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**Author(s):** Jack McDevitt; Michael Shrively; Susan Bennet; Jennifer Balboni; Michael Buerger

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181082

**THE BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT'S  
STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS  
PHASE ONE**

**A Report to the Boston Police Department  
and the  
National Institute of Justice**

by

Jack McDevitt  
Michael Shively  
Susan Bennett  
Jennifer Balboni  
Michael Buerger

Northeastern University

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1995, the Boston Police Department undertook a broad-based strategic planning process intended to provide a decentralized approach to community policing in the neighborhoods. This process, which included more than 400 representatives of neighborhoods and city-wide constituencies, working in 16 planning teams, represented all walks of life and all ranks within the Boston P.D. In concert with an organizational restructuring which placed greater resources at the disposal of District Captains, the Strategic Planning process provided a framework for identifying and addressing local community public safety needs in conjunction with an increased neighborhood viability. The major conclusions of this report are:

- Crime decreased in Boston as a result of the police-community partnerships at a greater rate than declining trends nationally and in comparable cities elsewhere;
- At the conclusion of the process reported a greater sense of security in their homes and neighborhoods compared with the period immediately prior to the onset of Strategic Planning;
- Boston residents were more likely to respond that crime had decreased in their neighborhoods than were residents of similar-sized cities;

- At the conclusion of the Strategic Planning process, citizens of Boston felt much more confident in the ability of the Boston Police to prevent crime and to solve crime than were residents of comparable cities;
- responses of Boston police Officers to a survey indicated that they viewed crime prevention and assisting the public as an equally important component of their work as effective criminal investigation and apprehension;
- Boston Police officers reported a broad awareness of both the tenets of community policing and the elements of their department's initiatives;
- Boston Police officers were broadly supportive of the joint roles of police and residents in dealing with crime and disorder;
- residents and officers in general agreed that the best means to reduce violence among young people involved greater youth opportunities and increased educational emphasis;
- the vast majority of Boston Police officers felt that the most effective form of policing was a model in which police work in partnership with the community they serve.

# The Boston Police Department's Strategic Planning Processes

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**BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
**STRATEGIC PLAN - PHASE ONE**

**Section I:**  
**Review of the Literature on Community Partnerships and  
Neighborhood Policing**

The Boston Police Department's Neighborhood Policing Program incorporates many elements of community policing, but the initiative distinguishes itself by the extent of decentralization, its emphasis on community partnerships, and the overall focus on neighborhood-based planning. In its Mission Statement, and throughout its organizational decisions, the Boston Police Department defines neighborhood policing as a primary vehicle for working in partnership with the community to fight crime, reduce fear of crime, and improve the quality of life in Boston's neighborhoods.

This section will serve to familiarize the new reader with terms and concepts found elsewhere in this report, and provide a broad overview of what is called community policing. It provides a foundation for comparing the Boston program with comparable initiatives elsewhere. Readers already familiar with these concepts and programs may wish to begin with Chapter 2.

**Community Policing: An Overview**

For over fifteen years, "community policing" has been promoted as a paradigm shift for American policing. The concept was institutionalized in President Clinton's 1994 Crime Bill, which limited federal hiring and technology assistance to agencies demonstrating a commitment to community policing. Proponents of community policing claim it is superior to the professionalization model that improved organizational rationality, but all too often neglected the needs and sensibilities of the citizens it was designed to serve. Opponents claim it is little more than "old wine in new bottles," a creative name for things that the police have always done, or simply a slick public relations .

Despite the numerous local claims of success, there still is no universally accepted definition of what "community policing" is. However, most police scholars and practitioners agree that it combines three primary characteristics within an overall emphasis of proactive policing: (1) police officers familiar with a geographic area or neighborhood, also called "beat/sector integrity"; (2) open, consistent two-way communication between police and the community about priorities and needs; and (3) building productive partnerships between police and community members in order to solve problems. Although the law enforcement emphasis of the professional era remains important under community policing, the police mandate expands to include a broader range of non-criminal concerns, primarily the low-



level disturbances and disorderly conditions that negatively affect the quality of life for neighborhood residents.

The descriptions that follow are very broad summations; community policing is a national phenomenon with decidedly local features. Because of this wide local variation in operational definitions, the descriptions may be more appropriate to some jurisdictions than others, and to some not at all.

### **Traditional Policing**

Community Policing is often defined by contrasting it to the model it is intended to replace, alternately called "traditional" or "professional" policing. Broadly speaking, the hallmarks of traditional policing are:

- rigidly hierarchical organizational models with centralized, top-down, and sluggish decision-making;
- staffing decisions based upon calls for service levels (which some administrators and police scholars now term "letting 911 run the police department");
- emphasis on crime-fighting, particularly felony arrests, as the primary mission ("real police work") and sole evaluation criterion of police effectiveness;
- a primarily reactive approach to reports of criminal conduct, summarized in the description "incident-based policing";
- sacrificing crime prevention responsibilities in favor of the more exciting crime suppression role;
- low priorities and status accorded to disorder and physical decline, in many instances leading to no police response at all;
- frequent reassignment of personnel out of districts, sectors, and

beats intended to isolate officers from the community as an anti-corruption measure;

- a paramilitary aspect and attitude, in which the world is divided into cops and bad guys (the natural prey of cops), and in which citizens, victims, and witnesses are someone else's responsibility;
- evaluation of employee performance based upon raw production numbers (citations, arrests, cases cleared, etc.) without regard for effectiveness;
- fragmented internal communications, supporting minimal (if any) crime analysis and intelligence;
- a passive citizens' role of providing information and political support for the police, who in turn act as "experts" in crime control on behalf of the law-abiding citizenry.

In addition, "traditional" policing in urban areas has been associated with differential applications of police authority. Particularly when dealing with the minority community, traditional police agencies have been faulted for underpolicing (poor responses to crime in minority areas), and for racially-based targeting of minority citizens under other circumstances.

Critics of the traditional incident-based policing allege that it has been ineffective in dealing with crime because it failed to deal with either the conditions which facilitate crime, or the debilitating fear that crime produces in a community.

By making felony crimes its sole priority, policing abrogated its responsibilities to maintain order and tranquility in the neighborhoods.

### Community Policing

As an antidote to the shortcomings of traditional, incident-based policing, community policing strives to augment the reactive crime-fighting role with a proactive crime-preventing one. Across the country, a broad range of strategies and tactics fall under the community policing umbrella, ranging from limited foot- or bicycle patrol units all the way to full-scale restructuring of agency operations, eliminating ranks, decentralizing command decisions, and inviting citizen participation in setting departmental priorities. Whatever its operational manifestations, the community policing philosophy is based on the following precepts:

- decentralized organizations marked by the delegation of authority to the lowest feasible level, for rapid and appropriate local-level responses to local conditions;
- stability of assignments of officers in beats, neighborhoods, and sectors in order to develop in-depth knowledge of the personalities, conditions, problems, and strengths of the area;
- bottom-up development of plans, making use of line-level employees' in-depth knowledge and promoting increased responsibility at the line level;
- an emphasis on crime prevention to support the crime control mission;
- an analytic approach focusing on problem conditions that give rise to repeated incidents;
- positive communications at and across all levels of the police organization, emphasizing information-sharing and crime analysis in support of the problem-solving focus;
- evaluation of employees based upon effectiveness rather than

production of numbers;

- an active community role in identifying local needs, developing local resources, and implementing mutually-designed solutions.

Although there are some earlier antecedents like the Team Policing experiments of the 1970s, modern community policing traces its roots to the Flint, Michigan, Foot Patrol Experiment of the early 1980s. Traditional motor patrol was supplemented by a series of foot patrol beats, staffed by officers who had crime prevention, community organizing, and crime suppression responsibilities. Despite economic hardships, residents of Flint twice voted to tax themselves extra millage in order to retain the popular program.

At approximately the same time, police in Newark, New Jersey, and Houston, Texas, began looking at the role of the police in reducing citizens' fear of crime. As James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling would note in their 1982 article "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety" (now widely cited as a theoretical basis for community policing), the residents of those cities' neighborhoods felt much better for a proactive police presence even though the actual crime rate did not decrease. The important lesson of these primary studies -- that active engagement of the police in matters of neighborhood concern is an essential component of community cohesion and stability -- was found in various ways in a wide range of community

policing programs in other cities across America: Seattle, WA; Portland, OR; San Diego, CA; New York City; Chicago; and others (a more exhaustive list of these community policing initiatives may be found in the Appendix).

### **Resistance and Dissent**

Despite the political rhetoric that has declared community policing to be a success, it is not universally understood or accepted. Critics claim that it is more rhetoric than reality, promising to be a panacea to social ills without adequate conceptualization of how the model must work in reality. They point to cases in which the "selling" of the utopian community policing idea underestimated the difficulties of changing organizational culture, where community policing disappeared after the departure of the chief who championed it. The most common criticism is that community policing is proclaimed, but never implemented beyond small, programmatic initiatives run by a small group of self-selected individuals who take to community work easily. This creates a valuable public relations front for the organization, but leaves most of the agency's operations unchanged; most of the organizational culture still pursues traditional policing goals through traditional policing activities. At the same time, police-controlled initiatives have the effect of turning the community into a silent partner at best, and a mere cheering section at worst. Bringing the neighborhood into the process in meaningful ways, and sustaining neighborhood involvement, has been one of the most difficult tasks for police agencies across

the country.

### Neighborhood Involvement

When discussions of community policing do venture beyond idealistic rhetoric, they often focus primarily on reforms in policing styles, leaving out the essential component of the concept: the *community* (Cardarelli and McDevitt, 1995; Wilkinson and Rosenbaum, 1994). Although there are almost as many variations on the concept of "community" as there are definitions of community policing, several themes run through the literature. The first is the difficulty of adequately *defining* community in operational terms: definitions often resort to the arbitrary boundaries of existing geographical designations, which may not conform to residents' understanding of neighborhood dimensions. A second is that community policing works best in those neighborhoods that are stable, with a viable infrastructure of human capital and resources. The third is that community policing is most difficult to establish and sustain in socially disorganized, economically and politically marginal neighborhoods where it is most needed. The fourth is the difficulty of establishing meaningful roles for the community in the problem-solving endeavors.

Broadly speaking, the history of police-community relations in America's cities can be characterized as a long rollercoaster of crisis and reform. Although community policing has enjoyed considerable success in many locations, its history is nevertheless uneven. Agencies and municipalities

embarking upon community policing initiatives can face obstacles and difficulties.

### **Obstacles**

Earlier police reforms tended to be short-lived, so much so that one of the major problems encountered in community policing has been initiative fatigue, the reluctance of community members to "buy in" to yet another police program. Past experience has led them to understand the inauguration hoopla as a public relations gimmick that benefits only the police: "Business as usual" policing will return quickly, until the next crisis brings yet another round of fanfare and empty promises.

In other neighborhoods, distrust of the police or lack of social capital has meant that despite a crying need for the revival that community policing can ignite, residents simply do not participate. A small group of dedicated activists keep the possibility of a partnership alive, but there is no real community to unite.

Other neighborhoods have exactly the opposite problem: they already enjoy a cohesive community, relatively low and nonthreatening levels of crime and disorder, and few (if any) problems not already tended to by the municipality. These neighborhoods will attend police meetings out of a sense of civic duty, or in response to a crisis such as a rash of burglaries, but the "partnership" is limited, and based only on the immediate crisis. Once the crisis ends, other social obligations compete with the police initia-

tive for residents' time, and the enterprises tend to dissolve for lack of any real reason to continue.

Working under such conditions can be enormously frustrating for even dedicated community policing officers. In some extreme cases, such as those found by Sadd and Grinc (1994) in their evaluation of eight Innovative Neighborhood Oriented Policing (INOP) sites, officers may develop increased feelings of hostility toward community residents who fail to participate in a program designed to benefit them. Not every obstacles can be solved; not every small success leads to greater gains. Community policing is radically different from traditional police work, and creates considerable role confusion for unprepared officers (Buerger, Petrosino, and Petrosino, 1999). Similar stresses are created when organizational expectations are unrealistic, or agency operations do not adequately adapt to be able to support officers in community assignments.

The experiences of departments that have struggled with community policing suggest several lessons. First, it will not happen overnight, or just because a community meeting is held. Second, the impact on agency operations will be considerable: working within a framework of community partnerships requires, at a minimum, extended periods of time free from the obligation to answer calls. Specialized training will be required in many fields, as well as introductions to and information about the needs and corporate cultures of many other agencies.



Integration of the new community expectations into the traditional work habits of the department will be a constant adventure during the transition, and put a premium on open communications (it often requires a "check rank and ego at the door" approach that allows give-and-take debates over the appropriateness and efficacy of the changes; convincing skeptical officers of the righteousness of change is a matter of persuasion, and cannot be dictated). Traditional numbers-based performance evaluations are inadequate to measure and guide community policing work, and in many departments face the daunting challenge of fairly equating two radically different evaluation systems in promotional decisions.

### Successes

There are areas where community policing has been an effective catalyst in reviving troubled neighborhoods. Not only did citizens take full advantage of the new police resources available for crime control purposes, they organized and mobilized around broader issues of community health. With the police acting as their advocate (usually but not exclusively in "quality of life" concerns like trash pickup, graffiti, abandoned cars, noise violations, or the demolition or rehabilitation of derelict buildings), residents developed a renewed sense of competence to represent their own interests before the municipal government and other agencies.

When the conditions that most required police attention have been quelled, a renewed community infrastructure and activism remains, and

deals quickly and effectively with new problems as they arise. This is the end result, the success, sought by community policing advocates.

When equitable balancing of interests occurs through police facilitation, the result is a state called "collective efficacy," which summarizes a community's social cohesion and willingness to contribute to solving neighborhood issues. Researchers studying neighborhoods in Chicago since 1990 have found that crime rates are better explained by levels of collective efficacy than by poverty alone. Neighborhoods with greater degrees of organized, grassroots efforts to solve common problems have lower rates of crime than more disorganized neighborhoods. As a consequence, community policing efforts in marginal areas have focused on community-building activities that create or enhance collective efficacy.

At the same time, working together on problems has the effect of breaking down the old barriers of anonymity and distrust that existed between neighborhood residents and the police. (These barriers did not exist in every community, of course, but the nature of 911-driven reactive patrol nevertheless tends to create a distance between the police and the community they serve, even under the best of conditions.) Police officers see residents in their real lives, not just under conditions of stress and tragedy; in return, the officers also become known to the community as individuals, not just anonymous symbols of law enforcement. Officers and residents across the nation have offered testimonials about how successful

community policing partnerships have improved their lives; one police officer summed it up by noting that kids now waved at him using all five fingers instead of just one.

Friendlier relationships and working conditions are nice in their own right, but experience has proven that they produce ancillary benefits as well. When the community has confidence in the police they work with, the police are more likely to receive needed information about crimes and criminals. Youth in trouble, or facing moral dilemmas and decision points, are more likely to seek out officers for guidance. Police have greater moral authority to persuade persons to community- rather than self-interested actions in situations where law enforcement has no suasion. Ultimately, in those cases where collective efficacy is enhanced, informal social control can replace formal (police) control over antisocial activities, reducing the demand for police services.

Community policing is not a magic balm that miraculously appears whenever the police call a community meeting. It is a condition reached by considerable work by many people, in the police department, in the neighborhoods, and within the public and private agencies that interact with the community. Successful implementation of community policing requires the support of substantial organizational change (especially in larger, hierarchically tall organizations), a dramatic increase in available resources on all fronts, and considerable patience.

**Associated Organizational Issues**

Community policing does not come about overnight, nor does it exist because the agency creates a foot- or bicycle patrol program, does DARE, or or even has a split-force deployment of officers. Nor does it necessarily exist because community meetings are well-attended: building partnerships with the community requires that the police a balance of multiple interests, some of which may be in opposition. The promotional literature asserts a quixotic belief that community representatives are just 'average citizens' who come together to "take back their neighborhoods." In truth, many actually represent the wealthy, powerful, vested interests in the community, which sometimes includes landowners who do not live in the community, and whose engagement stems less from altruism and community investment than from their desire to protect their economic investments (Mastrofski, 1991; Bayley, 1991). This can be a feature of areas with low social capital and organization: the property-owning interests are the only stable group with which the police can interact, and articulation of their interests may obscure the needs of residents, which are more difficult to discern.

Police administrators may also face unanticipated issues of disillusionment, isolation, and even malfeasance on the part of the officers involved in the programs. Officers suffer from initiative fatigue just as much as residents, and may be even more suspicious of (or jaundiced about) the

agency's motives. One of the frequent criticisms of community policing programs is that they are R.I.P. ("retired in place") slots for "the sick, the lame, and the lazy": some officers still working motor patrol believe that the community policing positions are sought by the department's shirkers because the slots offer better working conditions (often Monday-Friday shifts, days or early evenings, and frequently with a much lighter call responsibility) than patrol duties.

If staff selection is not made with care, the makeup of the new community initiatives may reinforce negative stereotypes of the "touchy-feely" work held by traditionally-inclined officers. Even the manner of selection can cause difficulties: where management may be inclined to select younger officers who display initiative and an orientation toward working with the community, unionized cultures may demand open or seniority-based access to the "R.I.P." slots as a benefit of seniority.

"Empowerment" of lower-ranking employees in a traditional hierarchy also changes the relationships of supervisors, peers, and middle managers. New forms of communication, new limits, nor protocols are constantly in demand, constantly emerging, and require tending by the command staff. As the relationship between the individual officer and the community changes, so too do organizational work expectations. Often there is no useful template for organizational change, and strong nostalgia for the older paramilitary rigidity of command.

Residents may develop new expectations based on their relationship with their community officers that are not fulfilled by more traditional patrol-based officers, requiring a greater expenditure of administrative time in communications and fence-mending tasks. Not every community request of the new relationship will be possible (legally or logistically), nor will every attempt to mobilize partners in other agencies prove successful. Perseverance and the constant nourishing of the process is a prerequisite for any agency seeking to "turn the battleship" of a traditionally-oriented police department into a community-oriented one.

In sum, community policing is not merely a slogan, nor is it simply a new deployment strategy or a series of meetings with the community. It is none of these things individually; it is a whole that is greater than the sum of all these parts. Community policing is a new philosophy of delivering police services: it reduces crime and fear of crime through a comprehensive mechanism of locally-based partnerships and shared responsibility for crime control.

The following chapters describe the events leading to the initial stages of such an attempt. It is the story of the first phase of the Boston Police Department's initial 5-year Strategic Plan. The primary story is that of the community's response to District-level outreach, and the forging of different levels of partnership between neighborhood residents and the Boston Police Department. It is secondarily an account of the internal adjust-

ments made by the BPD to accommodate the new sets of relationships forged by this process.

## Section II:

### The Modern History of the Boston Police Through the 1990s

Strategic Planning was not undertaken suddenly as a magic panacea to solve all social ills: it emerged from a collective realization that the city's future health rested upon a broad community policing approach rather than the rigid, limited path of traditional policing. The Plan was a culmination of a lengthy history of experimentation and crisis, capitalizing on the incremental lessons learned from success and failure of other initiatives. It constituted a more radical change than its predecessors, precisely because it opened the department for the first time to substantive input and influence from the neighborhoods.

The paradigm shift represented by Strategic Planning is the vehicle through which the department continues to evolve and change to meet emerging needs. It was the product of a lengthy and sometimes strained relationship between the Boston Police and the city's numerous communities, shaping the police role through salient social issues and incidents. The chronology below is not intended to attribute blame for the Department's difficulties in the recent past, but to provide the background and context of the genesis of the Strategic Planning process.

Prior to the 1990s, the Boston Police adhered to the traditional model



of policing, rarely allowing the community any meaningful role in the process of maintaining public order. Like many other departments throughout the country, the Boston Police implemented many of the modern 'professionalization' reforms of the 1970s and 1980s. The reforms were, in part, attempts to restore public confidence in the police in the wake of a series of very public misadventures: police riots in the mishandling of Vietnam war protests in the 1960s, disputes over forced busing in the 1970s; racial tensions exacerbated by a series of highly publicized cases, most notoriously the 1989 investigation of the Carol Stuart murder case.

In the 1960s, the crisis of confidence in the police was a national crisis. In addition to the outcry over incidents of police brutality directed against civil rights marchers in the south, and antiwar protesters throughout the nation, public dissatisfaction rose along with a spiraling crime rate. Minority communities lambasted the police both for discriminatory enforcement and for failing to adequately police poorer ethnic neighborhoods. Middle-class communities were concerned with the apparent inability of the police to stem the rising tide of predatory crime. The reports of a series of Presidential Commissions brought into high relief the contrasts between the claims of the police and their actual ability to deliver.

In 1968, the Bell Telephone Company introduced the 9-1-1 system, designed to be a single, universal number for contacting police and emergency services anywhere in the country. The computer technology that

made 9-1-1 possible also created for the first time an opportunity to objectively measure an aspect of police performance, the time between dispatch of the call and the officers' arrival on the scene. Even though it provided no information about the quality of the police service rendered once the officers arrive, reducing the amount of time between call and arrival of the police became a surrogate measurement of police professionalism.

The Boston Police Department also seized upon this measure, touting "Rapid Response" as the answer to a broad range of citizen dissatisfactions in that era. In the early 1970s, the department received \$350,000 in federal grants for "Rapid Response" technologies through the Command and Control Project. For many years, response time remained the bedrock of police practices in Boston because it could be easily measured, but it led to the advent of "Zero Car Availability" as an internal mechanism for evaluating District effectiveness.

Central command officers would analyze 9-1-1 data to determine the extent of time that all duty cars were occupied servicing calls; i.e., there were "zero cars available" for preventive patrol or other interactions. Since Zero Car Availability was considered a negative, this measure created an artificial pressure to "clear the call as quickly as possible" to be available for the next one. Many officers attempted to meet this departmental directive, but it came at the cost of minimizing effective interactions with the citizens.

By the 1980s, the City of Boston was experiencing a financial strain in the aftermath of the statewide Proposition 2-1/2, which placed a cap on tax spending and left the city to budget its operating expenses without the luxury of deficit spending. As local government tried to adapt to the new financial constraints, several neighborhood police stations were closed. In an attempt to compensate for the restrictions, the BPD instituted a "one car, one officer" policy to ensure the maximum number of officers available for calls.

In 1983, the Department experimented with a foot patrol deployment that in many important ways presaged the later community policing movement. Patrol services were reallocated, with 300 officers committed to foot beats. But the beats were drawn up centrally by Headquarters personnel, without any input from the communities to be policed. The maps upon which the beats were plotted were several years out-of-date, missing important changes and new features. The new beats were assigned to officers without any supporting training, and (in some cases) even an explanation of their purpose. The result was a disastrous hodge-podge of misaligned assignments that generated resentment from officers, supervisors, and citizens.

The BPD also began to focus on order maintenance as a primary duty, intervening in low-level disorderly conduct because of the emerging awareness of the links between disorder and both crime and fear of crime.

Although these kinds of programs failed to demonstrate any positive impact on the crime rate (Greene and Taylor, 1991), it was a model that later efforts would draw upon, and served as a precursor to the more sweeping changes of the 1990s.

Despite the attempt to promote a different style of police services, the old problems of traditional policing persisted. By 1984, the Boston Police Department was under active investigation by the U.S. Attorney's Office on charges of extensive corruption, leading to a crisis of morale within the department. The corruption issue was a prominent factor in the mayoral race that year: the winner, Raymond Flynn, in February 1985 appointed as Police Commissioner his longtime friend, police officer Francis M. ("Mickey") Roache. Commissioner Roache has been publicly credited with stabilizing the department through the difficult time of the investigation, but the honeymoon proved to be short-lived.

As the decade of the 1990s opened, the Boston Police Department was again under considerable public pressure from several flashpoint incidents. Most notorious was the poor handling of the 1989 Carol Stuart murder case, which brought criticism of poor (and allegedly unconstitutional) investigative tactics, overt racism, and the destructive influence of City Hall politics upon the Department's operations. The Stuart case put the spotlight on Boston for both its bizarre character (and equally strange

denouement<sup>1</sup>), and the police abuses during the politically-driven search for an assailant who ultimately proved to be a phantom. There were accusations that Mayor Flynn exerted a direct influence on the investigation through his friend Commissioner Roache, abrogating the political responsibility to direct the police in a lawful manner. Some Boston officers, in turn, abandoned all pretext of professionalism in their heavy-handed "tossing" of the Mission Hill neighborhood where the shooting took place. The political imperative to find the shooter caused some officers to run roughshod over both the Constitution and common sense.

The Stuart case took place against a backdrop of the crack revolution of the late 1980s, which brought with it a steep rise in violent crime, continuing to undermine the public's confidence in and support of the Boston Police. A Boston Globe headline in March 1990 poignantly characterized community sentiment: "Fear Rises in a City Consumed by Violence." Although no one professed that the police were wholly responsible for the skyrocketing crime rate, the upward spiral of violent crime and continued criticism of the police exacerbated existing tensions between the police and the public.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Stuart fatally shot his pregnant wife in their car after leaving their birthing class at a local hospital, then shot himself in the side (a non-fatal wound). He dialed 9-1-1 and reported that the couple had been robbed and shot by a black man in sweat clothes; he said he was in an unfamiliar part of town, and the car was found only when police cruisers ran their sirens in sequence and dispatchers listened to see if they could hear the sirens over Stuart's cell phone. The chase made national headlines, and the truth was revealed only after Stuart's brother confessed to the police that he had helped dispose of the gun, as part of an elaborate insurance fraud scheme. Stuart himself committed suicide before he could be arrested. In the meantime, however, the heavy-handed police search for the supposed black killer had affected and alienated the entire Mission Hill section of the city.

The connection between Mayor Flynn and Commissioner Roache had continued Boston's long tradition of political involvement in the management of the Police Department from City Hall. Mayor Flynn maintained close contact with the intimate details of the Boston Police, to the point of issuing recommendations for promotions to the rank of Superintendent (an alternate means of promoting officers, created when a labor dispute effectively froze civil service promotions for several years). The politicization of management decisions became a source of frustration for many officers, who felt that the process rewarded officers for political connections rather than for meritorious service. Officer morale within the department plummeted to a nadir.

Finally, a four-part 1991 series in the Boston Globe, titled "Bungling the Basics," publicly detailed the serious managerial and supervisory problems within the Boston Police Department. To answer the charges of gross mismanagement within the department, Mayor Flynn appointed the Management Review Committee. Locally, the Commission was known as "the St. Clair Commission" after its Chairman, prominent Boston attorney James St. Clair (head of President Nixon's defense team during the Watergate scandal). The goal of the commission's investigation was complex: to disentangle the political and substantive issues, to determine where and why things had gone so badly awry in a department once renowned for its professionalism, and to suggest methods of improvement.

On January 14, 1992, just prior to Mayor Flynn's third inauguration, the St. Clair Commission issued its report. The report contained thirty-three recommendations, the most well-known of which called for the removal of Police Commissioner Mickey Roache. This recommendation was not well received by the Boston political machine, but it could not be ignored entirely. Mickey Roache retained his post as Police Commissioner, but a substantial portion of the command operations were shifted to the newly-created position of "Superintendent in Chief," a job to be filled with the recall of former Boston Police Officer William Bratton.

Bratton has risen through the ranks of the Boston Police Department, and had been tapped for the position of Commissioner of the Transit Authority in New York City. He had earned considerable attention nationally for reconstituting a moribund department, and returned to Boston with a new status as a quasi-outsider who nevertheless had insider standing. His familiarity with both the Boston communities and the Boston political landscape gave him the advantages of an insider; his time away from the BPD acted to sever the web of political ties that too often encumbered internal promotions. On March 24, 1992, Commissioner Roache and Superintendent-In-Chief Bratton responded to the St. Clair Report through their "30 Day St. Clair Implementation Report." This document set the stage for fundamental change in the mission and operations of the Boston Police Department.

The St. Clair Commission Report issued 36 separate recommendations in six separate areas, 31 of which were adopted by the Boston Police Department (30 Day, i). The primary organizing activity was the creation of a comprehensive Plan of Action, supported by the creation of an Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Development. A pilot Neighborhood Policing model was created in Dorchester's District C-11 to allow for experimentation with "new tactics, equipment, and techniques" for a city-wide strategy community policing (Districts B-2 Roxbury and B-3 Dorchester were added subsequently). Additional changes were made in the areas of Internal Affairs, Training, Leadership and Supervision, and Management Information Systems (MIS) and Information Technology.

Internal Affairs was centralized and doubled in strength under a new Office of Internal Investigations (OII), and a Community Appeals Board was developed to serve as an appellate body for citizens. Information brochures were printed in several languages, outlining the steps for filing a complaint against police officers. An "Early Intervention System" for internally identifying officers at risk for unacceptable behavior was developed, and all members of the OII received extensive training in conducting internal investigations. New Procedures were devised, and a 90-day timeline for the conduct and completion of investigations was implemented.

Leadership and Supervision changes included a commitment to more supervisors to reduce the department's span-of-control ratio; the introduc-



tion of a performance appraisal program; and returning to unit-based budgeting. Information needs were to be addressed through the creation of an MIS Steering Committee and identifying new sources of funds for systems upgrades.

Changes in Training included the development of a Neighborhood Policing Training Curriculum and new management development training for all supervisors and managers. A feasibility study for improving the Boston Police Academy was established, and a commitment given to make use of appropriate local and national academic institutions.

The creation of the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Development was an attempt to address criticisms of lack of vision on the part of the police administration, but attempts at reform were clearly anchored by the precepts of traditional policing. The 30-Day report itself employed the language of unidirectional communications of the "police-as-experts" model:

*In this and future reports, we will present to citizens our timetables and commitments stated in terms that will be clearly understood by both citizens and police officers. (pg. 2) [emphasis added]*

In the introductory letter to Mayor Flynn that accompanied the 30 Day report, the authors alluded to the fact that the (then-current) leadership had brought the department's response time to an all-time low, suggesting that the Commissioner still clung to the traditional "rapid response" as the

foundation of policing in Boston.

The 30 Day report did include language referring to a shift to “preventative” [sic] policing as a goal of the department, and in September 1992 the newly-issued “Plan of Action” called for full implementation of community policing by 1995. The Action Plan articulated a goal to make officers “problem solvers” to better reduce crime and fear of crime (Ellement and Murphy, 1992).

Over the next several months, newspaper stories reported the formation of “two camps” within the Boston Police Department: officers who maintained their allegiance to Commissioner Roache, and those who supported Superintendent-in-Chief Bratton (McGrory, 1992). The Boston Globe reported that Commissioner Roache constructed a barrier at the door connecting his office and Bratton’s (McGrory, 1992). The tension between the two men ended in June 1993, when Roache resigned and Bratton succeeded him as Commissioner.

William Bratton held the position of Police Commissioner for only a few months before being named Police Commissioner for New York City, but his tenure in Boston marked the beginning of the BPD’s change from a traditional police department to a community-oriented one. Throughout his time in Boston, Bratton articulated and stressed the importance of reducing the fear of crime as a departmental priority. He spoke openly of the paralyzing effect that fear of crime can have upon communities, and em-

phasized the need for community mobilization to fight that fear in conjunction with the police (Ellement and Aucoin, 1992).

Replacing a politically-driven management style with a merit-driven one was arguably the most important change begun by William Bratton during his time as Commissioner (Ellement, 1993). In July 1993, he attempted to return control of two police stations to civil service captains rather than mayoral appointees, an administrative device that had not been employed for two decades (Ellement, 1993). He also attempted to implement a policy that command staff must hold a civil service rank to qualify for Superintendent positions.

### **Current Leadership Initiatives**

The depolitization of the department was continued by Commissioner Paul Evans. Evens was named Acting Commissioner after Bratton left for New York, and in 1994 was appointed Police Commissioner in his own right. In May 1994, Evans cut his command staff by 25 percent (Lakshmanan, 1994).

Removing the department from the day-to-day central control of City Hall was accompanied by an initiative to make the District commands more responsive to local concerns. Numerous decision-making responsibilities were decentralized, giving the District Captains more autonomy in the administration of their commands, and making them directly accountable to the Commissioner rather than answering to Area Commanders.

The decentralized organizational structure that resulted was intended to make it possible for the police to communicate better with the community.

The practical effect of decentralization was to give District commanders greater access to investigative resources, particularly detectives and drug units. Previously, any officer with information about drug trafficking referred that information to a central drug office, which would investigate (or not) depending on its own priorities (a complicated investigation in one part of the city had the potential to strip the remaining areas of all drug investigations for an indefinite period). Patrol officers were divorced from drug investigations, and drug investigators had little knowledge about the communities where they were working. Under the decentralization plan, the citywide drug unit was disbanded, and its investigators were assigned to each of the eleven police districts. Acting under the direction of the District Captains, investigators focused on local concerns and built an expertise in a specific geographic area as well as in the techniques of drug investigation. Placing the expertise of the drug investigators under the District Captains had the effect of creating more timely and better-focused responses to neighborhood drug-related concerns.

The final major administrative shift was the establishment of "sector integrity," permanent assignment of patrol officers to a specific geographic beat. The earlier practice of varying the assignments of officers across different areas of the district gave the officers a more extensive knowledge

of Boston's geography, which allowed them to respond directly and efficiently when rapid response was the department's highest priority.

Knowledge of streets and landmarks came at the forfeit of more extensive knowledge of the residents of the community, however, and the marginal efficiency of response time was of little use to a department trying to become more effective. Sector integrity became the bedrock for neighborhood policing in Boston, encouraging greater familiarity with specific areas to sponsor healthier and more productive communications between residents and officers.

This open communications policy was supplemented by the creation of Beat Teams. Commissioner Evans and his command staff extended authority to line officers, first-line supervisors, and district-level command staff to make day-to-day operational decisions based upon their familiarity with changing local needs. The Boston Police Department recognized that in order for community policing to be effective, authority and responsibility had to be vested in local officers in a manner commensurate with the mission. This team approach allowed supervisors as well as officers to be responsible for individual neighborhoods, and augmented the individual officers' investment with enhanced supervisory capacity.

The city of Boston experienced significant changes during the period of the administrative change. The violent crime rate began to decline, providing immediate justification to continue the department's new direc-

tions. At the same time, public criticism of the Boston Police lessened, as the media responded positively to the new directions under Commissioner Evans. Headlines declaiming "Joint effort made summer safer; City groups focus on at-risk youth" and "A new openness at the BPD" replaced those of the "City consumed by violence" genre of just a few years before (Cullen and Grant, 1994; Editorial, 1995). New officers were recruited, and the median age of a patrol officer began a steady decline from the former high of 41 years old (Cullen, 1994).

The Department began to receive federal assistance under the Clinton Administration's Crime Bill packages. In 1994, U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno allocated nearly \$2 million dollars for Boston under the U.S. Department of Justice Comprehensive Communities Program (Dowdy, 1994). The money put more officers on patrol, and funded several community centers, including the Boys and Girls Club.

### **Innovative Programming**

Despite the fact that financial woes constrained the number of beat officers (Walker, 1995), the groundwork for more sweeping departmental change was steadily laid during this period. The St. Clair recommendations created an environment which first allowed, then encouraged the grass-roots initiatives that sustained the administrative shifts within the department. The year 1992 has come to be recognized as the signature year for innovative programming developed by both beat officers and community

residents. While none of these programs was singly responsible for the reduction in crime, their success within the community created a receptive climate for neighborhood policing. The most prominent of the programs from this period are Operation Night Light, the Youth Violence Strike Force, Operation Cease Fire , and a strategic alliance with the Ten Point Coalition, a faith-based community partnership concerned with youth violence.

In 1990, in response to an unprecedented increase in gang-related violence, the BPD created a specialized tactical group known as the Anti-Gang Violence Unit (AGVU). The unit was primarily a tactical force that used the conceptual language of the "War on Crime" [*sic*] to define its mission as "eradication" and "suppression" of gang violence. Under Commissioner Evans, however, the focus of the unit changed from reactive tactical operations to prevention. Along with the change of name to Youth Violence Strike Force, the unit ceased to be only a police tactical unit: its 1992 creation brought together more than 60 criminal justice and social service agencies with a stake in youth. An internal memo from the Commissioner further outlined the plan for cohesive cooperation between Strike Force officers and beat officers.

The Ten Point Coalition was formed in 1992 in the wake of gang violence and intimidation at the funeral of a Dorchester youth. Local clergy were galvanized to create an ongoing program of outreach in conjunction

with streetworkers and social service agencies. Initially, the coalition was comprised primarily of African-American ministers serving inner-city parishes; it has grown to include other faith-based institutions. This partnership provided the department with a credible ally in the minority communities, and a steady guide for interpreting community needs.

Operation Night Light exemplified the goals of the department's decentralization initiative. Conceived by beat officers and probation officers at the line level, Night Light grew to become a nationally-recognized program. By sharing information and resources (Probation's knowledge of probationers and authority to conduct spot checks, combined with the Police authority and deterrent presence), each agency grew more effective in their mutual task of encouraging law-abiding behavior. Probation officers had greater access to the real-life activities of their wards, and patrol officers became more knowledgeable and proactive in preventing crime. The effective combination of supervision and enforcement has meant that those who violate the terms of their probation are more often incarcerated. Since Operation Night Light put teeth in the enforcement of probation conditions, the number of Boston probationers complying with their conditions has increased substantially (U.S. Department of Justice, 1966; Lakshmanan, 1996). Boston's effort provided a national model for collaboration between criminal justice agencies in order for both to work more efficiently and effectively.



Operation Cease Fire, formed in the spring of 1995, continued the collaborative spirit of Night Light, forging partnerships with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the District Attorney, the U.S. District Attorney, and other law enforcement agencies. The project identified local gang influences and "hot spots," and communicated to potential offenders in word and deed a policy of zero tolerance for firearms use and other forms of violence. Supporting the suppression strategies were a broad range of outreach and prevention services to help those gang-involved and at-risk youth who wished to turn away from violent behavior.

The combination of these programs produced an unprecedented two and one half years free of any youth homicides in Boston. The national attention garnered by these successful programs validated the new focus on crime prevention rather than mere reactive response to crime. Even officers steeped in the older, traditional model recognized the possibilities inherent in the neighborhood oriented policing strategies. As one police officer put it, "If you asked me five years ago, 'What's the answer to youth violence?' I'd say 'Lock them up'... But we've realized we can't do it alone, and we need to give young kids alternatives to crime" (Det. Bobby Fratalia, quoted in Lakshmanan, 1996). It was within this atmosphere of optimism for police success that Strategic Planning was undertaken by the Boston Police Department.

**Section III:**  
**Strategic Planning as a Vehicle**  
**for**  
**Neighborhood Policing in Boston**

The Boston Police Department's Strategic Planning Process emerged from a collective realization that the city should actively pursue a course of community policing that differed substantially from the narrow path of traditional policing. While many police jurisdictions have committed to the concept of community policing as the "wave of the future," most have attempted it by instituting programs within the still-dominant paradigm of traditional policing. The Boston Police Department undertook a more challenging course of action, institutionalizing a comprehensive change in the manner in which the community and the police communicate.

The Boston model hinges upon strategic decisions made jointly by citizens and the police, creating partnerships that determine mutual action on common problems. While many aspects of traditional policing remain in place (calls still need to be answered, and arrests are still made), department operations are now purposeful, targeting reductions in locally-determined conditions including disorder, crime, and fear of crime. The process requires both initiative and continued participation from community members, in partnership with a police department with a flatter organizational structure and a commitment to "same cop, same neighborhood"

sector integrity (BPD Strategic Plan, 1996).

### **Strategic Planning 1: Process**

The Boston Police Department invested considerable time in the process of determining how to make the Neighborhood Policing program work. Because the endeavor was so sweeping, and a new experience for almost all concerned, the department contracted with the Boston Management Consortium for professional facilitation services to smooth the path.

The introductory step was the nomination of planning teams. At the behest of Commissioner Evans, District Captains nominated community leaders to be participants in the process. Captains were urged to not simply "round up the usual suspects," but to include members who reflected the diversity of the district. Though many of the individuals nominated had worked with the department on earlier projects, others had not been formal partners previously and were selected by the Captains by virtue of their offices or roles in the community. Formal letters of invitation, signed by Commissioner Evans, were sent to each of the nominees, asking them to participate and inviting them to the official inauguration event at the World Trade Center in Boston. At that opening meeting, held on March 4, 1995, over 400 team members and other participants gathered for a facilitated orientation to neighborhood policing and strategic planning. This event was designed and directed by the Boston Management Consortium

and intended to provide teams with an overview of the process they were about to undertake and to demonstrate the commitment of the Police Commissioner that the process would be "real." The first order of business was the formal empanelment of the Strategic Planning Teams.

The Strategic Planning process established sixteen teams: one from each of eleven districts led by the District Captain; four from specialized units, led by a Bureau Chief; and a city-wide team led by the Police Commissioner. Few ground rules were set: modeled upon the values behind decentralization, each team captain was given the responsibility of creating a viable productive team, and allowed to do so without a rigid set of centralized directions. The resulting teams were comprised primarily of residents (both young and old); merchants; members of local universities; clergy; representatives of other public safety, criminal justice, and social service agencies; and police of every rank.

Teams were encouraged to articulate the most salient issues in their community. The processes of setting realistic goals, and devising problem-solving solutions for those issues, was outlined. As the exercise advanced, and objectives became more concrete, a team member was assigned responsibility for each strategy. The process encouraged ownership on the part of all participants, and by establishing community members as integral stakeholders in the process, it stimulated the development of partnerships.

The meeting progressed from the 'kick off' in March of 1995 until the final group concluded its meetings in January 1996. Most groups met semi-monthly in the beginning, then weekly as they came close to closure towards the end of the process. On average, groups met 8 times, with some meeting only 6 and one meeting more than 15 times. While attendance was not kept at the individual group meetings, most team leaders reported that about 75% of their group attended most sessions, and about the same number stayed with the process from the beginning until the end. This was a remarkable retention rate considering that community members were not compensated for their involvement.

### **The Planning Teams**

Three distinct categories of planning team emerged, distinguished primarily by their membership: neighborhood-based teams, constituent-based teams, and functionality-based teams.

Neighborhood-based teams were more likely to develop under the leadership of District Captains. Two Captains chose to structure their teams by selecting representatives from each neighborhood in their command, representing individual neighborhoods and the District as a whole. In one district, the Captain was so confident about his neighborhood-based team that he allowed the team to recommend changes to the district-wide patrol allocation. As the Captain recounted, "If a neighborhood requests an additional patrol officer, that neighborhood representative must negotiate

to move a patrol unit from one of the other neighborhoods." This allows team members to understand in tangible terms the difficulties of providing additional police resources to any particular neighborhood.

The constituency-based model was not geographically determined, but invited representatives from various constituency groups in the district. These teams generally included a couple of neighborhood residents and owners of businesses in the community, and often included representatives from other neighborhood institutions such as churches, civic groups, and youth service organizations. This model seemed to be favored in districts with concentrations of businesses.

The functional approach marked the city-wide teams (the Bureau of Special Operations; the Bureau of Investigative Services; the Professional Standards Bureau; and the Field Services Bureau), which did not represent a particular neighborhood or interact with specific constituency groups. Functional teams generally were composed of individuals who supported the functions of the Bureau: representatives from the groups and agencies involved with the high-profile Operation Night Light were included on the Special Operations team, for instance. The Investigative Services team included members from the Massachusetts Training Council and The Center for Blood Research.

As Strategic Planning progressed, it became clear that the process was different for the district groups than for the citywide groups. The city

wide groups were dealing with issues internal to the B.P.D., initiatives intended to support the Captains such as increased communication between the central administration and the districts. District groups had a ready constituency, the residents and business owners in the district, and District plans dealt with youth violence, gangs, order maintenance issues and drugs.

The process seemed to work well in the districts, providing some structure to the ongoing neighborhood policing efforts that each Captain was developing. The strategic planning process became a way for the department to identify the neighborhood's problems and to develop partnerships to deal with them. In the process, Strategic Planning became an integral part of the department's neighborhood policing program in the districts.

The City-wide groups faced a different set of issues. For instance, the Special Operations Plan dealt with:

- \* Developing a plan for the increased utilization of the Special Operations Division within the Districts of the city of Boston.
- \* Increasing awareness of the unique functions and capabilities of the Special Operations Unit within the Districts of the BPD.
- \* Developing an effective feedback mechanism for interacting with BPD Captains and Command staff.

Like the District teams, the Field Service Bureau Team addressed the issues related to Beat Teams, but from an organizational perspective

(including development of resources, potential changes in chain-of-command responsibilities, and intra-agency communications). The Professional Standards team, which included members from the Boston Ten-Point Coalition, looked broadly at issues of police-community relations and standards for internal integrity.

### **Initial Planning Results**

After three months of followup meetings, a list of goals and objectives for all sixteen teams was published. Teams continued to meet monthly, now with a new, formal identity of District Advisory Councils, and most of the stakeholders continued to participate throughout the process. Each team developed its own neighborhood policing document specifying the pertinent issues, methods, and goals that would serve as a blueprint for future district-level priorities. As has been true in other partnership endeavors across the country, many of the issues identified at the neighborhood level included quality-of-life concerns: noise violations, graffiti, traffic and pedestrian safety, the need for crime prevention strategies, and improving overall police/community communications.

An overwhelming majority of the teams identified youth issues as a top priority for their communities, and several programs began as a direct result of the Strategic Planning initiatives. In several districts, the assignment of dedicated beat officers was made a priority; others requested



greater visibility of patrol officers. Some teams developed their own innovative programs to address crime problems, such as West Roxbury's "Operation Safe," developed to reduce larceny from motor vehicles.

The process began with each team developing a series of broad goals. It was made clear to the group leaders that these goals did not have to be achieved in the short term. Some group leaders were initially concerned about setting a goal that they could not achieve and then being evaluated negatively because they failed. Once the Commissioner gave assurances that failure to achieve broad long term goals would not be used against the team leader, the groups did in fact set fairly broad goals. Some examples were:

- \* Create safe business districts in South Boston (C6)
- \* Reduce alcohol and drug use in South Boston (C6)
- \* Make the drug culture less attractive via positive community values (B2)
- \* Create safer, more livable neighborhoods by reducing fear of crime (D4)

Once the goals were set, the groups then focused on developing one, two or three more specific objectives that could represent steps toward achieving the goal. The objectives developed included:

- \* Develop a safer atmosphere for shoppers by addressing the homeless problem
- \* Reduce the number of complaints about public drinking

- \* Create partnerships to increase the parental responsibility and awareness of the actions and activities of their children
- \* Increase drug arrests in the district by 10%

The objectives developed by the groups contained a large number that were not ordinarily considered formal police responsibilities (though they were frequently done individually, as a result of officers' personal initiative)--for example, notifying parents of their children's drinking, or eliminating outdoor car repairs on a particular street. This was the result of the openness fostered by the Commissioner and the influence of non-police members of each group.

After the objectives were identified, a set of strategies and tactics were developed for each objective. Strategies and tactics were defined as steps necessary to achieve the objective. The strategies and tactics made the goals and objectives real for most participants, who noted that by deciding on strategies and tactics, the dimensions and difficulties involved in actually achieving a goal became clear.<sup>1</sup> To meet a District D-4 objective of reducing violent crime by 10 percent, for example, the team established as tactics "Promote Priority Prosecutions for violent offenders,

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<sup>1</sup> Some groups experienced confusion and frustration attempting to make subtle distinctions between objectives strategies and tactics, and became bogged down in elaborate discussions about the difference between a strategy and a tactic. The Director of the OSP and the director of the Boston Management Consortium met with the groups to answer questions. They assured the teams that the overall progress of process was the important goal, and whether they designated a particular task as a strategy or a tactic should not impede their progress.

reduce the number of illegal weapons in the community, and expand existing violence prevention programs.” A number of participants reported that this part of the process was particularly useful because they had to choose the aspects of the objective that they thought they could realistically affect.

Commissioner Evans requested that an additional category, resources and partners, be included for each strategy and tactic. Making partners and resources an explicit part of the strategic planning process was an integral element of developing and enhancing partnerships. It provided accountability, identifying who would be responsible for achieving each goal, but also gave tangible form to the value of community-wide approaches to problem solving. The Commissioner used the strategic planning process to explicitly incorporate the concept of partnership into the day-to-day tasks of every unit in the Boston Police Department.

For many Districts, the Strategic Planning Teams evolved quickly from a time-limited exercise into an integral component of district operations. As the pressure of deadlines lessened, the intensity of the early phase evolved into a regular, comfortable meeting that in most Districts had no precedent. While Captains had previously turned to individual community leaders for assistance, attended meetings when asked, or hosted community events, they had not routinely or consistently shared the challenges and successes of their district with neighborhood stakeholders. Nor had they

constructed the groups, staffed the meetings, or chaired the proceedings. These meetings did not replace the ever-increasing roster of community engagements that Community Service Officers and Youth Service Officers were booking; instead, they provided the Captain of the District a routine way to engage the neighborhood and gauge local effectiveness.

Those Captains were entrusted with additional resources, and directed by the Commissioner to develop plans that took advantage of the partnerships within their districts. To support the Captains, the Commissioner eliminated the Area Superintendents' roles, reassigning the Superintendents to new duties commensurate with their rank, and effectively eliminating one entire layer of bureaucracy in the command chain. In addition, the citywide Drug Unit was decentralized, and its investigators placed under the command of the District Captains. Although the unit no longer functioned at the same level that it had previously, the District Captains had the resources--in terms of both the additional personnel and the expertise they brought--to deal with the chronic street-level drug problems that were too diffuse to attract the attention of the old centralized drug squad.

Additional support for the process was provided by the Boston Police Department's Office of Strategic Planning (OSP), which had originally promoted the planning process as a way to support and provide direction to the department's newly-empowered District Captains. The OSP staff

assisted the Captains in identifying members for each team, and provided ongoing support to each group by coordinating communications between group leaders and the committee members. OSP also provided technical writers (graduate students from Northeastern University) to record group discussions and maintain a cohesive record of deliberations and decisions. The fact that the OSP staff were members of the BPD was particularly important. As might have been predicted, confusion about the specifics of the strategic planning process developed at several stages; Captains reported feeling comfortable calling the Director of OSP to discuss their concerns "because he understood how the Police Department works."

In addition to support from OSP, the process benefited from the involvement and coordination provided by the Boston Management Consortium (BMC). BMC is a private collaboration of management professionals with a long history of assisting private and public organizations with organizational change strategies; importantly BMC has a long history of working with the management of the Boston Police Department. The BMC provided experienced facilitators and overall logistics to each of the Strategic Planning teams. A number of participants commented favorably on the ability of the BMC facilitators to keep the process focused and to ensure that all voices were heard, especially during occasionally heated discussions.

Participants from many Districts revealed that they feel deeply

invested in the process and the goals and objectives selected. Important themes emerged from interviews with citizen members particularly. They felt proud of their participation, and personally identified with the health and public safety success of the city. In a very profound way, the earlier "us/them" conflict of police/civilian status had been diminished. This was their collective plan as it was implemented, and the outcome a positive one: they considered it to be their success, not just the Department's.

Involving neighborhood residents and business owners also elevated the quality of life issues to a level of importance that may not have been possible had only BPD personnel conducted the strategic planning meetings. These issues--involving housing conditions, street cleanliness, graffiti, the granting of various permits--often required the Department to negotiate beyond their organizational niche on the City of Boston organizational chart, and to do so for their constituents rather than just for the enhancement of their budget lines. While this was often a source of frustration when the Captain had difficulty budging the bureaucracy, it also created for him or her a role of neighborhood champion that paid dividends beyond the success or failure of any single request. Because of the networking that developed through these meetings, several local city officials were able to obtain funding for some of the suggested programs.

Additionally, many of the teams worked with the news media to inform community members about the process. Some districts constructed

a monthly newsletter to educate and update community residents. Most of these newsletters are still being published four years later.

### **Second Stage**

After three months of meeting, a list of goals and objectives were published. Teams continued to meet monthly for five more months, and most stakeholders continued to participate in the process. Each team developed its own neighborhood policing document which outlined goals and objectives and served as a blueprint for future action. As in other similar efforts across the country, many of these issues included quality of life concerns (i.e. noise violations, graffiti, etc.), crime prevention strategies, traffic and pedestrian safety and improving overall police/ community communication.

An analysis of the goals and objectives developed during the strategic planning process indicates that the 16 teams generated 295 specific goals and objectives. This represents an average of 18 goals and objectives developed by each team. When these goals and objectives (G&O) are categorized, those dealing with internal Boston Police issues were the most common, accounting for 38% of the total. Among the most common G&O in this category were improved management and supervision practices, additional training, and improved technology.

The second most frequent category of G&O involved increased or improved partnerships between the police and the community (27%).

These include developing relationships with local community centers, area substance abuse programs, local judicial officials, various local community groups and in a number of cases the development of a District Action Council to implement the goals of the strategic planning process.

Following the partnership goals, the most frequent G&O involved specific attempts to deal with crime or quality of life issues. These included a full range of activities from dealing with sexual assault and domestic violence to actions intended to reduce graffiti and noise in the neighborhood. The final two categories of G&O dealt with two more specific issues, improved communication both within the Department and between the department and the community (7%), and a broad array of youth related issues (8%). These youth related issues included expansion of existing programs such as GREAT or DARE, establishing partnerships with local schools, and a large number of actions intended to increase the participation of local police officers in area youth activities.

A nearly unanimous sentiment on the part of community residents was that the visibility and accessibility of the police had been tremendously improved. Tied to this was a sense that the streets were safer. In Area B-3, one of the business owners moved back into the District--tiring of the commute and convinced that the neighborhood was becoming safer and more economically viable.

All participants could point to real changes they had experienced in



policing as a result of the planning process: the rapport between the Youth Service Officers and neighborhood children (District A-7), the degree to which younger officers were involved and were living in the City as a result of the residency rule (District A-1), the reduction in street gangs, vagrancy and public drunkenness (District B-3), the improved vitality of the neighborhood business districts and the role that the walking or bicycle beat officer played in this (District E-13), the improved professionalism, and better match of person to position (District E-5).

As many of the participants had been involved with their District over time, there was also a recognition that Strategic Planning was a truly different approach. As one participant explained:

Ten years ago the city paid lip service to community policing. Cops were only visiting the businesses that they knew. We had one officer who would park illegally in a bus stop and then sit all day in a single coffee shop. This shop got excellent police protection, but the rest of the business district suffered. Now we have a bicycle officer who is very mobile. He isn't in a car, he is moving, he is friendly. It is no longer us versus them.

From another policing district, a participant offered that the attitude of the residents had changed along with the police officers:

The change in police, in particular the increased number of younger officers, has prompted a change in attitude on the part of residents. The image of the Boston Police Department is that these are the "good guys." This was not the image just a few years ago when police officers were seen as part of the problem.

The following passage from an interview with a community team member reveals a great deal about the perception of the process and its impact for non-police members.

The Strategic Planning effort was an exercise in process and patience, but it was well worth it. I am still involved. The change in the relationship between the community and police is evident. They came out of the cars, moved to walking beats, established personal contact -- it has been a [180] degree change. Dorchester is a vast area and there are many neighborhood associations and meetings. The Community Service Officers are there. Our concerns are not falling on deaf ears. And they are creative and responsive -- the "Cop Cards" went over big with the kids and they saw the officers as individuals; the "Party Line" for noisy parties has been well received by adults. The Captain has taught us how the Department works--who reports to who--and with that comes an understanding of what the District can do. We are volunteers, but now we know that 9-1-1 calls are centralized and dispatched from downtown. We didn't understand before, now we do. This District has worked to address every possible quality of life issue--hiring multi-lingual officers, getting help from the Gang Units and Drug Units. I just hope the Department continues this. Our business districts are much healthier and much of this is due to the involvement of the Boston Police Department.

Consistent across almost all of the Police Districts was the sense that these sessions had become a key activity in each District. The meetings served as a way to introduce and orient those new to the District, such as newly assigned Captains, new business owners, new managers of agencies

or city departments, etc..

Asked if there would be an impact if the meetings were discontinued, community members gave answers that were very revealing. Short-term, they felt that the meeting's absence would not be noticed, but long-term, as inevitable shifts in personnel occurred, the sense of shared mission, and leadership familiarity would be lost. In districts striving to develop a sense of cohesion and connection during a time of demographic change, the meetings of the District Advisory Committees (the institutionalized successors of the original Strategic Planning teams) have developed a crucial role in the social organization of Boston's neighborhoods.

### **Closing the Circle**

During the winter of 1996, the set of district and special operations Strategic Plan Reports were completed and distributed back to each district. Approximately one year after the beginning of the Strategic Planning Process, each of Boston's Districts were asked to present a one year review of their course of action since receiving the official District Plan.

To meet this request, each district hosted a formal meeting to summarize the Team's progress in achieving their stated goals. Attendants of these meetings included Police Commissioner Evans (generally) police managers, officers, stakeholders and community members. Venues for the presentations varied from conference rooms in the district station houses, to community centers, to the dining hall of the Copley-Marriot Hotel.

Whenever possible, the presentations were preceded by comments from Commissioner Evans, to reinforce the Department's commitment to the process and to each team's work.

Each of the presentations observed by project staff followed a similar format, in which each of the goals and corresponding strategies were discussed at length. The discussion included details of successful strategies as well as barriers in achieving particular goals. Each issue was generally presented by the officer or team member who served as lead person, and often demonstrated considerable innovation and creativity by the team members. :

- an Allston Brighton Juvenile Officer who was leading efforts to improve relations between youth and police discussed the success the team had achieved with this goal, albeit through a tragic incident: when a young resident was killed by a motorist in an unmarked intersection, the officer developed the trust of the youths by serving as their advisor and liaison to other city departments to petition for a traffic signal to be installed.

- the officer serving as the lead person for a graffiti issue noted that one community team member was collaborating with Public Works to remove the graffiti and coat the walls with a chemical that would allow future graffiti to be washed away easily.

- one district team determined that flyers (advertisements for yard

sales, bands, lost animals, rooms for rent, etc.) on telephone poles were an unsightly quality of life issue, and was working to have a kiosk placed in the town center for all such advertisements and bulletins.

Other types of issues which were addressed included bridging the gap between diverse groups within the community and the police.

- District D-14: One South End resident reached out to their Spanish speaking community members through a Spanish version of the Guide to Quality of Life Issues in Allston/Brighton's Real Yellow Pages (an initiative paid for by Harvard's School of Public Health), which included a Spanish version of police definitions of specific types of misconduct and infractions. The team felt that this was important because some of the Spanish speaking community may unknowingly engage in illegal behavior because of cultural differences.

- E-13: In Jamaica Plain, the Team held the second community meeting of each month entirely in Spanish. The Captain felt that the team was successful in sustaining this model because the District Team composition was representative of the community and was therefore capable of accurately assessing the community's needs.

- when D-14 was experiencing an increase in night-time disorder in the Back Bay, community members sponsored a community camp-out in the park to raise community awareness, a strategy based on the Broken Windows philosophy that ignoring minor problems often allows them to

escalate. By increasing community participation and visibility, the Team hoped to send a message that their community was strong and would not be easily taken over by criminal conduct.

- a community member and police officer gave a team presentation on how they organized to obtain and strategically place electronic signs in areas close to pedestrian cross walks which would display the driver's rate of speed in an effort to slow down the driver down. The team communicated that they were having trouble getting more of the electronic signs and were eager to listen to other ideas to get them.

The dedication to innovative team work evident in these meetings was further evidence of the positive impact that the Strategic Planning Process. Team members demonstrated a great deal of collaboration and creativity in striving to achieve their goals. They also took pride and ownership in the positive changes they had helped to create.

### **Reflections on the Process**

Discussions with Departmental Captains and other group leaders yielded several observations that should assist in team staffing for subsequent planning efforts. First, it was stated repeatedly that the members of the teams need to be people with a commitment to work throughout the process. Some individuals who signed up initially did not have the time to give to such an intensive process, and they constituted a large part of the

25 percent who withdrew from the effort before the work was completed. To avoid attrition in the future, participants recommended that the initial meeting establish the expectations for the project. If individual team members can not make the level of commitment necessary, then they might suggest a replacement who has more available time. As one team leader commented, "this process requires workers, not bosses."

The Department focused much of its energy at the district level, leaving the citywide units to use Strategic Planning to identify ways of supporting the actions of the newly empowered Captains. Structural issues made the exercise somewhat frustrating for the citywide groups, since both the districts and the citywide groups were meeting at the same time. Members of the citywide teams had little opportunity to participate in the planning of the District teams, and so were forced to develop their own plans in an institutional vacuum. The Special Operations Plan, for example, noted that meeting with several of the Captains would have been helpful (one Captain had agreed to serve on the team), but the Captains were directing the activities of their own teams at the same time. It was suggested by some group leaders that in the future the Citywide teams meet after the district team have completed their plans to facilitate the necessary coordination.

Additional observations emphasized the need to maintain a high rate of participation throughout the process. Each and every team leader men-

tioned the necessity of providing food at meetings as a major consideration for their group. Most groups decided the best time to hold their meetings was early in the evening, which allowed community members to come after work and still get home early enough to spend some evening time with their families. The most significant drawback of meeting at this time was that few people had a chance to eat supper before the meeting, but Justice Department regulations forbade the use of federal funds for food (a legacy of prior abuses of grant budgets). This posed a significant problem for many groups, who became creative in providing food for meetings. Several established "pot luck" meetings where each member brought something they had made the night before, but this remained a problem for those who arrived straight from work. One group accepted an offer from a major hotel (a manager was a member of the team) to host and provide food to all upcoming meetings. One other District Captain, hosted each team meeting at a different restaurant within the district. By the end of the process, Commissioner Evans had been alerted to the problem, and decided to provide food for the groups from the Department's operating budget. Several group leaders noted that providing food to the members of their team was a statement that the BPD valued their involvement in the process and would do small things to make their participation a little less difficult.

A final issue of importance to the sustained participation in the pro-



cess was what was called a business-like approach to the conducting of meetings. Captains noted that they had all had numerous meeting with members of their districts previously. If these meetings were to be viewed as different and if individuals would be expected to put in a substantial time commitment, the meeting had to be run in a professional business-like manner. Toward that end, most meetings had an agenda, all meetings had notes prepared at the conclusion of the meeting and circulated by the OSP to each team member before the next meeting. Additionally, each meeting was coordinated by a trained facilitator who worked to devise achievable objectives for each meeting. Participants at the meetings reported that this business-like approach was refreshing, and conveyed the message that this was an important process that would in fact result in an important product.

## Section IV:

### Impact of the 1995 Boston Neighborhood Policing Initiative on Crime, and on Resident and Police Officer Perceptions

This section of the report analyzes information bearing on the issues defined as the substantive outcomes of the 1995 Boston Neighborhood Policing Initiative: reduced crime, lower fear of crime among residents, and improved neighborhood quality of life. One of the intentions of the initiative was that these goals would be achieved in large part through improved collaboration between police and the community. The weight of the evidence so far suggests that it has had a positive affect on crime, feelings of public safety, and some neighborhood quality of life issues. It also is clear that most BPD officers support the principles of the Neighborhood Policing Initiative, and there is a great deal of agreement in the opinions of Boston police officers and residents concerning causes of crime and potential solutions to the crime problem.

Because evaluation measures were not built in to the original planning process, there are few pieces of information that allow us to assess the impact of the initiative over time. The information about crime rates and resident perceptions of safety and quality of life issues in their neighborhoods provide solid evidence that the initiative has had a positive impact. For other indications of impact, we were required to employ a variety of secondary, indirect sources.<sup>1</sup> The analysis focused on a compar-

ison of local crime rates and trends with corresponding national figures, and looked at local citizen survey responses in the context of comparable inquiries across the nation. Due to availability of data, most of our analyses focus on the two years following the initiative (1995-1997). A brief summary of the data sources appears at the end of this chapter; a more complete Technical Report is enclosed as an Appendix to the primary report.

### **I. Crime and Victimization Rates**

Crime rates in Boston have fallen sharply over the past few years, and in 1999 the city is enjoying record low levels of homicide and other serious offenses. This is consistent with nation-wide declines in serious crimes, suggesting that forces far larger than (and existing prior to) the Neighborhood Policing Initiative are at work. Changes in the drug market, sentencing practices, demographic and economic trends, increased collaboration among criminal justice agencies, as well as the crime-prevention efforts of neighborhood groups, the clergy, parents, and schools are all potential contributors to the national and local declines in crime.

However, crime data suggest that crime rates in Boston are being affected by something beyond what would be expected from national trends alone. For the fourth consecutive year, Boston's rate of decline has exceeded the national average (Figure 4.1, adapted from BPD Office of

Research and Evaluation, 1998). There is good reason to believe that Boston's approach to neighborhood policing has made a significant impact on crime.

### Reported Crime

The decline in Boston's reported crime rate has been among the steepest for U.S. cities in the past three years. In 1995, Boston ranked 28th among the 50 largest U.S. cities in the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Part One crime rates, in which higher rank indicates lower relative crime rate. This ranking improved to 22nd in 1996 and 12th in 1997 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1998). Boston had the greatest reduction in Part One crimes among the largest U.S. cities from 1995 to 1996, and the third largest reduction from 1996 to 1997 (FBI, 1998). In 1997, Boston's crime rate was lower than the average rate for the other 49 largest U.S. cities (Figure 4.2).

The timing of the sharp decline of serious crime coincides with the BPD's Strategic Planning Initiative. The crime rate decline at the national level during the two years preceding the initiative (from 1993 to 1994, and 1994 to 1995); during that period, Boston's serious crime rate was within 3% of the national average. However, in the two years after implementation (from 1995 to 1996, and again from 1996 to 1997) serious crime in Boston fell at least 10% more than the national average (Figure

4.1). There were 96 homicides in Boston in 1995, which is consistent with the 25-year average of 95 homicides per year and the average of 92 in the four years prior to 1995 (Figure 4.3). The number fell to 59 in 1996, and to 43 in 1997. In 1998 the number of homicides fell yet again, to 35.

Boston's declines exceed national trends, and cannot be explained by demographic or economic variables alone since those have not changed significantly in this short time frame. Crime has fallen dramatically in the two years since the start of the BPD Neighborhood Policing Strategic Planning Initiative, which is precisely what was intended. Many factors affect the crime rate, and this analysis can only address broad outcomes. The limitations of the data sources do not support precise analysis of all causal links between the multiple police operations and the overall decline in serious crime.

### **Crime Victimization Surveys**

Since not all crimes are reported to police, Uniform Crime Report figures generally underestimate incidence and prevalence, particularly of less serious types of crime. What can appear to be trends in the level of crime in UCR data might actually be changes in levels of reporting to the police. The Boston Police Department has long recognized this difficulty, and has augmented its information about the effectiveness of police initiatives through extensive use of citizen surveys.

Crime victimization surveys are a means of further understanding reported crime statistics such as the UCR figures. Other citizen surveys capture other dimensions of the police mission, including the perceived effectiveness of the police, public confidence in the police, and resident satisfaction with a broad array of police services. The BPD's desire to garner as much useful information as possible each time it surveyed its constituents led to some unanticipated consequences which affect this analysis. Changes in the wording of certain questions, and changes in the scales of available responses, make it difficult to compare the results of the surveys: each is anchored in the immediate questions of the day, diminished the ability to analyze changes over time.

The 1997 BPD Public Safety Survey contained questions designed to address crime victimization (since no such questions appeared in the 1995 survey, however, we are unable to determine whether there has been a change in rates since the Neighborhood Policing Initiative). While we cannot use BPD surveys to examine a change in crime from 1995 to 1997, we can compare the 1997 Boston survey to data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to try to verify Boston's relatively low rates of crime reported to the police.

Figure 4.4 presents data from the 1997 Boston Public Safety Survey (BPD, 1998) and from the NCVS (BJS, 1998). In the 1997 Boston survey, city residents were asked, "Have you been a victim of any crime in Boston

within the past year?" Only those individuals who answered affirmatively to this question were asked about the specific type of crime that occurred. Eighteen percent of the residents said they had been victimized by some type of crime in the previous year.

The NCVS presented a national sample with a series of questions designed to yield information about many specific types of criminal victimization. In order to maximize the comparability of the data to the Boston survey, we combined the violent and property victimization rates, and selected only the NCVS data from urban residents. We found that 20 percent of the national urban sample had been the victim of crime in the previous year.<sup>2</sup> Figure 4.4 presents the data for this comparison. Given the differences in how these victimization estimates were derived and the similarity of the rates, we cannot conclude with any certainty that Boston's crime victimization rate is significantly different than the national urban average. However, it appears to be true that Boston is experiencing victimization rates that are similar to or slightly lower than those of other cities.

## II. Resident Concerns about Safety

Both the 1995 and 1997 surveys of Boston residents conducted by the BPD contained questions about fear of crime and feelings of personal safety. However, changes in the wording and/or response scales of some

questions on the 1997 survey made it difficult to determine how perceived fear and safety levels may have changed from 1995 to 1997 (Technical Appendix, Note #2).

While the differences in the two surveys limited our ability to make valid comparisons regarding fear of crime, there are questions about feelings of safety that are similar enough to allow for assessment of changes from 1995 to 1997. Where comparisons across the two surveys are possible, the data suggest that feelings of safety among Boston residents have improved greatly. In 1995, 41 percent of the sample reported feeling "very safe" out in their neighborhood alone during the day, while two years later 78 percent said they felt "very safe" during the day (Figure 4.5). Only 16 percent said they felt "very safe" in their neighborhood alone at night in 1995, while 35 percent said so in 1997 (Figure 4.5). The increases in the proportions of those surveyed who felt very safe from 1995 to 1997 were statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ; see Note #3 of the Technical Appendix for a discussion of statistical significance). Of greater significance is the finding that in those two years, the proportion of youth who felt very safe at night or during the day nearly doubled.

To corroborate these results, we compared the most recent Boston survey figures with data obtained from the National Opinion Survey on Criminal Justice (NOS CJ; Flanagan and Longmire, 1995). Several of the questions in the BPD's 1997 survey were also asked in this survey of pub-



lic opinions about crime and justice issues. We obtained the NOSCJ data from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data, and selected the sample of urban residents. In both the Boston and NOSCJ questionnaires, respondents were asked how safe they feel out alone in their neighborhood at night. While only 19 percent of the national urban sample indicated that they felt "very safe", 35 percent of Boston residents said they felt "very safe" out alone in their neighborhoods at night (Figure 4.6).<sup>4</sup>

In the 1997 BPD survey, Boston residents were asked how safe they feel at home during the night, and 75 percent said they felt "very safe" (Figure 4.7). In 1996 a national urban sample of residents was asked a similar question (Los Angeles Times Poll, 1996, reported in BJS, 1997), and just 43 percent indicated that they felt "very safe" (statistically significant at  $p < .01$ ; see Note #6 of the Technical Appendix). Again, when compared to residents of other cities, residents of Boston were twice as likely to report feeling very safe in their neighborhoods.

In addition to being asked about feelings of safety, Boston (BPD, 1998) and national samples of residents (Flanagan and Longmire, 1995; Gallup Poll Monthly, 1997) were asked how they felt crime had changed in their neighborhood over the previous year. In 1997, 37 percent of Boston residents said they felt crime had decreased over the previous year (Figure 4.8), compared to only 17 percent of a 1995 national urban sample (NOSCJ, Flanagan and Longmire 1995).<sup>5</sup> In a similar comparison using a

1997 national sample of residents (Gallup Poll Monthly, 1997), 46% said they felt crime had increased, while only 12 percent of Boston residents felt similarly that year (Figure 4.9).<sup>6</sup>

It is clear from these results that Boston residents felt much safer in 1997 than they did in 1995. The proportion of residents saying they feel very safe in their neighborhood during the day and during the night doubled in two years. It is possible that this increase in perceived safety is the result of the falling crime rate or other reasons and may have happened without the 1995 Neighborhood Policing Initiative. However, there are some indications that the initiative may have played a role. First, Boston residents feel safer than do national samples, most of which include rural and suburban residents who live in communities with lower crime rates. This suggests that something in addition to crime is driving perceived safety. If feelings of safety are primarily a function of the crime rate, we should not have seen such dramatic improvements in perceived safety. The rate of increased perceived safety far outpaced the declining crime rate in Boston (with the exception of homicide, which fell from 96 to 43 from 1995 to 1997; no other major crime type fell this sharply).

Second, the great magnitude of the change in perceived public safety in Boston is highly unusual, even with declining crime rates. Research on fear of crime (not identical but related to feelings of safety) finds that

nationwide, the proportion of people expressing fear in their neighborhood had not changed more than four percent in any one year from 1967 to 1994 in either NORC's General Social Surveys (GSS) or Gallup Polls (Warr, 1995). From 1972 to 1993 the percentage of national samples expressing fear in their neighborhood in the Gallup Polls varied between 42 and 48 percent. From 1973 to 1994, the proportion expressing fear varied from 38 to 47 percent. This stability occurred through periods when crime rates were varying dramatically. After reviewing these and other sources of public opinion, Warr found that "Fear of crime... appears to be a relatively stable--if all too prevalent--phenomenon" (Warr, 1995:302).

This research suggests that something in addition to declining crime is probably at work in driving the higher levels of perceived safety in Boston. It is quite reasonable to conclude that the Neighborhood Policing Initiative played an important role in this improvement.

### III. Identifying Crime as a Neighborhood Problem

The 1997 Boston Public Safety Survey contained the question, "As a resident of Boston, what three (3) major or minor issues concern you the most, and how would you rank them?" No list of issues was read to the respondents, who were free to mention whatever they wished. Crime was the most frequently mentioned problem, with 14.2% citing it as an issue of concern (BPD, 1998).

To assess whether the proportion of Boston residents citing crime as a concern is relatively high or low, we compared the results of the Boston survey to those from a national survey asking similar questions. One of the questions in the American Housing Survey (BJS, 1998) was, "Is there anything about the neighborhood that bothers you?" The proportion of urban respondents mentioning crime was 15.0%, 14.8%, and 14.5% in the 1991, 1993, and 1995 surveys, respectively. The results were remarkably similar to those of the 1997 BPD survey (Figure 4.10). Again, the lack of identical questions in the BPD and the national surveys compromises the validity of this comparison (Note #9, Technical Appendix).

#### IV. Resident Opinions on Neighborhood Quality of Life Issues

One of the features of the 1995 Boston Neighborhood Policing Initiative was an attempt to improve neighborhood quality, with police working in cooperation with the community. Some of these issues targeted involve criminal activity (such as drug dealing, prostitution, and auto theft). Others (such as youth loitering, dogs running loose, and too much noise) did not necessarily constitute crimes, but have been identified as important to neighborhood residents and about which the community has sought assistance from the police.

In both the 1995 and 1997 BPD Public Safety Surveys, residents were asked to what extent they considered a series of issues to be prob-

lematic in their neighborhood (BPD, 1995; 1998). Fifteen issues were addressed in the 1995 survey and 22 were listed in the 1997 survey. Only five of these issues were presented in a manner similar enough to allow valid comparisons across the two surveys (see Note #10 of the Technical Appendix for a discussion of these differences). Figure 4.11 presents the results of a comparison of these five issues across the surveys, displaying the percent of the respondents indicating that the issue is a "serious" or "major" problem in their neighborhood (the 1995 survey contained "major problem" and the 1997 survey contained "serious problem" as response categories for recording opinions of the most pressing problems).

As can be seen in Figure 4.11, there were no dramatic changes from 1995 to 1997 in opinions about these problems. There was a five percent drop in the proportion of residents who considered graffiti to be a serious or major problem ( $p < .05$ ), and four percent fewer residents viewed public drinking as a serious problem ( $p < .05$ ). There were increases of less than three percent in the portion of residents indicating that kids hanging around, prostitution, and criminal gangs were highly problematic (the latter two increases were statistically significant at  $p < .05$ ).

To pursue resident perceptions of neighborhood problems, we also compared the 1997 Boston survey results to recent surveys from other jurisdictions. Figure 4.12 presents the results of comparing the Boston resident survey to the NOSCJ urban sample (Flanagan and Longmire,

1995). Five items could be directly compared across these two surveys (Note #11, Technical Appendix). The proportion of Boston residents feeling that graffiti is a serious neighborhood problem was significantly lower than the national sample ( $p < .05$ ). A significantly greater proportion of Boston residents felt that dogs running loose and vacant houses and lots were serious problems ( $p < .05$ ). The differences between the Boston and national survey results for perceptions of litter and abandoned cars as neighborhood problems were not statistically significant.

Finally, we compared the 1997 Boston survey results to a 1997 survey of Chicago residents (Chicago Community Policing Consortium, 1997). Chicago provides us with an interesting point of comparison, since it is considered a leader among major U.S. cities in implementing community policing (e.g., Skogan, 1998; Skogan and Harnett, 1997). Although Chicago is a much larger city than Boston and has significant demographic differences, it has an active community policing program (initiated in 1993) and, like Boston, has an ongoing evaluation effort, which provides us with survey data. There were five items presented in a manner allowing for comparison between the 1997 Boston and Chicago surveys (Note #12 Technical Appendix). As seen in Figure 4.13, Boston compares favorably to Chicago on four of the five measures.

A smaller proportion of Boston residents than Chicago residents believe that graffiti, drug dealing, public drinking, and abandoned cars are

a serious problem in their neighborhood (all comparisons statistically significant at  $p < .05$ ). More Boston residents than Chicago residents indicated that auto theft was a problem in their neighborhood ( $p < .05$ ).

#### **V. Resident Experiences with and Perceptions of Boston Police**

Both the 1995 and 1997 BPD surveys asked residents questions about their level of contact with Boston Police, their satisfaction with police services, and their opinions about how police actions affect crime. However, in 1997 the wording of most questions was changed, diminishing our ability to determine how Boston residents' perceptions of and satisfaction with police services changed since the 1995 strategic planning initiative.

#### **Confidence in Boston Police Ability to Prevent and Solve Crime**

One of the points of comparison that provides a relative sense of how Boston police are performing subsequent to the strategic planning initiative is a comparison of questions from the 1997 BPD survey with nearly identical questions from the 1995 NOSCJ, regarding the department's ability to prevent or solve crime. The similarity of the questions, the response scales, sampling, and data collection methods provide confidence in this comparison, with only minor concerns for potential discrepancies.<sup>7</sup> The comparison provides a rough indication of whether the BPD is viewed by

city residents as effective or ineffective compared to how residents of other U.S. urban residents view their police.

Figures 4.14 and 4.15 present the comparison of the 1995 NOSCJ and 1997 BPD surveys. Significantly greater proportions of Boston residents expressed confidence in the ability of police to prevent and solve crime. Seventy-four percent of the national urban sample said they had a "great deal" or "some" confidence in police ability to solve crime, while 84 percent of Boston residents expressed these levels of confidence (Figure 4.14). Only 58 percent of the national urban sample said they had a "great deal" or "some" confidence in the ability of police to prevent crime, while 84 percent of Boston residents expressed such confidence (Figure 4.15).

### Contact with Local Police

In the 1997 BPD survey, Boston residents were asked whether they have had any contact with police (aside from family members or friends who are officers) in the past year. A similar question was asked in a survey of residents of 12 U.S. cities in 1998 (BJS and COPS, 1999; see Technical Appendix, Note #13). The proportion of Boston residents indicating a police contact (34 percent) was very similar to the portion of the samples in the 12 cities (35 percent). Thus, it does not appear that the Boston residents' responses are due to anything related to the *quantity* of citizen police interactions, but are instead based on the *quality* of those interac-



tions.

### **Resident Familiarity with Community Policing**

The 1997 BPD survey asked residents, "Have you ever heard of the concept Neighborhood or Community Policing in Boston?" Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) said they had. In 1998, residents of 12 other U.S. cities (BJS and COPS, 1999) were asked, "Are you familiar with the term 'community policing'?" The portion of the samples saying they had ranged from 39 percent in Tucson to 73 percent in Chicago, with a mean of 54 percent across the 12 cities. Assuming that the differences in question phrasing have not affected the comparison, it appears that a relatively high proportion of Boston residents are familiar with the concept of community policing.

That Boston's rate of awareness is within ten points of Chicago's is noteworthy, because it has occurred without a large-scale publicity campaign. Public awareness of the Chicago initiative (CAPS, or the Chicago Alternative Police Strategy) was one of the articulated goals of that initiative, and when, at the conclusion of the second year, early assessments indicated that program recognition among residents had risen only from 32 percent to 38 percent (CCPEC, 1995:80), there ensued a deliberate campaign to raise public awareness (CCPEC, 1995:100). Although Boston has certainly publicized its strategic planning operations, it has avoided the

intense media campaign that attended the Chicago effort. The Boston awareness rate is the product of grass-roots efforts and the persistence of the BPD command staff and community officers.

## **VI. Survey of Boston Police Officers, 1997**

In this section of the report we describe some of the 1997 Police Officer Survey results and interpret how they reflect on the impact of the Neighborhood Policing Initiative. We also compare some of the 1997 Police Officer Survey data with that from the 1997 Public Safety Survey, again assessing how fully the Neighborhood Policing Initiative's goals seem to have been met.

### **Boston Police Officer Opinions about BPD Mission, Priorities**

Several questions in the survey addressed how officers viewed the mission and goals of the department, as well as their opinions of their most important functions as police officers. These are separate but related concepts, with the potential to provide contradictory viewpoints. For instance, officers might respond to questions about the agency's mission in what they viewed as a "politically correct" manner, but express more traditional views in response to questions about their role and function. The test of success rests upon whether the two sets of answers reflect the same basic attitudes: in the Boston Police Department, they do.

The data and knowledge of the process available to us all suggest that these attitudes are the result of the strategic planning process itself. The sustained commitment to the process, the all-ranks inclusiveness of the process, providing resources to support announced changes in focus, and the inclusion of community representatives in substantive roles all served to solidify the public pronouncements about the process. They all represent "walking the walk," which is far more important to police officers than the latest version of "talking the talk." The ancillary benefit of providing a structured forum for officers to hear community concerns in a neutral aspect (as distinct from crisis-driven encounters) also serves to bring the line officer and community viewpoints together toward a common understanding of problems and needs.

#### **Officer Recognition of the BPD's Formal Mission Statement.**

Officers were presented with three statements, and were asked to indicate which one is the formal mission statement of the BPD (Question #26). Approximately two-thirds (66 percent) correctly identified the BPD mission statement, which was the only one specifically mentioning "neighborhood policing." (See the Technical Appendix, Note #14, for the text of this question and list of mission statements.) That fully one third of the officers were unable to recognize the departments Mission Statement might be considered an area of concern by some, but we recognize that not

everyone places the same level of faith in mission statements as the authors of those statements often do. We are far more encouraged by the two-thirds of the glass that is full than discouraged by the empty third.

### **Decentralization of Administration**

One of the main features of the Neighborhood Policing Initiative was decentralization of administration, giving district captains much greater control over police activities within their jurisdiction. To assess the level of police officer support for this policy, the question was asked,

"Do you think that giving district captains complete control of all police activities in their district has or will improve the delivery of police services within the city's neighborhoods?"  
(Question #4)

The responses are summarized in Figure 4.16, where it is apparent that the vast majority of officers believe that giving district captains greater control has or will improve police services to the community. Eighty three percent indicated that this policy shift has or will either significantly (41 percent) or somewhat (42 percent) improve services, while only six percent said that it would not improve services at all. This level of support suggests that officers strongly support one of the key features of the neighborhood policing initiative.

### Importance of Various Police Functions, Priorities of BPD

Boston police officers were asked to indicate what they believe are the most important things they do in their jobs (Question #5). The majority (68 percent) listed functions that may be categorized as assisting and interacting with citizens: helping people/making them feel safe (38 percent), problem solve (15 percent), visibility (13 percent), and help children (2 percent). Very few (17 percent) listed arresting offenders or reducing crime as their most important function, and the remainder (15 percent) listed administrative and "other" functions (Figure 4.17).

When asked to rank what they believe are the current policing priorities of the BPD (Question #21), relatively few officers (a total of 30 percent) said that responding to 911 calls (20 percent) or solving serious crimes (10 percent) are the top priorities (Figure 4.18). The majority of officers (a total of 68 percent) indicated that the top priorities are crime prevention (27 percent), increasing the level of collaboration between police and others (22 percent), and public order maintenance (19 percent).

It is clear from these results that the majority of police see crime prevention and assisting the public as their primary function, not simply responding to and investigating reported crime. This can be interpreted as consistent with the neighborhood policing initiative, although the BPD mission statement clearly lists fighting crime as one of its top three goals. It

may not be too much of a stretch to suggest that one ancillary benefit of the process appears to be an increased understanding among the rank and file of how the community-oriented aspects of the mission support the crime-fighting ones.

### **Influences on Boston Police Operations and Priorities**

One of the fundamental principles of the neighborhood policing initiative is that police priorities must be developed in partnership with the community. It would be expected, then, that neighborhood residents, organizations, and business groups would be seen as having a strong influence on how the police function. The results of the officer survey are not as positive in this regard.

A question in the 1997 survey bearing on this issue (Question #27) asked officers to indicate which of a list of groups and individuals has "the greatest influence on the direction and focus" of the BPD. Less than one-third (28 percent) of the Boston police officers indicated a belief that community activists, neighborhood residents, or business leaders have the greatest influence on the direction and focus of the department. The majority of the officers said that they believe the mayor (23 percent), the news media (18 percent), or the police commissioner (16 percent) to have the greatest influence on the BPD (Figure 4.19).

Without data allowing comparisons over time, it is unclear whether

this reflects positively or negatively on the Neighborhood Policing Initiative. It may be that 28 percent represents a vast increase in the proportion of police officers that feel the community plays a primary role in police activity, or it may not. In any event, these results suggest that there is room for improvement, given the percentage of officers who view residents, community activists, or business leaders as playing a primary role in determining the focus of the BPD.

However, as noted previously, the history of the Boston Police Department prior to the current administration has been one of close ties between the department's command structure and City Hall. The survey question may have tapped a reservoir of strong past impressions that overwhelmed the new (and presumably still tentative) impressions of greater citizen input as a result of the strategic planning process. This mind-set might change with longer-term exposure to the new order of conducting police business, and it will be important that the question be included in future surveys to allow for comparisons as the fruits of the planning process are realized.

### **Police Officer Goals for Department**

When asked to list the most important things officers would most like to see the BPD accomplish over the next few years (Question #9), the most frequently mentioned was promoting/treating fairly (19 percent),

and another 12 percent indicated that they would like their labor contract ratified (Figure 4.20). Issues such as more technology (12 percent), racial diversity within the department (7 percent), police educational incentives in the Quinn Bill (6 percent), increasing/improving personnel (6 percent), and retirement (5 percent) were all mentioned as important goals more often than improving public image/relations (5 percent) and reducing crime (4 percent).

These results may be interpreted in many ways. It would almost certainly be unfair to characterize the small proportion of officers listing reducing crime as an important objective as police disinterest in seeing crime decline. It is probably the case that some of the other things were listed because the officers believe that they are important in dealing with crime. For example, it stands to reason that more technology, increasing and improving personnel, and having better training and equipment were listed by the officers because they will help them to ensure public safety. It is also important to recognize that the Boston Police union had been without a contract for several months when this survey was conducted, and a number of job actions were being considered by the union.

The items listed can be categorized as either public service and safety issues or job-related issues. Promoting and treating officers fairly, ratifying the contract, Quinn Bill incentives, retirement, more money, and improving morale can be considered job related concerns; together they



were listed as most important by 47 percent of the officers. More technology, increasing/improving personnel, improving the department's public image/public relations, obtaining more/better training, reducing crime, and better equipment can be classified as issues focused on public service and safety; together they were listed as most important by 34 percent of the officers.

As with the "community influence" question, there are some recognized dangers to asking police officers what they think their department should do, at a time when the officers' labor contract is in dispute. The preoccupation of the officers with internal concerns is quite natural under those conditions, and the original question did not adequately specify whether the field of reference was internal to the department or external, as in "accomplish on behalf of the community." Both of those questions are important, but it will be important that future iterations of the survey clearly indicate the locus of the question.

### **Police Officer Opinions of What Boston Residents Expect of Police**

The BPD officers were asked, "Regardless of your current assignment, what do you think are the two primary issues that residents would like to see the police do more about?" (Question #11) As can be seen in Figure 4.21, the items listed by the officers as the public's top priorities for their attention are drug-related problems (16 percent) and quality of life issues

(15 percent).

Fifty-seven percent of the officers indicated that they think the public would like them to do more about things that are crimes or closely linked to crime: Reducing crime, drug-related problems, gangs, youth crimes, property crimes, vehicle theft and break-ins, breaking and entering, and guns. Forty percent of the officers said they believe that the public wants more action in areas that may be categorized as quality of life and community service: More police and community involvement, quality of life issues, more walking beats, increasing police/citizen communication, public drinking, and vagrants/homeless.

We cannot say whether these results represent a shift in officers' thinking brought on by the neighborhood policing initiative. However, they do suggest that Boston police officers see their role as working with the community on quality of life issues as well as fighting crime, and this is consistent with the community policing orientation and the mission statement of the BPD.

### **Police Officer Perception of Crime Trends**

Two questions addressed how Boston police officers perceived changes in crime rates over the years prior to the survey in 1997. One of the questions asked, "Do you think that serious (Part One) crime has increased or decreased citywide during the past five years?" The officers

were given the option of indicating that crime had increased, remained the same, or decreased. The other question was identical except that it referred to crime in the officer's district (Technical Appendix, Note #15) rather than all of Boston, and only during the prior two years. The majority of officers correctly perceive that crime has decreased both in their own district (71 percent) and citywide (74 percent; Figure 4.22). Optimists will be encouraged that most of the officers are aware of local crime trends. Others might be concerned that more than one of every four officers is unaware that their city is in the midst of historic declines in crime rates.

### **Comparison of Boston Police and Resident Perceptions of Crime Trends**

As discussed earlier in this report, in the 1997 Public Safety Survey Boston residents were asked whether they thought crime had increased or decreased in the prior year. The 1997 BPD officer survey asked about their perceptions of the prior two years, so the comparison of the results of these two surveys is somewhat tenuous. However, since the crime rate in Boston had been declining at about the same rate for each of the two years prior to the 1997 survey, the dissimilar time frames should not seriously distort the comparison (Technical Appendix, Note #16). We have no reason to believe that the difference in phrasing ("district" versus "neighborhood") significantly affected the comparison.

Figure 4.23 presents the comparison of officers and residents perceptions of local crime trends. Relatively few residents (12 percent) or police officers (five percent) indicated that they thought crime had increased. However, the proportions of the two groups who believe that crime had decreased versus remained the same were quite different. More than half of the residents surveyed (52 percent) said that crime had stayed the same in their neighborhood, while less than one-third of the officers (29 percent) felt similarly. Only 36 percent of the residents indicated that crime had declined in their neighborhoods, while the great majority of the officers (71 percent) perceived that crime had fallen.

### **Opinions of the Best Way to Reduce Boston's Drug-Related Problems**

When asked to indicate the best way to reduce the problems associated with drugs in the city of Boston, the most frequent responses of BPD officers were: stricter punishment (24 percent); better education/ prevention (23 percent); stronger enforcement at the major dealer level (20 percent); and increasing police powers (8 percent). Relatively few indicated drug legalization (5 percent); more youth activities and facilities (4 percent); rehabilitation programs (4 percent); and more parental involvement (Figure 4.24). The majority (53 percent) of the officers indicated strategies focused on enforcement and punishment (stricter punishment,

stronger enforcement at the dealer level, and increasing police powers), while 37 percent suggested strategies focusing on prevention and rehabilitation (education and prevention, legalization, youth activities and facilities, rehabilitation programs, and more parental involvement). The responses of the remaining 11 percent of the officers were listed as "other." (the categories add to 101 percent due to rounding).

A similar question was asked of residents in the 1997 Boston Public Safety Survey (BPD, 1997). Residents were asked: "How would you complete the following statement: The best way to reduce the problems associated with illegal drugs in the city of Boston is to\_\_\_\_\_." 8 Figure 4.24 presents a comparison of the police and citizen responses, where the response categories are similar enough to allow comparison (Technical Appendix, Note #17). There appears to be general agreement between the officer and resident opinions. The rank order of most frequently mentioned remedies for drug problems are very close, with a combination of targeting dealers, education and prevention, and tougher penalties mentioned most frequently, while legalization and rehabilitation programs were mentioned relatively infrequently.

A few differences are seen when examining the comparable response categories. For example, the percentage of citizens believing that legalization would be best way to reduce drug-related problems (8.6 percent) is nearly twice that of police officers (4.8 percent), although legalization sup-

porters are a small part of each group. The portion of the citizen sample (11 percent) indicating that tougher penalties is the best response to drug related problems is less than half that of the police officer sample (24 percent).

### **Comparison of Boston Police Officer and Resident Opinions of the Best Way to Reduce Crime and Violence Among Young People**

When asked to indicate the best way to reduce the problems associated with drugs in the city of Boston, the most frequent responses of BPD officers were: "More kid activities/facilities" (29 percent), "better education/prevention" (26 percent), "stricter punishment/laws" (15 percent), and "more parental involvement" (13 percent). Other responses included improving economic conditions and opportunities (five percent) and more church involvement/morals (one percent).

A similar question was asked of residents in the 1997 BPD survey (Technical Appendix, Note #18), and the comparable responses for of Boston residents and police officers are presented in Figure 4.25. As seen here, there is general agreement across the two groups, with the rank order of most frequently mentioned solutions being quite similar. The main difference is that residents place somewhat greater emphasis on youth activities and facilities (40 percent for residents, 29 percent for police officers) and less emphasis on tougher punishments (eight percent

for residents, 15 percent for officers).

### Comparison of Boston Police Officer and Resident Perceptions of Neighborhood Problems

The 1997 BPD resident and police officer surveys each contained questions addressing how people feel about certain problems in the neighborhoods in which they live and work (respectively). While the questions and response scales were not identical, they are similar enough to allow some bases for comparison (Technical Appendix, Note #19).

A comparison of the similar items is presented in Figure 4.26. As can be seen here, there are substantial differences in the responses of Boston's police officers and residents. A consistent difference is that a greater proportion of police officers than citizens identified all 14 of the issues as serious problems. Some of the differences in perception are pronounced. For example, just 12 percent of residents said that burglary was a serious problem, while three times the proportion of police officers (34 percent) gave this response. Similarly, at least twice the proportion of police officers than residents indicated that youth loitering, public drinking, prostitution, criminal gangs, and abandoned cars were serious problems.

Perhaps this pattern is to be expected, since police officers are routinely called to deal with these problems throughout a given neighbor-

hood. However, if neighborhood policing involves an effective exchange of information between residents and the police, we would hope that both groups would share more opinions of the severity of local problems.

### **Boston Police Officer Opinions About their Activities, Neighborhood Policing, and Police Officers' Impact on Crime**

BPD officers were asked a variety of questions about their activities and opinions, such as how many hours per week they spend in various functions, what they consider important to increasing police effectiveness, their impact on crime, and how they feel about various aspect of neighborhood policing.

Officers' Role in Neighborhood Crime Prevention Activities. Officers were asked the following question (#53) about their activities:

"During the course of an average 35 hour work week, how many hours do you think you spend engaged in prevention-oriented police work (ex., making informal contact with residents/kids, identifying potential problems and attempting to address them, voluntary walk n talks, etc.)?"

The great majority of the officers (83 percent) said they spend three hours per week or less in such prevention-oriented activity. (This should be evaluated in the context of the specific question, which asks police to calculate time they spend on "unstructured, voluntary crime prevention activity," as distinct from department-directed crime prevention duties or



assignments.) Since 71 percent also said they currently play either a major (19 percent) or moderate (52 percent) role in preventing crime in the neighborhoods they patrol, it appears that the BPD officers feel that their crime-preventive efforts are highly efficient.

Activities Considered Most Important to Increasing the BPD's Effectiveness. When asked to rank the three activities that would be most important to increasing the effectiveness of the department from a list of nine activities, the most frequently mentioned was increasing police visibility and interaction in the neighborhoods (21 percent). About one-third of the officers chose activities that are clearly within the realm of neighborhood policing priorities: (1) Increasing police visibility and interaction in neighborhoods, (2) addressing more quality of life issues, and (3) setting up/working with crime watch groups in more neighborhoods.

Forty-four percent selected activities that are not so clearly linked with neighborhood policing: (1) Improving the ability of officers to use information and technology, (2) holding personnel accountable for their actions, (3) putting more resources into investigative, crime-solving functions, (4) providing faster response to emergency 911 calls, (5) increasing ability to conduct in-depth crime analysis and strategy evaluations, and (6) better case preparation for court prosecutions. It is important to note that these latter activities are not necessarily antithetical to neighborhood policing; in fact they co-exist quite well in practice. The point of this com-

parison is that the former set of three issues are very clearly major elements of neighborhood policing, while the latter set of issues are not explicitly stated elements of the initiative.

### **Officer Frequency of Interaction With Citizens for Non-Crime-Related Issues**

When asked to indicate how many times in a typical week they interact with citizens in their district for issues other than crime-related incidents or calls for service (Question #34), a significant amount of interaction was reported. Only six percent said they never interact with citizens in this manner, and the majority (71 percent) said they did so at least six times per week or more (Figure 4.28). The most common response was "20 times or more," given by 32 percent of the officers surveyed.

When asked to characterize the nature of this interaction (Question #35), the most common response was, "Just saying 'hello'" (29 percent). Saying "hello," giving directions, and discussing specific crime problems were reported by a combined 72 percent of the officers surveyed. Only six percent said they typically interact with residents at community meetings.

Again, we have no direct way of knowing whether this level and of interaction with residents represents a change brought on by the Neighborhood Policing Initiative. However, it is clear that BPD officers have frequent contact with residents for reasons other than responding to crime,

and that this is one of the goals of the initiative.

**BPD Officer's Opinions about Resident Involvement in  
Identifying and Solving Local Problems**

When the officers surveyed were asked whether they agreed with the following statement:

"We could significantly reduce crime if more neighborhood residents made an effort to work closer with police officers to identify and solve local problems." (Question #39)

the overwhelming majority agreed (96 percent; Figure 4.30). When asked to agree with a related statement (Question #41) about whether residents would be willing to work more closely with police officers to solve neighborhood crime problems, a smaller but still significant majority agreed (70 percent; Figure 4.31).

These responses provide evidence of very strong police officer support for one of the primary features of neighborhood policing: residents working in cooperation with police to identify and solving problems in neighborhoods. They also reflect a belief on the part of police officers that citizens would be willing to engage in this partnership.

**Police Officer Effort to Become Acquainted with Residents**

Officers were asked whether they agreed with the following state-

ment, to which three-fourths said that they disagreed (Figure 4.32)

"When I'm out on the street, I DO NOT usually make an effort to get to know the people in the neighborhoods of my district, or make sure that they know me by name." (Question #42)

### **Police Officer Opinions About the Status and Future of Neighborhood Policing**

A series of three questions in the 1997 survey (numbers 36, 37, and 38) specifically addressed how BPD officers feel about the current status and future potential of neighborhood policing in Boston. First, they were asked how they regard "... the current status of Neighborhood Policing within the Department" (Question #36). The responses are presented in Table 4.1. The results suggest a nearly equal division between those who believe that the initiative is gaining momentum with potential for additional success (43.3 percent), and those who believe that it is simply a new name for existing police practice, a buzzword perpetuated for political purposes, or unrealistic (48.2 percent combined).

Responses to the next question provide some insight into the depth of the cynicism of half of the officers. When asked their opinion of the future potential of neighborhood policing, most said that it is either going to build on current success, or will achieve some positive results, although "it will never achieve all that is stated or possible." (Question #37) Only 17 percent said it would probably be replaced by the next policing fad.

The results of Questions 36 and 37 suggests that although half of the officers express little enthusiasm for the current status of neighborhood policing, the great majority believe that it is either currently successful or is likely to achieve some positive results, albeit less than those stated as goals. One may interpret these results as indicating that some of the officers are put off by the rhetoric of the initiative and believe politics are a significant motivation for its existence, but still believe that it will achieve positive results.

Finally, BPD officers were asked to rank various activities that they feel should be the focus of the current neighborhood policing strategy. Perusal of this list suggest that proponents of the initiative should be very encouraged. High on the list are keeping officers in the same neighborhood (16 percent), improving communication among police personnel (13 percent), and increasing involvement of neighborhood residents.

There is nothing on this ranking to indicate anything but support for neighborhood policing. However, an interesting result is that the activity ranked as the lowest priority for the BPD's neighborhood policing strategy was the "strategic planning and community mobilization process." We interpret this, in light of the other results of the officer survey and our interviews with BPD personnel, to mean that there is strong support for most of the fundamental principles of neighborhood policing, but that the strategic planning process itself was held in very low regard.

**Summary: Boston Police Officer Survey**

With the available data, our best strategy for assessing the initiative's impact on police officers is comparing the views of police officers with the strategic planning initiative's major goals, and with the views of the public. If officers' views of their role in the community and in addressing crime are consistent with the tenets of the initiative and with community residents, the initiative successfully met its internal goal of fostering organizational change.

Whenever evaluators are forced to work with second-hand sources rather than evaluation measures crafted for a specific initiative, there is always a shadow of doubt around their conclusions. For instance, it is possible that officer's opinions, while generally congruent with the initiative and with community residents' opinions, were not formed or changed by the initiative at all. One rival explanation is that the initiative did not create significant change in either police practices or officers' understanding of the police role, but instead merely articulated already existing police officer's views and practices in a more public form.

While we are familiar with these "What if?" scenarios, we do not subscribe to them. Traditional police organizations, which Boston PD has been, foster traditional police outlooks: though individuals might harbor viewpoints consonant with community policing, the majority of employees

of such agencies hold traditional views that police responsibility is limited to law enforcement -- that is, "locking up bad guys" -- to the exclusion of (even resistance to) the more community-centered approaches that are a hallmark of neighborhood policing. In essence, the agency's character is defined by the sum of its parts, sometimes defiantly contradicting overt signals of change from the organization's command levels.

In light of this, the results of the survey of Boston Police Officers are very encouraging. The majority of BPD officers can correctly identify their department's mission statement. Though the third who could not (or would not) suggests a need for renewed efforts, it is encouraging that most of the officers appear to know what the administration expects of them in this regard. More important, in our view, is the strong support for the decentralization of command. That the overwhelming majority of officers both recognize this critical element of the initiative and demonstrate a belief in its effectiveness is a testament to Strategic Planning's success.

The officers also demonstrate an awareness of the importance of citizen interaction and a focus on community issues, without losing sight of or dismissing the importance of the enforcement functions. The overwhelming majority of officers believe that their police work would be improved with increased resident involvement, and most believe that residents are willing to participate if given the opportunity. When asked specifically about their opinions of the future prospects of neighborhood policing in

Boston, most officers indicate optimism, saying that they believe it is either currently successful and will continue to grow, or will at least achieve some positive results.

The survey results also reflect both the history and the current situation of the Boston Police Department, in the "influence" and the "important to accomplish" questions. Answers to the first question clearly indicate that there is a deep-seated belief that the past is prologue, and officers will need to see continued, robust input from citizens before this viewpoint changes. The second may be an artifact of the survey question, and it is important that a new baseline be established, distinguishing the internal and external facets of the question.

Public and police officers share some similar beliefs about how best to reduce problems associated with drugs and youth crime in Boston. However, fewer citizens than police officers believe that stricter penalties are the best way to reduce drug problems, and a greater proportion of citizens support prevention and treatment oriented approaches.

## **VII. Conclusions**

Serious crime has declined rapidly in Boston, faster than any corresponding national trends and beyond what could be expected from changes in demographic or economic influences. Boston is currently enjoying record low levels of most forms of crime, and in 1997 Boston residents



felt much safer than they had just two years previously. There are clear indications that the change in policing practices most likely contributed to the improvements.

When the strongest evidence is considered, the key indicators move in the direction intended by the neighborhood policing initiative. Significant declines in crime in Boston appear in the year after the strategic planning phase of the neighborhood policing initiative. Boston crime rates are now below national averages among large U.S. cities, and from 1995 to 1997 Boston resident perceptions of safety have increased sharply.

Where adequate comparison can be made between Boston and other urban samples (despite the limitations discussed above and in the Appendix), Boston residents generally feel safer, greater proportions feel that crime in their neighborhood is declining, and greater proportions express confidence in the ability of police to prevent and solve crime. With police-citizen contacts comparable to residents of other U.S. cities (which one might expect with active community policing methods), a relatively large proportion of Boston residents express familiarity with community policing and confidence in the effectiveness of the Boston Police Department. Boston Police officers, for their part, demonstrate a familiarity with the department's mission, express support for the operational changes brought about by the strategic planning initiative, and express optimism that the initiative has or will achieve positive results. They define their role and

purpose in terms of community efficacy, without losing sight of the need for effective law enforcement, and they remain committed to community safety. The vast majority of the officers welcome the increased participation of citizens in identifying and solving crime and other neighborhood problems, and express optimism that residents want to participate.

Despite the limitations of our data sources, most indicators suggest that the strategic planning process is contributing to improving public safety, public opinions of their community, and crime-related conditions in this city.

### **Data Sources**

Information about crimes known to the police was gathered from the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) and from the Office of Research and Evaluation of the BPD. For the most recent information about known offenses in Boston, we relied on data obtained directly from the BPD, and from BPD reports such as the City of Boston 1997 Crime Summary Report (BPD, Office of Research and Evaluation, 1998).

Second, we gathered information from surveys of Boston residents, as well as several surveys of residents of other cities and national samples. These surveys provided us with information on crime victimization, opinions about safety, and perceptions of neighborhood problems and conditions.

For information about Boston residents we relied heavily on the 1995 and 1997 Boston Public Safety Surveys conducted by the Office of Research and Evaluation of the BPD. The earlier survey gathered information from a random sample of approximately 1,000 Boston residents, and the latter from a sample of over 3,000 residents. Among the types of information obtained in these surveys were criminal victimization, concerns about personal safety in residents' neighborhoods, and perceptions of neighborhood quality of life issues.

For comparative purposes we also used the 1997 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) conducted by the National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS, 1998). For the NCVS, a nationwide representative sample of approximately 48,000 households is selected, and interviews of all household members at least 12 years old are conducted by U.S. Census Bureau personnel. The NCVS provides information on crimes committed against individuals and households, regardless of whether the crimes were reported to police or anyone else.

We also used national studies of residents such as The American Housing Survey (hereafter, AHS; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998). In this survey, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Bureau of the Census examined a national sample of 50,000 households every two years from 1985 to 1995. The most recent version of this survey provided us with information about perceptions of neighborhood

crime, which we compared to the Boston Public Safety Surveys.

To assess levels of public concern about neighborhood safety and quality of life issues, we also used: The National Opinion Survey of Crime and Justice, conducted in 1995 on a national sample of approximately 1,000 U.S. residents (Flanagan and Longmire, 1995); a nation-wide telephone survey of over 1,500 residents, conducted in 1996 by the Los Angeles Times Poll (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997); national surveys of approximately 1,000 individuals conducted by the Gallup Poll Monthly in 1996 and 1997 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997); and a 1997 survey of over 3,000 residents conducted as part of an evaluation of community policing in Chicago (Chicago Community Policing Consortium, 1997).

For resident experiences with and opinions about police, we examine the results of the 1997 BPD survey, and compare some of these to those from a survey of 12 U.S. cities conducted as a supplement to the NCVS in early 1998 (Bureau of Justice Statistics and the Office of Community Oriented Policing, 1999).

Finally, we examine the results of a survey of Boston Police officers. With the support of the National Institute of Justice, the BPD conducted a survey of 1,383 patrol officers, detectives, and command officers in 1997. Information was gathered on several issues, including opinions about working conditions, perceptions of effective public safety practices, understanding of the BPD's mission, and opinions about neighborhood policing

issues.

Since no similar survey was conducted in 1995, we have no direct way of knowing how the Neighborhood Policing Initiative has affected police officer's perceptions about crime, communities, and their work in the subsequent years. However, the Police Officer Survey results can still be used to try to assess the impact of the Initiative. For example, comparing the police survey results with specific features of the Neighborhood Policing Initiative can help us to understand how well the Initiative has been received by the officers. Comparing the officer survey data to those from the BPD's 1997 Public Safety Survey can, for example, shed light on whether police perceptions of neighborhood problems are consistent with what residents perceive to be the most serious problems.

1 The complexity of the dynamics affecting crime rates and public opinion, and the quality of available information, do not allow us to determine the impact of the neighborhood policing initiative with the same precision that would be possible had outcome measures been specified in the planning process, and data collected systematically throughout the project.

2 Since the NCVS estimate was derived from a series of questions, and the 1997 BPD survey estimate was derived from a single, general question about victimization, this is not an ideal comparison. See Note #1 of the Technical Appendix for a discussion of this issue.

3 A more detailed assessment of methodological issues such as these is presented in the Technical Appendix (Note #4).

4 See Technical Appendix Note #5; difference statistically significant at  $p < .01$ .

5 See Note #7 of the Technical Appendix; difference significant at  $p < .01$ .

6 See Note #8 of the Technical Appendix; difference significant at  $p < .01$

7 The main threat to the validity of this comparison is that the NOSCJ data were collected two years prior to the 1997 BPD survey. In addition, the Boston survey asks specifically about Boston police, while the NOSCJ asks about police, without specifying jurisdiction.

8 One technical issue compromising the comparability of the police officer and resident surveys is that the citizen survey question specified illegal drugs, while the officer survey did not.

## Section V:

### THE BPD'S 1995 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

#### Lessons Learned & Recommendations

The 1995 Boston Police Department Strategic Planning Process was a success in several different ways. The process constituted a vehicle through which District Captains could effectively implement the Department's Neighborhood Policing Program. It created a framework to identify neighborhood problems and an ongoing structure to address these problems in partnership with the community.

The most important success was the establishment of true and lasting partnerships, in which both police and community participants recognized and embraced a new relationship between the police and the public. Police officers came to understand the diverse strengths of the community, and citizen participants understood that the Boston Police truly wanted their participation and valued their ideas. In many cases this was perceived as a more serious and long term commitment than they had ever had previously with the Department.

The number of partnerships between the Boston Police Department and members of the community has increased dramatically. There are more partnerships particularly at the district level, and many of these partnerships have been sustained for more than four years. The new relationship exists not just in the meeting rooms, but also on the street. It is

best summarized in the words of one participant: "Ten years ago the city paid lip service to community policing. Cops were only visiting business they knew.... Now we have a bicycle officer who is very mobile. He isn't in a car, he is moving, he is friendly. It is no longer us versus them."

Equally important, the strategic planning process contributed to substantial crime decreases as well as increases in the perception of Boston as a safe community. The pronounced decline in serious crime in Boston in the years since the process began has outstripped previous crime reductions. In addition, citizens report increased feelings of safety after the implementation of strategic planning. When compared to residents of other cities, citizens of Boston seem to experience lower rates of victimization and less fear of crime.

Strategic planning teams may include representative of neighborhoods within the district or include representatives of constituency groups from the district. Whatever the design, before beginning the process the individuals who participate should know the time commitment required, the goal of the process, and the fact that assistance in addressing the objectives will be important after the planning process is complete.

The support provided to the process by the Office of Strategic Planning and the Boston Management Consortium during phase I was considered extremely important. All persons interviewed indicated that at different points in the process the facilitators played an important role in moving



the project forward and eventually assuring the overall success of the project. In addition the technical writers were seen as essential in sending the message that this is a serious process and that all efforts will be taken to ensure that the work of the teams will be documented.

One of the most successful aspects of the process was the serious effort put in by most groups to assure that a broad spectrum of opinions was included. Team members canvassed their neighborhoods and called people who held different points of view to be sure that the problems identified by the group did in fact reflect the perception of most people who lived in the District. It is important that similar efforts are made in the future to include as many voices from the community as possible.

The Strategic Planning process can have multiple outcomes. One that occurred in a number of Boston neighborhoods was the development of "neighborhood efficacy," Robert Sampson's term for the ability to develop a sense of community in neighborhoods where little community cohesion existed before. The Strategic Planning process demonstrated to residents in certain neighborhoods that their concerns would be heard and indeed could become a priority of the Police. This contributed significantly to the development of groups in certain neighborhoods that are now working in partnership with the police to reduce crime and fear of crime.

### Recommendations

- \* The Strategic Planning process should be institutionalized and undertaken every two-three years as a way of formalizing the neighborhood problem solving component of Boston's neighborhood policing program.
  
- \* The participants in the process should include those individuals who can commit to spending the time necessary to develop the plans and in the best case scenario be willing to stay involved in the process to work in partnership with the police to achieve the goals and objectives of the district.
  
- \* In phase II of strategic planning, efforts should be made to include some individuals who participated in Phase I. This will provide continuity with the previous process and will minimize the start up time required if all community members were new.
  
- \* Continued attention should be paid to communicating the interim and final results of the planning meeting to the rank and file officers in the district. Officers appreciated being informed in those districts that made significant attempts to keep the officers updated. In these districts, there appeared to be more support from the line officers when they were asked

to participate in activities develop in conjunction with the strategic plan.

\* The final written plan should be more limited than in Phase I. The plans that resulted from Phase I were too long and detailed (one plan District D-4 totaled 45 pages) . During Phase II the final plans should be shorter and thus more likely to be read by district officers and residents.

\* Shorten the time frame for the process in Phase II, with the experience from Phase I the process should be able to be completed within 4-6 total meetings

\* The role of facilitators and writers should be maintained, if possible. It indicates a serious approach by the department and minimizes the time commitment required by team members.

\* Again, if possible, provisions for food should be made so that meeting can occur in the evening and participants can get home in time to spend time with their families.

Table 4.1

**Boston Police Officer Responses to Question,  
 “How do you regard the current status of Neighborhood Policing within the Department?”**

Response	Percent Giving Response
Gaining momentum with a significant potential for changing the way we go about addressing crime-related issues.	43.3
Just a new name for something most cops have been doing for years.	30.7
A catchy buzzword or strategy based more on political convenience than on knowing what may actually work.	13.8
Far from a reality.	3.7
Other.	4.2

## *Technical Appendix*

### **Note #1**

The different ways in which the NCVS and BPD surveys gathered information on victimization reduces the confidence one should have in the surveys' comparability. We can speculate about how the two different sets of questions might affect the estimates of crime victimization prevalence. It is likely that a series of questions about several specific kinds of victimization will elicit a higher overall estimate of victimization than a single question. When asked a single, general question such as, "Have you been a crime victim?", people generally try to recall all types of crime victimization. In the absence of specific cues to aid their recall, it is not uncommon for people to forget that they have had certain experiences, particularly with less serious forms of crime. By asking people to try to recall a list of specific types of crime, one at a time, the likelihood of people forgetting is reduced.

How questions are asked affects responses. Without identical questions it is impossible to be certain whether the differences in the Boston and the national surveys are due to true differences in victimization levels, or whether they are due to different data collection techniques. It is possible that the slightly lower crime victimization estimate derived from the BPD survey relative to the NCVS is a function of different data gathering techniques (a single question versus a list of specific questions) and not due to a lower level of victimization.

Even with these concerns, there is still some value in comparing the 1997 BPD survey and NCVS results. The comparison does help to corroborate the evidence of the UCR data indicating that crime in Boston is lower than the national urban average. If we had found that victimization survey evidence ran counter to the police reporting data, it would have suggested that the image

of lower crime rates in Boston might be a result of lower levels of citizen reporting crime to the police, or BPD crime recording practices

## Note #2

To address fear of crime, the 1997 survey contained the following (question 15, 1997 Boston Public Safety Survey):

“At one time or another, most of us have experienced fear about becoming the victim of crime. Some crimes probably frighten you more than others. We are interested in *how afraid* people are in every day life of being a victim of different types of crime. Please rate your fear on a 10 point scale, where 1 means NOT AT ALL AFRAID and 10 means VERY AFRAID about being the victim of crime.”

This was followed by 13 items which were intended to describe types of crime. Oddly, the first item (question 15a) was, “Being approached by a beggar or panhandler?” Being asked for money by poor people is not a form of crime victimization. The other 12 items clearly describe crimes, e.g. burglary (15c and 15d), sexual assault (15e), auto theft (15i).

The main problem here is that no similar questions were asked in the 1995 survey, allowing no basis for comparison between 1995 and 1997. The earlier survey did ask people, “where or when do you feel afraid of being a crime victim?” (question 19, 1995 Boston Public Safety Survey). The question was followed by a list of situations, such as waiting for a bus (19a), leaving an ATM machine (19c), and at home (19g). The types of crime that people potentially fear are not listed, prohibiting comparisons to the 1997 survey.

### **Note #3**

Anyone can see that the proportions of the 1997 sample who reported feeling very safe were larger than the proportions in the 1995 sample. However, it is possible that the 1995 and 1997 samples drawn for the two surveys do not accurately represent the Boston resident population. For example, random sampling error could have resulted in drawing a disproportionately large number of people who felt unsafe in 1995, and the 1997 sample could have contained more people who happened to feel relatively safe. In fact, it is possible that Boston residents as a whole felt no more or less safe in 1997 than they did in 1995. What appears to be an increase in resident feelings of safety could be the result of nothing more than random sampling error in one or both of the surveys.

Statistical significance refers to the likelihood that a particular sample statistic or comparison of statistics accurately reflects the population. The question a statistician would ask in comparing the proportions of residents who felt safe in 1995 and 1997 is whether the apparent increase is the result of a true increase in the Boston population, or simply the result of sampling error. Statistical significance testing helps to determine (among other things) whether the differences between group proportions reflect true differences in the population from which the samples were drawn. If a significance test estimates that the difference in proportions has less than a one percent chance of occurring due to sampling error alone (even when the proportions of the populations from which the samples were drawn are identical), then it is determined that the difference between sample proportions represents a real difference between populations and is not the result of sampling error. If so, it is concluded that the differences in proportions are

statistically significant at  $p \leq .01$  (i.e., probability less than or equal to .01, or a one percent or less chance of sampling error being responsible for the difference).

To determine whether the proportions of Boston residents in 1997 who said they felt "very safe" was greater than the proportion who felt so in 1995, we used the Test of Proportions ( $z = 11.69$  for feeling very safe during the day,  $z = 31.83$  for feeling very safe at night, both significant at  $p < .01$ ). See Fox, Levin, and Shively (1999:204-207) for a discussion of this statistical significance test.

#### Note #4

The 1995 survey asked, "Do you feel safe moving around alone during the day in your neighborhood?". The 1997 survey asked, "How safe do you feel out alone in your neighborhood during the day?" The 1997 question makes no mention of "moving around" in the neighborhood, and it is clear that the question is phrased differently (e.g., "Do you feel safe..." in 1995 versus "How safe do you feel..." in 1997). We don't have reason to believe that these kinds of differences alone seriously affected responses. However, any difference in how the question is presented creates the possibility that dissimilar question wording, and not a change in public opinion over time, is responsible for response differences in the two surveys.

A more important issue is that the response scales associated with these two questions were also different. In the 1995 survey, there were five response choices: "very safe", "safe", "unsafe", "very unsafe", and "don't know". There were just four response choices in the 1997 survey: "very safe", "somewhat safe", "somewhat unsafe", and "very unsafe", and there was no "don't know" option available to respondents. Such differences could be significant in interpreting the results. For example, the difference between "very safe" and "safe" (the first two



response options in the 1995 survey) is not the same as the difference between "very safe" and "somewhat safe" (the first two response options in the 1997 survey). ). For example, respondents contemplating their answer who were not quite sure if they felt "very safe" would look at the next option, which is "safe" in the 1995 survey versus "somewhat safe" in the 1997 survey. Since "Somewhat safe" implies less safety than simply "safe". So, in the 1995 survey fewer people who were deciding between "very safe" and the next option may have selected "very safe" since the next option was close to it. In the 1997 survey more people may have selected "very safe" since the next option, "somewhat safe", was a bigger step down the safety scale. Thus, even when trying to compare the proportion in the two surveys who said they felt "very safe", the differences in results to the surveys may be due (at least in part) to having other differences in the response scales.

Similarly, the difference between "somewhat safe" and somewhat unsafe" (the second and third response options in the 1997 survey) appears to be smaller than the difference between "safe" and "unsafe" (1995 survey).

In addition, part of the difference in the results of the 1995 and 1997 surveys may have been because people who selected the "very safe" response option in the 1997 survey might have selected "don't know" if it were available (as it was in 1995). However, only 1 percent of the 1995 sample chose the "don't know" response to the question about feeling safe during the day, and only 4 percent said they didn't know how safe they felt at night. It is unlikely that much of the apparent increase in feelings of safety were due to the absence of "don't know" from the 1997 response scale.

## Note #5

The question and response formats were identical for the items about feeling safe in the 1997 BPD survey and the 1995 NOSCJ. The NOSCJ was a representative national sample of 1,005 individuals, reached through random digit dialing in a manner much like the BPD surveys. We are comparing the Boston survey results only with the results of the urban portion of the national sample selected in the NOSCJ. Thus, we are confident in the validity of this comparison.

The only thing compromising the comparability of the two surveys is the time frame. We are using the NOSCJ to corroborate other evidence that Boston residents' fear of crime levels are relatively low in 1997, but are relying on a 1995 survey for comparison. We argue that the NOSCJ is one of the only bases of comparison, and although imperfect allows some level of corroboration of the Boston survey results. While not definitive, the relatively high level of perceived safety in Boston is consistent with other evidence suggesting that positive changes have taken place locally regarding crime and perceptions of crime.

The test of proportions indicates that the levels of perceived safety in Boston were significantly higher than the national urban sample ( $z = 9.55, p < .01$ ).

## Note #6

The Los Angeles Times Poll of 1996 (BJS, 1997) asked a national sample of 1572 people, "How safe do you feel being alone at night in your home?" In the 1997 Boston public safety survey, people were asked how safe they feel "...inside your home at night?" Both surveys recorded responses on the same scale: "very safe", "somewhat safe", "somewhat unsafe", and "very unsafe".

The greatest threat to the comparability of the surveys is a dissimilarity in question wording. The national survey, but not the Boston survey, asks about being home *alone*. It is likely that feelings of safety at home generally decline when alone. We can only speculate about how much of the difference between the national and Boston results were due to this question wording difference.

That the BPD and national survey occurred one year apart compromises their comparability somewhat. In addition, the LA Times survey sampled rural and suburban as well as rural residents. Again, we acknowledge that this is not an ideal comparison, but it is one of the few available and we offer it simply to help substantiate the results of the BPD survey. The surveys asked similar questions, used similar sampling techniques, and identical response scales, suggesting that there is some basis for comparison. If the national survey had found significantly higher levels of feelings of safety than those found in the Boston survey, it would give us reason to hesitate in suggesting that the Neighborhood Policing Initiative had produced positive results. That is, if people in other urban areas had far greater levels of feelings of safety than Boston residents (and if we did not see an improvement between 1995 and 1997 in Boston), it would be hard to argue that local policing practices were instrumental in making people feel safe. We interpret the higher levels of perceived safety in Boston compared to the national LA Times sample simply as imperfect but corroborative evidence that people seem to feel relatively safe in Boston.

## Note #7

In the 1997 Boston survey, residents were asked, "Do you feel that over the past 12 months... crime has increased, decreased, or stayed the same?" (Question #11). Respondents were asked to assess crime trends both "in your neighborhood" and "...in the city overall". The response scale was, "Increased," "Stayed the same," "Decreased." The 1995 NOCSJ asked, "In the past year, do you feel that the crime rate in your neighborhood has increased, decreased, or stayed the same?" The Response scale was identical to that of the 1997 BPD survey.

As discussed above, the time difference across the two surveys may compromise their comparability. The similarity in sampling, questionnaire design, and data collection legitimate this comparison.

## Note #8

In the 1997 Boston survey, residents were asked, "Do you feel that over the past 12 months... crime has increased, decreased, or stayed the same?" (Question #11.) Respondents were asked to assess crime trends both "in your neighborhood" (#11a) and "... in the city overall" (#11b).

The 1997 Gallup Poll asked, "is there more crime in your area than there was a year ago, or less?" The response scale was "more", "less", "same", or "no opinion". While there was not a "no opinion" option on the Boston scale, only two percent of respondents in the Gallup Poll chose this option. Although identical response scales are ideal for comparison, we do not believe that these differences in wording have significantly limited comparability.

The Gallup Poll sampled rural and suburban residents as well as urban residents, while Boston is obviously urban. We can speculate that the difference between the Boston and national results would be even greater if rural and suburban residents were not included in the national sample.

The most significant difference between the way the two surveys addressed this issue is that Boston's asked people to make judgments about two areas (people's neighborhood and the entire city), while the Gallop survey asked about "in your area." The Gallup question could be (and probably was) interpreted in many ways, e.g. "your area" could mean a neighborhood, a city, state, county, or region. This could have been a problem for our comparison. For example, if the results of the two surveys were only a few percentage points apart we would not be able to conclude that the difference was due to the dissimilar geographic reference point, or to true differences in perceptions of respondents across the samples. The fact that responses to both of the Boston questions were so vastly different from the Gallup results suggests that fewer Boston residents perceive crime as increasing than do people throughout the country.

The similar sampling and survey administration methods and the nearly identical time frame of the two surveys provides suggest that we should have confidence in the comparisons of the results.

## **Note #9**

Being asked "as a resident of Boston" to list and rank "major and minor issues" is not the same as being asked whether there is "anything about the neighborhood that bothers you" (asked of the national samples). First, the Boston survey does not list either the neighborhood or the city of Boston as a reference point for the question. For example, as a resident of Boston many

national issues could be of concern. Respondents were not instructed to list and rank their concerns about any specific location, while the AHS clearly ask respondents about their neighborhoods.

Second, the Boston question specifically requests a list of several concerns, while the AHS simply asks people whether anything about their neighborhood bothers them. The Boston survey clearly encourages people to cite more than one concern, while the AHS does not explicitly do so. As long as it is among the three most salient concerns of a Boston respondent, crime will be mentioned. In the AHS, crime may not be identified unless it is the primary concern of the respondent. The question difference would be most likely to bias the comparison in favor of fewer AHS respondents listing crime as a major concern.

#### Note #10

The questions and response scales were not presented in identical form in the 1995 and 1997 BPD surveys. The question presented in the 1995 survey (question #23) read:

“Do you think that any of the following are a problem **IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?**”

The 1997 question (#13) read as follows:

“Okay, now I would like to read to you a list of specific conditions that some people say are problems in the area where they live. For each, please tell me if you think it has been a serious problem, somewhat of a problem, or no problem at all where you live over the past 12 months. If you don't know whether something is a problem where you live, please let me know.”

There are several differences that may have an impact on the results. First, the 1995 question refers explicitly to the resident's neighborhood. The 1997 survey refers to the “area where they live”. The 1997 survey is clearly less specific; most people have a clear definition of

their neighborhood, while an areas where they live could be anything from a street, block, or neighborhood to a city, state, or region. Second, the 1997 survey explicitly refers to the past 12 months, while there is no time frame for the 1995 survey.

In addition, the response scales were not identical in the 1995 and 1997 surveys. The former asked residents to record their responses as "major problem, moderate problem, minor problem, no problem", or "no opinion." The latter survey contained the following response scale: "serious problem, somewhat of a problem, minor problem, not a problem," and "don't know". These differences could be problematic if we tried to compare proportion of the sample who chose "moderate problem" in the 1995 survey to that selecting "somewhat of a problem" in 1997. However, we believe that comparing only the end point of the scale ("major problem" with "serious problem") alleviates some of the problems of dissimilar wording, and provides an adequate - if imperfect - point of comparison.

Some of the items in the 1995 survey were not carried on the 1997 survey, such as assault. Other items were listed in the 1997 survey but not on the earlier survey, such as "people high on drugs in public" and "inconsiderate or problem neighbors".

Still other items were present on both surveys, but were worded so differently that their comparability is highly suspect. For example, the 1995 survey contained the item, "guns", while the 1997 survey contained, "gun usage". Guns being bought and sold, stolen, or accessible for potential use are all plausible reasons that people would list guns as a problem in the 1995 survey. The latter survey's item is clearly restricted to gun usage. Similarly, the earlier survey contained, "noise", which could include dogs barking, traffic, and heavy equipment, while the latter contained, "people making too much noise" which has a narrower focus.

After consideration of the above problems, we concluded that the non-identical response scale was not fatal to a comparison if we used only an end point, and that there were five items whose phrasing were either identical (graffiti, kids hanging around, prostitution, criminal gangs) or similar enough to compare (public drinking).

### **Note #11**

The 1995 NOSCJ and 1997 BPD surveys used identical response scales, and five of the items were phrased similarly enough to allow for a valid comparison. To enhance comparability, we selected only the urban respondents (n=158).

The main issue compromising the comparison is the dissimilar time frame. There is no remedy for this, but the comparison still provides some sense of how Boston residents' perceptions compare to those of other cities.

### **Note #12**

The 1997 Chicago survey used "big problem" as the most serious end point of their response scale, while the 1997 BPD survey used "serious problem."

### **Note #13**

The question in the BJS/COPS 12 City Survey read, "In the past 12 months, have you been in contact with the local police for any reason?" The 1997 BPD survey asked, "Have you been in contact with the police, other than a family member or friend, during the past year - that is, since last year at this time?" The questions appear quite comparable, except that the Boston survey specifically excludes contact with police officers who are friends and family while the 12-city survey does not. If the 12-city



survey question had contained this exclusion, the proportion of residents acknowledging contact with police would certainly be reduced, but we have no way of knowing by how much.

The cities surveyed in this study were: Chicago, Kansas City, Knoxville, Los Angeles, Madison, New York, San Diego, Savannah, Spokane, Springfield, Tucson, and Washington, D.C. As in the BPD surveys, respondents were contacted by telephone through random digit dialing. More than 1,000 residents were surveyed in each of the cities (except for Kansas City, where only 162 were contacted), for a total sample size of 13,918. The phone calls took place over a four month period beginning in February, 1998.

#### **Note #14**

Question #26 in the 1997 Boston Police Officer Survey read, "Which of the following is the BPD's formal mission statement?" The following mission statements accompanied the question:

"We are dedicated to upholding the highest professional standards while serving the community in which we work and live. We are committed to the enforcement of laws to protect life and property, while respecting individual rights, human dignity, and community values."

"We dedicate ourselves to work in partnership with the community to fight crime, reduce fear and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. Our mission is Neighborhood Policing."

"We are dedicated to improving the quality of life within the City of Boston. This is accomplished through respect, integrity, and professional excellence."

## **Note #15**

The question was phrased, "Do you think that serious (Part One) crime has increased or decreased in your district during the past two years?" It is unclear whether "your district" refers to the officer's assigned district or the district in which he or she lives. In addition, officers who had recently been assigned to their current district may have had trouble answering this question. If they have been in their current district for only six months, e.g., they would not have a sound basis for their opinion. Also, in cases where officers have transferred within the last two years, it may have been unclear to them whether "your district" referred to their present or prior district.

## **Note #16**

A hypothetical example may help to illustrate this point. If crime had increased two years earlier, and then declined in the year prior to the 1997 surveys, the fact that the officer survey covered two years and the citizen survey covered one year would be fatal to the validity of the comparison. Officers might correctly conclude that crime had remained about the same in the prior two years, if the increase of one year and the decrease of the next essentially cancelled each other out. If residents were only asked to refer to the prior year, they might correctly observe that crime had declined. Both officers and residents may have correctly observed the crime trends in their communities, but since the time frame was different, residents and officers perceptions of recent crime trends would appear dissimilar. Given that crime had declined at about the same rate from 1995 to 1996, and from 1996 to 1997, any dissimilarities observed in perceptions of recent trends should reflect a difference in perceptions, and should not be adversely affected by the different time frame.

Boston residents and police officers were also asked their opinions of whether crime had declined citywide. However, residents were asked to refer to the prior year, while officers were asked about the

prior five years. We believe that this difference in time frame is too great to allow a valid comparison, and we do not present this information in this report.

### **Note #17**

Residents were asked: "How would you complete the following statement: The best way to reduce the problems ASSOCIATED WITH ILLEGAL DRUGS in the city of Boston is to:" Officers were asked, "The best way to reduce the problems associated with drugs in the City of Boston is..."

An issue compromising the comparability of the police officer and resident surveys is that the citizen survey question specified illegal drugs, while the officer survey did not. We can speculate that, given the context of the question in a survey of crime and policing issues, the officers assumed that the question referred to illegal drugs.

Also, many of the categories into which responses fall are not identical across the two surveys. Some of the responses could not be compared. For example, two percent of the officers surveyed said that parental involvement was the best way to reduce drug problems, while this response did not appear among the residents surveyed.

For comparative purposes we combined some of the response categories. For example, 23 percent of the officers gave responses categorized as "better education/prevention," while 16 percent of the residents said "education" and five percent said "prevention program." We combined the two categories in the resident survey to allow comparison to the officer survey results.

### **Note #18**

The questions were not identically phrased. The 1997 BPD officer survey asked, "The best way to reduce crime and violence involving young people in the City of Boston is..." The 1997 BPD resident

survey asked. "The best way to reduce *the problems associated with crime and violence* involving young people in the City of Boston is to:" (Emphasis added.) Asking about reducing problems associated with crime is not the same as asking about reducing crime itself. Some respondents may interpret the latter question as broader, asking not just about crime causation but about, e.g., victim impact, court costs, economic impact on local businesses, etc. This seemingly minor difference compromises the comparability of the survey questions, so the results should be interpreted with caution.

As with the question about reducing drug problems, there were differences in the way that some of the responses were categorized. Thus, we made decisions not to try to compare items we felt were too dissimilar. We also combined some categories that were separated in one survey but when combined, were comparable to a category of the other survey. For example, a response category provided by the BPD for the police officer survey was, "More kid activities/Facilities." Categories provided for the resident survey were, "Activities/things to do" and "Community centers/recreation." We combined the two resident survey categories and compared this combined category with the single one from the officer survey. While not ideal, we determined that this was the best use of the available information.

### Note #19

The question addressing neighborhood quality of life issues in the 1997 resident survey (#13) read as follows:

"Okay, now I would like to read to you a list of specific conditions that some people say are problems in the area where they live. For each, please tell me if you think it has been a serious problem, somewhat of a problem, or no problem at all where you live over the past 12 months. If you don't know whether something is a problem where you live, please let me know."

To a list of problems, residents recorded their responses on a scale of, "Serious problem," "Somewhat of a problem," "Minor problem," or "Not a problem."

The 1997 BPD officer survey question (#52) read:

"When you read through the list of problems below, think about the neighborhood in which you now work. Please indicate the extent to which you think each one is a problem in that area."

To a list of problems, officers recorded their responses on a scale of, "Major," "Moderate," "Minor," or "None."

While it is preferable to have identical questions, we believe that the phrasing differences in the questions are substantial enough to seriously skew the comparison. The differences in the response scale could be a more serious problem if we were to try to compare the two midpoints of the scales across the two surveys. However, to avoid some of these problems we will only compare the end of each scale representing the most serious problem. For simplicity of presentation, in this report we refer to perceptions of both officers and residents as "serious" problems, although the police officers actually recorded their opinions on a scale including the term "major" problem.

Unfortunately, the kinds of problems listed here were restricted to what the researchers included in the list, and the lists were not identical. While the items presented in Figure 4.25 are comparable, some important items were not included on both surveys. For example, 31 and 23 percent of the police officers indicated that property theft and assaults, respectively, were "Major" problems. But since the items were not included on the resident survey, we cannot determine whether there is agreement between officers and residents in the perceived seriousness of these problems.

Many of the items listed were phrased identically or so similarly that there is little question about their comparability. However, several were not. For example, one item addressed drug use and another drug sales in the resident survey, and made no distinctions between juveniles and adults. The officer

survey used one item to address both the use and sale of drugs, and used two items to address juvenile and adult drug problems separately. Although both surveys addressed drug issues, the dissimilarities in how the drug use and sale issues were approached make valid comparison impossible, and were excluded from our analysis. Due to dissimilar item wording, we also exclude from our comparison domestic violence, hate/bias crime, graffiti, vagrancy, and larcenies from automobiles.

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Table 4.2

**Boston Police Officer Responses to Question,  
"What do you believe is the future potential of Neighborhood Policing in Boston?"**

Response	Percent Giving Response
Current effort is likely to build and succeed in creating effective partnerships to reduce crime and fear.	43.3
Despite good intentions, it will never actually achieve all that is stated or possible. Nevertheless, some positive outcomes will be realized.	35.4
It will probably be replaced with another popular buzzword or method in a few years.	17.5
Other.	3.8

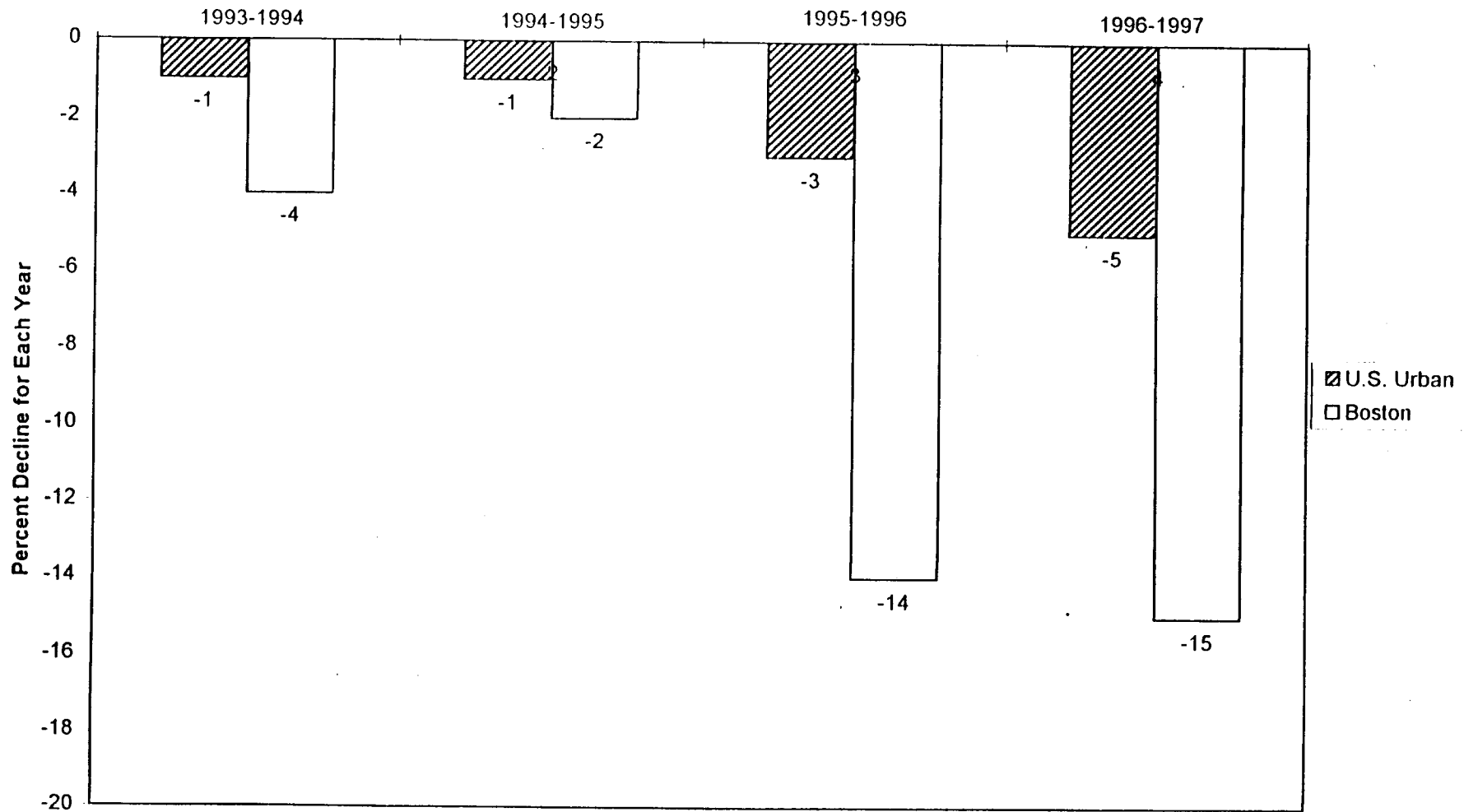
Table 4.3

**Boston Police Officer Ranking of the Activities That They Think Should be the Focus of BPD's  
Current Neighborhood Policing Strategy**

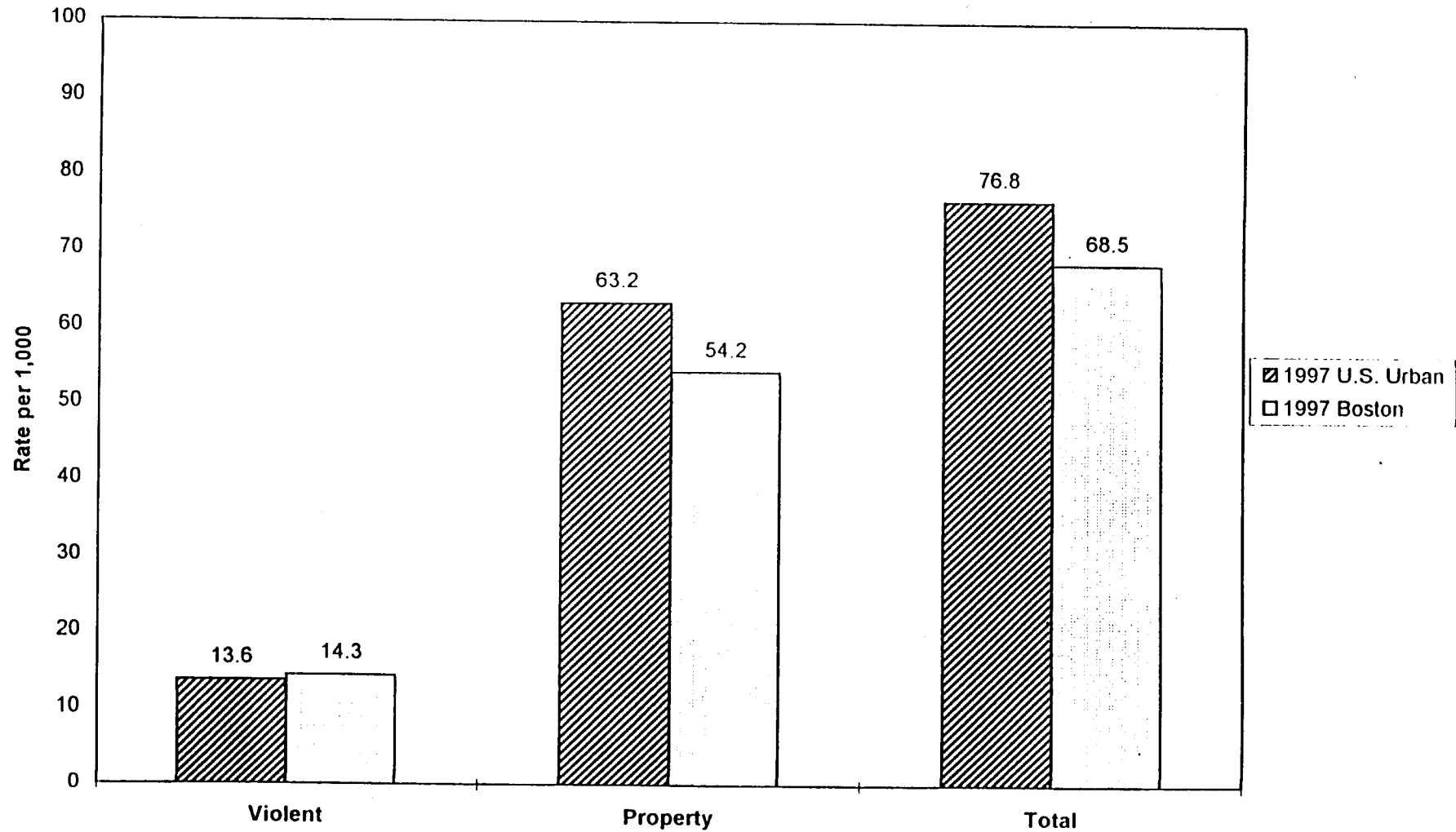
Response	Percent Giving Response
Assigning the same cops to the same neighborhood areas	15.5
Improving communication among police personnel	13.0
Increasing the level of involvement by neighborhood residents	11.1
Increasing the ability of police officers to use the latest technology	10.5
Increasing police presence in every neighborhood	10.3
Increasing the level of collaboration with other city agencies	9.3
Focusing on more nuisance and minor crime-related problems	9.0
Giving captains complete control in making deployment and tactical decisions concerning their districts	8.8
Increasing our ability to analyze crime problems and evaluate the strategies we use to address them	6.8
Increasing the level of collaboration with area businesses	3.7
The strategic planning and community mobilization process	1.3
Other	0.7



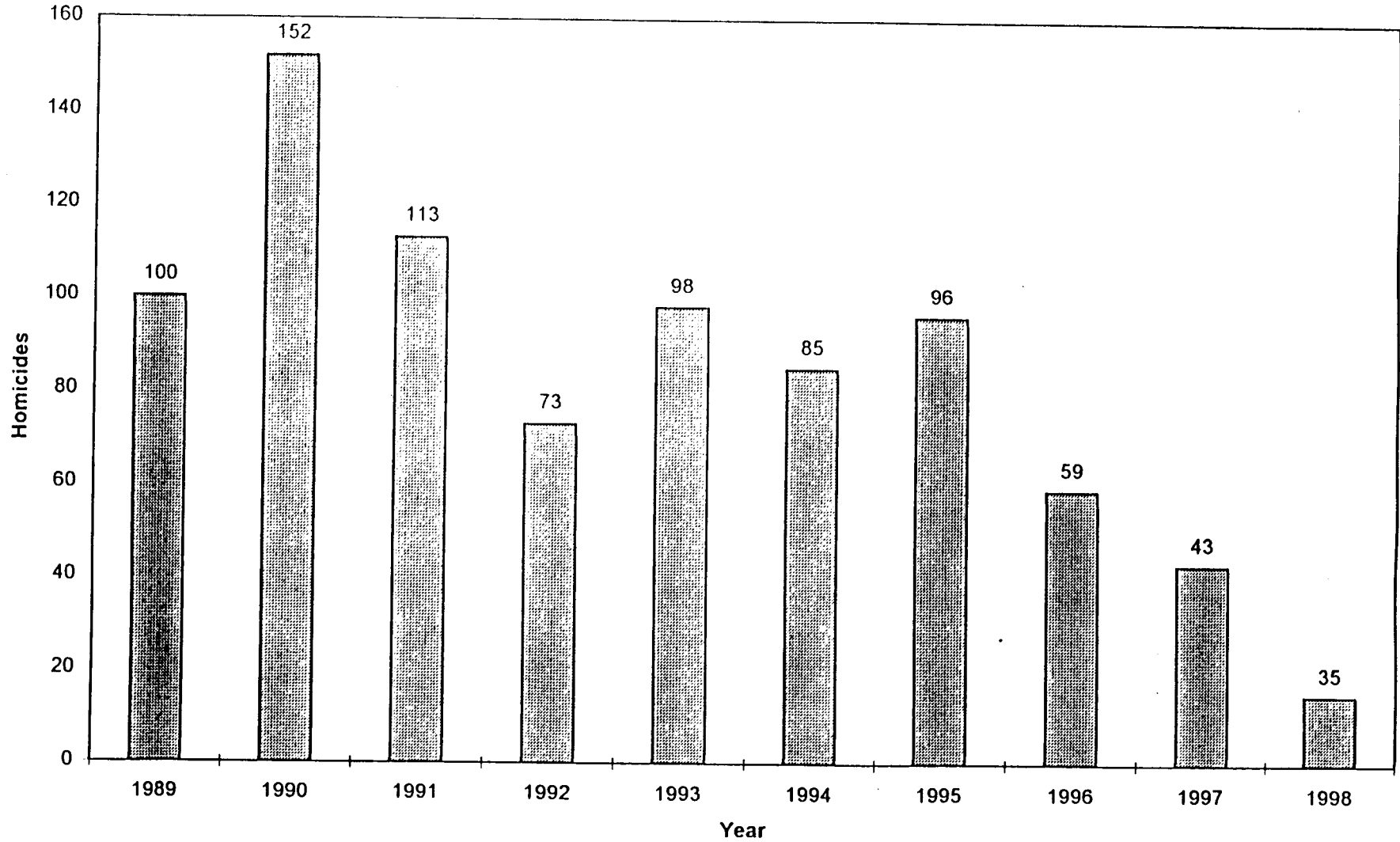
FIGURE 4.1  
Annual Decline in Urban Crime Rate: Comparison of U.S. and Boston, 1993-1997



**FIGURE 4.2**  
**Crime Rate Per 1,000 Residents (UCR Data): Comparison of Boston and Other 49 Largest U.S. Cities, 1997**



**FIGURE 4.3**  
**Boston Homicides, 1989-1998**



**FIGURE 4.4**

**Percent Who have Been Victims of Crime in Previous Year: Comparison of 1997 National Crime Victimization Survey (Urban Sample) and 1997 Boston Public Safety Survey**

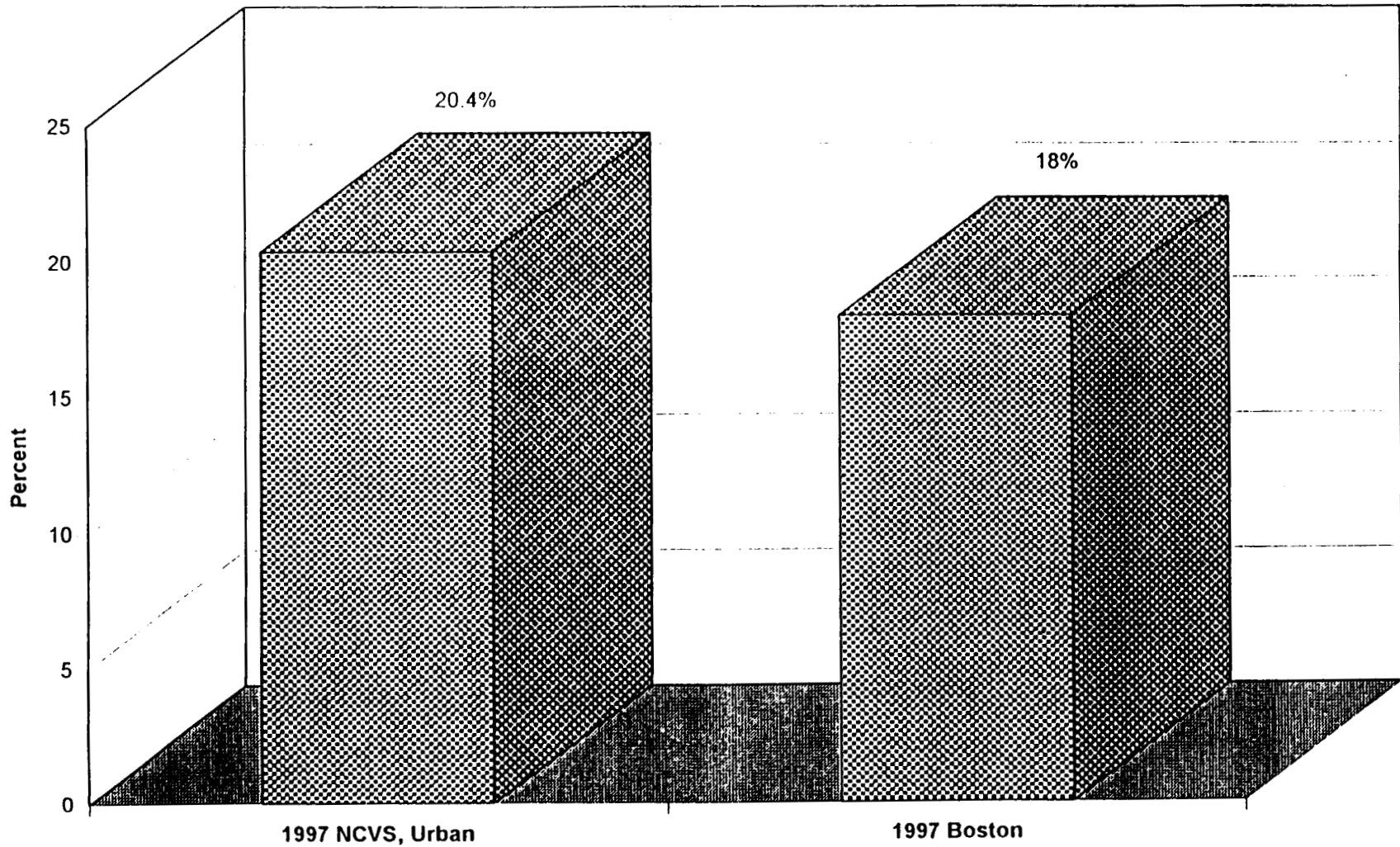
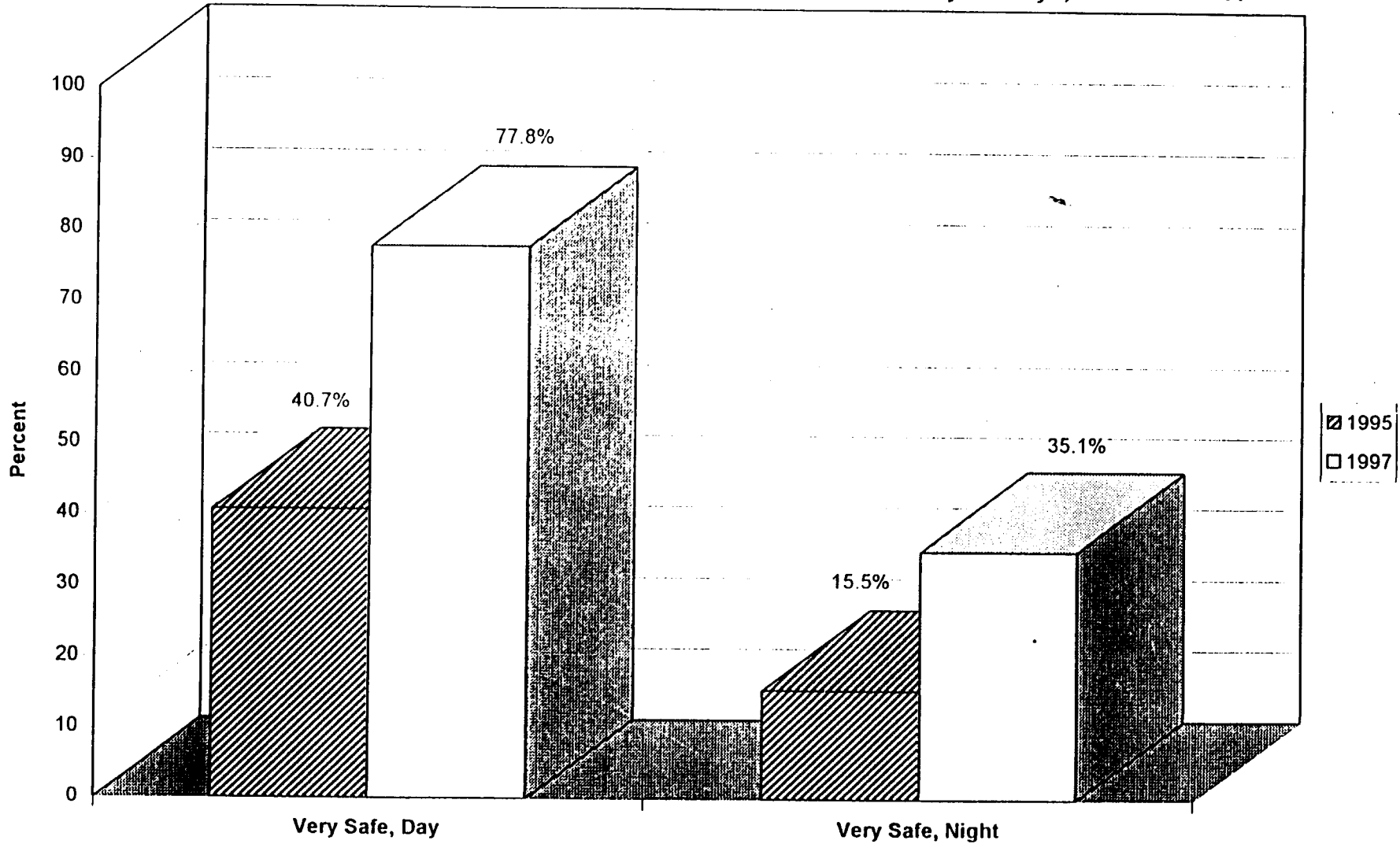


FIGURE 4.5

Perceived Safety Out Alone in Neighborhood: Boston Public Safety Surveys, 1995 and 1997



**FIGURE 4.6**  
**Perceived Safety Out Alone at Night in Neighborhood: Comparison of 1996 U.S. Urban and 1997 Boston Residents**

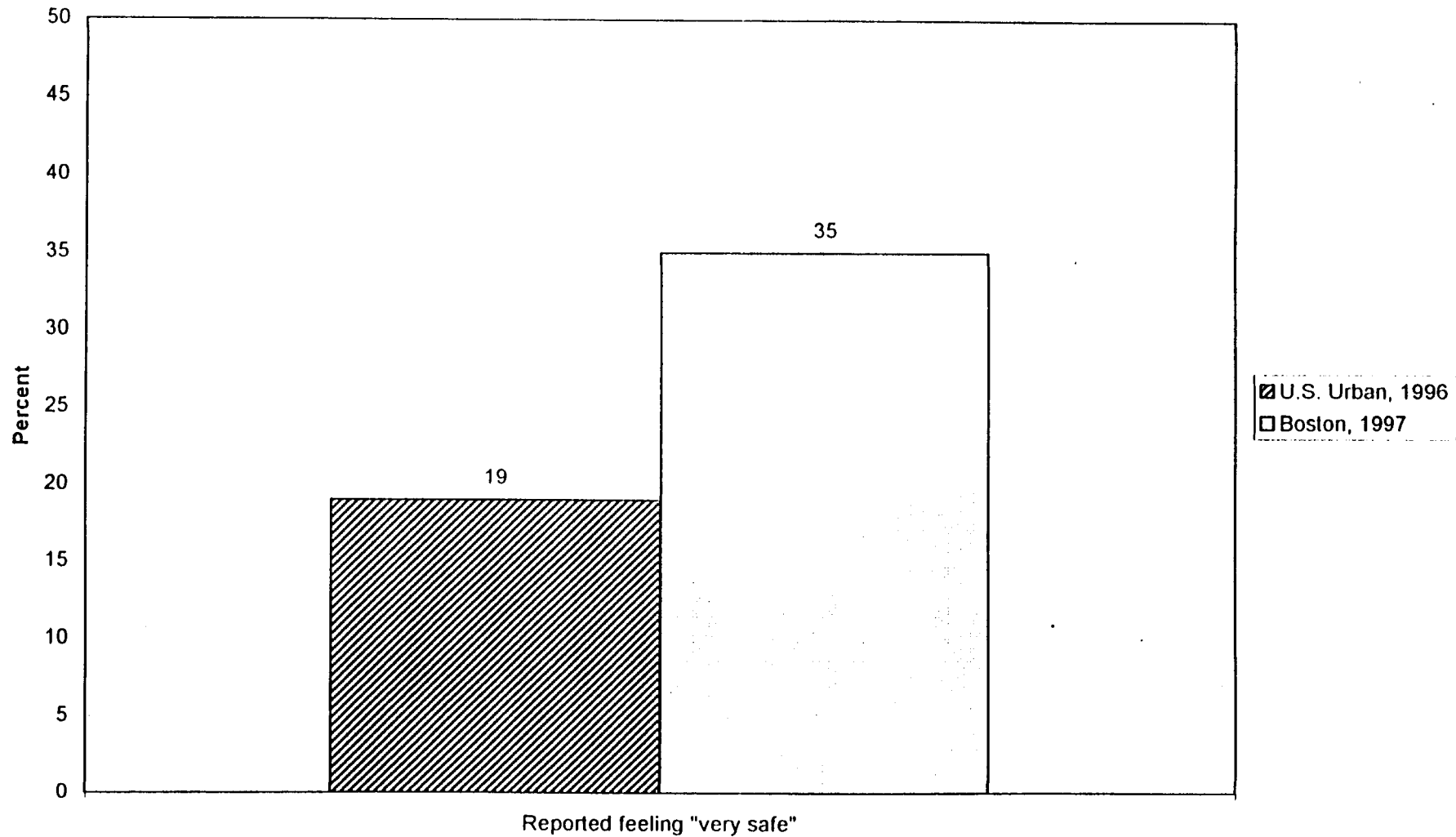
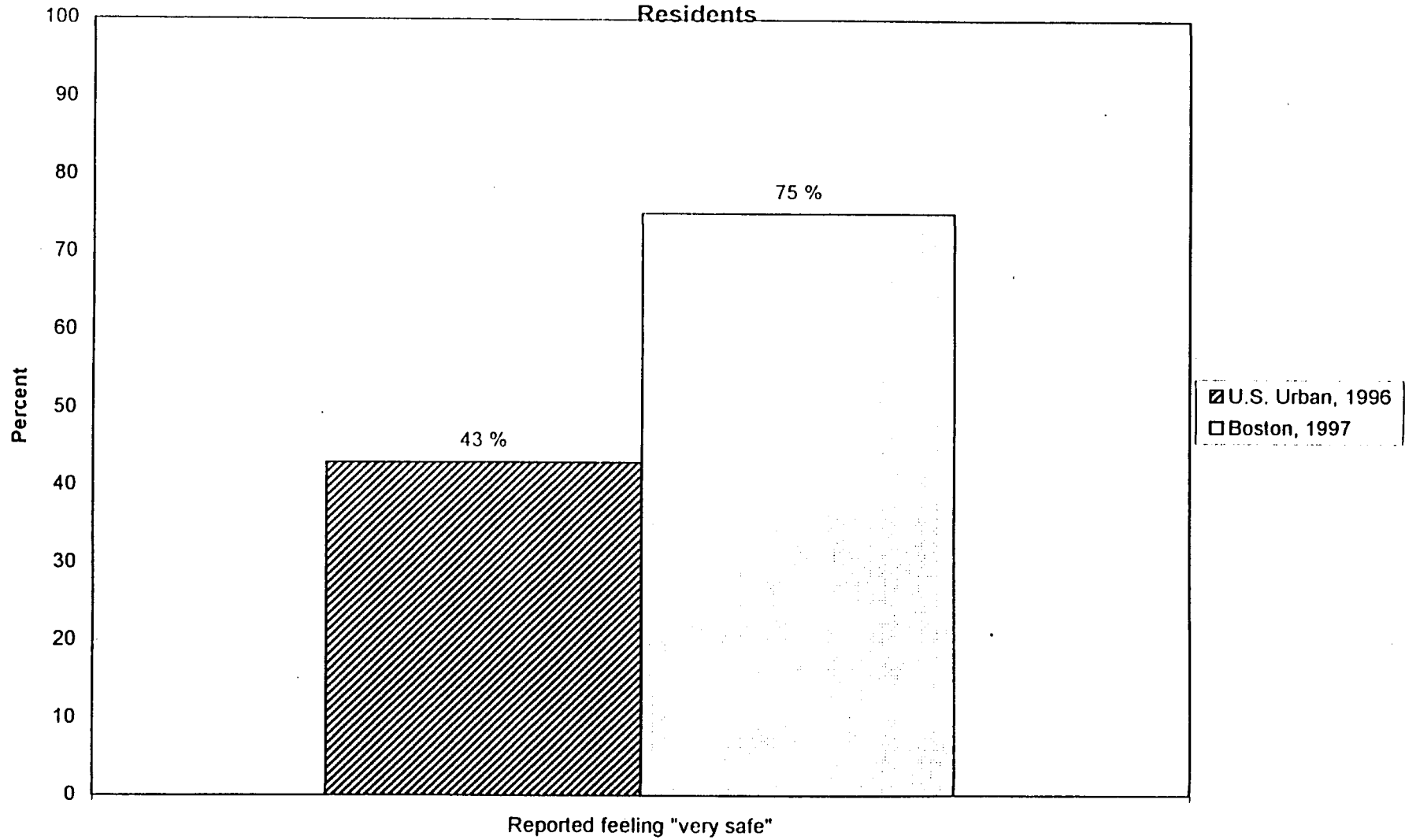
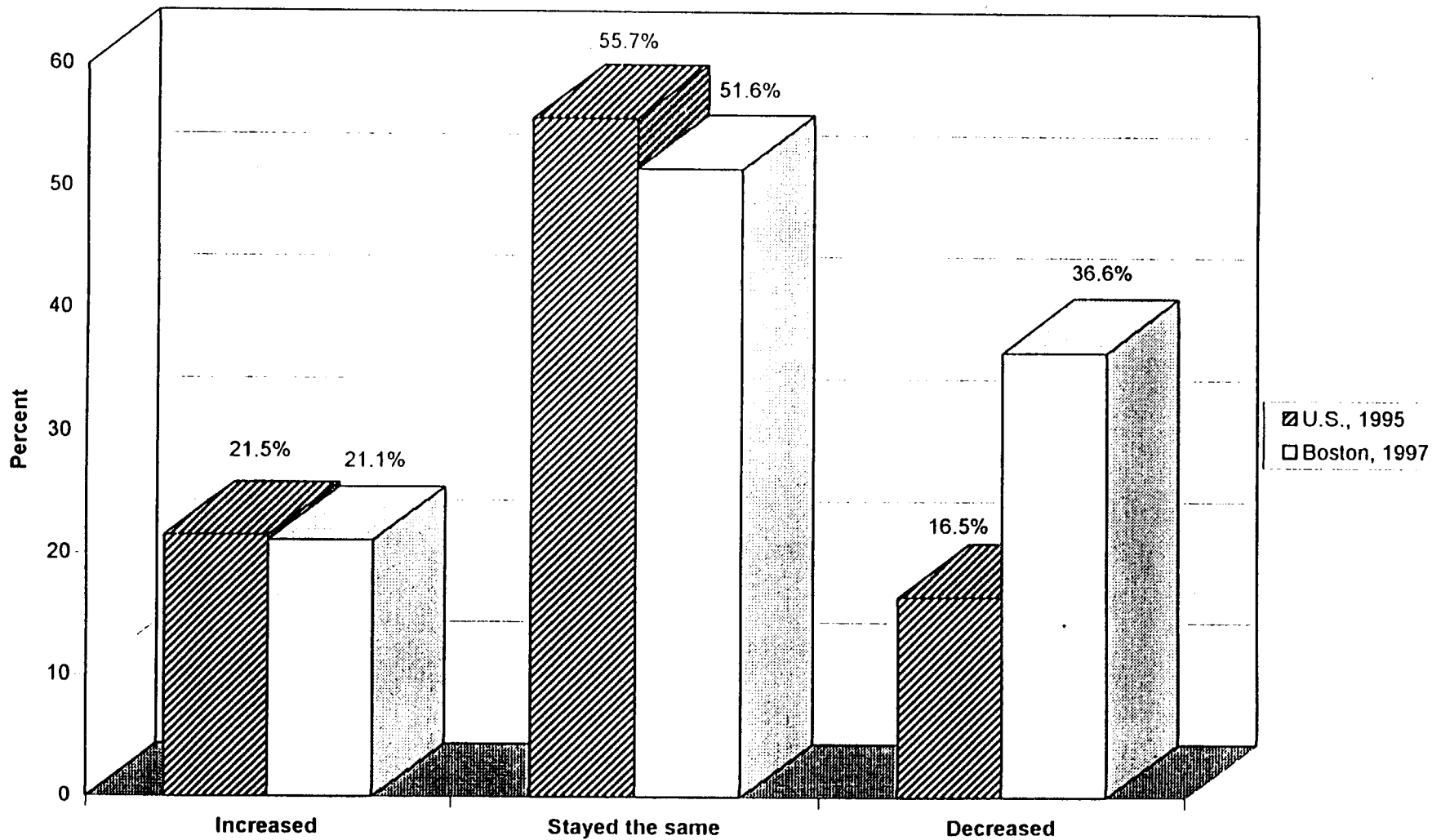


FIGURE 4.7

Perceived Safety at Home at Night: Comparison of 1996 U.S. Urban and 1997 Boston Residents



**FIGURE 4.8**  
**Perceived Change in Neighborhood Crime in Past Year: Comparison of 1995 U.S. Urban and 1997 Boston Residents**





**FIGURE 4.9**  
**Perceived Change in Neighborhood Crime in Past Year: Comparison of 1997 U.S. and 1997 Boston Residents**

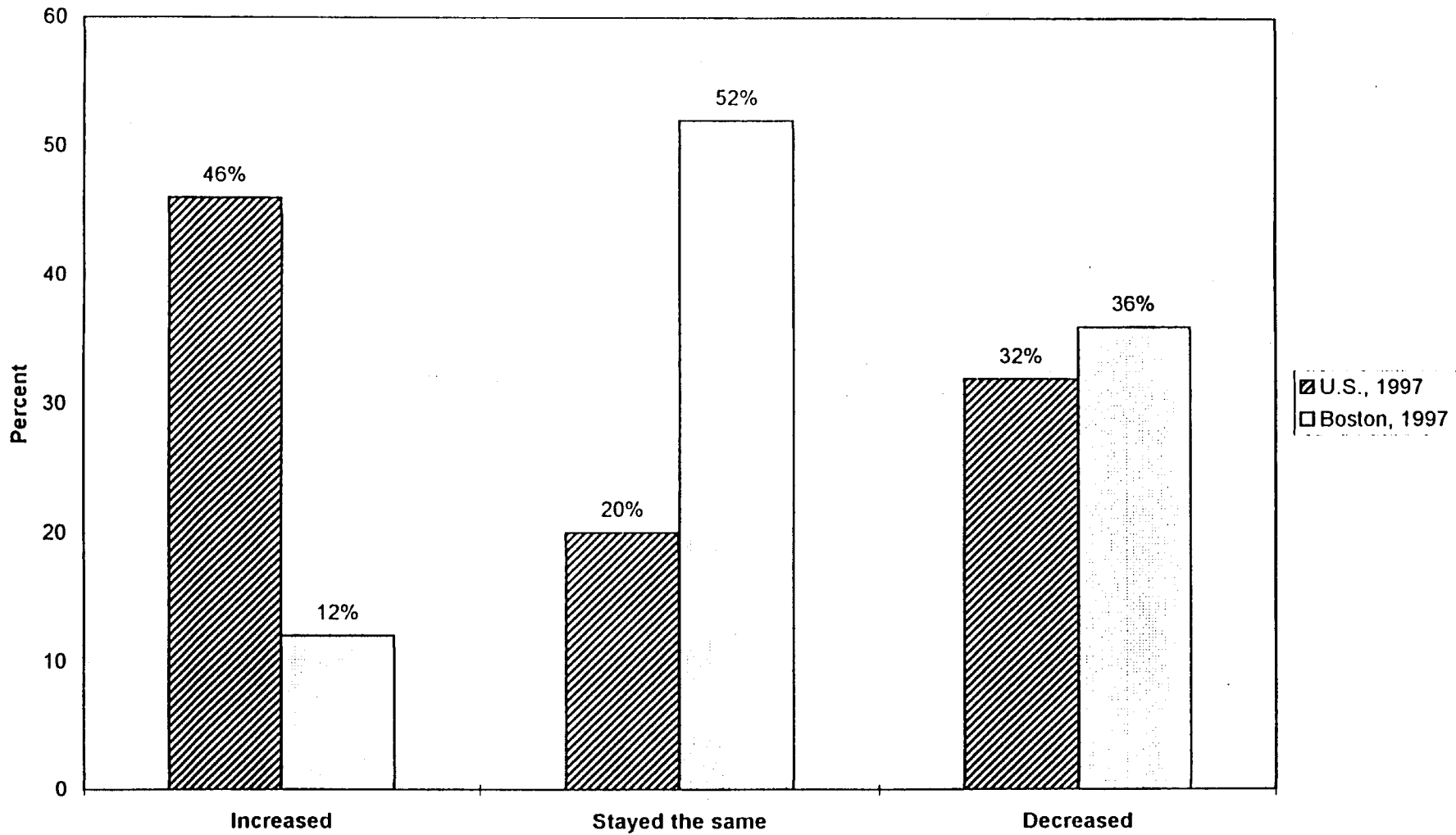
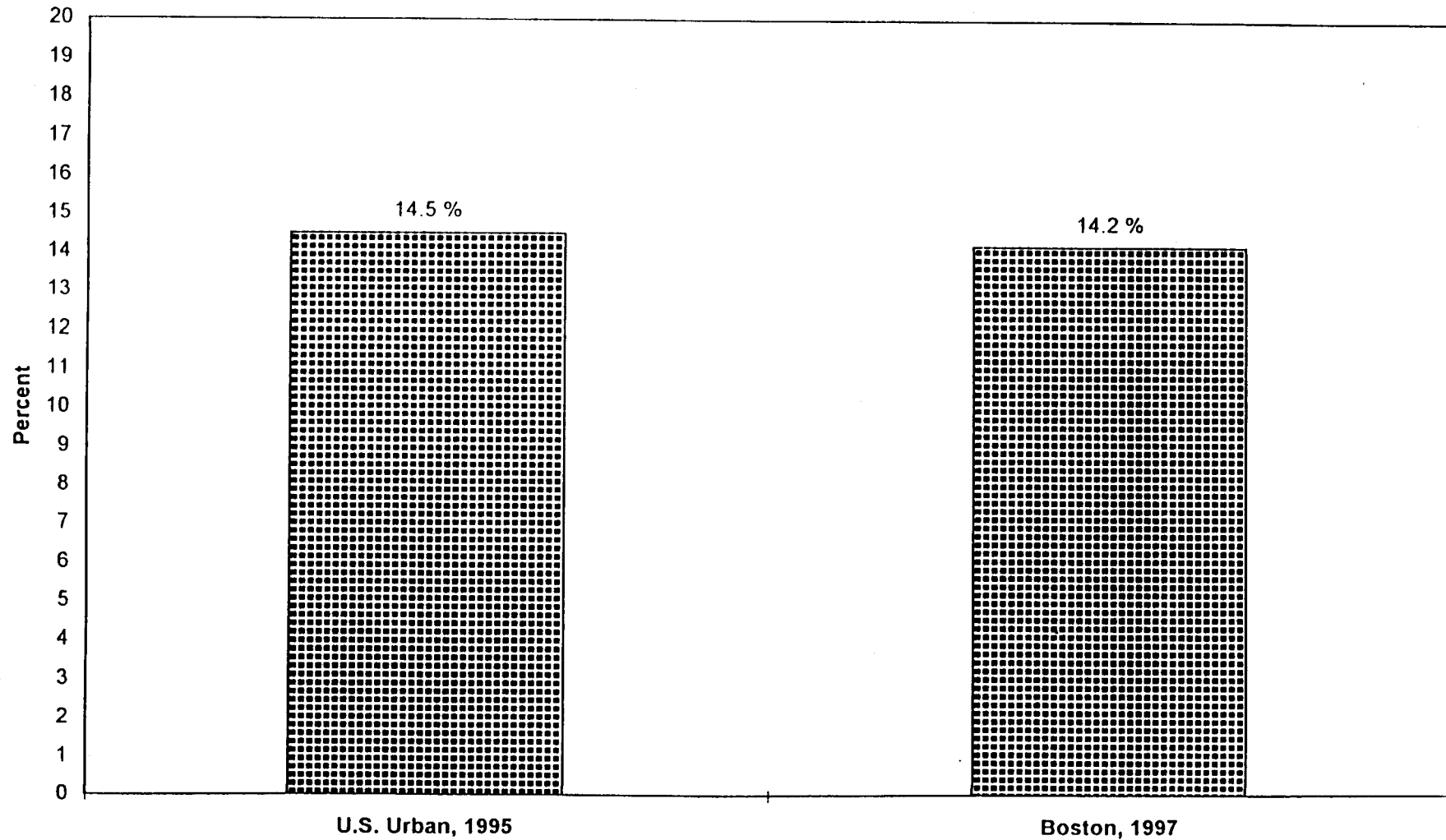
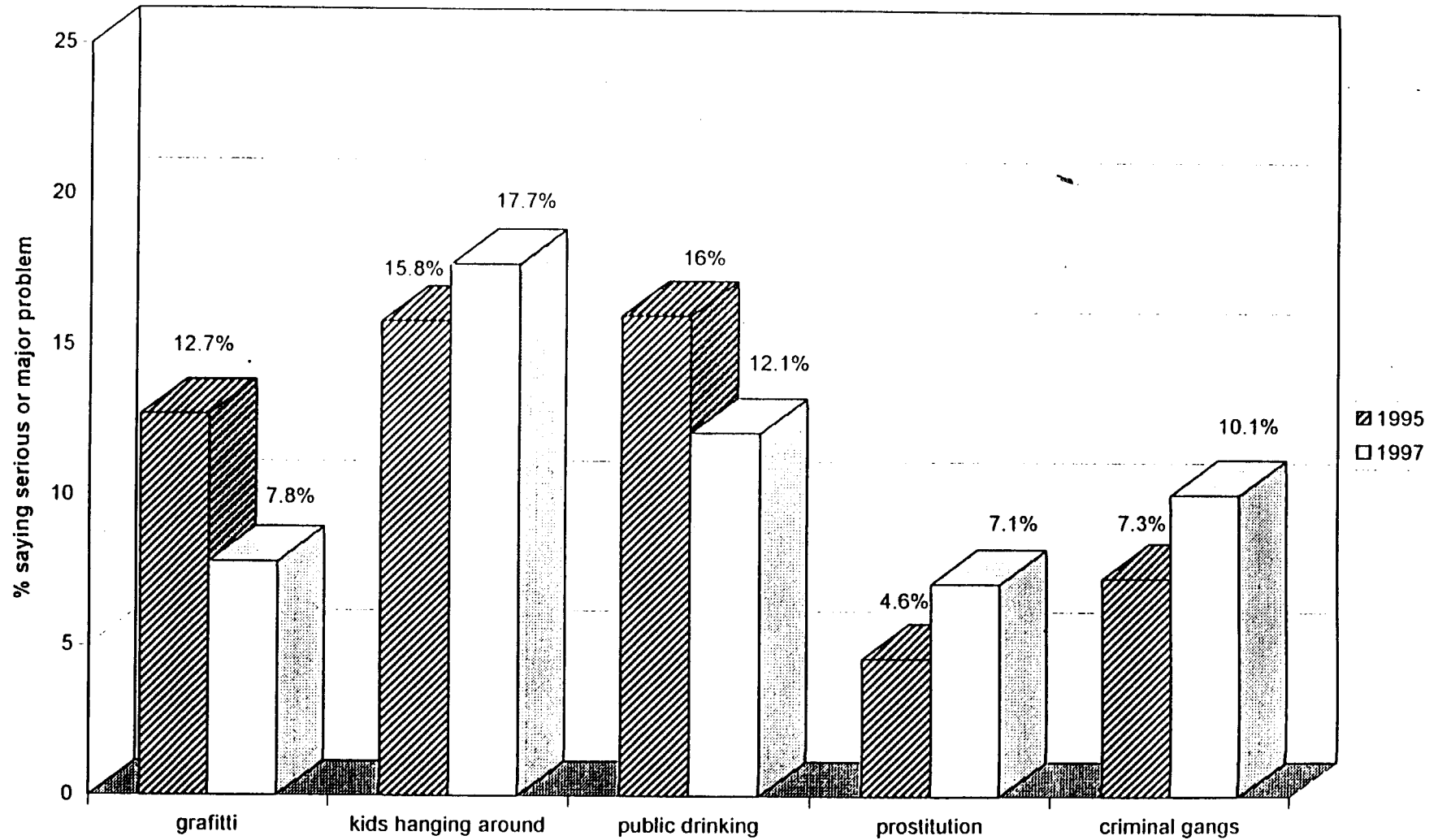


FIGURE 4.10  
Percent Mentioning Crime as a Neighborhood Problem: Comparison of 1995 U.S. Urban and  
1997 Boston Residents



**FIGURE 4.11**  
**Issues Considered Serious or Major Problems in Neighborhoods: Boston Residents, 1995**  
**and 1997**



**FIGURE 4.12**  
**Issues Considered Serious Problems in Neighborhoods: Comparison of 1995 U.S. Urban and 1997 Boston Residents**

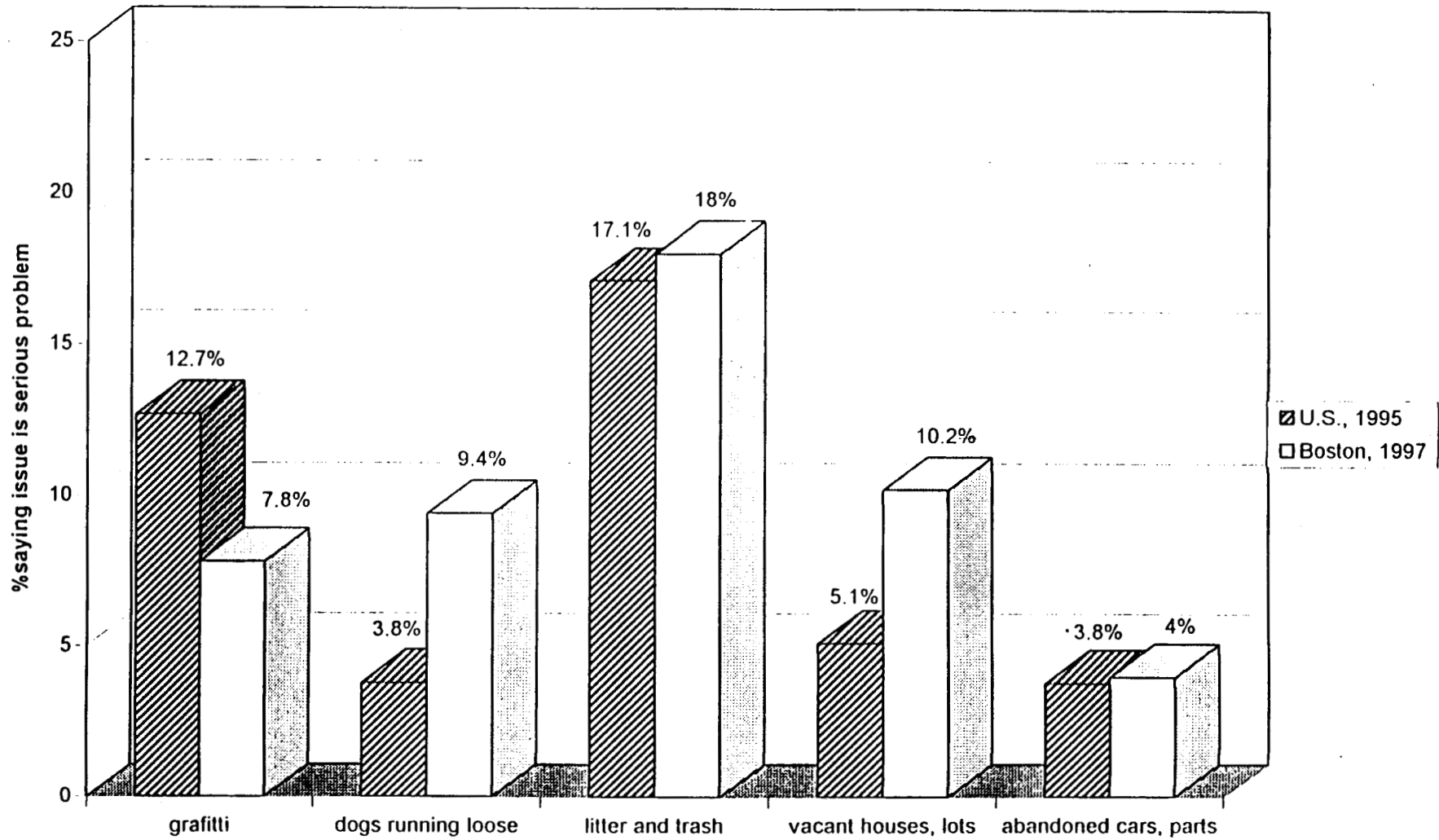
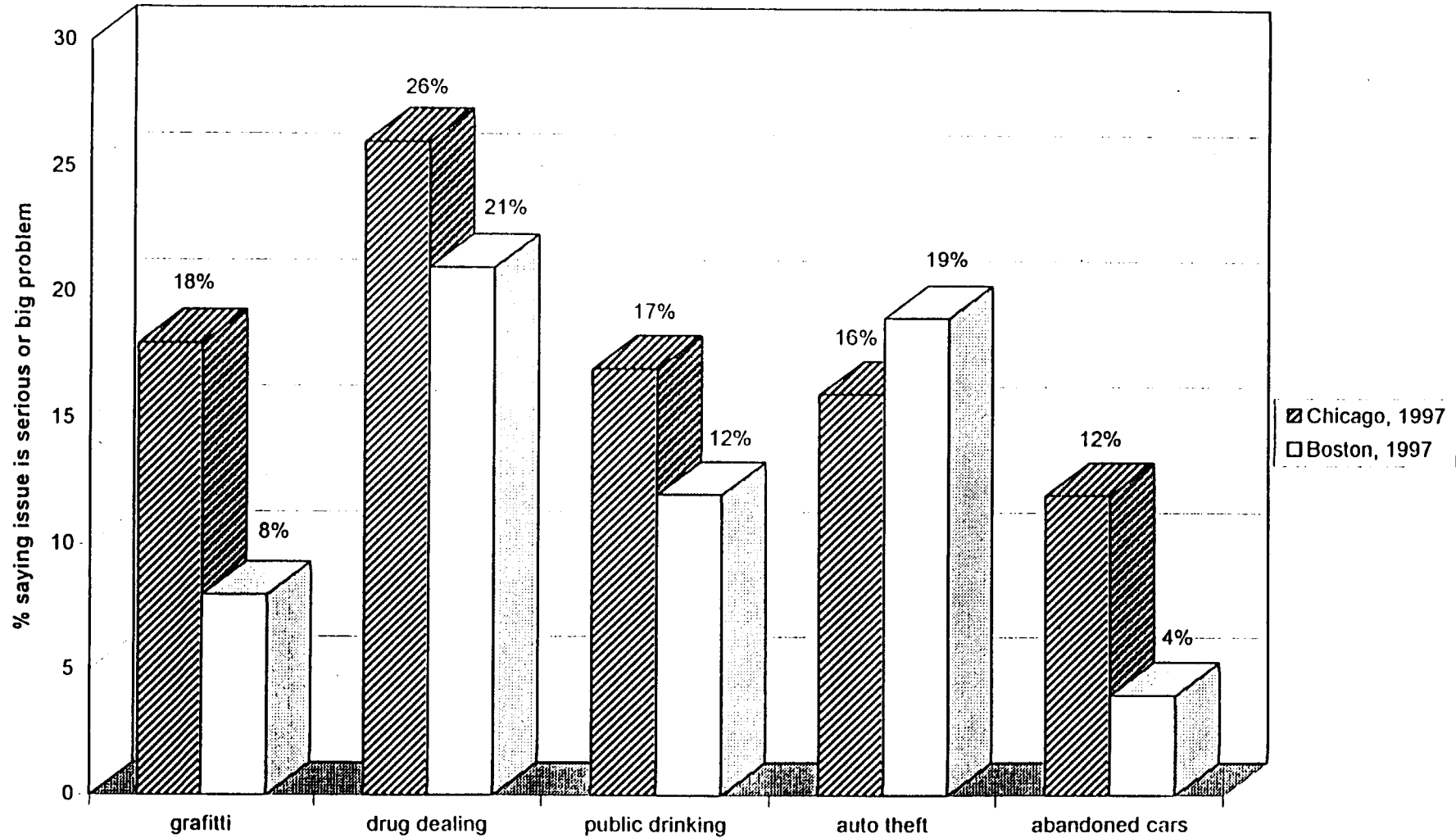


Figure 4.13  
Issues Considered "Serious" or "Big" Problems in Neighborhoods: Comparison of Boston  
and Chicago Residents, 1997



**FIGURE 4.14**  
**Perceived Confidence in Police to Prevent Crime: Comparison of 1995 U.S. Urban and 1997 Boston Residents**

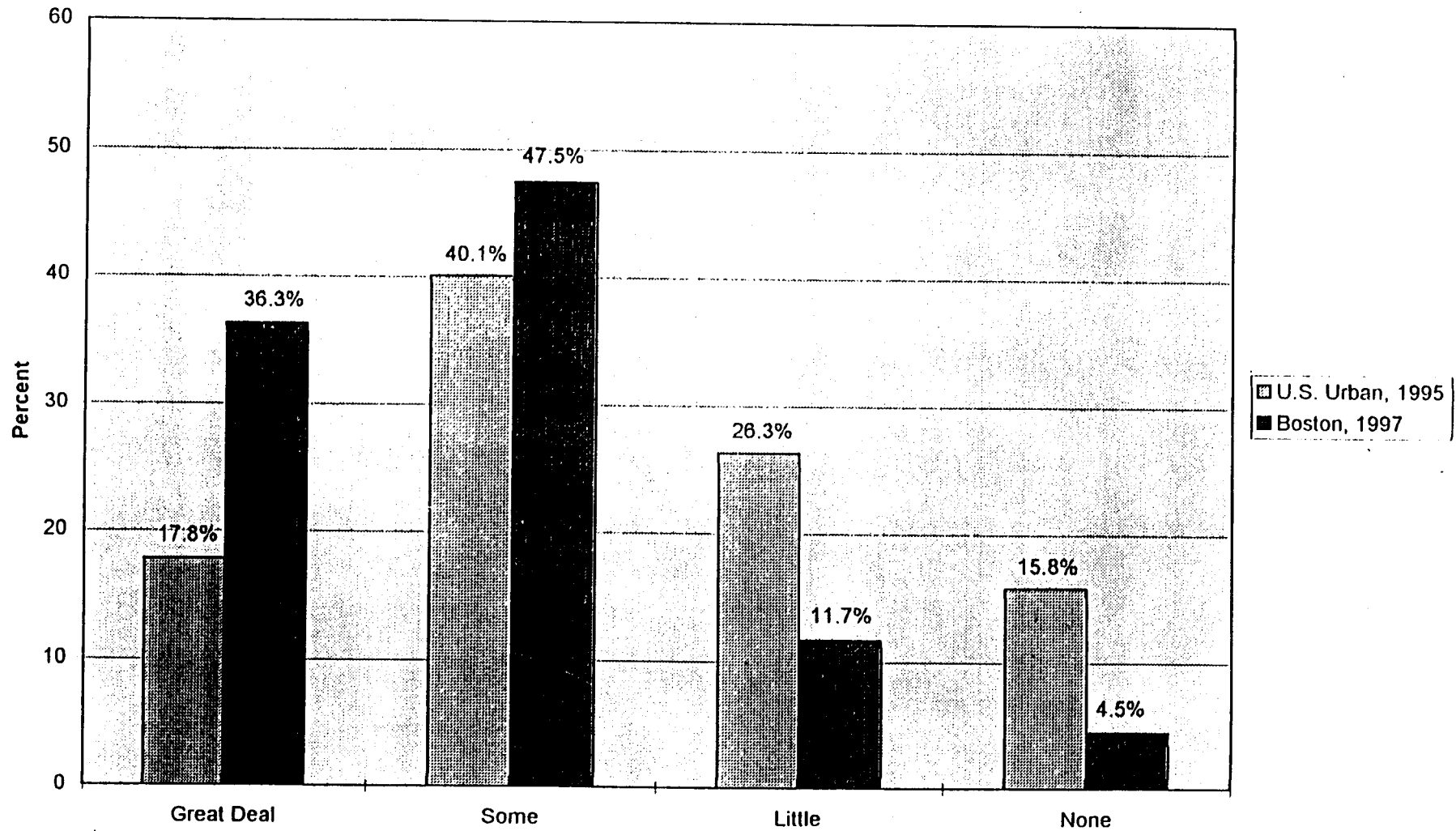


FIGURE 4.15  
Confidence in Police Ability to Solve Crime: Comparison of 1995 U.S. Urban and 1997 Boston Residents

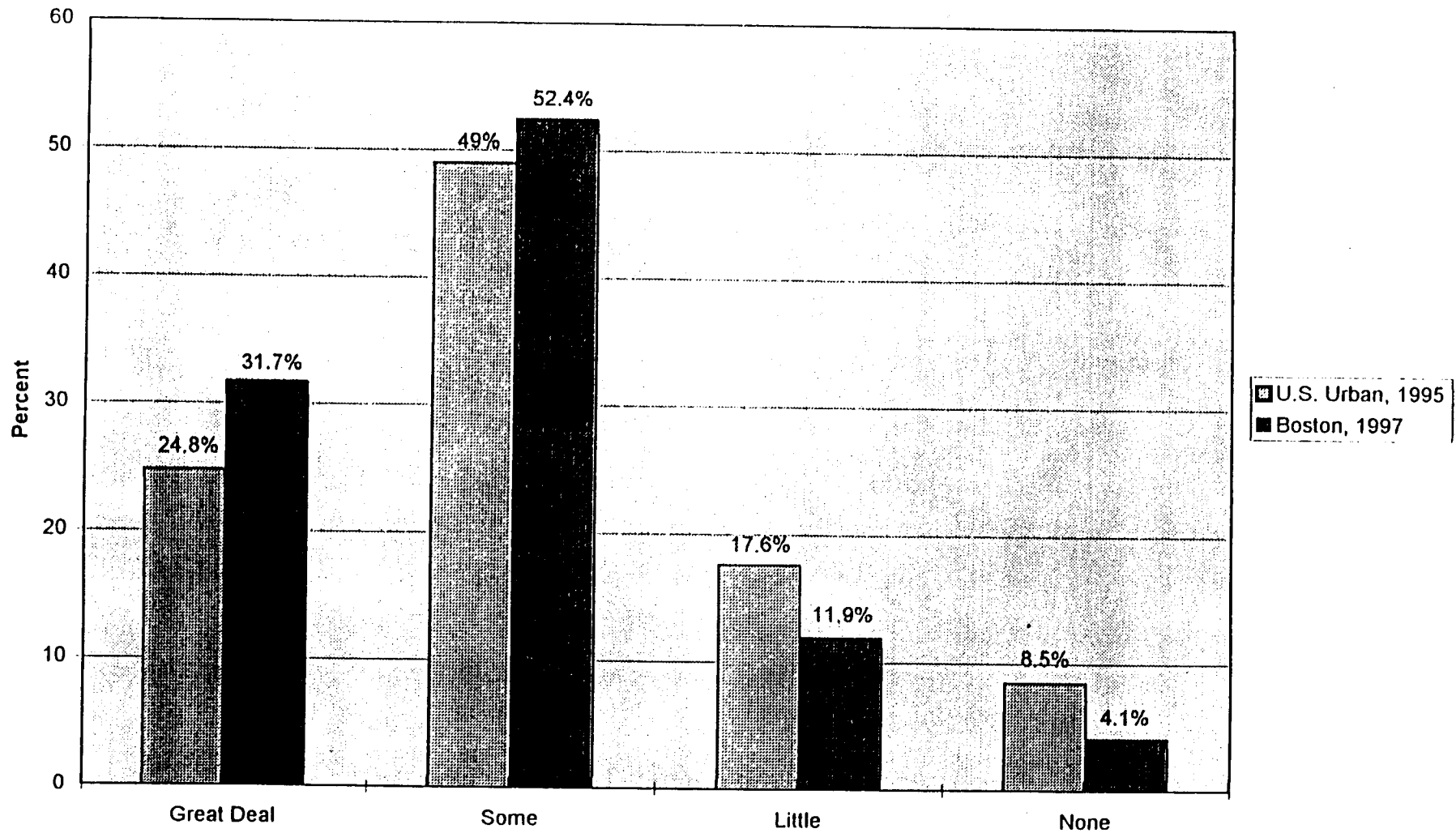


Figure 4.16  
Boston Police Officer Perceptions of How Giving District Captains Complete Control Has or Will Improve Police Services

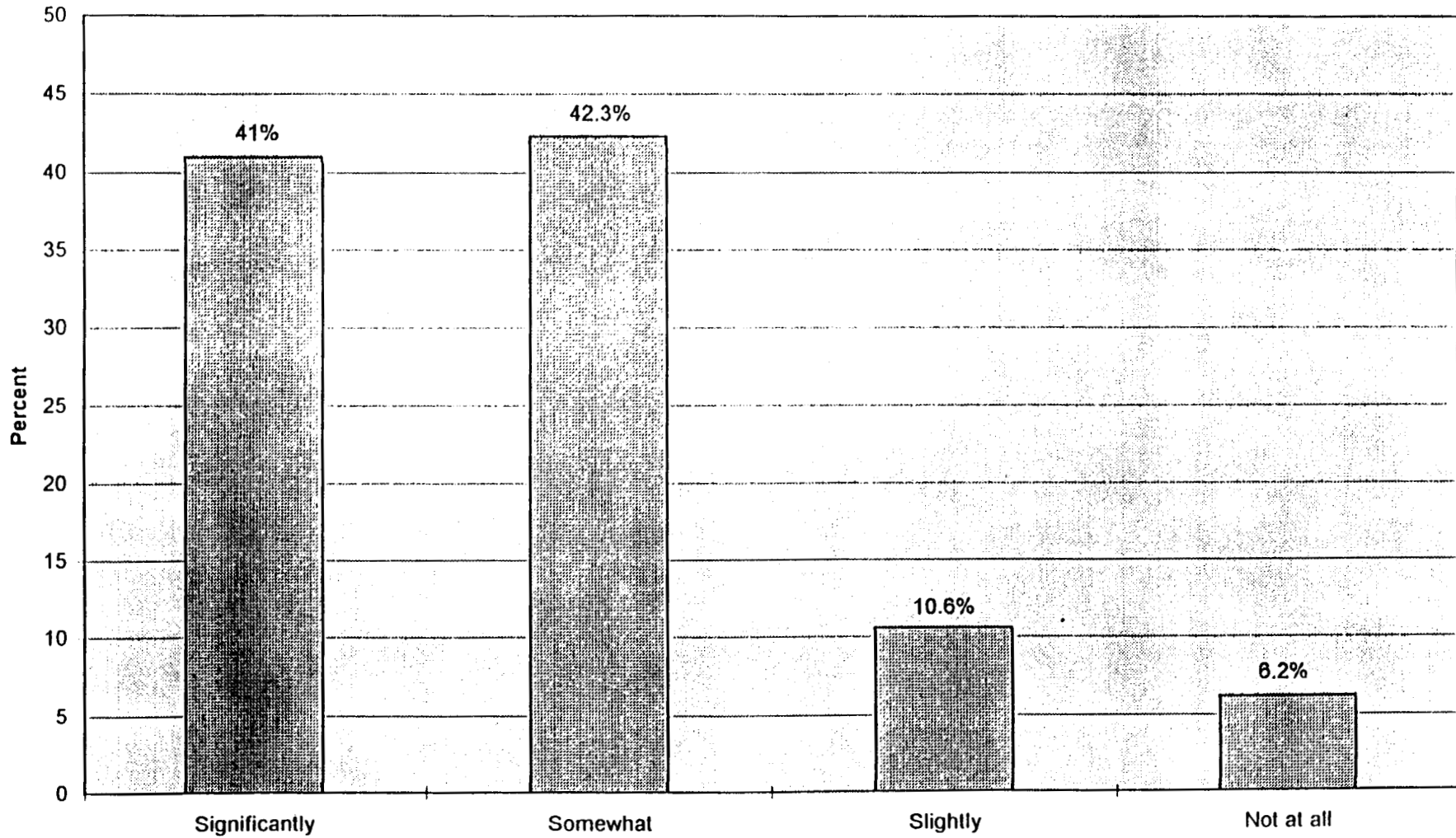
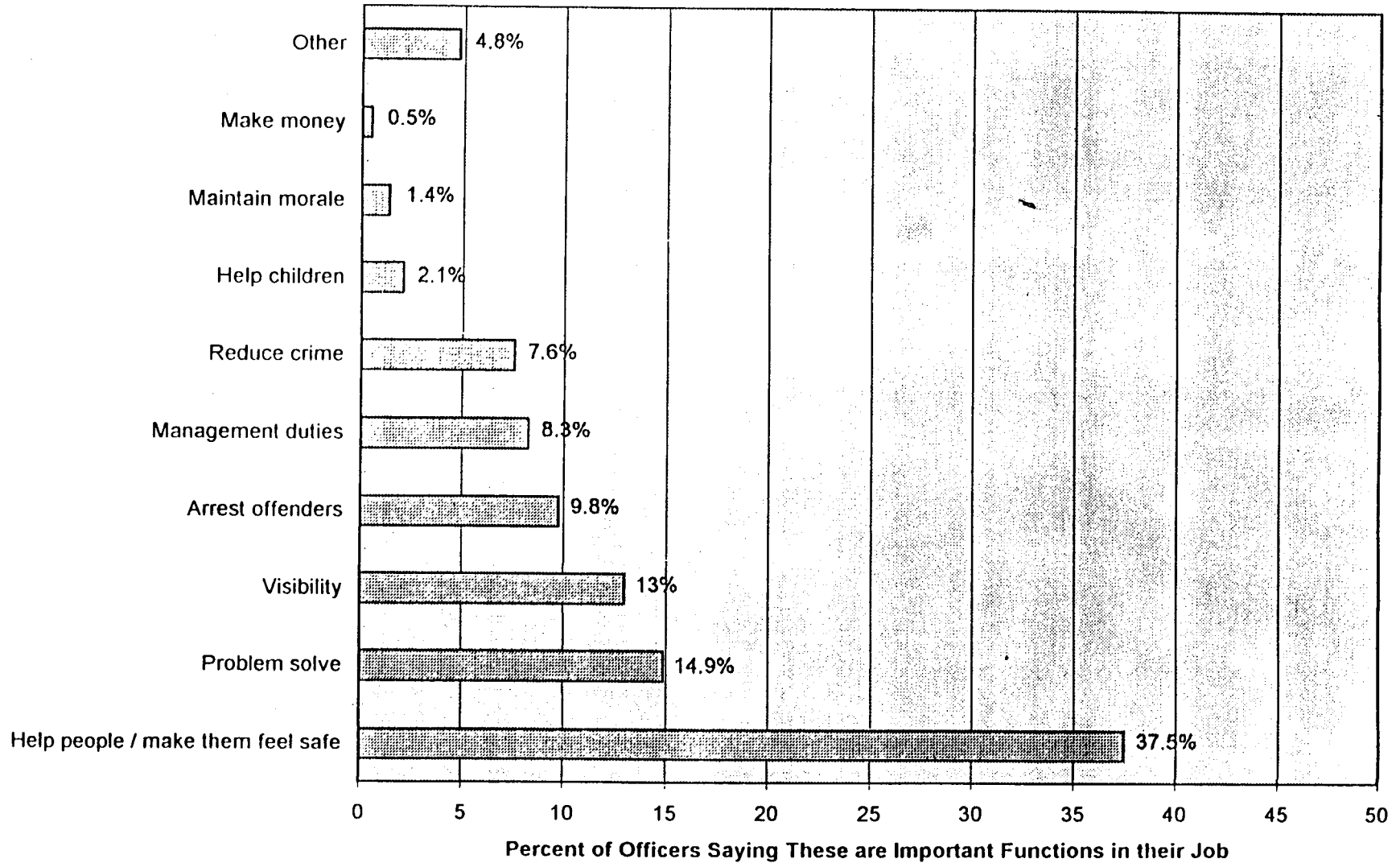
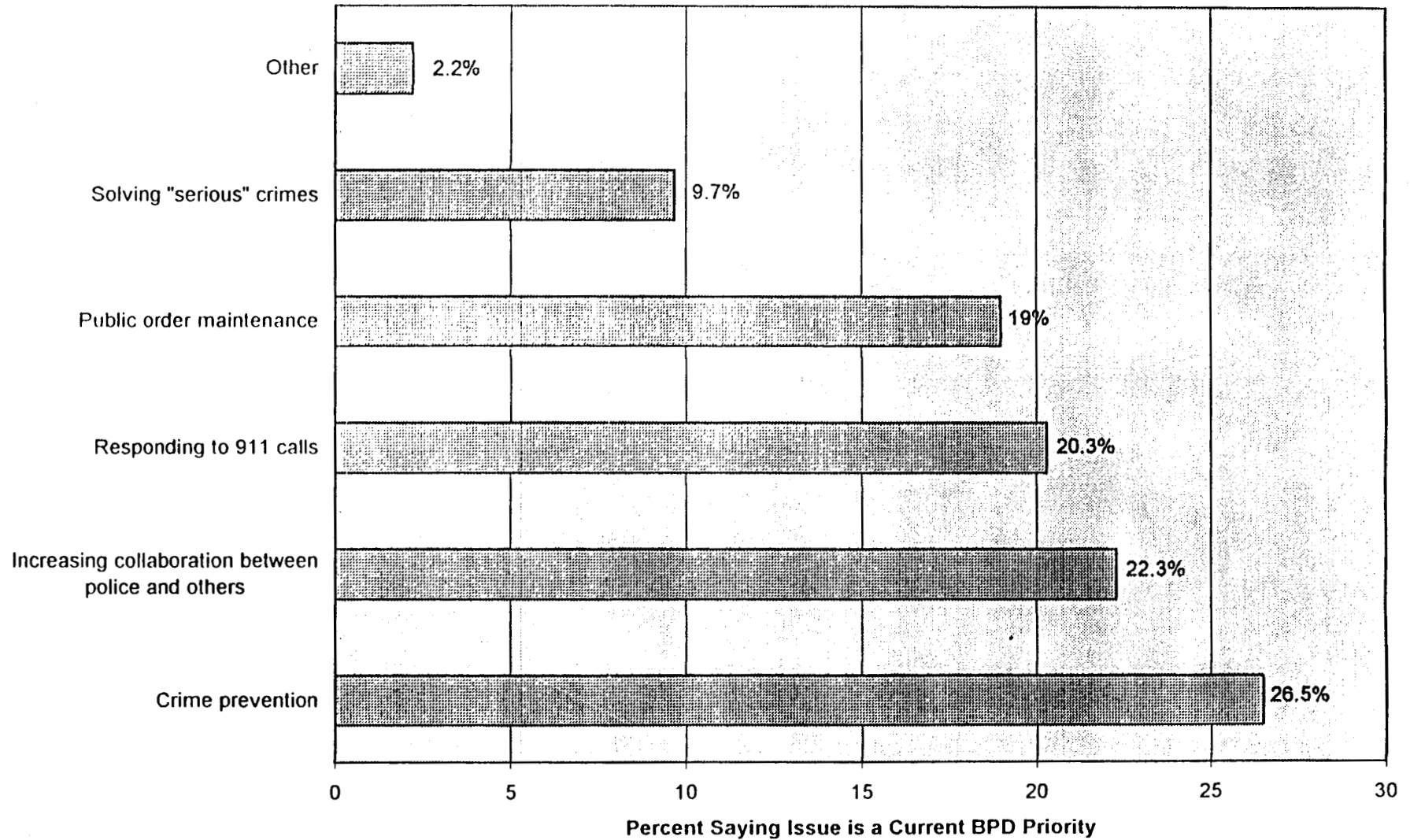




Figure 4.17  
Police Officer Perceptions of the Most Important Things They Do in Their Jobs



**Figure 4.18**  
**Boston Police Officer Perceptions of Current Policing Priorities of BPD**



**Figure 4.19**  
**Boston Police Officer Perceptions of Who Most Strongly Influences Direction and Focus of the BPD**

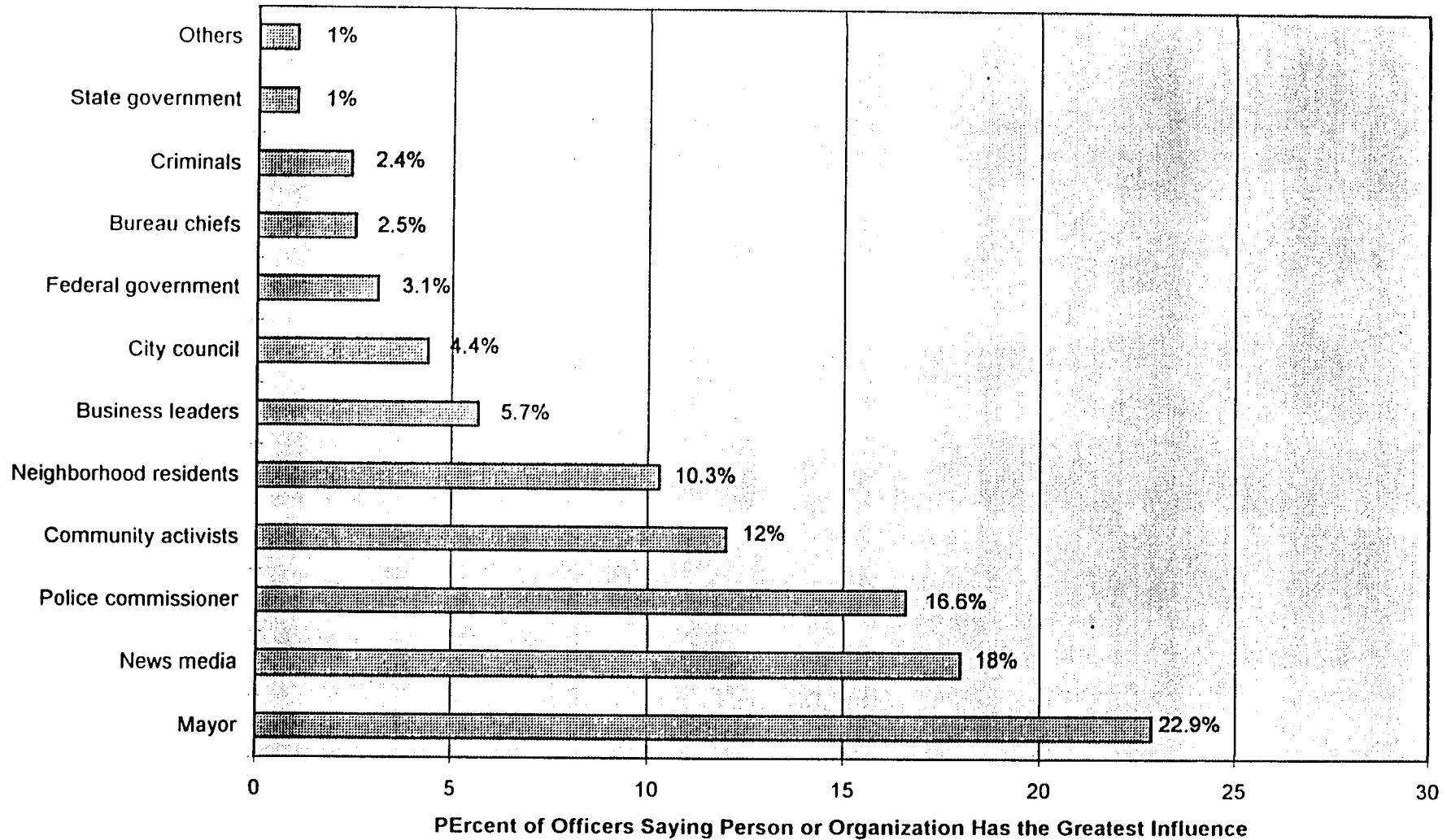
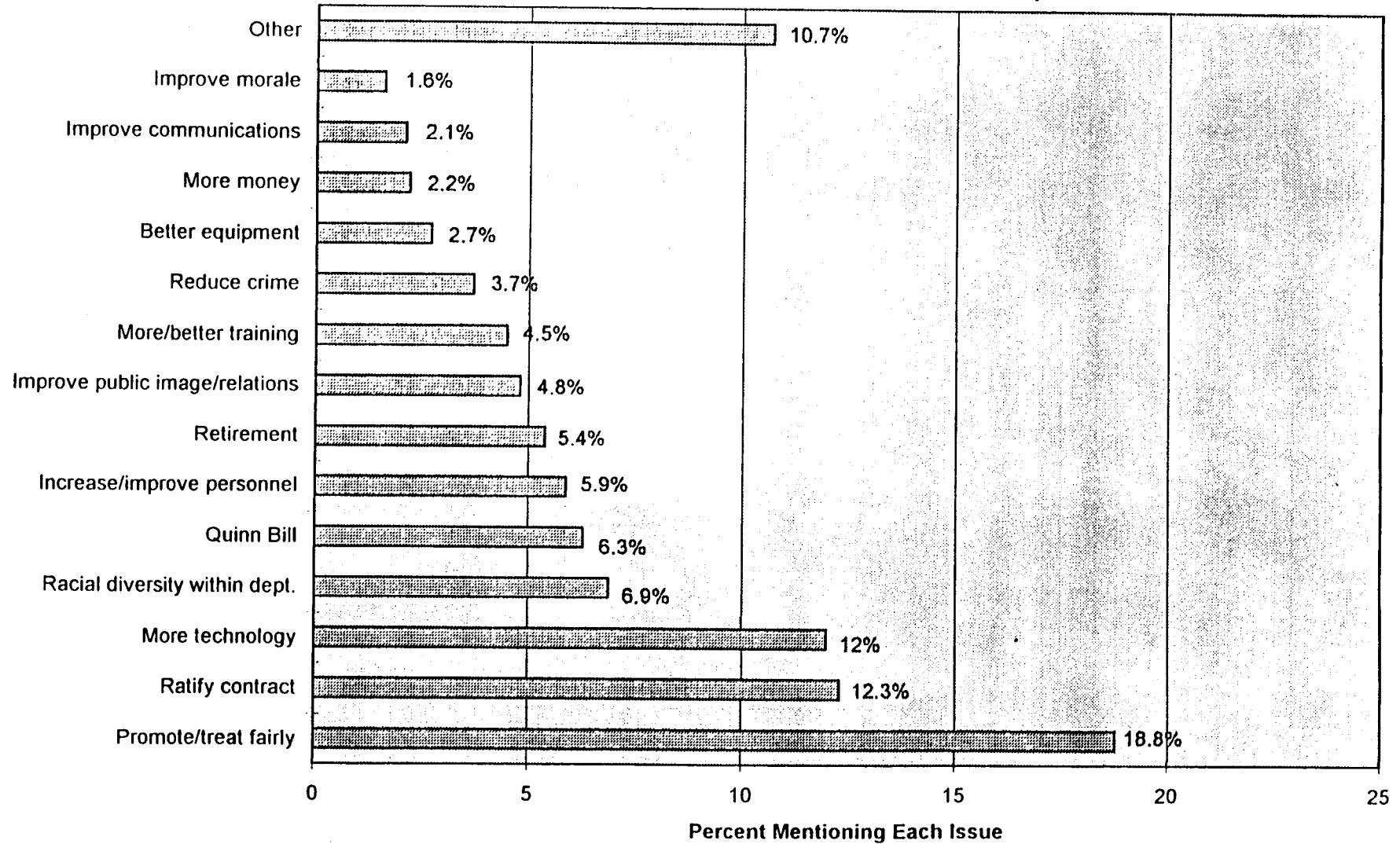


Figure 4.20

What Boston Police Officers Would Like to See BPD Accomplish



**Figure 4.21**  
**Boston Police Officer Opinions About What Residents Would Like Police to Do More About**

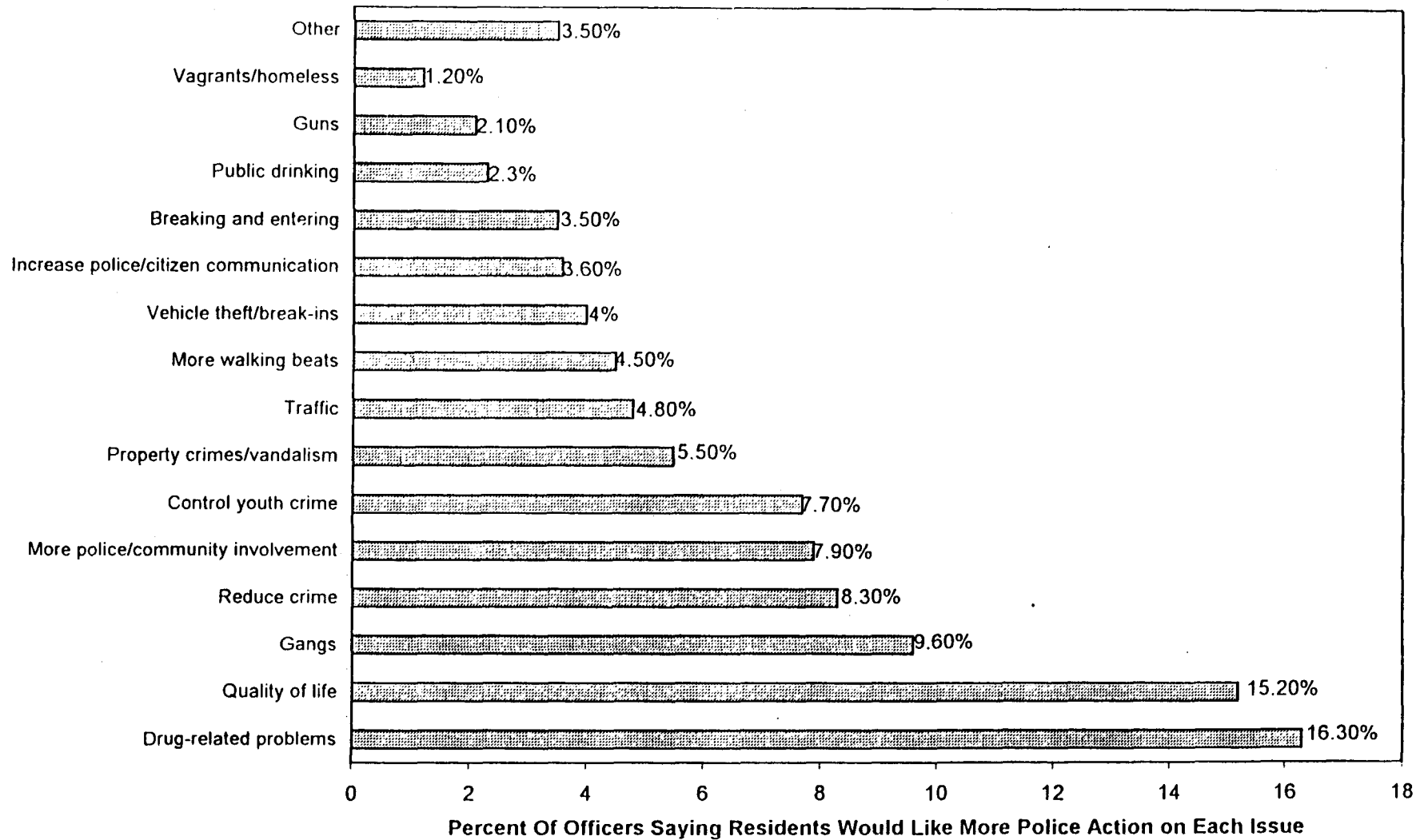


Figure 4.22  
Boston Police Officers' Perceptions of Recent Local Crime Trends

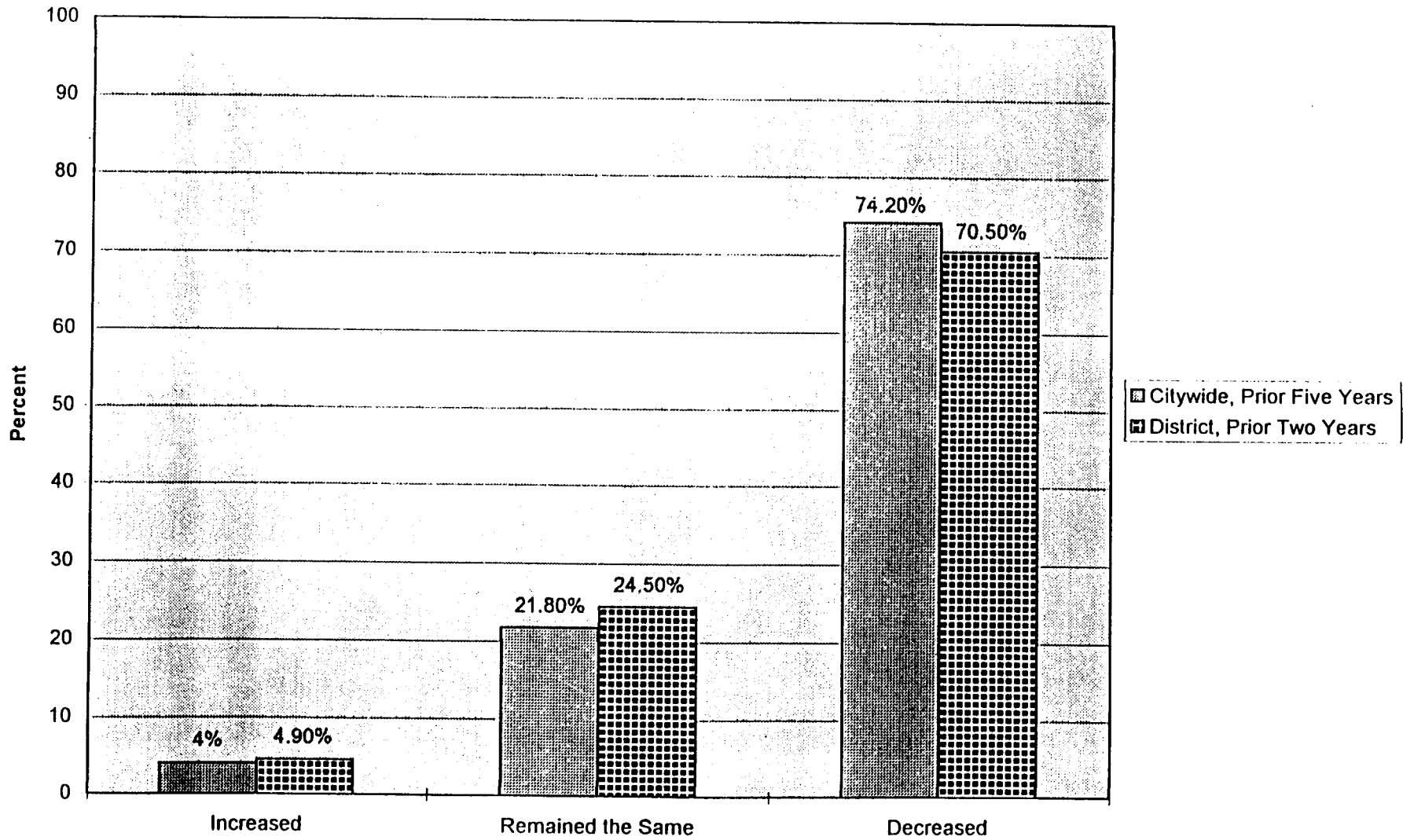
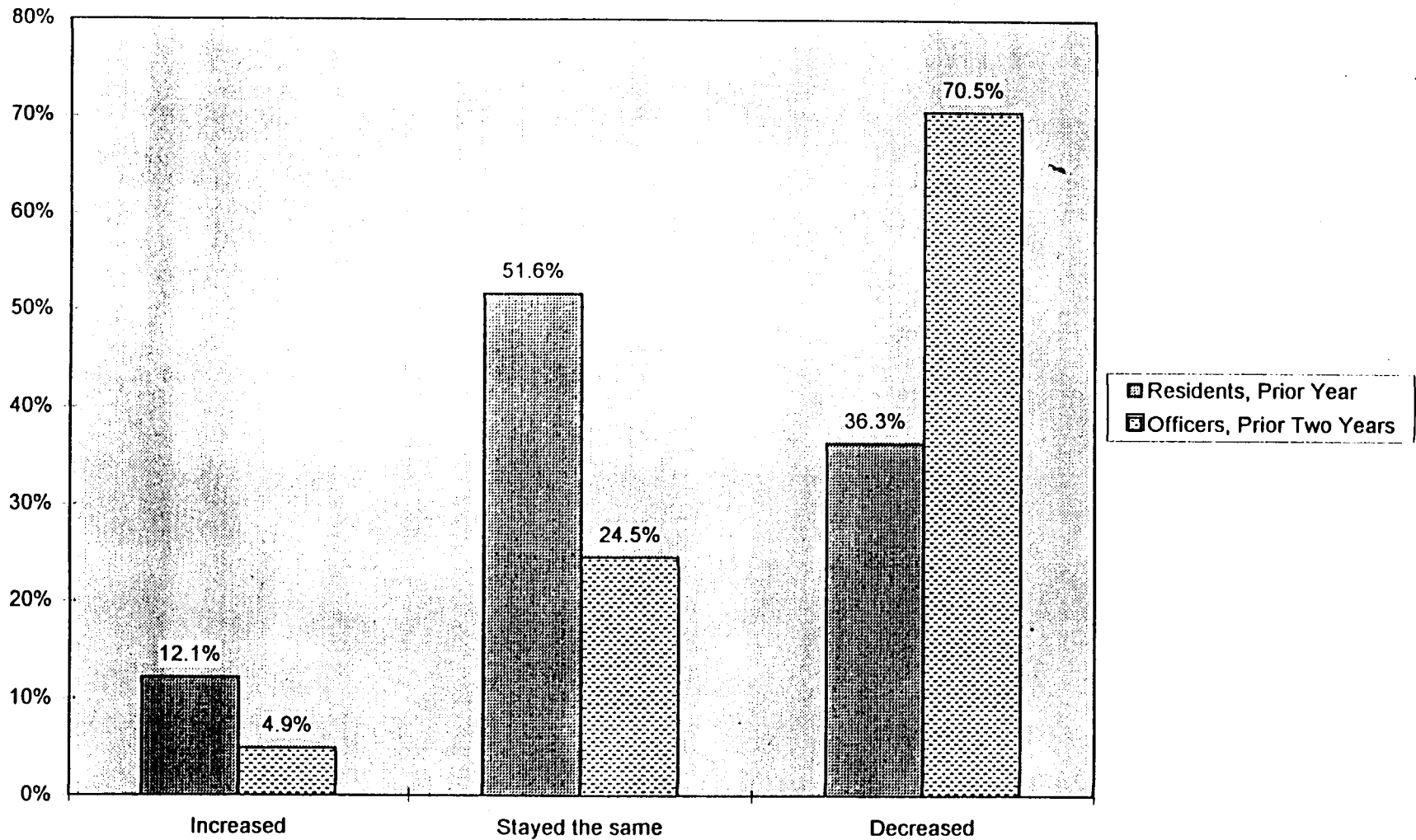
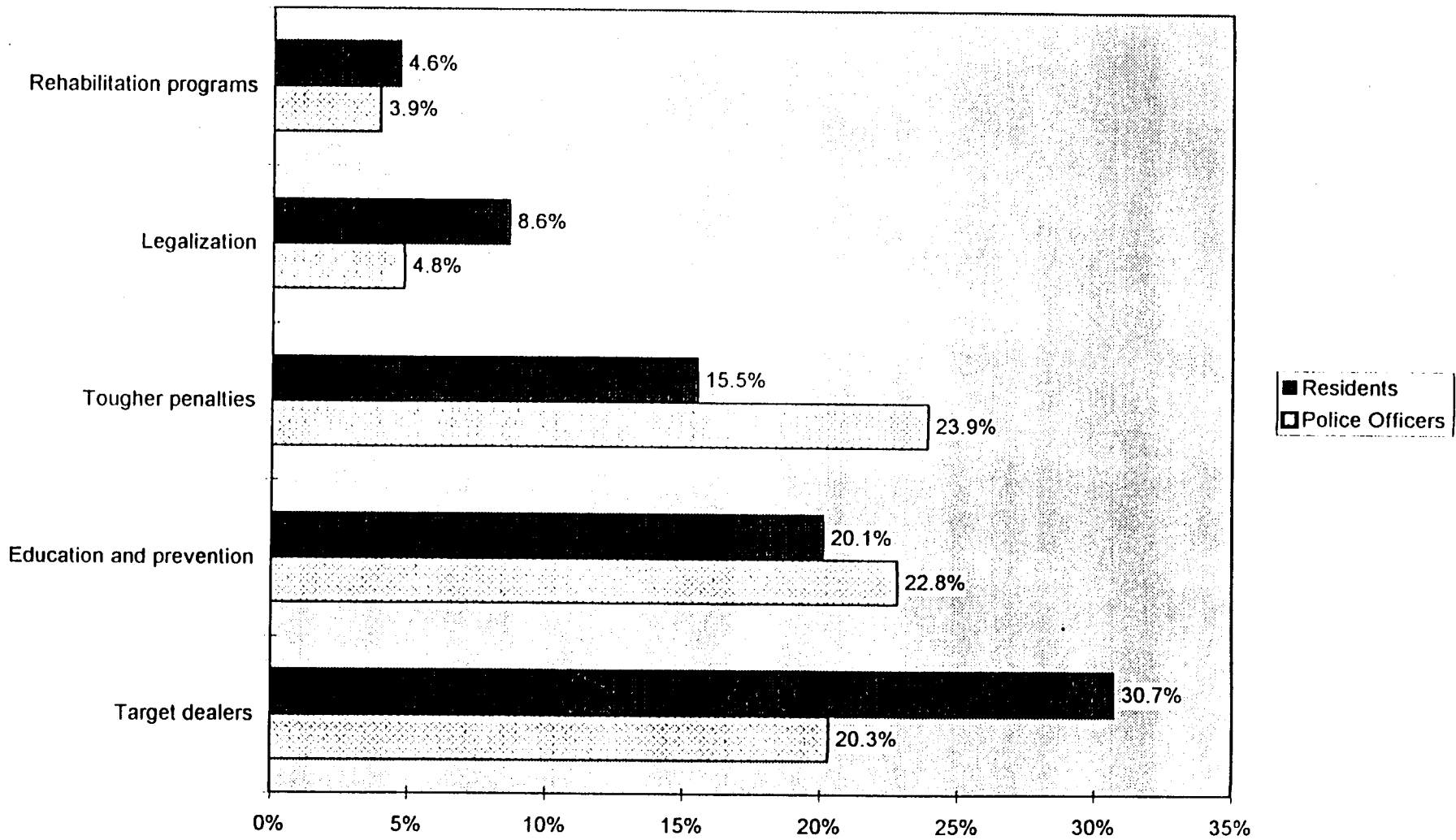


Figure 4.23  
Comparison of Boston Police Officer and Resident Perceptions of Recent Crime Trends, 1997

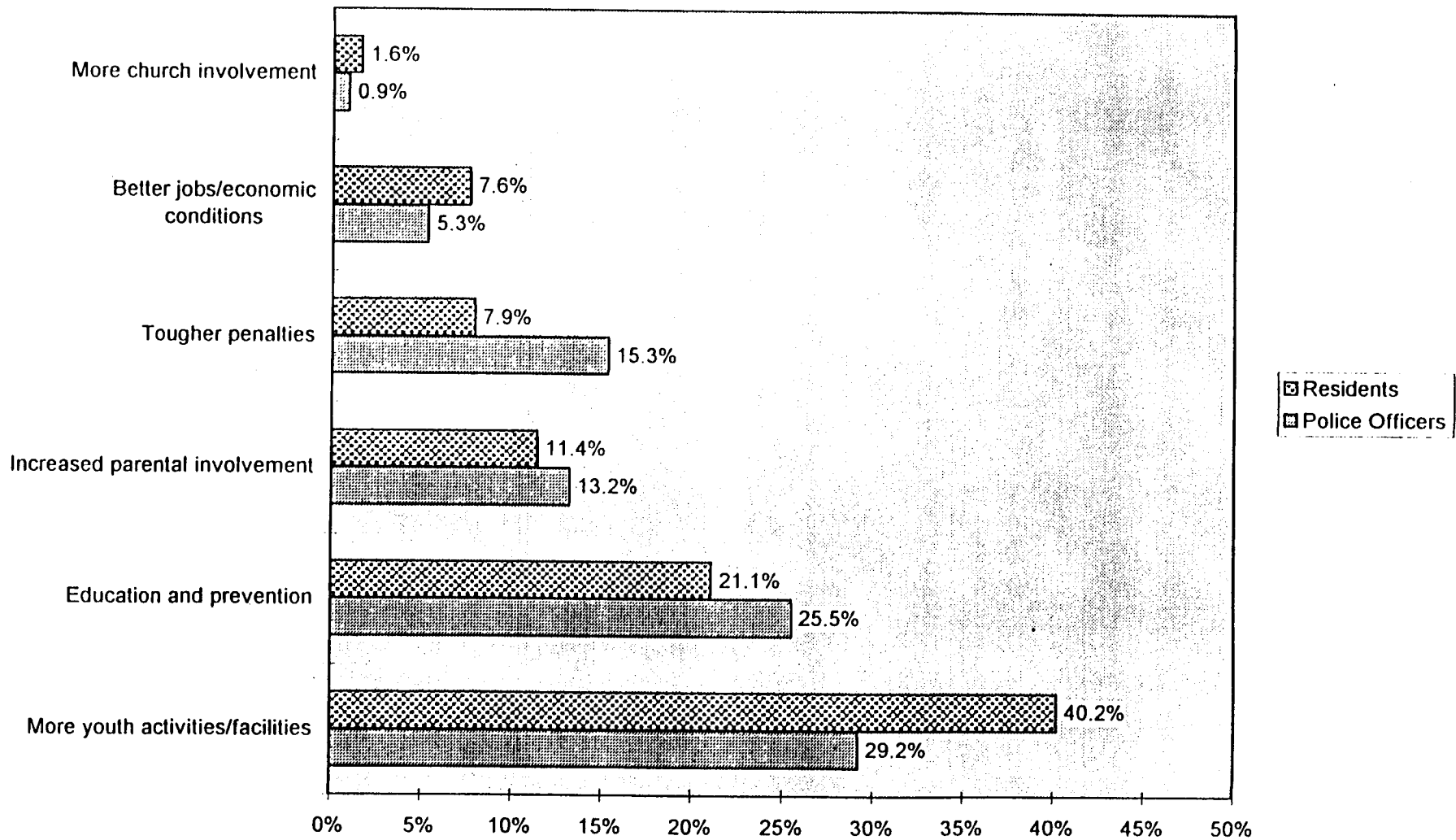


**Figure 4.24**  
**Comparison of Boston Police Officer and Resident Perceptions of the Best Ways to Reduce**  
**City's Drug Problems**





**Figure 4.25**  
**Comparison of Bosotn Police Officer and Resident Perceptions of the Best Ways to Reduce**  
**City's Youth Crime and Violence**



**Figure 4.26**  
**Comparison of Boston Police Officer and Resident Opinions of Most Serious Neighborhood Problems**

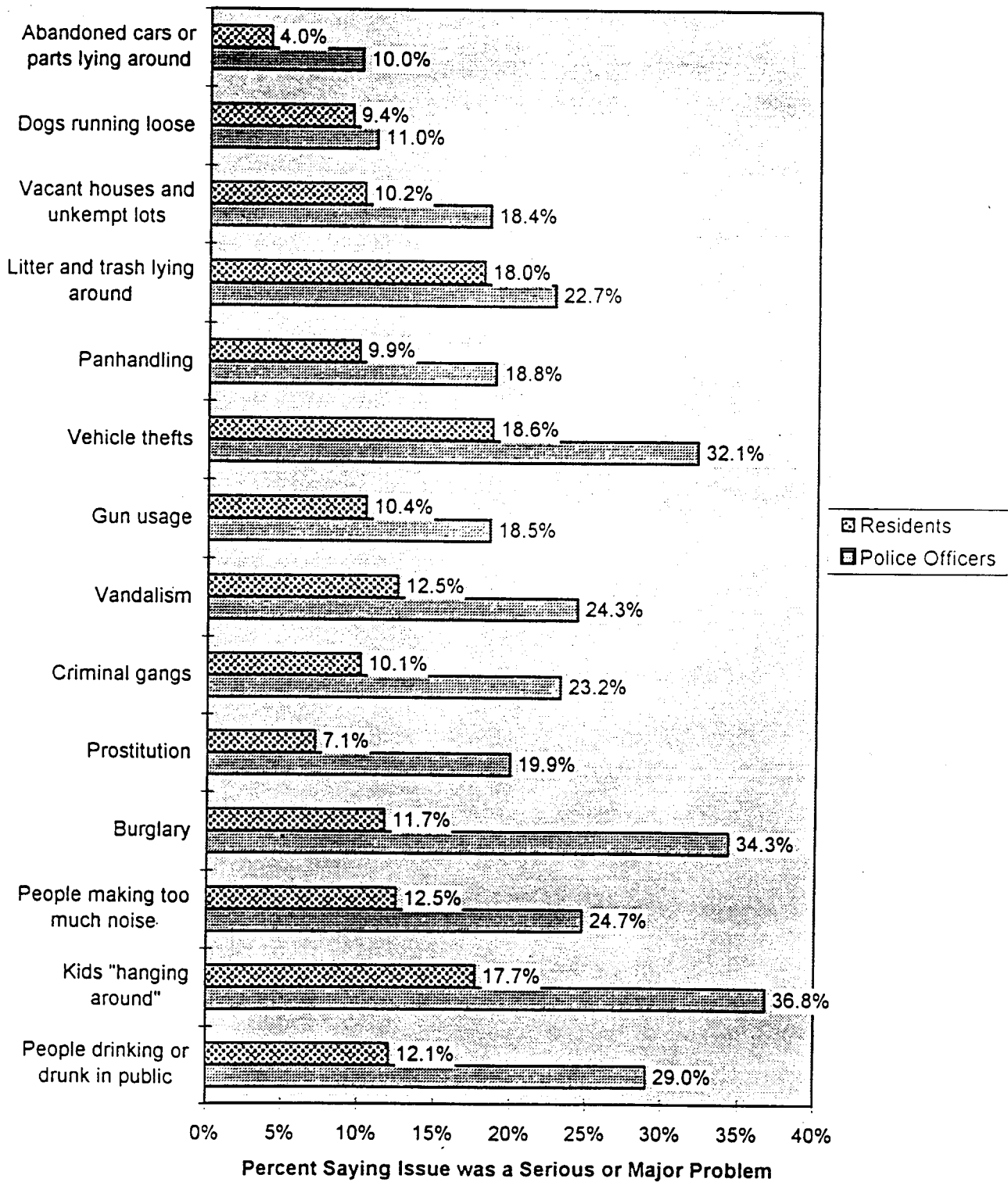


Figure 4.27  
Boston Police Officer Opinions of Activities Most Important to Increasing Effectiveness

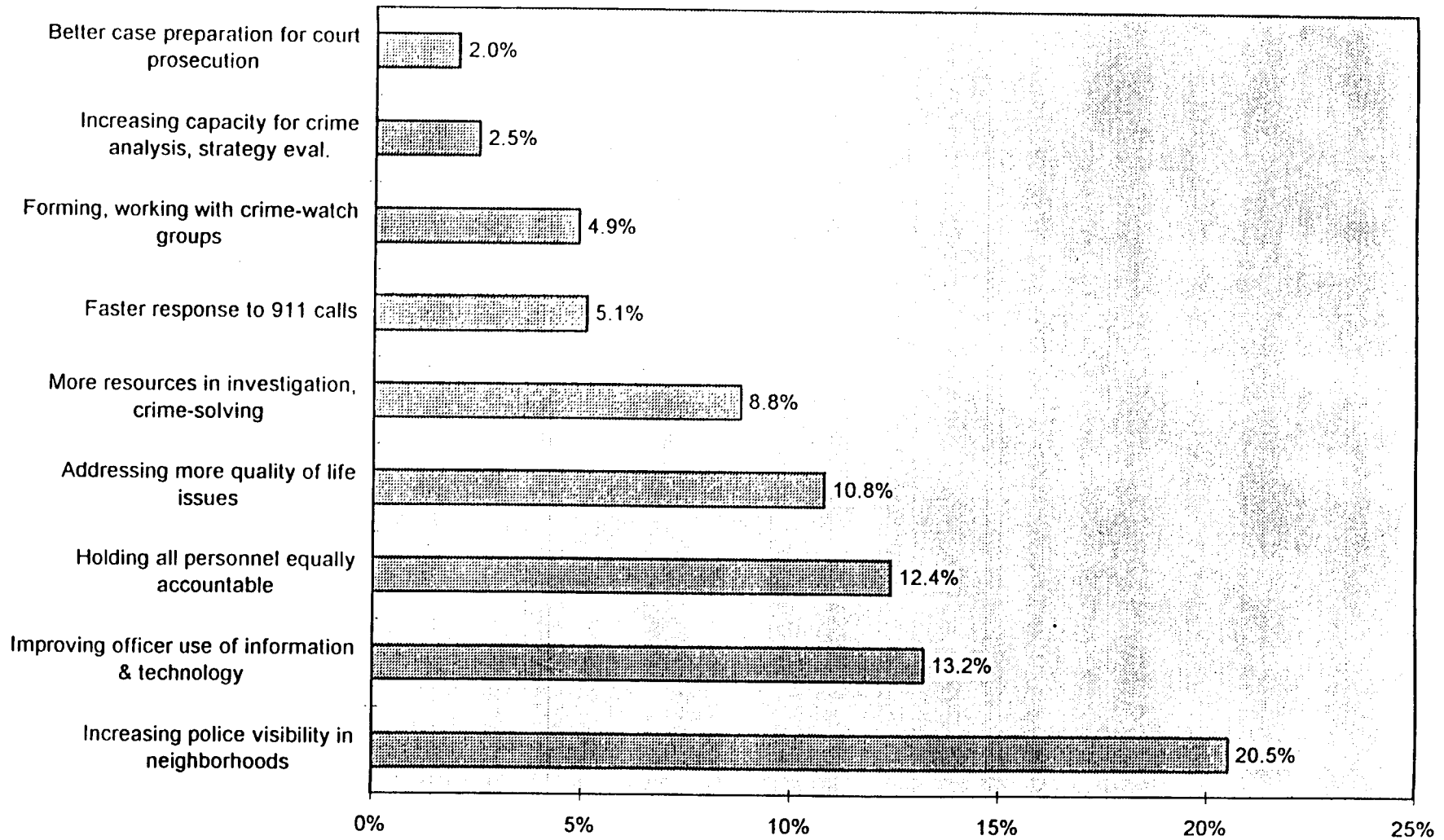


Figure 4.28  
Frequency of Boston Police Officer Interaction with Citizens, Not Including Crime-Related  
Contact or Calls For Service

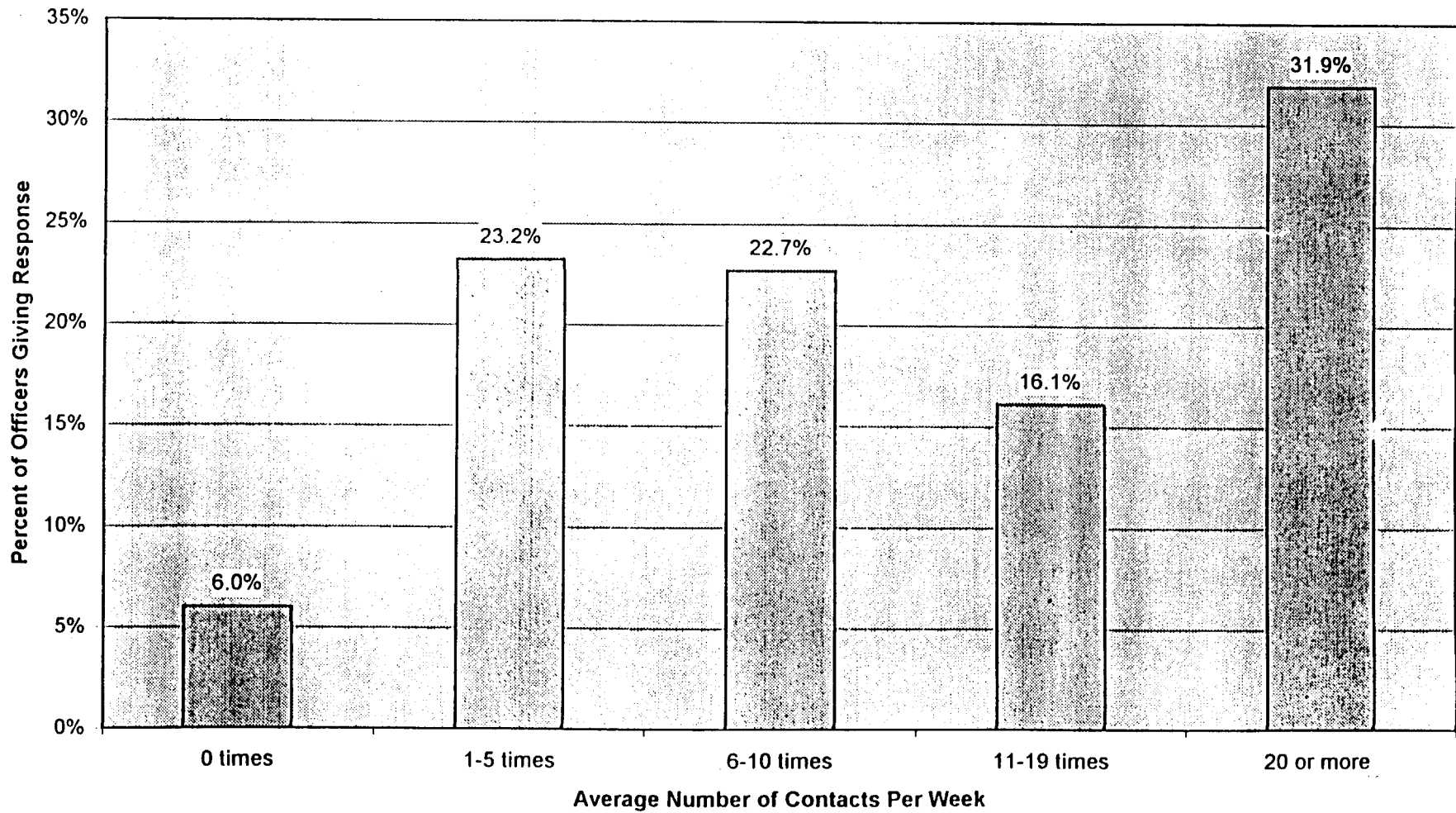
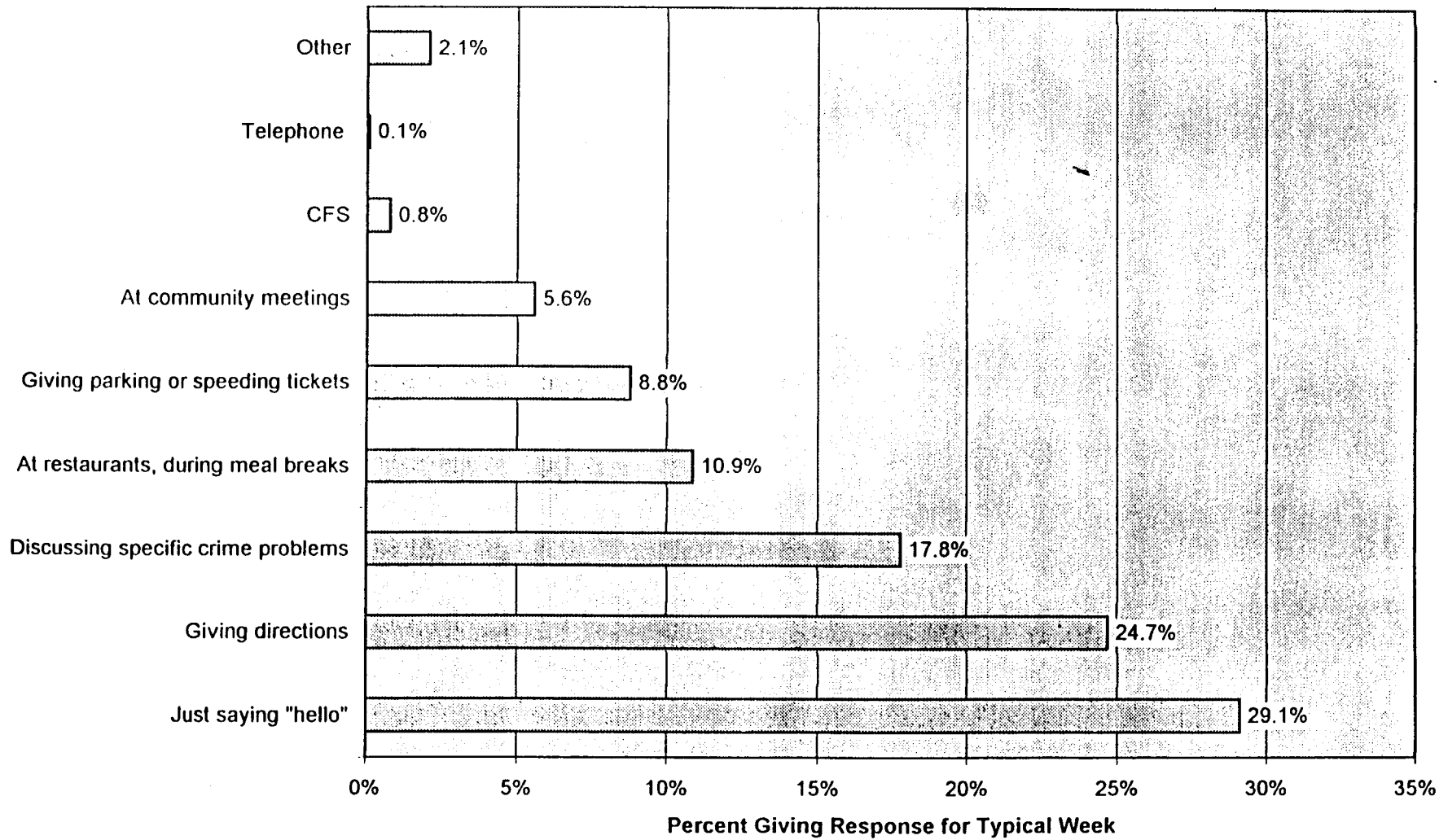
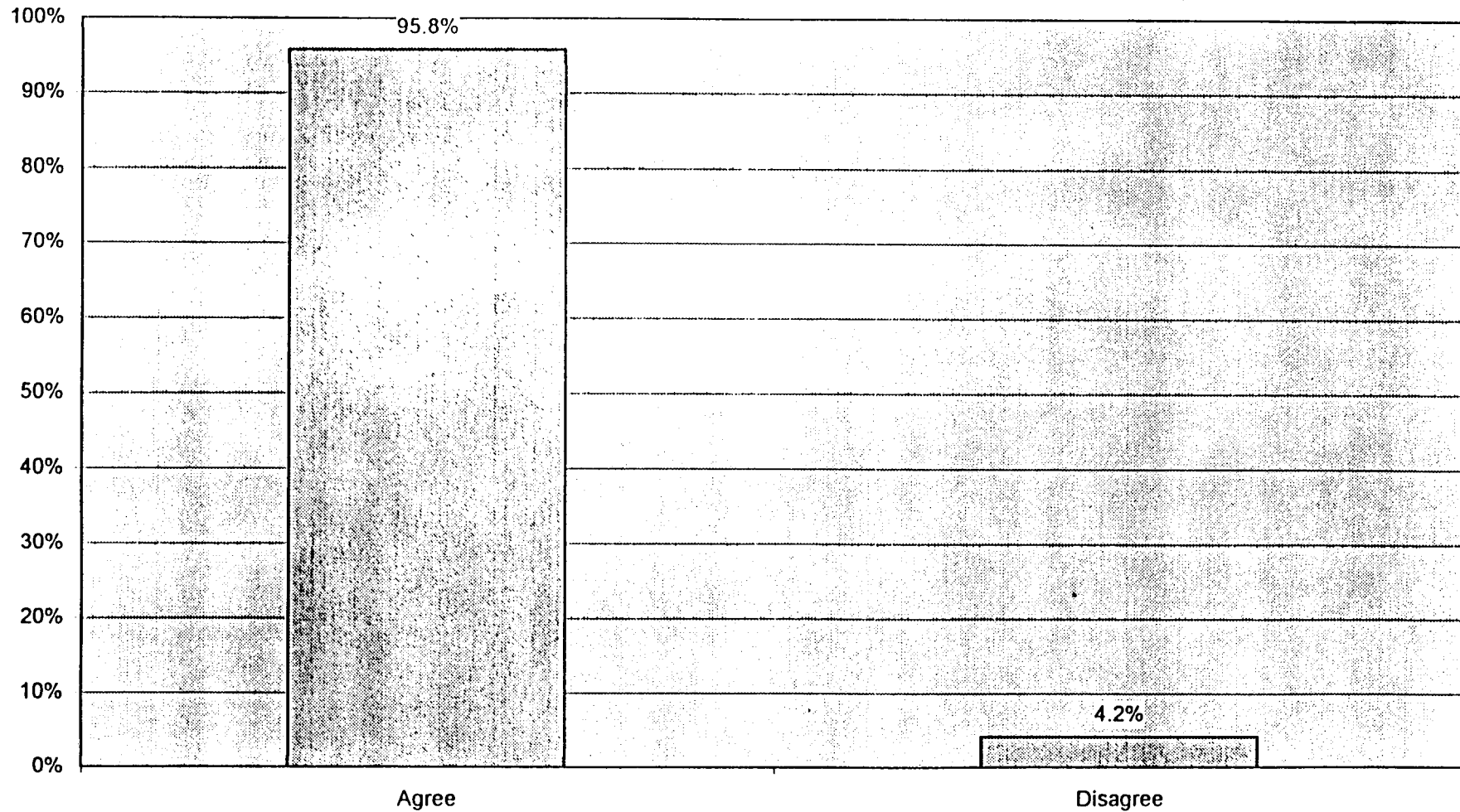


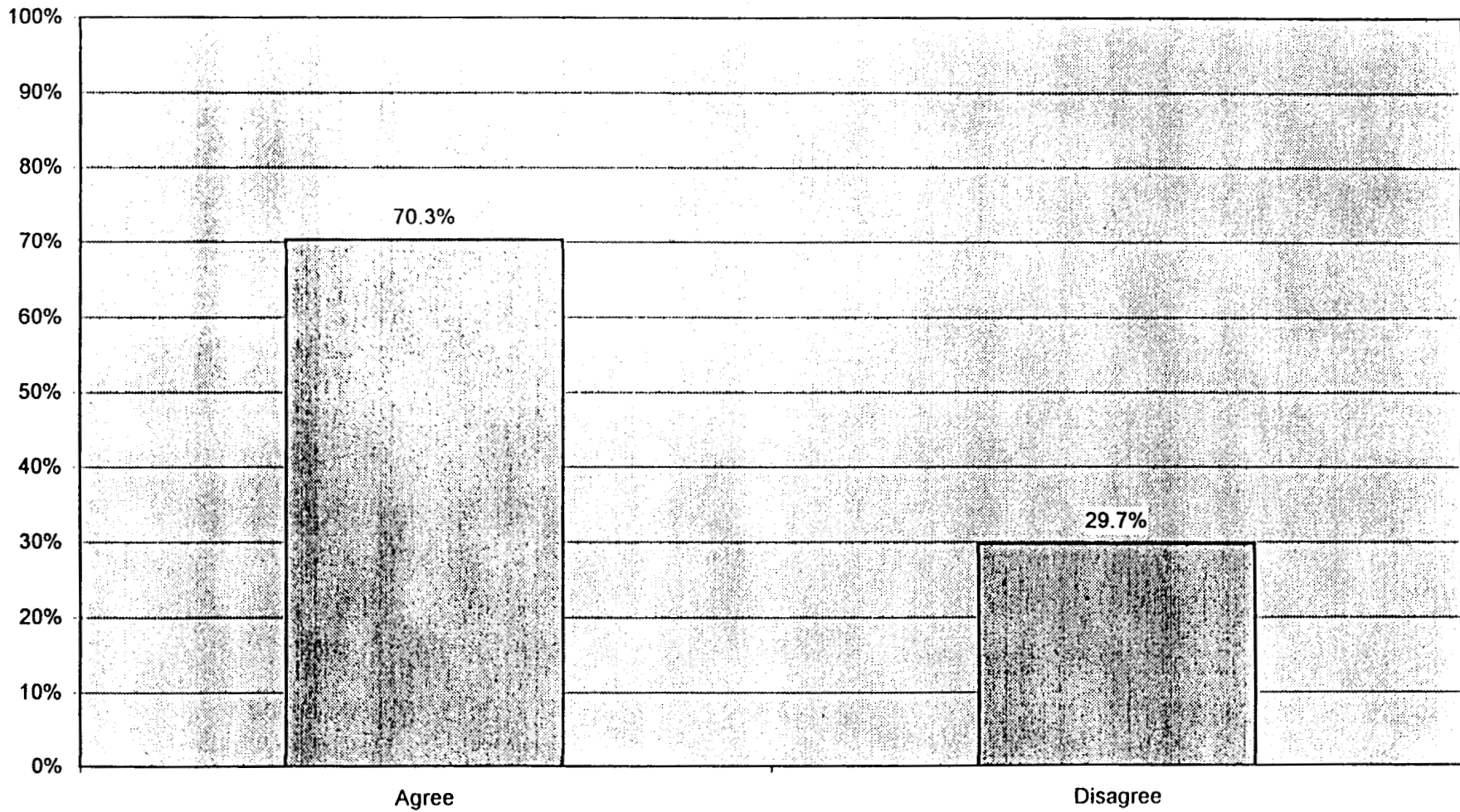
Figure 4.29  
Nature of Non-Crime-Related Interactions Between Boston Police Officers and Citizens



**Figure 4.30**  
**Boston Police Officer Opinion: Crime Significantly Reduced if Residents Work With Officers to Identify and Solve Local Problems**



**Figure 4.31**  
**Boston Police Officer Opinion: Given Opportunity, Most Residents Would Work More Closely**  
**With Officers to Solve Neighborhood Crime Problems**



**Figure 4.32**  
**Boston Police Officer Opinion: When Out On Street, I DO NOT Usually Make Effort to Know People in Neighborhoods, or Make Sure They Know My Name**

