

## A02.2

## The geographical movement of a crime: A consequence of crime prevention?

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### Synopsis

Situational crime prevention involves the removal or blocking of opportunities for offending in the physical environment (Clarke, 1992). Typical examples include the upgrading of physical security measures at vulnerable households, commonly referred to as target hardening, incorporating anti-theft devices into mobile phones, and the installation of immobilisers in automobiles (and more recently mobile phones). Many different types of scheme have been evaluated, and some appear more successful than others.

One issue that concerns criminologists and policy makers alike is the possibility that, when crime is prevented, unintended side effects may also occur. Underlying this way of thinking is the assumption that the deterrent effects of an intervention are insufficient to truly ameliorate a problem, although they may move or mutate it. Thus, the question of whether the beneficial effects of a scheme are diffused or extend beyond the operational boundary of a scheme is usually raised as more of an after thought rather than a plausible outcome considered from the outset.

However, while there has been theoretical discussion of such issues in the research literature, there has been little in the way of either standardized empirical work that investigates the incidence of diffusion of benefit (or displacement) or in the development of techniques that can be used to measure such phenomena. In the current paper we discuss a new technique, the weighted displacement quotient (WDQ, Bowers and Johnson, 2003), developed to measure the geographical displacement of crime or diffusion of benefit.

To illustrate the technique and the related conceptual issues we present results from the evaluation of a series of situational crime prevention interventions implemented as part of the Home Office's Reducing Burglary (RBI) Initiative. The results suggest a more positive conclusion than many readers might expect – that where crime is reduced, rather than crime displacement being a guaranteed side effect, a diffusion of benefit is the more likely outcome, with the beneficial effects of a scheme being apparent in the surrounding area.