

Who?

- **Street crime is a predominately male crime in terms of perpetrators.** A Home Office study in 2003 suggested that 94% of offenders in this category were male¹.
- **The majority of street crime offences (over 60%) are carried out by groups of offenders.** Normally this is two perpetrators, but has been anything up to five or more².
- **The street crime offender is most likely to be 16 to 20 years old,** with 50% of all offenders in 2003 falling into this age category³. Smith (2003) has identified that in fact, offending is “increasingly concentrated in younger age groups”⁴, and this is shown in two ways: a) that, as perpetrators of street crime, the 11 to 15 year old category has increased fivefold (by 483%) since 1993, and b) that other crimes (e.g. burglary and violence against the person) do not show the same trend in increasing numbers of younger offenders.
- **Often, the ethnicity of the perpetrator simply reflects the local demography**⁵, and so generalisations and inferences beyond this point do not help the understanding of street crime. To give an example, Smith (2003) found that white perpetrators of personal robbery accounted for 99% in Blackpool, but on the London Underground, 82% of offenders were black.

What?

- Street crime (or ‘mugging’) is generally regarded as ‘robbery’ and ‘snatch theft’ combined⁶, but there are nuances in its definition, and so

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, at p.17.

⁵ Hallsworth, S. (2005) *Street Crime*. Cullompton: Willan; Smith, J. (2003) *Op. Cit.*

⁶ “A person is guilty of **robbery** if he steals, and immediately before or at the time of doing so, and in order to do so, he uses force on any person, or puts or seeks to put any person in fear of being then and there subjected to force.”; “**Snatch theft** is an offence where property is stolen from the physical possession of the victim and some degree of force is applied to the property but not the victim.

it often also incorporates ‘theft from the person’⁷, ‘theft of personal property’⁸ and ‘personal robbery’⁹.

- Smith (2003) describes five key types of personal robbery¹⁰:
 1. **‘Blitz’** – violence is employed by the offender to overwhelm the victim before any property is removed.
 2. **‘Confrontation’** – a demand for property or possessions is made by the perpetrator.
 3. **‘Con’** – the victim is conned into some form of action by the offender.
 4. **‘Snatch’** – the perpetrator grabs the property using physical force, but without prior warning to the victim.
 5. **‘Victim initiated’** – the victim becomes such after they have initiated some contact with the offender (e.g. prostitution).

To this, we can also add the category of **‘stealth’** theft (used by the Home Office and the British Crime Survey), which describes a situation whereby the offender uses no violence or force, and as such the victim is not, at the time, aware that the theft is occurring¹¹.

Source: Tilley, N. et al. (2004) ‘*Problem-solving street crime: Practical lessons from the Street Crime Initiative*’ [online]. Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate. London: Home Office. Available from: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/pssc.pdf> [Accessed 12th December 2007].

⁷“**Theft from the person** comprises both snatch and stealth theft. There may be an element of force in snatch theft just to snatch the property away and victims are usually aware of the incident. No force is used in stealth thefts and victims are often unaware of incidents at the time they occur. For recorded crime, theft from the person offences are those where there is no use of threat or force.” Source: Nicholas, S., Kershaw, C. And Walker, A. (2007) ‘*Crime in England and Wales 2006/7*’. Home Office Statistical Bulletin. London: Home Office. Available from: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs07/hosb1107.pdf> [Accessed 12th December 2007].

⁸“**Other theft of personal property** covers thefts where no force is used and the victim is not holding or carrying the items when they are stolen, for example thefts of unattended property in the workplace.” Source: *Ibid*.

⁹“**Personal robbery** is where the goods stolen belong to an individual or group of individuals, rather than a corporate body, regardless of the location of the property, or whether the personal property actually belongs to the person being robbed.” Source: Smith, J (2003) ‘*The nature of personal robbery*’ [online]. Home Office Research Study 254. London: Home Office. Available from: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hors254.pdf> [Accessed 12th December 2007].

¹⁰Smith, J (2003) *Op. Cit.*, p.40.

¹¹Nicholas, S., Kershaw, C. And Walker, A. (2007) *Op. Cit.*

Where and when?

- In 2005-6, theft from the person (incorporating snatch and stealth theft) was most likely to occur on the street (20%), in a shop/supermarket (16%), or on public transport (13%)¹². Other theft of personal property occurred most frequently at work (24%), in another public building (17%) or inside a pub (14%)¹³.
- The most vulnerable time period for theft from the person to occur is on a weekday (58%) and in the daytime (70%), but particularly the afternoon (45%)¹⁴.

DAC Team

¹²Home Office (2007) 'Crime in England and Wales 2005/06: Supplementary Tables: Nature of burglary, theft, criminal damage, vehicle and violent crime' (Table 3.02). Available from: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/crimeew0506_tables_bvv.html#personaltheft [Accessed 12th December 2007]

¹³*Ibid.*, at Table 3.03.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, at Table 3.01.