



# Forecasting Crime

No one can predict *who* will commit a crime but in some cities math is helping detect areas *where* crimes have the greatest chance of occurring. Police then increase patrols in these “hot spots” in order to prevent crime. This innovative practice, called predictive policing, is based on large amounts of data collected from previous crimes, but it involves more than just maps and push pins. Predictive policing identifies hot spots by using algorithms similar to those used to predict



aftershocks after major earthquakes. Just as aftershocks are more likely near a recent earthquake’s epicenter, so too are crimes, as criminals do indeed return to, or very close to, the scene of a crime.



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