

# The Ohio Police Behavior Study

*an assessment from the officers*

Office of Criminal Justice Services

174002

**THE OHIO POLICE BEHAVIOR STUDY**

**Office of Criminal Justice Services**

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### *Summary Statement*

Planning for the Ohio Police Behavior Study began late in 1990, and resulted in a three-state application (Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania) submitted to the Bureau of Justice Statistics in May, 1991. From the outset, Ohio's Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) Research Section provided the idea, grant leadership, and project coordination for this ambitious study. Ultimately, Pennsylvania had to withdraw from the project, and the City of Chicago did not participate in the Illinois study.

This project was conceived in the immediate aftermath of the Rodney King incident in Los Angeles (but before the subsequent trials and related civil unrest). The critical reason for doing this research was the realization that issues of police behavior were being transacted on a huge scale among many interest groups, **but without any empirical data from the officers themselves**. No one had asked the police officers how seriously they regarded certain kinds of behavior, what kind of consequences should accompany those behaviors, and if (and how many times) they had personally observed misbehavior in other officers. The important training implications of the data set were perceived very early on in the study, and appropriate communications maintained with the Ohio Peace Officer Training Council staff, and the executive directors of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) and Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) State Lodge. Additionally, OCJS research staff were anxious to secure data based on a legitimate representation of officers and incidents, rather than a few sensationalized incidents with high visibility.

In order to create a law enforcement-centered data base for the issue of police behaviors, and as a tool for professional development via its training implications, OCJS administered the Police Behavior Study in 1993 among some 700 officers in over 150 local police departments in the state, using a stratified random-sampling technique. The officers were asked to: 1) rate the seriousness of, and (where appropriate) sanctions for, 35 different behavior scenarios; and 2) report whether and how many times they had observed 30 behaviors in fellow officers. A cohort of some 800 Ohio citizens was also surveyed to provide the public perspective for #1 above.

Three cautions are in order when reviewing the data which follow in this report. First, while the sampling error is fairly small, the measurement error may be larger because of the necessarily inexact nature of this kind of research (e.g., motives, discretionary judgments, unclear legal footing, etc.). Secondly, the scenario rankings did not (and could not) give the officers all of the information they needed to offer their best judgments--many noted this in the written comments. Thirdly, the type of statistical analysis established for the scenarios, with differently worded questions for different officers, makes general inferences more difficult.

Key Ohio law enforcement officials and interests were briefed and consulted throughout the development of this project, notably the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy, the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, Ohio Law Enforcement Liaison Committee, and the Fraternal Order of Police State Lodge.

## Rating Police Behavior

This section of the survey asked officers to rate the behavior of police officers in 35 hypothetical situations. After receiving a brief description of the situation and the response of the officer, respondents were asked to rate the seriousness of officer misbehavior, if any, on a scale of 0 to 15, where 0 equaled "not at all serious," and 15 equaled "extremely serious." The responding officers also assigned appropriate punishments ("consequences") for each perceived misbehavior (e.g., "verbal reprimand," "suspension," "refer for criminal prosecution," etc.), but for simplicity these responses have not been included in the following tables. These will be made separately accessible.

In addition to holding out the "consequences" responses in this brief summary, the following tables include less than half of the possible "seriousness" rankings--though at least some data are provided on each of the 34 scenarios set out here. These edits are necessary because of the unique nature of the survey question format, which involved a perpetually changing set of variables. For example, in Question #31, while one respondent was rating the seriousness of an officer planting a weapon on a wounded white suspect with a violent record in order to avoid incriminating himself, another respondent was rating the seriousness of the scenario when the suspect was black, with no criminal record, and the purpose was to cover up for a fellow officer. Hence, a total of 24 different scenarios was possible, and any responding officer might receive any one of the 24 possible questions. This ever-changing format was the product of the factorial survey methodology used in the study which allows for a very subtle analysis of officer attitudes. The price for this scaling technique is the need for selective presentation of data tables since the full number of possibilities runs in the hundreds. Question # 35, for example, the only scenario excluded from the following tables, contains 144 possible data cells.

Several other factors should be born in mind when reviewing this summary data:

- The seriousness rating scale is reproduced at the top of each page for easy reference.
- The "mean score" is the mathematical average for each response.
- The "# of officers" denotes the number of officers who responded to the question as noted in the underlined table headings. Since there were about 660 usable surveys, this column will range from that figure (e.g., Q.'s #1, 2, 3) to as few as 11 (Q.# 33). When making comparisons and statistical inferences, it should be remembered that each cell represents a unique group of respondents, unlike traditional survey displays in which all interviewees respond to all questions.
- While the tables contain only some of the question variables, the questions themselves reflect all of the possibilities, usually in parentheses and underlined. Hence, some of the variables in the question wordings will not show up in the tables, but are included to indicate the full range of possibilities.

**Seriousness Scale**

---

Not at all serious	Not very serious	Moderately serious	Quite serious	Extremely serious
0.....		7...8.....		15

1. A police officer displays a badge to avoid a traffic citation.

*mean score*            3.3  
*# of officers*        661

2. A police officer sleeps on duty.

*mean score*            7.8  
*# of officers*        662

3. A police officer falsifies an arrest report.

*mean score*            12.2  
*# of officers*        660

4. A police officer is verbally abusive toward a citizen who is thought to be (gay/lesbian).

	<u>gay</u>	<u>lesbian</u>
<i>mean score</i>	8.4	8.2
<i># of officers</i>	313	344

5. A police officer gives false testimony in a (traffic/criminal) case.

	<u>traffic</u>	<u>criminal</u>
<i>mean score</i>	11.8	12.9
<i># of officers</i>	329	330

Seriousness Scale

---

Not at all serious	Not very serious	Moderately serious	Quite serious	Extremely serious
-----------------------	---------------------	-----------------------	------------------	----------------------

0.....7...8.....15

6. A police officer commits a (simple/aggravated) assault while participating in an undercover investigation.

	<u>simple</u>	<u>aggravated</u>
<i>mean score</i>	8.0	11.9
<i># of officers</i>	336	321

7. A police officer abuses prescribed Valium (on/off) duty.

	<u>on-duty</u>	<u>off-duty</u>
<i>mean score</i>	12.2	10.6
<i># of officers</i>	324	336

8. A police officer avoids a patrol area because of a (lack of concern/fear of injury) for the citizens in that area/for himself.

	<u>lack of concern</u>	<u>fear of injury</u>
<i>mean score</i>	9.1	10.2
<i># of officers</i>	334	327

9. A police officer chooses not to respond to a call because of (fear of getting injured or killed/lack of concern).

	<u>fear of injury or death</u>	<u>lack of concern</u>
<i>mean score</i>	12.9	11.8
<i># of officers</i>	326	333

**Seriousness Scale**

Not at all serious	Not very serious	Moderately serious	Quite serious	Extremely serious
0.....		7...8.....		15

10. A police officer stops and frisks a (white/black/Hispanic) known offender just to harass the person.

	<u>white</u>	<u>black</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>
<i>mean score</i>	7.5	8.7	8.1
<i># of officers</i>	211	222	222

11. A police officer fails to report an incident of excessive force by (his or her partner/another officer in own department/another officer in another department).

	<u>partner</u>	<u>other officer own dept.</u>	<u>other officer other dept.</u>
<i>mean score</i>	9.5	10.1	9.2
<i># of officers</i>	227	219	211

12. A police officer illegally searches a suspect for the purpose of (harassing the person/removing weapons from the street/removing drugs).

	<u>harassment</u>	<u>removing weapons</u>	<u>removing drugs</u>
<i>mean score</i>	9.1	6.6	7.3
<i># of officers</i>	216	217	225

13. A police officer uses (alcohol/marijuana/cocaine) while working undercover in an effort to gain the suspect's trust.

	<u>alcohol</u>	<u>marijuana</u>	<u>cocaine</u>
<i>mean score</i>	2.0	6.6	10.9
<i># of officers</i>	222	235	201



**Seriousness Scale**

Not at all serious	Not very serious	Moderately serious	Quite serious	Extremely serious
0.....		7...8.....	.....15	

14. A police officer conducts an unauthorized record check for (relative/friend).

	<u>relative</u>	<u>friend</u>
<i>mean score</i>	6.1	6.8
<i># of officers</i>	334	322

15. A police officer engages in consensual sex while on-duty with a (fellow officer of the opposite sex/prostitute/complainant).

	<u>fellow officer</u>	<u>prostitute</u>	<u>complainant</u>
<i>mean score</i>	10.0	11.7	11.2
<i># of officers</i>	211	222	228

16. A police officer purchases stolen merchandise worth (\$5/\$50/\$500/\$5,000).

	<u>\$5</u>	<u>\$50</u>	<u>\$500</u>	<u>\$5,000</u>
<i>mean score</i>	10.9	12.4	13.7	13.8
<i># of officers</i>	157	155	169	175

17. A police officer fixes a parking ticket for (self/relative/friend/superior).

	<u>self</u>	<u>relative</u>	<u>friend</u>
<i>mean score</i>	7.1	7.4	7.2
<i># of officers</i>	224	210	225

**Seriousness Scale**

-----  
 Not at all      Not very      Moderately      Quite      Extremely  
 serious          serious          serious          serious          serious  
 0.....7...8.....15

18. A police officer fails to turn in a (relative/friend) who is suspected of committing a (felony/misdemeanor).

	<u>relative</u> <u>felony</u>	<u>relative</u> <u>misd.</u>	<u>friend</u> <u>felony</u>	<u>friend</u> <u>misd.</u>
<i>mean score</i>	10.6	6.4	12.0	7.0
<i># of officers</i>	166	160	161	168

19. An officer drives (5/10/20/30) miles per hour over the speed limit when there is no emergency.

	<u>5mph</u>	<u>10mph</u>	<u>20mph</u>	<u>30mph</u>
<i>mean score</i>	1.6	2.7	4.7	6.5
<i># of officers</i>	176	140	171	171

20. A police officer knowingly violates surveillance laws to obtain evidence on a suspect who is known to have a record of (no offenses/drug offenses/property offenses/violent offenses).

	<u>no off.</u>	<u>drug off.</u>	<u>property off.</u>	<u>violent off.</u>
<i>mean score</i>	9.8	9.4	9.2	8.7
<i># of officers</i>	168	167	153	167

21. A police officer lies to (obtain a warrant/cover own mistake/cover other officer's mistake/alter crime statistics).

	<u>obtain</u> <u>warrant</u>	<u>cover own</u> <u>mistake</u>	<u>cover other's</u> <u>mistake</u>	<u>alter crime</u> <u>statistics</u>
<i>mean score</i>	12.6	10.2	10.0	6.2
<i># of officers</i>	169	164	166	159

**Seriousness Scale**

Not at all serious	Not very serious	Moderately serious	Quite serious	Extremely serious
0.....		7...8.....		15

22. A police officer commits perjury to (avoid self incrimination/avoid incriminating a fellow officer/avoid harming self/convict a known felon/receive money).

	<u>avoid self- incrim.</u>	<u>avoid other incrim.</u>	<u>avoid harm</u>	<u>convict felon</u>	<u>receive money</u>
<i>mean score</i>	13.4	12.3	11.1	12.6	14.7
<i># of officers</i>	131	154	127	127	119

23. A police officer uses (alcohol/marijuana/cocaine) (on/off)-duty which affects the officer's performance during work.

	<u>alc. on</u>	<u>alc. off</u>	<u>MJ on</u>	<u>MJ off</u>	<u>cocaine on</u>	<u>cocaine off</u>
<i>mean score</i>	11.9	10.8	13.8	13.5	14.6	14.1
<i># of officers</i>	111	112	117	119	93	108

24. A police officer, against department policy, accepts free (coffee or meals/services or merchandise\*) worth (\$5/\$50/\$500).

	<u>services worth \$5</u>	<u>services worth \$50</u>	<u>services worth \$500</u>
<i>mean score</i>	5.7	7.6	10.4
<i># of officers</i>	66	79	84

25. A police officer drops a (white/black/Hispanic\*) suspect off in a dangerous part of town in order to put that person at risk. The suspect is known to have (no offense record/drug record/property record/violent record\*)

	<u>white, no record</u>	<u>white, violent record</u>	<u>black, no record</u>	<u>black, violent record</u>
<i>mean score</i>	11.1	9.6	11.0	10.0
<i># of officers</i>	57	53	65	47

\* Space limitations prevent some variables from being displayed in the tables below.

**Seriousness Scale**

-----  
 Not at all      Not very      Moderately      Quite      Extremely  
 serious          serious          serious          serious          serious  
 -----

0.....7...8.....15

26. A police officer without intervening, watches fellow officers use excessive force on a (white/black/Hispanic\*) suspect. The suspect is known to have (no offense record/drug record/property record/violent record\*).

	<u>white, no</u> <u>record</u>	<u>white, violent</u> <u>record</u>	<u>black, no</u> <u>record</u>	<u>black, violent</u> <u>record</u>
<i>mean score</i>	12.2	10.7	11.6	11.2
<i># of officers</i>	54	38	58	60

27. A police officer covers up an incident of excessive force involving a (white/black/Hispanic\*) suspect. The suspect is known to have (no offense record/drug record/property record/violent record\*).

	<u>white, no</u> <u>record</u>	<u>white, violent</u> <u>record</u>	<u>black, no</u> <u>record</u>	<u>black, violent</u> <u>record</u>
<i>mean score</i>	11.3	10.7	12.7	11.4
<i># of officers</i>	47	46	45	50

28. A police officer who is male fondles a female (fellow officer/prostitute/subordinate\*) (with/without) consent while (on/off\*) duty.

	<u>fellow officer</u> <u>with consent</u> <u>on duty</u>	<u>fellow officer</u> <u>without consent</u> <u>on duty</u>	<u>prostitute</u> <u>with consent</u> <u>on duty</u>	<u>prostitute</u> <u>without consent</u> <u>on duty</u>
<i>means score</i>	7.5	13.0	9.9	11.9
<i># of officers</i>	48	44	50	50

29. A police officer accepts a bribe worth (\$50/\$500/\$5,000\*) to overlook a (traffic violation/misdemeanor/felony/ongoing criminal activity\*) or (commit perjury\*).

	<u>\$50 misd.</u> <u>bribe</u>	<u>\$50 felony</u> <u>bribe</u>	<u>\$5000 misd.</u> <u>bribe</u>	<u>\$5000 felony</u> <u>bribe</u>
<i>mean score</i>	14.3	14.2	14.5	14.7
<i># of officers</i>	50	48	45	40

\* Space limitations prevent some variables from being displayed in the tables below.

**Seriousness Scale**

-----  
 Not at all      Not very      Moderately      Quite      Extremely  
 serious          serious          serious          serious          serious

0.....7...8.....15

30. A police officer steals property worth (\$5/\$50/\$500/\$5,000\*) from (the department evidence room/a crime scene/an unlocked business/the department/a suspect\*).

	<u>\$5</u>	<u>\$5,000</u>	<u>\$5</u>	<u>\$5,000</u>	<u>\$5</u>	<u>\$5,000</u>	<u>\$5</u>	<u>\$5,000</u>
	<u>evid.</u>	<u>evid.</u>	<u>crime</u>	<u>crime</u>	<u>busi-</u>	<u>busi-</u>	<u>sus-</u>	<u>sus-</u>
	<u>room</u>	<u>room</u>	<u>scene</u>	<u>scene</u>	<u>ness</u>	<u>ness</u>	<u>pect</u>	<u>pect</u>
<i>mean score</i>	14.1	14.5	13.8	14.8	13.6	14.8	13.8	13.2
<i># of officers</i>	27	38	28	35	22	28	40	34

31. A police officer plants a weapon on a wounded (white/black/Hispanic\*) suspect to avoid (incriminating self/incriminating fellow officer\*). The suspect is known to have a record of (no offense record/drug record/property record/violent record\*).

	<u>white,</u>	<u>white,</u>	<u>black,</u>	<u>black,</u>
	<u>fellow off.,</u>	<u>fellow off.,</u>	<u>fellow off.,</u>	<u>fellow off.,</u>
	<u>no record</u>	<u>viol. record</u>	<u>no record</u>	<u>viol. record</u>
<i>mean score</i>	14.9	13.9	14.9	14.1
<i># of officers</i>	22	21	27	29

32. A police officer stops a (white/black/Hispanic\*) motorist who is speeding to a degree that department policy specifies at least a written warning. The motorist (is respectful/argues with, verbally assaults\*) the officer. The officer responds with (a verbal warning/written warning/citation/ an arrest\*).

	<u>white</u>	<u>white</u>	<u>white</u>	<u>white</u>	<u>black</u>	<u>black</u>	<u>black</u>	<u>black</u>
	<u>resp.</u>	<u>resp.</u>	<u>verb.</u>	<u>verb.</u>	<u>resp.</u>	<u>resp.</u>	<u>verb.</u>	<u>verb.</u>
	<u>verb.</u>	<u>arrst.</u>	<u>verb.</u>	<u>arrst.</u>	<u>verb.</u>	<u>arrst.</u>	<u>verb.</u>	<u>arrst.</u>
<i>mean score</i>	1.7	1.6	5.6	.8	1.3	6.1	4.2	2.5
<i># of officers</i>	15	21	17	17	18	23	23	17

\* Space limitations prevent some variables from being displayed in the tables below.

**Seriousness Scale**

Not at all serious	Not very serious	Moderately serious	Quite serious	Extremely serious
0.....		7...8.....		15

33. A police officer discovers a (white/black/Hispanic\*) man trying to enter a house at night through a first floor window. The man explains that he has lost his house key. The incident occurs in an area with (no/moderate/a lot of \*) criminal activity. The officer (does nothing/questions the man/orders him to freeze/points a gun at the man and orders him to freeze\*).

	<u>white</u> <u>no</u> <u>noth.</u>	<u>white</u> <u>no</u> <u>points</u>	<u>white</u> <u>lot</u> <u>noth.</u>	<u>white</u> <u>lot</u> <u>points</u>	<u>black</u> <u>no</u> <u>noth.</u>	<u>black</u> <u>no</u> <u>points</u>	<u>black</u> <u>lot</u> <u>noth.</u>	<u>black</u> <u>lot</u> <u>points</u>
<i>mean score</i>	9.6	1.0	7.5	1.5	7.0	1.4	9.6	1.1
<i># of officers</i>	11	17	22	21	19	27	14	17

34. A police officer forces a confession from a (white/black/Hispanic\*) suspect by (verbally assaulting/threatening harm/inflicting physical harm\*). The suspect is known to have (no offense record/drug record/property record/violent record\*).

	<u>white</u> <u>verb.</u> <u>no rec.</u>	<u>white</u> <u>verb.</u> <u>viol.</u>	<u>white</u> <u>harm</u> <u>no rec.</u>	<u>white</u> <u>harm</u> <u>viol.</u>	<u>black</u> <u>verb.</u> <u>no rec.</u>	<u>black</u> <u>verb.</u> <u>viol.</u>	<u>black</u> <u>harm</u> <u>no rec.</u>	<u>black</u> <u>harm</u> <u>viol.</u>
<i>mean score</i>	7.5	5.8	12.5	13.7	8.4	6.6	14.5	13.2
<i># of officers</i>	22	15	25	22	17	20	19	13

\* Space limitations prevent some variables from being displayed in the tables below.

## ***Behavior Observations Reported by Officers***

The most difficult aspect of the Police Behavior Study was the posing of questions directed toward actual observations of a variety of police behaviors. An early assumption was that officers would not freely report their own misbehaviors, even in a survey guaranteeing anonymity, but that they might report on the actions of other officers if the details requested in the queries related to when, not who. Hence, the survey officers were given a series of 30 law enforcement behaviors ranging from borderline ethical issues to outright felonies and asked if they had observed each type of behavior in another officer(s) during (1) the previous 12 months, and (2) ever in their career. Unlike the hypothetical scenarios earlier in the survey, the wording and order of these 30 action descriptions was the same for all officers responding to the survey.

Research staff realized early on that probing this sensitive and complex area of investigation requires a fair amount of discretionary judgment, and that such judgment can, itself, influence the information being gathered. For example, survey respondents would naturally infer that each of the 30 behaviors involve at least some kind of ethical, moral or criminal violation, yet several do not necessarily do so. "Accepting free food or coffee from a restaurant" may not violate the officer standards of a particular police department; "speeding when there was no emergency" doesn't rule out some other good reasons why an officer might exceed the speed limit; and "deliberately choose not to respond to an assigned call" might also be explained by an entirely legitimate decision to do otherwise under the circumstances. Furthermore, many of the words used in the survey--sometimes the very words on which the entire behavioral issue rests--are open to significant ranges of personal interpretation. "Force," "coerce," "abuse," and "knowingly" are terms which require the observing officer to either make judgments about ambiguous and disputed concepts still poorly understood under the best of circumstances, or to guess at the thoughts or motives of a brother or sister officer. For these reasons, a separate set of cautions should accompany the interpretation of each of the 30 different responses.

These cautions qualify, but do not compromise, the larger thrust of this research. Reducing the number and/or scope of the uses of a data set is something quite different from concluding that it has no use whatsoever. In the majority of cases, the behaviors highlighted in this section reflect well-recognized areas of ethical and professional concern relative to law enforcement officers. To the extent that these kinds of behaviors can ever be measured, the following table offers important indicators for law enforcement officers and administrators.

**Behaviors Observed by Ohio Police Officers**

Have you personally observed police officer . . .	in the past <u>12 months?</u>		ever during <u>your career?</u>	
	<u>%yes</u>	<u>%no</u>	<u>%yes</u>	<u>%no</u>
Verbally abuse a citizen who was thought to be gay or lesbian?	7.1	91.5 <sup>1</sup>	31.1	67.0
Harrass a citizen most likely because of the citizen's race?	14.9	82.8	44.7	53.5
Illegally attempt to coerce confession from a suspect?	5.3	93.3	21.7	76.3
Used considerably more force than was necessary to apprehend suspect?	12.9	85.3	56.6	41.6
(as a male police officer) Verbally sexually harass a male citizen while on duty?	6.0	92.2	20.0	78.3
Accepted payments to overlook legal activity?	0.0	98.3	2.2	96.3
Accepted free coffee or food from a restaurant?	71.0	28.1	87.3	10.5
Willing to arrest a friend or relative who the officer suspected of committing felony?	1.4	97.1	5.0	93.8
Found a weapon on a suspect?	0.2	98.3	1.2	97.6
Officer driven under the influence of alcohol while on duty?	5.0	93.3	25.3	73.5

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<sup>1</sup>The percentages will not add to 100% because of occasional non-responses, but the non-response figure was under 3% for all of the 30 observation scenarios.



Have you personally observed police officer . . .	in the past <u>12 months?</u>		ever during <u>your career?</u>	
	<u>%yes</u>	<u>%no</u>	<u>%yes</u>	<u>%no</u>
purchase merchandise which the officer knew to be stolen, for personal use or gain?	0.6	97.7	4.7	94.1
illegally use drugs while working under cover?	0.2	98.3	1.9	96.9
go to sleep when he/she was supposed to be on patrol?	27.8	69.6	78.9	20.0
fail to report an incident of excessive force by a fellow officer?	6.4	91.9	37.1	61.7
cover up an incident of excessive force by a fellow officer?	2.6	95.7	22.3	76.4
abuse drugs prescribed for his/ her use, or under the influence of such drugs, while on duty?	1.7	96.6	6.5	92.4
avoid a patrol area because he/ she considered it too dangerous?	8.2	89.8	21.2	77.4
speeding when there was no emergency?	63.1	35.5	82.3	16.0
deliberately choose not to respond to an assigned call?	12.2	86.2	32.9	65.7
stop a suspect off in a bad part of town in order to put that person at risk?	0.5	98.0	3.1	95.8
knowingly violate surveillance laws to obtain evidence?	0.7	97.0	6.5	92.2

Have you personally observed police officer . . .	in the past <u>12 months?</u>		ever during <u>your career?</u>	
	<u>%yes</u>	<u>%no</u>	<u>%yes</u>	<u>%no</u>
illegally search a suspect for the purpose of removing drugs from the street?	11.3	86.8	32.6	65.9
falsify the facts attendant to the arrest on an arrest report?	3.4	94.9	14.1	84.7
give false court testimony in a traffic case?	2.0	96.3	9.3	89.6
give false court testimony in a criminal case?	0.0	98.3	7.6	91.3
illegally "stop and frisk" a known offender just to harass the person?	10.2	88.1	32.9	65.4
commit a felony while participating in an undercover operation?	0.2	98.1	0.8	98.1
use illegal drugs while on duty?	0.0	98.6	2.2	96.7
use illegal drugs while off duty?	0.2	98.4	6.8	92.1
display a badge to avoid a traffic citation while off duty?	33.5	64.6	68.1	30.4

### **Observation Comparisons: Ohio Officers v. Illinois Officers**

Illinois, Ohio's companion state in the Police Behavior Study, received surveys from 861 officers in police departments throughout the state, with the exception of Chicago. Ohio's survey cohort was 645 officers. Generally, the Ohio officers tended to report smaller number of observations (yes responses) than did their peers in Illinois.

<b><u>Observation:</u></b>	<b><u>Yes responses, past 12 months</u></b>	
	<b><u>Ohio</u></b>	<b><u>Illinois</u></b>
verbally abuse gay/lesbian	7.1%	6.3%
harass citizen based on race	14.9%	26.2%
illegally coerce confession	5.3%	8.0%
use more force than necessary	12.9%	20.4%
sexually harass female citizen	6.0%	8.6%
accept payments to overlook crimes	0.0%	0.1%
accept free coffee or food	71.0%	79.9%
fail to arrest friend/relative	1.4%	1.1%
plant weapon on suspect	0.2%	0.0%
DUI on duty	5.0%	5.8%
RSP for personal gain/use	0.6%	0.4%
illegally use drugs under cover	0.2%	0.2%
sleep instead of patrol	27.8%	35.0%
fail to report peer's excessive force	6.4%	8.3%
cover up peer's excessive force	2.6%	5.6%
abuse prescribed drugs on duty	1.7%	1.1%
avoid patrol in dangerous area	8.2%	9.2%
speed when there is no emergency	63.1%	77.3%
choose not to respond to call	12.2%	14.3%
drop suspect in dangerous neighborhood	0.5%	0.8%
knowingly violate surveillance laws	0.7%	1.2%

Observation:

Yes responses, past 12 months  
Ohio                      Illinois

illegally search suspect for drugs	11.3%	24.8%
falsify arrest report	3.4%	6.7%
give false testimony (traffic case)	2.0%	4.1%
give false testimony (criminal case)	0.0%	2.9%
stop and frisk in order to harass	10.2%	23.7%
commit felony in undercover operation	0.2%	0.1%
use illegal drugs on duty	0.0%	0.1%
use illegal drugs off duty	0.2%	0.9%
display badge to avoid traffic ticket	33.5%	46.6%

## A Profile of the Survey Officers

### I. Personal characteristics

#### highest level of education achieved

less than high school	0% (1)*
high school or GED	19%
some college courses	42%
associate degree	20%
bachelor's degree	13%
some graduate	3%
master's degree	2%
doctoral degree	0% (1)*

#### sex

male	96%
female	4%

#### age group

less than 21	0%
21-24	3%
25-34	29%
35-44	41%
45-54	25%
55 and over	2%

#### race

white	94%
black	5%
Hispanic	0% (2)*
Asian	0% (2)*
other	0% (2)*

#### marital status

married	79%
divorced	10%
separated	1%
never married	10%

\* Because percentages are rounded off in these tables, figures rounded down to zero parenthetically include actual number of officers (if any) in the category.

household income

\$9,001-\$15,000	1%
\$15,001-\$25,000	5%
\$25,001-\$50,000	51%
\$50,001-\$75,000	36%
\$75,001-\$100,000	6%
over \$100,000	1%

II. *Professional characteristics*

years as a law enforcement officer

less than one	3%
1-3 years	10%
4-7 years	15%
8-10 years	10%
11-15 years	17%
16-20 years	18%
over 20 years	26%

present rank

police officer	53%
detective/investigator	12%
first line supervisor	15%
mid-level supervisor	12%
administrator	7%
other	1%

in service training hours  
in the last ten years

less than 20	3%
20-99	17%
100-299	32%
300-499	20%
500 or more	27%

cultural sensitivity training?

yes	65%
no	34%
DK	1%

ethics training (separate course)?

yes	65%
no	31%
DK	4%

III. *Attitudes and perspectives*

Do you think that the public's  
opinion of the police has  
changed in the last 5 years?

yes, more positive	16%
yes, more negative	65%
no, hasn't changed	14%
don't know	5%

How do you think the public behaves  
now (toward the police) as compared to  
when you began your career?

better	11%
worse	58%
about the same	30%

How religious do you  
consider yourself to be?

very religious	12%
somewhat religious	64%
not very religious	19%
not religious at all	4%
don't know	1%

IV. *Working environment*

full-time officers  
in the department

1-3 sworn	4%
4-7 sworn	12%
8-12 sworn	8%
13-19 sworn	8%
20-29 sworn	8%
30-49 sworn	13%
50-106 sworn	18%
107 or more	29%

type of duties

patrol	58%
investigative	15%
supervisory	19%
crime prevt.	3%
other	5%

description of duty area

little criminal activity	33%
moderate criminal activity	46%
much criminal activity	21%



### *Officers' Assessment of the Survey*

The officers' attitudes toward the survey, itself, provided unexpected insights. It was, in a sense, the survey within the survey. Clearly, the issues raised in the survey were of more than passing interest to the officers. Better than one officer in five, 147 in all, added personal comments to the end of the already lengthy questionnaire. The final entry on the survey form allowed officers to choose from six responses reflecting various attitudes on the utility of the study. The officers were invited to select more than one response if they wished. The results were as follows:

<u>response</u>	<u>percent</u>
I expect the results will be useful for targeting training programs.	50.1%
I suppose it might help to get the results, but I'm not too optimistic that much will be done.	19.9
I'm glad I had an opportunity to help the public understand that police are predominantly reliable and honest.	19.5
I'm concerned that if the results show a lot of misbehavior, the image of police may be damaged.	2.6
I don't see that anything positive will, or can, come out of this survey.	6.2
I'm glad I had a chance to help reveal just how bad things really can be in police departments.	0.2

The voluntary comments added at the end of the survey were marked by: 1) an intensity of feeling concerning the role of police officers; 2) a wide difference of opinion concerning the direction of that role in our contemporary society; and 3) a strong sense of--or hunger for--a group identity among brother and sister officers. Some officers were suspicious of what they perceived to be a subtle attempt to trick them into admissions of racial, cultural or gender prejudice. Such criticisms were frequently accompanied by suggestions that the survey revealed a bias against police, and that it had already been determined that the study findings would paint the officers in a bad light. Part of this suspicion is the result of the survey methodology which was based on a continuously fluctuating set of variables describing suspects and circumstances. Another part of the suspicion can probably be ascribed to the conscious decision to enhance the scenarios with some specific physical details--such as those which an investigating officer would

observe in his or her first glance--rather than asking the officers to make judgments based on the generic circumstances. (Interestingly, a larger number of officers criticized the scenarios for not providing enough investigation-scene details to allow them to choose a proper response.)

However, for every officer that expressed suspicion, another volunteered appreciation and support for the survey effort, often noting a keen interest in seeing the results. Generally, the 147 comments fell into five broad categories: 1) positive or supportive remarks about the survey (24); 2) critical comments or suggestions about singular aspects of the survey--distinguishable from #4 below in that there was no implicit criticism of the survey concept, just a logistical aspect of it (35); 3) general comments not related to the survey, itself (61); 4) negative comments about the survey (24); and 5) other non-survey relevant comments ((3). Because of the range and intensity of the comments from the 147 officers, and because these comments give voice to legitimate issues relating to law enforcement role identity, some of these comments are offered verbatim below.

***Positive comments:***

Surveys such as this one should be on going to find out problems and solve them.

I'm glad that I was given this opportunity to assist in evaluating law enforcement with the hopes of regaining integrity . . .

Anything that will help make us more professional is great.

***Criticisms/suggestions:***

Questions need to have more details; not enough information.

It would have helped to be able to assign more than one consequence combination.

I did not see any questions about how police officers feel about the justice system.

The survey can be deceiving as there can be vast differences in communities.

***Non-specific comments:***

I would like to see a similar questionnaire regarding politics within police departments.

More attention should be focused on the ethics of elected officials, rather than [on] free or half-priced meals . . . police officers get every shift.

I believe law enforcement officers reflect the attitude of society and their community.

This profession needs a national set of standards. We need to move police work into the 21st Century.

I hope that my ideals of what a good police officer is will still be a part of me at the end of my career.

*Negative comments:*

Survey is a joke & a waste of time.

I hope you realize most cops will lie on this survey.

I believe this survey is very negative in itself and has already depicted officers as criminals.

I am concerned this survey is going to be used directly against the police departments, regardless of how much misbehavior is shown.

Concerning the issue of whether the officers took the survey seriously, three affirmative inferences can be drawn: 1) the survey response rate was good (approximately 70% of all officers given surveys returned them); 2) 70% of the respondents chose a positive response from the alternatives displayed in the table at the front end of this section; and 3) there is no reason to suspect that the large majority of the officers were not responding openly and honestly.

This second point is, of course, crucial to the utility of this kind of survey--the thing which the survey attempts to measure (professional integrity) will also dictate the honesty of the responses. At least one respondent felt obliged to inform us that we were asking the fox to guard the hen-house. However, several indicators point in the direction of overall honesty and openness in the vast majority of responses, among these: internal consistency (every survey was re-reviewed with an eye toward spotting surveys which demonstrated obvious caprice or sabotage; the officers' ratings of the survey's usefulness; the officers' comments separately solicited regarding the survey; and extraordinary measures to protect officer anonymity (e.g., each officer was given the opportunity to return his or her anonymous survey in an already-stamped mailer).

We also believe that the survey response rate speaks to the veracity of the survey. While one cannot know the exact reasons why some 300 officers did not respond, the fact that some 700 did puts the burden of proof on the negative inference since the 70% is at or above the response rates achieved by even less-demanding and less controversial surveys. An important historical fact concerning this survey is that Ohio's two sister states in this national study, Pennsylvania and Illinois, both encountered major opposition from Fraternal Order of Police lodges at either the state or local levels. Pennsylvania had to cancel its participation in the study altogether, and Illinois was forced to conduct its effort without the participation of the City of Chicago. Under such circumstances, Ohio's 70% response rate assumes larger credibility.

**Most Recent Research Publications of  
The Office Of Criminal Justice Services**

December, 1995

Personnel Levels in Ohio's Law Enforcement Agencies as of  
July 20, 1995.

The first significant data from Ohio's 1994-96 Peace Officer Task Analysis Study is contained in this census of 24,217 sworn officers in 945 Ohio law enforcement agencies. The personnel data are broken out by gender, years of service, and full-time v. part-time employment. Necessitated by the need for an accurate data base on which to base the Task Analysis survey sample, the census represents the most comprehensive such effort in many years in Ohio.

January, 1995

The State of Crime and Criminal Justice in Ohio Report (2nd Edition).

This 112-page, 4-color report is an easily read overview of crime and justice in the state as borne out by the research data. It eclipses the 1987 edition with more information, a chapter on emerging technologies, and numerous brief inset articles by guest (expert) authors.

1993

"An Epidemiologic Study of Alcohol and Suicide Risk in Ohio Jails and Lockups, 1975-1984", Journal of Criminal Justice Vol. 21., Issue 3, pp. 277-283. Two hundred and twenty-eight suicides in Ohio jails and lockups, committed by inmates between 1975-1985, provide the data base for this unique study. Information was gathered from jail records and death certificates.

January, 1992

Ohio's Incident-Based Reporting System Data Collection and Submission Specifications.

The first edition of this manual outlines Ohio's new crime reporting program that will enable the State to participate in the National Incident-Based Reporting System. It includes a detailed description of the data elements and values, the data submission specifications and a listing of the edits that will be applied to the State information system.

November, 1989

Understanding the Enemy: An Informational Overview of Substance Abuse in Ohio.

Ohio's first comprehensive report on substance abuse and its link to crime draws together all of the known data relative to this most critical of public issues. The 5-color, 65 page report is a highly readable profile of citizen attitudes, use patterns, costs to society, and crime linkages relative to the problem of drug and alcohol abuse. The report also includes a series of provocative articles by some of Ohio's and America's leading experts on substance abuse.

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