

# Review

## Burglary prevention – a property marking trial in Aarhus

### *Background and objectives:*

- This report focuses on an efficiency evaluation of a property marking trial carried out by the local authority of Aarhus.
- Invisible property marking is accomplished by applying to one's property a unique UV traceable solution, one of the purposes being to make it easier to identify the rightful owners of stolen goods. To advertise the scheme, trial participants also place stickers on front doors, mailboxes, etc., indicating that household valuables are invisibly marked.
- The scheme is intended to increase potential burglars' awareness of the risks involved in breaking into that particular residence. This potential crime preventive element is at the centre of this evaluation.

### *Research design:*

- The survey is based on a randomised controlled trial including a good 6,600 houses randomly divided into a trial group and a control group. The houses are all located in the Municipality of Aarhus and have all been burgled over the past few years.
- The trial group was offered a free property marking kit, whereas the control group was not informed of the trial.
- In the trial group, 56 per cent of households joined the trial. Of all households in the trial group, 32 per cent both joined the trial and placed stickers on mailboxes, front doors, etc., to visibly advertise the scheme.
- The survey has examined whether the trial and control group households were burgled to different extents during the subsequent 15.5 months.

### *Findings:*

- In the observation period, trial group households were burgled to a significantly lesser extent than control group households (4.7 per cent compared with 6.2 per cent).
- Further analyses indicate that the effect of the stickers was at its highest during the early months of the trial; later in the observation period the two groups faced identical risks of burglary. That may simply be a coincidence.
- However, the reduced risk of burglary may not be due to invisible property marking alone. Hence, the results also indicate that those trial group households that did not join the trial or did join but did not visibly advertise the scheme were burgled less than control group households. It is possible that the very awareness of the risk of burglary that the trial launch may have triggered could have made trial group households take other precautionary measures during the same period to protect themselves against burglary.
- Accordingly, it is recommended to carry out a new trial to verify the effect recorded and to examine the importance of raised awareness of the risk of burglary.

