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CONTACT: JANICE BALLOU or
CLIFF ZUKIN

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THE EAGLETON INSTITUTE OF POLITICS
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NEW JERSEYANS' FEELINGS ABOUT CRIME

While most New Jerseyans feel safe in their own neighborhoods, 2-out-of-5 state residents think crime has increased in the last year. In addition, 1 New Jersey household in 5 has been hit by crime in the last six months.

These are some of the findings of the latest Eagleton Poll. The Rutgers based poll, conducted between May 6 and 18, asked 501 New Jerseyans 18 years and older about crime and neighborhood safety.

State residents agreed that they feel safe in their neighborhoods. Only 6 percent reported feeling "not at all safe" during the day, although a somewhat larger 13 percent felt this way about the safety of their neighborhood at night. While the number of state residents who feel "very safe" during the day was 61 percent; fewer, 42 percent, said their neighborhood was very safe at night.

Two groups of state residents who felt less secure were those 50 years and older and female New Jerseyans. Fifty-two percent of those 50 years and older and 54 percent of the females said their neighborhoods were very safe during the day. However, these groups were much more fearful at night. Twenty percent of those 50 years and older and 19 percent of female state residents reported their neighborhoods were not at all safe in the evening.

While half of those interviewed said there had been no change in the rate of crime in their neighborhood, far more of the remaining half said crime had gone up rather than down over the last year. Forty-one percent felt there was now more crime while only 4 percent felt that crime had decreased.

Most state residents reported that no one in their household had been a victim in the last 6 months. In households that had first hand experience with crime, more

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state residents were victims of property damage or thefts than physical assaults:

- ... 14% had property vandalized
- ... 12% had money or property stolen
- ... 12% had a car stolen or broken into
- ... 7% had their home broken into
- ... 2% had been assaulted or mugged

Five percent of the 116 victimized households reported a handgun had been used in the crime.

In addition, the poll found that 1 New Jersey household in 4 has a firearm. Five percent of these households have a handgun, 9 percent have a handgun plus another type of firearm and 10 percent have a firearm that is not a handgun. South Jerseyans were more likely to have a firearm than those living in other parts of the state. While 17 percent of north and 29 percent of central Jersey households reported they had a firearm, 33 percent of those in south Jersey have some type of gun.

The data presented in this release are based on a randomly selected sample of 501 New Jersey residents 18 years or older. All interviews were conducted by telephone between May 6 and May 18, 1981. Sampling error for the entire sample is ± 5 percent at a confidence interval of 95 percent. The error for smaller sub-groups is larger depending on the number of respondents in the sub-group. The theoretical margin of error does not take into account possible additional error from various practical difficulties involved in taking any survey of public opinion.

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BACKGROUND MEMO--RELEASE 44-5, MONDAY, JUNE 8, 1981

The questions referred to in this release follow:

"In the past year would you say that the amount of crime in your neighborhood has gone up, gone down, or remained the same?"

	<u>Gone up</u>	<u>Gone down</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Don't know/moved</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total	41	4	50	6	101%	(496)

"How safe do you feel in your neighborhood during the day--very safe, somewhat safe, or not at all safe?"

	<u>Very safe</u>	<u>Some-what safe</u>	<u>Not at all safe</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total	61	31	6	2	100%	(496)

Age

18-29	69	28	2	1	100%	(128)
30-49	65	27	6	2	100%	(185)
Over 50	52	38	8	2	100%	(166)

Sex

Male	66	27	5	2	100%	(292)
Female	54	38	7	1	100%	(204)

"How about your neighborhood at night--do you feel very safe, somewhat safe, or not at all safe?"

	<u>Very safe</u>	<u>Some-what safe</u>	<u>Not at all safe</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total	42	43	13	1	99%	(496)

Age

18-29	42	50	8	0	100%	(128)
30-49	48	40	11	1	100%	(185)
Over 50	38	40	20	2	100%	(166)

Sex

Male	50	40	9	1	100%	(292)
Female	32	47	19	1	99%	(204)

"During the last six months have any of the following things happend to you or anyone in your household? Have you..."

PERCENT SAYING YES

	<u>Total</u> (n=496)
Had property vandalized	14%
Money or property stolen	12
Your car stolen or broken into	12
Your home broken into	7
Been assaulted or mugged	2

"Was there a handgun used in this crime?"

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total	5	86	9	100%	(116)

"Does anyone in your household have a firearm?"

	<u>Has a hand-gun</u>	<u>Has a handgun plus another gun</u>	<u>Has a firearm other than a handgun</u>	<u>Does not have a firearm</u>	<u>Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Total	5	9	10	74	2	100%	(501)
<u>Region</u>							
North	4	5	8	81	2	100%	(263)
Central	6	9	14	69	2	100%	(112)
South	6	18	9	65	2	100%	(126)