

School Safety Threats Persist, Funding Decreasing:

NASRO 2003 National School-Based Law Enforcement Survey



Final Report on the 3rd Annual National
Survey of School-Based Police Officers

August 19, 2003

for the

National Association of School Resource Officers
(NASRO)

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Dedication

Our nation today faces threats to public safety that are greater than ever before in modern history. Our schools, as reflections of their broader communities, also face increasing threats to the safety of their students and staff. These threats include internal threats originating from sources within the schoolhouse itself, and external threats from forces often originating far outside of schoolyard grounds.

This report is dedicated to the School Resource Officers (SROs) who protect our students, school personnel, educational facilities, and school-communities regardless of the source and nature of these threats. This report is further dedicated to the memory of School Resource Officer Ronald Wood, of the West Jordan (Utah) Police Department, who made the ultimate sacrifice this past school year. Officer Wood will be remembered as a friend of countless young people, law enforcement officers, and school staff.

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2003 NASRO National Survey of School-Based Police Officers

August 19, 2003

Methodology

The *National Association of School Resource Officers* (NASRO) contracted independent professional services for the development, administration, and analysis of NASRO's third annual professional industry survey of school-based police officers. Surveys were independently administered by the staff of *National School Safety and Security Services*, tallied by *Scantron Corporation*, and the results analyzed and reported by Kenneth S. Trump, President of *National School Safety and Security Services*, an independent, non-product affiliated national school safety consulting firm.

The 20-question survey instrument was developed in May of 2003 and administered to attendees of the 13th Annual NASRO Conference held in Orlando, Florida, on June 29 – July 4, 2003. 1,100 surveys were distributed to conference attendees upon their registration. A total of 728 surveys were tallied by *Scantron Corporation*, representing a return rate of approximately 66%. Whereas every respondent did not answer every question, the total number of respondents for each question will be shown with the chart for each question.

NASRO conferences provide the largest single yearly gathering of SROs and offer the greatest cross-section of officers with representatives from each of the 50 United States. The results from surveys administered at NASRO conferences represent the largest known bodies of data derived from school-based police officers in the world, with the 2003 survey representing the largest return (total of 728) of the three annual surveys conducted to date.

This is a professional industry survey. NASRO membership surveys are intentionally not designed as, nor are they represented as, long-term scientific academic research studies. NASRO does believe the survey to be reliable and valid as a representative cross-section and subsection of NASRO's membership.

Scientific research studies typically involve years of time for their design, implementation, analysis, and validation through professional debate and subsequent research testing. NASRO believes that its membership surveys provide timely, concrete "real time" data reflecting **today's** current school safety threats, trends, and resource needs identified by those professionals currently working on the frontlines of schools to protect America's school children and educators.

Executive Summary

This Executive Summary highlights key survey findings and conclusions from the *2003 NASRO 3rd National Annual Survey of School-Based Police Officers*. Detailed findings and graphic illustrations follow this section of the report.

KEY FINDINGS

Significant findings from this survey include:

- **School safety threats continue to persist from both within, and outside of, our nation's schools.**
 - Over 90% of the survey respondents believe that schools are “soft targets” for potential terrorist attacks.
 - Over 70% of the officers reported that aggressive behavior in elementary school children has increased in their districts in the past five years.

- **School-based police officers reported that significant gaps continue to exist in their schools' emergency preparedness planning and, in training for terrorism and other crisis situations.**
 - Over 76% of the officers feel that their schools are not adequately prepared to respond to a terrorist attack upon their schools.
 - Over 51% of the respondents' schools do not have specific, formal guidelines to follow when there is a change in the national homeland security color code/federal terrorism warning system.
 - Over 55% of the respondents said that their school crisis plans are not adequate.
 - Over 62% of survey respondents reported that their school crisis plans have not been adequately exercised (tabletop exercises, full scale drills, etc.).
 - Over 71% of the respondents report that their schools' teachers, administrators, in-house (civilian, non-school police) security personnel, and support staff have not received terrorism-specific training.
 - Almost 47% of the school-based officers themselves have not received any terrorism-specific training related to their role as a school-based police officer.

- **Crimes occurring on school campuses nationwide are underreported to law enforcement and the current federal No Child Left Behind Act requirement for states to define “persistently dangerous” schools will lead to further underreporting of school crime. The vast majority of respondents also believe that Congress should enact a federal mandatory K-12 school crime reporting law.**
 - Over 87% of school-based police officers reported that the numbers of crimes that occur on school campuses nationwide are underreported to police.
 - Over 61% of survey respondents believe that school administrators faced with their schools possibly being labeled as “persistently dangerous” will result in decreased school crime reporting.
 - Over 88% of respondents believe the Congress should enact a federal law requiring mandatory, consistent school crime reporting for K-12 schools nationwide.

- **A significant percentage of School Resource Officers reported budget cuts for school safety funding in their local school districts, inadequacies in federal school safety funding, and the need for an “Education Homeland Security Act” to fund school terrorism training, improve security and crisis planning, and support SRO programs.**
 - Over 41% of school-based police officers report that funding for school safety in their schools is decreasing.
 - Over 85% of the survey respondents believe that the U.S. Department of Education’s 2004 proposed budget cut of 35% (\$50 million) for state funding of the Safe and Drug Free Schools program will contribute to schools being less safe.
 - Almost 64% of the respondents believe that the U.S. Department of Education’s recently announced \$38 million in emergency planning grants (to be awarded to an estimated total of 150 local education agencies) is inadequate.
 - 95% of the survey respondents believe that a Congressional “Education Homeland Security Act” to fund SRO and school staff terrorism training, improve security and crisis planning, and support SRO staffing would make schools more safe.

*See detailed results starting on page 8 for additional survey questions not listed above.

CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the 2003 survey data found that significant school safety threats persist, the source of such threats being both internal (school violence/aggressive behavior) and external (terrorism). The majority of school-based officers continue to indicate that their schools' emergency preparedness plans and training are not adequate. The majority of respondents also reported that school crimes nationwide are underreported and that they are likely to be further underreported with the existence of new federally-imposed requirements for states to create definitions of 'persistently dangerous' schools.

The data suggestion that school safety threats persist with no significant changes in emergency preparedness and training to deal with emergency situations should, standing alone, present public officials with serious concern. It would be expected that even if safety threats themselves did not decline, the preparedness level of schools should have improved, especially following the spate of high-profile school shootings of recent years and the terrorist attacks on America on 9/11. Yet less than one month away from the two-year anniversary of 9/11, and roughly six years since the first in the series of high profile school shootings, we find very significant percentages of school-based police officers telling us that the threats to school safety are ever-strong and that preparedness levels for responding to school crises remain significantly inadequate.

Most concerning is the finding that while the threats persist, funding for school safety is declining in a significant percentage of local schools (41%) and the federal government is proposing further cuts (35%, i.e., \$50 million) to state allocations for Safe and Drug Free School program funding, which front-line safety officials report as likely to contribute to schools becoming even less safe. Survey respondents also feel that the U.S. Department of Education's recently announced \$38 million in emergency planning grants, to be distributed among an estimated total of 150 local education agencies, is inadequate, a finding which is consistent with respondent reports of the significant gaps yet to be addressed in their current emergency planning and training. Local and federal funding cuts to school safety are significant and appear likely to continue, yet the majority of respondents (95%) clearly feel that just the opposite is needed, i.e., additional funding for terrorism-related training for school officials, improved security and crisis planning, and strengthened SRO programs.

Public policy and funding trends are clearly headed in the opposite direction of what front-line school safety officials are saying is needed. It is illogical for public officials to cut school safety funding in general. It is even more illogical for them to cut school safety funding while over 90% of the school-based police officers feel that schools are soft targets for terrorist attack, and while public officials provide heightened funding for security practices elsewhere, including in their own legislative halls, and in airports and other government facilities.

In NASRO's 2002 annual survey almost a year ago, this evaluator recommended that:

- NASRO should strongly encourage federal, state, and local education and public safety agencies, as well as elected and appointed public officials, to include schools in meaningful terrorism and homeland security planning, and in related resource allocations.
- NASRO should encourage and support meaningful legislative and programmatic initiatives geared toward assisting schools in collaborating more closely with SROs and other public safety agencies in improving school security policies, procedures, and programs, and in developing, revising, and testing emergency/crisis plans.
- NASRO should encourage and support meaningful initiatives to fund and implement greater training opportunities for school-based police officers as first responders to terrorist attacks, as well as for expanded overall specialized training for SROs and SRO supervisors.
- NASRO should maintain an awareness campaign on the findings and issues in this survey by encouraging national education and public safety organizations to disseminate the survey findings, and accurate information on best practices in school-based policing in general, nationwide within their respective professional communities.

The evaluator recommends once again that NASRO continue pursuing the goals. However, the evaluator is not alone in making such recommendations. Over 97% of NASRO members responding in this year's 2003 survey indicated that NASRO should be a vocal, national advocate for additional school safety resources and SRO programs.

But the responsibility for improvement rests far beyond the front-line members of NASRO and the organization's leaders. The data suggests that it is time, perhaps even well past the time, for our nation's public officials to take concrete policy and funding steps for heightened and sustained school safety funding, improved school crime reporting requirements, and measures which strengthen and sustain ongoing school safety, security, and emergency planning. Unfortunately, the data suggests that our public officials appear to currently be heading in the opposite direction.

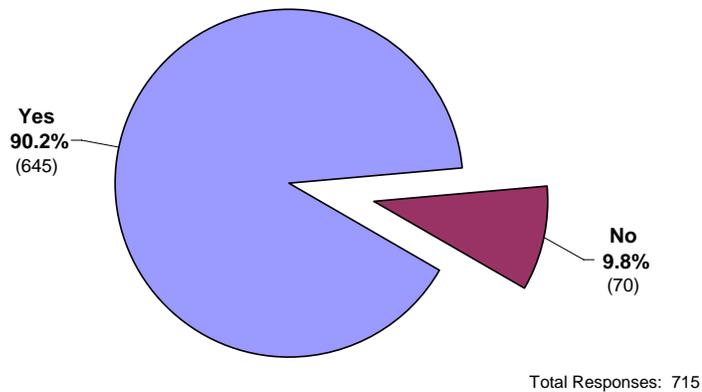
Heightened awareness and preparedness in our schools, like that advocated elsewhere across our nation, will reduce terrorism fears and the threats from within our own schoolhouses and school communities, while enhancing our school safety prevention and preparedness levels.

Detailed Survey Results

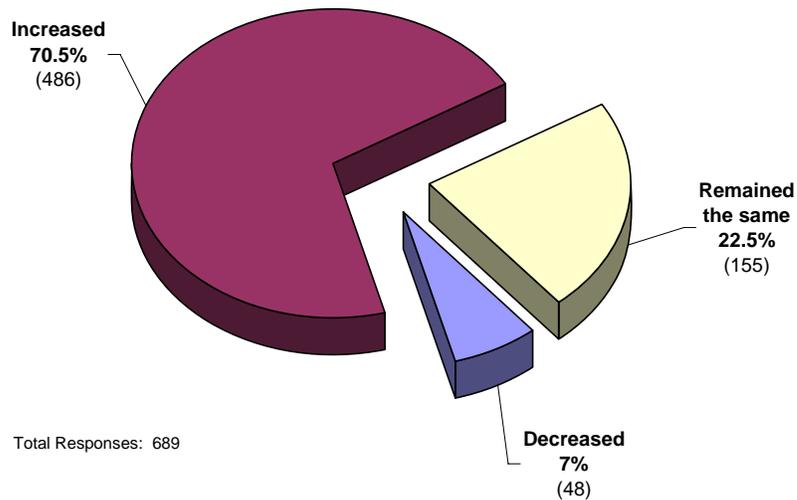
This section expands upon the *Executive Summary* with percentages, number of responses (in parenthesis), and graphics of responses for each survey question. *Percentages are based on valid responses and may vary 1% due to rounding.

Terrorism & School Violence Threats

Do you believe schools are "soft targets" for potential terrorist attacks?

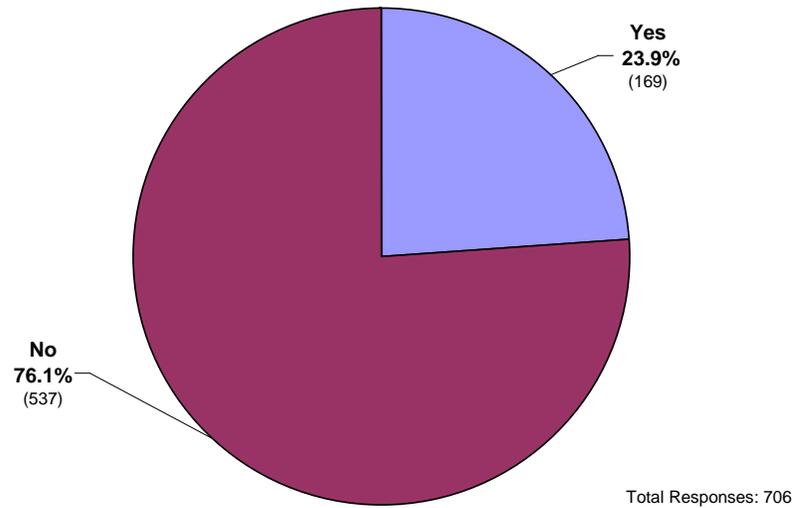


In the past five years, has aggressive behavior in elementary school children in your district:

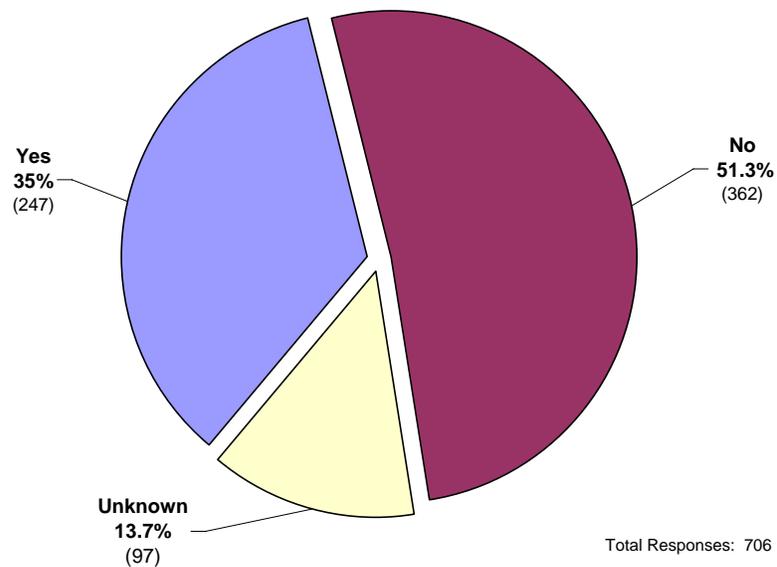


Terrorism & Overall Emergency Preparedness

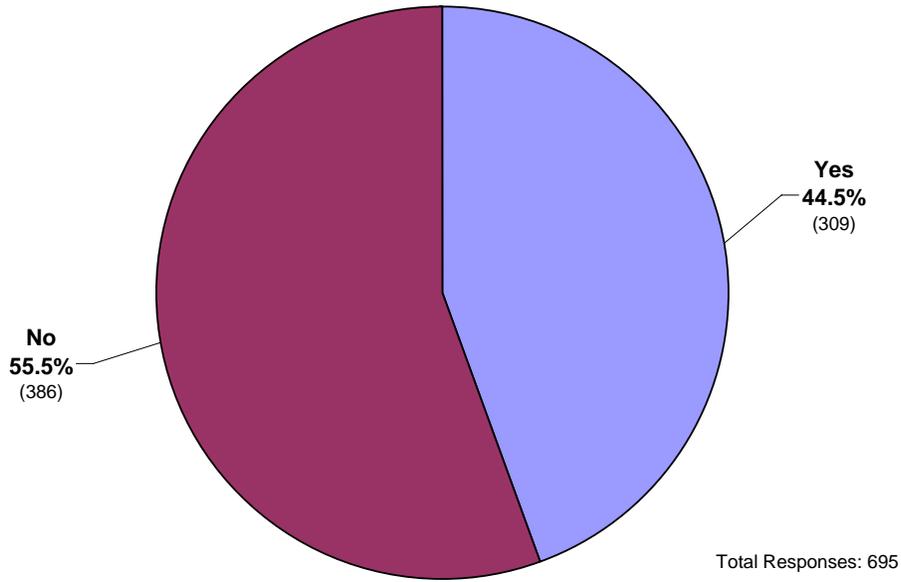
Do you feel that the school(s) within your district are adequately prepared to respond to a terrorist attack upon the school(s)?



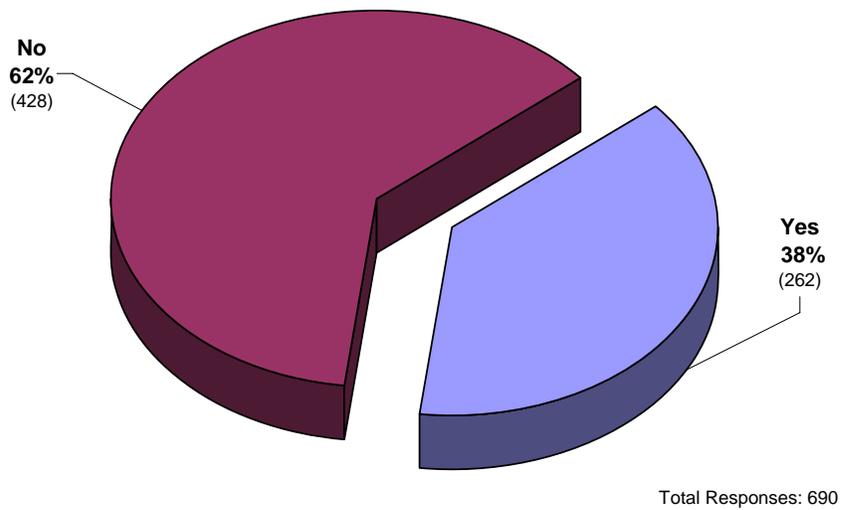
Does your school have specific, formal guidelines to follow when there is a change in the national homeland security color code / federal terrorism warning system?



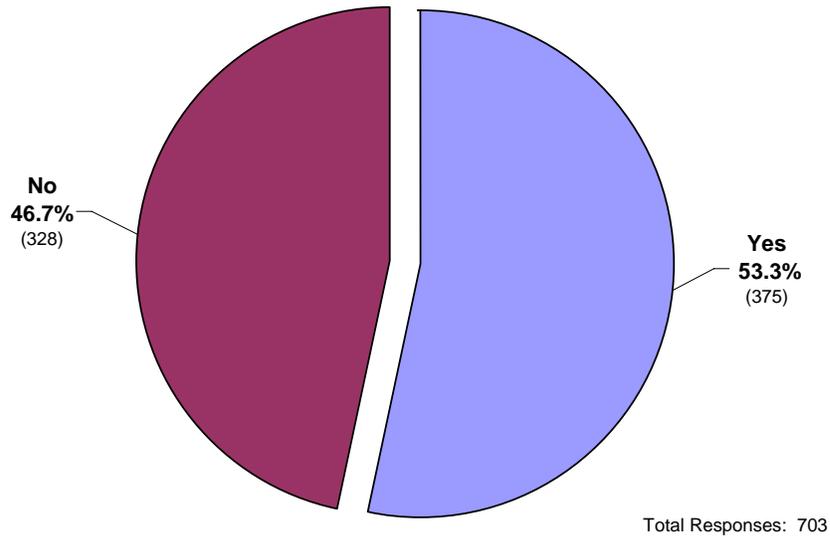
In your opinion, are crisis plans for your school(s) adequate?



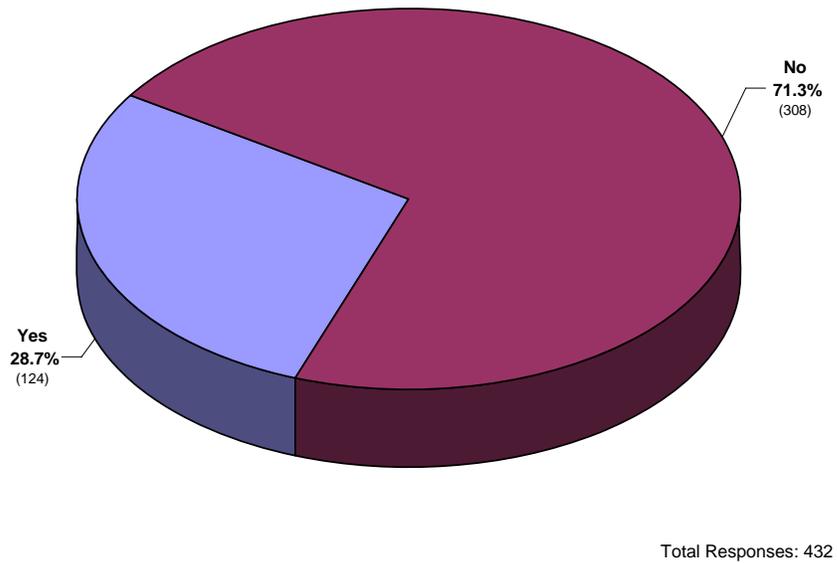
Have crisis plans for your school been adequately exercised (tabletop exercises, full scale drills, etc.)?



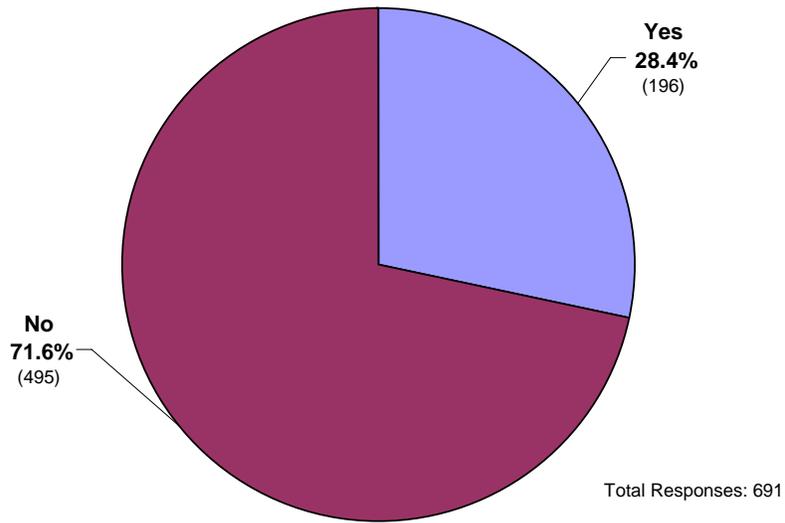
Have you personally received any terrorism-specific training related to your role as a school-based police officer?



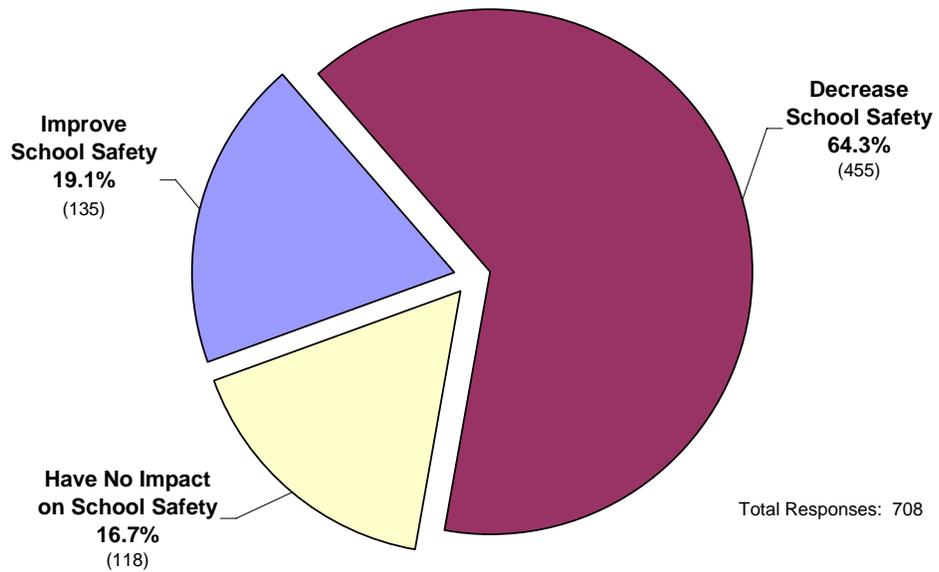
If you have in-house school security personnel at your school, have they received any terrorism-specific training related to their role as school security personnel?



Have other school employees (teachers, administrators, and non-security/non-police) received any terrorism-specific training related to their roles as school personnel?

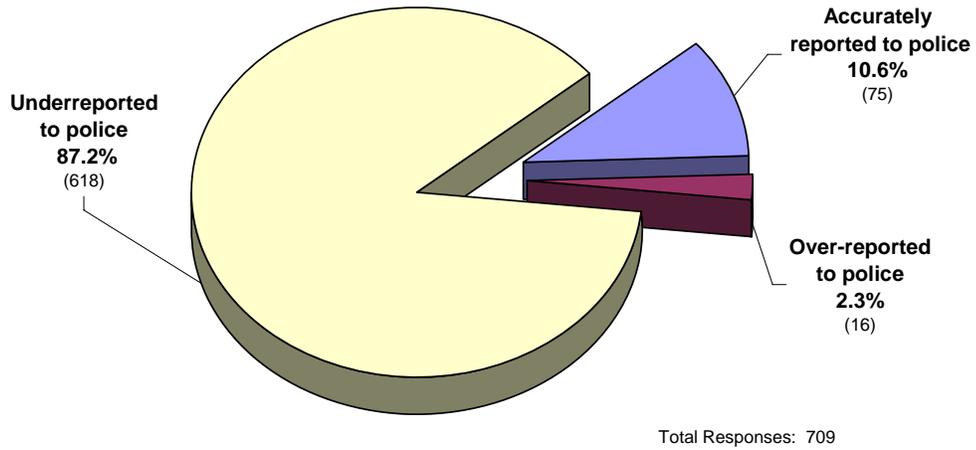


Do you believe that student use of cell phones in schools during a crisis would:

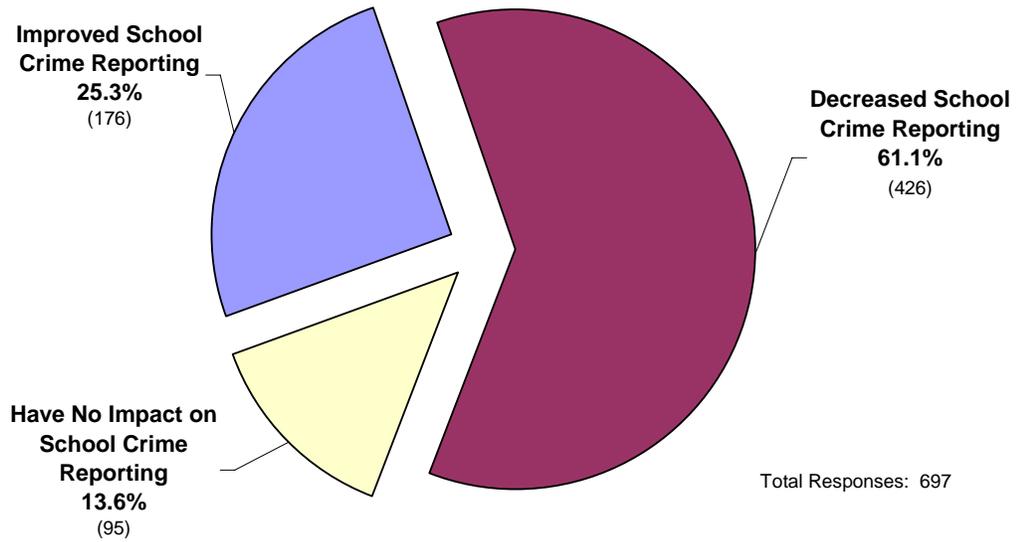


School Crime Reporting & Underreporting

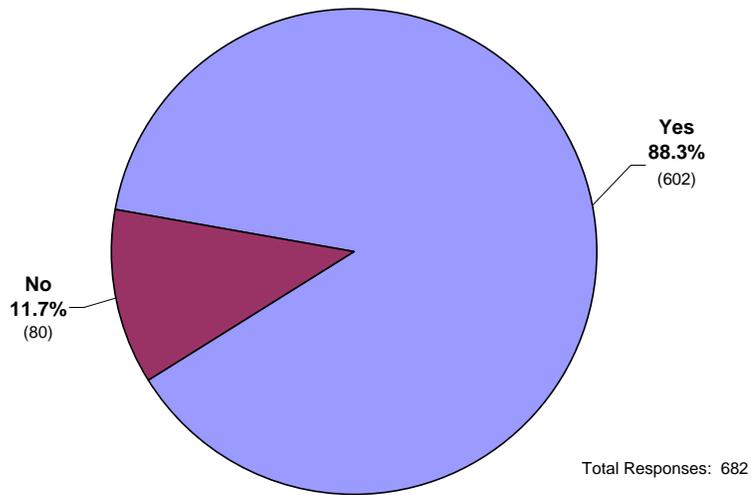
Do you believe that, in general, the number of crimes that occur on school campuses nationwide are:



The federal "No Child Left Behind" law requires each state to create a definition of a "persistently dangerous school." Will school administrators, faced with their schools possibly being labeled as "persistently dangerous," result in:

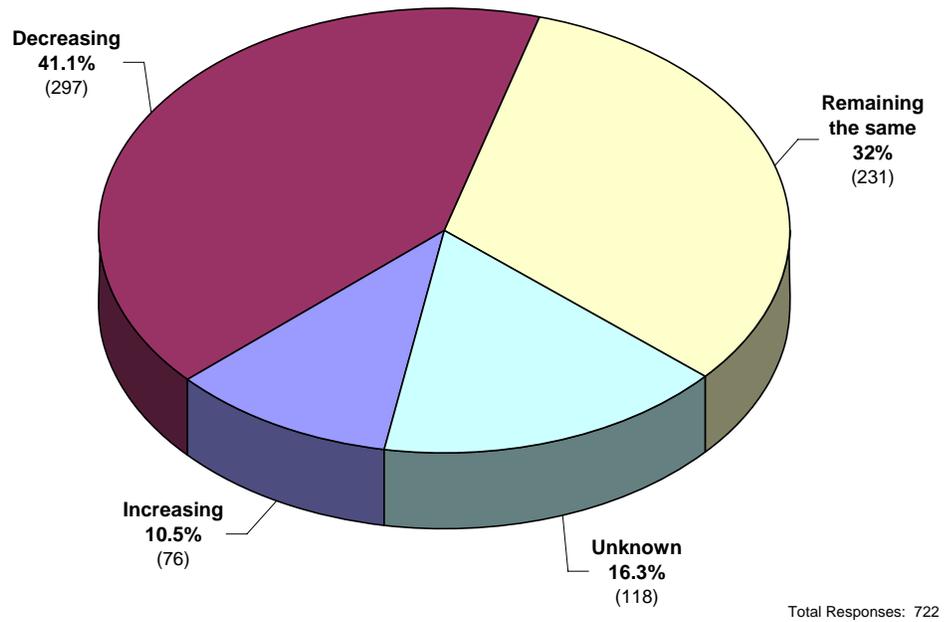


Do you believe that Congress should enact a federal law requiring mandatory, consistent school crime reporting for K-12 schools nationwide?

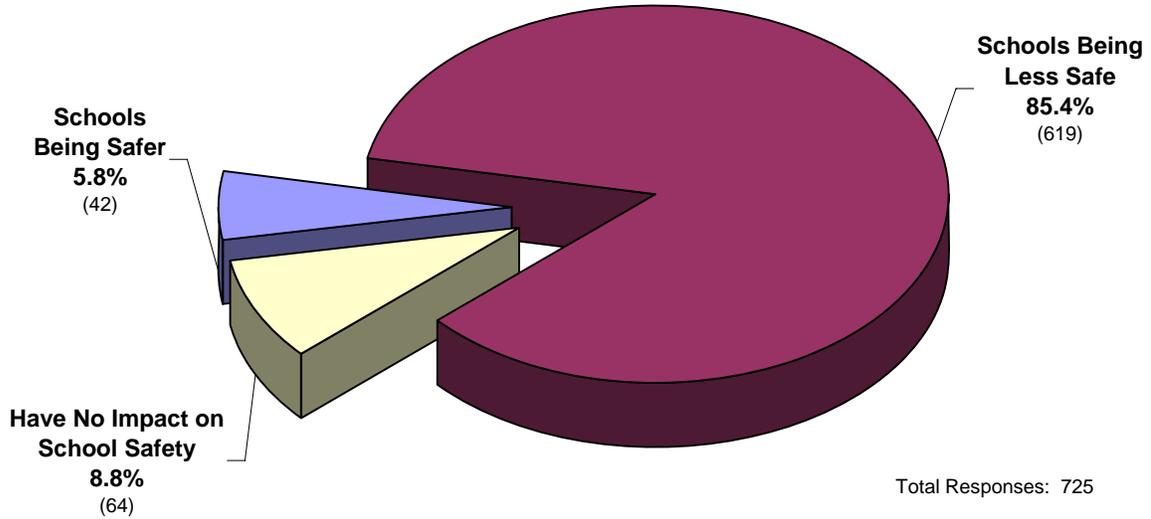


Budget & Funding Issues

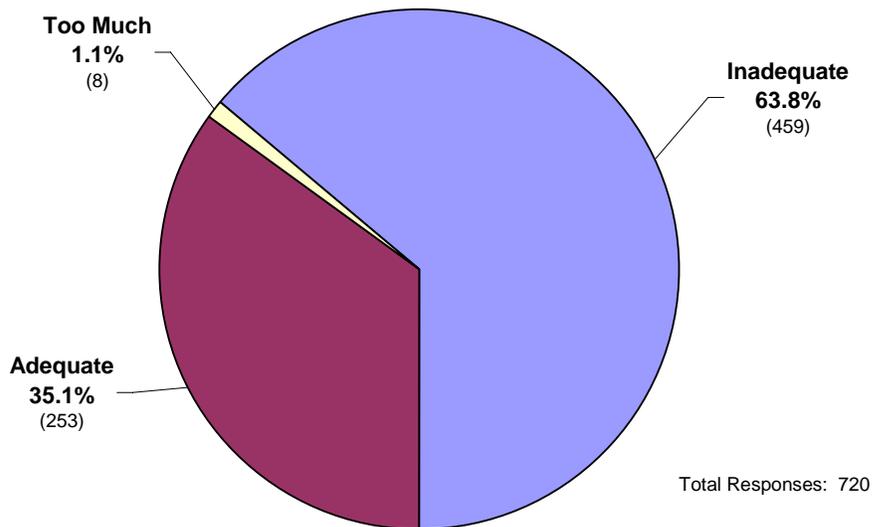
Is funding for school safety in your school:



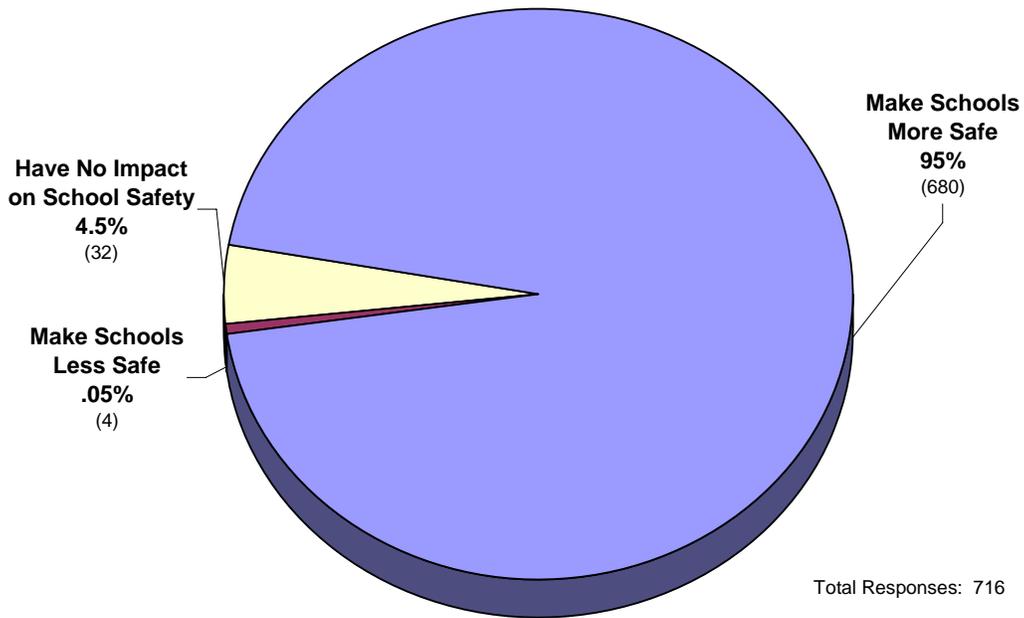
The U.S. Department of Education's 2004 proposed budget has a \$50 million (35%) decrease in state funding for Safe and Drug Free Schools programs. Do you believe this budget cut would contribute to:



The U.S. Department of Education recently announced \$38 million in emergency planning grants to be awarded to an estimated total of 150 local education agencies. Do you believe this amount of grant funding is:

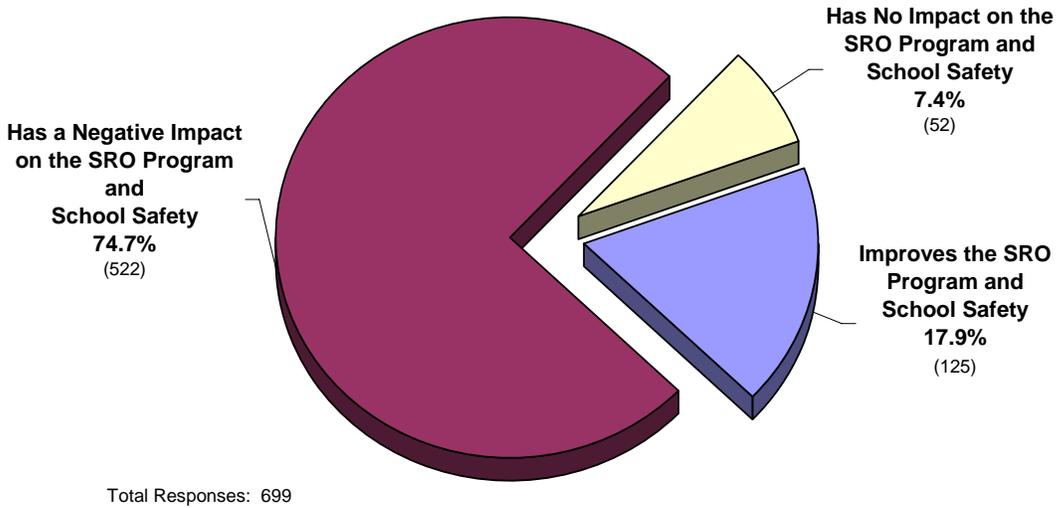


**NASRO has called upon Congress to create an "Education Homeland Security Act" to fund SRO and school staff terrorism training, improve security and crisis planning, and support SRO staffing.
Do you believe such a law would:**

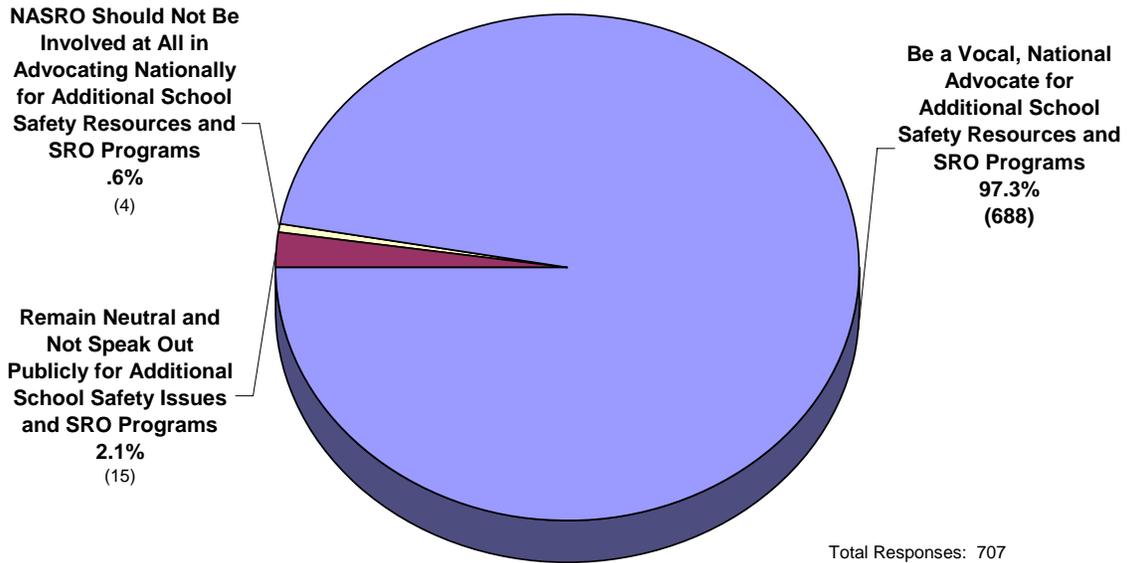


SRO Program & NASRO Issues

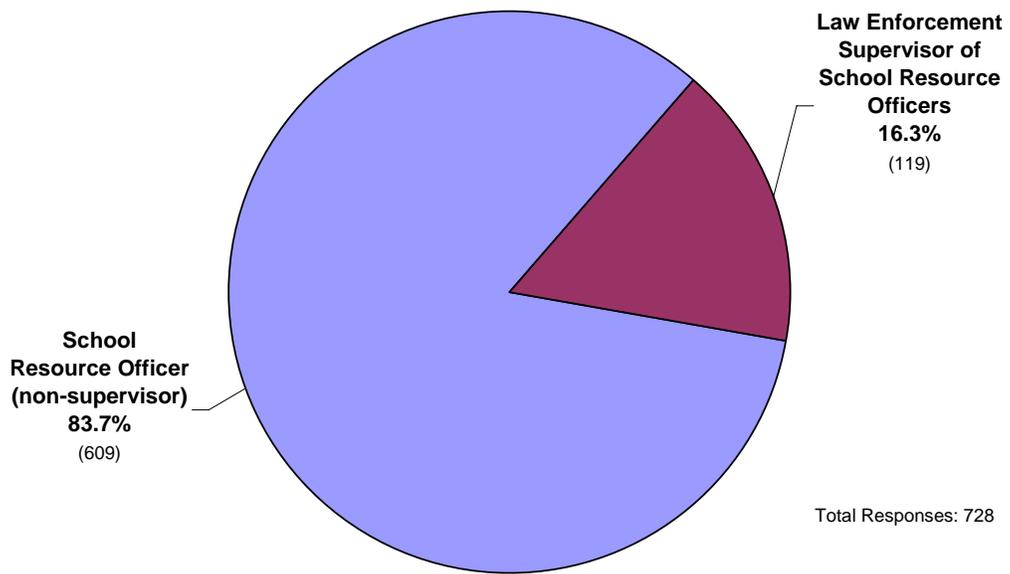
In general, do you believe that having a regular, routine rotation (change) of personnel in a SRO position for any one school:



Do you believe that NASRO should:



Position of Survey Respondents:



APPENDIX 1

2001 NASRO School Resource Officer Survey Highlights (based on a July, 2001, national survey of 689 school-based police officers)

SROs Prevent Serious, Violent Crime

- * 92% report preventing 1 to 25 violent acts per school year
- * Over 94% state that students have reported to them violent acts or similar safety threats that the students believed were going to occur for an estimated total of 11,155 cases (average of 17 per officer) in their careers as SROs
- * 67% report having prevented a school faculty or staff member from being assaulted by a student or other individual on campus for an estimated total 3,200 cases (average of 7 per officer)

SROs Improve School Crime Reporting

- * 84% of SROs believe that crimes on school campuses nationwide are underreported to police.
- * 86% report that the presence of a SRO on campus improves the accuracy of school crime reporting

SROs Confiscate Weapons in Schools

- * 24% report having taken a loaded firearm from a student or other individual on campus for a total estimated 344 guns
- * 87% report having taken knives or other bladed weapons from students or others for a total of 6,100

SROs Primarily Focus on Prevention-Oriented Tasks

- * 91% report at least half of their job consisting of preventative duties. Only 7% said the majority of their emphasis is on enforcement and investigations.
- * Over 81% report following the Triad SRO program model of counselor, law officer and classroom instructor

Tasks Performed by School Resource Officers	% of Officers
One-on-one counseling with students	93%
Calls for service to classrooms	88%
Classroom instruction	87%
Crisis preparedness planning	83%
Security audits/assessments of school campuses	82%
Special safety programs/presentations	78%
Faculty/staff in-service presentations	75%
Truancy intervention	70%
Group counseling with students	69%
Supervising/coordinating non-athletic extracurriculars	60%
Field trip chaperone	57%
Parent organization presentations	57%
Coaching athletic programs	30%

Data extracted from 2001 NASRO School Resource Officer Survey independently administered and evaluated by National School Safety and Security Services <www.schoolsecurity.org> copyright © 2001, NSSSS; all rights reserved

APPENDIX 2



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

Web Site: www.nasro.org

National office located in Sarasota County, Florida

2002 NASRO SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

658 attendees of July, 2002, NASRO Conference participated; Number of responses to each question may be found in full report; Full report available at www.nasro.org; Copyright © 2002, NASRO; all rights reserved

KEY OVERALL FINDINGS

- An overwhelming majority (95%) of school-based police officers feel that their schools are vulnerable to a terrorist attack and a substantial percentage of officers (79%) do not feel that schools within their districts are adequately prepared to respond to a terrorism attack upon their schools.
- The majority of School Resource Officers reported that significant gaps exist in their schools' security, that their school crisis plans are inadequate, and that their school crisis plans are either untested or inadequately tested and exercised.
- School-based officers have received limited training and minimal support from outside agencies (local, state and federal) in preparing for a terrorist attack upon their schools. The vast majority of SROs also reported that their in-house school security personnel, school administrators, teachers, and support staff have received no terrorism-specific training. Additionally, SROs reported decreasing opportunities for their overall training, especially since 9/11, with many limitations attributed to a lack of funding.

SPECIFIC SURVEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS:

- 95% of school-based officers described their schools as vulnerable to a terrorist attack. 32% of those survey respondents described their schools as "very vulnerable" while an additional 63% characterized their schools as "somewhat vulnerable." Only 5% felt that their schools were either not vulnerable or were already prepared for a terrorist attack.
- 79% of the school officers stated that their schools are not adequately prepared to respond to a terrorist attack.

- Only 22% of the surveyed school resource officers described themselves as "very prepared" as a first-responder to a terrorist attack upon their school. 55% of the officers reported that they have not received terrorism-specific training related to their roles as school-based officers.
- Officers reported that of those schools having in-house school security personnel, 82% of these (non-police) security personnel had not received any terrorism-specific training. 77% of the respondents also reported that teachers, administrators, and support staff in their schools have not received terrorism-specific training.
- 55% of the respondents felt that their schools' crisis plans were not adequate. 52% of the school resource officers reported that these crisis plans have never been tested and exercised, and in those schools where plans have been tested, the amount and/or type of testing has not been adequate, according to 62% of the respondents.
- 55% of school resource officers said that their schools do not have mail handling procedures for dealing with anthrax scares and other suspicious packages.
- 96% of the surveyed school officers described gaining access to their outside schools grounds during school hours as either very easy (74%) or somewhat easy (22%). 83% of the officers described gaining access to inside their school as very easy (37%) or somewhat easy (46%).
- Almost 40% said their schools have not had a formal professional security assessment conducted in the past five years.
- 68% of school-based officers believe that student use of cell phones in school would detract from school safety in a crisis and another 10% believe they would have neither a positive or negative influence. 81% of school resource officers indicated that their schools continue to not allow students to use cell phones in school.
- 74% of school officers reported that their schools do not educate parents, and communicate effectively with parents, on school safety, security, and crisis planning issues.
- 89% of school-based officers believe that crimes occurring on school campuses nationwide are underreported to the police, while 91% believe that the presence of a police officer on campus improves the accuracy of school crime reporting.
- 66% of the school-based officers were not able to attend training even though they had a demonstrated need and 75% of the officers indicated that they have not been able to attend needed training due to a lack of funding. Almost one-third reported that their opportunity to attend specialized training has decreased since 9/11.

#