



# The Security Hypothesis and the Crime Drop

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# Brief Context

- Early attempts to explain the crime drop focused on the drop in the U.S.
- But crime has declined in most Westernized countries in recent decades, though at different rates and times.
- US explanations for the crime drop mostly do not hold for these other countries
- The security hypothesis claims that increases in security account best for the widespread declines in crime. The main proponents are Jan van Dijk, Graham Farrell, Ken Pease and Nick Tilley
- The security hypothesis relies on the situational crime prevention literature

# This Presentation

1. The role of opportunity in crime
2. Evaluations of situational crime prevention
3. Farrell et al's work on security and the crime drop
4. Widespread improvements in security
5. Policy implications

# Suicides in Britain

Clarke and Mayhew 1988

	All Methods	By Gas	% By Gas
1958	5,298	2,637	49.8
1960	5,112	2,499	48.9
1962	5,588	2,469	44.2
1964	5,566	2,088	37.5
1966	4,994	1,593	31.9
1968	4,584	988	21.6
1970	3,940	511	13.0
1972	3,770	197	5.2
1974	3,899	50	1.3
1976	3,816	14	0.4

# Helmet legislation and motorbike thefts in Germany

Mayhew, Clarke and Elliott 1989

	Motorbikes	Cars	Bicycles
1980	153,153	64,131	358,865
1981	143,317	71,916	410,223
1982	134,735	78,543	453,850
1983	118,550	82,211	415,398
1984	90,008	72,170	376,946
1985	73,442	69,659	337,337
1986	54,208	70,245	301,890

# Car thefts and parking place (British Crime Survey)

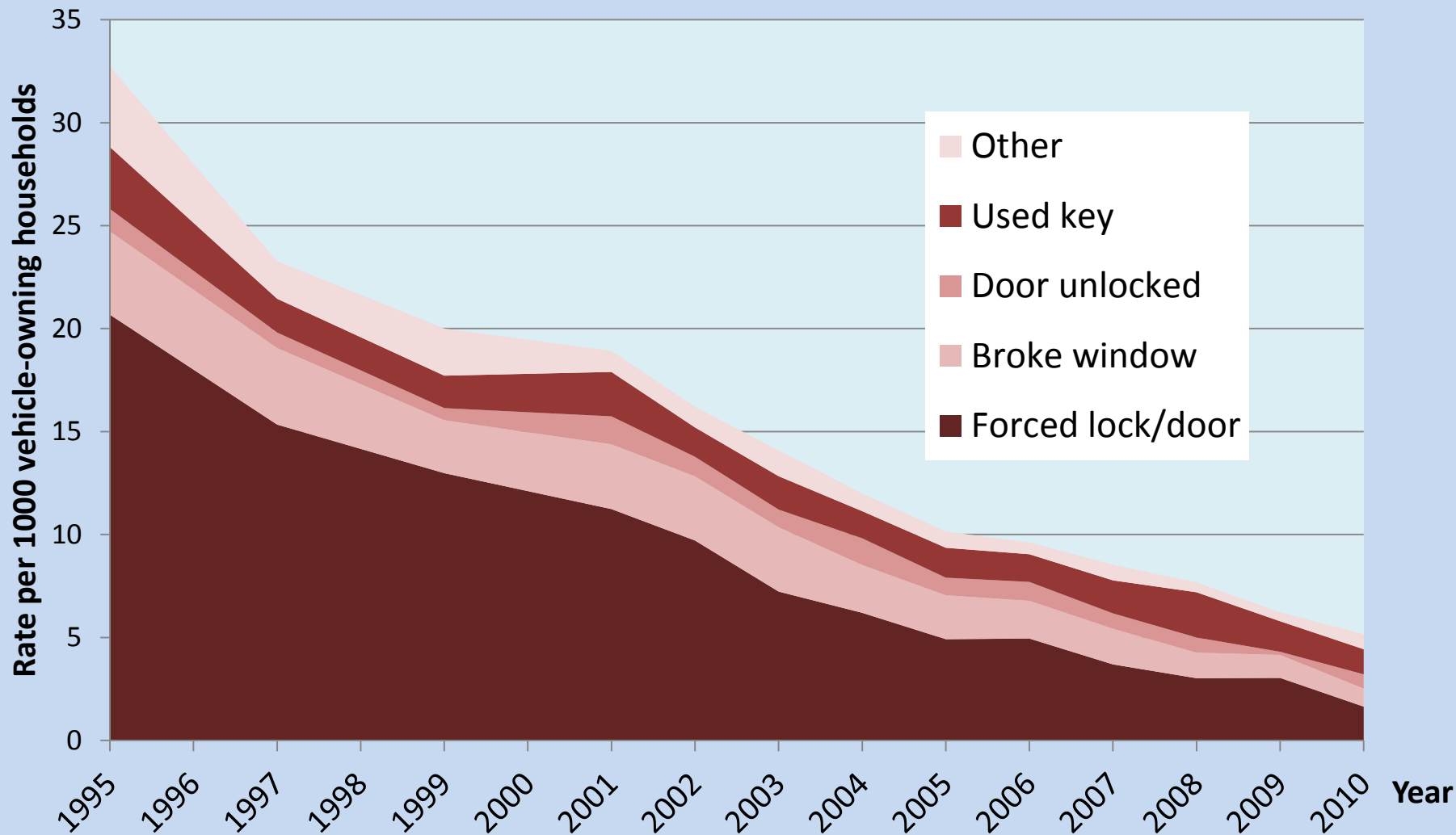
Clarke and Mayhew 1998

Thefts per 100,000 cars per 24 hours:

Garage at home	2
Drive/carport	40
Street outside home	117
Public car park	454

# Means of entry to vehicles

## England and Wales 1995-2010



# Percent of Households Burgled

## British Crime Survey

Nicholas, Kershaw and Walker (2007)

<b>Average for England and Wales</b>	<b>2.5%</b>
Local authority housing	4.1%
Less than 1 year at address	4.6%
Perceived physical disorder in local area	5.1%
Household head economically inactive (sick)	5.1%
Household head homemaker	5.4%
Single adult and child(ren)	5.5%
Household head unemployed	6.0%
Household head student	6.4%
Household head aged 16-24	6.7%
<b>No home security measures</b>	<b>22.5%</b>



# Alley gates in Liverpool



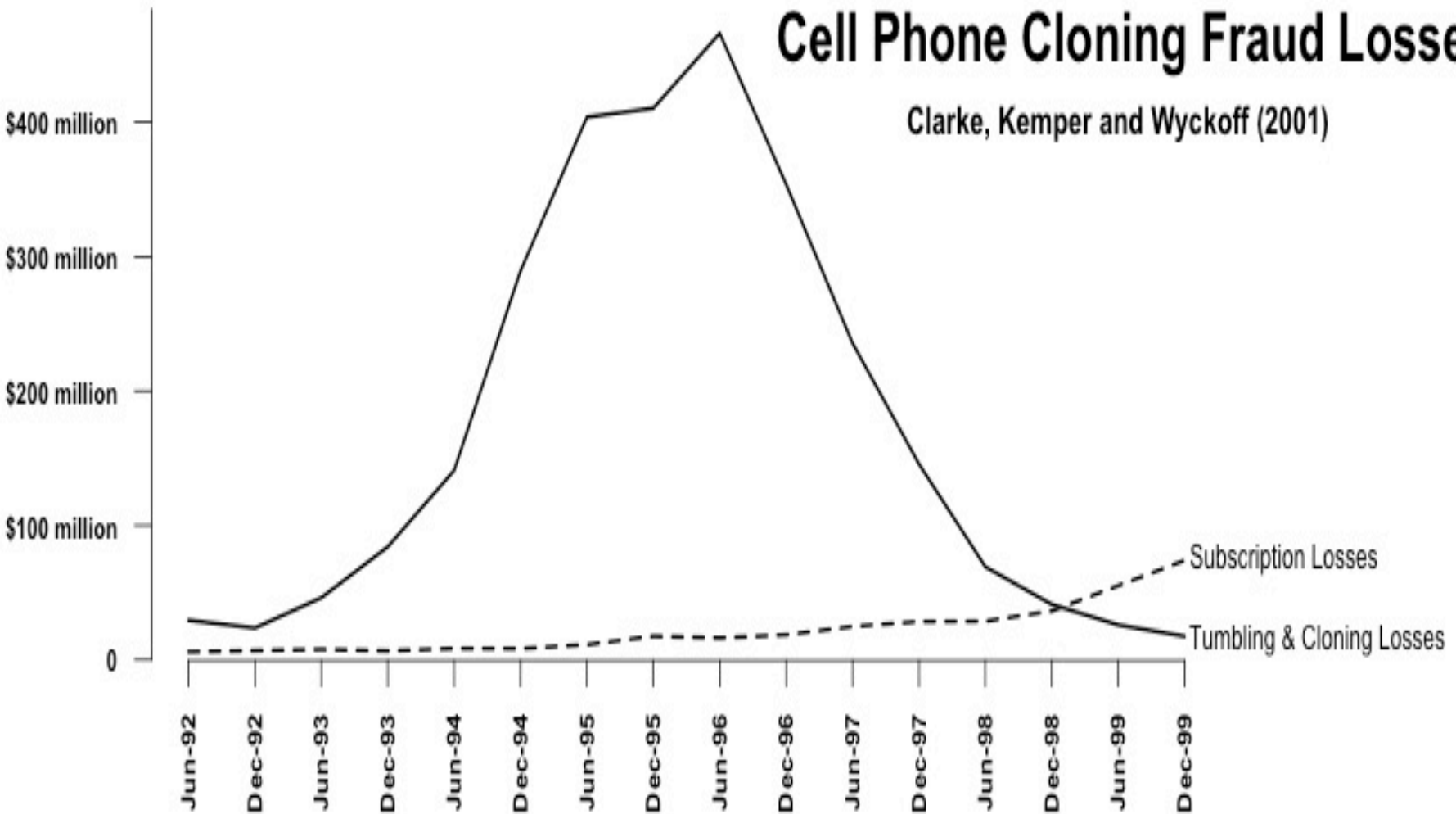
# Alleygating in Liverpool

Bowers, Johnson and Hirschfield (2005)

- 3178 gates were installed
- Burglary reduced by 37% in first year
- No significant displacement
- Cost benefit ratio of gates after one year was 1.86
- Armitage, R & Smithson, H (2007) Alley-gating revisited: The sustainability of residents' satisfaction. *Internet Journal of Criminology*.

# Cell Phone Cloning Fraud Losses

Clarke, Kemper and Wyckoff (2001)



# Meta-analysis of displacement and diffusion

1. Guerette and Bowers (*Criminology* 2009)
2. Reviewed 102 situational prevention studies where displacement was examined
  - No displacement found in 68 of the studies
  - Diffusion of benefits found in 39 of the studies
  - Displacement was never complete
3. Largely consistent with Hesseling (1994) who examined 55 studies

Guerette, R.T. & Bowers K. (2009). Assessing the Extent of Crime Displacement and Diffusion of Benefits: A Review of Situational Crime Prevention Evaluations. *Criminology*, 47:1331-68.

# 15 Explanations for the crime drop

Pease and Farrell (2014)

1. Strong economy
2. Lawful concealed weapons
3. Capital punishment
4. Gun control laws
5. Rising Imprisonment
6. Better policing
7. More police
8. Legalization of abortion
9. Immigration
10. Consumer confidence
11. Waning hard drug sales
12. Childhood lead poisoning
13. Changing demographics
14. Civilizing process
15. Improved security

# Pease and Farrell's tests of the crime drop explanations

1. **Cross-national** – must hold in different countries
2. **Prior crime increase** – must be consistent with the fact that crime previously increased for several decades
3. **Phone theft and eCrimes** – compatible with fact that some crimes have increased during the crime drop
4. **Varying trajectories** – must be compatible with variation in timing, trajectory and composition of crime drops between countries and crime types



# Important explanatory concepts

## 1. *Debut crimes*

- a. Vehicle theft is often one of the first offences that offenders commit, but it can lead to a long and diverse criminal career (Cooper et al., 2013).
- b. Deterring vehicle theft may stop a criminal career at the earliest stage, preventing other types of offences.

## 2. *Keystone crimes*

- a. Stolen cars are used for other crimes like burglary or theft from vehicles. Or thieves sell-on the contents such as the radio rather the vehicle itself (Light et al. 1993).
- b. Deterring theft of vehicles might prevent various other crime types.

## 3. *Increasingly elegant security* – Immobilisers vs. car alarms; central locking vs. “lock your car!”

# Widespread security improvements

1. **Public housing:** 1000s of high rise blocks demolished worldwide and replaced by defensible space designs
2. **Private housing:** burglar alarms and security design standards
3. **Public transport:** help points; CCTV, more guards, better CPTED designs
4. **Shops:** EAS, ink tags, CCTV, bar coding and RFID
5. **Convenience stores:** cash reduction, “two clerks”
6. **Banks.** Large scale heists eliminated by security guards, reduced cash in tills, time release safes and bullet proof screens.
7. **Offices:** controlled access; ID tags
8. **Pubs and clubs:** bouncers, responsible drinking practices



# Security improvements (cont.)

- **Cars:** steering locks in 1970s, immobilizers in 1990s, central locking
- **Credit cards:** Improved delivery of cards, POS verification, chips
- **Computers:** anti-virus programs; spam filters etc
- **Bank notes:** anti-counterfeiting features
- **Public phones:** card-operated, strengthened cash boxes, etc
- **Motoring offenses:** Speed/red light cameras and breath tests
- **Street offences:** city guards, neighborhood watch, improved lighting
- **Security guards:** Now outnumber police in many countries
- **CCTV:** Campuses, parking lots, schools, hospitals, city centers and shopping malls, banks and ATMs

# Security in modern hotels

35+ specific security measures identified; 12 in-room

## Protect Guest

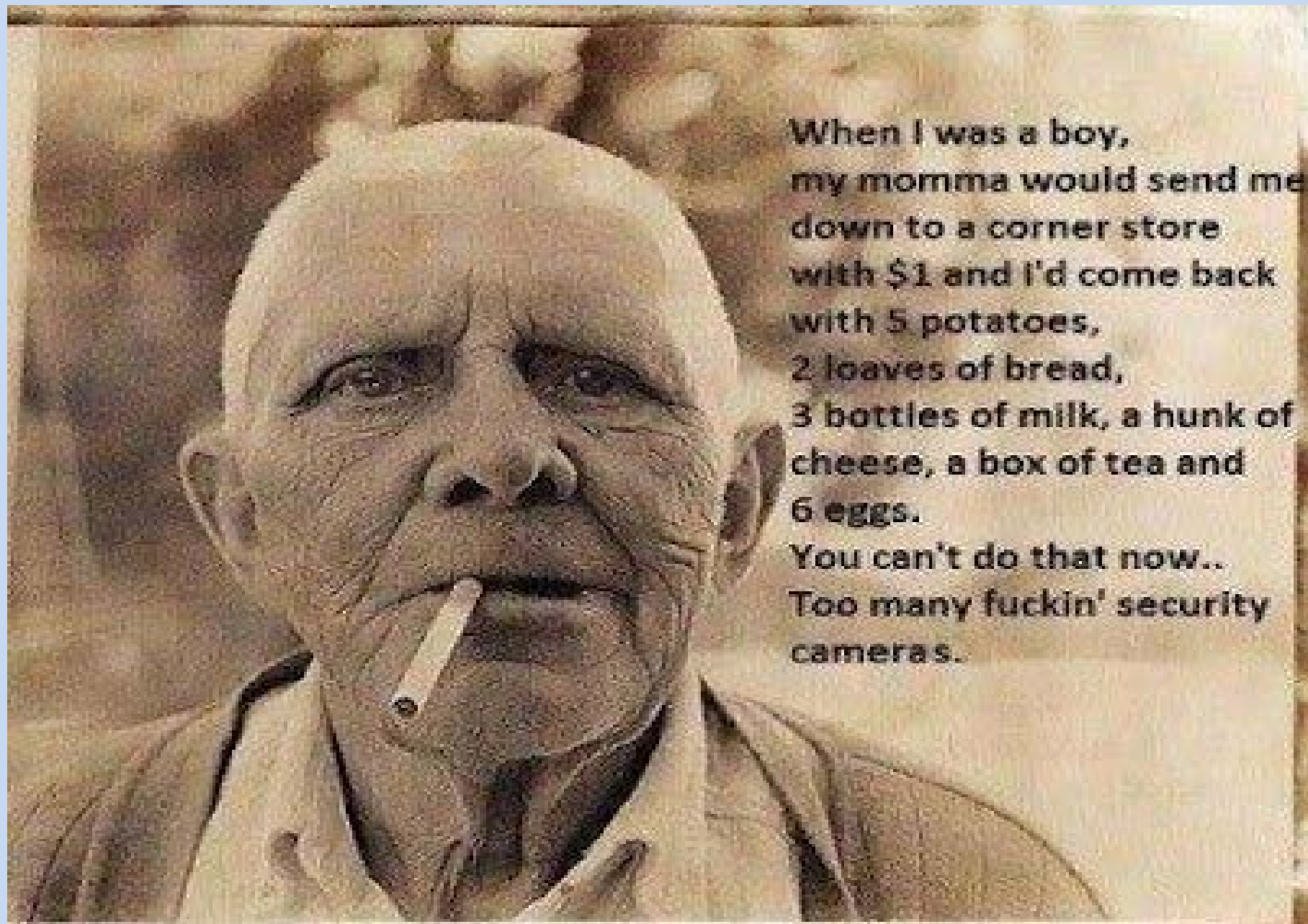
1. Key card entry
2. Restricted window opening
3. Peephole for occupant's use on door
4. Door jamb lever to prevent door being pushed open
5. In-room safe
6. Guest instructions on security

## Protect Hotel

1. Room entries electronically recorded
2. Key for mini-bar
3. Standard contents for mini-bar
4. Dressing gown offered for sale
5. Non-removable clothes hangers
6. Prepaid internet access

# Policy/research implications

- Businesses and other private and public organizations could be largely responsible for crime drop – not criminal justice system
- Government should engage much more actively with businesses as crime reduction partners
- Must persuade them not simply to protect themselves, but consumers too
- Governments should fund research on effectiveness of security measures (e.g. guards and alarms)
- Governments should fund research on citizens' routine precautions against crime.



When I was a boy,  
my momma would send me  
down to a corner store  
with \$1 and I'd come back  
with 5 potatoes,  
2 loaves of bread,  
3 bottles of milk, a hunk of  
cheese, a box of tea and  
6 eggs.  
You can't do that now..  
Too many fuckin' security  
cameras.