



TOWN OF ATHERTON

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE
83 ASHFIELD ROAD
ATHERTON, CALIFORNIA 94027
(650) 752-0501

June 16, 2021

Subject: Burglary Prevention

Dear Atherton Resident:

During the past two months, our officers have investigated 10 residential burglaries. Many of these burglaries have occurred in sheds, outbuildings, and garages. Most were unsecured and without security lighting. These crimes appear to be conducted by individuals and are not related to past burglaries that have involved organized Chilean gang members from southern California.

The purpose of this Burglary Prevention letter is to provide you, our resident partners, with information to assist you in helping reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of a burglary. One of the best things you can do to prevent a burglary is to make your house look like someone is home when you are away from your home. There are steps you can take to help make your residence a harder target for burglars. The tips we provide here are part of a concept called Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). CPTED is part of the National Crime Prevention Council's tools to create and support a climate of safety in a community. The website is available at the following link: <https://www.ncpc.org/resources/home-neighborhood-safety/crime-prevention-through-environmental-design-training-program/>.

If you have never stepped back and looked at your residence from the perspective of a would-be criminal, you should take a moment and do so. Burglars look for vulnerabilities and opportunities. They look for an easy target, so making their job more difficult, or more risky, reduces the appeal to most criminals. Burglars will most often try for unlocked windows and doors as a means of entry. If you have windows and doors that create a challenge to burglars, they may move on to something easier. Burglars also want to remain unseen if possible. Lighting, landscaping, natural access control, and other concepts, are forms of Environmental Design that can make your home a harder target and one that will assist crime prevention and deterrence. We have police staff trained in CPTED and we will come to your residence for a CPTED review. To arrange a visit, call our Dispatch Center at 650-688-6500, to set up an appointment.

On Tuesday, June 29, 2021 at 6:00 pm, we will be hosting a Zoom Community safety meeting to discuss our recent burglaries, ways you can help prevent from being victimized by a burglary, detailed information about recent deployment of Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) cameras in Town, and general police operations.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87337054835?pwd=bXltM0llZE1QSXdFaVNVdURyK0ZlUT09>

Meeting ID: 873 3705 4835

Passcode: 362236

Dial by your location: +1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

The Atherton Police Department's crime prevention efforts are meant to strengthen the partnership between our residents and the community that we serve. But, none of these ideas will help unless they are used properly. Failing to lock doors and windows or to turn on security lighting and alarms will represent a failure of the overall protection system for the home. We hope that together, we can enhance the quality of life in Atherton and make our great community as safe and secure as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "SD McCulley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Steven D. McCulley
Chief of Police



Atherton Department of Police



We all want our home and family to be safe. However, we often tend to believe that bad things happen to others but not to us. The truth is that you can't always prevent a burglary or a home invasion, but you can, indeed, significantly reduce the chance of it happening by taking some simple preventative measures.

That's when home burglary statistics come in: by studying intruders' habits, you can be one step ahead of them. Data can also help you understand important correlations and patterns of

burglaries that will definitely make your job easier when it comes to making your home safer and more burglar-proof.

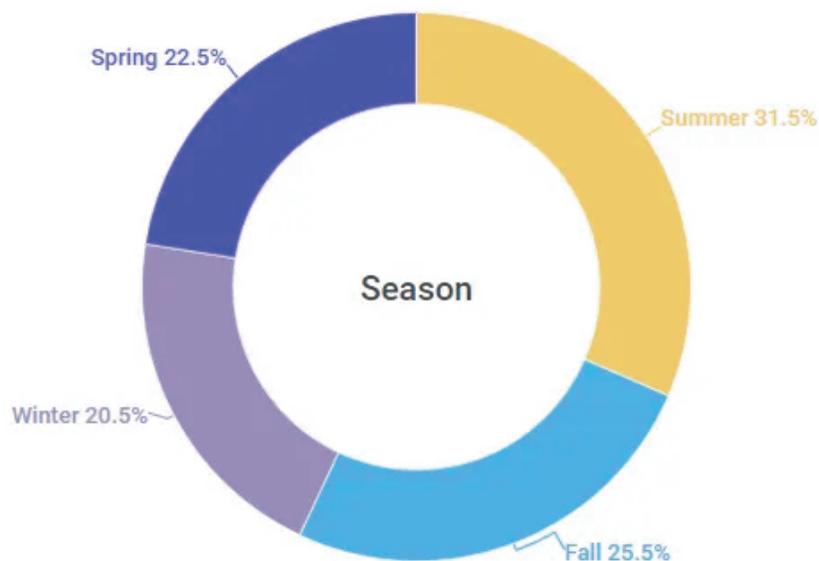
Statistics can even help you find the weak points of your home so you can focus on those first in order to improve security. While it's true that the number of burglaries has reduced in the last few years, there are still more than 3,000 break-ins each day, on average, in the U.S. That's why it's so important to be familiar with burglary facts and figures: they show what crooks exactly look for in a house and how to successfully deter them.

1. What Time of Day Do Most Break-Ins Occur?

Many people think burglars are more active at night in the dark. As it turns out, the exact opposite is true: according to statistics, 65% of burglaries occur during daylight, between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. The timeframe between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. on weekdays is especially popular among intruders. This is when most people are at work or school and homes are empty.

On the other hand, burglars are more active in the summer months: most break-ins occur in July and August when many people are on vacation. Data from 17 consecutive years (from 1993 to 2010) show that, on average, home burglary rates are about 6% lower in fall, 9% lower in spring, and 11% lower in winter than in the summer months.

When Do Most Burglaries Occur?

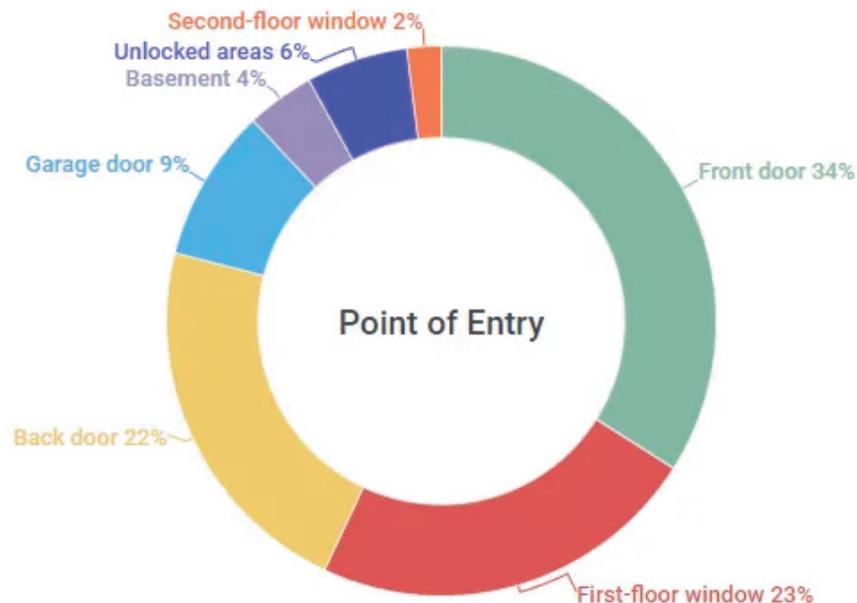


Security Tip: Make sure you always lock the doors when you leave from home. Burglars usually look for easy targets, so often you can deter them by reinforcing your doors and windows or by installing a real or a dummy security camera. The vast majority of burglars avoid homes that are not empty, so it's a good idea to pretend someone is at home when you're away for a longer time.

2. How Do Most Burglars Break into Homes?

Most intruders (about 34%) get into homes through the front door. Usually, they simply kick it open but it's not uncommon that they find themselves with an unlocked door. The second and third most common entry points are first-floor windows and back doors: 23% and 22% of burglars, respectively, choose these entrances to get into a home. So, we can assume that most burglars use either a door or a first-floor window to break into homes. Therefore, the first thing you want to do is make sure your doors and windows are secured properly.

Common Points of Entry for Break-Ins



Security Tip: You can easily and significantly improve front door security on the cheap just by replacing the deadbolt strike plate and reinforcing the hinges.

3. Where Do Most Burglars Head for After Getting into Homes?

Once crooks get into a home, they want to collect as many valuables as possible in as little time as possible. Therefore, most of them head straight for the master bedroom where they usually search for jewelry, cash, and other small and expensive items. In a survey, burglars were asked where they looked first for valuables: 75% of them answered that they headed first for the bedroom. Only 19% started searching in the living room.

Conclusion?

It's always a good idea to hide your valuables but it's especially true if you keep them in your bedroom. If you use a safe, you want to make sure you conceal it rather than keeping it in a place where it can be easily spotted by intruders (no matter how firmly you fix your safe or how secure it is, if it's not hidden, crooks will try their best to crack it open).

4. Do Burglars Return? What Are the Chances of a Repeat Burglary?

Burglary statistics show that criminals often return to the same house (or apartment), especially if no intervention has been made to improve security. In fact, one out of three burglaries are a repeat burglary. So once burglarized, there's a pretty high chance of a second attempt. It's good to know that criminals usually return within one month after the first successful break-in.

Do burglars return after a failed attempt?

It usually depends on the reason behind the failure. If a burglar gets caught by the owner, it's not very probable that they will return. On the other hand, if the reason for the failure was bad timing or an unexpected level of security, they might come back with a more detailed plan or the proper equipment they need to get into the house.

Bottom line?

If your home is burglarized, do not hesitate to improve security as soon as possible because there's a real chance that the same burglar (or another one taking advantage of the same vulnerability of your home) will return. If you notice or get notified that there was a failed attempt, you should look for the weak points of your house and reinforce them as soon as you can. Pay special attention to sliding doors because in most cases those are very easy to bypass many of them can be lifted out of their track in no time.

5. How Often Do Burglars Break Windows?

While it's true that the second most common points of entry are first-floor windows, most burglars prefer not to smash any glass to get into a house and for good reason: breaking a

window is noisy. On the other hand, windows often come with poor latches that can be easily compromised. Not to mention those cases when a window is left open (it's more common than you might think). Thus, if intruders want to get into a house through a window, they usually have better options than smashing the glass.

However, have no doubt that many burglars won't hesitate to break a window if they can't find any other option. You can prevent this scenario by installing security film or security screens, for instance.

6. How Many Home Burglaries Occur Each Year According to Statistics?

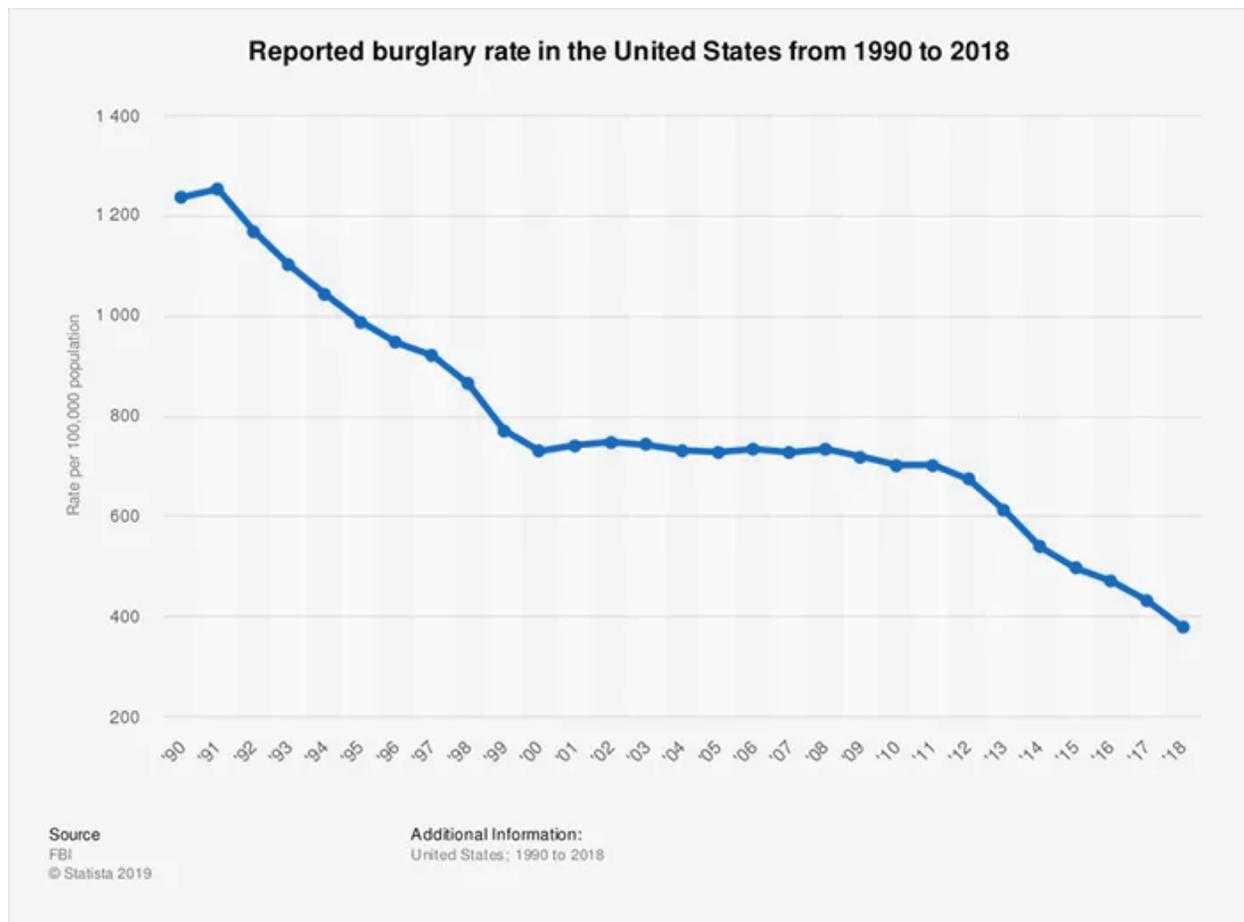
According to the database of the FBI, there are approximately 3,350 burglaries each day on average in the U.S. In 2018, an estimated 1,230,149 burglaries occurred in the country, 56.7 percent of which involved forcible entry.

On average, in Atherton, we experience and investigate approximately 2.5 burglaries per month. According to home burglary statistics, you have the greatest chance of being burglarized if you live in New Mexico, Mississippi, or Oklahoma: these are the top three states with the highest burglary rates. On the other hand, New Hampshire, New York, and Virginia have the lowest rate of burglary in the whole country.

7. What Are the Trends? Burglary Statistics From 1990 to the Present

The good news is that the number of burglaries is definitely decreasing across the whole country. Fewer homes are broken into each year. While in 1990 there were more than 3 million burglaries in the U.S., by the year 2018 this number has decreased by 60% to about 1.23 million. When compared with data from 2014, the number of burglaries dropped by 28.2%. So, the trend is clearly downward, however, that doesn't mean you can ignore home security.

Although the trend is actually favorable, the burglary rate in the U.S. is still pretty high comparing to some European countries. So, there's still room for improvement. If you're more of a visual type, you can clearly see the downward trend in burglary rates on the graph below:



8. What Is the Average Loss per Burglary?

According to the latest statistics, a burglary victim loses an average of \$2,799. That can be a whole month's earnings for many people. Not to mention the damages a burglar might cause while trying to get into a home. And then there are the psychological effects of burglary or, even worse, robbery which can be very hard on some people.

When it comes to home security, prevention always pays off. You can secure all your doors and windows for a fraction of the potential damage.

9. How Long Does an Average Burglary Last?

It does not last long. In fact, most burglaries are committed in between 90 seconds and 12 minutes, however, the typical timeframe is between 8 and 10 minutes. That's usually enough time to find some cash and valuables in most homes. If you conceal your valuable items (or at least if you don't keep them in obvious places), you can significantly reduce the damage in case of a break-in.

Here is another reason to take prevention seriously: about 90% of the burglars are never caught, so once they're gone, chances are great that you'll never see your valuables again.

Putting It All Together

As you can see, statistics show a clear decline in the number of home burglaries in the U.S., however, there's still room for improvement. Thus, improving security is still important and shouldn't be taken lightly. Burglars are more active during daylight (between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.) and in the summer months when most people are on a vacation.

Most criminals use the front door to get into a house (or apartment), however, first-floor windows and back doors are also popular. Once inside, they usually head straight for the master bedroom and look for cash and small valuable items.

Crooks often return to the same house within just a few weeks (usually within one month) after a successful burglary. Often you can expect a second visit after a failed attempt too. While it's true that any door, window or security system can be compromised, burglars almost always choose the easier target. Most of them are not professional criminals and they often get into a home by simply kicking the door open (or through an unlocked door).

Therefore, practically any security improvement can contribute to preventing home invasions. So, make sure you have at least some basic protection in your home and if you don't, start by reinforcing your doors and windows. Believe me, it's well worth the effort.

Steven D. McCulley

Chief of Police
Atherton Department of Police

