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**NEW YORK STATE POLICE
CITIZEN SATISFACTION SURVEY**

During 1987 the Division conducted an extensive internal management study known as the Rensselaerville Project. The primary purpose of the project was to explore methods by which we can improve our response to the needs of citizens. One of the areas identified as most in need of attention (if the State Police is to best meet these needs) is Quality of Service and Discipline. One of the primary recommendations which our study made regarding quality of service and discipline was that the Division take the lead from successful service sector businesses and develop a citizen survey program.

The ultimate goal of the Division's comprehensive inspection process is to insure that State Police services are being provided to the public in an efficient, effective and courteous manner and to make recommendations concerning improvements that can be made. A constant examination of the administration, operations, systems and programs of the Division helps insure this goal. The purpose of the new survey program is to provide the Division with important information solicited from those we serve, which will supplement the information the Inspection Section currently gathers through the formalized inspection process. The survey format provides a means to quantify information garnered from responses to specific questions on the survey, and to categorize and summarize the valuable comments and suggestions offered by respondents.

Prior to such a program, the only input received from individuals interacting with the State Police has been either through formal personnel or service complaints or through letters written to a supervisor expressing appreciation for a particular service and detailing the efforts of a Trooper who aided the individual in the particular matter. The survey approach now offers a way of independently measuring, qualitatively and quantitatively, the community's perceptions regarding the quality of our services.

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Surveys will be mailed in individual troops as part of the inspection process by the Division Inspection Section. In this way, a Troop Commander can be provided with survey results indicating how citizens in his or her Troop area perceive State Police service and how it might be improved. The Troop Commander will also be able to compare the survey results in his or her Troop to those in other Troops. The survey format will, therefore, provide a system of identifying problems, real or perceived, in the Division's many services; and that information can be used by field supervisors and Academy staff to train veteran troopers and recruits regarding problems that are correctable. The program will also give Members a clearer picture of the community's concerns and perceptions regarding the services the Division provides, thereby improving their ability to understand and relate to those they serve.

DESIGNING THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT AND CONDUCTING THE FIELD TEST

In preparation for the survey program the following objectives had to be met:

- .. Survey all State Police and State Highway patrols to determine the current use of surveys by state level law enforcement agencies.
- .. Design a survey instrument suitable for our purposes.
- .. Conduct a limited field test of the survey instrument and the processes associated with a program of this nature.

Designing the Survey Instrument: The Division's Planning and Research Section began designing a questionnaire in late 1987, in conjunction with the School of Criminal Justice at SUNY-Albany. The survey instrument that was designed is a two page fold-out self-administered questionnaire. It contains 12 specific questions regarding the service provided to the respondent by the State Police and requesting the respondent to state the reason assistance was provided (for example a burglary or larceny was reported by the respondent) and to offer comments or suggestions regarding the service he or she received.

The next step in the process was to conduct a field test of the survey for the purposes of measuring response rates, refining the survey instrument, examining the administrative requirements of a survey program and analyzing the surveys returned by respondents.

Field Testing the Survey: The field test was conducted during the Spring of 1989. Troop G was selected as the test Troop and it was decided that 200 surveys would be mailed to individuals who were recently provided service by the NYSP. The survey sample was selected from the Division's computerized document control system, which contains the names of all of complainants/victims associated with cases for which troopers or investigators submitted field reports.

The 200 person sample was obtained using the following criteria: That the individuals be 16 years of age or older, that they be associated with closed cases involving criminal offenses that occurred in the Troop G area within the preceding 5 months, and that the cases not involve a sex crime, homicide, child abuse or endangering the welfare of a child. These particular crimes were excluded because, given their serious effect on victims and complainants, the potentially unsettling experience of recalling the event to complete a survey far outweighs any benefit the Division would gain by including them in a survey sample, especially for a limited field test.

Prior to mailing the surveys each individual was assigned a unique three digit number, which was placed on the survey form to link the returned surveys to the appropriate complainant and case information already recorded in the Document Control System (for example, incident date, location, and age of complainant). The survey form and a postage paid return envelope addressed to Planning and Research were enclosed in an oversized #11 white envelope. Commemorative stamps were used on the outer envelope, under a standard research guideline that they have a positive effect on response rates.

A computer file was created, which contained all the information contained in the Document Control System for each individual in the survey sample, as well as addresses from the hardcopy of the original field reports. A separate file was created for survey responses. The surveys were mailed in March of 1989 and as the completed surveys were returned the responses were reviewed, coded and entered in the computer file for subsequent analysis.

Field Test Results: Seventy-four of the 200 surveys were returned, indicating an overall response rate of 37%. The overall results reflect a positive assessment of the services provided by the State Police. Four of the survey questions are intended to measure citizen satisfaction with various aspects of the service provided by the State Police, while two questions are intended to measure the citizen's overall rating of the degree of courtesy displayed by and the service received from the New York State Police. The four satisfaction questions and the two overall rating questions deal with the following areas:

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| Phone Service: | A question to be answered by individuals who requested assistance by telephone asks them to express their level of satisfaction with the person answering the phone. |
| Response Time: | A question asks the respondent how satisfied he or she was with the amount of time it took for a Member to arrive. |
| Action by first NSYP Member: | A question asks the respondent how satisfied he or she was with the action taken by the first Member of the NYSP to arrive. |
| Further Action: | A question to be answered only if the respondent was aware that further action in the particular case was taken by the NYSP asks how satisfied the respondent was with the further action. |
| Overall Courtesy: | A question asks the respondent to rate the degree of courtesy displayed by the NYSP in the particular case. |
| Overall Service: | A question asks the respondent to rate the overall service received from the NYSP in the particular case. |

The attached bar graphs illustrate the responses to each of the above six questions. In excess of 90% of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the actions taken by the first Member to respond to the incident (figure 3). Ninety-five percent indicated that the degree of courtesy displayed by the NYSP was good or excellent and 86% gave an overall service rating of good or excellent (figure 5 and 6).

Respondents' Comments: The last part of the survey asks respondents to briefly list any additional comments or suggestions they would like to make regarding the service received from the New York State Police in their case. Sixty-three percent of the respondents offered comments ranging in length from one sentence to several paragraphs. Although the question refers to the service provided in the specific case, several comments were general in nature; for example "There should be more State Police patrolling in this area."

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**How satisfied were you with the
person who answered the phone?**

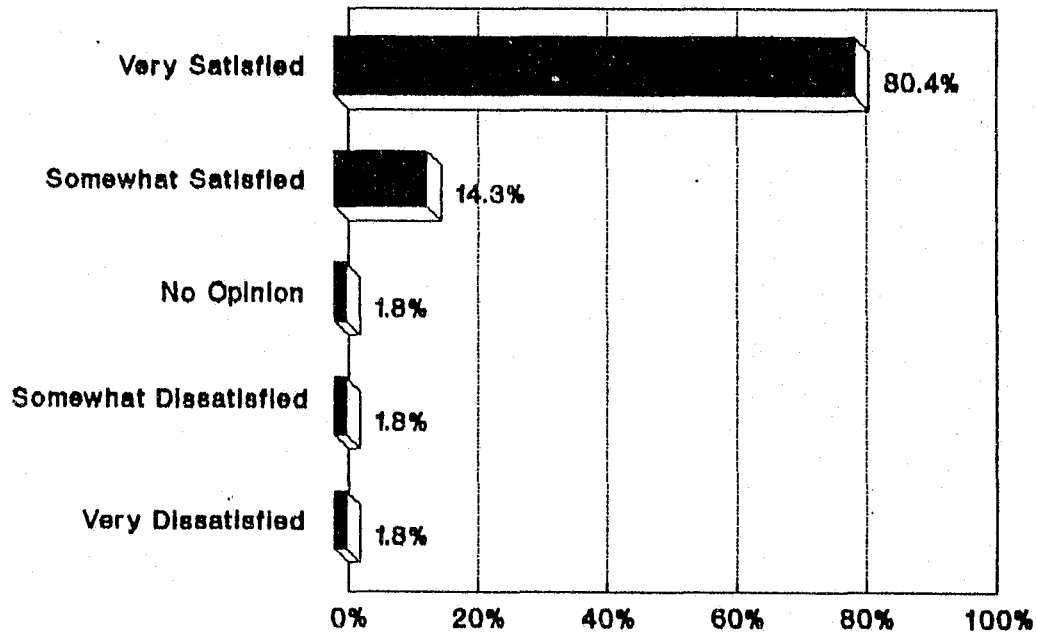


Figure 1

**How satisfied were you with the amount
of time it took for a Member of the
New York State Police to arrive?**

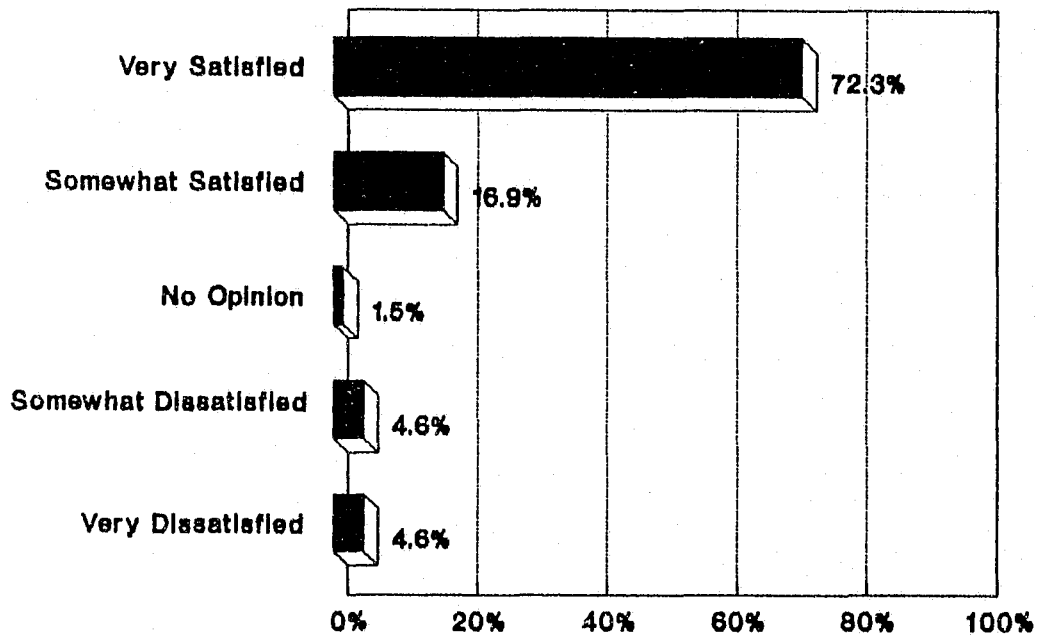


Figure 2

How satisfied were you with the action taken by the first Member of the New York State Police to arrive?

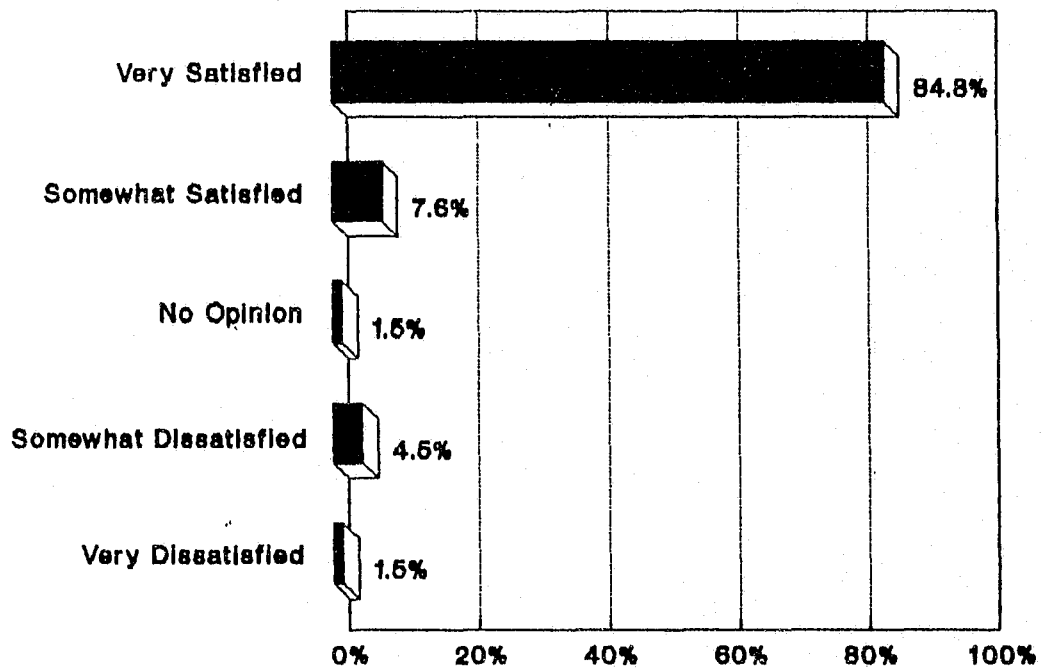


Figure 3

If further action was taken by the New York State Police, how satisfied were you with the action taken?

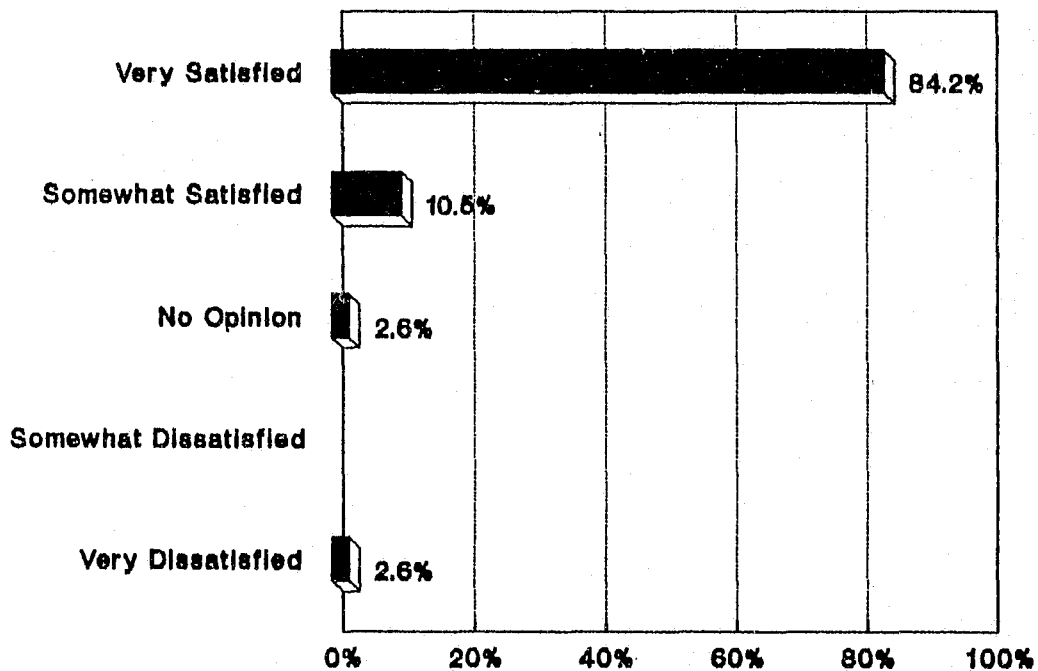


Figure 4

What overall rating would you give the degree of courtesy displayed by the New York State Police in this case?

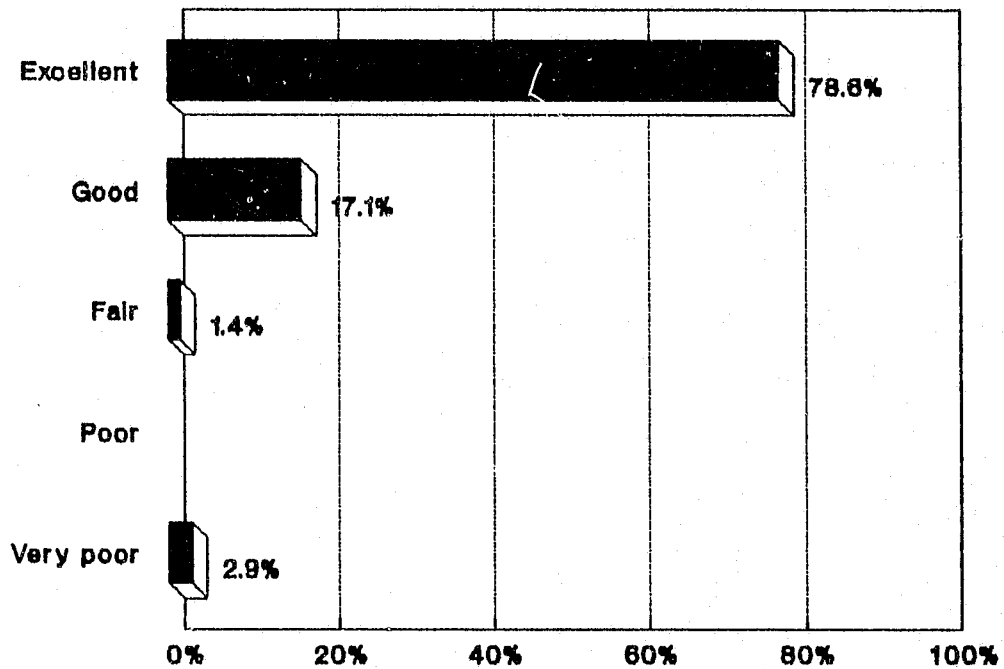


Figure 5

What overall rating would you give the service you received from the New York State Police?

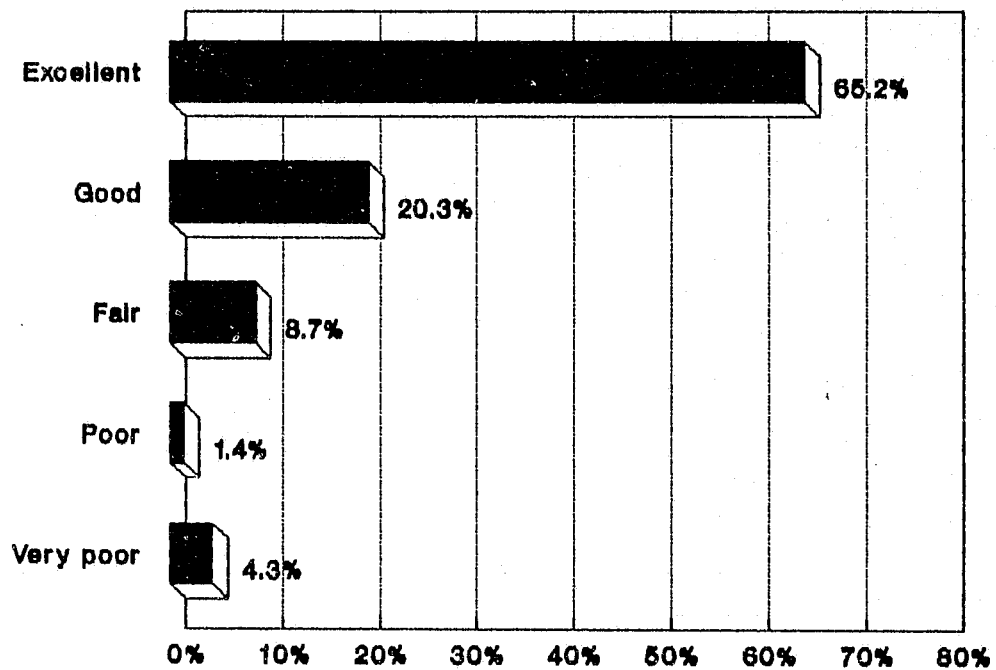


Figure 6