

Burglars Using High Street Shops To Dispose Of Stolen Goods

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Burglars using high street shops to dispose of stolen goods

- Convicted burglars reveal they use high-street pawn shops and cash converters to dispose of stolen goods¹
- Undercover researchers reveal ease of selling second hand goods with no ID or proof of ownership⁽²⁾
- Not a single pawn shop, gold exchange, or cash conversion shop investigated asked the provenance of goods being sold⁽³⁾

New research⁽¹⁾ from Churchill Home Insurance reveals the ease with which burglars are able to dispose of stolen goods on the high street at pawn shops, second hand electronic stores and gold exchanges. Undercover researchers were able to sell goods in 60 per cent of the stores visited that buy second hand merchandise, such as gold and computer games, without any form of identification.

In no single store were researchers ever asked about the provenance of the goods being sold, even if the items were still in their shop wrapping. Over half (55 per cent) of shops visited did not require a declaration of legal ownership for the goods sold.

Churchill Home Insurance commissioned researchers to demonstrate how easy it is to dispose of goods without proof of ownership or identification on the high street, after interviews with convicted burglars revealed it is a major channel for disposing of stolen merchandise. In a series of interviews¹ criminals made statements such as "pawn shops...they were used yes it was surprisingly easy. Too easy if I am honest. I would just use a false ID." Another burglar stated when disposing of goods "I have done pawn brokers a few times... and I never had a problem."

The research also highlighted the ease at which burglars are able to source fake identification, which they can use in pawn shops that demand documentation when selling second hand goods. When interviewed, a burglar stated "You can get an ID surprisingly easily. You can get ID which is quite genuine looking off the internet."

Martin Scott, head of Churchill Home Insurance, stated: "The ease with which burglars are able to dispose of stolen merchandise on the British high street is truly frightening. If we can close the doors on stolen goods disposal, making it as difficult as possible for burglars to make money, we can make this type of crime less attractive. Burglars are able to convert goods into cash in just a matter of minutes, because employees in cash conversion outlets are failing to make sufficient checks for identification."

Even when companies buying second hand goods publish a list of the identification they insist will be required to make a sale, employees in store are not following through and requesting to see documentation. Of the stores that stated on their corporate websites a list of acceptable forms of identification for the sale of second hand goods, just 33 per cent insisted this documentation was produced before handing over the cash.

In one leading high street chain store researchers were able to sell goods with just a debit card, despite the corporate website stating two forms of identification are required, "one photo ID" and "one proof of address". Researchers were also able to sell goods with store account cards belonging to other people completely unchallenged.

Criminals using pawn shops and their network of contacts to dispose of goods are receiving much less than their retail value. A ring was sold to a gold exchange for just 4.3 per cent of its retail value. A brand new Lego Marvel computer game was sold for a mere £6, just 17 per cent of the retail price. Burglars recognise they don't get huge returns from using these outlets accepting "generally get less than half the retail" but use the outlets for their speed and ease of disposal.

- Ends -

Notes to editors

1 Findings based on qualitative interviews with fifteen convicted burglars by Perpetuity Research led by

Professor Martin Gill of between September – October 2014

2 Results drawn from visits to 50 pawn shops across London and the South East between 12th February 2015 and 25th February 2015

3 In some stores researchers were asked to sign a waiver or declaration that they were the legal owner of the goods being sold

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