

WHEN COPS BECOME CRIMINALS



Detroit leads large cities in number of cops accused of crimes, study finds

By John T. Wark
 News Staff Writer

Detroit police officers are accused of committing crimes more often than officers in any other major U.S. city, according to a Detroit News survey.

Allowing for the differences in the sizes of the departments, the Detroit Police Department ranks in the middle among big-city departments for the number of those accusations that later are proved, the survey found.

Police departments in the nation's 10 largest cities — New York, Los Angeles, Dallas, Houston, Detroit, Philadelphia, Chicago, Phoenix, San Diego and San Antonio — were surveyed.

In 1987, some 725 allegations were made by citizens and other police officers and agencies that Detroit officers had committed crimes. The department's Internal Affairs investigators could find evidence that 36 of the allegations were true.

THAT GAVE Detroit the highest number of alleged police crimes among the 10 cities, 151 per 1,000 officers.

Detroit investigators substantiated 7.2 allegations per 1,000 officers, ranking fifth among the 10 cities. Local police officials, including Chief William L. Hart, would not comment on the survey's results.

ONE REASON for the comparatively high number of complaints against Detroit officers could be the department's policy of accepting and investigating all complaints.

But Los Angeles, with a population of 3 million compared with Detroit's 1.2 million, has the same policy, and it reported fewer criminal allegations per 1,000 officers.

There also would be more complaints in Detroit if local residents are more likely to make frivolous al-

legations.

According to John Goldpaugh, a lawyer who often represents Detroit officers charged with crimes, many people who make such allegations later refuse to cooperate with investigators, or their complaints lack credibility initially and investigators quickly drop the case.

ALTHOUGH THERE are more complaints in Detroit, fewer of them are proved than in some other cities. But police officers, police union leaders and Goldpaugh say Detroit investigators are tough and thorough.

The large number of complaints could mean that investigators don't have time to build good cases. One investigator, who asked not to be named, said the department's Internal Affairs Section does not have enough manpower to keep up with the rising number of complaints.

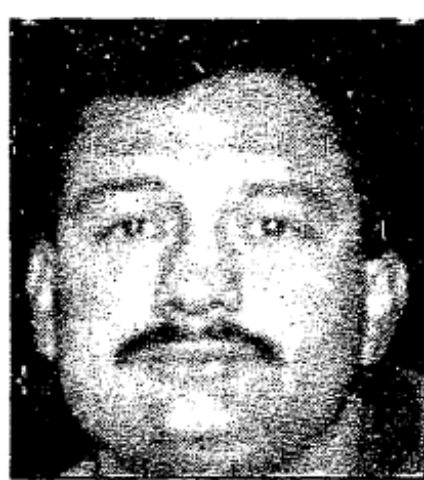
Internal Affairs completed 62 percent of its 421 investigations in 1987. Completed investigations found evidence 36 officers committed crimes.

There were fewer investigations in the first nine months of 1988, but with 91 percent complete, investigators found evidence that 45 officers committed crimes.

OF THE 10 cities contacted, only San Diego police refused to release figures. Reports published in the San Diego Tribune suggest San Diego's rate is lower than Detroit's. Between January and June 1987, the newspaper reported 47 serious allegations against police, only three of which were proved.

San Antonio police provided a figure for number of proven crimes by police in 1987, but were unable to provide a figure for number of allegations.

Statistics from the city's Police Civil Service Commission show that the only disciplinary action against a police officer for a crime in 1987 was for driving while intoxicated.



Joseph Johnson

Joseph Johnson put a "For Sale" sign on his Pontiac Trans Am and parked the car near a Farmer Jack supermarket on 8 Mile.

Two days later it vanished. Johnson, 28, reported the theft, and police found the car.

It was being driven by a Detroit police officer named Timothy Counts, who was charged with receiving and concealing stolen property. Counts was dismissed from the force and is awaiting trial.

"I could not believe it. I was stunned," Johnson said.

Rising crime by police officers is a matter of civic concern for many Detroiters, but nothing personal. For the victims of police crime, it's very personal. Not only have they suffered a loss, but the person responsible was a police officer — who was supposed to be protecting them from the real criminals.

Counts was arrested because of good work by another police officer. He spotted Counts driving a Trans Am too fast and pulled him over. Counts identified himself as a police officer.

The officer let Counts go, but made a routine check of the vehicle identification number. It matched the number of Johnson's car. Police found the car at Counts' home. Johnson got his Trans Am back months after it was stolen in November 1987.

"It's imperative this stuff is brought out in the open because the average citizen isn't aware of what's going on," said Johnson's attorney, Paul Zyburski. "I think the main issue is whether we're going to hold a police officer to a higher professional standard than other people."

It's not just an average person doing a crime. It's a police officer, people who are looked to to set an example in our society.

A cabbie, a driver on his way home from buying milk, a student out on the town, a man whose trouble always came at the grocery store and a prisoner serving a drug sentence — all of them would agree with that.

Samuel Galogun

Cabdriver Samuel Galogun was stopped by two 10th (Livermore) Precinct officers after he ran a stop sign. As one officer stood at the driver's side of the cab, the other opened the passenger door and took a car stereo that was lying on the front seat.

In testimony at a preliminary criminal hearing after the December 1987 incident, Officer Kenneth Wilson said he saw his partner, Officer Dereck Henry, take the stereo.

Henry told Wilson to drive their patrol car to a Detroit party store where Henry apparently sold the stereo. Wilson said Henry carried the stereo into the store and returned without it.

Officer Henry was charged with larceny and then vanished. A warrant has been issued for his arrest. Galogun would not talk about the case.

Robert Price

Robert Price was on his way home from buying milk about 10 p.m. in April 1987 when he noticed a marked police van behind him.

The van pulled him over near Fenkel and Lahser.

The police threw him against his car and searched him, never explaining why they had stopped him, said Price. 27. As one officer patted him down, another asked for identification.

Price said as he reached for his wallet, he was struck on the side of

The Victims
 For them, cop crime is personal

the head with a flashlight.

"I looked around and I could see one of them going through my wallet," Price recalled. "They asked me where I was going and I told them I was going home."

"They threw my wallet back at me. And when I picked it up I could see my money was missing."

Price said there was \$48 in the wallet when he handed it to the police.

"I said, 'Hey, my money is gone.' They said, 'Go on, get out of here.' I was madder than hell. I waited until they left and got the police car number," Price said.

Price said he drove to the Eighth (Grand River) Precinct to file a complaint, but a lieutenant in charge refused to take it. The lieutenant told him he was lucky he wasn't arrested.

Price, who said he is a student at Wayne State University and works at a group home, drove to the Sixth (McGraw) Precinct where the complaint was accepted.

Police concluded in September there was not enough evidence to pursue the case.



Jeff Block

On Sept. 2, 1988, Jeff Block and a friend went to Canada for the evening. On the way home, they had a frightening experience in this age of freeway shootings.

As they were waiting to pass through the toll booth on the Canadian side of the Ambassador Bridge about 2 a.m., their car bumped a white van, Block said.

"When we got to the booth the guy driving the van gets on our tail and waves his hand," said Block. 20. As Block's car went on, the van followed.

The van pulled alongside as they drove over the bridge. Block said, "and one guy inside was making motions, you know, shooting motions, with the thumb and forefinger, like if you had a gun."

On the U.S. side, as Block and his friend drove away from the customs booth they found the van waiting.

"We got on I-96. He got on our tail. We drove faster and they started chasing us," Block said. "We were going 110 miles per hour at one point. It was kind of scary."

Block said he decided to get off the expressway and head for the nearest police precinct when he spotted a police car ahead.

"We drove up along one side of the scout car and motioned to them, and the van pulled up to the other side," Block said. The driver of the van rolled down his window and said something to the police.

The patrol car pulled Block's car over, he said. And as the police officers came to the driver's side of the car, the men in the van approached the passenger side where Block sat.

"The guys in the van were in street clothes but you could see their guns and badges, they were kind of flashing them," Block said.

"The guy driving the van comes up to my side of the car, grabs me by the shirt and shakes me back

and forth and jabs his fingers into my chest. He kept asking me if I wanted to live to be 20. And he wouldn't identify himself."

Block said he turned to the two uniformed officers on the driver's side and said, "Do you see what this guy is doing here? Stop him."

One officer replied, "I can't do anything. He's my boss."

Block said the men went back to the van and the officers returned to their car.

"We waited for several minutes for them to leave so we could get their license plate numbers," Block said. "But they didn't leave."

"We finally pulled out and drove very slowly hoping they would pass us and then we would get the numbers, but they followed slowly behind us." Block and his friend pulled away and went home.

Block, a student at Michigan State University, said he filed a complaint with police. Last week he said he learned from police they have dropped their investigation.

Kenneth Hamlin

Kenneth Hamlin of Detroit accused Officer Amir Harris of cracking open his head with a plastic milk crate in February 1987 at a Farmer Jack supermarket in Redford. Harris was charged with assault and received one year's probation.

Three months later Officer Harris tried to retaliate by allegedly setting up Hamlin on a phony charge.

Court records say Hamlin entered Albinas' Market at 21746 Schoolcraft to buy pop and cigarettes. Harris appeared, pushed Hamlin into a window, then pointed a gun at him.

Harris said Hamlin was carrying a knife. A knife — Hamlin said it did not belong to him — was on the floor. Harris summoned other officers to arrest Hamlin.

But it was the officer who was charged, for assaulting Hamlin with a gun. Harris is now awaiting trial. Neither man could be reached for comment.

Hamlin's experience with police crime did not end there, however. Four months later, he and his family began getting threatening calls. In one, the caller said, "Tell him he is a dead man."

The call was traced to Harris' home.

Bennie Marshall

People convicted of drug crimes don't get much public sympathy. But the large amounts of cash common in the drug trade can make them targets of police crime.

Bennie Marshall wasn't home the night of Sept. 29, 1985, when Detroit narcotics officers raided his home.

Several people inside the house that night said they saw officers seize bundles of cash discovered in Marshall's basement safe and casually slip some of the money into their socks and shoes.

Marshall — now serving a 20- to 30-year sentence for possession



of a pound of cocaine found during the raid — claimed he had \$101,000. Police reported finding \$93,357.

Marshall and one witness to the alleged theft, Ima Wilmore, agreed to take polygraph tests.

The Detroit News hired a nationally known polygraph expert last summer to administer the tests. Marshall was asked how much cash he had in the basement. Wilmore was asked if she saw police steal the money.

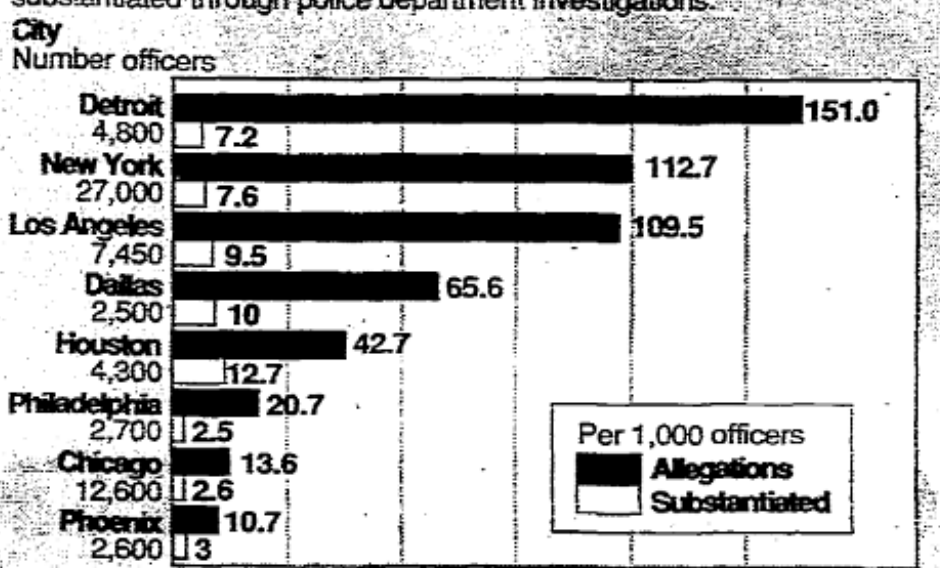
The expert concluded they were telling the truth.

After the newspaper published a story on the case in July, a police official said an investigation would begin immediately.

A police spokesman said the case still is under investigation. — John T. Wark

Crimes by police

A Detroit News survey of police departments in the 10 largest U.S. cities found that Detroit ranks first in allegations of crimes by police officers. Detroit ranked fifth in the number of allegations substantiated through police department investigations.



Source: Police departments. Includes only cases investigated by the departments. Figures are approximate.

DAVID PIERCE / The Detroit News

React

Public confidence in police wanes, News poll finds

From page 1A

Forty-seven percent said they believe police are committing more crimes today than five years ago; 11 percent said they were committing fewer crimes.

EXACTLY 50 percent are dissatisfied with the Detroit Police Department's disciplining of officers who have committed crimes or violated department rules; 38 percent are satisfied.

Half of those polled believe that more than one in 20 of the department's officers are involved with illegal drugs.

The poll found 53 percent of the city's residents believe they are more likely to be crime victims today than five years ago.

Forty-four percent said they had called the police for help sometime in the past two years. And among that group, 43 percent are dissatisfied with the department's response.

A FOUR-MONTH study of the department by The News found support for that popular impression that police are committing more crimes.

Criminal investigations of Detroit police increased between 1985 and 1987, and those investigations are concluding that more officers are guilty of crimes.

The random telephone survey of 600 Detroit adults was conducted by Gordon S. Black Corp. of Washington, D.C., between Jan. 6-8. It has a statistical margin of error of plus or minus 4 percent.

The results contain some good news for the department. While many are dissatisfied with police service, more have the opposite reaction: 57 percent of those who had called police within the past two years are satisfied with the service they received.

DETROITERS HAVE mixed feelings about whether police are protecting their homes and families from crime. Sixty percent of those polled feel police have made their neighborhoods safer.

But 38 percent are dissatisfied with the way police handled the investigation of a recent rash of assaults on girls walking to and from school.

Drugs are another big worry in the city. The poll found that the city's residents have considerable confidence in the department's announced commitment to shut down crack houses.

But a majority were dissatisfied with the department's overall fight against drug sales.

Fifty-eight percent said that if they called the department to report that drugs were being sold from a house in their neighborhood, they believe police would close down the operation.

Fifty-one percent said they were dissatisfied with the department's efforts to curb drug sales; 43 percent were satisfied.

DRUGS ALSO have become an issue inside the Police Department. A program to test officers for drugs was aborted last summer just after it began, but initial results identified 14 who were drug users — about half of them narcotics officers.

Forty-nine percent of those polled said they believe that from 6 percent to more than 50 percent of Detroit officers use or sell illegal drugs. Included in that group are 12 percent who believe at least half the city's 4,800 officers are involved with drugs.

BLACK AND white residents of the city share much the same feelings on most of these issues.

For example, 55 percent of the blacks who had called police were

satisfied with the service they received, compared with 60 percent of whites.

Income made a bigger difference in their opinions. Those with annual incomes of \$15,000 or below were less likely to call police, but were almost twice as likely to be dissatisfied with police service, as those with incomes of more than \$50,000.

Public trust in police has been an issue in Detroit for many years. Mayor Coleman A. Young promised to make the department more accountable to the public during his first successful campaign in 1974.

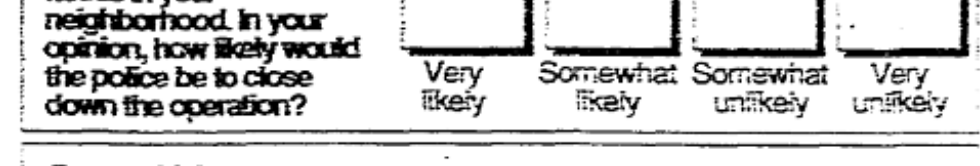
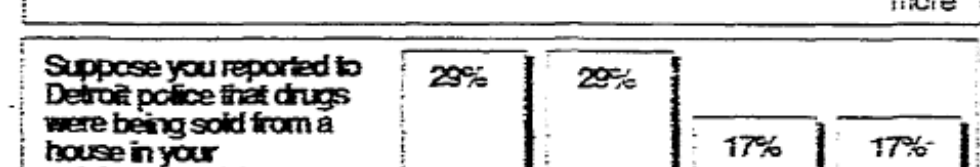
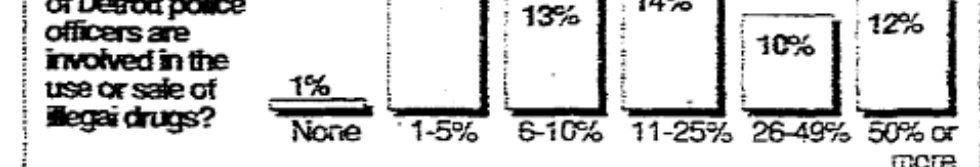
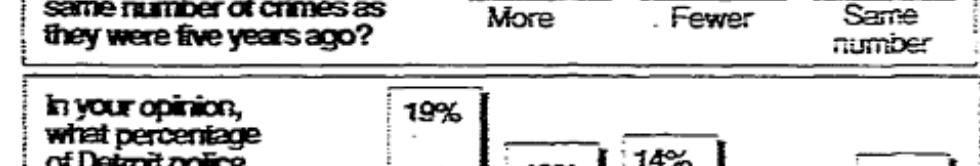
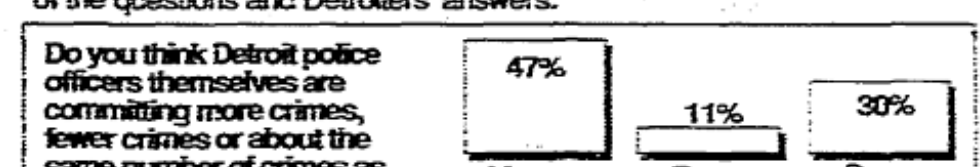
A POLL conducted 17 years ago found 60 percent said they trusted black officers and 42 percent said they trusted white officers.

At the time, the predominantly white department was deep in controversy over its STRESS — Stop the Robberies Enjoy Safe Streets — unit, which used decoys to fight street crime and was involved in the deaths of 17 blacks.

Illegal drugs were an important issue then, too. The 1972 poll found 56 percent of the city's residents believed that police could end the city's drug problem "if they wanted to."

What Detroiters think of police

A Detroit News poll, taken Jan. 6-8, asked 600 Detroit residents for their views on the city's police department. The results of the poll, conducted by telephone by the Gordon S. Black Corp. of Washington, have a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points. Here is a sampling of the questions and Detroiters' answers:



Note: Results do not include those who answered "don't know" or refused to answer.

DAVID PIERCE / The Detroit News

Hart shuns 5 requests for interview

Detroit Police Chief William L. Hart refused to be interviewed for this series of articles.

Over several months, Hart declined five written requests for interviews. Numerous telephone requests to Hart aides, as recently as last week brought Chief Hart



promised an interview that never was scheduled. Hart's office also refused the

low most other police executives and officers to be interviewed. Department policy prohibits officers from talking to reporters without permission. Officers can be disciplined or fired for violating the policy.

NATHAN CONYERS, a member of the Detroit Board of Police Commissioners, which helps set department policies, would not comment on the increase in investigations of alleged crimes by officers.

About 50 officers and former officers who were charged with crimes or serious misconduct by the department in the past two years were sent certified letters asking for interviews. Three re-

sponded.

STATISTICS ON police crimes were obtained from the department under the Michigan Freedom of Information Act. But a city lawyer would not release investigative reports on alleged police crimes.

Assistant City Attorney William Wolfson said neither the city nor the Police Department would answer questions about the statistics.

Asked why Hart would not comment, spokesman Insp. Fred Williams replied: "Shoot, I don't know. Because he's the chief. The chief doesn't have to say why. I'm not going to ask him."