



CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

QUEENSLAND POLICE RECRUIT STUDY

SUMMARY REPORT #1

February 1992

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1. INTRODUCTION

In December 1991, a survey of Queensland Police Recruits was conducted by the Criminal Justice Commission as part of an evaluation of the new Certificate Course. A questionnaire was administered to the first group of recruits to complete the new training course. The major findings of the survey are summarised in this initial report.**

Of the 368 graduating recruits, a total of 350 recruits responded. They identified themselves as 94 females, and 251 males (5 non-responses); 168 attended Queensland University of Technology, and 175 attended Griffith University (7 non-responses).

2. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

A demographic profile of the first (1991) intake of recruits is presented in Table 1. This indicates that over a quarter (27%) of the class are female, the large majority of the recruits (80%) are 25 years of age or less, that a large proportion (75%) are single, that around half (51%) have a highest educational qualification of Senior, and that about three-quarters (76%) have worked prior to joining the Police Service as a recruit.

Therefore, the class of '91 was predominately male, relatively young, with prior experience in the workforce.

** Percentages have been rounded, and therefore may not add up to exactly 100%. Remember that not all respondents answered every question; thus percentages are based on the number of those who responded to the question.

3. REASONS FOR JOINING

Respondents were asked to rate a series of possible influences on their decision to join the Police Service. Most of the recruits reported similar influences. Virtually all indicated that working with people (98%), serving the community (95%) and job security (93%) were important factors (either very or somewhat) in their decision to join. About half (49%) indicated having a position of authority was important. Most also considered that fighting organised crime (75%) and maintaining civil rights (77%) were important factors in joining the Police Service. Just over half of the recruits (58%) saw admiration for person(s) in the Police Service as an important factor.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE
QUEENSLAND POLICE RECRUITS
(1991)

Females	27%
Males	73%
Less than 21 years of age	40%
21 - 25 years	40%
26 - 30 years	13%
31 - 35 years	4%
More than 35 years	3%
Single	75%
Married/De Facto	25%
Some secondary education	6%
Senior	51%
Diploma, Certificate, or Trade	16%
Attended university, no degree	22%
University degree	5%
Worked prior to joining	76%
No previous work experience	24%

FIGURE 1: SELECTED BEST ASPECTS OF THE UNIVERSITY SEMESTER

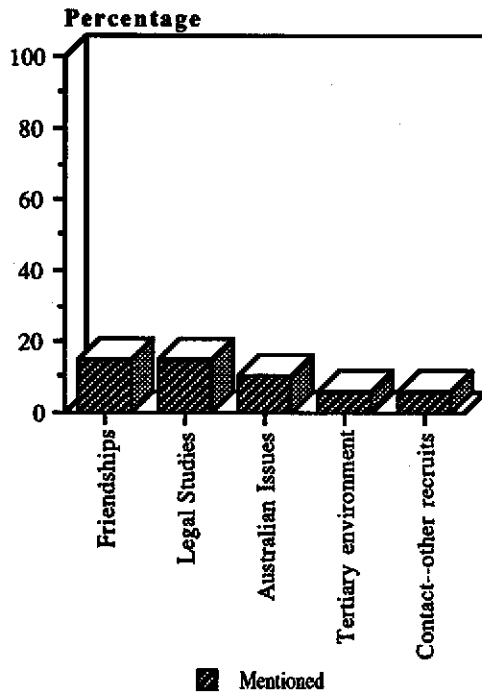
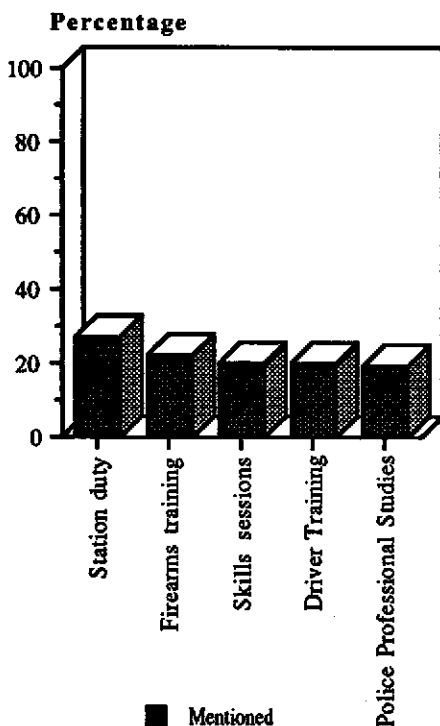


FIGURE 2: SELECTED BEST ASPECTS OF THE ACADEMY SEMESTER



Few (6%) reported failure to gain admittance to another course as a factor in their decision to join the Police Service. Parents (8%), relatives (7%), teachers (1%), and friends (10%) were reported by few to have had influence on the decision. About a third of the recruits (38%) indicated that they joined the Police Service as a step towards a career in another profession.

4. UNIVERSITY SEMESTER

The survey asked respondents "for you, what was the best aspect of the university?" (see Figure 1). (Some respondents nominated more than one feature, and therefore the percentages add to more than 100%.) Over three-quarters (76%) of the recruits identified one or more positive features. Of those recruits who did provide positive aspects, the "best" features included the friendships made (15%), the subjects of Legal Studies (15%) and Australian Issues (10%), the tertiary environment (6%), and contact with the other recruits (6%). Overall, the university curriculum was favourably mentioned by 24% of the recruits.

There was little agreement among the recruits about improvements for the university semester. (Respondents could identify more than one change.) Of those who provided suggestions, the largest proportion (25%) indicated that the units should be more relevant to policing. Other changes mentioned by the recruits who gave suggestions included teaching more law (9%), and making the law taught more relevant to the tasks of policing (8%).

5. ACADEMY SEMESTER

There was greater agreement among the recruits about the Academy semester (see Figure 2). When asked "what was the best aspect of your time [at the Academy]?", 92% provided a positive response. Of those who did respond, over a quarter (27%) mentioned station duty; 22% identified firearms training; 20% identified the skills sessions; 20% mentioned Driver Training; and 19% referred to Police Professional Studies. (Respondents could nominate more than one aspect). Generally, operational policing aspects were identified favourably.

Recruits were asked for one or more suggestions to improve the Academy semester. Of those who provided suggestions, under one-third (28%) reported that there should be more emphasis on Police Professional Studies; a greater emphasis on skills training (11%); more "real life" policing (5%); and the subject of Organisational Theory and Management should be replaced (5%).

6. CERTIFICATE COURSE

The survey also sought to assess how prepared for Field Training the recruits felt after completing the Certificate Course (see Figure 3). Only 26% of the recruits believed that they were prepared for Field Training. An almost equal proportion (24%) disagreed--they felt unprepared. Half (50%) of the recruits were unsure.

Overall, the Certificate Course had a neutral to positive effect on the recruits' desire to be police officers. Less than half (43%) expressed an increase since starting the course; while for 49% the Certificate Course had not made any difference. Only 8% considered that they felt less desire to be a police officer than when they started.

7. CAREER PLANS

Among the recruits, there is a high level (96%) of satisfaction with their career choice. About half (46%) also indicated that they would be satisfied to remain an uniformed police officer for most of their careers, and a further 27% were undecided.

Figure 4 shows how the recruits saw their careers five years after completing the Certificate Course. (Some respondents indicated more than one career plan for the next five years.) About two-thirds (66%) of the recruits mentioned that they would like to be working in a specialist squad. Of those who wanted to "specialise", the most popular "specialities" were the JAB (17%), drugs (14%), and the CIB (13%). More female recruits than males (15% vs 10%) mentioned the JAB; while males were more likely than females to choose the drugs squad (11% vs 4%). The little interest shown in the Traffic Branch came from the male recruits (2% vs 0%). Around 29% did not specify a type of squad.

FIGURE 3: HOW PREPARED FOR FIELD TRAINING

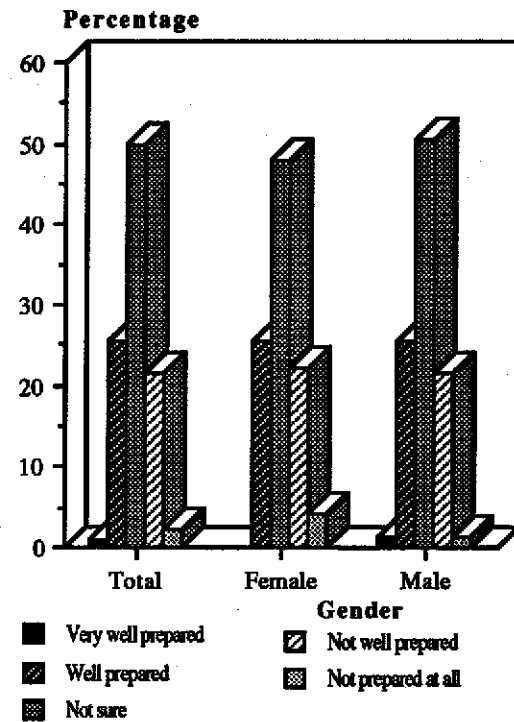
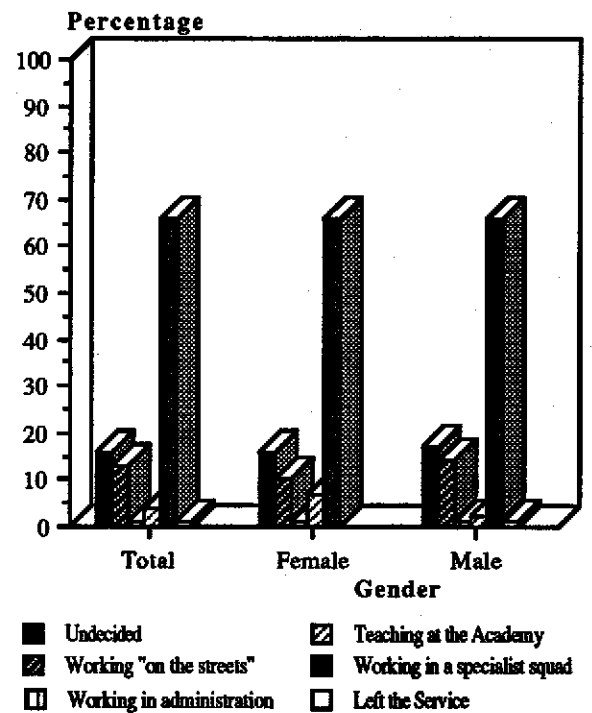


FIGURE 4: MAJOR CAREER PLANS (Expectation for 5 years)



About 13% of the recruits also indicated that they might like to remain working "on the streets". This was mentioned by more male recruits than females (14% vs 10%). A small number showed interest in administration (1%) and teaching at the Academy (4%). Only 1% of the recruits said that they planned to leave the Police Service within five years. (These were all male recruits). However, 16% of the recruits were undecided about their career plans.

8. EDUCATIONAL PLANS

The class of '91 intends to undertake further tertiary studies. Almost all (91%) indicated that they intended to do further study within the next five years; but just under 1% would only do so if it was needed for the job.

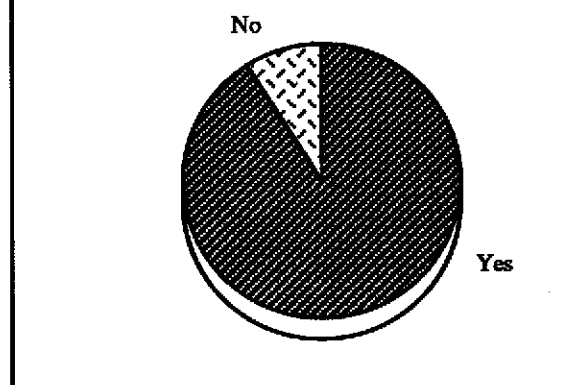
Just over half (57%) of the recruits indicated that they intended to complete the Bachelor of Arts (Justice Studies) or the Bachelor of Arts (Justice Administration); about a third (36%) also expressed interest in pursuing a different Bachelor's degree. About 1% proposed to complete degrees already started before joining the Police Service. (Some respondents chose more than one.)

9. CONCLUSIONS

A note of caution about the interpretation of the results. Undoubtedly some of the dissatisfaction expressed by recruits reflects the organisational difficulties associated with the design and implementation of the initial offering of a new program. The recruits' lack of sufficient information about the total training program (one year university/Academy, one year Field Training) may also be a factor in their judgement of the Certificate Course. A different assessment may be provided after the completion of the Field Training Program. The new orientation program for 1992 should provide the recruits with a better introduction to the training program.

The most consistent theme emerging from the survey was that the recruits believed that the curriculum should be more relevant to the day-to-day demands of operational policing. About

FIGURE 5: INTENTION TO PURSUE FURTHER TERTIARY STUDY



one-quarter of the respondents felt unprepared for the Field Training stage on completion of the Certificate Course.

In contrast to the view that the Certificate Course should have more emphasis on operational policing, nearly all (91%) of the respondents indicated that they intend to pursue further tertiary study. Clearly, many recruits saw the benefits of tertiary education.

Another interesting theme also emerges from the survey: the policing career. Over a third (38%) indicated that they saw policing as temporary, as a step towards a career in another profession. Policing was also viewed by almost all as providing job security (93%), as a way to serve the community (95%) and to work with people (98%).

What the recruits personally expect from their policing careers is indicated by their career plans. The majority (66%) of all recruits said that working in a specialist squad was a career path they would like to pursue. Fitzgerald, however, recommended a shift away from the use of specialist squads.

10. FURTHER INFORMATION

This is a summary report which is based on a more detailed report. For further information contact Christine Bond, Research and Coordination Division, Criminal Justice Commission. Phone: (07) 360 6136.