pre-incident checking behaviours (Wald=3.95,  $p=0.047$ ).

Second, risk factors most strongly associated with being a victim (both victim groups combined) versus being a repeller were investigated. Three risk factors were identified by the logistic regression as being most predictive of being a victim, correctly classifying 88.0 per cent of participants:

- believing the caller's story "rang true" (Wald=17.44,  $p<0.001$ );
- having a neglected garden (Wald=7.16,  $p=0.007$ );
- reporting fewer pre-incident checking behaviours (Wald=5.50,  $p=0.019$ ).

Finally, risk factors associated with specific types of victim (let in victims versus victims where the caller gained entry uninvited) were investigated. Three risk factors were identified by the logistic regression as being most predictive of being a victim where the caller was let in, correctly classifying 72.9 per cent of participants. Victims where the caller was let in were:

- less likely to agree that it is extremely rude to close the door on a caller (Wald=9.21,  $p=0.002$ );
- more likely to believe the caller's story "rang true" (Wald=8.49,  $p=0.004$ );
- more likely to agree that if they are unsure of who a caller is, they don't have to answer the door (Wald=5.40,  $p=0.02$ ).

## Summary

This chapter has reported a number of differences in personal characteristics, housing circumstances and risk factors between groups. Environmental indicators were important risk factors for targeting, particularly features of housing such as council-rented property, neglected gardens and décor, surrounding houses being in poor condition, and the front door not being visible to the street or neighbours. These are factors also identified by

offenders (Steele, 2000). Whether they became victims or not appeared more due to how convinced they were about the caller's story and also their checking behaviours on the doorstep. It is worth noting that victims increased their checking behaviours after the incident to an equivalent level to other groups. It is unclear how older adults determine whether a caller's story "rings true". Possible reasons may include: i) perpetrator skill/persuasiveness, ii) circumstances rendering the perpetrator's story more or less believable, iii) aspects of the target as yet uninvestigated.

It is noteworthy that several assumptions concerning risk factors were not borne out by the current study. Factors such as cognitive impairment, compliance and loneliness were not risk factors for targeting or victimisation, with few older adults reporting signs of dementia, compliant personalities or extreme loneliness. Post-victimisation confusion amongst older victims (as responding police officers document) may be due to the effects of anxiety immediately post-trauma rather than any permanent state of confusion. As mentioned earlier, some of these differences may be partly attributable to differences in recruitment and sampling strategies across groups.

Also, the risk factors associated with specific types of victim may seem counter-intuitive, with those victims who let the caller in saying they were less likely to agree that it was extremely rude to close the door on a caller than those who experienced incidents where the caller came in uninvited. This may demonstrate the difficulties with matching actions to beliefs. This may reflect their change in beliefs after the incident occurred.

Although distraction burglary is often assumed to have a serious impact on older adults, research evidence is lacking. This chapter reports on the impact of distraction burglary on a range of outcomes for older adults: mental health, functioning, physical health and fear of crime. Factors predictive of greater impact on the older person were also investigated. Initial attempts to gather information regarding access to services directly from the participant's GP-held medical records proved difficult. Thus reported impact of the distraction burglary on physical health is via self-report only and cannot be verified against actual medical records.

### **Mental health**

Measures of current anxiety and depression were collected from all participants at Time 1 and Time 2 (Follow-up – approx. three months after the first interview). A measure of post-traumatic stress disorder concerning the distraction burglary incident was also collected from victims and repellers at Time 1 and follow-up.

### **Anxiety and depression**

At Time 1, a significant proportion of the sample reported depression (15%) and at least moderate levels of anxiety (13%) (see Appendix B, Table B.9 for details). Regarding depression, there were no differences across groups or changes from Time 1 to Time 2. Anxiety scores reduced from Time 1 to follow-up for all participants, but there were no differences between victim, repeller or non-victim groups. Thus the crime itself did not predict heightened levels of anxiety and depression for victims.

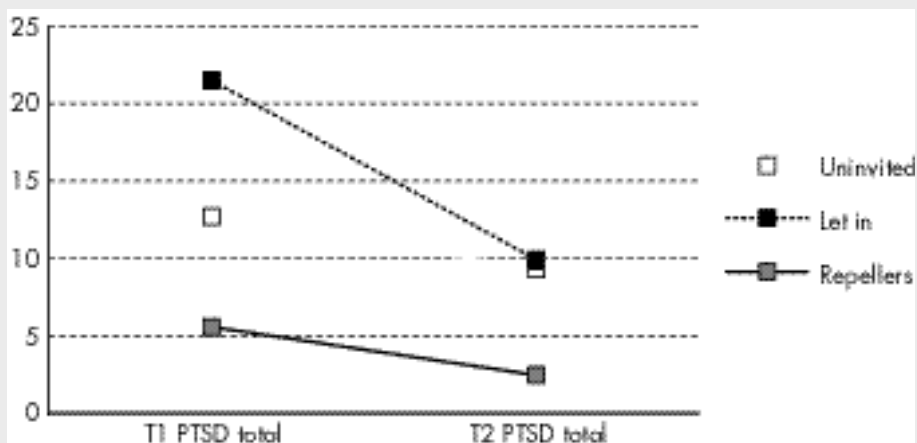
### **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**

Figure 5.1 presents scores on the PTSD measure at Time 1 and Time 2 (see Appendix B, Table B.10 for more details). Within one month of the crime, 9 per cent of participants demonstrated levels of trauma above the cut off for PTSD indicating a marked reaction to the crime. This had reduced to 2.3 per cent of participants at follow-up. At Time 1, both victim groups reported higher levels of avoidance (for example avoiding thoughts of the incident or avoiding doing things which reminded them of the event), frequency of symptoms and

higher overall PTSD scores than repellers. In addition, the victim group where the caller was let into the home reported higher levels of intrusion and severity of symptoms compared with repellers.

For all participants, all PTSD subscale scores and the PTSD total score reduced from Time 1 to Time 2. However, there were some differences between groups in the way their PTSD scores changed over time. Victims who let in the caller and repellers showed a greater reduction in hyperarousal scores than victims where the caller gained entry uninvited. Victims who let in the caller showed a greater reduction in symptom frequency than victims where the caller gained entry uninvited and repellers.

**Figure 5.1: Post-traumatic stress disorder**



### General functioning

Non-victims at Time 1 and follow-up reported fewer problems than victims who let in the caller on overall physical/emotional health and quality of life. Non-victims also reported fewer problems at Time 1 and Time 2 than victims where the caller gained entry uninvited in physical activities and social support. The general functioning of participants did not change from Time 1 to Time 2.

### Physical health

Examination of GP records and interviews with participants at follow-up were used to investigate the impact of the distraction burglary incident on participants.

### **Use of medication at follow-up**

Most of the sample were using some form of medication at Time 2 (85%), with each participant taking an average of 2.7 medications with no differences between groups. The medications most commonly taken for physical health complaints were for blood pressure (39%) and heart conditions (31%). Less common were medications for mental health problems such as depression (7%) and anxiety (4%). There were no differences between groups in medication usage.

Only 3 per cent of new medications were taken up by participants in the three months prior to the Time 2 interview, and only seven participants had increased their dosage of an existing medication from Time 1 to Time 2.

### **Use of health services at follow-up**

Approximately one third of the sample (34%) had used a GP service in the four weeks prior to Time 2 interviews, with fewer repellers using GP services than other groups (10.3%). Six per cent of GP visits were reported to be for emotional or mental health problems.

Victims and repellers were also asked whether they were seeing the doctor more, less or about the same since the distraction burglary incident, compared with before the incident. Few victims and repellers reported seeing the doctor more since the incident (10%).

Few participants had attended out-patient appointments (11%) or had been admitted to hospital (3%) in the four weeks prior to Time 2 interviews. Hospital admissions were for diverse physical health problems, not clearly attributable to the incident.

### **Changes in health status at follow-up**

Overall, a minority of participants (18%) reported changes in health status since the incident (victims and repellers) or over the past three months (non-victims). Five victims who had let in the caller (17%), three repellers (10%), none of the victims where the caller had come in uninvited and only one non-victim (1.5%) reported changes in health status over the time period before the Time 2 interview. Overall, 12 participants across all four groups (8%) reported an accident or fall in the four weeks prior to the Time 2 interview.

## Fear of crime

Home Office Fear of Crime measures were asked of all relevant participants at both Time 1 and Time 2. Differences between groups at Time 1 were examined to infer the short-term impact of the incident on fear of crime. Changes in fear of crime from Time 1 to Time 2 were analysed to examine if initially elevated fear of crime scores amongst victims and repellers reduced to a similar level to non-victims at follow-up.

In terms of the perceived likelihood of crimes being committed, participants across all four groups reported local and UK crime rates as having increased substantially in the last two years at both Time 1 and Time 2 (66% reporting A Lot More). Participants across all four groups were, however, much less likely to believe that a range of specific crimes would happen to them in the next year. There were few between-group differences on these measures and no changes from Time 1 to Time 2.

Concerning fear of crime, participants generally reported moderate levels of worry about specific crimes (Time 1 mean=2.39, Time 2 mean=2.10; on 1-4 scales of worry, 1=not at all, 4=very) with no between-group differences, whilst fear of specific crimes declined from Time 1 to Time 2. Participants' frequency of worries about crimes (Time 1 mean=1.80, Time 2 mean=1.54; on 1-4 scales of frequency of worry) also declined from Time 1 to Time 2, with victims where the caller gained entry uninvited reporting more frequently worrying about crime than non-victims (uninvited mean=2.00, non-victims= 1.37).

In terms of the impact of fear of crime on quality of life, participants overall reported moderate impact declining from Time 1 to Time 2 (Time 1 mean=3.64, Time 2 mean=3.00; on 1-10 scales of impact), with no between-group differences. In terms of the impact of the distraction burglary incident on victims and repellers, 40 per cent of victims and repellers reported the incident as having a significant impact on their quality of life. Participants overall reported a moderate impact, which did not significantly decline from Time 1 to Time 2 (Time 1 mean=4.33, Time 2 mean=3.87; on 1-10 scales of impact).

Victims who had let in the caller reported a greater impact than repellers (let in mean=4.70, repellers mean= 2.62).

Finally, participants were asked about their feelings of personal safety. Few participants reported feeling at least fairly safe walking alone at night (18%), with both victim groups particularly likely to report that they never walked alone at night (Let in group, 88%, uninvited group, 79%, repellers, 60%, non-victims, 67%). The vast majority of participants

reported feeling at least fairly safe at home alone at night (88%), with victims where the caller gained entry uninvited least likely to feel safe (uninvited, 20.7%, let in, 7%, repellers, 2%, non-victims, 2%).

### **What predicts outcome at follow-up?**

This section investigates which factors most strongly predict outcome at follow-up for victims and repellers, again using logistic regressions (see Chapter 4).

First, factors most strongly predicting being depressed at Time 2 were investigated. Two factors were identified by the logistic regression as being most predictive of Time 2 depression, correctly classifying 91.2 per cent of participants:

- greater participant loneliness at Time 1 (Wald=7.31,  $p=0.007$ );
- participants worrying more frequently about crime at Time 1 (Wald=6.70,  $p=0.01$ ).

Second, factors most strongly predicting being anxious at Time 2 were investigated. Two factors were identified by the logistic regression as being most predictive of Time 2 anxiety, correctly classifying 72.7 per cent of participants:

- less participant satisfaction with police response (Wald=6.38,  $p=0.012$ );
- Time 1 anxiety scores (Wald=4.62,  $p=0.032$ ).

Third, factors most strongly predicting Time 2 PTSD were investigated. Three factors were identified by the logistic regression as being most predictive of Time 2 PTSD, correctly classifying 80.8 per cent of participants:

- participants who reported their quality of life being more affected by the distraction burglary incident (Wald=7.28,  $p=0.007$ );
- participants being victims where the caller had come in uninvited (Wald=4.15,  $p=0.042$ );
- participants who reported using fewer checking behaviours before the distraction burglary incident (Wald=4.15,  $p=0.042$ ).

Finally, factors most strongly predicting the reported impact of the distraction burglary incident on quality of life at Time 2 were investigated. Four factors were identified by the

logistic regression as most strongly predicting Time 2 impact of the distraction burglary incident, correctly classifying 87.0 per cent of participants:

- Time 1 impact of distraction burglary incident on quality of life (Wald=7.14,  $p=0.008$ );
- participants making attributions that they felt like a puppet in the burglars' hands (Wald=6.01,  $p=0.014$ );
- the callers leaving the incident by running away (Wald=4.74,  $p=0.029$ );
- attributing the distraction burglary incident to bad luck (Wald=4.56,  $p=0.032$ ).

### **Tackling distraction burglary – the older person's perspective**

Study 1 explored the views of older adult participants concerning the best methods for reducing distraction burglary. There were no between-group differences in any of the questions asked, therefore information in this chapter has been pooled across all available participants.

#### **Awareness**

First of all, victims and repellers at Time 1 were asked about their awareness of distraction burglary before the incident, with most participants (68%;  $n=79$ ) aware at the time of the incident. Participants reported being made aware largely through newspapers ( $n=46$ ) and television ( $n=46$ ), with fewer participants being made aware of distraction burglary through the radio ( $n=15$ ), knowing a victim ( $n=13$ ), being a repeat victim ( $n=9$ ) or other informal means. Almost no participants reported being made aware of distraction burglary through leaflets from utility companies ( $n=2$ ).

All participants at Time 2 were asked if they had received any warning messages about distraction burglary, what those were, how they were delivered, and what messages they would like to give to warn others about distraction burglary.

Just over a third (35%;  $n=53$ ) of Time 2 participants remembered receiving a warning message about distraction burglary. Of those recalling receiving such a message, many participants recalled general warnings to raise awareness ( $n=13$ ), not letting the caller in ( $n=13$ ), asking for caller ID ( $n=7$ ), using the door chain ( $n=6$ ), or did not remember what the warning message said ( $n=6$ ). Most of these warning messages came through the media ( $n=27$ ), particularly television ( $n=18$ ), although warning messages had also been received from a wide variety of other sources, most commonly the police ( $n=7$ ).

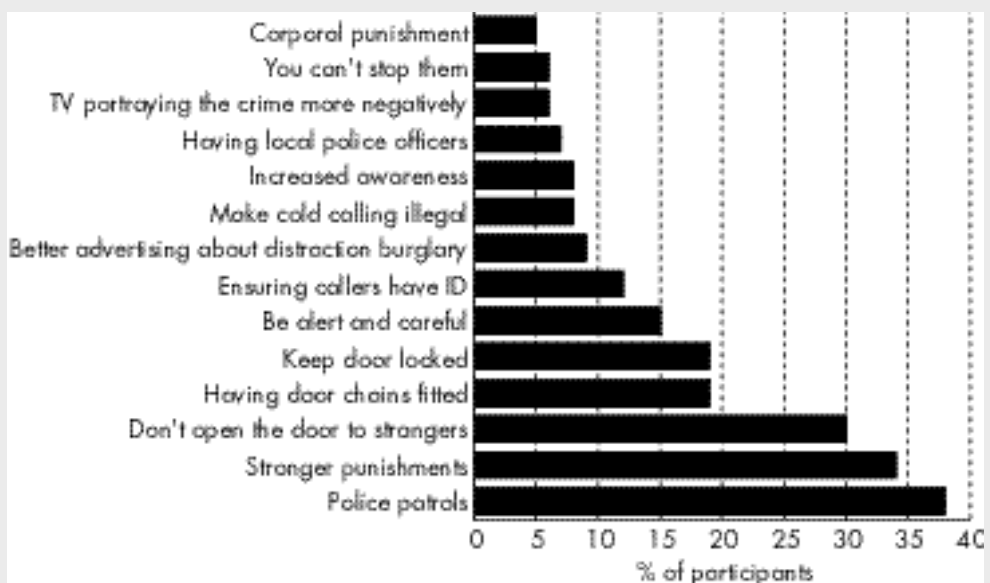
In contrast to the warning messages participants reported having received, the messages participants would wish to give to others tended to be more specific. In addition to general warnings about being cautious and mistrustful of strangers (n=39), specific warnings focused on not opening the door to strangers (n=44), using a door chain or lock (n=19) and checking callers' ID (n=18).

Participants had a variety of ideas about raising awareness of distraction burglary. The two most common ideas were through television advertising (n=40) and being told about distraction burglary face to face (n=36).

### Stopping distraction burglary

Finally, all participants at Time 2 were asked to provide three ideas for stopping distraction burglary. Figure 5.2 presents those ideas mentioned by five or more participants. As the Figure shows, participants suggested a wide range of ideas. Some of these concerned changing the behaviour of potential targets (e.g. don't open door to strangers), or changing home security (e.g. have chains fitted). However, many responses also suggested broader societal action, particularly having more police patrols and introducing tougher sentences for distraction burglars.

**Figure 5.2: Participant ideas for stopping distraction burglary**



## Summary

A significant number of victims demonstrated their resilience in the face of victimisation in respect to distraction burglary. The uninvited group appeared to fare less well over time, as did those participants who still felt like “a puppet in the burglar’s hands”.

For general mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, few problems were reported, with no differences between groups at either time point. Depression did not change over time, with depression at follow-up predicted by greater loneliness and more frequent worries about crime. Anxiety reduced over time, with anxiety at follow-up predicted by initial anxiety and less participant satisfaction with police response to the incident. Although the general picture is of low levels of mental health problems, a small minority of victims and repellers did report an extreme negative impact of the incident.

Few victims or repellers reported any changes in physical health post-incident. No participants accessed mental health services as a result of the incident, hospital admissions were in a minority, and it is unclear whether these admissions were a result of the incident exacerbating existing conditions or not.

The participants reported inflated concern over national and local crime compared with British Crime Survey figures (Kershaw et al, 2001). Victims where the offender gained entry uninvited were most likely to report feeling unsafe at home alone at night and rate fear of crime as having a greater impact on their quality of life. Further, 40 per cent of distraction burglary victims reported that this crime had had a significant impact on their quality of life.

Participants reporting a more sustained impact of the crime were likely to believe that the incident was down to bad luck or that they felt like a puppet in the burglar’s hands. This confirms previous research, which finds improved victim adjustment if the crime is attributed to aspects of the victim’s behaviour which they can control, compared with uncontrollable causes such as an unstoppable perpetrator (Winkel et al., 1994). Often support services try to avoid victim self-blame and shift responsibility to the perpetrator (e.g. “it is not your fault – it is the distraction burglar that is too clever”). The current findings demonstrate that this would be unhelpful to victims of this crime.

Participants suggested that awareness raising campaigns needed to disseminate specific information, preferably via television or face-to-face. In terms of stopping distraction burglary, suggestions centred around changing the behaviour of potential targets and/or broader societal action.

The second study focused on learning more about the experiences of distraction burglary amongst Asian and African-Caribbean communities as little is known about this from existing research. The research set out to investigate the extent of victimisation and levels of reporting amongst these communities.

### **The extent of distraction burglary amongst minority ethnic communities**

#### **Official statistics**

In the area that constitutes the Central Bristol Police District, the African-Caribbean and Asian communities account for 12.6 per cent of the total population (1991 Census for Avon and Somerset). A breakdown of distraction burglaries recorded on the Central Bristol Police District's Crime Management Unit recording system from April 1997 to February 2002 indicated that from the 312 distraction burglaries recorded only two victims were African-Caribbean and one Asian. African-Caribbean and Asian victims therefore made up only 1 per cent of total recorded victims. Records were held for 309 (99%) white victims of distraction burglary. These figures suggest that proportionally African-Caribbean and Asian victims were not targeted to the same extent as white victims, or that they are less likely to report incidents.

Force wide analysis provided by the Avon and Somerset Constabulary Crime Analysis Unit, indicated that from January 1996 to November 2001 four Asian and four African-Caribbean victims were recorded in the Constabulary area. Although changes to recording practice have affected the accuracy of distraction burglary statistics it is suggested that distraction burglaries overall were averaging 51 per month in the same period.

#### **Community outreach statistics**

The community outreach programme undertaken within the Central Bristol Police District indicated that rates of distraction burglary within the Asian and African-Caribbean community were far higher than suggested by police statistics.

Although several participants were uncertain of specific dates of offences (the earliest recorded year of offence was 1996, the latest 2002), community outreach strategies identified a further six Asian victims and five African-Caribbean victims in the Central Bristol Police District. None of these crimes had been reported to the police. It could therefore be suggested that whilst still proportionally lower than within the white community (and not taking into account under-reporting from white victims), rates of victimisation are slightly higher than previously considered within the African-Caribbean and Asian communities.

Community outreach strategies also identified 25 Asian and 24 African-Caribbean subjects who believed they had been targets of and repelled distraction burglars. No repellers had reported the attempted crime to the police.

The traditional view of distraction burglary is that it is a “white on white” crime. This appears to be confirmed from this study as few victims of distraction burglary were identified through the community outreach programme, in study. Although these numbers still result in lower rates of distraction burglary victimisation amongst ethnic minority communities compared to white communities, they are higher than police statistics.

### **Explanations for under-reporting**

Focus groups and interviews point towards several explanations for the under-reporting of distraction burglary among ethnic minority communities. Although some participants claimed they would not inform anyone of a crime, many Asian participants stated they were more likely to inform their own family whereas a majority of African-Caribbean participants stated they would rather inform family or friends than report the crime to the police. The perceived inability of police action against offenders was often suggested as a reason for non-reporting amongst Asian and African-Caribbean targets. Within the Asian community preserving family honour was not seen as a major factor in non-reporting. Comparison with the extent and cause of under-reporting of distraction burglary amongst white targets of distraction burglary was not possible due to a lack of previous research, and also differences in methods in the current research.

### **Investigating experiences of distraction burglary.**

Sample sizes from participant interviews were too small to conduct statistical tests. Qualitative analysis indicates that Asian and African-Caribbean repellers were more likely to be worried by crime in general, were more suspicious of strangers and were more likely

to be assertive towards strangers on the doorstep than Asian and African-Caribbean victims. There was some evidence to support the contention that both Asian and African-Caribbean victims were more trusting, believed more stereotypes including uniform and ID, and were more polite on doorsteps than non-victims. Although there are considerable dangers associated with stereotyping offenders, both distraction burglary targets, comparison group and focus group participants were all likely to be suspicious of smart white males aged 21-50 offering goods or services for sale, requesting assistance or claiming to be from electricity or gas companies.

### **Vulnerability**

Study 1 indicates that vulnerability to being targeted by distraction burglars is increased if a person lives alone. The following factors emerging from participant interviews and focus groups may have contributed to the reduction of the probability of victimisation in the Asian and African-Caribbean communities.

- African-Caribbean people perceived loneliness to be a vulnerability factor. Younger participants saw older adults as being especially vulnerable and stated that older relatives involved in child care experienced reduced vulnerability.
- Many houses in Bristol's Asian community are occupied by more than one person for almost 50 per cent of the time during the day and many Asian households are occupied by more than one person during the afternoon, which was seen as being a high risk time.
- Many older Asians live with young relatives.
- The work practices of many Asian and African-Caribbean participants enabled partners to be at home during the day.

It is of note that 'safe' warden controlled accommodation for older Asian adults in this sample might affect victimisation as physical security was thought to be lax and easy to breach, although the number of victims in this sample is very small (n=6), and therefore conclusions cannot be drawn from this.

### **Doorstep etiquette**

Focus group and interview analysis indicated that Asian women understood the importance of door checking procedures, especially looking through the front window to see the caller. This procedure was closely followed by requesting and checking ID and using door chains. It is of note that many Asian participants expected officials to wait outside with the door shut whilst identification was verified. Strangers would be sent away if suspicion was raised.

Many participants would not open the door at all if they were suspicious of the caller, especially if he was a male. Indeed some Asian women would not open their front door to any man apart from their father, husband, brother or son. Asian participants suggested that cultural and religious factors determined aspects of this behaviour.

The highest reported doorstep checking behaviour amongst African-Caribbean participants was looking through the front window to see who was at the door. The second highest reported behaviour was looking through a spyhole. There was a relatively low reported use of doorchains despite the recognition of the importance of using the door chain. Many African-Caribbean participants also expected officials to wait outside with the door shut whilst identification was verified. It is of note that participants stated the importance of demanding rather than requesting ID perhaps indicating the importance of showing who was in control – the householder not the caller.

During focus group discussions it emerged that many African-Caribbean participants contended that dealing with and pressure from doorstep sales representatives actually increased suspicion of further strangers knocking on the door. Specific problems were identified with charity bag collectors and energy account sales representatives who often had no identification. Due to changes in practice, official but unexpected visits from public service utilities were rare as meters were often placed externally on houses, thus negating the need for officials to call unless a visit had already been arranged.

### **Surrounding environment**

Earlier research findings suggest that a majority of white older adults who become victims of distraction burglary were residents in quiet streets (Thornton and Barlow, 2000). From participant interviews with both ethnic groups, more non-targets of distraction burglary had doors that were visible to neighbours than targeted groups, suggesting that those with doors visible to neighbours may be less likely to be targeted. In the African-Caribbean group, more targets lived in quiet streets than non-targets. The same trend was observed in the Asian group although less pronounced. In both ethnic groups, researchers noted they were more likely to be observed by others in the street when calling at the houses of non-targets, suggesting that the presence of passers-by may deter distraction burglars.

**Table 6.1: Percentage of participants with each observation of surrounding environment by group**

Observation	Asian		African-Caribbean	
	Targets (n=29)	Non-targets (n=35)	Targets (n=25)	Non-targets (n=34)
Door visible to neighbours	24.1	42.9	24	44.1
Quiet street	31.0	25.7	72	44.1
Observed by others when calling	3.4	14.3	0	8.8

### Beliefs about offenders

Few participants in either focus groups or interview reported trusting stereotypes that appeared to increase their vulnerability to deception, although beliefs about stereotyped offender characteristics were most prevalent amongst older participants. Both African-Caribbean and Asian participants agreed that offenders were more likely to be white males aged between 21 and 50, well-presented, well-spoken, friendly, and reassuring. Participants believed it counterproductive for the offender to scare the victim - the most effective perpetrators would leave victims feeling confident and comfortable rather than frightened. The most common description used for an offender was 'just a normal person'.

### Guise used by offender

Of participants who had been targeted by distraction burglars a third of the offenders who targeted Asian participants and almost half of the offenders who targeted African-Caribbean participants had posed as officials. The most frequently used bogus official guise was that of an electricity official wanting to check the meter, followed by a gas official.

The most frequently used non-official guise was that of a person needing help (e.g. asking to use the telephone because their car had broken down). This was followed closely by doorstep sales people. Other guises included claiming to know members of the family, offering building/gardening/odd job services and window cleaning. It is of note that one offender posed as a religious leader; there is no evidence of this kind of deception being used in white communities.

### Manner and dress

Most participants in both ethnic groups described the offender's manner positively. Only a small number of participants thought that offenders would be "forceful", "aggressive" or

“intimidating”. Most commonly offenders were not perceived as wearing uniforms but rather looking smart, clean and casual. If work uniform was worn it was more likely to be “overalls” with no specific identification. The majority of participants identified public service personnel and council workers as the easiest “officials” to impersonate and most likely to be trusted. Identification was seen as easy to forge.

### **Participants’ reaction to offenders**

During interviews it became clear that the majority of African-Caribbean and Asian participants who had actually repelled a distraction burglary at some stage were not convinced of the offender’s authenticity and had not allowed the offender into their house. As a consequence two offenders posing as officials had then used physical force to attempt to gain access by putting their foot through the door to prevent closure.

When potential offenders were admitted into the participant’s house most participants reported feeling “cautious”, “uneasy”, “vulnerable” or “confused”. Repellers of this type did not actively “repel” the crime and could potentially have become victims. The most likely explanation for the offender not progressing with the crime is that the repellers did not let the offender “out of their sight” when they were in their house. During focus group discussions it was emphasised on many occasions that strangers who had actually got as far as “being shown in” were still treated with a high degree of suspicion.

### **Awareness of distraction burglary**

#### **Making others aware**

Awareness of distraction burglaries was low in both the Asian and African-Caribbean communities.

Asian participants able to define the crime had previously attended crime prevention workshops organised by an Asian community group or had knowledge of a victim. African-Caribbean participants with knowledge of distraction burglary had received information from newspapers, television and the radio. During discussion it became apparent that a number of participants believed that victims must take some of the blame if an offender was allowed into a victim’s house - once in, finding money would be easy for the offender as money and valuables were always kept in “obvious” safe places. The presence of children in the house was identified as a deterrent and people who live alone were seen as most at risk.

### **Asian participants**

Participants stated that “many existing agencies with a crime prevention or awareness raising brief are targeting their resources towards white victims” and “existing Asian community groups and networks are being ignored by some agencies in their attempt to raise awareness of distraction burglaries in the Asian community”. Awareness raising and advice were believed more effective than providing and fitting security equipment. Many participants already had experience of using door chains but found infra-red alarms carrying verbal reminders to “stop, chain, check” to be of limited use.

The key findings from the Asian participants were:

- Crime prevention information must be delivered within a social setting.
- Information should be presented in visual and verbal form.
- Asian participants preferred to receive information from community or religious groups.

### **African-Caribbean participants**

Participants recognised distraction burglary as both a community and individual problem. Participants talked about increasing the speed of crime information transfer in order to protect more vulnerable members of the community. Current information featured in local newspapers on preventing distraction burglaries had not been widely accessed by African-Caribbean people.

The key findings from this can be summarised as follows:

- The police should make greater use of crime prevention presentations at community-led functions.
- Greater use should be made of the local media.
- Pension books should be used to convey information on preventative measures.
- Local community groups, older adult groups, health and religious centres should be involved in future campaigns.
- African-Caribbean participants believed the police should deliver crime prevention information.

### **Warning messages**

Participants were asked what message they would like to get across to people warning them about the crime of distraction burglary. The message most frequently mentioned by Asian and African-Caribbean participants was “be careful when people come to your door”. This was followed by the general warning, “be aware of distraction burglary”, and “do not trust anyone – do not open your door to strangers”. One Asian participant also advised others “don’t be helpful”. Specific advice from both groups centred around using the appropriate security measures, such as the spy hole and door chain, and then asking for identification.

During interview participants were asked what features they would look at on an ID card to satisfy themselves that it was genuine. The majority of participants in both ethnic groups said they would check the photo on an ID card. Many would also check the name of the caller and the name of the company they were from. During focus group discussion participants noted the merit of having an appointment or a letter from the company making the visit that confirmed the visit arrangements.

### **Trust crimes**

Many Asian participants confused distraction burglary with other “trust” crime. This led to most participants discussing relatives who gained their trust and stole from them at a later stage. Several participants gave examples of such crimes, but none had been reported to the police. Although evidence to support the nature, severity and frequency of the crimes was purely anecdotal, “trust” crimes were a cause for concern within the Asian community. Further investigation should be undertaken into the nature and scale of “trust” crimes.

There is also evidence within the African-Caribbean community that offences similar to distraction burglaries can be committed by other family members or friends. Such crimes were often dealt with in the family or ignored for fear of retribution.

### **Summary**

The research suggests that distraction burglary prevalence rates are lower amongst ethnic minority communities, than white communities, although it must be borne in mind that the age group for this study was not restricted to those over 60. The study appears to confirm that distraction burglary is predominantly, although not exclusively, a ‘white on white’ crime. Under reporting of the crime to the police was highlighted – respondents in this study said

they would tell family and friends rather than the police. Whether family and friends passed on this information to the police, as was the case for almost a third of older people in study 1, is unclear.

A number of reasons were given as to why Asian and African-Caribbean communities experience a lower incidence of distraction burglary than white communities:

- many Asian households are frequently occupied by more than one person for most of the day, especially in the afternoon which is perceived as being a high risk time.
- Asian women in particular are very aware of door checking procedures and will not open the door at all if they are suspicious of the caller, particularly a male caller; they suggested that cultural and religious factors may determine aspects of this behaviour;
- African-Caribbean people will often demand rather than request callers' ID, and stressed the importance of maintaining control of the interaction on the doorstep;
- both African-Caribbean and Asian people are prepared to leave callers on the doorstep with the door closed whilst ID is checked. Despite this, there was still the feeling that identification could be easily forged.

An additional potential problem was identified through this study with family members gaining the trust of older relatives, and consequently using this build up of trust to steal from them. These 'trust crimes' were recognised by both Asian and African-Caribbean communities.

In terms of raising awareness, respondents from minority ethnic communities were less likely to have heard about distraction burglary, and the action they could take to prevent them becoming victims, than white communities. Ideas for raising awareness included using local community and religious groups to deliver these crime prevention messages, and also for local practitioners to make effective use of local media channels.



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## Chapter 7: Conclusions and recommendations

This final chapter outlines the main conclusions drawn from both research studies, and discusses the key recommendations for policy and practice. These cover the problems of defining and recording distraction burglary; ideas for raising awareness most effectively for particular communities; reducing the vulnerability of older adults and minority ethnic groups; and minimising the impact of the crime when an incident does actually occur. The recommendations apply to a variety of professional and volunteer groups working with older people and ethnic minority communities, including amongst others, the police, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, charity organisations, health workers and utility companies.

### **Defining and recording distraction burglary**

The pervasive image of the stereotypical distraction burglary victim is of a white older person who is tricked on the doorstep and allows the offender to enter, or is distracted whilst an accomplice sneaks in (see the Good Practice Guide, 2001, definition). The findings of the first study demonstrated that although older adults victims do let in offenders, other modes of entry are common (i.e. offender gains entry uninvited), and the homeowner is not always convinced by the offender's story.

Existing definitions do not always take account of such distinct profiles within the crime categorised as distraction burglary, and also do not account for those 16 per cent of cases in the first study where the victim found the offender within their home, rather than encountering them on the doorstep. These existing definitions, by emphasising the words "trick on the doorstep", may act to reinforce ageist myths of older adult victims of distraction burglary as naïve, confused and gullible, rather than accurately reflecting the complexity and variation of crimes categorised as distraction burglary.

Furthermore, the second study found that participants from minority ethnic communities reported a number of blurred boundaries around existing definitions of distraction burglary, including a range of "trust crimes" involving perpetrators known to the victim.

Both studies have indicated limitations in the current Good Practice Guide definition of distraction burglary, with this definition appearing to exclude many crimes considered by participants to be examples of distraction burglary. Recommendations here include:

- recognising the broader range of entry modes. The Operation Litotes definition (South West Distraction Burglary Consortium), which highlights a “trick, action or falsehood” as modes of entry, offers a firm basis for a revised definition;
- defining those crimes to be incorporated under the distraction burglary rubric, owing to the blurred boundaries of current definitions of distraction burglary, such as trust crimes, over-priced goods or services.
- The new definition of distraction burglary adopted in April 2003 should be reviewed to assess how well distraction burglaries outlined in this report are covered.

## Raising awareness

Most of the older adults in the first study (68%) reported themselves to be aware of distraction burglary before the incident, largely through TV or newspapers. Fewer (35%) could recall the detail of these warning messages. In contrast, Asian and African-Caribbean participants in the second study generally had little awareness of the term “distraction burglary”, with awareness campaigns having very little impact.

Both studies have highlighted the importance of raising public awareness of distraction burglary, and suggest ways in which existing awareness raising campaigns might be improved. Recommendations for the content and dissemination of future distraction burglary awareness raising campaigns include:

- incorporating specific warning messages in awareness raising campaigns rather than general cautions;
- adding a “keep door locked” message, which could also help reduce other forms of burglary such as walk-in burglaries;
- adopting methods that encourage interaction rather than passivity on the part of the audience, to maximise learning effectiveness (Bischoff, 1976), particularly through the use of face-to-face awareness raising strategies. This has already been adopted through the work of the Distraction Burglary Taskforce (Good Practice Guide, 2001)
- promoting self-confidence and feelings of personal control over victimisation, as these can minimise future vulnerability (Winkel et al, 1994);
- tailoring campaign strategies to meet the needs of particular communities, using mass-media strategies and more focused local campaigns using local community resources;

- encourage the home-owner to take action, make the distraction burglary message in awareness raising campaigns more explicit, where the viewer witnesses an actual (staged) victimisation, to alert them to the repercussions of unsafe doorstep practices. Again this has already been adopted in some distraction burglary projects, and is undergoing evaluation;
- encouraging the reporting of attempted and successful distraction burglary incidents amongst all communities, including ethnic minority communities and older adults.

However, it is also worth noting that the findings of these two studies challenge many of the assumptions made by professionals concerning the process of distraction burglary, the nature of a typical victim and the impact of the crime on victims. Thus, awareness raising campaigns also need to take place amongst professional groups.

### **Reducing vulnerability**

The study concerning older adults identified several environmental and psycho-social risk factors for being a target and a victim of distraction burglary. Qualitative data from the participants in the second study, from ethnic minority communities, suggested a similar range of risk factors for targeting and victimisation. Based on these diverse sources of evidence, several recommendations can be made to reduce the vulnerability of citizens to distraction burglary.

Older adults identified a number of environmental factors marking out a potential target. Such external property indicators of a vulnerable resident (e.g. neglected gardens and décor) could be minimised by:

- encouraging home owners to carry out external repairs, including helping them seek financial support where necessary. Registers of reputable workers may also help to reduce the extent of rogue trader crime;
- for rented properties, simple, quick and reliable procedures for reporting repairs and upkeep to landlords, including local councils.

Agencies aiming to promote and maintain the independence of older people living in their own homes, together with local councils, could take a lead in this area.

Poor mobility as a vulnerability factor amongst older adults could be minimised by:

- ensuring that professionals visiting an older person encourage them to keep their exterior doors locked. This might most usefully be coupled with the introduction of relevant gadgets enabling the older person to check who is at the door and unlock it remotely after checking out the callers' identity; These gadgets could include an entryphone system, or a remote door entry system monitored by a central control centre.
- outreach teams supporting older persons temporarily e.g. after a fall, might consider buying gadgets that can temporarily be left with a person until they recover or circumstances change and the additional risk is no longer present.

Isolation as a vulnerability factor may be reduced by developing social networks reaching people either in their own homes or in community settings, such as day centres with an explicitly social function.

Finally, it is important to note that calls from utility companies or professionals should ideally be arranged in advance, with a specific date and time of appointment, in the first language of the resident. Once at the property, an agreed consistent "doorstep code" should be employed by the visiting agency, so this practice becomes consistent and predictable. This will reduce vulnerability to bogus callers adopting these identities.

## **Reducing impact**

The findings from the study with older adults highlighted the importance of assessing and treating victims of distraction burglary as individuals, rather than developing a standard response to distraction burglary victims. For victims, the assessment and prolonged intervention for physical and mental health problems should concentrate on the relatively small proportion of victims and repellers experiencing serious trauma as a result of the distraction burglary incident. To facilitate this process, suggestions here include:

- police personnel informing the victims GP to ensure a vulnerable victim receives continued support and higher levels of supervision. Disclosure of information under Section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 states that information can be shared for the purposes of preventing further crime;
- police or victim support administering a brief assessment of the likely impact of the crime on the victim, triggering routine referral onto other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies where necessary;

- identifying “slips in behaviour” in doorstep security that resulted in the crime instead of shifting blame to the perpetrator, to reduce feelings of helplessness and encourage changes in future behaviour to reduce future vulnerability.



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## Appendix A: Standardised measures used in Study 1

### Psychosocial risk factors

#### **The Abbreviated Mental Test Score** (Hodkinson, 1972).

The Abbreviated Mental Test Score (AMT) was used to assess cognitive impairment. The AMT has 11 items and is scored out of 10, with a score below 7 suggestive of cognitive impairment. This measure has been validated with the over-60 population (Quereshi and Hodkinson, 1974).

#### **The UCLA Loneliness Scale (version 3)** (Russell, 1996)

The UCLA Loneliness Scale (version 3) is a simplified version of the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell et al., 1980) which was amended to be sensitive to an older adult population. The scale contains 20 items, answered on four point scales.

#### **The Gudjonsson Compliance Scale** (Gudjonsson, 1989)

The Gudjonsson Compliance Scale assesses the general tendency towards compliance which may make a person particularly susceptible to exploitation, and consists of 20 true-false items. The scale is used as a self-report measure where individuals are asked to indicate aspects of their behaviour reflecting compliance, with higher scores indicating greater compliance.

#### **Doorstep etiquette**

Seven questions investigating doorstep etiquette were developed for this study. They focus on how the respondent feels they should behave towards unknown doorstep callers. All items are measured on five-point scales, with higher scores indicative of safer doorstep behaviour.

### Impact

#### **The Geriatric Depression Scale** (Yesavage et al, 1983)

The 15 Yes/No item version of the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) was used. The GDS is used to screen for depression in older adults. The scores on the GDS range from 0 to 15, with a cut off score of 5/6 indicative of probable depression.

**The Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale** (Zigmond and Snaith, 1983)

The Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale consists of two 7-item self-assessment sub-scales, separately screening for anxiety (A-scale) and depression (D-scale). For this study only the A-scale was used. Scores range from 7 to 28, with higher scores representing more severe anxiety. The HADS has been extensively validated (Moore et al, 1991).

**The Dartmouth COOP Function Charts** (Nelson et al, 1990)

The Dartmouth COOP Function Charts were developed specifically for use in clinical practice, and can be used as an outcome measure in clinical research. The measure uses nine five-point items to measure functioning, general health status and quality of life, according to how the person has felt in the previous four weeks. Scores range from 9 to 45, with higher scores indicative of greater problems in functioning. This tool is routinely used with the older adult population (Meyboom-de Jong and Smith, 1990; Nelson et al, 1990).

**The Davidson Trauma Scale** (Davidson, 1996)

The Davidson Trauma Scale was developed as a self-rating scale for use in screening for post-traumatic stress disorder symptomatology. This 17 item scale measures each DSM-IV (APA, 1994) symptom of PTSD on five-point frequency and severity scales. Scores range from 0 to 170, with higher scores indicative of PTSD. The use of the DTS as a tool to measure trauma is well validated (Davidson et al, 1997).

**The Home Office Fear of Crime Scale** (Home Office, undated)

This scale is routinely used to measure fear of crime in targeted populations and is used in the British Crime Survey. The questions cover a range of worries and anxieties about crime, both personally and at a societal level.

**Police Response** (adapted from Winkel et al, 1994)

Eight six-point response questions used in the Time 2 interviews focused on participants' perceptions of the police response to their particular incident. These items are based on the work of Winkel et al (1994), who suggest that the initial response given by the police may be crucial in terms of the subsequent recovery of the crime victim.

**Attributional Style Questions** (adapted from Winkel et al, 1994)

Four attributional questions using six-point response scales were used in the Time 2 questionnaire also based on the work of Winkel et al. (1994). These questions investigate four possible reasons a person may give for becoming a victim of crime: bad luck; the person feeling that they "attract" negative events; the crime being a result of a lapse in behaviour by the participant; and the participant feeling manipulated by the offenders.

### Physical health

A GP pro-forma sheet was developed to allow for the following standardised information to be drawn from participants' GP records: number of GP contacts; reason for appointment; prescription type and rates; referrals to other agencies; and medical interventions.

Comparisons were made between two time periods:

- The time period between the incident (Groups 1 and 2) or the past three months (Group 3) and the Time 2 interview.
- The equivalent number of months up to the incident (e.g. if the time between the incident and Time 2 was four months then the four months prior to the incident were also scrutinised).

In addition, all participants were asked to fill in a brief medical history questionnaire at Time 2 focusing on general health and well being in the four weeks prior to the Time 2 interview and the four weeks prior to the distraction burglary incident (or, for Group 3, a four week period three months before the Time 2 interview).

The measures collected from each group at Time 1 and Time 2 are summarised in Table A.1.

**Table A.1: Measures used for each group at each time point**

	Group 1 (Victim) Time 1	Group 1 Time 2	Group 2 (Repeller) Time 1	Group 2 Time 2	Group 3 (Non-victims) Time 1	Group 3 Time 2
Abbreviated Mental Test (AMT)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UCLA Loneliness Scale	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Compliance Scale	✓		✓		✓	
Depression Scale	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Anxiety Scale	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Physical/Emotional Functioning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Doorstep Etiquette	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Attributions		✓		✓		
Fear of Crime Scale	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trauma Scale	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Police Response Questions		✓		✓		
Awareness Raising Questions		✓		✓		✓
Money Safety Questions		✓		✓		✓
Crime Related Questions	✓		✓			
Medical History		✓		✓		✓



**Table B.1: Demographic characteristics of participants at Time 1**

	Distraction burglary victims – let caller in (n=42)*	Distraction burglary victims – caller gained entry uninvited (n=33)	Distraction burglary repellers (n=45)	Non-victim group (n=95)	Total sample (n=215)	Test of difference between groups
<b>Gender:</b>						
Female	32 (76.2%)	25 (75.8%)	30 (66.7%)	64 (67.4%)	151 (70.2%)	$\chi^2=1.84, df=3, p=0.61$
Male	10 (23.8%)	8 (24.2%)	15 (33.3%)	31 (32.6%)	64 (29.8%)	
<b>Age (years):</b>						
Mean (s.d.)	78.4 (7.0)	80.0 (7.5)	74.3 (7.9)	75.1 (7.7)	76.3 (7.8)	One-way ANOVA
Range	62-93	62-97	60-94	60-96	60-97	
60-64	2 (4.8%)	1 (3.0%)	6 (13.3%)	9 (9.5%)	18 (8.4%)	F=5.72 (3,211) p=0.001
65-69	2 (4.8%)	1 (3.0%)	8 (17.8%)	18 (18.9%)	29 (13.5%)	
70-74	7 (16.7%)	5 (15.1%)	7 (15.6%)	19 (20.0%)	38 (17.7%)	
75-79	16 (38.1%)	10 (30.3%)	11 (24.4%)	22 (23.2%)	59 (27.4%)	
80-84	7 (16.7%)	7 (21.2%)	9 (20.0%)	17 (17.9%)	40 (18.6%)	
85+	8 (19.0%)	9 (27.3%)	4 (8.9%)	10 (10.5%)	31 (14.4%)	Victim (uninvited) > Repeller + Non-victim

\* N.B. Throughout the report, numbers for each group vary, due to missing data.

**Table B.2: The sequence of successful and unsuccessful distraction burglary attempts**

	Distraction burglary victims – let caller in (n=42)	Distraction burglary victims – caller gained entry uninvited (n=33)	Distraction burglary repellers (n=45)	Total sample (n=120)	Test of difference between groups
Did caller get into home:					
Yes-let in	42 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.9%)	44 (37.9%)	$\chi^2=189.12$ , df=4, p<0.001
Yes- uninvited	0 (0.0%)	33 (100.0%)	6 (14.6%)	39 (33.6%)	
No-did not get in home	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	33 (80.5%)	33 (28.4%)	
How uninvited caller got into home:					
	n/a				Insufficient numbers for analysis
Sneaked in		7 (21.2%)	0 (0.0%)		
Through open/unlocked door		5 (15.2%)	0 (0.0%)		
Walked in when participant on doorstep		17 (51.5%)	5 (100.0%)		
Broke in		1(3%)	0 (0.0%)		
Followed participant back into the home		3 (9.1%)			
Manner of caller on first appearance:					
Friendly/plausible	31 (77.5%)	22 (75.9%)	19 (57.6%)	72 (70.6%)	Chi square test friendly/plausible vs. other $\chi^2=4.00$ , df=2, p=0.14
Odd	1 (2.5%)	1 (3.4%)	3 (9.1%)	5 (4.9%)	
Uneasy/on edge	3 (7.5%)	2 (6.9%)	2 (6.1%)	7 (6.9%)	
Intimidating	4 (10.0%)	4 (13.8%)	6 (18.2%)	14 (13.7%)	
False	1 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (9.1%)	4 (3.9%)	
Feeling when first met caller:					
Neutral/at ease/not suspicious	30 (78.9%)	15 (51.7%)	7 (21.2%)	52 (52.0%)	$\chi^2=31.60$ , df=6, p<0.001
Uneasy/worried/alarmed	5 (13.2%)	5 (17.2%)	10 (30.3%)	20 (20.0%)	
Suspicious	2 (5.3%)	5 (17.2%)	15 (45.4%)	22 (22.0%)	
Irritated/angry	1 (2.6%)	4 (13.8%)	1 (3.0%)	6 (6.0%)	
On first meeting, convinced caller was genuine:					
Yes	32 (84.2%)	16 (55.2%)	3 (7.9%)	51 (48.6%)	$\chi^2=45.00$ , df=2, p<0.001
No	6 (15.8%)	3 (44.8%)	35 (92.1%)	54 (51.4%)	

What convinced participant caller was not genuine:					
Responses to questions	5 (55.5%)	1 (9.1%)	8 (33.3%)	14 (31.8%)	Insufficient numbers for analysis
Relevant workers not in area/offering service at time	1 (11.1%)	1 (9.1%)	2 (8.3%)	4 (9.1%)	
Age and demeanour of caller	0 (0.0%)	3 (27.3%)	2 (8.3%)	5 (11.4%)	
Caught in act of theft	2 (22.2%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (6.8%)	
Participant distrustful	1 (11.1%)	4 (36.4%)	7 (29.2%)	12 (27.3%)	
Poor/no ID card	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	3 (12.5%)	4 (9.1%)	
Time of night	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (8.3%)	2 (4.5%)	
How participant felt when caller was in home:					
Angry/upset	3 (8.6%)	10 (34.5%)	1 (14.3%)	14 (19.7%)	Chi square Initially OK vs. Not initially OK $\chi^2=23.22$ , df=2, p<0.001
OK/not suspicious	22 (62.9%)	5 (17.2%)	2 (28.6%)	29 (40.8%)	
OK, then suspicious	5 (14.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (40.8%)	
Uneasy/uncomfortable	2 (5.7%)	6 (20.7%)	1 (14.3%)	9 (12.7%)	
Scared/alarm	3 (8.6%)	8 (27.6%)	3 (42.9%)	14 (19.7%)	
Did caller's story 'ring true':					
Yes	35 (87.5%)	17 (53.1%)	5 (11.6%)	57 (49.6%)	$\chi^2=47.95$ , df=2, p<0.001
No	5 (12.5%)	15 (46.9%)	38 (88.4%)	58 (50.4%)	
When did participant suspect something was wrong:					
Before caller entered home	0 (0.0%)	5 (15.6%)	14 (53.8%)	19 (19.0%)	$\chi^2=35.30$ , df=6, p<0.001
While caller was in home	16 (38.1%)	16 (50.0%)	6 (23.1%)	38 (38.0%)	
After caller left home	23 (54.8%)	11 (34.4%)	5 (19.2%)	39 (39.0%)	
Didn't suspect	3 (7.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.8%)	4 (4.0%)	
Did participant ask caller to leave:					
Yes	8 (32.0%)	14 (56.0%)	17 (68.0%)	39 (52.0%)	$\chi^2=6.73$ , df=2, p=0.035
No	17 (68.0%)	11 (44.0%)	8 (32.0%)	36 (48.0%)	

**Table B.3: Satisfaction with police response**

Satisfaction with police (1=very satisfied; 6=very unsatisfied)	Distraction burglary victims – let caller in (n=33)	Distraction burglary victims – caller gained entry uninvited (n=26)	Distraction burglary repellers (n=27)	Total sample (n=86)
<b>Speed of police response</b>				
Mean (s.d.)	1.53 (1.14)	1.24 (0.52)	1.81 (1.23)	1.53 (1.04)
Range	1-6	1-3	1-5	1-6
<b>Manner of visiting officers</b>				
Mean (s.d.)	1.41 (0.61)	1.15 (0.37)	1.62 (0.98)	1.39 (0.71)
Range	1-3	1-2	1-5	1-5
<b>Reassurance and help</b>				
Mean (s.d.)	1.41 (0.80)	1.23 (0.43)	1.62 (0.98)	1.42 (0.78)
Range	1-5	1-2	1-5	1-5
<b>Police empathy</b>				
Mean (s.d.)	1.31 (0.78)	1.27 (0.45)	1.73 (1.04)	1.43 (0.81)
Range	1-5	1-2	1-5	1-5
<b>Other officers' speed of response</b>				
Mean (s.d.)	1.60 (1.00)	1.50 (1.14)	1.57 (1.13)	1.56 (1.06)
Range	1-4	1-6	1-4	1-6
<b>Further police visits</b>				
Mean (s.d.)	1.39 (0.50)	1.46 (0.51)	1.60 (0.50)	1.47 (0.50)
Range	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>				
Mean (s.d.)	1.56 (0.91)	1.40 (0.87)	1.77 (1.11)	1.58 (0.96)
Range	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5

**Table B.4: Attributions concerning the causes of the distraction burglary incident**

Attribution (1=strongly agree; 6=strongly disagree)	Distraction burglary victims – let caller in (n=33)	Distraction burglary victims – caller gained entry uninvited (n=26)	Distraction burglary repellers (n=27)	Total sample (n=86)	One-way ANOVA with Scheffe post-hoc tests
I am typically the kind of person who attracts negative events					
Mean (s.d.)	4.27 (1.23)	4.00 (1.06)	4.44 (0.97)	4.24 (1.11)	F=1.09, df=2,83, p=0.34
Range	1-6	2-5	2-6	1-6	
I think the occurrence of the event is related to my behaviour					
Mean (s.d.)	3.06 (1.22)	3.27 (1.31)	4.41 (1.10)	3.49 (1.33)	F=8.70, df=2,78, p<0.001
Range	1-6	1-5	2-6	1-6	Victim (let in) + Victim (uninvited) < Repeller
I feel like a puppet in the burglars' hands					
Mean (s.d.)	3.52 (1.18)	3.69 (1.16)	4.93 (0.62)	3.85 (1.20)	F=8.73, df=2,70, p<0.001
Range	2-6	2-5	4-6	2-6	Victim (let in) Victim (uninvited) < Repeller
I attribute the incident to bad luck					
Mean (s.d.)	3.60 (1.09)	3.19 (1.39)	4.12 (1.20)	3.63 (1.26)	F=3.70, df=2,81, p=0.029
Range	1-6	1-5	1-5	1-6	Victim (uninvited) < Repeller

**Table B.5: Environmental risk factors showing differences between groups**

	Distraction burglary victims – let caller in (n=42)	Distraction burglary victims – caller gained entry uninvited (n=33)	Distraction burglary repellers (n=45)	Non-victim group (n=95)	Total sample (n=215)	Test of difference between groups
<b>Housing tenure:</b>						
Owner occupied	17 (41.5%)	11 (33.3%)	26 (57.8%)	61 (64.2%)	115 (53.7%)	Owned vs. Rented – council vs. All other rented. $\chi^2=18.07$ , df=6, p=0.006
Rented – council	20 (48.8%)	18 (54.5%)	16 (35.6%)	22 (23.2%)	76 (35.5%)	
Rented – HA	2 (4.9%)	3 (9.1%)	1 (2.2%)	7 (7.4%)	13 (6.1%)	
Rented – private	2 (4.9%)	1 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (3.2%)	6 (2.8%)	
Other	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.4%)	2 (2.1%)	4 (1.9%)	
<b>Co-residents:</b>						
Lives alone	32 (76.2%)	21 (63.6%)	32 (71.1%)	45 (47.4%)	130 (60.5%)	Lives alone vs. With partner vs. With other $\chi^2=15.58$ , df=6, p=0.016
With partner	7 (16.7%)	7 (21.2%)	9 (20.0%)	39 (41.1%)	62 (28.8%)	
With child(ren)	0 (0.0%)	3 (9.1%)	4 (8.9%)	10 (10.5%)	17 (7.9%)	
With other(s)	3 (7.1%)	2 (6.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.1%)	6 (2.8%)	
Neglected garden	8 (20.0%)	12 (37.5%)	3 (6.8%)	2 (2.5%)	25 (12.8%)	$\chi^2=28.45$ , df=3, p<0.001
Neglected exterior décor	8 (20.0%)	11 (34.4%)	2 (4.5%)	5 (6.3%)	26 (13.3%)	$\chi^2=20.30$ , df=3, p<0.001
Burglar alarm	3 (7.5%)	4 (12.5%)	10 (22.7%)	26 (32.5%)	43 (21.9%)	$\chi^2=11.76$ , df=3, p=0.008
Door visible to neighbours	16 (39.0%)	11 (34.4%)	12 (34.3%)	64 (79.0%)	105 (55.6%)	$\chi^2=30.69$ , df=3, p<0.001
Poor visibility of front door to street	13 (31.7%)	9 (28.1%)	5 (14.3%)	7 (8.6%)	32 (16.9%)	$\chi^2=12.85$ , df=3, p=0.005

Other houses in good condition	19 (46.3%)	20 (62.5%)	20 (57.1%)	61 (75.3%)	122 (64.6%)	$\chi^2=11.10$ , df=3, p=0.011
Other houses in poor condition	12 (28.6%)	9 (28.1%)	3 (8.6%)	8 (9.9%)	33 (17.5%)	$\chi^2=13.56$ , df=3, p=0.004

**Table B.6: Cognitive impairment**

AMT (0-10)	Distraction burglary victims – let caller in (n=42)	Distraction burglary victims – caller gained entry uninvited (n=33)	Distraction burglary repellers (n=45)	Non-victim group (n=95)	Total sample (n=215)	Test of difference
Total score:						Kruskal-Wallis
Mean (s.d.)	9.05 (1.27)	8.79 (1.45)	9.42 (0.89)	9.31 (0.99)	9.20 (1.12)	ANOVA
Range	5-10	5-10	7-10	4-10	4-10	$\chi^2=4.97$ , df=3, p=0.17
Impairment category:						Insufficient numbers for analysis
No problem	37 (88.1%)	27 (81.8%)	43 (95.6%)	92 (96.8%)	199 (92.6%)	
Possible dementia	3 (7.1%)	4 (12.1%)	2 (4.4%)	1 (1.1%)	10 (4.7%)	
Probable dementia	2 (4.8%)	2 (6.1%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.1%)	6 (2.8%)	

**Table B.7: Compliance scores**

	Distraction burglary victims – let caller in (n=42)	Distraction burglary victims – caller gained entry uninvited (n=33)	Distraction burglary repellers (n=45)	Non-victim group (n=95)	Total sample (n=215)	Test of difference
Compliance (0-20: high score=high compliance):						Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA and post hoc Mann-Whitney U tests
Mean (s.d.)	9.38 (3.25)	9.58 (3.54)	9.11 (2.95)	9.11 (3.38)	9.23 (3.28)	$\chi^2=1.24$ , df=3, p=0.74
Range	3-17	2-16	3-16	2-19	2-19	

**Table B.8: Doorstep etiquette at Time 1 and Time 2**

	Distraction burglary victims – let caller in (n=34)	Distraction burglary victims – caller gained entry uninvited (n=26)	Distraction burglary repellers (n=27)	Non-victim group (n=69)	Total sample (n=156)	
Total doorstep etiquette (high score=more likely to let caller in):						
T1 mean (s.d.)	20.74 (3.43)	24.69 (4.80)	21.00 (4.05)	22.17 (4.39)	22.08 (4.38)	
T2 mean (s.d.)	19.15 (4.61)	20.27 (5.16)	19.30 (4.50)	17.42 (4.52)	18.60 (4.73)	
Repeated measures ANOVA: Main effect (group) F=4.32, df=3, 152, p=0.006 Victim (uninvited) > Repeller Main effect (time) F=49.34, df=1,152, p<0.001 Time 1>Time 2 Interaction effect F=4.32, df=3,152, p=0.006 Victim (uninvited) & Non-victim greater reduction than Victim (let in) & Repeller						

**Table B.9: Depression and anxiety at Time 1 and Time 2**

	Distraction burglary victims – let caller in (n=33)	Distraction burglary victims – caller gained entry uninvited (n=26)	Distraction burglary repellers (n=26)	Non-victim group (n=65)	Total sample (n=150)	Repeated measures ANOVA
Depression:						
T1 mean (s.d.)	3.06 (2.03)	3.08 (3.39)	3.30 (2.80)	2.45 (2.51)	2.83 (2.63)	Main effect (group) F=1.38, df=3,152, p=0.25
T2 mean (s.d.)	2.85 (2.51)	3.35 (3.50)	2.67 (2.43)	2.10 (2.06)	2.57 (2.53)	Main effect (time) F=1.93, df=1,152, p=0.17 Interaction effect F=1.06, df=3,152, p=0.37
Time 1						
Not depressed	28 (82.4%)	22 (84.6%)	22 (81.5%)	60 (87.0%)	132(84.6%)	$\chi^2=0.63,$

						df=3, p=0.89
Depressed	6 (17.6%)	4 (15.4%)	5 (18.5%)	9 (13.0%)	24 (15.4%)	
Time 2						
Not depressed	31 (91.2%)	20 (76.9%)	23 (85.2%)	63 (91.3%)	137 (87.8%)	$\chi^2=4.20$ , df=3, p=0.24
Depressed	3 (8.8%)	6 (23.1%)	4 (14.8%)	6 (8.7%)	19 (12.2%)	
<b>Anxiety:</b>						
T1 mean (s.d.)	5.72 (4.25)	5.62 (4.28)	5.44 (3.54)	5.95 (3.84)	5.75 (3.92)	Main effect (group) F=0.03, df=3,146, p=0.99
T2 mean (s.d.)	5.00 (3.45)	4.73 (2.92)	5.26 (3.74)	4.85 (3.79)	4.93 (3.54)	Main effect (time) F=4.79, df=1,146, p=0.030 Time 1 > Time 2 Interaction effect F=0.39, df=3,146, p=0.76
<b>Time 1</b>						
Low anxiety	22 (66.7%)	18 (69.2%)	21 (77.8%)	46 (66.7%)	107 (69%)	Low vs. mild vs. moderate/ high $\chi^2=0.85$ , df=6, p=0.85
Mild anxiety	8 (24.2%)	4 (15.4%)	3 (11.1%)	13 (18.8%)	28 (18.1%)	
Moderate anxiety	1 (3.0%)	3 (11.5%)	3 (11.1%)	10 (14.5%)	17 (11.0%)	
High anxiety	2 (6.1%)	1 (3.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (1.9%)	
<b>Time 2</b>						
Low anxiety	24 (72.7%)	21 (80.8%)	21 (77.8%)	52 (80.0%)	118 (78%)	Low vs. mild vs. moderate/ high $\chi^2=5.27$ , df=6, p=0.51
Mild anxiety	7 (21.2%)	5 (19.2%)	3 (11.1%)	7 (10.8%)	22 (14.6%)	
Moderate anxiety	1 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (7.4%)	4 (6.2%)	7 (4.6%)	
High anxiety	1 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.7%)	2 (3.1%)	4 (2.6%)	

**Table B.10: PTSD at Time 1 and Time 2**

PTSD	Distraction burglary victims – let caller in (n=33)	Distraction burglary victims – caller gained entry uninvited (n=26)	Distraction burglary repellers (n=26)	Total sample (n=150)	Repeated measures ANOVAs
<b>Intrusion:</b>					
T1 mean (s.d.)	8.30 (7.98)	4.96 (5.98)	2.00 (3.38)	5.35 (6.73)	Main effect (group) F=7.60, df=2,82, p=0.001 Victim (let in)> Repeller Main effect (time) F=4.48, df=1,82, p=0.037 Time 1>Time 2 Interaction effect F=1.70, df=2,82, p=0.19
T2 mean (s.d.)	5.03 (5.93)	4.00 (5.48)	1.69 (3.55)	3.69 (5.30)	
<b>Avoidance:</b>					
T1 mean (s.d.)	5.18 (6.63)	2.96 (5.24)	0.77 (1.97)	3.15 (5.42)	Main effect (group) F=7.20, df=2,82, p=0.001 Victim (let in)> Repeller Main effect (time) F=9.95, df=1,82, p=0.002 Time 1>Time 2 Interaction effect F=1.95, df=2,82, p=0.15
T2 mean (s.d.)	1.88 (3.44)	1.38 (2.33)	0.15 (0.78)	1.20 (2.62)	
<b>Hyperarousal:</b>					
T1 mean (s.d.)	8.03 (9.13)	4.77 (7.16)	2.81 (4.78)	5.44 (7.66)	Main effect (group) F=3.90, df=2,82, p=0.024 Victim (let in)> Repeller Main effect (time) F=14.25, df=1,82, p<0.001 Time 1>Time 2 Interaction effect F=3.20, df=2,82, p=0.046
T2 mean (s.d.)	3.00 (5.58)	3.92 (4.92)	0.62 (2.38)	2.55 (4.75)	

						Victim (uninvited) less change than Victim (let in) & Repeller
Symptom freq:						
T1 mean (s.d.)	10.85 (10.55)	7.00 (8.93)	3.08 (4.75)	7.29 (9.13)		Main effect (group)
T2 mean (s.d.)	4.63 (5.61)	5.23 (5.62)	1.46 (3.20)	3.85 (5.20)		F=6.30, df=2,82, p=0.003
						Victim (let in) > Repeller
						Main effect (time)
						F=14.93, df=1,82, p<0.001
						Time 1 > Time 2
						Interaction effect
						F=3.59, df=2,82, p=0.032
						Victim (let in) more change than Victim (uninvited) & Repeller
Symptom sev:						
T1 mean (s.d.)	10.67 (11.52)	5.69 (7.69)	2.50 (4.49)	6.64 (9.28)		Main effect (group)
T2 mean (s.d.)	5.27 (8.04)	4.08 (4.53)	1.00 (2.83)	3.60 (6.03)		F=7.56, df=2,82, p=0.001
						Victim (let in) > Repeller
						Main effect (time)
						F=9.56, df=1,82, p=0.003
						Time 1 > Time 2
						Interaction effect
						F=2.11, df=2,82, p=0.13
PTSD Total:						
T1 mean (s.d.)	21.52 (21.83)	12.69 (16.41)	5.58 (9.09)	13.94 (18.19)		Main effect (group)
T2 mean (s.d.)	9.91 (13.25)	9.31 (9.82)	2.46 (5.95)	7.45 (10.83)		F=7.03, df=2,82, p=0.002
						Victim (let in) > Repeller
						Main effect (time)
						F=12.88, df=1,82, p=0.001
						Time 1 > Time 2
						Interaction effect
						F=2.97, df=2,82, p=0.06



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