

The nature of crime 2008/09

Philip Hall and Bryony Green

INTRODUCTION

This note supplements Crime in England and Wales 2008/09. It reports on the circumstances surrounding incidents of burglary, vehicle-related theft, bicycle theft, other household theft, personal theft, vandalism and violence as reported by victims of such offences in the 2008/09 BCS. It includes information relating to when and where the incident took place, any details on the offender(s), and the respondent's view of the emotional impact and seriousness of the crime.

Estimates of victimisation from the BCS, including the overall level of risk for the offence types covered below, are published in Crime in England and Wales 2008/09 but the information included here provides a more detailed picture of respondents' experiences and thus a greater understanding of the nature of crime to help inform policy development.

The 2008/09 tables are the seventh in the series of Supplementary tables which began with 2002/03 data and have been published annually since¹. This set of tables contains the full set of data from 2002/03 to 2008/09, where figures have previously been published. Where figures have not been published in previous years, this is indicated with a point (.) in the relevant table.

The full set of 2008/09 BCS tables, containing data from 2002/03 to 2008/09, are published online at:

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/crimeew0809_tables_bvv.html.

This year the tables are being published with an interpretative commentary, to give a fuller picture of the nature of crime for each crime type. The commentary below refers to figures from the 2008/09 BCS. Where differences are noted, either between groups or over time, they are statistically significant.

1. THE NATURE OF BURGLARY

Domestic burglary is an unauthorised entry (including attempts) into the victim's dwelling. The sub groups presented here for analysis comprise *burglary with entry* (with or without loss) and *attempted burglary* (where there is no loss). More information on the definitions of these offence types can be found in Volume 2 of Crime in England and Wales 2008/09.

Incidents of burglary were more likely to take place at night (61%) than during the day (39%) and in seven out of ten burglaries (72%) the method of entry (or attempted entry) was through a door. For *burglary with entry* the most common method of entry was through an unlocked door (27%), while forcing the lock of the door was most common method of attempted entry in *attempted burglaries* (51%) (Tables 1.1 and 1.3).

¹ The Supplementary table series is published online at <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/bcs-publications.html>.

Damage was caused in around half (52%) of all burglary incidents. Damage was more likely to occur in incidents of *attempted burglary* compared with incidents of *burglary with entry* (61% compared with 46%). The types of damage most commonly caused were damage associated with (attempted) entry including damage to an outside door, a broken window or damage to a lock (45%, 28% and 27% of all burglary with damage respectively) (Table 1.4).

In about three in five burglaries entry was successful and of these, items were stolen in seven out of ten incidents (70%). Items most likely to be stolen were a purse, wallet or money (46%), electrical goods or cameras (36%), computers or computer equipment (29%), jewellery (23%) and mobile phones (19%) (Table 1.6).

In 59 per cent of all burglaries someone was at home at the time of the incident. In one-quarter of burglaries (25%) someone was at home and saw the offender(s) and in nearly half of these incidents (45%), force or violence was threatened or used by the offender(s), representing fifteen per cent of all burglaries (Table 1.8).

In less than half (45%) of incidents of burglary the victim was able to say something about the offender(s). Of such incidents, victims said that the offender(s) were most likely to be:

- acting alone (65%);
- male(s) (89%) rather than female(s) (6%) or in a mixed sex group (5%);
- aged between 16 and 24 years (51%).

In around half of incidents (49%) where the victim was able to say something about the offender(s), the offender(s) were known, at least by sight, to the victim (Table 1.9).

In 2008/09 the most commonly used household security devices were window locks (87% of households) and double or deadlocks on doors (82%) (Table 1.12). The most common reason for people to say that they made improvements to their home security was that it was done as part of general improvements to the house (49%) (Table 1.13). It was shown in Crime in England and Wales 2008/09 that homes with security devices were less likely to be burgled than those without.

2. THE NATURE OF VEHICLE-RELATED THEFT

Vehicle-related theft includes *theft of vehicles* (where the vehicle itself was the target), *theft from vehicles* (where the target was property in the vehicle or component parts of it) and *attempted theft of or from vehicles*. Further details can be found in Volume 2 of Crime in England and Wales 2008/09.

The risk of vehicle crime was higher during evening or night than daytime. Just over three-quarters (77%) of vehicle-related thefts occurred during evening or night time. Just under one-third (32%) of vehicle-related thefts occurred at the weekend. Vehicle-related thefts were most likely to take place in the street outside the home (41%), which is likely to be a reflection on where vehicles tend to be parked for longest (Tables 2.1 and 2.2).

The most common method of entry in incidents of *theft of a vehicle* was an offender forcing the lock (32%), while the most common method of entry in incidents of *theft from a vehicle* was an offender breaking a window (48%).

In the 2008/09 BCS just under half of stolen vehicles were retrieved and returned to their owner (46%) and the majority of these stolen vehicles had been damaged in some way (86%) (Table 2.4). The items most frequently stolen in incidents of theft from vehicles were exterior fittings (37%), electrical equipment, for example satellite navigation systems, televisions, videos, MP3 players, DVD players and computer equipment (14%), valuables, for example jewellery, handbags/briefcases/shopping bags, purses/wallets, cash, cheque books, credit cards, clothes and documents (13%) and car radios (12%) (Table 2.5). Older vehicles were more likely to be stolen, with 34 per cent of stolen vehicles being over ten years old, compared with nine per cent being less than a year old (Table 2.9). Crime in England and Wales 2008/09 showed that vehicle security measures are effective in reducing the risk of vehicle theft.

3. THE NATURE OF BICYCLE THEFT

Bicycle theft covers thefts of bicycles belonging to the respondent or any other member of the respondent's household. This category does not include every bicycle theft, as some may be stolen during the course of another offence (eg. burglary) and are therefore classified as such in the BCS. See Volume 2 of Crime in England and Wales 2008/09 for more details.

Bicycle thefts were more likely to take place during the week (71%) than at weekends (29%) and at night (57%) than during the day (43%), although this is a much smaller difference than for vehicles (Table 3.1). Bicycles were most likely to be stolen from outside areas around the home but still on the premises (53%) (Table 3.2).

4. THE NATURE OF HOUSEHOLD THEFT

Household thefts reported here include thefts from inside and outside a dwelling and burglary and attempted burglary from a non-connected domestic garage/outhouse. See Volume 2 of Crime in England and Wales 2008/09 for further details of these offence types.

Incidents of household theft were more likely to occur at night (62%) than during the day (38%) with the exception of theft in a dwelling which was most likely to take place during the day (70%) (Table 4.2).

A wide variety of items were stolen in incidents of household theft, reflecting the different types of offence included in this category. In incidents of burglary to a non-connected domestic garage/outhouse, tools (32%) or garden furniture (29%) were the most likely items to be stolen. Garden furniture was also the most likely item to be stolen in incidents of theft outside a dwelling (49%). In incidents of theft in a dwelling, purses, wallets or money were the most likely items to be stolen (51%), followed by food, toiletries or cigarettes (28%), CDs, videos or DVDs (27%) and clothes (24%) (Table 4.3).

5. THE NATURE OF PERSONAL AND OTHER THEFT

Personal thefts include theft from the person (snatch theft, stealth theft and attempts) and other theft of personal property (for example, theft of items the respondent was not carrying

or holding at the time of incident). See Volume 2 of Crime in England and Wales 2008/09 for further details of these offence types.

Unlike other crime types, incidents of theft from the person and other theft of personal property were more likely to occur during the day than at night (63% compared with 37% and 60% compared with 40% respectively) (Table 5.1).

One in five incidents of theft from the person occurred in the street (20%) and a similar proportion took place inside a shop or supermarket (20%). Just under a quarter of incidents of other theft of personal property took place inside work (23%) (Table 5.2).

Items most commonly stolen from the person were cash (49%), a purse or wallet (48%), a mobile phone (34%) and credit cards (30%). Cash was the item most commonly stolen in incidents of other theft of personal property (30%) (Table 5.3).

6. THE NATURE OF VANDALISM

BCS vandalism (synonymous with criminal damage) covers intentional and malicious damage to a *vehicle*, to the *home* (includes doors, windows, gates, fences and belongings in the garden) and to *other property*. Any vandalism where there is deliberate damage to property belonging to the respondent or their household caused by fire is coded as arson, regardless of the property involved. Arson is included in the *vandalism to other property* sub group; more information on the vandalism classification can be found in Volume 2 of Crime in England and Wales 2008/09.

In over half of all incidents of *vehicle* vandalism, the vehicle was damaged while parked in the street outside the house or flat (56%), likely to be a reflection of where vehicles tend to be parked for longest. Scratched bodywork (39%), damage to wing mirrors (23%) and other damage to bodywork (20%) were the most common types of damage to *vehicles* (Tables 6.2 and 6.3).

The most commonly experienced type of damage to the *home and other property* was broken fences, walls and other garden items (34%). Around one in five (18%) incidents of vandalism to the *home and other property* involved graffiti to either walls, fences or other items in the garden (8%), the house or flat itself (7%), or to a garage or garden shed (3%) (Table 4.3)².

As expected, the proportion of vandalism incidents where the victim was able to say something about the offender was fairly low, particularly for *vehicle* vandalism (18%), although higher for vandalism to the *home and other property* (46%) (Table 6.7).

Across all incidents of vandalism, where the victim was able to say something about the offender(s):

- in around three in five incidents the victim knew the offender(s) well or by sight (57%);
- the offender(s) were male in the majority of such vandalism incidents (72%) but in 21 per cent of incidents both male and female offenders were involved; and

² These categories are not mutually exclusive – it is possible to have experienced graffiti on the home and also on fences, walls, gates or other garden items.

- in nearly half of such incidents of vandalism to the *home and other property* (45%) and over a third of incidents involving *vehicle* vandalism (36%) there were four or more offenders involved.

Where known, vandalism offender(s) have a younger age profile compared with other crime types; incidents of vandalism most commonly involved offenders aged under 16 (48%) or aged between 16 and 24 (44%) (Table 6.7).

7. THE NATURE OF VIOLENCE

Violence as measured by the BCS includes the offence types of wounding, robbery, assault with minor injury and assault with no injury. Violence is also categorised as domestic violence, mugging, stranger or acquaintance violence. See Volume 2 of Crime in England and Wales 2008/09 for more information on these classifications.

Given the nature of the offence, victims are more likely to be able to say something about the offender than for other types of crime; this was true for the vast majority of incidents (99%). Two thirds of incidents involved a sole offender (64%), but in around one-fifth of incidents there were four or more offenders involved (19%). The distribution is similar when looking at the different types of violence, except for domestic violence, when 96 per cent of incidents involved a lone offender (Table 7.1).

In half of violent incidents the offender was known to the respondent, whether known by sight (22%) or known well (28%) and the majority of incidents involved male offender(s) (86%). The offender was aged between 16 and 24 years in over half of violent incidents (55%). The proportion of robberies involving offenders aged 16 to 24 was higher at around three-quarters (77%) (Table 7.1).

The majority of all violent incidents took place on the street (34%), around a pub or club (21%) or around the home (20%)³. As could be expected, most domestic violence incidents took place around the home (72%). Nearly three quarters of incidents of stranger violence happened in the street or a pub or club (37% and 36% respectively); six out of ten muggings took place in the street (59%) and a further 16 per cent in pubs/clubs or on public transport (Table 7.2).

8. THE EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO CRIME

Respondents were asked about their emotional reaction to the crimes they had experienced. In around nine out of ten incidents, respondents said they were emotionally affected and this was the case for all the main crime types. When asked about the type of emotional response felt, anger and annoyance were the most common feelings experienced. But victims of burglary and violence were more likely to experience feelings of shock (33% and 39%), fear (25% and 23%) and loss of confidence (26% and 21%) than victims of any other crime type.

When asked about the seriousness of the incident of crime they had been a victim of, the majority of respondents rated crimes in the least serious category. The mean value of the ratings for the main offence groups shows that vehicle-related theft, personal theft, bicycle

³ Incidents in a pub or club also include premises, whether inside or in a nearby street/carpark. Inside or outside home comprises home, garage, shed, car park or nearby street.

theft, other household theft and vandalism were all in the least serious group, with burglary and violent crime being rated just slightly higher in the intermediate group.

In incidents of violence, the perceived seriousness of the offence was related to the level of injury suffered. Incidents of wounding had the highest mean score for seriousness (9), while incidents of assault with minor or no injury had the lowest (both 6).

REFERENCES

Walker, A., Flatley, J., Kershaw, C. and Moon, D. (2009) *Crime in England and Wales 2008/09*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 11/09 Volume 1. London: Home Office.

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1109vol1.pdf>

Smith, K. and Hoare, J. (2009) *Crime in England and Wales 2008/09: Volume 2*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 11/09 Volume 2. London: Home Office.

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1109vol2.pdf>