

**SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS IN KENTUCKY
WHO ARE THEY AND WHAT DO THEY DO?
2021 - 2022**

By:

Kentucky Center for School Safety

Lee Ann Morrison, M. S.

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SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS IN KENTUCKY WHO ARE THEY AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

School Resource Officers were first referenced in Kentucky statutes with the passage of the Safe Schools Act in 1998. Kentucky Revised Statute 158. 441 defines an SRO as *a sworn law enforcement officer who has specialized training to work with youth at a school site. The officer shall be employed through a contract between a local law enforcement agency and a school district.* The statutory language was extremely important to the development of the SRO program for three reasons: 1) it required SROs to have specialized training; 2) it recognized the importance of having a written contract between the two agencies to clarify the duties of the officer; and 3) it formally recognized SROs as a specialized field of law enforcement.

Every even year since 2004 the KCSS has updated its database of SROs and has administered questionnaires to the SROs asking questions regarding their characteristics, activities, and perceptions of school safety and the SRO's role in school safety in Kentucky. This report is an outcome of that effort during the spring of 2022.

Data Collection

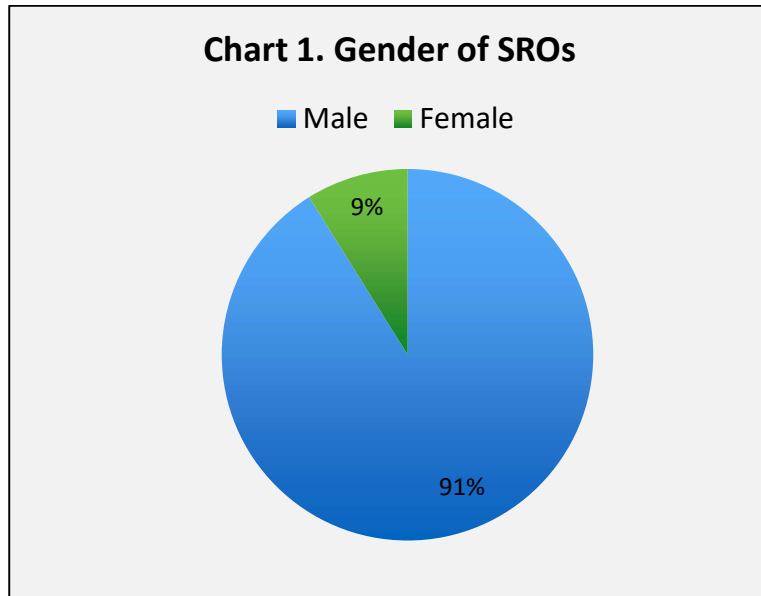
In the winter 2022, researchers from the Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS) conducted a study examining the attributes of School Resource Officers throughout the state of Kentucky. Using an existing database revised in the fall of 2021, an electronic questionnaire was utilized to make it easier for the SROs to complete the survey. An introductory email was sent out from the Kentucky Center for School Safety that served as a warning email advising the SROs in the database that a survey link would be sent to them in late January of 2022. In January an email was sent that explained the purpose of the survey and included a link to a Survey Monkey website where the questionnaire was housed. A second auto-generated email from SurveyMonkey was sent two weeks later that automatically linked the survey and reminded the

SROs to complete the survey if they had not already. There were 523 SROs on the master mailing list and 511 SROs received the electronic survey. There were 259 responses received for a response rate of 50.7%.

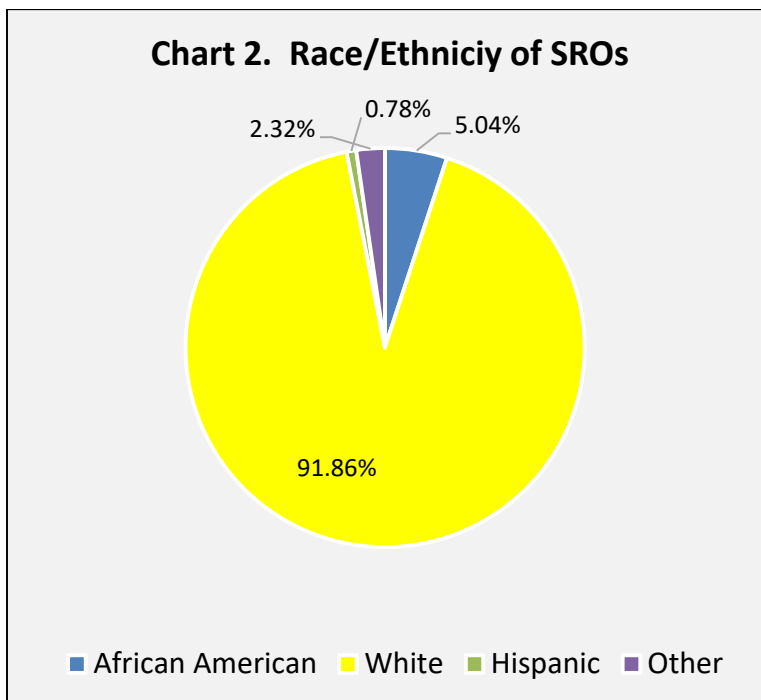
The data for this study are comprised from responses received from 259 SRO questionnaires. Practically all respondents provided data for questions on the last page of the questionnaire, indicating that the entire sample probably read the entire questionnaire. Nevertheless, some respondents failed to complete data for some of the questions. The charts provided below (as well as the percentages presented in the text of the report) reflect only valid responses. In other words, the number of responses for some charts is greater than the number of responses for others because some respondents chose not to answer some questions. In most cases, the charts present the raw number of responses while the text presents summary of the charts, using percentages instead of raw numbers. The tables from which the charts were derived are available upon request.

Results

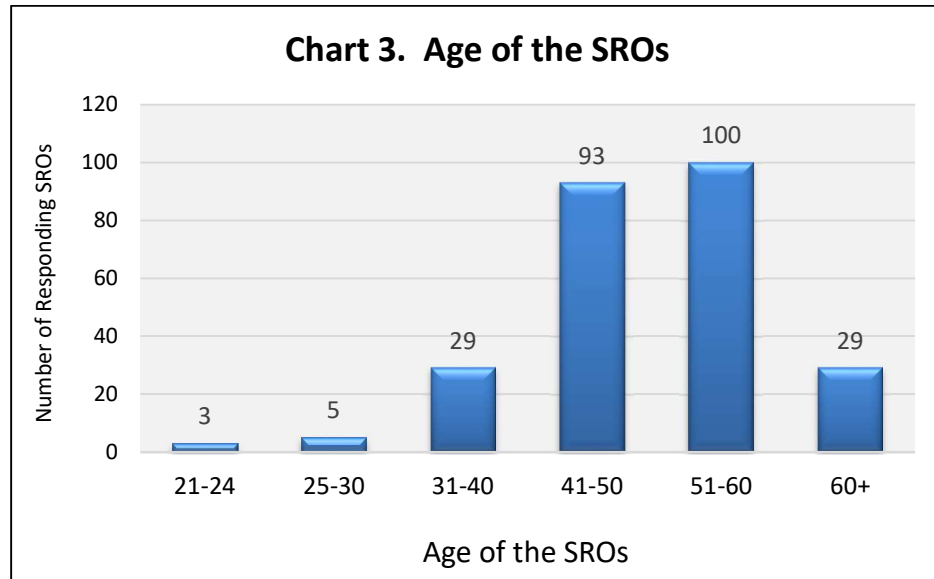
The gender and racial characteristics of the Kentucky SROs who provided data for this study are similar to those who responded in the previous SRO reports.



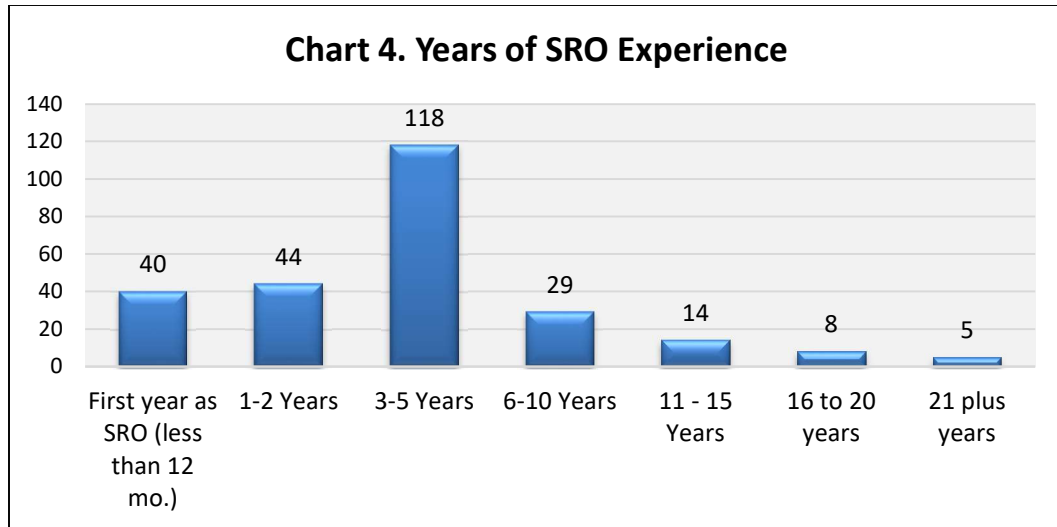
The vast majority (91.0%) of the SROs were male, while (9.0%) were female.



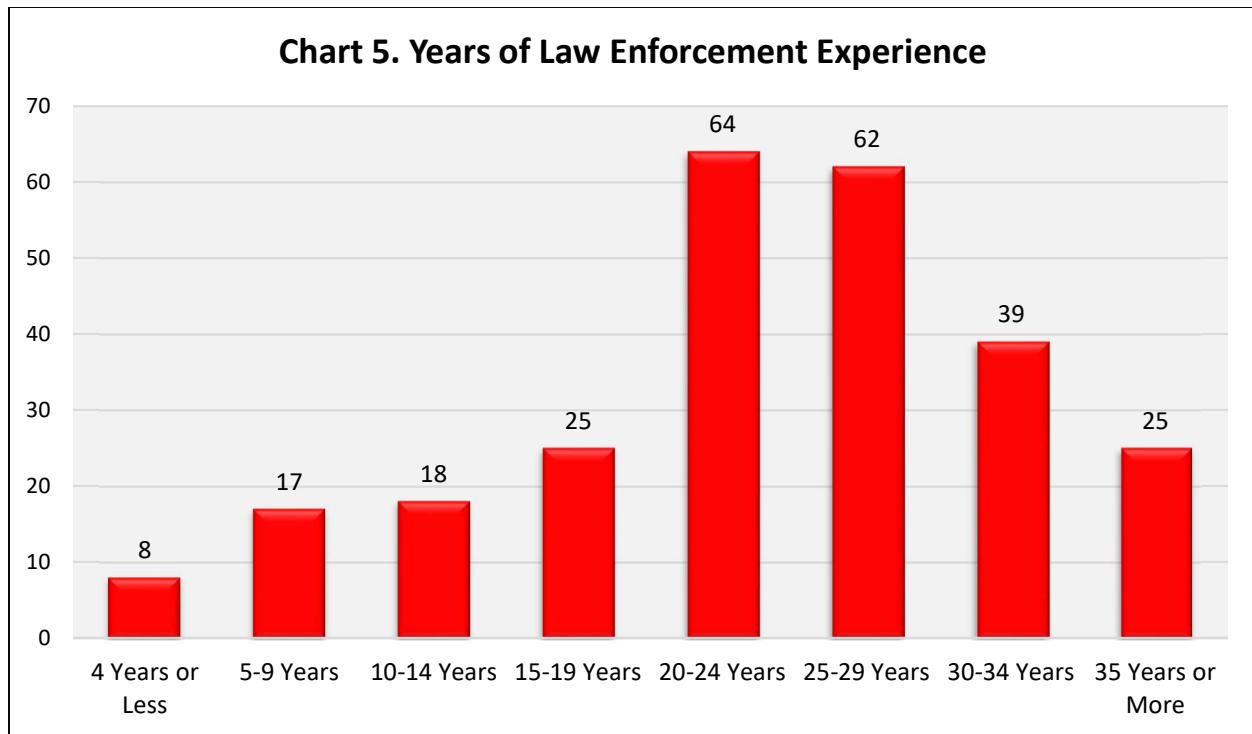
The vast majority of SROs (91.9%) were White, while the remaining SROs were African American (5.0%), and Hispanic or other races (3.1%)



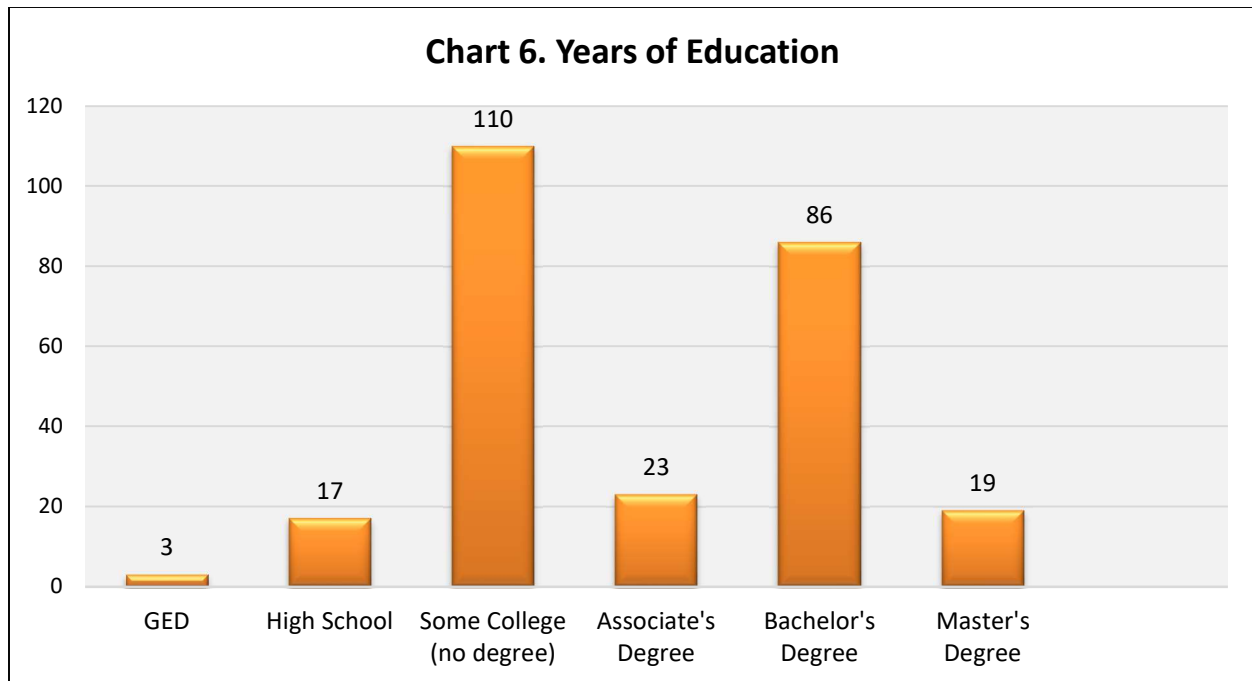
Of the 259 SROs who responded to the question that asked their age, a small percentage (3.09%) reporting being between 21 and 30 years of age and 11.2% were between 31 and 40 years of age. More than one in three SROs were 41 - 50 years of age (35.9%). Almost two in five SROs (38.6%) reported being between the ages of 51 and 60 years of age. More than one in ten SROs were over 60 years of age (11.2%).



Of the 258 responses to the question asking how much SRO experience the officers had, more than one in seven officers (15.5%) had been working as an SRO for less than a year. One in six officers (17.1%) had been working as an SRO for 1-2 years. Two in five officers (45.7%) had been working as an SRO for 3-5 years. One in ten SROs had been working 6-10 years (11.2%) years. Of the remaining SROs who responded, 11-15 years (5.4%), 16-20 years (3.1%), and 20 plus years (1.94%).



We then asked the respondents how many years they had been employed in law enforcement. Of the 258 officers who responded to that question, only eight officers had four years or less of law enforcement experience. A small percentage (6.6%) had been employed as law enforcement officer for 5-9 years and (6.9%) had been employed 10-14 years. One in ten officers (9.7%) had 15-19 years of law enforcement experience. One in four officers had been employed 20-24 years (24.8%) and 25-29 years (24.0%). One in seven officers (15.1%) had been employed as a law enforcement officer for 35 years or more.



We then asked the SROs how many years of education they had completed. Of the 258 SROs who answered this question, a small percentage of respondents (6.6%) had completed high school. More than two in five SROs (42.64%) have some college education and more than one in three SROs (33.3%) earned a bachelor's degree. Nineteen SROs (7.4%) reported having a master's degree.

School resource officers were asked what agency employed them. Chart 7 indicates who the responding officers considered their main employing agencies. More than one in three (36.3%) of the 200 responding officers reported being hired by a sheriff's department. Two in five respondents are employed at a city/county police department (39.0%) and more than one in four (27.4%) reported being hired as a school district employee. In another question asked in this survey, SROs were asked if they went through the Special Law Enforcement Officer (SLEO) hiring process for school district departments. Sixty-six officers reported going through the SLEO hiring process through the Justice Cabinet.

Chart 7. Where SROs are Employed

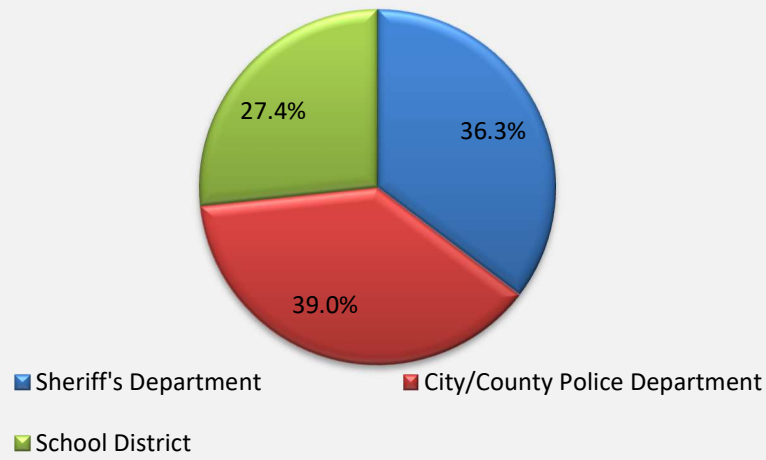
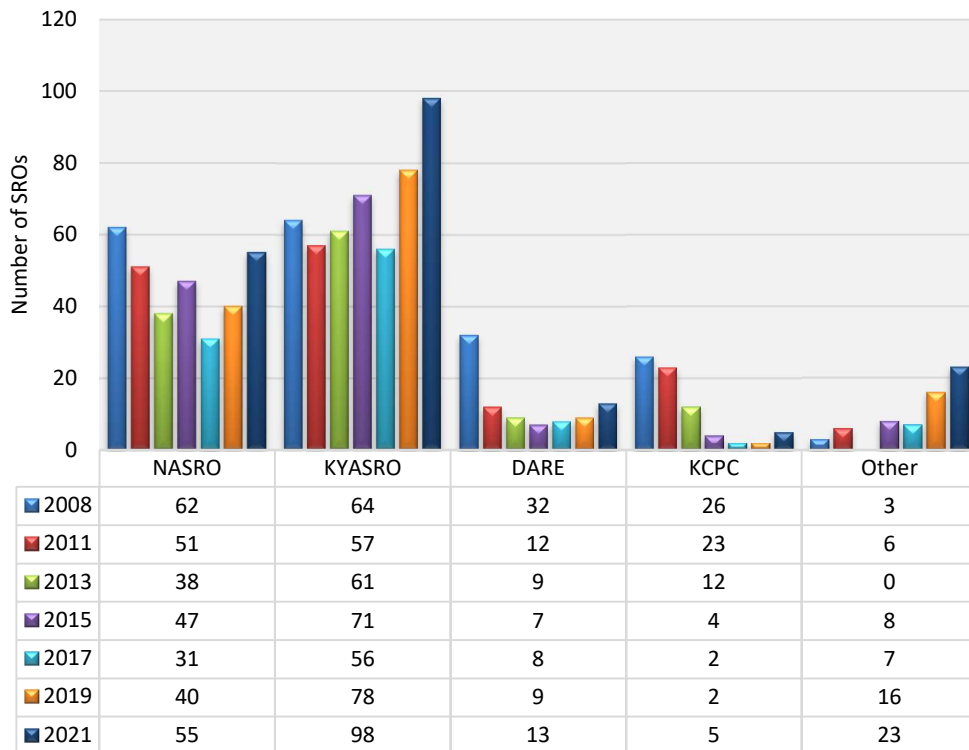
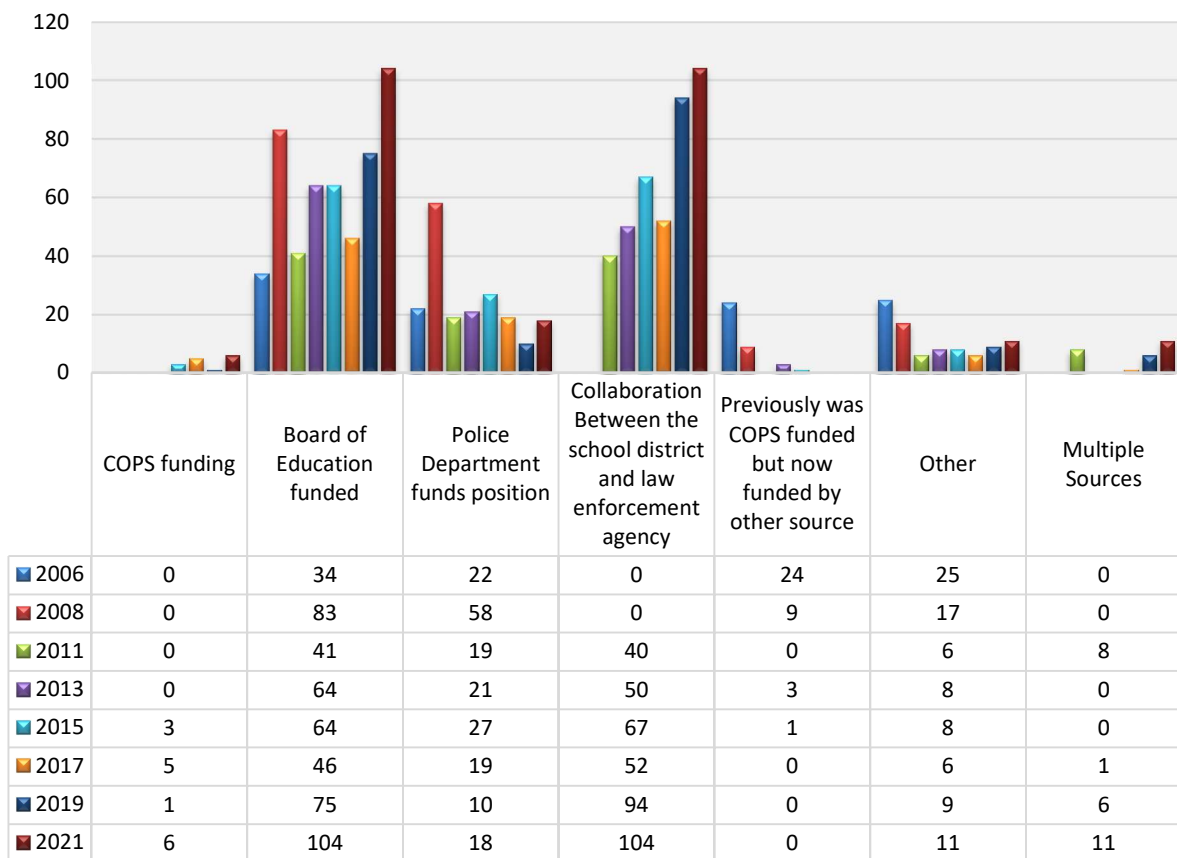


Chart 8. Membership in Professional Organizations



School Resource Officers were then asked which professional associations they were involved with. Responses to this question can be found in Chart 8. Only two in five (44.2%) responding SROs reported being a member of a professional association. Of those SROs who belong to a professional association, the majority (70.0%) reported being a member of the Kentucky Association of School Resource Officers (KYASRO). Almost two in five of the SROs (39.3%) are members of the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). Almost one in ten (9.2%) reported being members of Kentucky DARE and only five SROs reported being a member of the Kentucky Crime Prevention Coalition (KCPC). Twenty-three respondents reported being a member of another association.

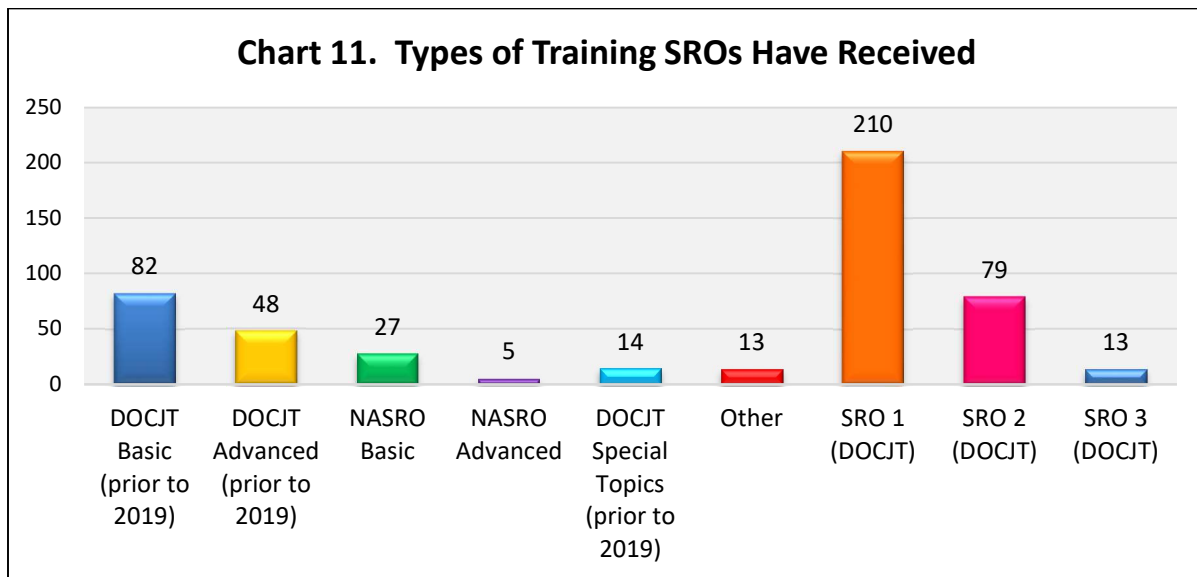
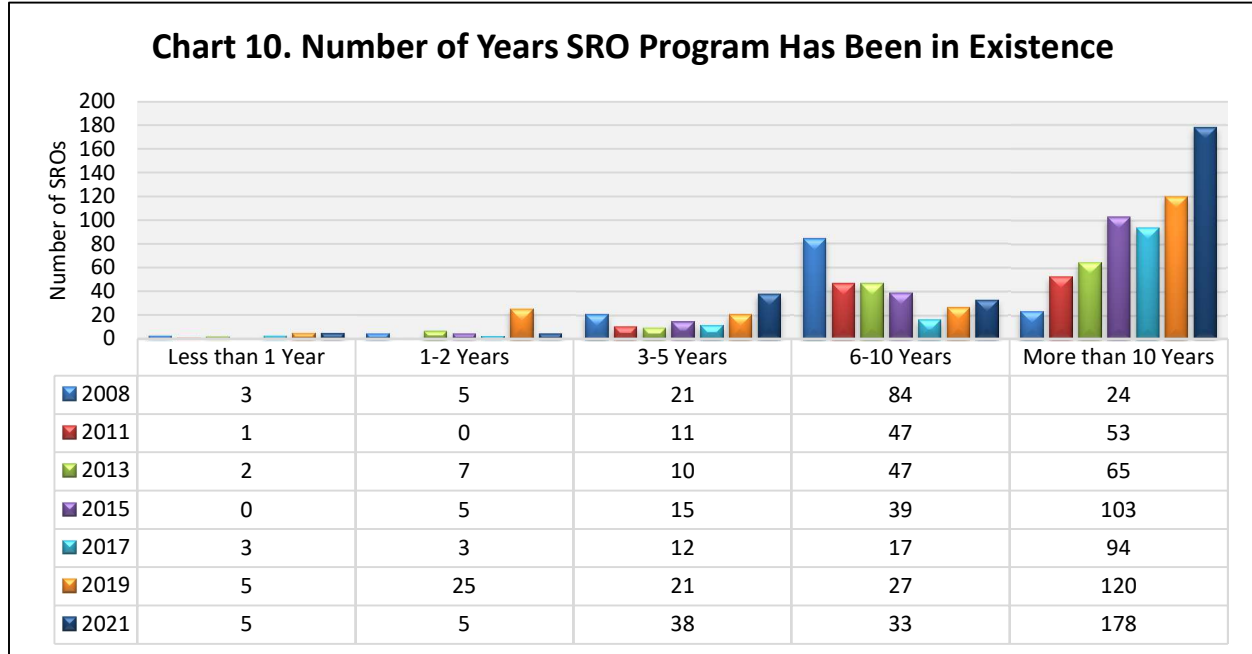
Chart 9. Type of Funding Available to the SROs at Schools



The SROs were then asked how their position was funded. The 254 responses to that question are presented in Chart 9. As is evidenced by the chart above, in 2011 and 2013 no schools were funded by Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) funding, which is a dramatic reduction from 2004, when almost half of the SROs were funded by COPS funding. In 2015 and 2017 there was a slight increase in SROs reported being funded by COPS funding. One SRO was funded by COPS funding in 2019 and six SROs reported being funded by COPS in 2021. Most of the SROS were funded either through the Board of Education (40.9%) or through collaboration between the Board of Education and Police Department (40.9%). Of the remaining categories, 7.1% were funded solely by police departments and 4.3% were funded by other sources which were not listed.

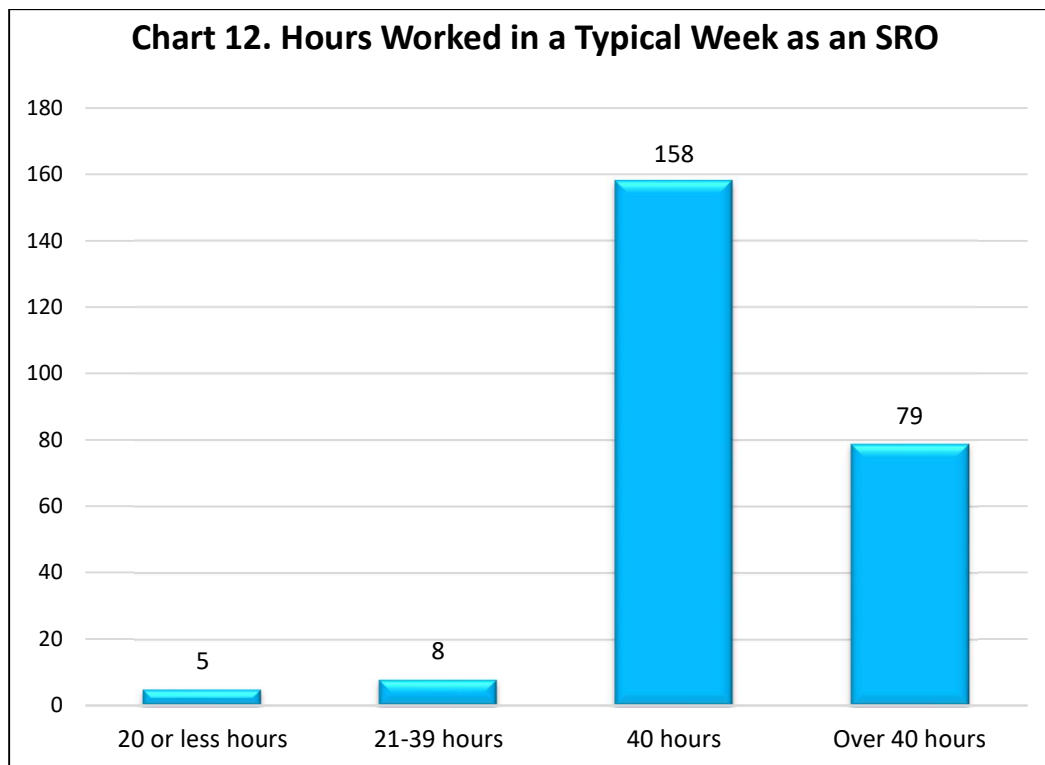
The SROs were then asked how long an SRO program had been in existence in the district to which they were assigned. Of the 259 responding officers, the vast majority (68.7%) indicated in Chart 10 that their SRO program had been in existence ten or more years. One in seven SROs (14.7%) responded their programs were three to five years old. Only a small percentage of SROs (3.9%) reported their program was less than two years old. Overall, the SROs providing data for this study generally work in districts with well-established SRO

programs.

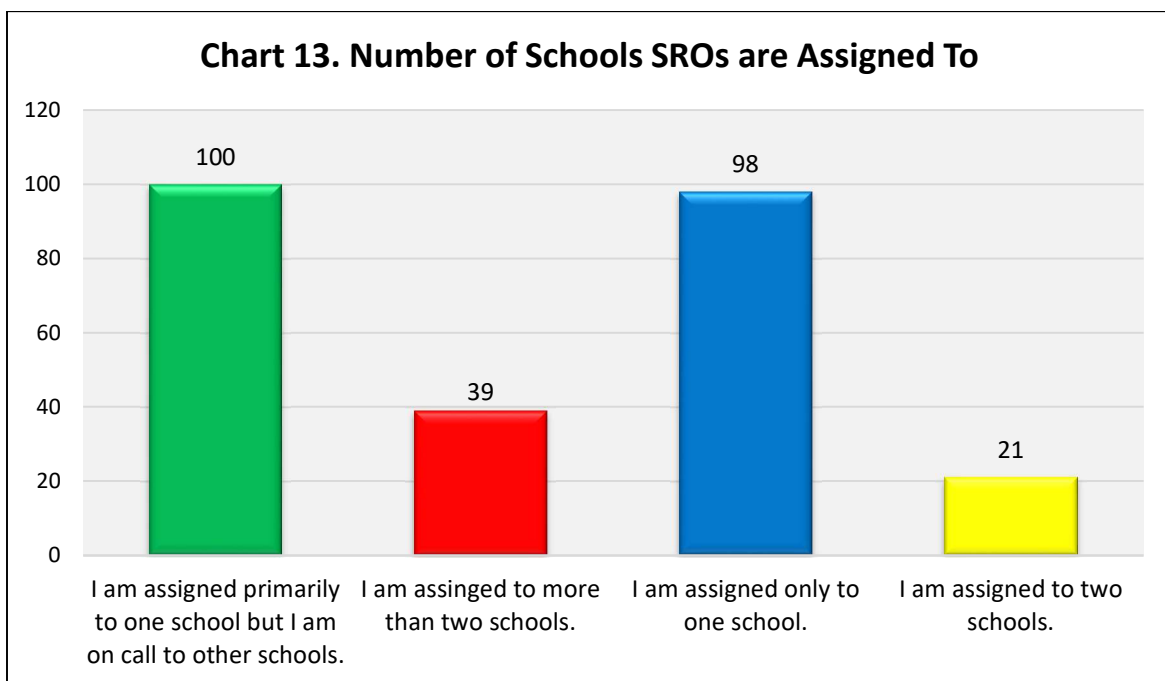


The SROs were then asked what type of SRO training they had received. With the passage of Senate Bill 1 in 2019, the training requirement for School Resource Officers changed considerably. SROs are now required to take 120 hours of training from the Department of Criminal Justice Training over a three-year timeframe. Prior to 2019, the training from DOCJT

was highly encouraged but not mandatory. The 240 responses to that question are presented in Chart 11. Among the SROs who responded, 34.2% had attended the SRO Basic Training offered by the Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice training (DOCJT) prior to 2019. One in five SROs (20.0%) attended the DOCJT Advanced training prior to 2019 and a small percentage (5.8%) of SROs attended the DOCJT Special Topics training prior to 2019. The majority of responding SROs (87.5%) attended the new mandatory SRO 1 course and one in three responding SROs (32.9%) attended the new SRO 2 course. A small percentage of respondents (5.4%) attended the new SRO 3 course. More than one in ten respondents (11.3%) responded having attended the basic class offered by the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). A small percentage of respondents (5.4%) received “other” type of training or the NASRO advanced training (2.1%).

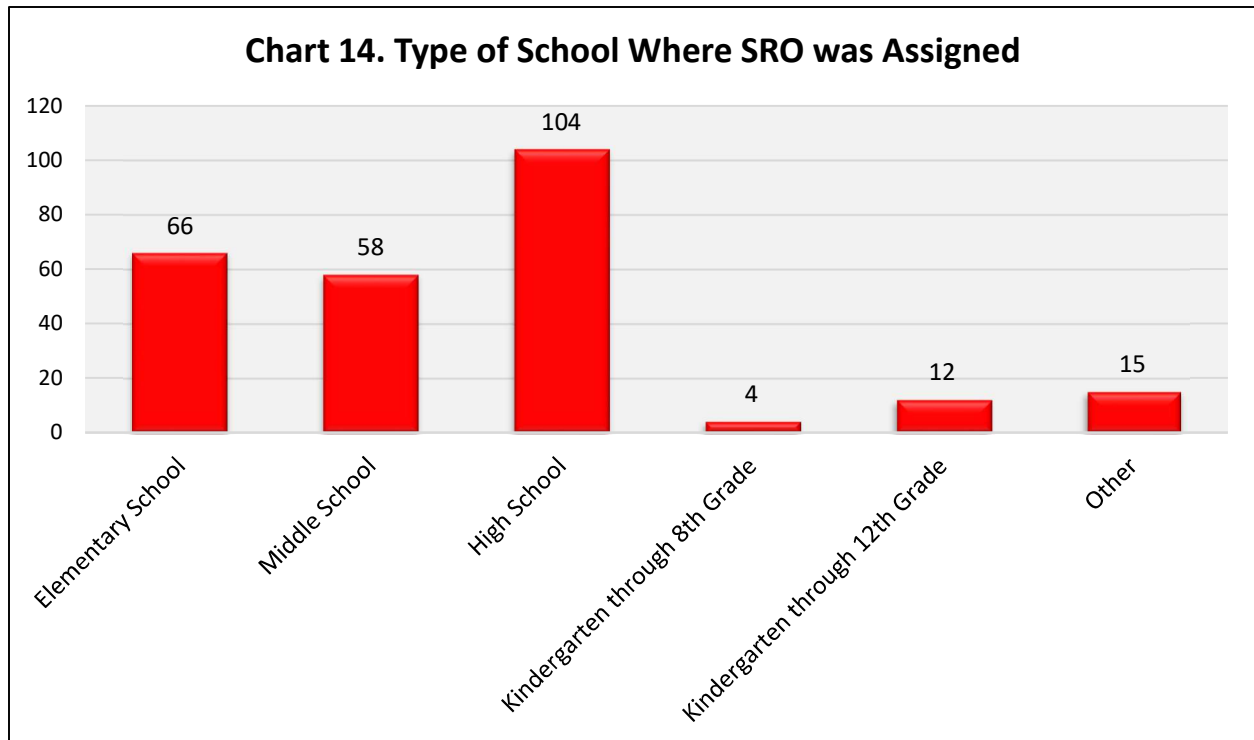


SROs were then asked how many hours per week they worked in the SRO role during the typical school year. The responses to that question are presented in Chart 12. Of the 250 SROs who responded, 63.2% worked full-time as SROs (40 hours per week) during the school year. One in three (31.6%) worked more than 40 hours per week. A small percentage had worked 20 hours or less (2.0%) or 21-39 hours (3.2%). Thus, the majority of SROs were full-time SROs during the school year, a trend that matches the findings from the seven previous reports.



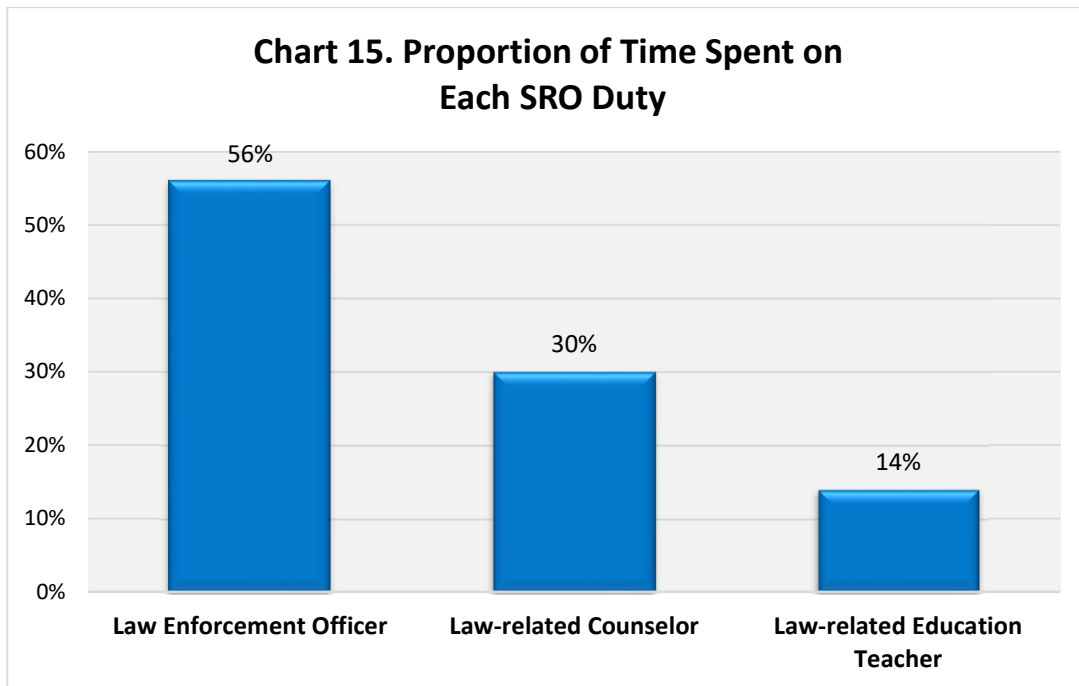
Respondents were then asked the number of schools for which they provided coverage. The responses to that question are presented in Chart 13. Of the 258 SROs who responded, almost two in five SROs (38.0%) were assigned to one school. This was a considerable increase from the 2017 report when only 9.2% of responding SROs reported being assigned to one school only. Almost two in five (38.8%) of responding SROs were primarily assigned to one school but were on call for other schools. Almost one in ten SROs (8.1%) split their time

between two schools. One in eight SROs (12.1%) were assigned to more than two schools. Thus, despite the fact that the optimal situation is one SRO per school, many officers are responsible for more than two schools or respond to other schools in their district, but that trend appears to be decreasing over time.

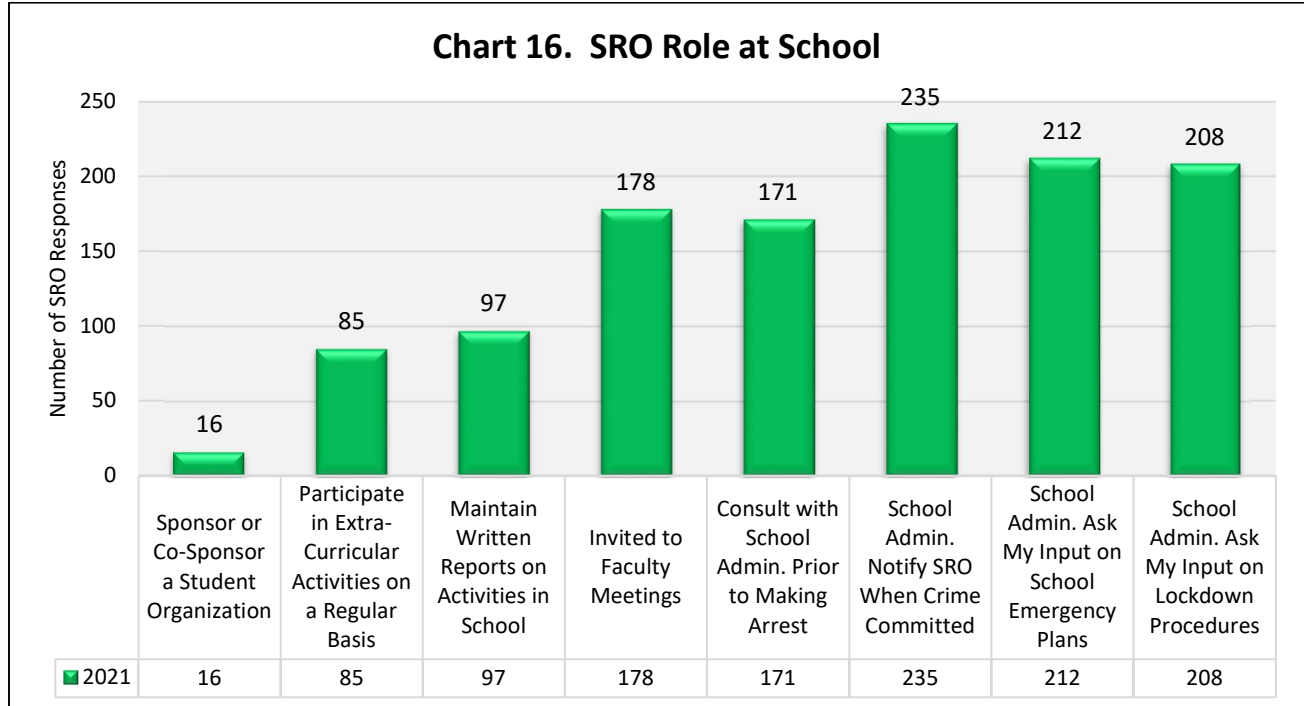


We then asked the SROs the grade levels of the school(s) to which they were assigned. The responses are presented in Chart 14. Two in five of responding SROs (40.2%) were assigned exclusively to high schools, while approximately one in five (22.4%) were assigned exclusively to middle schools. One in four officers (25.5%) were assigned exclusively to elementary schools. This is a considerable increase from the 2017 survey when only 5.4% of responding SROs reported being solely assigned to an elementary school. Of the remaining SROs who responded, 6.7% were assigned to schools of more than one level and 5.8% responded with “other.” SROs in

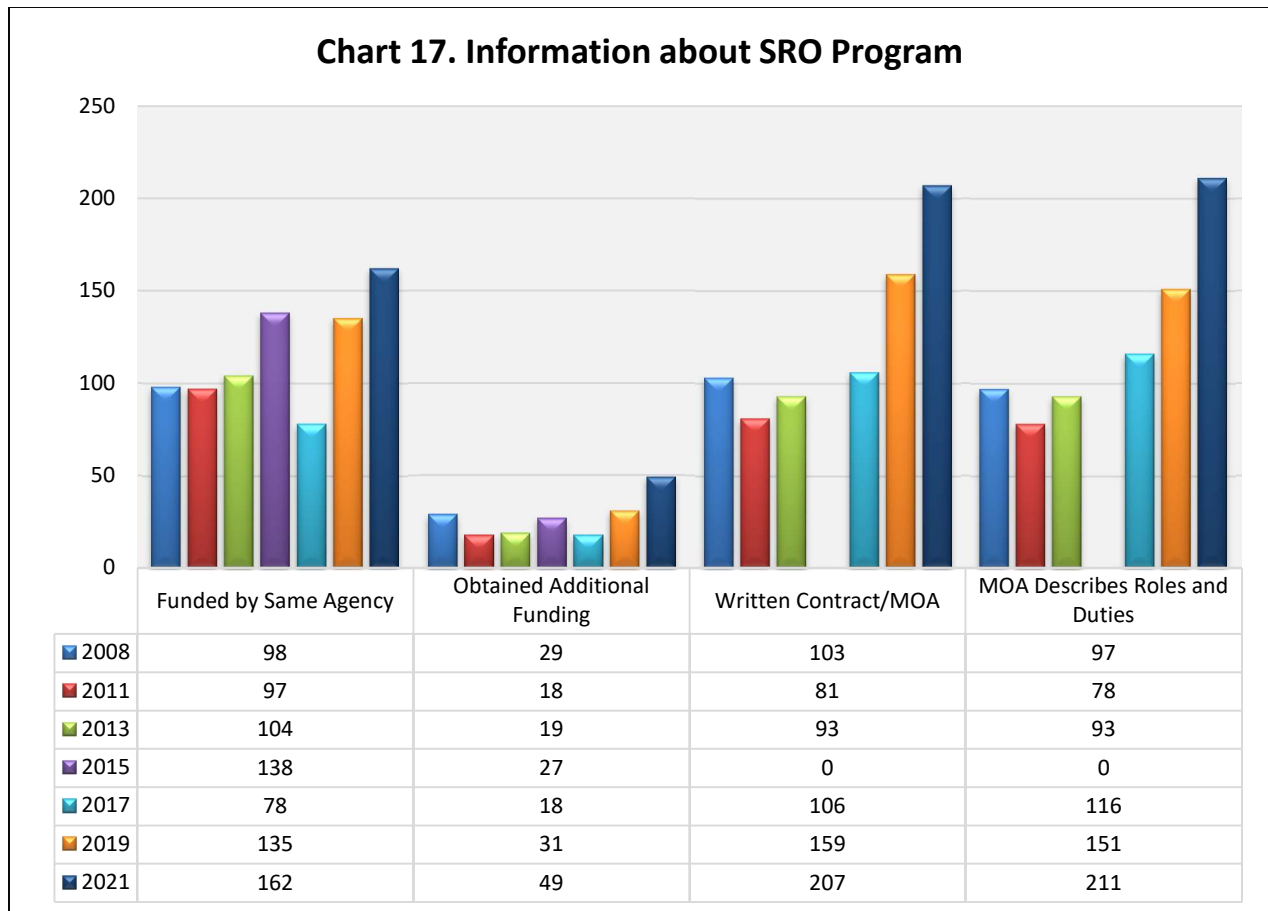
Kentucky still work primarily in the high schools but the number of SROs being assigned to elementary schools have exceeded the number of SROs being assigned solely to middle schools.



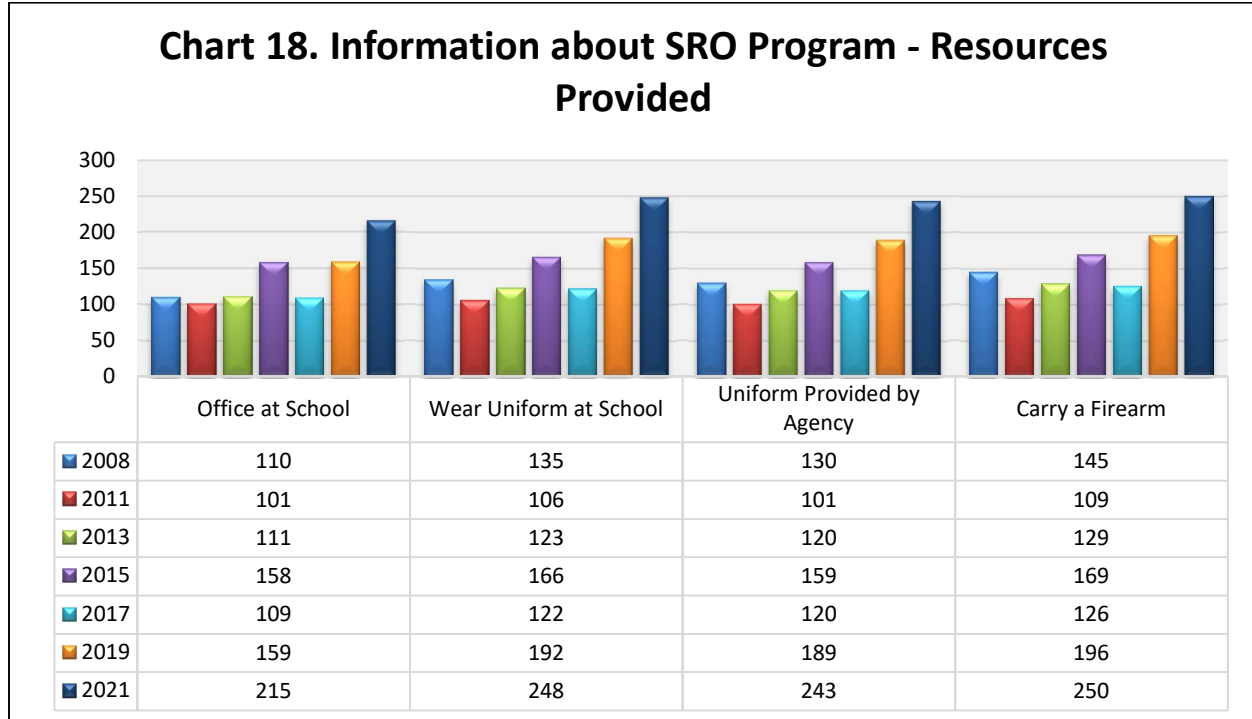
We then asked the SROs how much of their time was spent on each of the SRO duties that NASRO suggests comprising the SRO triad (law-related counselor, law-related educator, and law enforcement officer). The responses to those questions are presented in Chart 15. The SROs in this sample spent more than half their time (56.0%) as law enforcement officers with less than half their time spent on law related counseling (30.0%) and an even smaller amount spent as law-related educators (14.0%). Thus, at least among this sample of SROs, the “triad” is not an accurate depiction of the way in which SROs actually spend their time. In fact, the SRO’s proportion of time spent on the three tasks would better be described as a “pie,” with one slice teacher, two slices counselor, and three slices law enforcement.



We then asked the SROs about their specific duties as an SRO. The responses to those questions are presented in Chart 16. The vast majority of SROs (95.5%) notify school administration when a crime is committed at school. Most responding SROs are asked their input on lockdown procedures (84.2%) and the development of school emergency plans (86.2%). The majority of the responding SROs (72.1%) are invited to staff meetings two in five (39.4%) maintain written reports on activities at school. The majority of responding SROs (71.0%) consult with school administrators prior to making an arrest and one in three of the SROs (34.6%) participate in extracurricular activities. Sixteen SROs reported being a sponsor of a student organization.

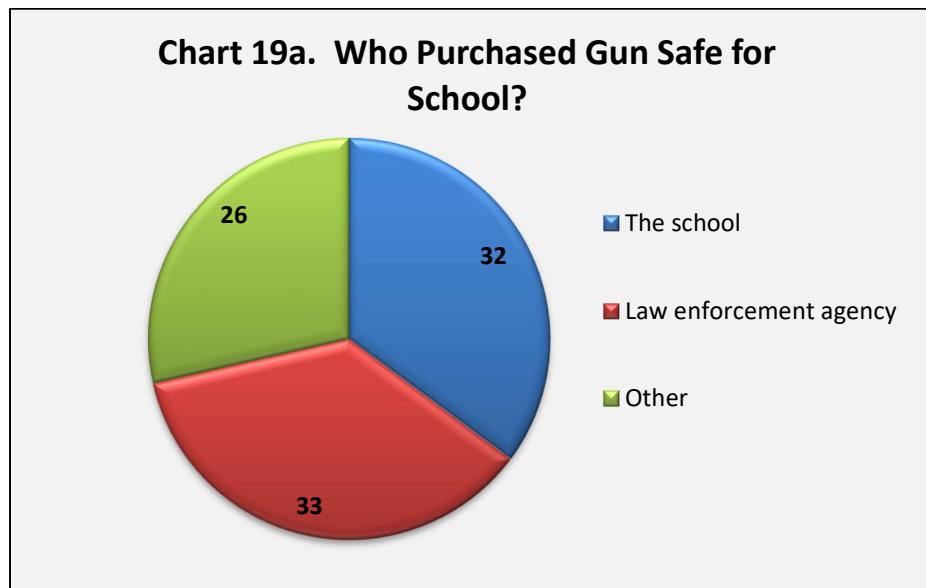
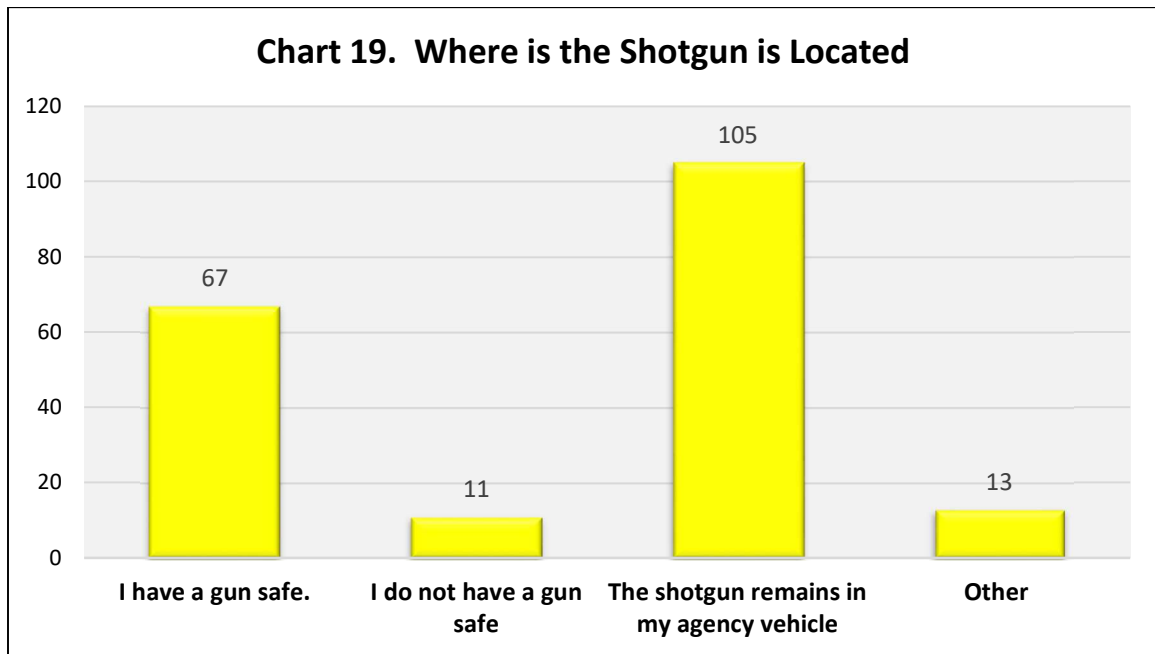


SROs were then asked a number of questions about their SRO program. The responses are presented in Chart 17. The vast majority (63.8%) reported that since the SRO program began in the district, it had been funded consistently by the same agency. More than one in five SROs (21.3%) reported that their program received additional funding outside the same agency that had previously funded them. The majority of the SROs who responded (86.3%) stated that there was a written contract/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the school(s) where they worked as an SRO and the police department with whom they were employed. Finally, the majority of SROs (92.1%) who responded to this question, reported that the contract/MOA adequately described the role and duties of the SRO and the relationship between the school administration and the law enforcement agency to which they belonged.



SROs were then asked questions about their resources provided by the school and their law enforcement agency. The responses are presented in Chart 18 and Chart 19. Of the SROs who responded the survey, the vast majority (86.4%) stated that they had their own offices located at school. Almost all of the SROs (99.2%) reported that they wore a uniform in their role as an SRO and that uniform was provided by the agency for which they were employed (97.6%). All but one of the officers that responded to the firearm question (251) carried a firearm on school property, while almost three in four of the officers (69.1%) had access to shotgun on school property. Of those officers that indicated having a shotgun at school, one in three (34.2%) had a gun safe in their school to store their shotgun. The majority (71.4%) of the SROs who had a gun safe at school, reported that their law enforcement agency or school district purchased the gun safe for them. Over half of responding SROs (53.6%, n = 105) keep their long

gun in their agency vehicle. Additionally, the majority of SROs (77.4%) report having access to canine patrol units for searches on the school property.



Conclusion

The results presented here suggest that the School Resource officer program continues to thrive in the state of Kentucky. Kentucky SROs are generally experienced law enforcement officers who enjoy their positions, work well with the school administrators at their school, and their programs are well established and have been in existence for ten years or more. SROs generally work at least 40 hours per week in their positions as SROs and are generally assigned to more than one school (typically high schools). Even though they respond that the majority of their time is spent in law enforcement duties, SROs engage in a wide variety of activities at school that would not traditionally be considered law enforcement activities. Given the findings from this report, it appears that the SROs who work in schools in Kentucky work collaboratively with school administration and are an asset to the schools in which they perform their duties.