

The market reduction approach to reducing property crime

Like any other economic market, the stolen goods market is largely driven by supply and demand. As such, property crime can be understood as a function of the ease of theft and the availability of a pool of willing buyers. The Market reduction approach (MRA) to reducing property crime focuses on shrinking the stolen goods market, by preventing supply and reducing the demand for stolen goods. Without an active market, disposal becomes difficult, risky and unrewarding. All of these factors have significant implications for an offender's willingness to engage in property crime. MRA strategies include:

1. *Identifying hot products:* Identifying the items which are most attractive to thieves enables the public to make choices about which products to purchase. For police, knowing which products are 'hot' will allow them to identify the types of markets that would deal in such products, the potential location of those markets and an indication of who would be dealing in a particular market.
2. *Target hardening:* By making property less valuable and easier to trace, the property becomes less desirable for potential buyers. Target hardening measures may involve the unique marking of property by owners or manufacturers, designing products which have security features, using alarms, locks and other security devices which prevent items from being re-used.
3. *Addressing handlers:* The final destination for stolen goods is often unknown. However research has demonstrated the important role of commercial and residential fences, hawking markets, drug dealers and the general public in providing an avenue of disposal and protection from police. Regulating and licensing second-hand suppliers, enforcing laws related to handling stolen goods and informing handlers of the consequences of receiving stolen goods are vital to changing the level of demand.
4. *Public education campaign:* Crime reduction using the MRA may be assisted in the long term by creating a greater understanding amongst the public of their role in perpetuating crime. Handling stolen goods or ignoring the risks may stimulate crime, increase insurance and contribute to the suffering and fear of people who are victims of crime. Furthermore, a public education campaign would encourage those who do not consider the risks to be better informed about the consequences of knowingly handling stolen goods, thereby acting as a deterrent.

Further reading:

Clarke RV 1999. *Hot products: understanding, anticipating and reducing demand for stolen goods*. Police research series paper 112. Policing and Reducing Crime Unit, Research Development and Statistics Directorate. London: Home Office

Sutton M, Schneider J & Hetherington S 2001. *Tackling theft with the market reduction approach*. Crime reduction research series paper 8. Police and Reducing Crime Unit, Research Development and Statistics Directorate. London: Home Office

Sutton M 1998. *Handling stolen goods and theft: a market reduction approach*. Home Office research study no 178. London: Home Office