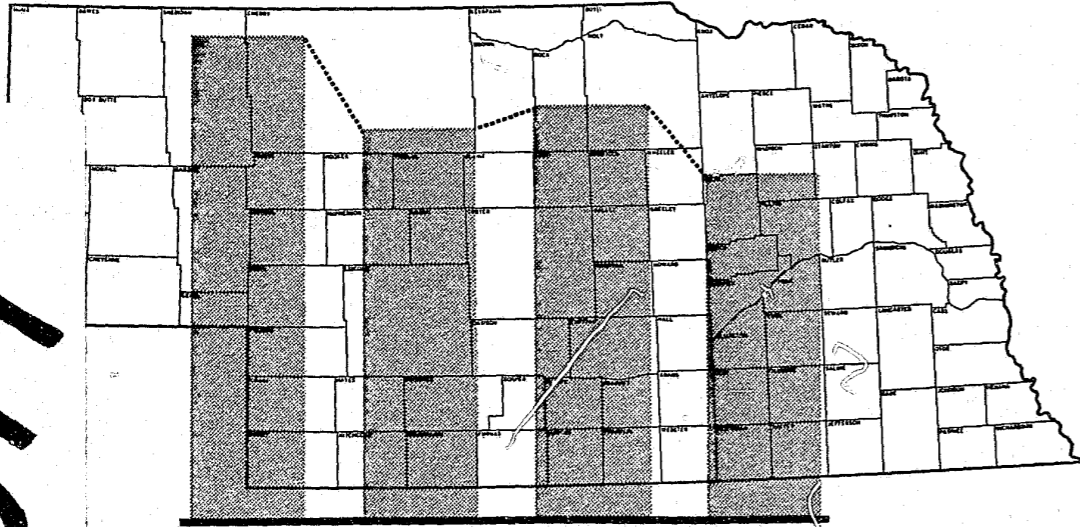


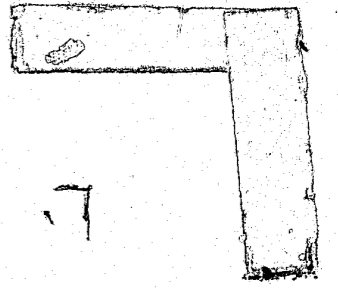
Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

CRIME IN NEBRASKA

CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION AND CITIZEN ATTITUDES
1980



86094



U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this copyrighted material has been granted by

Nebraska Commission on
Law Enforcement & Criminal
Justice
to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the copyright owner.

The data discussed in this report were collected as part of the Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey conducted by the Bureau of Sociological Research, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The Bureau of Sociological Research assumes no responsibility for the views or interpretations contained herein. A detailed description of the way in which the data were collected is contained in the booklet, "Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey" which may be obtained by writing Study Director, Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, Nebraska, 68588.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS CENTER
January, 1981

NCJRS

OCT 4 1982

ACQUISITIONS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Synopsis	2
Introduction	3
Interpreting NASIS 1980 Victimization Data	4
Offense Rates and Distribution	4
Victim Characteristics	8
Victim Reporting of Offenses	13
Economic Losses to Victims	14
NASIS 1977-1980	15
Citizen Attitudes About Crime and Criminal Justice	18

SYNOPSIS

In order to obtain information concerning criminal victimization and citizen attitudes regarding crime and criminal justice, the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice purchased interview time in the 1980 Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey (NASIS). This telephone survey of a representative group of Nebraskans is conducted by the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The Commission asked several questions pertaining to the respondents' experiences as victims of crime and their attitudes and opinions concerning crime and the criminal justice system.

GENERAL FINDINGS

- o 1 in 4 (24%) of the survey respondents were victims of an offense in the 12 months preceding the survey (Spring, 1980), a slight increase from the previous year's total of 23%.
- o More than three-fourths of all victimizations involved vandalism (33%) and larceny-theft (45%).
- o Somewhat more than half (59%) of the offenses were reported to law enforcement authorities. Motor vehicle theft (100%), robbery (100%), and burglary (81%) were most frequently reported.
- o Young, urban, and middle-income respondents were the most likely to become victims of crime.
- o Overall victimization rates have not changed significantly over the NASIS victimization surveys of 1977, 1978, 1979, and 1980.
- o Most survey respondents (66%) believed that crime levels had remained the same in the year or two prior to the survey, in their neighborhoods.
- o About one-quarter (26%) of Nebraskans surveyed responded affirmatively when asked if there was any area within about a mile of their home where they would be afraid to walk alone at night.
- o 24% of respondents had taken some measure to make their home more secure against crime.
- o Economic conditions and problems with drugs and alcohol were the most frequently cited causes of crime.
- o More than one-third (35%) of the Nebraskans in the survey indicated they felt no improvement was necessary in the performance of their local police department.
- o The large majority of respondents (72%) believed that the courts were too lenient in dealing with persons charged with crimes.

INTRODUCTION

The information presented in this report is based on data collected in the 1980 Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey (NASIS) conducted by the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. This survey has been conducted annually since 1977 and selects a representative sample of Nebraskans who are interviewed by phone about their life experiences and attitudes. Respondents answer questions dealing with the environment, transportation, housing, health, crime, family life, and other variables reflecting the quality of life experienced in Nebraska. Information provided by the survey is used by a variety of organizations and individuals for program, planning, and research purposes.

Each year since 1977, the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice has purchased interview time in NASIS to obtain information regarding Nebraskans' attitudes toward and experiences with crime and related matters. The focus of the Commission's interest in NASIS 1980, as in previous years, has been on victimization. That is, the collection of information concerning the characteristics of crime victims, the number and nature of offenses committed, and the victims' responses to these events. In this year's survey, two general questions concerning victimization were asked of each of the 1,916 respondents. These questions dealt primarily with the circumstances of any offense of which the respondent may have been a victim during the preceding twelve months (the survey was conducted during the months of February, March, and April, 1980). Responses to these questions are contained in the victimization section of this report. In addition,

several questions were posed regarding respondents' beliefs and actions concerning crime-related topics, which are summarized in the second part of this report.

Interpreting NASIS 1980 Victimization Data

All surveys (including NASIS) are subject to varying degrees of "sampling error". This means that the number of crime victims, for example, measured in the sample will not ordinarily be equal to the "real" numbers or "real" percentages which might be estimated by taking a very large number of samples. Generally, with relatively large samples such as in NASIS 1980, these two figures are relatively close, but results from NASIS 1980 should not be interpreted as completely exact estimates of Nebraska's total population characteristics.

VICTIMIZATION SUMMARY: 1980

Of the 1,916 respondents in the survey, almost one in four (24%) were victims of some offense. A total of 481 victimizations were recorded in two categories: personal sector and household sector incidents, as presented in Table 1. Personal sector victimizations were those in which the target of the offense was an individual, while household sector victimizations were those which primarily involved property crimes and in which the target of the incident was the household. For example, household sector larceny-theft involved property stolen from the respondent's home without breaking and entering.

Table 1 contains rate and frequency information by victimization category. Violent personal victimizations (assault, robbery, and sexual assault) comprised only about 6% of all victimizations while property-related offenses accounted for approximately 71% of all victimizations. Vandalism incidents were the most often recorded type of victimization with a victimization rate 50% higher than any other category.

TABLE 1 VICTIMIZATION BY OFFENSE CATEGORY

Offense Category	Number of Incidents	Victimization Rate
PERSONAL SECTOR		
Larceny-Theft.....	109.....	56.9 ^a
Assault.....	24.....	12.5 ^a
With Weapon.....	8.....	
No Weapon.....	16.....	
Robbery.....	3.....	1.6 ^a
Sexual Assault.....	3.....	1.6 ^b
HOUSEHOLD SECTOR		
Vandalism.....	159.....	83.0 ^c
Larceny-Theft.....	106.....	55.3 ^c
Burglary.....	57.....	29.7 ^c
With Theft.....	42.....	
No Theft.....	15.....	
Motor Vehicle Theft.....	12.....	6.3 ^c
Other (e.g., Arson).....	8.....	4.2 ^c

^aper 1,000 adults

^bper 1,000 adult women

^cper 1,000 households

The uneven distribution of different types of victimization is apparent in Figure 1 and Figure 2. More than two-thirds of victimizations were household sector offenses. This obtained distribution of victimization types is comparable to the distribution of crime types reported to law enforcement authorities recorded in the Nebraska Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program. In 1979, the UCR categories of burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft comprised about 94% of all serious (index) crimes reported to police; the corresponding NASIS victimization categories comprised approximately 90% of all victimizations.

FIGURE 1 DISTRIBUTION OF VICTIMIZATION BY SECTOR

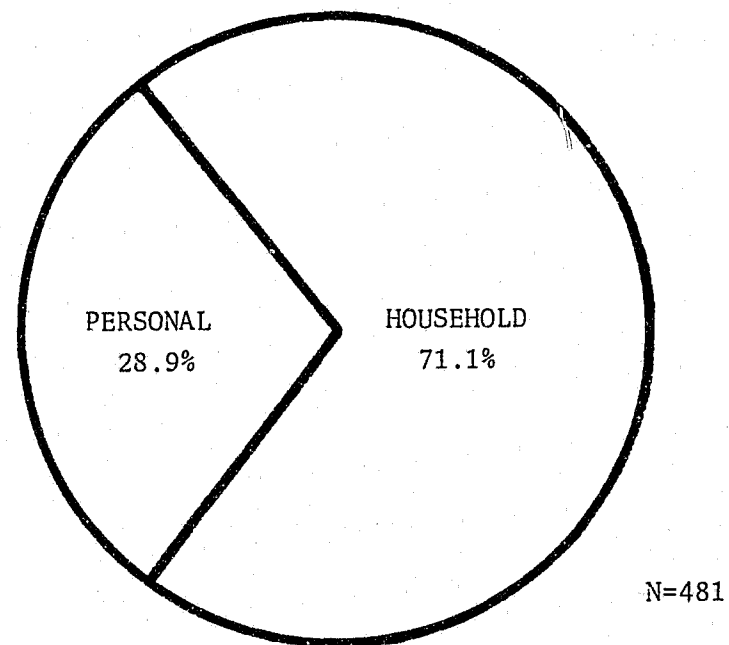
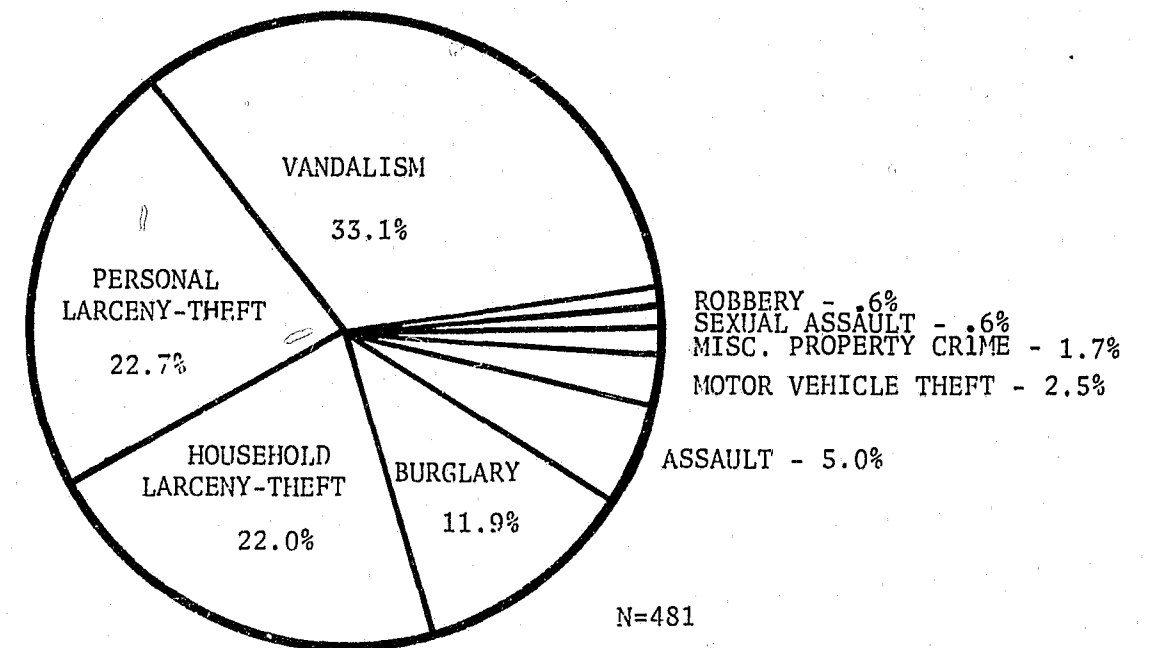


FIGURE 2 DISTRIBUTION OF VICTIMIZATION BY TYPE OF OFFENSE



Although crime rates derived from UCR and victimization survey data are not directly comparable, it is apparent that there are some major differences in crime rates obtained through the reporting of crime to police (as summarized in the UCR program) and victimization rates recorded by performing a victimization survey. For example, NASIS 1980 recorded a burglary victimization rate of 29.7 per 1,000 households surveyed. Uniform Crime Reporting program records for 1979 (the most recent year for which complete data is available) show a residential burglary crime rate of 11.8 per 1,000 households in the state*. Discrepancies such as these support the conclusion that a substantial number of victimizations are not reported to law enforcement authorities.

* Based on preliminary 1980 Bureau of the Census count of 621,846 housing units in Nebraska.

Victim Characteristics

Figure 3 indicates that victimization was not uniform across age groups. Older Nebraskans (i.e., over 60), contrary to popular belief, are victims less often than any other of the survey's age categories. In fact, the proportion of seniors who were victimized was less than their representation in the overall sample: only 11.5% of all victims were 60 and over, while they comprised almost 23% of the entire survey. On the other hand, respondents under 50 were victims more often than would be expected by their representation in the survey; about 78% of all victims were under 50 although this group composed approximately 63% of the survey respondents.

FIGURE 3 PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS VICTIMIZED BY AGE CATEGORY

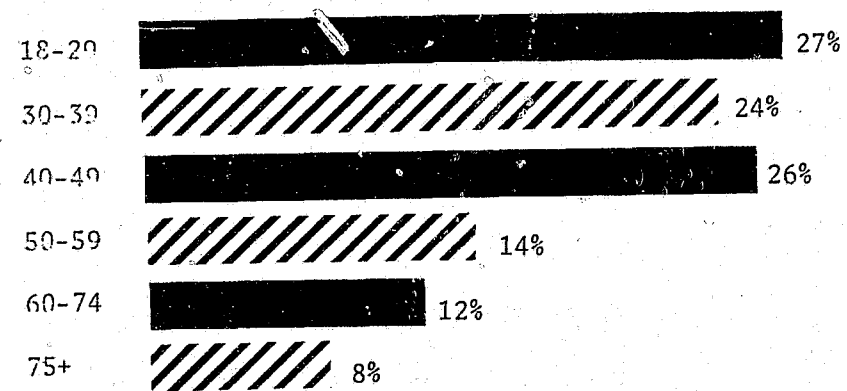
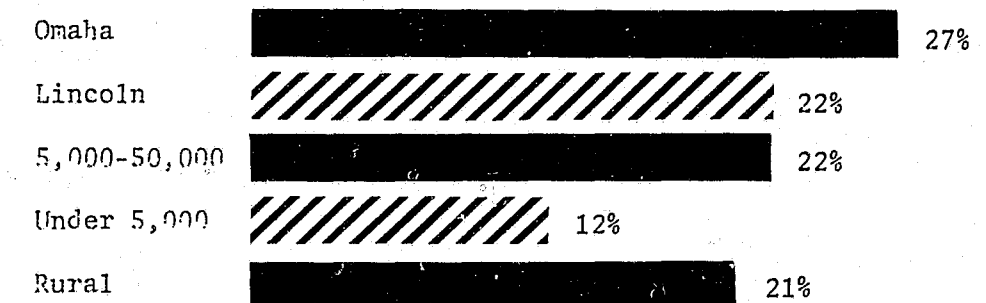


FIGURE 4 PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS VICTIMIZED BY COMMUNITY POPULATION



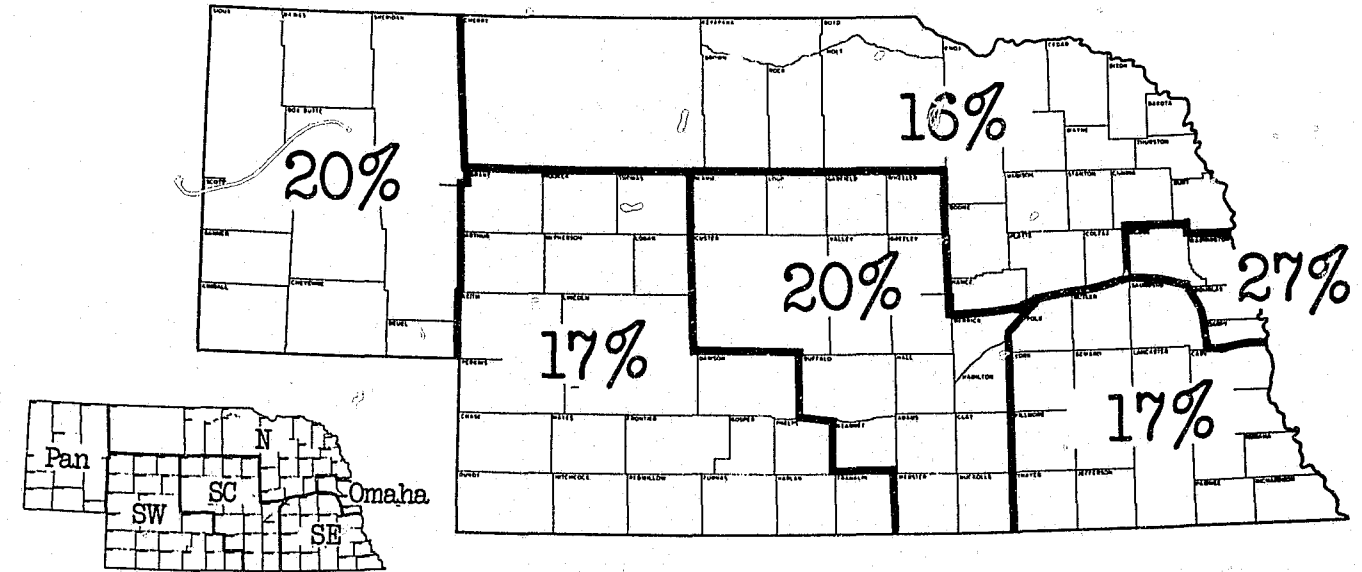
Respondents were classified into five categories based on the population of the community in which they lived. Residents of Omaha and Lincoln, while representing about one-third of survey respondents, accounted for roughly 42% of all victims. As illustrated in Figure 4, Omaha residents were victimized most frequently while respondents in towns under 5,000 were least likely to be crime victims. Residents of Omaha were victimized more often than would be expected on the basis of their representation in the sample; about 24% of survey respondents were from Omaha, while almost 32% of all victims resided in Omaha.

Figure 5 depicts the percentage of respondents victimized in each of six income groups. Respondents with the lowest family income were among the two income groups with the highest victimization rate. About one-quarter of those respondents in families with less than \$5,000 annual income were victimized; the same percentage were victimized in the income group between \$15,000 and \$20,000. There were no significant differences, however, among the income groups with regard to the expected number of victims in each group based on the income group's representation in the survey.

FIGURE 5 PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS VICTIMIZED BY TOTAL FAMILY INCOME



FIGURE 6 PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS VICTIMIZED BY REGION



The geographic distribution of victimization is illustrated in Figure 6. When the distribution of victimization is examined on this basis, the Omaha region (including Dodge, Washington, Douglas, and Sarpy counties) has the highest victimization rate. In addition, respondents in the Omaha region comprised 32% of the survey but 43% of the victims. All other regions were underrepresented in total victims relative to the region's proportion in the survey. For example, about 25% of the respondents were from the southeast region; however, respondents in this region comprised only 20% of all victims. Residents of the northern region of the State were least likely to be victimized; only 16% of the respondents in this area were victimized.

FIGURE 7 PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS VICTIMIZED BY RACE

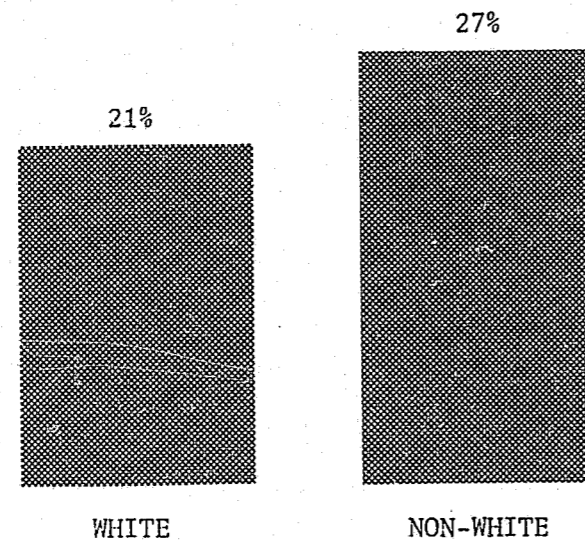
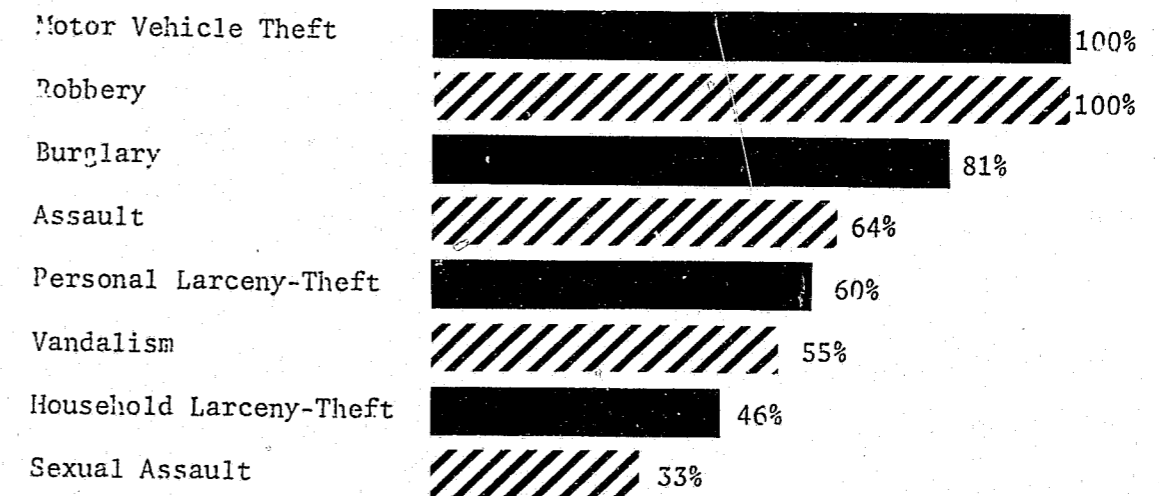


Figure 7 suggests that non-whites are more likely to be victims of crime than whites. Because the percentage of racial minorities in Nebraska's population is relatively small, the number of minority respondents in the survey (4.5%) was also relatively small, and all minority respondents were grouped into the non-white category. Thus observations concerning the different victimization rates for whites and non-whites must include the fact that the non-white victimization rate is based on a very small sample and may not be as reliable as the victimization rate for white respondents.

Victim Reporting of Offenses

Generally, victimization surveys have shown that a substantial number of victimizations are not reported to law enforcement authorities by victims. Reporting rates in the general areas of 30% to 40% have been typically recorded in national victimization surveys. The overall reporting rate recorded in the NASIS survey was almost 59%, considerably higher than recorded national rates. Reporting rates for each victimization category are depicted in Figure 8. Personal sector victimizations (assault, robbery, sexual assault, and personal larceny-theft) were more likely to be reported to authorities than household sector victimizations; 61% of personal sector victimizations were reported while 57% of household sector victimizations were reported.

FIGURE 8
PERCENTAGE OF VICTIMIZATIONS REPORTED TO POLICE



Of those respondents who reported victimizations to police, approximately 59% expressed satisfaction with police handling of the incident. The remainder either expressed dissatisfaction or provided no response. In general, there were no large variations among different victimization categories in the respondent's opinion of police handling; victims of most types of victimization expressed satisfaction with police handling in about 50% of the incidents.

Of those respondents who provided an identifiable reason for not reporting a victimization, approximately 47% indicated that the offense was "not important enough". Close to 18% of respondents said the offense was "useless to report" or "nothing will be done". Approximately 5% of unreported victimizations were not reported because the respondent indicated that the offender was a "friend or relative".

Economic Losses to Victims

At least \$90,131 in damages and stolen money or property were incurred by respondents who were victimized in the survey. This total did not include three incidents involving separate losses over \$10,000. Of those victimizations for which the victim specified a dollar amount of economic loss, the largest average loss per incident was for motor vehicle theft (\$1,494), followed by burglary (\$675), personal and residential larceny-theft (\$188 and \$187, respectively), and vandalism (\$125).

Only 12% of victimizations involving stolen property or money resulted in the victim recovering some or all of the money or property. In about 10% of personal and residential larceny-thefts, the victim recovered some or all of the property stolen, half of the motor vehicle thefts resulted in recovery, and about 14% of burglary victims were able to recover some or all of their losses.

Victimization surveys are often utilized as alternate measures of crime incidence and its attendant circumstances. As such, repeated measures of victimization over a number of years may provide useful information concerning changes over time. Since the Commission has participated in NASIS since its inception in 1977, four years of victimization data are now available to examine victimization trends in Nebraska.

The percentage of respondents who were victimized has remained fairly stable over the period from 1977 to 1980. Figure 9 illustrates that the largest year-to-year difference is about 3% of the total survey. The range of sampling error (an estimate of the possible error due to sampling methods used in the survey) exceeds this difference, and therefore it is unlikely that there has been any significant change in overall victimization percentages across this time period.

FIGURE 9
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS VICTIMIZED: NASIS YEARS 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980

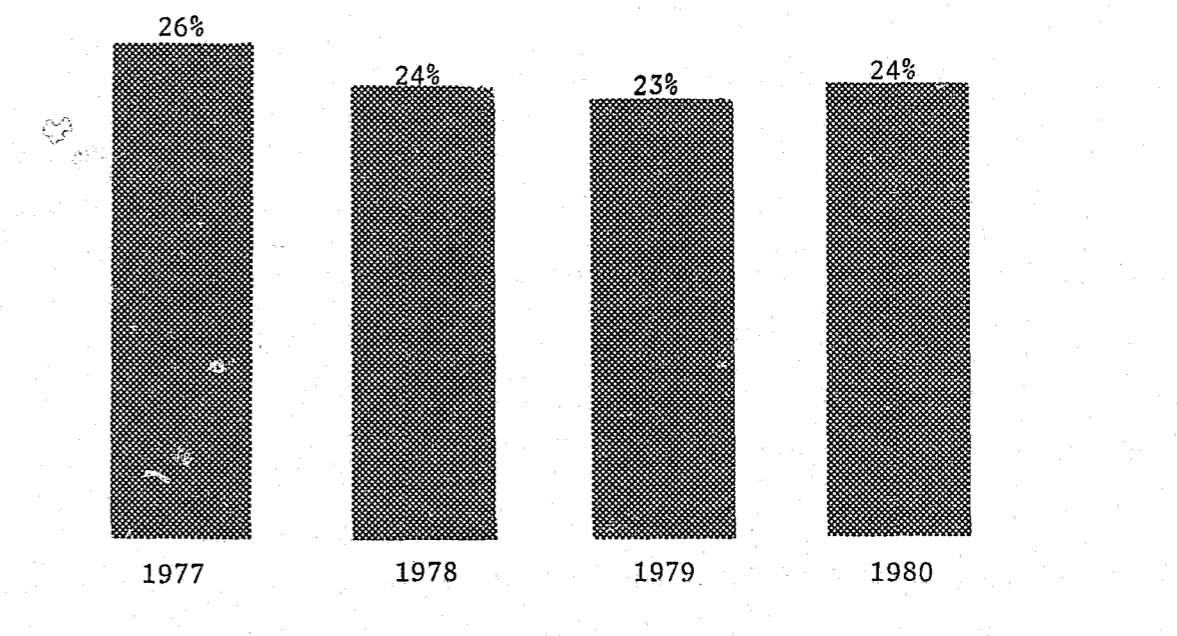


TABLE 2 VICTIMIZATION RATE BY OFFENSE CATEGORY: 1977-1980

Offense Category	Year			
	1977	1978	1979	1980
PERSONAL SECTOR				
Larceny-Theft	91.9	57.2	91.9	56.9
Assault	17.6	12.4	12.8	12.5
Robbery	7.5	2.1	2.1	1.6
Sexual Assault	10.3	3.8	6.0	1.6
Fraud	56.1	60.3	43.6	--
HOUSEHOLD SECTOR				
Vandalism	114.7	116.0	106.3	83.0
Larceny-Theft	--	--	--	55.3
Burglary	43.4	43.8	31.3	29.7
Motor Veh. Theft	9.6	11.3	1.6	6.3
Arson	--	--	3.2	--

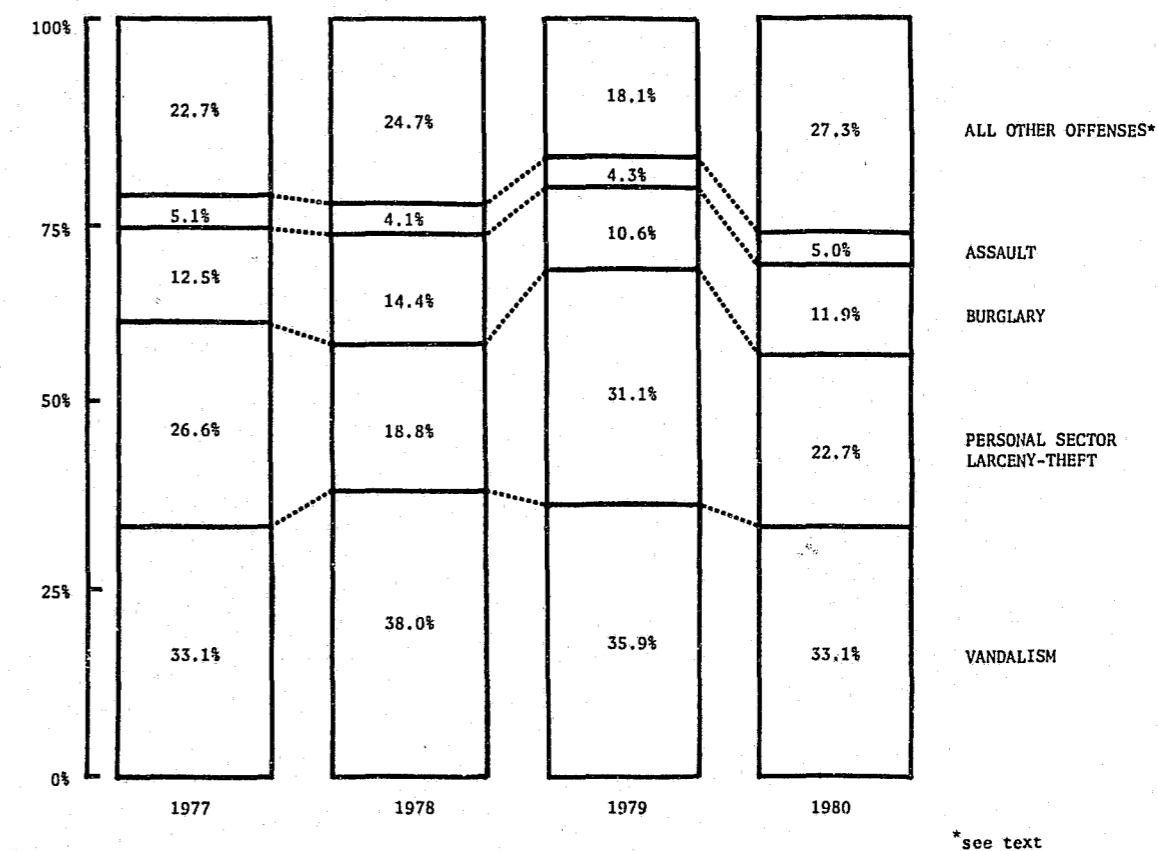
Note: Personal sector victimization rates are reported per 1,000 adults, household sector victimization per 1,000 households, and sexual assault per 1,000 adult women.

Table 2 depicts victimization rate information for individual victimization categories for the period 1977 to 1979. Certain victimization questions were not included in some years and it is therefore not possible to present comparative information in those categories and years.

Although large percentage changes may be derived by comparing one year's victimization rate for a particular category to another, it should be noted that in many of these instances, the change in absolute numbers is relatively small. For example, the motor vehicle theft victimization rate increased dramatically from 1979 to 1980, but in terms of actual numbers, three motor vehicle thefts were recorded in the 1979 survey, while 8 were recorded in the 1980 survey.

The relative distribution of four different types of victimization is illustrated in Figure 10. The victimization categories of vandalism, personal larceny-theft, burglary and assault generally comprise at least 75% of all victimization in any year. The category of "all other offenses" does not include exactly the same victimization categories from year to year (e.g. fraud victimization was not included in 1980) and therefore, this category is not directly comparable from year to year. Figure 10 suggests that there has been some variation in the general distribution of types of victimization since 1977 but no apparent trend emerges.

FIGURE 10 DISTRIBUTION OF VICTIMIZATION BY TYPE OF OFFENSE: NASIS YEARS 1977-1980

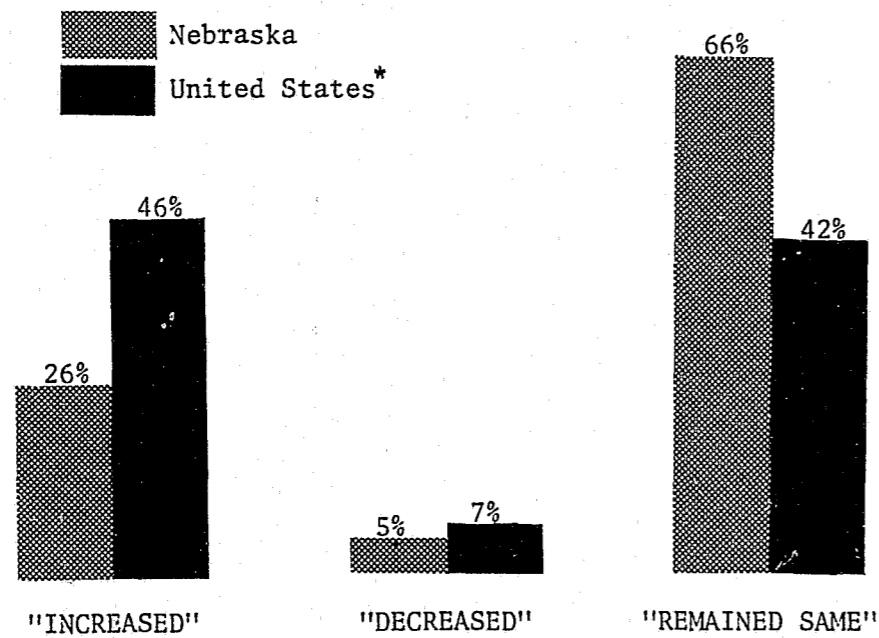


*see text

ATTITUDES ABOUT CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Most survey respondents believed that crime in their neighborhoods had remained at the same level in the year or two prior to the survey. However, Figure 11 shows that only 5% of the Nebraskans surveyed felt that crime levels had decreased in their neighborhoods, while 26% felt that crime had increased. When compared to a national sample asked a similar question, Nebraskans were more likely to feel that crime levels had remained the same and less likely to indicate that an increase had occurred. Almost 30% of Omaha area residents felt that crime had increased in their neighborhoods, however, rural residents also expressed concern; nearly 24% believed that

FIGURE 11
HOW HAS CRIME CHANGED IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE LAST YEAR OR TWO?



* Source: ABC News-Harris Survey, Chicago Tribune, May 17, 1978

crime had increased in their area. On the other hand, only about 11% of Lincoln residents and 10% of farmers and ranchers indicated that crime in their immediate area had increased. As Figure 12 shows, victims of crime were more likely than non-victims to respond that an increase in crime had occurred, and indicated crime levels had remained stable less often than non-victims.

When queried regarding the nature of specific types of crime which had increased, vandalism was most frequently cited: about 27% of respondents believed that vandalism incidents had increased in their neighborhood. Other types of crime cited by respondents as having increased in their neighborhoods included the categories of burglary (21%), larceny-theft (19%), robbery (17%), and sexual assault (5%).

FIGURE 12
HOW HAS CRIME CHANGED IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE LAST YEAR OR TWO?

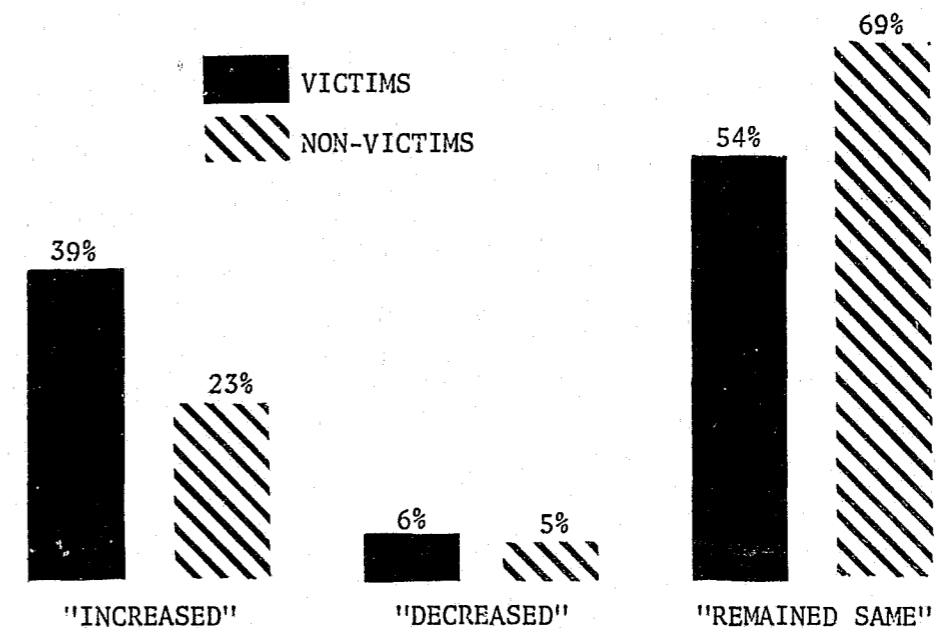
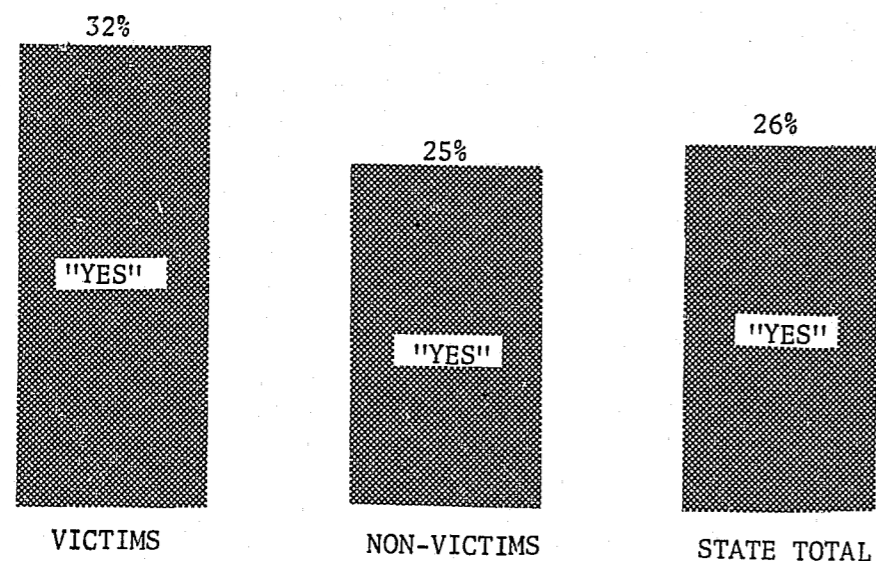


FIGURE 13
ARE YOU AFRAID TO WALK ALONE AT NIGHT WITHIN A MILE OF YOUR HOME?



Approximately one-quarter of the Nebraskans surveyed responded affirmatively when asked if there was any area within about a mile of their home where they would be afraid to walk alone at night. Figure 13 also depicts (as would be expected) that crime victims were more apprehensive than non-victims: 32% of crime victims indicated fear while 25% of non-victims responded that they would be fearful. In general, fear of walking alone at night was most often expressed by Omahans (44%), females (41%), citizens 60 years and over (38%), Lincoln residents (36%), and crime victims (32%). Groups which expressed fear of walking alone at night less often than the state total included non-victims (25%) respondents 18 to 39 years old (19%), residents of rural areas (13%), and males (10%).

A common response to fear of crime is making one's residence more secure against it. This may take many forms, including installing or strengthening locks, extra lighting, alarm systems, etc. Nearly one-quarter (23%) of the Nebraskans surveyed had taken some active measure to make their home or apartment secure against crime. An even higher percentage of victims (35%) had taken some crime deterrent or prevention activity with regard to their residences. As Figure 14 shows, however, non-victims were much less likely than victims to have taken measures designed to prevent or deter residential crime.

FIGURE 14
HAVE YOU DONE ANYTHING TO MAKE YOUR HOME MORE SECURE AGAINST CRIME?

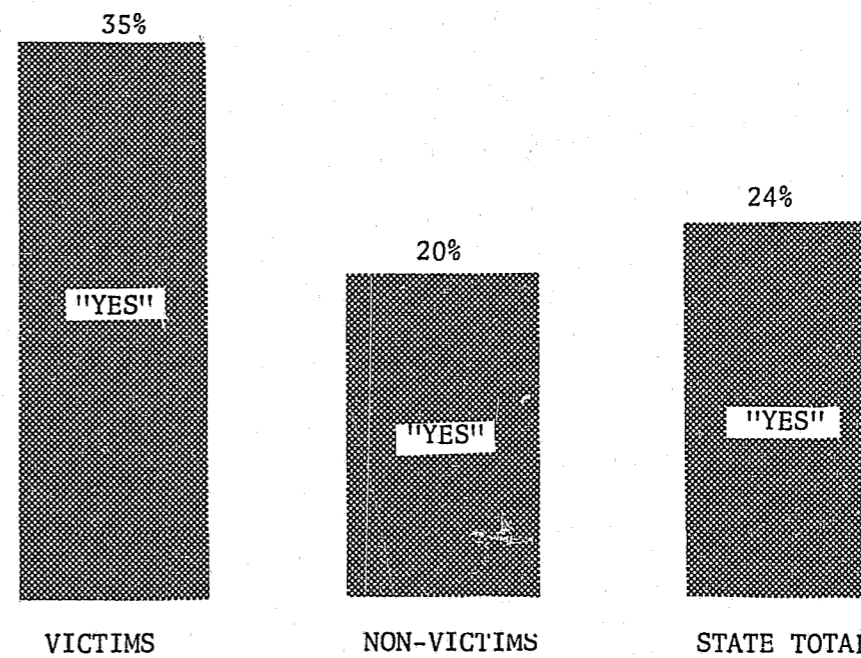


Figure 15 depicts selected groups which exhibited some variation in whether or not they had taken crime prevention or deterrence measures in their home. It is interesting to note that even those respondents who said that police protection in their community was excellent (from a previous question) were more likely than average to have taken some home security measures.

FIGURE 15
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS MADE HOME MORE SECURE AGAINST CRIME

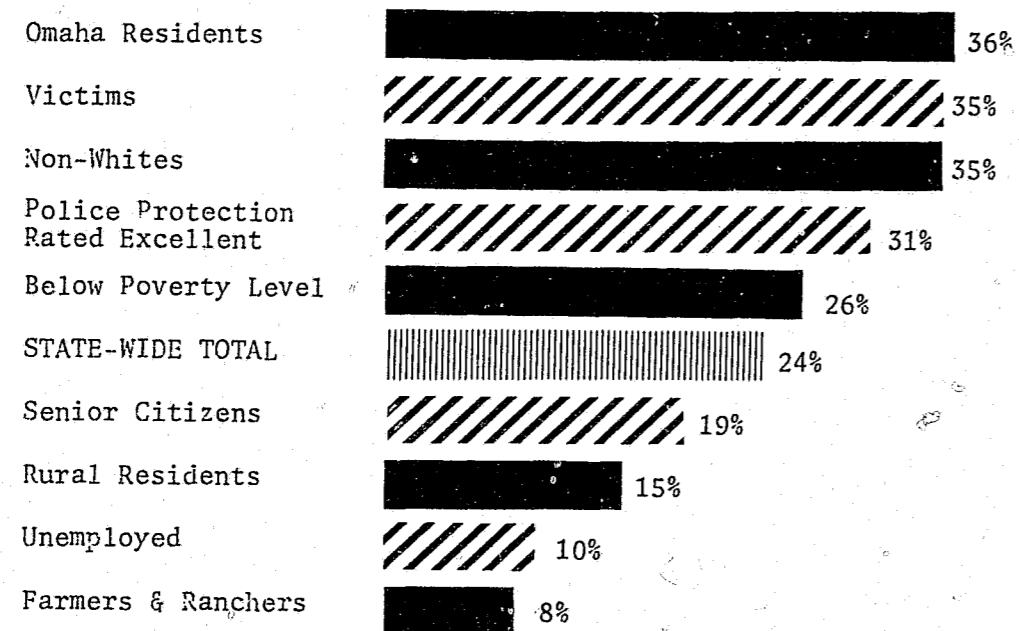
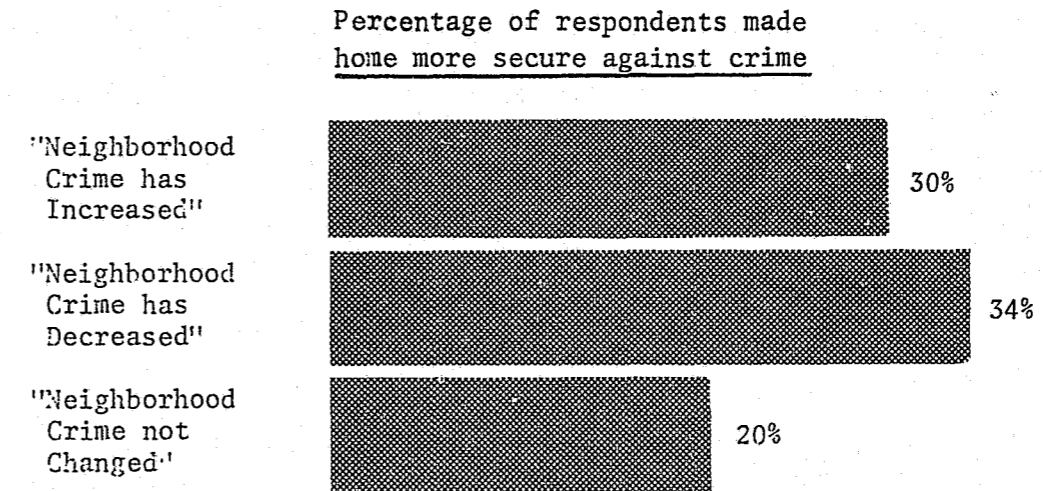


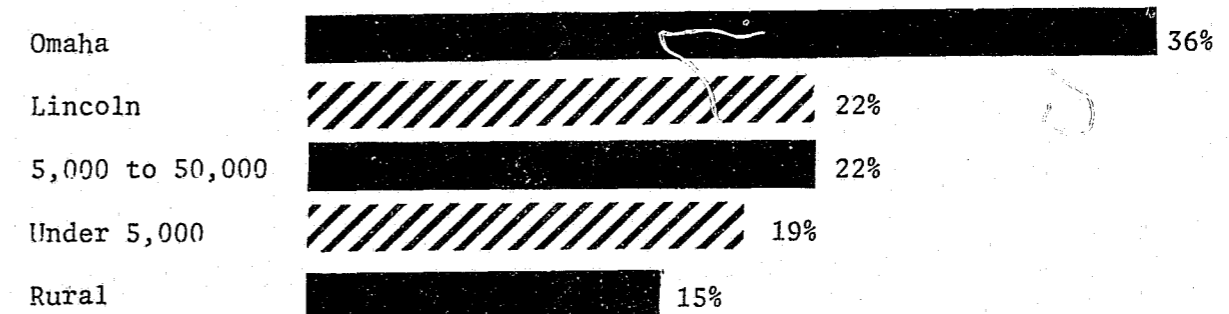
Figure 16 suggests that respondents' perception of changes in neighborhood crime activity may not result in direct action to make their own home more secure against crime. Specifically, of those respondents who thought neighborhood crime had decreased, 34% had taken residential crime prevention or deterrent measures; however, only 30% of those who thought crime had increased had done the same.

FIGURE 16
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS MADE HOME MORE SECURE AGAINST CRIME BY RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME CHANGE



Even fewer residents (20%) who believed that there had been no change in neighborhood crime also had undertaken some home security precaution. Figure 17 shows the proportion of respondents in each community population category who had made their residence more secure against crime.

FIGURE 17
HAVE YOU DONE ANYTHING TO MAKE YOUR HOME MORE SECURE AGAINST CRIME?
PERCENTAGE RESPONDING "YES" BY COMMUNITY POPULATION



Of those respondents who had taken measures to protect their home against crime, the largest number (72%) had installed or strengthened door locks. Figure 18 illustrates the types of activities reported by survey respondents who had taken home security measures. The small miscellaneous category included responses referring to such activities as purchasing insurance, carrying weapons, and storing valuables in secure places.

FIGURE 18
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MAKE YOUR RESIDENCE MORE SECURE AGAINST CRIME?

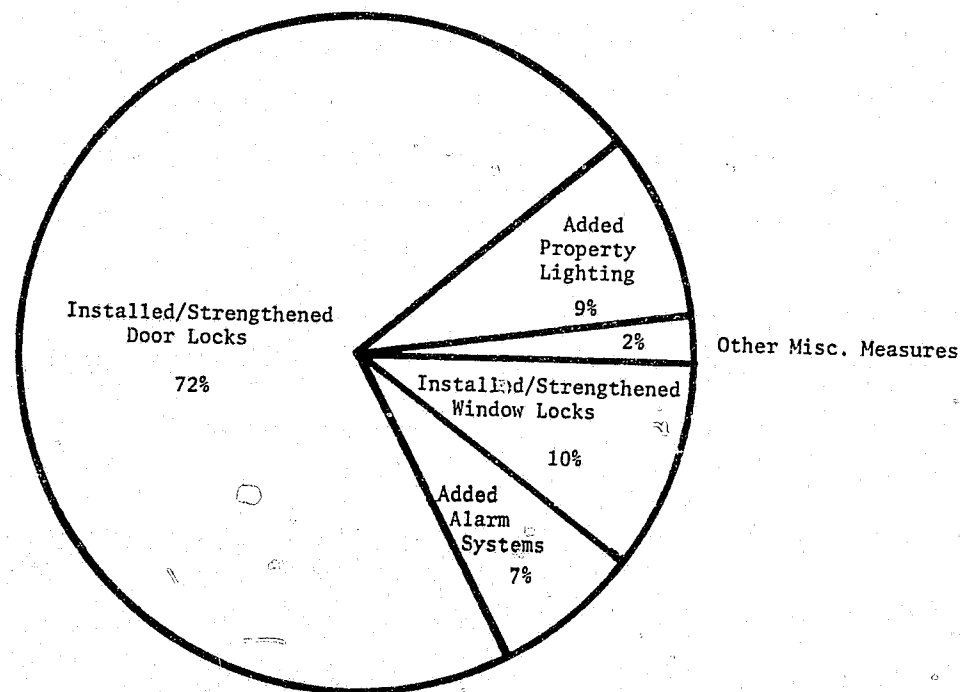
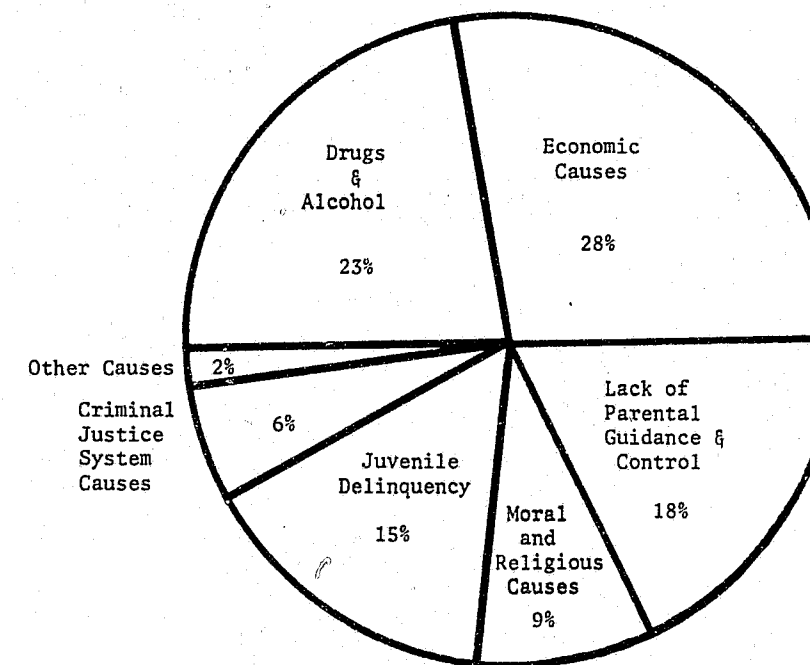


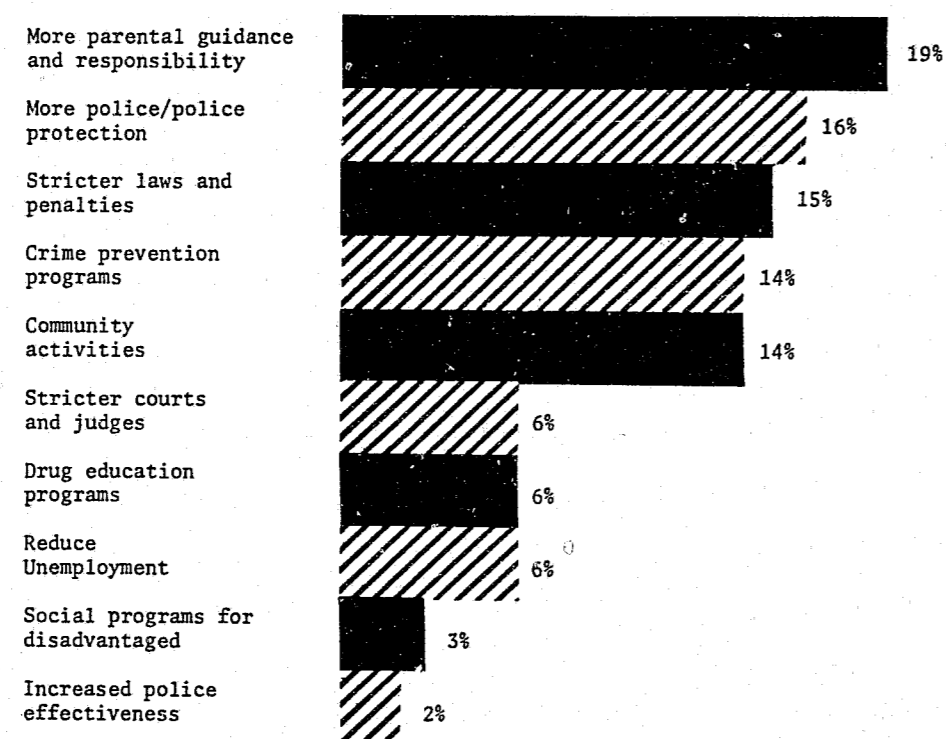
FIGURE 19
WHAT DO YOU FEEL IS THE MAJOR CAUSE OF CRIME IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



The survey respondents reflected a wide variety of opinions concerning the origins and causes of crime and criminal activity. In fact, the more than 1,500 identifiable responses could be grouped into about 120 specific categories ranging from references to lack of education to gas shortages. These, in turn, could be roughly collapsed into the seven general categories pictured in Figure 19. Responses dealing with drugs and alcohol and juvenile delinquency were not difficult to categorize. However, four other categories require some explanation. The moral and religious category, as a rule, included statements containing judgements against human nature, references to declining moral standards, religion, and similar topics. The lack of parental guidance category included responses referencing children's needs for more

supervision and youthful offenders having too much money/free time, etc. Economic causes included references to unemployment, inflation, recession, or general economic factors, while criminal justice system causes included statements concerning leniency of courts, insufficient numbers of police, etc.

FIGURE 20 WHAT THINGS COULD BE DONE TO REDUCE CRIME IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

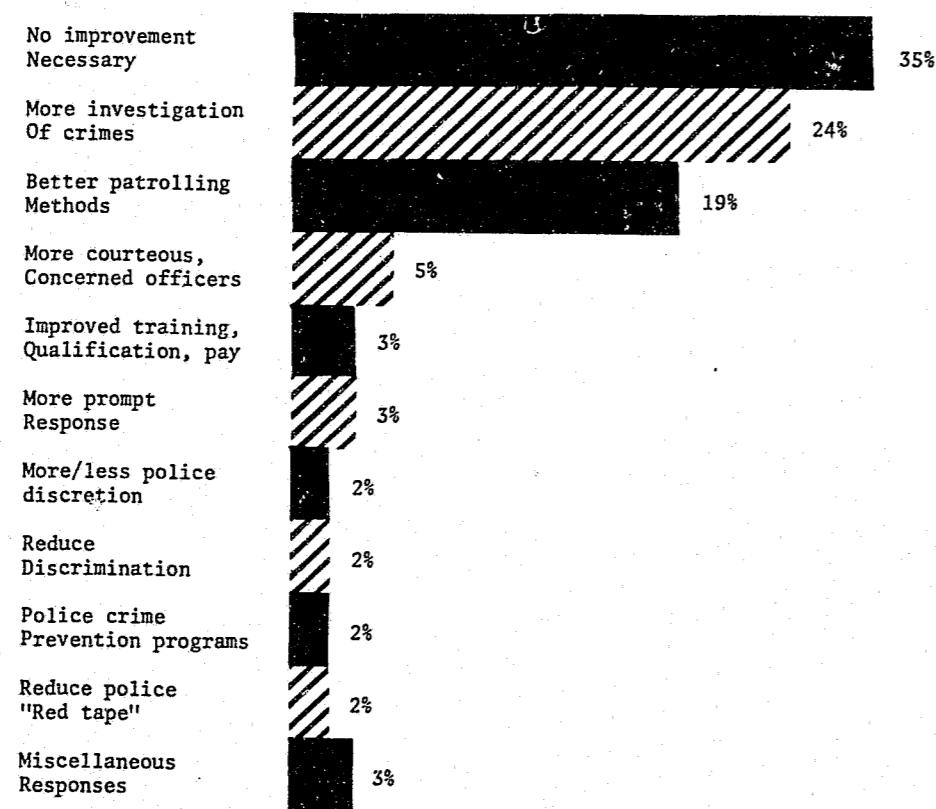


Respondents were asked for their opinions concerning what measures could be utilized to reduce crime in their community. The large number of different types of responses were categorized into ten general groupings, as shown in Figure 20. The most frequently mentioned means of reducing crime involved references to the need for more parental guidance and responsibility for their

children, more police protection (e.g., more police officers, better patrolling procedures, etc.) was cited by almost as many respondents (16%). In general, the Nebraskans surveyed did not single out specific aspects of society or the criminal justice system, but rather the responses dealt with measures to be taken in different areas of society (for example, social programs for the economically disadvantaged or drug education projects) and by different institutions and organizations (legislative enactment of stricter criminal penalties or community crime prevention programs). Figure 20, however, does indicate that the Nebraskans surveyed felt strongly about parental responsibility, adequate and efficient police protection, and strict criminal penalties as methods to reduce and deter criminal activity.

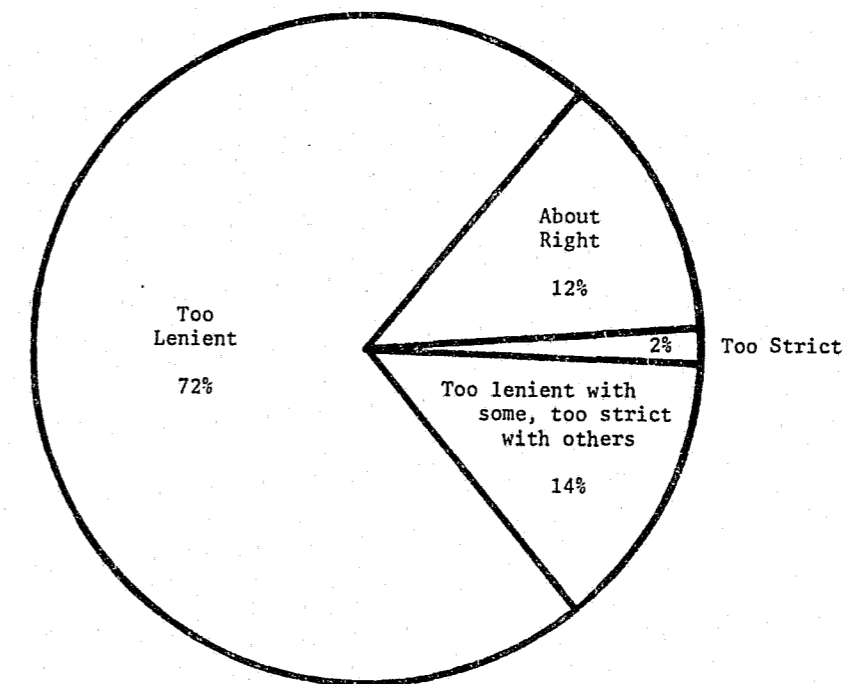
When asked in what ways their local police department could improve the job they were doing, the largest group of respondents (35%) indicated that no improvement was necessary. Nearly one-quarter (24%) said that increased investigation of criminal activity was needed. About 19% of respondents felt that better patrolling methods (e.g., more officers in certain areas or at certain times) would increase police effectiveness. Miscellaneous responses (3%) included, for example, references to action by organizations or individuals other than police agencies. As Figure 21 illustrates, it is significant that more than one-third of the Nebraskans surveyed felt that no improvement was necessary in the performance of their local law enforcement agencies.

FIGURE 21 HOW COULD YOUR LOCAL POLICE IMPROVE THE JOB THEY ARE DOING?



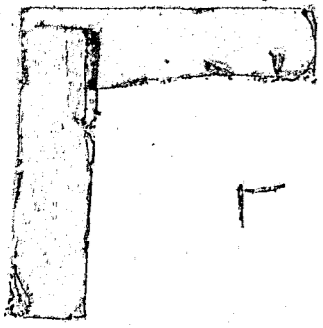
The majority of Nebraskans interviewed expressed the opinion that courts were too lenient in dealing with people charged with crimes; only 2% said that courts were too strict in handling persons charged with offenses. In addition, as Figure 22 illustrates, a large number of respondents (14%) felt that courts were inconsistent, that is, too lenient with some persons and too strict with others. In general, older Nebraskans were more likely to respond that courts were too lenient (81% of those 60 and over) while only 62% of respondents under 30 years felt that courts were too lenient. Lincoln residents (48%) and respondents with incomes below poverty level (59%) were among the groups that least often responded that courts were too lenient.

FIGURE 22 IN GENERAL, ARE THE COURTS TOO LENIENT, TOO STRICT, OR ABOUT RIGHT IN DEALING WITH PERSONS CHARGED WITH CRIMES?



This report was prepared by the Statistical Analysis Center of the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. Although a large amount of detailed information was collected in NASIS 1980, it was desired that only the more pertinent and significant victimization and attitude data be presented in this report. For this reason, the tables and graphics are intended to be self-explanatory and the text has been kept to a minimum. Persons interested in obtaining more detailed information should contact:

Mark Murphy
Statistical Analysis Center
Nebraska Crime Commission
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, NE 68509
(402) 471-2194



END