

Burglars on burglary

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CONFIDENTIAL



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Section 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The aim of this study was exploratory in nature and focussed on 15 burglars who were interviewed about their offending. The interview schedule included questions about their rationale for burgling, some of the decisions they make and the reasons for them in choosing which property to target and what to steal, and their reflections on the process of offending.
- 1.2 What follows is a summary of the key issues that emerged from the interviews. The aim in this small-scale study has been to better understand the burglars' perspectives and highlight how these can help how we might better understand and respond to the offence.
- 1.3 The research team would like to thank the interviewees for their help, Ewan Robertson of Citigate Dewe Rogerson for commissioning the study, and Halifax Insurance for funding the work. Rarely are offenders' views sought yet, as this study has shown, they often have important things to say about both the ways offences are conducted and importantly how they might be prevented or the impact reduced.

Section 2. Profiling the burglars

- 2.1 As noted above 15 burglars were interviewed. Below we provide a mini profile of each. In order to ensure anonymity we have used pseudonyms.
- 2.2 **Mark.** He is 37 years old and Mixed Race (White and Black British). He has 37 convictions, with burglaries constituting about 40 per cent of his offences. He admits committing 15 to 20 burglaries in total. He has served three custodial and two community sentences over a 20 year period.
- 2.3 **Rupert.** He is 35 years old and White British. While he has 60 convictions in all, this includes theft from vehicles, shoplifting as well as burglaries from commercial premises and dwellings. About 10 per cent of these convictions were for burglaries although he stated he has “committed many more”. He stole to feed a drug habit. He has served three custodial sentences; the longest was for three years.
- 2.4 **David.** He is 25 years old and White British. He has been convicted of 11 offences in his life but only one of these was for burglary which he described as an offence committed for revenge. He has undergone probation supervision, undertaken 200 hours community service and undergone a programme of impulse control.
- 2.5 **Aban.** He is 35 years old and Asian British: Pakistani. Over a 20 year period he was a prolific offender committing many offences (maybe 200) and some of these were burglaries. He has 20 to 25 convictions, two for burglary. He avoided capture for many years but was eventually sent to prison.
- 2.6 **Joe.** He is 36 years old and White British. Over a 26 year criminal career he has committed more than 90 offences, and over a half of these (he estimates about 60 per cent) have been burglaries mostly of commercial premises although some dwellings especially when he was younger.
- 2.7 **Charlie.** He is 36 years old and White British. He has committed around 30 burglaries over a 15 year criminal career. He has 15 convictions, of which two or three were for burglary. He has served multiple custodial sentences for burglary.
- 2.8 **Chris.** He is 46 years old and White British. He has 12 convictions including two burglaries both of which were committed on family members. For the first he received a drug treatment and testing order and for the second a 12 month custodial sentence.
- 2.9 **Ken.** He is 47 years old and White British. He admitted to having committed 300 to 500 house burglaries from 1984 to 2001. He has received around 25 convictions the vast majority for burglary for which

he received community service and multiple custodial sentences, the longest was for three years.

- 2.10 **Sid.** He is 42 years old and White British. He has over 200 convictions, 90 per cent for burglary and he admitted to committing many house and commercial burglaries from the age of 13 to 35. He has received many custodial sentences including a term of five years imprisonment for burglary.
- 2.11 **Trevor.** He is 52 years old and White British. He has “at least 70” convictions mostly assault while working as a pub doorman. He has admitted to hundreds of burglaries, some dwellings but mostly commercial all committed before he was 20 years old.
- 2.12 **Ivan.** He is 58-years old and White British. He has 20 to 30 convictions, “about half” for burglary. He claims to have committed 11 or so domestic and five commercial burglaries up until he turned 40. He has had several custodial sentences for burglary. He claims to have stopped mainly for health reasons, “If I was still fit I would probably still be at it.”
- 2.13 **Frank.** He is 46 years old and White British. He has 15 convictions mostly for burglary and he claims to have committed around 10 domestic and commercial burglaries over a long period of time up until five years ago when he stopped for health reasons. He has received community service along with multiple custodial sentences for burglary including 21 months, several two and three year sentences and finally four years and five months last time he was sentenced.
- 2.14 **Dennis.** He is 36 years old and White British. He has 30 convictions mainly for domestic and commercial burglary. He admits around 30 burglaries committed over two decades, the latest two years ago. He has served seven, three and a half year sentences for burglary.
- 2.15 **Mike.** He is 18 years old and White British. He has eight convictions, one of which is for burglary but he has not yet been sentenced. He admits committing around two or three burglaries the last one being three or four months ago.
- 2.16 **Jack.** He is 57 years old and White British. He has 6 or 7 convictions all for domestic and commercial burglary. He admits to around 50-60 committed as part of a gang over a two decade period. He has received 9 months in prison, suspended sentences and probation.

Section 3. What burglars say about burglary

Committing burglary

3.1 A variety of reasons were offered for committing the offences. Some were involved from a young age and for some burglary and other crimes was a way of life. More common reasons given were:

- the opportunity presented itself
- it is easy to commit and/or lucrative
- the need to maintain a drug habit
- greed

3.2 A number of less common reasons were also apparent:

- revenge
- it provided a 'buzz'

3.3 Notably, for most interviewees the reason for committing the offence were numerous and overlapping:

Burglary is only good if you see a really good opportunity, for me it is more opportunity; windows open, poorly lit. You can get more out of it than other theft but I have done a few burglaries where there was nothing worth taking. Any time I committed it was because I was desperate for drugs ... Even when I was on drugs I would only do it if I needed the money. If I had money and I saw a window open I may think I will bear that in mind but no. It is not a nice crime. (Mark)

Well it is quick easy money. Well I say easy money it is not really easier than other types of theft but it is a decent amount of money. It is really the fact it is the most profitable and when you need money quickly to feed a drug addiction that is what you want. Because you can go shoplifting which is easy but you can get caught and it is not so much money. (Rupert)

For me it was a vendetta. I wanted revenge to get back at someone so I broke in and stole a laptop, camcorder. I have done other thefts. I was done for petrol theft but this was different. (David)

It was the buzz, the money. I was young I knew I could out do them. (Aban)

I would say 80% the money and 20% the kick you get the thrill of the chase. Not desperation for me really just a way of life. Sometimes it was about drugs but I was always going to commit crime. When I was very young I did it with older people. I just liked having money. I had a good upbringing but I was greedy I wanted everything. (Joe)

Just through drug addiction for money to feed a habit. I just need the money for drugs that was it. I just did what I had the opportunity to do. It was not particularly chosen. (Charlie)

It was not attractive. I had a drug habit at the time and I needed to fund that. Needed the money for drugs. (Chris)

It was all to support a drug habit. I picked burglary because chances are you could make more money and less chances of getting caught as well. Make more money than shoplifting and in shops there are guards and cameras. In houses there is less security and no security guards. (Ken)

I did burglary so I could get drugs. I was running away from a kid's home where I was abused as a kid. Drugs were escapism. Burglary was easier than other crime and it was a way to get money quickly. Better than shoplifting. (Sid)

At that time I was in a social club and we use to steal from the one-armed bandit machines in other social clubs so I would do that with my friends. I just wanted money. I would treat it like a 9 to 5 job with my friends. When I was young I broke into a shop and I would take silly things. I stole a toy car just because I wanted it. It was just the only way I could get things I wanted was stealing it. (Trevor)

I was not so much attracted to house burglaries. It was the commercial burglaries because of the volume you can get your hands on, so much profit in commercial. You may find a house you liked the look of so you do some research on it but the trouble with houses is the cameras and alarms that you have got, you don't know where they will be. (Ivan)

Just because I had a heroin habit. I just liked the buzz of it actually. I wanted the cash. You could get more if you

go burgling rather than shoplifting. Commercial was the best. Most profit. (Frank)

I was bought up by my mum's boyfriend and he did it. I started from a young age. I have done other thefts but I found burglary easy and it was what I would always come back to. I was addicted to drugs but crime is an addiction as well. It is nasty but it is easy money and it is exciting. (Dennis)

Money. It is easy money. It could be easy if no one is in to catch you. It is easier than shoplifting. If the people aren't in then it is easy. There is no one to catch you. If you go shoplifting you have all the people in the shop and the security. But if there is no one in the premises then it is easy. (Mike)

Sometimes crime for me was a cry for help. I wanted the probation to help sort me out. It kept me out of trouble. I would want the police to come to speak to someone you know. I would work with a couple of fellers in a gang. It was bravado as well, one-upmanship. There was a peaking order. I would just go if they were going and get a cut it would not be much be anything would help as a top up. I got out of all that now you need to get away from people like that. Money was very important as well it was instant money or what you could sell just to get food. Not drugs or alcohol. Just buy cloths just top up what you needed. (Jack)

Choosing a target

- 3.4 Choosing a target that was easy was important, and this included knowing the householder was out – hence the attraction of neighbours' properties or even (ex) friends and family. Some individuals actively targeted people they knew included people they described as friends and family members because it was easier and there were often desperate. The advantage of familiarity was at least four fold, burglars could know: when the occupants would be out of the house; the best ways of gaining entry; what assets they had, and where the assets were located. Sometimes there was a view that familiarity meant that if they were identified the victims would be less likely or unlikely to call the police. While a few stated that they targeted someone they knew because they held a grievance against them. Some typical comments on this issue were:

You knew they (neighbours) were not home; (the) consequences were less. They would not call the police, you knew what they had ... When you are on drugs you feel guilty because of the things you do and then you try

and block it out with more drugs so you need more money. (Mark)

My brother. I was desperate for money for drugs and I took the easy option. I knew what was there and when he would be out. So I did it. (Rupert)

Yes it was someone I knew. I used to live there. It was a personal vendetta that is why I did it. (David)

Yeah I robbed everybody and anyone I could including people I knew. The money was for drugs and clubbing and all sorts really; I was young. It was easy and I planned to take from people I knew. A bit easier as I knew when they would be out and what they had. But it was not difficult. (Aban)

Both were family members. It was just a case of, if I was found out the consequences would not be so bad. I thought I could talk my way out of it. I also knew what they had and where it was. I knew the running of the house so I knew they would be out. (Chris)

Yes I did burgle people I knew. Out of desperation. You know they had stuff I could steal to get money for drugs. It was easier because I knew they would be out and I knew what they had. I did not worry about getting in, I knew I would find a way in really. (Ken)

Yes. Sometimes. Just a lash out. Burglary was a way to get back at someone not just because it was easier, not just for the money. (Sid)

The only time I ever got in trouble for a house was when we had done it out of malice. My friend did not like this bloke so we broke into his house and he took ornaments. There was nothing worth having in there. It was just someone we did not like. That was it. (Trevor)

Yes I burgled a family member. They were on holiday so it was an easy option, better than a stranger. I knew they had something I could sell. (Mike)

I have done that. (Burgled) People I knew that were just local. Sometimes you would not even want to take anything I would just try and make a statement and pile stuff by the door. Just to show I could. Some people had nothing to take anyway. They never did me no harm. It is like a sickness. It was like being in a black out. (Jack)

- 3.5 More often it seems burglars avoided burgling people they knew. Often it was felt that this approach would increase the chances of getting caught and some felt it was too personal. For this reason some expressed a preference to target commercial premises:

I did not want to do houses because it is more personal, more of a risk someone will catch you there. (Charlie)

No, that is one of those things you don't do if you are a proper criminal. You don't steal from people you know and you don't steal on your doorstep because you will get caught. (Ivan)

No. I don't want to hurt my own. I would not want to touch family and friends stuff. (Dennis)

The importance of locality

- 3.6 When money is needed urgently it often drives a tendency to commit offences locally. Travelling further afield was sometimes influenced by the availability of transport, or because of a particular need, such as the choice of a particular target (in one case the offender travelled a long way because the burglary was committed for revenge). Some noted that they stole locally because it was closer to the outlets they used for disposal of stolen goods and it was best to retain goods taken in burglaries for as short a time as possible. Knowing the area also helped in terms of being aware of the surroundings and specifically having knowledge of the location of vulnerable properties as well as good escape routes. One person also stated that he worried that if he travelled far and got caught he would receive a harsher sentence as it would indicate that the crime was planned. Some typical comments included:

(I burgle) mostly in the local area, you usually want money quick. There is this myth in prison ... that "You don't rob off your own people" but most people do it local. You do not want to be carrying goods a long way. If you are a known addict in an area you do not want people to see you on the street carrying a tv on your head ... You might go out of your area to the nice part of town nearby. (Mark)

Yes normally within 4 or 5 miles. I always did it on a push bike so it had to be not too far away. I think people normally do it nearby because if they are desperate for drugs they need the money quick so it has to be nearby. It is also better because they are familiar with the surroundings. (Rupert)

In was in the same city ... I had to travel 4 miles ... I used to live there so I knew it well. (David)

If you went far away it would be conspiracy as well. Yeah it would show that you had planned it. So I would try not to travel. (Joe)

It depends where I lived. It would just be local to where I would be. I knew the area. When you are an addict it is where I would usually hang about. I would always be on foot. It was convenience. (Charlie).

... in my local area. Partly because that is where my family lived and partly because I was lazy. I needed money fast so it had to be near. (Chris)

Yes (it would be nearby). Because it was convenient at the time and I had seen things as I was going past. I would do it near enough straight away if I could. I was an opportunist. (Sid)

When I was young it would only be walking distance so very near by. When I was old enough to drive and steal a car ... we would travel further. (Trevor)

When I was a teenager I did burgle nearby but I learnt a lot in borstal. That is when I got into commercial there was a lot of experienced criminals in there. (Ivan)

I suppose mainly where I was living I was just lazy really. More opportunistic if I saw an opportunity... Just a couple of miles, 4 or 3 miles. Big posh houses. I started on dwellings but I moved on to commercial. Last few years was commercial. I realised there was nothing in houses really. (Dennis)

I would do my own area. It is easy and you know what is there and you can get there because it is close. Would sometimes have a car it would depend. It depends. I would do the burglary to get the car. I wanted the money. No longer than 7 miles. If I have to walk I would not want to go further than that. Anywhere could be good really. (Mike)

We did (Burgle locally) but we would go all round the country. Get a stolen car. Go to the country side where it is quiet. Then we would also do the block of flats across the road. If my friends said they were going I would go. (Jack)

- 3.7 Some outlined in more detail the attractions to travelling away from their bases to commit burglaries. This often depended on knowledge of a good target that they believed had attractive goods and/or weak security; or avoidance of where they lived because it was a hotspot of police activity at the time. One person spotted a potential target in a magazine. Some typical comments included:

I had a car and I would travel quite far. I was young and I had no licence. I went wherever I could find a nice house and try and get through the cat flap. But I would also go for smaller (houses) if I saw an opportunity ... The most was about 50 miles but I would just go wherever. (Aban)

I would do a lot local but I did travel to other areas. If I had heard from a friend that it was not so hot in a different area. Because there were a lot of burglaries in our area and if you were known to the police it would be better to go somewhere you are not known and the police were not on to it... At the most I would travel 70, 80 miles (but) mostly nearby. I nearly always took a car. (Ken)

I would sometimes travel. I would go 15 or 20 miles. If someone is asking for a specific thing and saying where it was. Burgle to order like shoplifting to order. I would steal a car or we would get someone with a car. If we knew someone that had a car, that would take us there, we would do that. (Sid)

I would travel a lot in ... about 50 miles. I would never do where I lived. I have gone up to Scotland and the Midlands before. That was a particular house. We saw a house in country life in Scotland that we liked the look of. The house was up for sale they would take photographs. If a person can take a walk round there in a pretence they are looking to buy it, you know the lay out. I did not feel

under threat going into an estate agent and having a chat with someone I know they can have cameras and that but it would not be immediate. You would wait 6 months down the line when new people had moved in. (Ivan)

No not near by, the other side of town. It needed to be as close as possible but I was to well known in the local area... About 5-6 miles away in the town. (Frank)

Selecting a house

- 3.8 Many of the burglars we spoke to have indicated that they would select a target on the basis of the anticipated value of the contents rather than based on anticipation of ease of access. The argument presented here was that they could typically find a way of entering any premises if the rewards merited it:

I targeted them because I could get something. If I could get in quick in somewhere smaller I would. But I would spend more time on the bigger ones because I would get more out of it... (Aban)

I only went for little stuff but what was in there was important. There is always a way in. (Dennis)

I would base it on what was in there. If the house was expensive or big I thought they would have expensive things. (Frank)

We concentrated on what was inside and picked out targets. Then we would break in at 2am and take it while they were asleep. We would also look in the phone book for clubs that would have one armed bandit machines and travel to where they would be. They would have a lot of money in them £900 to £1000 and we would burgle shop keepers houses as we knew they had taken home their takings, it was all based on knowing what was in there. (Trevor)

I would look what was in there and how easy it would be to get in. If there was a nice Audi in there or a safe I would try. (Mike)

I think it is a bit of both you do look at the types of windows or doors to get through but also the equipment you can see and the type of cars. Houses with more expensive stuff may have alarms. But you want the houses that are likely to have valuable items. (Rupert)

Everybody wants money. Rich professional people, yuppies ... often (they) didn't have curtains and you would just look in and see all their stuff lying around... (Jack)

3.9 However ease was also important especially to the less planned, more opportunistic burglars:

Both. I knew it was easier to get in there than I place I didn't know... I knew what was there. (Chris)

Sometimes I would go for something I knew was worth having. Most of the time I would assume stuff would be there. I was more interested if an opportunity would be easy. (Charlie)

I went for ease of access really. If I could see a way in and I would not be seen. There may be 10 million pound

in a place but if it I would be banging on the door for hours what is the point. (Mark)

Ease of access really. Ok on larger house we would go for the antiques and I have emptied a house completely. It was in the middle of the country. No houses nearby and we loaded up a lorry. If people were away. If you have a target in mind it all comes down to researching where the house is and who is likely to be in. (Ivan)

Obviously a bit of both. The harder the more rewarding it is. I would basically see when I got there. (Joe)

Both how ease it was and value. If you could tell from the outside that maybe there was stuff easy to sell but also how easy it would be to get it if they had patio doors. (Ken)

Ease. I would look for pop-up windows you can stick a screwdriver in and undo them or force them up. But you would also see what was on display that would be easy to sell. (Sid)

Both really...you would worry about dogs. Doberman's are the worse. Very dangerous dog. You don't know about them till you get in then they don't let you leave that is what they are like. We would look for old fashioned windows that were easy to get in. I was always with someone more experienced than me. He knew what to take he had don't lots more time than me. I would just open the door for him. (Jack)

Planning the burglary

- 3.10 As noted above some burglaries were committed on a whim. However, planning was sometimes involved although it was often minimal. Sometimes burglars would identify a property and keep watch over it to assess its potential, but then may decide to commit the offence quite quickly with only a little planning at the scene. Hanging around outside a premises would attract attention so was to be avoided. Some burglars identified weak entry points as a sign of a good target. Some comments included:

I would knock on the door. Or stand across the road for a few minutes. You need money instantly, I would not plan ahead. I would look for signs like misted windows means someone is home. Some doors won't be worth attention as they are too strong. Some patio doors you can pop out with a fork. You don't want to be fiddling with a door in the

*open, basement flats or off the main road were good.
(Mark)*

It would vary. Sometimes I would watch somewhere for a week or so. But when you are entrenched in using (drugs) you don't really plan very well and that is when you get caught. You are sloppy. (Rupert)

*Three minutes, then I would just go in and grab the gold and jewels. If I needed money for something I would just go on the hunt. I was young and I needed the money.
(Aban)*

It would be seconds. If you hang about you would get caught just in and out grazing. You would stake it out but it would be really quick. So not to register in peoples minds if they saw you. (Joe)

It was more out of opportunity rather than planning to set about doing something. I would be out and about looking for a way to make some money and I would stumble upon something. It was not planned but I was expecting to break the law to get some money for drugs... I did not really plan. Most of the time I would stumble on something I could do. (Charlie)

I didn't (scope), no, I just went there. I knew the goings on. I knew people would not be there. I knew it was not overlooked. (Chris)

*You would just walk past and do it within a minute. I would go out and look were it was easy and no one was home. I would always knock on the door. I was an opportunist really. I would go out needing money for drugs I would have an idea but it was not very planned.
(Ken)*

About half an hour. I would knock on the door and if no one answered I would knock again in 20 minutes. (Frank)

No I wouldn't watch the place I was opportunist. (Dennis)

It was just the opportunity I would not watch the house. I would just go and knock on the door to make sure there weren't in. If there was no answer I would just kick the door in. (Mike)

Sometimes you just drive past. If you come down for somewhere you would not want to wait for long. You just drive past if you see a drive with no cars then that was a good sign no one was home. Maybe just an old dear but

then you could just make out it was a mistake and get away. We would not want to rough anyone up. (Jack)

- 3.10 However some of the burglars interviewed planned very carefully sometimes watching over a target for an extended period of time:

Yes sometimes we would. There was one where we hid in the grounds of the house for 3 days to see the routine of the house. We had been told to get something specific from that house. (Sid)

We were not opportunists. We would steal shop takings by following shopkeepers often butchers with their suitcase of takings at the end of the day. We would watch them for up to four nights some times as they lock up. Often they would go to the pub after work and leave it in their car and we could break in. However if they took it home we would have followed them and known where they lived and know their routine. We concentrated on what was inside and picked out targets. Then we would break in at 2am and take it while they were asleep. (Trevor)

For domestic it would take a while. You would look in the magazines for values. You would not want to go all that way if not but it was never a wasted trip, you could always find somewhere else. You would start looking at how to get past the alarms... We would wait at least 2 months ... If you wait for less then someone will turn up. Commercial property you don't need to. There you can go straight in more or less. Personally I have sat outside a house for 2 weeks on my own in camouflage gear in the garden. It always amazes me the tv shows people always drive out of their house and don't see 2 guys sitting in a car outside. People are not security conscious. I would think if you know you have stuff worth taking you would look out for signs like that. (Ivan)

The importance of security

- 3.11 Recently there has been research that has highlighted the importance of security measures in reducing crime.¹ For the most part burglars confirmed the importance of security in rendering a target less attractive. A lack of security made a target easier. Where security did exist burglars said it had to be managed. Often structural features

¹ See: van Dijk, J., Tseloni, A., and Farrell, G. (2012) (editors) *Closing the Doors: New Perspectives on the International Crime Falls*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, and in a different way: Armitage, R. (2013) *Crime Prevention through Housing Design*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

such as whether the property was overlooked, or whether the property was occupied or empty were more important considerations. Some burglars avoided properties they knew had dogs (and in one case a parrot). Some typical comments included:

I went for ease of access really. If I could see a way in and I would not be seen. There may be 10 million pound in a place but if it I would be banging on the door for hours what is the point ... The front door- some are really flimsy- I might see one and think I could get through that. Alarms now you see a lot of rusty alarms from the 70s and you know it will not work. You need an alarm that looks like it works. CCTV- when I did it 90% would not work- you could see the wires and tell it was not connected to anything. Now they are smaller now you can get cameras and everything like that is cheap. Visibility? I would know from just looking that ok I will not get in there. I would not take anything with me, no equipment. I would just use what was there maybe I would have a little screw driver; I was not at all organised. (Mark)

Alarms, but mainly (they are a problem) if they are linked up to a smart phone or a security company or something. Sometimes people can have a system where they will be alerted to someone breaking in. You cannot tell that but it is very expensive so rare. You can tell the places that are likely to have them by how expensive the house is. You sometimes get these really nice old houses in cities that could have them. Again you look at the kind of cars and equipment they have. Normal alarms can just keep ringing and nothing will happen. You can just carry on and leave with what you want and nothing will happen. But once I was in a place and the alarm went off, I just carried on. Then I had a bad feeling went outside and there was a police van there. CCTV is no worry. You just hide your face. (Rupert)

No I knew there were no alarms or anything like that. I just took a golf club to the front door window. (David)

Direct alarms that go to the police stations. Yeah if you know about that you just steer clear. CCTV is a worry but you can disguise yourself but the cameras are so small these days it can be hard to tell. Dogs actually seeing a dog that would put me off. They will attack you. You can poison it but I am not going to poison a dog. You can get in anywhere if you want to that bad you will get in but it will be risky.... The shop I done and was convicted for I knew it was an easy target because it was a listed building. They had front windows but they were little panels no double glazing. They could not change it

because it was listed. I just put the window in at 2 am and dived in and grabbed the fags. They were not alarmed. (Joe)

It depends what you are trying to take. Alarms can bother you but if you are in there you can just carry on and then get out quick before anyone came. I would get what I came for first. Yeah I would worry that it would call the police but the alarms can go for a good 5 or 10 minutes before it will be responded to. In houses alarms can be going on and off all day. If I knew there was cctv I would take precautions...The strength of the windows and doors would effect my decision but not worry me really. You can get in anywhere if you have time and seclusion. So you would not want to be overlooked. I have never had a problem with guards. (Charlie)

No alarms no big dogs. Not overlooked. Solidness of doors and windows. I could not have done it if it was overlooked by neighbours or if it was like fort Knox. (Chris).

Alarms, dogs, security cameras all deterrents. I would avoid that property. Double glazing and doors would not put me off most you can get in to. (Ken)

Alarms did not worry us. A dog would put you off but it would depend on the type of dog and you can tell from its bark if it is a big dog and if it is likely to attack you. I have burgled a place where the dogs barked the whole time and no one woke up because they always bark. CCTV was not so widely used then but we would avoid town centre cameras. You can really get in everywhere. Double-glazing is easily overcome there are very few windows and doors you can't get through with a spade and pop it out. (Trevor)

If you have a target in mind it all comes down to researching where the house is and who is likely to be in... .Nowadays I would worry about entry more, cameras and things. You hear about these bait houses that the police set up. They have a word with estate agents and they fit it out a small house on the estates near a city with cameras and smart water that sprays at you. Then they would leave a window open to tempt them in and they have got you then. If they have you on camera and with smart water all over you, you might as well hold your hands up. Once it has caught people they try and make it known that there is a bait house in the area but they can move it around and if it is in a high burglary area you are going to catch people. It is a good deterrent. Cameras

worry me most especially these days with facial recognition, even if you cover your face if they get a partial they can get you. It all depends how prolific the problem is. If the insurance companies get involved they have the money and investigators to look into it. The smart water I think is really good. You can put it on everything you own and if they catch you with a computer that you have got second hand, even if you just bought it off a mate, then it is a deterrent for people not to buy stolen goods. Not making any noise is the main thing when you are doing domestics. If the doors and windows are secure you will need to make a lot of noise to get in. Sight as well, if the house is overlooked at the back and front by neighbours that will put you off. You want seclusion. High bushes. Lights that come on on a timer are good as long as you have it for upstairs as well because if you are watching a house you will see that the lights do not come on upstairs. It is good if you get a light that if you trigger it in the garden the lights upstairs will come on. Dogs, burglars don't like dogs anything that makes noise. A parrot can be quite scary as well. We would stop and just avoid anywhere with dogs (Ivan).

Cameras, cctv. I would think twice with cctv. You just don't know things like that. Sometimes it depends where it is if I could see it on the wall I would not try. I would not worry too much about double glazing you can get in anywhere really. I did not really worry about being overlooked by neighbours they will not bother me. (Frank)

Nothing really. Alarms obviously. Cameras. I would not do it then. I would not worry about neighbours, I thought I was quite good at it. Dogs. I would not do it with people in the house. I would keep knocking. I would do it in day times. I would worry about broken glass and leaving DNA most. There are so many cameras and DNA technology, now it is hard. (Dennis)

Today it would be cameras now. I go past houses and I do look about it would be harder there are lots of different ways they can get you. You never know if there are neighbours behind curtains. You did not worry about neighbours really back then you could just have an overall on and you look like a tradesman. People are more security conscious now. I still look about it is an old habit and you see alarms on most big houses now. Not always sure if they are real but it is a deterrent. They may be dummy but they have lights and look real. You would always look about for a "beware of the dog" sign. But I had no fear in those days not like now. Alarms are a very

good deterrent. Good security lock and light that came on when you went near. You hear about burglars getting caught on cctv. (Jack)

3.12 For some the security was not the main concern:

I was a cat flap burglar. I would go in head first ... Gloves are very important. I left my hat once and went back for it. That is like leaving your name and address really. I would cover everything, gloves and hats. Cameras would not worry me as I was so covered, hoody and scarfs. I would not really worry about alarms. If one went off I would just leave because of the attention but it would take a while for anyone to get there. It is also easier to get through weaker windows and doors. I would avoid solid doors or double glazing. (Aban)

Nothing really you can get in whatever. CCTV was not a problem because we could cover our heads. We would use different set of clothes over the top so we can take them off and the police will be looking for people wearing such and such and we would look different. We would always wear gloves. Back then alarms connected were not connected to the police or anything like that. If a house has a working looking alarm not just a sign then you might worry. But usually you can let it go off see if anything happens then just carry on. Double glazing would not worry you can usually prise the glass out. The neighbours are usually the quickest ones they are the quickest ones phone the police so you would not want to be overlooked. There was not much security, no guards in the small shops and wine sellers we would do. For ease I would look for pop up windows you can stick a screwdriver in and undo them or force them up. (Sid)

I would not worry about alarms and cameras. I would just worry if someone was in. I would not worry about neighbours. That is how I got caught actually. There was a witness. I would not worry too much about double glazing and things as some are easy to get in anyway. I might worry about a dog but it would depend what dog it was. If you get in there and there is a giant Rottweiler you are not going to carry on are you?... With cameras I don't care if they have my face. If they don't know me I don't care. (Mike)

Selling the stolen goods

- 3.13 Collecting money for stolen goods was rarely a problem and normally did not take long because the burglars were part of networks that made it easy. Some said they sold goods in an hour, others a day, but it was rarely a problem; there are plenty of willing buyers it seems. It was possible to sell via normal channels too. Items such as cigarettes and alcohol were regarded as the easiest to sell on quickly. Some typical comments included:

Usually I would know someone that had said if you ever get a laptop or whatever come and see me. It is instant stuff I would just get rid of it where I can. I would not want to wait for 7 days for an e-bay listing or anything like that. I think that it is good now you cannot take anything to one of those resale shops without them wanting lots of id and proof. I did a few times take something there if I was desperate using my own id. But I did not like doing that. The police just go in and take a look at things and it can be traced back to you so easily with the id. (Mark)

I know people that buy stolen goods and I just give them a call and go and see them. That is the easiest way. You just get to know this type of people when you are around crime. I grew up with it really. (Rupert)

I just went into shops and sold the items. I used my own ID. I did not care I wanted them to know it was me. It was easy as long as I had a driving licence. They did not ask me where I got the items. (David)

I knew so many people and they would bargain for it. I would just ring them up with a bracelet worth £200 so and offer £50 quid. I could get rid of it fast and I wanted the money quickly. (Aban)

I would usually go for cigarettes to sell on. Cigarettes are the next best thing to money. Alcohol as well things with no serial numbers on so it would not be identifiable. They all have the same numbers for the till. I would get rid of them in maybe half a day. There are loads of people you can ask everybody wants them. Yeah when you are growing up like this you get to know people. I would pop round and see them and ask if they wanted any. They would definitely know (that the goods were stolen). No questions asked. No I didn't have to lie. If you have 3000 cigarettes they will know where they are from but you can't trace them. They are easy to get rid of. They have no proof. (Joe)

...I had quite a few contacts. Most things would go the same day. Sometimes we might get rid of something the next day. All sorts of things. Fags and cigarettes, alcohol, spirits. Motor bike. I would only take what I could sell on easily if I was on my own. I was not likely to take too much or take too long, just what I needed for the drugs. People I knew well. They would know they were stolen. I have done pawn brokers a few times, I would just use my own id and I never had a problem. Even with booze and fags I would just go round all the pubs in town with a carrier bag. It was a good way to get rid of stuff

quickly. Most people in the pubs would want to buy it. They would not ask questions. Most people don't ask questions. I think they take it for granted that they are stolen. They are aware that this is how you come by a high volume of items like that. (Charlie)

I would only take something if I already had someone lined up. Within an hour. I needed money fast for drugs. There is no good getting something that is hard to dispose of. I would know someone already and I would ring or go round. I would sometimes use pawn shops. They were used yes it was surprisingly easy. Too easy if I am honest. I would just use a false id. You can get an id surprisingly easily. You can get id which is quite genuine looking off the internet. Sometimes I would trade goods direct with the drug dealer. (Chris)

It would be within a day. Gold and any jewellery would be quickest. Electrical I knew where I could take it to someone I knew...I would go to a jeweller I knew that would just give you scrap value. You knew people that would not ask questions. I knew someone that would buy electricals. I would never take it anywhere that I would need id or they would ask me anything. (Ken)

Within 24 hours... Usually I would sell straight to the drug dealer but not all the time. Sometimes people who worked on the property and seen something would come to me and ask me to get it for them. Cigarettes we would sell in the pub to anyone who wanted them. No they all knew really I think. People don't ask questions. (Sid)

We always concentrated on money. I have had stolen goods and there is always someone. I would go to someone I knew already. I once stole a van full of shoes thousands of pounds of them and sold them on. I would use someone I knew it would go quickly. People know they are stolen, I have done not it (sold stolen goods) on a big scale, but people don't ask questions. I did sell cigarettes and alcohol to the public at pubs I think they knew they were stolen people don't ask. (Terry)

When we did commercial we had our buyers set up already so that was quick. If not we may leave it in a lock up somewhere until it cooled down. People would be looking for it so if you put it somewhere it can be far away and you can leave it for as long as you like. For domestic (goods), pubs usually. If someone is looking for a PlayStation you can sell it within at least a week. (Ivan)

It depends what it is. I took things I knew I could sell. I would sell within a day or two... I would know them already. I would often steal with a buyer in mind. I have sold to strangers but not mostly, sometimes the drug dealer. I would steal all sorts of things but particularly laptops. They would sell all day long. I know someone who said if you ever come across a laptop I will have it... They knew me, they knew I was an addict so they knew they were stolen. (Frank)

Not long at all. Within hours... Anywhere on the estate. I would only go to people I know. I would trade with drug dealers. They would know they were stolen. I have taken things to sell to the public at the pub or where ever. I would be surprised if they didn't know it was stolen. They would know, everyone likes a bargain. (Dennis)

About an hour... I would not take something I could not sell. I would go to people I knew. I would sell it on eBay and down the pub as well. People I knew would know (the goods were stolen). I don't care if people don't know they should know based on the price. (Mike)

A couple of hours. We would be in and out of the house and sold the goods in a couple of hours. We would just meet up with people after and that was it. People I knew in the area. There was always people I knew that wanted to get a good deal. I would just get a cut. It was not a lot at all. Anything was better than nothing. I would be working but wages were so bad back then I would need extra to keep going. They knew it was stolen they knew what is going on. It would be silly to sell to strangers. You need to trust them. (Jack)

- 3.14 However it was also noted that selling goods directly to the public that are unaware that they are stolen has its advantages.

If you sell it on to people you know they will know it is stolen and that is a risk. They can turn against you and go to the police and that has happened to me. If you sell it down the pub (they) don't know it is stolen so that is safer...You would have to lie to sell it to them. People don't want stolen goods. (Ivan).

- 3.15 The problem was that they would often only get a fraction of the price. Burglars indicated that alcohol, cigarettes, jewellery and electricals such as laptops, tablets and phones were the easiest to sell on. Charlie, Joe, Frank, Ivan, Mike and Sid all indicated that they would get around half the retail price for stolen goods but sometimes less. However Charlie and Joe both noted that they would sometimes have

to sell alcohol and cigarettes on in bulk for cheaper to get rid of them quickly. Frank said he would get around 200 to 250 pounds for a “decent” 500 pound laptop but he would “not take less than 150 pounds for any laptop”.

- 3.16 However it was not uncommon for them to receive considerably less than half especially if they were addicted to drugs and desperate for money fast. Many of the burglars would try and find cash in the first instance for that reason. Mark received got 400 pounds for a tv worth a 1,000 pounds but on other items he would get ‘a fraction of that’. Rupert, Terry, Aban, Ken, Jack and Dennis quoted an average of a third of the retail price. However Aban said that for some more desirable items such as stolen laptops he might hope to get nearer half the retail price as these were in demand. Chris often traded his stolen goods directly with the drug dealer so the rate ‘would not be good’. However he also used pawnbrokers and existing contacts and he would generally get less than half the retail price. Jack said that as he worked with a gang they would all get a cut of the money “it would not be anything like worth it. When you think of the amount of time you can get for it. I would maybe get £60 or a couple of hundred.” David claimed he attempted to sell (‘probably’) 7,000 pounds worth of stolen goods and was offered 360 pounds, but he did not care, as he did not want to keep the money; ‘I took the money and burnt it in front of their (the victim’s) face’.

The importance of passwords

- 3.17 According to these interviewees, passwords were not sought after in a burglary. However keeping an eye out for pin numbers and bank cards is an easy way to get cash. Some comments here included:

No I would not think of that. Your eyes are just on what you could grab and passwords could be anywhere. I would look in wallets but I would not really search for pin numbers or anything. It could be anywhere and you need to get out quick. (Mark)

No, passwords for electricals do not worry me, that can easily be got around, except Apple items which I just avoid stealing altogether. Apple have this thing with ipads where you can register your device and ... if it is stolen can track you down. I think this is something I have just become aware of myself because I am into gadgets. But Apple had done well with that; I think it is a real deterrent. I am not sure if other burglars are aware of it however. I do look for bankcards and pin numbers for bankcards you can just take them straight to the cash point. I have done this on multiple occasions. (Rupert)

No I did not worry about (that), yeah I can crack them, they are easy. I can pay £10 and get a laptop unlocked. I did not look for passwords in the property. Just grab what I can. Sometimes I would find cards and pin numbers which I would take straight to the cash point and run the limit. (Aban)

Yeah you would sometimes have pin numbers for cards and it was a lot easier back then you only had to sign for them in a shop as well... Yes I did look for pin numbers as a kid. Yeah normally in purses or in the cupboard. We would go and sell them on to the older generation who knew what to do. People in the know. (Joe)

There was a couple of bank cards with the pin number in the wallet. I used it in a cash point. I was not looking for it, it just happened to be in the wallet I took. (Chris)

I never bothered with that. Just stuff that was easy to grab you need to be quick. I did have a few laptops with codes I think but that was never a problem. The people I was selling to can bypass it easily. It maybe hard to do now but then it was not a problem. (Ken)

No I would not look for anything like that. There were a few times we found pin numbers. We would go shopping with them. Computers didn't really have passwords then. (Sid)

No but we did sometimes find things like that. Not usually very useful. The suitcases of cash did have codes but we could just break them and dump the bag. We also found safe and alarm keys, which we would go and use

sometimes but it was never that useful. We would find bankcards and cheque books in the suitcases of shop takings. We would often sell the cheque books on or go round all different shops and get 49 pounds of stuff, which was the limit. We had shops that would know that they were stolen but would take them anyway. We would give them a check for 49 pounds and they would give us 29 pounds worth of cloths. So we would both benefit. But mostly I would sell it on I am more interested in the cash. (Trevor)

It was something you come across. We would look for paperwork and id to sell on. You would look for paper work for mortgage and passports and sell it on to those in the know. All the monetary stuff they need in life you would find. Sometimes people will hide stuff in their fridge in an old fish fingers box but that is the first place you would look for something they don't want you to find...If you have a laptop you do not need to worry because you can just press 2 keys and wipe the hard drive or just replace the hard drive depending on how valuable it was you can take it out and get a new one. The only thing that would catch me out is Smartwater. (Ivan).

No but I did not look. I did find bankcards and pin numbers and I would take them straight to the cash point... That was not a problem. Some of the laptops I took did have passwords but that did not matter. I could still sell them to the same guy and he did not give me any less for them because he knew someone that could unlock them. (Frank)

No I have never bothered really. The password would not worry people I was selling on to. I would not get a lower price or anything like that. They can be got round... I would not use bankcard I have found. (Dennis)

No I would not look. (on electricals) You can unblock it. I can get it done easily... I would not really look but I have found pin numbers for bank cards but you can get round pin numbers anyway just pay over the phone or online. (Mike)

No that was before my time really. No we would not want anything like that only instant money and stuff we could sell quick. (Jack)

Encountering home owners and the implications of legal changes

- 3.18 Interviewees were asked for their views on the implications of the legal change clarifying the rights of householders to use force to protect themselves or others in their homes. The provision is designed to give householders greater latitude in frightening situations where they may not be thinking clearly about the precise level of force that is necessary to deal with the threat faced.²
- 3.19 Interviewees understood the point of the law change, some had heard of it and even if they had not they were able to express a view but often had mixed feelings about the issue. Some felt that it would not make any difference to them because they avoided householders anyway. Encountering occupants of homes during a burglary was unsurprisingly seen as undesirable. Believing that no one was at home was most often a pre-condition of carrying out the offence.
- 3.20 Others felt that the law did not change the circumstances greatly in that if they encountered a householder there was always the risk, and always had been, that violence would ensue. Many indicated that fear of violence is not an issue most burglars consider especially if they are desperate for money for drugs.
- 3.21 However some articulated what they considered to be some potential dangers in the new laws. It was noted that it might make some householders more willing to use violence against intruders which seemingly would trouble some of them. Some comments here included:

I think I had heard of it. I think it is good people are allowed to protect their homes. I would go mad if I found someone in my house. I do not think it would change anything ... I would not take anything with me to defend myself. Some people go in expecting a fight and (are) willing to do violence. I think the change in the law would not affect them. (Rupert)

It would depend on the type of person you were (and) if you were worried about getting into a fight. Most burglars are not worried about that I would say. I don't think it would deter burglary ... I think householders would feel safer because you can use force to protect yourself and be less likely to get in trouble. (David)

I have never had that and I would always knock on the door to make sure it was empty. If someone answered I

² Specifically, Section 43 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 (use of force in place of residence).

would pretend to be a window cleaner. I am not sure if it would have much effect on me. I would avoid (targets) where people were home anyway. (Aban)

It would not change anything for me really. It is already in your head that that they could come in, it is fight or flight. Nine times out of 10 the burglar will just want to go. Some people may want to fight but the law won't change that. (Joe)

It would bother me now but I don't do that anymore. It would worry me if I did it now and people use more force because of that law. I think people would (use force) anyway. (Charlie)

Yeah I was aware of that. Yes that would worry me if I was still doing it. But at the time when I was on drugs you don't think like that (Chris).

I was aware of it ... The only thing that has changed is the law, you were still at risk if someone caught you in their house. And when you are desperate for money for drugs you don't think of that. (Ken)

No I was not aware of the law change. But that issue is one of the reasons why I stopped really, I hit someone. I was trying to get in a house and he came out. I thought there was no one home, I always knock on the door. But he came out and challenged me and I hit him ... Yeah I think they (householders) would be more likely to fight back because of that law. I would always avoid somewhere where people are home but you can't always be sure. It would worry me yes. (Sid)

Yes I would think twice because anything can happen. I think most burglars are not thinking of things like that. Most are addicted to drugs. (Trevor)

Yeah I would say the younger ones more than anything. Older ones would not want to entertain the idea of people being in the house. If you are under drugs or alcohol which they often are then you are likely to make mistakes. I did know a cat burglar that liked to go in when they were asleep like it was extra kudos for managing to sneak around. For me that is asking for trouble to do it with people in the house. I did do commercial places some times that had security guards. We would just tie them up. We would not be rough. We would be firm with them. Make it so they could not alert anyone and leave them tied up. They would not fight. If you come across five guys with crow bars and lump hammers at night when

you are doing your rounds you are not likely to resist. You do get in a lot of trouble for it. It is kidnaping even though you are not taking them anywhere you are restricting them. You have to have some morals about it but it would not worry me really. It is not like going in somebody's house it is a professional environment. I am not trying to diminish the effect of tying them up....I think it is definitely a good thing as it puts the owner in a better position, they deserve what they get. Anyone that has burgled deserves it. They are opportunistic. I don't think we would be more scared if a householder has the permission to hurt or detain a burglar. The most sensible person would not. It is far easier to lock the door of the bedroom and phone the police. The law is fresh and it will take a while to filter down. I think it will take a while but it will have an effect... (Ivan).

I think it will cause more trouble ... I would try and make sure no one was home. But some people may think it is like being a trapped rat. Your only instinct is to get away. But you are scared, there is adrenaline and if you are thinking everyone is coming to get you because of this law change you may be more likely to hurt someone. You may think everyone is coming to get you but the person may not even be interested in that. (Mark)

I think most people are willing to take matters into their own hands in that situation and some people are just scared I don't think (the law change) would change anything. I would always try and avoid them. But I have gone in if a door is open and everyone was in the living room and gone straight through to the kitchen to take things without anyone noticing. I have set out to do that multiple times ... (Rupert)

I think it would depend on how intimidating I was. Most people (householders) are scared and just run it depends how intimidating I am. I think the law may make people more likely to defend themselves. (Aban)

Even if you make sure there is no one in. You are aware that someone could come back. No I don't think it will change anything. Obviously they will have it in their head that the law has changed. They (home owners) will think they have the right to fight. But the best thing for everyone is just to let them go. That is the best thing. It is a good thing because people should be able to defend themselves you should be about to tackle them. They should not be in the house (Joe).

I would not want to do it when someone was home anyway but it would worry me more. I think obviously it (the law change) would make people bring weapons to defend themselves. That kind of thing has an effect on society. That will be in their minds when they set out on a burglary. People will defend their property and what would you expect? (Chris)

I would always knock on the door and then assume no one was in. I was disturbed a few times but I would just run away. I think you would expect someone to anyway. I don't think the law change will make any difference. (Ken)

I had not heard. It would and it wouldn't. I would avoid going in anywhere where someone was in but anything can happen. It would worry me more now because of that law. You hear about things like when that farmer shot that

boy. That could be me... I would avoid it anyway but I would be more worried. (Frank)

No I would not think of it. People don't really think about it. You don't really think that people will come home. It did happen to me a few times but I just ran. It would not cross my mind to fight... It would make me more worried about doing it when someone was home. I have done in the past. I have been attacked I would just run away. (Dennis)

No because I have never done one with people in. No it don't bother me. The only thing that bothers me is the police...(because of the law changes) I would be more worried that someone might come home... (on householders fighting back) Yes I suppose you would expect them to. (Mike)

Yes I was aware of it and it is really worrying. You have to try not to think about it. At the time I would block it out. But anything can happen with these farmers in the country side. They can axe you and burry you or feed you to the pigs. I would be much more worried now. It is really a deterrent. It is too terrible to think about when are a burglar. It stops you in your tracks. Industrial premises are less dangerous in a why. You feel more at risk in someone's house than a business... You just try not to think about at the time. I would be more nervous now because of the law I would be very concerned after having read it in the paper. It is a deterrent. It makes you think. Yes I think people would be more willing than in the past to attack an intruder because of this law. (Jack)

Going 'tooled up'

- 3.22 Many of the burglars we spoke to would take 'tools' with them when embarking on a burglary. However they also noted that they would often make use of what they could find at the scene. The amount and type of planning was linked to the type of tools taken to commit burglary. Generally the more unplanned the less likely that thought would be given to tools of any kind.
- 3.23 The idea of taking weapons to a burglary was very uncommon and the idea of using violence was unpopular. However it was noted that most of the tools burglars such as a crow bar along with many household items can be used as weapons.

I would yeah definitely take something if you go in to burgle someone. (David)

There is another motive if someone is taking a weapon to a burglary. They want a fight ... Someone tooled up is expecting a fight. It is in the back of his mind. I would take something to rip the shutters ... off. (Joe)

I would just take screwdrivers, long strong ones. Most of the time I would find stuff there to use to break in ... I would never take something to defend myself. (Charlie)

I would take a screw driver or small crow bar. (Ken)

Screw driver and crow bar to get in and gloves. (Sid)

We would have a couple of tools like a screwdriver. But you can use what you find. Garden spade is the easiest. (Trevor)

Most burglaries have a weapon from the start, a screwdriver, crow bar something they have in the garden and every house has knives, anything like that. But you don't think like that. If you have a weapon you are just like those kids out there carrying knives on the street. I always had gloves and a balaclava. I took a small hammer like a lump hammer usually. (Ivan)

Screw driver. Crowbar a small one. I would have gloves. (Frank)

Crow bar, a hammer, a fat ended screw driver. (on self defence) I suppose that is why I have the crow bar. I can defend my self with that if I need to. (Mike)

We had gloves, good torch and batteries. Crow bar, screwdriver a holdall. Balaclava. Just in general so if someone sees you they can't identify you. (Jack)

No I would not take anything with me. (Dennis)

The risk of capture

- 3.24 Burglary was considered a high risk offence by only some interviewees. The offence was sometimes favoured because it was viewed as more lucrative than the obvious alternatives, particularly shoplifting, while not more risky. Certainly greater public awareness, more advanced technology, or better security all combined to make some feel burglary was more difficult now than in the past. Despite the fact police forces often focus on some burglars cited the lack of police prioritisation of burglary and a lower presence on the street

were amongst the reasons given for believing the chances of success had swung towards burglars. Some typical comments included:

It is high risk, you don't last long without being caught. It is much harder now. With all the technology, cameras and dna you can leave behind. (Dennis)

Yes it is high risk because now there is too many things that can catch you. Hidden cameras too much technology. (Sid)

(The risk is) a lot higher now than it used to be because of cameras and that. I suppose it depends how clever you are and how cautious, and if you plan it well. (Charlie)

Nowadays it is quite high. I have seen a lot of burglars in prison so yeah they often get caught. (David)

People are more switched on now I think. There is more awareness and people protect their homes better. Before it was hidden from parts of society. You see the programs and people on TV. There is more security. People will go to lengths to protect their homes, people are aware so it is more risky. (Joe)

Yeah obviously it is a risky crime. If you get caught it will be jail. If someone is in you also have that risk. They may be in so that is a risk. But I have been caught both times so what does that tell you. But I know there are obviously people that get away with it. (Chris)

Now a days I would say the chances are high of getting caught. But other than that it is 50/50.. Shoplifting from what I am gathering they get caught too often. You are very visible with security and cameras. And all the shops work together. People always return as well. If you find an easy mark they return. Criminals are not clever that is why they are criminals. You never find a rich burglar, they don't save and invest. They only do it because they are lazy and if you can get six grand in one night you do not need to work for the rest of the week you can relax. You never keep hold of it long. (Ivan)

It is and it ain't. If you don't leave fingerprints and dna then they won't catch you. It depends on carelessness. When you get nicked they... trace your other crimes. They connect it better nowadays. (Frank)

Medium. A lot of people get caught. You can get away with it if you think about it and you don't leave any

*evidence. If you think about it you can get away with it.
(Mike)*

I would say it is a medium risk crime compared to other theft ... When you are that entrenched in drug use it does not matter. I think it is the same risk as shoplifting really but shoplifting is not as profitable. (Rupert)It depends. It is not high risk. I got caught when I was only a learner but it took them four years to find me. I got through the cat flap and left finger prints because I did not wear gloves that time. The other time I had used sticks through the letter box to unlock the door and again (left) fingerprints. But I only got caught for two and I had done 100 to 200. So you are not likely to get caught. (Aban)

If you know your method of getting in the chances are quite slim. It was a problem if you were known to the area. It is not such a low risk nowadays. But you are still unlikely to get caught. Police do not prioritise burglary. They would not follow it up quickly and now there is much less police presence on the roads. (Ken)

It depends. I never really got caught only as a kid. We never did it as an opportunist. We put a lot into following people if you follow someone over three or four nights you get prepared and you don't mind if you get 1,000 out of it ... If you are smart, not that I am saying I am smart, you won't get caught. (Trevor)

You don't hear anything about it. It goes on everyday but they don't report it the paper much. Yes it must be easy to get away with it really but you need to be careful ... burglary is so common now it is too easy to get caught on the rich houses with cctv and many of the poor have nothing worth taking. (Jack)

Ideas for preventing burglary

Although a number of ideas were suggested it was noted that the best hope was that burglary could be reduced, it could not be prevented altogether. Tackling the root causes, principally drug addiction and offering support to those coming out of prison, providing better security, and placing an emphasis on the public being more security conscious featured prominently in answers given here. Making offenders more aware of the consequences of their actions was also highlighted. Some typical comments included:

People can make their house more unattractive. The bigger picture; the government needs to put more money

into drug addiction ... I also went to a victim awareness course and they showed videos of victims talking saying the effect it had had on them. One lady wanted to move house because of it and couldn't afford to. The crime was faceless and victimless to me. At the time it is not personal to me. You do not know or see the people you are effecting or understand how you are effecting people's lives. Sitting down with someone you burgled that is the way forward. I just watched a video of victims and it opened my eyes. I knew burglary was bad but you don't allow yourselves to think how bad it is. If one of the times I was in prison I had met one of the people I burgled even in my desperation for drugs it would have made me think twice. Stickers on the windows are also good. Neighbourhood watch sticker, of a little policeman or (saying) burglars beware. It is just seeing that this person has thought about burglary for them to have got the sticker. You wonder what preparations they have (made). It is also about secured doors and window, not leaving stuff on display. I know people are supposed to be able to leave their curtains open but if you walked past a house and a laptop is sitting on the side (it is tempting). (Mark)

The people that do it for money are never going to stop. Well for me it was all to do with addiction. It takes many years to get out of that lifestyle and level of use. They do need to think about addiction. It is also about the community. Letting people know that there is another way to live from a young age. You get so entrenched in the lifestyle, it can seem like there are no other options. Alarms are goods. It is also about a judgement call on the size of the property and how much money they have. It would be good for people to have a secure house. High standard pvc windows. Very secured windows and door. I would not typically go back to the same place unless it was a commercial one I had identified as easy. I did a lot of walk-ins where doors were left unsecured when people were home. (Rupert)

I don't think you will; people will always buy nice stuff and some other people will always want it. It is just the materialistic society we are in. A lot are on drugs, I am not. I would never touch drugs but there is nothing they can do about them other than make drugs free. If they didn't need money for drugs they would not commit crime. (David)

Put alarms in houses and put all the doors and windows closed. Solid double glazing. Get lights that come on

when you go near and talk to your neighbours to get them to watch the house. I said I did not worry about alarms but they did stop me. I would just leave and not take anything if an alarm went off and I did not want the attention. It is a deterrent but I did not expect anyone to turn up quickly. (Aban)

Basic awareness. Lock your windows. Strong double glazing and doors. Cameras are no use because if you cover your face they are not going to try and find you for a small burglary. It is the opportunistic crime really. When your guard is down. The problem is that it is the only thing you can do now to earn money is house burglary or street robber because everyone is wiser Alarms that are connected directly to the police. Better alarm system. Get a dog. If it was the crown jewels if they really want something then nothing will stop them. Especially prolific offenders. It is more when you are released from prison there is nothing guiding you there is nothing to provide for you. We need to know how to live when you are skint. These people are just wanting money and they want it now. It is your ego and you will go to any length. They need more guidance of how to live without much money. They don't know how to pay bills. What people take for granted they don't know. Self-awareness and life skills. Maybe more careers advice and more youth college they should be an alternative to academic. It is supply and demand and if no one is wanting to burgle. It should be a shame thing. Direct alarms that call the police. Maybe (they) should put more into advertising so people know that the alarms ring the police in a place. Maybe the government (should) get involved with alarms companies. (Joe)

Only what people already do. The cameras and the alarms and get your neighbours to look out. Can't think what people can do other than have someone in 24 hours a day. Security guards I suppose. I never saw one and they would stop you. (Charlie)

It is just having a property that is secure and it looks like it has a proper alarm. Good windows and doors. Make it look secure. Nothing on show. Well overlooked by neighbours and well lit. Drugs were the big issue for me. I am a bit biased as I now work in the field but help with addiction, (it) has to play a part in reducing a crime like burglary. (Chris)

More security on houses and alarms. Dogs, even a little dog making a noise will put you off. Attracts attention. Well lit and those 'neighbourhood watch in this area'

stickers on the window. There are so many houses you just need to put them off with something like that. Time switches on lights so that the lights come on at different times in the day so it looks like someone is home. Drug treatment was important for stopping me but it does not always work the person has to really want to change and it is a long process. It should be a higher priority for police. You don't see police on the street anymore. When you do it you don't think of the heartache you cause. I would say sitting down with victims would really help people understand the impact they are having and help them to change. (Ken)

People should get an alarm system and cctv linked straight up to their phone and record everything. Cameras. If you can make sure the place is covered by cameras. (Sid)

Educating people not to commit crime but there will always be the criminal element. Depending on the security can put people off. A big light with a sensor that comes on if you go near that would worry me more than alarms because of being seen. Strong windows and doors matter but that can be overcome. Most burglaries are committed by people on drugs. If people are more aware that people are out there looking for someone to burgle to get money for drugs. We should educate people to be security conscious. A dog is a good thing and it will put a lot of people off but it does depend on the type of dog. (Trevor)

I think make sure that the outside is secure, so it would take a lot of noise to get in, and visible from neighbours. And Smartwater is a great one. If you can get it so it sprays at them. If you have a warning sign as well saying Smartwater. Alarms and cameras need to look like they work just get a little flashing led or something. It does not take much. Also I don't think people realise the impact burglary has. They don't realise until it happened to them or someone they know how distressing it can be especially for female residents. People go in and make a mess, they may not even have taken anything but if you are a burglar you don't think like that. It is definitely a good idea to meet victims and have someone to one contact especially if they find out the victim is a vulnerable person. There are always some that are hardened to everything so it won't affect them. But that is one of the reasons I stopped domestic. I was not happy with other people's houses. I know I did tie people up in commercial

burglary you have to have some morals about it but for me it is not as bad in a business. (Ivan)

More security. People should have lights that come on when you are out all the time. If lights are on I would not go in. Dogs don't worry me. Don't leave valuables out... I did do commercial once and there was a guard I just ran off. (Frank)

More cameras. Make the public more aware people don't think about security. They could make flyers and send them out. (Dennis)

Lock your windows and doors and shut your curtains. If people leave a brand new laptop out it is like they are advertising that you have a new laptop. If you hide it away it is less likely to get taken. (Mike)

Those yellow signs that said when where had been a burglary were a great deterrent. You don't see them now but they use to put up signs outside house that had had burglaries to ask for witnesses. You would sometimes get 5 in one street in some areas. This would tell you it was a hot spot for burglaries and therefor a hot spot for police and plain cloths cid. What people need to is to get a proper job with decent money then you don't need it. If you are busy with a job that pays well enough for your family you will be set. You need to break away from associates. I have a lot of guilt about what I put my family through. People need to be more security conscious as well. You house needs to be like a fortress. People need to secure their homes. Make them think there is someone in with lights and a radio. Don't leave milk piling up outside and flyers in the door. They indicate someone is away. Poor people have no security and they have nothing much but they are an easy target. In Hampstead they have their own security guards in their housing places and they protect the rich. Raising awareness about what you put people through when you break into their house can help. Some people show remorse but some people are not worried about it. I didn't' think about it at the time but I feel very uncomfortable about what I did. I would do anything to go back and get the time back and not put my family through what I did. It is common sense really for individual individuals families get rid of your hedges in London they are ideal for burglars with all those hedges and big plat pots to hide behind while we get the door open. They make it easy. (Jack)

- 3.25 One burglar highlighted new risks posed by the public selling items online on auction websites such as eBay including providing an address for people to come and look at or pick up an item:

People need to stop advertising stuff online. EBay. People will see something they like on eBay. Go round to have a look at it so you have the address. Say they don't want it then go get someone like me to get it for them. (Sid)

Section 4. Concluding comments

- 4.1 Listening to what burglars have to say about their offending can be instructive. In these interviews insights have been gleaned from those who are opportunists, sometimes driven by the need to feed an addiction, to those who plan their burglaries. There are those who burgle because they feel they need to, and those who do so because it offers the chances of rich rewards and a better life. Some admitted they got a buzz from crime.
- 4.2 Whatever the reason there was plenty of evidence that householders, and for that matter business owners too, would do well to pay attention to security. Burglars look for an easy target, typically one that looks empty is more attractive and also one that is not overlooked (and some noted that neighbours trained to keep watch can be effective), sometimes too one that doesn't have a dog, where doors and windows are either open or look fragile, and where they know there to be goods can be a trigger for an offence.
- 4.3 Security plays its part, and burglars saw a range of dangers in different security measures that they had to manage if they were to be successful. It was not just a case of having security measures though, they have to be good ones and they have to work. Burglars are adept at spotting weak links.
- 4.4 Passwords for electrical were not typically sort after as they can easily be got around by those who know how. However the discovery of pin numbers, bank cards and other financial information can be profitable to sell on, shop with or use at cash points.
- 4.5 Burglars mentioned other remedies too. Changes in the law giving more scope for householders to protect themselves will, according to this sample have a limited affect, and could in some cases have an adverse effect. Some noted the lack of police presence on the street and the low priority that appeared to them to be attached to burglary as reasons why it is unlikely to be prevented altogether.
- 4.6 Tackling burglary will also need to involve some focus on the causes. This will include helping people with addictions, giving support to people coming out of prison, and even raising awareness amongst offenders of the harm done to victims may all play a part.
- 4.7 Just having security did not mean that a house would not be burgled, but it typically makes it less attractive and reduced the interest of both burglars who planned and those who were opportunists. The point is not that this small exploratory study has identified any new insights, rather it has confirmed what the public needs to be reminded of, that

protecting against burglary starts with good practices and good security at home.

Section 5. Perpetuity Research

Perpetuity Research is a leading research company with wide expertise in both quantitative and qualitative approaches. We have been extensively involved in evaluating 'what works' (and what does not). Our work has involved helping our clients to understand people's behaviours, perceptions and levels of awareness and in identifying important trends. Our mission statement is 'committed to making a difference', and much of our work has a practical application in terms of informing decision making and policy formulation.

We work closely with our clients. This includes businesses, national and local governments, associations and international organisations as well as charities and foundations. Our aim is to exceed their expectations and it speaks volumes that so many have chosen to work with us repeatedly over many years. We are passionate about our work and we would welcome the opportunity to work with you.

Amy Randall: Research Assistant

Amy Randall joined Perpetuity Research in October 2013. Since joining Perpetuity she has been involved in a range of research tasks and is currently working on a project interviewing insurance fraudsters. Amy has a good knowledge of a range of methodological approaches, both qualitative and quantitative. She has experience conducting interviews and focus groups and has strong research design skills. As well as this she has a working knowledge of data analysis techniques and a good proficiency in relevant software packages and experience working with large data sets.

Prior to working for Perpetuity, Amy graduated from The University of Kent with a First class BA (Hons) in Sociology. She has an MSc in Social Research Methods at London School of Economics and Political Science.

Professor Martin Gill: Director

Martin Gill is the Director of Perpetuity Research and Consultancy International. He started the company in 2002 and it was formally launched by HRH Prince Michael of Kent. Martin is also a Professor of Criminology and for over two decades has been actively involved in a range of studies relating to different aspects of crime and its prevention.

Martin started and leads the Security Research Initiative. Martin has published widely (14 books and over 100 articles including 'Managing Security' and 'CCTV' published in 2003, and the 'Handbook of Security', the first edition was published in 2006 and the second edition in 2014) and is editor of Security Journal. In 2002 the ASIS Security Foundation made a 'citation for

distinguished service' in 'recognition of his significant contribution to the security profession'. In 2010 he was recognised by the BSIA with a special award for 'outstanding service to the security sector'. In 2013 and 2014 IFSEC placed him in the top 15 most influential fire and security experts in the world.

Section 6. The Research approach

- 6.1 The burglars were approached in a variety of ways. We prepared a poster that was displayed in a number of organisations that work with or provide services to offenders, and this led to some burglars making themselves available for interview typically after having discussed the project with staff. Often those interviewed recommended others who then took part in the interview. In one case an offender (but not a burglar) we had worked with us in the past was approached and he involved someone he was aware of. In another case we identified a burglar because he had appeared in the press. The sample is not representative in any sense; it should be remembered the aim was to generate insights from people who had burgled at some point in their lives.
- 6.2 All potential interviewees were advised about the project and the questions that would be addressed. A few declined to be interviewed at this stage, or did not respond at the agreed time of the interview and/or could not be contacted again. All interviewees were advised that all the details they provided would be anonymised and no names would be recorded (we have used pseudonyms in this report). They were also advised that confidentiality would not apply in the following circumstances:
- 'You tell me something that suggests that you or another person is in real danger of serious harm
 - If you tell me details of an offence which the authorities don't already know about
 - If you express an intention to commit a specific offence'
- 5.3 At the start interviewees were asked whether they had any questions and at the end of the interview they were asked if they were happy with all the statements provided. Interviewees were provided with a shopping voucher in return for their input.



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