

Examining Burglary and Robbery Case Clearance Rates for the Knoxville (TN) Police Department

This research study was conducted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police/University of Cincinnati Center for Police Research and Policy (the IACP/UC Research Center) and examined the case clearance rates in residential burglary and individual robbery crimes reported to the Knoxville, Tennessee Police Department (KPD) from 2013-2017. Using data from the KPD's crime database, and the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports*, and the United States Census Bureau's 2017 *American Community Survey*, the IACP/UC Research Center compiled descriptive analyses of burglary and robbery incidents including:

- **Trends** such as changes in reports over time and a breakdown of reports by month, day of week, and geography.
- **Case characteristics** such as calls for service, number of crimes committed concurrently, presence of witnesses, weapon involvement, presence of fingerprints, property value lost in burglary, and description of suspects and victims (name, DOB, hair color, race, sex, etc.).
- **Clearance rates** that indicate whether the cases were cleared by arrest, cleared by exceptional means, or not cleared. Analysis also examined how these rates compared to national trends.
- **Neighborhood characteristics** such as concentrated disadvantage and ethnic heterogeneity in the KPD jurisdiction.

Researchers found no significant associations between these factors and individual robberies; however, many were associated with case clearance for residential burglary.

Factors associated with a **higher probability** of case clearance in residential burglary include:

- Greater value of stolen property,
- The presence of a weapon, and
- Identification of a suspect.



On the other hand, some factors were associated with a **decreased likelihood/lower probability of case clearance** in residential burglaries. These factors include:

- The existence of a black victim and
- Neighborhoods characterized by concentrated disadvantage.



However, further multivariate analysis revealed an interesting finding; analysis showed that in disadvantaged communities where a description of a suspect was known by the police, case clearance for residential burglary was significantly higher. Researchers suggest that this positive finding indicates the importance of police intelligence and police-community relations (to solicit this type of intelligence) in solving residential burglary cases and the ability to apprehend offenders.

From the findings, the IACP/UC Research Center researchers made several key recommendations to the KPD.

- Exploring the racial disparity in case clearance for black victims in residential burglaries,
- Creating a checklist of factors associated with case clearance, and
- The need for more detailed electronic records of investigations (along with analysts to analyze this data).

Future efforts to study characteristics associated with case clearances may help law enforcement better allocate resources and enhance their ability to apprehend offenders.

For more information, see McManus, H., Yildirim, M., Corsaro, N., & Engel, R. (2020). Examining Burglary and Robbery Case Clearance Rates for the Knoxville (TN) Police Department. Available at <https://www.theiacp.org/research>.