

**STRATEGIES TO REDUCE THE INCIDENCE AND IMPACT
OF CRIME
THAT VICTIMIZES THE ELDERLY IN PENNSYLVANIA**

July 1, 1980

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**Dick Thornburgh, Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania**

**Dr. Alfred Blumstein, Chairman
Pennsylvania Commission on
Crime and Delinquency**

**George F. Grode, Executive Director
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MR. ROBERT A. AKERS (PROJECT COORDINATOR)
MR. JAMES L. BUBB
MR. KEITH L. DOUGLASS
MR. JOHN P. HANNAH
MR. RODNEY L. KELLEY, AICP
MS. LOUGWIN E. SPENCER

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE THE INCIDENCE AND IMPACT OF CRIME THAT VICTIMIZES THE ELDERLY IN PENNSYLVANIA

This summary presents a compendium of the results of a research project conducted by staff of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to examine the problem of crime that victimizes the elderly in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It has been condensed to provide the reader with pertinent background information on the subject of crime that victimizes the elderly on a National and Commonwealth basis. Further, it recommends a program to reduce the incidence of these crimes and their impact on senior citizens' quality of life.

BACKGROUND OF NEED

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, in response to a growing perception among concerned officials that the elderly were suffering inordinately from the incidence of crime, directed staff in 1980 to study this problem and its ramifications. A research team, appointed by the Commission's Executive Director, had four objectives: research and analyze available data on the incidence of crime as it affects the elderly; explore and study available data on the fear of crime and its consequences on the quality of life of Pennsylvania senior citizens; review currently available strategies and services on a National and Commonwealth level, that address the subject; and, formulate an effective program that applies proven strategies to confront the problem.

The research team focused their efforts on the incidence of crime as it victimizes the elderly who reside in Pennsylvania. The team was limited in this respect to the lack of original research on this subject specifically focusing on Pennsylvania's senior citizens. Consequently, it was forced in many cases to draw conclusions based on related research conducted on the national level by a variety of sources. The materials presented in this report commences with a description of Pennsylvania's elderly and demographic trends and then proceeds to discuss their victimization problems as well as recommendations to overcome these problems.

Graphs in support of findings and recommendations follow narrative explanations.

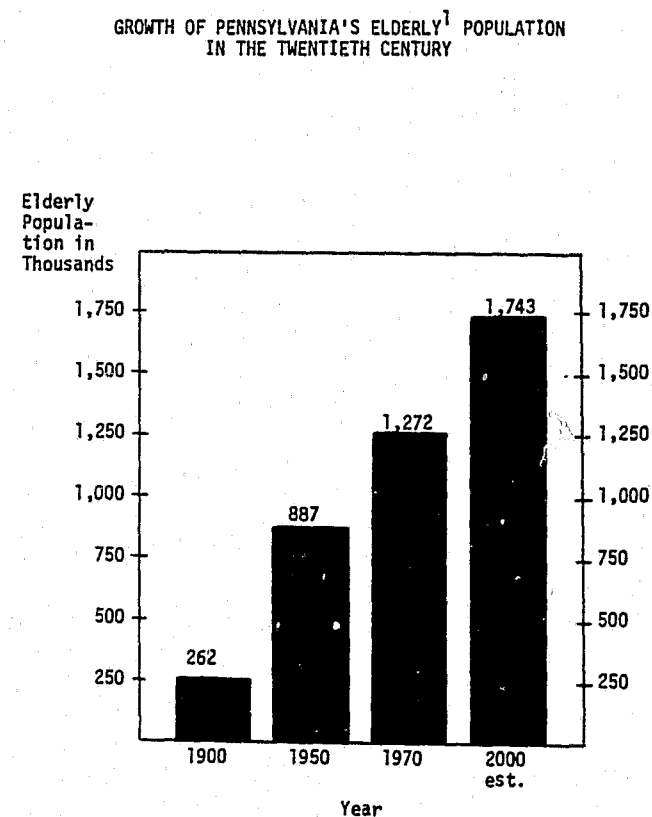
SUMMARY OF GENERAL FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHY

FINDING - THE ELDERLY POPULATION IN PENNSYLVANIA IS INCREASING IN NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF TOTAL RESIDENTS.

In 1900, as depicted in Graph 1, 262,000 Pennsylvanians were 65 years of age or older. This segment of society increased in number to 1,272,000 persons or 11% of the population in 1970. By 1985, given current estimates, the trend should continue so that the elderly will constitute 12% of the population or 1,600,000 persons. By the year 2000, it is estimates that 1,743 000 elderly will reside in Pennsylvania.

GRAPH 1



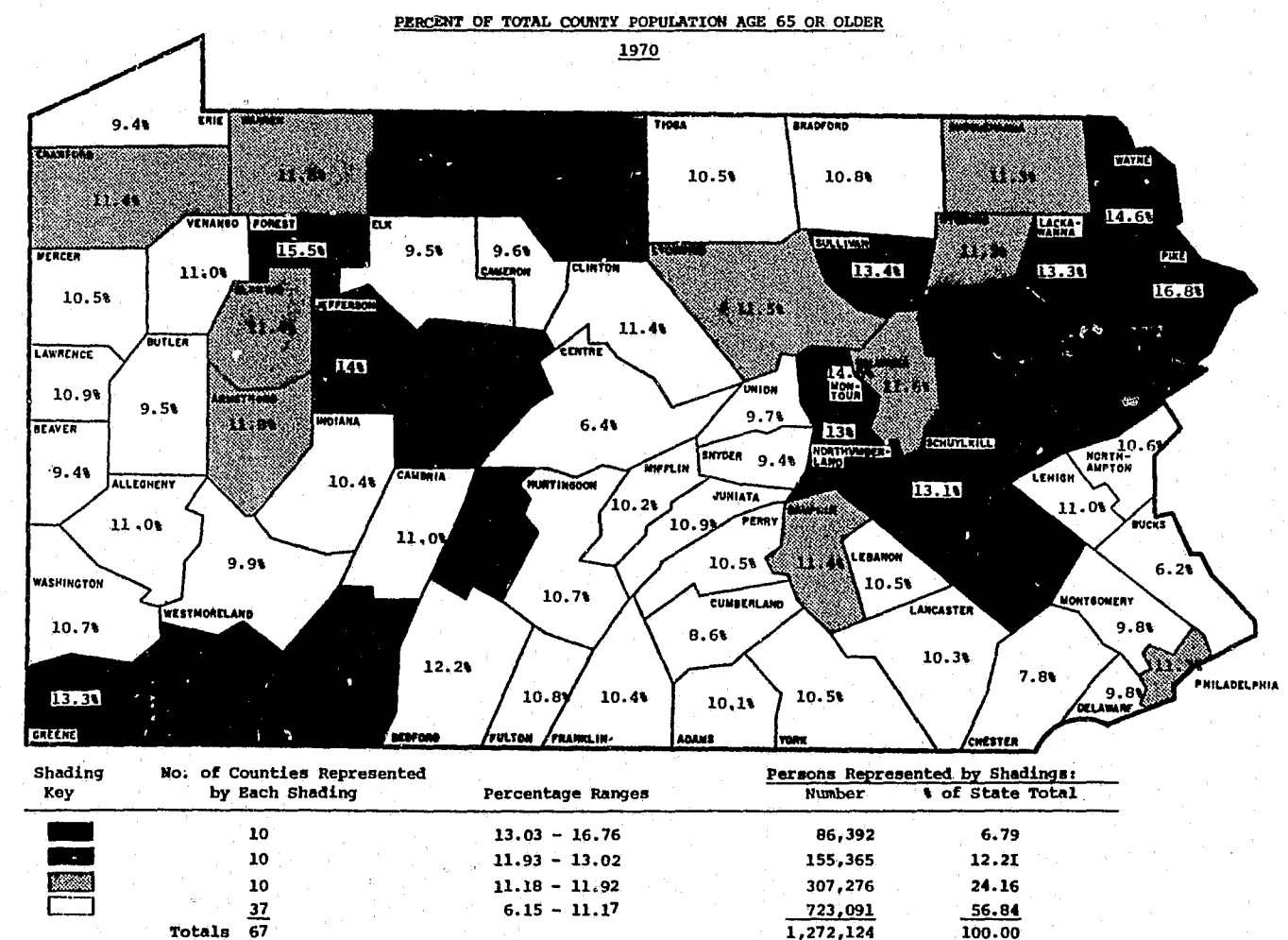
¹For the purpose of this report, the term elderly will apply to ages 65 and over.

Source: U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

FINDING - THE ELDERLY CONSTITUTE A MAJOR PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL POPULATION IN A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF PENNSYLVANIA'S COUNTIES.

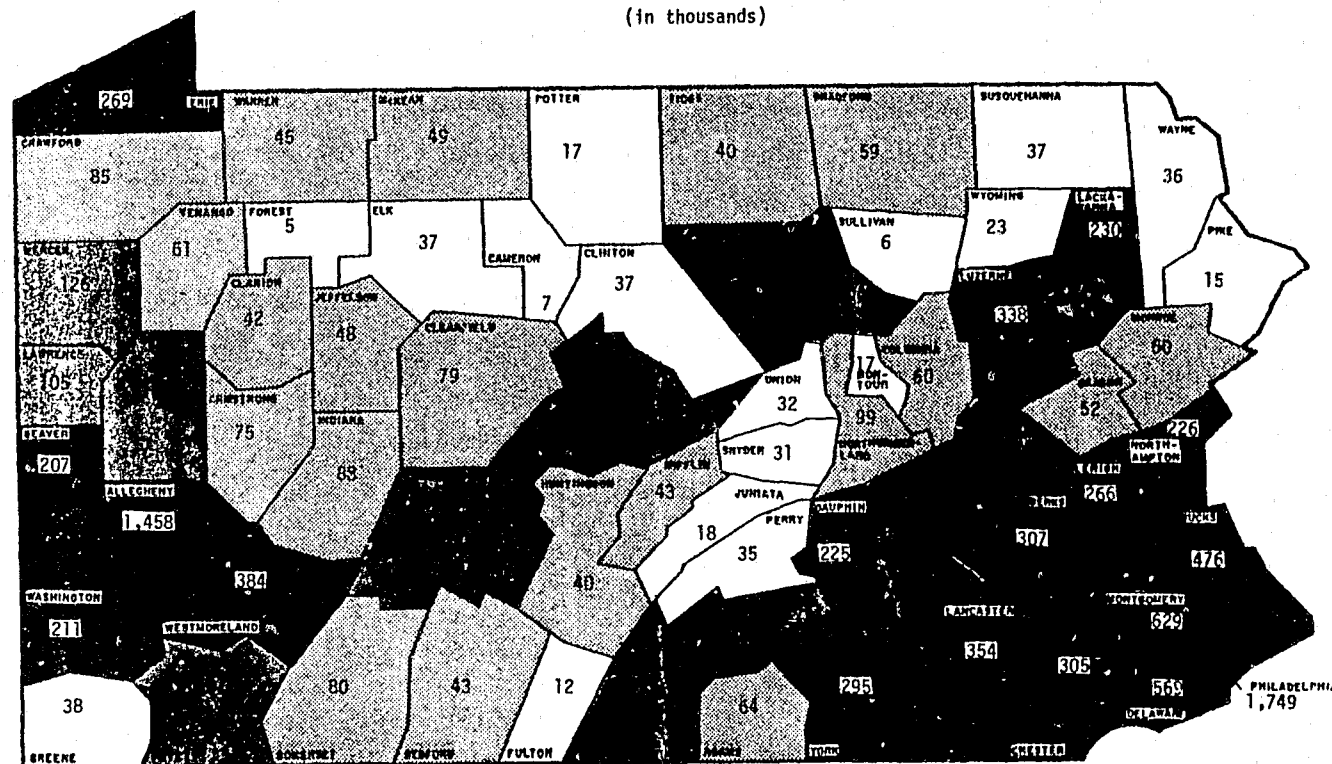
The darker shaded counties noted on Graph 2, portray concentrations of elderly residents. In general, the northeast region appears to have a higher concentration of senior citizens than the remainder of the Commonwealth. It also should be pointed out that the southeast region, despite having the highest concentration of total population, has the lowest proportionate amount of elderly residents. These figures are contrasted in Graph 3, with the total county population in 1979 of each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties.

GRAPH 2

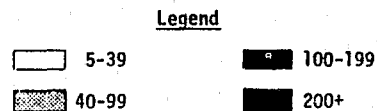


GRAPH 3

TOTAL COUNTY POPULATION, 1979
(in thousands)



Source: Governor's Office of Budget and Administration,
Bureau of Management Services.

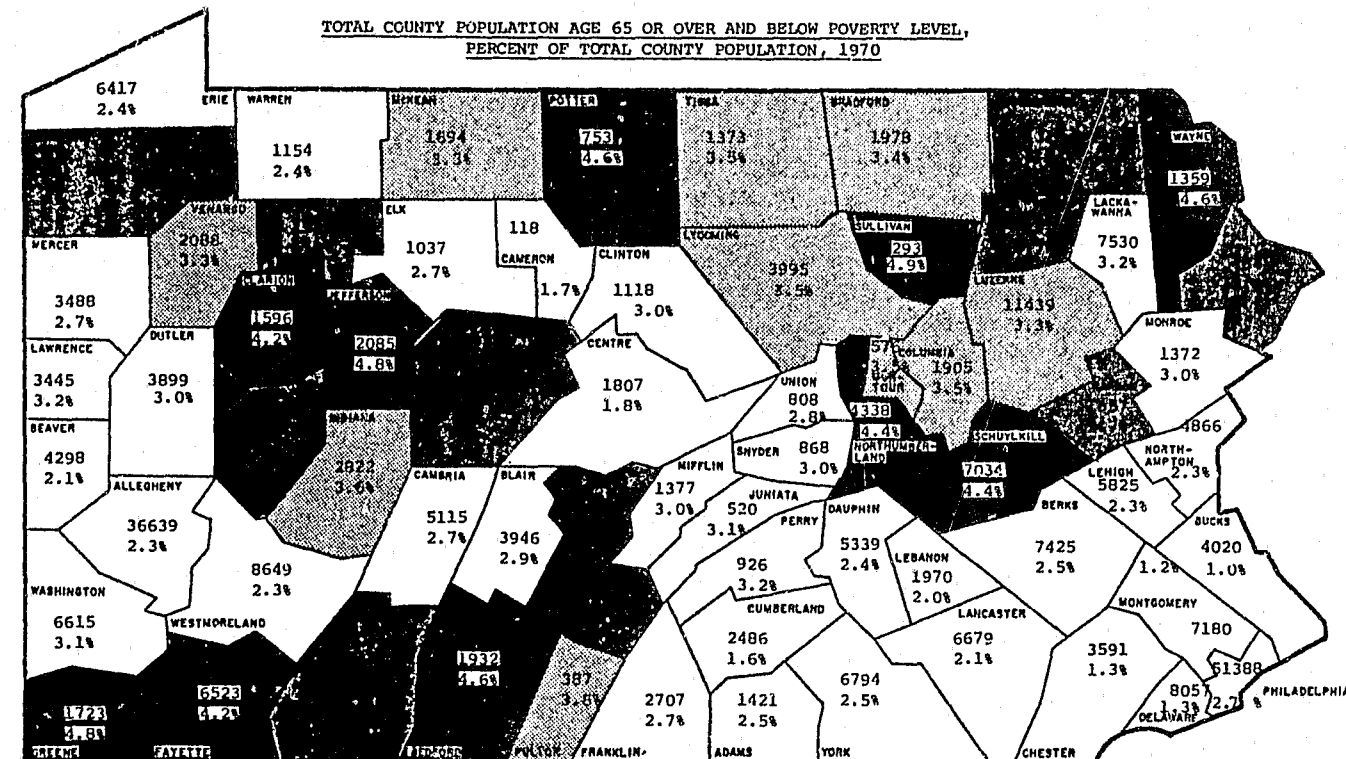


FINDING - IN PENNSYLVANIA, THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT CONCENTRATIONS OF ELDERLY WHO HAVE AN INCOME THAT IS BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL.

As shown in Graph 4, there are significant concentrations of elderly residents in many Pennsylvania counties who are experiencing poverty. This is especially true in the northeast and southwest regions of the Commonwealth. The highest proportion of elderly poor reside in Sullivan County. In 1970, 4.9% of that county's population was elderly and received income that fell below the federal poverty level with Bucks County having the lowest proportion in Pennsylvania at 1.0%. This is a significant problem caused in no small measure by the fixed incomes of many elderly.

GRAPH 4

TOTAL COUNTY POPULATION AGE 65 OR OVER AND BELOW POVERTY LEVEL,
PERCENT OF TOTAL COUNTY POPULATION, 1970

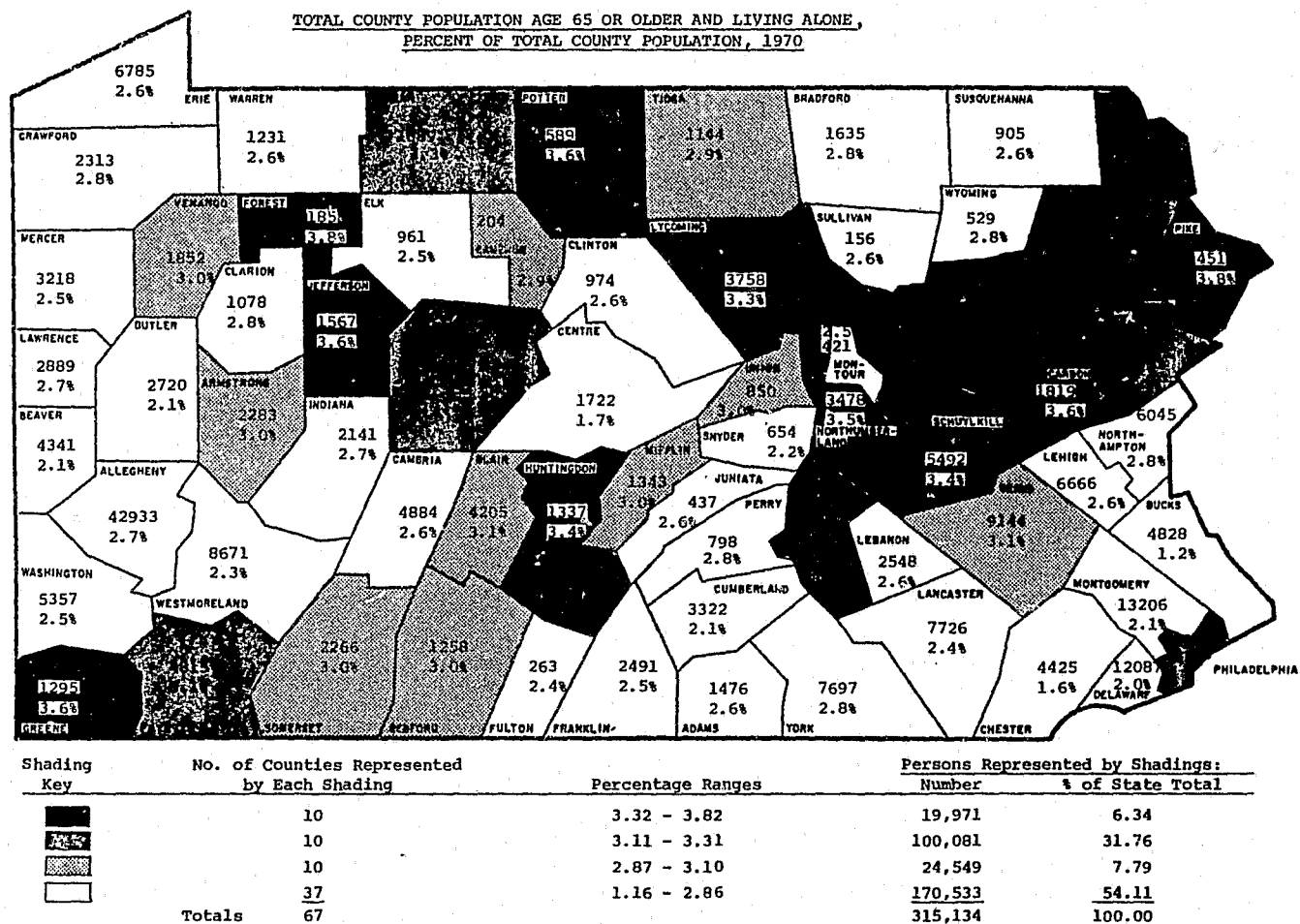


Shading Key	No. of Counties Represented by Each Shading	Percentage Ranges	Persons Represented by Shadings:	
			Number	% of State Total
Dark Gray	10	4.15 - 4.92	27,636	9.33
Medium Gray	10	3.60 - 4.14	17,773	5.99
Light Gray	10	3.26 - 3.59	28,257	9.54
White	37	0.97 - 3.25	222,694	75.14
	Totals 67		296,360	100.00

FINDING - CONCENTRATIONS OF THE ELDERLY RESIDING ALONE ARE FOUND IN A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES.

Characteristic of the elderly population is a high number of persons who reside alone. In many cases these individuals are female since males on the average have a shorter life expectancy. A comparison of Graph 2 (Total Elderly Population) and Graph 5 (Elderly Residing Alone) bears out this finding. The northeast and southwest regions of Pennsylvania have an especially high concentration of elderly living alone. Pike and Forest Counties each share the highest proportionate share of the total county elderly population residing alone with 3.8% each. The suburban Philadelphia counties collectively have the lowest incidence of this characteristic. In particular, Bucks County has the lowest proportion of individuals at 1.2% of the total population.

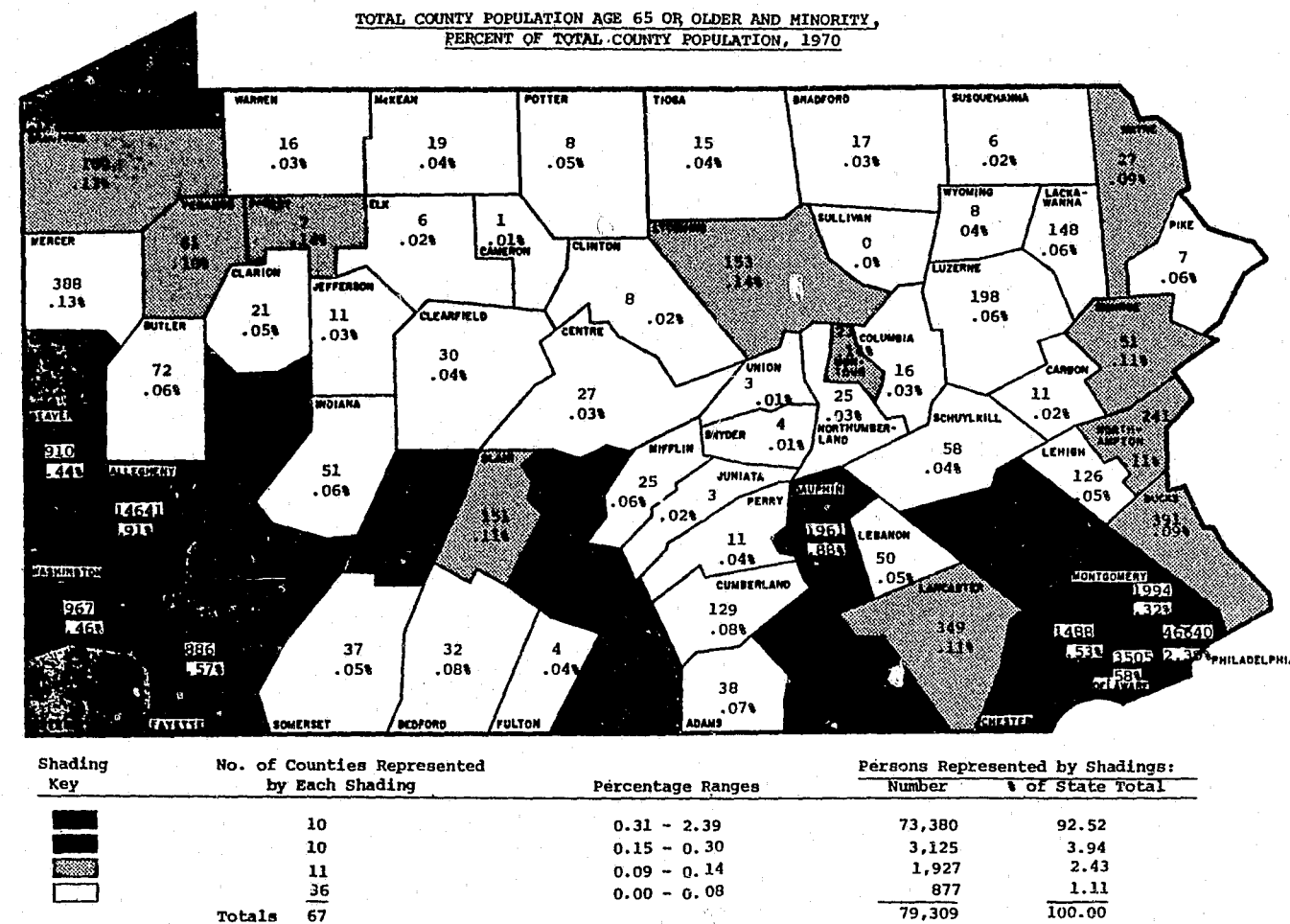
GRAPH 5



FINDING - PENNSYLVANIA'S ELDERLY WHO ARE MEMBERS OF A MINORITY ARE CONCENTRATED AROUND THE URBAN CENTERS OF PHILADELPHIA AND PITTSBURGH.

This characteristic will have far reaching consequences in an anti-crime program since a large proportion of the crime incidence in Pennsylvania occurs in urban areas.

GRAPH 6

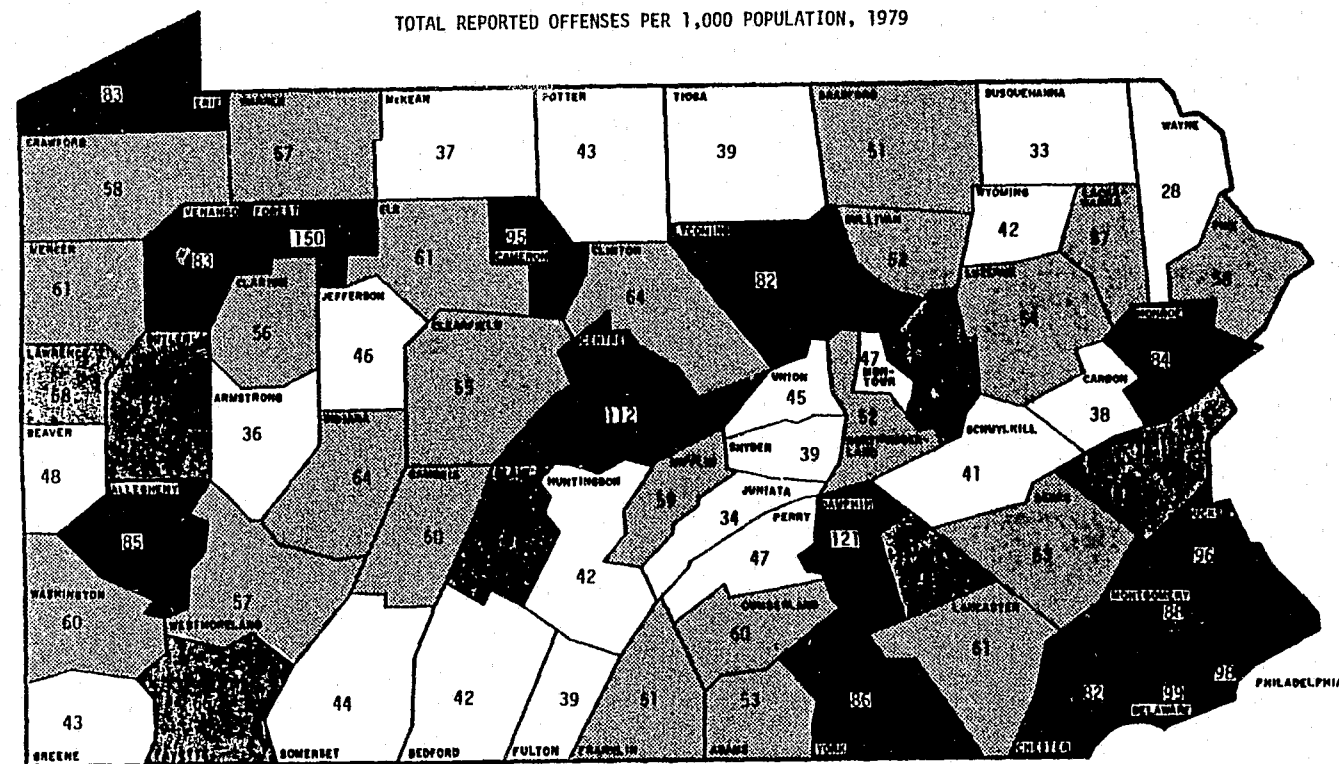


CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION

FINDING - INCIDENCE OF CRIME IS NOT DIRECTLY RELATED TO PERCENTAGE OF ELDERLY RESIDENTS IN A GIVEN PENNSYLVANIA COUNTY.

Graph 7 maps locations of criminal incidence in the Commonwealth in 1979. Comparing this with Graph 2, which depicts the concentration of elderly residents and Graph 3, portraying total county population, it can be inferred that incidence of crime is more a factor of total population concentration than elderly residency. This is especially so in the northeast region of Pennsylvania.

GRAPH 7



Source: Pennsylvania Uniform Crime Report, 1979
U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

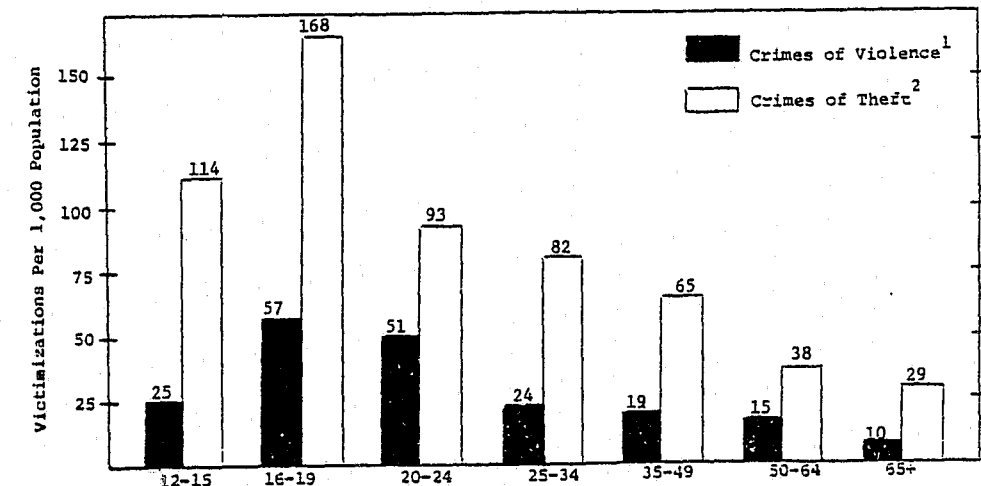
FINDING - ELDERLY CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION TRENDS IN PENNSYLVANIA APPEAR TO BE GENERALLY SIMILAR TO NATIONAL PATTERNS. THEY INDICATE THAT THE ELDERLY ARE THE LEAST VICTIMIZED OF ALL AGE GROUPS.

Police agencies generally do not collect or publish data on the age, sex or race of crime victims, except for the crime of murder. Recently, however, victimization surveys conducted by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, United States Department of Justice, and the Bureau of Census, United States Department of Commerce, have produced data that describes the extent of crime against the elderly for the Nation, generally, and Pennsylvania in particular. According to one of these surveys, Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1976, persons age 65 and over constitute the least likely age group to be victimized by any of the four crimes of violence studied: rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. Persons age 65 or older were also the least likely to become victims of theft with the exceptions of pocket picking and purse snatching.

Victimization survey results for Pennsylvania tend to reflect national trends. National Crime Survey Data for Pennsylvania, published in 1975, shows that age group 65 + is the least likely age group to be victimized. Graph 8 indicates that age group 65 + has lower victimization rates than all other age groups for crimes of violence and theft. The only exceptions again are purse snatching and pocket picking. These crimes are age related and impact particularly on the elderly.

GRAPH 8

PERSONAL CRIMES: PENNSYLVANIA VICTIMIZATION RATES FOR PERSONS AGE 12 AND OVER, BY TYPE OF CRIME AND AGE OF VICTIM, 1975
(Rate per 1,000 population in each age group)



¹Includes rape, robbery and assault

²Includes personal larceny both with and without contact

SOURCE: Pennsylvania Subsection of the National Crime Survey, 1975

FINDING - CRIME'S EFFECTS ARE FAR MORE DEVASTATING FOR THE ELDERLY THAN FOR OTHER AGE GROUPS.

The consequences of victimization which leave the elderly devastated can be categorized as economic, physical, and emotional. Economic consequences are particularly devastating because so many older persons live on fixed incomes. Thus, a loss due to crime can have a severe impact on an elderly person's budget.

A three-year study that assessed the patterns of elderly criminal victimization in Kansas City conducted by the Midwest Research Institute (1976) indicated that elderly purse snatching victims had lost on the average 93% of a month's income when victimized. The study noted that, given the low median incomes of the elderly, they were losing vital necessities when victimized by a crime. This included money for rent, doctor bills, and food. Consequently, when the elderly were victims of even relatively

minor crimes, the results can be life threatening given the limited resources of the elderly.

Due to their frailty, the elderly are more likely than other age groups to suffer broken bones and other injuries due to criminal victimization. In addition, they require a longer recovery period due to their physical makeup. Tragically, many elderly persons are unlikely ever to recover fully from a severe injury due to physical assault.

Finally, criminal victimization of older people, can manifest some social and psychological consequences. These can be as severe as economic deprivation and physical impairment which often results in the elderly seeking isolation from their community due to fear of crime.

FINDING - A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF PENNSYLVANIA'S ELDERLY POPULATION LIMIT OR CHANGE ACTIVITIES DUE TO A FEAR OF CRIME.

Fear of crime among the elderly in Pennsylvania tends to mirror national trends. A 1975 Louis Harris Poll sampled 4,000 persons over age 65 throughout the nation, and the results showed that fear of crime was perceived by the respondents as the elderly's most serious concern. In fact, in this Poll, fear of crime was ranked by 23% of the elderly respondents as the most serious concern outranking even health problems (21%) and financial problems (15%).

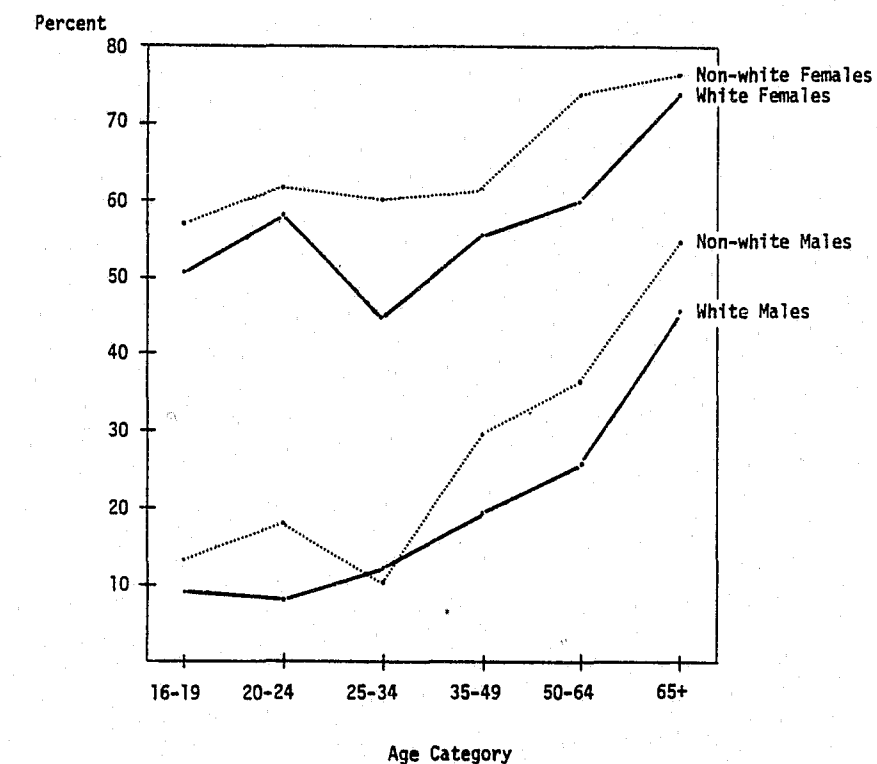
Studies by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration conducted in Pennsylvania and other areas of the country report the same findings. A survey conducted in 1975 in 13 American cities reported that 64% of respondents age 65 and over felt either somewhat unsafe or very unsafe when out alone in their neighborhoods at night. Similar surveys conducted by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia found that fear of crime particularly effects the elderly. As illustrated in Graph 9, in Pittsburgh 75% of elderly non-white females felt somewhat or very unsafe when out alone at night. Further, nearly 7 out of 10 white elderly females expressed a similar fear. Both non-white and white elderly males expressed considerably less fear than elderly females of either race.

Although the elderly, particularly the poor, black and female, experience high levels of fear in urban areas, the problem is not limited to large cities. According to testimony presented to the Select Committee on Aging, United States House of Representatives, in February, 1978, by Professor Wesley Skogan, fear of crime is not distinctively a big city problem. Professor Skogan's data, taken from a national survey by the National Opinion Research Center, reports that "fully one-half of the fearful elderly in that national survey lived in towns, villages and rural areas and another twenty percent in suburban areas".

The high fear levels of the elderly can easily be reconciled with the low crime rates. Part of this is due to the lower visibility of the elderly who frequently do not venture out of doors thus avoiding victimization. The elderly have a life style that is naturally self-protective. Elderly citizens are rarely auto theft victims because they own fewer cars, and infrequently show up in assault cases because they are involved in fewer conflicts.

GRAPH 9

PERCENTAGE OF PITTSBURGH SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHO FELT SOMEWHAT UNSAFE OR VERY UNSAFE WHEN OUT ALONE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD AT NIGHT



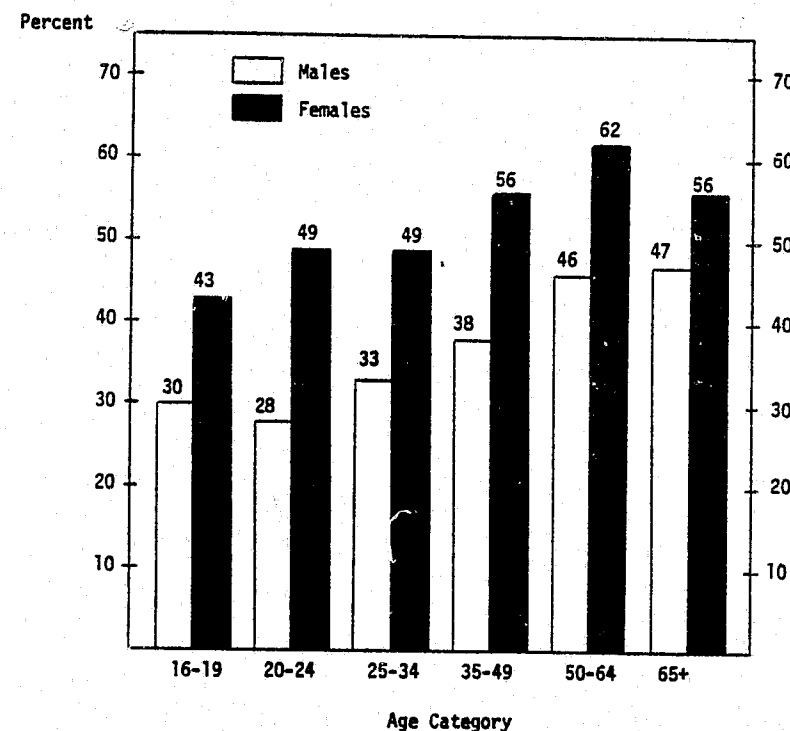
Source: Criminal Victimization Survey in Pittsburgh, 1973

FINDING - FEAR OF CRIME IMPAIRS SIGNIFICANTLY THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE COMMONWEALTH'S ELDERLY RESIDENTS.

Surveys conducted on a National and Commonwealth level report that nearly half of the elderly respondents changed or limited their activities because of their fear of crime. This is evidenced in Graph 10, where 56% of the female elderly and 47% of the male senior citizen respondents stated that they had limited or changed their activities because of crime. A heavy toll is exacted on many elderly for their self-imposed confinement. The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration in its booklet We Can Prevent Crime states that many poor elderly who reside in inner-city neighborhoods with high crime are actually under "house arrest" because they "virtually imprison themselves in their homes". Dr. Barry D. Lebowitz of the National Institute of Mental Health in testimony before the Select Committee on Aging, United State House of Representatives, stated that "decades of research have consistently shown that social isolation has deleterious mental health consequences of the most serious kind".

GRAPH 10

PERCENTAGE OF PHILADELPHIA SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHO LIMITED OR CHANGED THEIR ACTIVITIES BECAUSE OF A FEAR OF CRIME



Source: Philadelphia Criminal Victimization Survey, 1972

STRATEGIES

Based on analysis of the incidence and effect of crimes that victimize the elderly in Pennsylvania, this section identifies a number of strategy recommendations for implementation. They are based upon successful precedents in other states and are designed for implementation primarily by existing social services agencies across Pennsylvania.

The foundation of the program is the existing social service networks system, made up of the Pennsylvania Department of Aging and the 49 Area Agencies on Aging located at the county level. The Area Agencies on Aging are charged to provide comprehensive community services to the elderly. In addition, many other organizations providing services to senior citizens at the local level such as the more than 2,000 senior centers and clubs can aid in the delivery of services.

Also available to deal specifically with community crime prevention is the commonwealth-wide program known as Pennsylvania Crime Watch. Pennsylvania Crime Watch involves state and local law enforcement agencies in a coordinated effort to educate the public in crime prevention techniques and assist local police agencies to identify specific crime problems and effectively counteract them. Pennsylvania Crime Watch, coordinated by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, can easily be geared to focus special attention on the elderly. Through the Commission's Regional Offices and its network of over 600 trained crime prevention officers in local police departments positive follow-through on elderly crime prevention strategies can be assured.

Through a coordinated effort at the state, county, and municipal levels, an effective, inexpensive program to combat the problem of crime victimization of Pennsylvania's elderly can be achieved.

RECOMMENDATION - THE PENNSYLVANIA UNIFORM CRIME REPORT SHOULD BE MODIFIED TO INCLUDE THE AGE, SEX, AND RACE OF CRIME VICTIMS.

Currently there exists no systematic process of collecting, aggregating, reporting, and analyzing data on crimes that victimize the elderly population in Pennsylvania. Many local police departments collect the data on individual cases but do not aggregate it in periodic reports. All departments should be advised by the Pennsylvania State Police to report this information for incorporation in the annual Pennsylvania Uniform Crime Report. Implementation of this recommendation would result in valid figures on the extent of crime which not only victimizes the elderly, but all age groups. This would contribute to more effective planning, monitoring, and evaluation of anti-crime programs by state and local elderly service providing agencies.

RECOMMENDATION - AN INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE SHOULD BE APPOINTED TO MARSHAL AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND INSURE COORDINATION OF EFFORT IN COMBATING CRIMES THAT VICTIMIZE PENNSYLVANIA'S SENIOR CITIZENS.

Through coordination of resources, various agencies of the Commonwealth collectively possess the capability to effectively assist the elderly in anti-crime programs. For example, the Department of Community Affairs, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Crime Victims' Compensation Board, Department of Banking, Insurance Department, State Police, Commission on Crime and Delinquency, and others have in-house expertise and resources that can contribute to reducing elderly crime incidence and assisting elderly crime victims. The State Police, Insurance Department, and Bureau of Consumer Protection could initiate educational programs designed to reduce the incidence of consumer fraud among the elderly. To insure maximum resource utilization and coordination of effort, the Governor should consider the appointment of an Interagency Task Force. The Task Force, composed of representatives from the aforementioned agencies, should develop a timely plan of action outlining programs that each agency should undertake in order to reduce elderly crime risks. The lead role in formulating the Task Force should be jointly assigned to the Commission on Crime and Delinquency and the Department of Aging. The Secretary of Aging should serve as Chairman of the Task Force.

RECOMMENDATION - A CRIME PREVENTION TRAINING PROGRAM SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND ADMINISTERED TO THE ELDERLY SERVICE PROVIDERS.

Throughout the nation in recent years, crime prevention training has been an effective means of combating both the incidence of crime and its ramifications on the elderly community. The National Council of Senior Citizens' Criminal Justice and the Elderly Program has proven in a series of demonstration projects in such major urban areas as Chicago, New York, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and Washington, D.C. that crime prevention training helps the elderly in a number of significant ways to avoid both victimization and fear of crime. Training provides the opportunity to orient social networks to the needs of the elderly and strengthen neighborhoods to be more crime prevention conscious. Furthermore, training expands public awareness of the problem of the crime against the elderly and in the activities needed to effectively combat it. Formulation of a specific training program for elderly service providers utilizing the expertise of the National Council on Senior Citizens' program would be an effective and efficient means of educating Pennsylvania's social service network on elderly crime problems and the means to reduce both their incidence and impact. The Commission on Crime and Delinquency in conjunction with the National Council of Senior Citizens should formulate this anti-crime program. The Commission's field staff after completing

training of its own should conduct throughout the Commonwealth sessions for elderly service providing agencies to increase their sensitivity and awareness of the impact crime has on Pennsylvania's senior citizens. Coordination of these sessions on the local level should be made by the local Area Agency on Aging. Service providers who participate in the anti-crime training workshop could then be able to present crime prevention training to the elderly either in a group or individual setting.

It should be emphasized that coordination with the crime prevention officers of the municipal police departments throughout the commonwealth will be an important factor in this program's long term success.

RECOMMENDATION - A TRAINING PROGRAM SHOULD BE DEVELOPED TO SENSITIZE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS TO UNDERSTAND AND DEAL MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH OLDER PERSONS.

Everyday law enforcement officers deal with the problems of crime and its effect on the elderly. An understanding of the aging process can improve law enforcement officers' relationships with older persons. Such understanding helps officers avoid regarding the elderly in the same stereotypical fashion as does much of the rest of the society, thus greatly assisting their delivery of services to protect senior citizens.

A training package has been developed by the American Association of Retired Persons to specifically deal with this subject. Commission on Crime and Delinquency staff should contact the American Association of Retired Persons and make arrangements for utilization of this curriculum to instruct Pennsylvania's local law enforcement personnel. The same training method utilized in the service providers program will be applied.

Field staff of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency will receive instruction from the American Association of Retired Persons and, in turn, present instruction to law enforcement personnel throughout the Commonwealth. This program will improve communication between the police community and the growing elderly population and will help individual officers relate more effectively to older citizens.

RECOMMENDATION - RESIDENTIAL SECURITY SERVICES SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO PENNSYLVANIA'S ELDERLY.

The National Council of Senior Citizens, in their demonstration projects throughout the country, found that the most popular crime prevention services provided were home security surveys and hardware installations.

Security surveys include assessments of the vulnerability of property protection and a prescription of measures for exterior lighting, entry protection including locks on doors and windows, adequate interior lighting and key control. These services are "tangible" as the elderly can take part in the survey of their residences. It has been found that this service reduces fear of crime and chances of victimization. When followed by assistance from local police crime prevention officers this service has been found to be extremely effective.

Elderly service providing agencies can also perform or coordinate this service after completing crime prevention instruction offered from police crime prevention units established under Pennsylvania's Crime Watch Program. Commission on Crime and Delinquency field staff can provide back-up assistance and referral as needed.

RECOMMENDATION - COMMUNITY-BASED CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED IN AREAS OF HIGH ELDERLY RESIDENT CONCENTRATION.

For several years, the Pennsylvania Crime Watch Program has been actively involved in the formation of crime prevention programs in residential areas. This effort has been based on successful precedents in communities throughout the country. Community-based crime prevention programs have proven successful in reducing crime risks, community fear, and increased clearance of criminal incidents. Local police should continue to be encouraged through Pennsylvania Crime Watch to target areas of high elderly residential concentration for community crime prevention programs.

Such programs should include block watch, escort, lobby monitor and telephone assurance services. This approach, fostered by active local police, would stimulate the elderly community to assist itself in helping criminal incidence and the atmosphere of fear of crime.

RECOMMENDATION - POLICE SHOULD ESTABLISH ANTI-CRIME UNITS DESIGNED TO APPREHEND PERPETRATORS OF CRIMES THAT VICTIMIZE THE ELDERLY.

It has been established that law enforcement authorities should be aware of the nature of crime that preys on elderly citizens. Developing such awareness includes the continuous analysis of the nature, location, and scope of criminal activity in areas housing high concentration of senior citizens. Where appropriate, police should establish high visibility patrol units disguised as decoys to operate in determined areas of high criminal incidence. As an additional measure, the use of auxiliary police in areas of high elderly population concentration should be considered.

RECOMMENDATION - SENIOR CITIZENS WITH SUITABLE EXPERTISE SHOULD BE UTILIZED BY AREA AGENCIES ON AGING TO REDUCE INCIDENCE OF CONSUMER FRAUD AMONG THE ELDERLY.

It is an accepted sociological fact that peer pressure is an effective method in changing behavior. Peer pressure can be an effective tool in alerting senior citizens of the ever increasing problem of consumer fraud.

Studies have revealed that consumer fraud victimization is due to the elderly victim getting the impression that they can "get something for nothing". Anti-fraud committees composed of senior citizens with trade and legal skills should be developed by Crime and Delinquency field staff. Retired contractors, plumbers, roofers, etc. could serve on these committees and offer practical ideas for reducing the incidence of confidence swindles. However, such panels should be created only with the full cooperation and endorsement of the local police authorities.

RECOMMENDATION - THE DIRECT DEPOSIT PROGRAM SHOULD BE ENDORSED AND ACTIVELY ADVOCATED BY THE PENNSYLVANIA ELDERLY SERVICE SYSTEM FOR USE BY PENNSYLVANIA'S SENIOR CITIZENS.

The direct deposit of income in the form of checks from the federal government or pension funds is critical to the reduction of theft of income from the elderly. A senior citizen's loss of income, even for a short period of time, has devastating consequences and often causes irreparable harm. A public awareness program monitoring the Direct Deposit Program would be extremely beneficial.

Staff of senior centers should receive training in direct deposit regulations and procedures and assist the elderly with enrolling in this program. This can be done as part of the aforementioned anti-crime public education program.

RECOMMENDATION - THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF CRIME VICTIMIZING THE ELDERLY IN PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS SHOULD BE RESEARCHED AND APPROPRIATE ANTI-CRIME PROGRAMS FORMULATED.

Pertinent information on crime against the elderly in public housing areas is not currently available. This is a problem that must be addressed as an increasing number of the Commonwealth's elderly population resides in these projects. To prevent housing project crime, authorities should consider age integrated housing in both urban and rural areas. Further, public housing authorities for the elderly should incorporate "defensible space" concepts into design features in order to reduce criminal opportunities. If appropriate, the Department of Community Affairs should assume a lead role in assuring that all future elderly facilities incorporate design features that tend to reduce crime by means of environmental design.

RECOMMENDATION - THE BASIC MUNICIPAL POLICE COURSE SHOULD INCLUDE INSTRUCTION IN CRIME AGAINST THE ELDERLY WITH EMPHASIS ON THE AGING PROCESS.

As noted in an earlier recommendation, law enforcement officers need to be sensitized to the nature of crime against the elderly. Therefore, all local police in their qualification training should be made aware of this situation so that they may better serve Pennsylvanians over 65 years of age. The appropriate training module can be drawn from the American Association of Retired Persons police instructional material.

RECOMMENDATION - SECURITY SURVEYS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED OF LOCAL SENIOR CENTER FACILITIES BY POLICE CRIME PREVENTION OFFICERS.

The elderly center much of their public life around service facilities. In the Commonwealth there are approximately 2,000 senior centers and clubs. Many such centers are located in crime areas. In these areas, municipal police crime prevention officers and service providers should conduct standardized security surveys of the centers. These surveys should include a review of the area surrounding the facility such as location of bus stops, parking areas, etc in order to reduce criminal opportunities. And local communities should routinely request comments on site planning for future elderly facilities from police crime prevention officers.

RECOMMENDATION - PARENT ABUSE IS A GROWING PROBLEM AND SHOULD BE RESEARCHED TO DETERMINE ITS SCOPE AND INCIDENCE.

The extent of parent abuse is not known since there has been no original research undertaken in Pennsylvania. However, authorities believe this offense to be increasing rapidly. Studies in Ohio and Massachusetts suggest that the problem may be of considerable magnitude. The Department of Aging should conduct research on this problem and existing legislation should be reviewed in order to determine whether current statutes are adequate concerning the reporting of this problem by social service agencies, physicians, etc.

RECOMMENDATION - DISTRICT ATTORNEYS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO ELDERLY VICTIMS OF CRIME INCIDENCE TO REDUCE TRAUMA AND FEAR.

As this report notes, crime victimization is an especially unnerving experience for the senior citizen. District Attorneys' offices can provide a variety of services to assist the elderly

crime victim especially when a person is participating as a prosecution witness. Case scheduling and witness notification procedures that minimize the time that the elderly need to wait in court should be adopted. Information on court proceedings including a clear presentation on court process should be provided to minimize fear and confusion. Where the elderly victim/witness does not have convenient means of transportation to and from court, coordinated arrangements with local aging service centers and the county area agency on aging should occur to provide transportation. A special waiting area for the elderly to avoid contact with the accused would be beneficial. Procedures expediting payment of fees to elderly witnesses should be implemented. Victim impact statements could be incorporated into pre-sentence reports, especially for the elderly victims.

RECOMMENDATION - AREA AGENCIES ON AGING SHOULD DESIGNATE A STAFF MEMBER TO ASSIST ELDERLY VICTIMS OF CRIME.

In spite of the prescribed victim assistance services provided by the District Attorneys' offices, trauma incurred by elderly victims impacts on all aspects of their lives. Basic services required to help the elderly cope with trauma include crisis intervention and management, criminal justice services, crime prevention services and compensation, property repair and restitution assistance. Most of these services are not available in Pennsylvania at this time.

A staff member of the local Area Agency on Aging should be given the responsibility for identifying and coordinating agencies who can assist elderly crime victims. The staff member could establish interagency procedures and protocol to insure that the service delivery system is responsible to elderly crime victims. Liaison with local police should also be the responsibility of this person.

RECOMMENDATION - STAFF OF SENIOR CENTERS SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED ON THE CRIME VICTIMS COMPENSATION PROGRAM AND HAVE TO ASSIST THE ELDERLY VICTIM.

The Commonwealth has a compensation program that provides assistance to victims of violent crimes. Victims may be eligible for medical expenses, loss of earnings and support, and reimbursement for burial expenses is available for their families.

Recent legislation mandates that police officers provide written advice to victims about the compensation program. However, many elderly may need assistance in making application for compensation. Processing of awards can take six (6) months to a year but time can be reduced if proper documentation is submitted. To fill their assistance void, elderly service providers can be instructed by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency

in the intent and mechanics of the compensation program and how to assist the elderly with filing claims.

RECOMMENDATION - STAFF OF PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY AND DEPARTMENT OF AGING SHOULD REVIEW ON AN ANNUAL BASIS THE STATUS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT AND THE CONTINUING NEED FOR SERVICES TO THE ELDERLY.

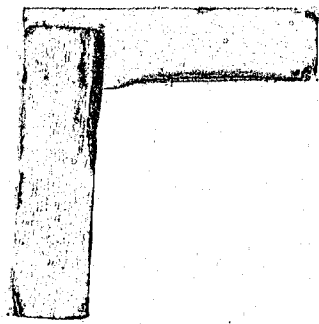
As noted in this report, the proportion of elderly citizens is growing in Pennsylvania with special needs in the area of crime prevention and victim assistance. In this regard, it is essential that the needs of this segment of the population be assessed yearly in order that services for the elderly be provided in a timely and effective manner.

CLOSING STATEMENT

Governor Dick Thornburgh at a conference on Crime and the Elderly in Philadelphia, PA. on May 15, 1980 stated, "Crime against older persons cannot be tolerated---for it spreads fear among those of our citizens who are most vulnerable, and those who, after a lifetime of work, are most entitled to be free of the physical and psychological effects of fear". It is hoped that this report has laid the groundwork for an effective program to alleviate this problem.

The strategies recommended band together Pennsylvania's government, law enforcement organizations, business and citizens in an alliance based on the common theme of combatting a problem which, according to Governor Thornburgh, "reduces the luster of these golden years".

Comments or questions on this report should be directed to Mr. Herbert C. Yost, Director, Bureau of Regional Operations, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Post Office Box 1167, Federal Square Station, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 17108.



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