

REVIEW OF THE WCPSS SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAM

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WAKE COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

DATA, RESEARCH & ACCOUNTABILITY



ABSTRACT

In response to inquiries about the roles of School Resource Officers (SROs), the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) conducted a review of the SRO program using data from several sources: SRO referral and incident data; a survey of WCPSS students, staff, and members of the community; and data from focus groups. Two major themes emerged from the review: equity and the use of a law enforcement officer in an SRO role. While student incidents and number of referrals have been trending down overall since 2017-18, disproportionality in referrals remains a concern particularly for Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students. Referrals have also shifted toward less punitive consequences over the past few years. Data from focus group discussions indicated some participants also felt that the disproportionate impact on students of color points to a need for change in the SRO program. Survey results showed positive perceptions of SROs, although some respondents indicated a need to reduce ambiguity in SROs roles (e.g., increase awareness of the role and function of SROs, etc.). Survey respondents also indicated a need for SROs to receive more training on working in a school environment. Respondents were in agreement that school administrators should have more say about which SROs are assigned to their schools. However, some participants in the parent/community members focus group felt that sworn law enforcement officers (i.e., SROs) should not have a role in schools. Like survey respondents, focus group participants mentioned a lack of definition and clear communication about the SRO role; this insufficiency might be driving the negative and ambiguous responses on SROs in the survey data. Participants in the focus groups indicated WCPSS has missed opportunities of intentionally building positive relationships between SROs and stakeholders.

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BACKGROUND

In response to the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) Board request for a review of the School Resource Officer (SRO) program in the WCPSS schools, staff examined the SRO program during the 2020-21 school year. SROs are sworn law enforcement officers assigned to schools by the employing police department/agency for community-oriented policing assignments. SROs work in schools in collaboration with school staff to provide safe, inclusive, and positive educational environments for students and educators. The SRO program is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the WCPSS Board of Education and the local law enforcement agencies that provide SROs to identified schools. An MOU is an agreement between two or more parties that describes the responsibilities of each party and the terms of the agreement. The review of the SRO program included a collection of data from the following sources:

- SRO referral and incident data from 2016-17 through 2019-20,
- a survey administered in October 2020 to identified stakeholder groups (students, parents, WCPSS staff, and members of the community), and
- data from focus groups that were conducted between December 2020 through February 2021 with the same stakeholder groups including law enforcement officers and WCPSS security staff.



WCPSS and the local law enforcement agencies have had an MOU since 2009. The agencies that provide SROs are police departments from the City of Raleigh, Fuquay Varina, Garner, Rolesville, Knightdale, Apex, Wake Forest, Cary, Holly Springs, Wake County Sheriff’s Office, and Wake Technical Community College. The MOU provides agreed upon guidance between WCPSS and the law enforcement agencies and endorses positive relationships among schools, students, and parents in WCPSS. The current MOU states that “the ultimate goal of the School Resource Officer Program is to provide a safe, inclusive and positive learning environment for all students and educators.” There are a total of 75 SROs assigned to 81 schools within the district including 34 SROs serving 34 high schools, 37 SROs serving 37 middle schools, and four SROs serving 10 elementary schools.

This review will provide summaries of the SRO referral and incident data, stakeholder survey results, focus group results, and an overall summary across the data sources. The WCPSS Board of Education will use the results of this review in its discussions regarding the SRO program.





SRO REFERRAL AND INCIDENT DATA

SUMMARY

A review of the WCPSS SRO referral and incident data was presented to the WCPSS Board of Education in August 2021 covering data from 2016-17 through 2019-20. It should be noted that data for the 2019-20 school year may not be comparable to previous years because in-person classes were suspended after March 13, 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Three general themes emerged from the overall district data. The first was that offenses declined between 2016-17 and 2018-19 and have held steady since then. Secondly, referrals shifted towards less punitive consequences over the past few years, and thirdly, there were slight improvements in disproportionality among student groups. See Table 1 for more specific details.

Table 1
Referrals and Incidents declined between 2016-17 and 2018-19

WCPSS District Referral and Incident Data				
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	*2019-20
Total referrals	871	513	488	409
Race				
White	165	111	137	121
Black	572	326	306	253
Hispanic	127	71	36	32
**Other	7	5	9	3
Gender				
Male	627	381	375	311
Female	244	132	113	98
Court system				
Adult	243	210	157	64
Juvenile	248	146	152	174
Other Diversion	158	63	101	92
Teen Court	222	94	78	79

Notes: *Data for the 2019-20 school year may not be comparable to previous years because in-person classes were suspended after March 13, 2020.

**Other includes Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific, and Multiracial.

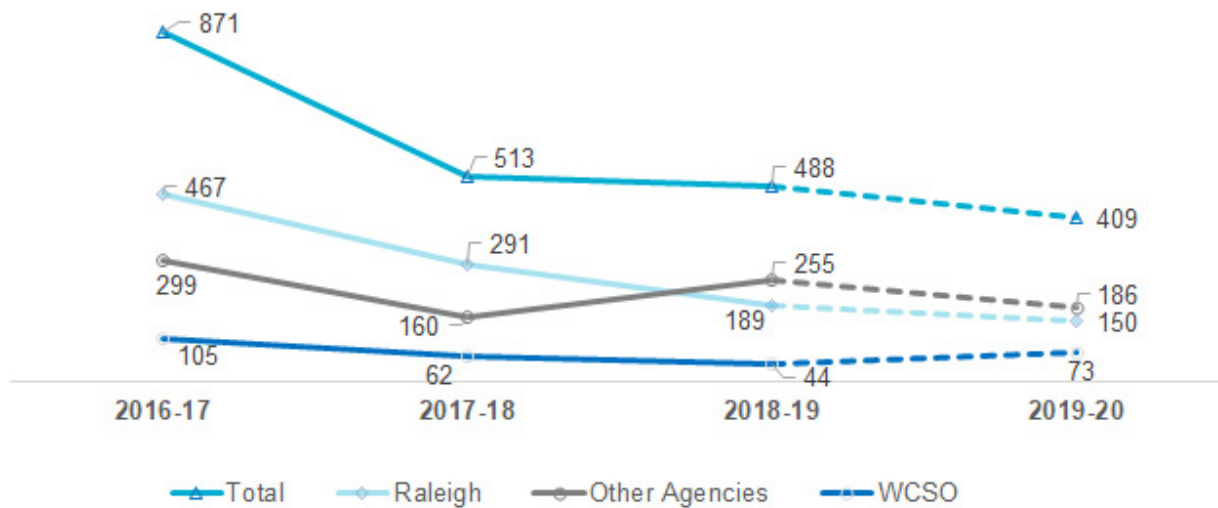


OVERALL

From 2016-17 through 2018-19, total referrals decreased by 44%. Raleigh PD referrals decreased by 60%, Wake County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) referrals decreased by 58%, and referrals from all other agencies decreased by 15%. Data from the shortened year in 2019-20 suggest those figures are showing a steady decrease except for WCSO.

Figure 1

Total referrals decreased to almost half in 2018-19 (488) from a high of 871 in 2016-17



Note: Data for the 2019-20 school year may not be comparable to previous years because in-person classes were suspended after March 13, 2020.

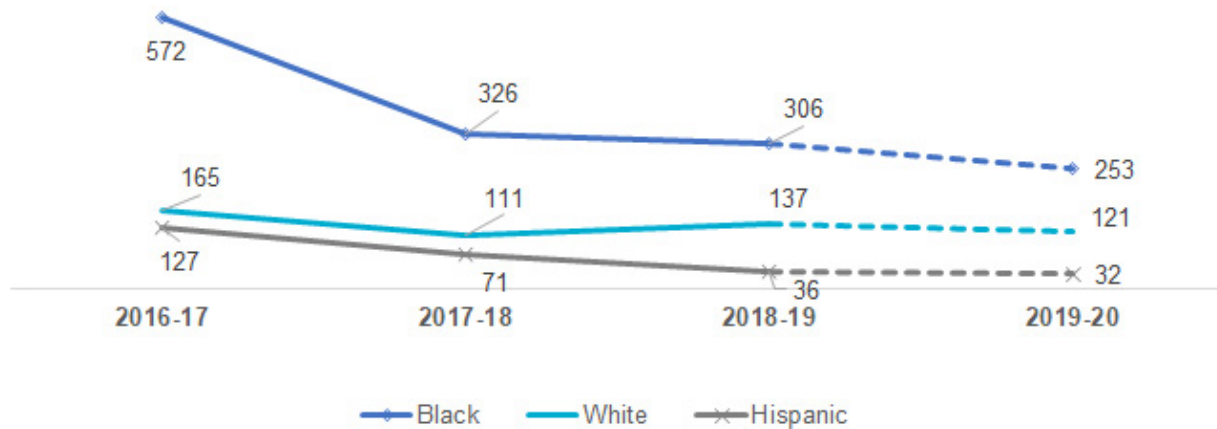


TRENDS BY RACE

From 2016-17 through 2018-19, referrals decreased by 47% for Black students, 17% for White students, and 72% for Hispanic/Latino students. Data from the shortened year in 2019-20 suggest referrals continued to decrease for the three race/ethnic groups.

Figure 2

Black students' referrals dropped to almost half (306) in 2018-19 from a high of 572 in 2016-17



Note: Data for the 2019-20 school year may not be comparable to previous years because in-person classes were suspended after March 13, 2020.

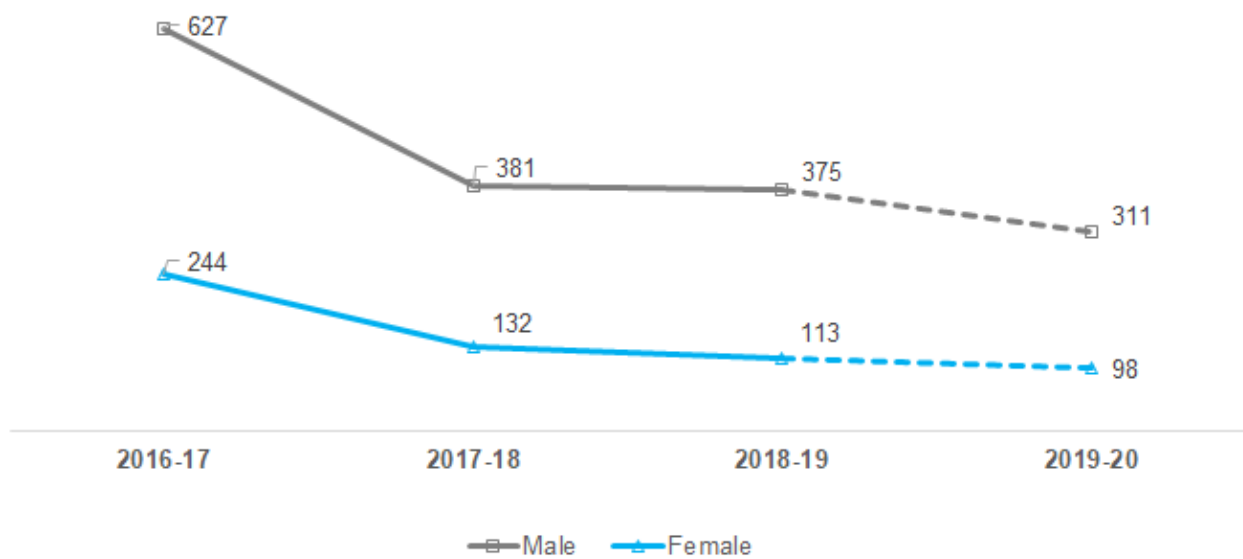


TRENDS BY GENDER

From 2016-17 through 2018-19, referrals for male students decreased by 40% and 54% for female students. Data from a shortened year in 2019-20 suggest a continuing decrease in referrals.

Figure 3

Referrals for male students decreased from a high of 627 in 2016-17 to a low of 375 in 2018-19



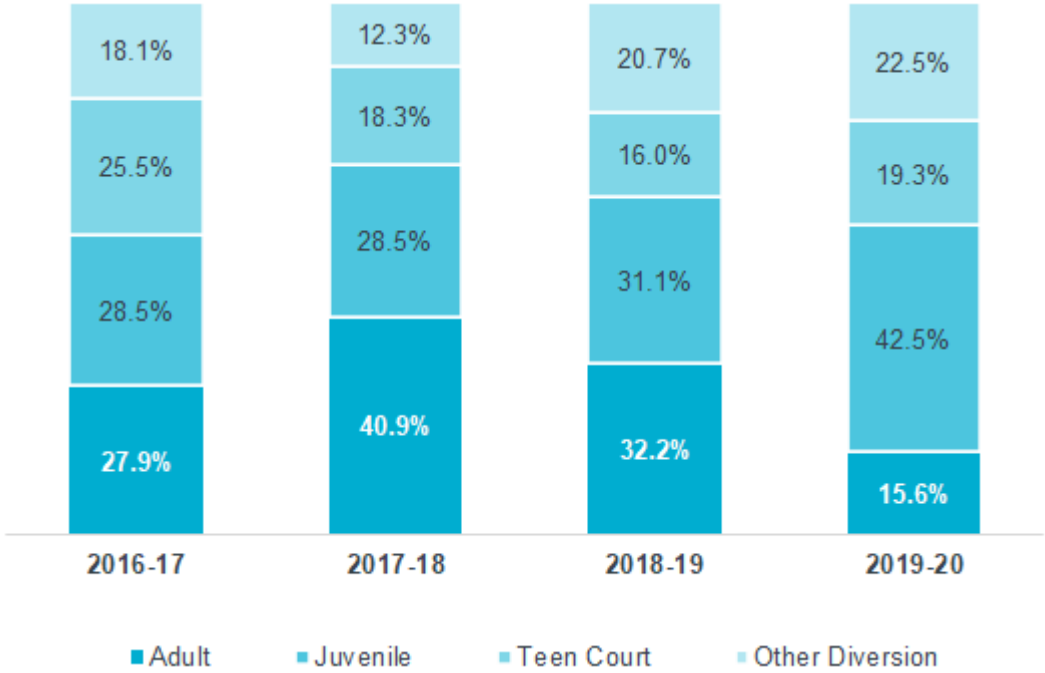
Note: Data for the 2019-20 school year may not be comparable to previous years because in-person classes were suspended after March 13, 2020.



TRENDS IN TYPE OF REFERRAL

Adult Court referrals made up 16% of the 2019-20 referrals and were proportionally lower compared to 2016-17. The Juvenile System referrals made up 43% of the 2019-20 referrals which was higher proportionally compared to 2016-17. The Teen Court referrals made up 19% of the 2019-20 referrals. Finally, Other Diversion referrals (e.g., 4H, Campbell Law Mediation Program, Haven House, Alliance, etc.) accounted for the remaining 23% of the 2019-20 referrals and was somewhat higher proportionally as compared to 2016-17.

Figure 4
After 2017-18, the proportion of Juvenile Court referrals increased while the proportion of Adult Court referrals decreased



Note: Percentages for each year may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.

Based on the ongoing disparities in the incident and referral data, WCPSS decided to undertake a broader review of the SRO program to gather data on a variety of topics related to the role of SROs and Bike Patrol Officers in WCPSS. A survey and focus groups were conducted, and the results are presented in the following sections.





SCHOOL RESOURCE AND BIKE PATROL OFFICERS SURVEY RESULTS

SUMMARY

Respondents in each stakeholder group (parents, students, school staff, and community) reported favorable perceptions of SROs and Bike Patrol Officers overall and saw them as an important part of the school security plan. Bike Patrol Officers are private security employees (not sworn law enforcement officers) and their responsibility is to patrol on bicycles the perimeter of school properties. Bike Patrol Officers are trained to observe and report security matters to school administration. Favorability ratings on questions regarding perceptions about SROs and Bike Patrol Officers ranged from around 52% to as high as 89%. However, a small percentage of respondents across stakeholder groups appeared to be unsure or unaware about SROs and their role in the school. For example, among students who said they had an SRO assigned to their school, only about one-third said they knew the officer's name. Many students responding to the survey were also not sure whether their school even had an SRO. This would suggest that awareness of the role and function of the SRO is not high among the general student population.

Inconsistencies were also found between administrators and teachers in terms of the SRO's role, with administrators being more likely than teachers to identify school staff - rather than the SRO - as the most appropriate responder to certain situations. There was also a clear difference of opinion among stakeholder groups as to whether SROs or school staff should be the primary responder to incidents of fighting.

There were some modest differences evident among subgroups (in particular grade span and racial/ethnic groups) on most questions. Overall, middle school students were more favorable in their opinions toward SROs and Bike Patrol Officers than were high school students, while parents and school staff were generally more favorable toward SROs than were students or community members. Among racial/ethnic groups, sentiments about SROs and Bike Patrol Officers were positive overall, but slightly less so among Black and Asian students.

PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

The purpose of the survey distributed to WCPSS students, parents, school staff, and members of the community was to gather their opinions on a variety of topics related to the role of School Resource Officers and Bike Patrol Officers in WCPSS middle and high schools. The survey was administered in September-October 2020 and was available in English and Spanish. Surveys of students, parents, and staff were available to all middle and high schools, as well as 10 elementary schools which have SROs assigned to them and responses were collected from tens of thousands of students, parents, staff, and community members. In some cases, the same survey question was posed to multiple stakeholder groups whereas in other cases survey questions may only have been asked of selected stakeholder groups depending on the specific nature of the question.

The survey data helped guide a larger examination of perceptions, efficiencies, and standards within the SRO program. The themes that emerged from the survey data were instrumental in the development of the topics discussed during focus groups. A breakdown of overall survey respondents by stakeholder groups is shown in Tables 2 and 3 and a summary of the survey responses by topic area is provided in the following sections.

Table 2
Over 54,000 community members, parents, students, and school staff responded.

Total Respondents	54,531
Community Members	12,919
Parents	20,810
Students	15,656
Staff	5,146
Survey Platform	Survey Monkey
Date survey released	24-Sep-20
Date survey closed	23-Oct-20



Table 3

Most respondents were parents or students who were White, Black/African American, or preferred not to disclose their race/ethnicity

	Community members	Parents	Staff	Students
Race/Ethnicity (%)				
Total Respondents	11,259	19,468	4,772	13,707
White	51.4	54.8	64.3	40.2
Black/African American	11.4	12.5	13.5	16.1
Hispanic/Latino	7.0	7.0	3.1	11.6
Native American	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.9
Asian	6.8	6.9	1.0	14.3
Other	2.8	4.4	1.5	8.3
Prefer Not to Answer	20.2	14.1	16.3	8.6
Gender (%)				
Total Respondents	11,252	19,464	4,753	13,709
Male	20.8	49.7	24.5	33.8
Female	70.7	45.8	68.7	59.9
Non-binary	0.4	0.3	0.1	1.3
Prefer Not to Answer	8.0	3.8	6.6	4.2
Prefer to Self-describe	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.8
Grade Span (%)				
Total Respondents	N/A	19,448	4,699	13,708
Elementary	N/A	17.4	10.5	N/A
Middle	N/A	34.6	40.2	39.9
High	N/A	48.0	49.3	60.1

Notes: 1. The parent survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and grade span.
 2. Not all survey respondents answered the demographic characteristics questions.



SURVEY RESPONSES BY TOPIC AREA

Perceptions of SROs

The first set of questions on the surveys asked about general awareness and perceptions about SROs in schools. The questions about the perceptions of SROs were focused on the following themes: Safety, Treatment of Students, Creating a Welcoming Environment, Students' and Parents' Knowledge of the SRO's Presence in Schools, Selection and Placement of SROs, and School Security Plans. Overall perceptions of SROs were positive among all stakeholder groups, with positive responses ranging from 52% to nearly 89% depending on the question and stakeholder group. Responses of parents and school staff members were more positive overall than students or community members. Between 4-12% of respondents said they had first-hand knowledge of a situation where a student was treated inappropriately by an SRO (Table 4).

Table 4
Perceptions of SROs are generally favorable among all stakeholder groups

	Students	Parents	Community	Staff
Does the presence of an SRO make you feel safe? (% more safe)	67.7	87.2	81.3	85.4
Do you think most students are treated appropriately by the SRO? (% yes)	60.8	76.7	57.0	88.9
Do you have first-hand knowledge of a situation where an SRO treated a WCPSS student inappropriately? (%yes)	11.6	3.6	8.1	4.3
Does the presence of an SRO help create a welcoming environment? (% yes)	52.2	77.2	N/A	77.0
Do you feel WCPSS staff should have some level of input into the selection and placement of SROs within schools? (% yes)	N/A	69.1	74.0	60.2
How important is the SRO for a school's security plan? (% very important)	N/A	78.1	67.3	78.4

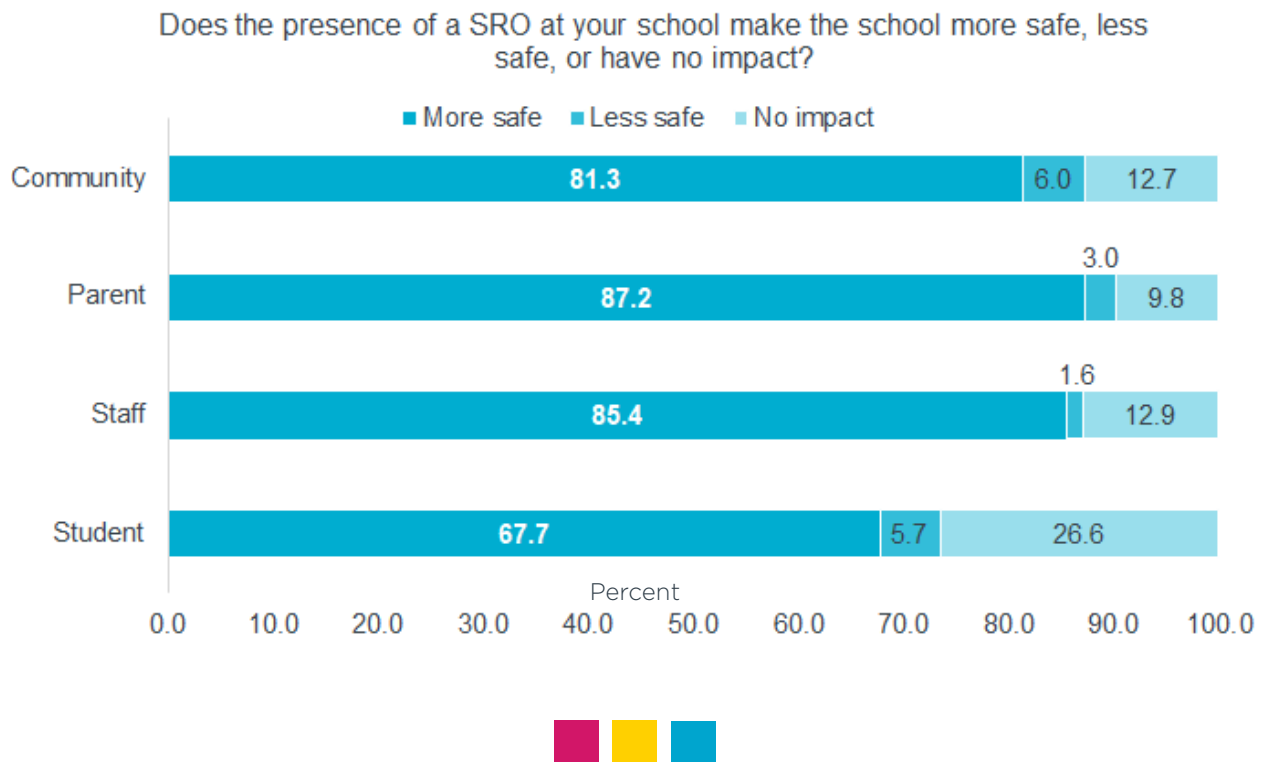


Figures A1-A18 in the Appendix contain additional results for these survey questions by subgroups within the stakeholder categories. Among students, responses were more generally positive for middle school students, with a more mixed pattern among racial/ethnic groups. With respect to first-hand knowledge of a student being treated inappropriately by an SRO, Black and Hispanic/Latino students were more likely to respond affirmatively. Among parents and community members, responses were very consistent across subgroups, with one exception - parents of Black students were consistently less positive across all questions. Staff responses were consistently high across all questions, with the exception of administrators being more likely than teachers or other staff to have first-hand knowledge of a student being treated inappropriately by an SRO.

School Safety

School safety is one of the biggest concerns of students, parents, and the community especially given the increase of school violence over the past few years. School leaders have taken precautionary measures to improve the safety of their schools, and one of those steps includes the implementation of an SRO program (Myrstol, 2011). Overall, between 67-87% of respondents felt that having an SRO at school made the school more safe (Figure 5). However, it should be noted that student sentiment toward the presence of an SRO in schools is less positive than that of parents, community, and staff. Most of the research regarding these differences is unclear, however, in many studies Black students and those who had negative interactions with SROs generally felt less safe in schools with SROs (Hudson et al., 2019). Black and Asian students who responded to this survey were less likely than their peers to report that SROs made their school more safe (Figure A1 in the Appendix).

Figure 5
SROs were viewed as making schools more safe



Treatment of Students by SROs

Over 77% of parents and staff, and approximately 61% of students believe SROs treat students appropriately (Figure 6). While Black students (53%) and parents of Black students (60%) responded positively, their responses were not as favorable as other ethnic groups (Appendix Figures A8 through A11). When asked if they had firsthand knowledge of students being treated inappropriately, almost all the respondents indicated they did not (Figure 7). The same was true when the responses were disaggregated by ethnicities (Appendix Figures A12 to A15). Interestingly, over 30% of community members and students responded “Not Sure” to this question, suggesting either a lack of information or possibly conflicting sentiments on the topic.

Figure 6

SROs were generally seen as treating students appropriately

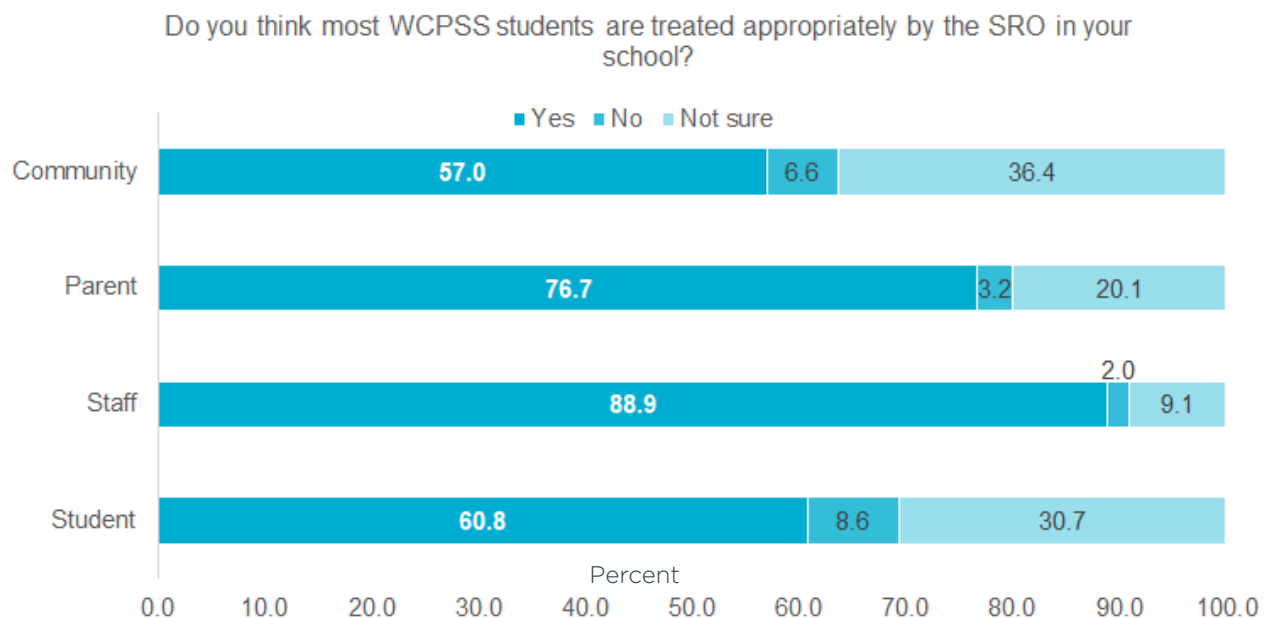
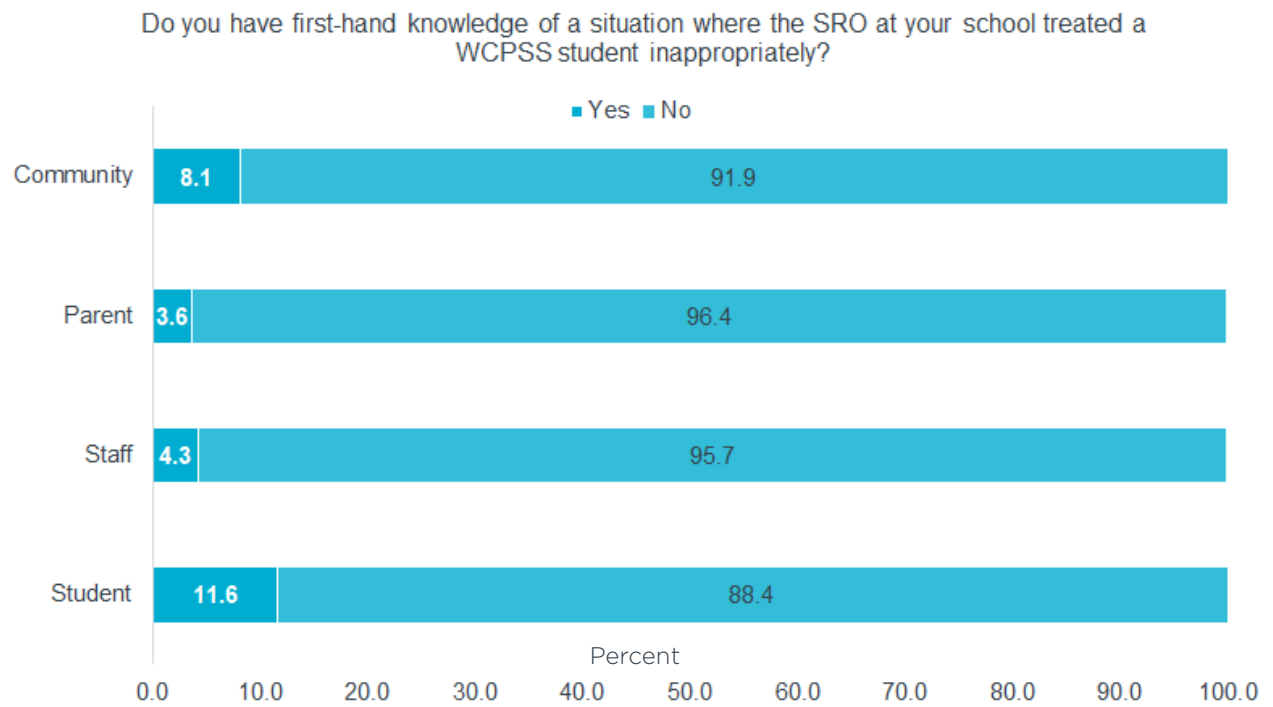


Figure 7

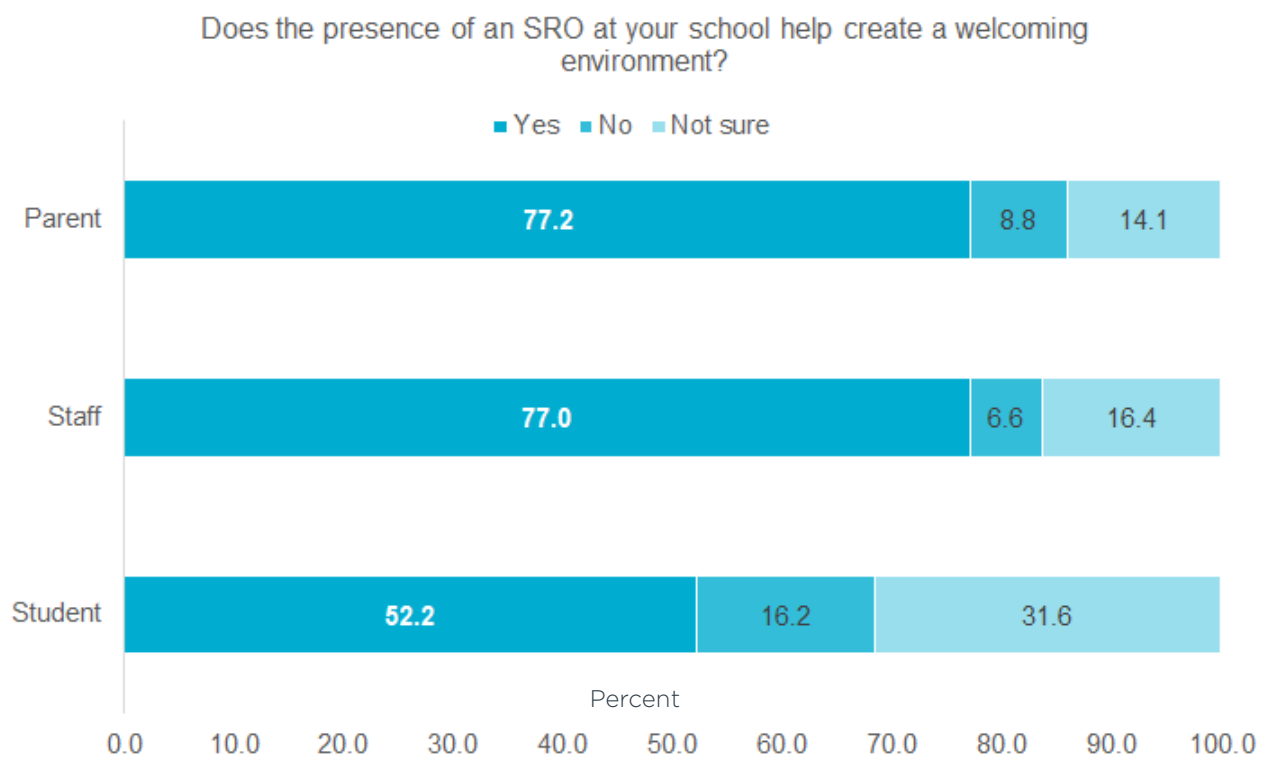
Few respondents reported first-hand knowledge of SROs treating students inappropriately



Welcoming Environment

More than three-fourths of parent and staff respondents felt that SROs create a welcoming environment, while 52% of students reported similarly (Figure 8). The responses dropped to just below 50% among high school students, Black students, and Asian students (Appendix Figure A5). Similar to the question about appropriate treatment (Figure 6), over 30% of students said they were not sure whether SROs create a welcoming environment.

Figure 8
SROs appear to help create a welcoming environment



Knowledge of the SRO's presence in school and comfort with reporting incidents

Thirty-eight percent of students responded they were not sure if their school had an SRO working in their school (Figure 9), with middle school students being more likely to be unsure than high school students. Although SROs are primarily assigned to middle and high schools, the survey link was posted on the district website, and as such was technically accessible to all students. Among students who said their school had an SRO, only 34% said they knew the SRO's name (Figure 11). Similarly, 32% of parents indicated they were not sure if an SRO was assigned to their child's school in 2018-19 or 2019-20. Three-fourths of student respondents indicated they felt very or somewhat comfortable reporting an incident to an SRO (Figure 12). Owens (2017) explains that students are more likely to report incidents to SROs if they believe SROs are "friendly, helpful people who are interested in protecting rather than persecuting them" (pg. 15).

Figure 9

Students' knowledge of SROs in their school was inconsistent

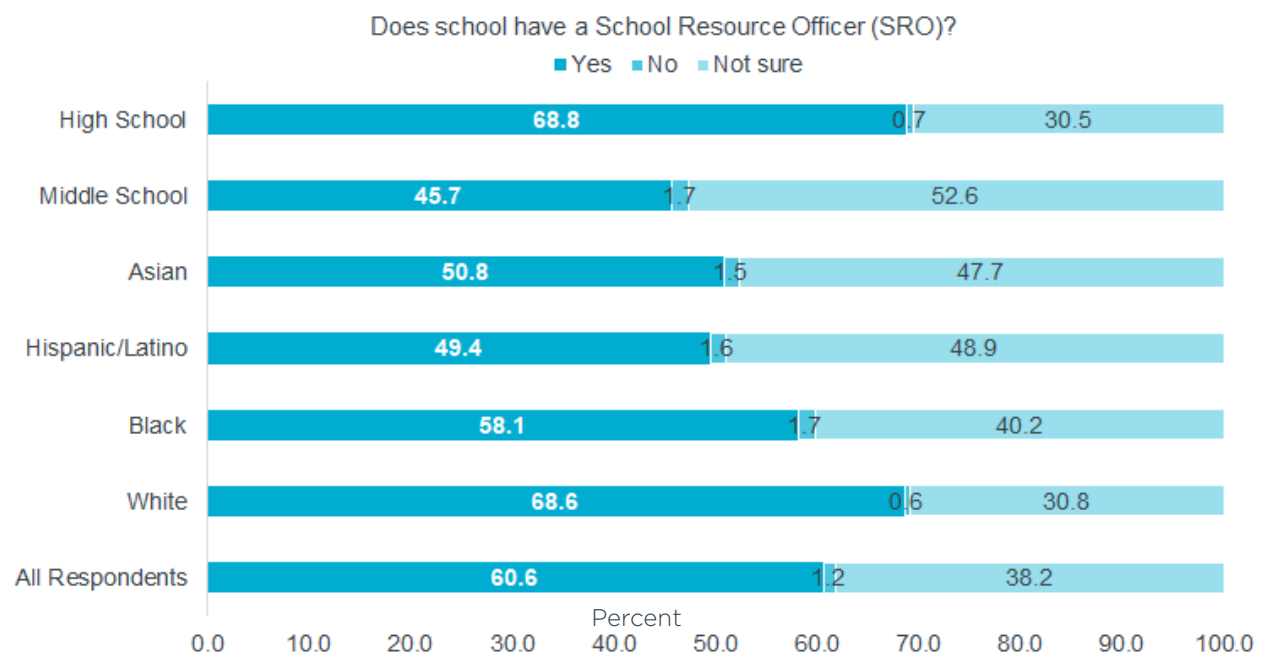


Figure 10

Parents' knowledge of an SRO assigned to their child's school in 2018-19 or 2019-20 was inconsistent

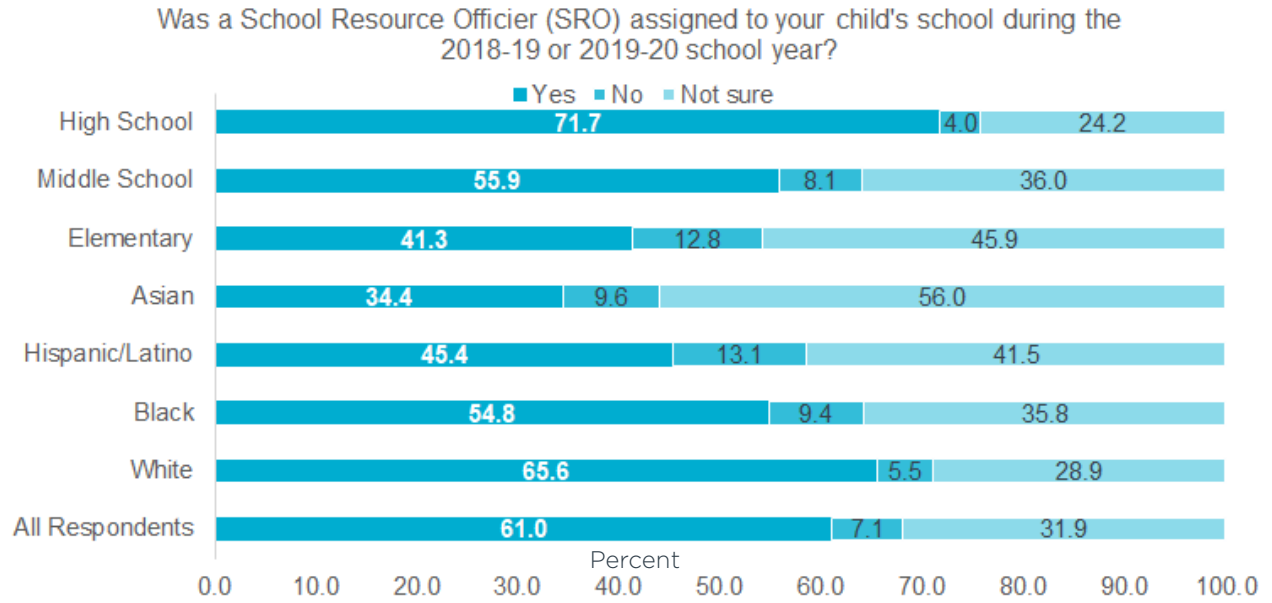


Figure 11

Students' knowledge of their SRO's name was relatively low

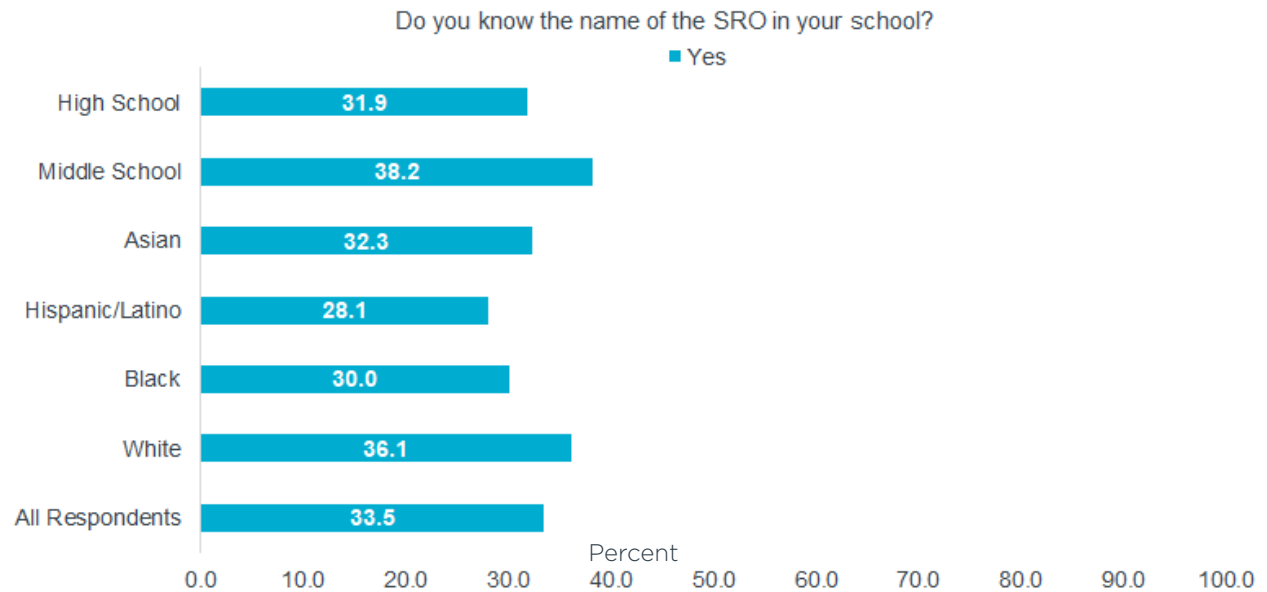
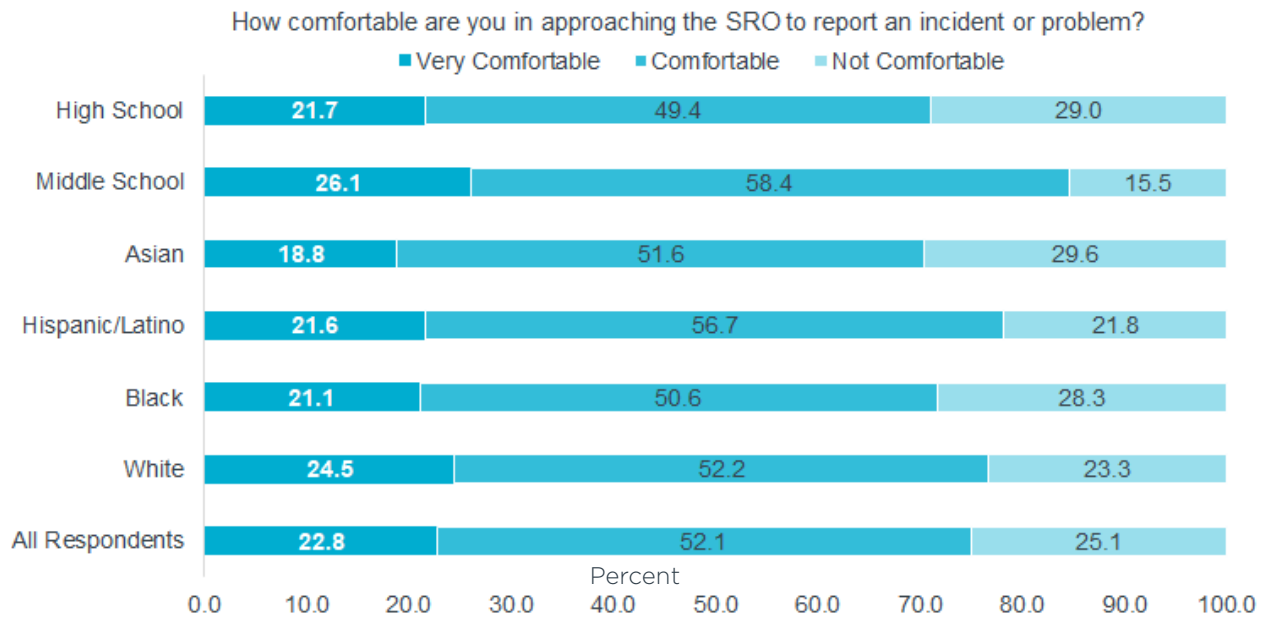


Figure 12

Students' comfort level with reporting incidents to their SRO was mixed

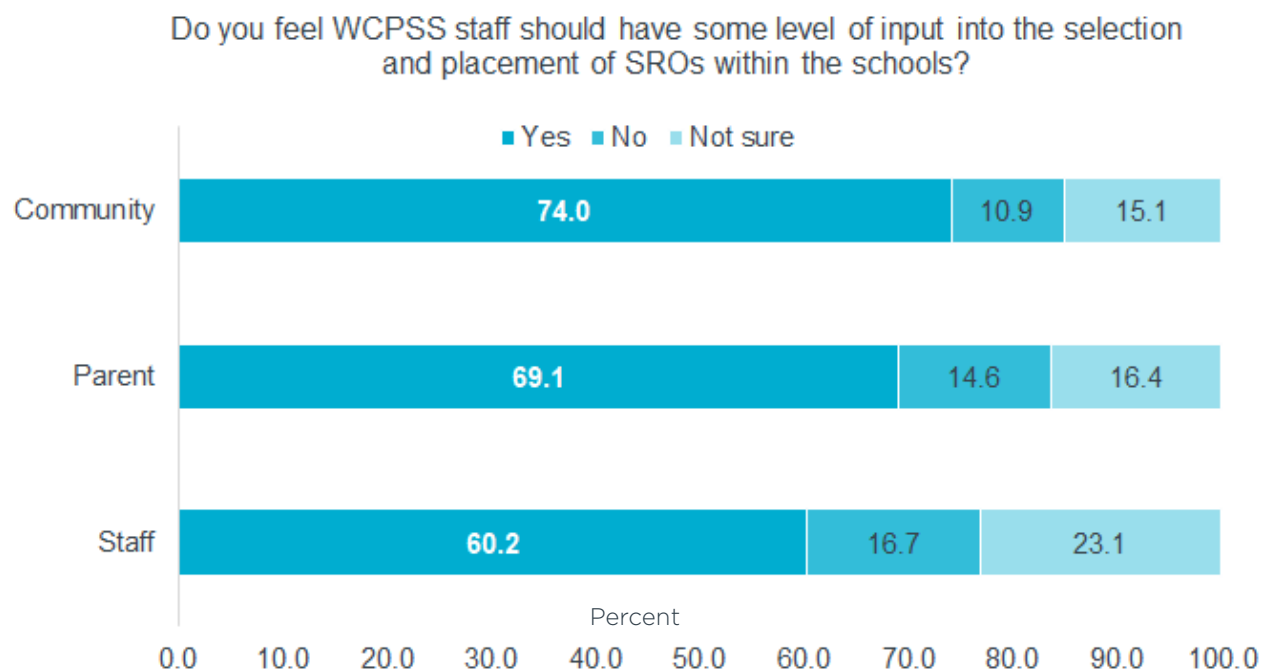


WCPSS staff input on the selection and placement of SROs

Between 60-74% of the respondents indicated that staff should have input about the selection and placement of SROs (Figure 13) indicating a need for increased collaboration between WCPSS and the local law enforcement agencies. While most staff (62%) felt SROs are trained to work with students in a school environment, 39% either felt differently or were not sure (see Appendix Figure A70). Additionally, respondents were asked if complaints involving inappropriate actions taken by an SRO should be handled by school administration, local law enforcement or someone else, and interestingly they were split in their responses. About 35% of the respondents felt school administration should handle SRO complaints and 46% thought the local law enforcement agencies should handle inappropriate actions taken by an SRO (see Appendix Figure A68). According to Thomas et al. (2013), the most effective SRO programs are “built on careful selection and training of officers, well-defined roles and responsibilities, and a comprehensive agreement between the school and the law enforcement agency that fosters collaboration, communication, and ongoing evaluation” (pg. 1).

Figure 13

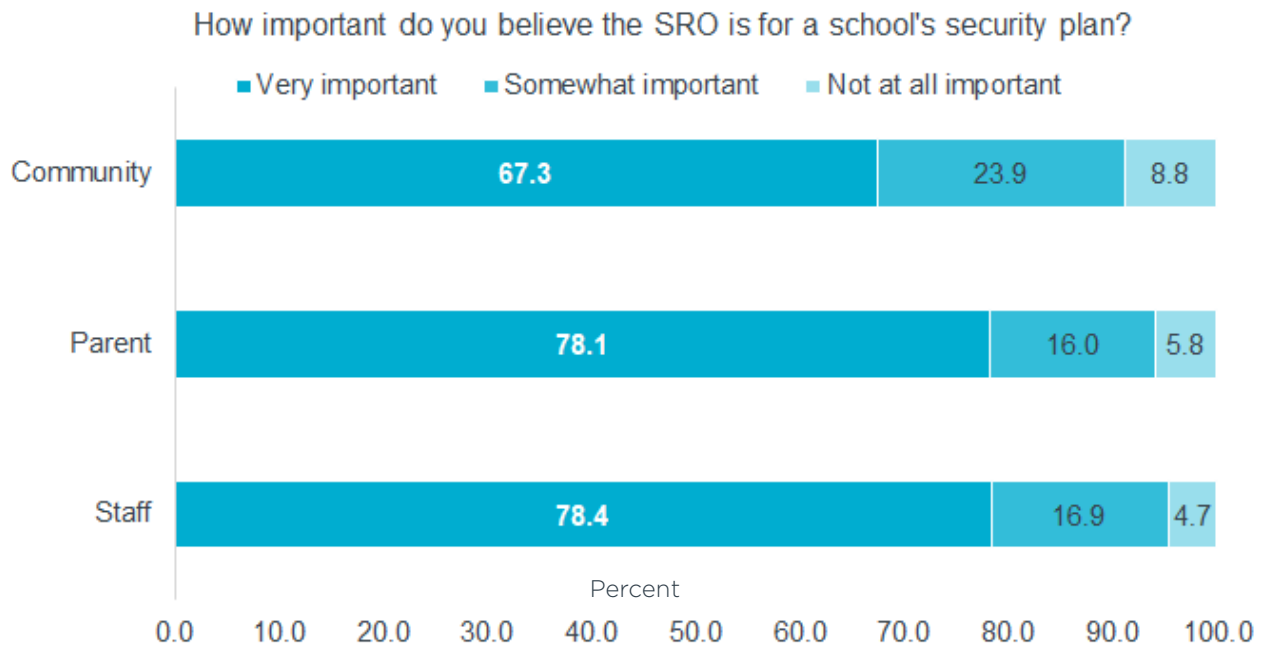
Respondents felt school staff should have input on selection and placement of SROs



School Security Plan - SROs

Each school within WCPSS has several components to create a safe and secure environment for learning and the SRO program is one of those components. Over two-thirds of stakeholders responded that SROs should be an integral part of the school's security plan (Figure 14). Responses by racial/ethnic group and grade span can be found in Figures A62 through 64 in the Appendix.

Figure 14
SROs are seen as important for the school security plan



PERCEPTIONS OF BIKE PATROL OFFICERS

The next set of questions on the surveys asked about general awareness and perceptions about Bike Patrol Officers in schools. Overall perceptions of Bike Patrol Officers were positive among all stakeholder groups, with positive responses ranging from 50% to slightly over 81% depending on the question and stakeholder group (Table 5 and Figure 15). Responses of parents were more positive overall than those by students, school staff, or community members. Between 3-9% of respondents said they had first-hand knowledge of a situation where a student was treated unfairly by a Bike Patrol Officer.

Table 5

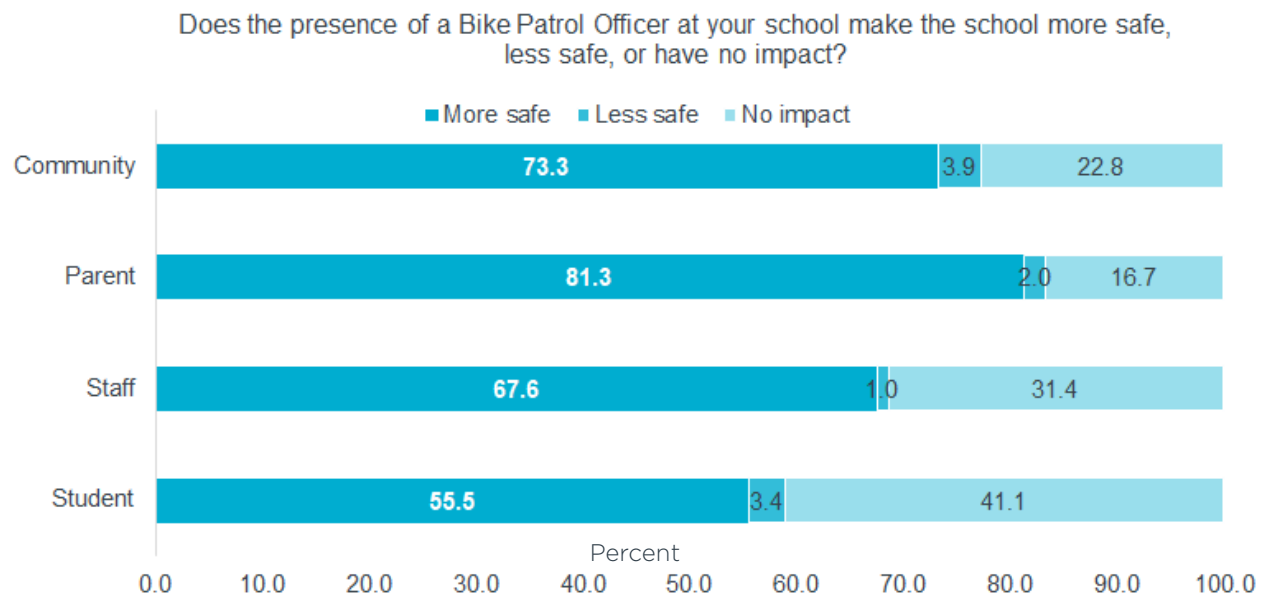
Perceptions of Bike Patrol Officers were generally positive among all stakeholder groups.

	Students	Parents	Community	Staff
Does the presence of a Bike Patrol Officer make you feel safe? (% more safe)	55.5	81.3	73.6	67.6
Do you think most students are treated appropriately by the Bike Patrol Officer? (% yes)	60.9	72.0	42.7	60.9
Do you have first-hand knowledge of a situation where a Bike Patrol Officer treated a WCPSS student inappropriately? (% yes)	8.6	3.3	2.9	4.9
Does the presence of a Bike Patrol Officer help create a welcoming environment? (% yes)	50.9	74.2	58.9	61.1
How important is the Bike Patrol Officer for a school's security plan? (% very important)	N/A	62.6	49.9	47.7



Figure 15

Bike Patrol Officers make schools more safe



Treatment of Students by Bike Patrol Officers

Close to three-fourths of parents and staff reported that Bike Patrol Officers treat students appropriately. Around 60% of students said the same, whereas more than half of the community respondents were not sure (Figure 16). Additionally, a large majority of the respondents indicated that they did not have first-hand knowledge of students being treated inappropriately by Bike Patrol Officers (Figure 17). Between 51-74% of respondents said Bike Patrol Officers help create a welcoming school environment (Figure 18).

Figure 16

Students appear to be treated appropriately by the Bike Patrol Officers

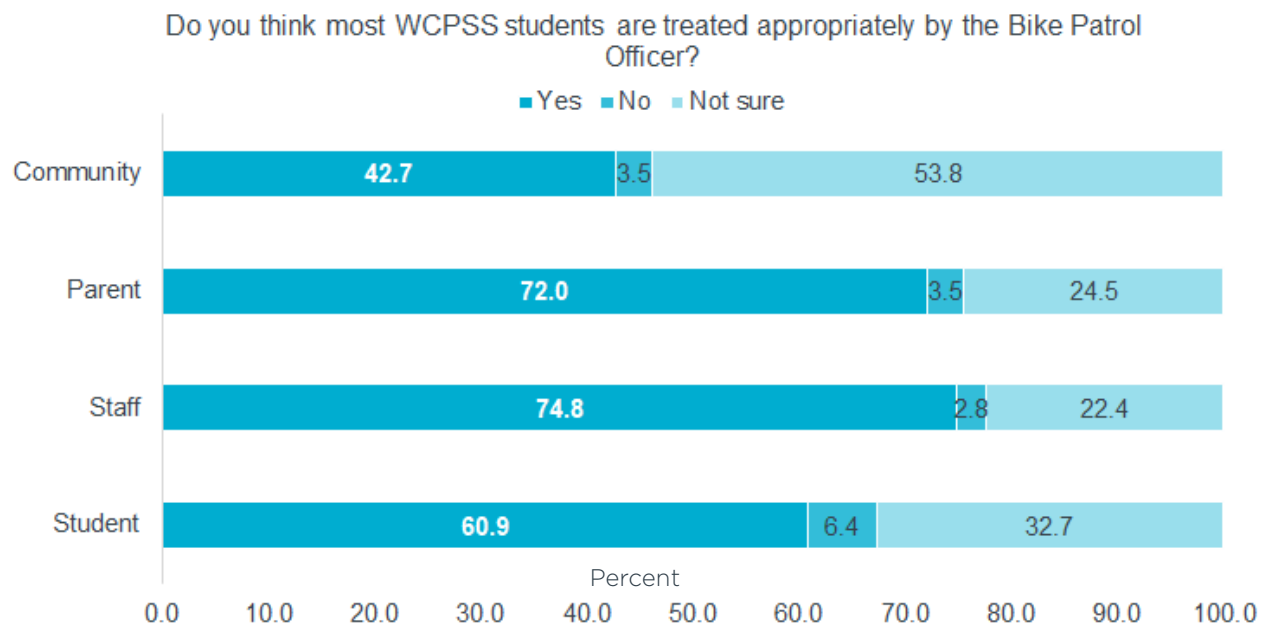


Figure 17

Knowledge of Bike Patrol Officers treating students inappropriately is rare

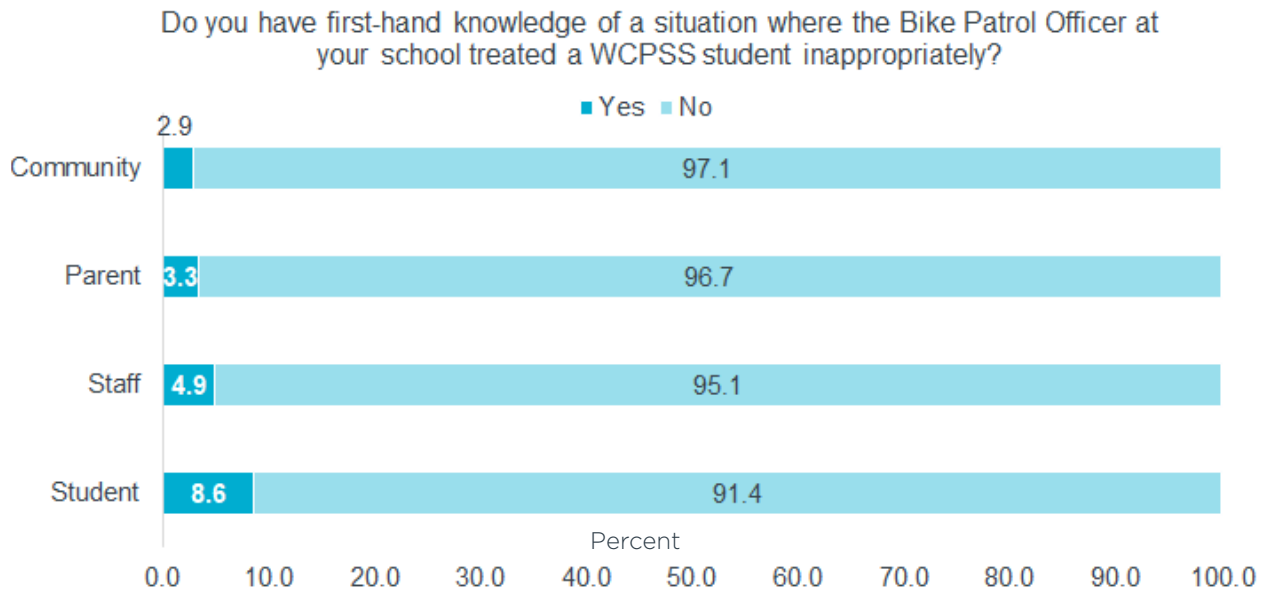
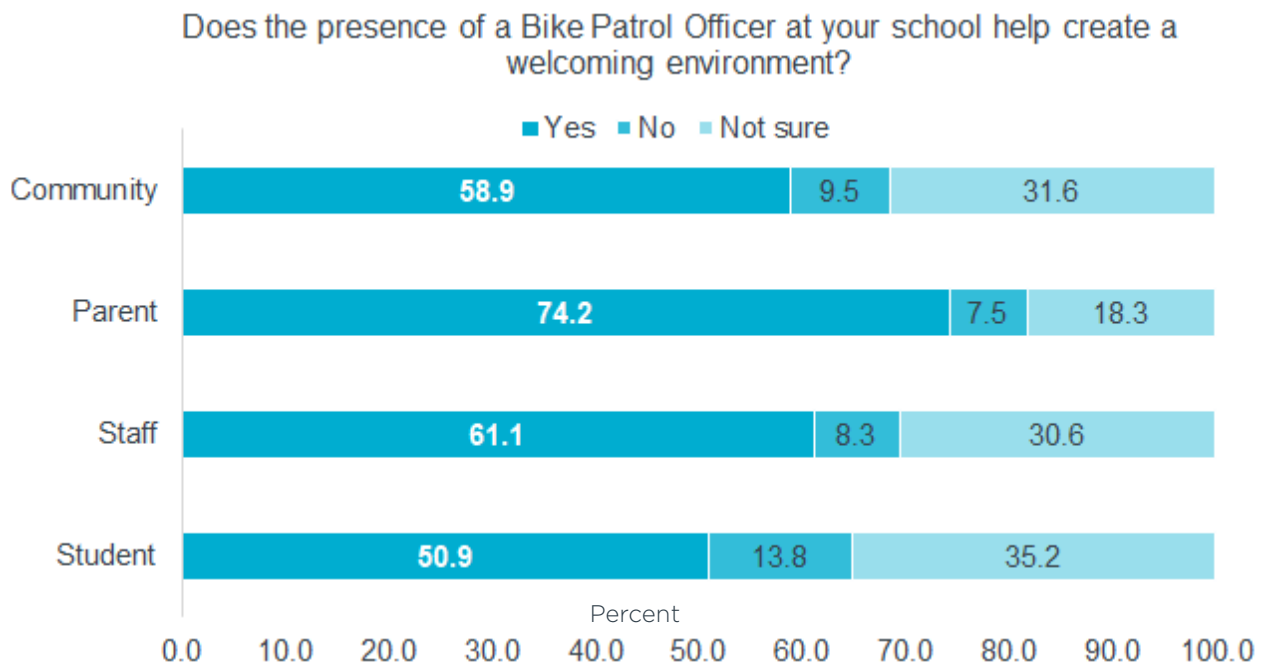


Figure 18

Bike Patrol Officers are generally seen as helping create a welcoming environment

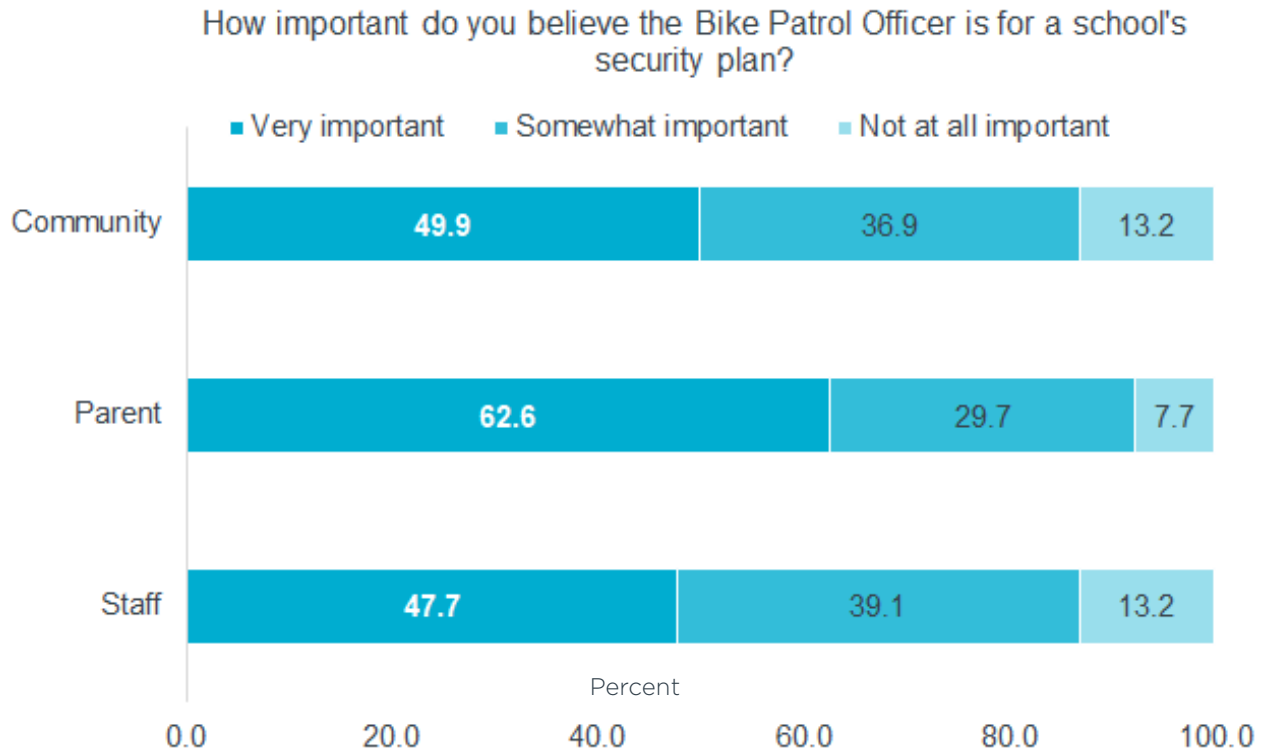


School Security Plan - Bike Patrol Officers

Like SROs, Bike Patrol Officers are viewed as an important part of the security environment. The vast majority of respondents indicated that Bike Patrol Officers are a very or somewhat important part of the school's security plan (Figure 19). Responses by racial/ethnic group and grade span can be found in the Appendix (Figures A65 through 67).

Figure 19

Bike Patrol Officers are viewed as important for a school's security plan



POLICIES AND PRACTICES RELATED TO SROS AND BIKE PATROL OFFICERS

The next set of questions asked about the roles and proper functions of SROs and Bike Patrol Officers in schools. In examining the possible adverse events that could occur on a school campus and the appropriate primary responder to those events, the WCPSS SRO Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with local law enforcement agencies stipulates that it is appropriate for SROs to involve themselves in matters that are criminal in nature. The MOU is also clear that school policy violations are to be handled by school staff. Bike Patrol Officers are not addressed in the MOU as primary responders to either criminal events or violations of policy; their role is to report events to school staff or the SRO. While some of these issues are explicitly spelled out in the SRO MOU, asking these questions nonetheless allowed for stakeholders to express their opinions and feelings about those issues as compared to the stipulations of the MOU.

Respondents were asked to identify whether SROs, Bike Patrol Officers, or school staff should be the primary responders to a host of adverse events that might occur on a school campus. The majority of the responses across stakeholder groups indicated that SROs should respond to incidents involving controlled substances (over 70%), possible possession of a weapon (over 83%), security at after-school activities (over 64%), property theft (over 67%) and trespassing (over 65%). Across stakeholder groups, school staff were generally thought to be the best responders for meeting with disgruntled parents, dress code violators, and medical emergencies. Stakeholders

were split, however, in their beliefs about responders to students fighting. Over 45% felt SROs should be the primary responder for fights with a little more than 39% felt that school staff should be the primary responder. While Bike Patrol Officers were not often cited as the most appropriate responders to adverse events, a high majority of responders felt they should be the primary responders for trespassing and violations occurring during after-school/athletic events. Among school staff, administrators were consistently more likely than teachers and other school-based employees to identify staff as the ideal primary responder for adverse events rather than the SRO or Bike Patrol Officer (Figures 20-28). Additionally, the majority of Principals (81%) and Assistant Principals (66%) felt that SROs should respond to violations of the law but there was a mixed perception among other subgroups (see Appendix Figure A69).



Figure 20

The vast majority of respondents felt SROs should be primary responders for search of controlled substances

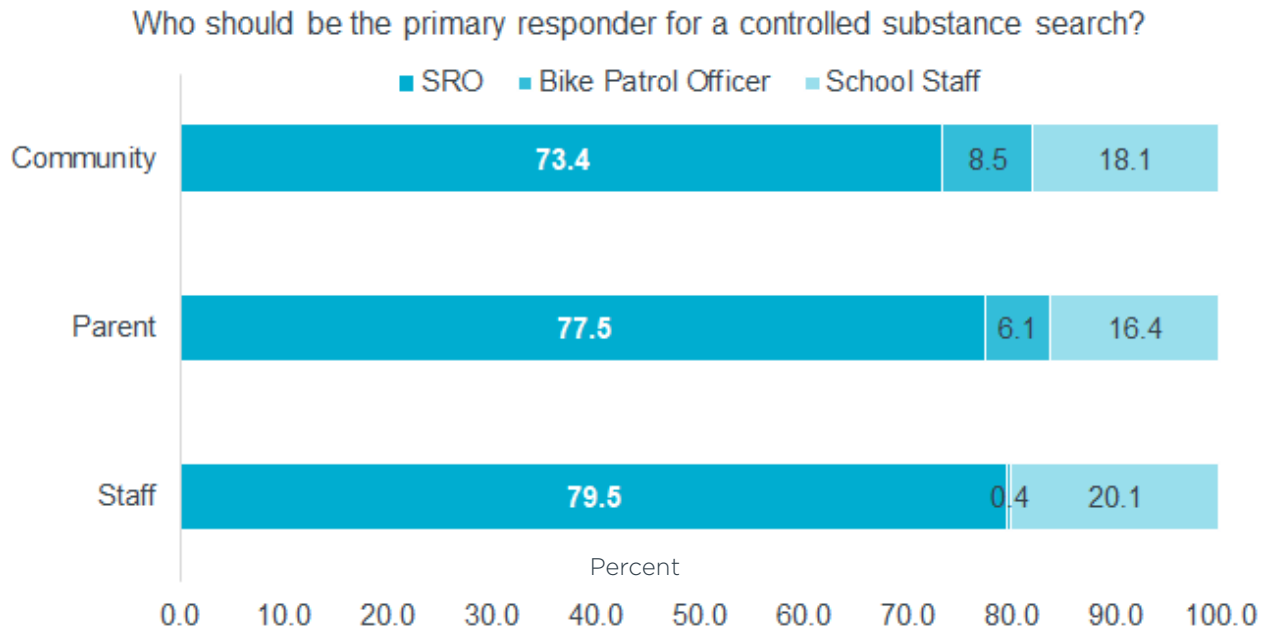


Figure 21

The vast majority of respondents felt school staff should be primary responders for disgruntled parents

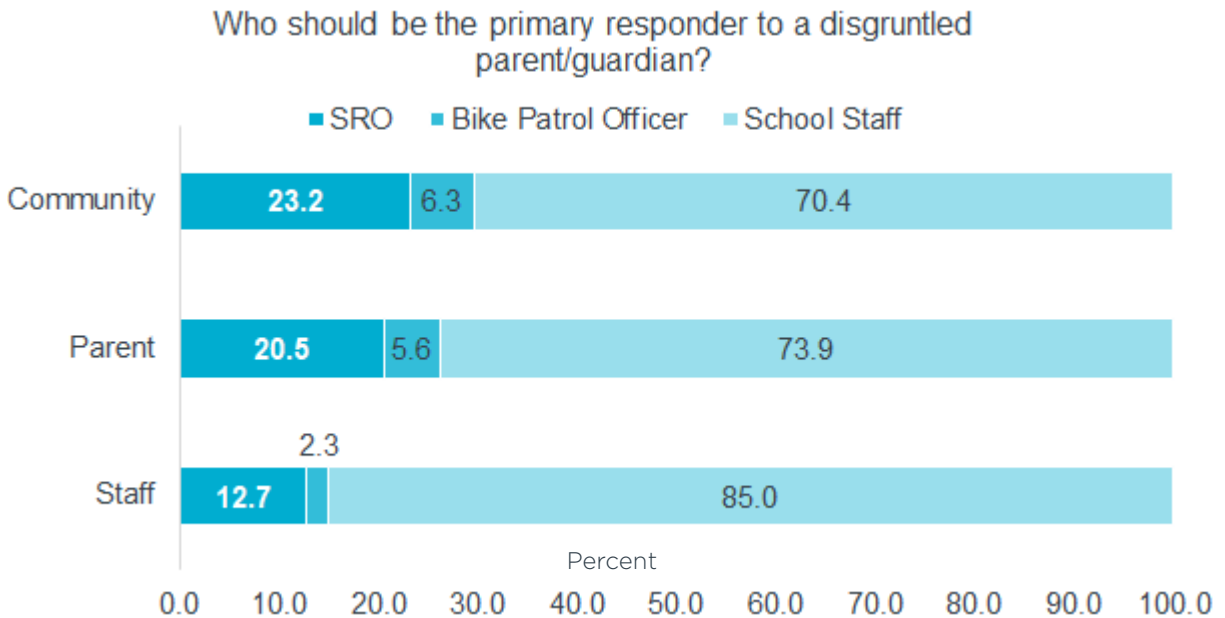


Figure 22

Almost all respondents felt school staff should be primary responders for dress code violations

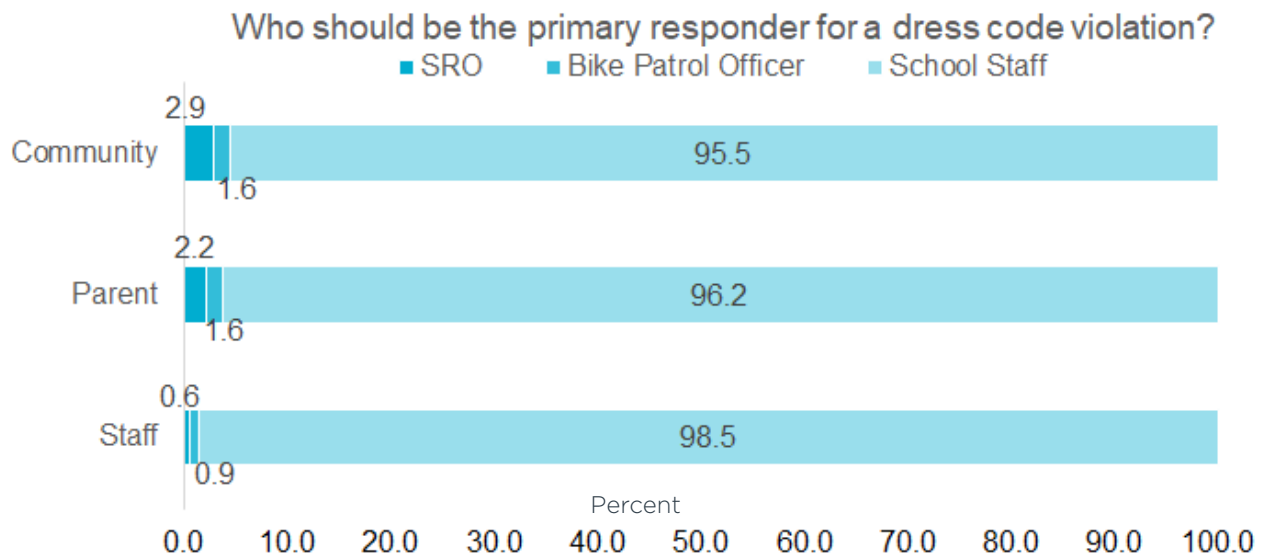


Figure 23

More than half of respondents felt school staff should be primary responders for medical emergencies

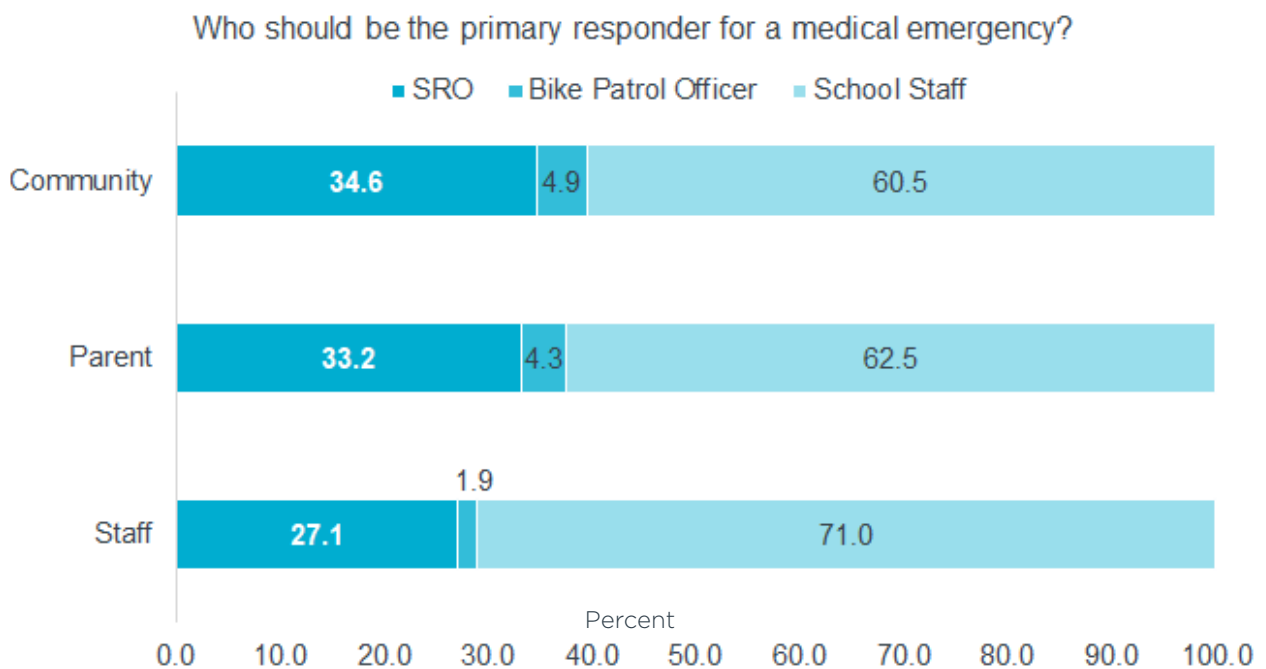


Figure 24

The vast majority of respondents felt that SROs should be primary responders for possible weapon possession

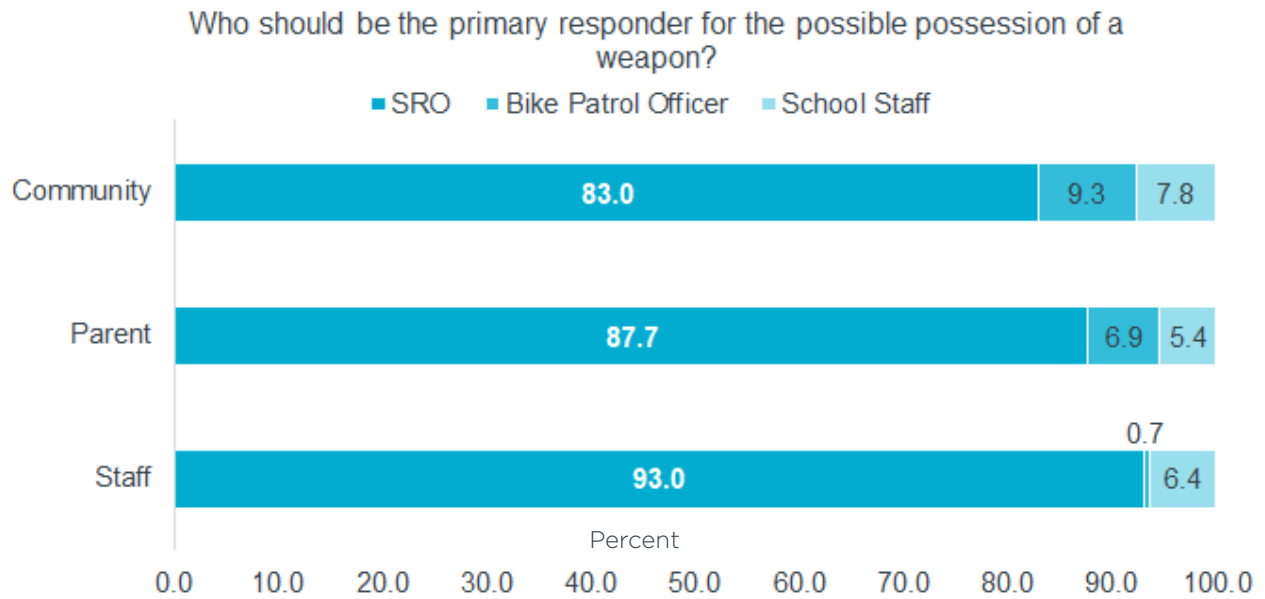


Figure 25

Most respondents felt SROs should be primary responders for property theft

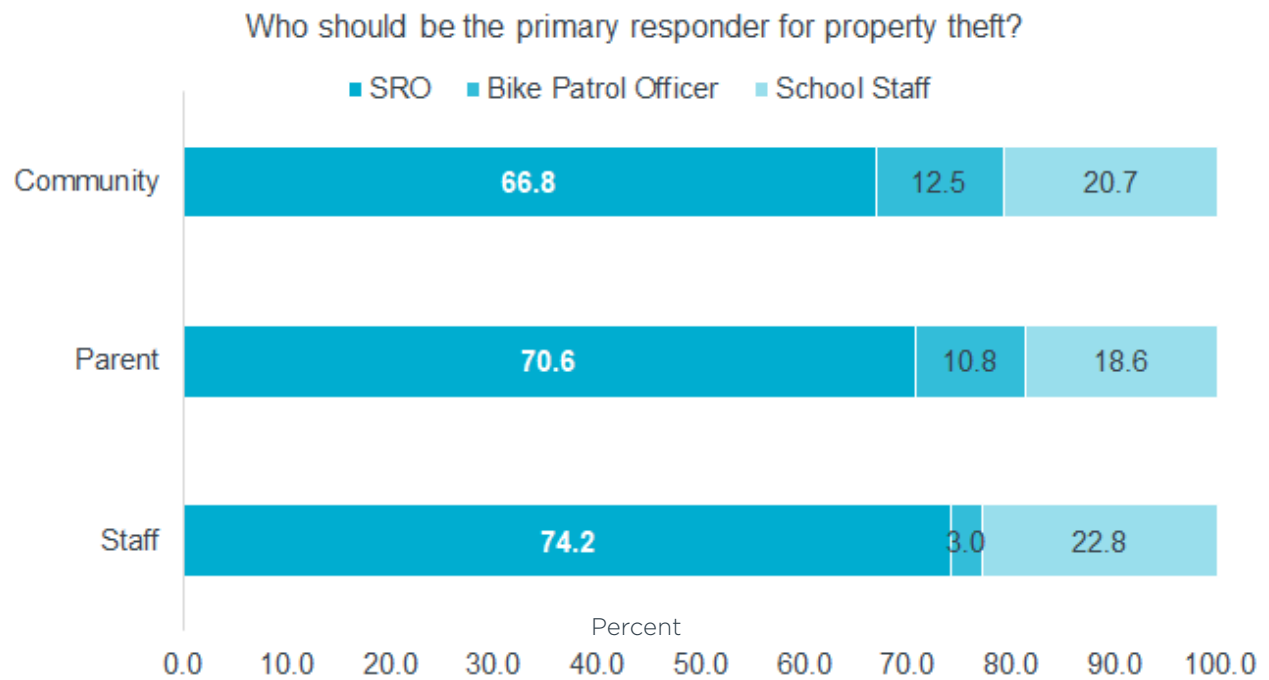


Figure 26

Over half of respondents felt that SROs should be primary responders for security at after-school events

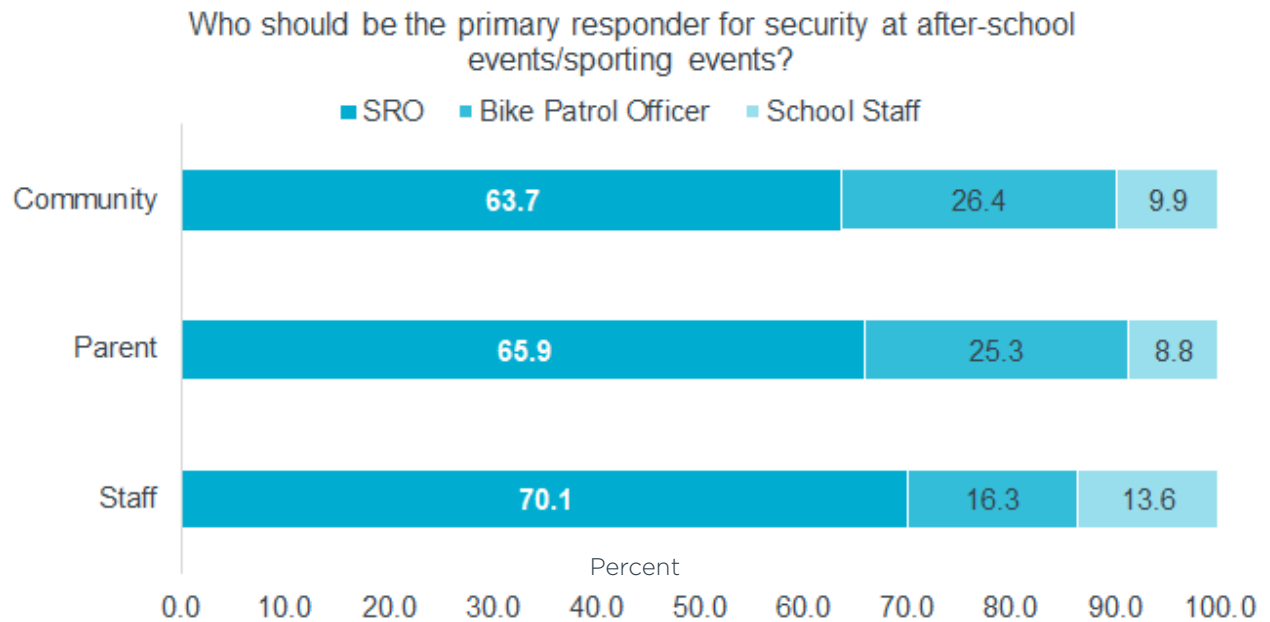


Figure 27

About half of respondents felt SROs and school staff should be primary responders for students fighting

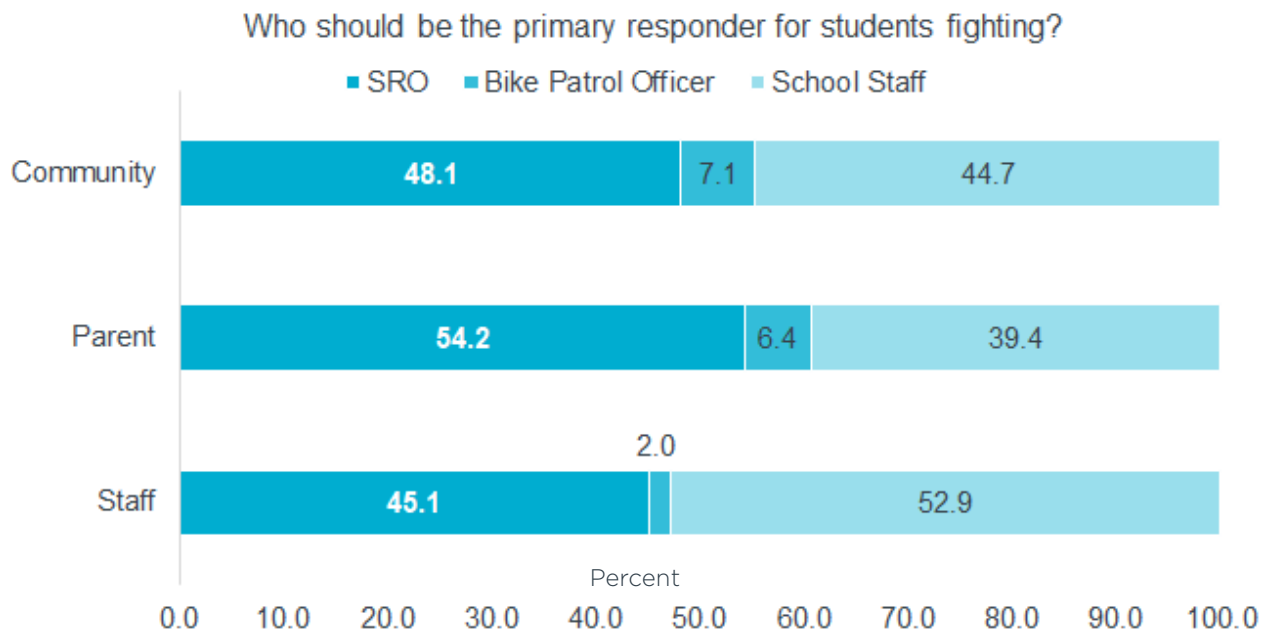
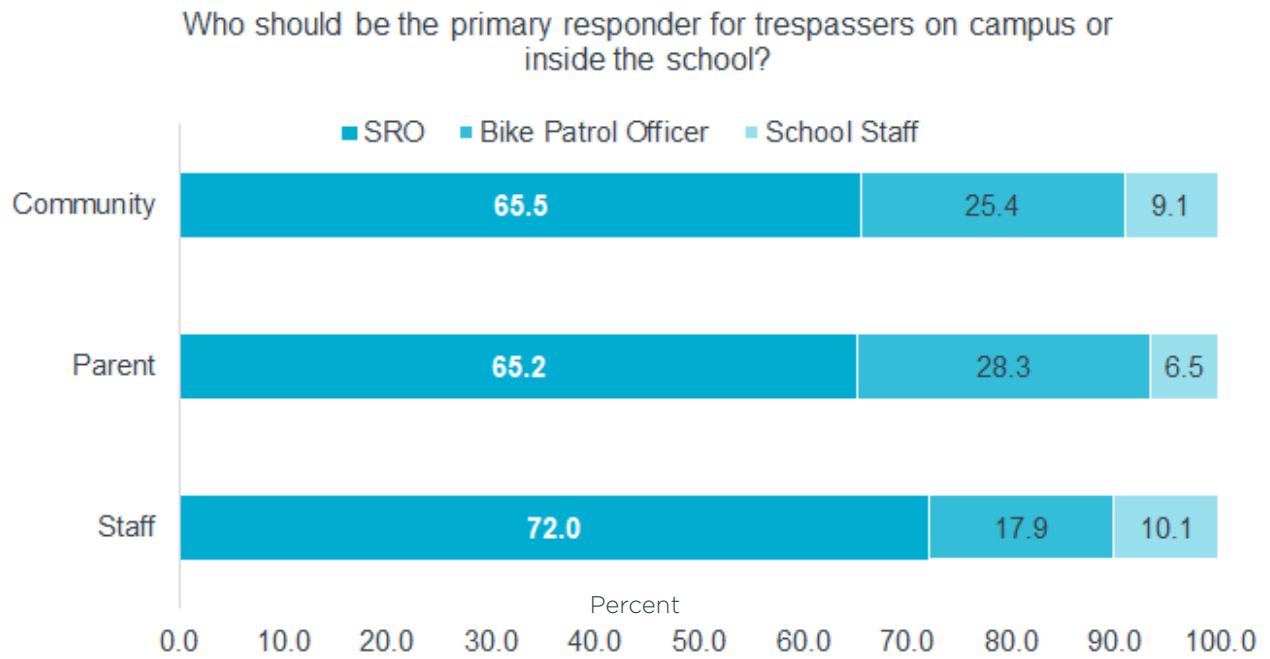


Figure 28

About two-thirds of respondents felt SROs should be primary responders for trespassers in schools





FOCUS GROUPS

SUMMARY

To unpack the themes that emerged from the School Resource and Bike Patrol Officers Survey Results, staff in the Data, Research, and Accountability (DRA) department conducted a series of virtual focus groups. Fifteen focus groups were conducted and were comprised of the following stakeholder groups: students, teachers, principals, parents/community members, law enforcement officers, and Central Services Security Department staff. During each of the focus groups, participants were presented with a series of four discussion topics. Some of the general themes that emerged from the discussions included: safety, negative perceptions/experiences, racial biases and disparities, lack of training for school setting, goodness of fit and SRO assignment, and limited interactions. Across the discussion topics and stakeholder groups, two consistent themes became apparent. The first theme was that the SRO role is neither consistently understood by nor communicated to the school community. For example, participants commented that there needs to be clear communication regarding when SROs are to be involved, and that the day-to-day tasks SROs engage in to enhance the school community are not well known. The second theme was the importance of SROs building positive relationships with the school community. In doing so, SROs become valued, trusted members of the school community, and help to establish a learning environment in which all students feel safe and secure. These focus group discussion results make an important contribution to the broader review of the SRO program in WCPSS.

PURPOSE OF THE FOCUS GROUPS

The purpose of the focus groups was to unpack the themes that emerged from the SROs survey results. Staff in the Data, Research, and Accountability (DRA) Department conducted a series of virtual focus groups from December 9th, 2020 through February 4th, 2021. To ensure a broad representation of perspectives, both random and purposeful participant sampling were used to identify and invite participants. Fifteen focus groups were conducted. A breakdown of overall participants by stakeholder groups is shown in Table 6.

Table 6
A total of 100 students, teachers, principals, parents/community members, law enforcement officers, and security staff participated

Total Participants	100
Middle and high school students	5
Students from the Superintendent's Student Leadership Council	5
Elementary, middle, and high school teachers	11
Teachers from the Superintendent's Teacher Advisory Council	7
Elementary, middle, and high school principals	21
Principals and assistant principals from the Division of Principals' Safety and Security Committee	10
Parents and community members/interest groups	14
Law enforcement officers/SROs	18
Central Services Security Department staff	9



During each of the focus groups, participants were presented with a series of four discussion topics. The focus group discussion topics were developed by a collaborative team from the WCPSS DRA and Security Departments (see Table 7). Data were collected and coded using a real-time online brainstorming tool. DRA staff reviewed and summarized themes that emerged from the data. The main themes for each of the discussion topics are summarized in the following sections.

Table 7
Focus group participants responded to four discussion topics

Topic 1	What is the purpose of SROs in schools? What should or could be the purpose?
Topic 2	Most respondents to our survey—parents, students, staff, and others—felt SROs helped to keep schools safe, but there were some who were not sure and others who said they made the school less safe. Why do you think some respondents did NOT feel that SROs make schools more safe?
Topic 3	Most respondents to our survey—parents, students, staff, and others—said that students were treated fairly by SROs in general, but some said they knew of specific situations where SROs had treated students unfairly. Why do you think some respondents felt that students are not treated fairly by SROs?
Topic 4	In our SRO surveys, many respondents gave responses of "not sure" to a number of the questions about SROs (e.g., when asked if SROs created a welcoming environment, 32% said they were not sure). Why do you think they said that? Do you think that they didn't have enough information to answer the question? Do you think they were just conflicted about the issue? Another reason?

FOCUS GROUPS RESULTS BY DISCUSSION TOPIC

Discussion Topic 1: Purpose of SROs in Schools

There was consistency across all stakeholder groups that SROs are perceived to have two primary roles and responsibilities: 1) building positive relationships with the school community and 2) providing a safe and secure learning environment. By learning students' names, attending and participating in school activities, establishing trust, and mentoring students, participants felt SROs help to establish a learning environment in which students feel safe and secure. Participants also felt that SROs have the opportunity to counter students' prior negative associations and experiences with law enforcement outside of the school setting by establishing positive connections with students. The second primary role identified by stakeholders was ensuring campus safety which included protecting all students, staff, and visitors from physical harm (e.g., school shootings, gangs, weapons, physical altercations, etc.), providing an immediate connection to emergency personnel, and intervening with criminal offenses.



Even though these two SRO roles were clearly identified, students, teachers, and parents/community members expressed that the SRO role is neither consistently understood by nor communicated to the school community. For example, some students expressed that the purpose of SROs was never formally shared with them. Students also noted that SROs are inconsistent with respect to the specific student behaviors for which they intervene. Parents and community members did not think SROs should be responsible for enforcing school policies; however, the aforementioned survey results suggested that many school staff members think the opposite (e.g., over 45% of school staff felt SROs should be the primary responder for students fighting, etc.). Teachers expressed a need to better understand when staff should and should not request SRO assistance. Teachers also suggested the district rebrand SROs, not just as law enforcement but as a positive resource within the school community. Furthermore, students and parents/community members brought-up the issue of racial biases and disparities such that students of color have been unfairly targeted (i.e., subject to more discipline) in comparison to White students. Students also envisioned SROs partnering with school counselors and serving as mental health resources. Table B1 in the Appendix displays the primary themes related to the purpose of SROs that emerged from the stakeholder groups with representative quotes.

Discussion Topic 2: Why Some Survey Respondents Did Not Feel That SROs Make Schools More Safe

The predominant theme that emerged across all stakeholder groups as to why some survey respondents did not feel that SROs

make schools safer was individuals' prior negative perceptions and experiences with law enforcement both within and outside of the school setting. In the school context, students observing SROs using force while interacting with students either firsthand or via the news/social media leaves a lasting impact and adds to a distrust of SROs. Participants acknowledged that the SRO's role is more visible during negative interactions than positive (i.e., disciplinary events vs. relationship building). Students, teachers, principals, and parents/community members all discussed the lack of school-specific training for SROs. It was perceived that SROs do not receive consistent districtwide training or continued professional learning opportunities to have the necessary skillset to support students and staff. Similar to the discussion in Topic 1, participants also spoke to the issue of racial biases and disparities such that students of color receive differential treatment and, as a result, do not feel safe at school.

In reference to what could make students feel safer at school, parents/community members suggested increasing mental health resources (e.g., counselors, social workers, nurses, etc.) and acknowledged the positive impact SROs have when they build positive relationships with students. Several of the stakeholder groups again tapped into the theme that the SRO role is not clearly defined or communicated. They noted an inconsistent understanding among school staff about appropriate SRO involvement and that the day-to-day tasks SROs engage in to enhance the school community are not well-known. Moreover, students did not perceive SROs to be part of the school community and would like to see them more engaged in the school culture (e.g., not wear a police uniform, participate in spirit week, attend sporting events and performances, etc.). Principals



emphasized the importance of goodness of fit and suggested that it takes the right temperament, skill set, and mindset for an SRO to work in schools. To support that fit, principals believed that they should be involved in the selection of SROs at their schools. Table B2 in the Appendix displays the primary themes related to why some survey respondents did not feel that SROs make schools safer that emerged from the stakeholder groups with representative quotes.

Discussion Topic 3: Why Some Survey Respondents Felt That Students Are Not Treated Fairly by SROs

In response to the question of why some survey respondents felt that students are not treated fairly by SROs, the predominant themes that emerged were again 1) prior negative perceptions and experiences with law enforcement both within and outside of the school setting, 2) biases and disparities, 3) the SRO role not being clearly defined or communicated, and 4) the importance of building positive relationships with the school community. In terms of negative perceptions and experiences, participants reflected that when SROs are involved in negative interactions, these are the events that are publicized and go viral on social media. This further underscored the importance of encouraging SROs to build positive relationships with the school community and to make those positive interactions more visible. In terms of biases and disparities, students added that SROs treat students unfairly based not only on race/ethnicity, but also on gender and sexual orientation.

In terms of the SRO role, participants reflected that there needs to be clear communication regarding when SROs are

to be involved and that their responsibilities should not be restricted to student misconduct. For example, teachers and principals discussed that SROs are too often called and relied upon to de-escalate situations. Students spoke to the issue that there is a lack of gender diversity among SROs and that there is perceived inconsistency about which student behavioral offenses are disciplined. Similar to principals, teachers also brought up the issue of goodness of fit. Teachers shared that it takes a certain set of competencies to work in schools and not all officers are well-matched to work with students. Parents/community members stated that there should be a system of accountability for SROs that engage in unfair and/or unlawful treatment of students. Both law enforcement officers and Central Services Security Department staff said that perceptions of fairness and emotional reactions to SRO activity are often based on partial knowledge due to legal restrictions that limit the amount of information that can be shared with those not directly involved in an incident. Law enforcement officers also talked about how some students may feel mistreated because they do not like being held accountable for their actions as well as a lack of trust and bias against law enforcement. Central Services Security Department staff shared that SROs are repeatedly dealing with the same group of students, and as a result, these students and their parents feel like they're being treated unfairly. Table B3 in the Appendix displays the primary themes related to why some survey respondents felt that students are not treated fairly by SROs that emerged from the stakeholder groups with representative quotes.



Discussion Topic 4: Why Many Survey Respondents Answered “Not Sure”

In the discussion about why some survey respondents answered, “not sure” to several of the survey questions, the shared themes that emerged across the stakeholder groups were 1) the SRO role is not clearly defined or communicated, 2) many stakeholders have very limited interactions with SROs, 3) the SROs’ lack of connection with the school community, and 4) a need to build positive relationships with the school community. Given that the roles and responsibilities of SROs are not well-known or understood, respondents may not have had enough information to provide clear answers to all survey questions. For example, some students, teachers, and principals reported that SROs are typically not introduced to the school community—for example at school orientation or departmental presentations—and as a result, students do not know their purpose or the resources they offer. Moreover, it was expressed that many students, teachers, and families have very few interactions of any kind with SROs and as such may not have had enough information to even form an opinion.

Participants also shared the perception that some SROs are not active members of the school community and are only involved in disciplinary events. This lack of community connection tied into participants’ support and encouragement for SROs building positive relationships with the school community thereby humanizing SROs and establishing mutual trust. To become integral members of the school community, students discussed the possibility of scheduled round table discussions and opening a regular dialog among SROs, school administrators, and students. In a

similar vein, teachers suggested including SROs in Professional Learning Team (PLT) meetings so that they can better understand the education side of the school community. Given that SROs are often called to de-escalate situations, teachers also expressed the need for more mental health support staff who are trained in meeting the needs of students’ social and emotional health (e.g., behavioral support teachers and school counselors, etc.). Principals again emphasized their desire to be involved in the selection of SROs at their schools in order to help determine who is the best fit. Some of the parents/community members shared that there is simply no place for law enforcement in schools and instead there should be more mental health support positions (e.g., counselors, social workers, nurses, etc.) who can build relationships with students. Table B4 in the Appendix displays the primary themes related to why some survey respondents answered, “not sure,” that emerged from the stakeholder groups and illustrative quotes.





OVERALL SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In response to growing inquiries about the roles of School Resource Officers (SRO) in schools, WCPSS conducted a review of the WCPSS SRO program during the 2020-21 school year. The SRO program review included a collection of data from the following sources: SRO referral and incident data from 2016-17 through 2019-20, a fall survey administered in October 2020 to identified stakeholder groups (students, parents, WCPSS staff, and members of the community), and data from focus groups that were conducted with stakeholder groups from December 2020 through February 2021. Major findings from the data review are discussed below:

- Since 2017, student incidents and number of referrals are trending down overall. Referrals have also shifted toward less punitive consequences over the past few years. Disproportionality, however, remains a concern particularly for Black and Hispanic/Latino students although there are some signs of improvement. Currently there is a total of 75 SROs at 81 schools within the district. The sheer number of SROs in WCPSS can make it a challenge to ensure consistency of actions by SROs across schools. Some focus group participants felt that the disproportionate impact on some students of color speaks to the need for changes; others felt that there is no role for law enforcement in schools.

- Survey results indicated that most stakeholders had positive perceptions of SROs. Results also indicated a need to reduce ambiguity in the SROs roles and responsibilities (e.g., increase students' awareness of the role and function of the SROs, etc.). The results also showed some pockets of negative perceptions, particularly among certain subgroups of stakeholders. Some stakeholders responded that school administrators should have more say about which SROs are assigned to their schools. Respondents also indicated a need for more training for SROs on how to work in a school environment.
- The results from the focus groups suggest there is a lack of communication and definition of the SRO role; this insufficiency might be driving the negative and ambiguous responses on SROs in the survey data. Stakeholders felt WCPSS has missed opportunities of intentionally building positive relationships between SROs and the stakeholders. Focus group participants mentioned that being an SRO requires a unique skill set that cannot be assumed. In some focus group discussions, it was mentioned that some SROs appear to act as law enforcement officers first and felt that WCPSS might consider hiring more counselors or behavior specialists, etc., for non-law enforcement functions instead of SROs.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

School Safety – SROs

Figure A1

School Safety: Student Survey

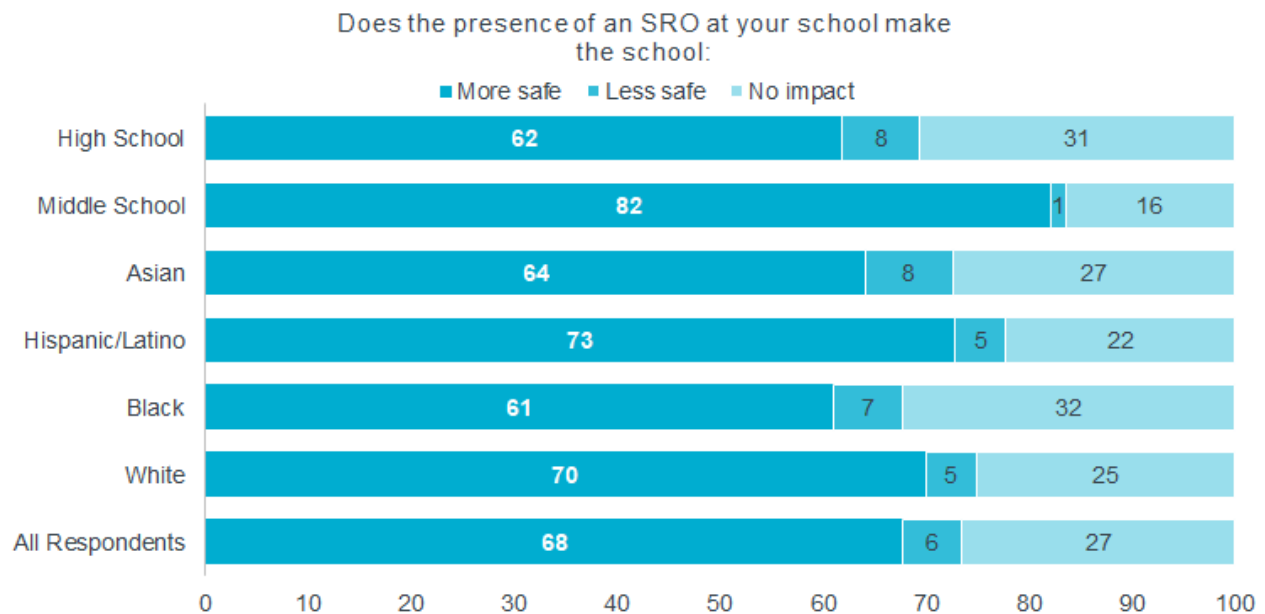
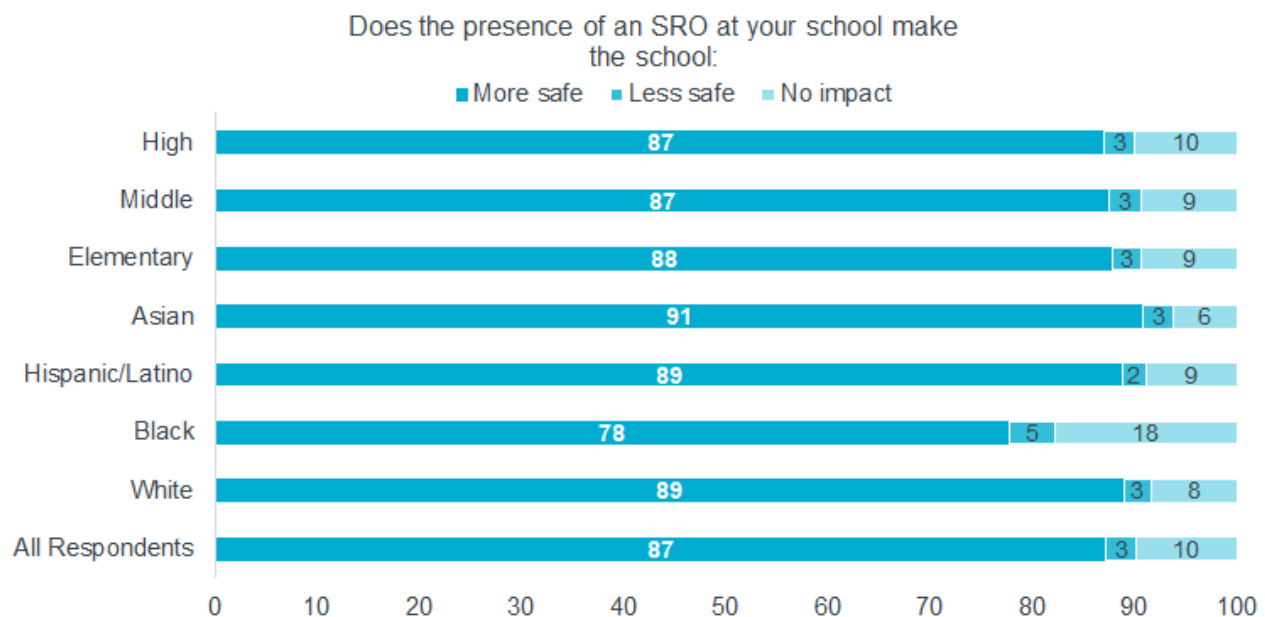


Figure A2

School Safety: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and school level.

Figure A3
School Safety: Staff Survey

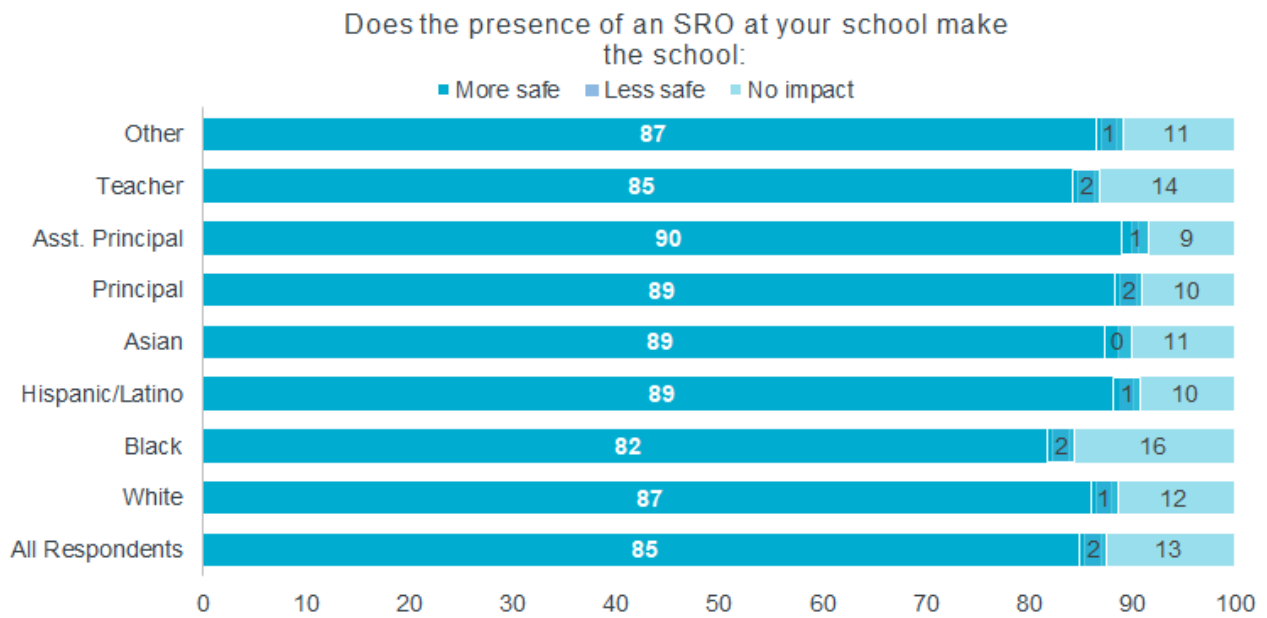
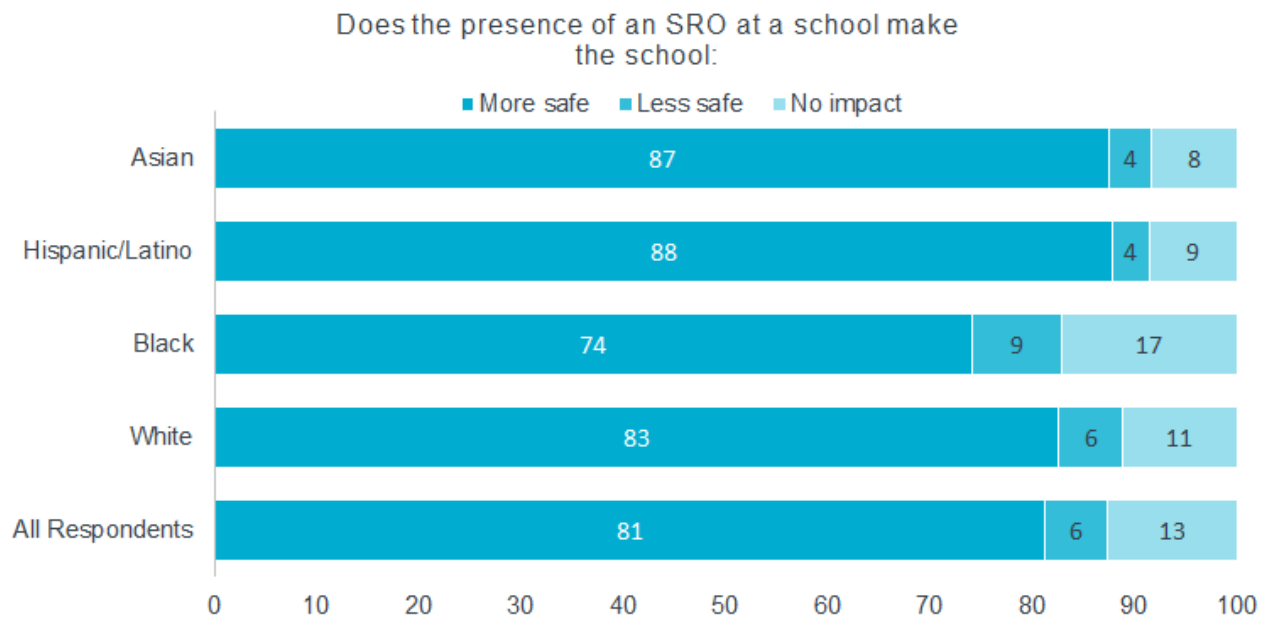


Figure A4
School Safety: Community Survey



Welcoming Environment - SROs

Figure A5

Welcoming Environment: Student Survey

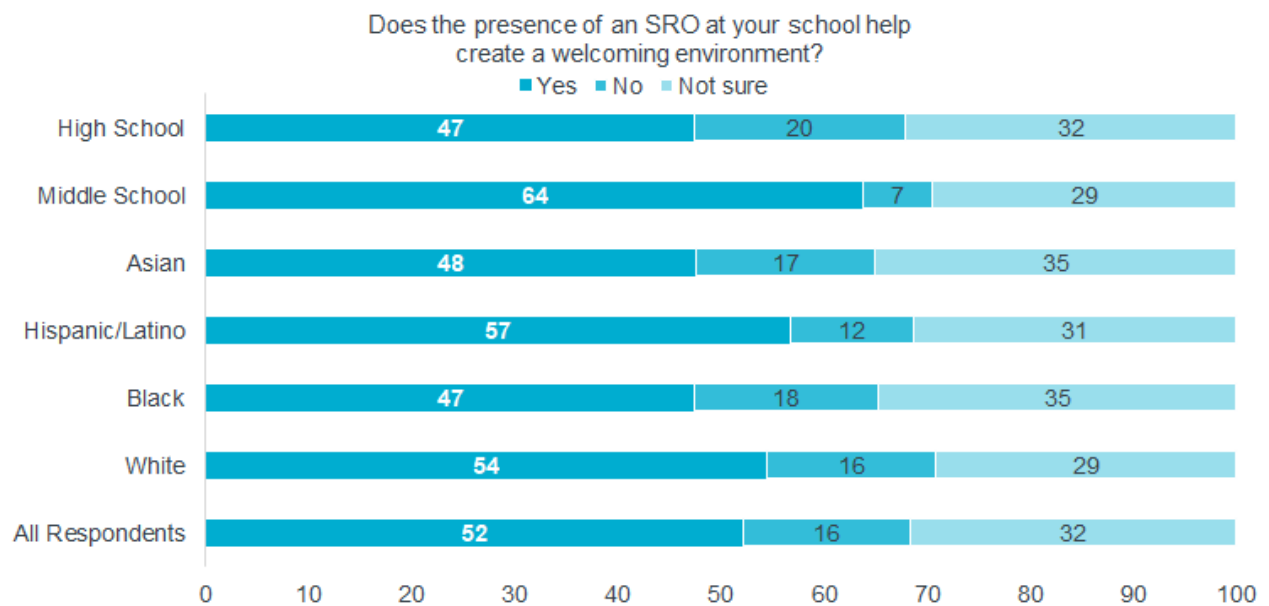
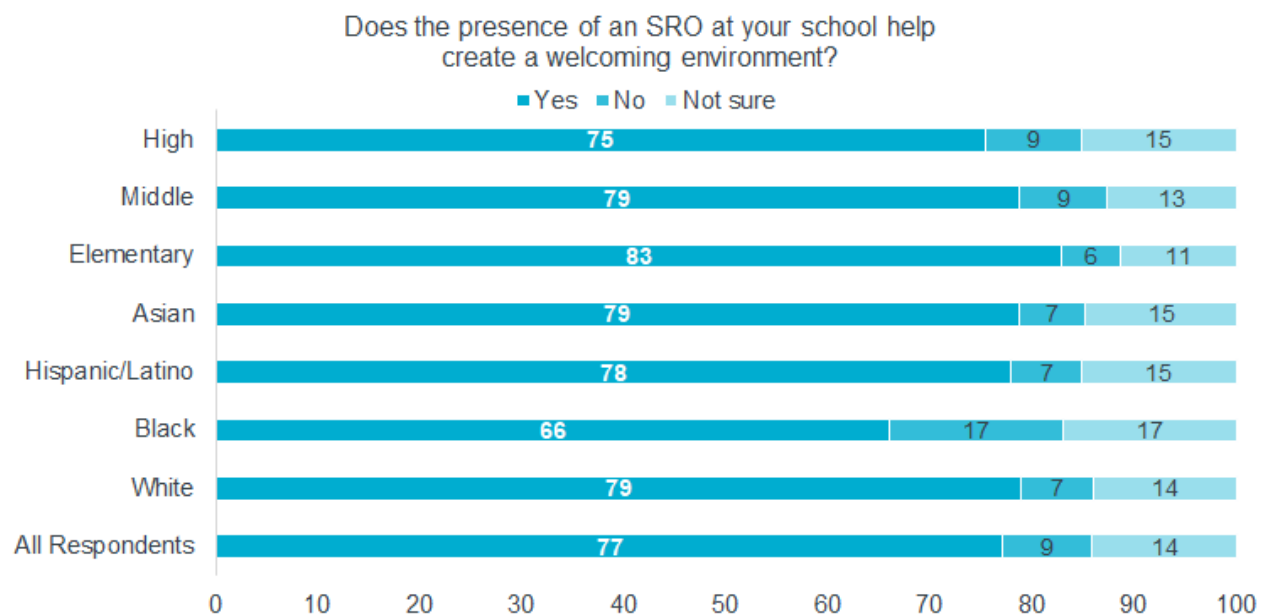


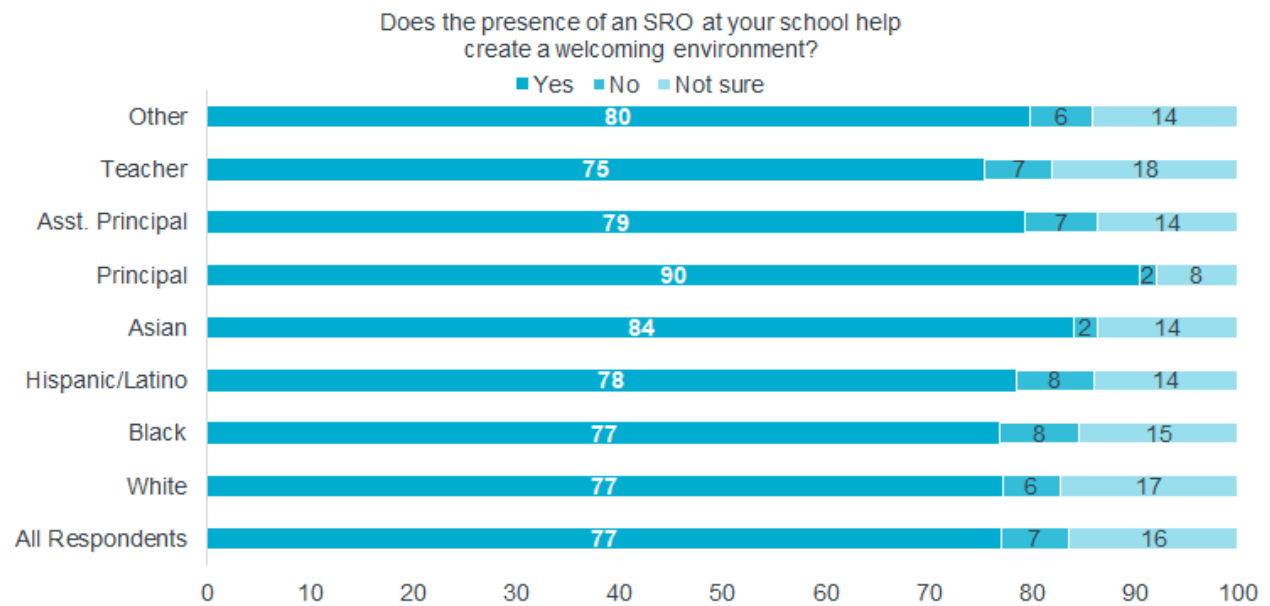
Figure A6

Welcoming Environment: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child's race, gender, and school level.

Figure A7
Welcoming Environment: Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Treating Students Appropriately

Figure A8
SROs Treating Students Appropriately: Student Survey

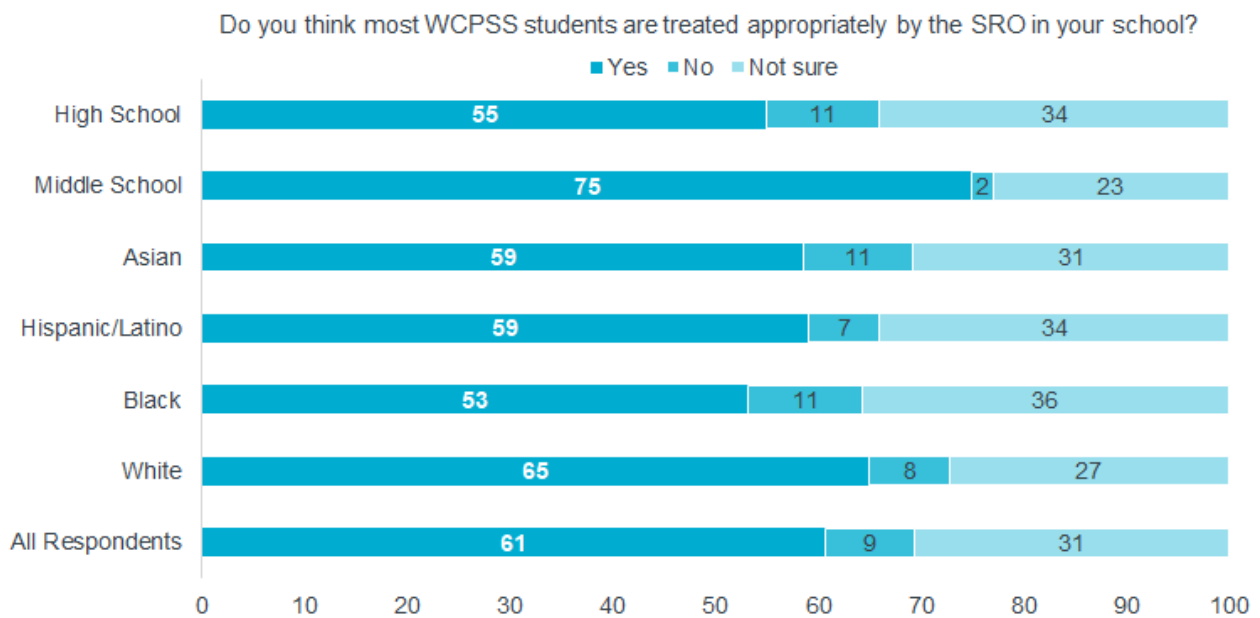
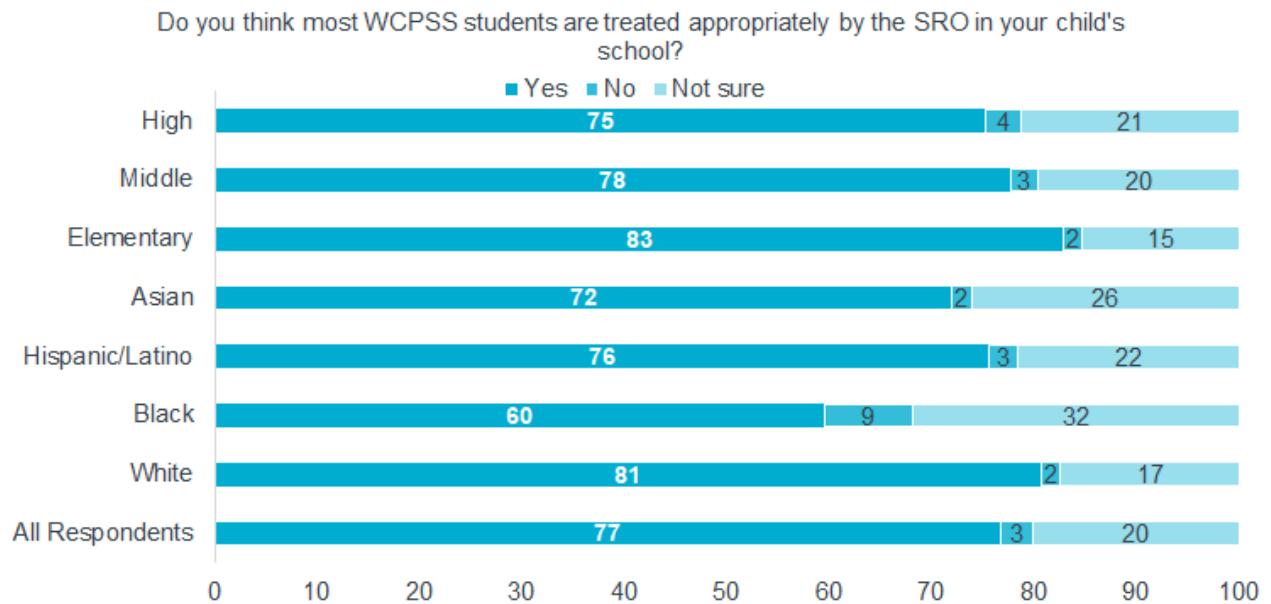
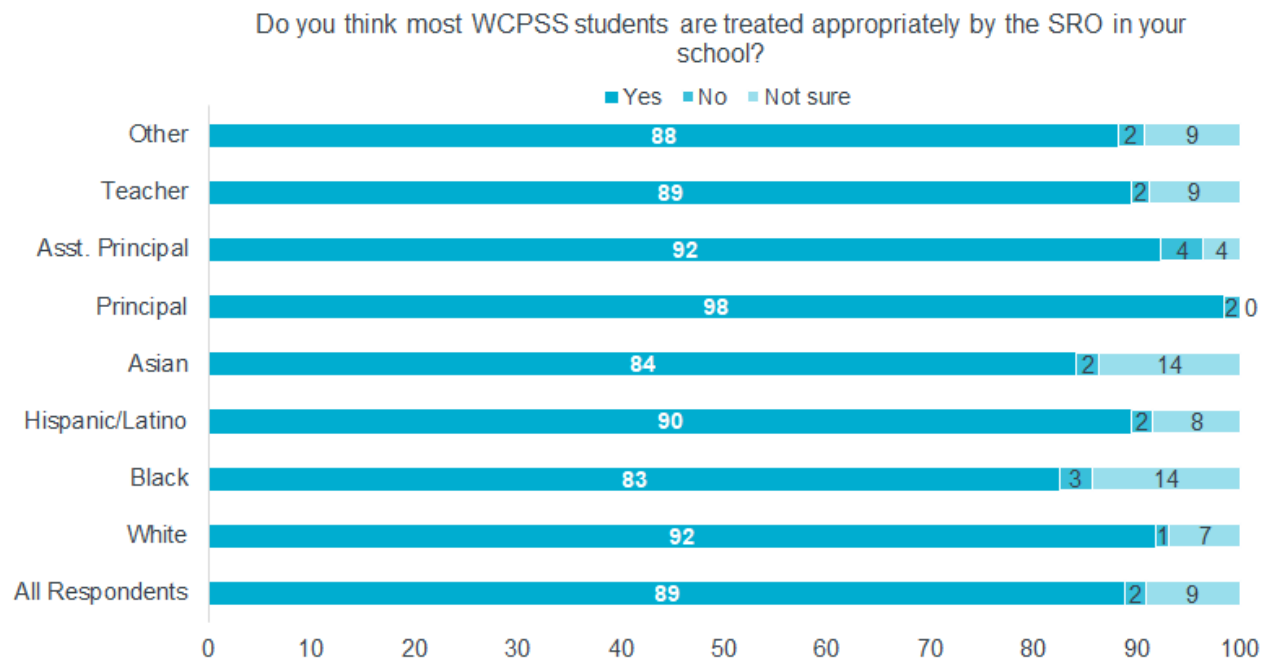


Figure A9
SROs Treating Students Appropriately: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child's race, gender, and school level.

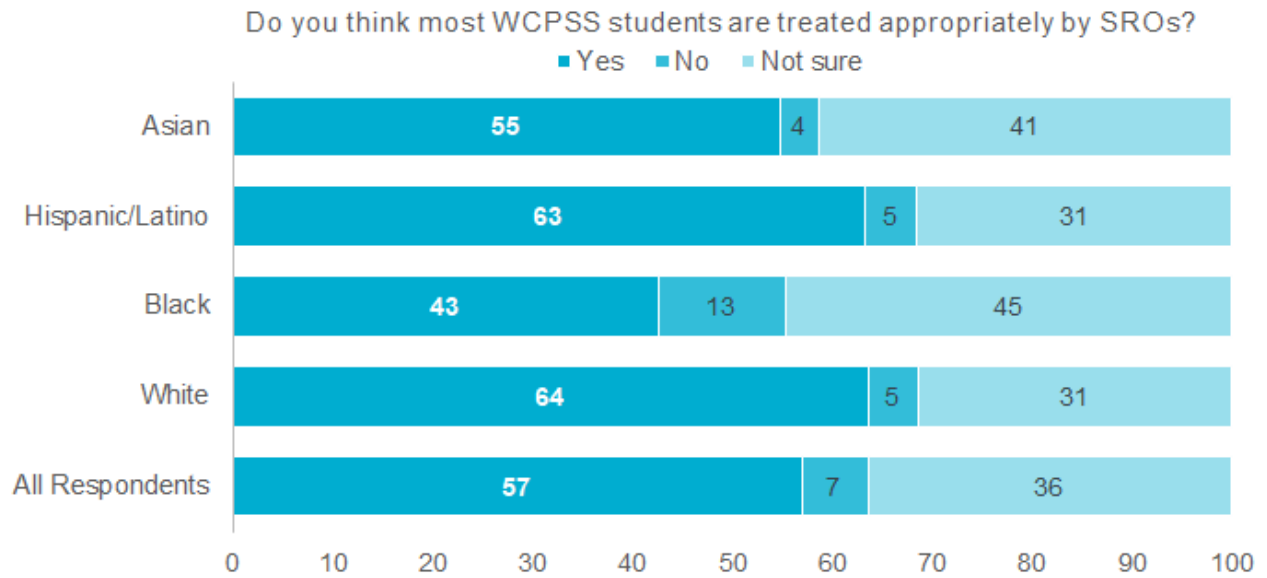
Figure A10
SROs Treating Students Appropriately: Staff Survey



Note: The "other" subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A11

SROs Treating Students Appropriately: Community Survey



Firsthand knowledge of SROs treating students inappropriately

Figure A12

Firsthand Knowledge of SROs Treating Students Inappropriately: Student Survey

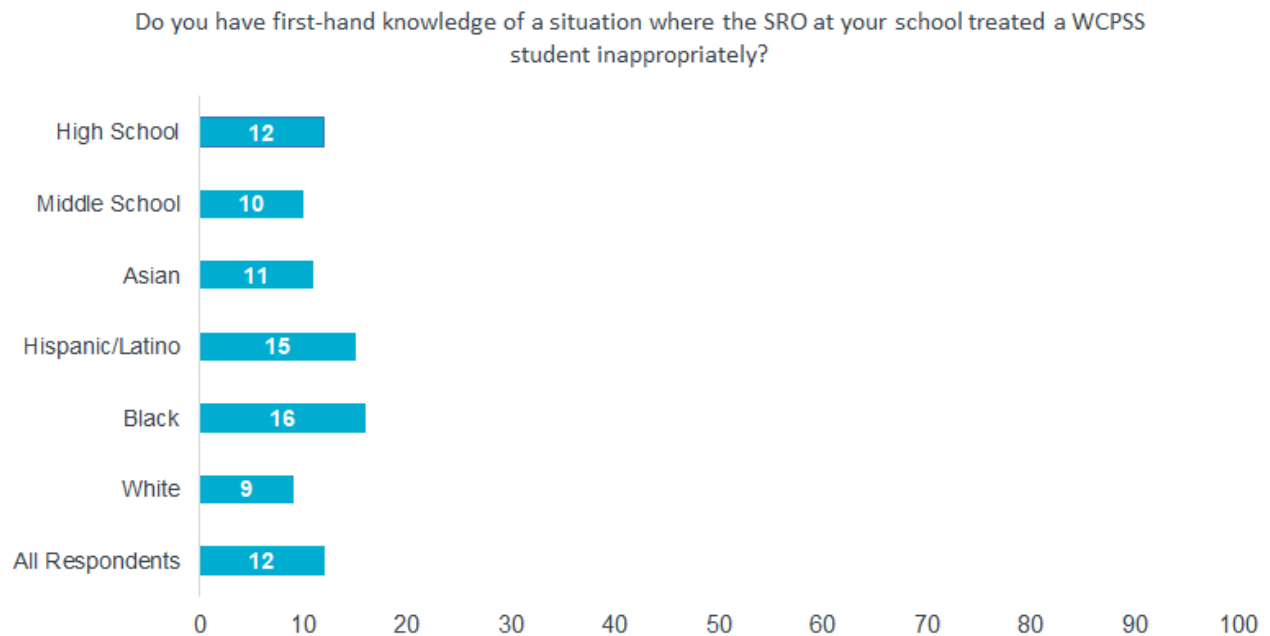
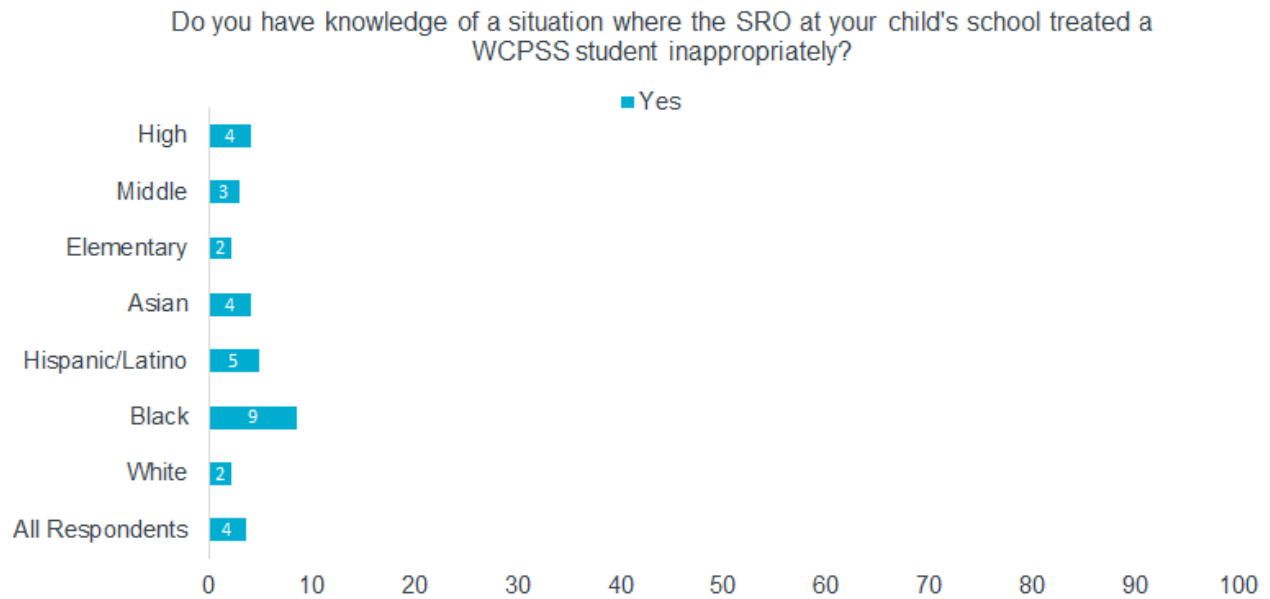


Figure A13

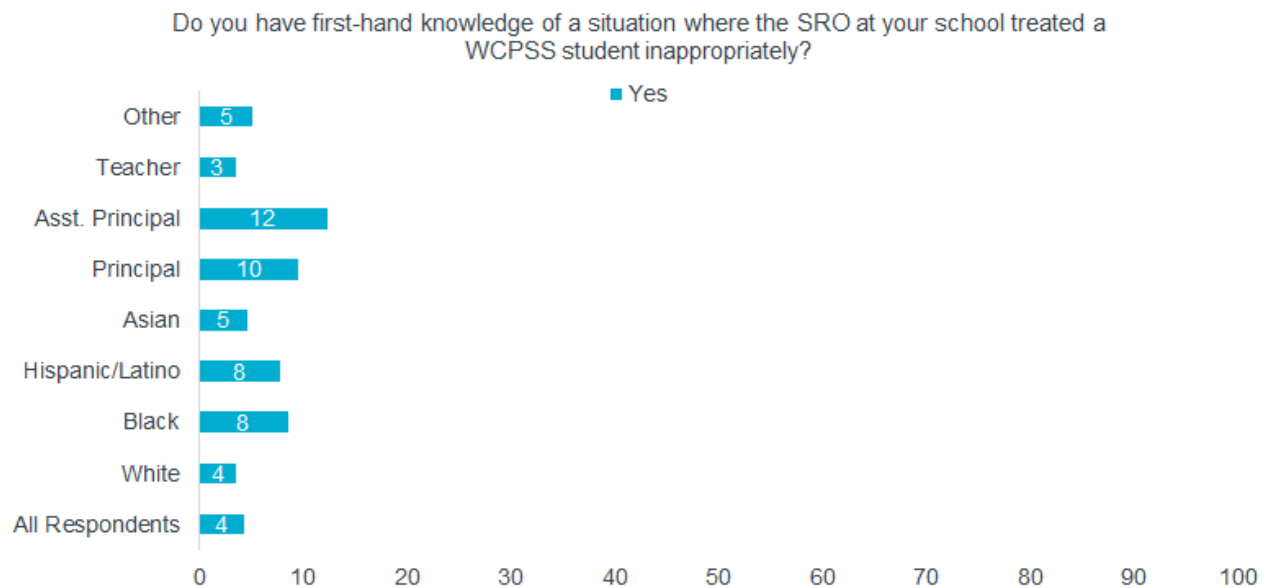
Firsthand Knowledge of SROs Treating Students Inappropriately: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child's race, gender, and school level.

Figure A14

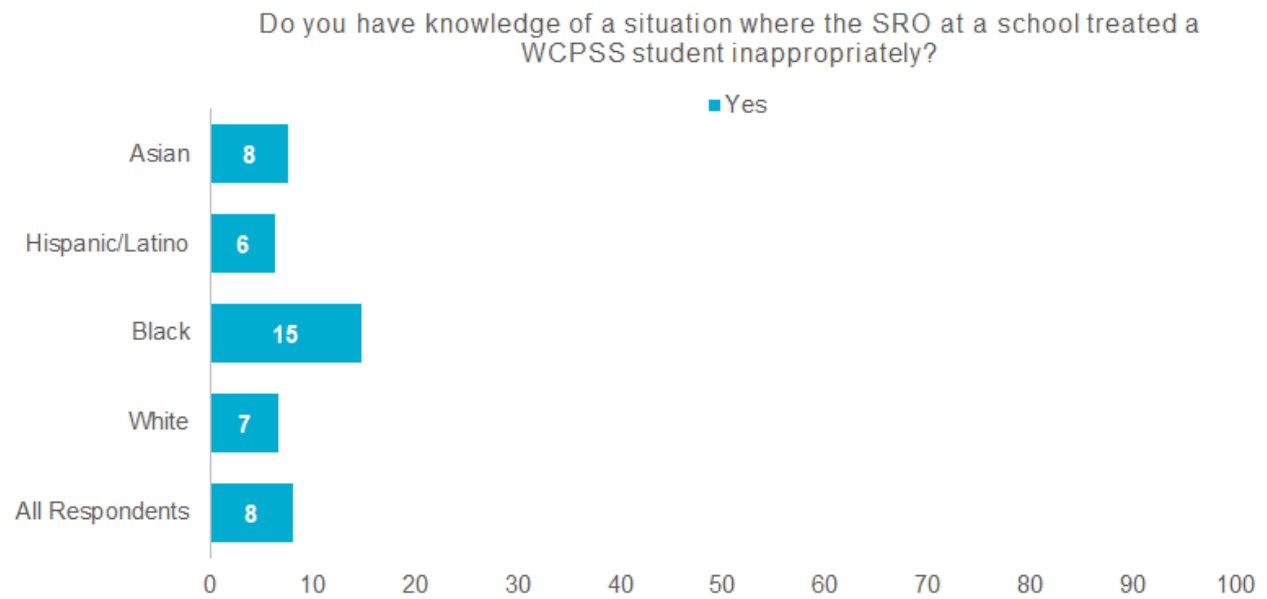
Firsthand Knowledge of SROs Treating Students Inappropriately: Staff Survey



Note: The "other" subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A15

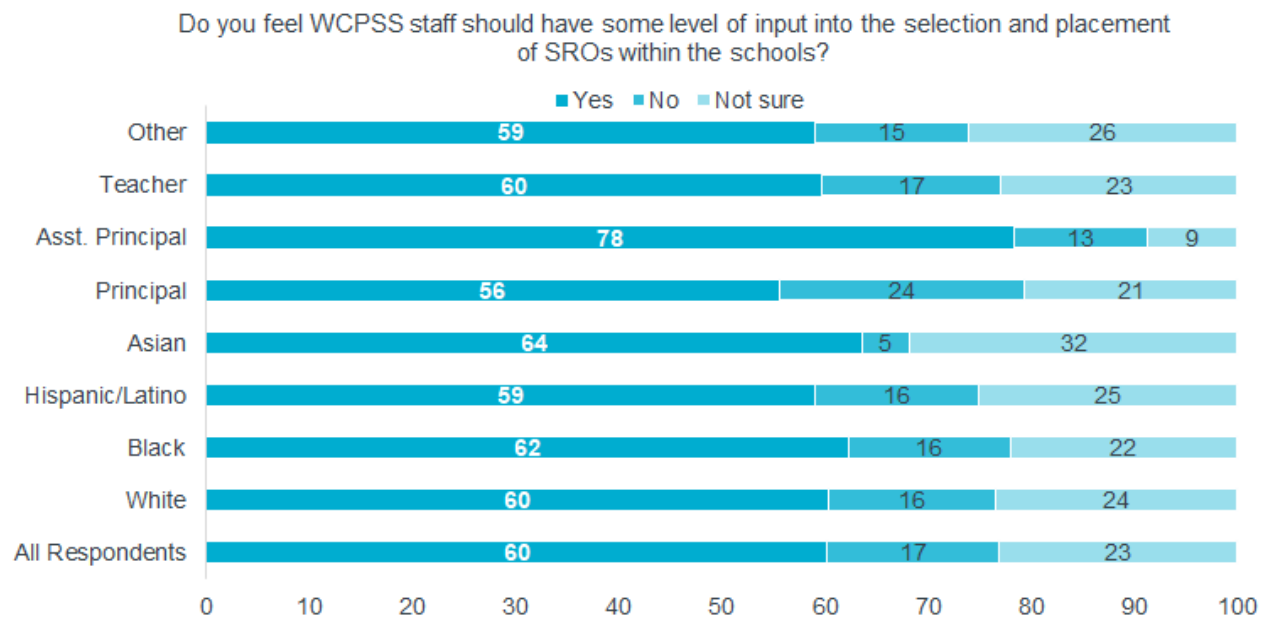
Firsthand Knowledge of SROs Treating Students Inappropriately: Community Survey



Input on selection and placement of SROs

Figure A16

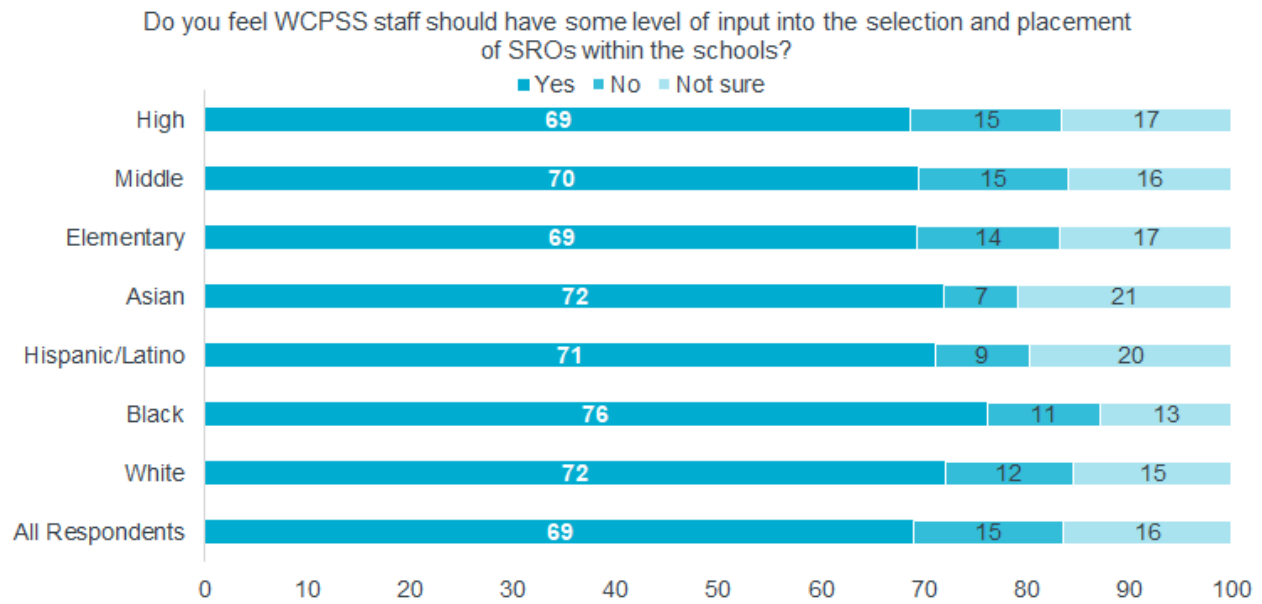
Selection and Placement of SROs: Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A17

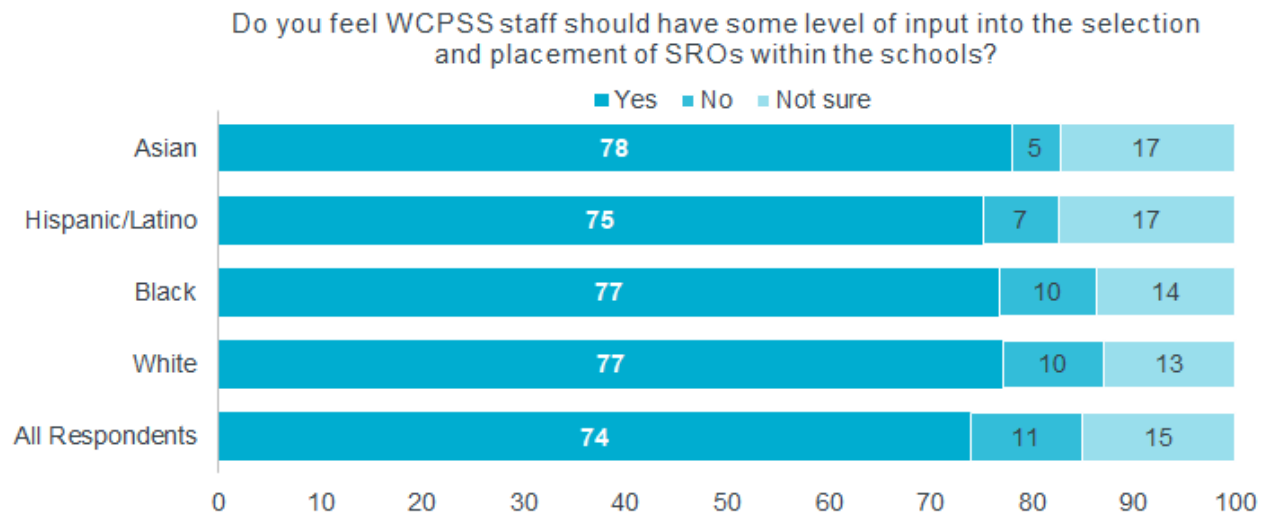
Selection and Placement of SROs: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and school level.

Figure A18

Selection and Placement of SROs: Community Survey



Treating Students Appropriately - Bike Patrol Officers

Figure A19

Treating Students Appropriately by Bike Patrol Officers: Student Survey

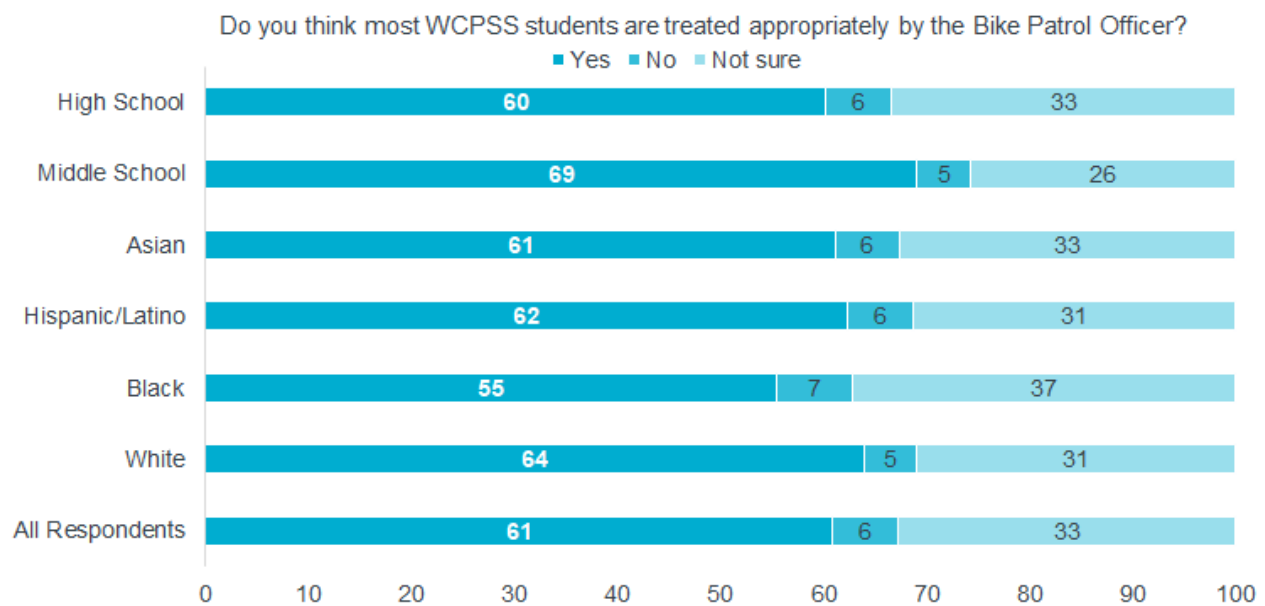
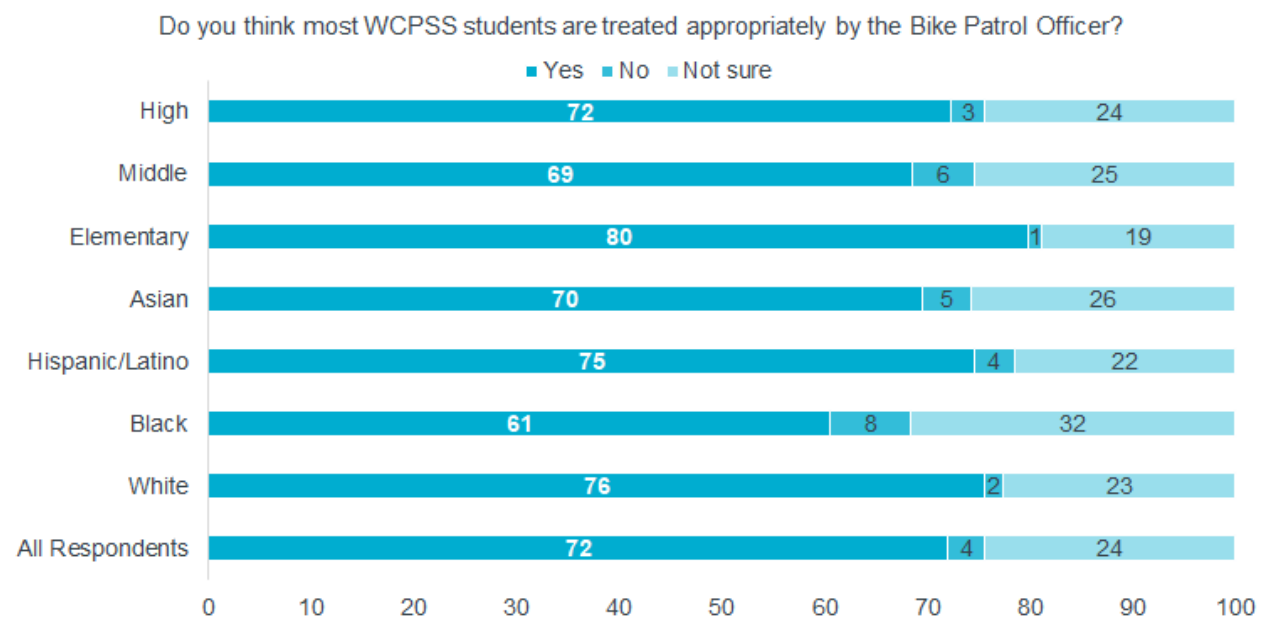


Figure A20

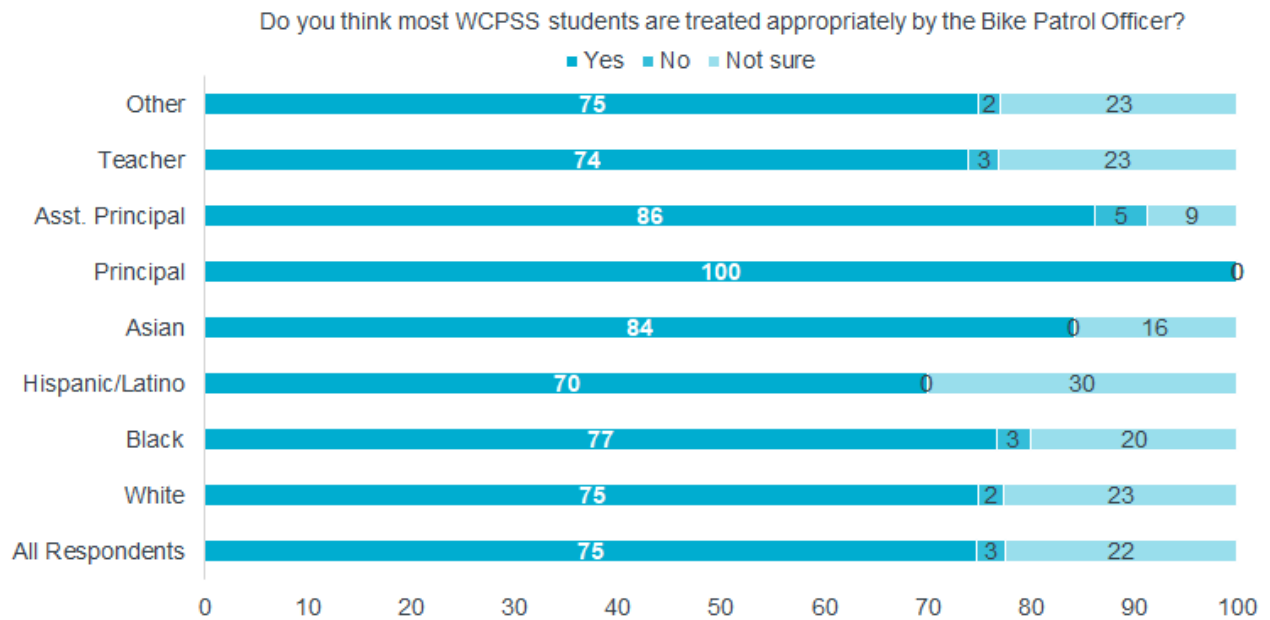
Treating Students Appropriately by Bike Patrol Officers: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child's race, gender, and school level

Figure A21

Treating Students Appropriately by Bike Patrol Officers: Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal

Figure A22

Treating Students Appropriately by Bike Patrol Officers: Community Survey

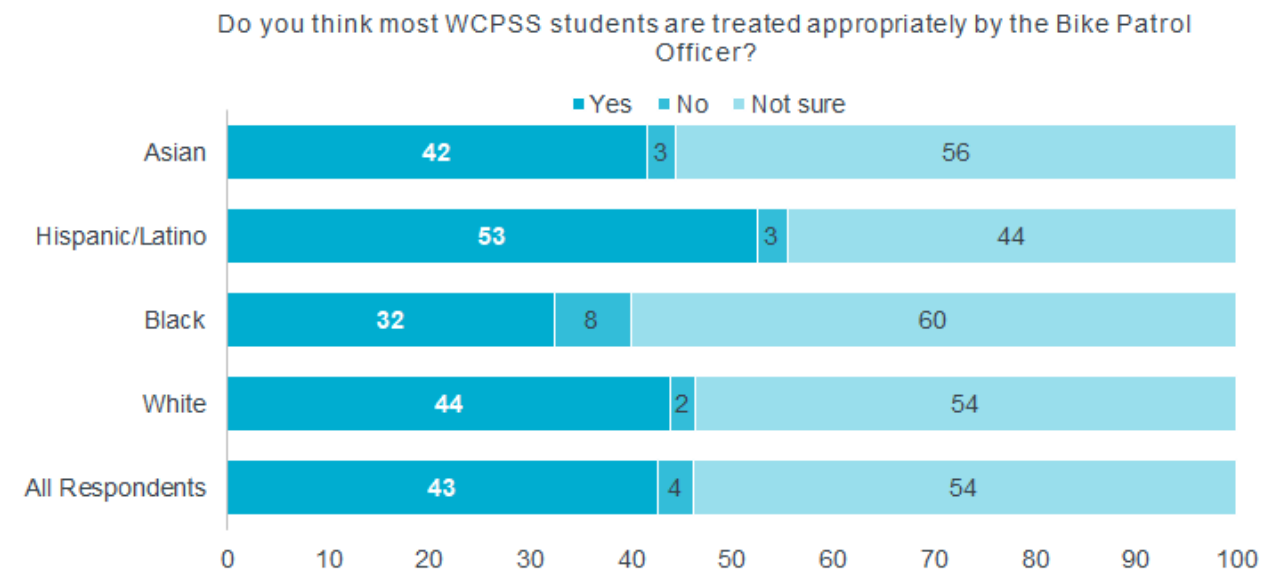


Figure A23

Firsthand Knowledge of a Bike Patrol Officer Treating Students Inappropriately: Student Survey

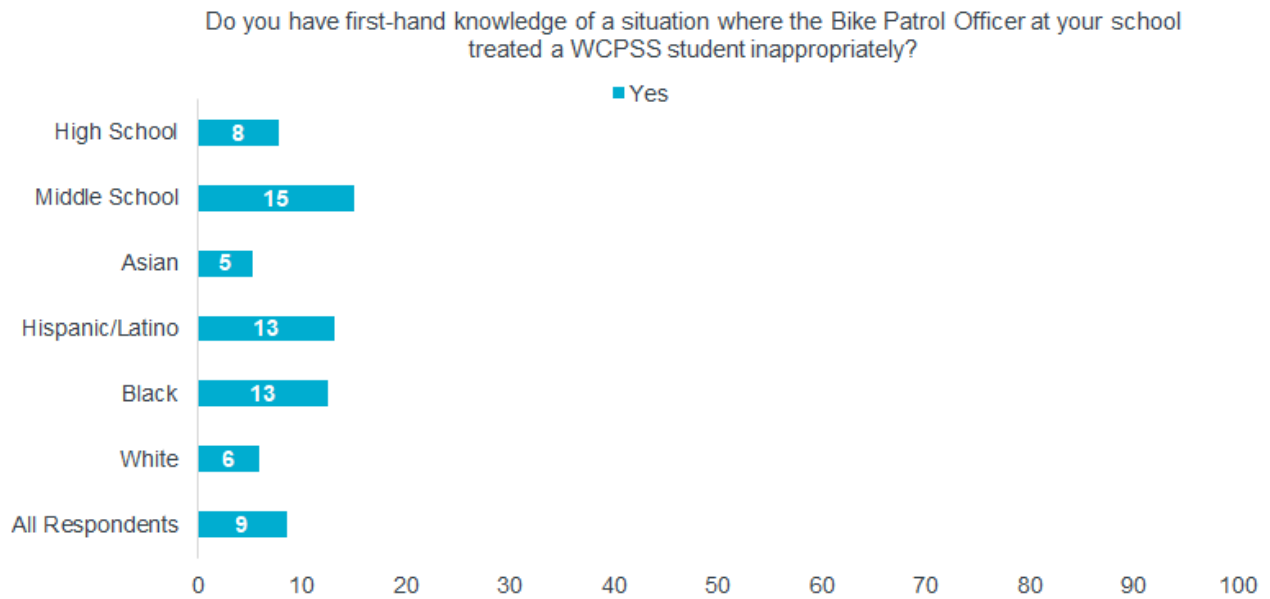
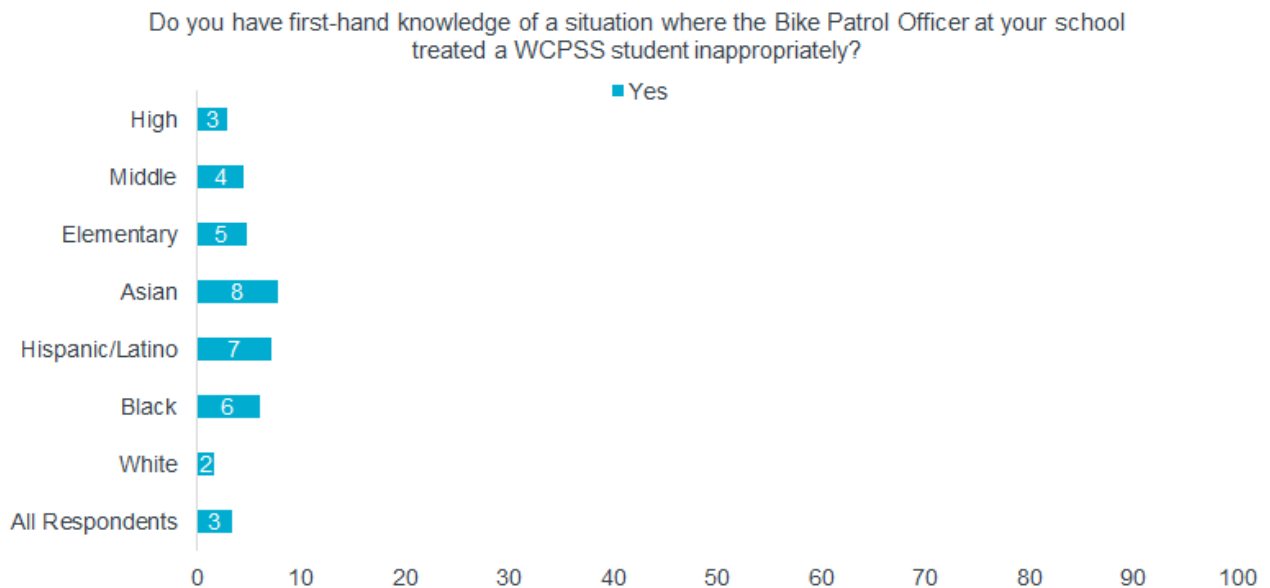


Figure A24

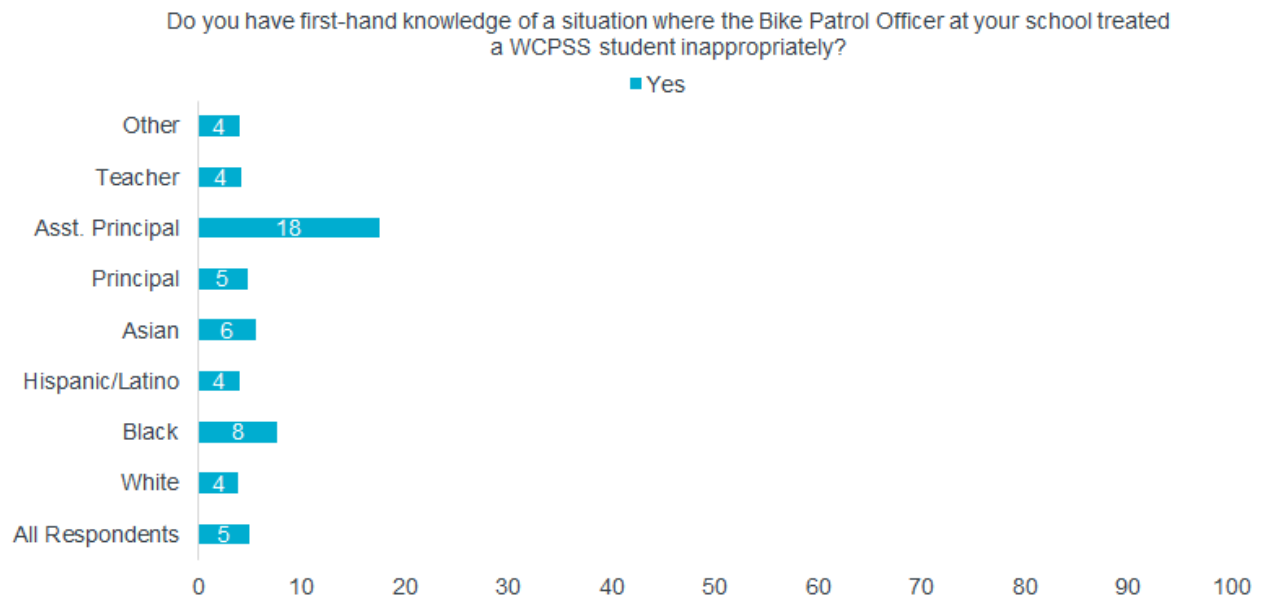
Firsthand Knowledge of a Bike Patrol Officer Treating Students Inappropriately: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child's race, gender, and school level.

Figure A25

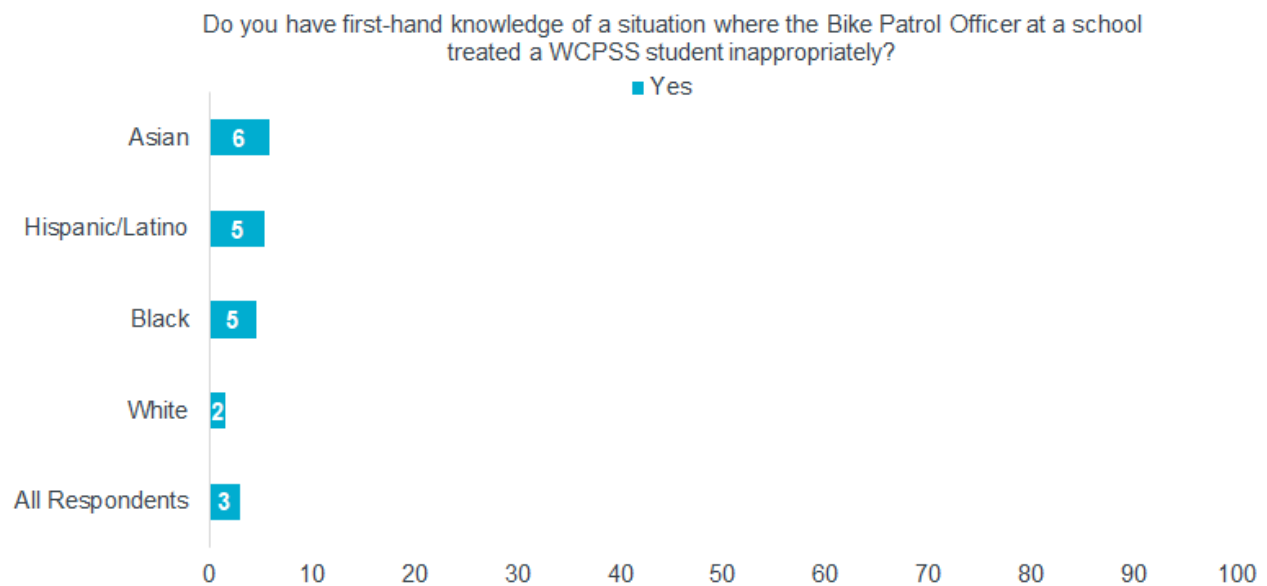
Firsthand Knowledge of a Bike Patrol Officer Treating Students Inappropriately: Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A26

Firsthand Knowledge of a Bike Patrol Officer Treating Students Inappropriately: Community Survey



Welcoming Environment – Bike Patrol Officers

Figure A27

Bike Patrol Officers Create a Welcoming Environment: Student Survey

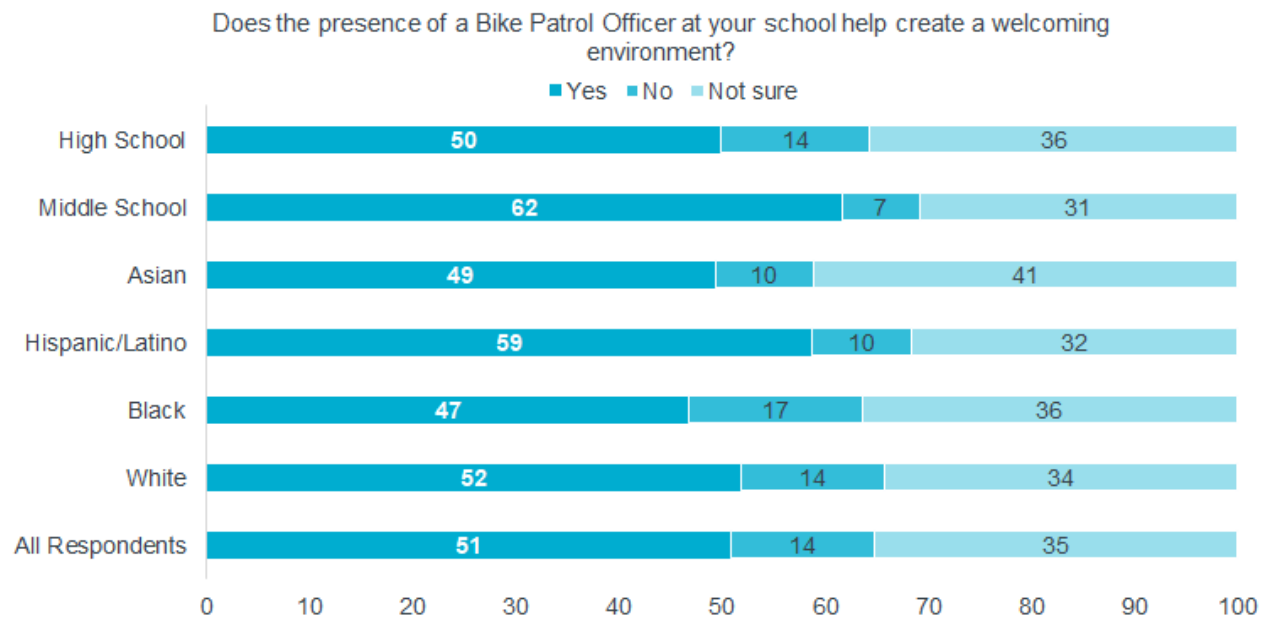
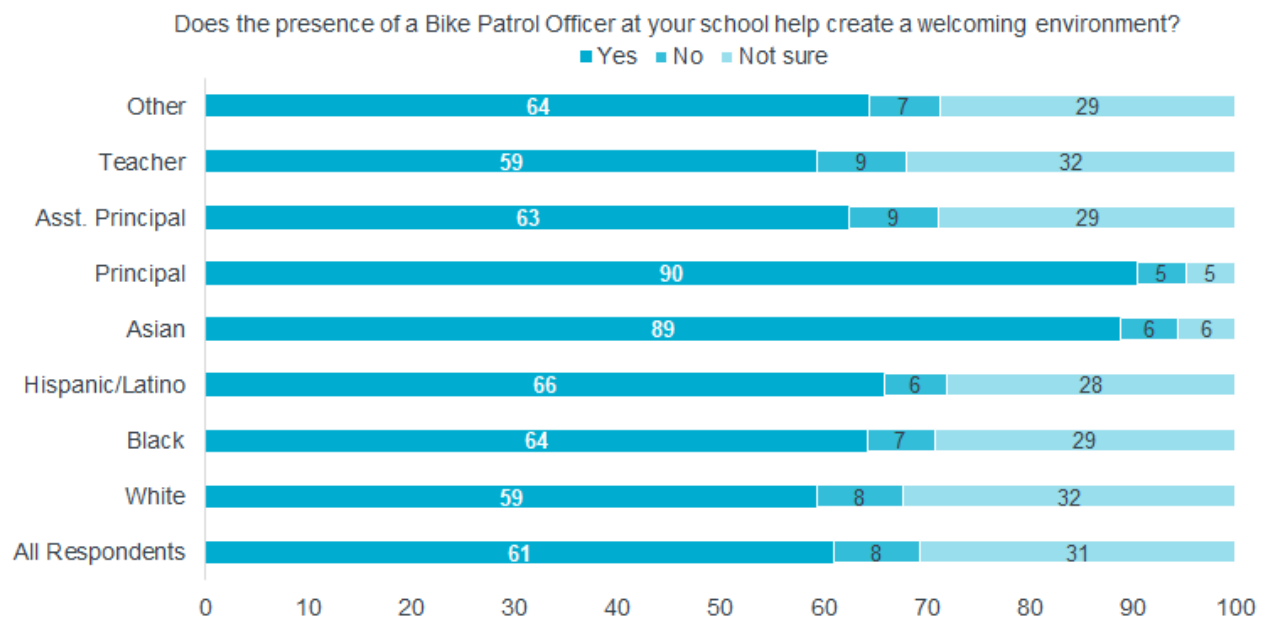


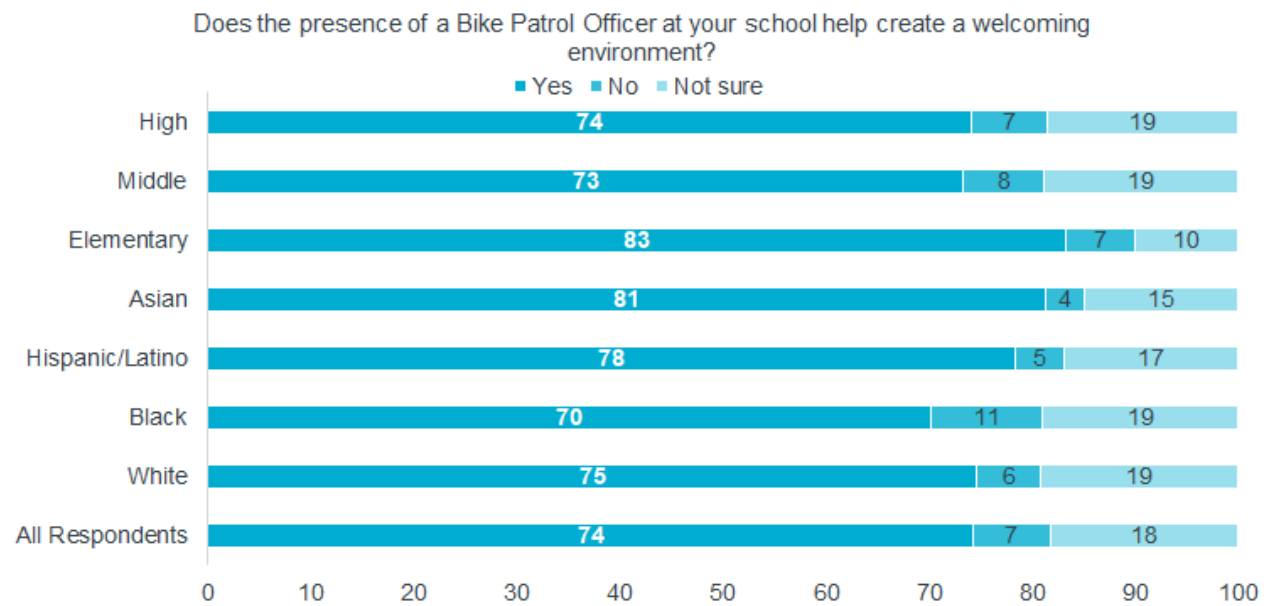
Figure A28

Bike Patrol Officers Create a Welcoming Environment: Staff Survey



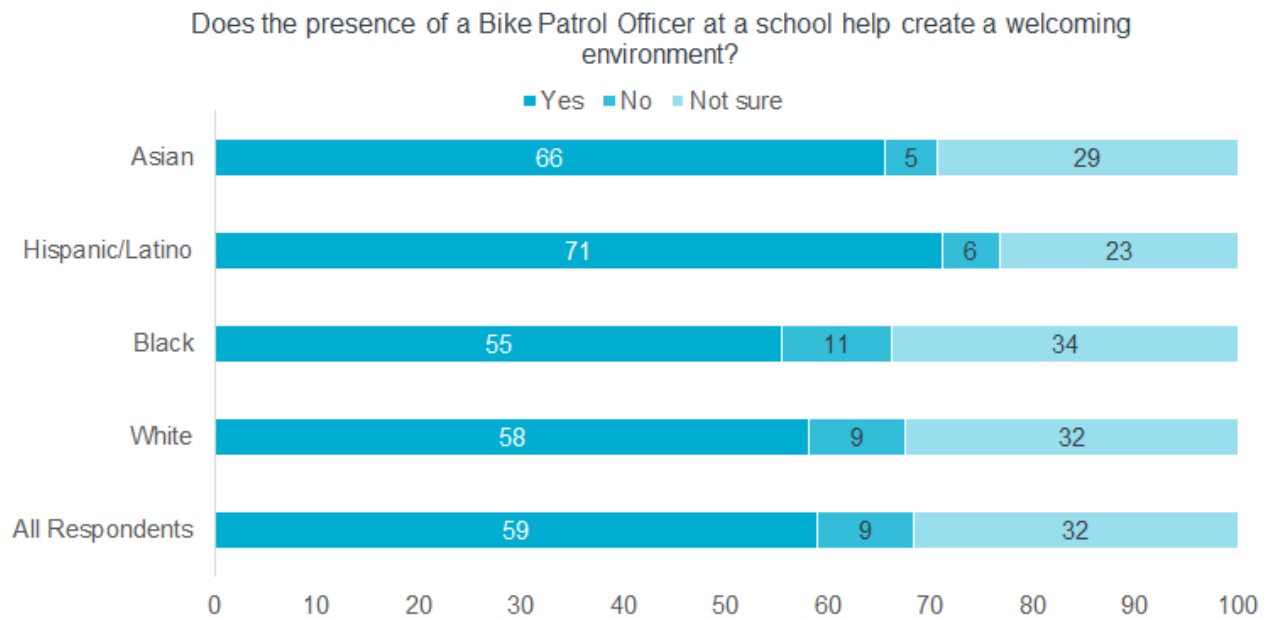
Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A29
Bike Patrol Officers Create a Welcoming Environment: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and school level.

Figure A30
Bike Patrol Officers Create a Welcoming Environment: Community Survey



School Safety – Bike Patrol Officers

Figure A31

Bike Patrol Officers Make Schools More Safe: Student Survey

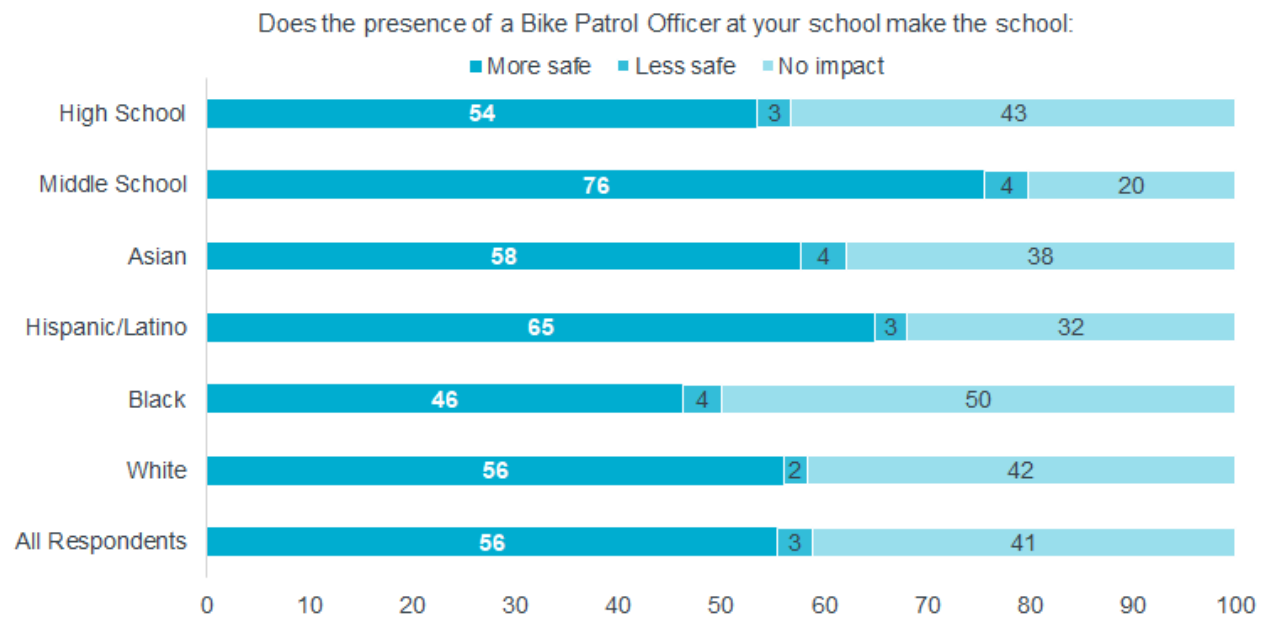
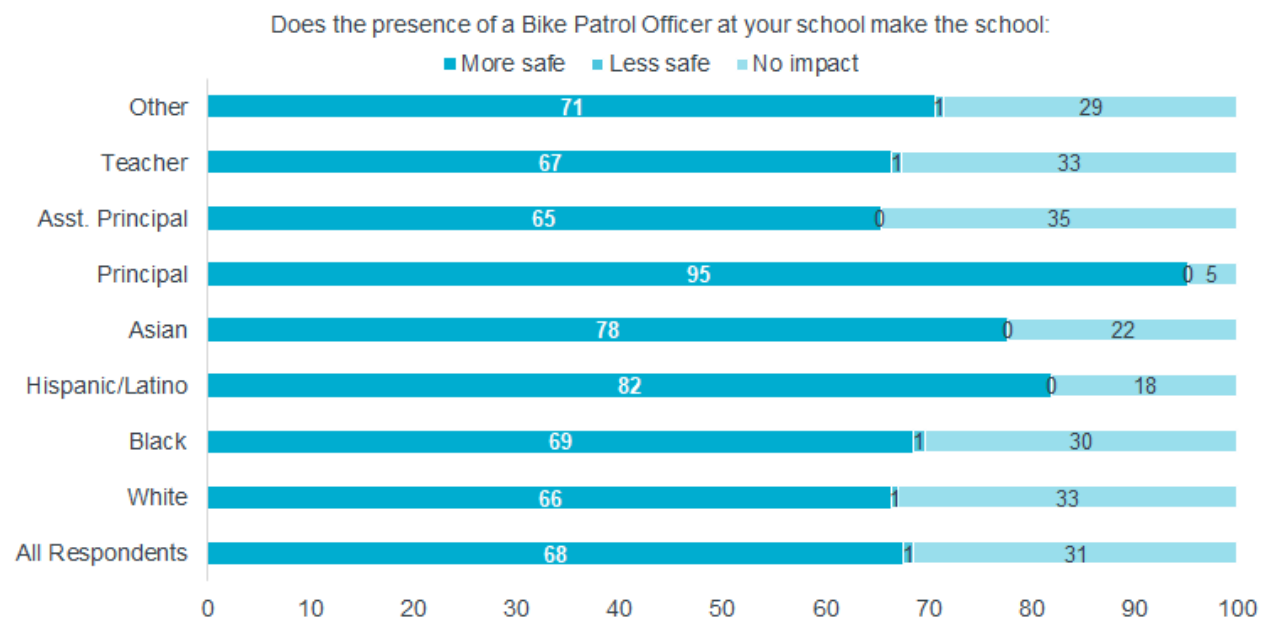


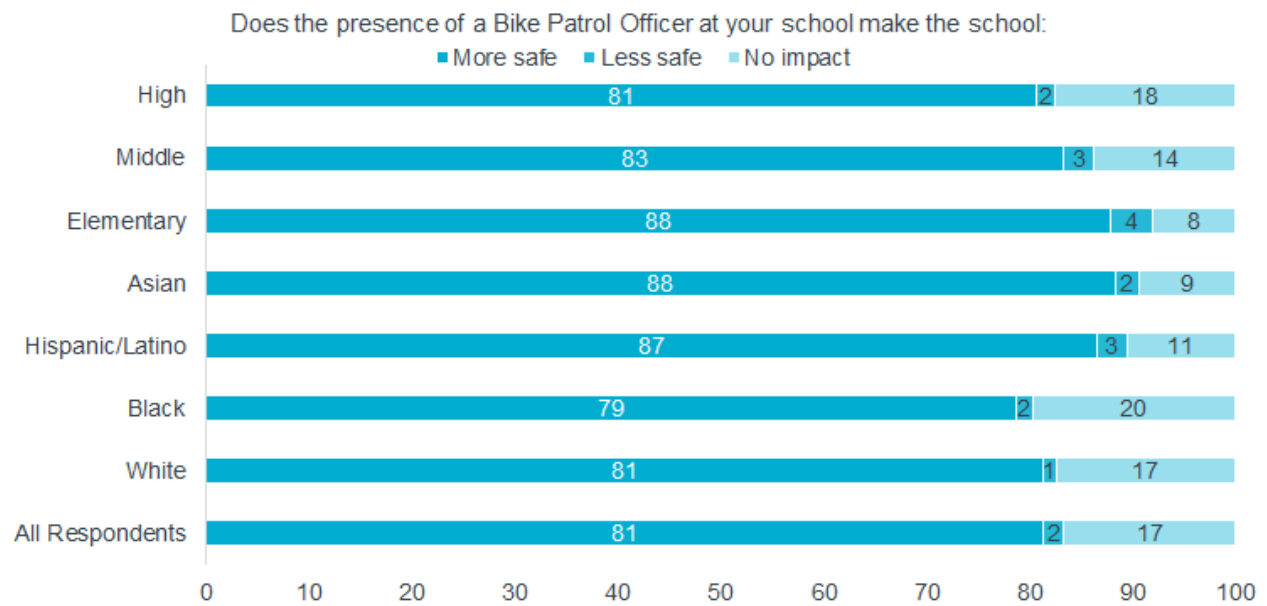
Figure A32

Bike Patrol Officers Make Schools More Safe: Staff Survey



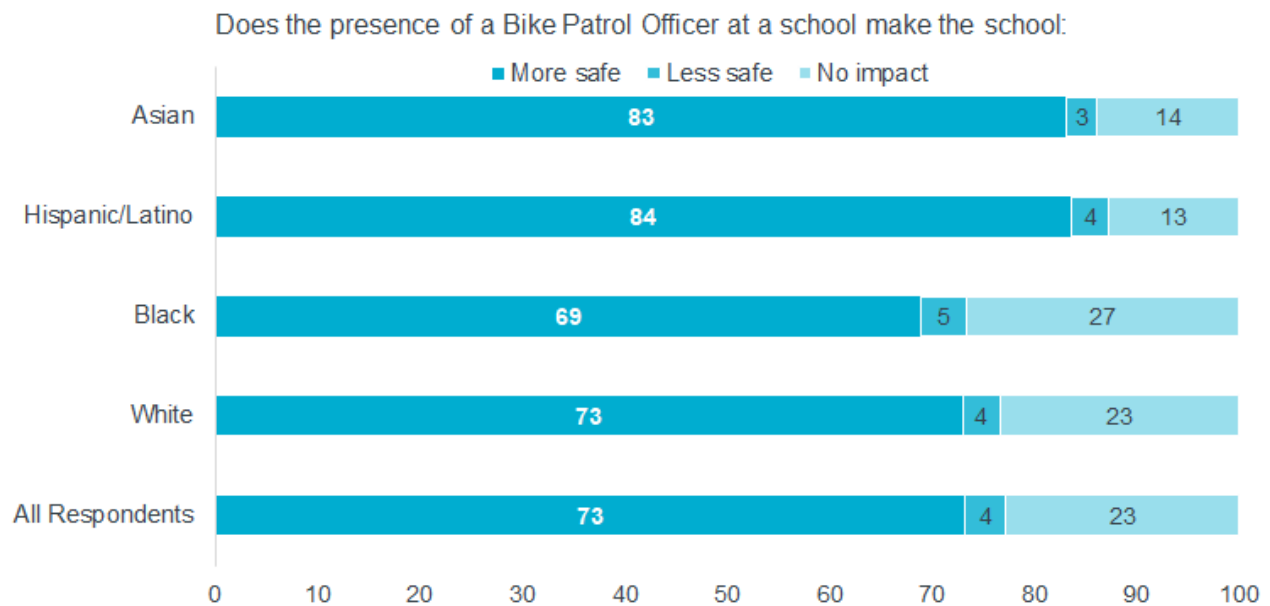
Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A33
Bike Patrol Officers Make Schools More Safe: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and school level.

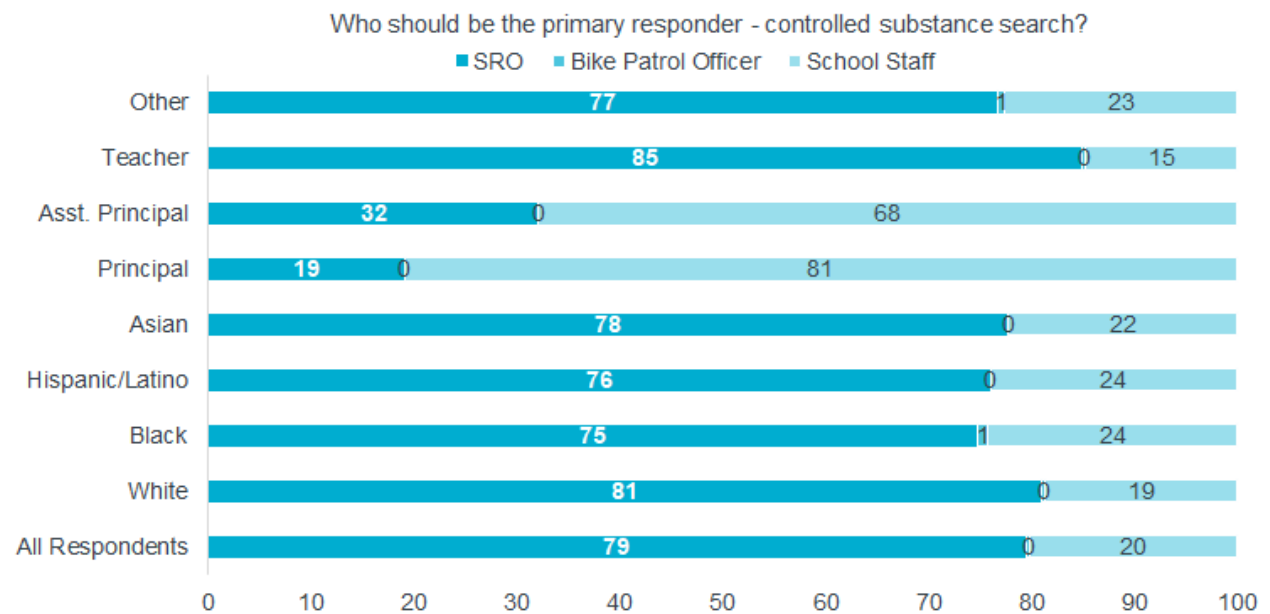
Figure A34
Bike Patrol Officers Make Schools More Safe: Community Survey



Primary Responder for Incidents – SRO, Bike Patrol Officer or School Staff

Figure A35

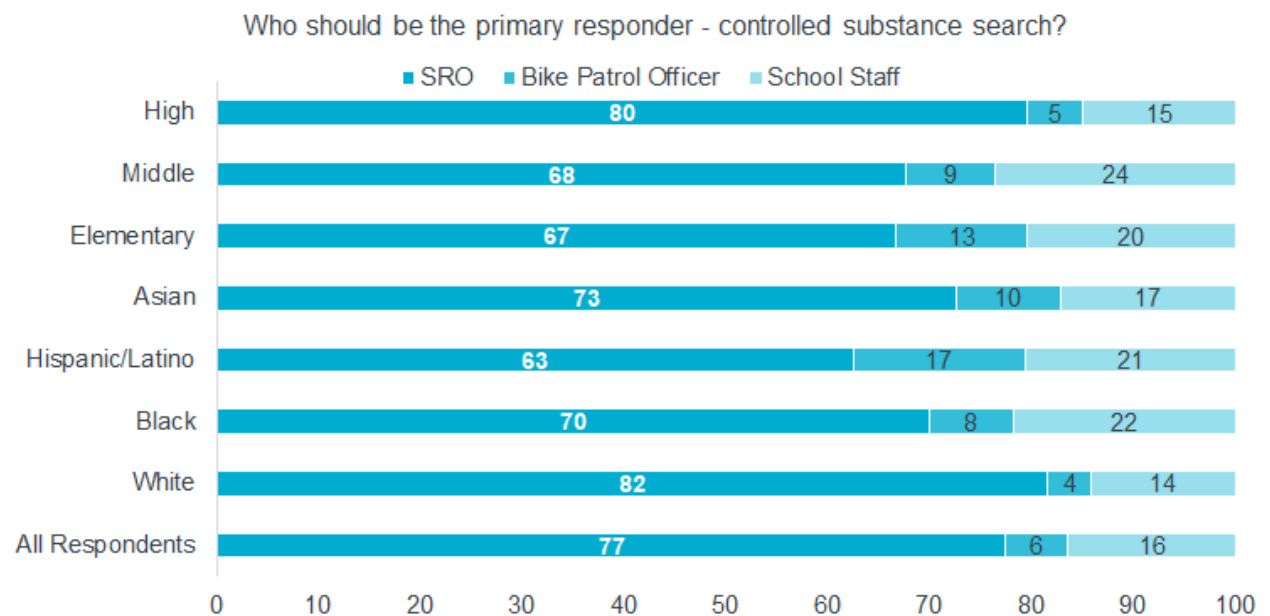
Primary Responder for Controlled Substance Search: Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A36

Primary Responder for Controlled Substance Search: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and school level.

Figure A37

Primary Responder for Controlled Substance Search: Community Survey

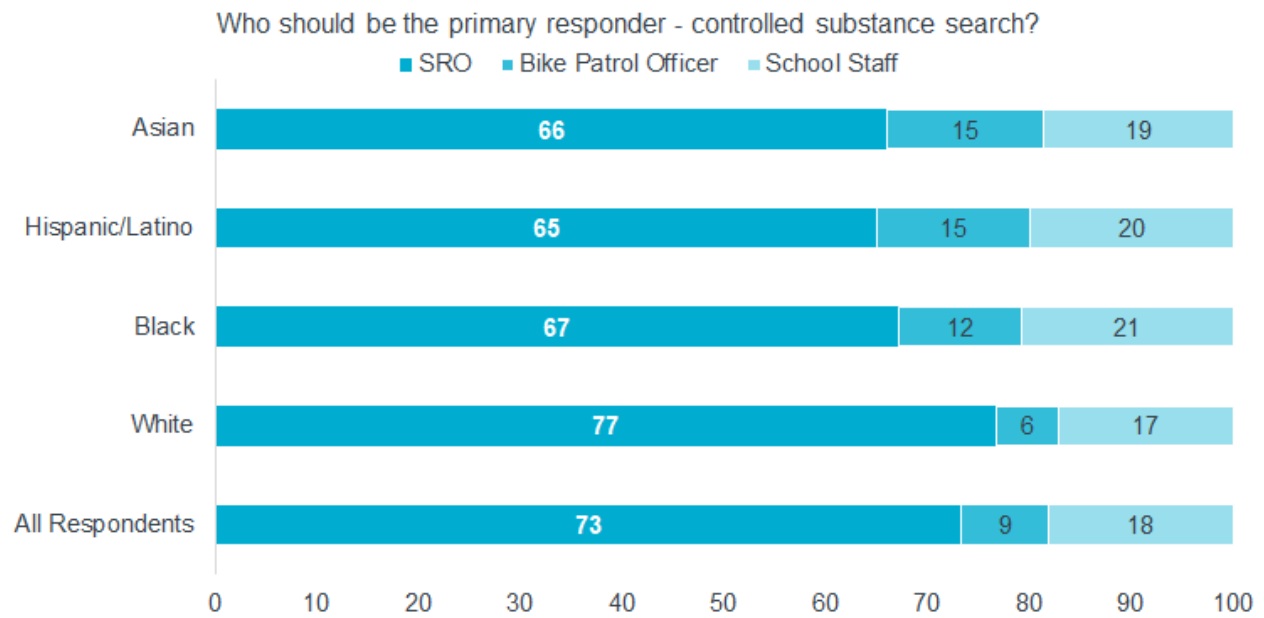
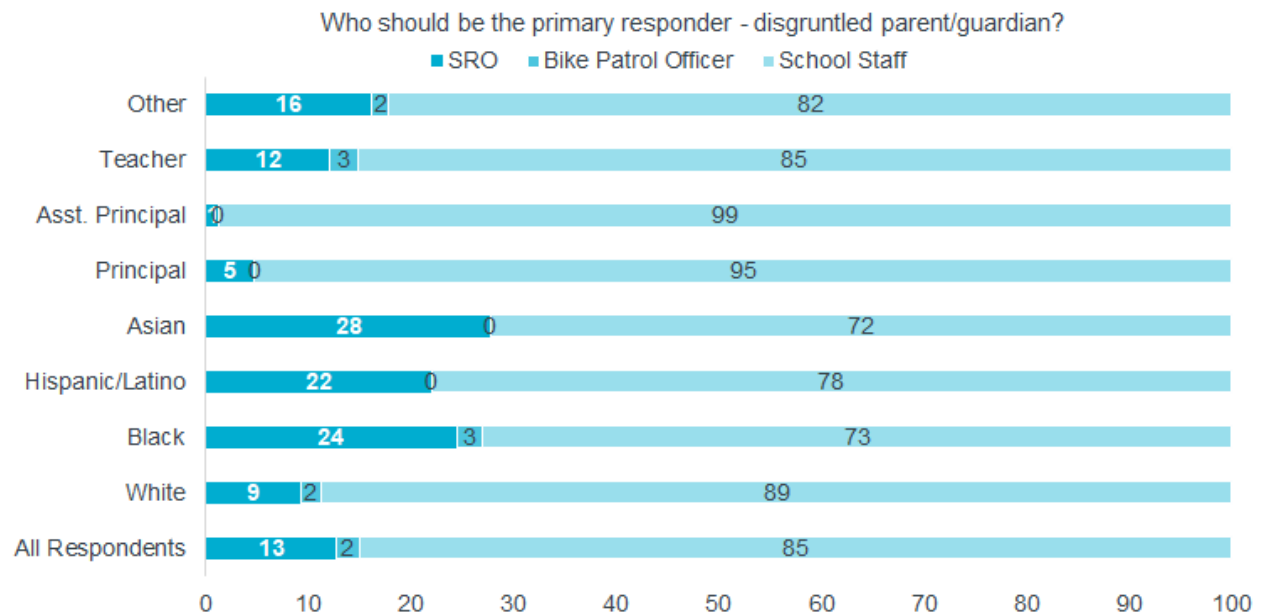


Figure A38

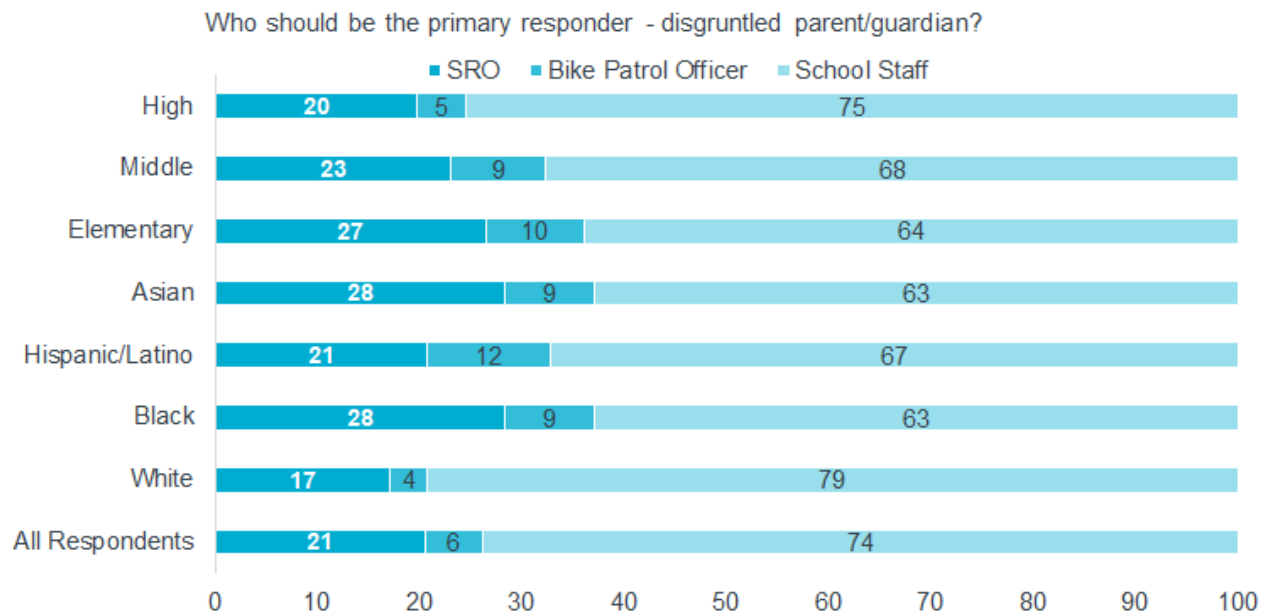
Primary Responder for Disgruntled Parent/Guardian: Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A39

Primary Responder for Disgruntled Parent/Guardian: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and school level.

Figure A40

Primary Responder for Disgruntled Parent/Guardian: Community Survey

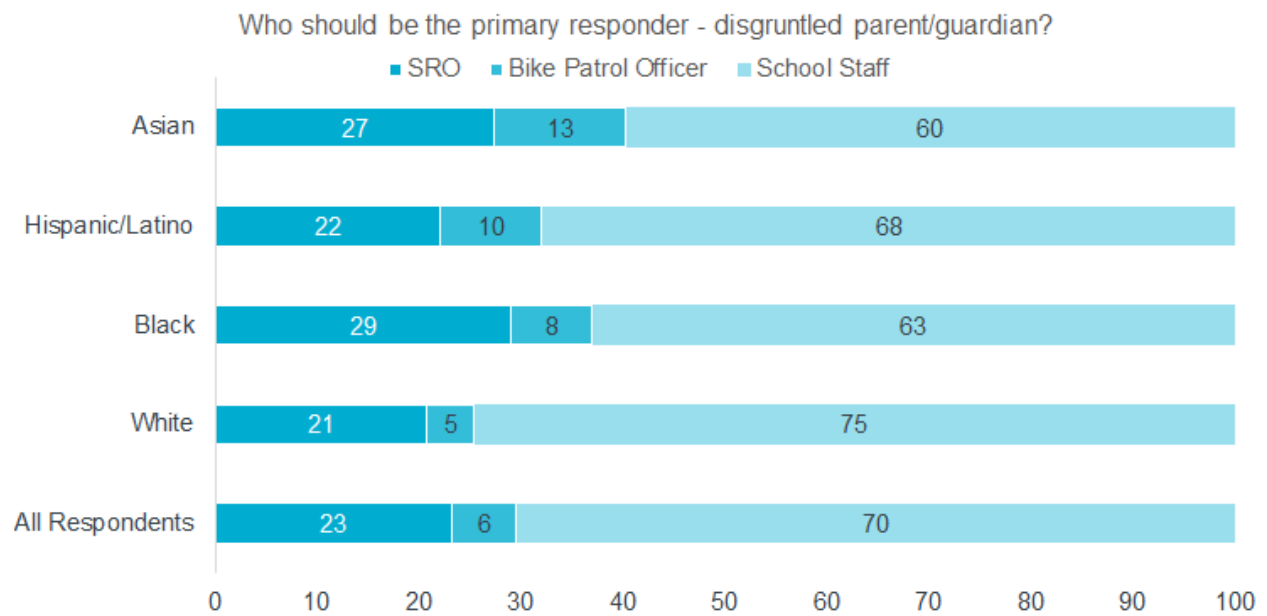
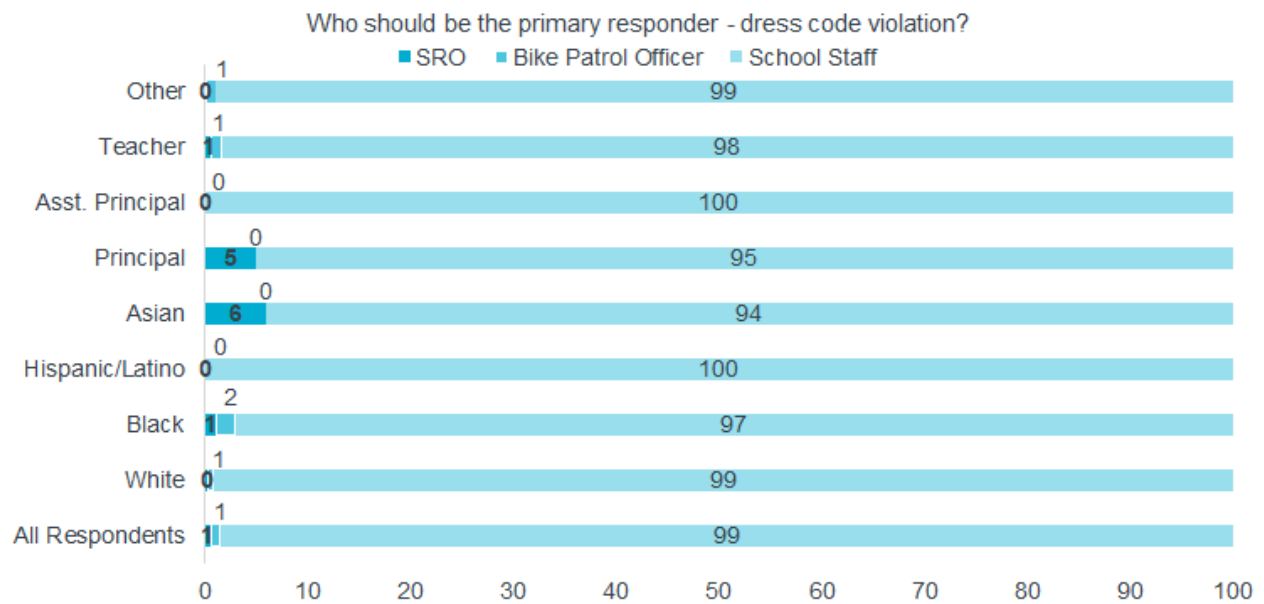
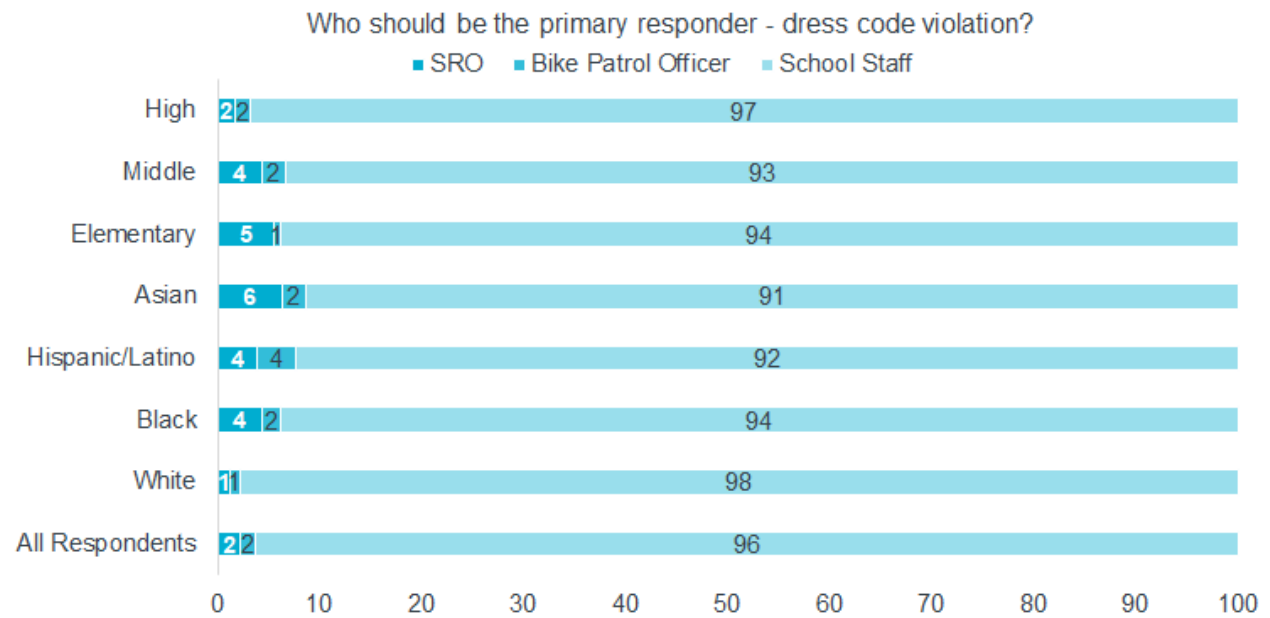


Figure A41
Primary Responder for Dress Code Violation: Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A42
Primary Responder for Dress Code Violation: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and school level.

Figure A43
Primary Responder for Dress Code Violation: Community Survey

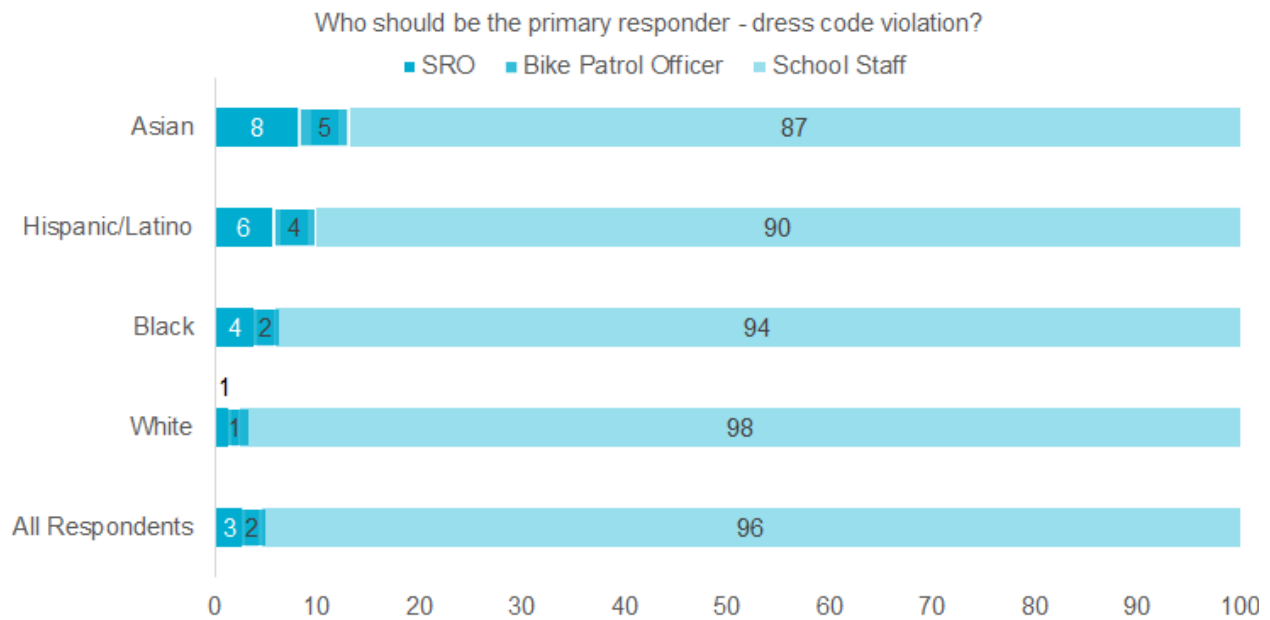
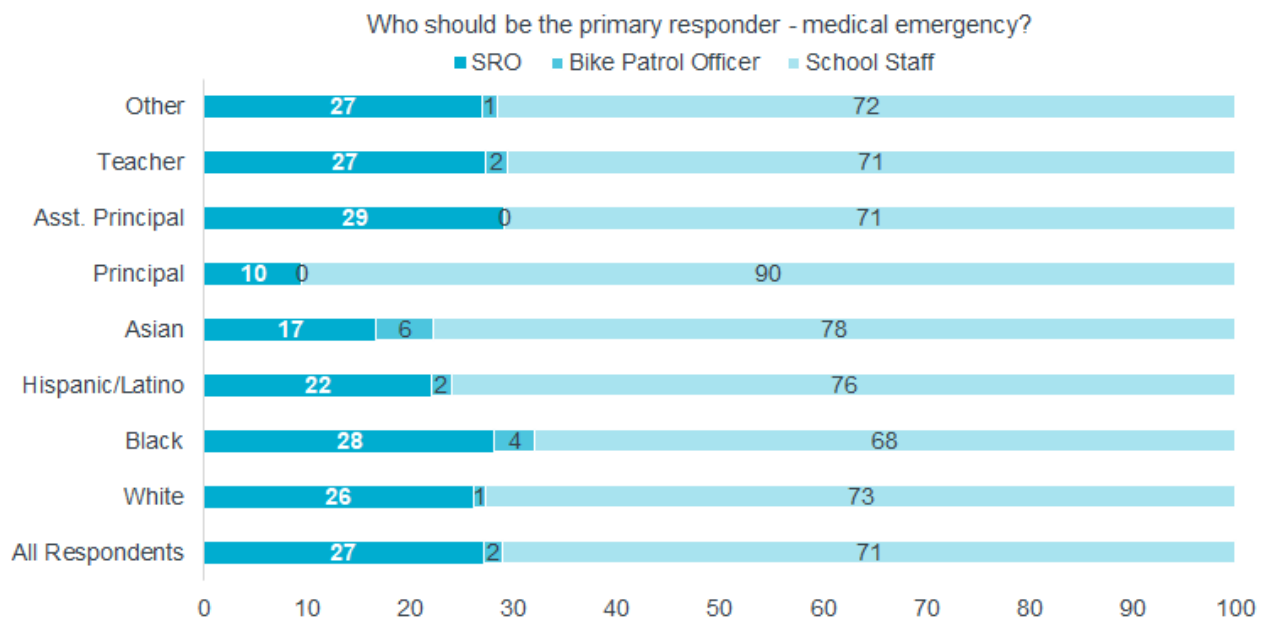


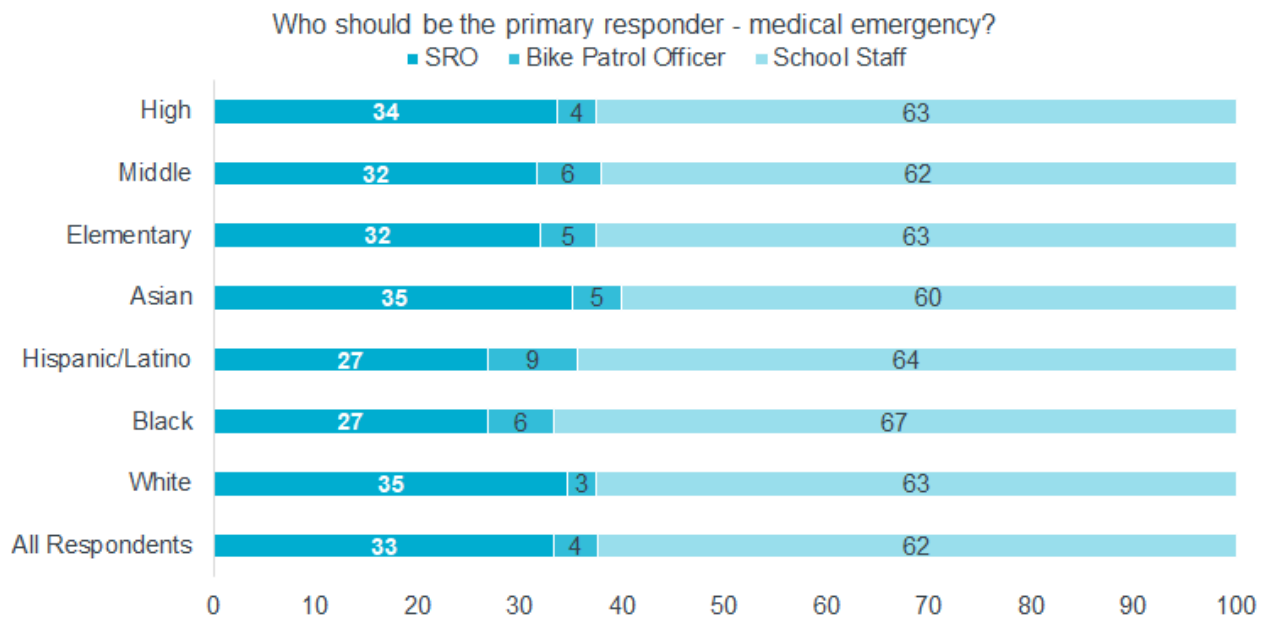
Figure A44
Primary Responder for Medical Emergency: Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal

Figure A45

Primary Responder for Medical Emergency: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and school level.

Figure A46

Primary Responder for Medical Emergency: Community Survey

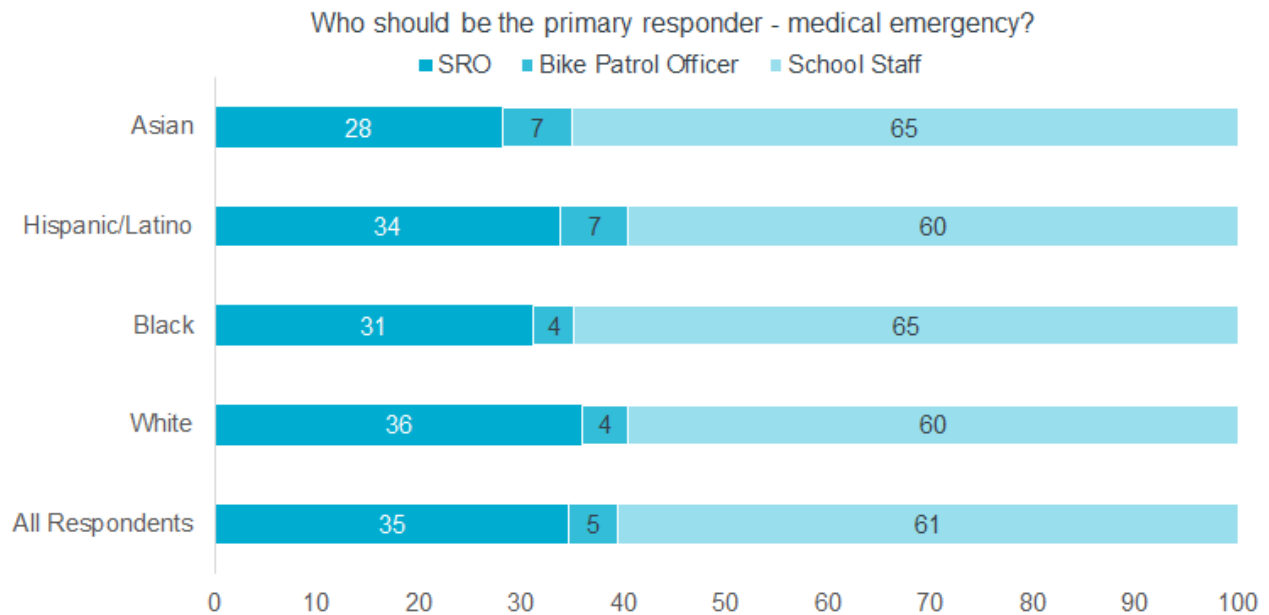
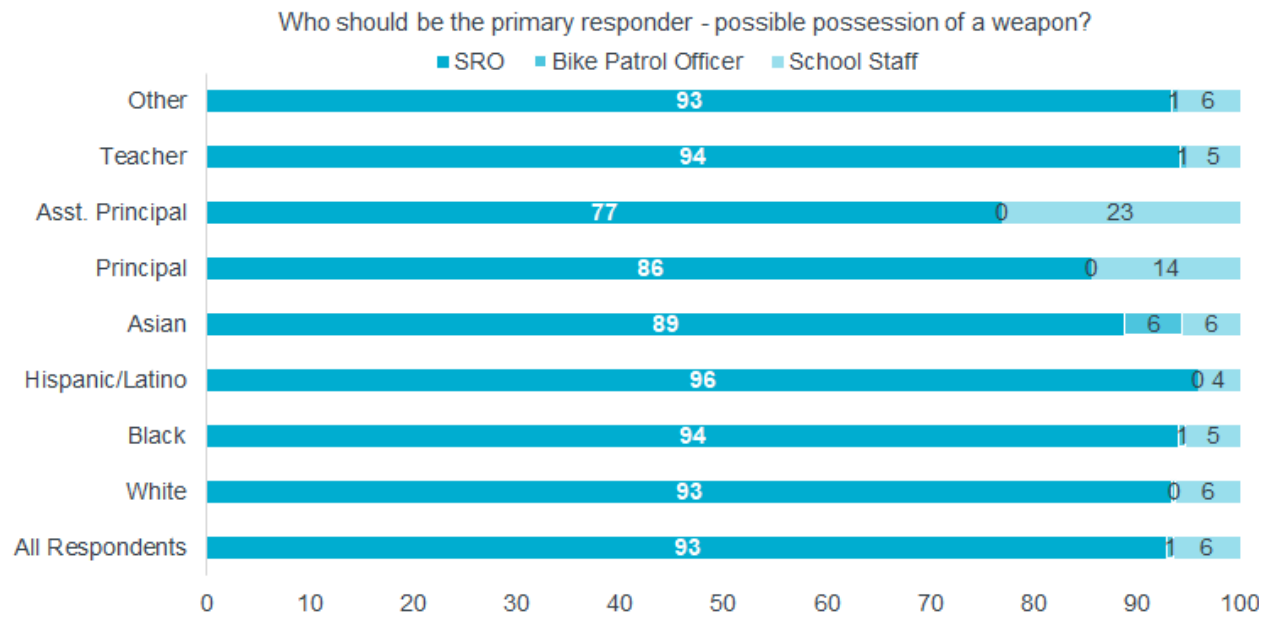


Figure A47

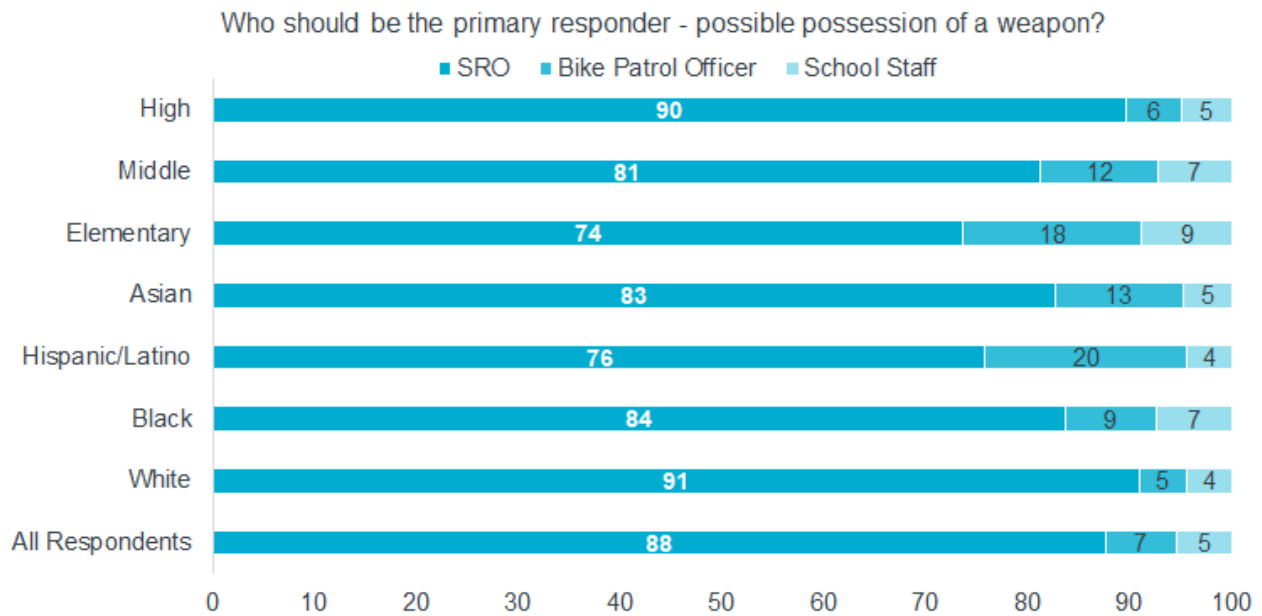
Primary Responder for Possible Possession of a Weapon: Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A48

Primary Responder for Possible Possession of a Weapon: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and school level.

Figure A49

Primary Responder for Possible Possession of a Weapon: Community Survey

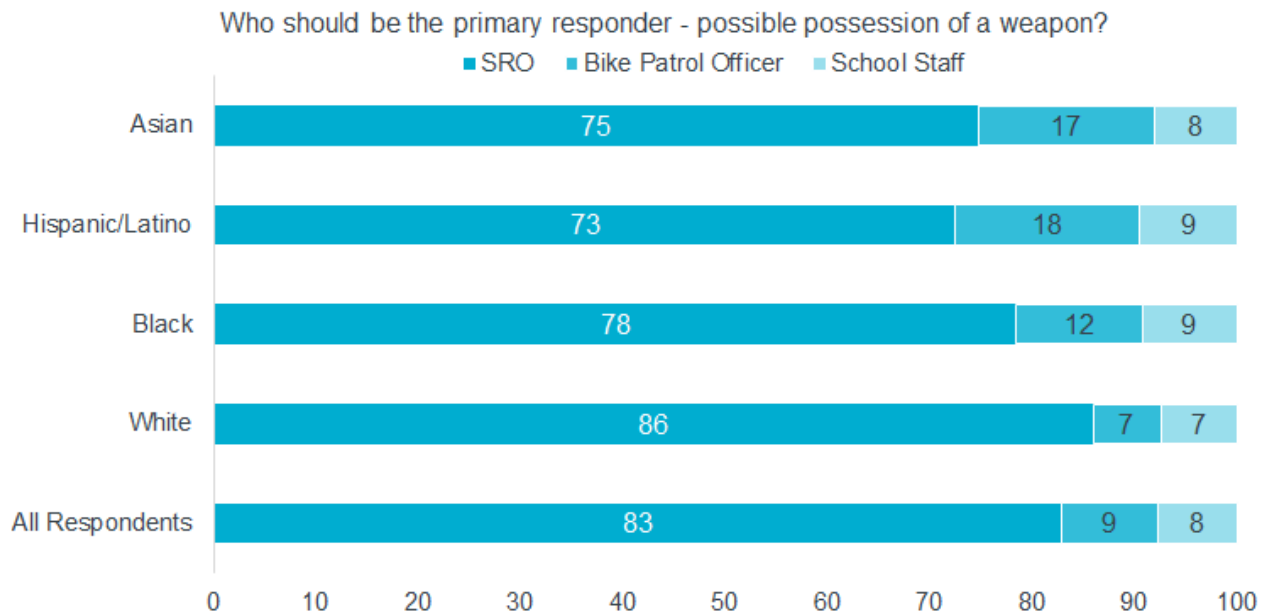
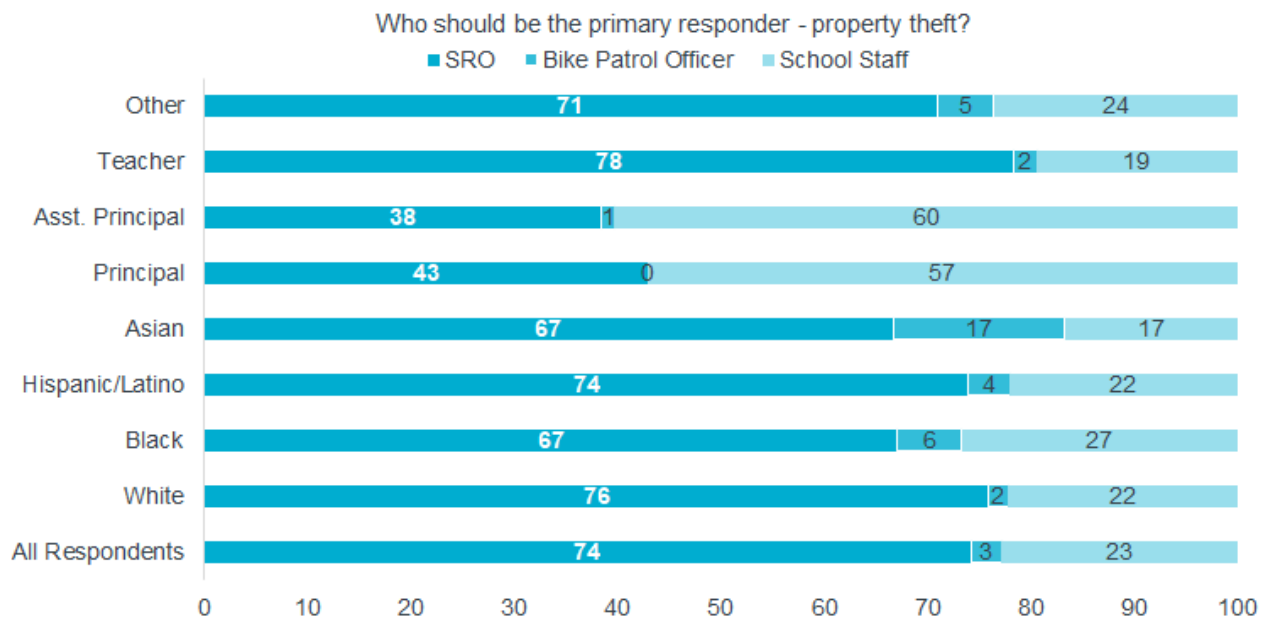


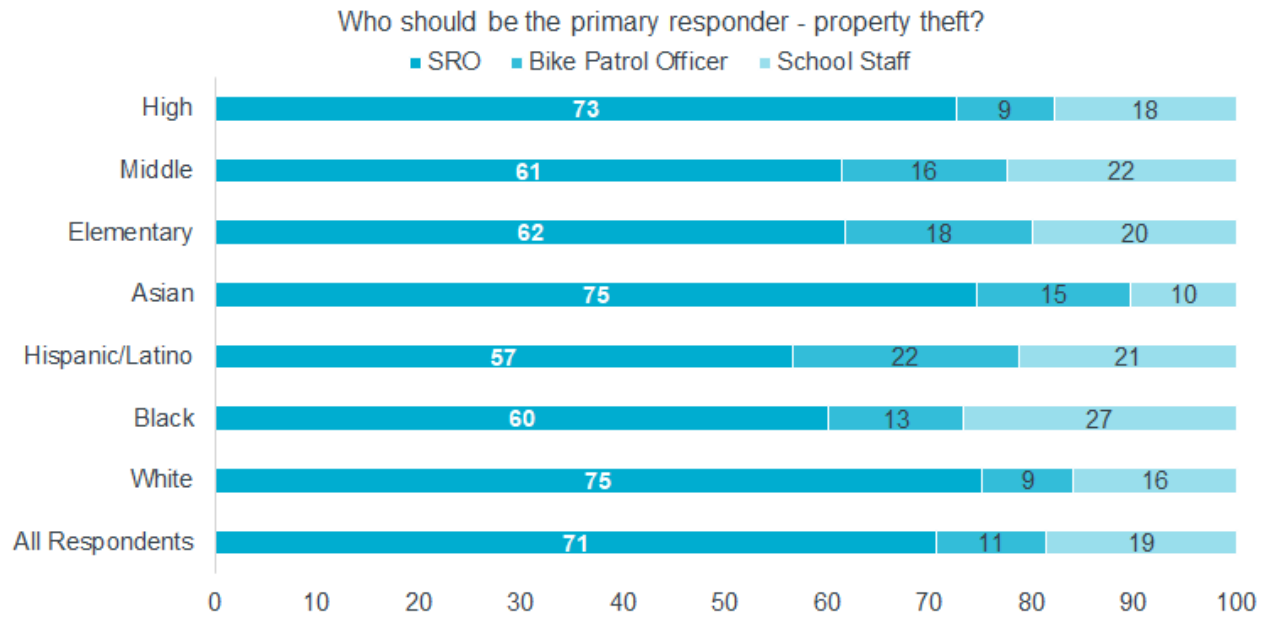
Figure A50

Primary Responder for Property Theft: Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A51
Primary Responder for Property/Theft: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child's race, gender, and school level.

Figure A52
Primary Responder for Property Theft: Community Survey

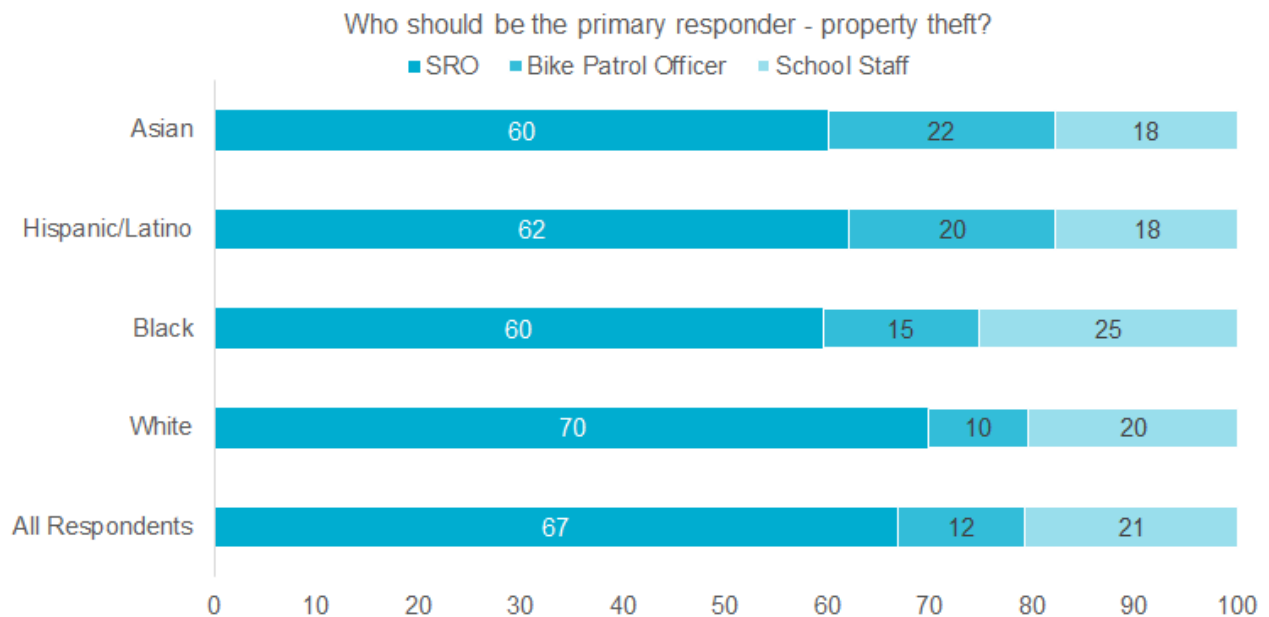
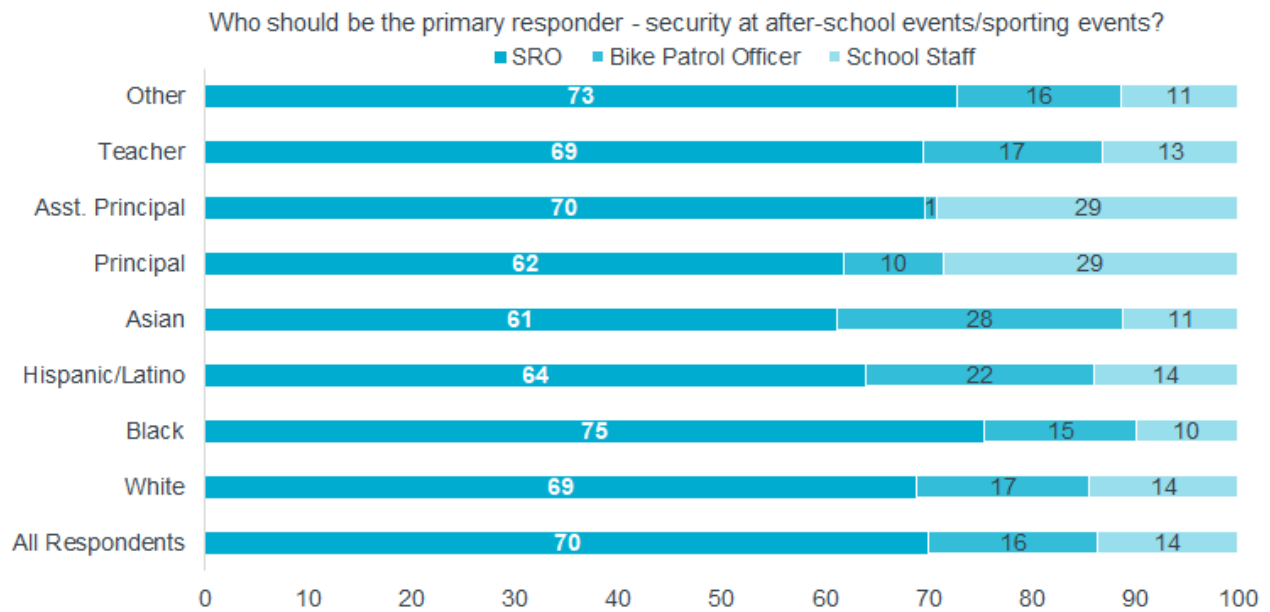


Figure A53

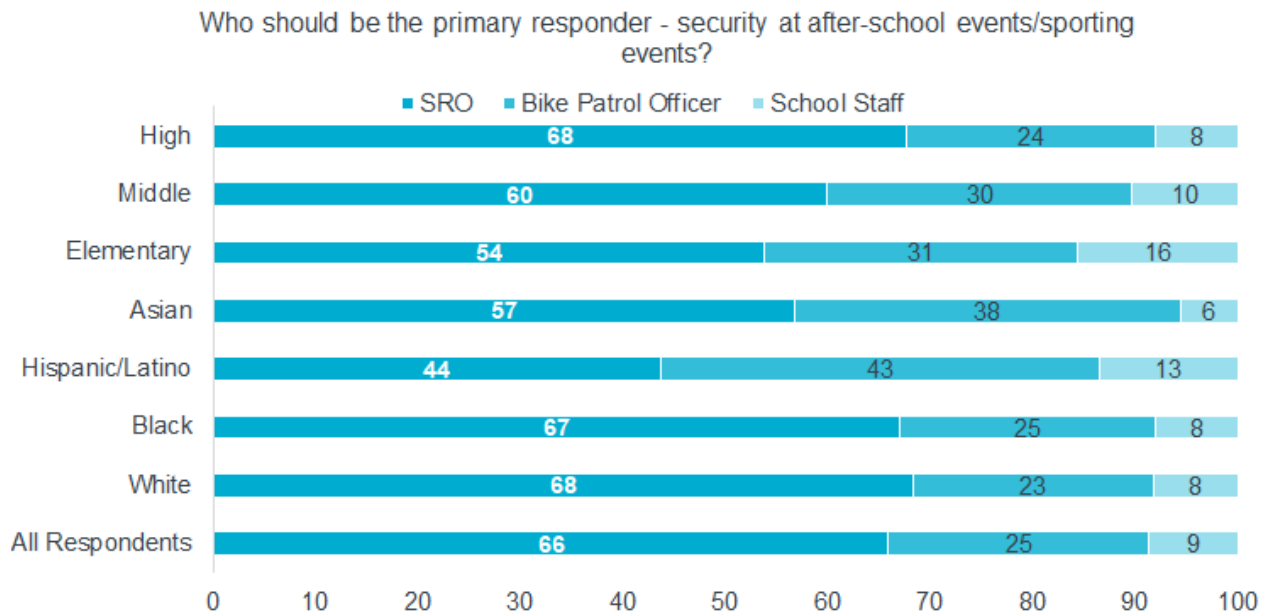
Primary Responder for Security at Afterschool/Sporting Events: Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A54

Primary Responder for Security at Afterschool/Sporting Events: Parent survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and school level.

Figure A55

Primary Responder for Security at Afterschool/Sporting Events: Community Survey

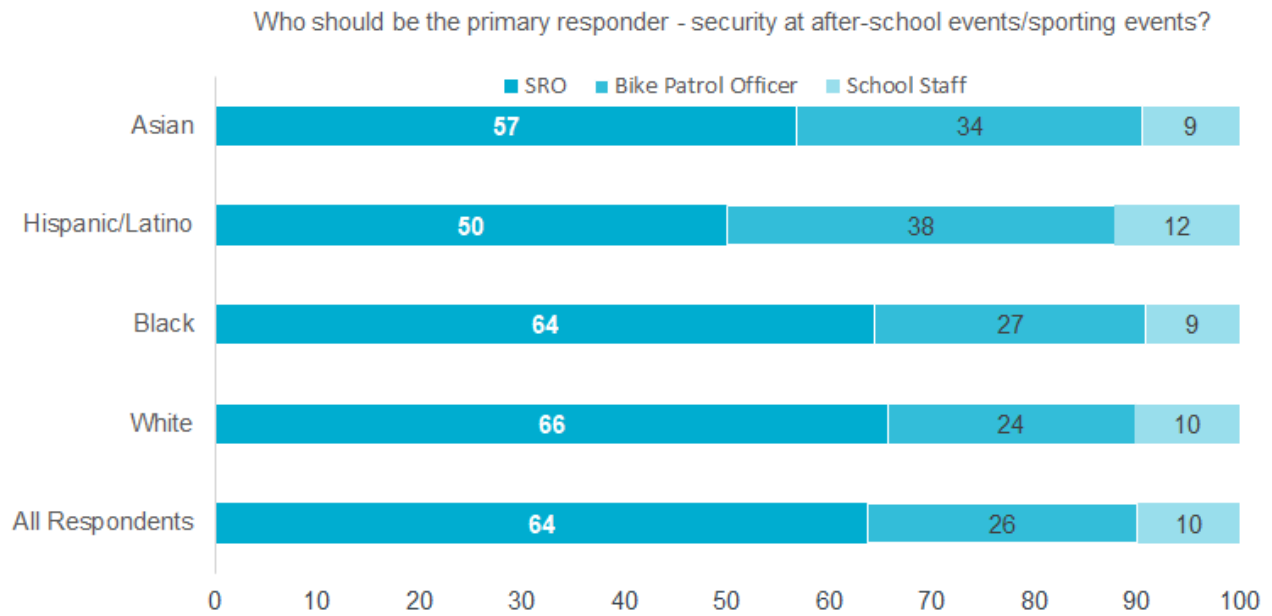
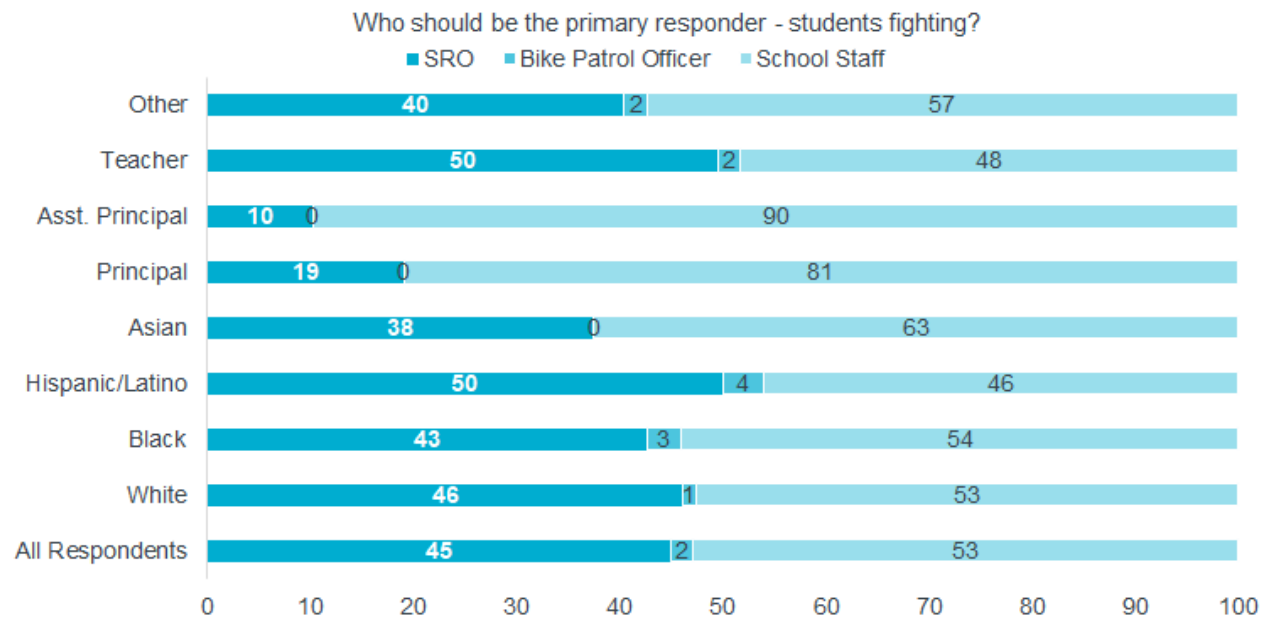


Figure A56

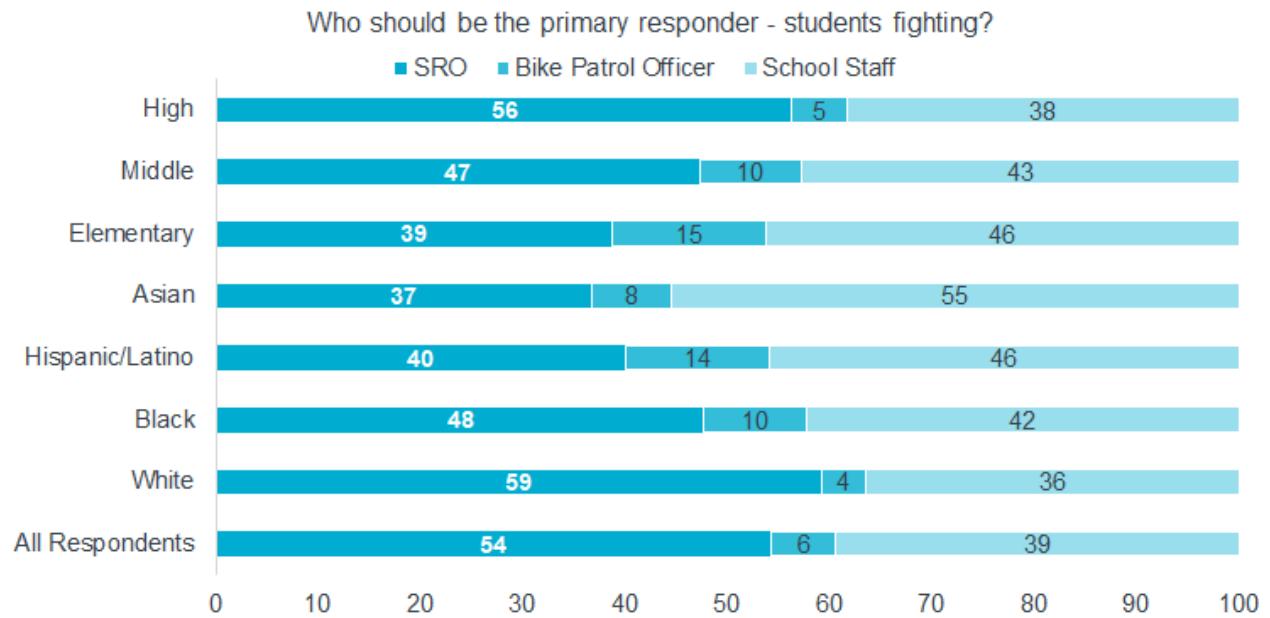
Primary Responder for Students Fighting: Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A57

Primary Responder for Students Fighting: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and school level.

Figure A58

Primary Responder for Students Fighting: Community Survey

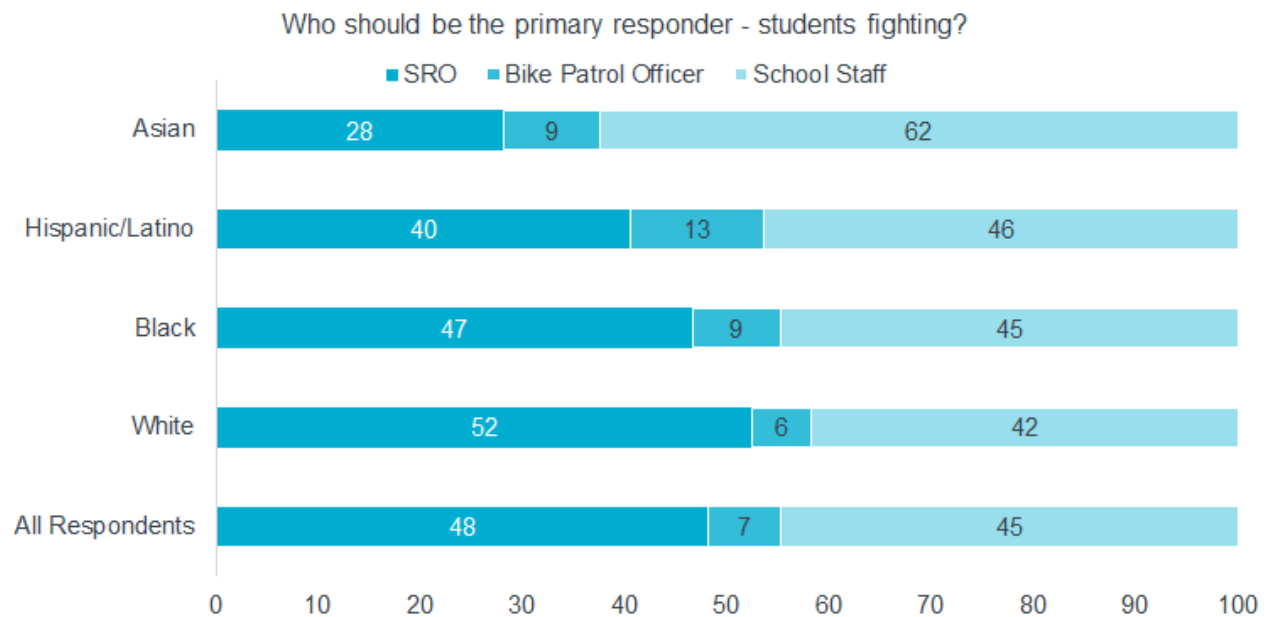
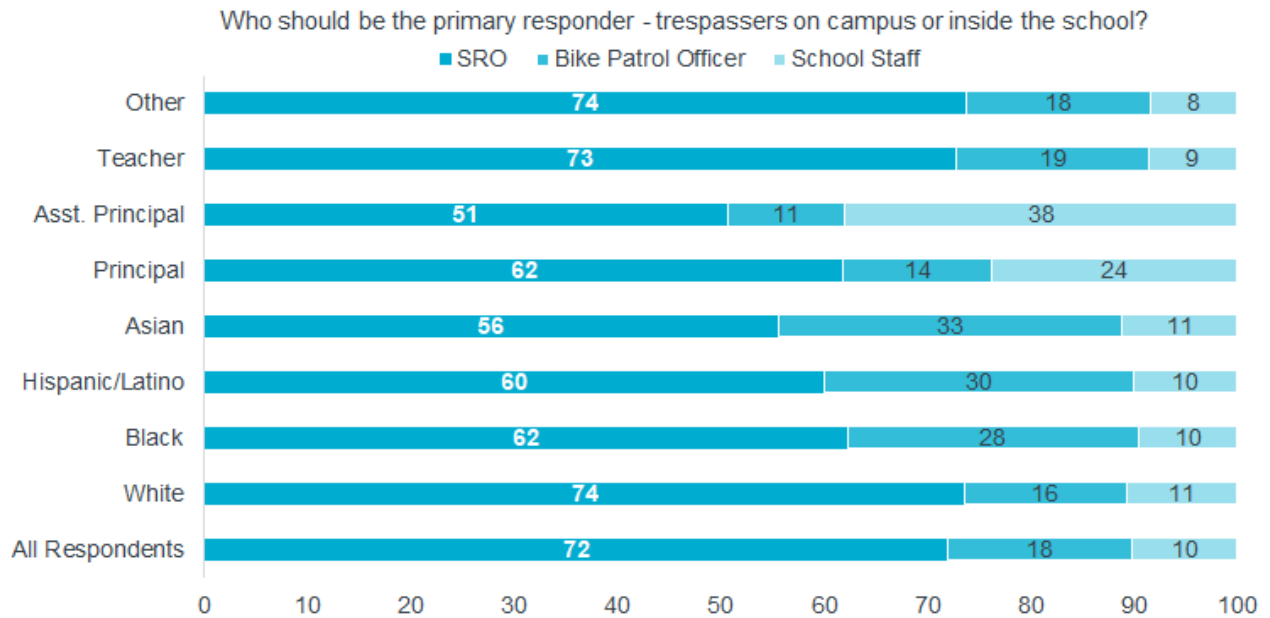
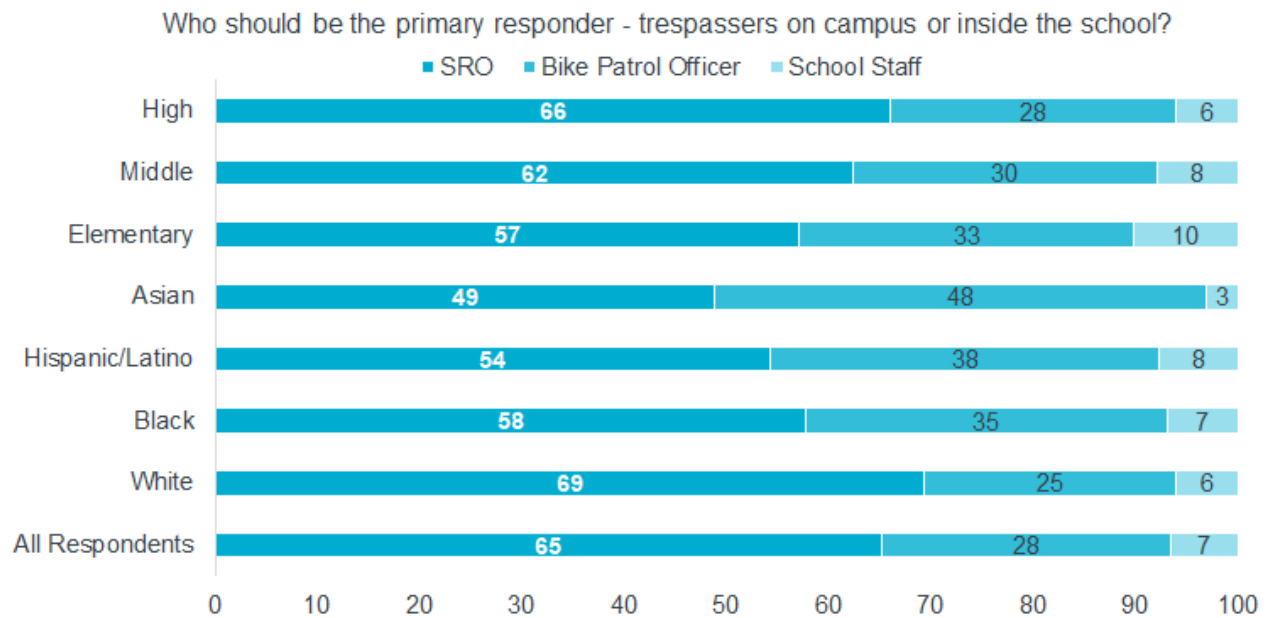


Figure A59
Primary Responder for Trespassers: Staff survey



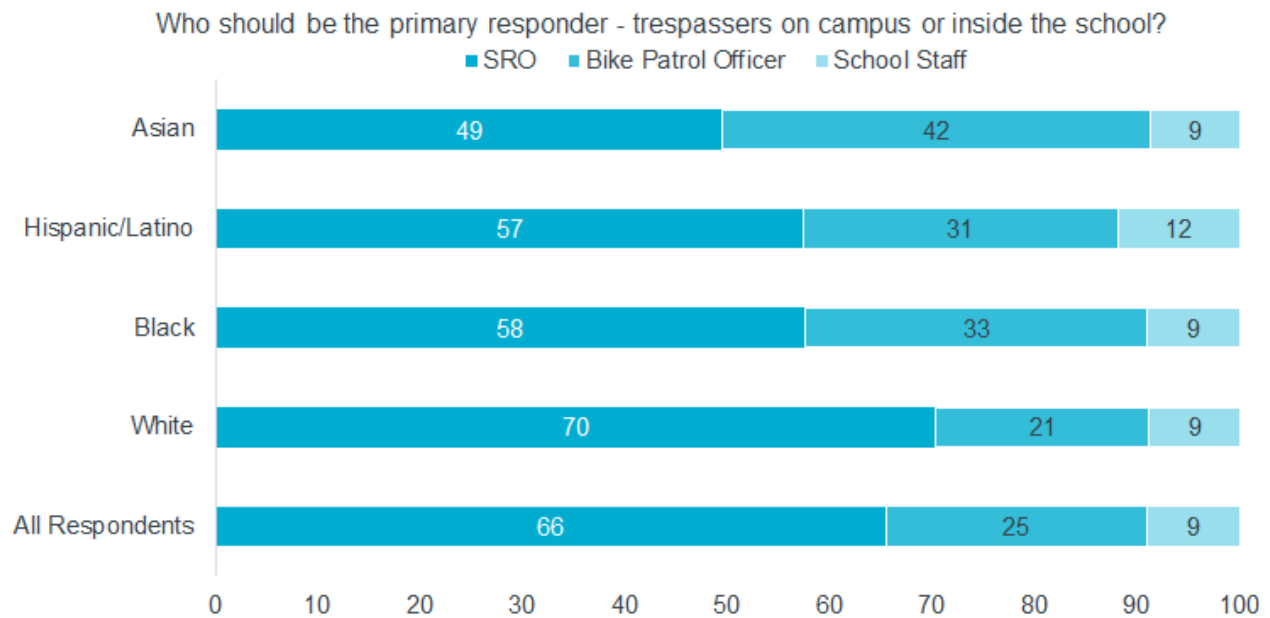
Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A60
Primary Responder for Trespassers: Parent Survey



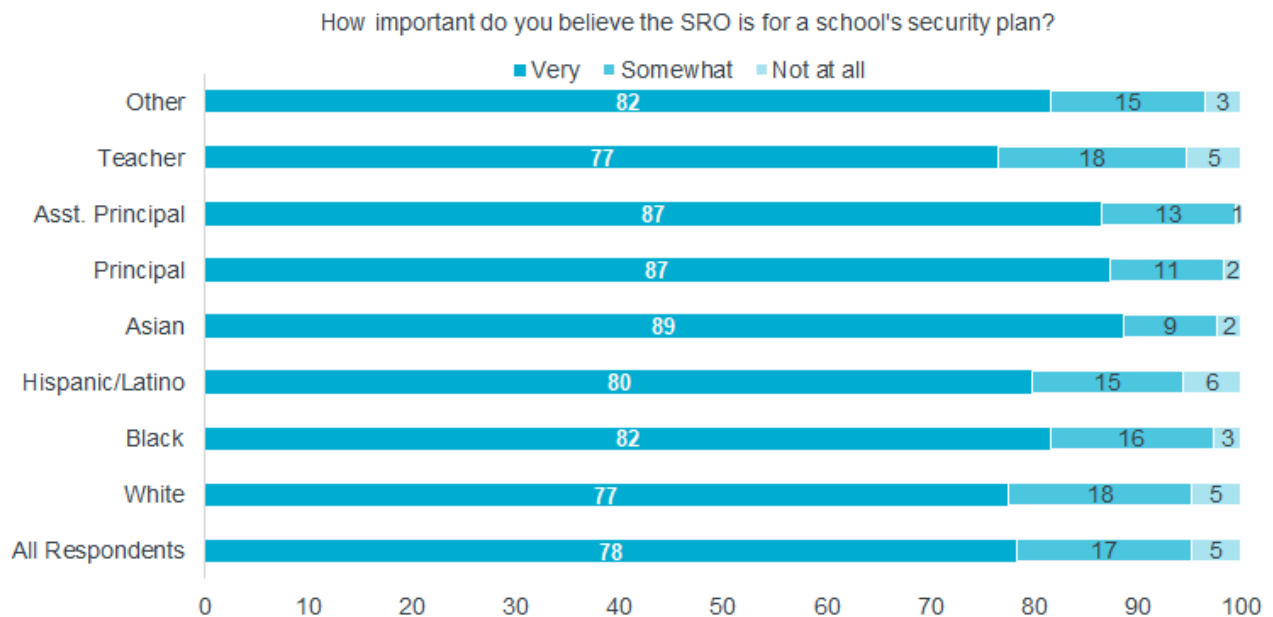
Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and school level.

Figure A61
Primary Responder for Trespassers: Community Survey



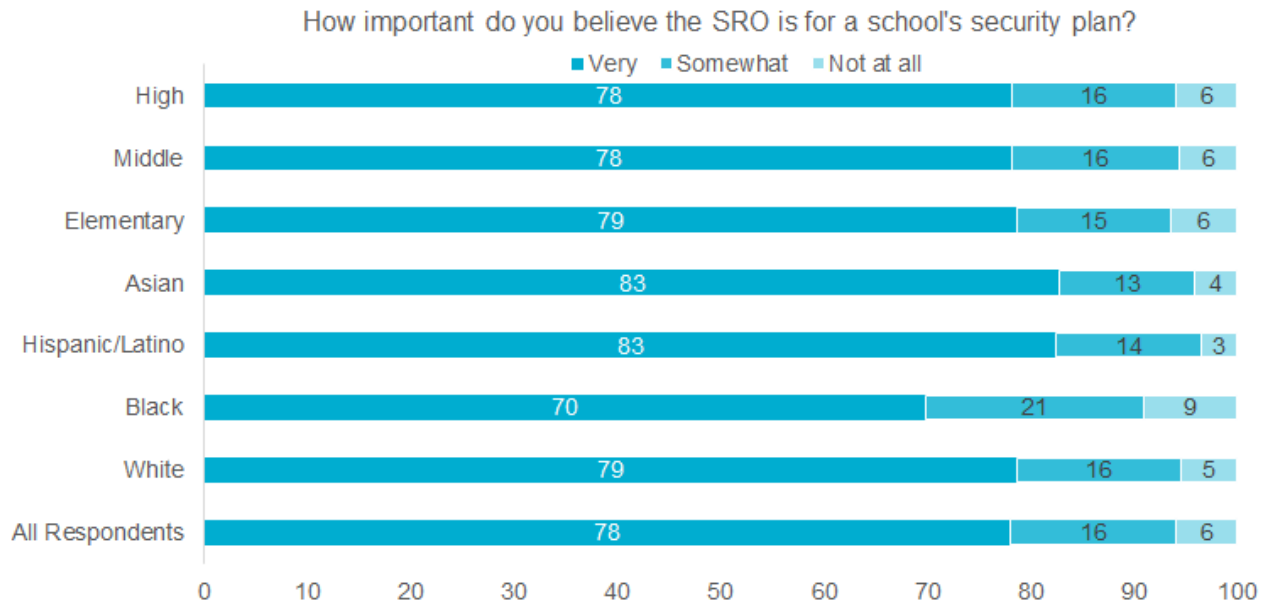
School Security Plan - SROs

Figure A62
Importance of SROs for a School Security Plan: Staff Survey



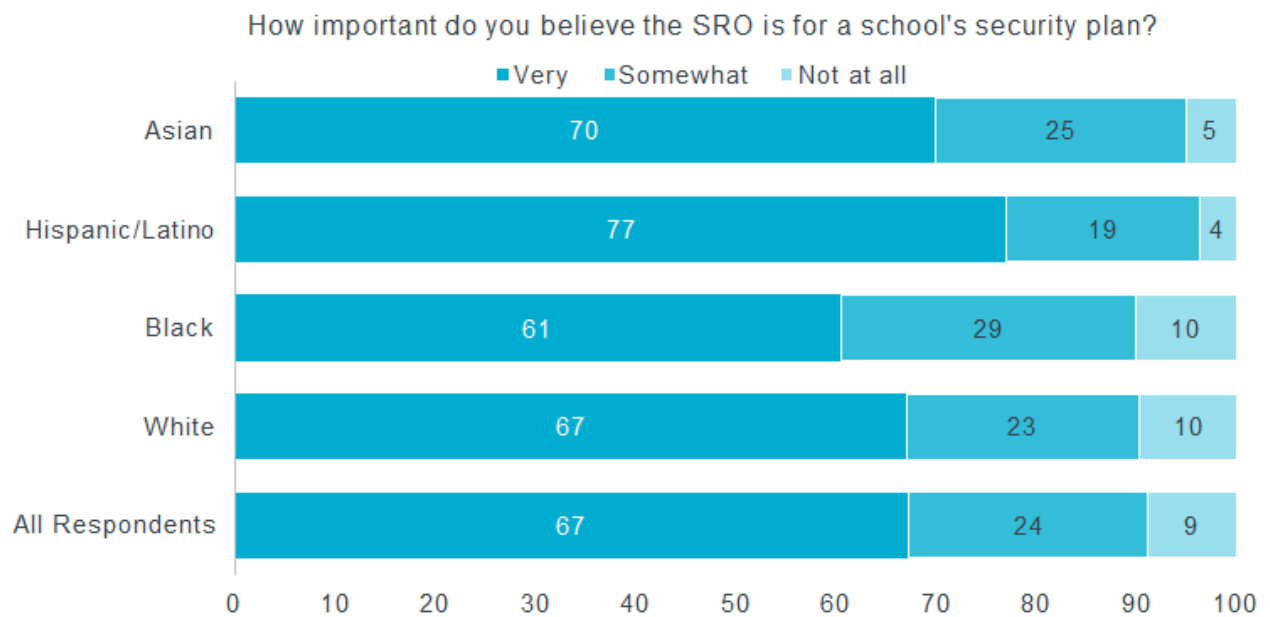
Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A63
Importance of SROs for a School Security Plan: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child's race, gender, and school level.

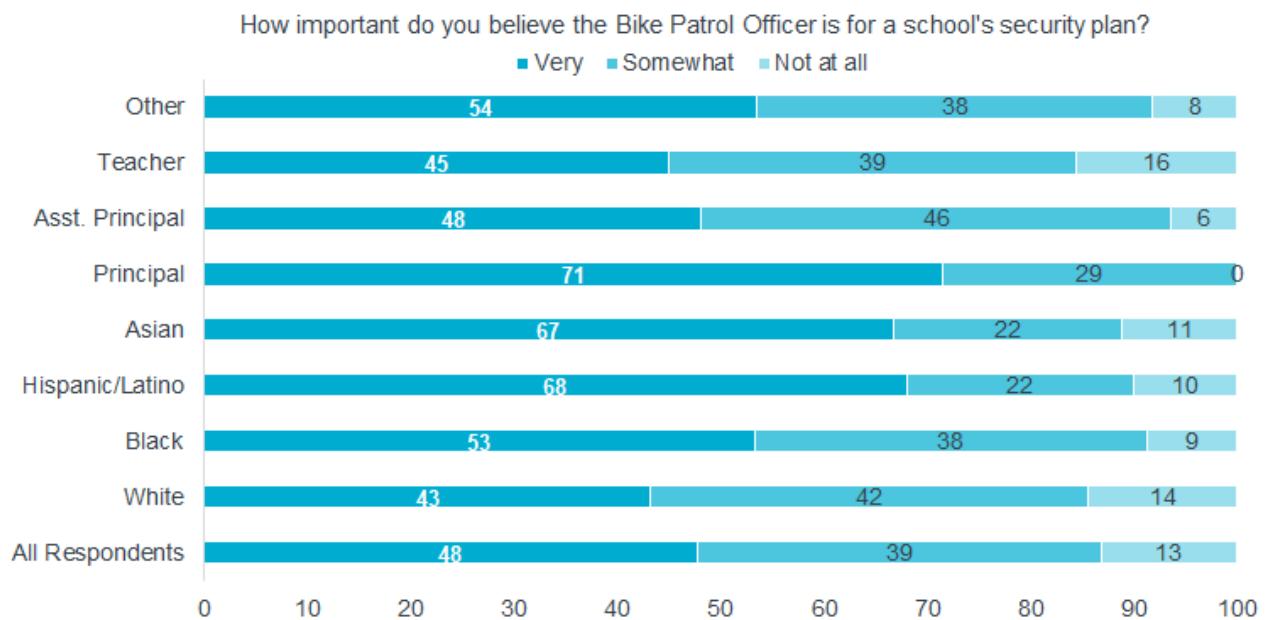
Figure A64
Importance of SROs for a School Security Plan: Community Survey



School Security Plan – Bike Patrol Officers

Figure A65

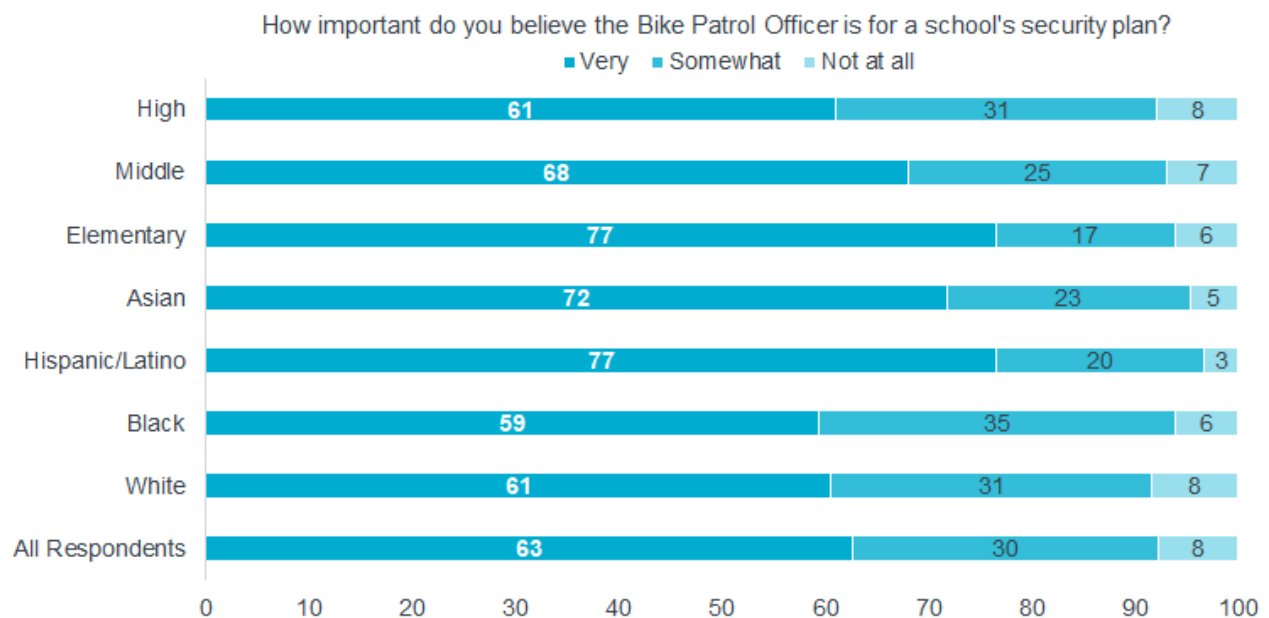
Importance of Bike Patrol Officers for a School Security Plan: Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A66

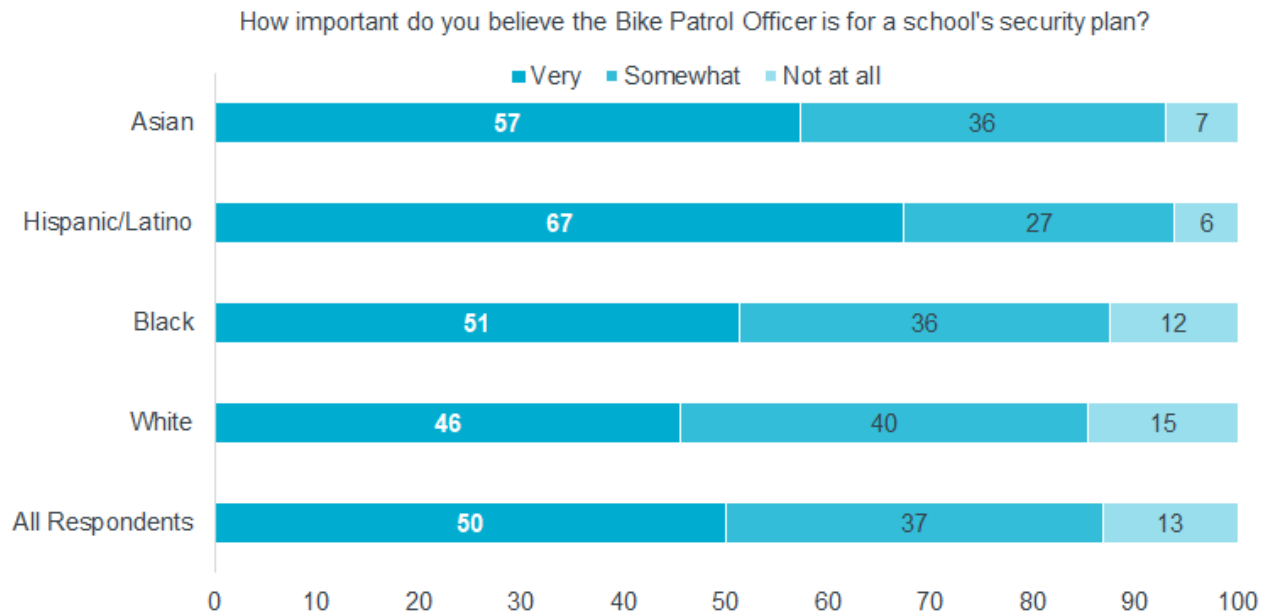
Importance of Bike Patrol Officers for a School Security Plan: Parent Survey



Note: The Parent Survey asked parents to identify their child’s race, gender, and school level.

Figure A67

Importance of Bike Patrol Officers for a School Security Plan: Community Survey



Policies and Practices Related to SROs

Figure A68

Inappropriate Actions Taken by SROs – Community, Parent and Staff Surveys

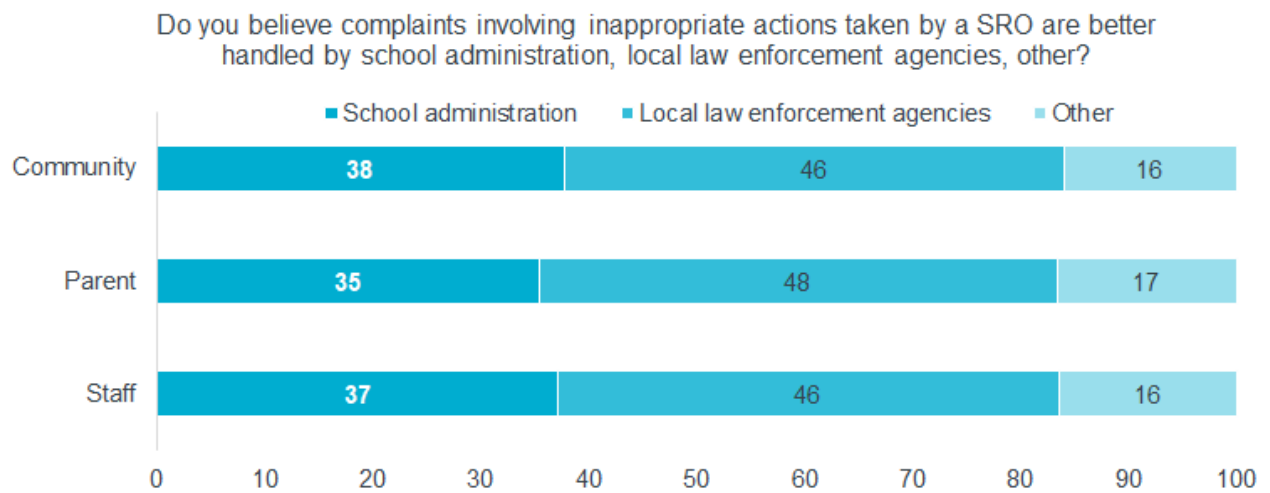
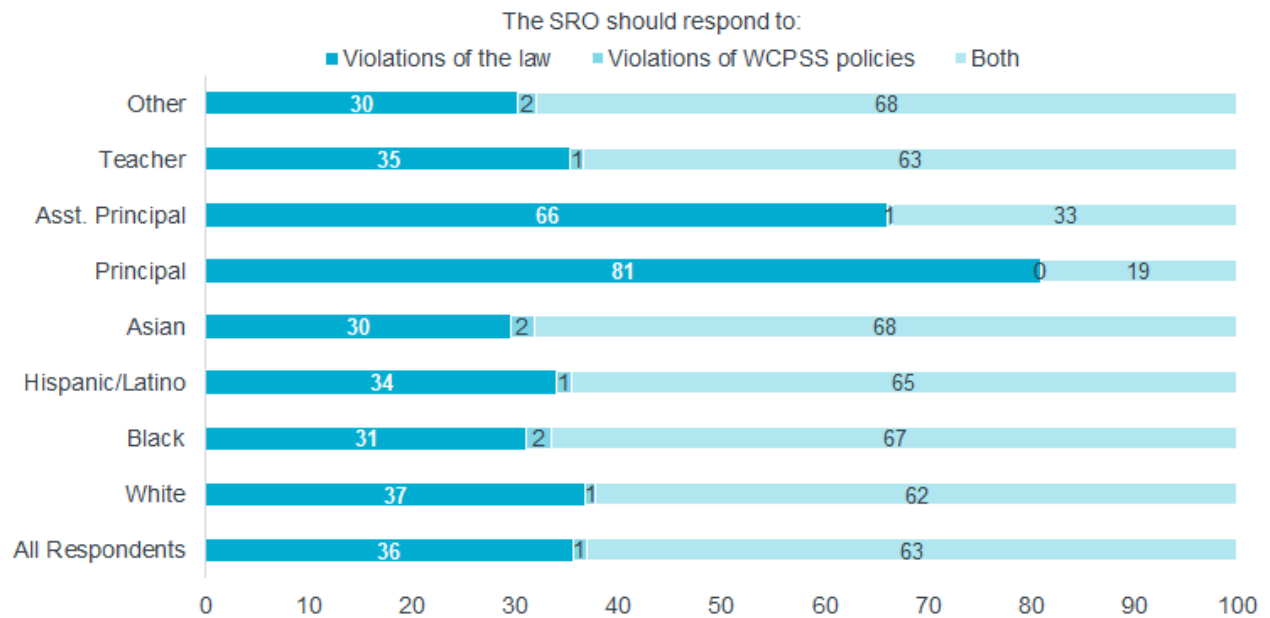
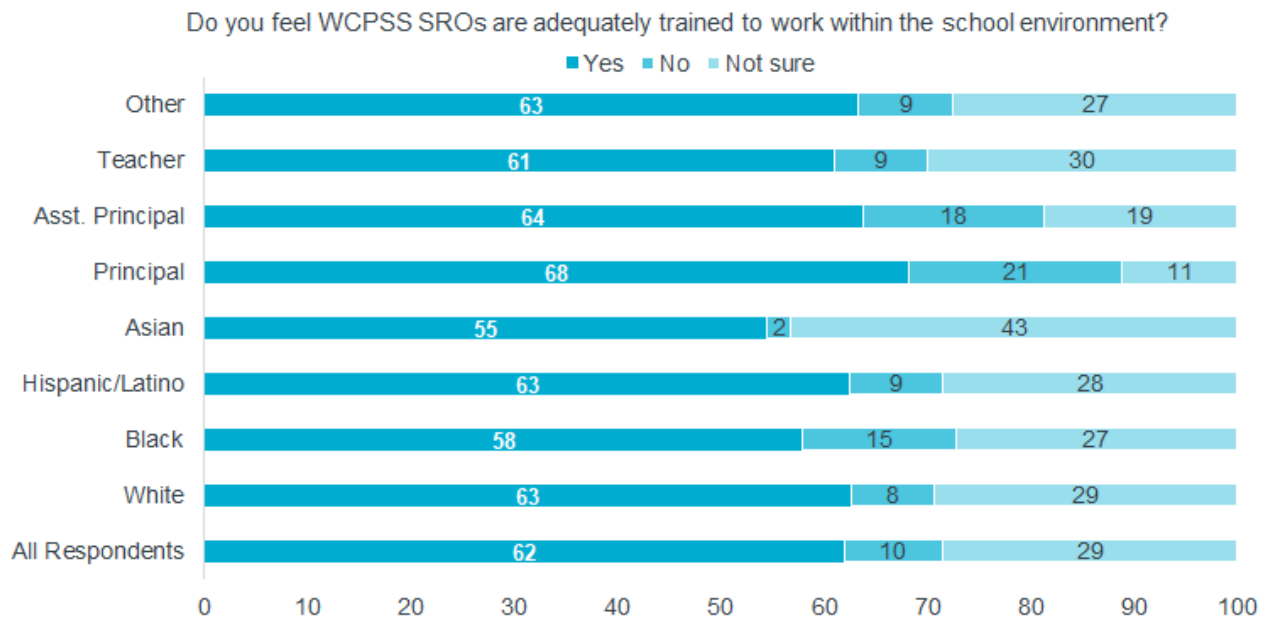


Figure A69
SRO Responsibility – Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Figure A70
SRO Training – Staff Survey



Note: The “other” subgroup includes WCPSS staff who are not a teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

APPENDIX B

School Safety – SROs - Focus Groups’ Results

Table B1

Stakeholder groups’ responses to, “What is the purpose of SROs in schools? What should or could be the purpose?”

Themes	Example Quote
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build positive relationships w/ school community • Safety • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated • Racial biases and disparities • Mental health support 	<p>Students <i>"I feel like a lot of SROs only step in when it comes to discipline issues or when it is a high stress situation. I feel like SROs would be a lot more helpful if they came before those incidents happen and that counselors and SROs should work together to try to prevent fights and also help with the mental health of students after those events to ensure they do not occur again."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build positive relationships w/ school community • Safety • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated 	<p>Teachers <i>"Expectations need to be very clear among staff, students, and parents. The 'relationship piece' is very important. Some SROs are great at building relationships with students, but others create fear and mistrust."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build positive relationships w/ school community • Safety 	<p>Principals <i>"In our case, it's not so much about the safety element as it is about having the role models of law enforcement and starting to build strong relationships, as many people mentioned, and seeing the police as allies that would help in difficult situations and not somebody to be afraid of."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build positive relationships w/ school community • Safety • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated • Racial biases and disparities 	<p>Parents/community members <i>"A big part of the problem is that SROs are being placed in the schools to enforce policies or handle discipline issues that should be handled internally. Doing so increases the school to prison pipeline."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build positive relationships w/ school community • Safety 	<p>Law enforcement officers/SROs <i>"We are there for safety and security, but we are also there to build relationships."</i> <i>"The SROs...serve as ambassadors to individuals that probably have never had an interaction with law enforcement, so that is a critical kind of opportunity for us to make a very positive first impression."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build positive relationships w/ school community • Safety 	<p>Central Services Security Department staff <i>"It helps to build the relationships between the community and law enforcement when SROs are seen as a mentor to students when they are not responding to criminal activity or some type of emergency."</i></p>

Table B2

Stakeholder groups’ responses to, “Why do you think some respondents did NOT feel that SROs make schools more safe?”

Themes	Example Quote
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions/experiences • Lack of training for school setting • Racial biases and disparities • SROs not part of the school culture 	<p>Students <i>"Everyone is wearing normal clothes and they [SROs] are super intimidating in their full out uniform. [During] Spirit Week they never participate and we never get to see another side of them except the intimidating one and I feel like if you don't put down that wall or hard exterior they don't have a chance to get to know you. So if you are making the school safe we do not feel safe."</i></p> <p><i>"He [the SRO] made efforts to connect with students by attending basketball games or commenting on jerseys kids were wearing."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions/experiences • Lack of training for school setting • Racial biases and disparities • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated 	<p>Teachers <i>"I know SROs are trained on law enforcement, but I don't know what their training is on school level interventions. I do feel that at the school level there is a gray area when it comes to the disciplinary chain, so you could have SROs intervening in something that could have been deescalated by school staff... there are other ways that teachers and staff could get involved to deescalate a situation without having to involve an officer."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions/experiences • Lack of training for school setting & mental health • Racial biases and disparities • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated • Goodness of fit & SRO assignment 	<p>Principals <i>"I also found out that when they come directly off the beat of driving the cars and dealing with criminals, sometimes they don't even realize this is a whole different place you're in and you don't treat children the same way you did out there. So we need to do a better job with who comes into the schools and principals should have some say in talking to them to see if they really match your school and don't just assume that because someone has come off the beat, that they're ready to go into a school."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions/experiences • Lack of training for school setting • Racial biases and disparities • Need for mental health support positions • Build positive relationships w/ school community 	<p>Parents/community members <i>"Latinx youth said they have seen differential treatment in the classroom and a lot of time SROs are called out for students of color more than their White peers."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions/experiences • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated 	<p>Law enforcement officers/SROs <i>"We need to do more of telling the stories of what being an SRO means and share those relationship building, trust, mentorship [stories] a little bit better to the public."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions/experiences • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated 	<p>Central Services Security Department staff <i>"A lot of folks have no idea of what an SRO does or is supposed to be doing when they are on the campus and they just take either their personal experience or the group think mentality and draw conclusions from it."</i></p>

Table B3

Stakeholder groups’ responses to, “Why do you think some respondents felt that students are not treated fairly by SROs?”

Themes	Example Quote
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions/experiences • Biases and disparities • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated • Lack of SRO gender diversity • Students treated inconsistently 	<p>Students <i>"There are not enough female SROs. It's uncomfortable having to deal with male SROs all the time."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions/experiences • Racial biases and disparities • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated • Build positive relationships w/ school community • Goodness of fit 	<p>Teachers <i>"Some people may be influenced by things that happen in the media...It would be beneficial for people to see the kinds of things they [SROs] do as well as understand the role inside the school and how they keep students safe. They are not just busting up fights."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions/experiences • Racial biases and disparities • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated • Build positive relationships w/ school community 	<p>Principals <i>"So from my own experience, we tend to like to focus on the negative things...you have to give the SRO the opportunity to have moments of positive interactions, so putting the SRO in a position to teach classes if possible like say Civics classes. Some of the most positive experiences we've had was having our SRO be a part of Spirit Week and participating in Dodge Volleyball. Our kids were able to see the SRO as a real person with hobbies and interests and preferences. I think this helped transfer things so that everyone was more willing to talk about the things that were going well with the SRO."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions/experiences • Racial biases and disparities • Build positive relationships w/ school community • SRO accountability 	<p>Parents/community members <i>"I hear directly from students that they see the disparities with the way the discipline and procedures are enforced in the school system."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions/experiences • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated • Lack of information • Student accountability & perception of fairness • Lack of trust and bias against law enforcement 	<p>Law enforcement officers/SROs <i>"The idea of fairness is an emotional response. We can't share what happened to students because of privacy laws, so they don't know how everybody else is treated. They only see what it looks like from the outside."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions/experiences • Lack of information • SROs dealing w/ same group of students 	<p>Central Services Security Department staff <i>"There [are] a select few who cause drama or get involved in a situation where the officer has to continue to deal with the individual student and it creates a skewed perception from parents that their child is being singled out."</i></p>

Table B4

Stakeholder groups’ responses to, “Many respondents gave responses of ‘not sure’ to a number of the questions about SROs. Why do you think they said that? Do you think that they didn’t have enough information to answer the question? Do you think they were just conflicted about the issue? Another reason?”

Themes	Example Quote
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated • Limited interactions • Lack of connection w/ school community • Regular dialog among SROs, administrators, & students 	<p>Students <i>"I definitely feel that the reason so many people said unsure is because of the lack of connection with school or students because a lot of times we only see SROs helping with fights or traffic. You don't really see them face to face or having a connection unless you are in trouble or something negative is happening to you so I think it would really help students to feel more at ease and more comfortable if [SROs] were more active members of the community and helped at fun things the school had to offer like coming to games and interacting with students or helping with spirit week so we don't just see them as a negative person we deal with at school."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated • Limited interactions • Lack of connection w/ school community • Build positive relationships w/ school community • Additional training for behavioral support teachers, counselors, teachers • Include SROs in PLTs 	<p>Teachers <i>"Most parents aren't even sure that there's an SRO there. Most SROs sit in their office and only come out if there's a fight. So, their interaction with students and parents is limited."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated • Limited interactions • Lack of connection w/ school community • Build positive relationships w/ school community • SRO accountability • SRO assignment 	<p>Principals <i>"We need to look in the mirror and say how often have we created these [issues] by sending an SRO to a situation to deal with that we should have never sent them to."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated • Limited interactions • Build positive relationships w/ school community • Removal of SROs/need for mental health support positions 	<p>Parents/community members <i>"Police officers should not be in the school building. They do not make students feel safe, they do not stop school shooting[s]. Yes, we do need someone to help building relationships with the students and provide with some sort of mental health support and counseling but to the argument that SROs should be mentors or coach to students, that is not their place. If we want a person to do that, the school district should invest in hiring more therapists, school counselors, psychologists or even a person whose actual job is to build relationships with the holistic community and the students. Maybe an intervention counselor or a peace builder."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated • Limited interactions • Build positive relationships w/ school community 	<p>Law enforcement officers <i>"A lot of kids don't have any interaction with us at all. It is our job to get out there and engage the students."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRO role not clearly defined or communicated • Limited interactions 	<p>Central Services Security Department staff <i>"There is limited information and limited knowledge about our SRO program."</i></p>



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Acknowledgements

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