Nudge burglary interventions – an RCT relating to reducing student burglaries

Behavioural nudges may increase the security awareness of people in high crime areas, which may reduce opportunities for offenders.

Key details

Status	Ongoing
Lead institution	University College London
Principal researcher(s)	Dr Kevin Smith, Inspector kevin.smith@southyorks.police.uk
Police region	London
Collaboration and partnership	• Dr Aiden Sidebottom, Associate Professor, JIll Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science, UCL • Dr Stuart Kirby, Crime Insights
Project start date	July 2022
Date due for completion	July 2023

Hypothesis

Following on from Roach, Cartwright and others' 12 Streets project, this is an RCT in which 12 streets were selected within an environment where burglary rates are statistically greater than the background average. When examined closely these streets were found to have abnormally high rates of 'sneak-in' MO burglaries.

Of these 12 streets a pairing process was used, where streets with similar rates of burglary (per 1,000 households) were selected. One was randomly chosen (via coin toss) to receive treatment. The course of treatment is for each household on the street to be visited and occupants questioned on their knowledge of burglary in the area, with some questions being designed to prompt a response in the people surveyed.

Surveys were completed in October 2022.

This follows on from an earlier study (see details below) that took place in 2020. This appeared to show a reduction in the rate of sneak-in burglary and compared property marking utilising Smart Water against nudge questionnaires. This earlier study showed a strong reduction in sneak-in burglaries, but this problem-solving plan was heavily affected by COVID-19 lockdown, which resulted in some interesting effects.

Roach J and others. (2020). Reducing student burglary victimisation using the Nudge approach . Crime Prevention and Community Safety, 22(4), 364-380.

Geographical area

Crookes, Sheffield.

Target sample size

12 streets comprising of 307 properties, individually surveyed by house-to-house survey.

Participants - inclusion criteria

People who live on the streets selected for intervention.

Three attempts to contact the occupants were made. If the occupant could not be spoken to after three attempts of randomly knocking on the door while conducting house-to-house surveys, the property was not treated.

Interventions

Survey conducted of households within this area – with surveys being conducted by police officers and PCSOs using the Mindspace framework – with some additional value being added to the

message due to uniformed police officers taking the time to speak to people individually.

Study design

Basic randomised comparing treatment to control.

Control (area not treated but selected due to selected similarities) is to receive standard policing treatment, with cocooning and increased patrols utilised as per force policies as a reaction to burglary trends identified from analysis.

Outcome measures

Number of burglaries per 1,000 households to be compared between the six streets chosen for treatment and those untreated.

Tags

- Neighbourhood policing