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**ARIZONA CRIME RATES STEADY OVER PAST TWO YEARS;
SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION AND PREVENTION
PROGRAMS TO FIGHT CRIME REMAINS STRONG;
MORE POLICE WANTED IN WAKE OF TERRORIST ATTACKS**

According to the latest *Grand Canyon State Poll*, fewer Arizonans today report that crime is increasing in their neighborhood, compared to similar surveys taken two and four years ago. Victimization rates, however, have remained steady over time. Looking at specific crime categories, victimization is the same as in past years except in the area of “being made sick by some type of pollution” where personal reports of victimization are lower this year than in the past. Arizonans prefer education and prevention programs as the best defense against crime. Continued prison construction is not strongly supported in Arizona and the state is divided over whether gun control would reduce crime in America.

The *Grand Canyon State Poll* was conducted by the Social Research Laboratory of Northern Arizona University in collaboration with the university’s Department of Criminal Justice. The telephone survey was conducted with 412 randomly selected Arizona adults between September 26 and October 2, 2001. Survey results have a margin of error of +/- 5

percent at a 95 percent confidence level. Results are compared against similar surveys from 1999, 1997, and 1994.

THE CRIME RATE IN ARIZONA IS HOLDING STEADY

In a recent survey, 22 percent of Arizonans say they or a member of their household was the victim of a crime during the past year. Seventy-eight percent of Arizonans say they or members of their household were not the victim of a crime. This figure is consistent with previous survey results. In 1999, 22 percent of Arizonans reported that they or a member of their household was a victim of crime during the previous year and 21 percent reported similarly in 1997.

In the recent survey, three-quarters (75%) of Arizonans reported that the level of crime in their neighborhood is about the same as before. This figure is consistent with results when the question was put before Arizonans two years ago (73%), and significantly higher than when the survey was taken four years ago (63%). Only 15 percent of Arizonans today say crime has increased in their neighborhood, compared to 20 percent saying the same two years ago and 27 percent four years ago.

THEFT REMAINS LOW; VICTIMIZATION BY POLLUTION DROPS

The *Grand Canyon State Poll* asked respondents whether they had been the victim of eight different types of crimes during the past year. Results from this survey are compared against similar surveys conducted in 1999, 1997, and 1994.

Levels of victimization are essentially the same as recorded two years ago with a significant change recorded in only one area. When asked whether they were “made sick by some kind of pollution” during the last year, 11 percent of respondents said they did experience pollution-related problems. This figure is lower than the 17 percent saying ‘Yes’ in 1999 and

1997 and 19 percent saying ‘Yes’ in 1994. One-in-four people (24%) now say they had “something stolen from where (they) live, (their) car, or some other place.” This figure is consistent with results from two years ago, but lower than in the past. In 1997, 28 percent of Arizonans said they had something stolen from them and 38 percent of Arizonans said they had something stolen from them in 1994.

Victimization rates in Arizona fall between two and five percent for each of six other crime types investigated in the study. Five percent said someone broke into their home during the past year and four percent were treated unfairly or made to feel uncomfortable at work because of their sex. Three percent of Arizonans said an employer or co-worker directed unwanted sexual advances toward them; a stranger hit, kicked, stabbed, or fired a weapon at them; or, they were the victim of a hate crime. Two percent said someone they know actually hit, kicked, stabbed, or fired a weapon at them. These figures are consistent with results from 1999, 1997 and 1994.

Dr. Nancy Wonders, Professor of Criminal Justice at Northern Arizona University, commented, “Citizen perceptions that crime rates remain steady or in some cases are dropping is consistent with national research on crime. It is an interesting paradox, however, that prison construction continues to be a growing industry.”

FUND SCHOOLS, NOT PRISONS

Arizonans clearly prefer funding education and prevention programs as a strategy for reducing crime in their neighborhoods, rather than building more prisons. When asked whether more money or less money should be invested in specific crime reduction programs, the number one crime-fighting strategy for Arizonans is funding public school education. Eighty-five percent of Arizonans support increasing funding levels for public schools. Public school

education has been the most preferred program in each of the *Grand Canyon State Poll* crime surveys. In contrast, only 41 percent of Arizonans support building more prisons as a strategy for reducing crime in their community.

Arizonans expressed a stronger preference than in the past for “increasing the number of police.” This strategy for reducing crime moved into the second-place position (77%) this year. Increasing the number of police ranked sixth in 1999, and fifth in 1997 and 1994. Dr. Fred Solop, *Grand Canyon State Poll* director, commented, “Increased support for hiring more police is likely a reaction to terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Calling for this survey began two weeks after the attacks when concern for increasing security in society ran high.”

Arizonans are strongly supportive of other education and prevention programs with two-thirds or more of the public supporting increased funding of drug prevention programs (77%), pre-school programs (70%), gang prevention programs (69%), and violence prevention programs (68%). More than half of Arizonans would like to see increased funding for reducing unemployment (62%) and support for single parents (54%) as measures for reducing crime in their communities. These figures are all consistent with those from the previous study years, with the exception of support for reducing unemployment. Support for funding to reduce unemployment rose 20 percentage points higher than findings recorded two years ago and appears to be a reflection of the current state of the economy.

Finally, when asked if limiting the availability of guns would reduce crime in America, Arizonans give a divided response. Forty-three percent of Arizonans say limiting availability of guns would reduce crime in society and 53 percent say it would not. This question was not asked on previous *Grand Canyon State Poll* surveys.



October 18, 2001

**GRAND CANYON STATE POLL
BACKGROUND MEMO**

1-NAU017/Fall 2001

The *Grand Canyon State Poll* was conducted between September 26 and October 2, 2001. A random sample of 412 Arizona residents was asked questions regarding crime, victimization, and crime prevention. Survey question results are subject to a sampling error of +/-5.0 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from the population. Sampling error does not take into account additional sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The data referred to in this release are presented below.

I'd like to ask you some questions about crime.

In the past 12 months do you feel that crime in your neighborhood has increased, decreased, or remained about the same as it was before?

	Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same	Don't know	N
October, 2001	15%	7%	75%	3%	(412)
February, 1999	20%	5%	73%	3%	(419)
March, 1997	27%	7%	63%	4%	(402)

In the past 12 months, were you or any member of your household the victim of a crime, whether you reported it to the authorities or not?

	Yes	No	Don't know	N
October, 2001	22%	78%	1%	(412)
February, 1999	22%	78%	1%	(419)
March, 1997	23%	77%	---	(402)

Please tell me whether or not each of the following did or did not happen to you during the last year.

	(2001) Did Happen	<i>(1999) Did Happen</i>	<i>(1997) Did Happen</i>	<i>(1994) Did Happen</i>
You had something stolen from where you live, your car, or some other place.	24%	23%	28%	38%
You were made sick by some kind of pollution.	11%	17%	17%	19%
Someone broke into your house.	5%	6%	7%	7%
You were treated unfairly or made to feel uncomfortable at work because of your sex.	4%	5%	3%	6%
An employer or co-worker directed unwanted sexual advances toward you.	3%	4%	3%	9%
A stranger actually hit, kicked, stabbed, or fired a weapon at you.	3%	3%	5%	9%
You were the victim of a hate crime.	3%	(not asked before 2001)		
Someone you know actually hit, kicked, stabbed, or fired a weapon at you.	2%	4%	4%	6%

I am going to read a list of programs and activities that different people think may reduce crime in your community. Please tell me whether Arizona should spend more money or less money on these programs and activities in the future.

	(2001) More Money	<i>(1999) More Money</i>	<i>(1997) More Money</i>	<i>(1994) More Money</i>
Public School Education	85%	84%	78%	81%
Increasing the Number of Police	77%	64%	64%	69%
Drug Prevention Programs	72%	71%	72%	79%
Pre-School Programs	70%	69%	67%	68%
Gang Prevention Programs	69%	70%	75%	76%
Violence Prevention Programs	68%	67%	62%	72%
Reducing Unemployment	62%	42%	51%	63%
Support for Single Parents	54%	50%	48%	47%
Prison Construction	41%	40%	48%	47%

Some people say we can reduce crime in America by limiting the availability of guns. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

	<u>%</u>	
Strongly agree	30%	N=410
Somewhat agree	13%	
Somewhat disagree	18%	
Strongly disagree	37%	
Don't know	2%	