

# Race, Neighborhood Context, and Strategies to Avoid Victimization among Female Probationers and Parolees

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We previously found that women in high-crime neighborhoods avoid becoming involved in criminal activities using some isolating activities. This strategy of isolation is problematic because social support and involvement with prosocial individuals is an important precursor to avoiding recidivism. Also, when neighbors avoid each other, the community has less capacity to control crime. Therefore, we analyzed our data to see if women were also using isolationist strategies to avoid victimization in bad neighborhoods. Of all the women in the study, 286 described their neighborhood as having some criminal activity and they identified several strategies that they used to avoid victimization.

Strategy	Example	Percent	N
Home physical security	"I'll make sure the doors and stuff are locked."	25.9	74
Stay at home	"[I] always stay Indoors."	25.2	72
Avoid criminal places/ places at certain times	"I limit how much time I'm out and then . . . I try to be in the house before it gets dark."	20.3	58
Avoid everyone	"I don't really associate with too many people. I'm like a loner type of thing."	17.5	50
Watch surroundings	"[I] make sure nobody's too close to me if I'm taking a walk. I keep my eyes open all the time, I'm very observant"	9.8	28
Avoid criminal people	"I just stay away from negative people-[and] violent people"	8.4	24
Don't be alone	"I'm not going out at night by myself."	5.2	15
Avoid some people	"I don't hang around a lot of people in the neighborhood"	4.5	13
Busy with legal routines	"I'm busy, I keep myself busy"	4.2	12
Be with prosocial people	"I be around all positive people now, I'm not around like too much negativity"	3.8	11
<b>Prepare for attack</b>	"I have mace spray here at all times."	3.8	11
Avoid situations	"[I] stay out of the way."	3.5	10
Other	"[I] self-talk."	4.2	12

Note: The "other" category of strategies were used by four or fewer women and included such approaches as coping with feelings, obtaining mental health treatment, and looking "tough."

## Neighborhood Context and Use of Strategies to Avoid Victimization

### *Home physical security*

- women who perceived their neighborhood as unsafe were less likely to rely on physical security in the home
- women who lived in more advantageous, affluent, and residentially stable neighborhoods were more likely to use physical security for their home
- women who were victimized in their neighborhood were slightly more likely to use physical home security

### *Avoid being alone*

- women who avoid being alone have higher levels of concentrated affluence and lower levels of social disorganization in the neighborhood

### *Stay home*

- women who stayed home lived in neighborhoods with less concentrated affluence, more economic disadvantage, and perceive more crime in the neighborhood

## Relationship between Race and Use of Strategies

- White women were more likely to use home physical security than Black and Multi-racial women
- Black and Multi-racial women tend to stay home and isolate themselves from others to avoid victimization. This may be because they are concentrated in the more disadvantaged, high crime areas.

## Helpful Interventions

- Help women who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods move to less distressed areas
- Help women build relationships by:
  - Coordinating support groups on a weekly/monthly basis
  - Providing safe and reliable transportation
  - Coaching women to use the less restrictive strategies to reduce victimization
  - Assisting women who lack means to purchase home security equipment