U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics



Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report

Crime Prevention Measures

By Catherine J. Whitaker BJS Statistician

Law enforcement agencies and other organizations concerned with crime prevention have increasingly urged the public to take steps to make their homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces safer from the threat of crime. This report presents information from the Victimization Risk Survey (VRS), administered to 21,016 persons age 16 and older in 11,198 households in February 1984 as a supplement to the ongoing National Crime Survey. It shows that substantial numbers of Americans have taken at least one of three specific crime prevention measures at home and were working in establishments where security features existed.¹ The survey found that:

• One-third of American households reported one or more of the following crime prevention measures: having a burglar alarm (7%), participating in a neighborhood watch program (7%), or engraving valuables with an identification number (25%).

• While black and white households were equally likely to have taken at least one of the three home crime prevention measures, Hispanics were less likely than non-Hispanics to have 'taken at least one such measure.

• About half of all households with incomes of \$50,000 or more reported at least one of the crime prevention measures, compared to about one-fifth of households with incomes below \$7,500. The Victimization Risk Survey (VRS) was administered in February of 1984 as a one-time supplement to the ongoing National Crime Survey of the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The VRS supplement collected information about erime prevention measures taken at home and at the workplace and about individuals' perception of the safety of their homes, neighborhoods, and places of work.

This special report examines several home crime prevention measures in detail: using burglar alarms, engraving valuables, and participating in neighborhood watch programs. Among the most

• Respondents in 19% of the households reported that a neighborhood watch program existed in their area. Where a program was reported, 38% of households participated.

• Two-thirds of the employed survey respondents reported the presence of at least one security feature at their place of work. The most frequently cited workplace security features were a receptionist to screen persons entering the workplace (42%), a burglar alarm system (33%), and guards (30%).

• Ninety percent of respondents working at places with more than 50 employees reported some security features at work, compared to about half of those working at places with 10 or fewer employees. March 1986

interesting findings are that twofifths of the households in communities with neighborhood watch programs participate in these programs and a fourth of all households have engraved their valuables with an identification number. The report also examines the characteristics of households and businesses that have taken crime prevention measures.

The findings of this report highlight the efforts of citizens to combat crime, thus providing policymakers and practitioners with valuable information on crime prevention.

> Steven R. Schlesinger Director

• Workers employed in manufacturing were most likely to have security measures at their place of work; persons employed in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, mining, or construction were the least likely.

Crime prevention at home

Citizens may act in ways that deter crime for a variety of reasons. Some of these actions may be only secondarily related to crime prevention, and some may have nothing to do with crime. For example, the residents of a third of the households surveyed owned a dog. Although most household residents probably regarded their dogs as family pets, some dogs may have been chosen for their ability to intimidate strangers. Similarly, while homeowners may install alarm systems to prevent bur-

 $^{^1\,{\}rm For}$ more information on the Victim Risk Survey and the National Crime Survey see "Methodological note," p. 6.

glary, they may also do so to reduce insurance premiums. Consequently, while it is relatively easy to measure specific crime prevention measures households have taken, it is more difficult to identify the reasons underlying these actions.

One-third of American households reported using at least one of the following three crime prevention measures: having a burglar alarm (7%), participating in a neighborhood watch program (7%), or engraving valuables with an identification number (25%) (table 1). These proportions show some variation when the characteristics of the household respondents or the characteristics of the household itself are examined.²

Age. Household respondents age 65 or older were less likely than younger ones to report that their valuable possessions had been engraved. The proportions of households that had a burglar alarm or had participated in a neighborhood watch program did not appear to be related to the age of the household respondent.

Race. Black households were more likely than white households to participate in neighborhood watch programs, but there were no measurable differences in the proportions of black and white households with burglar alarms or with engraved valuables.

Ethnicity. Hispanics were less likely than non-Hispanics to participate in a neighborhood watch program or to engrave-valuables with an identifying number. However, about the same percentage of Hispanics and non-Hispanics had burglar alarms.

Educational attainment. Households where the respondent had completed at least one year of college were the most likely to have engraved their valuables. Households where the respondent had only an elementary education were the least likely. Households with college-educated respondents were more likely than others to have installed burglar alarms or to have joined a neighborhood watch program.

Home ownership. A higher percentage of homeowners than renters had taken each of the three crime prevention measures. About twice as many homeowners as renters had burglar alarms (8% vs. 4%); 10% of the homeowners participated in neighborhood

 2 The bousehold respondent was any household member who could supply information about the household. In 94% of the cases the household respondent was either the household head or the head's spouse.

llave a burglar alarm 7% 4 5 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8	Jained a neighbor- hood walch program 7% 6 4 7 10 9 6	Engraved valuables with an identifying number 25% 36 30 29	Have taken at least one of these measure 33% 41 34
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or year completed, Income is that of all family members during the 12 months prior to the interview.

watch programs but only 4% of the renters; and a higher percentage of homeowners than renters had engraved their valuables (27% vs. 23%).

Household size. The use of home protection measures did not vary consistently by household size. Households in the two-to-five-person range were more likely to have engraved valuables than single-person households. Four-tofive person households were about twice as likely as single-person households to participate in neighborhood watch programs. There is some evidence that large households (six or more persons) were less likely to have burglar alarms. suburban area is the portion outside the centrul city. Nonmetropolitan areas include rural areas and cities of fewer than 50,000.

Number of units in structure.

Persons in single-family homes were about three times more likely than those living in buildings with four or more units to participate in neighborhood watch programs. Moreover, persons in single-family units (including mobile homes) were the most likely to have engraved their valuables. There was no measurable difference in the proportions having burglar alarms.

Location of residence. Households in metropolitan areas were more likely than those in nonmetropolitan areas to have burglar alarms or to participate in neighborhood watch programs. Suburban households were more likely than those in either central cities or nonmetropolitan areas to have engraved their valuables.

Family income

Half the families in the highest income category (\$50,000 or more) had taken at least one of the three crime

Table 2. Home crime prevention measures by family income and selected demographic characteristics				
	Percent of households taking at least one crime prevention measure with family incomes of			
Demographie characterístics ⁰	Less than \$10,000	\$10,000- 24,999	\$25,008 or more	
Age				
16-19	43%	38%	4296	
20-24	32	39	41	
25-34	25	- 35	41	
35-49	25	33	45	
50-64	20	30	43	
65 and over	18	28	35	
Race				
White	22	32	43	
Black	26	36	50	
Other	_	29	41	
Ethnie origin				
Non-Hispanie	24	33	40	
Hispanie	17	22	35	
Educational				
atiainment ⁶				
Elementary sehoo		19	29	
High school	24	32	40	
College	33	37	-16	
Tenure				
Owned	23	34	44	
Rented	23	29	34	
Number of persons				
in household				
1	19	30	37	
2-3	26	32	44	
4-5	27	35	43	
6 or inore	21	30	36	
Number of units				
in structure	6.9	a 2	4 #	
1	23	34	45	
2-3	44 44	28	39	
4-9 30	23	30	33	
10 or more	18 26	24	28	
Mobile home	20	36	30	
Location of residence ^e				
Metropolitan araa				
Central eity	24	33	40	
Suburban area	26	32	44	
Nonmetropolitan				
arca	21	31	38	
Natos Nome arima				

Note: Home crime prevention measures are: having a burglar alarm, engraving valuable property, and joining a neighborhood watch program. Family income is that of all family members during the 12 months prior to the interview.

-Too few cases to obtain statistically reliable data.

^aIndividual characteristics are those of the household respondent.

bEducational attainment is the highest year or grade completed. ²A metropolitan area is a county or counties

A metropolitan area is a county or counties that contain a city or cities having at least 50,000 total population. A central city is the largest city of a metropolitan area. A suburban area is the portion outside the central city. Nonmetropolitan areas include rural areas and cities of fewer than 50,000. prevention measures. This proportion was higher than that for any other income group and more than twice as high as the percentage for households with incomes less than \$7,500. The proportion in the highest income category with engraved valuables was about twice as high as that for households with incomes less than \$7,500. Households in the highest income category were about twice as likely as those with incomes of \$30,000-49,999 and about three times as likely as those with incomes less than \$7,500 to have a burglar alarm. The proportion of households participating in neighborhood watch was about four times as great for households with incomes of \$50,000 or more as for those with incomes less than \$7,500.

The relationship between family income and crime prevention measures may result in part from the costs of some of these measures. High-income families may be more able to afford burglar alarm systems; they may also own a number of valuables that could be engraved.

Table 3. Households reporting a neighborhood watch program in their area			
Demographic characteristics ⁶	Percent of households		
Tatal	19%		
Race			
White	19		
Black	23		
Other	20		
Ethnicity			
Non-Hispanie	20		
Hispanie	16		
Family income ^b			
Less than \$7,500	14		
\$7,500-9,999	14		
\$10,000-14,999	16		
\$15,000-24,999	19		
\$25,000-29,990	22		
\$30,000-49,999	25		
\$50,000 or more	30		
Tenure			
Owned	21		
Rented	16		
Number of units in			
structure			
1	21		
2-3	17		
4-9	15		
10 or more	15		
Mabile home	13		
Location of residence ^e			
Metropolitan area			
Central city	25		
Suburban area	21		
Nonmetropolitan area	12		

^aIndividual characteristics are those of the household respondent.

bincome is that of all family members during the 12 months prior to the interview.

^cA metropolitan area is a county or counties that contain a city or cities having at least 50,000 total population. A central city is the largest city of a metropolitan area, A suburban area is the portion outside the central city. Nonmetropolitan areas include rural areas and cities of fewer than 50,000. To determine whether the relationships between demographie characteristics and crime prevention measures are present at different incomes, households were examined separately for three income categories: low (less than \$10,000), middle (\$10,000-24,999), and high (\$25,000 or more).

Many of the relationships previously described between demographic characteristics and crime prevention measures are present within each income category. However, this was not always the case. For example, homeowners in general were more likely to use crime prevention measures than renters, but this was not true for the low-income group (table 2). The proportions of central city and nonmetropolitan households that took crime prevention measures did not differ for those with incomes below \$25,000.

High-income nonmetropolitan households were as likely as high-income metropolitan households to have engraved valuables. The percentage of households in different locations at each income level with engraved valuables was as follows:

Location	Inc	oma levo	2]
of residence	Low	Middle	High
Central city Suburban area Nonmetropolitan	$\frac{17\%}{21}$	25% 27	33% 32
area	15	25	31

Neighborhood watch programs

About one family in five reported that they lived in areas with neighborhood watch programs (table 3). Black households were more likely than white households to have a neighborhood watch program; homeowners more likely than renters; and families with incomes of \$50,000 or above more likely than families with incomes below \$50,000.3

One in four of the central-city households had a crime watch program in their neighborhood, 1 in 5 of the suburban households, and 1 in 8 of the nonmetropolitan households.

A substantial proportion of households that were located in areas with neighborhood watch programs participated in these programs (table 4). The overall figure was 38%. About 44% of the households with family incomes of \$25,000 or more participated, compared with 29% of those with incomes of less than \$10,000. A higher proportion of four-to-five-person households participated in neighborhood watch than did

³The difference between those with incomes of \$50,000 or more and those with incomes of \$30,000 to \$49,009 is significant at the 90% confidence level.

single-person households. The proportion of homeowners was nearly twice as high as the proportion of renters. About 44% of households in singlefamily homes participated in neighborhood watch programs, compared with 16% of household respondents in buildings of 10 units or more.

Table 4. Participation in a neighborhood watch program for households in neighborhoods with these programs				
	p	articly	ation in	
		righbo	rhood wa Not	ten
Demographic			ASCOL-	
characteristics	Y es	No	tained ^b	Total
Total Age	38%	60%	2%	100%
16-19	33	67		100
20-24	26	73		100
25-34	35	62	3	100
35-49	43	56	-	100
50-64	45	53	~~~	100
65 and over	32	64	4	100
Race				
While	38	60	2	100
Black	42	55		100
Other	-	67		100
Ethnic origin		e 0.	~	
Non-Hispanic	39	59 ae	2	100
llispanie Educational	29	66		100
sttainment ^C				
Elementary school	34	64		100
High school	35	63	3	100
College	42	55	2	100
Pamily incomed	**		*	100
Less than \$10,000	29	67	4	100
\$10,000-24,099	38	61		100
\$25,000 or more	44	54	- 2	100
Tenure				
Owned	45	53	2	100
Rented	23	75	3	100
Number of persons				
in household				
1	29	68		100
2-3	39	59	2	100
4-5	45	53		100
5 pr more	34	65		100
Number of units				
in structure	**	<i>#</i> 4	~	100
1 2~3	44 26	54 73	2	100
2~3 4-9	20	75	_	100 100
10 or more	16	79		100
Mobile home	36	61		100
Location of	24			190
residence ^C				
Metropolitan area				
Central city	34	64	2	100
Suburban area	40	58	2	100
Nonmetropolitan	•		-	
area	42	56	-	100
Note: Basers to out of			ta 100	

Note: Percentages may not total to 100

because of rounding.

-Too few cases to obtain statistically

reliable data. ^aIndividual characteristics are those of the

busehold respondent. bincludes responses of "don't know."

^cEducational attainment is the highest grade

or year completed. Income is that of all family members during the 12 months prior to the interview.

^eA metropolitan area is a county or counties that contain a city or cities having at least 50,000 total population. A central city is the largest city of a metropolitan area. A suburban area is the portion outside the central city. Nonmetropolitan areas include rural areas and cities of fewer than 50,000. Although those who resided in nonmetropolitan areas were only about half as likely as central city residents to have a neighborhood watch program in their community (12% vs. 25%), there is some evidence that they were more likely to participate in such programs when they existed.

It is possible that because of the higher population density in central cities, neighborhood watch programs can function successfully with lower percentages of participation by area residents, while in nonmetropolitan areas greater participation by area residents is essential to the operation of the program. In addition, more residents in nonmetropolitan areas than in central cities may be acquainted with their neighbors, may be more knowledgeable about community concerns and issues, and may be more likely to participate in crime prevention programs as a result.

Crime prevention measures and fear of crime

About 32% of the household respondents felt that their neighborhood was very safe from crime; 59% felt their neighborhood was fairly safe; and 10% felt their neighborhood was unsafe.

Those who felt their neighborhood was very safe from crime were less likely to have taken at least one crime prevention measure than those who felt their neighborhoods were unsafe or only fairly safe (table 5).

Other crime prevention measures

Although household respondents were asked about only three crime prevention measures the household may have taken, survey interviewers recorded the presence of a variety of features in or

		old respor that neig	
Crime prevention measures	Very sale	Poirly safe	Fairly or very unsafe
Tota1	100%	100%	100%
None	68%	54%	6396
At least one	30%	34%	35%
Burglar alarm Engraved	6	7	,8
valuables Participate in neighborhood	24	26	27
watch	7	8	7

around the house or apartment building in which the household was located. These included:

- a fence or barricade at the entrance
- a doorkeeper, guard, or receptionist • an intercom or phone to gain access
- to the building
- surveillance cameras
 bars on windows or doors
- signs indicating alarms or security devices

• other warning signs (such as "beware of dog").

Twenty percent of the households surveyed were in structures with at least one of these features (table 6). The proportion was highest for households located in buildings of 10 or more units. It was also higher for households in central cities than for nonmetropolitan households and for renters rather than owners. The most common security feature for households located in buildings with 10 or more units was an intercom or telephone system to control access. This feature was present for 36% of the households.

Security measures at work

The VRS elicited information about security measures at the workplace for all respondents who had worked outside the home at only one location during the previous 6 months. Specifically, they were asked whether there was: • a receptionist or guard who checked people coming in

Table 5. Security features observed by survey interviewers by selected bousehold characteristics						
Household characteristics	Percent of households with one or more security features					
Total	20%					
Number of units in stru	Number of units in structure					
1	13					
2-3	13					
4-9	20					
10 or more	56					
Mobile home	16					
Location of residence*						
Metropolitan area						
Central city	30					
Suburban area	19					
Nonmetropolitan area	12					
Tenurc						
Owned	16					
Rented	26					

Note: Security features observed by survey interviewers consisted of: a fence or barricaded entrance; a doorkeeper, guard, or receptionist; an intercom or phone; surveillance camera; signs indicating security or burglar alarm systems; other warning signs; bars on the windows or doors.

*A metropolitan area is a county or counties that contain a city or elties having at least 50,000 total population. A central city is the largest city of a metropolitan area. A suburban area is the portion outside the central city. Nonmetropolitan areas include rural areas and cities of fewer than 50,000. Table 7. Percent of respondents who reported specific scenarity measures at work by size of establishment

work by size of establishment					
	Number of employees in establishment				
Security measures	Tota] ^{&}	1-10	11-50	51 or more	
Percent of responde	nts				
who reported:					
Receptionist or					
guard who chee people in	4256	22%	40%	65%	
Burgiar alorm	44.22.70	62 23	ט/ ער		
system	33	26	38	43	
Police or guard					
for protection	30	11	18	54	
Pass or 1.D.					
required for					
entrance	. 19	5	8	38	
Entry or gate kep	L.				
locked during working hours	16	9	12	26	
Surveillance	10	3	12	20	
comera	16	6	11	28	
Guard dog	2	4	2	3	
5					
At least one of these measures	67	53	71	90	
	- •			20	
Of respondents repo	rling				
security measures,	- b				
percent who reporte	37%	63%	49%	22%	
Тжо	26	23	30	25	
Three	16	8	13	20	
Four or more	21	6	8	32	
a Total category in	eludes r	espon	lents fo	o r	
whom size of esta		nt wa	s not k	nown	
or not ascertained			00 6 6 6 6 6		
Percentages may of rounding.	not tote		oo beel	tuşê	
or contenus.					

• a burglar alarm system

- e police or guards for protection
- pass or ID required for entrance
- an entry or gate kept locked during working hours
- surveillance cameras
- e guard dogs.

Two-thirds of those asked about security at the workplace stated that at least one of these means of protection was used at their place of employment (table 7). Among those reporting security measures, some 37% worked at places with only one means of protection; 26% at places with two; 16% at places with three; and 21% at places with four or more of the specified measures.

A higher percentage of respondents who worked in large establishments, that is, those with 51 or more employees, reported security measures than those who worked in smaller ones. Ninety percent of respondents at large establishments reported one or more crime prevention measures, compared with 71% of those working at mediumsized establishments (11-50, employees), and 53% of those at small establishments (10 or fewer employees). In addition, a higher percentage of those working at large establishments Table 8. Percent of respondents who reported at least one security measure at work by type and size of establishment

			employe lishmeni	
Type of establishment	Total®	1-10	11-50	51 or more
- Total	07%	53%	71%	90%
Manulnoturing	83	60	76	94
Finance Public	74	63	87	97
administration Professional	73	63	75	91
services	71	61	70	85
Transportation Trade (wholesale	60	56	75	89.
and retail) Business and entertain-	59	50	64	88
ment services Agrieulture, for- estry, fisherles, mining, and con-	54	48	76	92
struction	37	37	64	80

whom size of cstablishment was not known or not ascertained.

reported multiple security measures than did respondents who worked in smaller establishments. Of those who reported one or more security measures at work, 32% of the employees at large firms reported four or more measures compared with 6% of those at small establishments. Respondents at large establishments. Respondents at large establishments were more likely than those at medium-sized and small establishments to report each type of security measure except guard dogs, which were rarely reported for establishments of any size.

Respondents who worked at small and medium-sized establishments were more likely to report a burglar alarm or a receptionist than any other security feature. Medium-sized establishments were reported as about equally likely to have a receptionist as they were to have a burglar alarm. Respondents at large establishments most frequently mentioned receptionists (65%), guards (54%), or burglar alarms (43%).

The percentage of respondents who

Table 9. Respondents' persention of safety at workslage

reported security features at work varied by type of establishment. About four-fifths of respondents in manufacturing indicated that there were one or more security measures at work (table 8). About three-fourths of those in public administration, professional services, and finance noted at least one crime prevention measure at work. The lowest proportion of respondents with one or more crime prevention measures at work were in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, mining, and construction activities. These tend to be outdoor activities making it more difficult to install security measures.

Within each establishment type the proportion of respondents with security measures at work rose with the number of employees. For example, almost all respondents in finance, manufacturing, business and entertainment, and public administration with more than 50 employees reported at least one security measure, while about half to two-thirds of those in these types of establishments with 10 or fewer employees reported one or more security measures.

Fear of crime at work

More than 9 in 10 persons surveyed felt very or fairly safe in their place of work. This was true whether or not there were any security features at the the workplace. In general, the proportion who felt "very safe" as opposed to "fairly safe" increased with the increase in safety features (table 9).

Very few persons—about 1 in 10--felt in danger of being the victim of a crime by a fellow employee. Slightly more in establishments with more than 50 employees—about 1 in 6—expressed fear of possible victimization. This may simply be because those working in larger establishments were less likely to be personally acquainted with all their coworkers and were more eoncerned about crimes of theft or violence committed by unknown persons.

	Perce	nt of respondent	is who reported	their workplace Fairly	to be:
Number of security measures at workplace	Total	Very sale	Fairly safe	or very unsale	Don'i know
None	100%	43%	49%	8%	1%
At least one	108	51	43	6	a
One	100	47	46	7	
Тwo	100	51	43	6	
Three	100	51	44	4	
Four	100	60	36	4	
Five or more	100	61	34	5	

Methodological note

The National Crime Survey measures personal crimes of violence (rape, robbery, and assault), personal crimes of theft (larceny with or without contact), and household crimes (burglary, household larceny, and motor vehicle theft). A representative national sample of about 127,000 persons in 60,000 households are interviewed twice a year. Each month a sixth of the sample are interviewed about criminal incidents. including those not reported to the police, that occurred during the previous 6 months. Definitions of the demographic characteristics used in this report and complete descriptions of the NCS sample design and data collection methods can be found in Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1983, Bureau of Justice Statistics. NCJ-96459 (Washington, D.C.: August 1985).

The Victimization Risk Survey was administered as part of the National Crime Survey in February of 1984. In addition to the usual questions asked on the NCS, interviewers obtained information from respondents about work, leisure activities, and crime prevention measures to identify possible sources of vulnerability to crime. After leaving each interviewed household, interviewers recorded information about household security measures and neighborhood characteristics that may influence the risk of victimization.

Questions about home crime prevention measures were asked of the household respondent. For each household one knowledgeable person was selected to answer questions pertaining to the entire household. The household respondent was not necessarily the head of household, that is, one of the persons who owned or rented the housing unit. In 94% of the cases, however, the head of household or spouse served as the household respondent. The household respondent had to be at least 18 years of age unless the household head or spouse was under 18. Since questions about home crime prevention measures were asked of the household respondent, the personal demographic characteristics are those of the household respondent and not necessarily those of the head of household.

A total of 11,719 households and 24,220 individuals completed the basic NCS questions in February 1984. Of these, 21,016 individuals in 11,198 households completed the VRS supplements. VRS supplements were not completed by persons aged 12-15 or by proxy respondents. A small number of respondents who answered the regular NCS questions refused to answer the VRS supplement.

Since the VRS supplement was a 1month sample, usual NCS weighting procedures to obtain annual estimates and rates cannot be used. However, each 1-month sample is representative of the U.S. population. The percentages presented in this report are based on unweighted totals. Significance tests have been modified to account for the use of unweighted rather than weighted data. All comparisons presented in the text are significant at the 95% confidence level or above, except where the phrase "some evidence" is used, indicating significance at the 90% confidence level. Differences in percentages that are below the 90% confidence level are referred to as "not measurably different." More information on estimation procedures can be found in Appendix III of Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1983 ("Survey Methodology and Standard Errors").

Copies of the VRS supplement are available from BJS.

Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Reports are prepared principally by BJS staff under the direction of Joseph M. Bessette, deputy director for data analysis. This report was written by Catherine J. Whitaker. It was edited by Carol Kalish, assisted by Marianne Zawitz. Marshall DeBerry, Anita Timrots, and Gertrude Thomas provided statistical assistance. Marilyn Marbrook, publications unit chief, administered report production, assisted by Millie Baldea, Tina Dorsey, and Joyce Stanford.

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