

English summary

Repeat victimisation

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This study examines repeat victimisation in Sweden. The term repeat victimisation refers to a situation where the same person or object (such as a school or shop) is exposed to several criminal offences within a certain period of time. Research from other countries has shown that this type of victimisation is relatively common. In Sweden, however, the available knowledge on repeat victimisation is limited. The objective of this study is to add to what is known about repeat victimisation in Sweden, and to elucidate the significance of such knowledge for crime prevention work.

The research examines crimes reported to the police in two Swedish municipalities and includes several categories of offences: assault and threatening behaviour, breaking and entering into schools and shops, car-related offences and residential break-ins. The study indicates that it is reasonable to assume that generalisations can be made on the basis of the major findings to other Swedish municipalities.

The findings show that those who have reported falling victim to one of the offence types included in the study run a higher risk than others of being exposed to the same type of offence again. For example, the likelihood that a woman will report being assaulted or threatened by somebody known to her during the course of a year lies at approximately half of one per cent. Of those women who have experienced such an offence and reported it to the police, however, 25 per cent experience a further offence of the same kind within a year. Persons (men and women) who are assaulted or threatened by perpetrators not known to them also run a higher risk of being victimised

again. Of these, approximately ten per cent report a further incident to the police within a year. Those experiencing various types of break-in are also at increased risk of being victimised again. The likelihood that a shop will report a break-in during the course of a year lies at 15 per cent, for example. Of those shops reporting such an incident, approximately twice as many (28 per cent) report further break-ins within a one year period.

Those reporting having been victimised on a number of occasions run an even higher risk of being exposed to further offences. Almost half of the shops that have reported two previous break-ins, report one or more further break-ins within a year. Of women who have twice reported being the victims of threatening behaviour or assault at the hands of a perpetrator known to them, approximately 40 per cent report further incidents within a one year period.

In order to develop an idea of the proportion of total crimes that may be affected by measures focused on the prevention of repeat victimisation, the study has examined the proportion of police reports comprising repeat reporting. The term repeat reporting here refers to police crime reports relating to persons or objects who have already reported a similar offence to the police less than a year previously. Repeat reporting of break-ins at schools is particularly common. Almost 90 per cent of such reports constitute repeat reporting. Repeat reporting is also common in relation to shop break-ins and assaults on women where the perpetrator is known to the victim. Around one-third of such reports are repeats. Of the crime categories studied, residential break-ins constitute the only category where repeat reporting was more unusual. Against the background of research from other countries, such as England and Holland for example, that has shown repeat residential break-ins to be common, this result was unexpected. In other respects, the findings from the current study correspond well with results from research elsewhere in the international community.

Several of the study's findings are worthy of note from a crime preventive perspective. Firstly, the findings show that there is good reason to direct crime prevention efforts at those who have already been victimised. In this way, measures can be focused on a relatively small group whilst at the same time providing opportunities for the prevention of a significant proportion of all crimes committed.

Secondly, it is important that measures be taken as quickly as possible, since the risk for repeat victimisation is greatest during the period directly after offences have been committed, and thereafter declines over time. A large proportion of repeat reporting takes place within a month of the latest previous report.

Thirdly, it may be particularly beneficial to work to prevent repeat victimisation in areas where offending is relatively common since such recurring crimes occur more often in these areas than they do in others.