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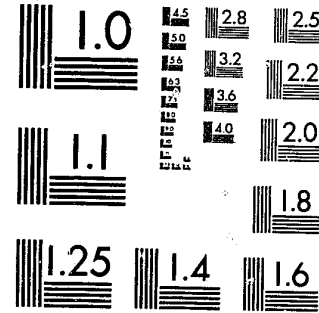
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OHIO CITIZEN ATTITUDES
CONCERNING CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

8457

Third Edition 1982
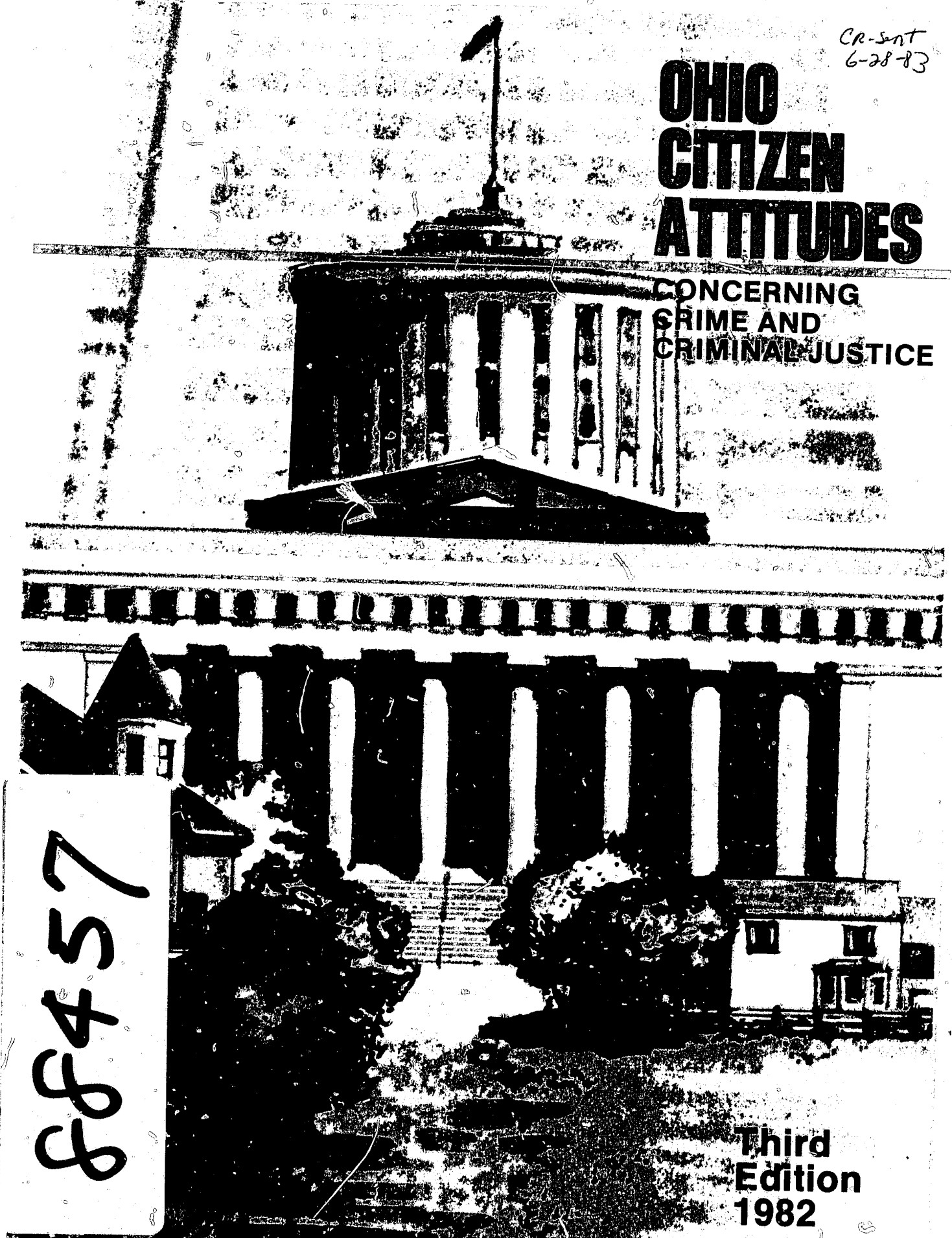
A SERVICE OF:

THE OHIO STATISTICAL ANALYSIS CENTER:
DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

STATE OF OHIO
RICHARD F. CELESTE, GOVERNOR

88457

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FOREWORD

This, the third annual survey of Ohioans' attitudes about crime
and criminal justice, reaffirms much of what the State's citizens have
been saying since 1979. Ohioans continue to feel very safe in their
own neighborhoods, are skeptical of the effectiveness of the criminal
justice system in general, but are especially supportive of law
enforcement officers in particular, and are demonstrating greater
reliance upon crime prevention methods. However, the 1982 survey also
probed previously unexplored areas of citizen opinion and behavior.
The new directions have provided a wealth of new information
concerning handgun ownership and use in Ohio, the sources of
information upon which citizens base their opinions about crime and
criminal justice, the accuracy of public perceptions about violent
crime, educational standards for police officers, the use of deadly
force, the effectiveness of female patrol officers, and many others.

More than ever, this type of information is needed in the process
of making decisions about criminal justice in Ohio. Because the
criminal justice system is largely composed of key elected
officials--from judges, sheriffs and prosecutors to the State's law
makers--there needs to be a good supply of information on the public
flowing to these decision-makers.

The Ohio Citizen Attitude Survey series is not an attempt to
gauge the citizens' emotional response to the latest controversy in
the field of criminal justice, nor does it limit itself to superficial
"feelings" about issues when the complexity of those issues demands a
deeper line of reasoning. If, for example, the survey respondents
have indicated a "get tough" attitude toward criminals, they are then
asked how to pay for implementing the tougher sentencing policies they
suggest. Or, as was true this year, assertions about changes in the
crime rate are followed by questions about respondent knowledge of
crime occurrence and, further, the sources of that knowledge. This
second line of questioning is necessary if citizen attitudes are to be
put into any kind of rational perspective for the actual purpose of
making decisions that affect the administration of criminal justice in
Ohio.

This 1982 survey was conducted among some one-thousand randomly
selected Ohio residents in 84 of the State's 88 counties. A detailed
personal profile of these anonymous respondents can be found in the
final section of this report.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

-The period October, 1980 - May, 1982 saw Ohioans increase their use of deadbolt locks, pinlocks, alarms, and other crime prevention measures.

-Blacks practice crime prevention more so than any other sub-group of Ohio's citizenry, while senior citizens are the least likely to take such measures.

-There are more than two-million handguns in Ohio households, with at least one handgun present in 29% of all households.

-Only 56% of Ohio's handgun owners cited protection as their main reason for owning such a weapon.

-Two-thirds of the State's handgun owners said a handgun had been present in the home for at least ten years.

-In terms of profile, Ohio's handgun owners tend to be 30-45 years old, married, earning more than $25,000 per year and residing in the south/central part of the state.

-Handgun owners are slightly more optimistic about their neighborhood crime environments than are their non-owning peers.

-Fewer than 7% of Ohio's handgun owners have ever had to use their handguns in self-defense, and most of this use has come in the forms of displaying or referring to the weapon.

-Only two of the survey's 290 handgun owners said that their handguns had ever been accidentally fired.

-Eighty-seven percent (87%) of Ohio's citizens rely upon the news media--television news (46%), newspapers (33%) or radio news (8%)--as their main source of information about crime and criminal justice.

-Ohioans have a badly inflated image of the violent crime problem in the state, with nearly one-third (32%) estimating the occurrence of violent crime at a level at least six times higher than the actual rate of 3.4 victims per one hundred population, per year.

-Better than one-third (36%) of Ohio's citizens either could not or would not even hazard a guess as to the violent crime rate, leaving only one citizen in five whose estimate of violent crime occurrence was within 6% of the actual rate.

-Citizen perceptions of property crime occurrence are also inflated, but not nearly so much as those relating to violent crime.

-Persons relying primarily upon the electronic media (television, radio) demonstrate greater knowledge problems about violent crime occurrence than do those who rely primarily upon the print media (newspapers and magazines).

-Ohioans' confidence in media accuracy in the reporting of violent crime is inversely related to the accuracy of their own perceptions. That is, the greater the confidence, the more distorted the perception.

-Most Ohioans feel the main role of the police should be that of patrolling and being visible in the community, as opposed to those roles of solving crimes or helping people during emergencies.

-Three-out-of-four Ohio citizens said that their first response to a police officer involved feelings of either respect (50%) or friendship (26%). Only one citizen in twenty cited fear (4%) or dislike (1%).

-Among Ohio's subgroups, senior citizens and women are most impressed with the courteousness and concern of law enforcement officers, while those who have never been married are most critical of those qualities in the police.

-While blacks are somewhat critical of the levels of courteousness and concern among law enforcement officers, they give the police high marks for "providing very good protection" and are as supportive as whites with regard to police use of deadly force.

-Nearly two-out-of-three Ohioans feel that peace officers should have at least 2-3 years of college prior to entering the law enforcement profession.

-There continues to be some public skepticism concerning the effectiveness of female peace officers, with 10% of the public feeling that female officers are "never" as effective as males, and 35% believing that they are as effective only "in some situations." Only 17% said females were as effective as males "in all situations."

-Ninety-seven percent (97%) of all Ohioans feel that police officers are justified in firing their weapons at suspected criminals under some circumstances, most of which deal with the defense of a life.

-Ohio's citizens are divided with regard to the monitoring of "excessive police force," with nearly half (49%) favoring the use of oversight groups outside of the direct control of law enforcement agencies.

NCJRS

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CRIME PREVENTION MEASURES
AND HANDGUN OWNERSHIP

It would appear that a growing number of Ohioans are taking basic crime prevention measures to ensure the safety of themselves and their property. In light of the fact that most respondents in the Ohio Citizen Attitude Survey said they felt either reasonably safe (45%) or very safe (35%) in their neighborhoods at night, the increased safety precautions in the home could be interpreted as positive influences upon citizen crime fear levels.*

Forty-eight percent (48%) of Ohio's citizens took at least some measures to make their homes more secure during the two year period prior to May of 1982. This was slightly higher than the 39% who responded positively to this question in 1980, yet below the 1979 finding which revealed that 42% had made such security improvements during the previous _one_ year. The comparable figure for 1982 was 22%.

Significant growth was noted in the number of households utilizing three well-established crime prevention devices, namely: deadbolt locks (doors), pinlocks (windows) and alarms.

TABLE 1

PERCENT OF OHIO HOUSEHOLDS WITH...

	October, 1980	May, 1982
Deadbolts	40%	46%
Pinlocks	31%	39%
Alarms	9%	12%

The 1980 report found that among the various subgroups, blacks and those with a college education were the most crime prevention conscious, while senior citizens were least likely to take these three self-protection measures. A year and a half later those patterns remained largely unchanged. In fact, among eight sub-groups analyzed, blacks accounted for the highest percentages of those taking each of the three crime prevention measures in question (deadbolts, pinlocks and alarms). (Figure 1). Furthermore, while blacks were not significantly more likely than whites to own handguns in the home, those who did were much more likely to do so for reasons of self-defense than were the members of any other sub-groups. (See Figures 4 and 5).

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* This fear question was actually phrased to reflect feelings of safety outside of the home. However, when the 1980 survey queried respondents concerning their crime fears inside of their homes, an overwhelming 95% gave "safe" or "very safe" as an answer.

FIGURE 1

WHO PRACTICES CRIME PREVENTION IN OHIO?
BY
VARIOUS SUB-GROUPS

	Black	4 Yrs. College	$40,000+	Professional	Laborer	STATE AVE.	High School Or Less	$10,000 Or Less	65+ Yrs. Old
% With Alarms	23	20	19	19	9	12	10	7	9
% With Pinlocks	48	41	40	38	46	42	41	40	35
% With Deadbolt Locks	53	53	47	48	48	48	46	47	42

% WITH ALARMS ≡≡≡

% WITH PINLOCKS ■■■

% WITH DEADBOLT LOCKS ▨▨▨
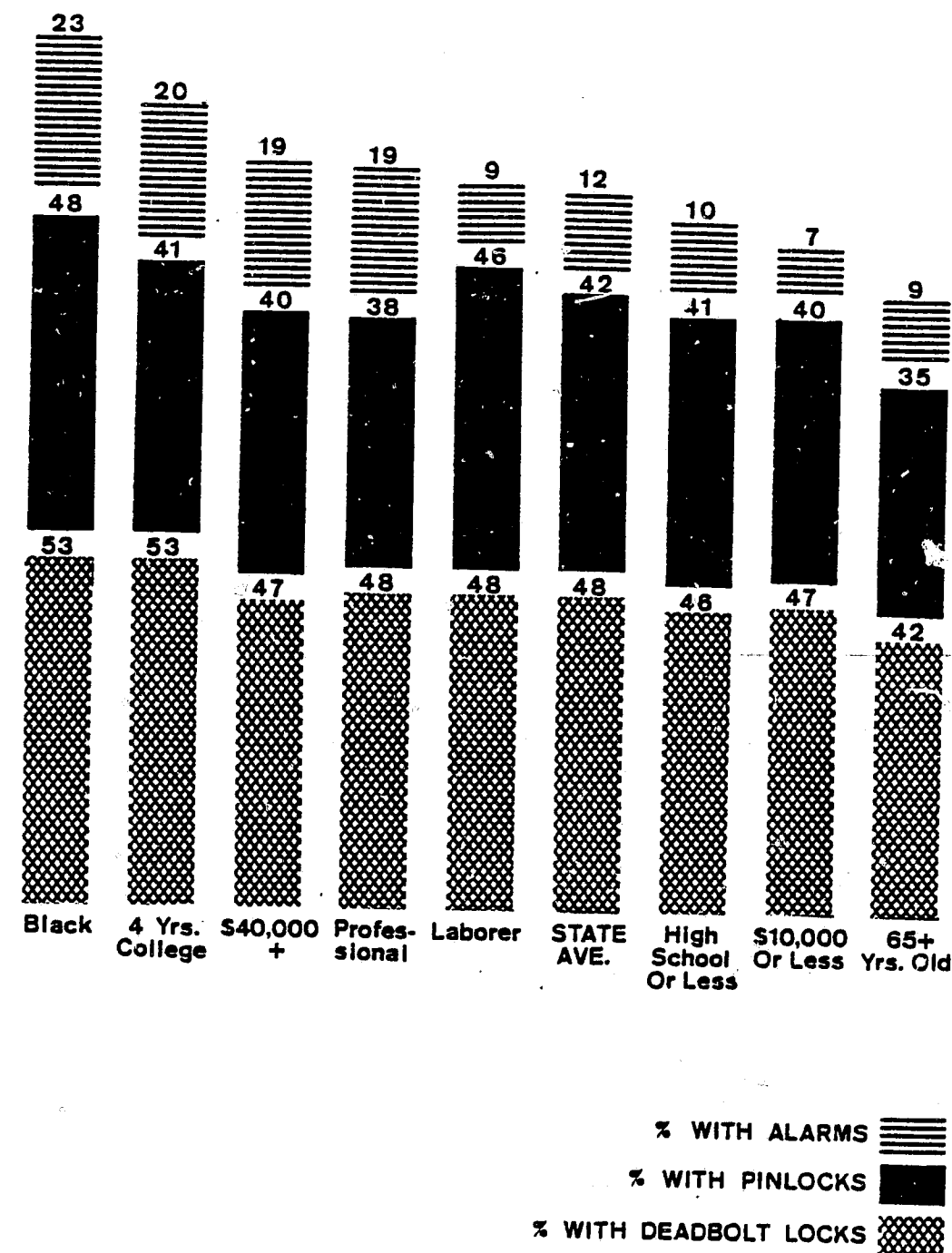
At the other end of the scale, Ohio's senior citizens finished in eighth place among the eight sub-groups with regard to the installation of deadbolt locks and pinlocks, and only one other sub-group, those earning less than $10,000 per year, reflected fewer security alarms.*

Prior victimization studies have shown that blacks are victimized at a higher rate than whites, and senior citizens are victimized at a rate lower than that of any other age group.** The difference in victimization rates could explain why blacks do but seniors do not practice crime prevention. Other aspects of the findings in Figure 1 are also explainable. For example, the "high" responses from college graduates, those earning $40,000+ per year and professionals/technicians can probably be explained in terms of heightened awareness of and available money for these crime prevention measures (especially alarms), while the inverse might be true of those at the low end of the scale.

The 1982 study, for the first time, broached the subject of handgun ownership. Even though few law enforcement officers would classify possession of a handgun as a crime prevention measure, it is included here as a reflection of public attitudes about crime. Furthermore, handguns beg the question of crime prevention from a negative direction because they play such an important role in Ohio's violent crime scenario. Better than half of Ohio's homicides (54%) are caused by handguns.***

A total of 29% of the survey respondents said that there was at least one handgun present in their household, with two-thirds answering in the negative. Interestingly, only 24 of the 1018 participants refused to answer the question. However, a follow-up question concerning the number of handguns in each household revealed that multiple handgun ownership is not rare in Ohio. Forty percent of the handgun households claim at least two such weapons, with 10% possessing four or more. In all, 539 handguns were accounted for among the 1018 survey participants. Figure 2, using this figure as well as known data concerning Ohio's population and number of households, projects a total state handgun figure of 2,029,895. (It should again be noted that this entire analysis pertains strictly to handguns, not to rifles and shotguns.)

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* These three crime prevention measures hardly exhaust all citizen self-protection possibilities. The 1980 study also asked respondents about some of these other options, such as the use of identification markings and participation in community crime prevention programs. The original patterns held true for these other measures as well.

** Property Crime Victimization: The Ohio Experience. Ohio Department of Economic and Community Development, April, 1981. p. 16.

*** "Crime in Ohio 1981". Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation, Fall, 1982. p. 32

FIGURE 2

HANDGUNS IN OHIO
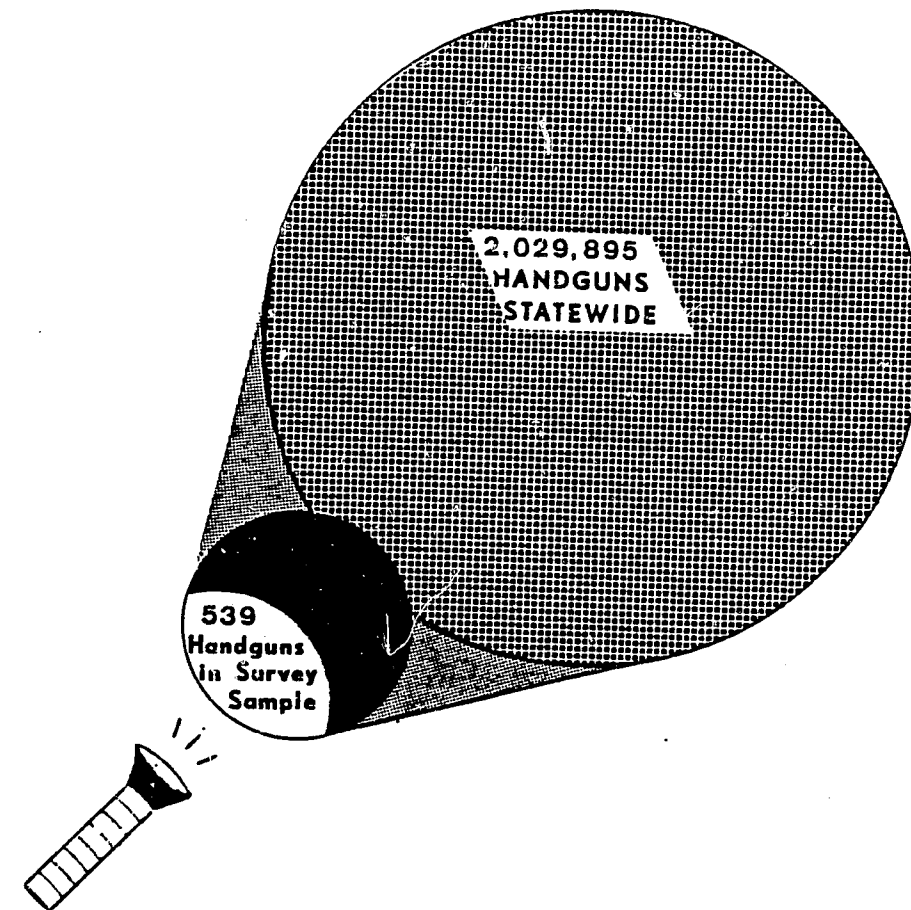
Someone might suppose that the existence of these more than
two-million handguns in Ohio is proof that citizens are reacting
desperately and fearfully to a badly deteriorating crime environment,
that the State's households are quickly falling into a state of "siege
mentality." Several follow-up questions, and two in particular,
undermine that interpretation of handgun ownership in Ohio. Whereas,
in some circles, handguns might be viewed only in defensive (or
offensive) terms, the handgun owners themselves reflect no
overwhelming agreement as to why they own their handguns.

TABLE 2

MAIN REASON FOR HANDGUN IN THE HOME

Protection..	56%
Recreation..	17%
Collecting..	6%
Sentimental.......................................	14%
Occupation..	5%
Other...	2%
	100% (290 cases)

4

"Protection" was sighted as the main reason by only a little more
than half of the handgun-owning respondents. A variety of competing
reasons drew the responses of 44% of the owners.

A second reason to discount the panic theory of handgun ownership
concerns length of ownership. Two-thirds of the owners responded that
they had had at least one handgun in the home for at least ten years,
while some two-fifths said handguns had been a part of their homes for
twenty years or more. Figure 3 graphically illustrates that handgun
ownership is anything but a new phenomenon among Ohioans.

FIGURE 3

HOW LONG HAS THERE BEEN A HANDGUN IN THE HOME?
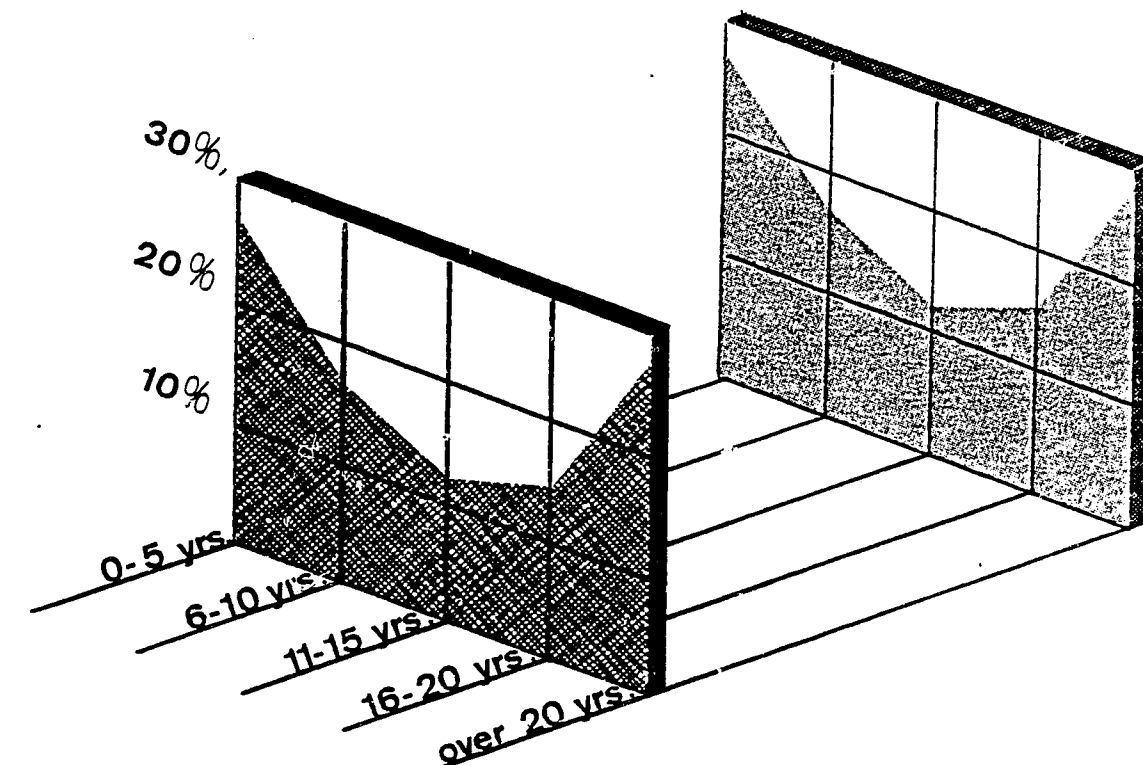
Who are Ohio's handgun owners? As was true of many of the
questions in the Citizen Attitude Survey, the response to this one was
not an "even bleed" from all respondents but rather the product of
numerous "uneven" response from several sub-groups. Figure 4 displays
several paired comparisons among some of these sub-groups.

5

FIGURE 4

OHIO'S HANDGUN OWNERS
(viewed as percentages of sub-group populations)
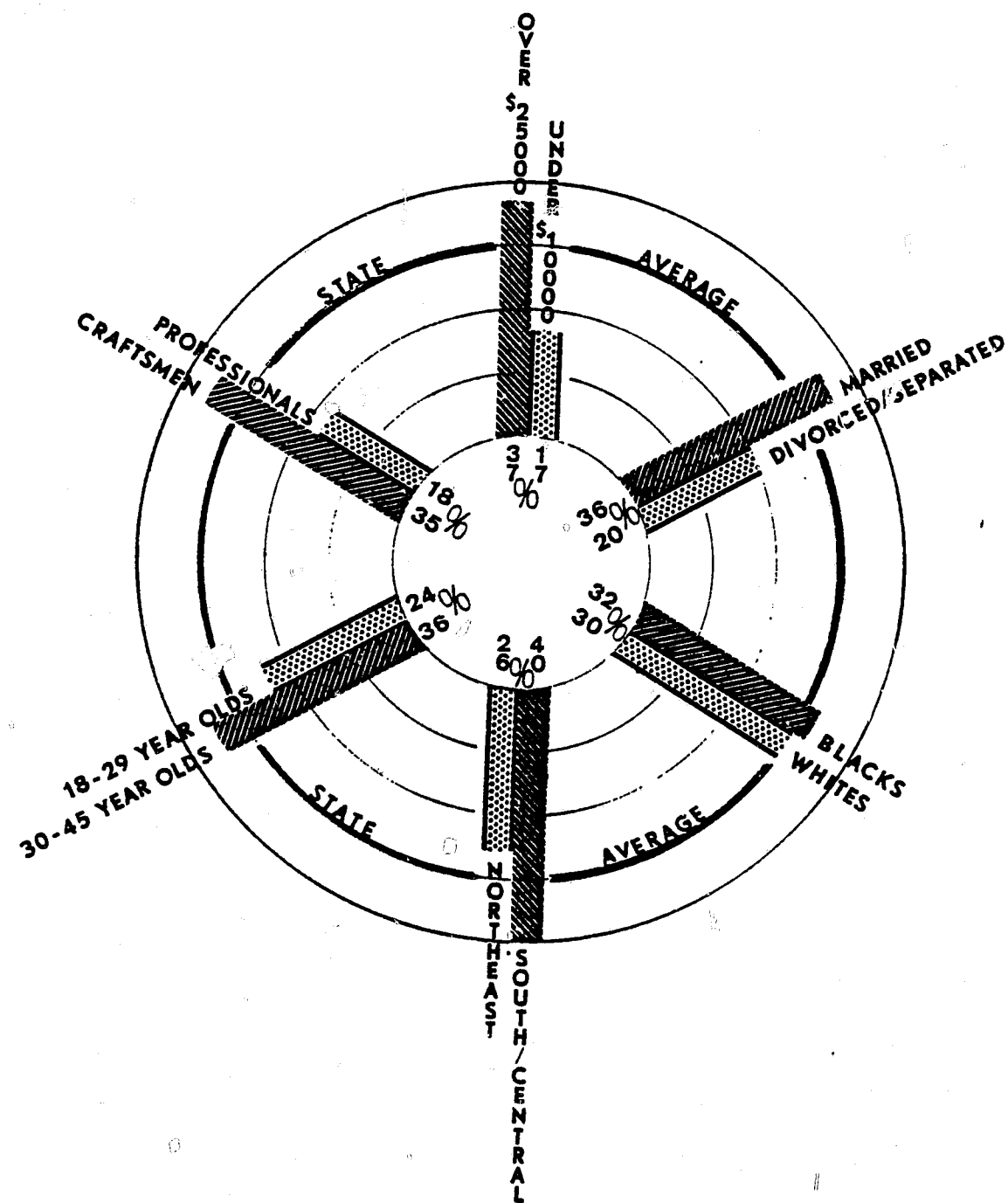
The strongest influence upon handgun ownership appears to be geographic residence within the State, one of the first times that variable has taken on any degree of significance. Other sub-groups which demonstrate tendencies toward handgun ownership include those who are married, aged 30-45, craftsmen, and earning more than $25,000 of household income per year. One variable which was significant for its lack of predictability was race, wherein the results were virtually the same.

It is especially interesting to note the inverse relationship between handgun ownership and protection as the main reason for that ownership. That is, the more likely one is to own a handgun, the less

FIGURE 5

HANDGUNS OWNED PRIMARILY FOR PROTECTION
BY
VARIOUS SUB-GROUPS

%	SUBGROUP	
52	Married	
76	*Divorced	
86	Black	
52	White	
62	Northeast	
50	South/Central	
46	65+ Years Old	
56	30-45 Years Old	
67	Professional	
45	Craftsmen	
62	Under $10,000	
56	Over 25,000	
56	STATE	
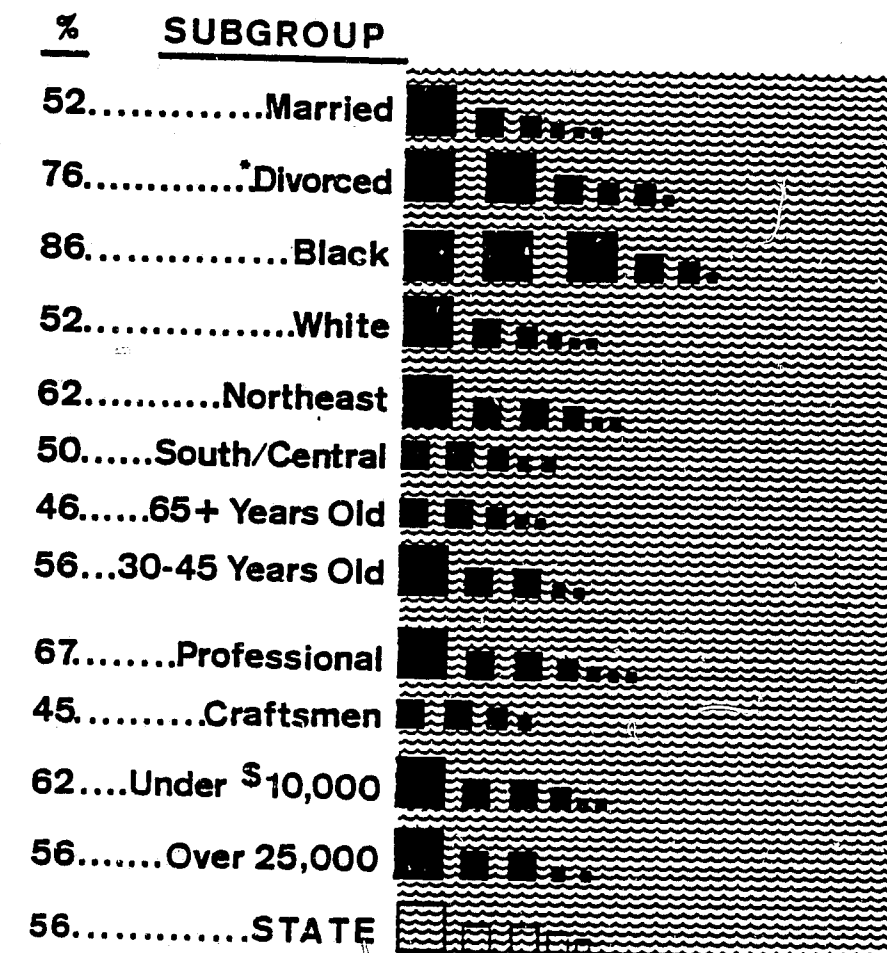
*Includes Separated

likely he or she is to cite protection as the reason for his or her ownership.* Figure 5 shows that those same groups which demonstrated the highest degree of ownership also reflected the least inclination to cite protection as reason for ownership.

The converse was also generally true. Thus, four of the five highest ownership sub-groups constituted the four lowest "protection" sub-groups from among the twelve analyzed, while four of the five lowest ownership sub-groups accounted for three of the four highest "protection" sub-groups.

It is difficult to put forth an interpretation of this data which will at once satisfy all possible explanations. However, the data do seem to argue the presence of a rather large and stable handgun-owning public in Ohio, one which is not directly dependent upon the pitch of the current rhetoric about crime. (Even among the "high protection" groups there is no evidence that gun ownership is of recent vintage.)

A final bit of data to support this interpretation can be seen in Table 3, which compares the neighborhood safety perceptions of handgun owners and non-owners. If handgun owners were an emotionally volatile group who were overreacting to the crime environment, one might expect them to be more likely than their non-handgun owning counterparts to compare their own neighborhoods unfavorably to others in the area. In fact, as Table 3 shows, that tendency is actually inversely related to handgun ownership (though not to a statistically significant degree). Thus, handgun owners may actually be slightly more optimistic about their neighborhood crime environments than are their non-handgun-owning peers.

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* There is a little methodological fuzziness here since the survey was oriented toward individuals, while the handgun question pertained to households. Interracial marriages, grandparents living with their children, and other such household relationships will cause a slightly higher error factor in this variable analysis.

TABLE 3

HOW OWN NEIGHBORHOOD COMPARES TO OTHERS IN AREA IN TERMS OF CRIME
BY
HANDGUN OWNERSHIP

	Handgun Owners	Non-Owners
Much More Dangerous	1.7%	1.8%
More Dangerous	1.4%	3.2%
About Average	28.7%	35.3%
Less Dangerous	43.6%	40.8%
Much Less Dangerous	24.7%	18.9%
	100.1%	100.0%
	(296 cases)	(665 cases)

Several of the survey's questions addressed not only the ownership of handguns but their use as well. Since protection was listed as the main ownership reason by a majority of Ohio's handgun owners, it is logical to ask if, in fact, those handguns are serving protective purposes.

The first significant finding to emerge from these follow-up questions is that 90% of Ohio's handgun owners never take their weapons out of their homes for purposes of self protection. Since more than 90% of all personal crimes of violence committed by strangers occur outside the home,* and since it is illegal to shoot a burglar or thief within the home (unless personal harm is threatened), most handgun owners are limiting their weapons to the places where such protection is least needed and usable.

A second logical area of inquiry concerns the number of times handguns were actually used in self-defense. Table 4 displays the answers of 309 respondents in this regard.

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* National Crime Survey data for Ohio, unpublished; Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.

TABLE 4

"HAVE YOU, PERSONALLY, EVER HAD TO USE A
HANDGUN IN SELF-DEFENSE? IF SO, HOW?"

No....................................... 93.5%
Yes, referred to it...................... .7%
Yes, displayed it........................ 3.3%
Yes, fired it............................ 2.6%
                                        100.1%
                                    (309 cases)

The data indicate that the number of times handgun owners must rely upon their weapons for self-defense is extremely small. It should be remembered that this particular question was not bounded by time limits, but could include incidents that were many years old. Given that most of the handgun owners have possessed such weapons for more than ten years, the yearly incidence of handgun use for self-protection shrinks to an even smaller number. This number can be reduced still further when illegitimate uses and unsuccessful preventions are identified. Table 5 is a listing of the twenty-one crimes in which respondents attempted to use a handgun in self-defense. In all but one of these cases the respondents reported that the handgun use was successful in preventing a victimization.

TABLE 5

CRIMES IN WHICH A HANDGUN WAS USED FOR SELF-DEFENSE

	Number	Percent
Assault	10	47.6%
Auto Theft	2	9.5%
Murder	3	14.3%
Robbery	4	19.0%
Kidnapping	2	9.5%
	21	99.9%

In an opposite direction, the danger of accidental handgun firings seems to be exaggerated. The survey found only two instances of such accidental firings from among 290 persons reponding to the question (again, no time limits were used).

All of this information must be weighed in the balance of other discussions concerning constitutionality, historical precedent, and the local law-making process. But, inevitably, it must also be weighed against the more than 20,000 handgun crimes committed in Ohio each year.

CITIZEN UNDERSTANDING OF CRIME
AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Three major Ohio citizen attitude surveys conducted during the past three years indicate that secondary sources of information may create informational gaps in the minds of Ohio's citizens. One such gap is noted in the wide disparity evident between citizen perceptions of the crime problem, in general, and perceptions of crime problems in individual neighborhoods. People tend to be pessimistic about the crime picture from the broader view, but are less so when crime is viewed from the immediate living environment. Further, while these views tend to be incorrect in the former case, they are rather accurate in the latter. The National Crime (victimization) Survey, which has been scientifically measuring crime incidence for over a decade, has shown that serious crime has leveled off since the mid-1970's. In fact, while 32% of American households experienced some kind of serious crime in 1975, that figure had dropped to 30% by 1981.*

How do secondary sources of information contribute to the breakdown of the public's understanding of crime and criminal justice? One explanation is that, as a normal course, news media bypass a large number of lesser crimes in order to highlight the rare and more sensational ones; citizens, therefore, receive a daily dose of information about these rare events. Many come to believe that serious crimes are commonplace (even though they, themselves, seldom, if ever, witness such crimes).

But this explanation is a poor substitute for research into the role of secondary news sources in shaping public opinion. However, there are also hard data to support this contention. Researchers who have closely analyzed the crime content of newspapers have concluded that increased editorial emphasis on crime leads to heightened fear levels among citizens.** Earlier Ohio Citizen Attitude Surveys have produced similar findings. The Citizen Attitude Survey began its inquiry with a direct question to the respondents regarding their "most important source of information about crime and the criminal justice system." Their responses are contained in Figure 6.

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*   "Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin," U.S. Department of Justice, September, 1982. p.1.

**   Margaret T. Gordon and Linda Heath, "The News Business, Crime and Fear," Margaret T. Gordon and Linda Heath, in Reactions to Crime: Individual and Institutional Responses, Edited by Dan A. Lewis. Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, Calif., 1981, p. 229
     "The Reactions and Crime Project: Executive Summary," National Institute of Justice, U.S. Dept. of Justice, May, 1982. P. 54

FIGURE 6

Most Important Sources Of Information About Crime And Criminal Justice

Other	T. V. Shows	Newspapers	Radio News	Television News	Friends/ Relatives
1.6%	6.7%	33.1%	7.9%	46.0%	4.7%
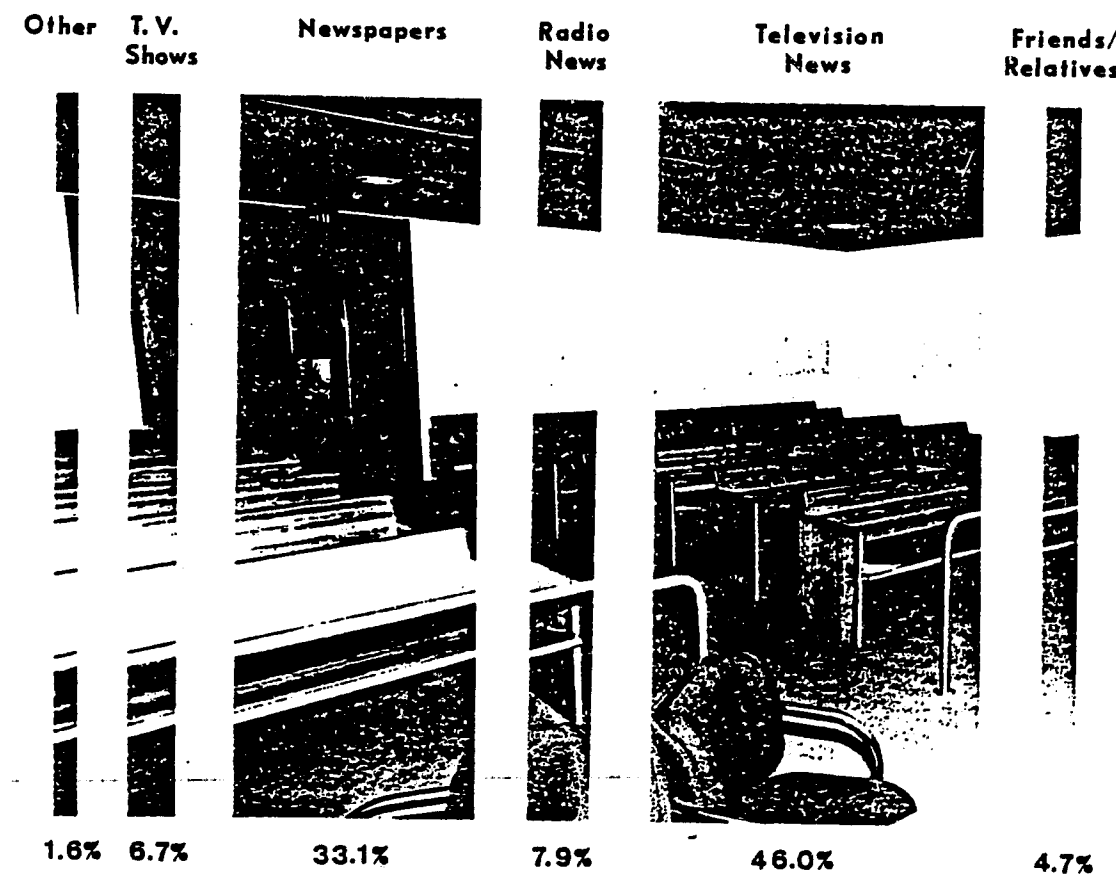
Overwhelmingly, Ohioans rely upon the print and electronic media for information about crime and criminal justice. Some 93.7% credited such sources, with the vast majority (87.0%) specifying the news media. Only 4.7% cited friends and relatives, while 1.6% identified other sources such as magazines, textbooks, or personal experience.

Because the vast majority of responses cited media sources of information,* any evaluation of public knowledge in this area necessarily implies a judgment about the effectiveness of the media as an information source for crime and criminal justice. The Citizen Attitude Survey attempted to make such an evaluation. The respondents

were asked to estimate what percentage of all Ohio adults were victims of violent crimes* during the past year, and how many Ohio households experienced a property crime** during the same period. The responses to these questions reflected the earlier-noted tendency of Ohioans to vastly over-estimate the incidence of crime in the State, particularly violent crime. While victimization studies have documented Ohio's violent crime rate at slightly less than four persons per hundred per year, only one citizen in twenty perceives that the rate is that low. (See Table 6).

---

* Even when the respondents were asked to name a second most important source of information, 89% cited media sources.

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* Includes murder, rape, robbery, and assault
** Includes burglary, theft, and auto theft

TABLE 6

RESPONDENTS' ESTIMATES OF PERCENTAGE OF OHIOANS ANNUALLY VICTIMIZED BY CRIMES OF VIOLENCE

Percent Perceived Victimized	Actual Victimization Rate	Percent of Respondents
0- 10%..........		....21%*
11- 20%..........	3.4%	....11%
21- 30%....................................		....11%
31- 40%....................................		6%
41- 50%....................................		7%
51- 60%....................................		3%
61- 70%....................................		2%
71- 80%....................................		2%
81- 90%....................................		.6%
91-100%....................................		.3%
Don't Know....................................		36%

99.9%
(Differences due to rounding)

---

* For example, 21% of the respondents estimated the violent crime rate at 0-10%, 11% said it fell between 11%-20%, etc.

More than one-third (36%) of the one thousand survey participants were incapable of making or unwilling to make even an "educated guess" as to the actual violent crime rate, an interesting fact considering that an earlier survey had found virtually all of the respondents willing to state that crime had risen during the previous year. An additional one-third of the survey respondents (32%) gave answers which were at least six times higher than the actual rate. Hence, more than two-thirds of Ohio's citizens demonstrate a marked lack of knowledge concerning violent crime victimization in the State.

There tended to be less of an information gap with regard to property crime. As can be seen from Table 7, nearly half of the respondents were within a reasonable range of the actual property crime rate, with about one-fourth estimating on the low side of that figure. Slightly more than one-fourth could not make a knowledgeable estimate of the rate.

Arguably, responses to these two questions reflect the media's overemphasis on violent crime. One recent study found that half of the crime stories in several selected newspapers were about crimes of violence,* even though such crimes constitute only one out of seven serious crimes. While similar content analysis of television and radio news is not herein available, it would appear that the more restrictive time limits of the electronic media suggests an even greater emphasis on crimes of violence. How often do burglaries make the six o'clock news?

---

* "The Reactions to Crime Project," p. 49

TABLE 7

RESPONDENTS' ESTIMATES OF PERCENTAGE OF OHIOANS ANNUALLY VICTIMIZED
BY
PROPERTY CRIME

Percent Perceived Victimized	Actual Victimization Rate	Percent of Respondents
0- 10%..........		........16%
11- 20%..........	20.8%	........12%
21- 30%................		..........10%
31- 40%................		.... 9%
41- 50%................		..........10%
51- 60%................		.... 4%
61- 70%................		.... 4%
71- 80%................		.... 6%
81- 90%................		.... .9%
91-100%................		.... .8%
Don't Know...............		27%

99.9%
(Differences due to rounding)

Within this area of public misinformation there are several subgroups which demonstrate even more pronounced misunderstandings concerning the occurrence of violent crime in Ohio. Figure 7 reveals that senior citizens and those with less than a high school

FIGURE 7

KNOWLEDGE GAPS CONCERNING VIOLENT CRIME
BY
SELECTED SUBGROUPS
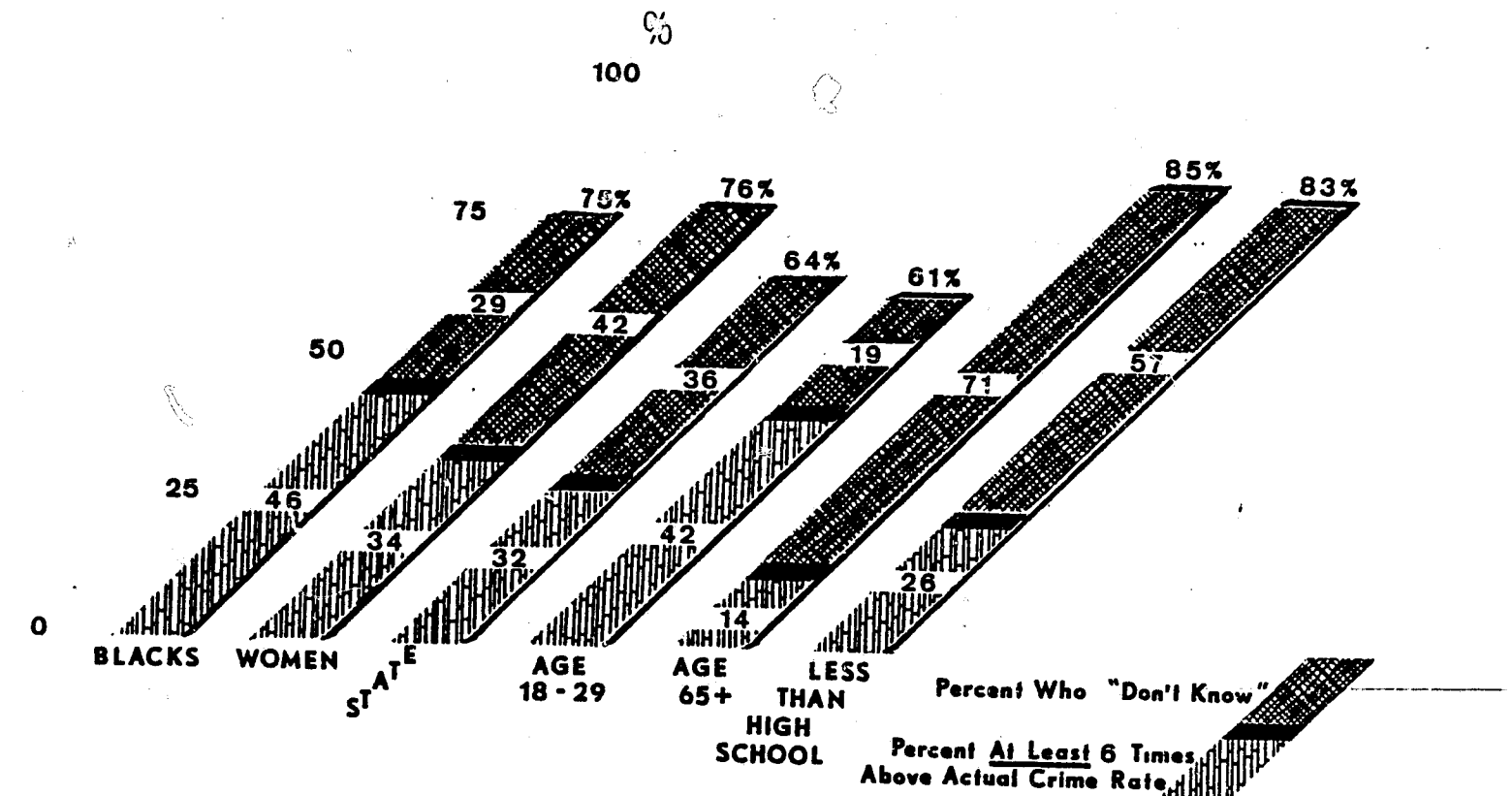
education demonstrate the least amount of knowledge concerning violent crime, with women and blacks also above the statewide average. (It should be remembered, here, that the statewide figure is, in itself, considerably above the actual crime rate.) The seniors owed their excessive figure to the fact that 71% of their respondents did not make an estimate in response to the question. The "less than high school" group suffered a similar problem with better than half (57%) unable to estimate a victimization percentage.

Blacks, young adults and, to a lesser extent, women reflected the greatest tendencies to badly over-estimate actual violent crime occurrence. Forty-six percent (46%) of black respondents estimated rates which were at least six times higher than the actual figure, with comparable overestimations for young adults and women at 42% and 34% respectively.

It is tempting to explain why some subgroups appear to overstate violent crime more so than others. One obvious suggestion might be that since many of these groups have already been shown to be more concerned about the effect of violent crime, they are more likely to possess exaggerated impressions about how often crime occurs. This, however, only begs the earlier question concerning the cause of these heightened fear levels. While blacks are, indeed, victimized at higher rates than whites, the same cannot be said for women and the aged. In fact, these two groups tend to be under-victimized by violent crime in proportion to their numbers.

A second possible explanation is that within the overly broad category designated as the "media," qualitative distinctions may exist with regard to crime information. It has already been noted that television news was selected by 46% of the respondents as their primary source of crime information, a figure which represents a plurality of the answers to that question. Thus, television news must bear some of the responsibility for public misunderstanding about violent crime. In fact, figure 8 indicates that television may play a disproportionately large role in influencing the crime awareness level of each of the four subgroups which were identified as exhibiting special violent crime-knowledge problems.

FIGURE 8

TV AS THE MAIN SOURCE OF VIOLENT CRIME INFORMATION
FOR
SELECTED SUBGROUPS
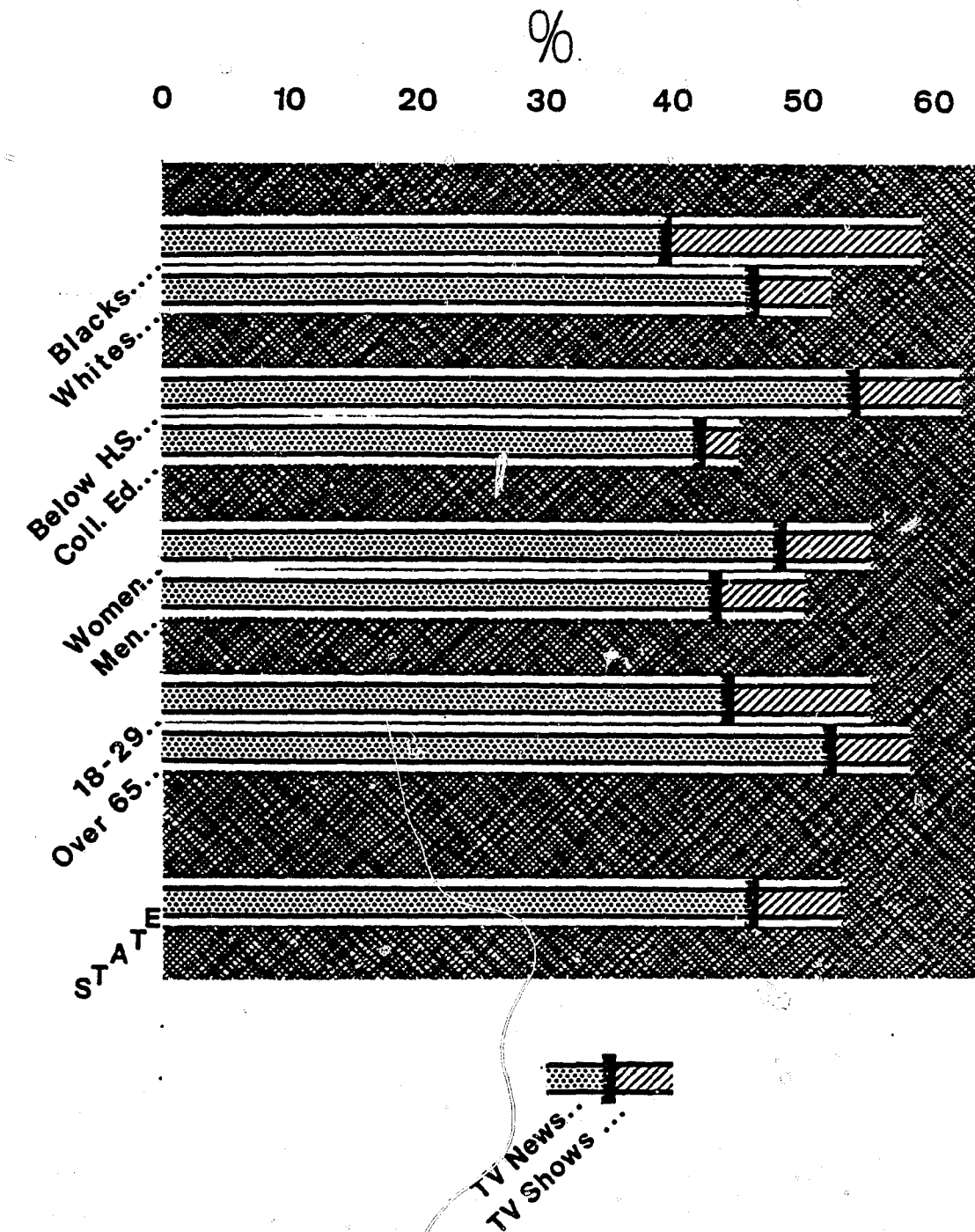
Of the four subgroups, only blacks fell below the statewide average for reliance upon television news. This was offset by the large percentage of blacks who cited TV shows as a major source of information (20%). Thus, each of the four subgroups in question demonstrated a rather heavy reliance on television sources of information.

There are other indicators of the same phenomenon. When the sources of information are analyzed in terms of their separate influences on citizen knowledge about violent crime, the electronic media sources consistently ranked at the low end of the quality scale.

TABLE 8

ACCURACY OF RESPONDENTS' VIOLENT CRIME PERCEPTIONS
BY
MAIN SOURCE OF INFORMATION

RESPONDENTS' MAIN SOURCE OF CRIME INFORMATION	ACCURATE PERCEPTION*	INACCURATE PERCEPTIONS**	DON'T KNOW
Magazines***	42%	-0-	58%
Newspapers	26%	27%	47%
Friends/Relatives	23%	40%	37%
Other***	20%	20%	60%
TV News	18%	31%	51%
Radio News	17%	33%	50%
TV Shows	8%	49%	43%

* Percent of respondents estimating violent crime within 6% of actual rate.

** Percent of respondents estimating violent crime at least 6 times above actual rate.

*** Category contains less than twenty cases.

Informational distortions appear to occur most frequently among those who rely upon television (drama) shows for their information about crime and criminal justice. An earlier Statistical Analysis Center study of 264 Ohio police chiefs and sheriffs found that 61% of those chief executive officers felt that law enforcement shows on TV were "not at all representative" of the police profession, while only one percent (1%) described them as "very representative."*

Magazines, in particular, and, to a lesser extent, newspapers, represented the other side of this information quality rating. Both tended to claim the highest number of crime-knowledgeable respondents and the lowest number of misinformed respondents. However, given the extremely small number of "magazine source" respondents, none of the sources can claim unqualifiedly to be a good influence upon public knowledge about violent crime.

In order to better isolate this issue the data were collapsed into two categories, "print media" and "electronic media," the former composed of newspapers and magazines, while the latter represents radio news, television news and television shows. This collapsing allowed for a more accurate, overall analysis in that it generated larger numbers of cases within the table cells (see Table 8).** Table 9 also adds a further dimension by eliminating the "don't know" answers. Thus, among those repondents who felt confident enough about their knowledge of violent crime to at least hazard a guess at the victimization rate, the following results were obtained:

* "Concerning Crime and Criminal Justice: Attitudes Among Ohio's Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police" Office of Criminal Justice Services
(DECD), State of Ohio. June, 1980. p. 18

** The lumping together of TV shows with television and radio news is not wholly legitimate. The problem arises because the respondents may not have been able to accurately or consistently discriminate concerning such shows as "60 Minutes." At any rate, TV shows were cited by less than seven percent of the respondents, and Table 8 stands as prior testimony to the general accuracy of Table 9.

TABLE 9*

ACCURACY OF RESPONDENTS' VIOLENT CRIME PERCEPTIONS:
BY
MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION
(PRINT MEDIA V. ELECTRONIC MEDIA)

	Print Media	Electronic Media
Accurate Perceptions**	45%	32%
Inaccurate Perceptions***	55%	68%

Are Ohioans aware that they are consuming substantial misinformation about crime? It would appear that they are not, and this may be the most serious of the difficulties relating to the information issue. When asked to rate "the accuracy of the news media in its reporting of information about crime and the criminal justice system in Ohio," a slight majority, 54%, responded with answers of either "excellent" (11%) or "good" (43%); another 35% described it as "fair", and only 11% saw it as "poor" (8%) or "very poor" (3%). These findings parallel those of an earlier federal research effort in five major U.S. cities in which survey participants were asked if they believed that crime was more or less serious than reported in the newspapers and on TV (or about the same). In that study a slight plurality (42%) actually felt crime was more serious than reported by the media, while about the same percentage (41%) believed the media was accurate in its presentation (i.e., "the same" answer category). Remarkably, only 9% stated their belief that their media sources overstated the crime problem.****

Not surprisingly, those who have the greatest confidence in media accuracy concerning crime information also reflect the greatest degree of misinformation regarding violent crime occurrence in Ohio.

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*   Chi Square = 9.79185 with 1 degree of freedom: P <0.0018.

**   Violent Crime Rate Estimate is within 6% of actual rate.

***   Violent crime rate estimate is at least six times above the actual rate.

**** James Garofalo, "Public Opinion About Crime," Criminal Justice Research Center (Albany, New York), 1977 p. 138

TABLE 10

ACCURACY OF RESPONDENTS' VIOLENT CRIME PERCEPTIONS
BY
CONFIDENCE IN ACCURACY OF MEDIA CRIME REPORTING

RESPONDENTS' RATINGS OF MEDIA ACCURACY REGARDING CRIME	ACCURATE PERCEPTION*	INACCURATE PERCEPTION**	DON'T KNOW
"Excellent"	18%	40%	42%
"Good"	19%	33%	48%
"Fair"	21%	27%	52%
"Poor"	27%	27%	46%
"Very Poor"	27%	27%	46%

All of this seems to indicate a cycle which, given citizen dependence upon media sources of information, could perpetuate itself. But it is also fair to ask at this point if the emerging picture of public information is as critical as it sounds in the nation's struggle against crime. It might well be argued that by exaggerating the occurrence of violent crime the media is prodding citizens to be more crime prevention-oriented and, thus alerted, better able to protect themselves against victimization.

Aside from this seeming plus, however, the overall conclusion has to be that even the increased crime-consciousness which may result from an exaggerated and sensationalized portrayal of crime has its dangers. There is some concern among criminologists that an overly fearful population is one which will not honor its obligations as

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*   Percent of respondents estimating violent crime within 6% of actual rate.

**   Percent of respondents estimating violent crime at least 6 times above actual rate.

witnesses, observers, informers, jury members, and other roles crucial to the functioning of the criminal justice system. They may also begin to curtail their lifestyles in ways that directly affect the economic and social well-being of the State and Nation.

Because crime is such an emotionally volatile public issue, misinformation can quickly be translated into policy decisions. Judges, prosecutors, sheriffs, legislators, and other elected officials gain their positions at least in part on the basis of citizen attitudes about crime and criminal justice. If these attitudes are the products of poor information, the criminal justice decision-making process is vulnerable to rapid and ill-advised operational changes.

THE LAW ENFORCEMENT ROLE

The police role in the United States has been in a state of flux during the past two decades. Typically, that oft-heard comment has been made in reference to the impact of Supreme Court decisions upon police operations, most notably search and seizure. Other factors, however, have also served to bring about this metamorphosis in law enforcement, among these: specialization, changes in training and hiring standards, information automation, and organized labor activities. With the added catalyst of the politicization of law enforcement issues law enforcement officers have increasingly found themselves in the role of crime fighters and crime solvers rather than the maintainers of order in the streets. James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling profiled this role shift in a recent article in The Atlantic Monthly:

> The police in this earlier period assisted in that reassertion of authority by acting, sometimes violently, on behalf of the community. Young toughs were roughed up, people were arrested "on suspicion" or for vagrancy and prostitutes and petty thieves were routed. "Rights" were something enjoyed by decent folk, and perhaps also by the serious professional criminal, who avoided violence and could afford a lawyer.
>
> This pattern of policing was not an aberration or the result of occasional excess. From the earliest days of the nation, the police function was seen primarily as that of a night watchman: to maintain order against the chief threats to order--fire, wild animals, and disreputable behavior. Solving crimes was viewed not as a police responsibility but as a private one.
>
> ...In the 1960s, when urban riots were a major problem, social scientists began to explore carefully the order-maintenance function of the police, and to suggest ways of improving it--not to make streets safer (its original function) but to reduce the incidence of mass violence. Order-maintenance became, to a degree, coterminous with 'community relations.' But, as the crime wave that began in the early 1960s continued without abatement through the decade and into the 1970s, attention shifted to the role of the police as crime-fighters. Studies of police behavior ceased, by and large, to be accounts of the order-maintenance funtion and became, instead, efforts to propose and test ways whereby the police could solve more crimes, make more arrests, and gather better evidence. If these things could be done, social scientists assumed, citizens would be less fearful."*

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*   Wilson, James Q. and George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows" The Atlantic Monthly: March 1982, p.33.

But, in fact, as documented in the Wilson-Kelling study of foot patrol in Newark, New Jersey, citizen fear levels are based not so much upon the occurrence of crime as they are upon the perception of police presence on the streets. *   This calls into question much of the drift of modern policing as outlined by Wilson and Kelling. Do citizens prefer a cleared burglary to the breaking up of a crowd of boisterous juveniles at the street corner? .Is a sophisticated criminal investigation more important than the removal of an abandoned, vandalized car? Are people more interested in crime statistics than broken windows? In short, do Ohioans feel that their peace officers should be crime fighters and crime solvers rather than maintainers of order?

This question, in a more generalized form, was put to the one-thousand respondents in the Citizen Attitude Survey. Their answers are quite revealing.

TABLE 11

THE MAIN ROLE OF TODAY'S POLICE OFFICERS
SHOULD BE:

1. Solving Crimes...................... 22%
2.' Helping People During Emergencies.. 12%
3. Patrolling and Being Visible   .
     in the Community................. 54%
4. Some Combination of the Above...... 13%
                                         101%
              (Differences due to rounding)

Interestingly, the "Patrolling and Being Visible in the Community" response category drew at least a plurality of the responses from every major sub-group in the survey. Thus, it would appear that Ohioans are primarily concerned about the order-maintenance function of their police.* And, since a good portion of the police role has been and continues to be defined in light of community expectations and values, this finding is of special significance.**

The survey also explored other, more subtle public attitudes toward the police. For example, what is the citizen's first emotional response upon seeing a police officer or sheriff's deputy on duty? If the response of a majority of the citizenry is fear, enmity, or some other form of alienation then it probably can be assumed that those officers are not representative of community values and, hence, not the type of peace officers originally envisoned for a democratic society. The same kind of assessments can be made with regard to the perceived concern and courteousness of those officers. The public perceptions of peace officers in these three areas are graphically illustrated in Figure 9.

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* It is recognized that the term "patrolling" could be interpreted to include the crime fighting role. It was precisely for this reason that the "being visible in the community" language was added to better isolate the order-maintenance function in the response categories.

** Wilson and Kelling do not see the public hunger for order-maintenance as a purposeless whim. They conclude that public instincts are on the mark in this regard, and that "serious street crime flourishes in areas in which disorderly behavior goes unchecked." Ibid., p.34.

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* Ibid, p. 29

FIGURE 9

**PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF
OHIO PEACE OFFICERS:**
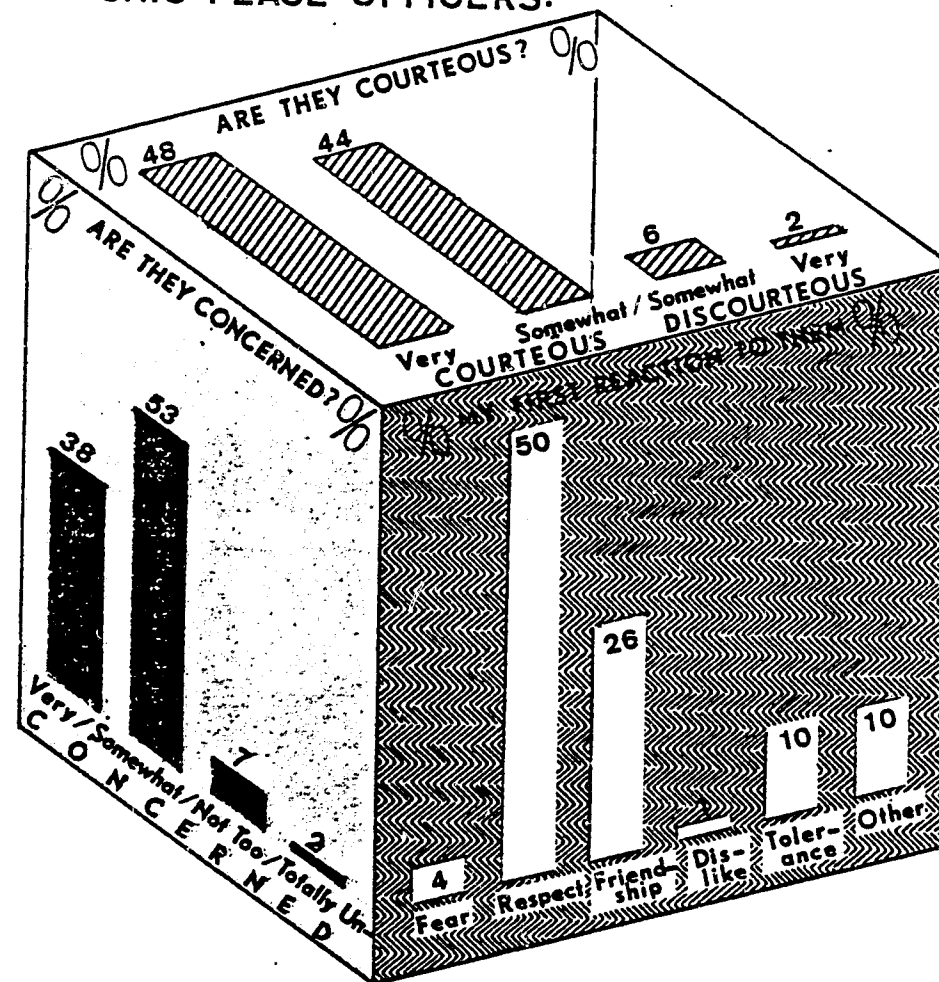
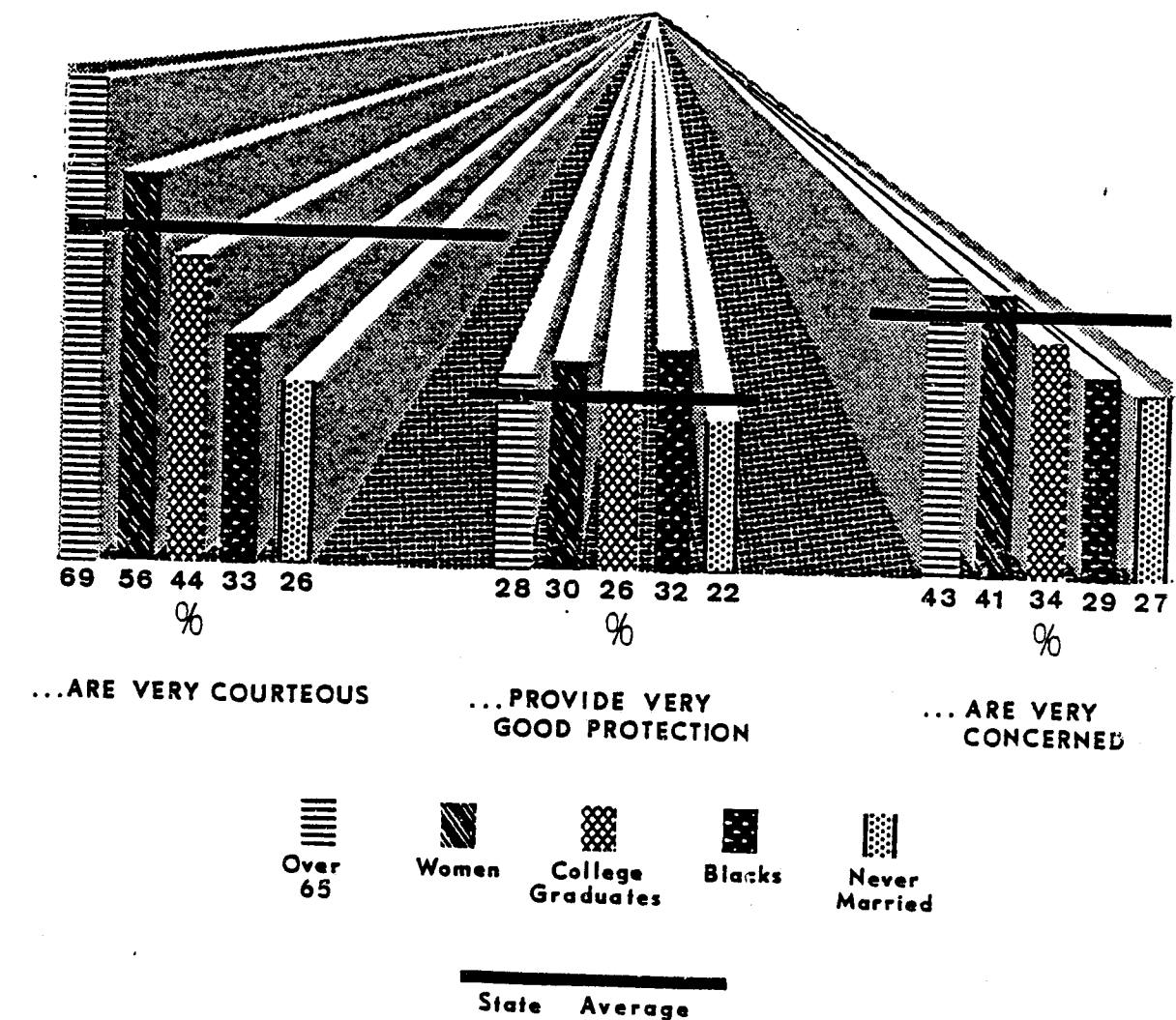Clearly, Ohioans have favorable impressions of their law enforcement officers. Three-out-of-four citizens expressed feelings of respect (50%) or friendship (26%) upon seeing an officer, while an additional 10% were willing to tolerate their presence for a necessary job. Only one citizen in twenty responded negatively, citing either fear (4%) or dislike (1%). Similar responses marked citizen perceptions of police concern and courtesy.

Among several of the survey sub-groups there tended to be significant variation within the highest (i.e., most favorable) response categories. Older people, for example, tended to be much more generous than most in rating police concern, courtesy, and the quality of their protection (see Figure 10). At the opposite extreme persons who have never married consistently ranked peace officers

below the state average in these same areas. There is at least some logic in these findings. Senior citizens, with a greater reliance upon and traditional respect for the police are likely to treat officers with deference and, thereby, receive more courteous treatment in return. In contrast, the life styles of many of the "never marrieds" could well have brought them into a disproportionately large number of negative contacts with police officers. Interestingly, college graduates came the closest of any of the five sub-groups to reflecting the state-wide response averages.

FIGURE 10

**PERCENT (%) OF SELECTED SUBGROUPS
WHO FEEL THAT THE POLICE...**

69 56 44 33 26   28 30 26 32 22   43 41 34 29 27
%   %   %

...ARE VERY COURTEOUS   ...PROVIDE VERY GOOD PROTECTION   ...ARE VERY CONCERNED

Over 65   Women   College Graduates   Blacks   Never Married

State Average

There were also some significant quirks within several of the sub-group responses. Women were 40% more likely than men to rank police behavior as very courteous and also gave them higher marks in terms of concern and protection. Once again, these differing perceptions probably reflect the fact that most of the law's serious violators are men, thereby producing a greater wariness in officers which cannot help but dampen such factors as "general courtesy." Probably, however, one need look no further than to the routine, street behavior of men and women to understand this particular finding.

Another note of interest concerns the black responses. With regard to concern and courteousness, blacks provided fewer high ratings than almost any other group. Indeed, senior citizens were more than twice as likely as blacks to describe the police as very courteous. However, blacks proved more likely than any of the other analyzed sub-groups to cite police protection as "very good."* Since blacks in Ohio are victimized by crime at a higher rate than whites, this finding is most intriguing. Perhaps, more than anything else, it speaks to differing levels of expectation among the sub-groups.

The state-wide ratings for the "Quality of Police Protection" question also underscored high esteem for the police, though there were not quite so many responses in the highest rating category as there were for the previous questions.

TABLE 12

"THE QUALITY OF POLICE PROTECTION IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD"

	Percent of Respondents
Very Good	27%
Good	38%
Adequate	26%
Poor	8%
Very Poor	2%
	101%

Public attitudes toward law enforcement officers also included some judgments about the personal characteristics of those officers. Two qualities, in particular, were isolated for the respondents, these being educational attainment and sex. These two are not "personal" in the same sense since the former represents an achievement while the latter refers to a condition of birth. Any conclusions from the survey data should, therefore, take into account this important distinction.

Ohioans have rather high expectations as to what should be the minimum level of education for their peace officers--higher than the

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* For this one table the differences among the figures are not statistically significant. The reversal of direction is, however, significant.

average educational level of today's officer, higher than the current entry-level standard (high school diploma) and higher than the respondents' own corporate level of education. Table 13 is a rough comparison between the respondents' opinions concerning minimal educational levels for law enforcement officers, their own levels of educational achievement, and actual educational levels for Ohio patrol officers who have been hired since 1974.

TABLE 13

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

	Respondents' Educational Expectations For Ohio Peace Officers (minimal level)	Respondents' Own Education	Actual Educational Levels for Ohio's Patrol Officers*
Less than High School	.1%	16.6%	2.1%
High School	34.7%	46.4%	37.9%
Some College		17.9%	16.8%
Associate Degree (or 2-3 yrs.)	50.9%	3.8%	29.2%
Bachelor's Degree (or 4-5 yrs.)	8.6%	10.2%	13.2%
Master's Degree (or 6-7 yrs.)	5.0%	3.8%	.7%
Doctoral Degree (or 8 yrs. or more)		1.3%	

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* Peace Officers Task Analysis: The Ohio Report. Ohio Department of Development. October, 1982.

As might have been expected, the respondents' _individual_ opinions on this issue were swayed by their own educational backgrounds.

TABLE 14

PERCEIVED MINIMAL EDUCATIONAL STANDARD FOR OHIO
PEACE OFFICERS
BY
RESPONDENTS' EDUCATION LEVELS

MINIMUM EDUCATIONAL LEVELS FOR POLICE	◄———————RESPONDENTS' EDUCATION LEVELS———————►					
	8th Grade or less	Grades 9-11	High School	Vocational Training	Some College	Bachelor's Degree or Above
High School	49%	48%	38%	39%	24%	26%
Associate	25%	33%	46%	52%	65%	61%
Bachelor's	7%	10%	9%	7%	9%	10%
Master's	20%	9%	6%	2%	3%	3%
TOTALS (differences due to rounding)	101%	100%	99%	100%	101%	100%

Three-out-of-four survey participants who had pursued at least some post high school studies also felt that Ohio peace officers should have moved beyond that level before qualifying at the entry level. In contrast, only half of those who had failed to complete high school believed that such a high standard was necessary. The only break in this consistent pattern came within the "eighth grade or less" group where an unexpectedly high percentage (27%) cited the need for officers to have acquired a bachelors or master's degree. However, because that percentage represented the opinions of only twelve (12) people it is not an entirely reliable figure. Furthermore, a higher percentage of persons in that same educational category opted for the minimal educational standard (high school) than in any other group.

It is of coincidental interest that Ohio's law enforcement officers seem to be demonstrating the educational advancement reflected in the citizen attitudes. A very recent study of 3,155 Ohio peace officers documented this upward educational mobility.

FIGURE 11

OFFICERS' EDUCATIONAL LEVELS:
PRIOR TO JOINING v. PRESENT

EDUCATION

PRIOR TO JOINING   PRESENT
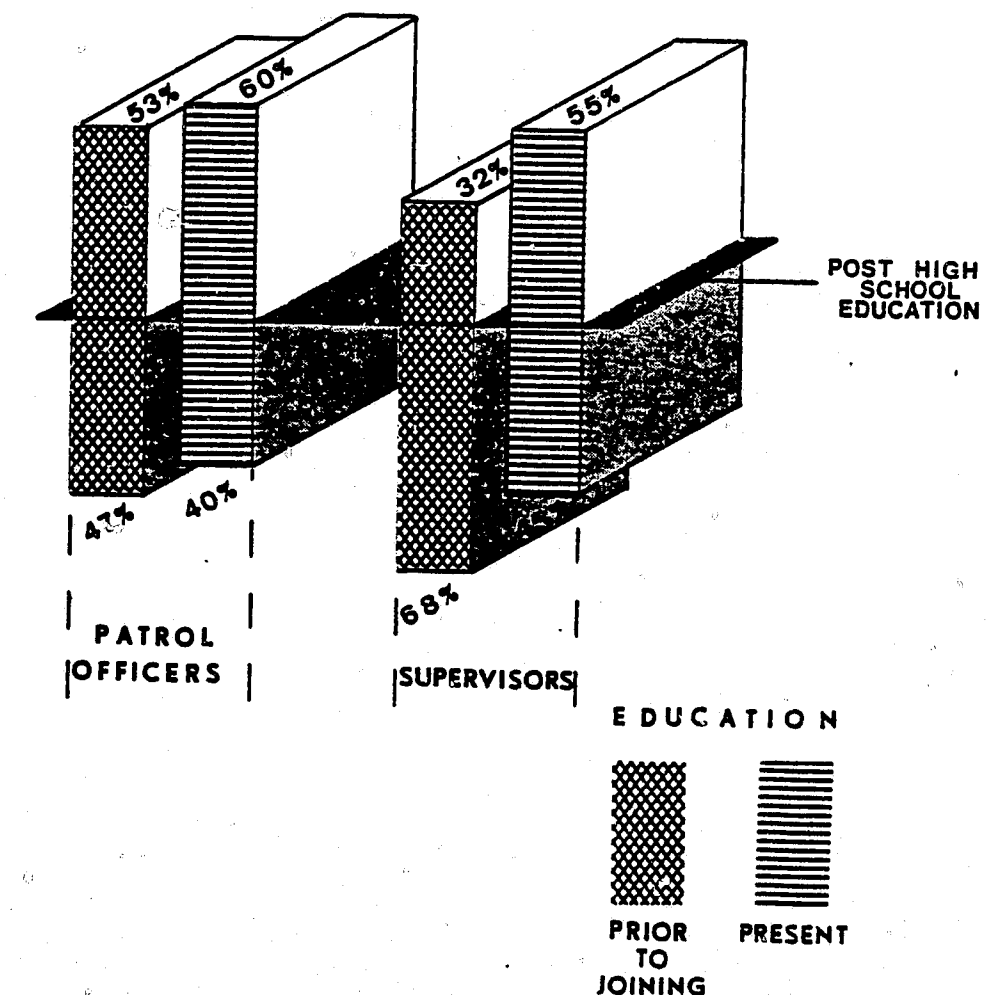
Seven percent (7%) of the patrol officers hired since 1974 and 23% of the patrol supervisors moved beyond the high school level _after_ they had joined their respective departments. The average total number of years of formal education for these officers is now 13.39%. Clearly, the high school standard has been by passed, in practice if not in policy.

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*   Ibid. p. 4

The survey respondents were also asked to assess the effectiveness of female patrol officers in comparison to their male counterparts. The exact wording of the question was:

"In terms of delivering police services in your neighborhood, do you feel that a female uniformed officer can be just as effective as a male officer in all situations, that she could be as effective in most situations, that she can be as effective only in some situations, or that a female police officer can never be as effective as a male?"

The response to this question was:

Female officers are as effective as males...

|	
...in all situations	17%
...in most situations	38%
...in some situations	35%
...never	10%
	100%

It should be remembered that these data represent personal perceptions, not performance measurements.*

As with several of the other attitude questions, certain of the sub-groups demonstrated rather dramatic differences of opinion in evaluating female officer effectiveness. Senior citizens, for example, were extremely skeptical about the performance capabilities

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* Several such performance evaluations of female officers found no significant effectiveness differences between sexes. While males held advantages in certain task areas, the females were more effective in others (e.g., family crisis intervention). See Police Women on Patrol: Final Report Vol. 1, Police Foundation, 1974.

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FIGURE 12

FEMALE OFFICERS CAN BE AS EFFECTIVE AS MALES IN...

...all or most situations

...some or no situations
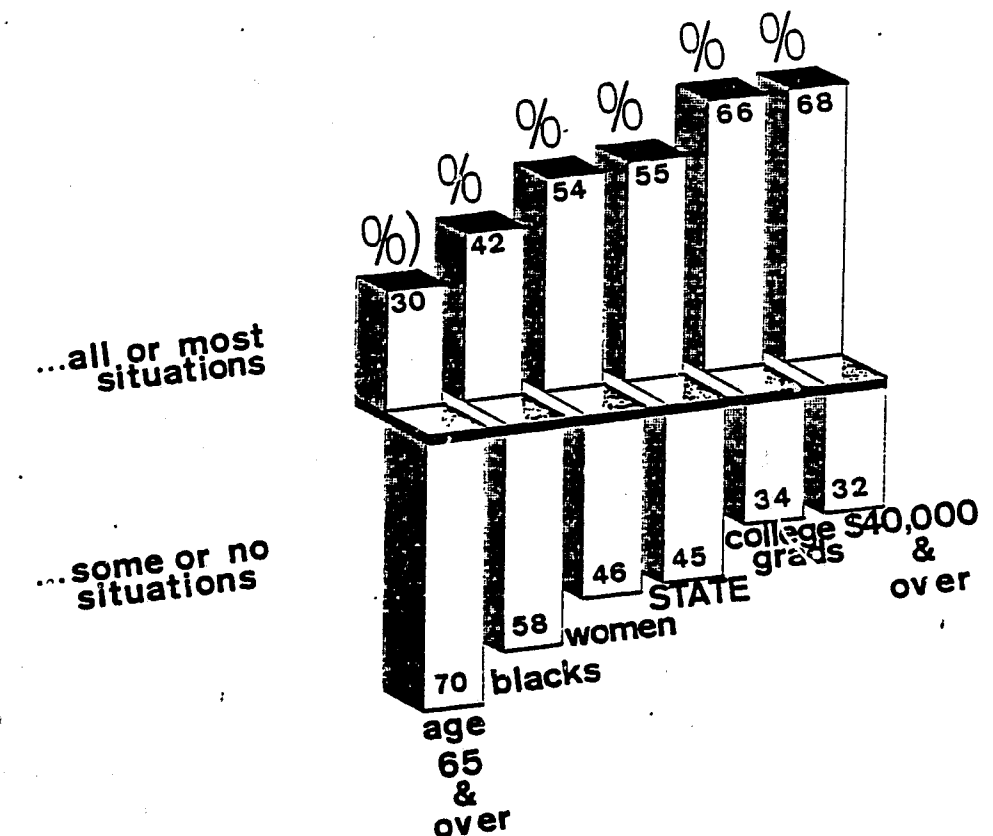
of females, with 70% saying females could be as effective as males only in some situations (45%) or in none at all (25%). A majority of the black participants also opted for the lowest two of the four effectiveness categories.

In the other direction, college graduates and those in the highest income category ($40,000+) demonstrated considerable confidence in female officers. Interestingly, women, who came closest to matching the overall state responses, were slightly less confident about female officers than were males, although the differences were not statistically significant.
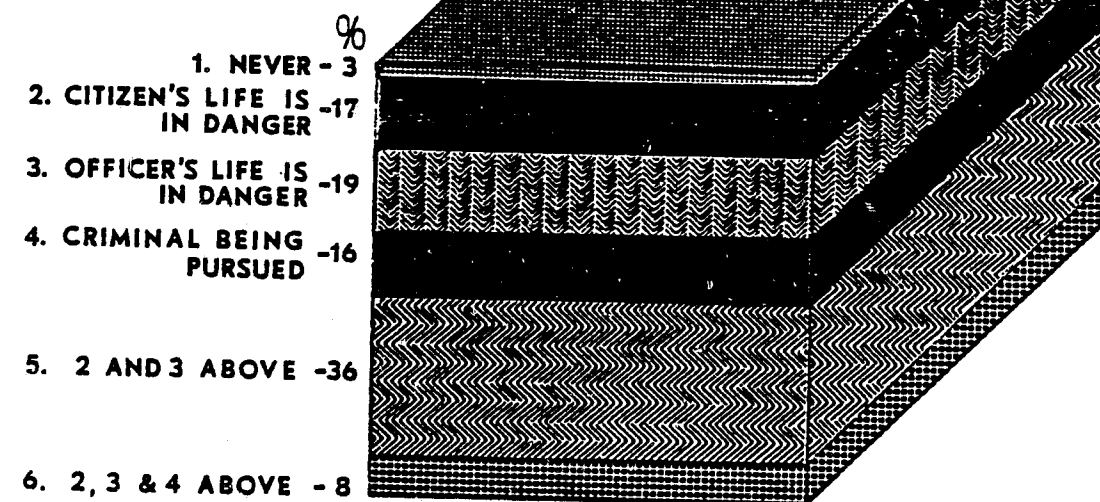
A final set of two questions concerning the use of police force was asked in order to determine if the generally high ratings for police conduct and performance could be translated into unqualified support for police actions in this most controversial area of

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police-community relations. At the very least, the responses to these questions could not be considered an operational blank check from the public to the police. Citizens, while understanding of the police need to use even deadly force at times, are not willing to see police actions completely removed from public scrutiny.

The first and most obvious finding to emerge from this data is that Ohioans strongly support officers who fire their weapons in defense of someone's life. Nearly three-out-of-four respondents (72%) felt that police use of deadly force was justified in such circumstances. Additionally, and somewhat surprisingly, 24% stated that such force was justified" any time a person suspected of a serious crime is being pursued." This left only 3% who were adamantly opposed to the use of deadly force under any circumstances. (Figure 13)*

FIGURE 13

Deadly Force:
OFFICERS ARE JUSTIFIED IN FIRING
THEIR WEAPONS WHEN . . .

%
1. NEVER - 3
2. CITIZEN'S LIFE IS IN DANGER -17
3. OFFICER'S LIFE IS IN DANGER -19
4. CRIMINAL BEING PURSUED -16
5. 2 AND 3 ABOVE -36
6. 2, 3 & 4 ABOVE - 8

One might suppose that the deadly force alternative would be much less popular among blacks than whites. Many of the most controversial police shootings in recent years have involved black suspects and offenders, and have resulted in a considerable outcry. The Citizen

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* Differences of 1% or less are due to rounding. Note: the "never" answer was the first response option given by the interviewer to the interviewee.

Attitude Survey data, however, show very little difference between the percentage of blacks and whites who oppose the use of deadly force. This suggests that procedures, training and departmental consistency, rather than the concept of deadly force, may consitute the real core of this issue.

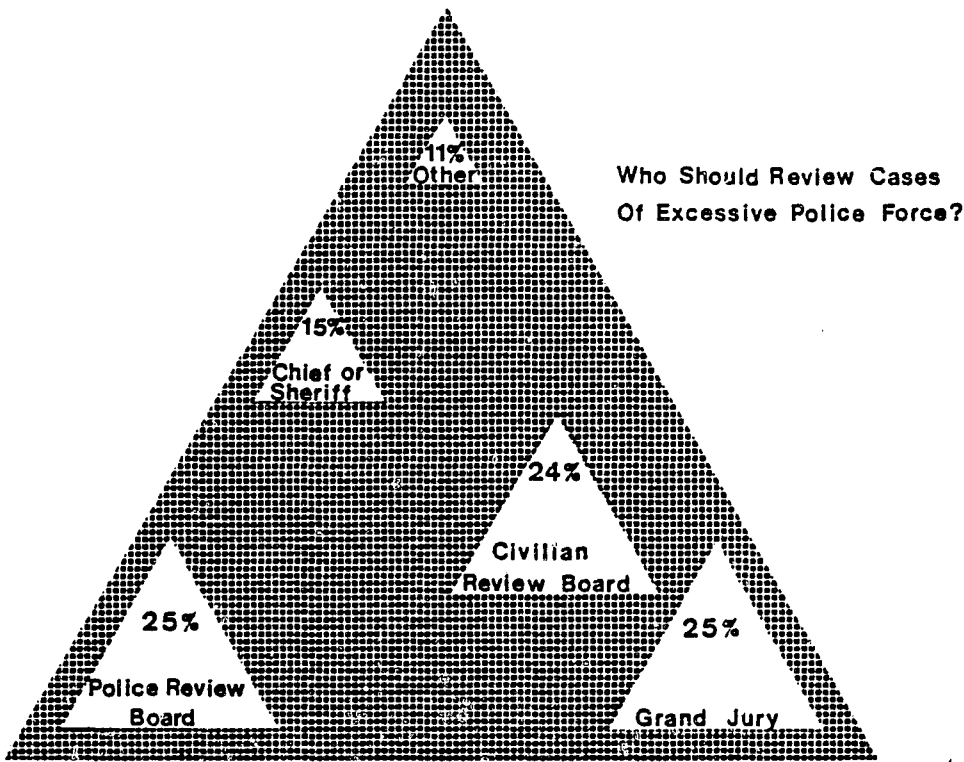TABLE 15

JUSTIFIABLE REASONS FOR USING DEADLY FORCE
BY
RACE

		Black	White
1.	Never	3.1%	2.8%
2.	Citizen in Danger	8.9%	18.0%
3.	Officer in Danger	30.5%	17.9%
4.	Pursuing a Serious Crime Suspect	16.5%	16.6%
5.	2 and 3 above	34.8%	36.5%
6.	2, 3 and 4 above	6.2%	8.2%
		100.0%	100.0%

At least two points from Table 15 are worth noting. The greatest disparity in the dichotimized responses concerns the "officer in danger" justification, an option selected by a much larger percentage of blacks than whites. Once again, it appears that many black people distinguish the need for the police from the sometimes disagreeable environment which they see surrounding police operations.* The second point of interest is that the closest agreement between the two groups came in the response category "pursuing a serious crime suspect." It is during such times that the most controversial police shootings occur.

While the public is willing to support police use of deadly force, they are not willing to allow the police exclusive authority in reviewing cases falling within the broader field of excessive police force. Less than half of the respondents were willing to entrust such a review to the police, either in the form of the chief executive

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* The same kind of interpretation could be made of the attitude questions which showed blacks as less than impressed with officer concern and courtesy, but complimentary in assessing the level of protection provided by the police.

FIGURE 14

Who Should Review Cases
Of Excessive Police Force?

11%
Other

15%
Chief or
Sheriff

24%
Civilian
Review Board

25%
Police Review
Board

25%
Grand Jury

officer or a police review board. Half of the respondents cited either civilian review boards or grand juries, while 11% mentioned other alternatives such as mayors, commissioners, judges or some combination of the above. Fearing outside interference, the police have been traditionally loathe to accept the civilian review board concept.

The discussion of public attitudes about law enforcement can be concluded with the observation that although Ohioans are warmly supportive and appreciative of their peace officers, they still recognize that police authority must be limited.

FEAR OF CRIME

This report, the third of its kind since 1980, strongly underscores many of the findings of those earlier studies with regard to Ohioans' attitudes toward crime and criminal justice. The most consistent and well-documented of these findings--and also the one most at odds with public comments--is that Ohioans continue to feel safe in their own neighborhoods. Eighty percent (80%) of the more than one-thousand persons participating in the 1982 survey said they felt either "very safe" (35%) or "reasonably safe" (45%) while being out alone in their neighborhoods at night. Furthermore, all of the groups which have traditionally demonstrated higher fear levels also answered on the "feeling safe" side of this issue, as illustrated in Table 16.

TABLE 16

FEELINGS OF SAFETY WHILE OUT ALONE AT NIGHT IN OWN NEIGHBORHOOD:
BY
SELECTED GROUPS

	"Very Safe"	"Reasonably Safe"	"Somewhat Unsafe"	"Very Unsafe"
Women	26%	49%	14%	10%
Blacks	23%	44%	17%	17%
Senior Citizens	24%	49%	12%	15%
Crime Victims	27%	45%	16%	12%
STATEWIDE	36%	47%	10%	7%

These figures have varied little since the question was first asked of Ohioans in 1979, but the small changes which have occurred have been in the direction of greater, not lesser, feelings of safety.* For example, 68% of the women from the 1980 survey responded "very safe" or "safe" to this question, but the figure had edged up to 75% in this year's survey. Statewide, the "safe" responses were up 2%, from 78% to 80%.

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*   The changes are not statistically significant.

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All of this is well worth noting in light of the rhetoric of the times. In July of 1982, one month after the current survey was completed, syndicated columnist Tom Wicker wrote an article entitled "Fear of Crime is Rampant" in which he cited various statistics to support his headline.* A year prior to that editorial, George Gallup had released figures which, he claimed, documented high fear levels among Americans.** These assertions contrast sharply with the Ohio findings.

Part of the answer to this seeming contradiction lies in the yet inexact science of public attitude surveying. Social scientists have found that changing even one word of a question can produce dramatically different results. The 1981 Ohio citizen attitude survey revealed that fact when it was discovered that Ohioans were much more amenable to "detaining" runaway juveniles (58%) than they were to "jailing" them (30%), as phrased in the earlier survey. The same kind of problems can result from inadequate answer categories which, it would seem, figured into the Gallup results. For example, the questions cited in Gallup's April release where largely formatted for "yes or no" responses, giving the respondent little chance to put his answer into some kind of perspective. Thus, when Gallup asked respondents if crime had increased in their area in the past year and found that 54% replied affirmatively, he concluded that they were frightfully concerned about crime. However, when the Ohio survey posed the same question in 1980 and offered respondents the additional choice "the level of crime has stayed the same," 63% chose that option. One wonders how that additional answer category would have affected the Gallup results. (NOTE: the 63% figure was seen as an especially significant testimony of the respondent's confidence in their neighborhood's safety since, in responding to the preceding question, 87% had said that they believed crime had increased nationwide during the same period.)***

Other disparities can be caused by interpretations of the data. Wicker may have fallen victim to such a practice. He appears to have made use of information stemming from the "Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid," a study discussed in the 1981 citizen attitude survey report.**** Since at least several of the Figgie questions were virtually the same as those asked by the Ohio citizen attitude survey, it is possible to determine whether the remarkably different conclusions reached in these separate studies are the result of differing data or differing interpretations of that data. The following comparative tables answer that question.

*   As printed in the Columbus Citizen Journal, Columbus, Ohio, July 20, 1982

** As printed in the Youngstown Vindicator, Youngstown, Ohio, April 5, 1981.

*** "Ohio Citizen Attitudes: A Survey of Public Opinion on Crime and Criminal Justice," Ohio Department of Economic and Community Development, May, 1980.

**** The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid. Research & Forecasts Inc. (New York, N.Y.) 1980.

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TABLE 17

FEELINGS OF SAFETY WHILE OUT ALONE IN OWN NEIGHBORHOOD AT NIGHT

	Figgie (1980)*		Ohio Citizen Attitude Survey (1980)
Very Safe	48.7%	Very Safe	34.2%
	76.9%		76.5%
Somewhat Safe	28.2%	Reasonably Safe	42.3%
Somewhat Unsafe	12.8%	Somewhat Unsafe	12.5%
Very Unsafe	9.5%	Very Unsafe	8.7%
NA	.8%	NA	2.3%
	100.0%		100.0%

TABLE 18

FEELINGS OF SAFETY WHILE OUT ALONE IN OWN NEIGHBORHOOD DURING THE DAY

	Figgie (1980)*		Ohio Citizen Attitude Survey (1980)
Very Safe	82.2%	Very Safe	71.6%
	95.9%		94.8%
Somewhat Safe	13.7%	Reasonably Safe	23.2%
Somewhat Unsafe	3.2%	Somewhat Unsafe	2.6%
Very Unsafe	.9%	Very Unsafe	1.7%
NA	—	NA	.8%
	100.0%		99.9%

*   Figgie, raw data tables (printout), University of Pittsburg, Release 7.02A (14 February, 1979). NOTE: The 1980 Ohio report data were collected in the fall of 1979.

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As can be seen, the only difference in the raw data results is that the Figgie sample demonstrated a greater tendency to use the "very safe" response category, probably because the "somewhat safe" response, slightly more negative than the "reasonably safe" choice parallel to it in the Ohio study, did not adequately reflect their generally positive citizen feelings about their safety. The Figgie researchers also found that 86.3% of their respondents felt "very safe" <u>at home</u> alone during the day (11.8% "somewhat safe"); 66.1% felt "very safe" <u>at home</u> alone at night (22.8% "somewhat safe"); 94.1% said their neighborhood was not dangerous enough to make them "think seriously about moving somewhere else;" and better than three-quarters "rarely" (21%) or "never" (58%) worry about being the victim of serious violent crimes.*

Given even these few findings from the Figgie study it is remarkable that that report proceeded to conclude that the fear of crime is "paralyzing American Society,"** and that the <u>Figgie</u> report has become a foundation for much of the fear-of-crime rhetoric which Wicker and so may others have made fashionable today.

Three years of citizen attitude testing in Ohio, as well as several years of national level testing through the National Crime Survey, strongly suggest that the key to understanding contemporary fears about crime lies in determining a perspective on the issue. For example, as noted earlier, people's attitudes about crime are dramatically different when they are talking about their own neighborhoods as opposed to the world at large. When asked to compare their own neighborhoods to others in their area in terms of crime, the 1982 Ohio survey respondents rated their neighborhoods as:

Much more dangerous	1.5%
More dangerous	2.0%
About average	31.3%
Less dangerous	41.4%
Much less dangerous	21.5%
NA	2.2%
	99.9%

Furthermore, this trend cuts across the lines of personal characteristics. Among those groups traditionally thought of as either more vulnerable to crime victimization or more fearful, the following indicated the extent to which they felt their own neighborhoods were more dangerous than most (i.e., the percentage of those who selected one of the first two answer choices above:

Lowest income (under $5,000)	17%
Blacks	13%
Crime victims (during last year)	6%
Women	4%
Senior Citizens	4%

Earlier federal studies supported this finding in noting that even in the highest risk neighborhoods of America's most crime-prone cities residents feel that crime is at least no worse than average, and probably worse elsewhere.* (NOTE: The <u>Figgie</u> data revealed that 57.4% of the residents believed their neighborhoods had "less than average amount of violent crime," and an additional 21.7% felt they had "none".**)
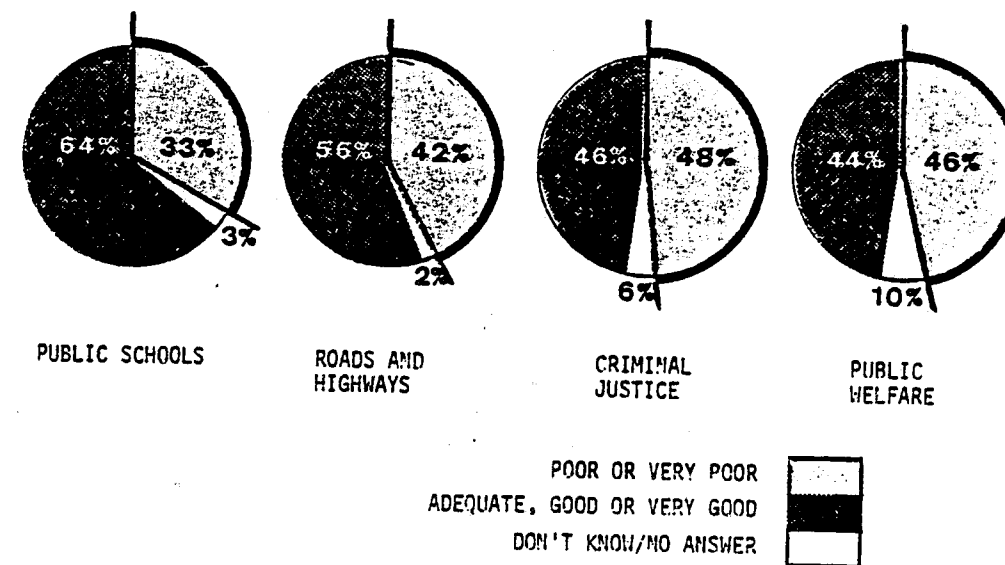
However, those same citizens change views when they focus on crime and criminal justice in a larger context. In addition to believing that crime is worse elsewhere, the vast majority believe that crime is rising nationwide (this, in contrast to national victimization statistics), and that the criminal justice system is among the least effective of all public services. Figure 15 documents this fact, reflecting that nearly half of Ohio's citizens rate the criminal justice system as either "poor" (34%) or "very poor" (15%). Only 14% rated it as "good" (13%) or "very good" (1%), giving it an even lower efficiency rating than the public welfare system.

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* Figgie raw data printout Ibid. pp. 19-27 (NOTE: Robbery was not
   included in the Figgie list, which otherwise included murder,
   rape, mugging, assault, aggravated assault and arson. The
   figures quoted here are averages for all six categories.
** <u>Figgie</u> Ibid., p.6

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* Garofalo, James, <u>Public Opinion About Crime</u> (Albany, New York).
   Criminal Justice Research Center, 1977. p. 176, 257 and 321
   (tables).

** <u>Figgie</u>, raw data printout, p. 13.

FIGURE 15

OHIOANS' RATINGS OF SELECTED PUBLIC SERVICES:

PUBLIC SCHOOLS	ROADS AND HIGHWAYS	CRIMINAL JUSTICE	PUBLIC WELFARE

POOR OR VERY POOR
ADEQUATE, GOOD OR VERY GOOD
DON'T KNOW/NO ANSWER

One final word needs to be said about the importance of perspective in judging citizen attitudes and fears. No one has yet defined terms such as "high", "low," "alarming," and other words routinely tossed about in those kinds of discussions. Nor has it been adequately determined (to this writer's knowledge) how citizen fear of crime compares with the specter of auto accidents, cancer or other diseases, nuclear war, loss of jobs, fires, or the many other fears which can prey upon the minds of all people. Until this can be determined, it remains highly risky to make positive assertions about the impact of the fear of crime.

APPENDIX:

A PROFILE OF CITIZEN ATTITUDE
SURVEY RESPONDENTS

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

AGE

	Number	Percent
18-29	282	27.8%
30-45	320	31.5%
46-64	304	30.0%
65 and older	108	10.6%
TOTAL	1014	99.9% (rounding difference)

SEX

	Number	Percent
Male	464	45.6%
Female	554	54.4%
TOTAL	1018	100.1%

RACE

	Number	Percent
Black	87	8.9%
White	889	90.4%
Chicano and Puerto Rican	3	0.3%
Oriental	3	0.3%
Other	2	0.2%
TOTAL	984	100.0%

EDUCATION

	Number	Percent
Eighth Grade or less	50	5.1%
Nine-Eleven Grades	114	11.5%
High School Diploma	269	27.3%
Vocational Training	188	19.1%
Some College	214	21.7%
Bachelor's or Higher	151	15.3%
TOTAL	985	100.0%

MARITAL STATUS

	Number	Percent
Married	677	68.6%
Widowed	61	6.2%
Divorced, Separated	67	6.8%
Never Married	182	18.4%
TOTAL	987	100.0%

NUMBER OF CHILDREN

	Number	Percent
No Children	506	51.3%
One child	196	19.8%
Two children	167	16.9%
Three or more children	117	11.9%
TOTAL	985	99.9%

RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE

	Number	Percent
Protestant	618	60.7%
Catholic	260	25.5%
Jewish	17	1.7%
None	51	5.0%
Other	72	7.1
TOTAL	1018	100.0%

REGION

	Number	Percent
Northeast	395	38.8%
Northwest	153	15.1%
Southwest	255	25.1%
Central and Southeast	214	21.1%
TOTAL	1018	100.1%

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

	Number	Percent
Employed	608	61.6%
Unemployed	40	4.0%
Disabled, Retired	82	8.3%
Student	41	4.2%
Keeping House	216	21.9%
TOTAL	987	100.0%

OCCUPATION*

	Number	Percent
Professional, Tech.	145	15.8%
Managers, Administration	100	10.9%
Sales, Clerical	246	26.8%
Craftsmen	122	13.3%
Operatives	126	13.7%
Laborers, Service	178	19.4%
TOTAL	916	99.9%

INCOME LEVEL

	Number	Percent
$0- 4,999	30	3.6%
$5,000 -9,999	93	11.2%
$10,000~14,999	86	10.3%
$15,000-19,999	96	11.6%
$20,000-24,999	117	14.1%
$25,000-29,999	96	11.5%
$30,000-34,999	104	12.6%
$35,000-39,999	59	7.1%
$40,000 and Higher	148	17.9%
TOTAL	829	99.9%

* includes former occupations for some students and those keeping house.

VICTIM OF A CRIME IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

	Number	Percent
Yes	121	12.2%
No	869	87.8%
TOTAL	990	100.0%

CRIME WITNESSED IN LAST 12 MONTHS

	Number	Percent
Yes	111	11.2%
No	881	88.8%
TOTAL	992	100.0%

OTHER SAC PUBLICATIONS

October 1982 — Peace Officers Task Analysis Study: The Ohio Report a two-and-one-half year study involving a survey of 3,155 Ohio peace officers in some 400 law enforcement agencies concerning the types of investigation, equipment, informational resources, tasks and physical activities associated with law enforcement in Ohio.

May 1982 — OCJS Research Requests and Responses: An Analysis: An analysis of 308 research data requests received and responded to by SAC in 1981, as well as the 625 total requests received to date, by type and source of request.

April 1982 — Fact and Fiction Concerning Crime and Criminal Justice in Ohio (1979-1982 data). A look at twenty-five popularly believed myths about crime and criminal justice in the State, accompanied by appropriate factual data.

July 1981 — Ohio Citizen Attitudes: Concerning Crime and Criminal Justice (Report #2, 1980 data). The second in a series of reports concerning Ohioans' attitudes and opinions about contemporary issues affecting law enforcement, courts, corrections, juvenile justice, crime prevention, and criminal law.

June 1981 — A Stability Profile of Ohio Law Enforcement Trainees: 1974-1979 (1981 records). A brief analysis of some 125 Ohio Law Enforcement Officers who completed mandated training between 1974 and 1979. The randomly selected group was analyzed in terms of turnover, advancement, and moves to other law enforcement agencies.

May 1981 — A Directory of Ohio Criminal Justice Agencies (1981 data). An inventory of several thousand criminal justice (and related) agencies in Ohio, by type and county.

April 1981 — Property Crime Victimization: The Ohio Experience (1978 data). A profile of property crime in Ohio highlighting the characteristics of victims, offenders, and the crimes themselves; based on results of the annual National Crime Survey victimization studies in Ohio.

March 1981 — Profiles in Ohio Law Enforcement: Technical Assistance, Budgets, and Benefits (1979 data). The second report emanating from the 1979 SAC survey of 82 sheriff's departments and 182 police departments in Ohio; discusses technical assistance needs and capabilities among these agencies, as well as budgets and fringe benefits.

December 1980 — The Need for Criminal Justice Research: OCJS Requests and Responses (1978-1980). An analysis of some 300 research requests received and responded to by the OCJS SAC Unit between 1978 and 1980, by type, request source and time of response.

September 1980 — State of the States Report: Statistical Analysis Centers (Emphasis Ohio) (1980 data). An analysis of the criminal justice statistical analysis centers located in virtually every state and several territories.

September 1980 — Survey of Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys: Report (1979 data). An operational overview of 46 county prosecutors' offices.

September 1980 — In Support of Criminal Justice: Money and Manpower (1977 data). Analysis of employment and expenditures within Ohio's criminal justice system, by type of component (police, courts, corrections, etc.) and type of jurisdiction (county, city, township and state).

June 1980 — Concerning Crime and Criminal Justice: Attitudes Among Ohio's Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police (1979 data). Opinions and attitudes of 82 Ohio sheriffs and 182 chiefs of police, analyzed by jurisdictional size.

May 1980 — Ohio Citizen Attitudes: A Survey of Public Opinion on Crime and Criminal Justice (1979 data). An analysis of public opinion and attitudes on a wide range of issues concerning law enforcement, courts, corrections, juvenile justice, crime prevention and other areas of crime and criminal justice.

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