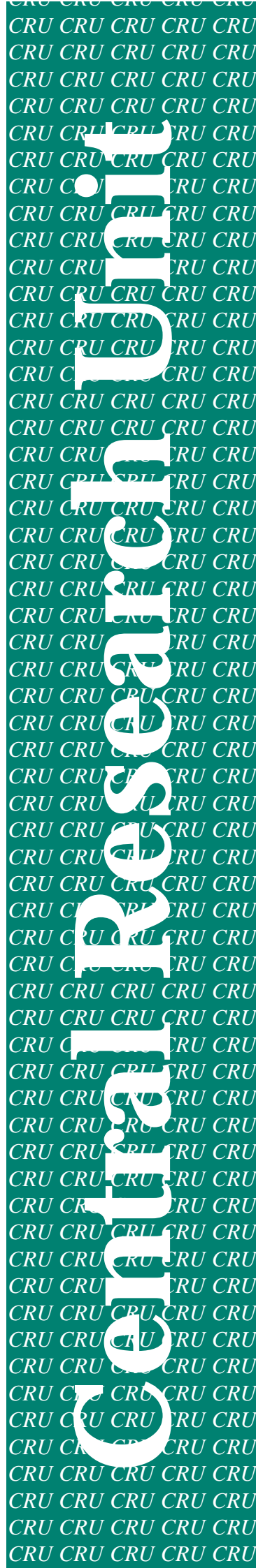


HOUSEBREAKING IN SCOTLAND: FINDINGS FROM THE 2000 SCOTTISH CRIME SURVEY



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE



**HOUSEBREAKING IN SCOTLAND:
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2000 SCOTTISH CRIME SURVEY**

MVA

**Scottish Executive Central Research Unit
2002**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Scottish Crime Survey (SCS) measures crimes directly experienced by people living in private households. The 2000 SCS is the fifth survey of its kind to be carried out in Scotland since the early 1980s. This report presents the findings on the extent and characteristics of housebreaking in Scotland.

KEY FINDINGS

- Housebreaking remains one of the least common crimes, accounting for one in ten crimes reported to the 2000 SCS. There was a small rise (2.7%) in the estimated total number of housebreakings between 1995 and 1999, but this was not statistically significant.
- Crime surveys have consistently shown levels of housebreaking to be higher in England and Wales than in Scotland. However, the gap has narrowed considerably between 1995 and 1999.
- The risk of housebreaking is low across all types of household. Three percent of households had suffered at least one incident of housebreaking in 1999. Of these, 9% had been targeted more than once.
- Not all crimes categorised as housebreakings resulted in loss of property. Unsuccessful attempts to gain entry comprised almost half of housebreakings. In a further 11% of cases the offender(s) gained entry but did not steal anything. Something was actually stolen in 40% of cases (most commonly jewellery/silverware, handbags/wallets/purses or cash).
- The respondent was at home during 53% of housebreakings, and in more than half of such cases had contact with the offender. These incidents were less likely to result in loss of property.
- There has been a small decrease since 1996 in how common housebreaking is perceived to be. Thirty percent of respondents felt that housebreaking was 'very' or 'fairly' common in their area, compared to 39% in 1996. Despite this perception, fewer than one in ten respondents felt that it was 'very' or 'fairly' likely that their home would be broken into during the next 12 months.
- Housebreaking appears to cause greater anxiety relative to other crimes than might be suggested by its prevalence. Whereas housebreaking comprises only one in ten of SCS crimes, it comes a close third behind vehicle vandalism and theft from a car in the extent of worry it generates. This level of anxiety is reflected in the fact that over half of those who had been victimised at any time in the past still remembered the incident very well, and a similar proportion claimed that it had had a lasting effect on their behaviour.
- Many security features have become more common since 1996, including security locks on windows, double locking doors and security chains. Only 6% of households had no household security measures. The majority of housebreaking victims (60%) had installed security measures as a direct result of having their home broken into.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings on housebreaking from the 2000 Scottish Crime Survey (SCS). The SCS measures crimes directly experienced by people living in private households. The 2000 SCS is the fifth survey of its kind to be carried out in Scotland since the early 1980s. The first two sweeps in 1982 and 1988 were conducted as part of the British Crime Survey (BCS) and only covered Central and Southern Scotland. A separate SCS was introduced in 1993 which covered the whole of mainland Scotland, including the larger islands. This was repeated in 1996 and 2000.

The report aims to answer the following key questions about housebreaking in Scotland:

- How much housebreaking is there in Scotland?
- Who are the victims? ?
- When does housebreaking occur?
- What impact does housebreaking have on victims?
- How worried are people about housebreaking?
- What measures do people take to protect their homes?

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DATA

The SCS definition of housebreaking includes incidents where somebody broke, or attempted to break, into someone else's home without permission and stole or attempted to steal something.

In statistical terms there was a fairly small number of cases of housebreaking¹. Therefore, care must be taken when examining their characteristics and generalising from the results. When the data are disaggregated into sub-groups (for example, by gender), the confidence with which we can generalise is reduced further.

The sample sizes reported on are as above, unless otherwise specified. Non-responses and 'Don't knows' have been excluded from the analysis unless otherwise specified. All data have been weighted and include responses from the whole of Scotland. Differences which are indicated to be significant are so at the 95% level of confidence or greater.

Respondents were asked about their experience of housebreaking in the previous year. The information in this report therefore relates to housebreaking during 1999.

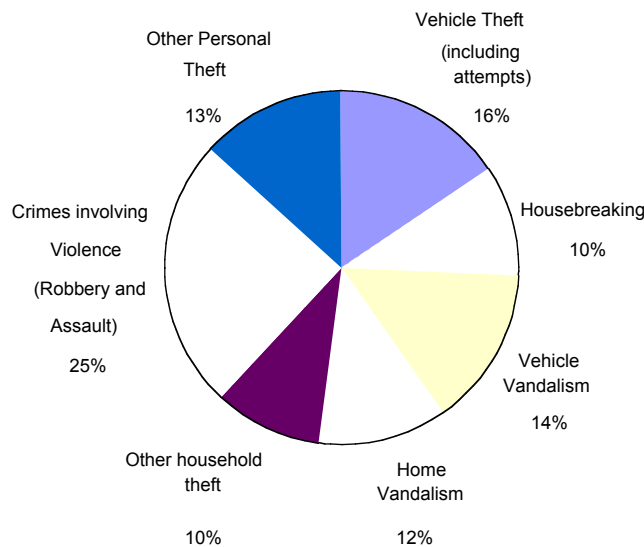
¹ In the 2000 SCS, there were 176 victim forms relating to housebreaking, covering 204 incidents and 171 victims; in the 1996 SCS there were 199 victim forms covering 243 incidents and 143 victims.

CHAPTER TWO: THE EXTENT OF HOUSEBREAKING IN SCOTLAND

INCIDENCE OF HOUSEBREAKING IN 1999

The SCS estimates that there were approximately 84,000 incidents of housebreaking (including attempted housebreaking) in 1999². Housebreaking now comprises one in ten SCS crimes, a smaller proportion than most other categories of crime (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Distribution of crimes in Scotland, 1999



Notes

1 Source: 2000 SCS, all victim forms, n = 1,474.

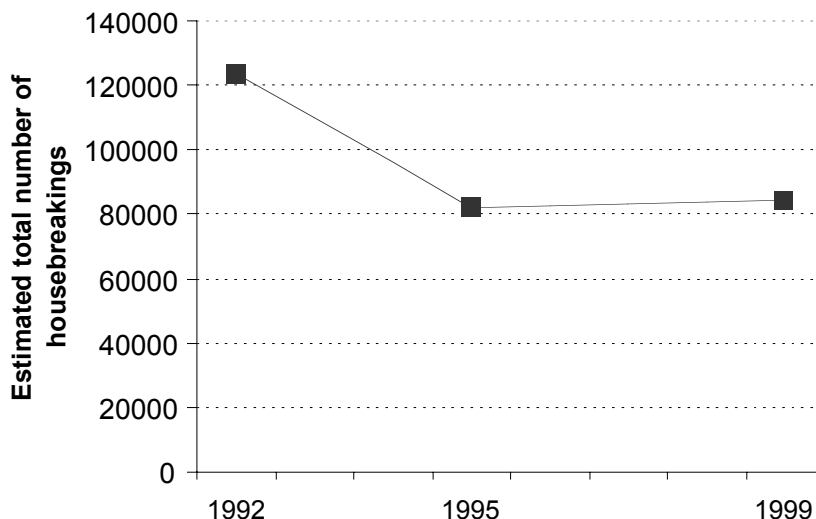
TRENDS IN HOUSEBREAKING

There was a small rise (2.7%)³ in the estimated total number of housebreakings between 1995 and 1999, following a drop of 34% between 1992 and 1995 (Figure 2.2).

²Because this estimate is derived from a survey sample there will be a margin of error around the figure. We can be 95% confident that the true number of housebreakings in Scotland in 1999 lies between 67,800 and 100,400 incidents.

³ This increase did not reach statistical significance

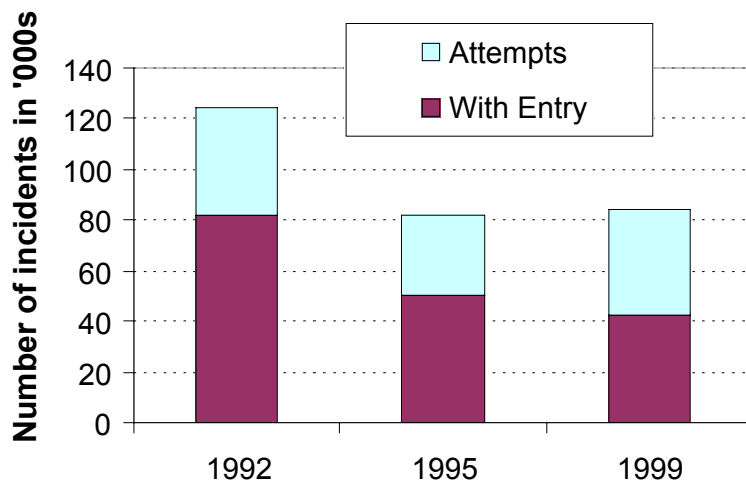
Figure 2.2: Trend in Estimated Total Number of Housebreakings



Note: 1993, n = 5,030; 1996, n = 5,045; 2000, n = 5,059

Not all incidents classified as housebreaking resulted in entry to the home. The proportion of incidents in which the offender actually gained entry to the home was 66% in 1992, but this fell to 62% in 1995 and to 51% in 1999. Thus, although a similar number of housebreaking incidents was reported to the survey in 1995 and 1999, there were fewer incidents of actual entry (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3: Trends in Attempted and Entry Housebreaking 1992 to 1999

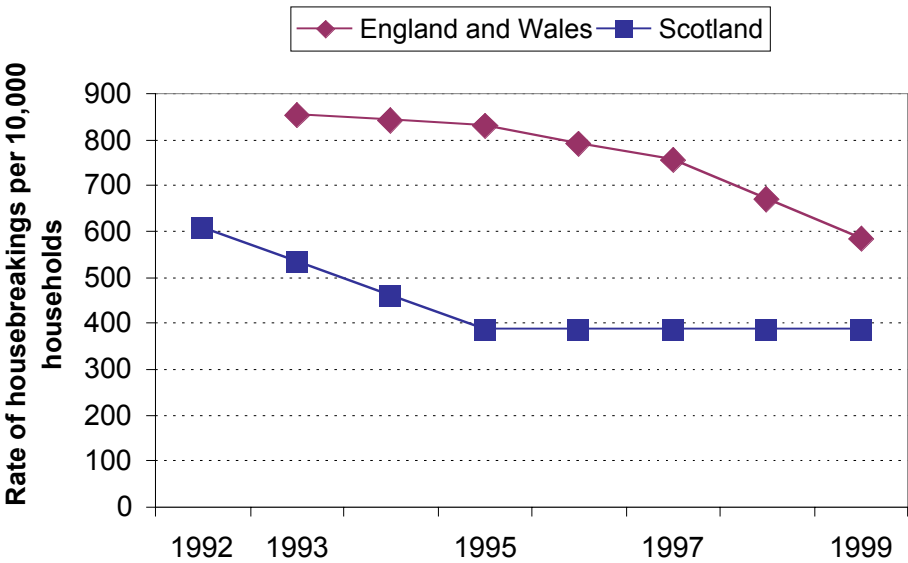


Note: Source 1993 SCS (all Scotland, weighted data), n=5,030; 1996 SCS (all Scotland, weighted data), n=5,045; 2000 SCS (all Scotland, weighted data), n=5,059)

COMPARISON WITH ENGLAND AND WALES

SCS and BCS findings have consistently shown the rate of housebreakings per 10,000 households to be higher in England and Wales than in Scotland. However, the gap has narrowed considerably between 1995 and 1999 as Figure 2.4 shows. In 1995, the rate of housebreakings per 10,000 households was 386 in Scotland compared to 829 in England and Wales. In 1999 the rate was virtually unchanged in Scotland (385), but had fallen to 585 in England and Wales.

Figure 2.4: Trends in Rates of Housebreaking: Scotland and England & Wales 1992-1999



Note: Source 1993 SCS (all Scotland, weighted data), n=5,030; 1996 SCS (all Scotland, weighted data), n=5,045; 2000 SCS (all Scotland, weighted data), n=5,059); 1994, 1996, 1998 and 2000 BCS (weighted data)

CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSEBREAKING IN SCOTLAND

WHO ARE THE VICTIMS?

Overall 3.2% of households had been the victim of housebreaking in 1999. However, the risk of victimisation differs between types of household. The groups most likely to have been targeted in 1999 were:

- lone parent households (6.2%) (although the number of households on which this is based is small)
- those living in tenements (5.0%)
- low income households (less than £10,000) (4.5% of these households had been the victim of housebreaking in 1999)
- one person households, under pensionable age (4.2%)
- people who live in rented property (4.1%)

There are, of course, relationships between these groups. For example, young people are more likely to rent their property.

It is not possible to analyse the relative risk of housebreaking for homes with and without specific security features in a meaningful way. Respondents were asked about features present at the time of the survey rather than at the time of housebreaking incidents, and in some cases security measures were introduced as a direct result of housebreaking.

MULTIPLE VICTIMISATION

It was rare for respondents to have experienced more than one housebreaking during 1999. Nine in 10 of all households that had been a victim of housebreaking (91%) had been the victim of only one such incident. Five per cent had experienced two housebreakings in the last year, and 4% had experienced three or more. This small group of households that had experienced three or more housebreakings accounted for 15% of all incidents reported to the survey.

WHEN DOES HOUSEBREAKING OCCUR?

The majority of respondents were able to identify when their house was broken into. Around one in three incidents (35%) occurred at weekends, a smaller proportion than was reported in the 1996 SCS (51%). The most common time of day for housebreaking was during the evening (39%), and the least common was during the morning (14%) (Figure 3.1). Although only a small number of weekend incidents were reported to the survey, it appears that housebreaking was more likely to take place during the evening or night at weekends than on weekdays.

Figure 3.1: Timing of Housebreaking

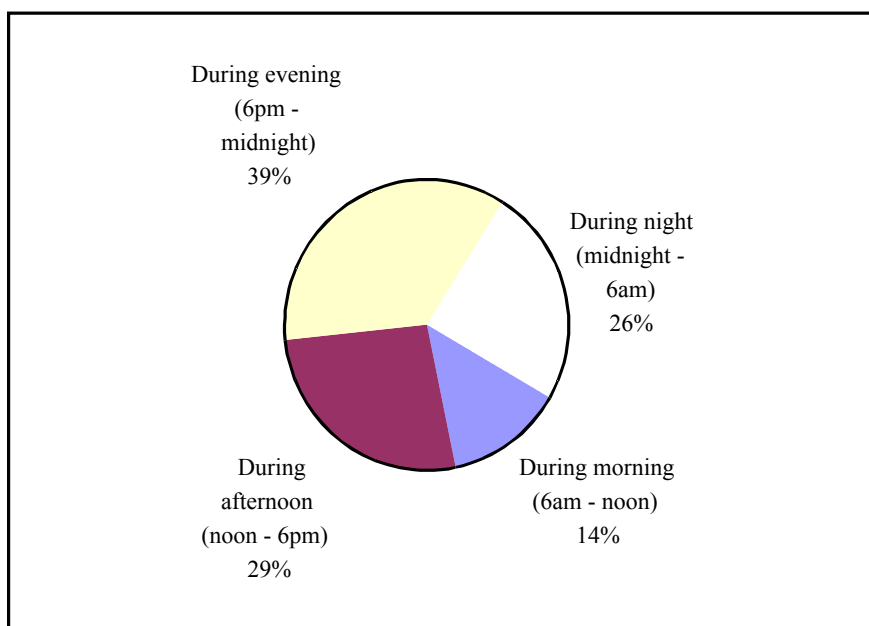


Table 3.1: What Respondent was doing at Time of Housebreaking

	% of incidents
At home - not sleeping, not working	26
At home - sleeping	23
Leisure activities away from home	17
At work or working (not at home)	9
Shopping	8
On holiday/away for weekend	6
Working at home	4
Visiting friends/relatives	3
Travelling to/from non-work destination	3
At school/college	1
In hospital	1

During around half of housebreaking incidents the respondent was at home and, in around half of these cases, was asleep. Overall, the respondent was away from home on leisure activities during 17% of housebreakings, and at work during 9% of incidents (Table 3.1).

METHOD OF ENTRY AND CONTACT WITH OFFENDER

In the majority of cases (88%) the offender(s) entered the property without permission. This is a significantly smaller proportion than reported in 1996 (95%). In the remainder of cases they gained entry by false pretences.

In one third of incidents (34%) the victim had some form of contact with the offender. In 12% of cases where there was contact, the offender(s) had a weapon or something they used or

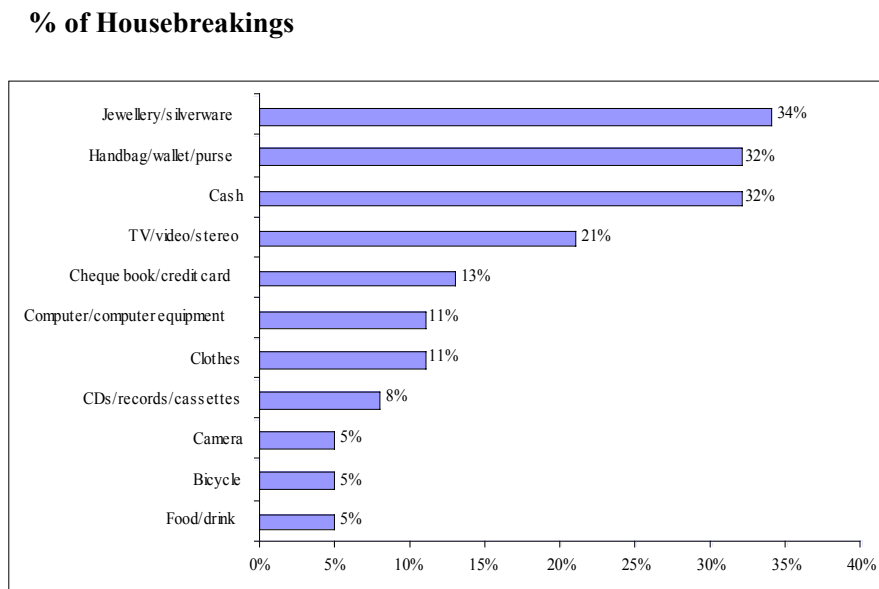
threatened to use as a weapon. The type of weapon most commonly carried by the offender was a knife, though this finding is based on a very small number of cases.

WHAT WAS STOLEN?

The proportion of housebreakings in which something was stolen fell from 48% in 1996 to 40% in 2000 (although this was not statistically significant). The items most commonly stolen are shown in Figure 3.2. It should be noted that the number of incidents where loss occurred was small and so generalisations should not be made from these results.

Jewellery /silverware, handbags /wallets / purses and cash were the most commonly stolen items, each being taken in around one in three housebreakings. The types of items most commonly stolen are similar to those reported in 1996, with the exception of handbags/wallets/purses which now comprise a larger proportion of stolen items. As might be expected, incidents where the victim had contact with the offender were less likely to result in loss than those where no contact occurred.

Figure 3.2 Items Most Commonly Stolen in Housebreaking



Notes

- 1 Base = housebreaking incidents where something was stolen, n = 76.
- 2 Other items account for less than 5% each.
- 3 More than one response was permitted.

Damage was caused to something belonging to the respondent or other household member in 54% of housebreaking incidents (this excludes the items that were stolen, but includes damage which the offender caused entering or leaving the property). This is a similar proportion to that reported in the 1996 SCS (51%).

THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF HOUSEBREAKING

The financial costs incurred as a result of housebreaking were recorded in three categories:

- the value of goods stolen
- the cost of damage to property
- the net cost of the incident to the victim, taking into account the value of any items stolen, damage to property, loss of earnings and any insurance claim that was made

These costs are summarised in Table 3.2 for those cases where a respondent was able to identify a monetary value. It should be noted that the number of respondents is small and generalisation from the results should be undertaken with caution.

Table 3.2: Cost of Incidents of Housebreaking

	Value of Goods Stolen	Cost of Damage	Net Cost to Victim
	%	%	%
Nothing	-	8	12
Less than £50	16	26	19
£50 – £99	11	15	15
£100 - £499	36	40	37
£500 - £999	10	8	7
£1,000 or over	28	3	11
Average cost			
Mean	£942	£194	£396
Median	£230	£100	£100
n =	72	61	84

Notes

1 Responses where a monetary value could not be specified were excluded from the analysis.

The items stolen had a wide range of values. For around one in four victims the value of the item(s) stolen was less than £100. However, a similar proportion estimated that the value of the item(s) stolen was £1,000 or more. The average cost of damage to property was much less at £194. Almost one in ten victims said that no damage was done. Taking into account insurance claims and compensation, the average net cost to victims was £396, with 12% of victims incurring no net cost. Although the numbers are too small to support statistical analysis, it appears that home owners and those who live in houses (as opposed to flats, etc) had items of higher value stolen, and incurred a higher net cost than others.

In just under half of all cases in which something was stolen or damaged (44%), some or all of the property in question was covered by an insurance policy. One in three said that the property was not insured, and the remainder, one in four, did not know whether insurance was in place. This compares to the 86% of *all* respondents who claim to have home contents insurance, suggesting that those without insurance are more likely to be victims. The level of insurance coverage was similar to that reported in the 1996 survey. Of the small number of cases where theft or damage of insured property occurred, most (63%) resulted in insurance claims.

CHAPTER FOUR: PUBLIC REACTIONS TO HOUSEBREAKING

THE EMOTIONAL REACTIONS OF VICTIMS OF HOUSEBREAKING

Victims of housebreaking since the beginning of 1999 were asked if they, or anyone else in their household, had an emotional reaction to the incident. In around two-thirds of cases someone in the household did have such a reaction, most commonly the respondent.

The most common reaction which the respondent experienced was anger (71% of incidents), followed by shock, fear and vulnerability (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Emotional Reactions Experienced by the Respondent at the Time of the Incident

	All reactions % of incidents
Anger	71
Shock	52
Fear	48
Vulnerability	46
Intimidation	25
Irritation	20
Numbness	12
Other	2
None of these	1

Notes

1 Base = victim forms relating to housebreaking where respondent had a reaction to incident, n = 102.

Later (at the time of the interview), the majority of those who experienced a reaction at the time still felt some emotion about the incident. The most common lasting emotion is also anger, followed by vulnerability and fear. As might be expected, shock is less lasting.

Those who had been a victim of housebreaking *at any time* in the past were asked how well they remembered the incident. Almost half (47%) said that they remembered it very well, 45% said they still thought about the incident and 48% felt that it had had a lasting effect on their behaviour and household routines. For over half (54%) of those who said they had ever been the victim of housebreaking the incident had occurred over 10 years ago. It is clear, however, that being the victim of such a crime has a long lasting impact. Over three quarters (77%) of those who had been a victim of housebreaking over 10 years ago remembered the incident 'very' or 'fairly' well, 43% still felt that it had a long lasting impact on their behaviour and household routines and 38% still thought about the incident.

The majority (69%) of those who had been the victim of housebreaking since the beginning of 1999 reported the incident to the police. This is a similar proportion to that reported in the 1996 SCS. Although the number of incidents recorded in the survey are too small to generalise from, it appears that the level of reporting to the police was higher where items were insured than where they were not.

The number of people who did not report a housebreaking to the police was small (n = 37). However, it appears that the main reasons for not reporting the incidents were that no loss or damage occurred, and a belief that the police could have done nothing. The main reasons given for reporting housebreakings to the police were a sense of duty (63%), followed by the hope that

the offenders would be caught and punished (48%), and the hope that items would be recovered (36%).

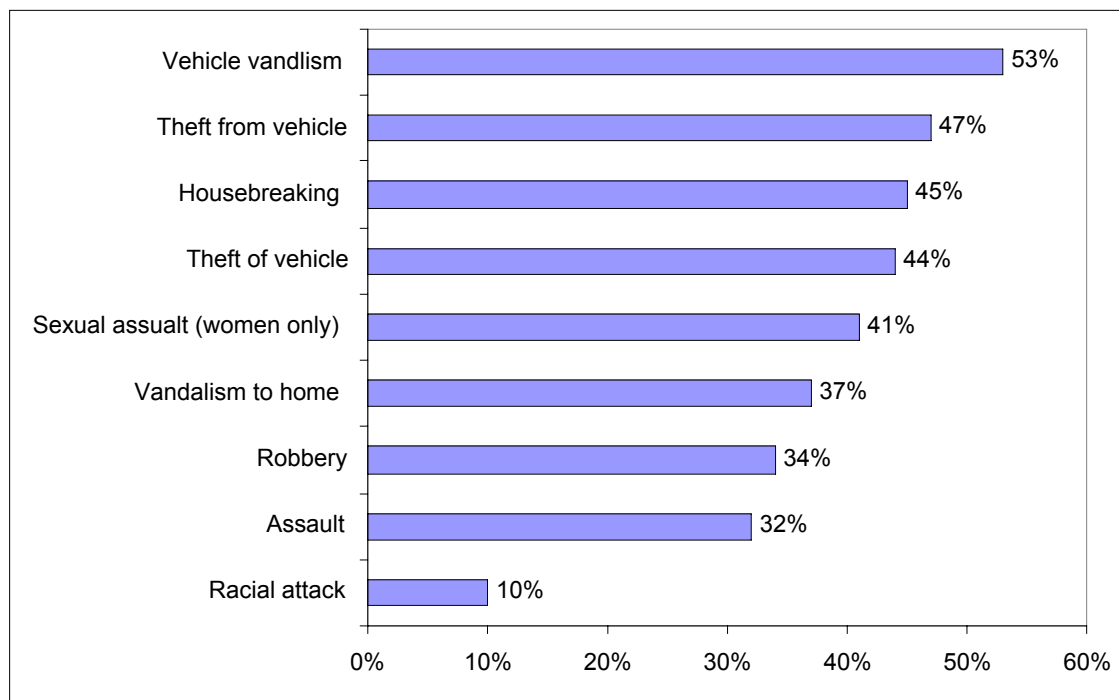
HOW CONCERNED ARE PEOPLE ABOUT HOUSEBREAKING?

Respondents’ general level of worry about crime (whether or not they had been a victim) was gauged by asking whether they worried about becoming a victim of specific crimes.

Concern about crime is likely to be influenced by perceived risk of becoming a victim of crime. This can be a response to a combination of perceived prevalence of a crime and personal circumstances of the respondent. A further issue is that of impact. For example, while sexual assault may be seen as a rare occurrence, a respondent who sees herself at low risk may conceivably be very worried about becoming a victim of sexual assault due to the nature of the crime.

Respondents were asked how worried they were about a range of different types of crime. Housebreaking was third behind vehicle vandalism and theft from a car in terms of how commonly it causes anxiety (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Percentage of Respondents ‘Very’ or ‘Fairly’ Worried about a Range of Crimes



Notes:

1 N = 5,059.

2 Sexual assault/rape based on female respondents only

Thirty per cent of respondents perceived housebreaking to be ‘very common’ or ‘fairly common’ in their area. This is a slightly smaller proportion than reported in 1996 (39%). Nevertheless, fewer than one in ten respondents (7%) felt that it was ‘very likely’ or ‘fairly likely’ that their home would be broken into during the next 12 months.

Those who had been a victim of housebreaking since the beginning of 1999 were more likely than others to believe that they would be a victim of the same offence in the next year. The perceived likelihood of becoming a victim of housebreaking was also related to respondents’

perceptions of how common housebreaking was in the local area, and whether they knew someone else who had been a victim (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Perceived Likelihood of Housebreaking

	Expectation of Housebreaking in Next 12 months		
	Very/fairly likely	Not very/not at all likely	Don't know
Were you a victim of housebreaking in 1999?			
Yes	22	68	10
No	7	84	10
How common is housebreaking in this area?			
Very/fairly common	17	70	12
Not very/not at all common	2	91	7
Don't know	6	57	37
Do you know anyone who has had their home broken into in the last year?			
Yes	11	80	8
No	5	85	10
All	7	83	10

Notes:

1 n = 2,542.

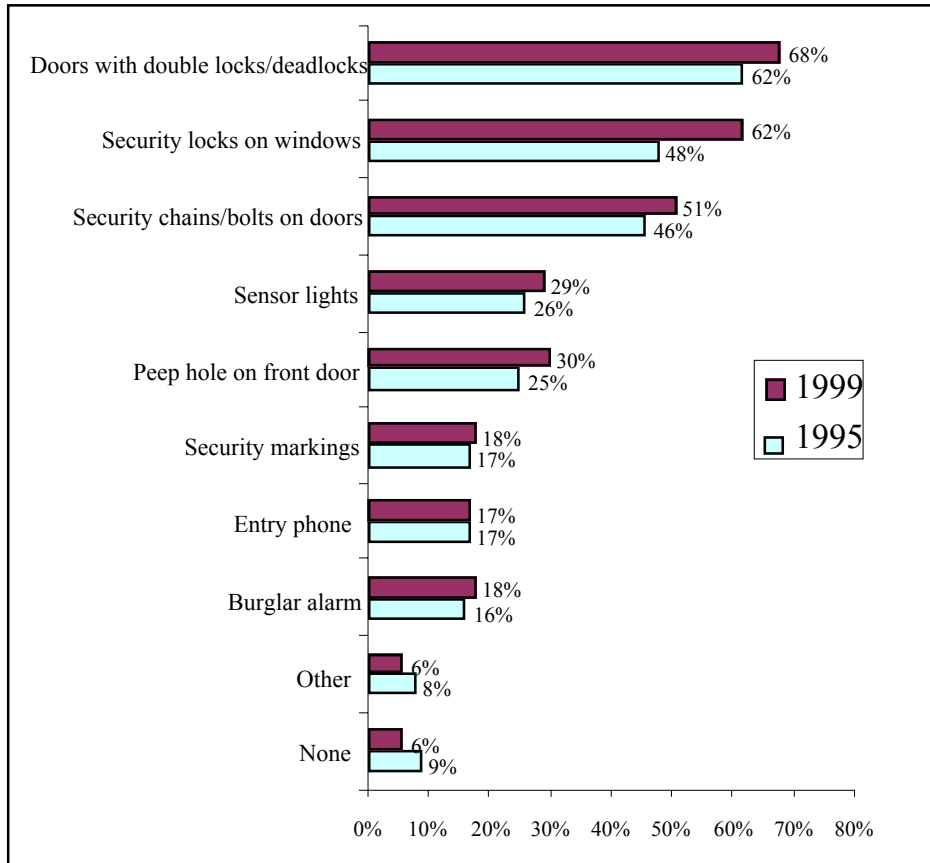
WHAT DO PEOPLE DO TO PROTECT THEIR HOMES?

The types of security device most commonly reported in households included double locks or deadlocks on doors, security locks on windows and chains or bolts on doors (Figure 4.2).

Many security features have become more common since 1996. These include security locks on windows (48% in 1996; 62% in 2000), double locking/deadlocking doors, security chains or bolts on doors and peep holes.

Many of these security devices were most common in households with largest incomes (£30,000 or more). These include burglar alarms, doors with double locks, security locks on windows and sensor lights. However, entry phones, door chains or bolts and peep holes were more common among less affluent groups. These tended to be in rented properties and were fitted by the council, housing association or private landlord.

Figure 4.2: Home Security Features

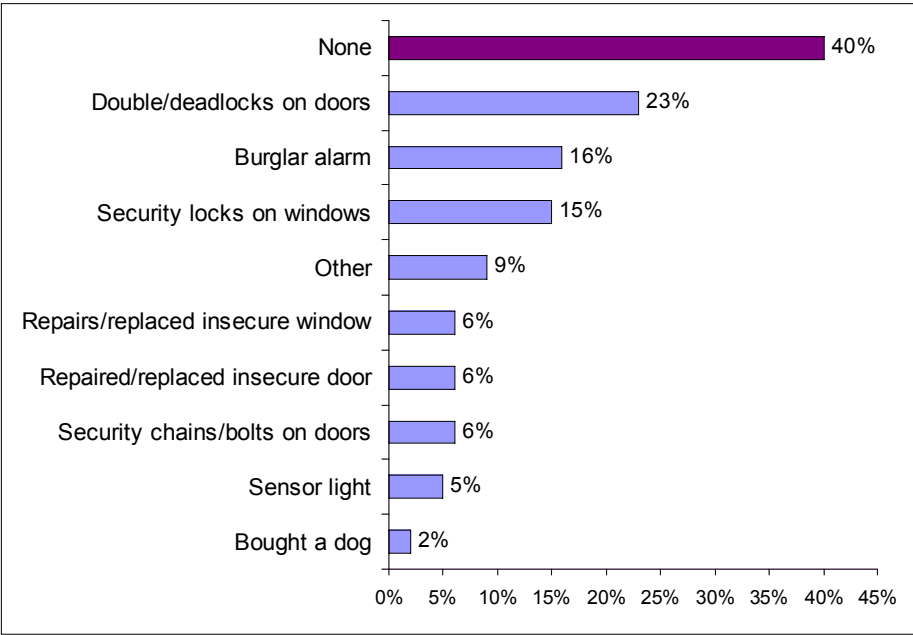


Notes
 1 n=2,542

HOME SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS

The decision to install household security devices often appears to be instigated by personal experience of crime. Six out of ten victims said that they had made security improvements because of a housebreaking, most commonly by installing double locks or deadlocks on doors, or locks on windows (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Home Security Improvements Made as a Direct Result of Housebreaking



Notes:

- 1 Base = respondents who had ever been a victim of housebreaking, n = 525.
- 2 'Other' = all measures with less than 2% response