

***Research on the effectiveness of Police
practice in reducing residential burglary
Report 9***

Burglary offenders

Garth Baker and Alison Gray

December 2005



Research on the effectiveness of Police practice in reducing residential burglary

- Report 1: *Surveys of Household Burglary part one (2002): Four Police Areas and national data compared*, Dr Sue Triggs, Ministry of Justice, 2005.
- Report 2: *Surveys of Household Burglary part two: Four Police Areas compared between 2002 and 2004*, Dr Sue Triggs, Ministry of Justice, 2005.
- Report 3: *Literature review: Police practice in reducing residential burglary*, Dr Sally Harvey, Ministry of Justice, 2005.
- Report 4: *Case study of the Manurewa Police Area*, Karen Johns, Ministry of Justice, 2005.
- Report 5: *Case study of the Rotorua Police Area*, Tanya Segessenmann and Karen Johns, Ministry of Justice, 2005.
- Report 6: *Case study of the Lower Hutt Police Area*, Alison Chetwin and Helena Barwick, Ministry of Justice, 2005.
- Report 7: *Case study of the Sydenham Police Area*, Dr Sue Carswell and Karen Johns, Ministry of Justice, 2005.
- Report 8: *Victims of burglary*, Garth Baker and Alison Gray, Ministry of Justice, 2005.
- Report 9: *Burglary offenders*, Garth Baker and Alison Gray, Ministry of Justice, 2005.
- Report 10: *Overview: Research on the effectiveness of Police practice in reducing residential burglary*, Alison Chetwin, Ministry of Justice, 2005.

First published in December 2005 by the
Ministry of Justice
PO Box 180
Wellington
New Zealand

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ISBN 0-478-29017-9

Foreword

Burglary is a problem that considerably affects many New Zealand households. From victimisation surveys we know that it can have a profound effect on victims and that householders are concerned about it. Burglary is also costly both to government and to the New Zealand public. Reducing burglary is a key priority in government's Crime Reduction Strategy and an important outcome for the justice sector.

Although recorded burglary rates show a declining trend since the late 1990s, there is considerable room to achieve further reductions. The extensive research published here helps us understand what strategies might be effective in which contexts, as well as the reasons why they are effective. The research has revealed a wealth of practical and workable strategies and initiatives that can be shared from one Police Area to another.

The research project is the result of a highly productive collaboration between the Ministry of Justice and New Zealand Police. We are grateful for the substantial funding support for the project provided by the Cross Departmental Research Pool (CDRP) administered by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. In the spirit of the CDRP, it has been an excellent example of cross-departmental research on a subject of high priority to government.

The real commitment of the New Zealand Police to reducing crime is evident throughout the ten reports of the Burglary Reduction Research Programme. This substantial series of reports is published to be used in part or in its entirety by front-line Police, as well as managers, advisers and policy makers, all of whom play a variety of roles in the wider justice sector in the effort to reduce burglary.

Belinda Clark
Secretary for Justice

Acknowledgements

The commitment and support of many people have made this research possible. The Burglary Reduction Research Team wishes to especially acknowledge and thank:

- the Police staff and Area Commanders in Manurewa, Rotorua, Lower Hutt and Sydenham, who welcomed us into their working world and so generously shared their time and experience, especially Heather Wells, Alan Shearer, Richard Middleton, Bruce Horne, Bruce Dunstan, Tony Scully, John Doyle, and Andy McGregor
- the District office staff and District Commanders in Counties Manukau, Bay of Plenty, Wellington and Canterbury
- the victims and offenders who talked about their experiences in interviews, and the householders who willingly gave their time by participating in the surveys
- the staff of Victim Support, the Public Prisons Service and the Community Probation Service who assisted with recruiting victims and offenders for interviews
- the people in community organisations and other justice sector agencies who participated in interviews
- those who have advised us along the way, including Dave Trappitt, Mark Heron, Graham Cowle, Mark Loper, Percy Ruri, Christine Jamieson, Steve Bullock, Alasdair Macmillan, Ross Levy, Tony Scully, Colin Braid, Darren Russell, Tessa Watson, Sonia Cunningham, Rachael Bambury, Steve Caldwell, Frank Lawton, Mino Meimand, Francis Luketina, Ben Young, and Justine O'Reilly
- Simon Webber, who produced the trends in Police recorded data and carried out the reconviction analysis
- TNS New Zealand Ltd, who conducted the fieldwork and produced the dataset for the household surveys
- our publication team, including Katie Boyle, Judith Spier and Chris Richardson
- the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, who provided funding for the project through the Cross Departmental Research Pool.

The Burglary Reduction Research Team: Alison Chetwin, Karen Johns, Tanya Segessenmann, Sue Carswell, Helena Barwick, Garth Baker, Alison Gray, Sue Triggs, and Sally Harvey

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Executive summary

The Ministry of Justice, in partnership with the New Zealand Police, has conducted research over three years (2002–2004) on Police practice in reducing burglary. This report is one of a series of studies examining aspects of burglary initiatives undertaken in four Police Areas—Lower Hutt, Manurewa, Rotorua and Sydenham. It focuses on the experiences of burglary offenders and their awareness of Police initiatives in each of the selected Police Areas.

Methodology

The offender interviews took place in the same four Police Areas as the wider study. Interviews were completed with 28 offenders—five females and 23 males.

The sample for this study was initially identified from two sources—the database of the local Police and, later, the Case Management System database of the Ministry of Justice. All informants were convicted of burgling a home in one of the four Police Areas between 1 January 2002 and 30 June 2003.

Interviews were semi-structured. The focus was on offenders' knowledge of Police and community initiatives relating to burglary, their experiences with the Police when their offence was investigated and their history and practice of committing burglaries.

The most obvious limitation of the study is its small sample size. The information cannot be and is not intended to be statistically reliable. It is qualitative in nature and is intended to describe people's experiences in more depth than is practical in a survey. It complements information gathered through other sources. In addition, the group was largely self-selected—i.e. all informants agreed to be interviewed. Their views are not necessarily representative of those held by burglary offenders as a whole.

History of offending

Offending typically began on a small scale at an early age.

- A quarter of informants began committing burglaries before the age of 13; only three were over 17 when they started.
- Most informants were first convicted of burglary in their teens.
- Twenty-four of the 28 informants had been convicted of a range of offences before their most recent conviction for burglary.
- Most informants claimed to have only one previous conviction; seven acknowledged two or more convictions, and four said that their current burglary conviction was their first conviction.
- All informants were teenagers when they were first convicted of an offence.

Most respondents gave more than one reason for commencing or continuing to commit burglaries. Money and drugs were the main motivators. Other motivators mentioned were:

- being under the influence of drugs and alcohol, or using them heavily around the time of offending
- feeling excitement at committing burglaries
- succumbing to peer pressure
- having a domestic dispute (with the burglary being part of the dispute).

When informants were asked what would stop them committing burglaries, some responded in relation to their personal situation, while others made more general observations. Most thought that several changes would need to happen to stop people committing burglaries. Changes they mentioned included:

- better employment options for burglars
- more money
- support from family or friends
- prison sentences
- effective options to manage alcohol and drug issues
- different policing techniques.

Some informants claimed that they had definitely stopped committing burglaries, for a range of reasons. Others intimated they were reducing their offending or expressed ambivalence towards committing burglaries in the future. Three informants associated committing burglaries with being a particular age.

Modus operandi of informants

The frequency with which offenders committed burglaries varied from several a day to having committed only the burglary they were charged with.

The informants who discussed when they committed burglaries did so at varying times of day. Informants were evenly divided as to whether they planned burglaries or seized opportunities. They were often reluctant to give details of their actual burglary techniques. No strong patterns of behaviour emerged.

Three informants said they needed to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol to commit burglaries.

Over half would return to the same house or the same area. The main motivation for returning to the same house seemed to be familiarity, along with confidence that the stolen items would have been replaced.

When informants were selecting a house to burgle, alarms, other security systems and dogs were the main deterrents. Potential offenders were also influenced by:

- the presence or absence of people either in the house or nearby
- whether potential victims belonged to particular groups—Maori, older people or poor people
- whether a potential burglary site was a business rather than a private home, as it was less personal
- possible conflict with local gangs over where they committed burglaries.

Some offenders would not be deterred by increased security measures, such as an alarm or invisible marking of property. Others said alarms reduce burglaries, even though it may be possible to disarm or ignore them.

When deciding what to take during a burglary, most informants focused on items that could easily be sold for 'fast' cash.

By far the most common method of getting rid of stolen goods was to sell them to contacts of some kind. Only seven informants had sold goods to a second-hand dealer—perhaps evidence that offenders avoided using second-hand dealers as an outlet for stolen goods. Informants were reluctant to go into details.

Police and community initiatives

Informants' views about the effectiveness of the Police and Police initiatives were strongly influenced by their own experience, their confidence in their ability to outwit the Police and their awareness of the increasing availability of sophisticated technology.

Interviewers asked the informants who were aware of particular initiatives how effective they thought they were. Opinions were divided. The strongest support was for increased Police patrols.

It is not surprising that informants were most familiar with the Police and community initiatives of which they had direct experience, or that were most likely to incriminate them. These included fingerprinting, bail checks and DNA sampling, as well as Neighbourhood Support and programmes to address their criminogenic needs. Offenders were particularly positive about the value of programmes and services. Most informants were confident they could 'get around' Police initiatives. The general perception was that offenders would still seek to meet their need for cash or drugs regardless of what steps the Police took.

What happened when informants were arrested

Most arrests were the result of Police investigations either for the current burglary or for some other offence. Very few resulted from information provided by the public or by other offenders.

The Police had asked informants:

- why they had committed the burglaries
- about other burglaries committed in the area
- where the stolen goods had gone.

Five informants claimed that Police treated them violently when they arrested or questioned them.

Sentencing

Almost all the informants in this study had been sentenced to imprisonment or periodic detention/community work. Over two-thirds thought this sentence was fair and had made a difference to their behaviour because it gave them time to reflect, they saw prison as a deterrent, or they had benefited from programmes or treatment during their sentences. This relatively positive view might be an effect of the sampling, in that all informants were willing participants and therefore more ready to reflect on their offending.

Most were realistic about the sentences they had received and took some responsibility for their own behaviour. They expressed a range of opinions on the purpose of sentences and the ability of a sentence to change offending behaviour.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Ministry of Justice, in partnership with the New Zealand Police, conducted research over three years (2002–2004) on Police practice in reducing burglary. This evaluation report is one of a series of reports examining aspects of burglary initiatives undertaken in four Police Areas—Lower Hutt, Manuwera, Rotorua and Sydenham.

The objectives of the wider research project are to:

- examine Police best practice, including Police initiatives in partnership with communities, in relation to residential burglary reduction; to understand which practices are effective in which contexts and why
- gain an understanding of some wider contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of burglary initiatives
- examine effectiveness in relation to the incidence of burglary, the resolution of burglary, public satisfaction and perceptions of safety
- examine any unintended effects of burglary initiatives, such as displacement.

This report focuses on the experiences of burglary offenders and their awareness of Police initiatives in each of the selected Police Areas.

1.2 The aims of the study

The aims of the interviews with burglary victims were to:

- explore the history of and reasons for engaging in burglary and the potential for stopping offending
- explore offenders' awareness and understanding of Police initiatives to reduce the incidence of burglary
- document offenders' personal experience of Police initiatives and their views on their effectiveness
- identify any effects on offenders resulting from Police initiatives
- describe offenders' experience of Police practices during investigation of an attempted or completed burglary
- identify any effects of sentencing on offenders' behaviour.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research sites

The offender interviews took place in the same four Police Areas as the wider study. Twenty-eight offenders were interviewed in total. Table 2.1 gives the numbers of offenders interviewed in each area.

Table 2.1 Offenders interviewed by site

Site	Number
Manurewa	7
Rotorua	6
Lower Hutt	9
Sydenham	6
Total	28

This report covers the responses of all offenders interviewed. Too few offenders were interviewed in each area to prepare separate reports. Differences between areas are noted where appropriate. A comparison of the responses of male and female offenders revealed few differences between them. Differences are mentioned in the report where relevant.

2.2 Identifying the sample

The sample for this study was initially identified from two sources. Most offenders were identified from the database of the local Police as having been convicted of burglary on homes in that Police Area during the period 1 January 2002 to 30 June 2003. All these names were checked with the Department of Corrections database to identify which offenders were currently serving a sentence for the burglary offence. Some were serving prison sentences and staff of the Public Prison Service approached them, offering them the opportunity to be interviewed. Others were serving community sentences and in Manurewa, Rotorua and Lower Hutt, staff of the Community Probation Service approached them. In Sydenham researchers approached these offenders directly.

Additional interviews were required and further offenders were identified from the 'Case Management System' database of the Ministry of Justice as meeting the location and time requirements. These offenders were posted a letter providing an 0800 number they could ring to be involved. This resulted in a further 14 interviews with offenders, providing half of the sample.

Offenders serving prison sentences were interviewed in prison at a time agreed to by prison management. Those serving community sentences were seen at Community Probation Service offices or Periodic Detention Centres. This was usually when they were at these sites as part of their sentence requirements. Offenders who rang the 0800 number were interviewed at their home or an agreed location, at a mutually agreed time.

The interviewer gave each participant an information sheet prior to the interview, containing information about the research, its key objectives, how the information would be used, and their rights to decline to participate or to withdraw at any stage. A copy of this information sheet is included in Appendix A.

All prison inmates interviewed were offered a koha of a \$20 phone card and interviewees serving a community sentence were offered \$20 cash. The offenders interviewed as a result of their 0800 call were provided with a \$30 cash koha, both because the original strategies did not attract enough response and in recognition of the greater initiative they demonstrated.

2.3 The completed sample

Interviews were completed with 28 offenders, five females and 23 males. Ethnicity and age data were not collected.

2.4 Limitations of the sample

The most obvious limitation of the sample is its size. The offenders interviewed were responsible for only a small percentage of the total number of burglaries recorded in the four Police Areas in the sample period. The sample size represents all the offenders who were identified and who were willing to participate.

The information cannot be and is not intended to be statistically reliable. It is qualitative in nature and is intended to describe people's experiences in more depth than is practical in a survey. It will complement information gathered through other sources. Where quantitative information is presented, this provides a profile of the sample in relation to specific questions, but it cannot be generalised to all offenders.

The interviewers asked offenders to recall incidents that had taken place up to 23 months earlier. Some informants could not recall the detail of what took place or how they felt at the time, either because of time that had elapsed or because they were affected by alcohol or other drugs at the time. Some may have been reluctant to disclose details of particular offences or their aftermath.

2.5 Interview guide

The interview guide was developed in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice and the Police. Interviews were semi-structured, using the interview schedule included as Appendix B. The focus was on offenders' knowledge of Police and community initiatives relating to burglary,

their experiences with the Police when their offence was investigated and their history and practice of committing burglaries.

2.6 Data analysis

All the interviews were taped and transcribed. The researchers used a computer programme, Nvivo, to assist in coding the interviews.

2.7 The report

The report begins with a discussion of the offenders' history of committing burglaries, their reasons for engaging in burglary and the potential for stopping offending. The next section outlines the offenders' awareness of Police initiatives to reduce burglaries, the effect these initiatives had on their behaviour, and their experience of the Police investigation into their offences. The final section covers the effect of sentencing on their behaviour.

3 History of offending

This section covers the history of informants' offending—when they started committing burglaries, when they were first convicted of burglary, their previous convictions, their reasons for committing burglaries and what would encourage them to stop offending.

3.1 When informants first started to commit burglaries

Informants were asked what age they were when they first started committing burglaries. A quarter did so under the age of 13. Only three first started offending over the age of 17.

Table 3.1 Age informants first started committing burglaries

Age	Lower Hutt	Manurewa	Rotorua	Sydenham	Total
Under 12	—	2	1	—	3
12	—	—	3	1	4
13	—	—	—	—	0
14	2	1	—	1	3
15	2	—	—	2	4
16	3	—	—	—	4
17	—	—	—	—	0
18	1	—	—	—	1
19	—	1	—	1	2
Unspecified but said they committed burglaries in early to mid teens	1	3	2	1	7
Total	9	7	6	6	28

Three informants first committed burglaries when they were under the age of 12 (one was six); the remainder were in their teens, usually between 12 and 16.

Some said that they started with theft of smaller items, often from people they knew.

I started with stealing mates' lunchboxes at school. [LHO-05]

Basically through '99 I was just doing little things, just stealing out of my Mum's bag and stuff. In 2000 that's when I got to the big things. [LHO-06]

Back then I didn't really have any lunch at school so that was the main basis for why I did it so I could have lunch or have some money. Then as I grew older it sort of went towards getting some money. [RO-03]

There were no obvious differences between the informants from the four areas or between males and females.

3.2 When informants were first convicted¹ of burglary

Informants were asked what age they were when they were first convicted of burglary (results shown in Table 3.2). Most were first convicted of burglary in their teens. This matches the results of the Ministry of Justice research described in *The criminal careers of burglars*², which identified the peak age for burglary convictions as 15.

Table 3.2 Age first convicted of burglary

Age	Lower Hutt	Manurewa	Rotorua	Sydenham	Total
13	—	1	2	—	3
14	3	—	—	1	4
15	—	—	2	3	5
16	1	—	—	1	2
17	—	—	1	—	1
18	—	3	1	—	4
19	1	1	—	—	2
20–25	2	—	—	—	2
Late 30s	—	—	—	1	1
Unspecified	2	2	—	—	4
Total	9	7	6	6	28

There were no obvious differences between the informants from the four areas or between males and females.

Table 3.3 does not compare individual cases but it does suggest that the age at first conviction is often considerably later than the first offence.

¹ This term includes 'proven' cases in the Youth Court.

² Triggs, S., *The criminal careers of burglars*, Criminal Justice Group, Ministry of Justice, March 2000.

Table 3.3 Comparison of ages when informants started committing burglary and ages when they were first convicted of burglary

Age	Number who started committing burglaries at this age	Number who were first convicted of burglary at this age
Under 12	3	—
12	4	—
13	0	3
14	3	4
15	4	5
16	4	2
17	0	1
18	1	4
19	2	2
20–25	—	2
Late 30s	—	1
Unspecified but during teens	7	4
Total	28	28

3.3 Previous convictions of informants

Informants were asked what convictions they had prior to the most recent conviction for burglary. Their answers are shown in Table 3.4. Twenty-four had been convicted of a range of offences, most commonly burglary and car conversion.

Table 3.4 Previous convictions—by type

Offence type	Number
Previous burglary offences	6
Car conversion	5
Aggravated robbery	4
Shoplifting	3
Theft	3
Fraud	2
Wilful damage	2
Assault—male on female	2
Assault—unspecified type	2
Drug-related	2
Assault—grievous bodily harm	1
Assault on Police officer	1
Driving offences	1
Disorderly conduct	1
Drunk and disorderly	1
Unspecified convictions	1

This is in accord with the Ministry of Justice report *The criminal careers of burglars*³, which also noted that many burglars are convicted for other offence types and are frequently convicted of burglary a number of times.

Table 3.5 Number of previous convictions

Number of previous offences	Number of informants
5 or more	3
3	1
2	3
1	12
0	4
Not stated	5
Total	28

The number of previous convictions informants said they had is shown in Table 3.5. Most informants claimed to have only one previous conviction, with seven acknowledging two or more convictions. Four said that their current burglary conviction was their first conviction. This pattern again matches that identified in the earlier report.

Informants were asked how old they were when they were convicted of any offence. As Table 3.6 shows, all were first convicted as teenagers, most commonly at age 13 or 15.

Table 3.6 Age first convicted of any offence⁴

Age	Number
12	1
13	4
14	2
15	5
16	2
17	1
18	2
19	1
Unspecified but during teens	1
Total	19

No information was gathered on the sentences informants received for previous convictions. Several volunteered that they had previously been sentenced to prison terms and one had been to a Child Youth and Family Youth Justice Residence. Others said that they had received periodic detention or probation or been required to undertake programmes for alcohol and drug issues, and in one case, a life skills training programme at a marae.

³ Triggs, S., *The criminal careers of burglars*, Criminal Justice Group, Ministry of Justice, March 2000.

⁴ This includes 'proven' cases in the Youth Court.

3.4 Reasons for committing burglaries

Most respondents gave more than one reason for commencing or continuing to commit burglaries. As Table 3.7 shows, money and drugs were the main motivators. There were no differences in motivation between males and females.

Table 3.7 Reasons for committing burglaries

Reason for committing burglaries	Number of informants citing this reason
	<i>n</i> = 28
To get money	15
To pay for drugs	8
For excitement	5
Peer pressure	5
Wanted items for themselves	2
As part of a domestic dispute	1
'Just felt like it'	1

The following were typical comments about committing burglaries for money.

We were pretty poor. I just wanted what other kids had. You know, shoes and clothes. That's mainly what it was about when I was younger. Just keeping up with the Jones. I'd just take whatever I needed really. If I needed clothes I had to get them. [LHO-08]

The goal was to get the cash for cigarettes or food or whatever. [LHO-09]

I started burglaries because I wanted to have what I didn't have. [MO-01]

Just for money, had no money and needed some so I rob other people. [MO-05]

Basically for money for food or for something like that. Peer pressure was also in it. [RO-03]

Because I ain't got the money to pay for things I need. [RO-06]

Committing burglaries to fund a drug habit was also a common motivation.

I need the money for the drugs. That's just what it comes down to. [LHO-01]

P had just ruined my life to the point where I couldn't go shopping and put food in my cupboards any more. And because it's such an expensive habit I basically was left with no choice but to do burglaries. [LHO-08]

Drug habit. Couldn't afford to buy my drugs. Started off with drugs. [RO-04]

I mean they're not nice crimes to do but at the end of the day when you own a drug habit... Burglaries and cars are real quick money really. They [burglars] are not purposely trying to hurt people, they just want another shot or another drug for that day and they'll do it whatever way. [SO-01]

I was burgling for the drugs. [SO-16]

Talking generally, several informants believed that alcohol and drugs were the main motivator for burglaries.

I haven't burgled for five years and all of a sudden I got desperate and stuck in a drug thing and I'm sure that's happened to other people. To tell you the truth I think burglaries revolve around drugs. I think the Police have known that for a long time especially in the intravenous circles. That's where I'd say 60% to 80% of the burglaries occur within the intravenous circles. When I got into remand this year, 90% of the burglars were drug addicts. [LHO-08]

Yeah they sell stuff to get drugs. [MO-101]

I found that without the alcohol it just doesn't happen. Alcohol is pretty much to blame for it all. It drops the inhibitions to not do it. I think if they've got a habit they do one thing or another. Whether it's houses and [if houses] get too hard they'll go to something else. The only deterrent is to stop the drugs and alcohol I suppose. [SO-03]

Six informants specifically said they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs when they committed burglaries. Three more said they were drinking or using drugs heavily around the time of their offending. This behaviour appeared to contribute to their offending.

Had I been straight I probably would have had second thoughts about doing it. [LHO-05]

I couldn't do it straight. I just got no fear when I'm onto the drugs. Now I've got a conscience and see the consequences of things because drugs and alcohol take that away from you. You don't see things like that. [SO-04]

I was under the influence of a lot of substances and that's a lot to do with how I ended up stealing. [SO-17]

Five informants said that they were motivated by the excitement of committing burglaries.

I'm not hard out for burglary. I just do that when I get bored or whatever, for the rush. [LHO-09]

Because it's exciting really. Getting in other people's houses, get a big fright to start with but I used to like it and I liked the money too. [MO-03]

[I did it] just for an adrenaline rush. That it was fun. [MO-05]

They also acknowledged that peer pressure was a reason for their offending.

[I was] mixing with the wrong people and had a lot of peer pressure from people. [MO-06]

I'm not really the type to do it but just with the wrong crowd at the time. Peer pressure was also in it. When I started mixing in with my cousin at a young age he was into that [committing burglaries] also. [RO-03]

[My mates] were pretty much the most influential because they would pressure me into it but I was pretty soft. I was straight into it. [SO-04]

One informant argued that jobs were poorly paid and time consuming, which encouraged more lucrative offending.

They can do what they like but they choose crime because it's easier for them to get by in life. It's not like they have to get up at seven in the morning half asleep and work till five at night and that's a whole day and basically your whole life gone because you only get two days in the weekend. That sucks, you know. And they'll see it as f..k this. Why should I do that when I can go steal and make a grand in one day, depends what you're nicking, and make six grand a week for two hours work a day? Why would I want to go to work, man? [LHO-07]

Several informants claimed that despite being charged with committing burglary, they were not burglars and did not commit burglaries. They had been charged with committing burglary as part of a domestic dispute. One man said that the Police had been called when he was drunk and was breaking into his partner's house during an argument. Another informant had entered a former partner's house and removed some items in retribution. This informant said, 'It wasn't my stuff, it wasn't my house and I shouldn't have been in there'. He expressed disdain for burglars.

I'd hate to be a burglar. I'm not the type of person to go and steal people's things because I know they work so hard for their things. Why would you want to go and do that? If you want that sort of stuff you go out there and work hard. You don't just help yourself to people's things. [MO-101]

Another informant, who had been charged with burglary as a result of a drunken episode of offending (burglary, assault, car conversion), had a similar attitude to burglars.

I can't really stand burglars, because they steal their money in burls. [LHO-02]

3.5 Stopping burglary

When informants were asked what would stop them committing burglaries, some responded in relation to their personal situation, while others made more general observations. Most thought that several changes would need to happen to stop people committing burglaries.

Eight thought that better employment options for burglars would reduce offending.

I think there honestly needs to be a better work scheme programme in place. [LHO-08]

A job and I'll stop. Making new friends, family support, a job, just something to keep me occupied because I usually commit a crime when I'm bored. [MO-01]

A job. A way of getting income without being on the dole and occupying my time. I'd be working for money instead of stealing [and] just behaving myself. [MO-05]

Two informants said that they would not commit burglaries if they had more money.

Money to live on, the benefit is nothing. [MO-03]

Just money, koha. [RO-04]

Seven said they would need support from family or friends to stop offending.

Getting more involved with the whanau. Whanau is one. Yeah, even just going to parties because when I had an offence I got them to take me to my Auntie's which was good. [I was] put in a positive environment. Well the main factor in that was just my partner really. She didn't really want me doing anything, so again it's whanau. [RO-03]

Being around the right people is how I deal with it and being employed. [MO-06]

My kids and a good partner [would stop my offending], and I've got one. [SO-15]

Five thought that prison sentences would reduce burglaries. This seemed to be based on their personal experience.

Prisons made me stop and realise that life's more important than doing burglaries. Realising what I'd done and realising that I was hurting other people when I shouldn't be. [LHO-05]

I definitely know I'll go inside if I get caught again. That's not what I want because all I know is that if I get caught doing another burglary they'll bring up my past and say he's done aggravated, 2003 he done armed robbery. They'll just bring it up and slam the book down. Probably the judges will look at this one, see he's been doing burgs and just chuck him inside. [LHO-06]

If they're giving out ten-year sentences for burglary, harder sentences. Depriving me of my family, to see my family. Not allowed visits and that. Just really make me think. [RO-02]

Four informants said that effective options to manage their alcohol and drug issues had reduced or would reduce their offending.

My whole drive's gone and I'm not using drugs now so I don't really have those thoughts of [committing burglaries]. I've got what I want. So I don't have to go anywhere, I don't have to do anything to get it. [SO-04]

Working on my drug habit that's the first thing. Help myself first and then my children. [SO-16]

They should really get me onto the methadone programme because then I won't attempt to use. [SO-16]

Four believed that different policing techniques would stop offending. These included checking suspicious cars, more Police foot patrols and community patrols, Police consulting with burglars about what is happening, and more hi-tech equipment for Police investigations.

Other suggestions for stopping burglaries included:

- making houses more secure: 'Keep your doors locked and keep your windows locked and just alarm up your house' [LHO-06].
- staying away from criminal associates
- having community patrols by reformed criminals that take a 'hard approach' with young offenders
- having a worthwhile project to be involved in (such as a work scheme for street kids)
- providing more programmes and counselling for prison inmates
- 'just behaving myself'.

Seven informants claimed that they had definitely stopped committing burglaries. While two did not offer a reason for this, others mentioned: giving up using illegal drugs; family relationships; and a growing empathy for their victims.

Two said that continued offending would jeopardise their ability to see or relate to their children.

I want my children back. I've had enough. Fifteen years is enough for me. My kids have been away from me. I've been battling with CYFS for ten years and I finally had my psychological report and she recommended that X be returned to me. I've done the Straight Thinking course, I've done the Criminogenic programme. I passed 100% on my Straight Thinking. I'm doing really well and I don't want to go back there. [RO-05]

My wee girl means a lot to me. So for me to go out and do another crime would jeopardise my relationship with my daughter and I don't know if I'd risk that. I've got to watch myself regarding drugs. If I go back to that I will lose my daughter. [SO-01]

Two others had discovered empathy for their burglary victims.

I realised that I was hurting other people when I shouldn't be. I just looked deep inside and realised that it wasn't for me when there's something better out there than doing burglaries. [LHO-05]

I just put myself in their shoes and know what it feels like. If someone ripped my house off I'd probably waste them. After what I went through in jail [where] I was smashed over in jail with a steel bar, [becoming] a victim myself. [SO-17]

Three intimated they were reducing their offending.

I've just been released from jail and I don't want to muck up no more. [MO-05]

I've seen through the darkness into the light because of this lag. I've changed my attitude and everything about it. I'm ready just to make a clean start. [RO-01]

Other informants expressed ambivalence towards committing burglaries in the future.

I'm not too keen on the old burglaries any more. Just the fact that I went into people's houses and that's really personal stuff. I just think that's wrong. I'm not too keen on [burgling shops either, but] no one ever loses apart from the insurance companies and they're rip-offs anyway. [LHO-01]

After my first couple of offences I was known [by the Police] and it's harder to commit something when you're already known. [RO-03]

Three informants associated committing burglaries with being a particular age. Two were not ready to stop their offending yet, as it was 'not that time in my life' and they 'still have time to change'. Another had 'grown out' of committing burglaries.

I'm getting a bit old for doing drugs, and going to jail. Leave it up to the young ones. It's a cycle. Some people do actually grow out of it about my age...I want to be different this year, if you know what I mean. What I'm saying is that I'm making a choice to not do that. I can't comment on the young guys but a lot of people around my age group are starting to think it's madness. [SO-01]

3.6 Summary

The offending pattern for this sample was similar to that described elsewhere, with offending beginning on a small scale at an early age, with multiple convictions. The drive to commit burglaries was often fuelled by a desire for money and drugs.

Factors that encouraged offenders to stop offending included: the deterrent of prison; family pressures, including having children; giving up illegal drug use; and maturity.

4 Modus operandi of informants

This section discusses how frequently informants offended, when they committed burglaries and how they went about them, including planning, selecting houses to burgle, deciding what to steal, disposing of the stolen goods, and returning for future burglaries.

4.1 Frequency of burglaries

Eighteen informants talked about how often they committed burglaries. Three claimed that they did so on a daily basis. (See Table 4.1.)

Table 4.1 How frequently informants committed burglaries

Frequency	Number of informants
3 times per night, every night	1
3 times per day	1
1 per day	1
2–3 per week	4
1 per week	3
1 per month	1
3–4 per year	1
3 in 2 years	1
First offence	5
Total	18

Seven informants said that they committed burglaries between one and three times a week, while five said that the offence they had been charged with (and which involved them in this research) was their first burglary.

4.2 When burglaries were committed

Of the nine informants who discussed when they committed burglaries, six said they did so mainly at night, two during the day or night and one only during the day.

4.3 Planning for burglary

Details informants gave about their planning for burglaries are shown in Table 4.2. Informants were evenly divided as to whether they planned burglaries or seized opportunities. Eleven claimed that their burglaries were opportune. Twelve engaged in relatively careful planning.

Table 4.2 Planning for burglaries

Planning for burglaries	Number of informants
Opportune—no planning	11
Pre-planned	5
Sometimes planned, sometimes not	3
Observed house to ensure empty	4
Had visited house before burglary	3
No information provided	2
Total	28

The different approaches to planning were reflected in the informants' comments.

If you're doing a big job then you sort of suss it out for a few days. And see neighbours talking to each other or things like that. Just little things. There's one house that they were away on holiday and we seen them, they were checking the windows and turning on the lights and stuff like, just deterring people. There was a gate between the two yards so you know they were constantly like coming back and forth. The next door neighbours had dogs. I just weigh up the risk of being caught, I suppose. [LHO-01]

Sometimes I'd case the place I would choose. Some of the times I wouldn't. I just did it at the spur of the moment. [LHO-05]

It was my mate's mate's house and my mate didn't like this man and he got me to do it. Maybe I'll go with them to show me or I'll go inside and meet some of his mates in the house just look around. They're probably thinking I'm just having a browse but I'm sussing the house out. Where to get in and where to get out. So that's how I usually do people's houses. The easiest type is just try and find the key, just take the key and then come back the same night. Just wait until they're all asleep and just go in. [LHO-06]

Like we'd probably give it one or two weeks, maybe a month and keep going round. If we wanted to rob this place I'd probably walk past and drive past. And basically wait for the right times. Just keeping an eye on them, if they're not there you go straight in and get the job done. [LHO-09]

In our case we would probably have a game of rugby or something, huffing and puffing when we come in and say 'Do you mind if we have a drink of water?' and then look round inside. So if you get a drink of water it would be like a detour [distraction] and they look around and see what's good and 'Oh thank you' and go outside. And maybe that night you're like 'Let's do the job' or something. [LHO-09]

I would be put off by an alarm or neighbours. Just the surroundings basically, if it looks like I'm going to get caught then I wouldn't do it. [MO-01]

Just scope the house out and see if no one's home and then break into it. Just look for one with no alarms. I just do it there and then. [MO-02]

I didn't plan anything because every time I did nothing went to plan. I just went on my own instinct, what was right at the moment and I did it. [MO-05]

It was random. It was the one thing that was never planned. It was always just go and do it, spur of the moment. [RO-04]

I'd take a lot of things off people's doorsteps and that. I definitely made sure there was no one home when I did them because I couldn't go into people's houses if someone was there. It was my neighbours so I knew before I went over there what I could get and there it was, so I sussed it out. [RO-05]

I just go round to a house, drive around in the car, and drive past slowly and see if there were any cars up the driveway. [SO-06]

[I'd look for] anything that caught my eye. Just look through the windows, have a look, see what's there, notice if anyone was about or not and that was it. [SO-07]

4.4 How burglaries were committed

Informants were often reluctant to give details of their actual burglary techniques. The interview guide focused more on selecting houses to burgle and what offenders did once inside, rather than on the actual process of breaking in.

No strong patterns of behaviour emerged. Offenders' comments are summarised in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 How burglaries were committed

How burglaries were committed	Number of informants
Numbers	
Operated alone	4
Operated in a group	5
Specific approaches	
Had pre-planned alibi	2
Only committed burglaries when drunk	3
Looked for an open window to enter	2
Informed by 'higher source' (e.g. drug dealer) on what was to be stolen	2
Specialised in burgling campervans	1
Specialised in burgling student flats (when occupants were away)	1
Transport	
Used a car for getting away	3
Walked	2
Used a bicycle if taking small items	1
Clothing	
Wore gloves or covered hands during burglary (to not leave prints)	5
Wore mask (when premises had video cameras)	1
Wore socks during burglary (to not leave footprints)	1

Three informants said they needed to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol to commit burglaries.

Most of the time I done the crime I've been under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Had I been straight I probably would have had second thoughts about doing it. [LHO-05]

I have to get intoxicated to do this, to be able to do burgs. I don't know why, because if I do it straight I change my mind, but once I'm drunk that's it, I got the balls to go and do it. [LHO-06]

Every time I had committed an offence it was alcohol related. [RO-03]

Others mentioned precautions they took to avoid being caught.

I've even heard of people putting on wigs and different eye contacts so the Police get a description of longhaired green-eyed or whatever. [LHO-01]

Got to make sure I had gloves so I don't get my fingerprints. [MO-02]

When you burg a house, you don't get cut, you don't drop your DNA, use gloves sometimes, police scanners. [MO-03]

Where you actually need to get through somewhere or it required your hands just chuck your sleeve over your hands or something like that. [RO-03]

You make sure you do not put your fingerprints on it if you don't wear your gloves. And be careful when people are around, watching next door or up the road. [Car] regos they notice. [SO-05]

Just wear gloves. [SO-06]

4.5 Returning for future burglaries

Interviewers asked informants if they would return to the same house, or to the same area, for future burglaries. Their responses are shown in Table 4.4. Of the 20 who replied, only four said that they would never go back to the same house. Over half would return to the same house or the same area.

Table 4.4 Returning for future burglaries

Future burglaries	Number of informants
Would return to the same house in future	7
Would return to the same area in future	9
Would never return to the same house	4
No information provided	8
Total	28

The main motivation for returning to the same house seemed to be familiarity, along with confidence that the stolen items would have been replaced.

I see how easy it is, so I give them a couple of months to get their shit back and then I go and visit again. [MO-03]

I would go back to the same house if not twice then more than three times. Only because they're insured plus I know how to get into the house, and I'd been in there before because I basically knew what to expect. If I got some good stuff out of that house then they'd be insured and I'd probably get it again. [MO-01]

One informant said he would return promptly to the neighbours of the house that he had burgled, as they would not be expecting to be burgled at that time.

4.6 Selecting houses to burgle

Twenty-one informants provided information on factors that they considered when selecting a house to burgle. Their comments are summarised in Table 4.5. As reported in studies carried out elsewhere⁵, burglars used a number of cues in selecting a target and carrying out an offence. Alarms, other security systems and dogs were the main deterrents. Potential offenders were also influenced by the presence or absence of people either in the house or nearby.

⁵ See e.g. S. D. Macintyre, 'Burglar decision-making', (doctoral thesis, Griffith University, 2001).

Four informants said that they would not steal from particular groups—Maori, older people or poor people.

Table 4.5 Factors in selecting houses to burgle

How selected houses to burgle	Number of informants
Put off by alarm fitted to house	8
Attracted to houses that looked 'flash', with valuables worth stealing	6
Put off by house having security or neighbourhood watch signs	5
Put off by presence of a dog	4
Put off by presence of neighbours	3
Attracted if no one was home	2
Put off if they knew the homeowner	2
Attracted to houses that were 'not too flash'	1
Put off by presence of car in the driveway	1
Put off by old houses (as they did not contain valuables)	1
Would not steal from Maori	2
Would not steal from elderly	1
Would not steal from poor	1

The following comments were typical.

I'd try and go for something that looked like they had insurance and didn't have kids and that they wouldn't worry about it too much. Basically I'd look for something that looked upper class without an alarm. [LHO-08]

Would choose a flash looking house that would probably have all the mod cons. [MO-04]

I only go for flash houses. I like real old houses. [MO-05]

I go for a house that looked like they got some stuff to burgle. A flash house. [RO-04]

[I'm put off] if it was a Maori house, or elderly or poor people. I've never burgled poor people like myself. I target the rich, the yuppies, high class. [RO-05]

Two informants said they preferred stealing from businesses rather than private homes, as it was less personal.

I mainly did industrial places, malls and shops and stuff like that. It was less personal. Sort of invading people's personal shit. [LHO-01]

I'd much rather go and do a shop or a business over and something that's guaranteed to have insurance. [LHO-08]

Two informants mentioned possible conflict with local gangs over where they committed burglaries.

I tend not to rob other Maori and I don't really like to do burgs around this area because they're all gang related and you probably know half of them. [MO-03]

I broke into this place and I got away with it but had a bit of a run off with the Mongrel Mob because they reckon it was their area. [RO-09]

Three people agreed that increased security measures, such as an alarm or invisible marking of property, would not deter them.

Alarms aren't that great anyway. So many alarms go off people don't take notice of alarms. [LHO-01]

Alarms can be a problem but I know a bit about alarm systems. My partner works selling alarm systems and I help sometimes to install it and got that experience. Alarms have a plug that plugs into the wall and there's a coil that runs up to the roof to the main box. You have to go to that and just turn it off. Pull the plug out and it will f..k the thing up. [LHO-09]

If they're remote alarms you can get around those. You stick to the walls. Just keep around the walls, so you don't go underneath the motion detectors and then just spray paint it. [RO-01]

It would not stop me if it's got an alarm and that. Burglars are good at getting around that one. [SO-16]

Five said alarms reduce burglaries, even though it may be possible to disarm or ignore them.

I just avoid those alarmed up houses. [LHO-01]

If it's got an alarm you've got to leave because you know it's no use. Once you open the door the alarm will go off. So we just leave the houses which have got alarms. [LHO-06]

If the alarm's going off you don't want to be sticking around too long. [SO-01]

When they [burglars] see stickers on the windows and realise there's an alarm they won't go near the place. If they haven't got an alarm they go in. [SO-15]

One informant commented that Neighbourhood Support stickers on the exterior of houses make a burglar think, 'Do I really want to break in here and steal stuff that's already marked?' [LHO-07].

4.7 Deciding what to take

When asked about how they decided what to take during a burglary, 25 informants volunteered an opinion. Their responses are detailed in Table 4.6. Most focused on items

that could easily be sold for 'fast' cash. Table 4.6 summarises the factors that influenced them and the items they took.

Table 4.6 Factors in deciding what to take

How to decide what to take	Number of informants
General	
Items that can be sold for money	19
Items that are easily carried	6
Money for self	5
Take items that can be exchanged for drugs	3
Items requested by others (drug dealers or 'higher sources')	3
Specific items	
Electronic items (TVs, DVDs, computer equipment, stereos, video equipment)	11
Jewellery	6
Microwaves	3
Clothes	1
Dogs	1
Guns	1
Kitchen equipment	1
'Anything that caught their eye'	1

The following comments are typical.

Just whatever I can sell, like appliances. I usually make a bit of money out of it. Basically they're easy to sell and it's what customers are after. I've got a few customers that buy everything. I don't take anything that I can't sell. [MO-01]

I just look for the expensive stuff. Videos, TVs and stereos. Jewellery and all that. Usually to get fast cash. [MO-02]

I take anything that looks valuable to me. Televisions, cameras, video cameras and just electrical appliances. [MO-05]

I'd look for expensive stuff that you can sell off cheap, like stereos, TVs and that. They're easy to sell and you know that people will want them. [SO-16]

4.8 Disposal of stolen goods

While reluctant to go into details, 26 informants provided some information on how they got rid of the stolen goods. Their responses are summarised in Table 4.7. By far the most common method was to sell goods to contacts of some kind. Only seven had sold goods to a second-hand dealer.

Table 4.7 Methods for disposing of stolen goods

Methods	Number of informants
Sold goods to unspecified contacts	13
Sold goods to second-hand shops	7
Sold goods to drug dealers	6
Sold goods to friends	5
Had stolen goods on order from others	3
Had stolen goods for self	2
Sold goods to gang contacts	1

Four said that they would definitely not sell goods to second-hand shops. It is unknown whether they had done so in the past.

The specific comments offenders made about disposing of stolen goods are set out below.

I'd see people, talk to people and they'd say they wanted things and they sort of make out a bit of a list. 'Here take that, sweet as.' That was when I got involved in gangs, because they buy anything. They sell it amongst themselves, sell it amongst their own community or whatever. People sell it to their families and things and that. [LHO-01]

I kept it. I know now not to keep it, I've had my house searched not so long ago. [LHO-03]

Oh, they would have kept it, or one of them [a friend] would have sold it to a drugs dealer, swap it out for a couple of ounces, it depends on what kind of stuff they've got. Probably for drugs or money. Because once it's out of your hands then sweet as, you don't worry about it. Just pass that on to somebody else. But just try to make sure that person doesn't get caught and dobs you in. [LHO-06]

They were supplying the drugs and that's how come I got in debt to them. [The stolen goods went] straight to the people that I owed the money to. To tell you the truth, most burglars sell the stuff as soon as they get it. They won't go out and do a burglary until they know they've got somewhere to sell it otherwise it's just a waste of time getting the stuff. [LHO-08]

I had a few connections and if I stole it from here [Lower Hutt] I'd probably go to Upper Hutt [to get rid of the goods]. [LHO-09]

There is always somebody out there that wants to take it off us. The guy that I sell it to usually just wants appliances like TVs and that. They would always take it off our hands. [MO-01]

I just ring some mates up and they'll come round and buy it. Never sell them to strangers because they might top me off. [MO-02]

I'd take it to the nearest drug houses and just ask. Or I'd give it to my friends if they want it. [MO-05]

I would hold it for a while and wait until things cool down. Maybe a couple of weeks, even a couple of months. The longest I've held something for was three years just so it could cool down. If you sell it straightaway you've got the risk of them telling the Police who they got it from or you've got the risk of them running a security check. I would either sell it for drugs or for just a small amount of money. [RO-03]

Friends. People who would want stuff like that. I sold to places like Cash Converters lots of times, it was quick money. [RO-04]

Flick them off to mates. Sell for drugs. I wouldn't take anything hot to second-hand dealers. No way, it's dangerous. Cash Converters get the cops, you know. My friends I trust. I wouldn't sell to people I didn't know. [RO-05]

Informants were not asked specifically what they thought happened to the stolen goods once they had passed them along to someone else.

4.9 Summary

The modus operandi of the offenders interviewed for this study varied. They claimed to have burgled more or less frequently, at different times of the day and with varying degrees of planning. They were deterred by obvious signs of security such as alarms and dogs and by the presence of people either in the house or in the vicinity. They mainly stole items that would fetch ready cash and sold them to people they knew. It is not clear whether or how those contacts disposed of the goods. There was some evidence that offenders avoided using second-hand dealers as an outlet for stolen goods.

5 Police and community initiatives

This section discusses informants' responses to questions about their knowledge of Police and community initiatives to reduce burglaries, the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives, the effectiveness of the Police and how burglars might 'get around' the Police.

5.1 Informants' knowledge of Police and community initiatives

Informants were asked about their knowledge of Police and community initiatives to reduce burglaries in their area. Not all initiatives operated in each area. Initially interviewers asked which initiatives informants knew of without prompting. Interviewers followed up with prompts about specific initiatives. Informants' answers are shown in Table. 5.1.

Table 5.1 Number of informants who knew of initiatives

Initiatives to reduce burglaries	Knew without prompting	Knew when prompted	Total number aware of initiative
<i>Police initiatives</i>			
Police fingerprinting crime scenes and suspects	2	13	15
Police doing bail checks	2	11	13
Police taking DNA samples from crime scenes and suspects	1	11	13
Police increasing their patrolling	5	8	13
Police targeting known offenders and executing search warrants*	1	9	10
Security initiatives for households	2	5	7
Police liaising with second-hand dealers	0	9	9
Custody clearances	0	0	0
0800 tip-off phone line**	0	0	0
Burglary-specific operations	1	0	1
<i>Community initiatives</i>			
Neighbourhood Support	8	11	19
Programmes/services to help with problems causing offending	1	11	12
Restorative justice programmes	0	0	0
Community patrols	0	6	6

* Informants included Police executing search warrants as part of the Police initiative of targeting known offenders.

** Rotorua only.

Only a few informants were aware of initiatives without prompting. More said they were aware of initiatives when prompted.

The Neighbourhood Support initiative was the best known, with 19 of 28 informants being aware of it.

Over half of the informants were aware of fingerprinting. Just under half knew about bail checks, increased Police patrolling, DNA samples and programmes or services to help with problems causing offending.

Understandably, the initiatives that informants were most aware of were ones that they had personal experience of—being targeted by Police or being searched, providing fingerprints, giving DNA samples or being checked for compliance with bail conditions. Those people aware of programmes/services to help with problems causing offending had attended a programme, usually to manage alcohol and drug issues better.

5.2 Informants' views on effectiveness of Police initiatives

Interviewers asked the informants who were aware of particular initiatives how effective they thought they were. Opinions were divided. The strongest support was for increased Police patrols. Table 5.2 shows their answers.

Table 5.2 Informants' views on the effectiveness of Police initiatives

Police initiative	Number who considered them effective	Number who considered them ineffective	Total number who offered a view
Police increasing their patrolling	9	2	11
Police doing bail checks	6	5	11
Police taking DNA samples from crime scenes and suspects	5	3	8
Security initiatives for households	5	3	8
Police targeting known offenders and executing search warrants	3	5	8
Police fingerprinting of crime scenes and suspects	3	7	10
Police liaising with second-hand dealers	0	1	1
Custody clearances	0	0	0
0800 tip-off phone line	0	0	0
Burglary-specific operations	0	0	0

Three informants said that targeting known offenders or executing search warrants would be effective in reducing burglaries.

Have someone [from the Police] that goes round and checks on them [offenders] every now and then but doesn't say when they're showing up. If they've got stolen goods on the property they'll try and hide it but if they don't know the person's coming then that person can ask, 'Where did this come from? That wasn't here last week. Where did this come from?' I feel it would make burglars more worried if they don't know when the cops are going to show. [LHO-07]

Search warrants and security checks have made a big difference because now people are aware when they commit an offence how it will come across to the Police. So it makes them little bit more wary before they do any other things. [RO-03]

Five thought that this initiative would not be effective in stopping determined burglars. One commented that if offenders 'wanted money they'd be doing burgs' [LHO-06]. Another added that 'most burglars sell the stuff as soon as they get it' [LHO-08] so were unlikely to be caught with it.

If someone's going to burgle a house, they're going to burgle a house no matter what. It doesn't really matter where the Police are or what the Police are doing, it's going to happen. If they want to burg things they'll do it. [SO-17]

When asked if being targeted by Police had made a difference to him, one informant said 'No, nothing that might matter' [RO-03].

Six informants thought that bail checks would reduce burglaries.

I thought it helped me because it kept me inside. [SO-04]

I knew they were going to be back so I didn't want to go anywhere, stay home. [RO-04]

Five other people did not think this initiative was effective.

It was an inconvenience. I wouldn't say it had an effect on it [my offending]. It was only five minutes out of the day. I sort of played them a bit. I stuck to the conditions for a couple of weeks and I said, 'I'm reporting every day, you know where I am,' and I got the curfew dropped so I was out again. [LHO-01]

I think bail checks, if they're consistent, would work well. But then you could be at home when the Police come around but leave straight after the Police have been. So I don't think that's a deterrent. It just depends on the person and drugs. Drug users don't care about anything. [SO-01]

While three informants thought fingerprinting would reduce burglaries, seven did not, as burglars would wear gloves to avoid leaving prints.

These days you use gloves. Everyone knows not to use bare hands because probably everyone around here has already been arrested and had their fingerprints taken. So they'll have to wear gloves. [LHO-06]

Three people said that DNA sampling would not be effective but five thought it would lead burglars to be more cautious. One commented:

I think the Police are getting a bit high tech with things more than what we think. Some criminals still act like they used to in the 80s while the Police have gone past us. [SO-01]

The court had ordered one informant to provide a DNA sample that ‘proved that I burgled the place that I burgled’ [LHO-05].

Two informants had been apprehended by selling stolen goods to dealers and a third was worried about this possibility. Another said it was easy to use false ID at a dealer to avoid detection. One informant believed pPolice liaison with second-hand dealers had ‘not really’ made a difference to him ‘because I had been doing burglaries for cash. If I found trouble it was because I wasn't financially stable’ [LHO-05].

No comments were offered on the effectiveness of custody clearances, the 0800 tip-off phone line or the Police’s burglary-specific operations.

5.3 Informants’ views on effectiveness of community initiatives

Informants’ views on the effectiveness of community initiatives are shown in Table 5.3. While Neighbourhood Support was the best-known community initiative, only eight out of 13 informants thought that it was effective. Five informants thought that it could be effective but was not, as people did not look out for others enough to deter burglars.

Table 5.3 Informants’ views on the effectiveness of community initiatives

Community initiatives	Number who considered them effective	Number who considered them ineffective	Total number who offered a view
Neighbourhood Support	8	5	13
Programmes/services to help with problems causing offending	9	0	9
Restorative justice programmes	2*	0	2
Community patrols	1	1	2

* Depending on the individual.

Comments included:

It puts me off when I see neighbours watching their neighbours’ houses. That's all good but if somebody got balls of titanium they're going [to burgle] no matter what. There's nothing that anyone can do to stop it. There are people out there with lumps of steel, they'll just go and do it anyway. [LHO-01]

They should keep an eye on people’s houses like Neighbourhood Watch. If there was more of that there would be less crimes because you can hear and see more things, which is good. That means we’ve all got to get along as well because you’re all looking out for each other but they don’t do that round Wainui. [LHO-07]

If the neighbours look out for each other then you've got a good neighbourhood but it doesn't happen much now. [SO-03]

Eight informants did think Neighbourhood Support was effective in reducing burglaries.

I was scared off a few times. Seeing them [neighbours] there. [LHO-01]

You hear it on the news all the time that some places round the country are getting burgled and the Police aren't even arriving for days after the burglary. So I think it's really up to the individuals or the Neighbourhood Watches. It is more the public than the Police. [SO-01]

[if it is] something out of the ordinary they will notice it. [SO-17]

The nine informants who thought that programmes or services to help with offending were effective all had personal experience of attending such a programme and had found it beneficial.

They made quite a big difference on me because at the time I was using drugs. [RO-03]

Only one course that really made a difference for me was the Straight Thinking course. [SO-17]

Two informants said that the effectiveness of the restorative justice initiative depended on the individual involved.

To some people it won't worry them. But to me it would. I wouldn't want like to see the person's face. [SO-15]

It depends on the person. I think a lot of youth these days, compared to the way we were, they've got no conscience. Nothing bugs them about what they do. [SO-17]

Another informant had an experience similar to restorative justice. She had stolen a container she later found held a dead person's ashes. She returned it to the homeowner who called the Police and she was jailed for this offence. She said the experience had a big impact on her.

While one informant said community patrols did not make a difference to him, another thought they could help to reduce burglaries.

5.4 The impact of the initiatives on burglary rates

When informants were asked if the initiatives were making a difference to burglary rates, only a few replied with any kind of definitive statement.

No one thought that initiatives were reducing burglary rates and ten informants were definite that they were not making a difference. One noted:

I think they [initiatives] haven't affected me because I'm basically avoiding being in contact with them. [MO-01]

For some, the burglars' motivation was greater than the impact of the initiatives.

People burgle stuff to sell basically. The people that are actually buying the stolen equipment are the ones that are encouraging the thieves to do it more and more. They will say, 'The more stuff you steal, the more cash you'll get from me or even more drugs'. That's the main reason. They don't do it just for cash, they need to supply their drug use. [LHO-07]

[The Police are not making a difference] because we need the money weekly. The burglary rate keeps going up and up. The cops don't stop it. [MO-03]

Others believed the Police were not effective.

They're not really catching burglars. The burglars are out there. They [the Police] just think they caught them but they haven't. Probably heaps of burglars out there. [RO-04]

I don't think they [the Police] have done much. I've known people that have been burgled. It's bottom priority. They take a couple of days to go out there and by that time the fingerprints are damaged or no good. They've got this epidemic of P. They're out trying to get all those dealers. [RO-05]

I think there's a lot more going round them [the Police] than what they know. They don't know what's been going on round the streets. [RO-06]

I haven't noticed any difference. What have they been doing? I don't know. I haven't noticed any change. They need more Police though. That's always been a big thing in New Zealand, the shortage of Police. [SO-01]

A further five informants thought the Police were making a small difference, describing it as 'half and half', 'yes and no' and 'a little bit but not that much'. Another acknowledged that the initiatives had 'just made me more aware of what to watch out for'.

5.5 Impact of the initiatives on informants' offending

Informants generally agreed that the initiatives had limited impact on their offending. As the comments below illustrate, no coherent pattern emerged.

When asked if it was now harder to sell stolen goods, four said it was not. One said it was harder but it did not reduce his burgling.

Three thought that the initiatives had not made burglars change to other offences. One thought that there had been a change in the type of offending but that this would eventually lead to more burglaries.

There are not as many people doing burglaries as there used to be. I'm seeing that they're starting to get more and more into drug dealing. So we must be due for an increase in burglaries because it's creating more drug addicts. The more drug addicts they create the more burglaries they're going to be looking at. [LHO-08]

When asked if initiatives in particular areas had encouraged burglars to change where they committed burglaries, four said they had and two said they had not.

The three informants who said they had reduced their offending did not link this to the initiatives, rather citing their present employment or a change in their own attitude.

One informant thought that properties were more secure now but two thought they were not. One noted that:

Nothing around here's secure enough. It's possible to rob anything and I don't think the Police are doing their job properly. [MO-05]

5.6 Informants' views on the effectiveness of the Police

Informants were asked if they thought that the Police had got better at reducing the number of burglaries or catching more burglars. Their answers are shown in Table 5.4. About half of the informants who responded did not think the Police were any more effective at either stopping burglaries or catching burglars.

Table 5.4 Informants' views on the effectiveness of the Police

Question	Police not more effective	Police more effective	Don't know	Total responses
Are the Police better at stopping burglaries in your area?	13	8*	0	22
Are the Police better at catching burglars in your area?	9	6	2	17

* Five conditional.

This was the one question where there were differences between the areas. Lower Hutt informants were the most positive about the effectiveness of the Police in that area. Four of the nine Lower Hutt informants said the Police were better at stopping burglaries, compared to two out of seven in Manurewa, two out of six in Rotorua and none in Sydenham.

Four Lower Hutt informants also said the Police were better at catching burglars, compared with one each in Manurewa and Rotorua and none in Sydenham.

5.6.1 Stopping burglaries

Thirteen people thought the Police had not become any better at stopping burglaries in their area.

Whenever there's one criminal being locked up there's another one out there. The Police have not got the burglaries down, in fact there's always going to be someone to replace the burglar. [LHO-05]

It's not working at this point in time because they're [the Police] too busy doing other important cases. Bigger cases like murders and manslaughter. They don't have time to run around with all these burglaries and catch all these criminals out there. Maybe if they got another Police force. [MO-01]

[Burglars are] burgling stuff every day, every month. It's getting higher and I know they [the Police] are probably doing their job but I think they need more Police because houses get robbed but they get there much too late. There should be more Police in Manurewa for burglaries because when there is a call up for burglaries they don't come until another hour later and they [the burglars] have already gone. [MO-06]

They [the Police] are not as good as they think they are. They still haven't done their homework. (laughing) [RO-04]

They just lack priorities. Just laziness. By the time they get there the dog has lost the scent. They haven't solved many burglaries at all. [RO-05]

I don't know that they catch any more criminals. A lot more crime happening but they're not catching them. [RO-06]

Eight out of 17 informants believed the Police had become better at stopping burglaries, although five expressed some reservations.

Sooner or later you're going to get caught. But there are more burglars now, there are more burglars than what there used to be. [LHO-02]

Sort of stopped burglaries. It's not burglars they [the Police] keep arresting it's just anyone and whoever. I think there are 10% good cops and 90% bad cops. Some cops just arrest you for the fun of it. [LHO-06]

I think they are scaring people from doing burglaries by making the sentences a lot higher in the last five years. It scares them a lot more but then they go and do other crimes in the area. [LHO-08]

You see the 50 new cops come from England or something and they target Manurewa and show their presence out there. Heaps of them roaming around. A lot of fellows [burglars] wait until two o'clock in the morning. [MO-03]

I think they have got better at stopping burglaries but I also think that the criminals have got more of an initiative of getting up there and getting more. [RO-03]

5.6.2 Catching burglars

These sentiments were reiterated when informants were asked if they believed that the Police were better at catching burglars. The nine who said the Police were not better made comments like:

No, because there's more fitter people out there than the cops. And there's a heap of room to go there especially if there's five burglars and one car with two cops in it and they all get away. You go that way and you go that way and you go that way, you go that way and for the cops it's like who should they go for? [LHO-09]

Not anything happening round that because I know quite a few [burglars] and they've been doing it for years. Police have got a bit slack. [RO-05]

No because I look in the paper and there's not many caught these days. They need to do something. [SO-16]

The six informants who thought that the Police were better at catching burglars thought that the Police had become more professional.

Most people around the Hutt are stupid. I see more burglars getting caught. Instead of being turned away they'll just do it anyway and they'll be caught for sure. You've got people that just don't care. [LHO-01]

I reckon the Police are getting more good in their detective work. [RO-04]

[Police have changed] in the sense of bashing and intimidation, being a bit more professional. They're actually doing investigating and using proper skills and Police didn't used to be like that. [SO-01]

Several informants offered suggestions on how the Police could be more effective. These included:

- tracking down teenagers if they know there are burglaries around
- keeping an eye on the youth
- stopping people drinking in town
- concentrating on receivers of stolen property (usually drug dealers)
- cracking down on methamphetamines makers—'Do some secret agent stuff'
- having all electronic items emit a radio signal so the Police could track them to an address.

5.7 Ways to 'get around' the Police

Informants were reasonably confident that they could 'get around' the Police initiatives as shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Informants' views on 'getting around' the Police

	Yes	No	Not stated	Total
Is it possible to 'get around' the Police?	17	6*	5	28

* Includes one who confirmed they were still offending.

Seventeen said that burglars were getting around the Police and cited a range of ways in which this was happening.

There's always one smart arse out there that's probably ahead of the cops. They might be scoping the place out and they might have been caught before and more aware of what, how they're going to get away with it. [LHO-05]

(There are) people out there these days that don't care. They just burgle whatever they like and they know they're going to get away with it. If they do it correctly like gloves, balaclavas, clothes you can destroy afterwards and shoes you can destroy afterwards. This is the stuff that burglars think of. You've got those burglars who think about the situation before they do it, where you've got the other ones that just don't give a shit. They're the ones that get busted easy. They go in there and take what they like, don't care about fingerprints, smashing the glass, whatever. [LHO-07]

If we see a Police car coming towards us we just pretend we are pulling into a house and stay there and until they've cruised off. It's just basically don't get anywhere near a Police car. So we don't even give them a chance to like pick up on us. [MO-01]

Aliases are the most common with security checks. If you get pulled up and you've got a warrant for your arrest or something like that then you just give them a false name. It's all in the dress as well too, because if you dress how you normally dress the Police have already got a certain target because of the way people dress. Also trying to get around the fingerprints. Where you need to get through somewhere or it required your hands, maybe chuck your sleeve over your hands or gloves. [RO-03]

Just covering themselves up, like their face and that. I seen on that Police Ten-Seven and they say 'Do you know this guy?' and he's all covered up and you can't actually tell. [SO-16]

The suggestions of what burglars could do to get around the Police included:

- wearing gloves or covering hands to avoid leaving fingerprints
- using disguises or covering face to avoid detection on security cameras
- better casing before burgling a house
- destroying clothes and shoes after burglary
- avoiding Police cars
- listening to Police radio communication on a radio scanner
- providing a false name when questioned by Police

- dressing inconspicuously
- using radios to communicate between accomplices
- posting lookouts
- blaming someone else for the crime
- wearing different shoes for offending
- being careful
- removing the number plate light on the burglar's car.

One informant said there was no way round the Police but went on to confirm that he was still offending.

You have to stick to their rules and then try to do your burls in your own spare time. [LHO-02]

Five informants did not think there were ways around the Police, 'unless they make deals to tell them what they want to know' [LHO-03].

5.8 Summary

It is not surprising that informants were most familiar with the Police and community initiatives of which they had direct experience, or that were most likely to incriminate them. These included fingerprinting, bail checks and DNA sampling, as well as Neighbourhood Watch and programmes to address their criminogenic needs. Offenders were particularly positive about the value of programmes and services. Most informants were confident they could 'get around' Police initiatives. The general perception was that offenders would still seek to meet their need for cash or drugs regardless of what steps the Police took.

6 What happened when informants were arrested

This section describes what happened when informants were last arrested for burglary.

6.1 Arrest situation

Table 6.1 shows information about informants' arrest situations. Over one-third (10) were arrested as a result of Police questioning or the offender making a statement. Six were arrested either at the time of the burglary or as a result of fingerprinting.

Table 6.1 The situations of the informants' arrests

Arrest situation	Number of informants
Arrested as a result of Police questioning or offender making a statement	10
Arrested at site and time of burglary	3
Arrested as a result of fingerprints	3
Arrested as a result of information provided by other offenders—'dobbed in'	2
Police visited informant and found stolen goods	2
Arrested as a result of security camera photos	2
Arrested as a result of matching DNA samples	2
Arrested as a result of neighbour providing information	2
Arrested as a result of a separate Police investigation	1
No information provided	1
Total	28

6.2 What happened after arrest

The Police had asked 13 informants why they had committed the burglaries. (No informants from Rotorua were asked this question.) Five told the Police that their burglaries were 'drug-related'. One informant had offered this explanation hoping to receive the lighter sentence of a drug rehabilitation programme.

The Police asked 11 informants about other burglaries committed in the area and asked six where the stolen goods had gone.

Five informants claimed that Police treated them violently when they arrested or questioned them.

6.3 Summary

Most arrests were the result of Police investigations either for the current burglary or for some other offence. Very few resulted from information provided by the public or by other offenders.

7 Sentencing

This section discusses the sentences informants received for their most recent burglary conviction, as well as their views on whether sentences make a difference to their behaviour, the fairness and point of the sentence and what factors they think judges should consider when determining sentences.

7.1 Sentences the informants had received

To be part of this sample, informants had to have been sentenced for burglary-related offences. Details of sentences they had received are given in Table 7.1. By far the most common sentences received for this offence were imprisonment (half of all informants) and periodic detention or community work under the Sentencing Act 2002 (just under half of all informants). One-quarter of informants received supervision. Several informants received a number of sentences simultaneously and some were still completing their sentence at the time of the interview.

Table 7.1 Sentences informants had received

Sentence type	Number who received this sentence the last time they were convicted of burglary	Number who had received this sentence for earlier offences
Imprisonment	14	9*
Periodic detention/community work	12	6
Supervision	7	2
Fine	1	1
Reparation	2	0
Undertake a specified training programme	0	2
Suspended sentence	0	2
Discharged from youth court	0	1
Unspecified sentence	0	2
No information	0	10

* Includes one in a CYF Youth Justice Residence.

7.2 Effect of sentence on behaviour

Of the 24 informants who offered an opinion on whether their sentence made a difference to their behaviour, 18 said that it had had a positive effect, including all five female informants.

They gave several reasons (shown in Table 7.2) for the change. Some had learned sufficient skills to manage their offending behaviour; others had acquired family responsibilities. Time in prison was enough to encourage others to make a change. If the offenders in this study follow the pattern described elsewhere⁶, it is likely that their burglary offending, at least, will diminish as they age.

Table 7.2 Why sentences made a difference

Reason	Number of informants
Sentence was a 'wake-up' or gave time to reflect on previous behaviour	6
Benefited from skills training programme or drug treatment during sentence	4
Did not like prison and does not want to return	3
Now has family responsibilities and does not want to jeopardise these	3
Knows how harsh the law can be	1
Others he met on PD advised him to stop offending	1

As these informants explained:

Prison has a pretty big effect on people. Sort of gets you thinking. You're locked away in a room, you don't know what's going on in the outside world. So you get thinking, 'Why did I do that when I've got to put up with this? Is it worth it?'—weighing up pros and cons about what you've just done and why you're here, how long you're here, stuff like that. What happens to you when you're in here, just everything. Some people come in here and they've got themselves a lot of injuries. There's a lot of dangerous people in jail. So that comes into play too. Other criminals would be a good deterrent for some people. [LHO-01]

I have already stopped [offending]. I have a picture about where I want to be in life and not to be a burglar, that's for real. A lot of things changed for me. So it's made me stop and realise that life's more important than doing burglaries. Realising what I'd done and realising that I was hurting other people when I shouldn't be. And realising that it wasn't really the lifestyle to live. I just looked deep inside and realised that it wasn't for me to be there when there's something better out there than doing burglaries all the time. [LHO-05]

Well I got a probation officer and she sent me to a counsellor because I told her I was having a lot of problems with the family and friends who do burglary. She sent me to a counsellor who I could just open up to and for the past eight months I've been all right. [MO-06]

It made me think and realise, 'Don't do crime ever again'. Just doing that shakes you up a bit because you're eating onions and you have to do what you're told and not answering back, stricter than your home. [MO-101]

⁶ See Leibrich, J., *Straight to the Point. Angles on Giving up Crime*, University of Otago Press in association with the Department of Justice, Dunedin, Wellington, New Zealand, 1993.

Six informants said that their sentence had made no difference to their offending behaviour or had encouraged them to offend more. The comments below describe the pressures they felt.

It just makes you go backwards. Actually poorer. When you get out you're back to square one again, unless you got good help and friends or got something lined up, a job or something and then you'll be sweet. But not if you're going back to your Aunty and Uncle's house again. Don't like bludging off the family. [LHO-02]

Made me feel like I was a criminal. Like the law just made me a criminal so I'll be one. [LHO-07]

I'm hanging out with thirty different gang members every blimen week and they're all telling me that they've got (burglary) work for me. If I was a bit younger and a bit more easy to intimidate, which I used to be, I'd probably be well and truly under the thumb of the gangs. [LHO-08]

It would make me think. Give me a lot of time to think, 'Is burglary worth it?'—then just move on to bigger and bigger things. [MO-03]

Five informants made particular mention of the increased sentences burglars could receive if their offence was considered a 'home invasion'. They considered this a deterrent.

I've noticed a few people coming in and they've got quite a harsh lag for what they've done and that. They reckon it's 'cause (it was seen as) an invasion. They entered the house when they're in there asleep or they come home. They went in there with no intention of coming face to face [but the court] didn't believe it. [LHO-01]

It makes a big difference, you don't want to be in jail for a while if you get caught. [LHO-03]

Usually there was sentence for burglaries, which is quite a light sentence, depending on what it is. It could either be a fine or community work or minimum jail sentence. But now that they've moved it towards home invasion it will probably be a maximum jail sentence. [RO-03]

One informant expressed a different view. He acknowledged that while they might act as a deterrent to some burglars, the harsher 'home invasion' sentences could also lead to an increase in the severity of the crimes burglars committed.

I think they are scaring people from doing burglaries by making the sentences a lot higher in the last five years. It works in two ways and there's a horrible end to that. It does deter them, it does scare them to the point that they'll have to beat the person up so they won't recognise them. That's where the home invasion started coming in, which they don't realise. They only know they're tough and they have taken it harder out on the victims. Naturally the more fear they've got the harder they're going to run. If they knock on the door or they're in a burglary and someone comes home they know that they're looking at three or four years. They're probably going to think, 'We might as well do the whole lot and try and get away with it.' [LHO-08]

7.3 Fairness of sentence

Table 7.3 shows what informants thought about the fairness of their last sentence. Over half the informants thought that their most recent sentence was fair and appropriate for their behaviour.

Table 7.3 Informants' views on fairness of last sentence

Was your last sentence fair?	Number of informants
Yes	16
No	9
Cannot decide	1
No response	2
Total	28

Typical comments were:

I shouldn't have done what I've done. [LHO-03]

Do the crime you've got to be punished for it, don't you? [LHO-08]

I was willing to take all the consequences. I knew I did wrong. I think I should pay that to make it right anyway. [MO-101]

I actually do think it was fair because at the time I was drinking quite a bit so I was repeating time after time. They decided to hold me in custody because I was a repeat offender and it got me off the streets anyway. [RO-03]

I suppose it is [fair], yep. It's easy to say no because you're doing the jail but I know those people lost a lot of things. [SO-01]

Others had been expecting something harsher.

I was rapt. It was better than going back to prison. I actually had my gears ready to go to prison and I gave my mum a kiss and my partner, 'See you when I get out' sort of thing. Five months PD, cool. Thank you. I was the only one in the cell but I actually got on my hands and knees and prayed. I was so happy. [LHO-09]

Nine did not think their sentence was fair. One thought their sentence was too light for the crime, while four felt hard done by because:

- they were covering for someone else
- they were charged with the wrong offence (two)
- there had been insufficient evidence
- they had confessed, apologised and returned the goods.

One commented:

Every time I've gone to court I've pleaded guilty. They've never taken my guilty pleas into consideration. I never had time taken off for that. That's the truth for all my crimes, no time was ever taken off for any pleas. So I haven't felt I've been treated very fairly. [RO-05]

The informant who could not decide on the fairness of his sentence said:

I can't average out what being fair is. Basically I can't take away what I've done to the other people, so they, the victims themselves, might not think it's fair. I can't average it out because me being the robber and them being the victims. [LHO-05]

7.4 The point of a sentence

Eighteen informants offered a view on what the point of a sentence was. Of these, eight thought that a sentence was meant to 'teach the offender a lesson' or be a 'wake-up call' for them.

The point of a sentence is to wake a criminal's mind up to teach them what's wrong from right. They keep drumming it in so that hopefully they don't reoffend. [LHO-05]

To try and buck you up, wake you up, get a life, get a job. I mean everybody else is working, you should too rather than just be a dole bludger or a guy that's out there just hunting anything they can steal. [LHO-07]

Other informants said the point of the sentence was:

- to give the victims some relief and make the judge and Police feel good
- to act as a deterrent
- to punish, including punishing the offender by separating them from their family
- for offenders on periodic detention/community work to think about what employment they could do
- to learn more criminal behaviour from other prison inmates
- to be made to mix with drug dealers at periodic detention/community work.

One thought that there was no point to a sentence.

About half of the informants did not think that, in general, sentences were effective in changing criminal behaviour. Four acknowledged that prison was a way to learn more about crime.

You come here, you learn more bad stuff. You learn what other people are in here for. [LHO-02]

I think [offenders are] better off to do the marae one [a community training programme] rather than the prison one because all that prison does is to help offenders to get to know other offenders and probably get together and do more crime. [LHO-05]

When I come inside it doesn't really help us rehabilitate or nothing because they're only hearing another way of doing it and stuff like that. Different ways of doing it or do a bigger crime. [MO-01]

Two informants believed that prison was too soft as a sentence.

I've been up to Rimutaka (prison) to see my mates and they laugh. They go f..k, I'd love to come back here. It's a holiday. You get three meals a day, you get paid even. It's like a holiday camp, that's what they tell me. That's why people are going to keep coming back. If you have a cold shitty cell with a drip leak in it and a shit toilet, do you really think they're going to want to go back in there every time? I don't think so. If you show them a shitty environment to live in, they don't want to live there. They'd rather do something to get better. It's got to be a bit harder on the criminals in prison because they're laughing. They're laughing at the courts, they're laughing at the system, they're laughing at the judge, they're laughing at everybody that puts them in prison. If they're fine in prison with mates and that, they're laughing. [LHO-07]

Others thought that prison sentences promoted an antagonistic attitude amongst offenders.

It makes you worse. It makes you anti more, anti everything. [LHO-02]

It really doesn't do anything because you get more angry when you get out. [MO-05]

Another informant said that:

Prison sentences do make a difference. But most of the thing with having a sentence is it's mixed in so much as a way of life with most of our people. Our friends and family are the ones that are inside. The fathers and all the uncles, they're seen as role models and when they see them going in there, they meet them in there, it's not something to look forward to but it's something that people follow. [RO-03]

7.5 What judges should consider when sentencing

Interviewers asked informants what factors they thought judges should consider when determining a sentence. Most of the 24 informants who responded offered several suggestions. These are detailed in Table 7.4. The most common were the background of the offender, any remorse or reparation and the offender's personal circumstances.

Table 7.4 Suggestions on what judges should consider when determining a sentence

Suggestion	Number of offenders
The background of the offender (including prior offending)	7
Remorse shown (including apology given, guilty plea, a confession, compensation offered or goods returned)	6
Whether the offender has a job, a family or a house (so should remain in the community)	6
Whether a prison sentence would be effective	4
Whether the offender was intoxicated at the time of the offence (so a lesser sentence)	2
What the offender's motivation was for committing the offence	2
The time period since last convicted	2
The impact on the victim (including if violence was used)	2
Whether a programme or drug rehabilitation would be appropriate	2
Whether offender was stealing for money to survive (so a lesser sentence)	1
The seriousness of the offence	1
Whether the offender was subject to peer pressure to offend	1
Whether the offender is likely to reoffend	1
The age of the offender	1
Whether the offender was grieving at the time	1

Informants offered a range of explanations for their answers.

They should take into account where the burglary was, a residential or industrial. Because I think going into somebody's house is the worse thing, way worse than a shop. [LHO-01]

They might be thinking about just chucking them behind bars. And it's no use because they go in and they'll just come out bigger and then they'll start bullying people. I reckon that the judge should just give them PD instead of chucking people in the cells because that's why people get bad, even worse. [LHO-06]

What they do most of the time is take it from your past history of offences, but then they've also got to take into account that there may be a time gap in [their offending]. And I think they should take into consideration, that maybe there was a time gap, or maybe they were under the influence at the time or under peer pressure something like that. [RO-03]

I guess you do the crime you do the time. I mean it's all up to the judges at the end of the day. No one can change the judge's mind, I mean a judge is a judge for a reason and they've got a reason for that. [SO-17]

While one informant thought everyone should be treated the same, two others said judges should consider each case on its circumstances.

If you got bad criminals you should do them first or last so the judge should actually sit down and think about the situation and say to himself, 'Well, is this going to work for this person in the long

run or am I just wasting my time giving him PD because he's just going to do it again?' [LHO-07]

The judge has to take into consideration is what we punish them for or what we've given them. Has the punishment in the past worked? Obviously it didn't so why do it again? I didn't even get asked why I was offending. They didn't even know that I had a drug problem so how could they take me on an individual basis? The first thing you've got to do when someone does a burglary is ask them why they did it. No one ever asked me why. I mean if the guy's got two kids and he hasn't been able to find a job and he's strapped for money, it's a different situation altogether. If he's drug abuser then he needs help with drugs, which is my situation. I was out there doing the burglary because I was a drug addict. I should have been getting drug rehab. I never even was asked. [LHO-08]

7.6 Summary

Almost all the informants in this study had been sentenced to imprisonment or periodic detention/community work. Over two-thirds thought this sentence was fair and had made a difference to their behaviour because it gave them time to reflect, they saw prison as a deterrent or they had benefited from programmes or treatment during their sentences. This relatively positive view may be an effect of the sampling, in that all informants were willing participants and therefore more ready to reflect on their offending.

One-quarter thought that their sentence either had no impact on their offending or encouraged them into greater offending.

8 Conclusion

This report describes the offending behaviour and perceptions of a small group of largely self-selected offenders. While their offending patterns reflect those described in other research, their views are not necessarily indicative of burglary offenders as a whole.

Half of the offenders in this study began offending before the age of 16. Most were strongly motivated to offend by a desire or need for money, for either drugs or living expenses. A number reduced or stopped their offending when they learned to manage their drug or alcohol problem. Overall, changes in offending behaviour appeared to be influenced by both 'push' factors, such as unwelcome prison sentences or unpleasant prison experiences, and 'pull' factors, like family responsibilities. Most agreed that it would take a combination of factors, including family support and employment opportunities, to reduce offending. Several had responded well to programmes they had attended.

No particular pattern emerged from the interviews as to when or how offending occurred. Burglars used a number of cues in selecting a target and carrying out an offence. While about half said their offending was opportune, the other half undertook some degree of planning. In both situations, offenders took account of cues such as alarms, security systems, dogs and the presence or absence of people in the vicinity when targeting a property. Most took some precautions to avoid being caught. Over half said they would return to the same area or house, suggesting that familiarity is one component of offending.

Most disposed of stolen goods through known contacts, not through public channels. They were reluctant to give away details of these arrangements. While some offenders specifically said they would not sell to second-hand dealers, it is unclear whether this represented a change in their behaviour due to second-hand dealers being closed off as an outlet for stolen goods.

Informants' views about the effectiveness of the Police and Police initiatives were strongly influenced by their own experience, their confidence in their ability to outwit the Police and their awareness of the increasing availability of sophisticated technology. They were familiar with fingerprinting, bail checks and DNA sampling but gave considerable weight to the likely effectiveness of increased Police patrolling. Most were sceptical about the effectiveness of Police initiatives in reducing burglary rates generally and their offending in particular. Overall, there was a sense that offenders' need for cash or drugs would lead them to ignore the effects of Police initiatives.

Most were realistic about the sentences they had received and took some responsibility for their own behaviour. They expressed a range of opinions on the purpose of sentences and the ability of a sentence to change offending behaviour.

A majority of informants claimed that they had already made positive changes in their lives. They cited a range of motivations, including the deterrence of prison, gaining family responsibilities, giving up on drugs and increased maturity. These factors appeared more powerful than the effect of any efforts by Police.

Appendix A Information sheet for offenders

Research on Police practice in reducing burglary

Information for people convicted of committing a burglary

We would like you to take part in a research project on burglary.

What the research is about

Burglary is one of New Zealand's highest recorded crimes. It has a serious impact on victims and communities. The Police are trying to reduce the number of burglaries.

We would like to find out how well this is working and one of the best ways to do this is by talking to people who have been convicted for burglary. We would like you to tell us about your own experiences of what the Police are doing.

How we are doing the research

Four Police Areas have been chosen for the research: Manurewa, Rotorua, Hutt City and Spreydon/Heathcote. We would like to talk to 10 offenders in each area sometime during September 2003.

How we chose you

Police in each area gave us a list of people convicted of a burglary between 1 January 2002 and 30 June 2003. We asked the Community Probation Service and the Prison Service to approach you to see if you would be willing to talk to us.

Who will be doing the interview

The interviewer will be Garth, who is an independent person working under contract to the Ministry of Justice. He has no connection to either the Police or the Probation Service.

Once you agree, the interviewer will contact you to arrange a time and place for the interview. If you are in prison we will offer you a \$20 phone card for taking part. If you are in the community, we will give you \$20 cash.

What the interview will involve

We expect the interview to take between 30 and 45 minutes. We will ask you about things like:

- your experience with the Police when they have been investigating a burglary
- how much you know about the things the Police are doing to try to reduce the number of burglaries
- your experiences of any of the things the Police are trying and any effects they have had on you
- the effect your sentence has had on you
- the history of your offending, when you began, why you did burglaries and what might make you stop offending.

If you agree, the interviewer would like to tape the interview. This tape will be confidential and only used for the research.

Choosing to take part

You can choose whether or not to take part. If you do decide to talk with us, you don't have to answer every question and you can pull out of the interview at any time.

Confidentiality

The interviews will be confidential to the research team. Neither the Police nor your probation officer will know what you said. If you tell us about offences that you haven't been caught or charged for, we will not report these to the Police or to your probation officer. There is a chance, though, that some time in the future a court may require us to report information on offending in court.

While the four Police Areas we are researching will be named in the final report, your name will not be used anywhere and there will be no information that could identify you.

If you want to, you will be able to check the typed interview notes. The interviewer will also ask you if you agree to be quoted anonymously in the report. If you want to you can check the quotes the researchers plan to use.

Who to contact for more information

If you would like to know more about the research, please contact Alison Chetwin, Research and Evaluation Unit, Ministry of Justice on 04 4949 864.

Appendix B The interview guide for offender interviews

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. My name is _____ and I'm doing this interview on contract to the Ministry of Justice. I'm independent and I don't have any connection with the Police or the courts.

I'd like to talk to you about what the Police are doing to try to stop burglaries in _____ and about your own experiences. What you tell me will help us understand more about how well the Police are doing and why people do burglaries.

It will take about half an hour. If it's OK with you, I'd like to tape the interview, and I'll take some notes as well. At the end I'll give you \$20/phonecard.

I won't tell the Police or your probation officer what you say and only the people doing the research will hear the tape. They won't know your name. However, if you do tell me about any offending you've done that the Police don't know about or haven't charged you for, it's possible that a court might ask me to tell them about them in the future. That's not very likely to happen.

Finally, remember that you don't have to answer any questions that you don't want to and you can stop the interview and leave any time you want.

Is that all OK? Can you please sign the consent form and we'll begin.

A. Police initiatives

I'd like to begin by talking about what the Police are doing about household burglaries in _____.

1. Do you know of any things the Police are doing to try to stop household burglaries happening? **Record answers—see checklist below for full list.**

As each initiative is mentioned, ask—Has this happened to you since the beginning of last year? If yes, what happened? Did it make any difference to what you did or how you behaved? **Probe.**

For example:

- Is it harder to sell goods?
- Have you switched to other offences?

- Switched to other areas?
- Reduced your offending?
- Attended a programme?
- Do you have a sense that properties are more secure?

Checklist of initiatives—**if informant does not mention ask (note that you had to ask).**

- targeting known offenders—making random visits, stopping their cars, stopping them on the street
- bail checks—checking up to make sure people on bail are at home when they are supposed to be; making sure they report to the Police and so on
- executing search warrants on houses
- fingerprinting
- DNA sampling
- increased patrolling
- security initiatives for households
- liaison with second-hand dealers.

2. Of all these Police activities, which one made the most difference to you?

B. Effects in general

3. Let's think about household burglaries in general in _____. Do you think the things the Police are doing have made any difference? If yes, in what way?
4. Is there anything that burglars or 'want to be' burglars can do to get round the Police? If yes, what kinds of things?
5. Do you think that is happening?
6. Overall, do you think the Police have got better at stopping burglaries in _____?
7. What about being better at catching burglars?
8. Last time you were convicted of a burglary was in (date). What happened when you were apprehended? How did the Police go about investigating that burglary? Did they try to find out about other burglaries at the same time?

C. Sentences

9. For your last burglary (or crime that included a burglary) you were sentenced to _____. Do you think that sentence is/was fair? Why/why not?

10. Did that sentence made any difference to your behaviour? In what way? *For those currently in prison:* Do you think this sentence will make any difference to what you do when you get out? In what way?
11. Have you been sentenced for other burglaries in the past? If yes, what kinds of sentences did you receive?
12. Did any of these make any difference to your behaviour? If yes, in what way?
13. Now let's think about sentences generally. What sort of things do you think the judge should take into account when they are deciding on a sentence for a burglary?
14. What's the point of the sentence? What good does it do? What would make a difference to your behaviour? (*e.g. rehabilitation, punishment*)

D. History

In this last section, I'm interested to find out more about your own story. **(Note: This part should be largely free flow with prompts. The questions below are for areas that should be covered.)**

How old you were you when you were first charged with a burglary?

Was that the first offence you've ever been charged with?

Why did you start doing burglaries?

Why do you keep on doing them?

How often do you usually do burglaries?

How do you usually go about it—alone, use a car, plan in advance, day or night?

How do you pick a house to burgle?

What would put you off choosing a particular house?

Do you ever go back to the same house? Why would you do that?

What about going back to the same area—would you do that? Why? How soon?

When you have broken into a place how do you decide what to take?

Why do you steal certain things?

How do you usually get rid of things you steal?—trade; sale; friends, shops, strangers; stole to order.

What kind of thing might make you stop burgling houses?

What would need to happen for you to stop offending?

E. Conclusion

It has been very interesting talking to you and I appreciate you doing this. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I'd just like to check a few things with you about what happens next. If you want to, you can check the typed notes from this interview to make sure they are correct. Would you like to do that? It won't happen for a couple of months. **If yes, check contact details.**

Is it OK for the researchers to quote you anonymously in the report?

If they decide to use a quote from your interview, you will be able to check it first. The quotes will only have a code number next to them, not your name or any other information that might identify you.

Would you like to see any quotes they want to use? The researchers will assume that it is OK to use the quotes unless you specifically object.

That's all I need to ask. Is there anything else you'd like to know? Thank you again, and here is the \$20/phonecard I agreed to give you.

Appendix C Consent form

I, _____, agree to be interviewed for this research study.

The interviewer explained to me the purpose of the research, and my right not to answer any question I don't like or to stop the interview, without having to explain why.

I understand that what I say will be kept confidential by the researchers and will only be used for research purposes. My name will not be used in any research reports and nothing will be published that might identify me.

I understand that the only exception to this is if I tell the interviewer about offending that the Police don't know about or haven't caught me for. I know that a court might ask the interviewer to repeat what I have said in court at some time in the future.

I agree to the interview being tape-recorded.

Signed _____

Date _____

