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STATE *of the* STATE Survey

State  
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State  
Survey

*Criminal Victimization and Fear of  
Crime in Michigan*

*by Christina Polsenberg*

*Briefing Paper No. 95-09*

MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY

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# ***Criminal Victimization and Fear of Crime in Michigan***

*prepared by*

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## KEY FINDINGS

### The Survey

- A telephone survey of 1,202 adult residents of the state of Michigan was conducted by Michigan State University's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research between May 10 and June 20, 1995. This is the third quarterly MSU State of the State Survey (SOSS). It focused on issues related to families, women and children. The sampling error is  $\pm 2.8\%$ .
- The sample is designed to provide representative information for respondents from major regions of the state: Detroit City, Southeast Michigan (excluding Detroit), Southwest Michigan, Central Michigan (West and East), northern Lower Michigan, and the Upper Peninsula. (See attached information sheet for list of counties included in each region.) The data reported here are weighted to make the results representative of the adult population of Michigan.

### Fear of Crime

- **One in two Michigan residents fears being a victim of a household burglary, one in five is fearful of a physical assault, and one in five fears a sexual assault.** In Michigan, as Figure 1 shows, 50% of the respondents said that they fear they will become the victim of a household burglary, 20% fear a physical assault, and 18% fear a sexual assault. (Q.1, Q.2, Q.3 — *question wording is given below.*)
- **Women are more fearful of criminal victimization than men.** Women are more likely to fear burglary, assault, and sexual assault than men. (See Figure 2.) Women especially are fearful of sexual assault: 6% say they are very fearful and 24% somewhat fearful. Only 2% of men say they are very fearful of sexual assault and 4% are somewhat fearful. (Q.1, Q.2, Q.3)
- **Previous victims fear sexual assault more than non-victims.** As Figure 3 shows, those individuals who have been victims of sexual assault are more likely to fear sexual assault (47% very fearful, 25% somewhat fearful) than those who have not been victimized (3% very fearful, 14% percent somewhat fearful). (Q.3, Q.6)
- **Michigan's minority population is more fearful of crime than Caucasians.** Those individuals who are very fearful of being beaten include 3% of Caucasians, 14% of African American respondents, and 15% of other races. Fear of burglary has a similar pattern, with 5% of Caucasian respondents reporting they are very fearful, 17% of African American respondents, and 14% of those in other racial categories. Only 3% of Caucasians report they are very fearful of sexual assault as compared to 6% of African American respondents and 12% of other races. (See Figure 4; Q.1, Q.2, Q.3)
- **People in Detroit are most fearful of being beaten, of being burglarized, and of sexual assault.** (See Figure 5.) Ten percent of Detroit residents report they are very fearful of being beaten and 22% are somewhat fearful. Fewer people living in an area other than Detroit say they are very fearful (3%) or somewhat fearful (14%) of being beaten. Women living in Detroit report they are very fearful of being beaten (13%), compared to their non-Detroit coun-

terparts (4%). Men who reside in Detroit are also more fearful of physical assault (6% are very fearful) compared to men living elsewhere (3% report very fearful). (Q.2)

Detroit residents are more fearful of burglary than people who live outside Detroit. Fifteen percent of Detroit residents are very fearful of burglary, compared to 6% of respondents living outside Detroit. Both men (12%) and women (18%) living in the Detroit area are very fearful of burglary, compared to men (4%) and women (8%) living outside Detroit. (Q.1)

Detroit residents are more fearful of sexual assault than non-Detroit residents. Of those living in Detroit, 9% state they are very fearful of sexual assault, compared to 4% of people who live elsewhere in the state. Proportionately more Detroit women (12%) than non-Detroit women (5%) are very fearful of sexual assault. Only a few men living outside Detroit report that they are very fearful of sexual assault (2%); slightly more Detroit men (5%) say this. (Q.3)

## Comparative Seriousness of Crimes

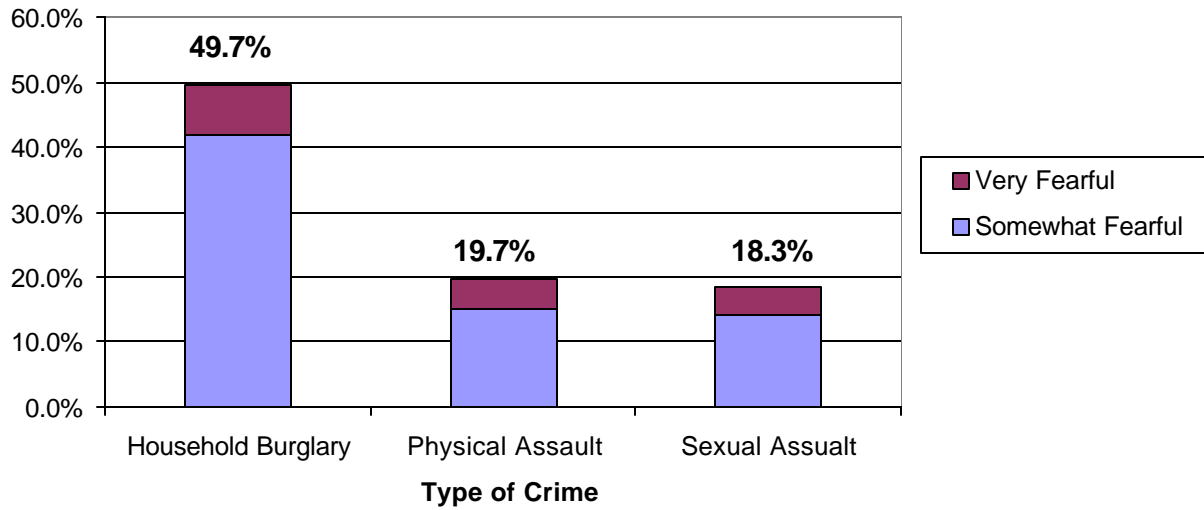
- **Women are more likely than men to identify forced sexual activity as more serious than either robbery or being beaten.** As Figure 6 shows, while about four out of five (78%) women identify forced sexual activity as the most serious, only three out of five (59%) men do. Men are more likely than women to say that being beaten (23%) or robbed (17%) is the most serious. Only 7% of women stated that robbery was the most serious, and 14% said being beaten was most serious. (Q.7)

## Victimization Experience

- **More than one in ten people in Michigan say that they have been conned out of money, one in 10 report being robbed, and three in every 200 people say they have been sexually assaulted just in the past year.** The specific figures are 13% reporting being conned out of money in the last year, 10% reporting robbery, and 1.5% reporting sexual assault. (Q.4, Q.5, Q.6)
- **Women are not more likely than men to be robbed or sexually assaulted.** Only 2% of women and 1% of men reported a sexual assault in the past year. Men and women also report similar percentages of robbery (10% of men, 11% of women). More men, however, report having been the victim of a con (18%) than women (12%).
- **Women report that more than one in ten sexual assaults are committed by someone they know.** Women say that the assailant was a stranger in 69% of sexual assault situations, and that he was someone known to them in 13% of assaults. For 18% of reported sexual assaults, Michigan women did not provide information about the identity of the assailant. (This finding should be interpreted with caution, since prior research has demonstrated that women assaulted by someone they know are unlikely to report such assaults in response to survey questions. Thus, there is a good chance that more than 13% of sexual assaults are committed by a person known to the victim.) (Q.8)
- **Minority residents are more likely to be robbed than Caucasian residents.** While 8% of Caucasian residents report they have been the victim of a robbery, 21% of African American residents and 13% of other racial groups report robbery victimizations. (Q.5)

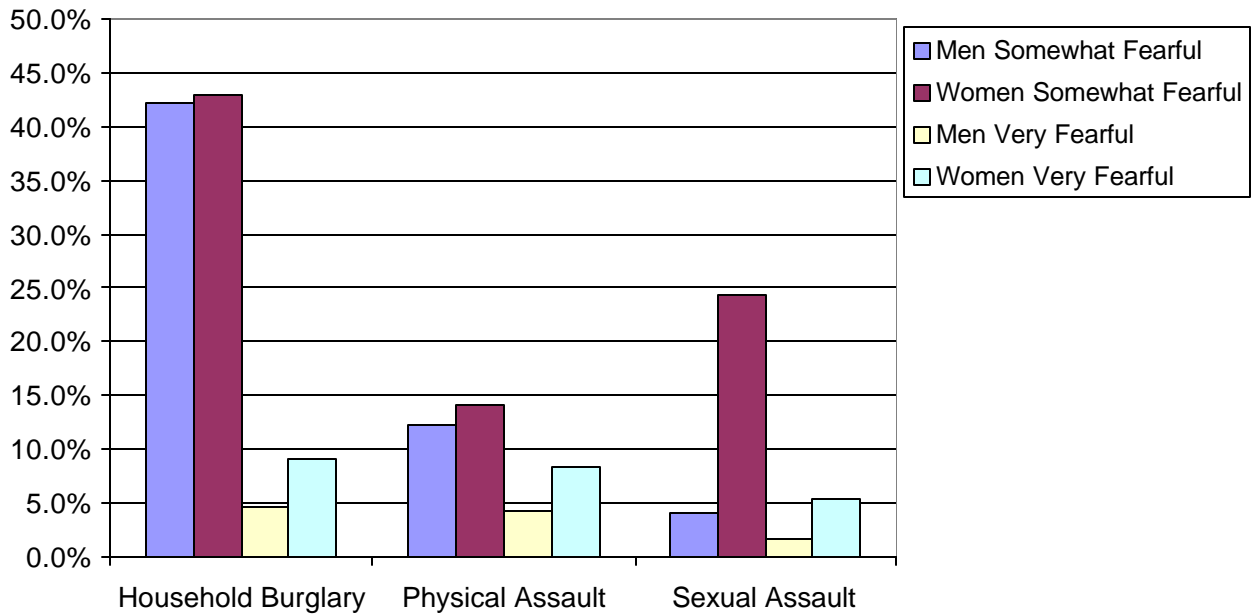
- **Detroit residents report higher rates of victimization.** They are more likely to be victims of robbery (17%) than non-Detroit residents (8%). They are more likely to report they have been victims of a con (23%) than non-Detroit residents (12%). There are no differences with regard to sexual assault. (Q.4, Q.5, Q.6).

**Figure 1. How Fearful Are You of Becoming the Victim of a Crime?**



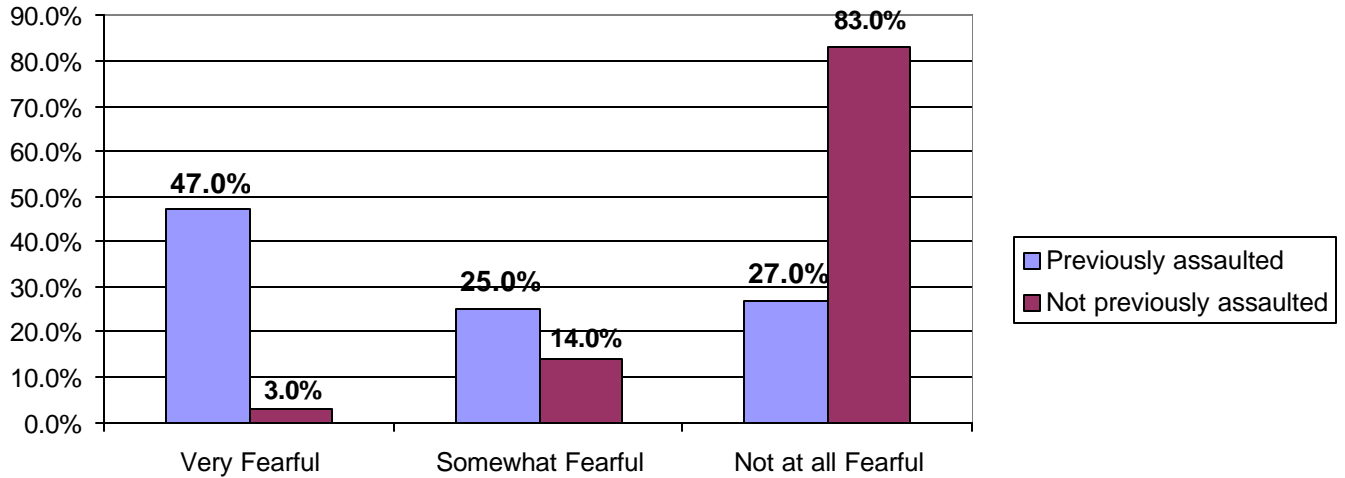
MSU State of the State Survey (SOSS), May-June 1995, N=1,202, Sampling Error +/- 2.8%, Michigan State University, IPPSR

**Figure 2. Percent Who Fear Different Types of Victimization Differences by Gender**



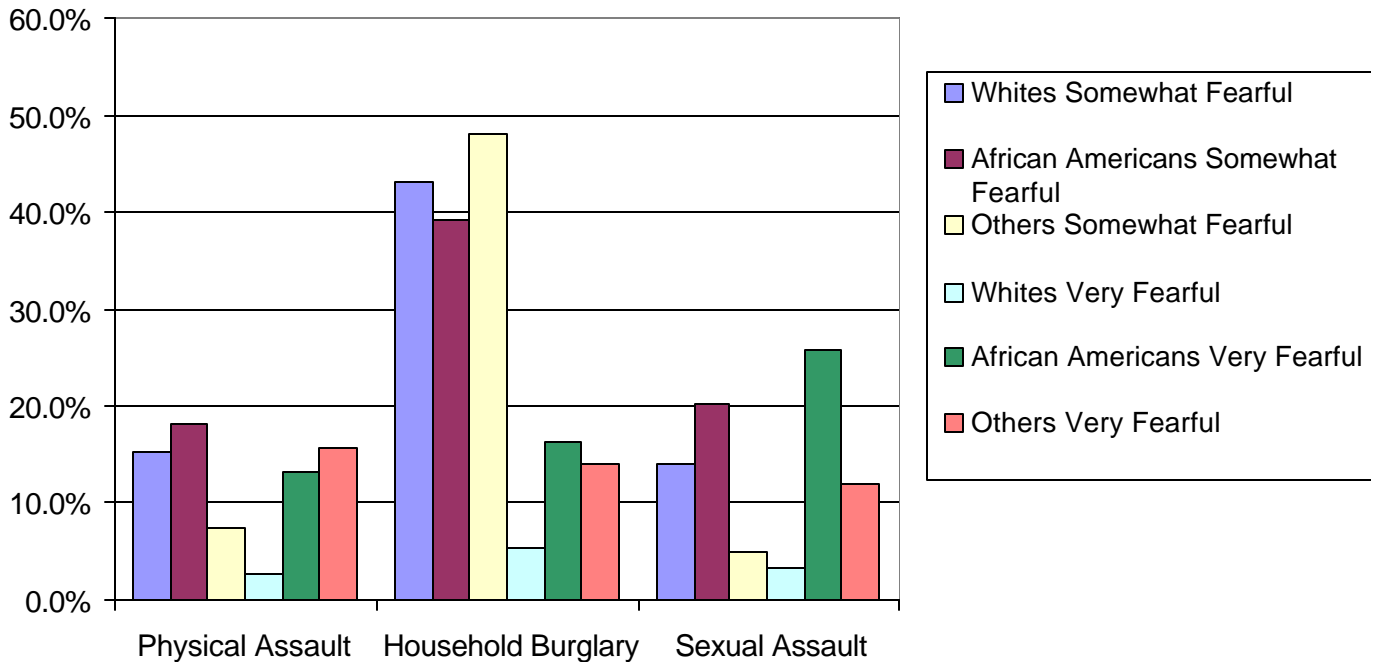
MSU State of the State Survey (SOSS), May-June 1995, N=1,202, Sampling Error=2.8%, Michigan State University IPPSR

**Figure 3. How Fearful Are You that Someone Will Force Sexual Activity on You?  
Differences by Previous Victimization Experience**



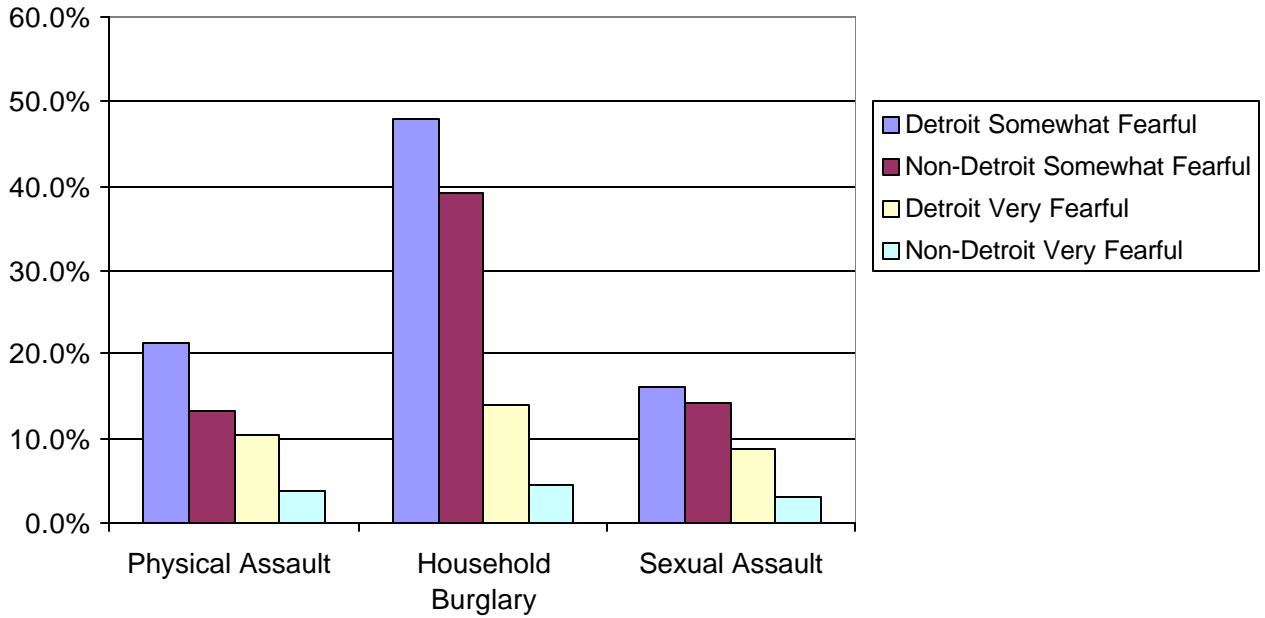
MSU State of the State Survey (SOSS), May-June 1995, N=1,202, Sampling Error +/- 2.8%, Michigan State University, IPPSR

**Figure 4. Percent Who Fear Different Types of Victimization  
Differences by Race**



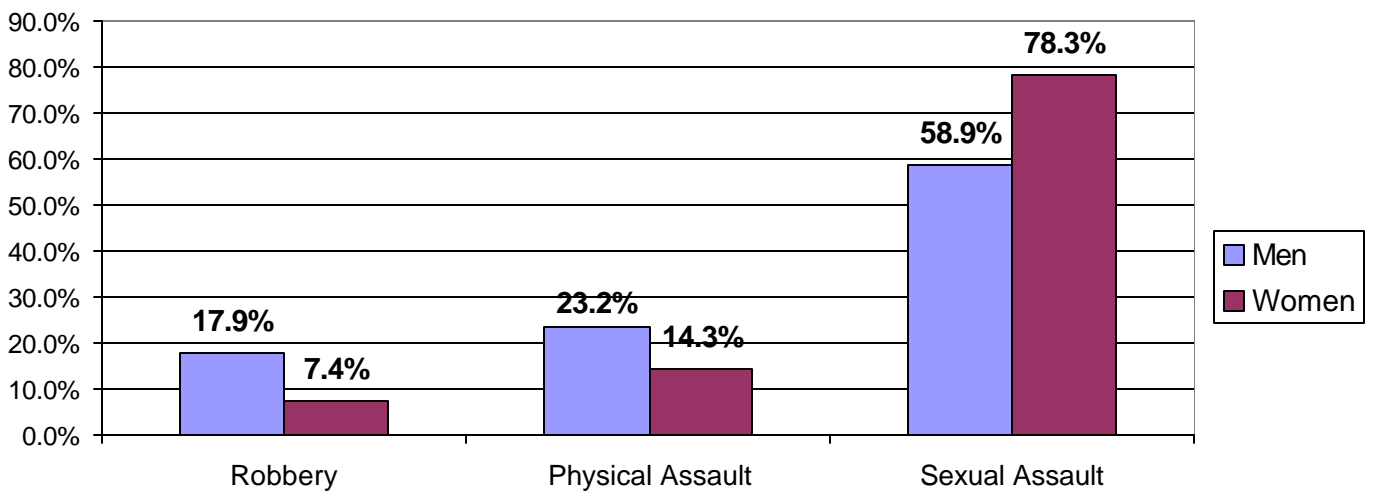
MSU State of the State Survey (SOSS), May-June 1995, N=1,202, Sampling Error=2.8%, Michigan State University, IPPSR

**Figure 5. Percent Who Fear Different Types of Victimization Differences by Race**



MSU State of the State Survey (SOSS), May-June 1995, N=1,202, Sampling Error=2.8%, Michigan State University, IPPSR

**Figure 6. Which Crime Is Most Serious? Differences by Sex**



MSU State of the State Survey (SOSS), May-June 1995, N=1,202, Sampling Error +/- 2.8%, Michigan State University, IPPSR

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

**NOTE:** The full wording of questions (and answer categories if other than yes or no) for the items discussed in this briefing paper is given here. The order in this list conforms with the order of bulleted items in the “Key Findings” section above, not with the order of questions in the survey instrument. Overall, the interviews lasted an average of 23 minutes. The questions asked about criminal victimization and fear of crime consumed about three minutes of that time.

Q.1 How fearful are you that someone will break into your home while you are away? Would you say very fearful, somewhat fearful, or not fearful at all?

Q.2. How fearful are you of being beaten, either by a stranger, a relative, or someone else you know? Would you say very fearful, somewhat fearful, or not fearful at all?

Q.3. How fearful are you that someone will force sexual activity on you? Would you say very fearful, somewhat fearful, or not fearful at all?

Q.4. In the past year, were you conned or cheated out of money or valuables?

Q.5. In the past year, have you or anyone in your household been a victim of a personal physical attack or robbery?

Q.6. In the past year, have you or anyone in your household been forced or coerced into sexual activity? (By that, we mean raped, sexually assaulted, or forced to have sex.)

Q.7. Of these crimes (being robbed, being beaten, or being forced to have sexual activity), which crime do you personally feel is the most serious?

Q.8. [If you were the victim of a sexual assault in the past year,] who committed the sexual assault? Was it a stranger, a relative, an ex-spouse, or someone else you know?

## REGIONAL CATEGORIES

**NOTE:** These regions are the ones used by the Michigan State University Extension Service, except that we treat Detroit City as a separate region.

**Detroit:** City of Detroit

**Southeast:** Genesee, Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, Wayne (excluding Detroit)

**Southwest:** Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Eaton, Hillsdale, Ingham, Jackson, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, Van Buren

**West Central:** Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, Ottawa

**East Central:** Arenac, Bay, Clare, Clinton, Gladwin, Gratiot, Huron, Isabella, Midland, Saginaw, Sanilac, Shiawassee, Tuscola

**Northern L.P.:** Alcona, Alpena, Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Crawford, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Iosco, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Missaukee, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Otsego, Oscoda, Presque Isle, Roscommon, Wexford

**U.P.:** Alger, Baraga, Chippewa, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Luce, Mackinac, Marquette, Menominee, Ontonagon, Schoolcraft

## ***Background Information***

### **Michigan State University State of the State Survey [MSU SOSS]**

#### **What Is MSU SOSS?**

The MSU State of the State Survey is a quarterly statewide survey of a random sample of the residents of Michigan. Although dozens of surveys are conducted in Michigan every year, none is designed to provide a regular systematic monitoring of the public mood in major regions of the state. Through SOSS, MSU aims to fill this information gap. SOSS has five main purposes: (1) to provide timely information about citizen opinions on critical issues; (2) to provide data for scientific and policy research by MSU faculty; (3) to provide information for programs and offices at MSU; (4) to develop survey research methodology; and (5) to provide opportunities for student training and research.

Each quarterly round or “wave” of SOSS has a different main theme: (a) January—quality of life, governmental reform, higher education; (b) April—family, women, and children; (c) July—ethnic and racial groups, Michigan communities; (d) October (even numbered years)—politics, the election, and political issues; (odd-numbered years) —health and the environment;

#### **Who Is Conducting SOSS?**

The State of the State Survey is administered by the Survey Research Division (SRD) of the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR), using its computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) technology.

The design and overall planning of SOSS is the responsibility of a 17-person Steering Committee chaired by Dr. Brian D. Silver, Professor of Political Science. The Steering Committee consists of representatives from sponsoring units, which are primarily colleges and other administrative offices within MSU.

Subject to final approval by the Steering Committee, the questionnaire for each wave of SOSS is developed by a Working Group, most of whom also serve as analysts for that wave. The Working Group for the May 1995 wave includes Principal Investigators, a Research Team and an Advisory Council. Members are:

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**Cynthia Wilbanks**, Michigan Children