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Ohio Citizen Attitudes

Concerning Crime & Criminal Justice

U.S. Department of Justice 96458
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Fourth Edition
1984

96458



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GOVERNOR

STATE OF OHIO
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96458

April 1, 1984

Dear Citizens of Ohio:

Because information is a cornerstone of good government, I am pleased to share with you the results of this fourth survey of Ohio citizen attitudes concerning crime and criminal justice in our state. It is one of several important projects being developed by the Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Services (GOCJS), a unit reorganized last November to provide my office with direction in the formulation of criminal justice policy in Ohio. Other significant ventures of GOCJS address the crucial areas of family violence, crime prevention, offender processing through the courts, prison overcrowding, drug abuse, and several others. All of these activities are aimed at developing policies which effectively and efficiently respond to the concerns of Ohio citizens for a safe and just society.

This is no easy task. As indicated in this report the criminal justice system is often only vaguely understood, a situation compounded by the highly charged emotional environment in which it frequently must operate. Until quite recently, there was little information available to Ohioans which allowed both a statewide and criminal justice systemwide perspective on crime and criminal justice. Understandably, such an environment has generated frustration, anger, and suggestions for "quick fix" solutions which are likely to make matters worse.

The Ohio Citizen Attitude Survey Series is the beginning point for a reasoned and comprehensive look at crime and our criminal justice system. It measures the attitudes, tests the awareness, probes the fears and weighs the tolerance of the citizens who elect the judges, prosecutors, sheriffs, coroners, lawmakers and others who administer a great portion of the criminal justice in Ohio. With this report as a backdrop, all of the other information gathering and policy development of GOCJS will take on added meaning. Above all else, it is a product that is meant to be useful.

I hope you find it so.

Sincerely,

Richard F. Celeste

Richard F. Celeste
Governor

OHIO CITIZEN ATTITUDES CONCERNING CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE 1981
(FOURTH EDITION)

A SERVICE OF:
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES
THE OHIO STATISTICAL ANALYSIS CENTER
STATE OF OHIO
RICHARD F. CELESTE, GOVERNOR

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

- Most Ohioans feel safe in their own neighborhoods, even while out alone after dark.
- Citizen worries about crime are no greater than their other worries (sickness, accidents, unemployment, wars).
- People are much more pessimistic about crime in general than they are about crime in their own neighborhoods, and virtually everyone believes his or her neighborhood is as safe or safer than most.
- At least some crime prevention measures are in evidence in over half of Ohio's households, and the use of such measures has increased some 50% during the past three years.
- Most Ohioans favor waiting periods and registration as handgun control measures, but most disagree with the prospect of outlawing handguns altogether.
- Blacks appear more in agreement with current criminal sentencing patterns than do whites.
- By large margins Ohioans favor jail or prison terms for first-time drunk drivers, felons using firearms and repeat serious juvenile offenders.
- Two-thirds of Ohio's citizens believe that fear of prison is not an effective deterrent to crime.
- A solid majority of the Survey respondents felt "changing behavior" was a legitimate prison objective for first-time offenders, but that goal was replaced by "isolation" and "punishment" for repeat offenders.
- Despite feelings that criminal sentences are too lenient, most citizens favor many of the options which allow alternatives to jail/prison.

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FOREWORD

As a service of the Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Services, this report constitutes the fourth survey of Ohio citizen attitudes about crime and criminal justice conducted since 1979. Some of the findings contained herein result from questions asked in all of the previous surveys, some are based on questions not asked since 1979, and others reflect questions asked for the first time in 1983. Because four years worth of data are now available, it is possible to provide a more meaningful analysis of citizen attitudes than was possible earlier. Not only are the "whats" of citizen opinion illuminated, but insight into the "whys" of those opinions also becomes possible.

The 1983 report is characterized by a large battery of new questions relating to Ohio's prisons in particular, and correctional philosophies in general. These questions are timely inasmuch as the state is on the threshold of a three-quarters-of-a-billion-dollar prison/jail construction and renovation program. In another equally practical direction, the Survey takes a first-time sounding of sentencing opinion with regard to drunk drivers, felons using firearms, serious juvenile offenders, and others who have drawn the interest of Ohio's lawmakers in recent years. And, among areas addressed in earlier studies, the report takes a close look at citizen attitudes and practices with regard to crime prevention, handgun ownership, fear of crime and perceptions of crime occurrence in Ohio.

While changes have been made in the Citizen Attitude Survey series over the years, the purpose for the series remains the same--to put public opinion information into the hands of key criminal justice decision-makers in the state. Because the criminal justice system can be very vulnerable to changes in or the emotional volatility of public opinion, these decision-makers need to have a regular reading of that opinion. Such a measurement not only provides insight into what people believe, but can also say much about the means of communicating crime and criminal justice information to Ohio's citizens.

Hopefully, the 1983 edition of the Ohio Citizen Attitudes Concerning Crime and Criminal Justice will help to provide such a measurement.

FEAR OF CRIME

For the past four years the newly reorganized Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Services* (GOCJS) has been carefully monitoring Ohioans' fears about crime. It is an important issue. An intimidated citizenry is likely to make unreasonable demands upon its law makers, curtail their own lifestyles to the detriment of the State's social and economic well-being, and fail to play their own key roles in the criminal justice system as witnesses and concerned observers. However, the overwhelming conclusion from the 1983 survey, and all previous surveys, is that Ohioans are not overly fearful of crime.

This finding may seem surprising in light of much public rhetoric seemingly to the contrary. The difference comes from the GOCJS survey attempt to put the question into a meaningful perspective. For example, one's fear of crime is likely to change from place to place. How fearful are people in their own neighborhoods where they live? Is their fear specific or, rather, a general sense of uneasiness?

Other questions also become important at this point. Since most people have to contend with many different kinds of anxiety in their lives, it makes sense to ask how fear of crime compares to these. And, finally, what does fear of crime mean in actual terms of changed lifestyles?

All of these questions have been answered in the Citizen Attitude Survey Series. But the starting point was to ask the simple question,

"How safe do you feel being out alone in your neighborhood at night?"

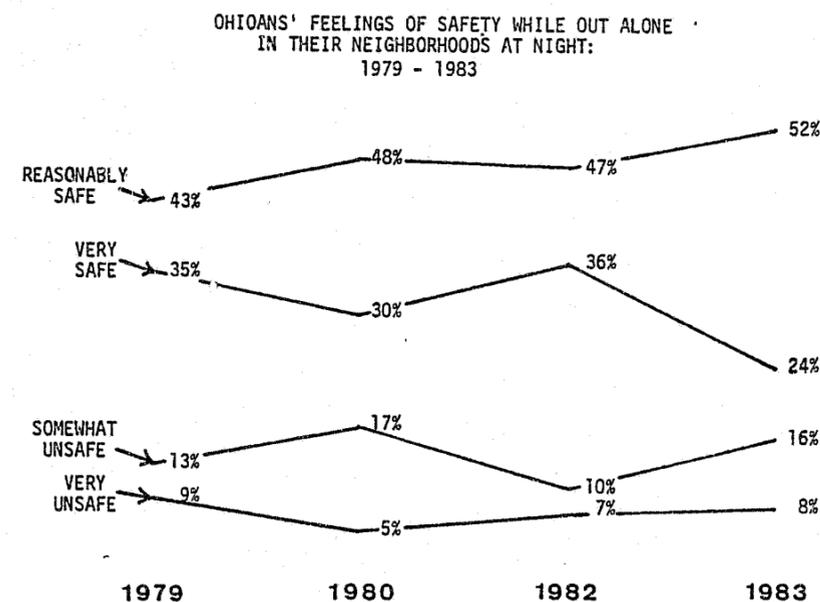
This same question has been asked in the National Crime Survey series since the early 1970s. Ohioans' 1983 responses to the question were:

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| "Very Safe" | 24% |
| "Reasonably Safe" | 52% |
| "Somewhat Unsafe" | 16% |
| "Very Unsafe" | 8% |

Figure 1 illustrates that the 1983 figures are in line with those of earlier years, with the "safe" side figures having varied no more than 7% (76%-83%) in four years. The earlier studies have shown that even senior citizens, women, and other traditionally high-fear groups fall on the "safe" side of this response, and that the state-wide "safe" figure rises to 95% or above when the question is put in terms of daylight hours.

* formerly, the Office of Criminal Justice Services

FIGURE 1



Approximately the same percentage of Ohio residents who expressed "unsafe" feelings about their neighborhoods also stated that fear of crime had limited or changed their activities while "away from home." The final clause is important, however, since prior research has determined that people are more fearful when travelling outside of their own neighborhoods. Table 1 indicates some interesting paired comparisons emerging from the responses to this question.

TABLE 1
FEAR OF CRIME HAS LIMITED OR CHANGED MY ACTIVITIES DURING THE PAST YEAR

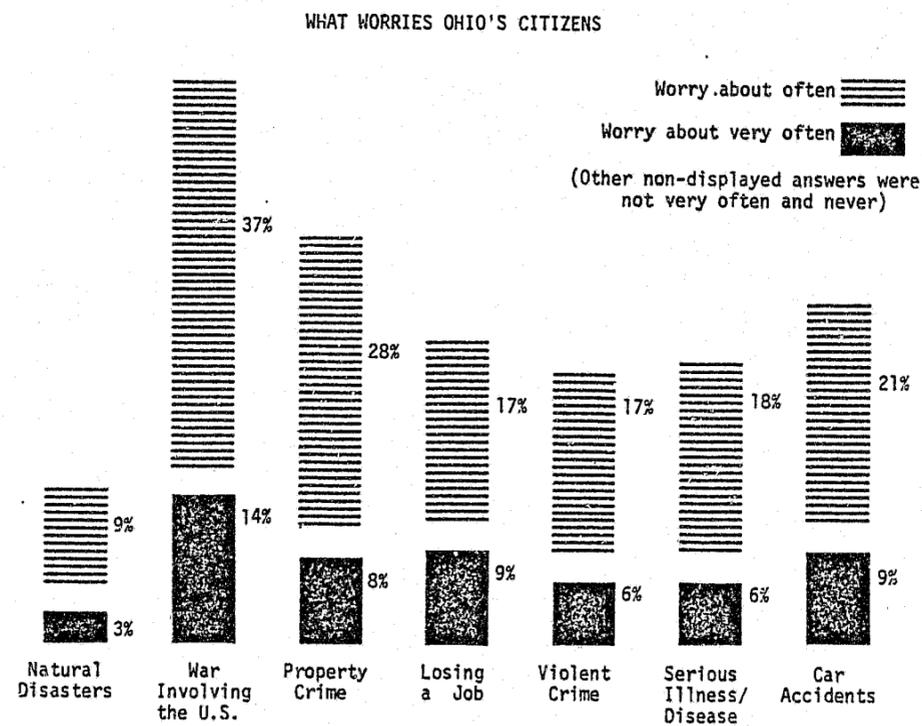
| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Blacks | 25% |
| Whites | 32% |
| 18-29 Yrs. Old | 30% |
| 65 and Over | 32% |
| Statewide 1983 | 31% |
| Statewide 1979 | 28% |

Perhaps the most remarkable figures in this table are the ones reflecting no significant difference between the responses of the very

young and senior citizens. In fact, the responses of the seniors to most of the fear-of-crime questions did not differ greatly from those of their younger peers. In another direction, it is interesting to note that blacks, who usually demonstrate somewhat higher fear levels in responding to the "neighborhood" question, are less likely than whites to allow their fears to interrupt their lifestyles. Also, the state-wide response to this question has shown very little movement since it was first asked in 1979.

The most significant 1983 addition to the series of fear-of-crime questions was the "worry index." It is a given that people will have at least some anxiety about crime victimization, but how does this compare with the other worries that inevitably crowd into human lives? Is concern about crime a vastly greater emotional burden than concerns about car accidents, serious illness, losing a job, and other human worries? The answers to these kinds of questions are important to key government decision-makers who must ascertain the relative seriousness of the issues before them. A quick inventory of Ohioans' worries, depicted below in Figure 2, indicates that fear of crime is only about even with several other worries, and falls far below the anxiety level accompanying the prospect of a war involving the United States.

Figure 2



Once again, these findings may seem inconsistent with preconceived notions about fear of crime, particularly the fear of violent crime. There are several possible explanations for the differences, but the best one is that people rightly differentiate between their perceptions of crime in their own neighborhoods and their perceptions of crime in the Nation as a whole. Unfailingly, citizens are both more pessimistic and less well-informed about crime in general than they are about crime in their own neighborhoods.* Their general impressions about crime are largely inflated, as are their assumptions about increases in the occurrence of crime nationwide. The point is, however, that people are not likely to worry about generalities. Thus, because people view crime as a problem which occurs mostly in someone else's neighborhood,** they are not overly worried about it on a day-to-day basis. In fact, over three-quarters of Ohio's people seldom (58%) or never (18%) worry about violent crime.

Table 2 illustrates the extent to which worry about crime affects selected sub-groups within Ohio. Again, the most interesting response is probably to be found in the senior citizen category, although worry among blacks about violent crime is also noteworthy.

TABLE 2
CRIME ANXIETY AMONG SELECTED SUBGROUPS

| | % Who Worry About Violent Crime Often Or Very Often | % Who Worry About Property Crime Often Or Very Often |
|--|---|--|
| -Senior Citizens | 24% | 30% |
| -Former Crime Victims | 39% | 54% |
| -Blacks | 35% | 35% |
| -Those Restricting Activities for Fear of Crime | 39% | 58% |
| -State Average | 23% | 36% |

The conclusion to be drawn from the fear-of-crime responses in the survey is not that crime is only of minor concern to Ohioans. National surveys continue to demonstrate that crime is a major social concern of citizens in all parts of the Nation. What can be concluded, however, is that Ohioans' concerns tend to be broad-based, that citizens are not afflicted by the hysteria and siege mentality often attributed to them, and that they have neither significantly altered their lifestyles nor lost confidence in the safety of their neighborhood environments.

* See Ohio Citizen Attitudes Concerning Crime and Criminal Justice, Third Edition, 1982. Ohio Department of Development (pages 11 and 39-43).

** See page 8 of this report.

CRIME PERCEPTIONS

The Neighborhood

The most significant and consistently documented finding to emerge from four years of citizen attitude testing in Ohio is what might be called the "neighborhood" factor. Simply put, that factor asserts that people are more negative about crime in general than they are about crime in their own neighborhoods, and that their attitudes about the administration of criminal justice are more negative where they have to rely upon second-hand sources of information rather than personal experiences with the criminal justice system. This finding has been thoroughly discussed in the last two Citizen Attitude studies,* For example, it was found that Ohioans have more direct, personal contact with law enforcement than the other components of the criminal justice system, and, correspondingly, that their highest confidence levels are also reserved for that component of the system. Furthermore, the relatively few people who have had criminal court experiences as jurors, witnesses, defendants and observers tend to have a higher regard for the courts than do those whose knowledge about them is limited to secondary sources of information.**

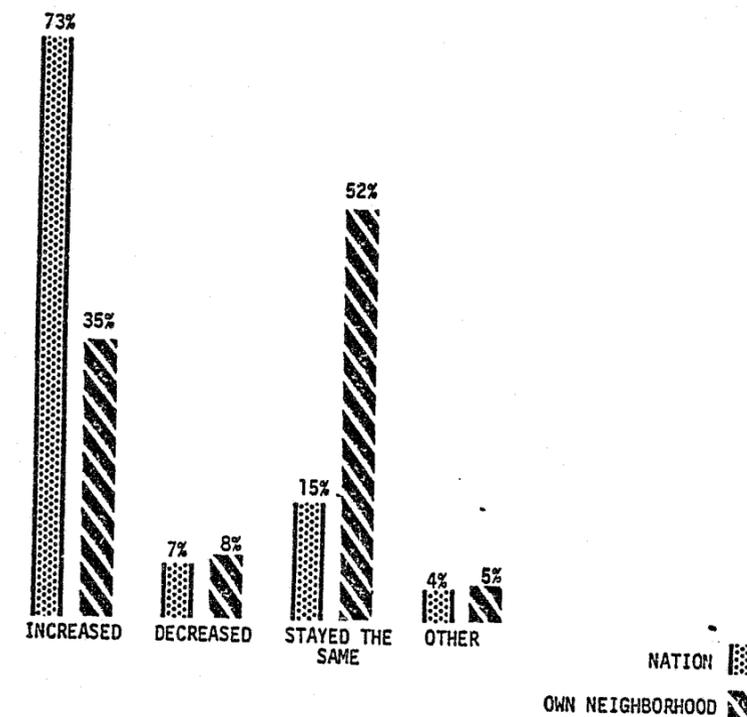
The point is particularly important since it has implications concerning where and how crime issues should be addressed and communicated. Nowhere is the concept more strongly documented than in the responses to the questions about perceived increases or decreases in crime occurrence at both the neighborhood and national levels. Figure 3 graphically illustrates the "neighborhood" influence on citizen perceptions about crime.

* See especially the National Crime Survey reports of the Bureau of Justice Statistics which have been published regularly since the early 1970s. Also of great interest in this regard is the Reactions to Crime Project: Executive Summary (Skogan, et. al., U.S. Department of Justice, Nation Institute of Justice, 1982), which dramatically documented the crime fear impact of sensationalized newspaper accounts, victimization stories discussed among friends, and other indirect sources of crime information.

** "Ohio Citizen Attitudes Concerning Crime and Criminal Justice" (Second Edition, 1980), Office of Criminal Justice Services, Ohio Department of Economic and Community Development.

FIGURE 3

OHIOANS' PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME OCCURRENCE
DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS:
OWN NEIGHBORHOOD V. THE NATION



The discrimination which takes place in citizens' minds between neighborhood crime perceptions and national crime perceptions can be explained in terms of their sources of information. Neighborhood perceptions are based on information which is more immediate, verifiable and balanced, whereas the more general (i.e., nationwide) perceptions are based on information reported secondhand and oriented toward the exception rather than the rules of crime occurrence. It is also interesting to note that the neighborhood perceptions are much more accurate than the nationwide perceptions. Both Uniform Crime Report and National Crime Survey (victimization) data, the major monitors of crime occurrence in the State and Nation, reflect a slight downward trend in crime incidence since 1980, yet 73% of the respondents continued to insist that nationwide crime had increased during that time.

The same question* was asked in 1979, and the results make for a meaningful comparison with the 1983 responses.

TABLE 3
NATIONALLY, DO YOU FEEL THAT CRIME HAS...

| | 1979 Responses | 1983 Responses |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| ... Increased | 84% | 73% |
| ... Decreased | 2% | 7% |
| ... Stayed the Same | 11% | 15% |
| ... Other | 3% | 4% |

It would appear that respondents' attitudes have moderated somewhat since the late 70's, but neither the degree of change nor the data give firm evidence regarding causes for such a change, or indicate whether the direction of that change is permanent. In contrast, the four-year changes in the "neighborhood crime" responses demonstrated greater stability, being limited to fluctuations of six percent or less.

A related question probed residents' beliefs about the sources of crimes committed in their neighborhoods. Most of the respondents resisted the temptation to blame their crime woes on outsiders.

TABLE 4
"WHO COMMITS MOST OF THE CRIME IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?"

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| People Living Here | 38% |
| Outsiders | 45% |
| Both, in Equal Numbers | 11% |
| Don't Know | 6% |
| Other | 1% |

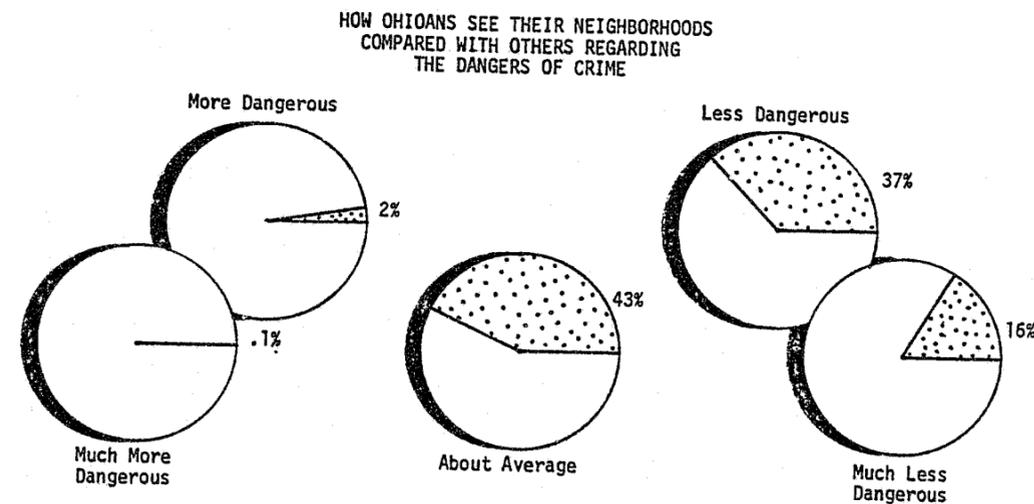
When the same question was asked in 1979, the response percentages were within four percent in each of the three main answer categories, another indication of the stability of neighborhood perceptions. In terms of sub-group perceptions, longtime residents (at the same address for three years or more) were somewhat more likely to blame outsiders for neighborhood crimes, but there was almost no difference on the basis of either home ownership or race.

A further indicator of the neighborhood factor can be seen in the responses to the question about the perceived safety of one's own neighborhood as compared to other neighborhoods in the area. An

* The wording was exactly the same except that the time frame in 1979 was one year rather than three. However, this was not likely a significant distinguishing point for most respondents.

initial expectation might be that some residents would see their own neighborhoods as less dangerous, while others would judge them as more dangerous or about the same. But Figure 4 reveals that virtually nobody believes that their neighborhood is "more dangerous" than comparable others, and that a full 50% feel they are in "less dangerous" environments.

FIGURE 4



The 1980 study found, in response to this same question, that even those in the traditional higher fear groups (females, senior citizens, blacks) were overwhelmingly convinced that their living environments were either as safe or safer than others. The point was rather forcefully underscored again this year when not one of the 65 black respondents cited their own neighborhoods as more dangerous or much more dangerous than others in the area.

As was true of several of the "crime fear" questions, the neighborhood comparison question was drawn directly from earlier National Crime Survey studies conducted throughout the 1970s. In particular, a detailed study of citizen attitudes in thirteen major metropolitan areas in the United States set the stage for many of the issues addressed in the Ohio survey series. These earlier studies are of interest both because they allow for comparison with cities outside of Ohio and because they were conducted during a time when crime was on the increase. In order to make such a comparative test, responses to the above cited question were drawn from citizens in Atlanta, Detroit and Newark (N.J.), among the Nation's most violent cities during the 1970s. And, to push the test to the extreme, the citizen results listed in Table 5 are limited to blacks living in households then with incomes of less than \$3,000 per year, perhaps the highest risk and fear groups in the country.

TABLE 5*

HOW OWN NEIGHBORHOOD COMPARES TO OTHERS:
BLACK HOUSEHOLDS WITH INCOME OF LESS THAN \$3,000 PER YEAR

| | Atlanta | Newark | Detroit |
|---------------------|---------|--------|---------|
| Much More Dangerous | 2% | 7% | 2% |
| More Dangerous | 7% | 15% | 6% |
| Average | 60% | 58% | 58% |
| Less Dangerous | 26% | 17% | 27% |
| Much Less Dangerous | 4% | 3% | 4% |

Thus, it would appear that even in the worst crime neighborhoods in some of the Nation's most violent cities, a good number of people still believe that crime problems must be worse elsewhere. Since one must, sooner or later, run out of such "elsewheres" it seems safe to conclude that most people have inflated impressions of crime seriousness in areas other than their own.

Juvenile Crime Perceptions

The highly publicized area of juvenile crime is one which Ohioans seem to understand rather well, at least with regard to the type and extent of the problems caused by juveniles. Respondents were asked the following two questions:

1. "What do you think is the most common type of crime committed by juveniles in Ohio?"
2. "What percent of all serious crime in Ohio do you think is committed by juveniles?"

* Garafalo, James. Public Opinion About Crime: The Attitudes Victims and Non-Victims in Selected Cities (Albany, New York) Criminal Justice Research Center (1977). pp. 177, 257 and 321.

TABLE 6

RANKING OF MOST COMMON TYPE OF JUVENILE CRIMES
(1=MOST COMMON 9=LEAST COMMON)

| | Rankings Based on Survey Responses | Rankings Based on Ohio Uniform Crime Report Arrest Figures* |
|------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Murder | 8 | 9 |
| Robbery | 3 | 6 |
| Rape | 7 | 8 |
| Assault | 6 | 4 |
| Arson | 9 | 7 |
| Burglary | 2 | 2 |
| Theft | 1 | 1 |
| Auto Theft | 5 | 5 |
| Vandalism | 4 | 4 |

Table 6 suggests that Ohioans have a good sense of the types of crimes in which juveniles engage most frequently, and have resisted the sometimes popular temptation to assume that most juvenile felons are violent offenders. The only exception appears to be in overestimating the occurrence of robbery. Some of this inflation is attributable to the fact that many people confuse the terms "robbery" and "burglary."

Respondents also demonstrated a rather good perception of juvenile crime proportions. In the past few years, Part I (serious) juvenile crime arrests have accounted for 25%-33% of all Ohio arrests. Table 7 reflects the percentage estimates given by the respondents.

TABLE 7

PERCEPTIONS OF JUVENILE CRIME INVOLVEMENT

| % of Serious Crime Committed by Juveniles (answer category) | % of Respondents |
|---|------------------|
| 0-10% | 7% |
| 11-20% | 13% |
| 21-30% | 17% |
| 31-40% | 16% |
| 41-50% | 13% |
| 51-60% | 8% |
| 61-70% | 3% |
| 71-80% | 2% |
| 81-90% | .5% |
| Over 90% | .2% |
| Don't Know | 19% |

Over half of the respondents who did make an actual estimate were within reasonable distance of the actual percentage given the tendency of that latter figure to fluctuate periodically.

* 1982 Ohio Uniform Crime Report Data, compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation; unpublished (now in Ohio Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Services).

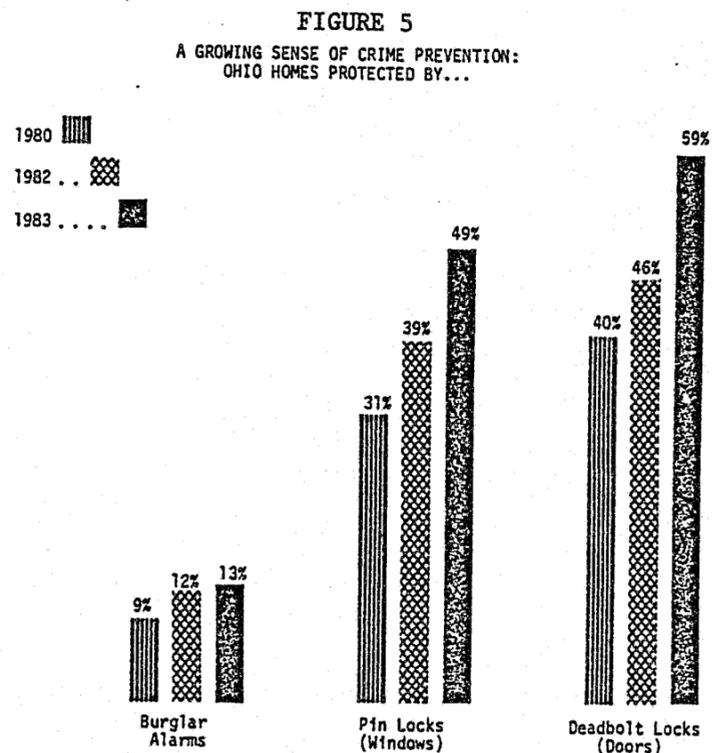
CRIME PREVENTION MEASURES AND HANDGUNS

Crime prevention consciousness continues on the rise in Ohio. Since 1979 a significant number of citizens have reported taking at least some measures to make their residences more secure during the 24 months preceding the survey.

TABLE 8
CRIME PREVENTION MEASURES IN OHIO HOMES*

| Year | Percentage "Yes" |
|------|------------------|
| 1979 | 42% |
| 1980 | 41% |
| 1982 | 48% |
| 1983 | 53% |

The survey concentrated on three specific crime prevention measures including deadbolt locks (doors), pinlocks (windows), and burglar alarms. (While it is recognized that the last of these three is not a standard, low-cost crime prevention tool in the sense of the first two, it is an indicator of the extent to which crime prevention is on the minds of Ohioans.) As reflected in Figure 5, there have been consistent and significant increases in the usage of all three measures since 1980.



* Respondents were asked if they had taken any measures to make their homes more secure. In 1980, 1982 and 1983 the time frame was the preceding 2 years, but the 1979 query was limited to the previous year.

These figures are open to differing interpretations regarding citizen attitudes about crime. For example, it could be argued that increased crime prevention means increased paranoia about crime, that these measures are evidence of movement toward a "fortress" mentality in which citizens barricade themselves and their concern for society behind the physical protection afforded by locks and alarms. Crime prevention practitioners have long been aware of the dangers of such a society--one in which citizens increasingly refuse to play their vital roles as observers, witnesses and supporters in the system--and so have striven to create an atmosphere in which citizens feel a positive sense of security rather than a sense of defensive tension about crime prevention.

The evidence from the Citizen Attitude Survey suggests that most of the State's residents have positive attitudes about crime prevention. The first indication of this comes from the responses to the crime-fear questions, discussed elsewhere in this report, which wholly fail to support the idea that people have an unreasonable fear of crime. A second indication is seen in the willingness of respondents to openly discuss crime prevention measures in their homes. Less than two percent refused to answer these questions over the phone. Thirdly, if the "fortress" mentality theory is true, it might be expected that the higher fear groups would demonstrate a greater dependency on locks and alarms. Table 9 dispels that notion.

TABLE 9
SELECTED SUBGROUPS WITH HOMES PROTECTED BY...

| | Senior Citizens | Female-Headed Households | Blacks | State Average |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------|---------------|
| ...Deadbolts | 55% | 59% | 63% | 59% |
| ...Pinlocks | 43% | 44% | 46% | 49% |
| ...Alarms | 13% | 12% | 12% | 13% |

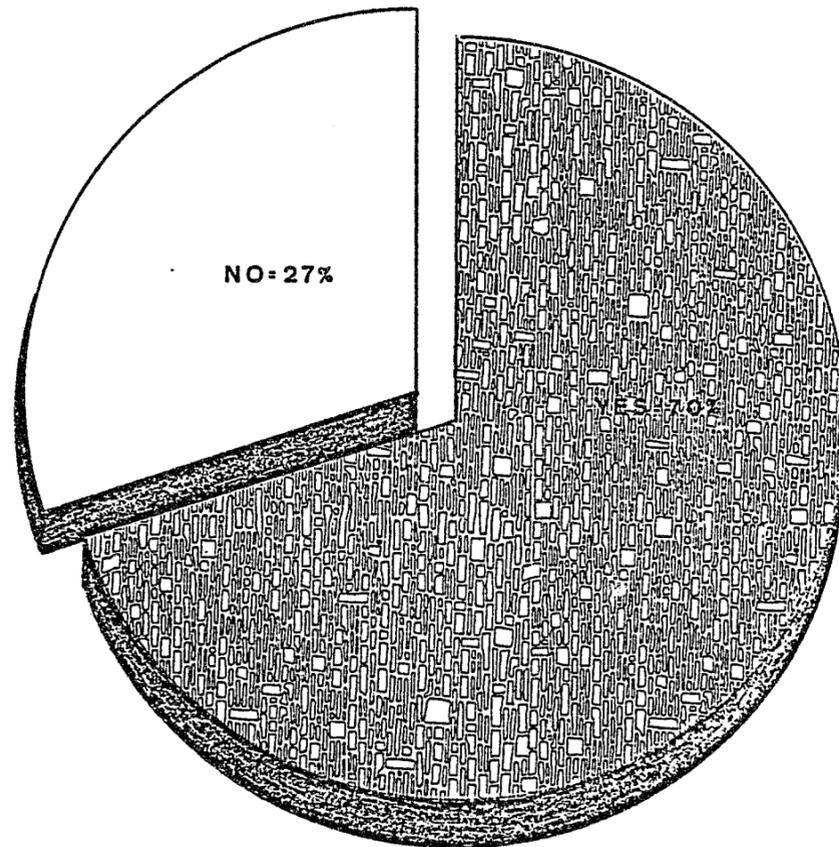
Attitudes about handgun ownership and control have been included in this section, not because handguns constitute a crime prevention measure, but because they provide at least some testimony to the range of opinion regarding self-defense. As a credibility check for the information collected last year, respondents were again asked if one or more handguns were present in their household. The question revealed handguns are to be found in 29% of all Ohio households, the exact percentage from a year ago. It is estimated that there are over two million handguns in Ohio residences.*

For the first time handgun owners were asked if they had ever received any formal training in the use of handguns. The somewhat surprising results are reflected in Figure 6.

* The 1982 study based this estimate on more detailed queries concerning the number of handguns in each household. It should be remembered that this estimate includes only residences, not businesses, places of entertainment and other places in which citizens have access to handguns.

FIGURE 6

DO OHIO'S HANDGUN OWNERS
HAVE FORMAL HANDGUN TRAINING?



The 1982 report documented that Ohio's handgun-owning population was not one that had come into existence in a panicked response to the crime problem. Almost half (44%) cited main reasons other than "protection" for their handgun ownership, and two-thirds had been owners for ten years or longer. The high percentage of owners claiming at least some formal training lends credibility to the theory that most handgun owners are responsible citizens, but also begs the question of controls to discourage ownership by a minority of people who do contribute significantly to the violent crime problem in Ohio.* In order to sound out public opinion regarding such controls, three possibilities were suggested to the respondents.

* For a profile of handgun violence in Ohio, see Fact and Fiction Concerning Crime and Criminal Justice in Ohio, Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services, Dept. of Development, 1982. p.15.

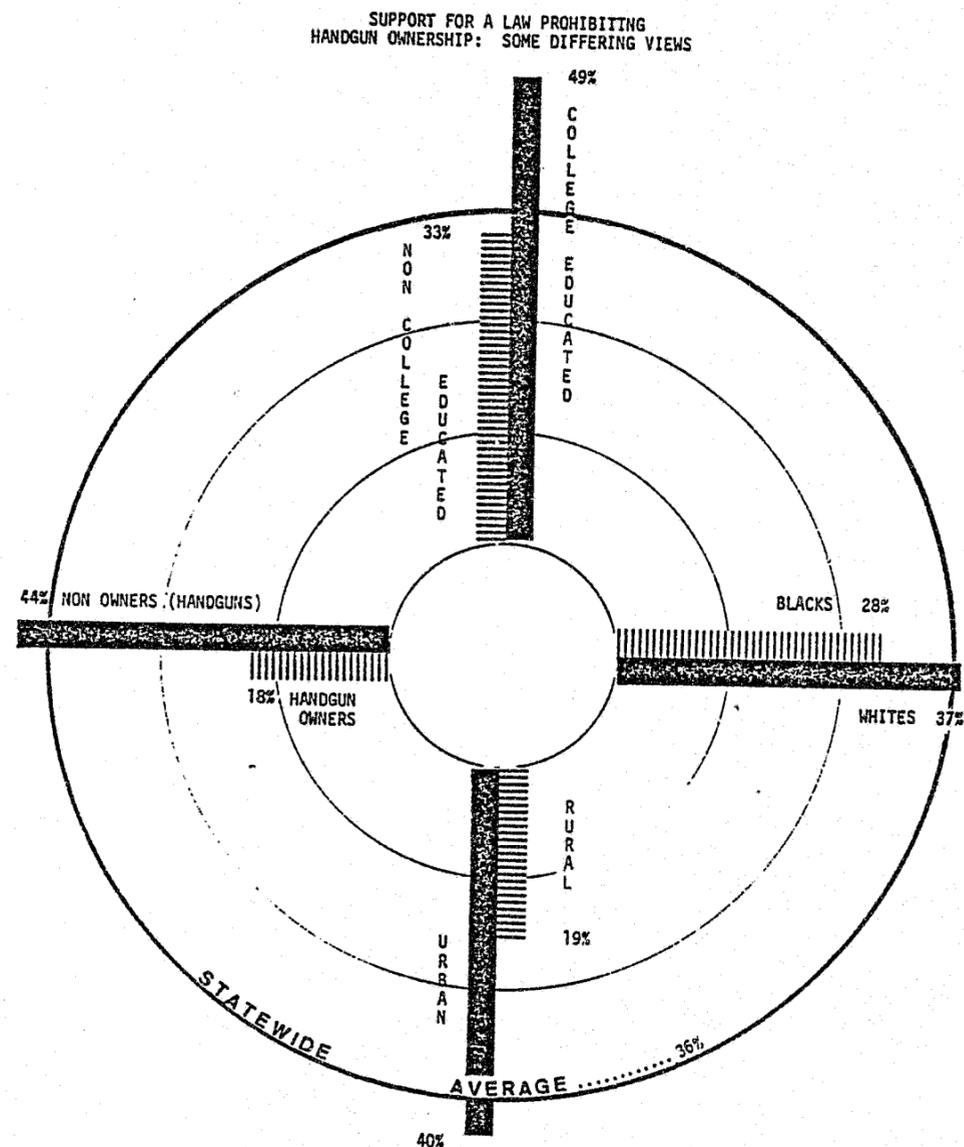
TABLE 10

SOME HANDGUN CONTROL POSSIBILITIES

| Control Action | Yes(%) | No(%) | Don't Know(%) |
|--|--------|-------|---------------|
| Forbid Handgun Ownership | 36% | 60% | 4% |
| Require a Waiting Period Before Purchase | 92% | 6% | 2% |
| Register All Handguns | 86% | 12% | 1% |

Clearly, Ohioans favor some degree of control, but that control stops short of outlawing handgun ownership. However, a closer look at the responses to the "outlaw" option indicates how some of the population subgroups divide on the issue of handgun control. Figure 7 demonstrates that support for handgun control seems strongest among those with college educations, whites, urban dwellers and, not surprisingly, non-owners of handguns.

FIGURE 7



ATTITUDES ABOUT SENTENCING

Ohioans remain somewhat critical of criminal sentencing in the State, with 61% believing that criminal sentences are "too lenient" and 56% feeling that sentences are less severe now than they were ten years ago. The vast majority (87%) also supports capital punishment, a sentencing option which has not been used for many years in Ohio. However, the 1983 survey uncovered some notable results which hint that public attitudes may be changing in this area, as reflected in Table 11.

TABLE 11
CRIMINAL SENTENCES TODAY ARE ...

| | 1983 Responses | 1979 Responses |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| ... Too Lenient | 61% | 68% |
| ... Too Harsh | 2% | 2% |
| ... About Right | 26% | 17% |
| ... Depends | 7% | 10% |
| ... Don't Know | 5% | 3% |
| ... More Severe (than 10 years ago) | 10% | 6% |
| ... Less Severe | 56% | 72% |
| ... About the Same | 25% | 16% |
| ... Don't Know | 8% | 6% |

Age is somewhat of a predictor with regard to these views, but only among the youngest Ohioans. Fifty-two percent (52%) of the 18-29 age group described criminal sentences as too lenient, with 36% satisfied with those judicial judgements. Figures for those citizens thirty and older were 65% and 21% respectively, for the same two categories. Much more significant is the difference generated by race.

TABLE 12
ATTITUDES ABOUT CRIMINAL SENTENCING:
BY RACE

| | Whites | Blacks |
|-------------|--------|--------|
| Too Lenient | 64% | 35% |
| Too Harsh | 1% | 6% |
| About Right | 24% | 42% |
| Depends | 7% | 11% |
| Don't Know | 4% | 6% |

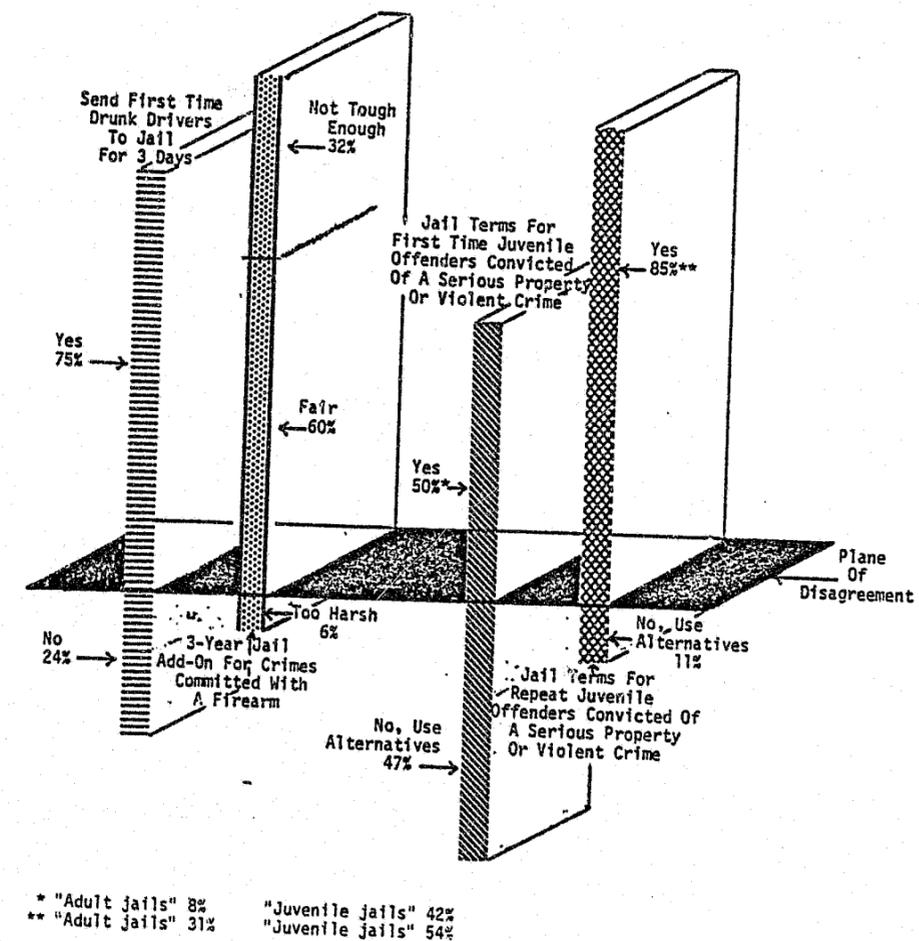
As can be seen, a plurality of black respondents felt that sentencing was fair, with slightly more than one-third judging it as too lenient. Even the combined "dissatisfaction" categories of "too lenient" and "too harsh" did not quite total the "satisfaction" response ("about right"). In dramatic contrast, whites were dissatisfied by a ratio of almost three-to-one. The findings suggest an interesting variation on the theme of racial justice within the criminal justice system.

Another indication that the seemingly critical public attitudes toward sentencing practices may be changing, or at least "soft," is found in citizen responses when presented with some actual alternatives to prison for non-violent offenders. On the whole, citizens reflect a marked acceptance of many sentencing practices which, stereotypically, are often thought of as lenient options. (see p. 20 for actual responses to these alternatives.) Interestingly, the strongest reservations about allowing offenders to avoid prison terms by paying a sum of money (fines or victim compensation) came from those households with incomes of less than \$8,000 a year.

In contrast to at least some of these findings, citizens maintain some pretty hardline attitudes regarding mandatory prison or jail terms for drunk driving and firearms-related felonies, capital punishment, and incarceration of juvenile offenders. Figure 8 captures many of these feelings.

FIGURE 8

WHO SHOULD GO TO JAIL/PRISON



Once again the under \$8,000 households and blacks provided the strongest opinions diverging from the norms. For example, 88% of the low-income respondents favored jail terms for first time drunk drivers, a figure 13% above the already overwhelmingly high state average. Among blacks, although they, too, were supportive of mandatory sentences for firearm-related felonies (78%)* and capital punishment (69%), those levels of support were significantly below those of whites (93% and 89%, respectively).

These attitudes, coupled with the those profiled earlier, hint at some confusion and misunderstanding in the public mind concerning sentencing practices and the use of alternatives to incarceration.

* This figure included both the "fair" and the "not tough enough" responses, and assumed that the latter would, at the least, include support for prison terms--the only question being that of additional lengths.

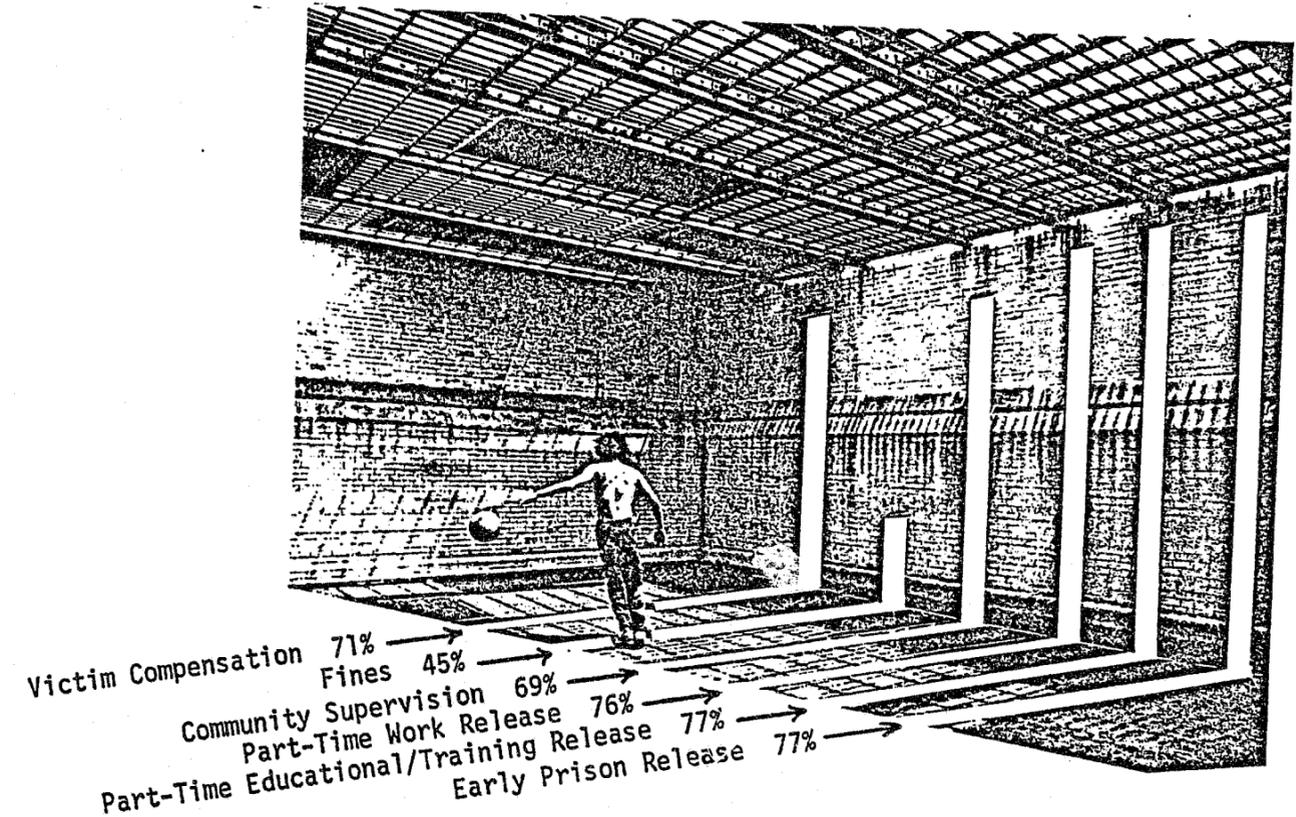
Only one in four mentioned either changing offender behavior (14%) or providing offender skills (12%). This year, however, in response to several respondents' clarification questions during the survey pre-test, a similar question was broken into two parts so as to make distinctions between first-time and repeat offenders. The results of that dichotomy, reflected in Figure 9, are revealing. Citizens, in fact, seem to have a good deal of tolerance for giving the first-time offender a second chance, with seventy-five percent (75%) choosing change of behavior* as the ideal prison purpose for this type of offender. That tolerance quickly ended, however, when the issue was raised in terms of the repeat offenders, for whom punishment (30%) and isolation from society (43%) were seen as more appropriate prison objectives.

One question, in particular, seemed to illustrate the sometimes conflicting public attitudes which can arise from an incomplete understanding of the prison system. That question posed a series of alternatives to prison and prison release measures, and asked respondents if each was acceptable or unacceptable. Based on other survey data, one would have expected all of the options to have met with the disapproval of most of the interviewees. For example, in another part of the survey, 61% of these same respondents stated their belief that criminal sentences were "too lenient," and 56% felt that those sentences were "less severe" than those being handed down ten years ago. Additionally, a plurality of the 1980 interviewees had been critical of what they perceived as too much concern for the rights of prisoners. These findings provide an interesting relief against which to measure the results profiled in Figure 10.

* The term "rehabilitation" was not used for fear that the great publicity surrounding that word might artificially bias opinion.

FIGURE 10

ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVES TO PRISON
FOR NON-VIOLENT OFFENDERS*



* Percentages represent the proportion of Survey respondents who felt the alternative was acceptable, as opposed to unacceptable.

Only the idea of "paying a fine instead of going to prison" caused citizens to balk, and even here the difference between acceptance and non-acceptance was only two percent. (The nine percent "not sure" response ensured that there was no majority opinion on the issue.) The uses of victim compensation and community supervision alternatives were overwhelmingly approved, as was early release from prisons. In a slightly different vein, the public proved warmly tolerant of part-time work and educational/training release options for offenders.

It is possible that the tremendous overcrowding problems facing Ohio's prison system, frequently called to the public's attention during the past year, have caused a moderation in citizen attitudes. But this is not entirely likely, given the continuing hard line taken by citizens regarding sentencing in general. More probable is the prospect that the alternatives to incarceration suggested in the survey forced citizens to think in specific terms of how to address the overcrowding issue which they, themselves, had identified. Taken individually, and placed in the perspective of an actual response rather than simply an emotional reaction, these alternatives appear to be more acceptable to Ohioans.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

| <u>AGE</u> | | |
|--------------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| 18-29 | 226 | 28.1% |
| 30-45 | 276 | 34.3% |
| 46-64 | 198 | 24.6% |
| 65 and older | 105 | 13.0% |
| TOTAL | 805 | 100.0% |

| <u>SEX</u> | | |
|------------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Male | 343 | 42.8% |
| Female | 459 | 57.2% |
| TOTAL | 802 | 100.0% |

| <u>RACE</u> | | |
|-------------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Black | 65 | 8.1% |
| White | 726 | 90.3% |
| Hispanic | 2 | 0.2% |
| Other | 5 | 0.6% |
| TOTAL | 798 | 99.2% |

| <u>EDUCATION</u> | | |
|---|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Eighth Grade or less | 21 | 2.6% |
| Some High School | 82 | 10.2% |
| Some High School & Vocational Training | 28 | 3.5% |
| High School Graduate | 311 | 38.7% |
| High School Graduate & Vocational Training | 42 | 5.2% |
| Some College | 167 | 20.8% |
| College Degree | 101 | 12.6% |
| Postgraduate Work | 18 | 2.2% |
| Postgraduate Degree | 31 | 3.9% |
| TOTAL | 801 | 99.7% |

| <u>MARITAL STATUS</u> | | |
|-----------------------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Married | 517 | 64.3% |
| Widowed | 66 | 8.2% |
| Divorced | 89 | 11.1% |
| Separated | 6 | 0.7% |
| Never Married | 123 | 15.3% |
| TOTAL | 801 | 99.6% |

| <u>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</u> | | |
|--------------------------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Working Full Time | 405 | 50.3% |
| Working Part Time | 71 | 8.8% |
| Ill-Vacation-Strike | 8 | 1.0% |
| Unemployed | 31 | 3.9% |
| Disabled | 9 | 1.1% |
| Retired | 73 | 9.1% |
| In School | 13 | 1.6% |
| Keeping House | 175 | 21.7% |
| Other | 16 | 2.0% |
| TOTAL | 801 | 99.5% |

| <u>OCCUPATION</u> | | |
|--------------------------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Executive | 30 | 3.7% |
| Managers | 95 | 11.8% |
| Administrative Personnel | 108 | 13.4% |
| Clerical | 207 | 25.7% |
| Skilled Labor | 108 | 13.4% |
| Semi-Skilled | 134 | 16.6% |
| Unskilled | 44 | 5.5% |
| Other | 77 | 9.6% |
| TOTAL | 803 | 99.7% |

| <u>INCOME LEVEL</u> | | |
|---------------------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Under \$8,000 | 66 | 8.2% |
| \$8,000 -11,999 | 65 | 8.1% |
| \$12,000-15,999 | 69 | 8.6% |
| \$16,000-19,999 | 90 | 11.2% |
| \$20,000-25,000 | 121 | 15.1% |
| More than \$25,000 | 229 | 28.5% |
| Don't Know | 69 | 8.6% |
| Refused | 94 | 11.7% |
| TOTAL | 803 | 100.0% |

| <u>OWN OR RENT HOME</u> | | |
|-------------------------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Own | 563 | 70.2% |
| Rent | 215 | 26.8% |
| Other | 24 | 3.0% |
| TOTAL | 802 | 100.0% |

| <u>YEARS AT PRESENT ADDRESS</u> | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Less than 1 | 85 | 10.6% |
| 1-3 | 159 | 19.8% |
| 4-10 | 254 | 31.6% |
| 11-20 | 164 | 20.4% |
| More than 20 | 125 | 15.5% |
| Refused | 16 | 2.0% |
| TOTAL | 803 | 99.9% |

| <u>TYPE OF DWELLING</u> | | |
|-------------------------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Single Family | 605 | 75.3% |
| Two-Family | 31 | 3.9% |
| Apartment | 101 | 12.6% |
| Townhouse | 23 | 2.9% |
| Hotel | 3 | .4% |
| Other | 34 | 4.2% |
| TOTAL | 797 | 99.3% |

| <u>NUMBER OF ADULTS IN HOUSEHOLDS</u> | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| One | 188 | 23.5% |
| Two | 469 | 58.6% |
| Three | 85 | 10.6% |
| Four | 43 | 5.4% |
| Five | 12 | 1.5% |
| Six | 2 | .2% |
| Nine | 2 | .2% |
| TOTAL | 801 | 100.0% |

NUMBER OF MALE ADULTS IN HOUSEHOLD

| | Number | Percent |
|-------|--------|---------|
| Zero | 147 | 18.3% |
| One | 558 | 69.3% |
| Two | 76 | 9.4% |
| Three | 20 | 2.5% |
| Four | 3 | .4% |
| Nine | 1 | .1% |
| TOTAL | 805 | 100.0% |

VICTIM OF A CRIME IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

| | Number | Percent |
|-------|--------|---------|
| Yes | 130 | 16.2% |
| No | 674 | 83.8% |
| TOTAL | 804 | 100.0% |

TYPE OF CRIME
(relative to previous question)

| | Number | Percent |
|---------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Robbery | 21 | 16.4% |
| Assault | 11 | 8.6% |
| Burglary | 26 | 20.3% |
| Auto Theft | 8 | 6.3% |
| Theft | 35 | 27.3% |
| Purse Snatch | 4 | 3.1% |
| Other | 23 | 18.0% |
| Not Applicable (answered no) | 677 | |
| TOTAL | 805 | 100.0% |

SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY COUNTY

| <u>COUNTY</u> | <u>NUMBER SURVEYED</u> |
|---------------|------------------------|
| Adams | 3 |
| Allen | 4 |
| Ashland | 5 |
| Ashtabula | 4 |
| Athens | 4 |
| Auglaize | 3 |
| Belmont | 8 |
| Brown | 3 |
| Butler | 15 |
| Carroll | 3 |
| Champaign | 2 |
| Clark | 16 |
| Clermont | 7 |
| Columbiana | 13 |
| Crawford | 4 |
| Cuyahoga | 115 |
| Darke | 5 |
| Defiance | 4 |
| Delaware | 3 |
| Erie | 5 |
| Fairfield | 7 |
| Fayette | 2 |
| Franklin | 68 |
| Fulton | 1 |
| Gallia | 2 |
| Geauga | 7 |
| Greene | 10 |
| Guernsey | 1 |
| Hamilton | 72 |
| Hancock | 6 |
| Hardin | 1 |
| Harrison | 2 |
| Highland | 3 |
| Hocking | 2 |
| Holmes | 2 |
| Huron | 7 |
| Jackson | 2 |
| Jefferson | 11 |
| Knox | 7 |
| Lake | 7 |
| Lawrence | 3 |
| Licking | 5 |
| Logan | 1 |
| Lorain | 17 |
| Lucas | 45 |
| Madison | 3 |
| Mahoning | 23 |
| Marion | 4 |
| Medina | 13 |
| Meigs | 1 |
| Mercer | 3 |

| <u>COUNTY</u> | <u>NUMBER SURVEYED</u> |
|---------------|------------------------|
| Miami | 10 |
| Montgomery | 42 |
| Morrow | 1 |
| Muskingum | 3 |
| Ottawa | 4 |
| Paulding | 1 |
| Perry | 2 |
| Pickaway | 1 |
| Pike | 1 |
| Portage | 13 |
| Preble | 4 |
| Putnam | 1 |
| Richland | 7 |
| Ross | 4 |
| Sandusky | 3 |
| Scioto | 4 |
| Seneca | 7 |
| Shelby | 4 |
| Stark | 35 |
| Summit | 38 |
| Trumbull | 11 |
| Tuscarawas | 5 |
| Union | 2 |
| Van Wert | 1 |
| Warren | 5 |
| Washington | 4 |
| Wayne | 7 |
| Williams | 2 |
| Wood | 10 |
| Wyandot | 2 |
| Missing | 2 |
| TOTAL 82 | 800 |

NOTE: Small discrepancies in these tables (less than 1%) may exist due to incompleting interviews, illegitimate answers, changed answers, etc. Six counties are not listed in this table because the random selection process generated no phone numbers from those counties.

OTHER SAC PUBLICATIONS

March 1983

Use of Force By Ohio Peace Officers. An analysis of the use of force by Ohio law enforcers during the performance of routine patrol work. Examined are personal defense tactics as well as non-lethal and lethal force.

March 1983

The Ohio Statistical Analysis Center: A User's Profile. This administrative report highlights SAC's setting and function in Ohio government, the federal SAC network, and the field of criminal justice. It profiles SAC's structure, research priorities, information users, and similarities to other state and territorial SACs.

March 1983

OCJS Research Requests and Responses: An Analysis. An analysis of 346 research data requests received and responded to by SAC in 1982, as well as the nearly 1,000 requests received to date, by type and source of request.

Spring 1983

The following series of eight reports are modular summaries, each about 40 pages in length, profiling the results from each of the jurisdiction levels (based on populations) represented in 1981-82 Ohio Law Enforcement Task Analysis Survey. These reports highlight the frequency of task performance, equipment usage, physical activities, as well as other facets of the peace officer's job. Also included are supervisors' assessments of importance and learning difficulty.

Law Enforcement In Ohio Cities Serving Over 100,000 People: A Task Analysis.

Law Enforcement In Ohio Cities Serving 25,000-100,000 People: A Task Analysis.

Law Enforcement In Ohio Cities Serving 10,000-25,000 People: A Task Analysis.

Law Enforcement In Ohio Municipalities Serving 2,500-10,000 People: A Task Analysis.

Law Enforcement In Ohio Municipalities Serving Under 2,500 People: A Task Analysis

Law Enforcement In Ohio Counties Serving Over 250,000 People: A Task Analysis.

Law Enforcement In Ohio Counties Serving 100,000-250,000 People: A Task Analysis.

Law Enforcement In Ohio Counties Serving Under 100,000 People: A Task Analysis.

November 1982 Survey of Ohio Citizen Attitudes Concerning Crime and Criminal Justice. The third annual report of this series, this study focusing on attitudes toward law enforcement officers, public crime-fear levels, handgun ownership, and the informational resources which mold public opinion in this area.

October 1982 Peace Officers Task Analysis: 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 sheriffs' 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.

END