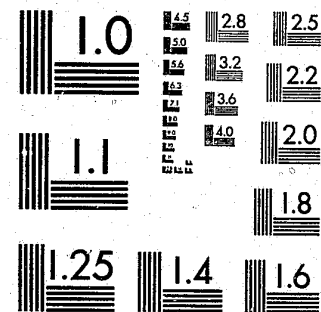


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RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY SURVEY
METROPOLITAN ATLANTA AREA

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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METROPOLITAN ATLANTA CRIME COMMISSION
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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Metropolitan Atlanta Crime Commission is a permanent, non-profit, metro-wide citizens' commission, supported by private funds. It functions as an independent, non-partisan advocate for crime prevention and quality in criminal justice. Primary areas of interest include law enforcement, courts, corrections and juvenile justice.

The Commission seeks to promote an aggressive, smoothly functioning criminal justice system which operates with integrity to provide appropriate protection for citizens of Metropolitan Atlanta, fair and swift justice for those accused of crime, and equitable and humane punishment for those convicted of criminal misconduct. The Commission identifies conditions conducive to crime or ineffectiveness or inequity in the criminal justice system, brings such conditions to the attention of government officials and the public, recommends actions to eliminate such conditions, and works through appropriate officials and agencies to implement corrective actions.

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Atlanta Bureau of Police Services

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Clayton County Police Department

Chief J. W. Reid
Cobb County Police Department

Chief R. T. Burgess
DeKalb County Police Department

Chief Clinton Chafin
Fulton County Police Department

Chief John W. Crunkleton
Gwinnett County Police Department

Without their help and the assistance of their burglary investigators and records personnel, this report would not have been possible.

Special thanks are also due to Dr. Howard C. Schneider, Department of Quantitative Methods, College of Business Administration, Georgia State University. Dr. Schneider provided invaluable assistance in developing the survey questionnaire and interpreting the data collected.

BACKGROUND

Crime prevention as a police function is a recent phenomenon in the United States, and only became a major factor in the 1970's. Through the support of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) a national program on crime prevention training for law enforcement personnel was begun at the University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky, in 1972.

One result of this national approach to crime prevention was an emphasis on studying individual crimes and methods of preventing their occurrence. Residential burglary has become the most discussed crime in this crime prevention literature. Georgia law states:

A person commits burglary when, without authority and with the intent to commit a felony or theft therein, he enters or remains within the dwelling house of another or any building, vehicle, railroad car, watercraft, or other such structure designed for use as the dwelling of another, or enters or remains within any other building or any room or any part thereof. A person convicted of burglary shall be punished by imprisonment for not less than one nor more than 20 years.

Many law enforcement agencies received federal grants from LEAA during the last decade to fund programs aimed at reducing burglaries. These included analyzing where and when burglaries occurred, what effect police actions produced on the occurrence of burglaries, and what homeowners could do to reduce the risk of being burglarized.

From these studies has come a wealth of burglary prevention tips. The most common of these are:

- o Organize neighborhood watch programs to teach neighbors to watch for and report suspicious behavior.
- o Have security surveys made by crime prevention personnel to point out security problems.
- o Have mail and newspapers picked up or deliveries stopped while out of town.
- o Replace hollow core doors with solid wood doors.
- o Use dead bolt locks on doors.
- o Use supplemental window locks.
- o Use supplemental locking devices on sliding glass doors.
- o Mark valuable items with an identifying number.
- o Install a burglar alarm system.
- o Post decals showing property marked, burglar alarm, etc.

METROPOLITAN BURGLARY SURVEY

Is there a success story behind the actions advised to protect a home from burglary, or is victimization a matter of bad luck? Since no research was found which explained why some homes were burglarized while neighboring homes were untouched, the Crime Commission decided to develop a method of identifying and comparing the defensive measures taken by a group of burglary victims and neighboring non-victims. By matching victims and non-victims the Crime Commission hoped to control many of the variables identified as influencing victimization, including:

- o Street location and type.
- o Neighborhood type.
- o Police patrol activities.

Because there are so many basic differences in the physical design of apartments, condominiums and single-family homes, and therefore many differences in the problems they face, it was decided to limit this study to single-family detached homes. A primary consideration was the fact that homeowners are in a position to make structural changes which would enhance security, while renters are probably not.

In the seven-county Metropolitan Atlanta Area there are over 40 law enforcement agencies, each receiving and maintaining reports of burglaries in their jurisdictions. With a limited amount of personnel available to conduct this research it was necessary to limit the police departments participating in the study. The six chosen represent in-town and suburban neighborhoods and are the policing agencies for over 61% of the population in the Metropolitan Atlanta Area. Without their cooperation and assistance this study would not have been possible.

A survey was conducted of 600 randomly selected single-family residential burglary victims during the period May 1, 1981 through April 30, 1982, in five Metropolitan Counties and the City of Atlanta. A matched questionnaire was sent to 600 neighbors of the victims who were not burglarized. Five hundred and ninety-nine responses (50%) were received. (See Appendix A.)

The purpose of the study was to determine which preventive measures used by non-victims were significantly different from those at the homes which were burglarized. It was felt that such a test would scientifically identify the precautions which homeowners could take with some assurance of their deterrent value.

A statistical test of this type is not capable of proving that certain preventive measures do indeed prevent burglaries. What it can do is determine if there is a significant difference in the relative frequencies of a protective measure in the non-victim and victim groups. If this test fails to show a significant difference between the two groups concerning a preventive measure, it can mean that there was no difference in the relative frequency (as many victims used the preventive measure as did non-victims), or the number of victims and non-victims sampled was not large enough to identify the difference statistically.

The first column of Table I lists the burglary prevention measures surveyed. The second and third columns show the percentage of non-victims and victims reporting the presence of a measure and the sample size on which the percentage is based. Sample sizes vary because of non-response to certain questions and because the answers to some questions depended on answers to others. For example, the entire sample of 599 respondents was asked whether they have sliding glass doors. For those who answered "no", the next three questions concerning glass door protective measures (use of charley bar, pins and screws) were inapplicable and were left unanswered. The last column indicates the findings for each preventive measure, either statistically significant or not significant.

The first row concerns sliding glass doors. These are considered by crime prevention specialists to be a weak point in home security. This study indicated that the percentage of non-victim homes with sliding glass doors was almost identical to the percentage of victim homes with them, and therefore sliding glass doors were not significant. The use of a charley bar to prevent forced entry of sliding glass doors was found more frequently among non-victims and appears to reduce the risk of burglary.

Solid exterior doors were found more frequently at non-victim homes and would appear to be significant in preventing burglaries, as was the presence of door hinges not removable from the outside.

Dead bolt locks were found to be a significant prevention measure and are generally combined with solid doors to provide entry way security.

The use of supplemental window locks (not sash locks) was not significantly different in the study group.

Burglar alarms were a significant factor in this study. An estimated 12.7% of the non-victim population have burglar alarms as compared with 3.8% of their victimized neighbors. Although these proportions are relatively small, the difference of 8.9% was highly significant.

The percentages of the non-victim and victim population who live within areas having an active neighborhood watch was not significantly different.

Crime prevention units and companies frequently provide decals, signs or other symbols to indicate that security measures have been taken by a homeowner. Homes displaying neighborhood watch decals were found more frequently among the non-victim group, as were decals indicating installation of a burglar alarm and the marking of valuables with an identification number. The difference in the percentages between victims and non-victims who indicated that they used security patrol signs or decals was not large enough to be statistically significant. It would appear that the displaying of a sign or decal is an important deterrent to burglars.

The presence of a car in the driveway or carport during the day was very significant. It would seem that the appearance of occupancy is important in deterring residential burglary.

Having mail and newspapers picked up or their delivery stopped when out of town was also found to be significant.

The remaining measures were not found to be significant. Lights left on continually or by timer when out of town are thought to be good preventive measures, but in this study did not appear significant. Security surveys which can be important in pointing out security weaknesses, had been made for about as many victims as non-victims. The value of any security survey is the degree to which recommendations are implemented. The response to survey questions regarding implementation levels was too small to determine significance.

There are many other security measures a homeowner may utilize. All of these could not be included in this study due to limitations in the length of the questionnaires and difficulties in phrasing the questions in an acceptable form. These measures could be just as important as those included in the study, or they may work in conjunction with other measures to provide greater protection. Some of these additional measures are:

- o A dog in the yard or home.
- o Keeping shrubs or trees from shielding windows of home.
- o Use of burglar bars on windows.
- o Securing tools or ladders that burglars might use to gain entry.

TABLE I
Results of Residential Burglary Study
Metropolitan Atlanta Area

| PRESENCE OF: | TOTAL SAMPLE RESULTS | | | | FINDINGS |
|--|----------------------|-----|-------------|-----|----------|
| | Non-Victim % | No. | Victim % | No. | |
| Sliding Glass Doors | 32.2 | 337 | 32.6 | 262 | ns |
| Charley Bar In Door | 64.6 | 117 | 53.0 | 90 | ss |
| Pins In Sliding Door Frame | 44.6 | 97 | 41.3 | 80 | ns |
| Screws In Upper Tracts | 16.4 | 88 | 27.0 | 64 | ns |
| Solid Exterior Doors | 78.6 | 271 | 67.0 | 226 | ss |
| Hinges Not Removable From Outside | 85.7 | 281 | 78.8 | 228 | ss |
| Dead Bolt Locks | 71.8 | 294 | 62.0 | 230 | ss |
| Supplemental Window Locks | 35.9 | 321 | 31.2 | 253 | ns |
| Burglar Alarm | 12.7 | 333 | 3.8 | 261 | ss |
| Active Neighborhood Watch | 24.1 | 322 | 22.0 | 251 | ns |
| Burglar Alarm Decal | 16.2 | 288 | 6.2 | 239 | ss |
| Security Patrol Decal | 2.7 | 250 | 1.1 | 226 | ns |
| Property Marked With Identification Decal | 19.8 | 269 | 11.0 | 239 | ss |
| Neighborhood Watch Decal | 11.2 | 261 | 2.8 | 227 | ss |
| Car In Driveway or Carport | 58.9 | 331 | 41.5 | 257 | ss |
| Mail and Newspapers Picked Up When Out of Town | 87.4 | 314 | 64.5 | 53 | ss |
| Lights Left On Continually | 57.5 | 290 | 56.5 | 47 | ns |
| Lights Left On Timer | 39.2 | 278 | 45.0 | 51 | ns |
| Security Survey Made | 18.4 | 330 | 15.9 | 259 | ns |

ss - Statistically Significant
ns - Not Statistically Significant

PROFILE OF A BURGLARY RESISTANT HOME

The key to reducing the risk of burglary appears to be in the use of several security measures to create a burglary resistant home. Based on the responses to the survey questionnaire, it is possible to develop a "profile" of a single-family detached home with a low burglary risk.

This profile does not rank the effectiveness of any single action or device, but encourages the application of as many as are applicable to each home. It is important that homeowners be cautioned against relying on one or two security measures to provide the protection afforded by the combination of several measures. The protective measures which identify the non-victim residence are:

- o Appearance of Occupied Premises
 - A. Car in driveway or carport during the day.
 - B. Mail and newspapers picked up or deliveries stopped when out of town.
- o Warnings to Potential Burglars
 - A. Burglar alarm warning decals.
 - B. Neighborhood Watch signs.
 - C. Operation Identification decals.
- o Physical Security of Residence
 - A. Burglar alarm.
 - B. Solid exterior doors with concealed hinges on the inside.
 - C. Dead bolt locks on exterior doors.
 - D. Charley bar in glass doors.

Metropolitan Atlanta citizens are encouraged to reassess the vulnerability of their homes and conform to the non-victim profile as nearly as possible. An added inducement to do so could be a reduction in homeowner insurance rates. Some insurance companies provide rate adjustments for alarm systems and other protection devices. Homeowners should check with their insurers to determine if any discounts are available.

METRO ATLANTA CRIME PREVENTION SURVEY

Appendix A

YESNO

1. IS YOUR HOME A SINGLE-FAMILY STRUCTURE (NOT AN APARTMENT OR CONDOMINIUM)?

2. HAS YOUR HOME BEEN BROKEN INTO SINCE MAY, 1981?

(IF NO, DISREGARD THE QUESTIONS BELOW AND RETURN SURVEY IN ATTACHED ENVELOPE.)

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS OF THE TIME YOUR HOME WAS BROKEN INTO:

YESNOYESNO

3. DID YOUR HOME HAVE A SLIDING GLASS (PATIO) DOOR?

IF YES, DO YOU HAVE AND ROUTINELY USE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

A. CHARLEY BAR (BETWEEN FIXED AND MOVABLE PANELS)

B. PINS THROUGH DOOR FRAME

C. SCREWS IN UPPER TRACK OF DOOR FRAME

8. DID YOU DISPLAY WARNING DECALS INDICATING YOUR HOME WAS PROTECTED WITH:

A. A BURGLAR ALARM

B. A SECURITY PATROL

C. NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

D. PROPERTY MARKED THROUGH OPERATION IDENTIFICATION

9. DID YOU ROUTINELY KEEP A CAR IN YOUR DRIVEWAY OR CARPORT DURING THE DAY?

10. WERE YOU OUT OF TOWN AT THE TIME OF THE BREAK-IN?

IF YES, WERE:

A. MAIL AND NEWSPAPERS PICKED UP OR DELIVERY STOPPED

B. LIGHTS LEFT ON CONTINUALLY

C. LIGHTS LEFT ON A TIMER

11. DID YOU HAVE A SECURITY SURVEY MADE OF YOUR HOME PRIOR TO THE BREAK-IN?

IF YES, WHO DID IT?

A. POLICE

B. PRIVATE SECURITY

TO WHAT EXTENT DID YOU IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS?

A. NONE

B. SOME

C. MOST

D. ALL

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