

Preventing domestic burglary:
Does signaling invisible
property marking make a
difference?

Britta Kyvsgaard (bky@jm.dk)
Ministry of Justice, Denmark

The experiment:

- Includes 6,607 houses in Aarhus municipality (second largest in Denmark) all of which had been burglarized within the last 4½ years
- Why only newly victimized houses?
- Randomly divided into a treatment group (3,382) and a control group (3,225)
- The treatment group was offered free marking kit
- The experiment was kept confidential to others than those directly involved

The treatment group

Did not respond to the offer of free kit	1492 (44%)
Did respond, but did not display signs of invisible marking	809 (24%)
Displayed signs of invisible marking	1081 (32%)
Total	3382

Effect

- Measured by number of burglaries or similar crimes (theft from houses)
- Measured from October 1., 2016 for the control group. Similar for those in the treatment group not having or displaying signs. For those displaying signs: From the day they entered the experiment + 10 days
- Weighting for differences in length of study period

Result: Number of burglaries

Treatment group	160	4,7 %
Control group	199	6,2 %

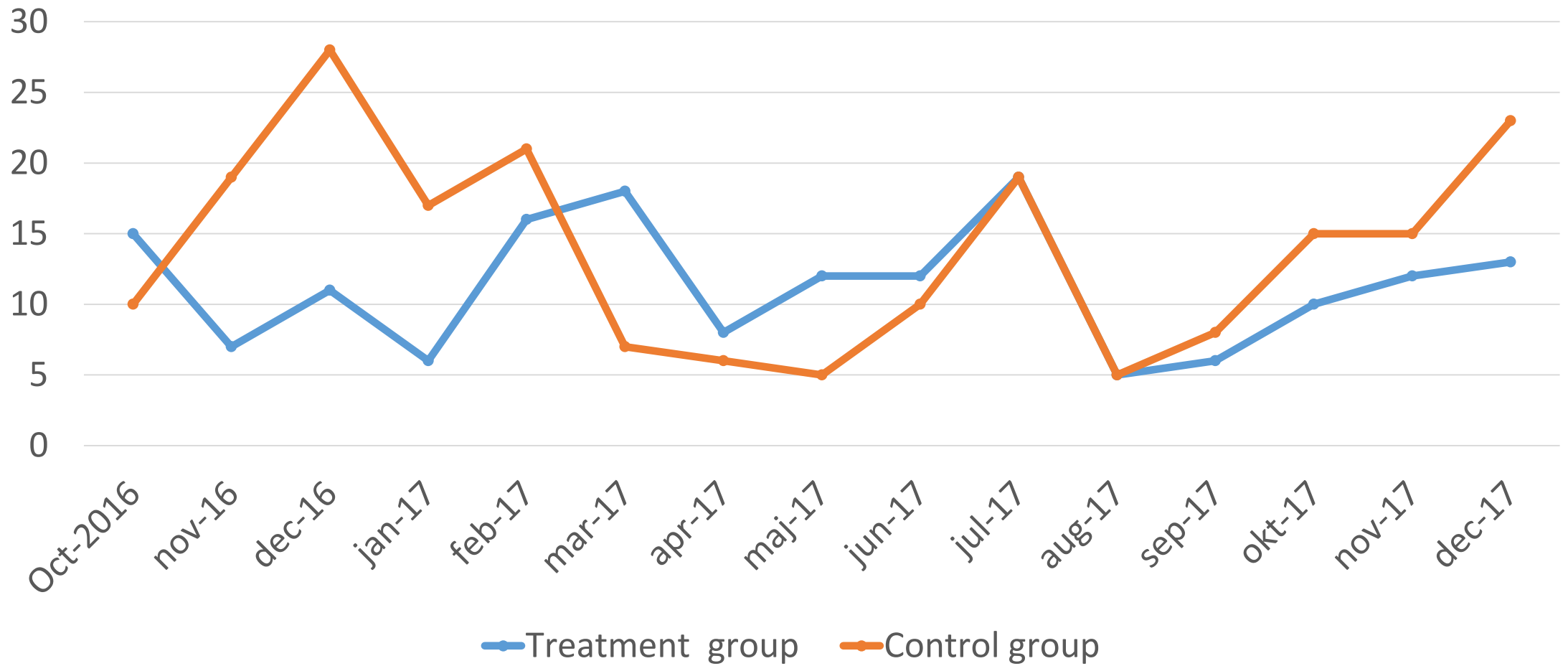
Expected pattern of burglaries (excluding a possible effect) in the groups

Did not respond to the offer of free kit	7%
Did respond, but did not display signs of invisible marking	6%
Displayed signs of invisible marking	5%
Control group	6%

Actual pattern of burglaries in the groups

Did not respond to the offer of free kit	82	5,5%
Did respond, but did not display signs of invisible marking	37	4,6%
Displayed signs of invisible marking	41	3,8%
Control group	199	6,2%

Date of burglary



A special kind of Hawthorne effect?

- Is the effect – partly or solely – caused by participants in the treatment group becoming aware of their risk and therefore – primarily immediate after receiving a letter about the experiment – initiate their own preventive measures like making the house look occupied when out during Christmas?

A new experiment is in the planning stage

- Ideas are welcome!