

2023 DCJS Division of Public Safety Training and Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety *Highlights*





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INTRODUCTION

In 2000, the Virginia Center for School Safety (VCSCS) was established by the *Code of Virginia* § 9.1-184 and placed within the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). This division is responsible for conducting research and providing training, resources, and technical assistance to Virginia’s public K-12 schools, institutions of higher education, and law enforcement officers. Over time, the division’s responsibilities have expanded, and it is now called the Division of Public Safety Training and Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (PST-VCSCS).

This document aims to provide an overview of the key data from all programs coordinated by the PST-VCSCS, including comparisons across components and multi-year data trends.

The 2023 Virginia School Safety Audit

Since 1997, Virginia law has mandated that all public schools conduct annual school safety audits as per *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.8. These audits help schools and divisions identify and evaluate physical safety concerns, as well as patterns of student and staff safety perceptions.

The Commonwealth of Virginia comprises 131 public school divisions, including the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice Division of Education, Virginia’s Academic-Year Governor’s Schools, Regional Alternative Education Programs, Regional Career and Technical Programs, and the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind. During the 2022–2023 school year, a total of 1,974 traditional K-12 public schools and 27 non-traditional regional programs and governor’s schools operated in Virginia. According to the Virginia Department of Education’s [Fall Membership database](#), there were 1,261,672 students enrolled in public schools during the 2022–2023 school year.

Further information regarding the components of the School Safety Audit as well as copies of the survey instruments are located on the [DCJS website](#). Reports summarizing state-level results by item can be found at www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/virginia-school-safety-audit-program.

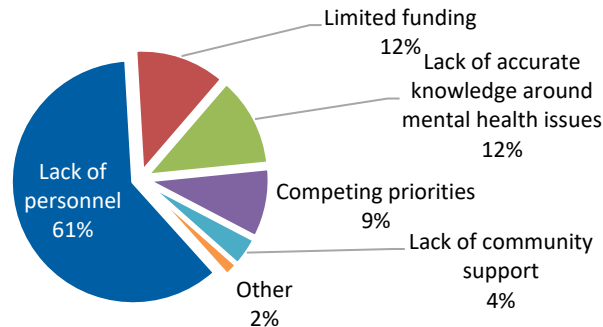
AUDIT COMPONENT	2023 PARTICIPATION	SPECIFICS
School Safety Survey	1,974 schools	100% compliance
Non-Traditional School Survey	27 schools	100% compliance
Division Safety Survey	131 divisions	100% compliance
Crisis Management Plan – Review and Certification	131 divisions	100% compliance
Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions – Staff Survey	1,527 schools	49,350 classroom instructors (63.3% participation) 17,039 staff (37% participation)
Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions – Student Survey	599 schools	183,837 students in grades 6–8 (70.5% participation)
The School Safety Inspection Checklist – Completion and Certification	131 divisions	Next certification due 2026

MENTAL HEALTH

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the mental health of students and staff. Only 61% of administrators expressed their confidence in their school's ability to offer adequate mental health support to students and staff during the 2022–2023 school year.

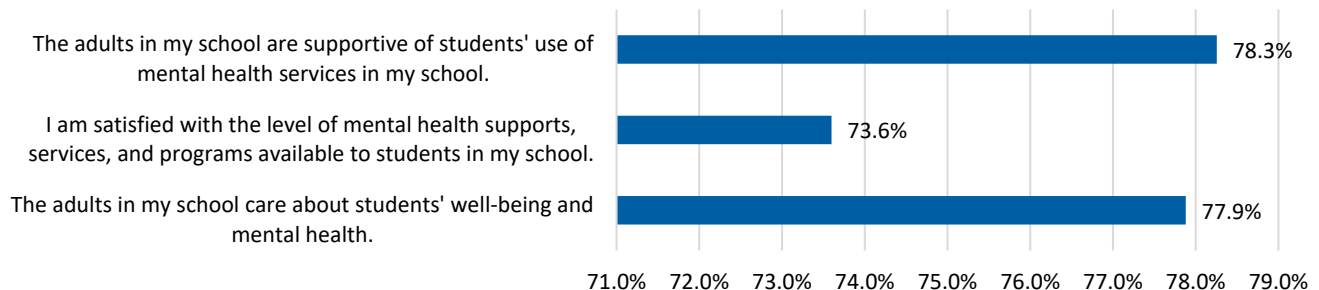
Top issues limiting schools' ability to provide sufficient mental health support to students and staff according to the 39% of administrators reporting limitations

As reported on the 2023 School Safety Survey (N=777)



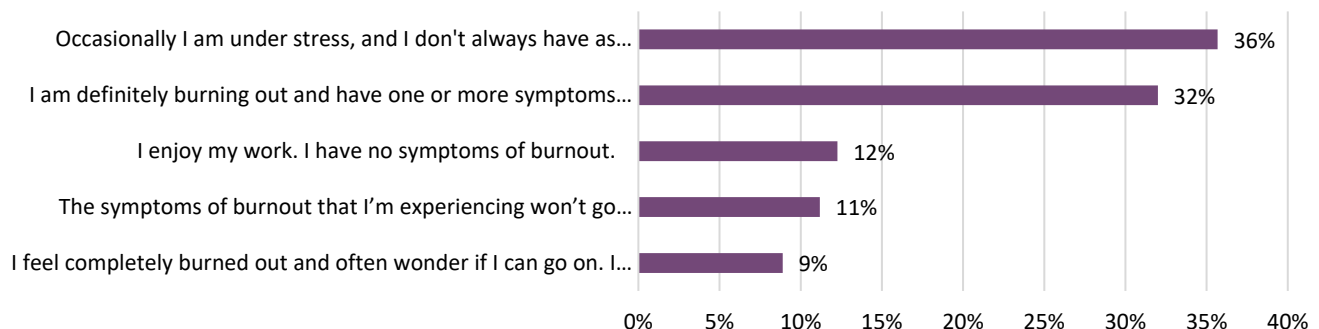
Percentage of middle school students responding slightly agree to strongly agree to the following statements.

As reported on the 2023 Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions (N=183,837)

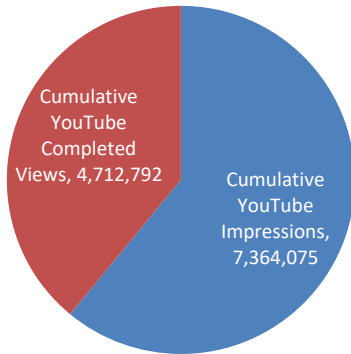


Classroom Instructors' responses to "Overall, based on your definition of burnout, how would you rate your level of burnout?"

As reported on the 2023 Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions (N=49,350)



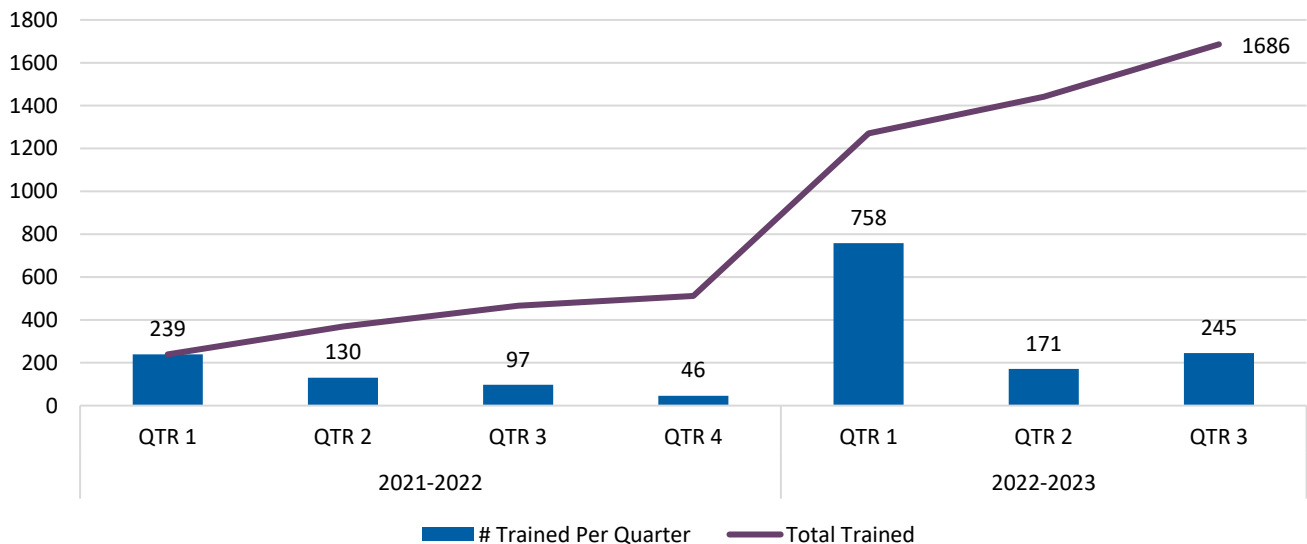
Youth Suicide Prevention Public Service Announcement



The public service announcement (PSA) campaign for Youth Suicide Prevention will continue to be broadcast on TV, radio, and certain social media platforms until September 2024, due to funding from a BJA STOP grant. The PSA campaign had over 4.7 million completed views on YouTube during the 2023 fiscal year. It is important to note that these views include instances where the viewer chose to watch the entire spot, although an option to skip was available. Data shows that social media is the most effective way to reach Virginia's youth, which is demonstrated by the success of the PSA campaign.

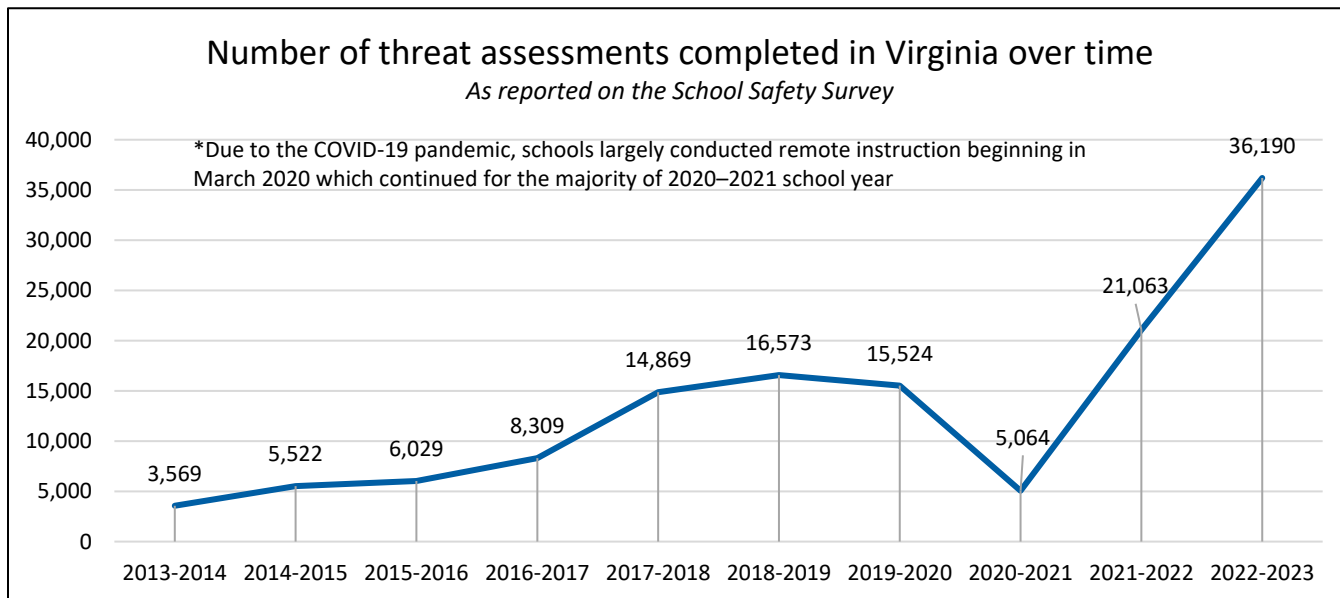
In 2021, the PST-VCSCS introduced the "Handle With Care: Law Enforcement-School Trauma Informed Communication System" (HWC) across Virginia. This system is a statewide trauma-informed response to child maltreatment and children's exposure to violence. If a first responder encounters a child during a call, the child's information is shared with the school. The school then implements individual, class, and whole-school trauma-sensitive curricula to ensure that traumatized children are treated with care. Additionally, if a child needs more intervention, on-site trauma-focused mental healthcare is available at the school.

Number of individuals trained in "Handle with Care" in 2021–2023



THREAT ASSESSMENT

In 2013, the Virginia General Assembly passed a law (*Code of Virginia* § 22.1-79.4) that requires all public school divisions to create and operate threat assessment teams to support their schools. This legislation also requires the PST-VCSCS to develop model policies, collect quantitative data from schools using a case management tool, and provide technical assistance to schools on threat assessment-protocols.

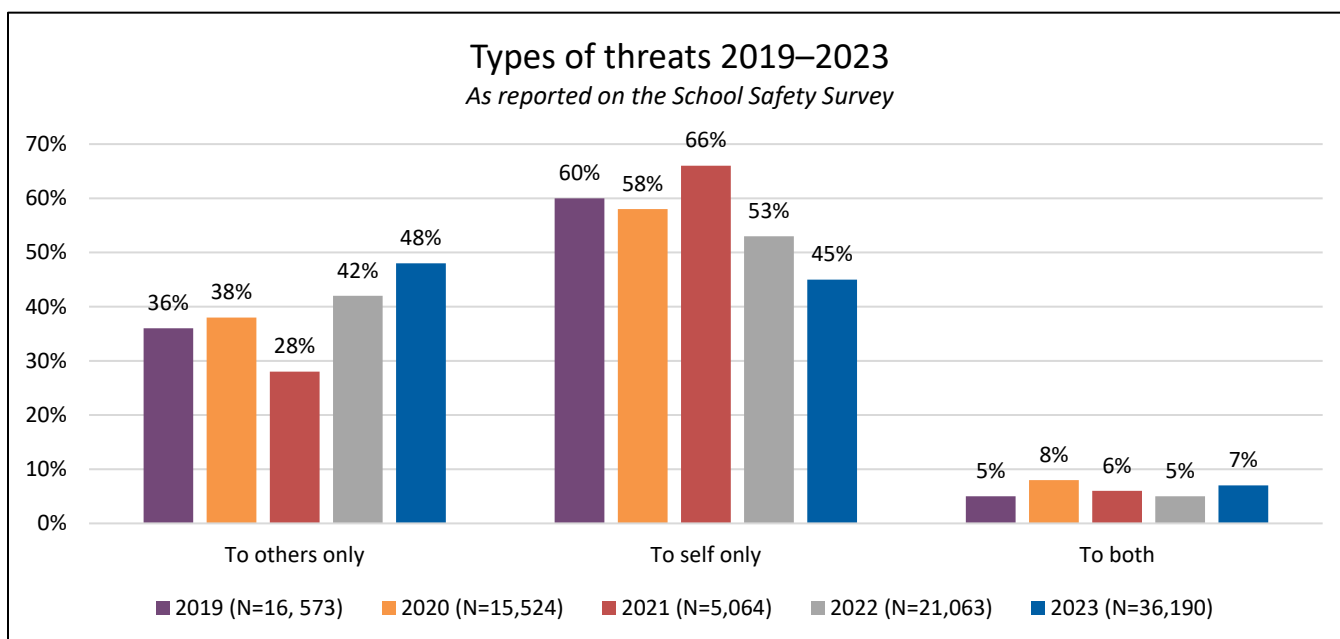


The following definitions were used to determine the type of threat:

Threatened others only: Threatened harm, posed harm to, or was perceived as posing harm to someone other than self, but DID NOT threaten suicide or self-harm.

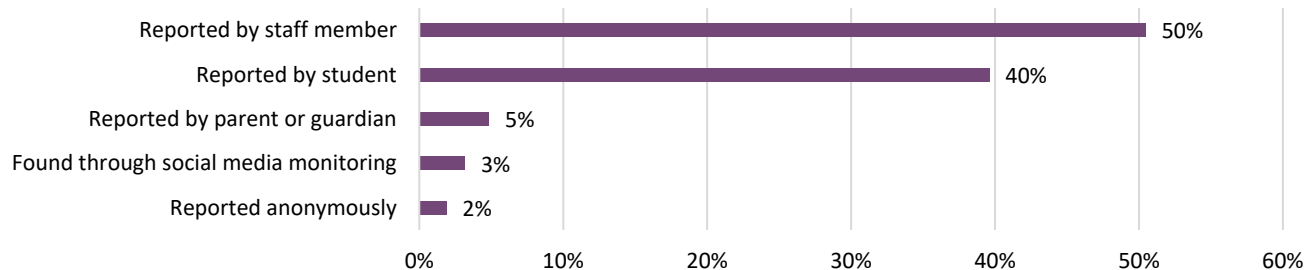
Threatened other(s) and self (to both): Threatened harm, posed harm to, or was perceived as posing harm to someone other than self AND threatened suicide or self-harm, or was perceived as suicidal or posing harm to self.

Threatened self only: Threatened suicide or self-harm or was perceived as suicidal or posing harm to self but DID NOT threaten others nor were they perceived as a threat to others.



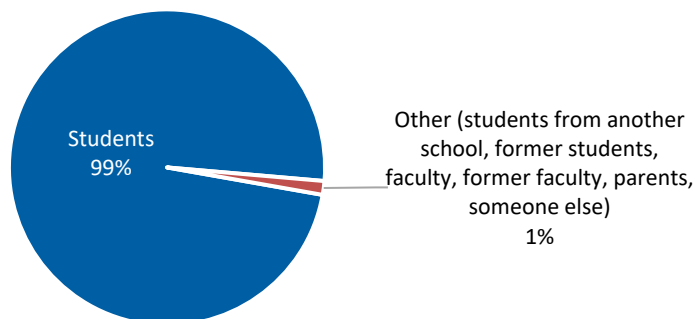
How are Threat Assessment Teams being alerted to threats and aberrant or concerning behavior

As reported on the 2023 School Safety Survey (N=31,632)



Individuals making threats or exhibiting aberrant or concerning behavior 2022–2023

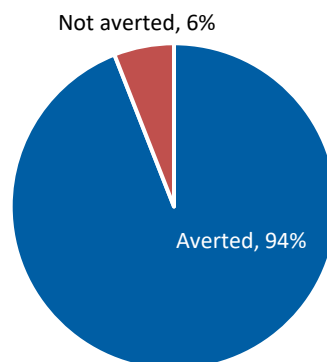
As reported on the 2023 School Safety Survey (N=36,190)



Schools reported 3,396 Priority 1 (Critical/Imminent) and 2 (High) threats during the 2022–2023 school year.

Of those, 202 threats were reported to not be averted.

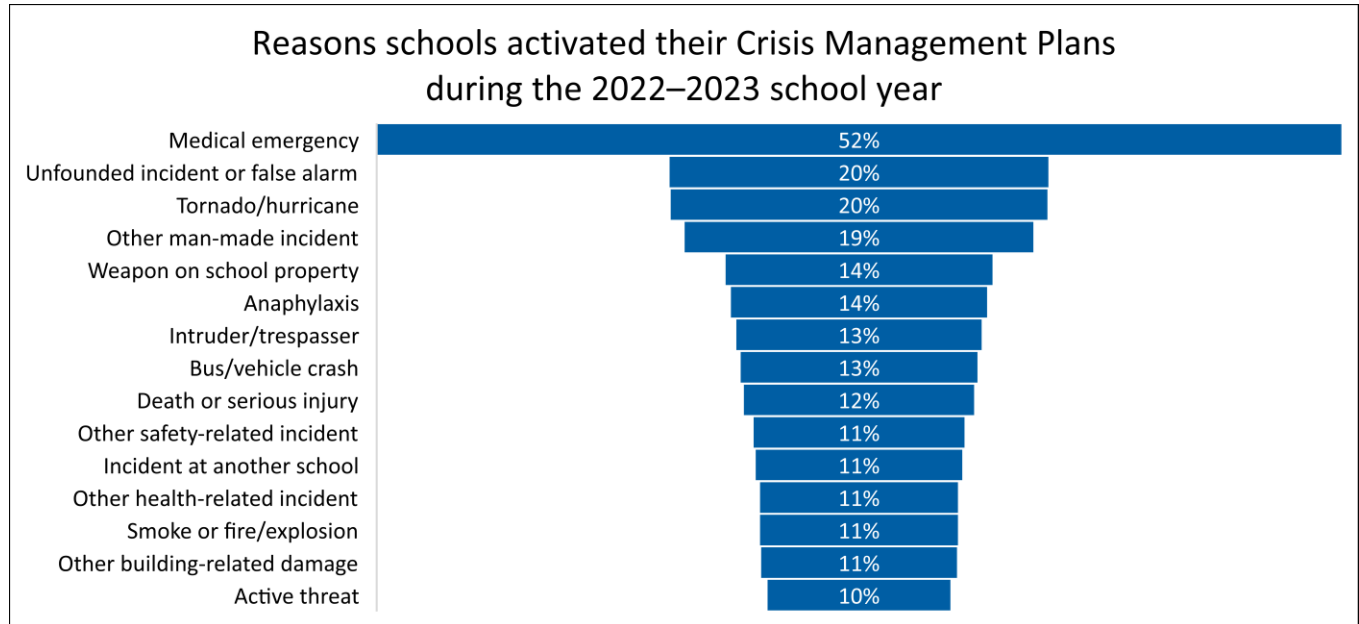
As reported on the 2023 School Safety Survey (N=3,396)



SAFETY PLANS AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The PST-VCSCS addresses a range of topics related to school safety, including personnel, crisis management, school climate, and physical measures that help schools prepare for and respond to emergencies. By focusing on these areas, PST-VCSCS aims to enhance the safety and security of school communities across Virginia.

Crisis Management Plans

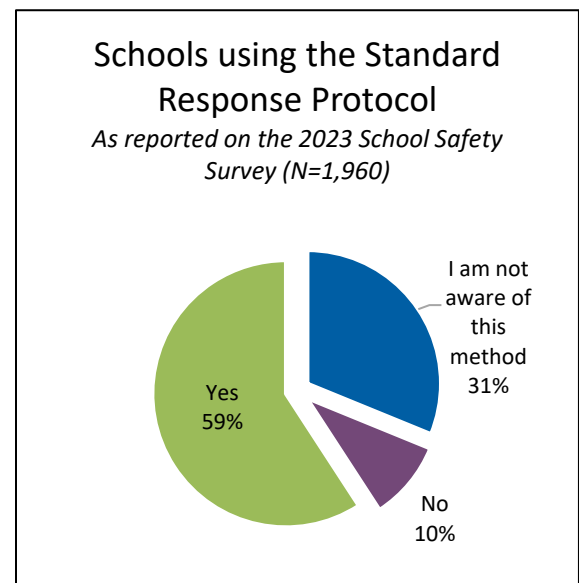


Emergency Drills

According to the *Code of Virginia* [§ 22.1-137.2](#), the Board of Education’s Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (SOA) ([8 VAC 20-131-260](#)), and the [Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code \(SFPC\)](#), all Virginia schools must conduct the following emergency drills each year:

- An initial fire drill within the first 10 days of the school year
- A second fire drill within the first 20 days of the school year
- At least one fire drill per month for the remainder of the school year
- A lockdown drill at least twice within the first 20 days of the school year
- A third lockdown drill after the first 60 days of the school year

PST-VCSCS has adopted, as best practice, the Standard Response Protocol (SRP) and the Standard Reunification Method (SRM) developed by the “I Love U Guys Foundation.” During a crisis, the SRP offers five possible actions to be taken, including Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter. It is considered a best practice for first responders as it uses a common-language approach that provides clear guidance on how a school should respond. On the other hand, the SRM provides a step-by-step process for developing reunification plans. It also defines roles for staff members to allow for an organized process and flow to reunify students with their families after a crisis.

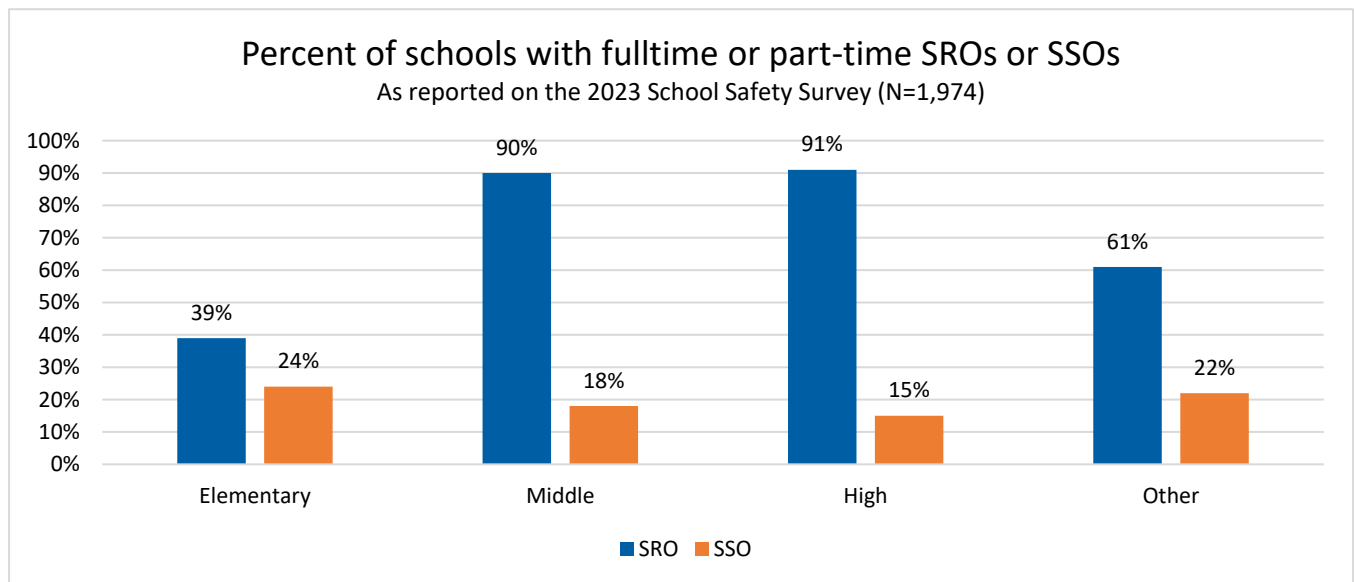


SECURITY PERSONNEL

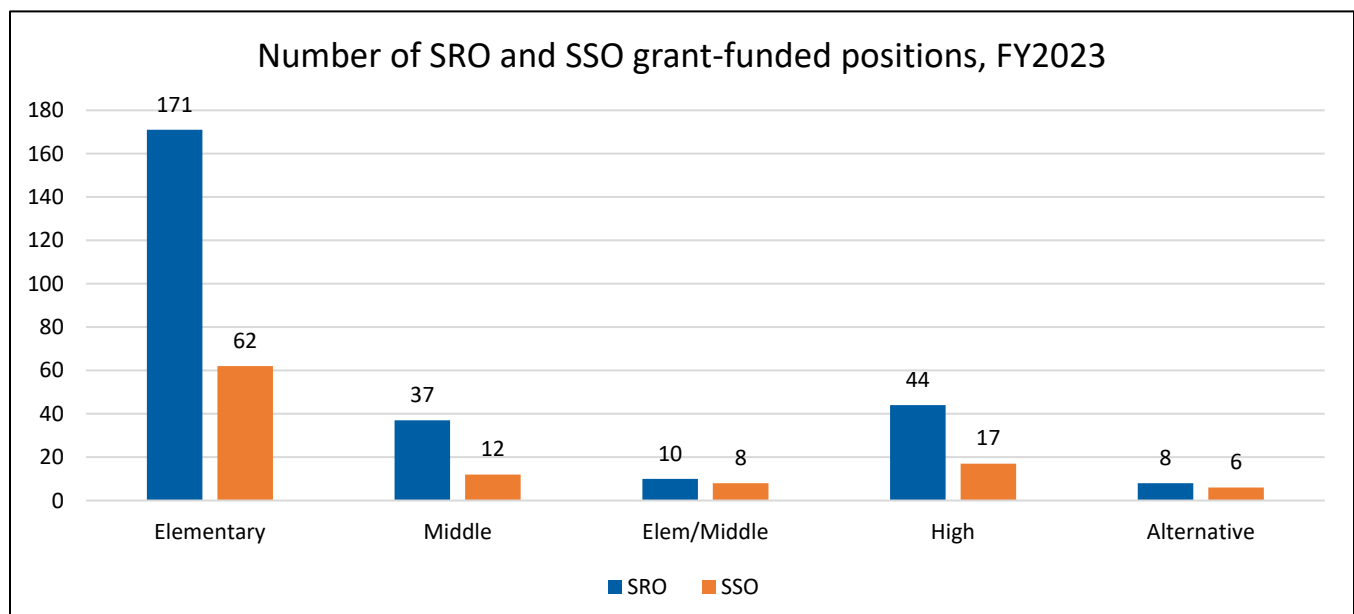
There are two main types of security personnel that serve to keep schools safe across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

A School Resource Officer (SRO) is defined in the *Code of Virginia* [§ 9.1-101](#) as “...a certified law enforcement officer hired by the local law enforcement agency to provide law enforcement and security services to Virginia public elementary and secondary schools.”

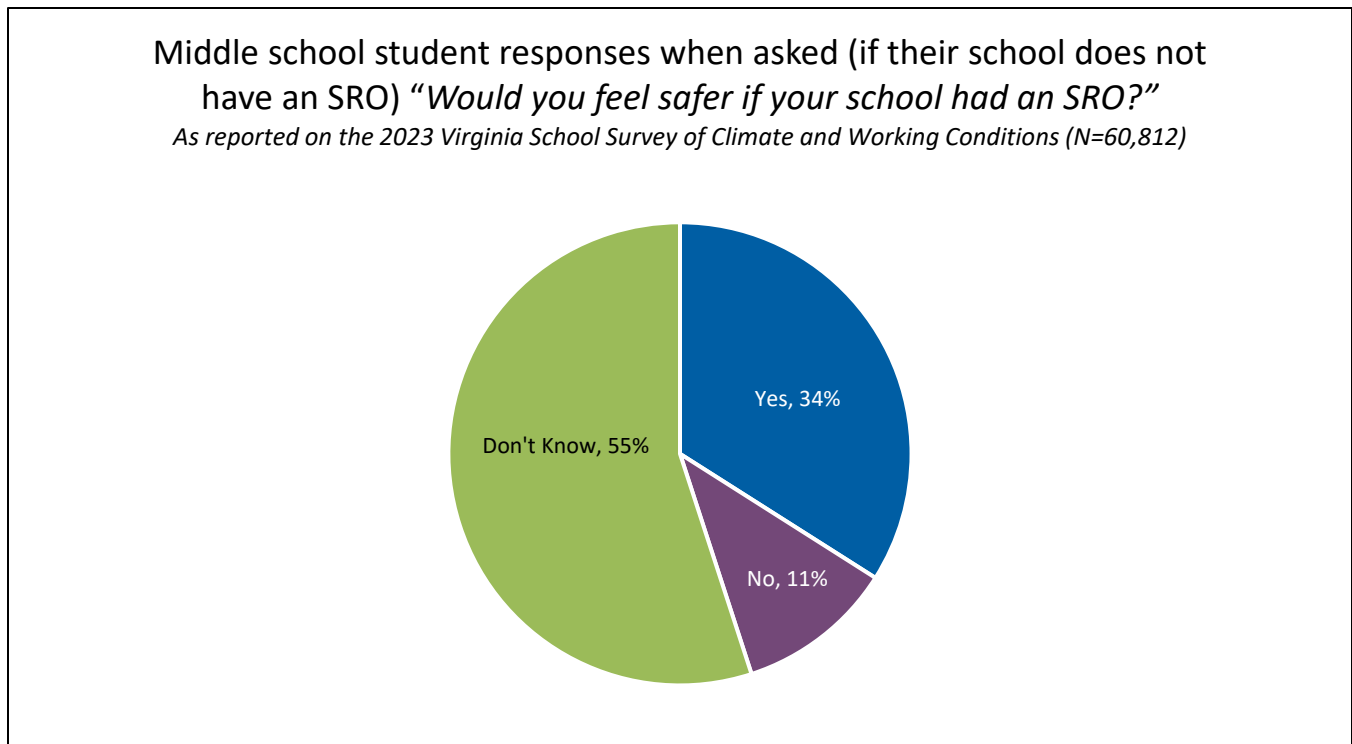
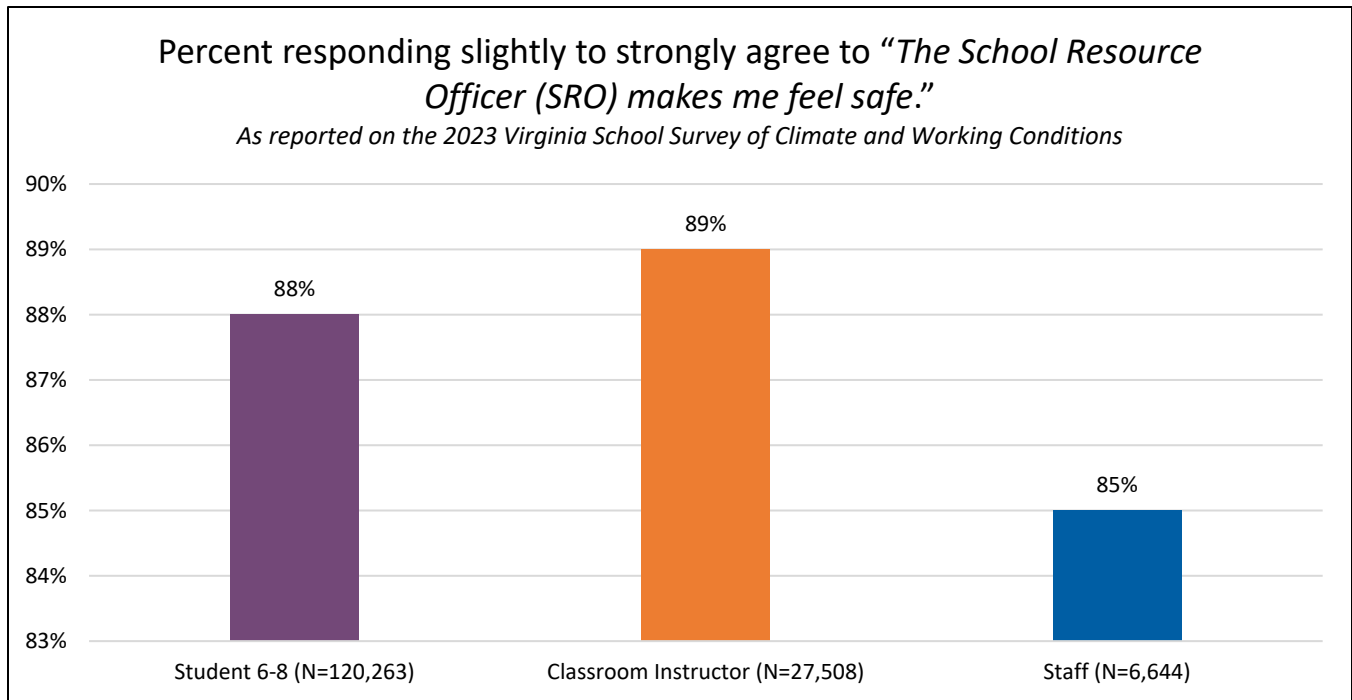
A School Security Officer (SSO) is defined in the *Code of Virginia* [§ 9.1-101](#) as “... an individual who is employed by the local school board or a private or religious school for the singular purpose of maintaining order and discipline, preventing crime, investigating violations of the policies of the school board or the private or religious school, and detaining students violating the law or the policies of the school board or the private or religious school on school property, school buses, or at school-sponsored events and who is responsible solely for ensuring the safety, security, and welfare of all students, faculty, staff, and visitors in the assigned school.”



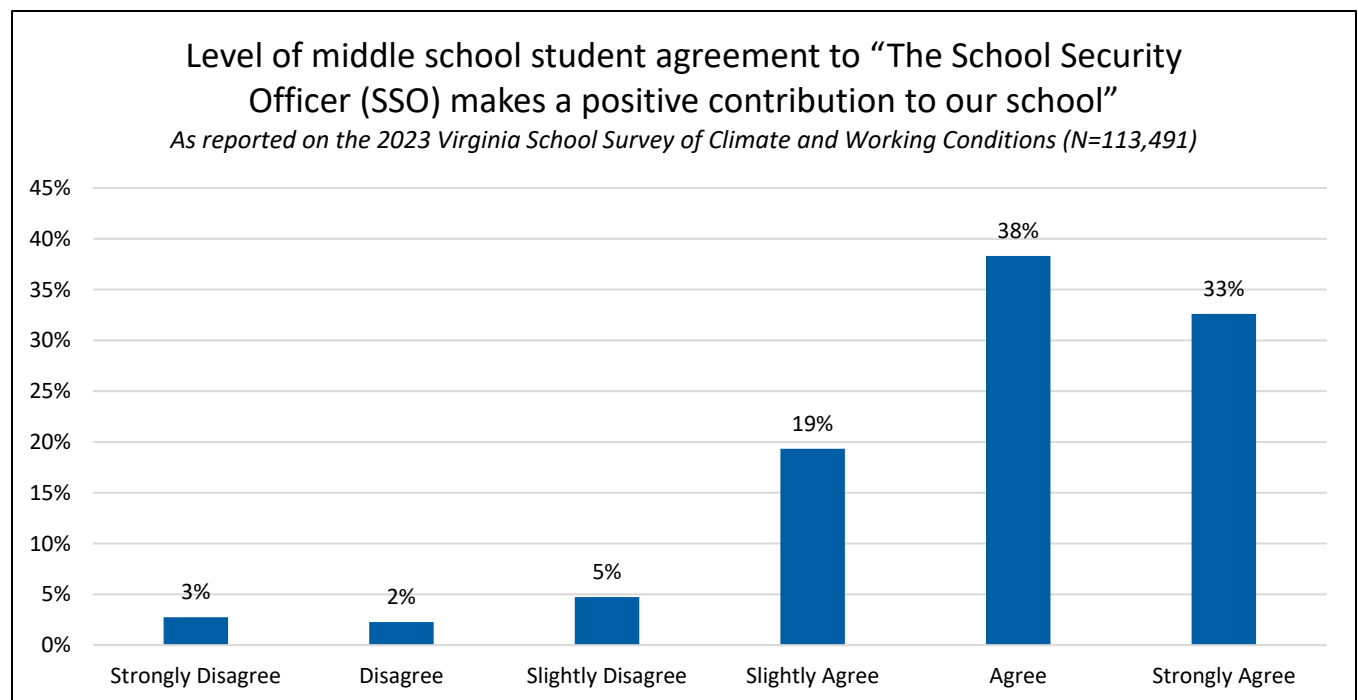
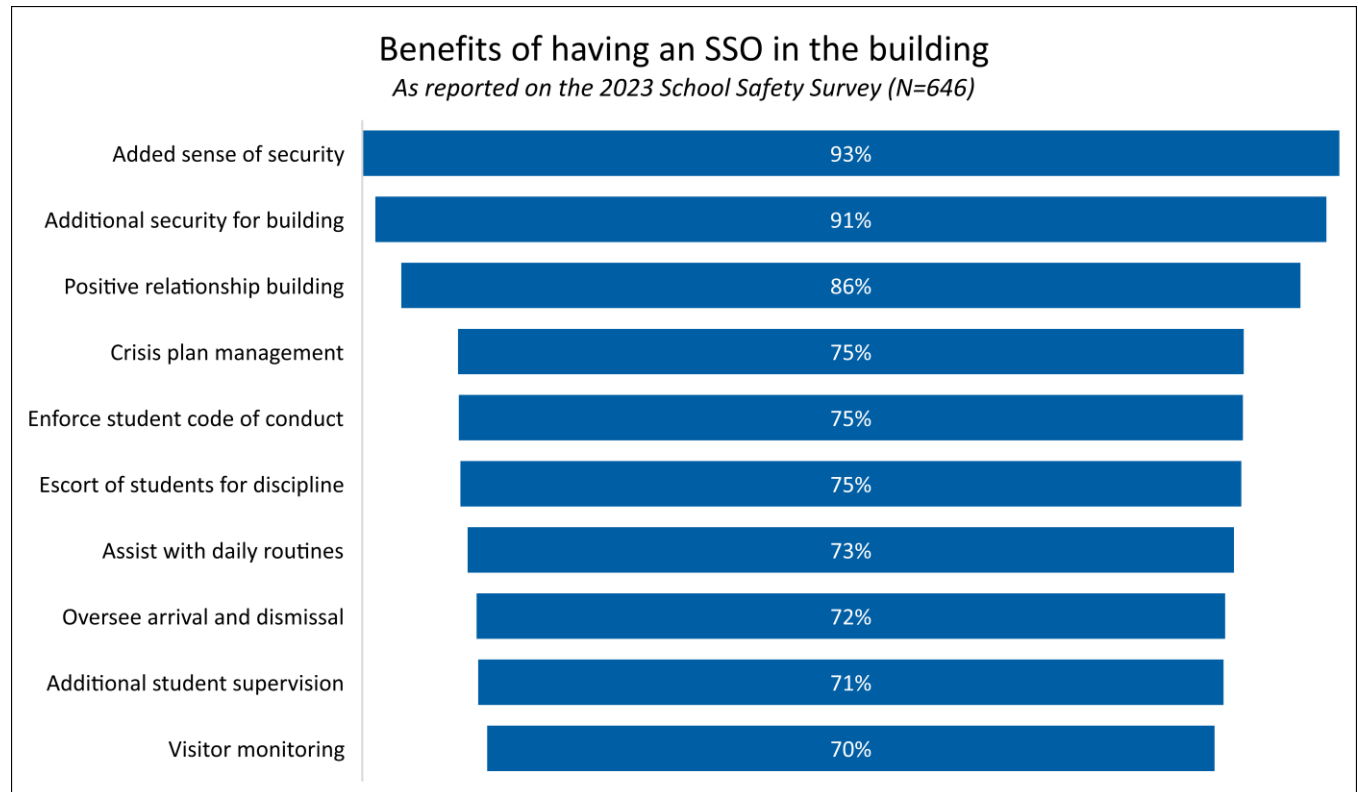
The FY2023 DCJS SRO/SSO Incentive Grant Program provided funding to localities to place either a School Resource Officer or School Security Officer in elementary and secondary schools where none previously existed.



School Resource Officers (SRO)



School Security Officers (SSO)

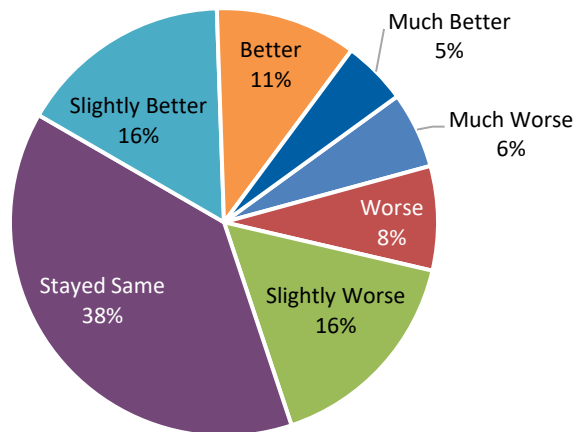


SCHOOL CLIMATE AND AUDIT

The purpose of the Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions is to gather information on school climate, safety, and working conditions. The survey is designed to help maintain a safe and orderly school environment that is conducive to learning. It measures the perceptions of school rules and discipline, teacher-student relationships, student engagement in school, and the prevalence of bullying and teasing on campus. The survey is administered to students, teachers, and staff, and their responses provide valuable insights into the school's overall climate and culture.

Middle school student responses to *"Since you have been at this school, the overall school atmosphere has become..."*

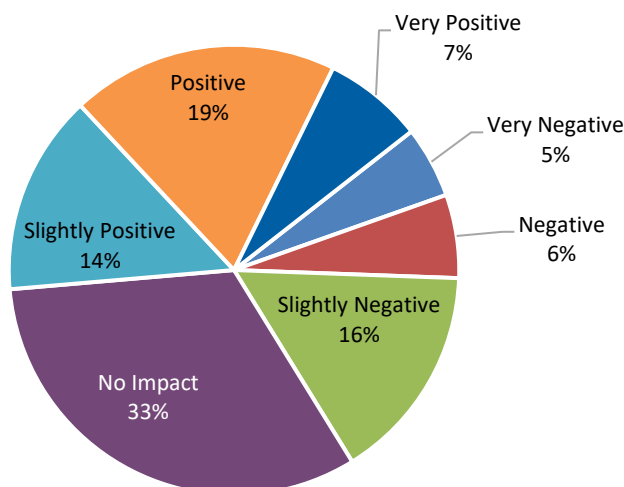
As reported on the 2023 Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions (N=113,491)



* Only asked of students who reported this was not their first year at this school.

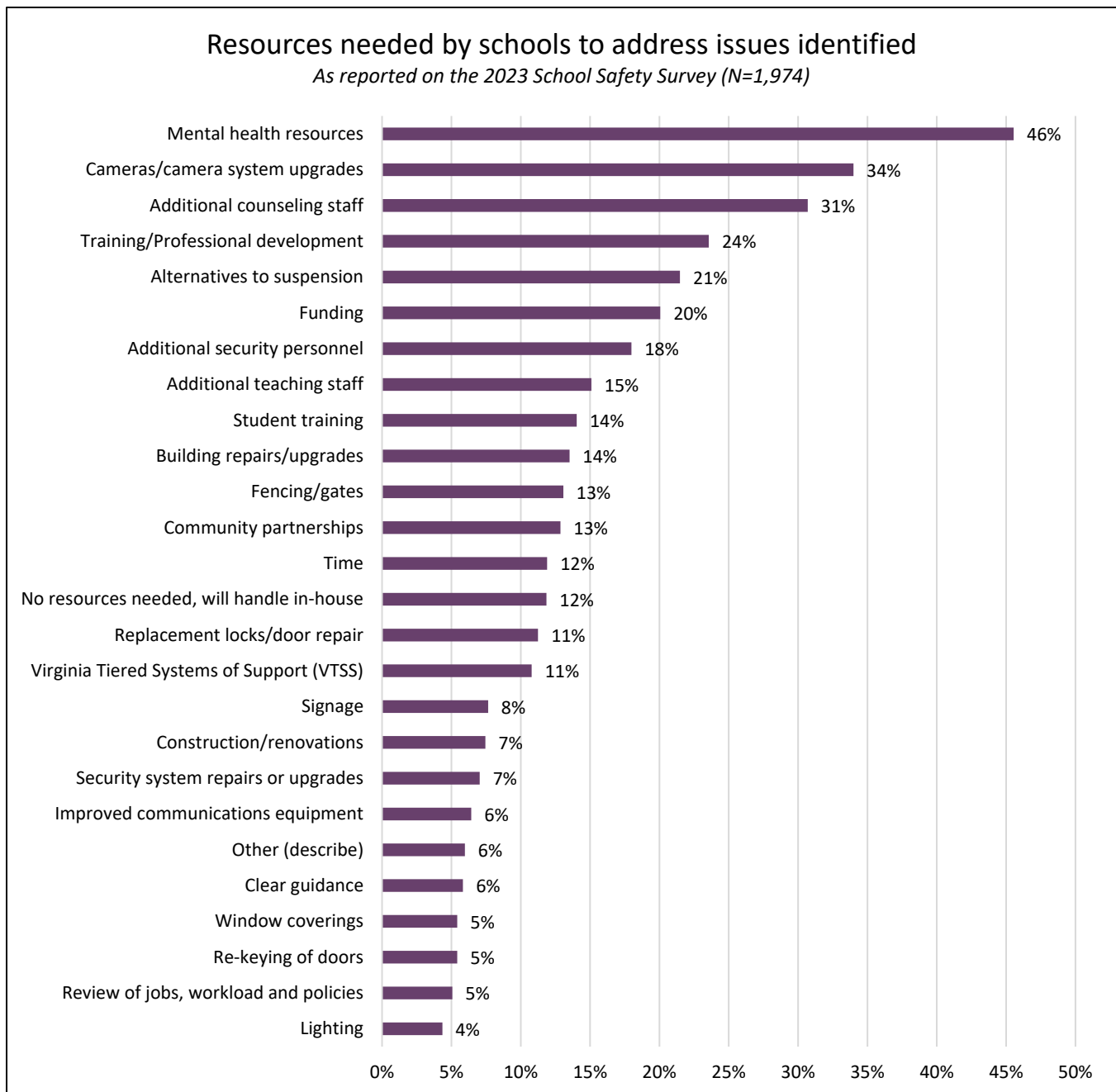
Middle school student responses to *"How does school atmosphere impact your learning?"*

As reported on the 2023 Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions (N=183,152)



Audit Review

The culminating component of the annual safety audit is a review of all relevant safety data to “... (i) **identify and if necessary, develop solutions for physical safety concerns**, including building security issues and (ii) **identify and evaluate any patterns of student safety concerns** occurring on school property or at school-sponsored events. Solutions and responses shall include recommendations for structural adjustments, changes in school safety procedures, and revisions to the school board’s standards for student conduct.” Schools are asked to review four areas of data: school safety and crisis management, school climate, facilities, and any other area such as discipline or attendance.



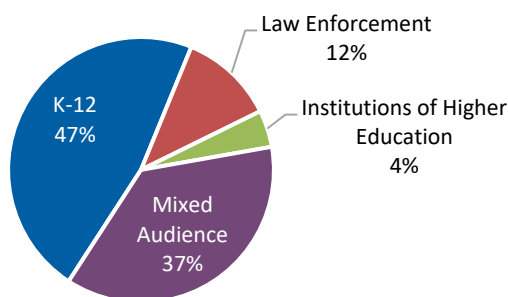
TRAINING AND GRANTS

The DCJS PST-VCSCS conducts research, creates guidance and resources, provides training on a wide range of safety issues that affect all Virginians, and provides grant funding. In FY2023, PST-VCSCS hosted six conferences that brought local, state, and national experts together to provide relevant and impactful networking and learning opportunities to over 2,000 participants from schools, campuses, law enforcement, and mental health backgrounds.

Conferences hosted in FY2023:

- *Impact of Trauma on Law Enforcement Officers Conference*
- *National Threat Assessment Conference for Educational Institutions*
- *School Safety Training Forum*
- *Strengthening Connections: Improving Student and Staff Emotional Wellbeing*
- *Conference on Violent Crime*
- *Virginia Campus Safety and Violence Prevention Forum*

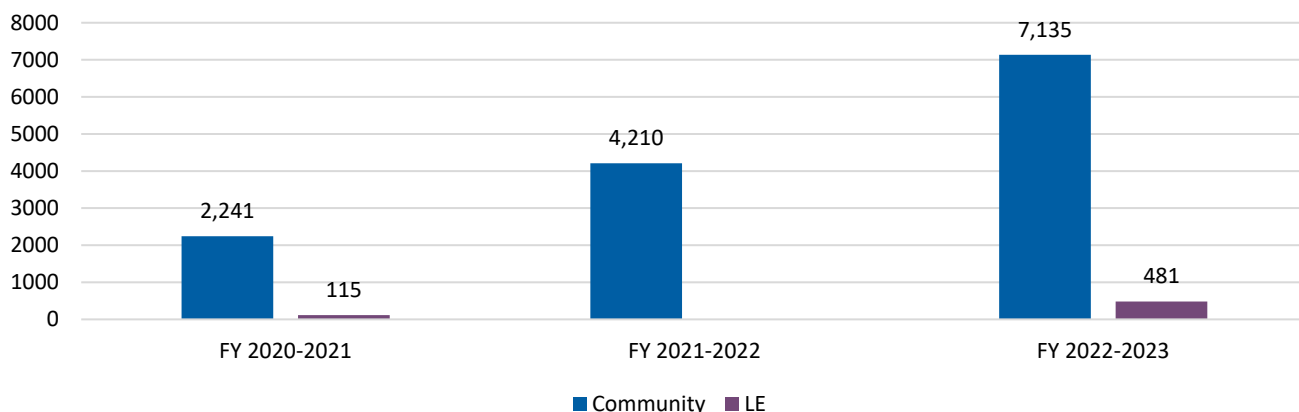
PST-VCSCS provided training to 21,641 participants
across 390 trainings, FY2023



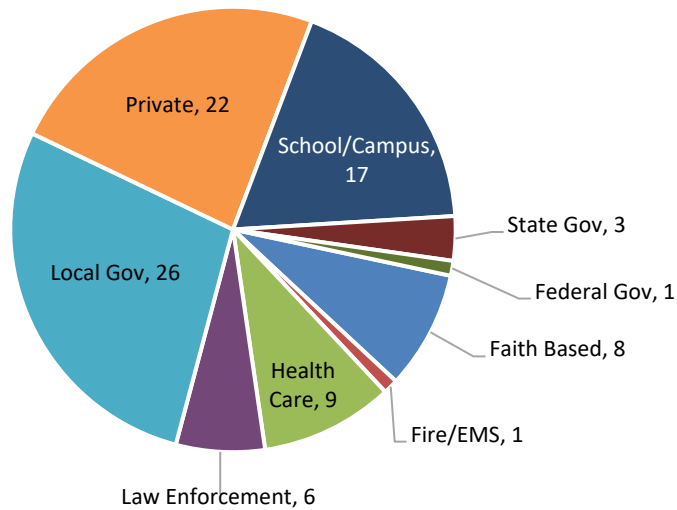
Active Attack Program

PST-VCSCS has a robust Active Attack Program that provides training to law enforcement (LE) and civilians on proper response to active attack emergencies.

Active Attack Annual Attendance



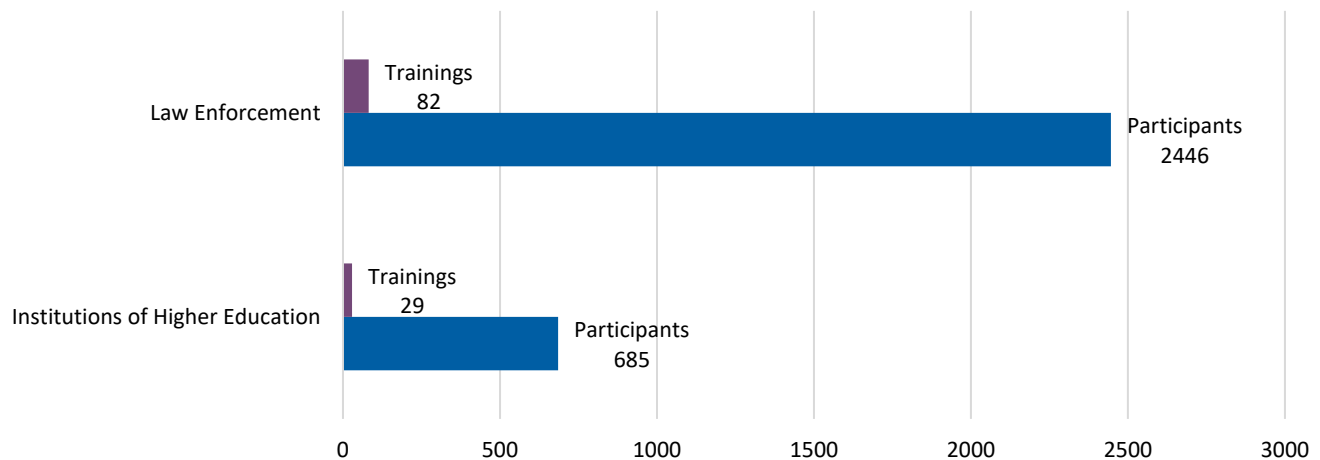
Agencies/organizations trained in community-focused active attack response, FY2023



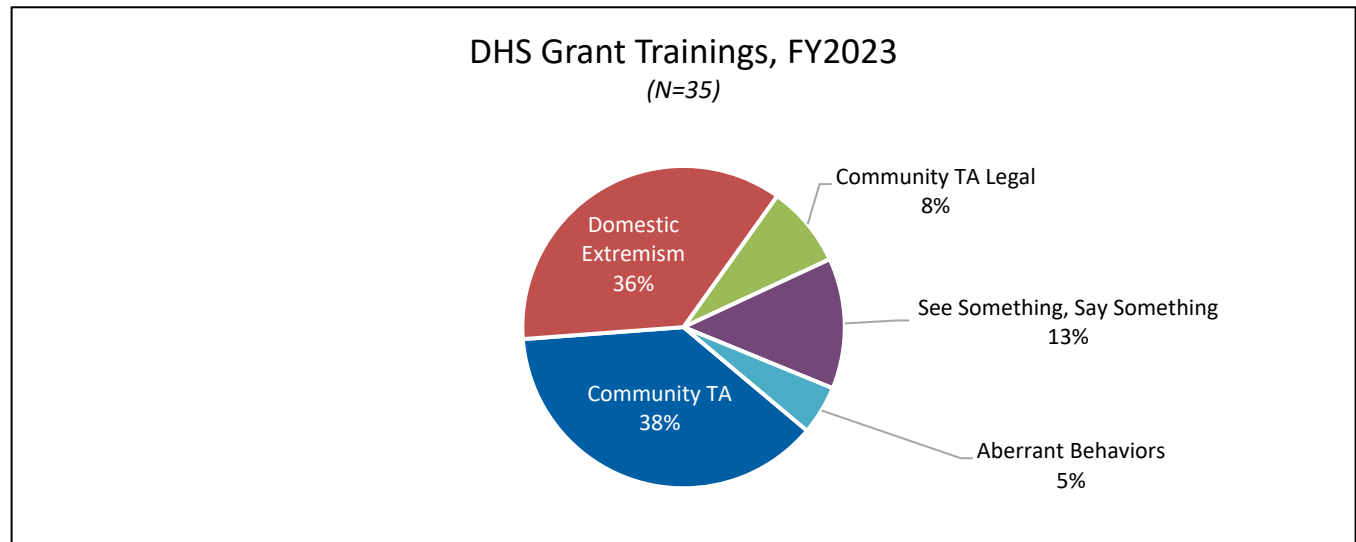
Public Safety and Law Enforcement Program

The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Program is responsible for overseeing the coordination and training development that is offered to law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies and Virginia's colleges and universities.

Law enforcement and institutions of higher education trainings, FY2023



In 2023, the General Assembly made changes to the law that now requires all members of threat assessment teams in public higher education institutions to complete at least eight hours of initial training within a year of being appointed to the team. Additionally, they must complete a minimum of two hours of threat assessment training each academic year after that. The Community Threat Assessment Training program was created using funds from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant.



Law Enforcement Grants and Programs

The Law Enforcement Grants and Programs section oversees federal and state funding to localities, state agencies, and nonprofit organizations. It also provides support to law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies throughout the Commonwealth.

Program	Number of Awarded Grants Monitored, FY2023	Program Allocation
"599"	173	\$221,681,830
American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	330	\$75,000,000
SRO/SSO Incentive Grant Program	170	\$27,200,000
Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG)/Local Law Enforcement (LOLE)	336	\$19,358,154
Coronavirus Supplemental Grant (CESF)	115	\$10,800,000
Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC)	2	\$4,304,967
Combatting Hate Crimes Grant (HCGP)	4	\$1,500,000
Historically Black Colleges and Universities Safety and Security (HBCU)	4	\$1,000,000
Coverdell Forensic Science (CDEL)	2	\$557,000
Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN)	3	\$370,000
Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)	2	\$300,000
John R. Justice Loan Repayment (JRJ)	0	\$110,000
Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE)	1	\$100,000
TOTAL	1142	\$362,697,800



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