

PRESS RELEASE

23 February 2015

Embargo: 00:01 Tuesday 24 February 2015

BURGLARS BEWARE: STATISTICS REVEAL BEST WAY TO KEEP HOMES SAFE

Criminologists have revealed the ideal home security set-up to prevent burglaries, based on a study of over 2,000 break-ins across the country.

Window locks, indoor lights on a timer, double door locks and external motion sensor lights – if all used together – could mean a property is almost 50 times more protected than a home without any proper security in place, according to a study published by the Royal Statistical Society.

The recommended mix, which the researchers have given the acronym 'WIDE', was the result of analysing 37,416 households from the Crime Survey for England and Wales between 2008/09 and 2011/12. It included 2,245 homes that have suffered a burglary, also taking into account the design of properties and whether they were privately owned or rented.

It allowed a 'Security Protection Factor' (SPF) to be calculated for various security combinations and single devices, based on the proportion of homes in each category that had been burgled. The WIDE combination came back with a SPF of 49.12, higher than nearly all other combinations.

The addition of CCTV and security chains was found to increase the SPF slightly further still, though installing CCTV would not be considered a cost-effective option for most households.

Table: Security protection factors (SPFs) for selected security combinations

Security device	Households	Burgled	SPF
<i>Total households in survey</i>	37416	2245	-
No security devices	1835	821	-
Window locks (only)	1765	120	6.58
Door deadlocks or double locks (only)	905	145	2.79
External lights (only)	242	36	3.01
Burglar alarm (only)	212	106	0.89
Window locks and door locks	5381	192	12.54
External lights, window locks, door locks	3307	43	34.41
Security chains, window locks, door locks	2743	38	32.30
Window locks, internal lights, door locks, external lights	1537	14	49.12
CCTV, security chains, window locks, door locks	116	1	51.90

The study was led by professor of quantitative criminology at Loughborough University, Andromachi Tseloni, and is reported in the February edition of *Significance* magazine, which is jointly published by the Royal Statistical Society and the American Statistical Association.

Ineffective burglar alarms

One apparent surprise from the research was the ineffectiveness of burglar alarms, which the research showed could make homes even more likely to be burgled than those that with no security measures at all.

It is thought an alarm may “act as a beacon” to the prospect of valuable items, especially in areas where other homes might not have such devices.

However, the researchers also add a caveat that only 167 properties with just only a burglar alarm were analysed for the study, and propose that further research should be carried out to see if their findings hold up with a larger sample size. Burglar alarms, when used as part of a security combination, were found to improve the overall protection against burglary in the 1990's, but in more recent years (2008/09-2011/12) seem to reduce the overall preventive effect of most combinations examined.

The survey data however does not reveal the different specifications of burglar alarms or the year they were installed and therefore questions about alarm quality remain unanswered.

Renters burgled more but enjoy less security

Another issue highlighted in the research is that renters often lack effective security, despite having higher odds of being a burglary victim than home-owners.

Private renters have roughly 37% more chance of being burgled than owner-occupiers, whilst the disparity is even starker for social renters, who face nearly triple the home owners' odds of burglary. Both private and social renters have a lower presence of security devices in their homes than other groups, and often have limited control over the installation of additional measures.

The research into burglary and security is part of a wider project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), which is using 20 years of data from the British Crime Survey to identify the most effective anti-burglary measures.

It is hoped the findings could allow police to target their resources more effectively to help reduce home burglaries.

Commenting on the findings, Professor Andromachi Tseloni said:

“Burglary has reduced substantially in recent years but it is still a high volume crime affecting many thousands of people each year.

“At the start of this research we knew that the risk of becoming a victim was not equally spread across households. We now know what security devices work in what contexts.

“This information is important to a range of agencies looking at reducing fear of crime and decreasing the risk of vulnerable people and property.”

In respect of burglar alarms Professor Tseloni said:

“Our findings about burglar alarms will be of interest to those undertaking crime reduction initiatives but it would be premature to conclude that the installation of burglar alarms should no longer be encouraged. More research into the particular impact of burglar alarms is called for.”

ENDS

NOTES

The full article in this month's *Significance* magazine, which includes further information, figures and the complete SPF formula, can be read online at

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1740-9713.2015.00800.x/epdf>

For more information about Loughborough University's burglary and security project, see

<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/socialsciences/research/projects/burglarysecurity>

CONTACTS

For more information, contact William Summers, RSS Public Affairs and Press Manager, on 020 7614 3920 or at w.summers@rss.org.uk

The Royal Statistical Society (RSS) founded in 1834 is one of the world's most distinguished and renowned statistical societies. It is a learned society for statistics, a professional body for statisticians and a charity which promotes statistics, data and evidence for the public good. Today the Society has 6000 members around the world. www.rss.org.uk