



**CALLER PROFILE**  
of the  
**BILL BALLANCE**  
**FEMININE FORUM**  
**KEBS RADIO**



January 1973



Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

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## I – INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results and conclusions of a survey of participating listeners of the Bill Ballance, Feminine Forum program. This survey was conducted by Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co. for KGBS Radio, Storer Broadcasting.

The Feminine Forum is a new format of a talk-radio show developed by KGBS, in which female callers discuss their personal thoughts and experiences on the air with Bill Ballance between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. each weekday. A composite tape of the best interviews each week is rebroadcast on Saturdays, and similar tapes are used in a syndicated version of the show by a growing number of radio stations across the nation and in Canada.

Of all radio programs in the Los Angeles area, Feminine Forum has achieved top listener popularity in its time slot, and the most recent radio ratings show a still further increase in listener audience. Since it is a pioneer venture highly relevant to the changing social mores, with public discussions of sexually related topics, the Feminine Forum and its principal performer, Bill Ballance, have received an increasing amount of coverage in the national press because of its success in attracting listeners. The show has also been copied in many parts of the country, unfortunately, sometimes to the detriment of the program's form and concept. This has raised so many comments that the show's originators feel that the phenomenon of this type of program should be better understood. A key factor would be to determine the actual descriptions of the callers.

This survey was conducted in a highly controlled manner to produce impartial results with exact quantitative definitions as far as possible. Based on a 100% sample of over 260 callers, the following primary conclusions emerge.

- . Callers to the Bill Ballance, Feminine Forum are a representative cross section of the Southern California female population, with the distinction of being significantly above average in education, income, quality of residence and level of occupation.
- . Their specific characteristics indicate a stable and mature group, with vested family interests, a fairly conservative outlook on marriage, as shown by a lower divorce rate than the national average, and social habits denoting upper middle class tastes.
- . They avidly support the Feminine Forum for its entertainment value and as a release from monotony and a useful and necessary form of expression and communication.
- . None of the callers considered her interview to have been in poor taste, salacious or in any way offensive. Practically all said it had been fun.

- . The callers, as a group, are highly enthusiastic about their support of Bill Ballance, whom they regard as friendly, interested and stimulating.
- . Daily caller composition is shown to be highly sensitive to the topic of discussion, and the data supports the concept of tailoring program audiences by appropriate topic selection.

The report describes the methods used to conduct the survey and compares the results with similar national and State demographical data. The qualitative comments of the callers are summarized and evaluated in the final chapter.

## II – DESCRIPTION OF SURVEY METHOD

The entire survey was conducted by telephone on the premises of radio station KGBS. A duplicate call director to the one used by Bill Ballance was set up in a separate conference room together with a headset to follow the program in real time. A tape recorder was patched into the telephone receiver to enable survey interviews to be recorded.

The light signals on the call director were used to indicate when a caller was on the air. By listening in on the headset monitor, the survey interviewer could anticipate the end of a call on the air and depress the appropriate line selector button just before the caller was released by Bill Ballance, and lift the receiver while the caller was still on the line. By this method, interviews were conducted in an anonymous mode and without prior warning to the caller. Attempts during the early interviews to ask callers to remain on the phone after they went off the air were unsuccessful, because listeners to the program became curious about the reasons for the request and started to call in to find out the purpose of the instruction.

For efficiency and to control the interviews so that they would all be directly comparable to one another, a long, detailed questionnaire was prepared. Single word answers were used as far as possible to keep interpretation to a minimum.

Callers were identified by their first names only and their full identity was never obtained. Specific addresses were avoided by asking for general residential area only. The first section of the questionnaire dealt with basic statistics such as caller age, marital status, occupation, education level, income, number of children, residence time in California, race and religion.

The second portion of the questionnaire dwelt on the caller's reaction to her treatment on the program. Callers were asked if they considered Bill Ballance now to be a friend and whether they felt good about the interview on the air. If their answer was affirmative to the latter question, they were asked to comment on whether their appearance had been fun, Bill Ballance's treatment of them had been in good taste, their participation in the program had been helpful to them or to others, their treatment had been good and whether they would consider calling again.

If they did not feel good about their interview on the air, they were asked whether they felt insulted, embarrassed, or whether the program had been smutty or their feelings had been hurt. During the first interviews, the negative questions were asked of all callers. However, since their answers were so consistently in favor of the program if they first indicated feeling good about their appearance, this procedure was discontinued.

The next questions pertained to listening frequency to the Feminine Forum and any previous history of calling in. Callers were next asked to enumerate any favorite topics on the show that they may have remembered.

The section that followed asked questions about the caller's views of the program in general. An equal number of favorable and unfavorable questions were used, such as whether the caller considered the show friendly, entertaining, informative and sincere on the positive side, and whether the caller thought it destructive, a put-down, a put-on or destructive on the negative side.

After asking the caller about the importance of anonymity on the show and whether she had anyone else to confide in, a series of questions were asked about social habits and preferences.

The questionnaire concluded with a few questions about advertising on the station, and the caller was then asked to comment freely about the Feminine Forum program. This portion was recorded on tape for later review.

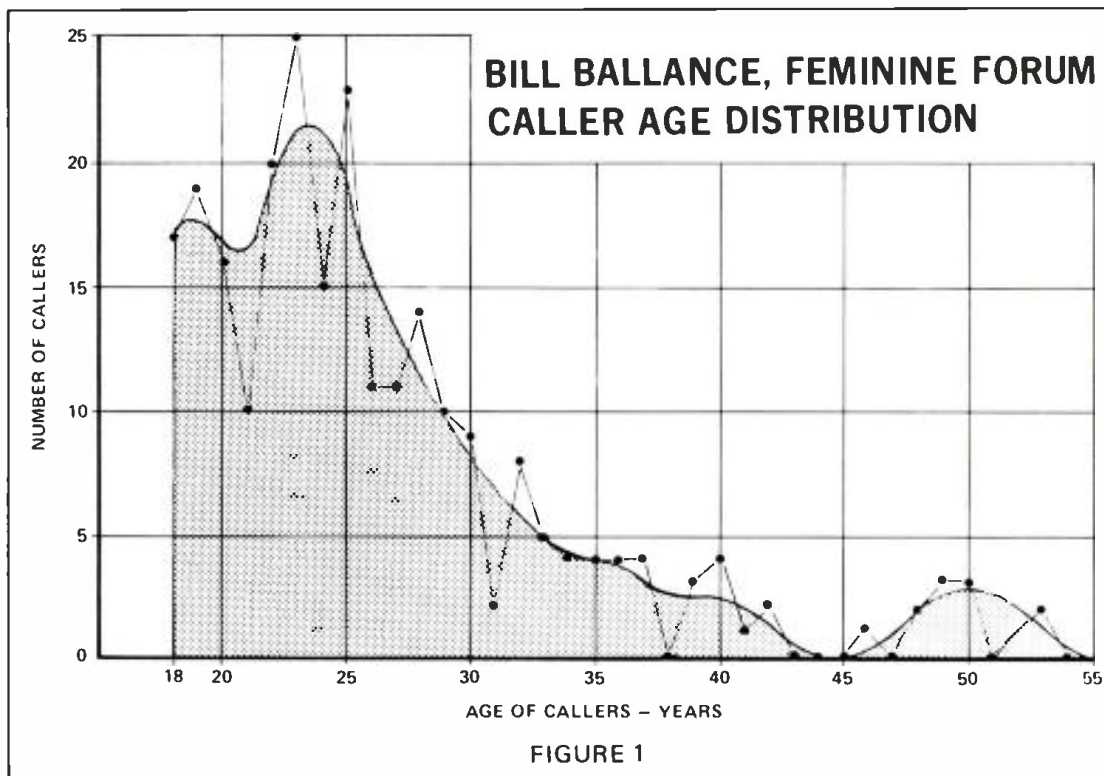
The success of the survey was largely dependent on a calm and experienced female interviewer. A person with a master's degree in languages and with an extensive background in lecturing at college level and conducting complex interview programs was used consistently throughout.

### III – SPECIFIC FEMININE FORUM CALLER CHARACTERISTICS

A statistical description of the callers to the Bill Ballance, Feminine Forum, radio program, as obtained from more than 250 telephone interviews, is as follows.

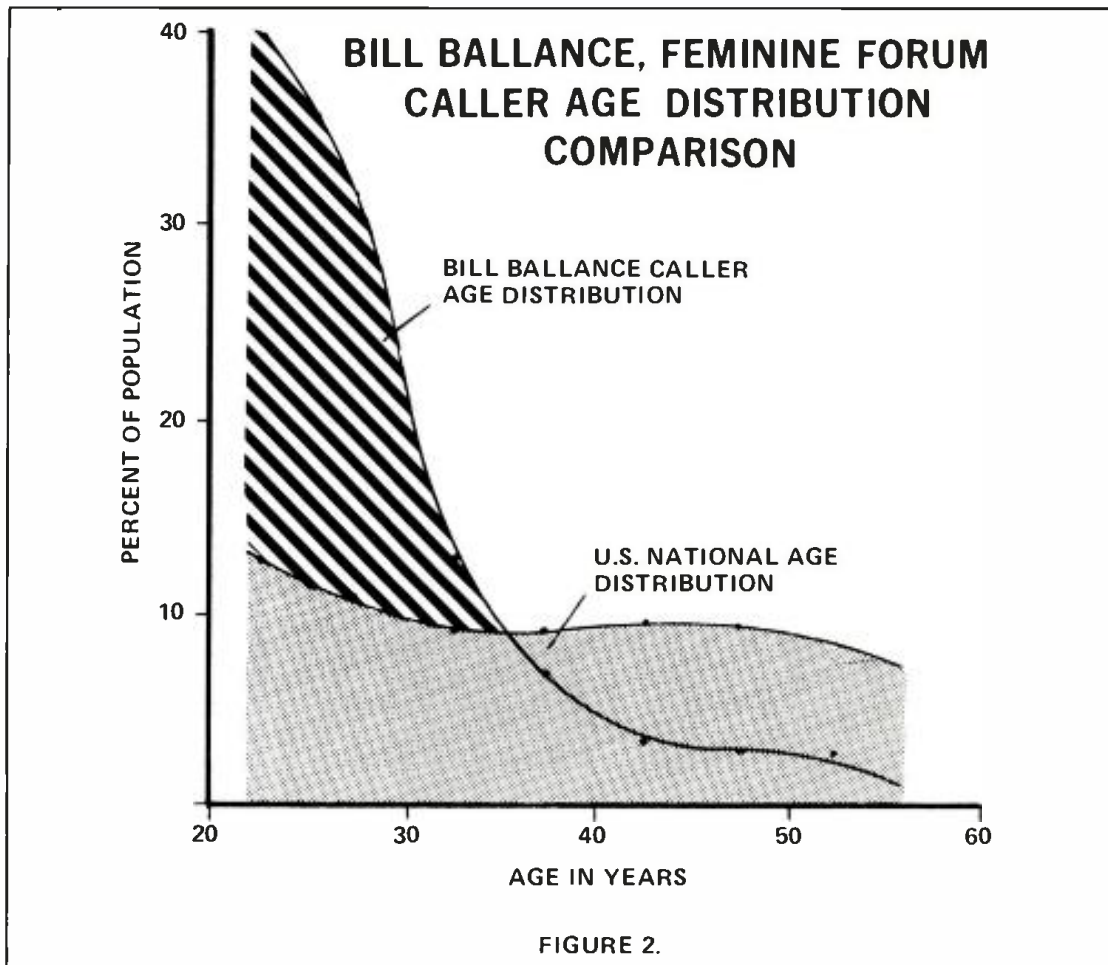
#### AGE DISTRIBUTION

Figure 1 shows the age distribution of the callers sampled during this study. The vast majority were below the age of thirty, with a peak concentration in the 23- to 24-year range. Surprisingly, quite a few callers were close to, or over, fifty years.



Compared with the national average age distribution, as shown in Figure 2, however, the Feminine Forum has its greatest success among those in their midtwenties.



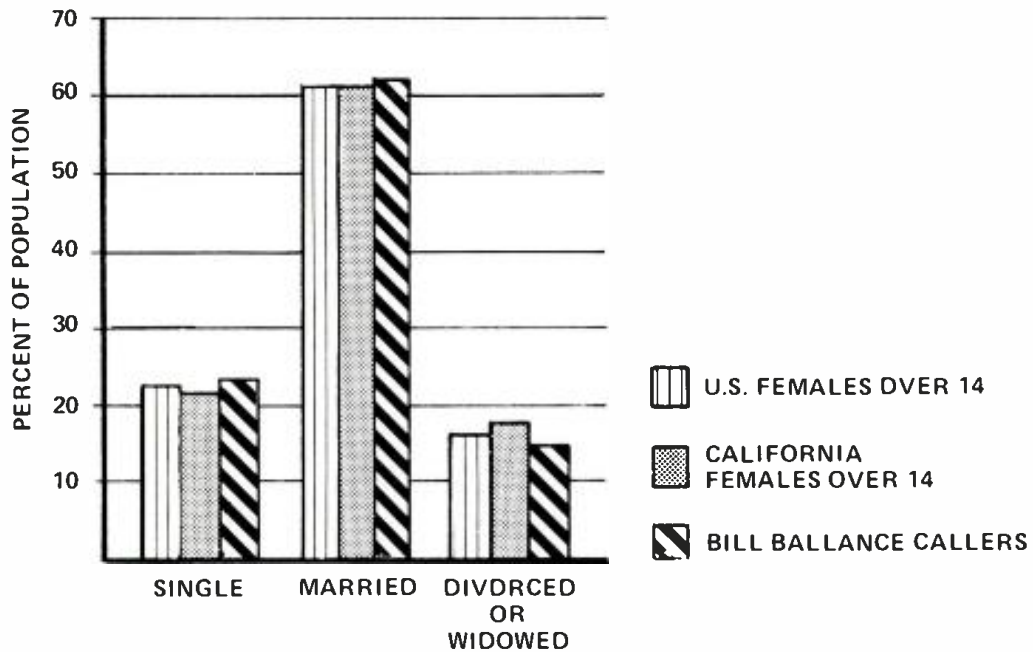


KGBS maintains a policy of not permitting callers under the age of 18 to participate on the Feminine Forum program. There is some evidence that callers below that age sometimes falsely claim to be older in order to get on the show.

### MARITAL STATUS

The distribution of marital status among the Feminine Forum callers generally reflected the California State and U.S. national averages, as illustrated in Figure 3. There is a slightly larger proportion of single and married callers and fewer divorced women in the sample recorded, which may indicate a somewhat more conservative attitude toward marriage among the participants of the Bill Ballance show. A greater percentage of the callers in the 25- to 44-year age group, also, were married than the State average.

### BILL BALLANCE, FEMININE FORUM CALLER MARITAL STATUS DISTRIBUTION



WOMEN BETWEEN 25 AND 44 EVER MARRIED:  
 CALIFORNIA AVERAGE 92.2%  
 BILL BALLANCE CALLERS AVERAGE 95.1%

FIGURE 3.

### EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Figure 4 depicts the distribution of educational achievement of the callers interviewed. The majority were high school graduates, with an average scholastic level of 1.2 years college attendance. The comparison in Figure 5 shows this to be substantially better than State norms.

## BILL BALLANCE, FEMININE FORUM CALLER EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND DISTRIBUTION

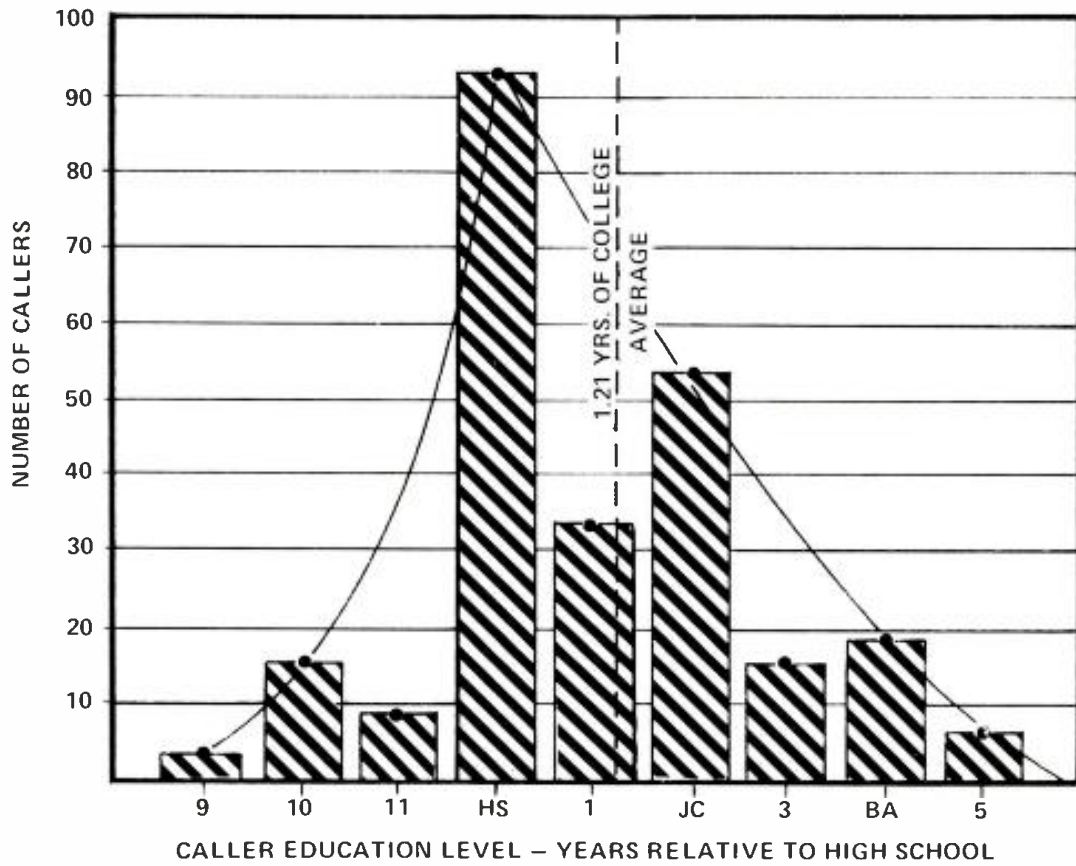


FIGURE 4.

There were far fewer dropouts among the callers, and a much higher proportion of the Bill Ballance show participants had a college education.

## BILL BALLANCE, FEMININE FORUM CALLER EDUCATION COMPARISON WITH CALIFORNIA NORMS

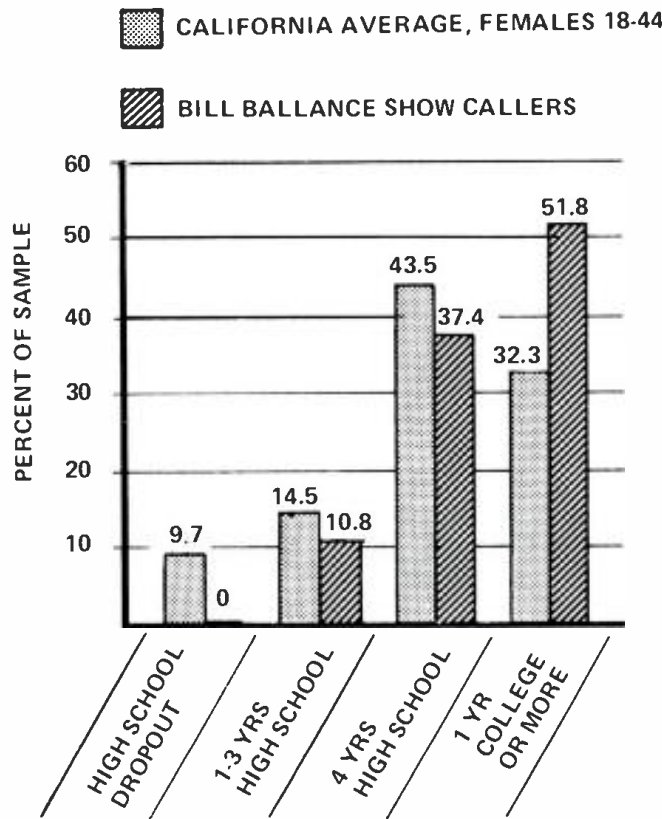


FIGURE 5.

As Table 1 further emphasizes, the Feminine Forum callers are substantially superior in educational background to U.S. national, as well as California State norms in all categories except for the proportion with four-year college degrees or better, in which the callers fall only marginally under the State average for all white men and women combined. The figures in Table 2 compare the median years of school completed by those interviewed with the national median for all persons over 25 years and with the medians for various other population groupings, including a number of local Southern California districts. Feminine Forum participants clearly stand out as having well above average educational backgrounds.

**Table 1**  
**Bill Ballance, Feminine Forum Caller Education**  
**Comparison with State and National Norms**

	White Californians over 25 years (1970)	White U.S. females over 25 years (1970)	Bill Ballance Show callers	
			All	Over 25 years
4 years high school or more	63.6%	52.0%	89.2%	92.2%
1 year college or more	30.4%	N/A	51.8%	58.9%
4 years college or more	13.8%	8.4%	10.0%	12.8%
1 to 3 years college	N/A	11.1%	44.2%	46.1%
	Percent of population			

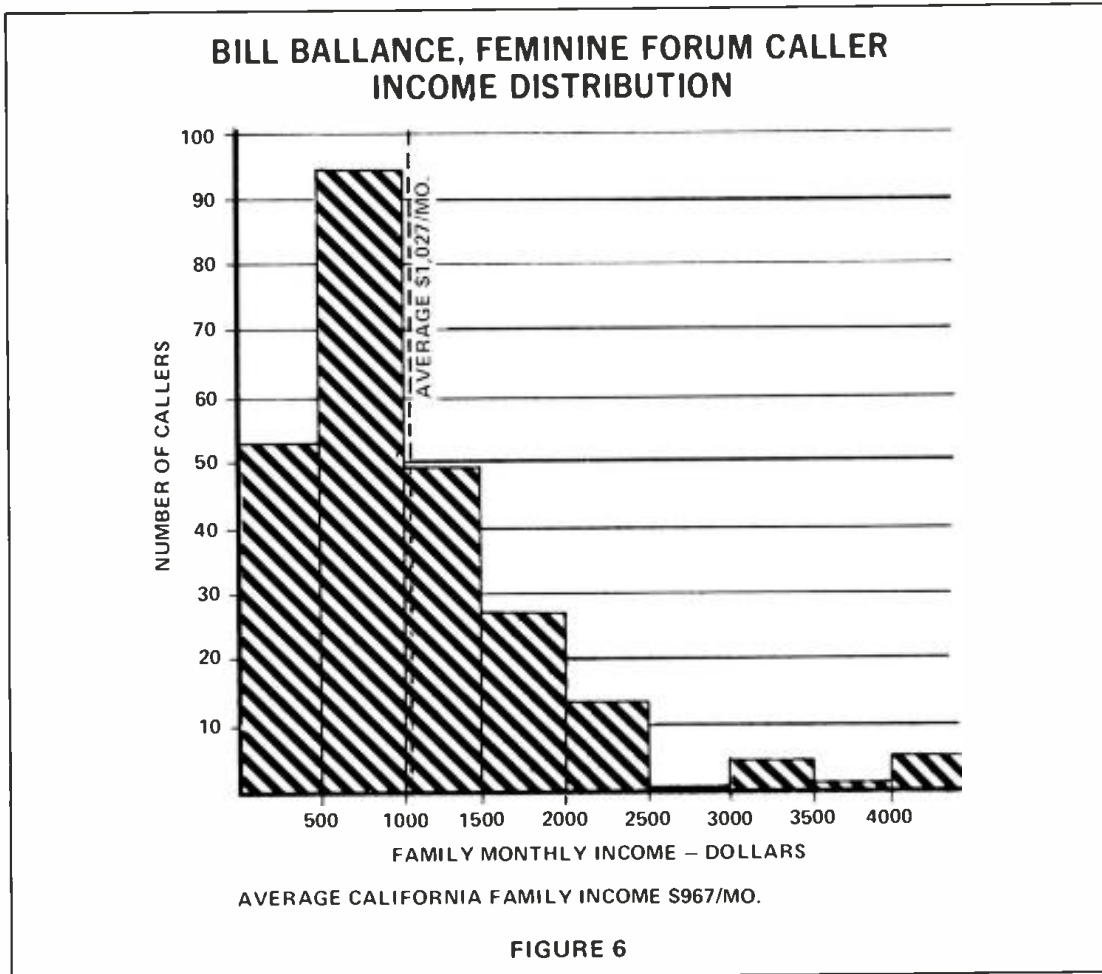
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

**Table 2**  
**Bill Ballance, Feminine Forum Caller**  
**Median Years of School Completed**

Bill Ballance callers	13.2 years
U.S. persons over 25 years	12.1 years
Pacific region, persons over 25 years	12.4 years
White U.S. females over 25 years	12.1 years
Anaheim – Santa Ana – Garden Grove area	12.6 years
Los Angeles – Long Beach area	12.4 years
San Bernardino – Riverside – Ontario region	12.2 years

#### INCOME LEVEL

The plot in Figure 6 records the family income distribution reported by the callers interviewed. The heaviest concentration falls in the \$500 to \$1,000 per month range, and the average income of the total sample taken was \$1,027 per month, which is quite a bit higher than the California State average.



The closer comparison in Figure 7 shows a smaller fraction of callers in the lowest income bracket and a higher proportion in the highest bracket than State norms. In general, the Feminine Forum participants appear to be more affluent than the public at large.

## BILL BALLANCE, FEMININE FORUM CALLER INCOME DISTRIBUTION COMPARISON WITH STATE NORMS

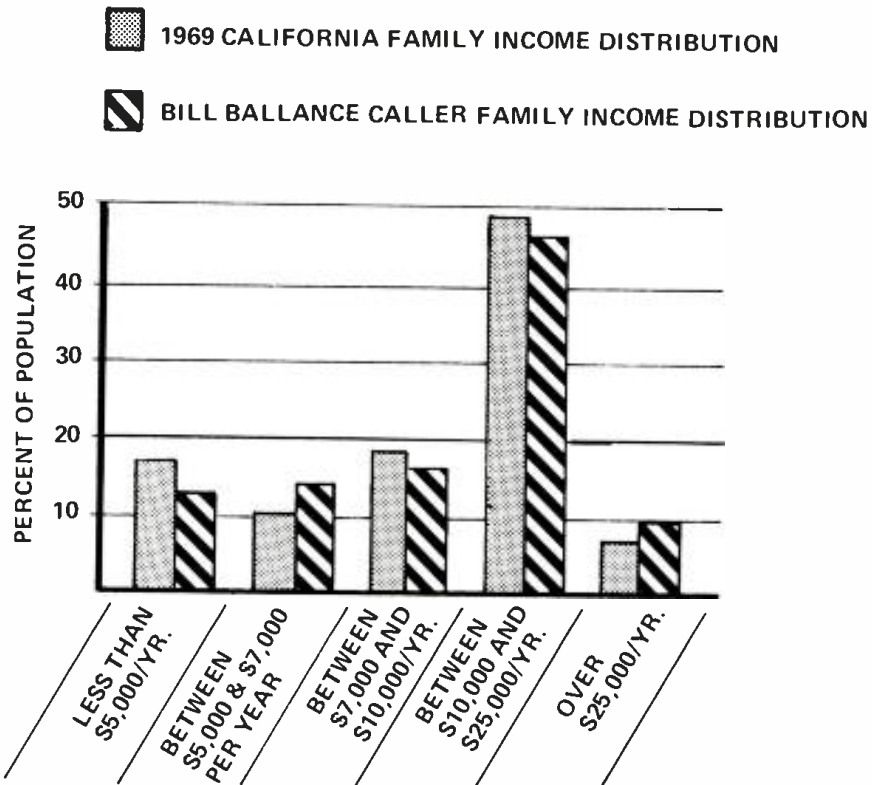
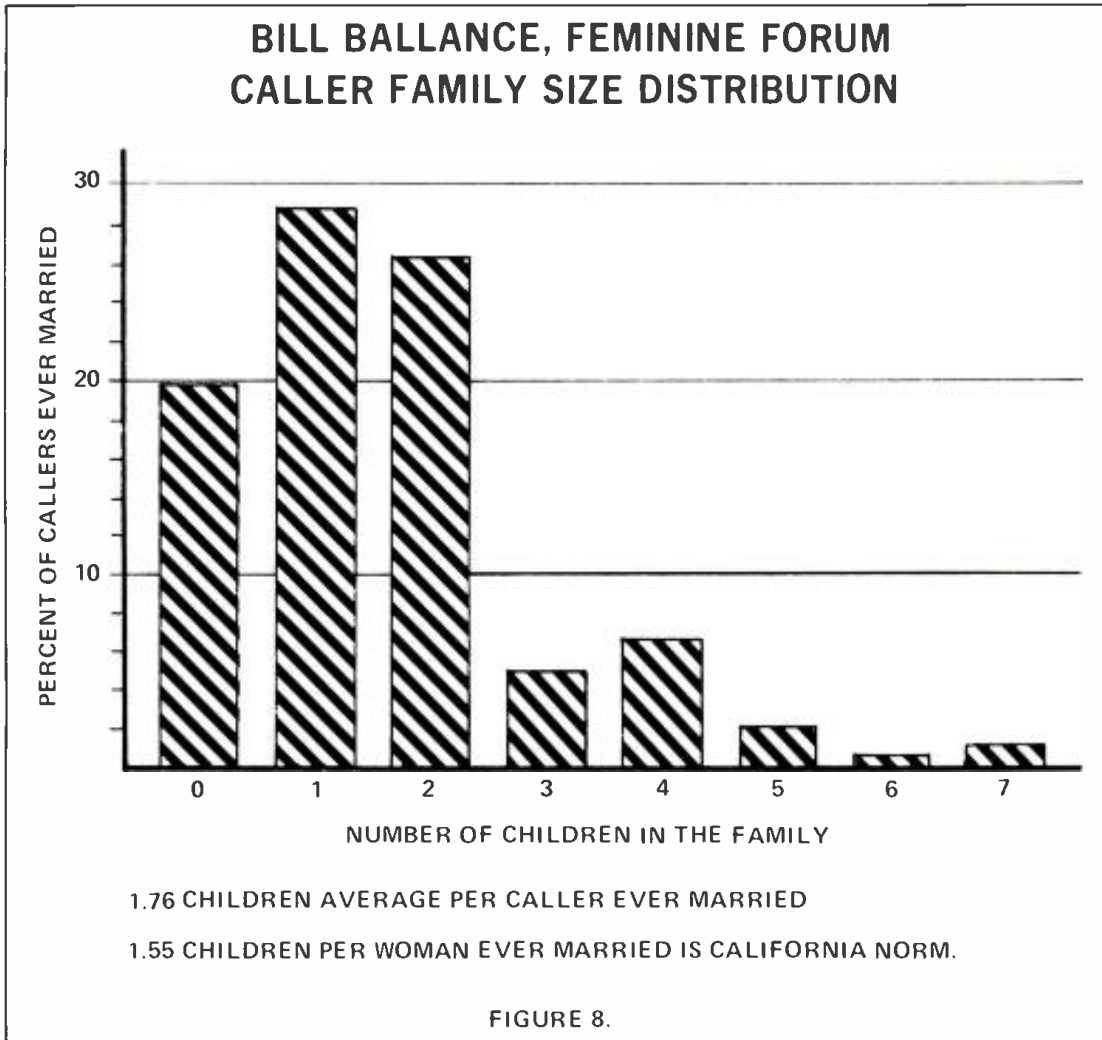


FIGURE 7.

### FAMILY SIZE

The family size distribution reported by the Bill Ballance callers is shown in Figure 8. Most of the callers have one or two children, and the average number of children among all married women was 1.76, which is above the overall State average of 1.55 children per family. Not many callers have more than two children, and very few have large families.



#### RACIAL REPRESENTATION

Table 3 shows the proportion of callers that fall into the racial categories of white, black and brown. The “brown” group is largely made up of Americans of Spanish or Mexican background, but also contains two Asian callers and one North American Indian.

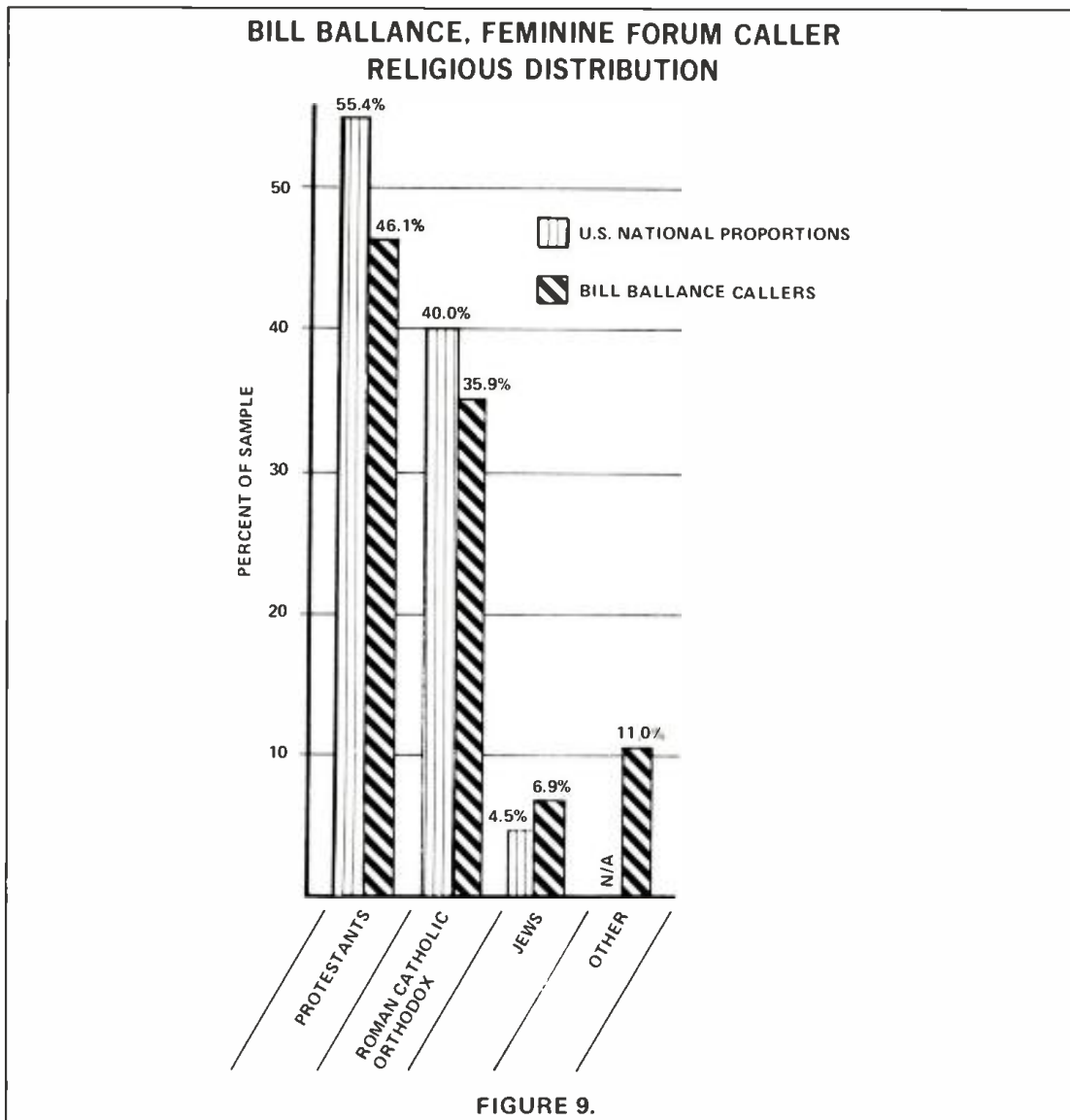
Table 3  
Bill Ballance, Feminine Forum Caller Race Distribution

	Percent of population		
	White	Brown	Black
Feminine Forum callers	87.5	8.6	3.9
Overall U.S. population (1970 census)	87.5	1.4	11.1
Overall California population (1970 census)	89.0	4.0	7.0
U.S. inside standard metropolitan statistical areas	86.5	1.5	12.0
California inside standard metropolitan statistical areas	88.6	4.0	7.4



## RELIGIOUS REPRESENTATION

Figure 9 compares the proportion of Feminine Forum callers in various religious categories with the U.S. national averages as reported by the Yearbook of American Churches. The Protestant and Catholic participation fell below their respective population proportions, while a significant percentage of callers claimed not to belong to any religious group, and the Jewish representation was greater than their population fraction. The religious distribution varied widely from day to day, apparently as a function of the daily Feminine Forum topic. This aspect is discussed in greater detail in a later report section.



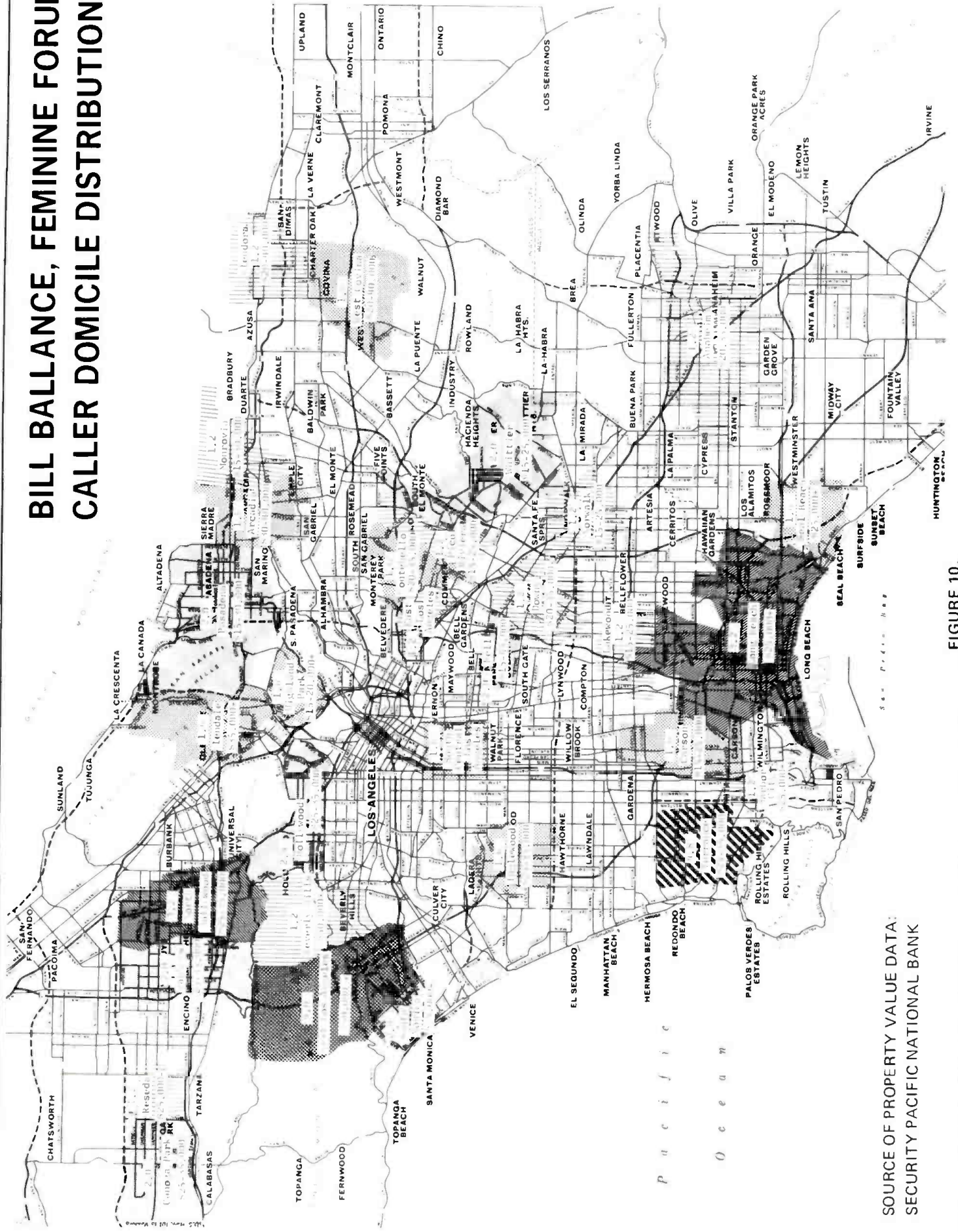
## RESIDENTIAL STABILITY

The callers interviewed have lived in Southern California for an average of 15.7 years, and over 60% of them have lived there for more than ten years.

## DOMICILE LOCATION

The sample of callers interviewed during this evaluation reported to live in the better areas of Greater Los Angeles to a large extent. Figure 10 indicates with different degrees of shading where the highest concentration of callers live. The percentage figures indicate the fraction of all callers who claim to live in each respective region, and the monetary amounts reflect the range of residential real estate values prevalent in each area. It is significant that so many callers named areas such as Torrance, West Los Angeles, North Hollywood, Long Beach, and Pasadena as the place of residence. This would indicate a substantial upper middle class proportion of callers.

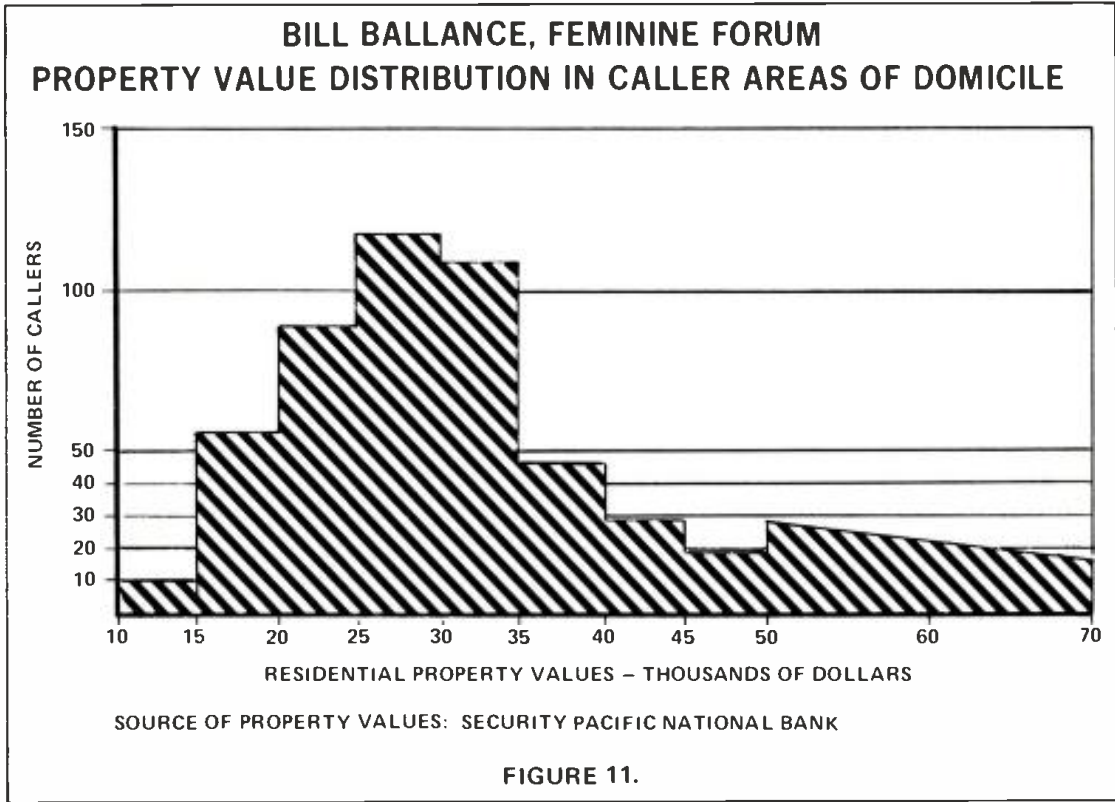
# BILL BALLANCE, FEMININE FORUM CALLER DOMICILE DISTRIBUTION



SOURCE OF PROPERTY VALUE DATA:  
SECURITY PACIFIC NATIONAL BANK

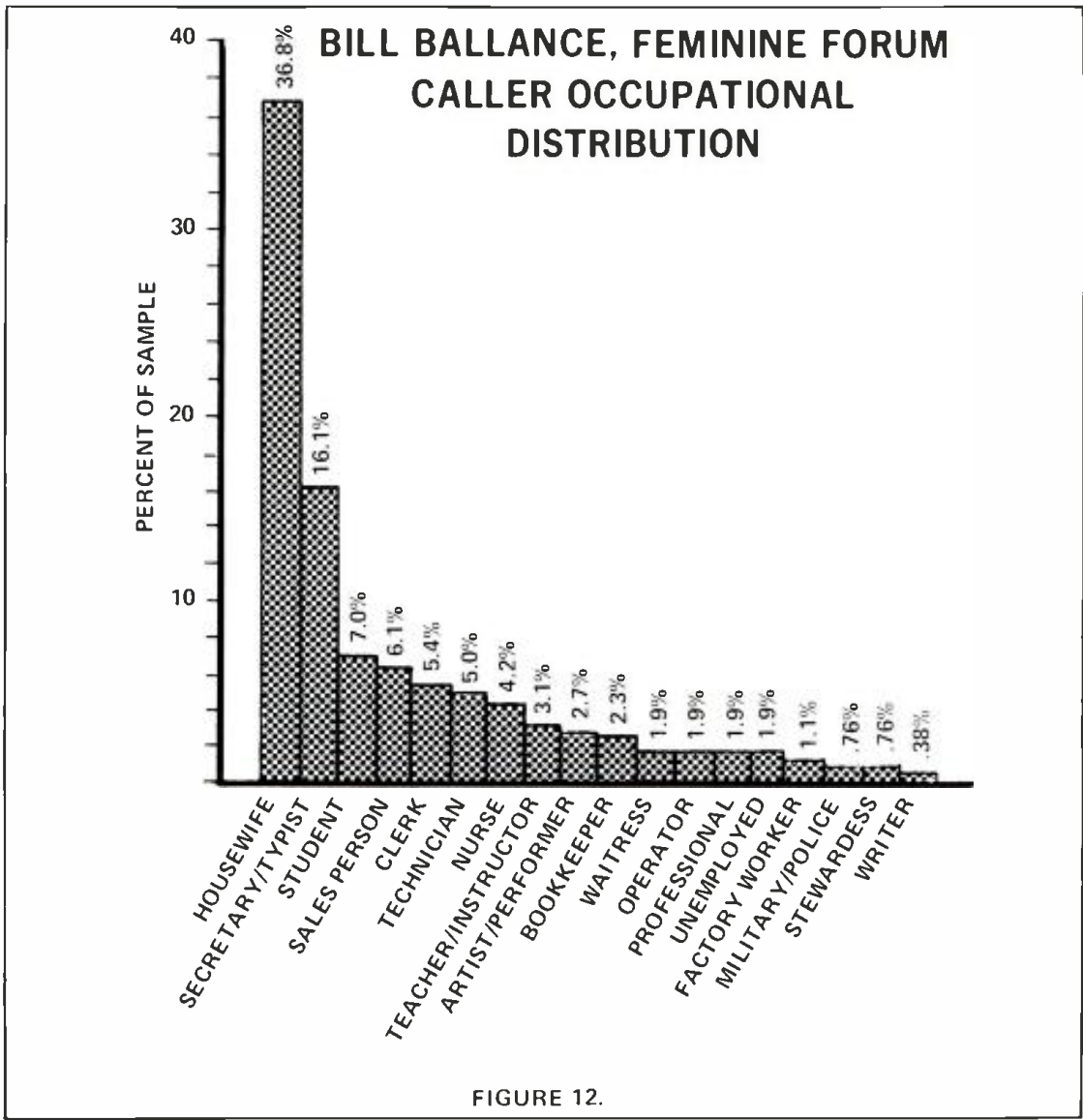
FIGURE 10.

This is further reflected by Figure 11, which is a plot of real estate value distribution among the callers. A very substantial proportion will be seen to reside in homes in the \$20,000 to \$35,000 range, and a goodly number appear to live in homes valued above \$50,000.



## OCCUPATION

Distribution of the occupations given by the callers is shown in Figure 12. By far the largest fraction are housewives, followed by secretaries and typists. There is also a significant number of students, clerks, technicians, nurses and teachers.



In terms of national statistics as Figure 13 illustrates, the Feminine Forum is not dominated by housewives, since the national proportion of housewives, students and unemployed females is far greater than the same group within the sample of callers. What is perhaps more significant is the high percentage of professionally or technically engaged persons who called in, which is consistent with the higher than average education and income levels discussed before. The fraction of more menially employed callers is commensurately lower and is well below California and national average levels. The spouses of the callers appear to hold better than average positions as well. Table 4 shows the percentage blue and white collar jobs held by caller spouses as compared with State averages.

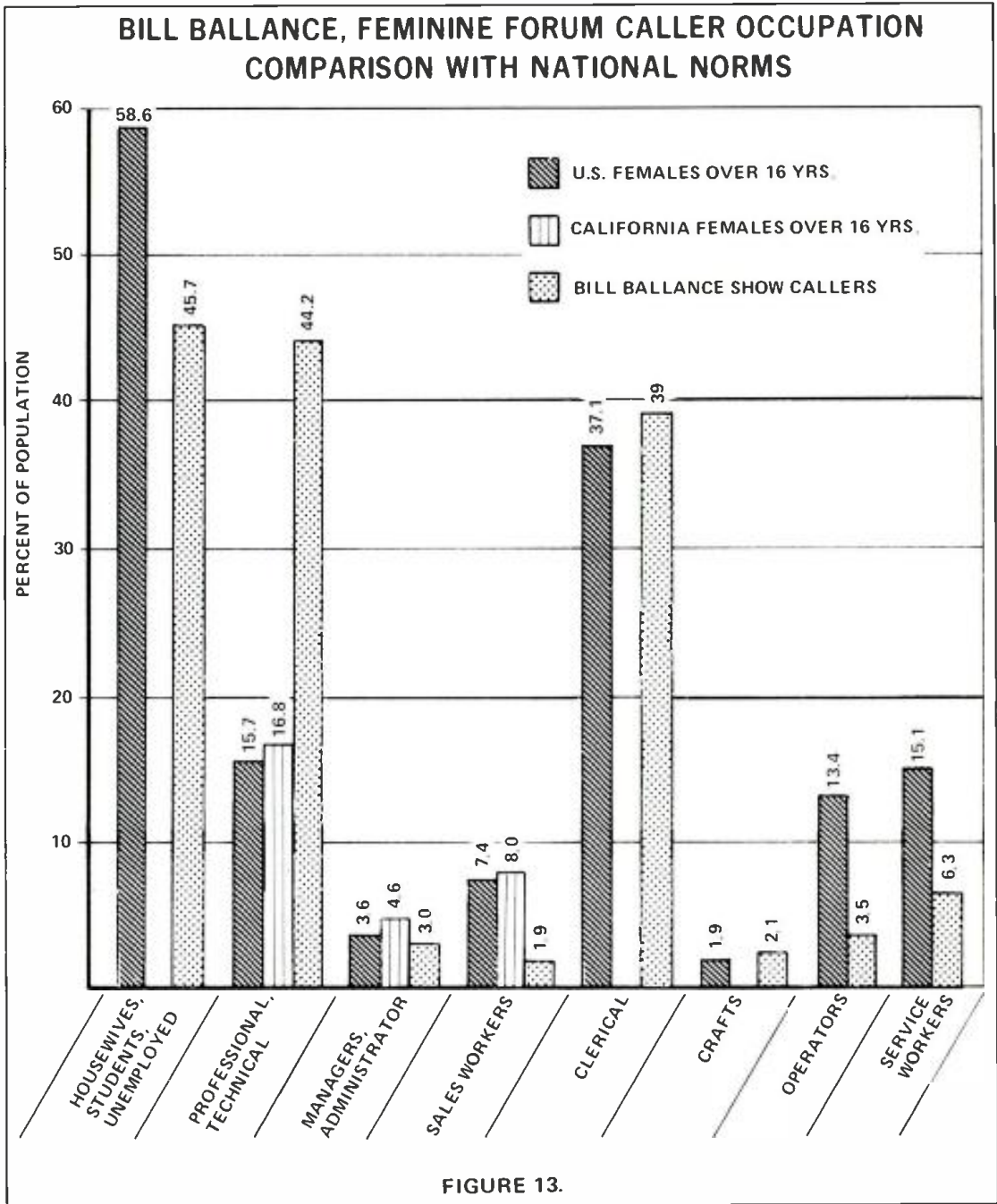


Table 4  
Bill Ballance, Feminine Forum Caller Spouse Occupations

	Percent of population	
	Blue collar workers	White collar workers
Bill Ballance caller spouses	50.3	49.7
California State averages	55.1	46.2

### CALLER SOCIAL PREFERENCES

To establish a pattern of social activities characteristic of the participants in the Feminine Forum, a series of questions was asked of each caller. The overall average results are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5  
Bill Ballance, Feminine Forum Caller Social Preferences

Social Activity	Percent of callers
Go out to dinner	78.3
Go to the movies	73.0
Go out to clubs and bars	51.0
Go to the theatre	41.0
Attend lectures	26.3
Participate in meetings and functions	30.0
Visit people's homes	83.1
Go out escorted	88.5

It appears that the average Feminine Forum caller is a social person who likes to be taken out to dinner or to the movies or to visit friends. Few callers showed much enthusiasm for going to bars and clubs, with half indicating that they did so on occasion. The theatre audience among the callers seems substantial, at 41%, but there are no norms available to compare it with. The typical caller does not participate much in social organizations or devote much time to lecture attendance, but she prefers to be escorted when she goes out.

### IMPORTANCE OF ANONYMITY

Almost eight out of ten (79.2%) of the callers considered it important that they be treated anonymously, and 28.4% of them claimed to have no other outlet for expressing themselves.

#### IV – CALLER RESPONSE TO TREATMENT ON THE SHOW

Each caller interviewed was questioned extensively about her feelings concerning the treatment she received during her participation with Bill Ballance on the show. The response was overwhelming praise for Bill Ballance.

Fully 94% of the callers considered him a *friend* after they had been on the show. The remaining 6% are not antagonistic, but consider friendship in a more personal light.

98.9% of the callers admit to *feeling good* after their appearance on the show. The remaining 1.1% indicate either that they had been nervous or could not understand the question.

99.2% consider their experience on the program to have been *fun*.

98.9% think their treatment by Bill Ballance to have been *in good taste*.

99.6% consider that they had received *good treatment*.

59.7% feel that their participation has been helpful to them or to someone else. On the two days that Dr. Kristy appeared on the show with Bill Ballance during the survey period, all but one person described the show as helpful.

95.9% of the callers indicated that they had enjoyed being on the show to the extent that they would try to call in again.

*Not a single caller* indicated that she felt *insulted*, *embarrassed*, or that Bill Ballance had *offended* her, or that her *feelings* had been *hurt*.



## V – CALLER OPINIONS ABOUT THE FEMININE FORUM SHOW

The vast majority of callers are strong supporters of the Bill Ballance show and listen to him frequently if not daily.

95.4% say that they *listened often*, and 57.2% claim to listen regularly every day.

However, only 32.9% of the callers have *called in before*, and 67.1% are doing so for the *first time*. The evidence further indicates that there are not many habitués who call in regularly. Only 11.1% had called in more than once, 6.2% more than twice, and 1.3% more than three times.

The callers give the show overwhelming acclaim as being *friendly, entertaining and informative*. 93.1% also think that it is *sincere*.

Only 3% consider that it is destructive at times. Less than 10% think that it is sometimes a put-down or tending toward the humiliating and only 7% think it is a “put on” or spoof on occasion.

Only three callers out of 262 consider that the program has at any time been offensive or dirty.

The callers have been asked to name a favorite topic of past Feminine Forum shows, but few remember a specific title. Most of the topics mentioned stemmed from days with Dr. Kristy on the program. The topics most frequently remembered were also the more sensational ones as noted in the table below.

Table 6  
Bill Ballance, Feminine Forum Caller Favorite Topics

Topic	Percent mentioned
Incest	6.5
Mamma's boy	3.1
Lesbianism	2.7
In-laws	2.3
Husband's best friend as lover	2.3
Virginity	1.9
How to spy on your man	1.5
Children's embarrassing moments	1.1

The callers are unanimous about the program being an effective radio advertising medium. Five items currently being advertised on the Feminine Forum were mentioned at random to each caller to test for recognition. They recognize an average of 2.68 items per caller.

The recognition scores by product are as shown in the table below.

**Table 7**  
**Bill Ballance, Feminine Forum Caller Product Recognition**

Product	Percent recognitions
Langendorf Bread	69.6
American Motors, Hornet, Hatchback	13.6
Craig Tape Recorders	31.7
Nice 'N Easy	50.0
Kentucky Fried Chicken	84.8
Compoz/Psorex	30.4
Firestone	26.1
Fotomat	84.4
Greatway Markets	7.1
Granola	38.3
Webers' Bread	73.9
Jack in the Box	82.2
Jack LaLanne	19.6
Mark C. Bloome	31.3
McDonalds Hamburger	66.0
Radio Shack	40.0
Safeway Stores	75.6
Blue Nun Wine	12.5
Burger King	93.0
Sunshine Biscuits	48.9
Bell Potato Chips	81.4
Certs	97.8
Christmas Seals	79.5
Lysol	57.1
Kern's Jelly	90.7
London Britches	44.2

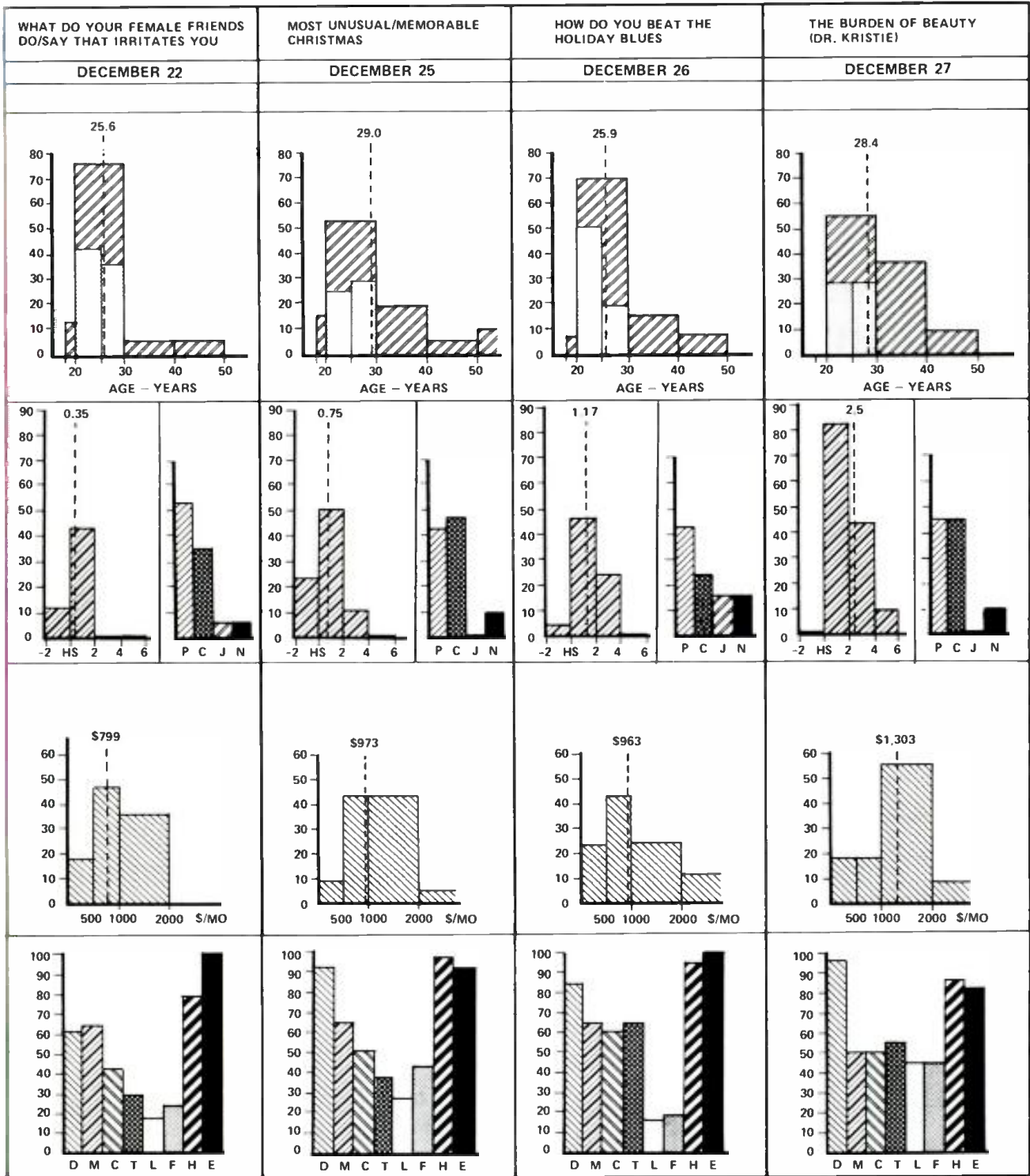
## VI – INFLUENCE OF TOPIC ON CALLER COMPOSITION

The type of participating audience on the Bill Ballance, Feminine Forum, like all talk radio programs, is highly variable as a function of the topic put up for discussion. Figures 14 and 15 plot some of the more important caller characteristics such as age, education, religion, income and social habit distributions on a day-to-day comparative basis. All of these parameters show great elasticity with changing topics. A more intellectual topic, such as on the Dr. Kristy days is immediately reflected in a more mature, better educated, higher income group of callers, for instance.

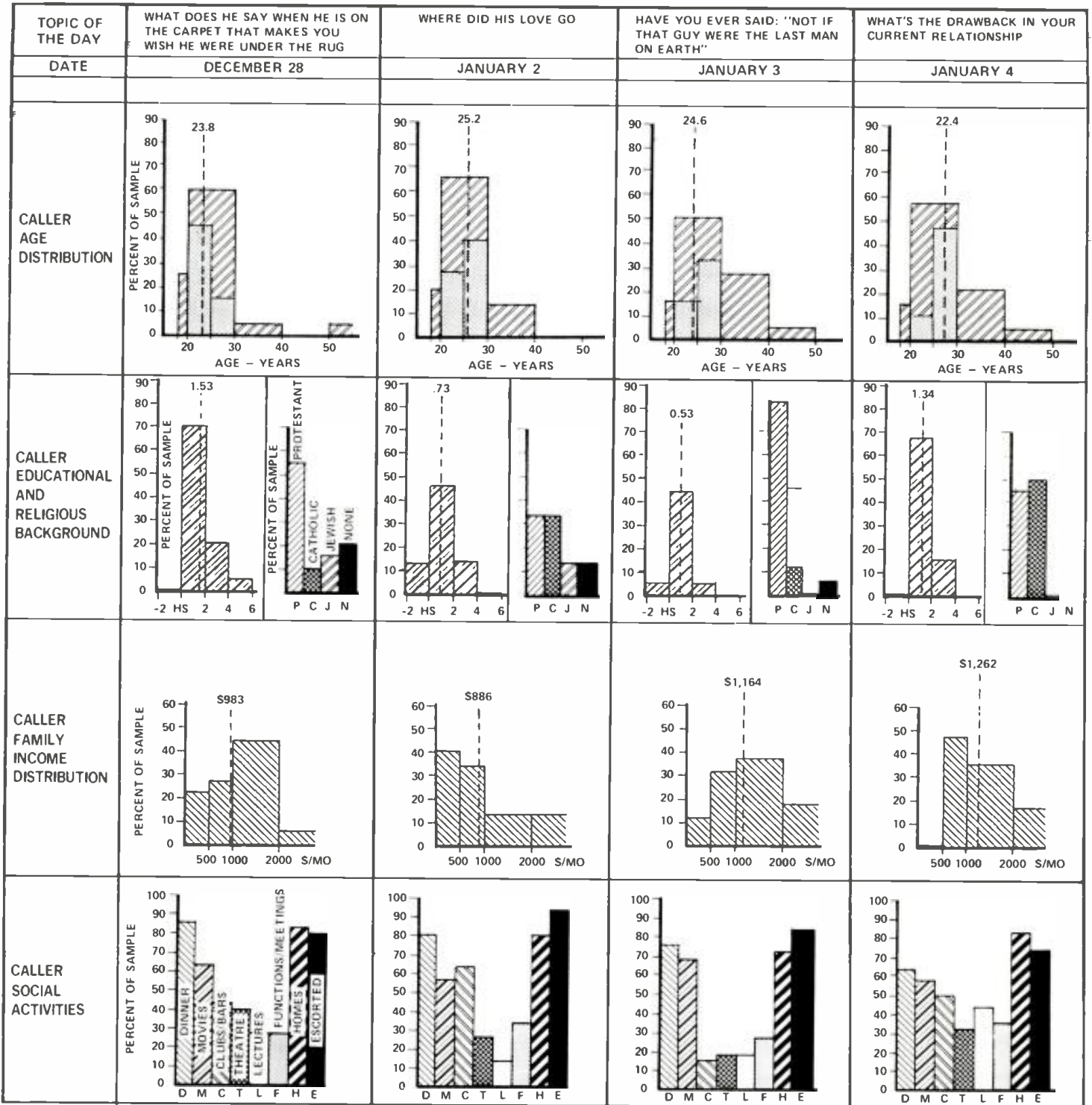
There are enough trends in the data gathered so far to indicate the practicability of further research to arrive at a quantitative method of determining a specific participating audience makeup by simply choosing the right subject. It stands to reason that the passive listening audience will tend to reflect the same social mix as the participating audience, which raises the possibility of predictable program beaming at selected audiences to offer tailored advertising exposure to a degree not possible before.

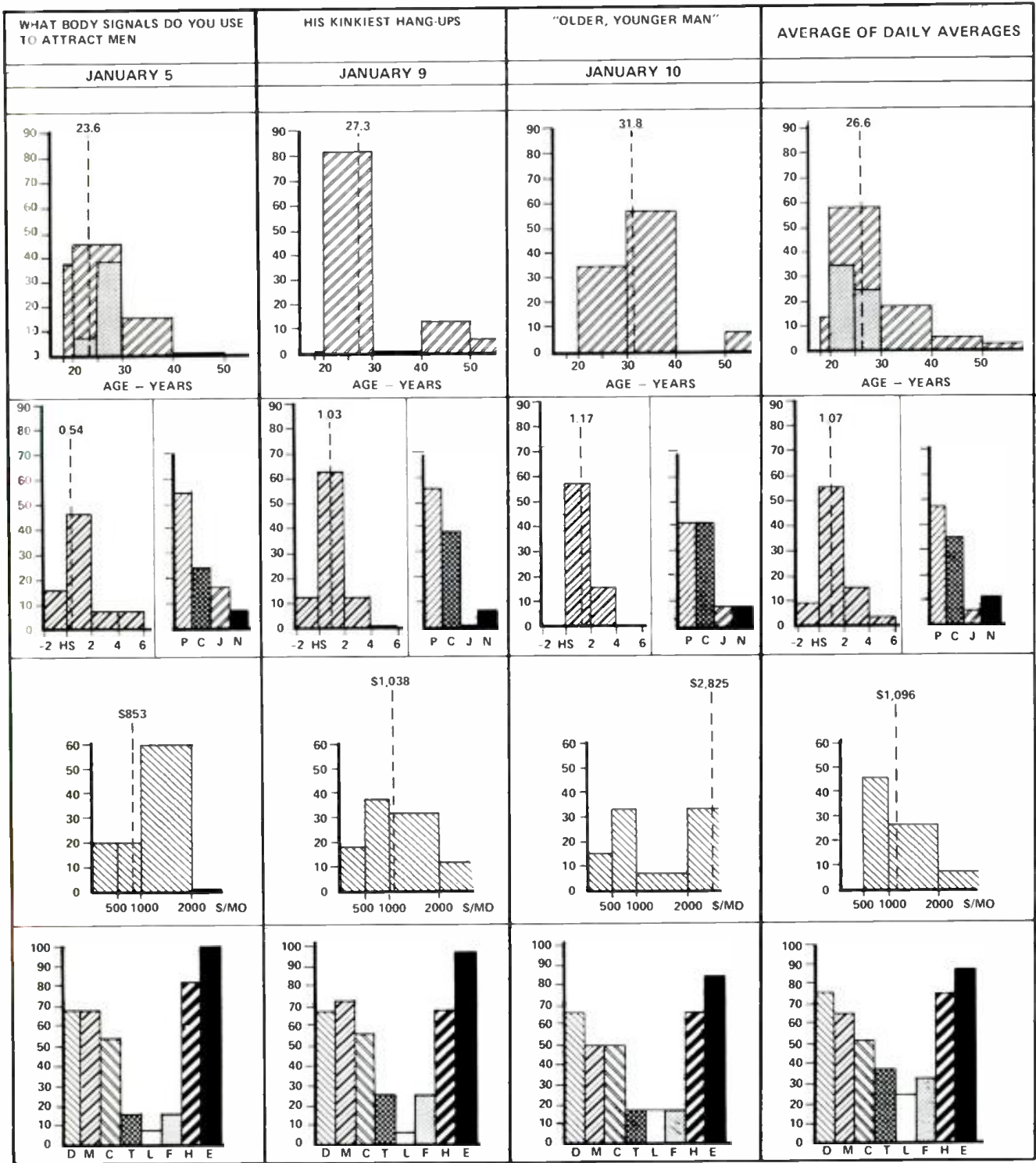
# INFLUENCE OF TOPIC FOR THE DAY ON THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE BILL BALANCE FEMININE FORUM

TOPIC OF THE DAY	HOW YOU CAN TELL HE IS MARRIED	FIRST IMPRESSIONS	FAVORITE CONQUEST	WHAT DOES HE DO/SAY THAT STILL FASCINATES YOU
DATE	DECEMBER 18	DECEMBER 19	DECEMBER 20	DECEMBER 21
<b>CALLER AGE DISTRIBUTION</b>				
<b>CALLER EDUCATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND</b>				
<b>CALLER FAMILY INCOME DISTRIBUTION</b>				
<b>CALLER SOCIAL ACTIVITIES</b>				



# INFLUENCE OF TOPIC FOR THE DAY ON THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE BILL BALANCE FEMININE FORUM





## VII – QUALITATIVE EVALUATION OF CALLER MOTIVATION AND RESPONSES

The program format of the Feminine Forum is entirely a modern innovation which, by its success in attracting listeners and participants in the Southern California region, appears to be a natural manifestation of the rapidly changing social values and liberalization of personal relationships. There is no precedent for the phenomenon of frank and open discussion on the air of personal and private topics relating to marital and intersexual matters. This understandably has raised doubts in many minds about the character and motivations of the callers participating in this unusual radio talk program.

As the earlier chapters show quantitatively with factual substantiation, the callers on the Bill Ballance show are a legitimate cross section of the Californian female population with the distinction of being significantly above average in education, income, domicile and occupation. All the statistics indicate a mature and responsible caller-audience with genuine appreciation for the program as something entertaining, helpful and exciting in their lives. For a better understanding of the value, for them, of their participation in the program, it is necessary to address the qualitative aspects of the information gathered in this survey.

Categorically, there appear to be three forms of stimulus causing the participants to call the Bill Ballance show. They are as follows:

- . response to “call-in” radio in general,
- . response to the particular format of the Feminine Forum, and
- . response to the individual performance of Bill Ballance.

### RESPONSE TO “CALL-IN” RADIO

The availability and popularity of “call-in” radio encourages many to participate or to convince others to call in and share family and personal experiences on the air. There are numerous instances on record in this investigation of friends and family – husbands, fathers, sisters – coworkers of both sexes urging participants to call in to Bill Ballance to relate some specific experience. This was particularly evidenced during the Christmas holiday period when some callers revealed that their relatives – sons and daughters – had placed the call to encourage them to talk to Bill Ballance.

Call-in radio offers callers a place of public importance and personal significance. Many find this attractive – not only those with few other opportunities. They are emboldened to call by the fact that they have heard so many different women, some to whom they can relate to and equate with their own circumstances. One caller said she was lonely and needed a special kind



of company – one that allowed her to say what she needed to without laughing at or harrasing her. “To relate experiences is ego-satisfying,” she continued.

One caller said that it is “easier to talk because you can’t see each other.” Another said, “It’s like talking to a movie star; it kind of rubs off on me and I feel special.” Only one caller admitted to wanting to be the “center of attention” and then questioned, “Is that bad?” Another said, “Bill makes me feel worth something. He really boosts my morale. I feel like a million dollars.”

The Feminine Forum is different from ordinary call-in radio in that it is specifically a women’s forum. It is a platform presenting ordinary women, not celebrities, to the world at large, in a completely unrehearsed and “unstaged” manner. It legitimizes feelings and presents a wide perspective on human behavior not generally available elsewhere in such a compelling mode.

It allows women to “get in touch” with the world, as one caller stated. Real situations common to many women provide assurance that no one is really “alone” in either suffering or celebration. The words “not alone” occur in the reasons for women calling in more than 60% of the time.

In the same way, situations new to some listeners open alternative possibilities generally not presented in many other ways. For some, the Feminine Forum is the only source of information on the “outside world.” One caller, for instance, spent years being miserable in her marriage until she heard how many others had changed their circumstances. During her interview, she said that their experiences impressed her and enabled her to consider another way of living, which turned out to be better for her.

Another reported that she would “trip on (others’) experiences and I get a better idea how to live more.” Another, a very religious woman, stated that, “Bill gives callers alternatives and makes it seem as if things are not all bad. I learn things about myself, my husband, and the relationship between us.”

## RESPONSE TO THE FEMININE FORUM FORMAT

As discussed previously in Section VI, the method of changing to a different subject for discussion each day has a profound influence on the composition of the callers. The topics tend to be immediate and personal, both informative and entertaining, ranging from sentimental to taboo. They evoke a “me too” or as another caller termed it, a “share and tell” which stimulates response. On alternating Wednesdays when Dr. Norton F. Kristy, a clinical psychologist, appears as a guest on the Feminine Forum, the topics tend to be more emotionally loaded.

The overwhelming number of callers who immediately recall Dr. Kristy’s topics may well recall them because of this difference, as well as the closer interpretation and analysis of the callers’

responses. Women for the most part who remembered Dr. Kristy's topics also responded that they would not want to see a change in the show's balance of fun and informative suggestions.

The responses "I'm so nervous" and "it's fun" were heard in nearly every interview. Upon further reflection, they appear to be related in a manner most important to a reasonable understanding of the motivation driving women to call. Excitement and involvement, which make it fun to participate, also carry with them the stage fright of embarrassment, which accounts for the nervousness. Both factors are largely absent from the "drab" lives recounted by many callers. They are generally women alone at home or in a single office. The presence or absence of children at home does not seem to materially alter the feeling of lives that are unchallenging or generally uneventful. What marks their answers is the involvement they feel toward the program, the fun in the exchange and match of wits and anecdotes. One caller explained that simple fun such as this kind of exchange is too absent in the face of the big business of leisure always linked with money. "Fun is simple and free," she continued, "like this show." The help-line that some callers see in the Feminine Forum is probably less effective than the witty reparté and funny skits or scenarios that Bill Ballance invents with the callers.

In some cases, however, callers ask for specific advice which, in the interviews covered, was generally given by Bill Ballance, sometimes hiding it in wit and fun, sometimes stating it directly. One woman called and waited two full hours to talk to him about her relationship with a younger man whom she was considering marrying. In eagerness to get his advice, she asked the operator to break in on another call with the call name of "Mrs. Rich Crone," a sample of the playful attitude that diffuses sometimes desperation.

In other cases, women call to discharge some great feeling or harbored guilt. They feel relieved to have "gotten it off." One caller said she listened to hear others' experiences and to relate to them, like "good therapy in the way that you can either relate or else just feel lonely." Another called to reveal a marital problem that was distressing her that she couldn't tell her husband. She knew, however, that he was listening and therefore called the Feminine Forum, knowing that she would reach him that way. Similarly, another called to tell Bill Ballance – and her listening husband – about a situation that she couldn't handle alone and waited for advice to them both. Another called after the topic of incest had been discussed to say that she had felt heretofore that she was the only one to whom this kind of sexual assault had happened; she had never revealed it to anyone in more than fourteen years.

A participative dialogue is strongly present, an aspect common enough to talk shows. Women call to share experiences and solutions. Nearly all the callers indicate that they relate to the topics and learn primarily from hearing others' experiences about how most people behave. One caller said, "I feel normal now."

They comment on and offer "helps." as one woman termed them, for others' circumstances. One woman called after two married women had spoken about their husbands' infidelities. She wanted to tell them the "other" woman's side so that they would understand more.

Another called the day after her husband left her and said she was cheered up by Bill Ballance and now finds her situation "more handlable since so many others have shared this experience."

One caller compared the Feminine Forum with soap operas. "Both deal with problems; some women listen to escape their own problems and lighten their load."

Because the show has only women callers, the threat that most women feel in competing for attention and interest with men is absent, which allows impulses to call, to speak out, to be more easily acted upon. The exclusion of male callers acts to stimulate greater interest as well as impetus for participation in women. A corollary observation is important; excluding men probably also stimulates male listening. Approximately one-third of the callers originally heard about the Feminine Forum from men.

### RESPONSE TO BILL BALLANCE

Most callers comment on Bill Ballance's quality of attention or his "magic listening," as one woman called it. Bill demands that his callers make the most of themselves and when they agree to do that, he encourages them to report back. One woman said in a kind of testimonial, "Ever since I have listened to Bill, I've gotten on the ball. I've lost weight. I've even started to model. I've grown less introverted. Bill lifts me up. He motivates me to change and gives me confidence. I've even met a man."

Some callers related that they felt "special" when Bill created an enactment or skit with them and gave them a feeling of "accomplishment" beyond their expectations.

Some callers are unable to remember what they said to Bill, but they recall verbatim his compliments: "lovely," "darling girl," "nifty kidlet," "intelligent," "curious," or "spunky," "wifely," etc. His praise is mixed in with some teasing and some flirtation. It may be one of the most important but covert reasons for calling.

His acceptance of their stories – really his expectation that they will reveal something very personal – makes it possible for this to happen. It is assumed that the audience absorbs the same acceptance. "He acted so natural that I wasn't embarrassed. I guess I'm not the only one," said one caller talking about her failure in a second marriage. Another said, "Bill can't be shocked; he listens more and knows more than anybody."

Some callers spontaneously have remarked about Bill's kindness in calming them immediately before going on the air and during commercial breaks (though the show is unrehearsed). His technique of making light with canned sounds to give a "zap" of "vibes" appears to have importance in this regard. Some callers make a point of asking for a special "vibe" or "yea" or "boo" for themselves, their friends, their husbands. One called only to get a "good vibe" while she was sick and directly hung up.

While the format of the Feminine Forum and the concept of the program make obvious contributions to its success and enthusiastic acceptance by the callers, the particular style and performance of Bill Ballance appears to be vitally important. His approach is the sole reason for the program having such a vast and growing listening audience without the use of lewd or

smutty material. This is a most important distinction, if it is remembered that only three callers out of more than 260 interviewed thought that the program ever became smutty, and their concept of smut must also remain open to question.

The participants consistently showed strong loyalty to the program and its principal performer. Some were even suspicious of this survey, conducted immediately after their dialogue on the air with Bill Ballance. They were worried that the station was considering taking him and his program off the air. They spoke with determination that Bill was important and needed and that "the show must go on."

