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Problem-Specific Guides Series
Problem-Oriented Guides for Police

No. 70

Home Invasion Robbery

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Center for
Problem-Oriented Policing

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About the Problem-Specific Guides Series

The *Problem-Specific Guides* summarize knowledge about how police can reduce the harm caused by specific crime and disorder problems. They are guides to prevention and to improving the overall response to incidents, not to investigating offenses or handling specific incidents. Neither do they cover all of the technical details about how to implement specific responses. The guides are written for police—of whatever rank or assignment—who must address the specific problem the guides cover. The guides will be most useful to officers who:

- **Understand basic problem-oriented policing principles and methods.** The guides are not primers in problem-oriented policing. They deal only briefly with the initial decision to focus on a particular problem, methods to analyze the problem, and means to assess the results of a problem-oriented policing project. They are designed to help police decide how best to analyze and address a problem they have already identified. (A companion series of *Problem-Solving Tools* guides has been produced to aid in various aspects of problem analysis and assessment.)
- **Can look at a problem in depth.** Depending on the complexity of the problem, you should be prepared to spend perhaps weeks, or even months, analyzing and responding to it. Carefully studying a problem before responding helps you design the right strategy, one that is most likely to work in your community. You should not blindly adopt the responses others have used; you must decide whether they are appropriate to your local situation. What is true in one place may not be true elsewhere; what works in one place may not work everywhere.
- **Are willing to consider new ways of doing police business.** The guides describe responses that other police departments have used or that researchers have tested. While not all of these responses will be appropriate to your particular problem, they should help give a broader view of the kinds of things you could do. You may think you cannot implement some of these responses in your jurisdiction, but perhaps you can. In many places, when police have discovered a more effective response, they have succeeded in having laws and policies changed, improving the response to the problem. (A companion series of *Response Guides* has been produced to help you understand how commonly-used police responses work on a variety of problems.)

- **Understand the value and the limits of research knowledge.** For some types of problems, a lot of useful research is available to the police; for other problems, little is available. Accordingly, some guides in this series summarize existing research whereas other guides illustrate the need for more research on that particular problem. Regardless, research has not provided definitive answers to all the questions you might have about the problem. The research may help get you started in designing your own responses, but it cannot tell you exactly what to do. This will depend greatly on the particular nature of your local problem. In the interest of keeping the guides readable, not every piece of relevant research has been cited, nor has every point been attributed to its sources. To have done so would have overwhelmed and distracted the reader. The references listed at the end of each guide are those drawn on most heavily; they are not a complete bibliography of research on the subject.
- **Are willing to work with others to find effective solutions to the problem.** The police alone cannot implement many of the responses discussed in the guides. They must frequently implement them in partnership with other responsible private and public bodies, including other government agencies, non-governmental organizations, private businesses, public utilities, community groups, and individual citizens. An effective problem-solver must know how to forge genuine partnerships with others and be prepared to invest considerable effort in making these partnerships work. Each guide identifies particular individuals or groups in the community with whom police might work to improve the overall response to that problem. Thorough analysis of problems often reveals that individuals and groups other than the police are in a stronger position to address problems and that police ought to shift some greater responsibility to them to do so. Response Guide No. 3, *Shifting and Sharing Responsibility for Public Safety Problems*, provides further discussion of this topic.

The COPS Office defines community policing as "a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies, which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime." These guides emphasize *problem-solving* and *police-community* partnerships in the context of addressing specific public safety problems. For the most part, the organizational strategies that can facilitate problem-solving and police-community partnerships vary considerably and discussion of them is beyond the scope of these guides.

These guides have drawn on research findings and police practices in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia. Even though laws, customs, and police practices vary from country to country, it is apparent that the police everywhere experience common problems. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, it is important that police be aware of research and successful practices beyond the borders of their own countries.

Each guide is informed by a thorough review of the research literature and reported police practice, and each guide is anonymously peer-reviewed by a line police officer, a police executive, and a researcher prior to publication. The review process is independently managed by the COPS Office, which solicits the reviews.

For more information about problem-oriented policing, visit the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing online at www.popcenter.org. This website offers free online access to:

- The *Problem-Specific Guides* series
- The companion *Response Guides* and *Problem-Solving Tools* series
- Special publications on crime analysis and on policing terrorism
- Instructional information about problem-oriented policing and related topics
- An interactive problem-oriented policing training exercise
- An interactive *Problem Analysis Module*
- Online access to important police research and practices
- Information about problem-oriented policing conferences and award programs

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Kimberly Nath oversaw the project for the COPS Office. Phyllis Schultze conducted research for the guide at Rutgers University's Criminal Justice Library. Nancy Leach coordinated the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing's production process. Peter Slavin edited this guide.

The Problem of Home Invasion Robbery

What This Guide Does and Does Not Cover

This guide begins by describing the problem of home invasion robbery and reviewing factors that increase its risks. It then identifies a series of questions to help you analyze your local home invasion robbery problem. Finally, it reviews responses to the problem and what is known about these from evaluative research and police practice.

Home invasion robbery is but one aspect of the larger set of problems related to residential and violent crime. This guide is limited to addressing the particular harms created by home invasion robbery. Related problems not directly addressed in this guide, each of which requires separate analysis, include the following:

- Burglary of single-family houses and apartments
- Street robbery
- Commercial robbery (e.g., banks, gas stations, convenience stores)
- Gun violence
- Stolen goods markets
- Stranger assault
- Crime against the elderly
- Drug dealing in privately owned apartment complexes

Some of these related problems are covered in other guides in this series, all of which are listed at the end of this guide. For the most up-to-date listing of current and future guides, see www.popcenter.org.

General Description of the Problem

This guide makes the best use of available research on home invasion robbery, but more recent studies on this crime are rare. Furthermore, of the few studies that describe the problem specifically and in close detail, many were conducted outside of the United States. Consequently, the description of the problem that follows is based on a small number of earlier U.S. *and* non-U.S. studies and therefore may not apply to your community.

Home invasion robbery has characteristics of both residential burglary and street robbery.[1] Like residential burglars, home robbers must usually gain unlawful entry into an individual's residential dwelling (a single-family home, apartment unit, or mobile home). Like street robbers, home robbers physically confront victims in order to obtain desired items.

Many home invasion robberies are drug rip-offs in which the drugs or cash are the target.

Yet, home invasion robbery is distinct from these crimes.[2] Street robbery occurs in public or quasi-public space and victims are pedestrians, not occupants. Most residential burglars try to avoid confrontation, but home robbers seek it. Residential burglars who confront and rob unexpected occupants are not necessarily home robbers, because they did not intend to commit robbery when they entered the home.[3]

In general, home invasion robberies have the following five features:

- Offender entry is forced and/or unauthorized (except in some drug-related robberies)
- Offenders seek confrontation (i.e., the intent is to rob)
- Confrontation occurs inside dwellings
- Offenders use violence and/or the threat of violence
- Offenders demand and take money and/or property[4]

There are several common motives for home invasion robberies. The most obvious is to steal valuable items, such as cash, drugs, or property, which can be sold for cash. Another is retaliation, such as against a rival drug dealer, gang member, or domestic partner; robbery is part of the retaliation. Another is sexual assault in which robbery is committed incidentally. In some communities, home invasion robberies are principally drug rip-offs in which the target is cash or drugs, or both, and both offenders and victims are involved in the illegal drug trade.[5]

Estimating the number of home invasion robberies is difficult, because it is recorded in various ways (e.g., as burglary, robbery in a residence, assault, homicide).[6] Nevertheless, data from different countries shed light on its prevalence and trends.

Home invasions make up a relatively small portion of all robberies. "Residential robbery" accounted for about 14 percent of all robberies in the United States in the late 1990s, but just 7 percent in Australia and about 4 percent in Canada.[7] About 6 percent of "violent thefts" in 1992 in Western Australia were classified as home robberies.[8] Less than one percent of robberies (armed and unarmed), burglaries, and dwelling break-and-enters in South Australia were identified as home robbery.[9] "Violent or threatening behavior" was used in just 11 percent of burglaries reported in the 1998 British Crime Survey.[10] About 14 percent of all robberies in the United States in 2003, and about 10 percent in Canada in 2008, occurred at a residence.[11]

Home invasion robbery is rare, but many robbers target homes at some point in their criminal career. In one study, about 21 percent of armed robbers reported having robbed a home, and homes ranked behind only the street, gas stations, and fast-food restaurants as the most common robbery location.[12] Another study found that, after banks and pedestrians, robbers most often targeted persons at home.[13]

Some data suggest home invasion robberies are increasing. Incidents in the United States increased 18 percent from 1999 to 2003 (compared to a one percent increase for all other types of armed robberies).[14] In Tulsa, Oklahoma, home robberies increased 29 percent from 2009 to 2010.[15] In Canada, robberies at residences increased 38 percent from 1999 to 2005, but this trend has stabilized.[16]

Harms Caused by Home Invasion Robbery

Home invasion robbery causes a variety of harms.[17] Victims lose cash and property and may also face property damage or have to pay to add or upgrade home security after the robbery. Victims also can experience sentimental loss, losing personal items like books, documents, and family heirlooms. These losses are unlikely for street or commercial robbery victims, who do not possess such items away from home.

More important, victims may suffer serious physical injury or even death. When it occurs, violence is sometimes unusually heinous. In one incident, robbers immersed an elderly victim's face in boiling water and in another they sodomized a victim to death with a broken table leg.[18] This extreme violence is possible in home robbery because incidents occur in private and are therefore less visible. By contrast, street and commercial robbers attack in public and must act more quickly in order to avoid detection.

Home robbery also causes fear among the victims and the general public, especially since it occurs inside one's home where people expect privacy and safety. The fear of re-victimization is unique, because victims live day-to-day at the robbery location, unlike those robbed in public who can allay fears by avoiding risky places or the location of a prior victimization.

Factors Contributing to Home Invasion Robbery

Understanding the factors that contribute to your community's home invasion robbery problem will help you frame your own local analysis questions, determine good effectiveness measures, recognize key intervention points, and select appropriate responses.

You should base your local analysis on the home invasion robbery analysis triangle (Figure 1). Local analysis may reveal unique situations, not on this list, that you may need to address. The home robbery triangle is a crime-specific modification of the widely used problem analysis triangle† and, more specifically, the street robbery analysis triangle.‡ It organizes the basic factors that may contribute to home invasion robbery problems. Though no single factor completely accounts for a home invasion robbery problem, the interrelated dynamics among offenders, victims, locations, and times may help explain these incidents.

Home invasion robberies occur when motivated offenders encounter suitable victims (residential occupants) in an environment and dwelling that facilitate robbery. A home invasion robbery *problem* emerges when victims are repeatedly attacked by offenders in the same community or neighborhood. In short, a combination of circumstances will lead to a robbery, not any single circumstance. For example, a home robber needing cash learns of and targets a senior citizen who lives alone and possesses large amounts of money and valuables. A pattern of home invasion robberies could occur if a robbery is completed easily, and proves lucrative, and offenders notice similar victims and circumstances.

General routines (e.g., special events, holidays, the beginning and end of the school day) that bring people together at certain locations and times are not emphasized on the home robbery analysis triangle because they have a less prominent role compared to other types of robberies where both offenders and victims move about in a variety of public and semipublic spaces. For home robbery, it is most important to understand how the everyday routines of occupants (e.g., leaving, returning, or spending time in the home) influence the timing of robberies and how knowledge of victims influences target selection.

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† See www.popcenter.org for a description of the Problem Analysis Triangle.

‡ See Problem-Specific Guide No. 59, *Street Robbery*, for further information.

FIGURE 1. Home Invasion Robbery Analysis Triangle

The relative importance of each side of the triangle varies, depending on the details of a home invasion robbery problem. Addressing any one element in Figure 1 might reduce a robbery problem, but addressing more than one element may be more promising for achieving a decline. The sections below describe each factor in more detail.

Offenders

Home invasion robbers typically are young (usually under 30), uneducated, unemployed males.[19] They usually rob in groups, which sometimes are well organized and specialize in home invasions.[20] Some home robbers commit nonviolent property offenses before turning to home invasion robbery and continue to commit other types of crime.[21]

You should identify what factors affect offender decision-making to determine the most appropriate responses. The acronym **ROBS** summarizes some of these factors, as discussed on the following pages.

Rehearsal. Home robbers spend considerable time planning home invasion robberies and sometimes even rehearse them.[22] They prefer victims about whom they have inside information and, long before the robbery, may monitor them or talk to others who know their routines.[23] In drug-related home invasions, offenders often conduct surveillance before the robbery. Some even meet with victims days before the attack to ensure that drugs and cash will be on hand during the robbery. The time spent monitoring victims varies, ranging from just 30 minutes to two weeks in one study.[24] Robbers also consider neighborhood and dwelling access, security measures, disguises, and the expected rewards when planning attacks.[25] Just before an attack, they may also count and locate occupants.[26] Where offenders make no effort to disguise their identity, it is probable they know the victim and believe that the victim will not identify them to police.

Immediate circumstances might affect a set plan. A home robber might change targets after noticing an unexpected occupant or a new home security feature. You should consider how situational challenges make home robbery unattractive to some offenders.

Operating methods. Offenders choose certain home invasion methods. These methods are not mutually exclusive and can change during the course of the robbery, depending on the circumstances. For example, a robber may use a con to get a person to open their door and then use blitz violence to complete the robbery. You should consider the combination of attack methods that offenders use in your community, some of which are described below.

> ***Blitzes.*** Offenders first break into an occupied dwelling with or without force (e.g., kicking in the door versus entering through an unlocked door). Upon entry, they use violence to physically immobilize, intimidate, and control victims, and then rob them. The offenders' presence inside the home and intent to rob are immediately obvious to victims. Blitzes were common for drug-related home invasions in Madison, Wisconsin.[27]
>
> ***Cons.*** Offenders use deception to mislead victims into allowing them entry into their home (e.g., posing as utility workers or police officers). The offenders' presence and intent to rob are not immediately obvious to victims. Unlike blitzes, con robberies do not require physical violence. For example, some offenders could search for and take items while another distracts the victim. They may even openly take items from victims who are unaware they are being robbed,[28] although this type of crime is usually classified as distraction burglary or distraction theft.

Push-ins. Like cons, push-in robbers also rely on victims to voluntarily open the door (this makes them different from blitzes), but they then use force to push their way into the home; moreover, they make no effort to conceal the attack. In one incident, offenders made noise in a hallway until an occupant opened the door, then pushed their way into the apartment.[29] Other tactics include simply knocking on the door or waiting outside until a victim opens the door to leave or return home, then forcing the victim inside.[30]

Surprises. Offenders enter the dwelling when occupants are away and then ambush them upon returning home.[31] They may not simply burglarize the home once inside, because they do not know where cash and valuables are located. Surprise robberies may not require violence, since the sudden fear can immobilize victims. A different type of surprise attack may occur in drug-related home invasions. An occupant may invite an individual inside the dwelling to purchase drugs; the buyer then robs them.

Weapon use is common by offenders (e.g., firearms, knives, striking instruments)[32] but the type of weapon varies by location. Studies of home invasion robberies in South Africa; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Madison, Wisconsin, suggest home robbers prefer firearms.[33] However, in South Australia weapons were used in just half of all incidents, and firearms were used much less frequently than other weapons.[34]

Some home invasion robbers use or threaten extreme violence (e.g., torture, rape, murder), but it is rare and victims are usually unharmed.[35] Extreme violence, however, can be instrumental to committing the robbery; for example, torturing female and/or child occupants to gain compliance from males and assistance in locating hidden items.[36]

Benefits. Most home robbers seek cash and believe home robbery provides quick money and a relatively low risk of being caught.[37] They might spend cash on recreational items (e.g., cars, clothes, drugs, alcohol) but also basic needs (e.g., food, rent).[38] Some offenders may rob solely to meet drug needs, and take nothing else.[39] The vast majority of home invasion robberies in Madison were drug rip-offs in which robbers took cash and/or drugs.[40]

Special advantages. Home robbery offers offenders special advantages over similar crimes like residential burglary and street robbery, which have similar financial rewards. Home robbers can spend considerable time inside the home—sometimes hours[41]—whereas street robbers must subdue victims and take property quickly. Residential burglars also must search homes quickly to avoid detection, at the cost of greater rewards.[42] Home robbers can also force occupants to identify valuables, while burglars must search for them and may overlook something.[43] Burglars may also risk setting off home alarms, which may be disengaged when home robbers attack.[44] Finally, home robbers can take greater hauls compared to street robbers, who can take only what pedestrians are able to carry (e.g., smaller items, smaller amounts of cash).[45]

Despite these advantages, home invasion robbery presents special challenges that increase the risk to offenders. Witnesses may be more effective, since offenders and victims interact for longer periods and probably under better lighting. Home robbery is a group crime, so a co-offender could "snitch." Victims also have a "home field" advantage, if offenders are not familiar with the dwelling. Offenders likely must spend time and effort during planning to mitigate these and other risks.

Victims

Both males and females can be home robbery victims: In Australia, *crime reports* indicate that most victims are young males, but *victimization data* indicate that most victims are young females.[46] Home invasion victims and offenders are often strangers; still, compared to other types of robbery, they are more likely to know each other.[47] For example, some home invasions stem from domestic disputes (e.g., an intoxicated boyfriend breaks into a residence to obtain personal property) or retaliation against known individuals. In some cases, the victim's home is targeted by mistake and what is intended to be a drug rip-off or a retaliation robbery results in a wholly innocent victim.[48]

Home robbers target victims who appear vulnerable and are believed to have money and/or desired property.[49] Victims are usually alone during the robbery.[50] Some home robbers target older homeowners specifically because they are perceived as less likely to resist the attack.[51] However, some research finds that senior citizens are targeted for home robbery less often than are younger people.[52] Still seniors are at greater risk of home invasion robbery than robbery in public.[53] This is consistent with criminal opportunity perspectives: senior citizens probably spend more time at home, so the risk of robbery would be low overall, but greater in their home than in public.[54]

Most home invasions are committed by groups of young men.

In general, victims report home robberies to the police more frequently than street robberies.[55] However, there are several reasons why they might not: victims either are involved in crime, fear repeat victimization or retaliation, or distrust police.[56]

Victim demographics bear on routine activities and risk. Finding that certain individuals have a heightened risk of home invasion robbery is helpful only as a first step: you still have to discover *why*. Robbers might target people who keep large amounts of cash at home and are unlikely to report to police. Or, they could target senior citizens, because they are usually home during the day and unable to defend themselves. Linking victim demographics to routines can reveal intervention points otherwise concealed by examining demographics alone, but can also help identify less-promising responses. For example, property-marking of home electronics would not reduce home robberies against those senior citizens who possess cash but not these items.

For prevention purposes, it is useful to look at victims from the offender's perspective. The acronym **VICTIM** summarizes six important victim factors. These factors are distinct but all relate to a common idea: offenders know something important about victims before an attack that makes them more or less attractive (probably far more than is the case for street robbery).

Vulnerable. Because home robbers confront victims for longer periods of time and try to avoid being injured, they are likely to prefer occupants who will not resist an attack.

Insecure. Home robbers evaluate target attractiveness based on the security of people in their home, about which they may not always be certain. You will need to understand why occupants appear more or less insecure, and so more or less attractive to robbers, inside the home. Home robbers must consider victims' access to weapons in the home, not just what they might carry in public. Home robbers also expect that occupants are alone, whereas street and commercial robbers can determine the number of victims in advance. A dog inside the home also makes the home a less attractive target.[57]

Consistent. Home robbers are likely to prefer occupants whom they can expect to be home in predictable situations (e.g., a day and time when they are alone, the neighbors are gone, and presumably no visitors are expected).

Targeted items. Occupants might possess items that cannot be taken in other forms of robbery (e.g., artwork, large electronic items, large firearms), which may also be protected in ways that would defeat burglary. Home robbers may target occupants whom they know to possess valuable items that are hidden (because they need an occupant to locate them). Offenders in drug-related home invasions in Madison usually knew the location of specific, desired items.[58]

Though home robbers prefer cash, they sometimes take a variety of items, such as electronics, jewelry, clothing, food, drugs, and weapons, but other times they may take just one type of item, especially drugs.[59] Home robbers in an Australian sample usually took less than $500AUD worth of items (AUD are roughly equivalent to U.S. dollars).[60] This makes sense, because victims with more valuable items in their home are also more likely to have stronger security to protect those items.

Intimidated. To reduce their risk of apprehension home robbers may target occupants unlikely to report the robbery. For example, victims of drug-related home invasions in Madison were reluctant to report and cooperate with the police, because they themselves were involved in the illegal drug trade and feared retaliation for "snitching."[61] They may also target those more easily intimidated by threats of violence (e.g., senior citizens, children), thereby avoiding the need for actual violence.

Mindless of risk. Distracted occupants are apt to be easier to approach and overpower, especially in surprise or con robberies. Some home robbers target occupants watching television because it provides cover for the attack. Here again, senior citizens and children are attractive targets, because they are more likely to be initially trusting of strangers who approach or ask to enter the home.

Locations and Times

Home robbers prefer certain areas and dwellings, which both should be considered. For example, they may first select a particular neighborhood and then search for an attractive dwelling within it. Home robberies occur in apartments as well as houses.[62] The acronym **HOMES** summarizes factors that influence location selection.

Home access. Some home robbers break into homes but others use unlocked or open entry points or unsuspecting victims who allow them access. The front door is a common point of entry, but back doors and windows are also used.[63] Robbers may break through a door or window to gain entry but might also push through an open door after knocking or enter through an unlocked door.[64] This suggests that certain target-hardening measures (e.g., stronger locks, reinforced doors) may not be effective on their own.

On guard. Like burglars, home robbers consider natural guardianship such as their visibility to neighbors, something that is critical to entering the home, and other features that could thwart detection once inside (e.g., few windows). When guardianship is high, home robbers may use cons, since being seen outside is not a concern with this method. Offenders also consider other security features that provide guardianship, like home alarms, fencing, and dogs.

Market for stolen goods. Home robbers may take noncash items solely for resale, not personal possession. They may prefer dwellings close to places that provide resale opportunities (e.g., pawn shops for consumer goods or open-air markets for drugs). This, of course, is less important for robbers who take only cash.

Escape routes. Neighborhoods with many paths in and out of them and easy access to major roads are attractive to home robbers.[65] Some robbers prefer to target homes near their own, but will travel farther if the expected "take" from the robbery is high.[66] In extreme cases, some gangs will travel across cities to find targets (some gang members have no permanent address and reside in motels).[67]

Schedules. Attack times and days may vary by the robbers' preferences.[68] Some prefer evening hours, because people are home, alarms are likely off, televisions are on, and doors or windows may be unlocked or open. Others, however, may prefer early morning, when it is quiet, neighbors are sleeping, and visitors are not expected.

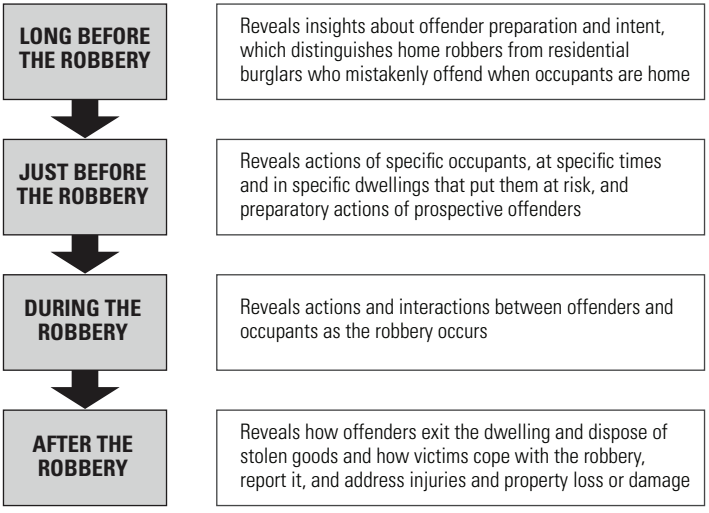
Home robberies may increase slightly on weekends.[69] On the other hand, that they would not be more common on weekends is also consistent with criminal opportunity: dwellings must be occupied and weekend-related activities tend to take occupants away from home. There is sometimes no clear monthly pattern to home robberies.[70]

Understanding Your Local Problem

The information provided above is a generalized description of home invasion robbery. You must combine the basic facts with a more specific understanding of your local problem. Analyzing the local problem carefully will help you design a more effective response strategy.

The first step in conducting local analysis is determining that your community has a specific home invasion robbery problem, and not a problem with residential burglary or personal robbery near or outside residential dwellings. The next step is analyzing the home robbery process, which can vary from problem to problem. It helps to divide this process into four time blocks, which cover activities during the following periods as depicted in Figure 2:

Figure 2. Home Invasion Robbery Process



Source: Adapted from Jacobs and Wright (1999); Jacobs, B., and R. Wright (1999). "Stickup, Street Culture and Offender Motivation." *Criminology* 37(1): 149–173.

Table 1 and Table 2 (on page 21) use this division of time to show the differences between two types of home invasion robberies. Table 1 describes the robbery of a senior citizen by a stranger. Table 2 describes the robbery of a drug dealer by a familiar person.

Table 1. Home Invasion Robbery of a Senior Citizen by Time Block

Time Block	Offender	Victim (Senior Citizen)	Location
Long before	An offender needs cash. He identifies the victim by posing as a utility worker. The offender can easily monitor the victim while appearing legitimate.	A single senior citizen is usually home for predictable, long periods of time.	Neighborhood; homeowner's property
Just before	The offender notices that the victim is alone.	The victim willingly opens the door to the offender (who is in uniform) and allows him inside.	Porch; home entry way
During	The offender switches from "con" to "blitz" tactics and uses force to restrain the victim and takes money and property after searching the home for a long period of time.	Victim complies with offender's demands and does not resist. The victim suffers minor injuries.	Inside home
After	The offender casually exits the house and drives away. He later sells the stolen property.	The victim is left restrained and must free herself, so she cannot contact police until long after the robbery.	Destination will vary

Source: Table adapted from Tilley et al. 2004.

Table 2. Home Invasion Robbery of a Drug Dealer by Time Block

Time Block	Offender	Victim (Drug Dealer)	Location
Long before	An offender needs drugs. He is an acquaintance of the victim and knows of his dealing and where he lives. He can easily visit the victim without raising suspicion.	A drug dealer is known to sell narcotics out of his house.	Victim's neighborhood and outside of dwelling
Just before	The offender asks to buy drugs from the victim.	The victim presents drugs that are for sale.	Inside the home
During	The offender threatens victim with a gun and quickly takes the drugs and cash, but not other property.	The victim complies with the offender's demands. He is not injured.	Inside the home
After	The offender flees the home on foot to a nearby escape route and uses or sells the drugs.	The victim does not report the crime, because only drugs were taken and he doesn't want police investigating his own crimes.	The location will vary

Source: Table adapted from Tilley et al. 2004.

Stakeholders

In addition to criminal justice agencies, the following groups have an interest in the home invasion robbery problem and ought to be considered for the contribution they might make to gathering information about the problem and responding to it:

- *Community/neighborhood associations* have local knowledge that could help identify potential offenders, locations, and other contributing factors.
- *Local pawn shops* want to avoid losing money and merchandise from buying or pawning stolen property and might help police identify offenders and/ or assist in investigations.
- *Local hospitals* are interested in reducing injuries and deaths from home invasion robberies, and hospital staff may know of robbery-related injuries not reported to police.
- *Residential service providers* (e.g., utility companies) could provide information to customers that would help them protect themselves from cons. They could also train their employees not to give personal information about customers.

- *Other local government agencies* (such as city planning departments, city councils, public health departments, and social service providers) could provide data for analyzing the problem or assist in planning and implementing responses, including those too costly for community and neighborhoods associations.
- *Illicit drug sellers, gamblers, and other possible victims involved in illicit activities.* They will want to avoid robberies, and while they may not cooperate to aid in the arrest and prosecution of robbers, they may provide general information that could be useful in developing prevention tactics.

Asking the Right Questions

The following are critical questions you should ask in analyzing your particular problem of home invasion robbery, even if the answers are not always readily available. Your answers to these and other questions will help you choose the most appropriate set of responses later.

Incidents

- How many incidents occur in your community?
- Is the number of incidents increasing or decreasing?
- How do the police record and classify reported home robberies (as burglary, robbery, theft, trespass, or some other crime)?
- What percentage of completed home robberies is reported to the police? Of attempted home robberies?
- Why are attempted home invasion robberies not completed (e.g., victim resistance, mistaken identity, targets not found in home, crime interrupted by others)?
- What percentage of home robberies involves weapons?
- What percentage of home robberies is perpetrated by strangers and by familiar persons?
- What are the underlying motives for home invasions (retaliation, financial gain, intimidation, sexual assault)?
- What methods are used to gain entry (e.g., force, deception)?

Locations/Times

- Where do most incidents occur? Is a particular neighborhood or housing area being targeted?
- When are incidents most common (e.g., day or night, day of week, time of year)?
- How much time elapses between home invasions in an area? Short time intervals may indicate a home invasion crew is operating; long intervals suggest a crew is not.

Victims

- Are there demographic patterns among victims (e.g., age, sex, and education)?
- What percentage of victims resist and how? How serious are injuries occurring from resisting, if any?
- What are victims doing before the robbery?
- Are victims involved in illicit activities?

Dwellings

- Are repeat home invasions common?
- Are repeat and one-time home invasions different? If so, how?
- What are common entry points?

Offenders

- Do offenders fall into a demographic pattern (e.g., age, sex, and race or ethnicity)?
- Are offenders local residents or from out of town? Where, in relation to the dwelling, do offenders live? How do they get to the dwelling?
- Do offenders work alone or in groups?
- What percentage of home invasions do repeat robbers commit?
- What percentage of offenders was on probation or parole at the time of their most recent offense?
- Are offenders on drugs or alcohol during the home invasion? Are offenders seeking drugs and/or alcohol before the incident?
- What types of items do offenders take?
- Where do offenders sell stolen goods and to whom?
- Do offenders commit other types of robbery and/or residential burglary of unoccupied dwellings?

Current and Previous Responses

- Have specific home invasion robbery strategies been tried? If so, what strategies have worked or failed?
- What agencies have been involved in previous responses? What did they do?
- Do police have a special unit assigned to address home robberies?
- How are home robbers prosecuted and sentenced?

Measuring Your Effectiveness

Measurement allows you to determine to what degree your efforts have succeeded and suggests how you might modify your responses if they are not producing the intended results.

You should take measures of your problem *before* you implement responses to determine how serious the problem is, and *after* you implement them to determine whether they have been effective. You should take all measures in both the target area and the surrounding area. For detailed guidance on measuring effectiveness, see Problem-Solving Tools Guide No. 1, *Assessing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide for Police Problem-Solvers* and Problem-Solving Tools Guide No. 10, *Analyzing Crime Displacement and Diffusion*.

The following are potentially useful *outcome* measures of the effectiveness of responses to home invasion robbery. They assess the actual impact on the problem (i.e., reductions in the level and severity of incidents as opposed to arrests or clearances):

- Reduced number of home invasion robberies in your community or targeted area
- Reduced number and severity of injuries or of deaths resulting from home robberies
- Reduced cash and property losses
- Reduced community fear of home invasions

Responses to the Problem of Home Invasion Robbery

Your analysis of your local problem should give you a better understanding of the factors contributing to it. Once you have analyzed your local problem and established a baseline for measuring effectiveness, you should consider possible responses to address the problem.

The following response strategies provide a foundation of ideas for addressing your particular problem. These strategies are drawn from a variety of research studies and police reports. Several of these strategies may apply to your community's problem.

It is critical that you tailor responses to local circumstances and that you can justify each response based on reliable analysis. In most cases, an effective strategy will involve implementing several different responses. Law enforcement responses alone are seldom effective in reducing or solving the problem.

Do not limit yourself to considering what police can do: carefully consider whether others in your community share responsibility for the problem and can help police better respond to it. The primary responsibility of responding, in some cases, may need to be shifted toward those who have the capacity to make more effective responses. For detailed information on shifting and sharing responsibility, see Response Guide No. 3, *Shifting and Sharing Responsibility for Public Safety Problems*.

For further information on managing the implementation of response strategies, see Problem-Solving Tools Guide No. 7, *Implementing Responses to Problems.*

General Considerations for an Effective Response Strategy

The relative rarity of home robberies suggests that opportunities for this crime are already low, so they may be perpetrated by only a few offenders.[71] Therefore, controlling repeat offenders may be the most promising response, whereas location- and victim-based responses are likely to be less effective.

Many of the responses listed below could address general crime problems but could also help reduce home robberies. The responses that are not specific to home invasion robbery may be less effective as stand-alone or primary strategies. For example, recommending that the police disrupt stolen goods markets simply to reduce home robberies is less realistic (because they are so rare) than if it is also intended to address residential burglary, shoplifting, or street robbery.

Specific Responses to Reduce Home Invasion Robbery

The following specific responses are organized around the home invasion robbery analysis triangle. Responding specifically to home robbery is challenging, because incidents may consist of several related problems, such as assault, rape, stolen goods markets, or drug trafficking, each requiring a special type of response. Furthermore, cons and push-ins of senior citizens, for instance, differ from home robberies of drug dealers. Thus, some responses may be effective for all home robberies, but others may only work for one or certain types. You must determine which responses are useful for the specific problem you are addressing. After each response heading, we identify in parentheses the types of home robbery to which the response is most applicable and the time block it addresses.

Offender-Based Responses

1. **Disrupting offender groups (home robberies in general; long before).** Home robberies may occur sporadically (given the level of difficulty and planning), so identifying a series of them early and determining how to disrupt or deter the responsible group may be one of the most important strategies. Monitoring a robbery series could be part of a multi-strategy response.

2. **Using intelligence to target known offenders (robberies in general; long before).** Given their rarity and victims' low level of reporting, gathering information on home robberies is likely to be difficult. As part of Operation Trio, South African police dealing with serious residential robbery problems were given resources to collect intelligence on offenders, which led to a 44 percent increase in arrests.[72] Analyzing other robbery-related crimes (e.g., drug dealing) could also help you identify repeat home robbers in your community (who could be a relatively few). (This response is applicable to general crime problems and not specific to home invasion robbery.)

3. **Using handlers to control offenders (robberies in general; long before).** In some cases, family and friends know about a home robber's criminal activities.[73] These "handlers," along with teachers, employers, and probation/parole officers, could exert some control over an offender's actions. They could also remove excuses for offending by setting rules or controlling drugs and alcohol use, which may be a factor in offending.† (This response is applicable to general crime problems and not specific to home invasion robbery.)

† See *Crime Analysis for Problem Solvers in 60 Small Steps* (Step 8) for more information on handlers.

4. **Diverting potential offenders (robberies in general; long before).** Diversion strategies depend on the offender's needs (such as providing employment services to those without legitimate work). You could also work with local schools or parks and recreation departments to create after-school activities to divert young offenders. (This response is applicable to general crime problems and not specific to home invasion robbery.)

5. **Disrupting stolen goods markets (noncash/drug robberies; after).** This is appropriate if offenders target noncash items for resale. Pawn shops may partner in prevention, because they lose money from taking stolen items.[74] Disrupting markets is less effective if offenders sell items to illegal fences or friends or online (e.g., eBay and Craigslist) and likewise if they take only cash, or keep the items, or trade them (e.g., for drugs), or give them away.[75, †] (This response is applicable to general crime problems and not specific to home invasion robbery.)

Victim-Based Responses

6. **Improving victims' reporting (varies by type of victim; after).** Information provided by victims helps police identify offenders and offense patterns. Operation Eagle Eye, a U.K. anti-street robbery initiative, improved the victim's reporting experience in several ways in an effort to encourage reporting.[76] Victims were automatically referred to support groups, continually updated on their case, and could use pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and protection from retaliation. This response is less useful for victims who are involved in crime (thus drug dealers are unlikely to report regardless). In theory, victims who are themselves criminals might be induced to cooperate with police and prosecutors through offers of protection or qualified immunity or threats of their own prosecution. But in practice, most such offenders fear retaliation from other offenders for cooperating with authorities more than they fear arrest and prosecution.[77] (This response is applicable to general crime problems and not specific to home invasion robbery.)

† See Problem-Specific Guide No. 57, *Stolen Goods Markets,* for further information.

Door peepholes can help prevent home invasions.

7. **Launching a home robbery awareness campaign (varies by attack type; long before).** Citizens could underestimate their risk of victimization, let alone their risk of certain types of home robbery (e.g., blitzes versus cons). The New York City Police Department held meetings in neighborhoods where push-ins were common, warning residents about ruses (such as knocking on the door claiming to be a service worker).[78] Your agency could pursue its own anti-robbery awareness campaigns, partnering with local media and government, and employ multiple tactics, such as radio call-in programs (so residents can speak to police about the problem), crime prevention displays in public places, and distribution of safety leaflets.[79] Whatever the approach, the campaign should include information on improving home and personal safety.[80] It should also target people directly at risk of robbery.† Since home robberies are rare and may involve familiar persons, you should consider whether raising awareness justifies potentially increasing fear, especially among senior citizens. At a minimum, you should signal in your press releases these characteristics: this helps alleviate citizens' fear of being randomly targeted.[81]

8. **Making senior citizens less vulnerable (varies by attack type; long before).** If senior citizens are commonly targeted, focus on the factors causing this pattern. For example, police in Pelham Parkway in the Bronx, New York City, observed a 60 percent increase in push-ins over a 2-month period (most involving seniors). They discovered many seniors did not have peepholes and were opening doors to strangers. With support from a state grant, the police, community organizations, and a local company, 750 peepholes were installed. A sharp reduction in robberies followed.[82]

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† See Response Guide, No. 5, *Crime Prevention Publicity Campaigns,* for further information.

9. **Making some cultures less vulnerable (home robberies in general; long before).** Members of certain Asian communities, temporary workers, and illegal immigrants may be targeted because they keep cash at home, rather than in banks, and may not report crimes to police.[83] Your agency could work with community social and cultural agencies to make these groups more aware of the risk of home invasion. In Virginia, for instance, a U.S. Representative met with community groups, police, and the Asian community to discuss the home invasion robbery problem.[84] Such forums can be used to offer prevention tips (e.g., encouraging banking) and to build trust with police.

10. **Partnering with local service companies (con robberies; long before).** Utility companies could attach crime prevention information to their bills, including a photo of the worker's ID badge, along with a warning about allowing unauthorized persons access to one's home.[85]

11. **Encouraging victim compliance (home robberies in general; during).** Victims may naturally want to defend themselves, but home robbers may avoid using violence if they comply.[86] Information about victim compliance could be distributed as part of an awareness campaign. This response will not reduce home robbery incidents, but it could reduce deaths or injuries.

Location-Based Responses

12. **Increasing dwelling visibility (blitz and surprise robberies; long before).** Home robbers dislike homes highly visible to neighbors.[87] Occupants should remove any potential hiding spots around their property or anything that obstructs natural surveillance by neighbors (including parked cars, overgrown trees, shrubbery, and planters).

13. **Securing dwellings externally (blitz, push-in, and surprise robberies; just before).** Home robbers who break in consider a variety of features related to home access, including fencing/razor wire, security lights, the strength of doors/gates, dogs, and perimeter alarms (e.g., in gardens or along outside walls).[88] When facing a specific home robbery problem, consider what access-control measures would work best (e.g., reinforcing doors to address "door kick" blitzes).[89]

Clear indicators that dogs are in a home can deter home invasions.

14. **Securing dwellings internally (blitz, push-in and surprise robberies; just before).** When planning a home invasion, robbers consider internal security, preferring homes in which security alarms are not likely to be on.[90] You could encourage occupants to activate alarms when they are home or use alarms with panic buttons that they can quickly access if the main security system is off. Home robbers also dislike homes with drawn curtains, because they cannot locate or count occupants, so installing curtains is a quick and inexpensive response.[91]

15. **Increasing occupancy indicators (home robberies in general; just before).** This strategy is used to deter residential burglars who prefer unoccupied dwellings.† For home robbery, the key is convincing offenders that more than one occupant is home (e.g., lighting multiple rooms), since they prefer dealing with one occupant. However, occupancy indicators could attract home robbers, since they target occupied dwellings.

† See Problem-Specific Guide, No. 18, *Burglary of Single-Family Homes* for further information.

Responses with Limited Effectiveness

16. **Increasing broad surveillance and access control.** As noted, home robberies may not be geographically concentrated, so identifying hotspots is likely to be difficult. This makes installing closed circuit television (CCTV), improving lighting, and closing streets and alleys less promising responses. For example, installing one or a few CCTV devices would be insufficient for a series of home robbery spanning multiple neighborhoods. Furthermore, in the unlikely event that CCTV captured a home robbery, only the offender's entry would be visible (not the act of robbery inside the home). CCTV or lighting, however, could be more effective at apartment complexes or senior citizen homes, which have multiple residences and a single entry point.[92]

17. **Deploying visible vehicle directed patrols.** Directed patrols could be part of another task force or multi-response strategy. They are most effective when proactive and highly visible. You should not consider crackdown techniques, like directed patrols, a long-term strategy, because their impact is often temporary.† For home robbery, foot patrols are apt to be ineffective, since offenders may target entire neighborhoods as opposed to discrete places (such as an alley popular with street robbers).

† See Response Guide No.1, *The Benefits and Consequences of Police Crackdowns* for further information.

Appendix: Summary of Responses to Home Invasion Robbery

The table below summarizes the responses to home invasion robbery, the mechanism by which they are intended to work, the conditions under which they ought to work best, and some factors you should consider before implementing a particular response. It is critical that you tailor responses to local circumstances, and that you can justify each response based on reliable analysis. In most cases, an effective strategy will involve several different responses. Law enforcement responses alone are seldom effective in reducing or solving this problem.

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
Offender-Based Responses					
1	26	Disrupting offender groups	Identifies and deters offender groups involved in repeat robberies	…a series of home robberies is identified, analyzed, and responded to immediately	Response is limited if home robberies are very infrequent or committed by unrelated offenders
2	26	Using intelligence to target known offenders	Increases robbers' risk of apprehension	…police can build intelligence databases containing information from different sources to target repeat robbers	Officers may need additional training or assistance from a civilian IT professional; continually working with other agencies to obtain real-time data (e.g., daily, weekly, or monthly updates) could be difficult

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
3	26	Using handlers to control offenders	Individuals personally close to offenders exert control over their criminal behavior	…handlers have a strong enough influence to remove offender's excuses for robbing	Family or friends may not want to strain relationship with the offender; family or friends may be co-offenders
4	27	Diverting potential offenders	Removes excuses for offending (e.g., drug needs, unemployment, boredom) by connecting offenders to services and legitimate activities	…your agency works with social services agencies, human resources departments, and schools	Offenders may prefer criminal lifestyle and ignore services and activities
5	27	Disrupting stolen goods markets	Reduces rewards for offenders, who cannot "cash-in" stolen items	…your agency works with local businesses (e.g., pawn shops, resale stores) that can identify offenders/ groups wanting to make these transactions	Will not affect robbers who take only cash or do not sell noncash items
Victim-Based Responses					
6	27	Improving victims' reporting	Helps identify offenders, investigate incidents, and learn about robbery patterns	…the reporting is easy, provides some benefit for victims, and victims receive support	Not applicable if victims are involved in illegal activities and so unlikely to report to police

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
7	28	Launching a home robbery awareness campaign	Encourages potential victims to better protect their homes and themselves	…awareness campaigns target the people most at risk of home robbery	Your agency may need to work with a local public relations firm to help create an effective campaign; may also want to work with residents to learn about the specific problem, so messages can be tailored
8	28	Making senior citizens less vulnerable	Raises potential victims' awareness of home robbery risk and reduces the likelihood of victimization	…special circumstances put senior citizens at particular risk	Consider carefully the particular needs of senior citizens in your community, which may be difficult for your agency to address if it has little contact with them
9	29	Making some cultures less vulnerable	Raises potential victims' awareness of home robbery risk and reduces the likelihood of victimization	…special circumstances put certain cultural groups at particular risk	Consider cultural factors that influence perceptions among certain groups
10	29	Partnering with local service companies	Reduces the likelihood of "con" victimization by raising awareness of risk and teaching how to identify legitimate service workers	…con robberies in which offenders pose as service workers are common in your community	Con robbers may tactically displace by posing as different figures (e.g., police officers or door-to-door salesmen)

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
11	29	Encouraging victim compliance	Reduces the likelihood of victim injury during an attack	…victims can remain calm and fight the impulse to defend themselves	Will not reduce home robbery incidents
Location-Based Responses					
12	29	Increasing dwelling visibility	Increases the risk of detection via natural guardianship	…neighbors are alert and home to spot offenders	Not ideal for reducing con robberies where offenders don't worry about being seen
13	29	Securing dwellings externally	Increases the effort needed to break into the home	…homes are not well-secured from the outside	Security upgrades may be costly and must be purchased by the homeowner
14	30	Securing dwellings internally	Increases the risk of detection of offenders inside the home	…security systems are activated when occupants are home	At-risk residents may not have security systems already in place
15	30	Increasing occupancy indicators	Deters robbers who believe more than one occupant is home	…indicators are used throughout the home	Home robbers may be more attracted to homes that appear occupied

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
Responses with Limited Effectiveness					
16	31	Increasing broad surveillance and access control	Increases the risk of detection and apprehension by installing CCTV, improving lighting, or closing streets and alleys	…tactics are focused at shared residence buildings	High-risk areas may be too large for such measures
17	31	Deploying visible vehicle directed patrol	Increases the risk of detection and apprehension by strengthening formal surveillance	…police make it part of a highly visible, proactive task force	Vehicle patrols may have to cover larger areas, making it less effective; foot patrols are probably not an effective option

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