

2023 VIRGINIA SCHOOL SURVEY OF CLIMATE AND WORKING CONDITIONS Executive Summary



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2023 Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions – Executive Summary

The 2023 Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions (the Virginia School Survey) was administered from January through February 2023 to students in grades 6–8 as well as to classroom instructors and staff in all Virginia public elementary and middle schools. The Virginia School Survey represents a collaboration between the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to reduce school divisions’ survey administration burden while meeting the DCJS legislative mandate to conduct a secondary school (grades 6–12) climate survey and VDOE’s legislative mandate to conduct a working conditions survey of all licensed school personnel.

Local results from the Virginia School Survey are shared with participating schools and divisions to provide actionable information to division leaders and school administration that enables a safe, healthy, and positive school and work environment for all students and staff. The findings discussed in this report focus primarily on school climate for students, perceptions of safety, and experiences around bullying. See the VDOE website (<https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/school-operations-support-services/school-climate-working-conditions>) for additional findings on classroom instructor and staff working conditions. Nearly all eligible schools (96.8%) participated in the 2023 survey administration, with response rates above 63% percent for students and classroom instructors.

Survey Participation and Demographics

Student

- Over two-thirds of the eligible schools (70.5%) participated in the student portion of the survey. There were 183,837 student responses, a response rate of 65.4% among grades 6–8 students.
- The racial and ethnic demographics of student respondents were:

Race/Ethnicity Response	Count	Percentage
American Indian or Alaska Native	1,432	0.8%
Asian	13,108	7.2%
Black or African American	28,809	15.7%
Hispanic or Latino	37,909	20.7%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	464	0.3%
White	73,704	40.2%
Other Race	7,640	4.2%
More than one race	20,086	11.0%
Total	183,152	100.0%

**685 students did not report their ethnic demographic*

- Just under half, 44.9%, of student respondents identified as female, 47.8% identified as male, 2.5% identified as non-binary, and 4.9% preferred not to disclose their gender.

Classroom Instructor

- Over half the eligible schools (63.3%) participated in the classroom instructor portion of the survey. There were 49,350 classroom instructor responses, a response rate of 60.7% among teachers and teachers' aides.
- The racial and ethnic demographics of classroom instructors were:

Race/Ethnicity Response	Count	Percentage
American Indian or Alaska Native	94	0.2%
Asian	1,089	2.2%
Black or African American	5,228	10.7%
Hispanic or Latino	2,303	4.7%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	65	0.1%
White	38,080	78.0%
Other Race	895	1.8%
More than one race	1,085	2.2%
Total	48,839	100.0%

**511 classroom instructors did not report their ethnic demographic.*

- Eighty-three percent (83.4%) of classroom instructors identified as female, 10.6% as male, 0.3% identified as non-binary and 5.8% preferred not to disclose.

Staff

- Nearly 40 percent (37%) of eligible schools participated in the staff portion of the survey. There were 17,039 staff responses. This is a response rate of 35.3% among other licensed and non-licensed individuals.
- The racial and ethnic demographics of staff respondents were:

Race/Ethnicity Response	Count	Percentage
American Indian or Alaska Native	40	0.2%
Asian	271	1.6%
Black or African American	2,375	14.0%
Hispanic or Latino	926	5.5%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	22	0.1%
White	12,753	75.4%
Other Race	223	1.3%
More than one race	309	1.8%
Total	16,919	100.0%

**120 staff did not report their ethnic demographic.*

- Eighty-four percent (83.9%) of staff respondents identified as female, 11.7% as male, 0.2% identified as non-binary and 4.2% preferred not to disclose.

Climate/Atmosphere

The Virginia School Survey assesses climate through several measures and asks one global question about climate for students and working conditions for teachers and staff.

Student

- Fifty-nine percent (59.2%) of students participating rated the atmosphere of their school between *slightly positive* and *very positive*.
- Comparatively, among student respondents, 62.6% of males, 58.1% of females, 37% of non-binary students, and 46% of those who preferred not to disclose their gender rated the atmosphere between *slightly* and *very positive*.
- Comparatively, of student respondents, 55.7% of American Indian or Alaska Native, 71.7% of Asian, 51.7% of Black or African American, 57.5% of Hispanic or Latino, 48.9% of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 53.3% Two or More Races, 62.5% White and 58.4% Other Race rated the atmosphere between *slightly* and *very positive*.
- Students were asked how the school's atmosphere impacts their learning. Under half (40.8%) of respondents rate the impact on learning as between *slightly* and *very positive*, while 32.4% rated the atmosphere as having no impact on their learning, and 26.8% rated the impact as between *very* and *slightly negative*.

Classroom Instructor

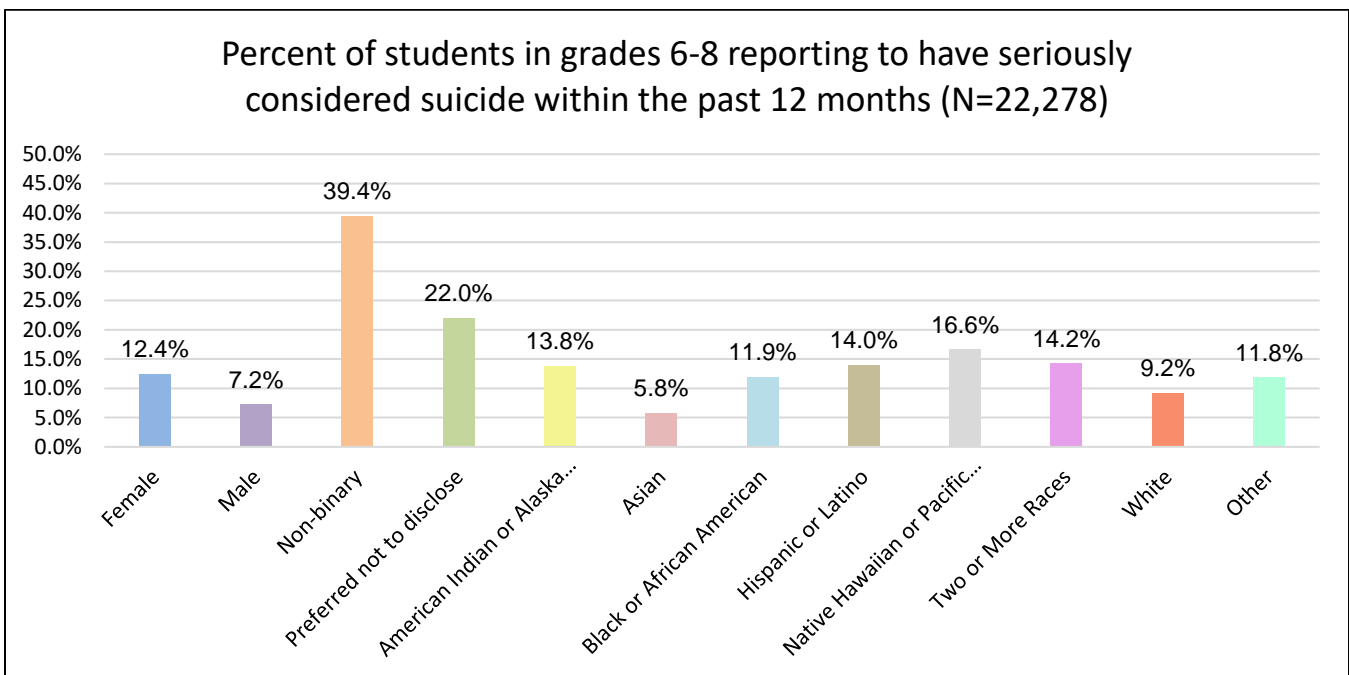
- Overall, 29.2% (14,386) of classroom instructors stated that over the last year the school climate for themselves has become *slightly* to *much worse*, 25.9% (12,761 instructors) stated school climate for themselves has become *slightly* to *much better*, 29.6% (14,600 instructors) stated school climate for themselves has *stayed about the same*, and 15.4% (7,603 instructors) had *no opinion*.
- Just under eighteen percent of instructors (17.9%, 8,840) stated that school climate for students has become *slightly* to *much worse*, 30.0% (14,822 instructors) stated school climate for students has become *slightly* to *much better*, 36.8% (18,163 instructors) stated school climate for students has *stayed about the same*, and 15.2% (7,525 instructors) had *no opinion*.

Staff

- Twenty percent (19.5%, 3,318 staff) of staff stated that over the last year the school climate for staff has become *slightly worse* to *much worse*, 33.6% (5,719 staff) stated school climate for staff has become *slightly* to *much better*, 28.4% (4,837 staff) stated school climate for staff has *stayed about the same*, and 18.6% (3,165 staff) had *no opinion*.
- Overall, 36.4% or 6,195 staff stated school climate for students has become *slightly* to *much better* and 33.2% (5,660 staff) said *it stayed the same*.

Student Mental Health

- Overall, 23.7% of students reported experiencing anxiety more than half of the days in the past two weeks, and 20.5% of students reported experiencing signs of depression more than half of the days in the past two weeks.
- A total of 99,842 students (54.3%) reported problematic depressive thoughts, feelings, or behaviors within the past 12 months. Most (94.7%) students said they had an adult in their life that they could turn to for help, and 76.5% of students statewide said they would tell a trusted adult if a friend were having mental health struggles.
- Eleven percent (11.0%) of students reported to have seriously considered suicide within the past 12 months.



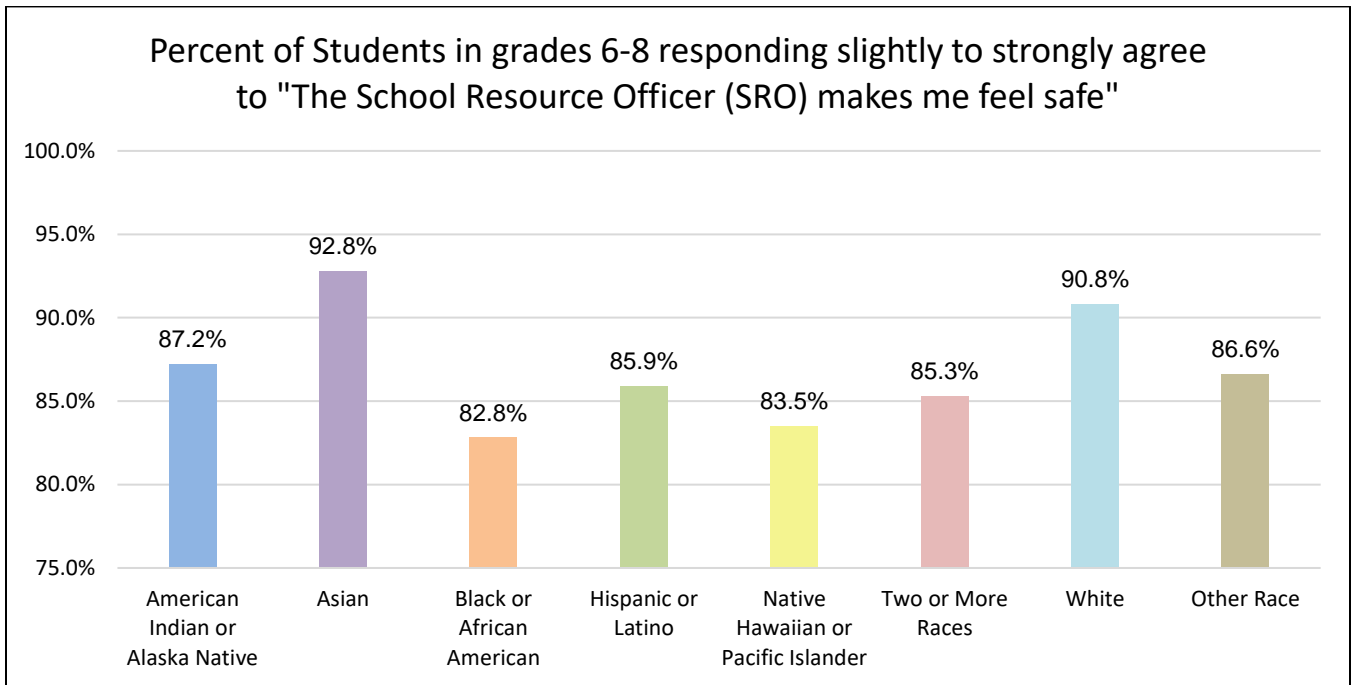
Security Personnel

Participants are asked about their perception of having a School Resource Officer and/or a School Security Officer in their building. These questions are all rated on a six-point scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Slightly Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree).

Student

- Nearly two-thirds of students (65.4%) reported their school had a School Resource Officer (SRO). These 120,263 students were then asked to respond to the statement “*The School Resource Officer (SRO) makes me feel safe,*” where 87.9% scored this between *slightly* to *strongly agree*. This is represented by 87.7% of American Indian or Alaska Native students, of 92.2% Asian students, 83.0% of Black or African American students, 85.5% of Hispanic or Latino students, 82.7% of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students, 85.3% of students who reported Two or More Races, 90.6% of White students, and 86.2% of students who reported their race was Other.

- One-third (33.8%) of students that reported not having an SRO in their building ($n=60,812$) stated that they would feel safer if there was one whereas 55.1% stated they did not know if they would feel safer with an SRO.
- Over half of students (56.3%) reported their school had a School Security Officer (SSO). These 103,058 students were then asked to respond to the statement “*The School Security Officer (SSO) makes me feel safe,*” where 87.7% scored this between *slightly to strongly agree*. This is represented by 87.2% of American Indian or Alaska Native students, of 92.8% Asian students, 82.8% of Black or African American students, 85.9% of Hispanic or Latino students, 83.5% of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students, 90.8% of students who reported Two or More Races, 86.6% of White students, and 78.3% of students who reported their race as Other.



Classroom Instructor

- Just over half (56.3%) of classroom instructors reported their school had a School Resource Officer (SRO). These 27,508 classroom instructors were then asked to respond to the statement “*The School Resource Officer (SRO) makes me feel safe,*” and 89.4% of instructors indicated *slight to strong agreement* (90.2% of American Indian or Alaska Native instructors, 93.1% of Asian instructors, 87.0% of Black or African American instructors, 88.2% of Hispanic or Latino instructors, 93.3% of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander instructors, 86.1% of instructors who reported Two or More Races, 89.9% of White instructors, and 79.0% of instructors who reported their race was Other).
- These same classroom instructors were asked to respond to the statement “*The School Resource Officer (SRO) makes a positive contribution to our school,*” and 91.2% of instructors *slightly to strongly agree* (90.2% of American Indian or Alaska Native instructors, 95.2% of Asian instructors, 90.2% of Black or African American instructors, 89.3% of Hispanic or Latino instructors, 90.0% of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander instructors, 88.9% of instructors who reported Two or More Races, 91.4% of White instructors, and 85.3% of instructors who reported their race was Other).

- Just over half (54.1%) of classroom instructors that reported not having an SRO in their building ($n=21,213$) stated that they would feel safer if there was an SRO, while 23.7% stated they did not know if they would feel safer with an SRO.
- Over one-third (34.5%) of classroom instructors reported their school had a School Security Officer (SSO). These 16,871 classroom instructors were then asked to respond to the statement “*The School Security Officer (SSO) makes me feel safe,*” and 87.1% indicated *slight to strong agreement* (81.8% of American Indian or Alaska Native instructors, 92.7% of Asian instructors, 87.6% of Black or African American instructors, 86.2% of Hispanic or Latino instructors, 91.2% of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander instructors, 83.5% of instructors who reported Two or More Races, 87.3% of White instructors, and 77.0% of those who reported their race was Other).
- These same classroom instructors were asked to respond to the statement “*The School Security Officer (SSO) makes a positive contribution to our school,*” and 92.7% of instructors *slightly to strongly agree* (95.5% of American Indian or Alaska Native instructors, 95.0% of Asian instructors, 93.4% of Black or African American instructors, 92.8% of Hispanic or Latino instructors, 94.1% of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander instructors, 91.4% of instructors who reported Two or More Races, 92.8% of White instructors, and 85.2% of instructors who reported their race was Other).
- Nearly forty percent (38.4%) of classroom instructors that reported not having an SSO in their building ($n=31,894$) stated that they would feel safer if there was an SSO, while 38.5% stated they did not know if they would feel safer with an SSO.

Staff

- Sixty percent (39.3%) of staff reported their school had a School Resource Officer (SRO). These 6,644 staff members were then asked to respond to the statement “*The School Resource Officer (SRO) makes me feel safe,*” and 85.2% of staff indicated *slight to strong agreement* (75.0% of American Indian or Alaska Native staff, 89.6% of Asian staff, 83.4% of Black or African American staff, 82.7% of Hispanic or Latino staff, 87.5% of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander staff, 77.6% of staff who reported Two or More Races, 86.0% of White staff, and 71.0% of staff who reported their race was Other).
- These same staff members were asked to respond to the statement “*The School Resource Officer (SRO) makes a positive contribution to our school,*” and 85.4% of staff *slightly to strongly agree* (85.7% of American Indian or Alaska Native staff, 93.0% of Asian staff, 85.2% of Black or African American staff, 82.4% of Hispanic or Latino staff, 85.7% of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander staff, 80.2% of staff who reported Two or More Races, 85.9% of White staff, and 72.6% of staff who reported their race was Other).
- Half (49.4%) of staff that reported not having an SRO in their building ($n= 6,822$) stated that they would feel safer if there was an SRO, while 23.0% stated they did not know if they would feel safer with an SRO.
- Less than a quarter (23.6%) of staff reported their school had a School Security Officer (SSO). These 3,986 staff were then asked to respond to the statement “*The School Security Officer (SSO) makes me feel safe,*” and 86.2% indicated *slight to strong agreement* (100% of American Indian or Alaska Native staff, 90.5% of Asian staff, 85.8% of Black or African American staff, 82.7% of Hispanic or Latino staff, 71.4% of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander staff, 80.0% of staff who reported Two or More Races, 87.4% of White staff, and 64.5% of those who reported their race was Other).
- These same staff were asked to respond to the statement “*The School Security Officer (SSO) makes a positive contribution to our school,*” and 89.2% of staff *slightly to strongly agree* (100% of American Indian or Alaska Native staff, 95.5% of Asian staff, 89.3% of Black or African American staff, 86.0% of Hispanic or

Latino staff, 85.7% of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander staff, 86.3% of staff who reported Two or More Races, 89.8% of White staff, and 77.3% of staff who reported their race was Other).

- Over one-third (34.6%) of staff that reported not having an SSO in their building ($n=11,130$) stated that they would feel safer if there was an SSO, while 37.1% stated they did not know if they would feel safer with an SSO.

Bullying

Student

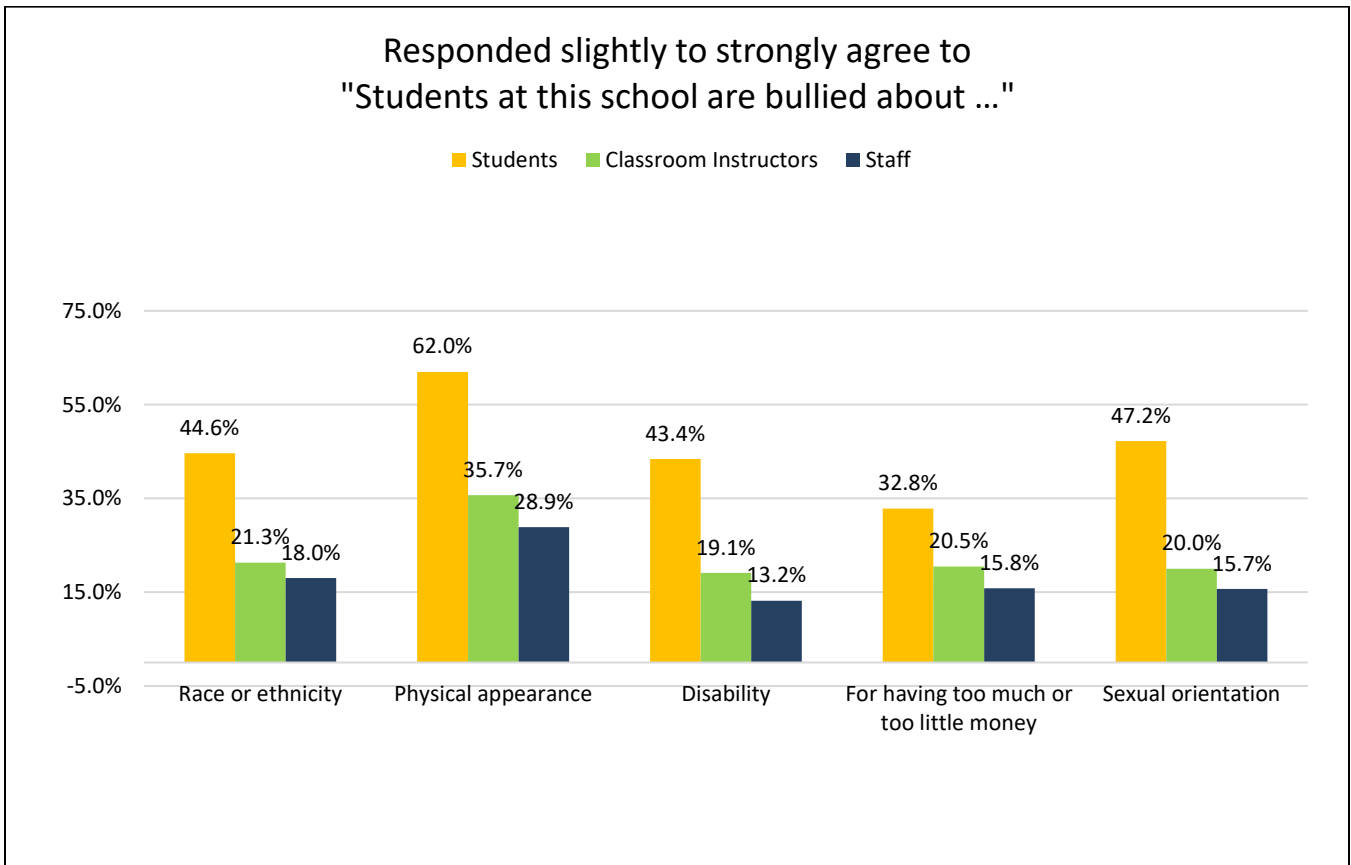
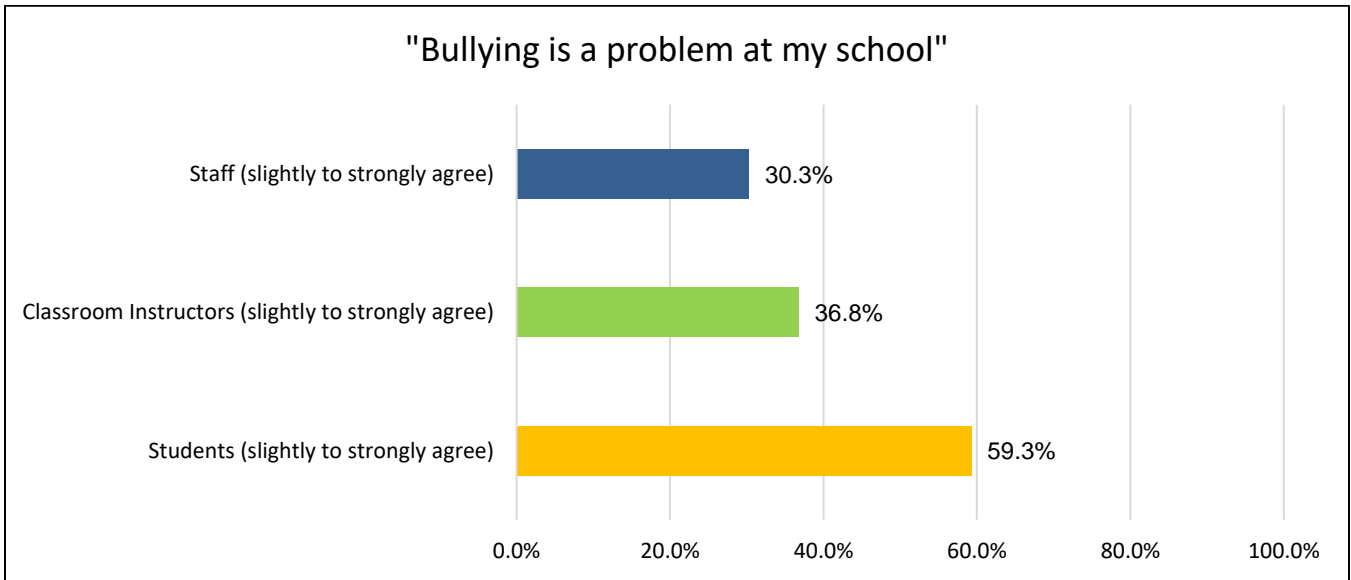
- Bullying was reported as a problem in schools by 59.3% of students. When asked about the reasons students are bullied at school, students reported the following between *slightly* and *strongly agree*: 62.0% reported that students are bullied about their physical appearance, 47.2% reported that students are bullied about their sexual orientation, 44.6% reported that students are bullied due to their race or ethnicity, 43.4% reported that students are bullied about their disability, and 32.8% reported that students are bullied for having too much or too little money.
- Somewhat more than half of students (64.3%) *slightly* to *strongly agree* that adults take action to address bullying.

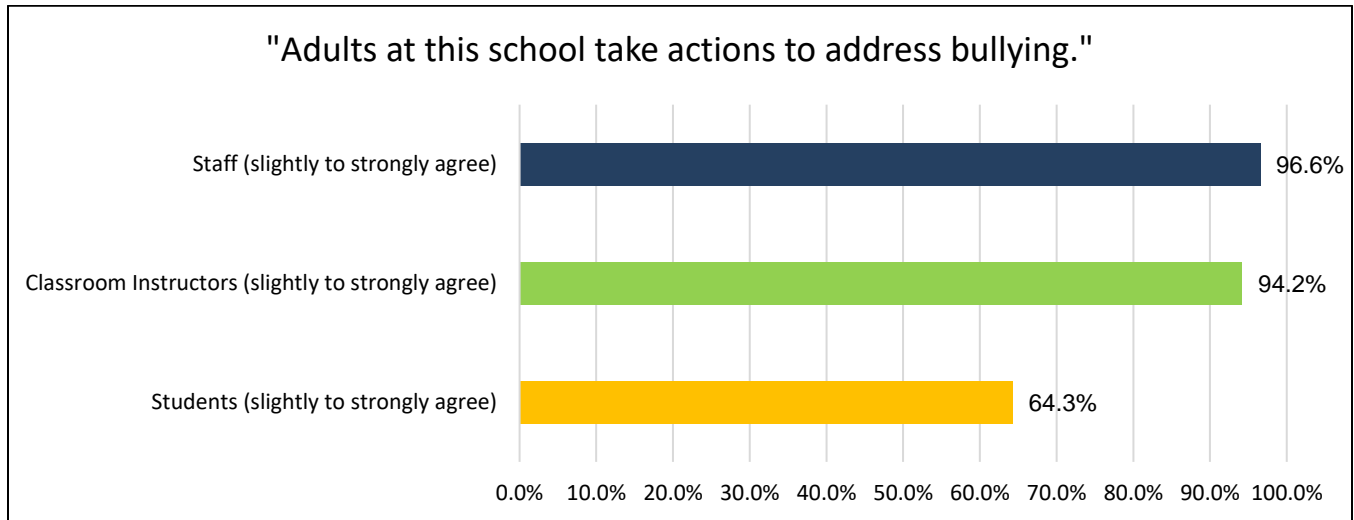
Classroom Instructor

- Bullying was seen as a problem in schools by 36.8% of classroom instructors. When asked about the reasons students are bullied at school, 21.3% of classroom instructors reported that students are bullied due to their race or ethnicity 35.7% reported that students are bullied about their physical appearance, 19.1% reported that students are bullied about their disability, 20.5% reported students are bullied for having too much or too little money, and 20.0% *slightly* to *strongly agree* that students are bullied about their sexual orientation.
- Most classroom instructors (94.2%) *slightly* to *strongly agree* that adults take action to address bullying.

Staff

- Bullying was seen as a problem in schools by 30.3% of staff. When asked about the reasons students are bullied at school, 18.0% of staff reported that students are bullied due to their race or ethnicity, 28.9% reported that students are bullied about their physical appearance, 13.2% reported they *strongly agree* that students are bullied about their disability, 15.8% reported students are bullied for having too much or too little money, and 15.7% *slightly* to *strongly agree* that students are bullied about their sexual orientation.
- Most staff (96.6%) *slightly* to *strongly agree* that adults take action to address bullying.





Relationships and Safety

Student

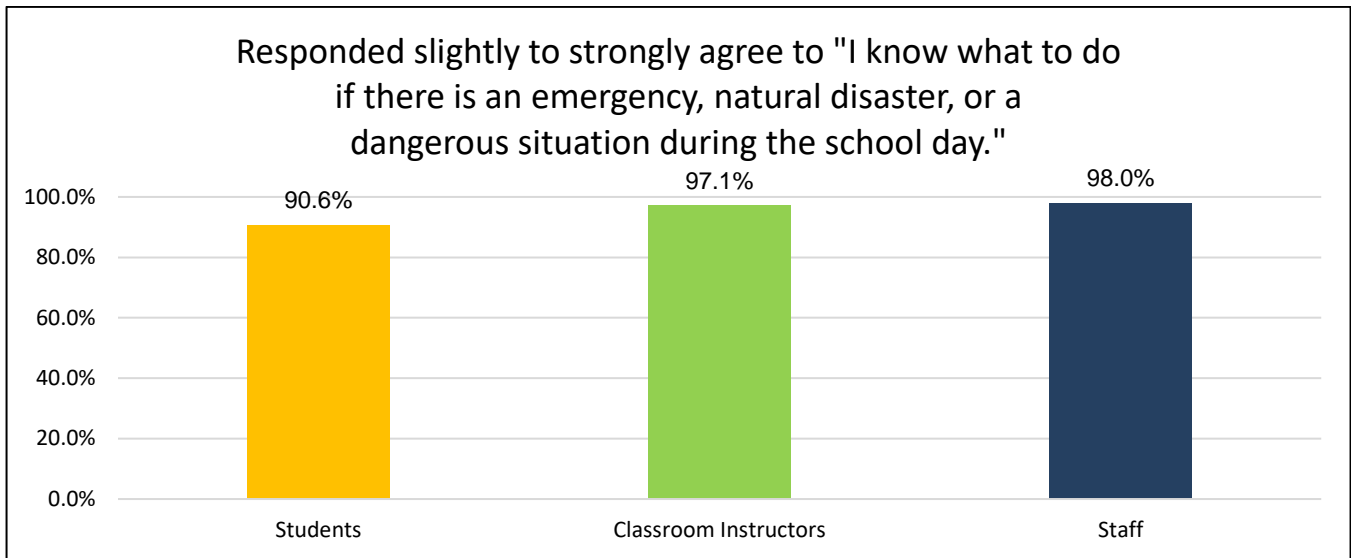
- One measure on the survey assesses the relationship between students and adults in their schools with questions such as, “*Adults at this school care about me,*” “*Adults at this school want me to do well,*” and “*I respect the adults at this school.*” A total of 83.6% of students reported between *slightly* and *strongly agree* on questions about the positive nature of the relationship between students and adults.
- Nine percent (8.8%) of students reported they had missed three or more days of school in a 30-day period due to not feeling safe in their school.
- One quarter (24.8%) of students reported they worried about violence at their school *often* or *always* and 12.6% stated they had been threatened by another student more than *once* or *many times*.
- The survey asked students about the extent to which they agreed with a variety of crisis preparation and management strategies 86.8% of students responded to questions in this domain between *slightly* and *strongly agree*. Similarly, we asked students if they knew that their school used a team approach to threat assessment and 54.7% of students answered “yes.”

Classroom Instructor

- Classroom instructors were asked to assess the positive nature of the relationship between students and adults in their schools and 92.7% reported between *slightly* and *strongly agree* on the questions about those relationships.
- Classroom instructors were asked about the safety and crisis preparedness in their school (e.g., “*I feel safe at this school*” and “*I have been adequately informed about the threat assessment process in my building*”), and 94.3% responded between *slightly* to *strongly agree* to those questions.

Staff

- Staff were asked to assess the positive nature of the relationship between students and adults in their schools and 95.9% responded between *slightly* and *strongly agree* on the questions about those relationships.
- Staff were asked about the safety and crisis preparedness in their school (e.g., “*I feel safe at this school*” and “*I have been adequately informed about the threat assessment process in my building*”), and 96.2% rated between *slightly* to *strongly agree* to those questions.



Looking Ahead

DCJS and VDOE will administer the Virginia School Survey during the 2023–2024 school year, focusing on school climate among high school students (grades 9–12) and working conditions among classroom instructors and staff in all schools serving grades 9–12. DCJS and VDOE will continue to improve the survey administration experience for schools, based on lessons learned from the 2023 administration, and revise survey items as needed to improve the psychometric properties and actionable information derived.

Notes on Administration

Results from the Virginia School Survey are intended to assist school and division personnel in understanding how connected students feel to their school, the quality of their relationships with other students and classroom instructors, and their feelings of safety. For classroom instructors and staff, the survey provides insights on their perceptions of the learning environment, support for their professional role, and with whom they collaborate to serve students well. The survey is not intended to be evaluative but may be useful for understanding areas of strength and opportunity, as well as points of accomplishment, within school buildings.

Reports summarizing state-level results by item for students, classroom instructors, and staff are available on the DCJS and VDOE websites through the following links:

- DCJS: <https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/school-safety-survey/secondary-school-climate-survey>
- VDOE: <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/school-operations-support-services/school-climate-working-conditions>