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NEW WESTMINSTER

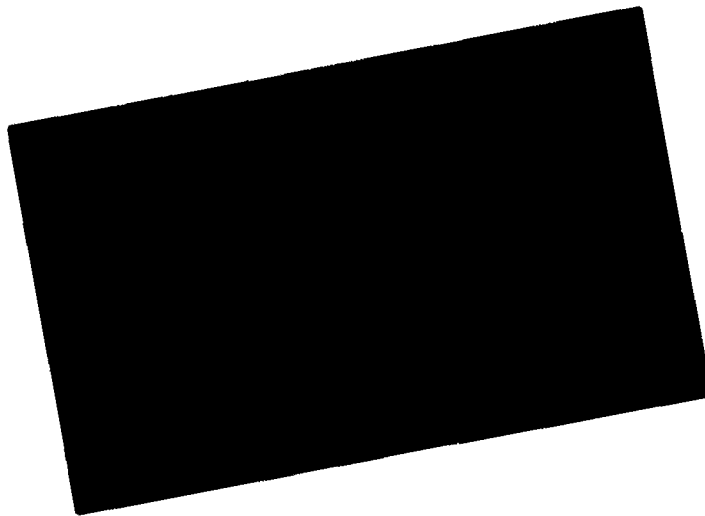
PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME AND  
THE POLICE: FINDINGS OF  
THE CANADIAN URBAN  
VICTIMIZATION SURVEY,  
1979 AND 1982

NO. 1987-14

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Resource de documentation  
Centre sur les victimes  
OTTAWA, Canada K1A 0P8



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Jacques de Verteuil  
Fauzia Gardezi  
and  
Dwight Kellett

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NEW WESTMINSTER

PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME AND  
THE POLICE: FINDINGS OF  
THE CANADIAN URBAN  
VICTIMIZATION SURVEY,  
1979 AND 1982

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This Working Paper was prepared by the Statistics Division of the  
Solicitor General. The ideas and opinions in it do not  
necessarily reflect the views of the Ministry.

Ce document de travail est disponible en français.

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## INTRODUCTION

This report further specifies the findings of the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey (1982)<sup>1</sup> for Greater Vancouver and in particular for New Westminster, one of the municipalities in the Greater Vancouver area. Findings of the Greater Vancouver Victimization Survey (1979) are also incorporated where appropriate.

Although victimization rates and reporting patterns (by area where the victims resided) are presented, the emphasis of the report is on residents' concern and fear of crime, and on the perceptions of residents toward their police and the criminal justice system. These data can contribute to the overall development and management of police and crime prevention priorities and to the development of baseline data for the evaluation of changing policing, crime prevention and victims assistance strategies.

## DEFINITIONS AND LIMITATIONS

### Categories of Crime

Victimization surveys can give us information about most, but not all types of crimes which are of major concern to the general public. Crimes such as murder, kidnapping, and

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(1) The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey (CUVS) was conducted in 1982 in seven major urban centres: Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax-Dartmouth and St. John's. The seven-city findings have been published in a series of Bulletin available from the Ministry of the Solicitor General. User Report No. 1984-45 provides preliminary findings for Greater Vancouver in the context of the seven-city aggregate. User Report No. 1984-54 provides highlights of the 1979 Greater Vancouver Victimization Survey (GVVS).

"victimless crimes" cannot be captured using survey techniques, and were therefore excluded. Residences without telephones were excluded from the survey as were residents of institutions such as hospitals, prisons and psychiatric centres. Crimes against businesses were also excluded.

The eight categories of crimes included in this survey are: sexual assault, robbery, assault, breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft, theft of household property, theft of personal property and vandalism. These offences are ranked in descending order of seriousness.

1. Sexual assault includes rape, attempted rape, molesting or attempting molestation, and is considered the most serious crime.
2. Robbery occurs if something is taken and the offender has a weapon or there is threat or an attack. The presence of a weapon is assumed to imply a threat. Attempted robberies are also included in this offence category.
3. Assault involves the presence of a weapon or an attack or threat. Assault incidents may range from face-to-face verbal threats to an attack with extensive injuries.
4. Break and enter occurs if a dwelling is entered by someone who has no right to be there. "No right to be there" differentiates, for example, between a workman who is in a dwelling with the permission of the owner and steals something, and someone illegally entering the dwelling to take property. The latter would be classified as a break and

enter as are attempts to enter a dwelling if there is some evidence of force or knowledge of how the person tried to get in.

5. Motor vehicle theft involves the theft or attempted theft of a car, truck, van, motorcycle or other motor vehicle.
6. Theft or attempted theft of household property.
7. Theft or attempted theft of money or other personal property (not household property).
8. Vandalism occurs if property is damaged but not taken.

Incidents which involved the commission of several different criminal acts appear in the tables only once, according to the most serious component of the event. Thus for example, if sexual assault, theft of money and vandalism all occurred at the same time, the incident would be classified in these tables as sexual assault. An incident would be classified as vandalism (least serious on the hierarchy) only if no other crime which is higher on the seriousness scale occurred at the same time.

#### Sampling

The sampling method employed by the CUVS and the GVVS was to randomly select households using the list of working telephone numbers that represent all available households. The result of this method was a sample of about 10,000 households in the Greater Vancouver area, about 400 of which were in New Westminster. In presenting the data for the New Westminster area one must assume that the responding households in that area are also statistically representative of all households in that municipality.



The sample size in New Westminster is sufficient to produce binary responses accurate to within 5%, 19 times out of 20 (i.e. the 95% confidence interval). We are confident, therefore, that the responses to the questions on attitudes and perceptions do in fact reflect the views of New Westminster residents.

Because very large samples are required to uncover sufficient incidents of victimizations to produce reliable estimates of the number of certain types of crime, the victimization rates for residents of New Westminster should be interpreted with caution. The confidence intervals for these rates are between 25% and 50% of the estimates, 19 times out of 20.

#### **VICTIMIZATION RATES**

Estimated victimization rates per 1,000 population in New Westminster and in Greater Vancouver are presented in Table 1. Victimization rates were estimated according to the number of residents in the area aged 16 or older who were victimized, divided by the total population aged 16 or older in that area. Victimizations do not necessarily occur in the area in which the victim resides and the rates presented in Table 1 are based on the place of residence of the victim, not the area in which the victimization occurred. As seen in the following table, it was sometimes not possible to make statistically accurate estimates because of the low number of cases found in an area.

Table 1 shows that victimization rates for residents of New Westminster do not appear to differ substantially from those for residents of Greater Vancouver for most categories of offences. For violent crimes, however, New Westminster residents

did appear to have higher victimization rates. For residents of Greater Vancouver, violent victimizations occurred at a rate of 90 per 1,000 persons in 1979 and 117 per 1,000 persons in 1982, whereas, for residents of New Westminster, violent victimizations occurred at a rate of 149 per 1,000 persons in 1979 and 147 per 1,000 persons in 1982. While the increase in rates from 1979 to 1982 for Greater Vancouver area residents was statistically significant, they remained stable in New Westminster.

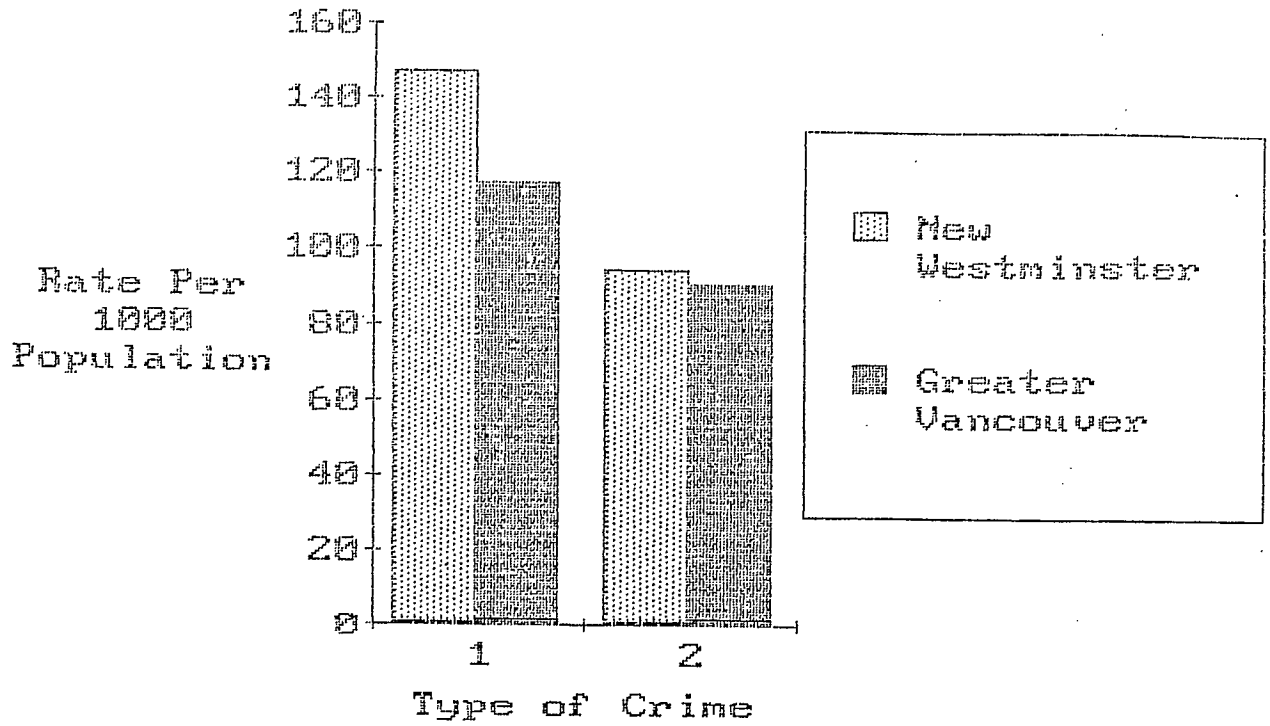
**TABLE 1**  
**Estimated Victimization Rates Per Thousand**  
**Population 1979 and 1982 and Significance of Change**

	NEW WESTMINSTER		GREATER VANCOUVER	
	1979	1982	1979	1982
<u>Personal Offences</u>				
Sexual Assault	**	**	3	4
Robbery	**	**	12	13
Assault	119	122	74	100+
Total Violent	149	147	90	117+
Personal Theft	76	94	64	91+
<u>Household Offences</u>				
Break and Enter	72	118	88	101+
Motor Vehicle Theft	**	**	18	22
Household Theft	172	196	170	213+
Vandalism	94	159+	103	122+
Total Household	348	479+	378	458+

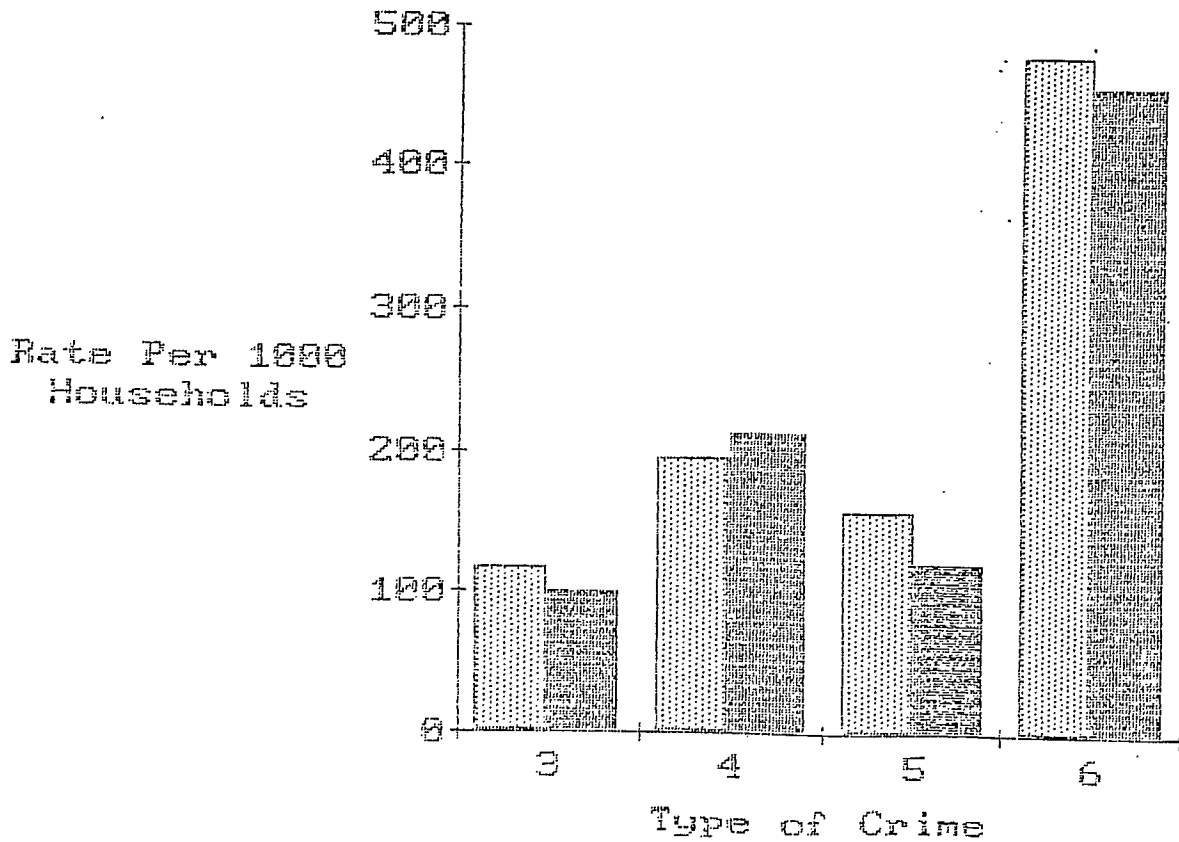
+ The difference between the two years is statistically significant at the .05 level.

\*\* The actual count was too low to make statistically reliable population estimates.

FIGURE 1  
VICTIMIZATION (CUVS, 1982)



- 1 VIOLENT CRIME
- 2 PERSONAL THEFT
- 3 BREAK AND ENTER
- 4 HOUSEHOLD THEFT
- 5 VANDALISM
- 6 TOTAL HOUSEHOLD



## REPORTING PATTERNS

Figure 2 shows the proportion of incidents reported to the police by type of incident for residents of Greater Vancouver. Data on the reporting of offences by category of offence is not shown for New Westminister as there were too few respondents in this municipality to permit such detailed analysis. Moreover, there appeared to be no difference between the proportion of all incidents reported to the police by residents of New Westminister (see Figure 3) and that by residents of Greater Vancouver.

FIGURE 2

### PROPORTION OF INCIDENTS REPORTED TO THE POLICE (GREATER VANCOUVER 1979, 1982)

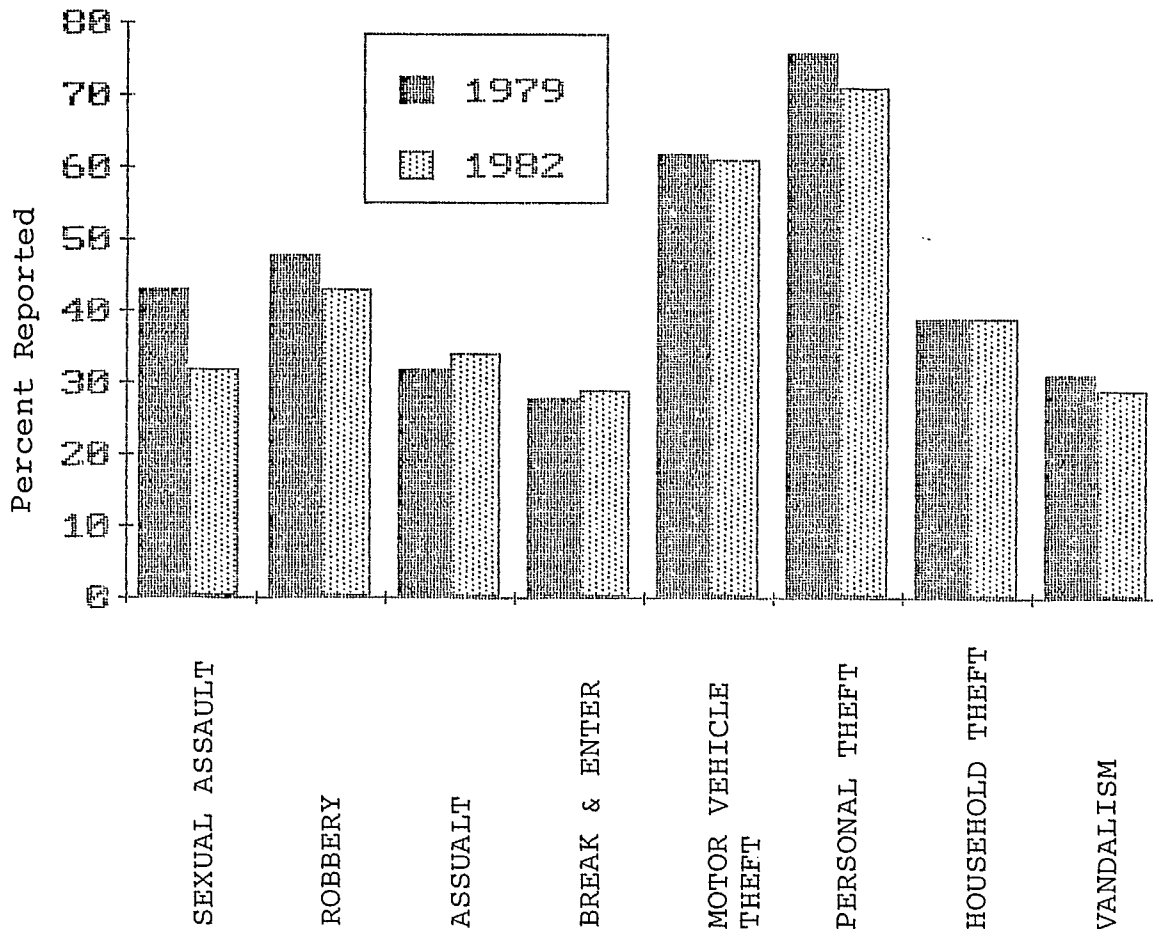
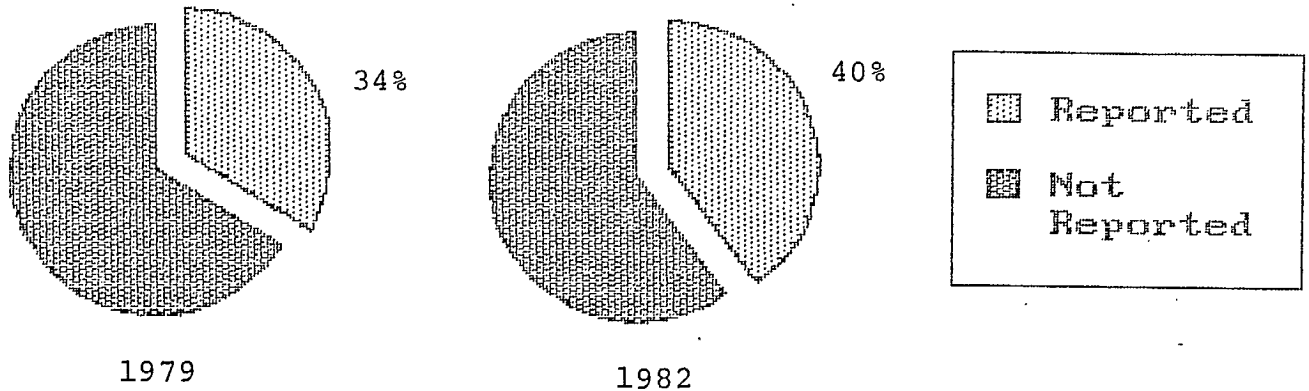


FIGURE 3

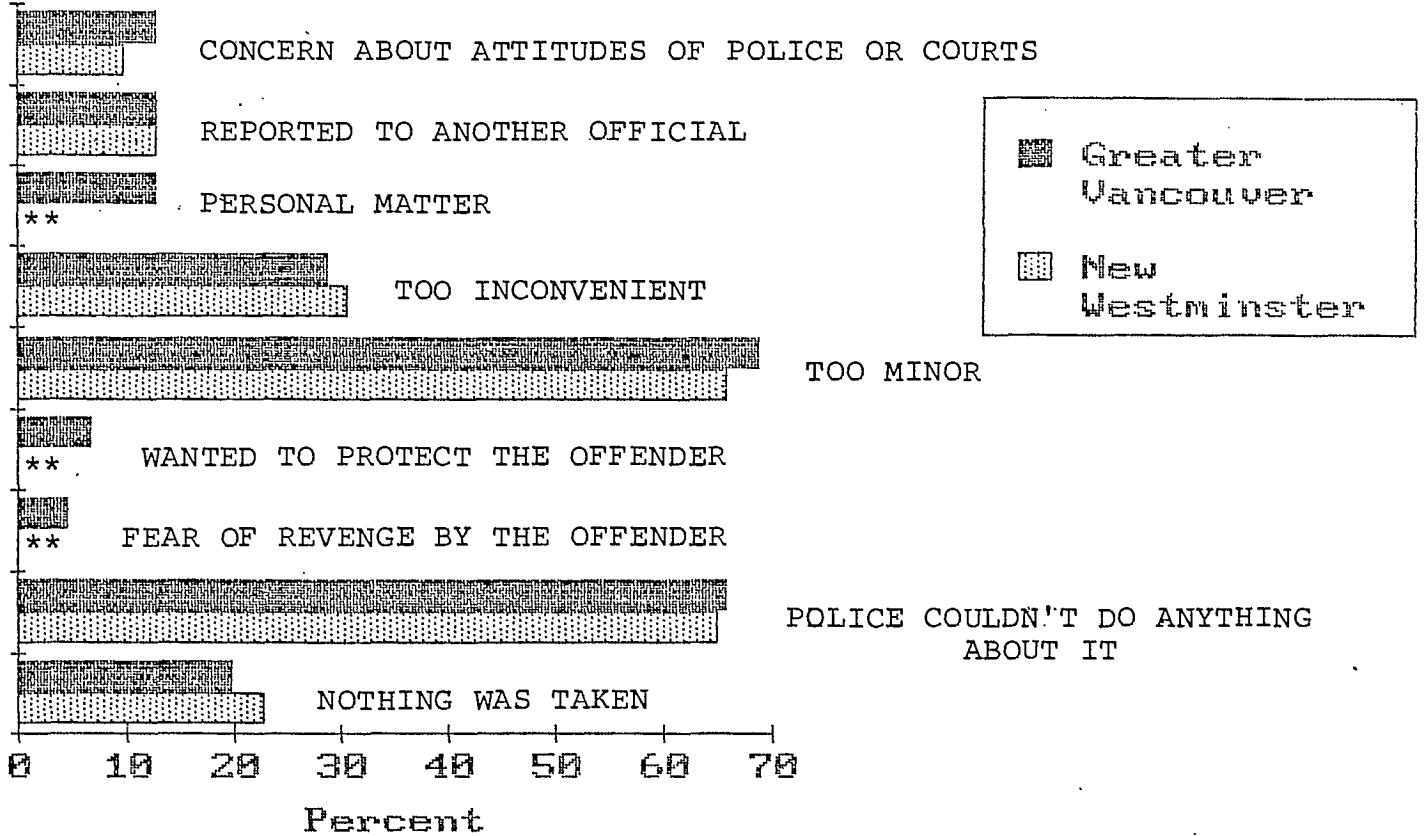
PROPORTION OF ALL INCIDENTS  
REPORTED TO THE POLICE (NEW  
WESTMINSTER 1979, 1982)



Reasons given for not reporting incidents to the police by victims residing in New Westminster are very similar to those given by victims residing in Greater Vancouver (see Figure 4). These findings are consistent with those of the CUVS in the other six cities surveyed (see Bulletin series). The most common reasons given for not reporting an offence to the police were that the incident was considered to be "too minor" and that "the police couldn't do anything about it".

FIGURE 4

REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING INCIDENTS TO THE POLICE (1982)

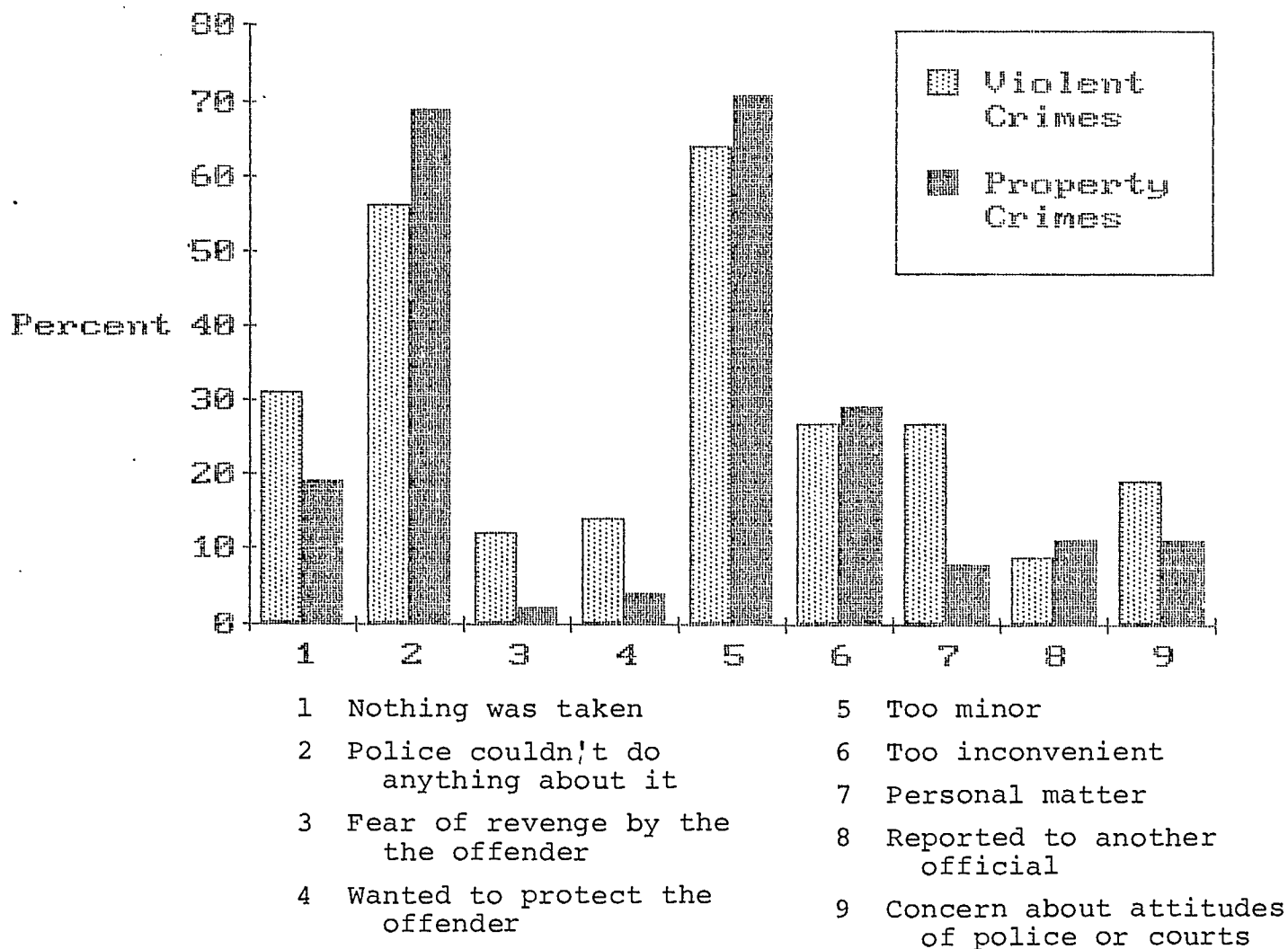


\*\* The actual count was too low to make statistically reliable population estimates.

Figure 5 details the reasons given by residents of Greater Vancouver for not reporting violent and property offences. Once again, because of the small number of respondents, data are not presented for New Westminster. However, while there were too few respondents in New Westminster to permit analysis of these data by type of crime, Figure 4 shows that there do not appear to be any differences between residents of New Westminster and residents of Greater Vancouver in reasons for not reporting all types of crime.

While the two most common reasons given for not reporting both violent and property offences to the police were that victims perceived the incident to be "too minor" and that the "police couldn't do anything about it". Victims of violent crime were more likely than were victims of property crime to perceive the incident to be a personal matter, to fear revenge by the offender, to want to protect the offender, and to express concern about the attitudes of police or courts toward the incident.

FIGURE 5  
REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING INCIDENT  
TO POLICE BY CATEGORY OF OFFENCE  
(GREATER VANCOUVER 1982)





## PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME

As shown in Table 2, residents' perceptions of crime trends over the past two years in their own neighbourhood are very similar for both New Westminster and Greater Vancouver. Approximately one half of residents in both areas believed that it had remained the same.

Table 3 shows that most residents believed that there was little crime in their neighbourhood. However, it appears that the proportion of residents of New Westminster who believed that their area had an average or high amount of crime may have increased from 1979 to 1982 (see Figure 6). Also, in 1982, New Westminster residents were more likely than were their Greater Vancouver counterparts to state that their neighbourhoods had an average or high amount of crime.

TABLE 2

Residents' Perceptions of Crime Trends Over Past Two Years  
in own Neighbourhood

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

CRIME CHANGE	1 9 7 9			1 9 8 2		
	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP
<b>NEW WESTMINSTER</b>						
Increased	17	28*	21	32	35	33
Decreased	4*	**	5*	**	**	3*
Remained the same	61	50	57	52	47	49
Don't Know	17	15	17	13	15*	14
<b>GREATER VANCOUVER</b>						
Increased	19	30	23	27	36	31
Decreased	7	7	7	4	5	4
Remained the same	58	49	55	55	48	51
Don't Know	15	13	14	15	12	14

\* The actual count was low (11 to 20), therefore caution should be exercised when interpreting this percentage.

\*\* The actual count was too low to make statistically reliable population estimates.

TABLE 3

**Residents' Perceptions of the Level of Crime  
in Own Neighbourhood**

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

AMOUNT OF CRIME	1 9 7 9			1 9 8 2		
	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP
<b>NEW WESTMINSTER</b>						
High	6*	13	9	9	28	17
Average	25	42	31	36	39	38
Low	60	38	52	47	28	39
Don't Know	9	7*	8*	7*	**	6
<b>GREATER VANCOUVER</b>						
High	7	15	10	8	17	11
Average	28	34	30	30	38	33
Low	58	46	54	55	42	50
Don't Know	7	4	6	7	4	6

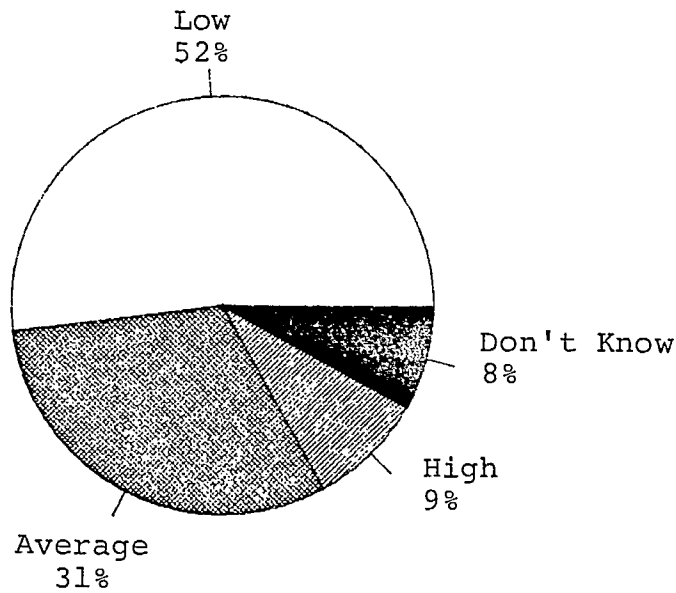
\* The actual count was low (11 to 20), therefore caution should be exercised when interpreting this percentage.

\*\* The actual count was too low to make statistically reliable population estimates.

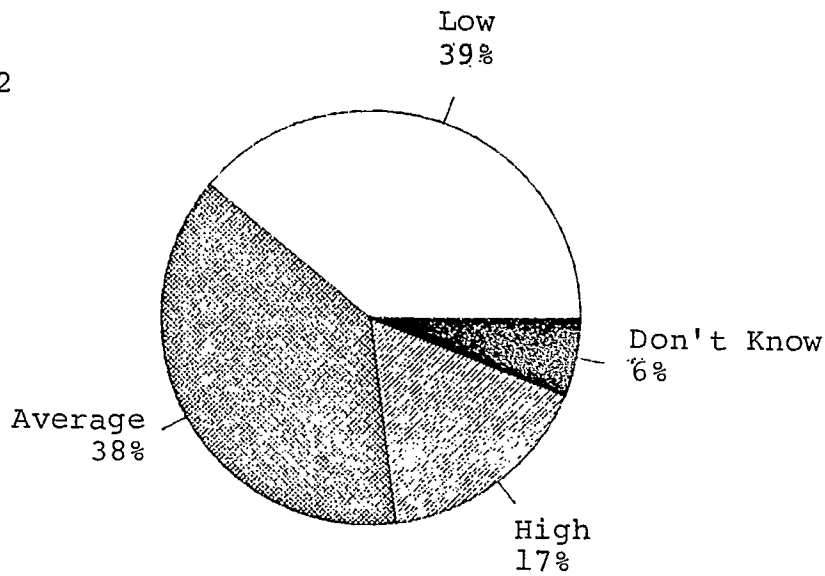
FIGURE 6

RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE  
LEVEL OF CRIME IN OWN  
NEIGHBOURHOOD (NEW WESTMINSTER  
1979, 1982)

1979



1982



When asked to compare the amount of crime in their neighbourhood with that in other areas, the majority of residents in both New Westminster and Greater Vancouver believed that there was less crime in their own neighbourhood (see Table 4). Table 5 shows that most residents in both New Westminster and in Greater Vancouver believed that crime was not a serious problem in their own neighbourhood. However, there appears to have been a slight increase from 1979 to 1982 in the proportion of residents who believed that there was a serious crime problem in their own neighbourhood.

These findings are consistent with those from the National Crime Survey (NCS) in the U.S. which show that respondents have a strong tendency to hold fear and concern with crime at a distance; to express that crime is rising rapidly in the country, less in their own city and is stable in their own neighbourhoods.

TABLE 4

Residents' Perceptions of the Level of Crime  
In Own Neighbourhood in Comparison with Others

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

AMOUNT OF CRIME	1 9 7 9			1 9 8 2		
	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP
<b>NEW WESTMINSTER</b>						
More	4*	8*	6	**	14	8
Same	16	25	19	19	24	21
Less	73	62	68	71	58	65
Don't Know	7	**	7	8*	**	6*
<b>GREATER VANCOUVER</b>						
More	5	8	6	3	7	7
Same	20	20	20	15	19	19
Less	69	66	67	76	71	67
Don't Know	7	6	6	7	4	7

\* The actual count was low (11 to 20), therefore caution should be exercised when interpreting this percentage.

\*\* The actual count was too low to make statistically reliable population estimates.

TABLE 5

Residents' Perceptions of Crime Problem in Own Neighbourhood

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

AMOUNT OF CRIME	NON VICTIM	1 9 7 9		NON VICTIM	1 9 8 2	
		VICTIM	POP		VICTIM	POP
<b>NEW WESTMINSTER</b>						
Serious	8	26	14	17	33	24
Not Serious	88	69	81	77	63	71
Don't Know	4*	**	4	6*	**	5
<b>GREATER VANCOUVER</b>						
Serious	11	22	15	17	28	21
Not Serious	85	74	81	77	68	74
Don't Know	3	3	3	6	4	5

\* The actual count was low (11 to 20), therefore caution should be exercised when interpreting this percentage.

\*\* The actual count was too low to make statistically reliable population estimates.

Table 6 and Figure 7 show that the majority of residents of Greater Vancouver and New Westminster in particular felt safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark. Consistent with the findings from other research females were much more likely to express fear for their personal safety than were men (Figure 8).

**TABLE 6**  
**Residents' Feelings of Safety while Walking Alone After Dark**  
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

	1 9 7 9			1 9 8 2		
	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP
<b>NEW WESTMINSTER</b>						
Safe	58	67	61	58	62	60
Unsafe	42	33	39	41	37	39
<b>GREATER VANCOUVER</b>						
Safe	65	68	66	66	63	63
Unsafe	35	32	34	34	37	37



FIGURE 7  
FEAR OF CRIME IN NEW WESTMINSTER  
(1982)

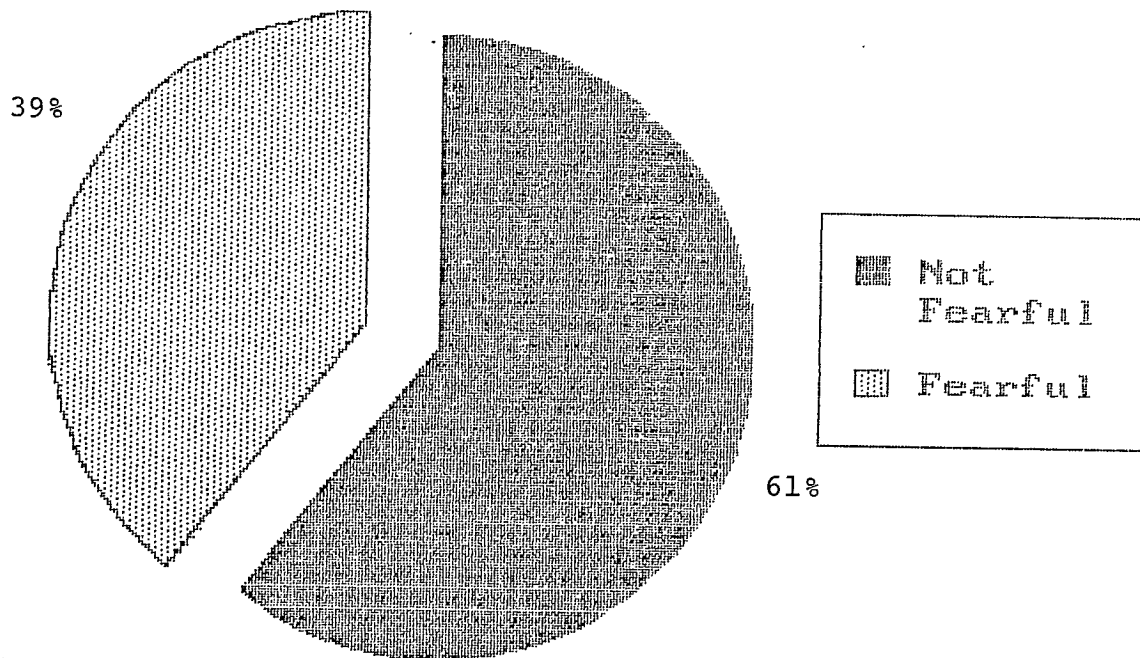
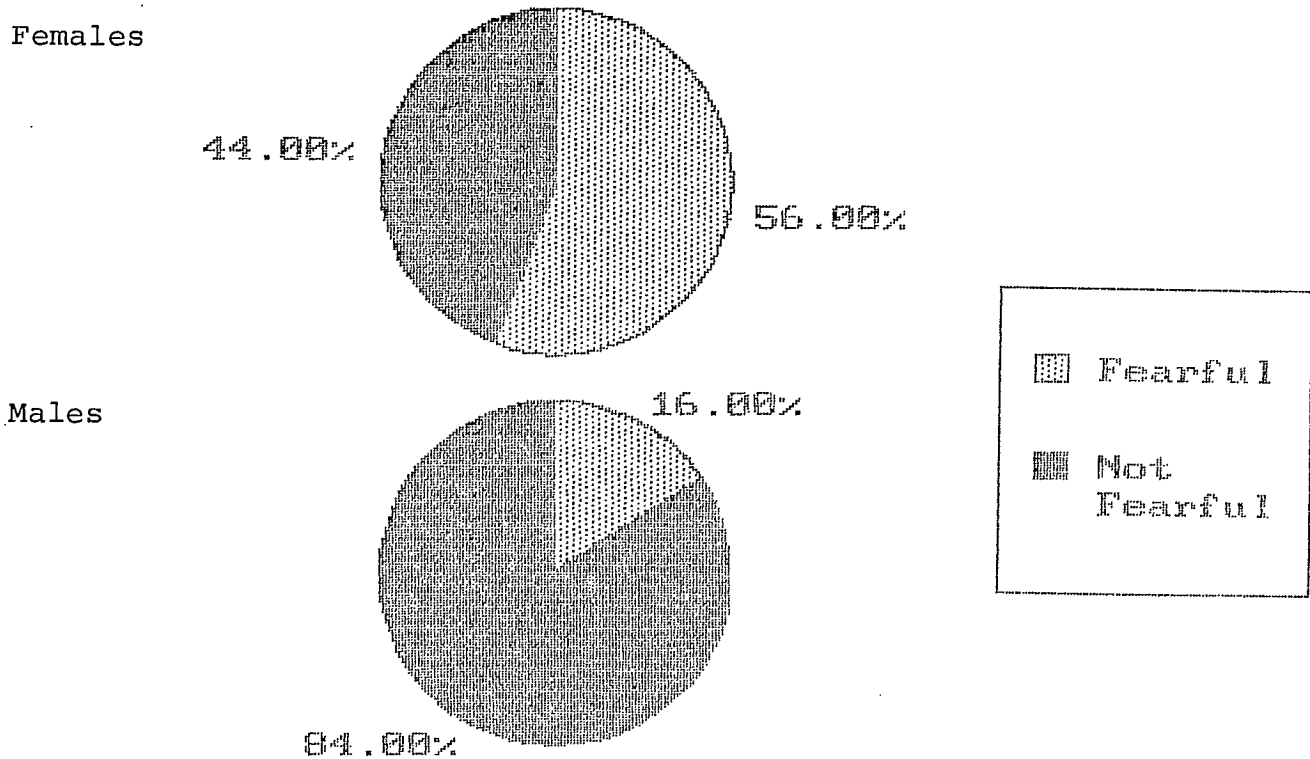


FIGURE 8  
FEAR OF CRIME IN GREATER  
VANCOUVER (1982)



**PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLICE**

All respondents were asked to make an assessment of police performance on four main dimensions. The results are shown in Tables 7-10. There appear to be no substantial differences between the findings for New Westminster and those for Greater Vancouver with the police receiving generally positive ratings on all four dimensions.

**TABLE 7**

**Residents' Perceptions of Police Performance  
on Enforcing the Laws**

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

	1 9 7 9			1 9 8 2		
	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP
<b>NEW WESTMINSTER</b>						
Good	64	52	60	61	41	52
Average	25	39	30	28	46	36
Poor	**	**	5*	**	10*	6
Don't Know	7*	**	5	7*	**	5
<b>GREATER VANCOUVER</b>						
Good	64	55	61	58	48	54
Average	25	33	28	29	38	33
Poor	4	8	5	5	9	6
Don't Know	7	5	6	8	5	7

\* The actual count was low (11 to 20), therefore caution should be exercised when interpreting this percentage.

\*\* The actual count was too low to make statistically reliable population estimates.

TABLE 8

Residents' Perceptions of Police Performance on  
Responding Promptly to Calls

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

	1 9 7 9			1 9 8 2		
	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP
<b>NEW WESTMINSTER</b>						
Good	57	53	55	42	49	45
Average	12	21	15	18	20	19
Poor	5*	**	5*	6*	12	9
Don't Know	26	20	24	33	18	26
<b>GREATER VANCOUVER</b>						
Good	54	52	54	48	47	47
Average	13	17	14	14	20	16
Poor	5	11	7	6	12	9
Don't Know	28	20	25	32	21	27

\* The actual count was low (11 to 20), therefore caution should be exercised when interpreting this percentage.

\*\* The actual count was too low to make statistically reliable population estimates.

TABLE 9

Residents' Perceptions of Police Performance  
on Being Approachable

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

	1 9 7 9			1 9 8 2		
	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP
<b>NEW WESTMINSTER</b>						
Good	69	62	66	65	61	63
Average	10	25	16	14	22	17
Poor	**	**	5*	**	**	3
Don't Know	17	7*	13	17	14*	15
<b>GREATER VANCOUVER</b>						
Good	67	65	67	66	63	65
Average	12	17	14	12	19	15
Poor	3	7	4	4	6	5
Don't Know	17	10	15	18	11	16

\* The actual count was low (11 to 20), therefore caution should be exercised when interpreting this percentage.

\*\* The actual count was too low to make statistically reliable population estimates.



Storage

TABLE 10

Residents' Perceptions of Police Performance on  
Supplying Crime Prevention Information

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

	1 9 7 9			1 9 8 2		
	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP	NON VICTIM	VICTIM	POP

NEW WESTMINSTER

Good	54	48	52	53	43	38
Average	17	23	19	16	26	20
Poor	8*	15*	10	12	18	15
Don't Know	21	14*	19	18	13*	16

DATE DUE

Good				39	42
Average				26	23
Poor				19	16
Don't Know				15	20

\* The actual course of action should be exercised with care and caution should be exercised.

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