

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION
RESEARCH AND CO-ORDINATION DIVISION

POLICE RECRUIT SURVEY

JANUARY 1994

SUMMARY REPORT #3

In January 1994, the Queensland Police Service (QPS) commenced a revised recruit training program (known as 'PROVE'). There were 61 recruits in the first intake.

A survey of these recruits was conducted at the start of their training by the Criminal Justice Commission as part of its continuing evaluation of recruit training in the QPS. The survey was similar to the questionnaire completed by an earlier recruit intake in July 1992. All 61 recruits in the intake responded to this survey.

The major findings of the survey are summarised in this briefing note.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The demographic characteristics of the January 1994 intake, based on information provided by the recruits, is presented in Table 1. It indicates that:

- 30% of the intake is female
- 13% identified themselves as being from an ATSI background
- the majority (84%) are 21 to 30 years of age
- 96% had some exposure to post-secondary education, with 75% having attended university and 21% having completed a Diploma, TAFE or trade qualification
- 95% had worked prior to joining the QPS. The previous work experience of the recruits was diverse. For female recruits, the most common occupational categories were education/teaching (28%), clerical/administration (17%), and retail/sales (17%). Male recruits had been employed in retail/sales (19%), industry/trade (19%), and defence forces/security (14%).

REASONS FOR JOINING

The recruits were asked to indicate the importance of a number of factors in their decision to join the QPS. All recruits reported seeing policing as a professional career as important. Other factors identified as very important or important included:

- serving the community (97%)
- working with people (97%)
- combating crime (95%)
- job security (87%).

A substantial proportion (42%) of the recruits indicated that having a position of authority was important. Twelve per cent reported failure to gain other employment as an important reason in their decision to join.

Table 1: Demographic Profile
(n=61)

Females	30%
Males	70%
Less than 21 years of age	7%
21 - 30 years	84%
31 - 40 years	8%
More than 40 years	2%
ATSI	13%
Non-ATSI	87%
Single	75%
Married/De facto	25%
Secondary education	3%
Diploma/TAFE/Trade	21%
Some or completed university	75%
Worked prior to joining	95%
No previous work experience	5%

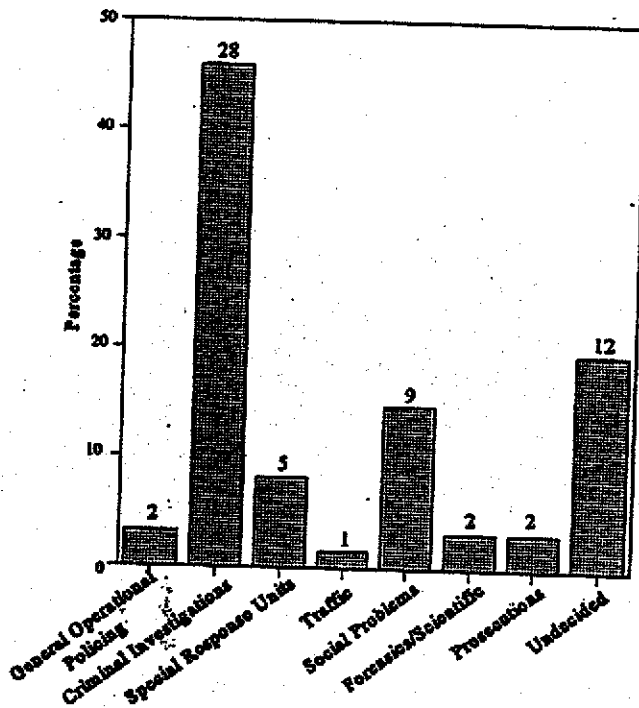
Percentages have been rounded, and therefore may not always add up to exactly 100%.

CAREER PLANS

Figure 1 shows how the recruits projected their policing career five years after completing recruit training. The largest proportion (46%) reported that they would like to work in the area of criminal investigation. The next most popular choice was to work on social problems such as domestic violence and child abuse (15%). Around 20% were undecided.

The responses of female recruits were predominantly distributed between criminal investigation and social problems (44% each). The responses of male recruits were more varied. Some male recruits indicated that they would like to work in special response units (12%), general operational policing (5%), forensics/scientific (5%), prosecutions (5%), and traffic (2%). No female respondent indicated a desire to work in these areas.

Figure 1: What type of work recruits want to be doing 5 years after recruit training*



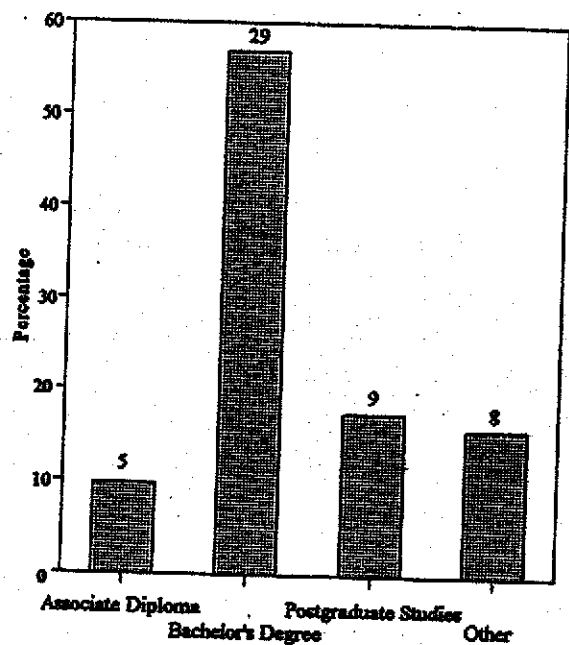
The figures above the bars represent the number of recruits who responded in that category.

EDUCATIONAL PLANS

Most recruits (84%) expressed an interest in undertaking further study. Of these, 10% indicated they would like to study towards an Associate Diploma, 57% indicated a Bachelor's degree and 18% indicated a postgraduate qualification (see Figure 2).

Of the 38 recruits who were interested in further university study, the main area of interest was justice administration/studies (34%). Other areas of interest specified by the recruits included: science/forensics (16%), law (11%), education (11%) and business/management (11%).

Figure 2: Type of course planned by recruits intending to undertake further study*



IEWS ON TRAINING

Recruits were asked to express their views about two training issues:

- the importance of training in particular areas, such as communication skills, criminal law and procedure, and the use of weapons
- the emphasis that should be given to various teaching methods, such as lectures from experienced police officers and observing policing in real situations.

Content of the Training Program

The recruits reported the following areas as being very important in their training:

- communication skills (95%)
- criminal law (90%)
- police rules and procedures (83%)
- problem-solving skills (77%)
- ethics and social responsibility (72%).

Areas which a relatively small proportion of recruits regarded as very important included:

- knowledge of the QPS corporate goals (39%)
- the roles of other agencies (23%)
- theories of the nature of crime (34%).

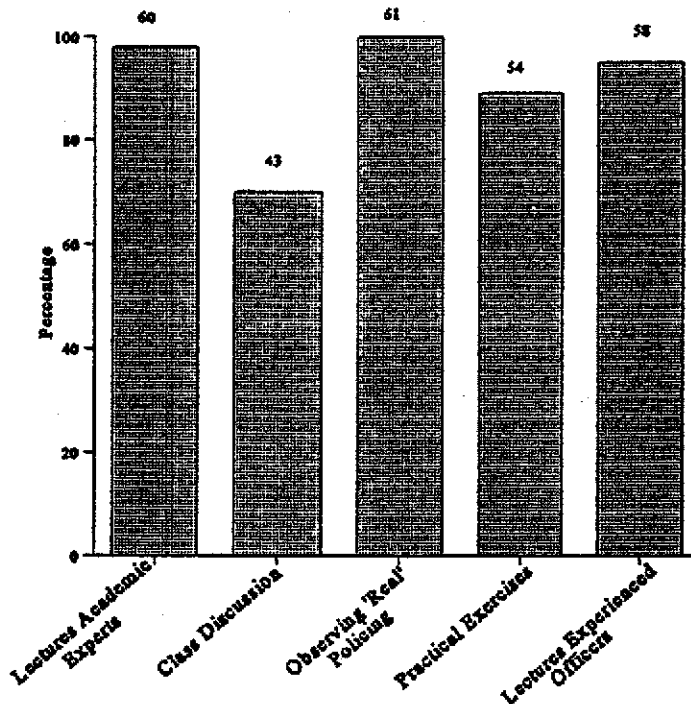
Teaching Methods

Almost all recruits reported that 'a lot' or 'a fair amount' of emphasis should be given to:

- participation in problem-solving exercises (100%)
- observing policing in real situations (98%)
- lectures from experienced police officers (95%).

Seventy-one per cent of recruits thought that 'a lot' or 'a fair amount' of emphasis should be given to lectures from academic experts on policing and law (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: How much weight to be given to these teaching methods (% reporting 'a lot' or 'a fair amount')*



* The figures above the bars represent the number of recruits who responded in that category.

COMPARISON WITH DECEMBER 1991 AND JULY 1992 RECRUIT INTAKES

As part of the evaluation of recruit training, data have been collected on two earlier recruit intakes (February 1991 and July 1992).^{*} A brief comparison between these intakes and the January 1994 group shows that:

- The proportion of female recruits has remained fairly stable – 27% (February 1991), 32% (July 1992), and 30% (January 1994).
- The average age of recruits at the time of entry has increased from 22 years in February 1991 to 25 years in January 1994.
- The level of education attained by recruits prior to entry has increased over the last three years. Forty-three per cent of the February 1991 intake had some type of post-secondary education. In comparison, 82% of the July 1992 intake and 84% of the January 1994 intake had experienced some type of post-secondary education.
- The proportion of recruits with prior work experience has increased significantly – 76% of the February 1991 intake stated that they had worked before joining the QPS, compared with 93% of recruits in July 1992, and 95% in the January 1994 intake.
- The reasons reported by recruits for joining the police service have remained fairly constant.

SUMMARY

This preliminary analysis of the results of the January 1994 recruit survey shows that the profile of police recruits has changed considerably in the last three years. On the basis of these data, the profile of the most recent intake is as follows:

- 30% of the intake are female
- 13% identified themselves as being from an ATSI background
- 75% have had some exposure to university education
- 93% were over 20 years of age at the commencement of training
- 95% reported having had prior work experience.

Recruits' preferences at the commencement of their training were:

- to work in the area of criminal investigation
- to be taught in a manner that emphasised the practical application of knowledge and skills
- to pursue further education.

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^{*} As the evaluation of recruit training was not commenced until late 1991, the February 1991 intake were first surveyed at the end of their university/Academy course in December 1991.