

**SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS IN KENTUCKY
WHO ARE THEY, AND WHAT DO THEY DO?
2025 - 2026**

By:

Kentucky Center for School Safety

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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 with 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, or directly by a board of education, to foster a safe school environment.* Statutory language was fundamental 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.

In 2019, the Kentucky General Assembly passed the School Safety and Resiliency Act (SSRA). The SSRA affected the expansion of school-based law enforcement and the development of expanded training requirements. This act mandated that every local school district in Kentucky assign one or more certified SROs to each school campus as funds and personnel became available. SROs, as mandated by the SSRA, are required to work under a contractual relationship between the local law enforcement agency that employs the law enforcement officer and the local school district that utilizes their services. The SSRA also provides a broadened scope of training that SROs must complete in three years. SROs are now required to complete 120 hours of training specific to the role of SRO. Before 2019, training for SROs was highly recommended as an in-service training opportunity by the Department of Criminal Justice (DOCJT) but not required.

The Kentucky Center for School Safety updates the master list of SROs in Kentucky annually. On a biannual basis, online questionnaires are administered to 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 winter of 2025-2026.

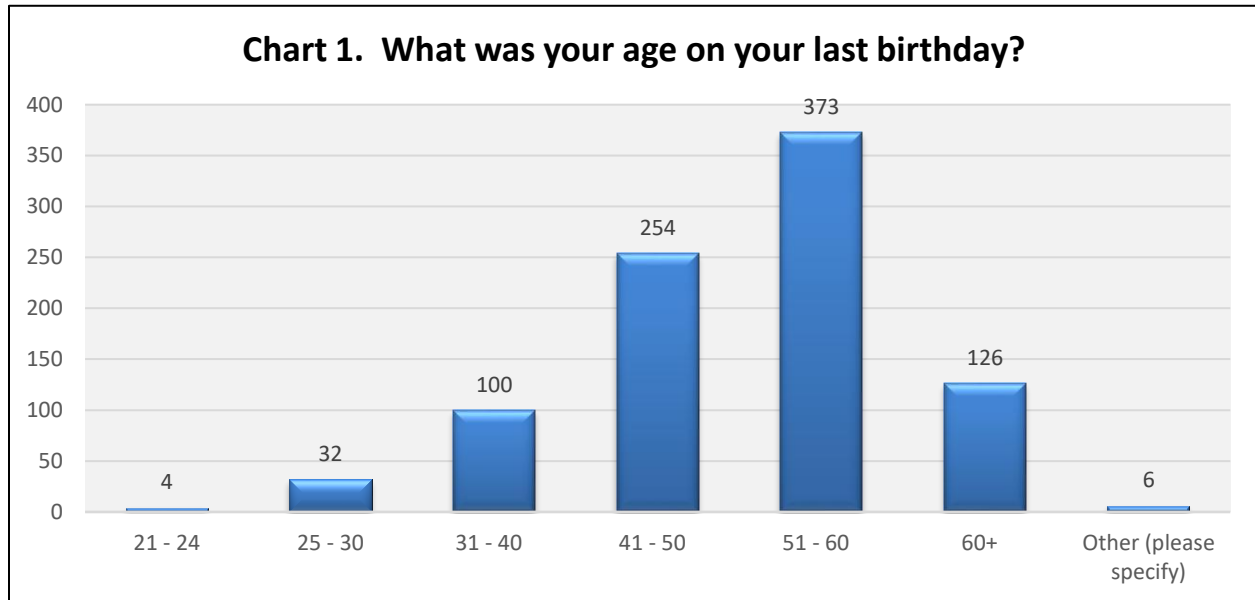
Data Collection

In December of 2025 and January of 2026, staff from the Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS) conducted a study examining the attributes of School Resource Officers throughout Kentucky. Using an existing database revised in the fall of 2025, an electronic questionnaire was developed to facilitate completion of the survey by the SROs. In December of 2025 and January 2026, emails were sent that explained the purpose of the study and included a link to a SurveyMonkey website where the questionnaire was housed. A second auto-generated email from SurveyMonkey was sent two weeks later, automatically linking the survey and reminding the SROs to complete it if they had not already done so. KCSS staff then followed up with phone reminders in January 2026. At the time the study was conducted, 937 SROs received a survey request from KCSS. Responses were received from 903 SROs for an impressive 96.4% response rate. This response was significantly higher than the response in the previous survey, as reported in the 2023-2024 survey report.

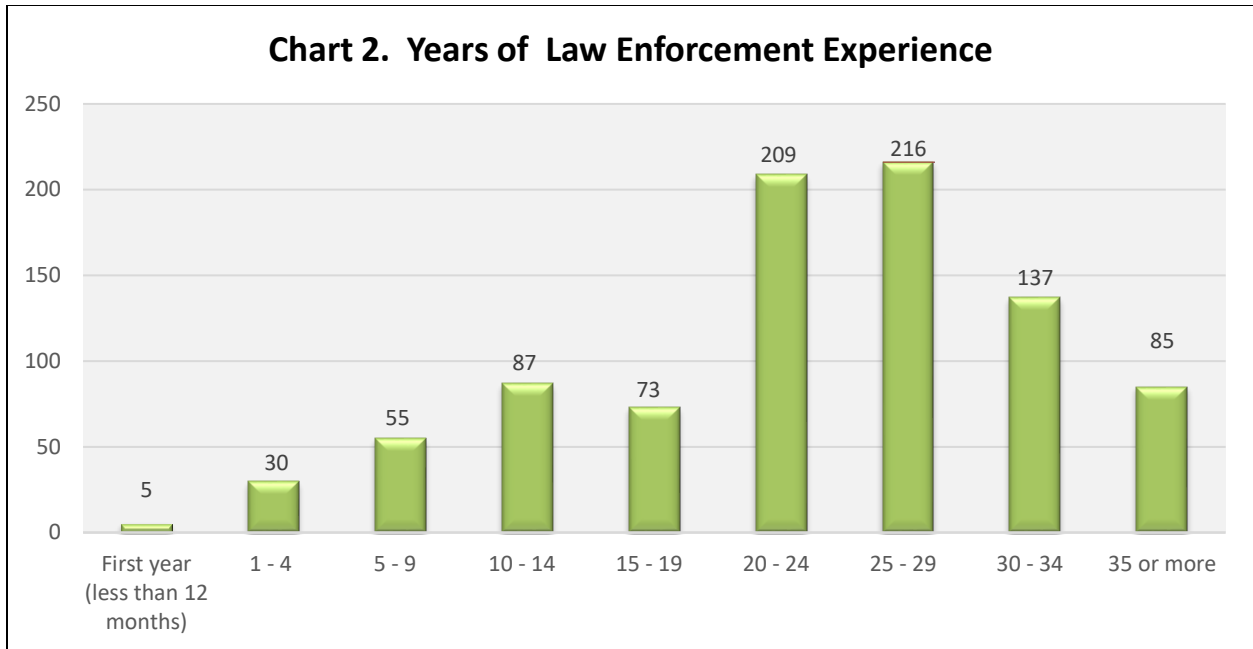
The data for this study comprise responses received from 903 SRO questionnaires. Practically all respondents provided data for the questions on the last page of the questionnaire, indicating that the entire sample is likely to read the entire questionnaire. Nevertheless, some respondents failed to complete the data for some 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.

Results

The ages of the Kentucky SROs who provided data for this study are like those who responded to the previous SRO reports.



As **Chart 1** shows, of the 895 SROs who responded to the question about their age, a small percentage (3.6%) reported being between 25 and 30 years of age, and 11.2% reported being between 31 and 40 years of age. More than one in four SROs were 41-50 years of age (28.4%). Two in five SROs (41.7%) reported being between the ages of 51 and 60. One in seven SROs was over 60 years of age (14.1%). These responses were consistent with the 2024 report.



Respondents were asked how many years they had been employed in law enforcement. Of the 897 officers who responded to that question (**Chart 2**), only five indicated that the current school year was their first year of law enforcement experience. A small percentage (3.3%) had one to four years of law enforcement experience. A small percentage (6.1%) had been employed as law enforcement officers for 5-9 years, and (9.7%) had been employed for 10-14 years. One in ten officers (8.1%) had 15-19 years of law enforcement experience. One in four officers was employed 20-24 years (23.3%) and 25-29 years (24.1%). One in seven officers (15.3%) had been employed as a law enforcement officer for 30-34 years, and 9.5% for 35 years or more.

Respondents were then asked how much SRO experience they had. Of the 898 SROs who responded (**Chart 3**), one in seven (14.8%) were in their first year as an SRO. Almost one in five officers (19.9%) had worked as an SRO for 1-2 years. One in three officers (36.3%) had worked as an SRO for 3-5 years. One in five SROs had been working for 6-10 years (21.8%). Of the

remaining SROs who responded, they had worked as an SRO for 11-15 years (3.9%), 16-20 years (2.0%), and 21 plus years (0.8%).

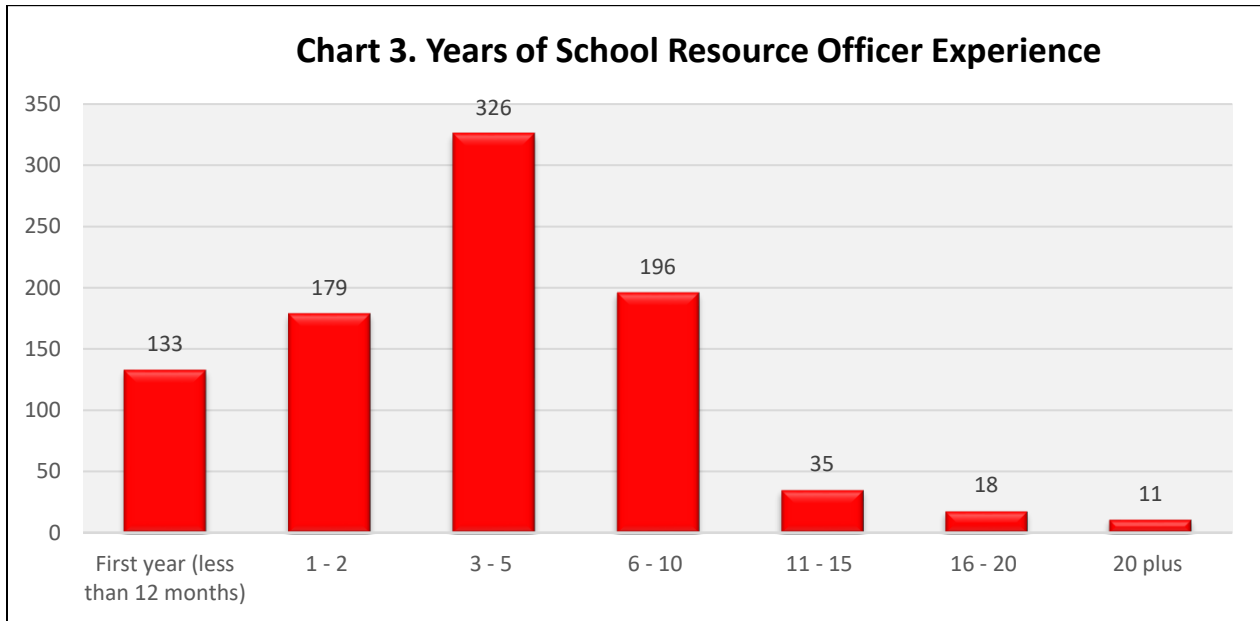
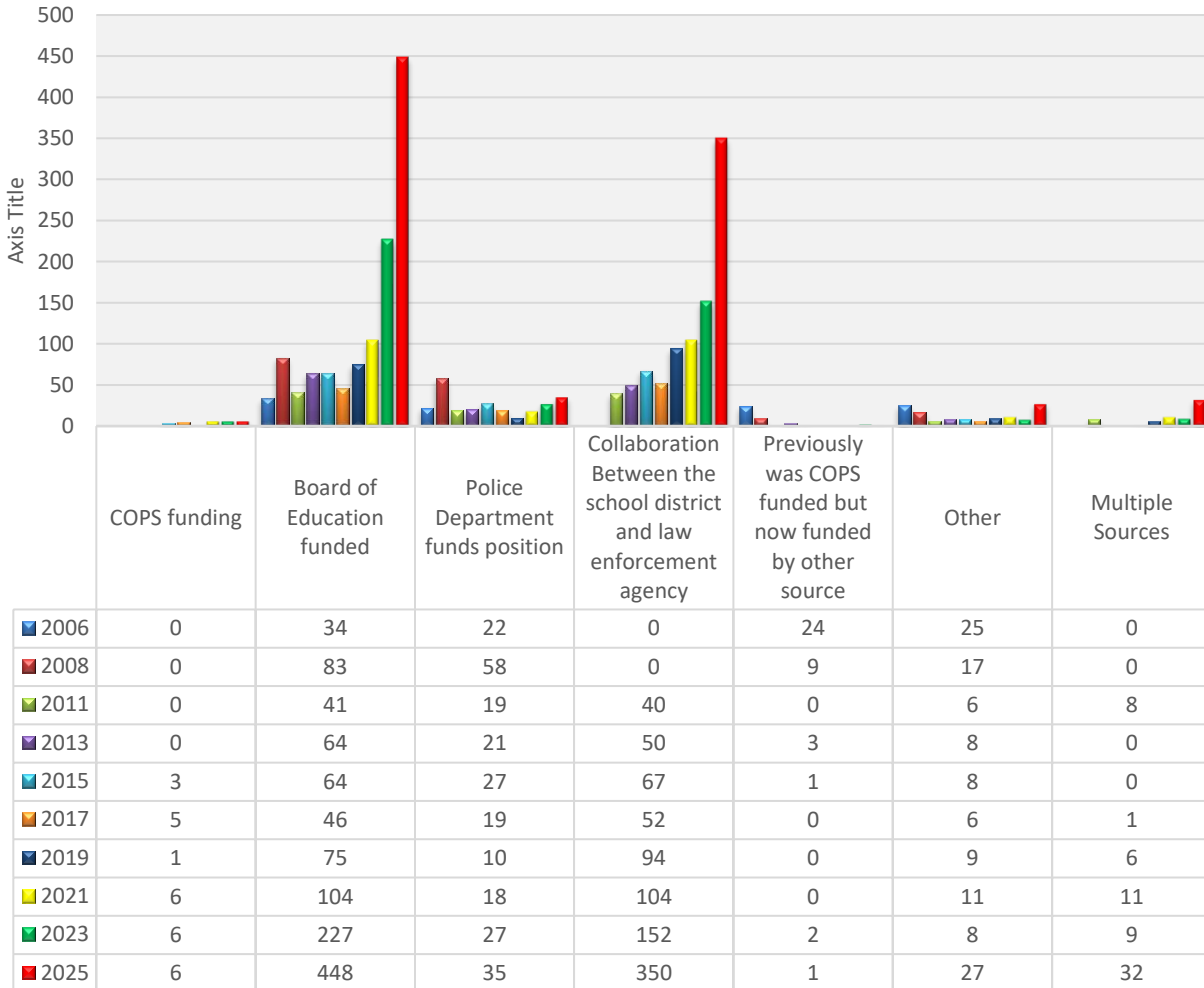
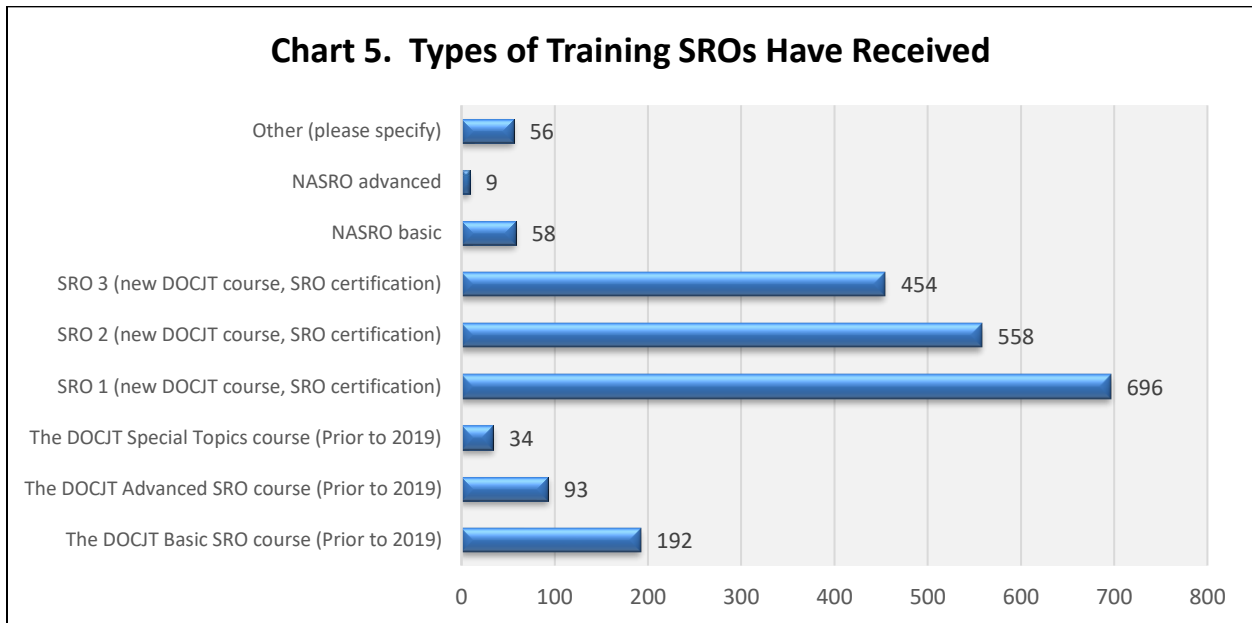


Chart 4. Type of Funding Available to the SROs at Schools



The SROs were then asked how their position was funded. The 899 responses to that question are presented in **Chart 4**. As evidenced by the chart above, in 2011 and 2013, no schools were funded by Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) funding, 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 to be funded by COPS. One SRO was funded by COPS in 2019, and six SROs were reported to be funded by COPS in 2021, 2023, and 2025. Most of the

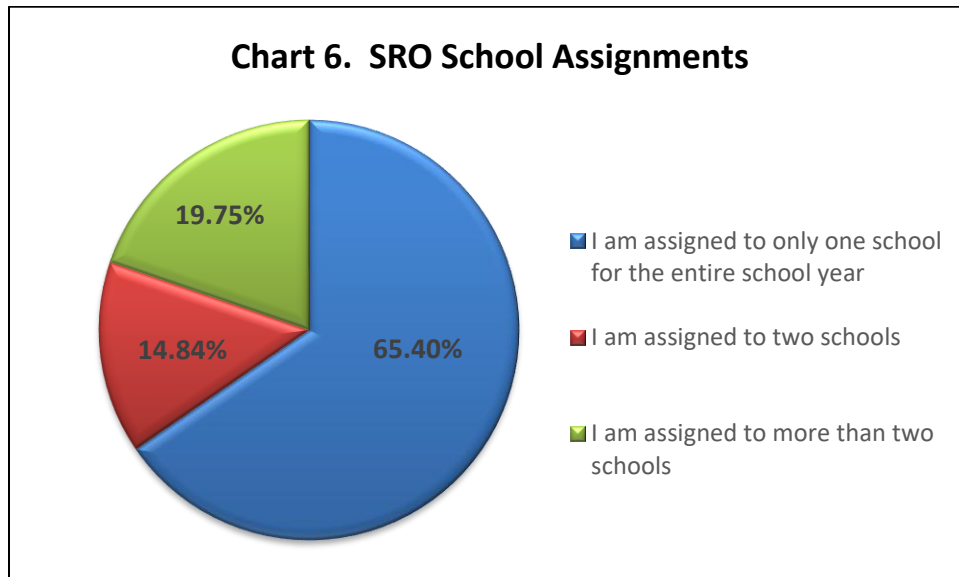
SROS were funded either through the Board of Education (49.8%) or collaboration between the Board of Education and the Police Department (38.9%). Of the remaining categories, 3.9% were funded solely by police departments, and 3.0% were funded by other sources not listed.

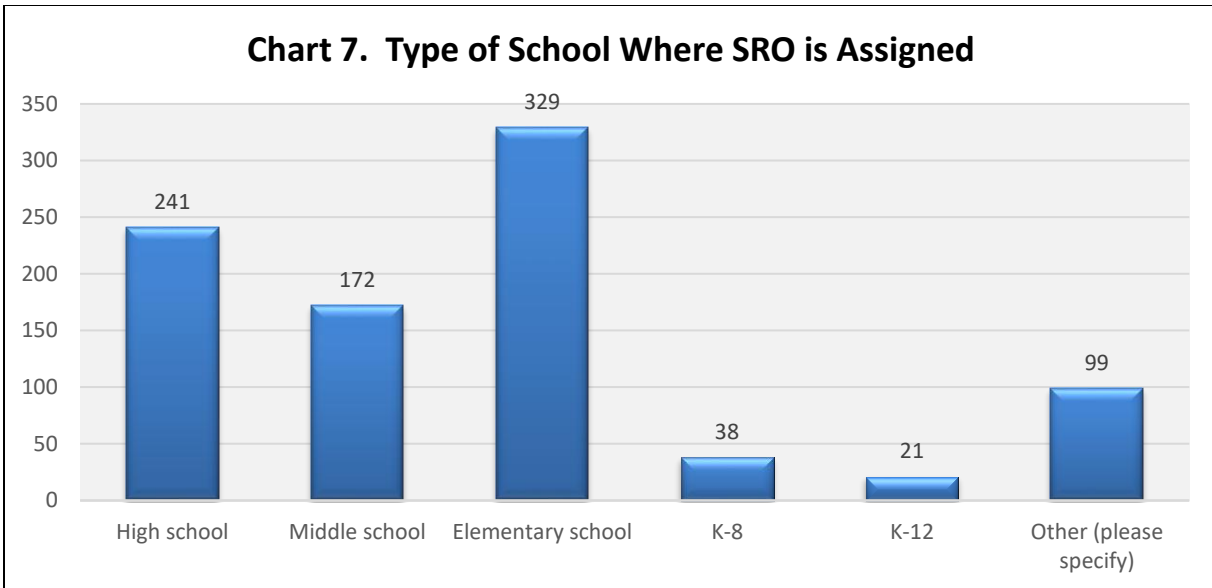


The SROs were then asked what type of SRO training they had received. With the passage of Senate Bill 1 in 2019, the training requirement for School Resource Officers changed considerably. SROs are now required to take 120 hours of training from the Department of Criminal Justice Training over a three-year timeframe. Before 2019, the training from DOCJT was highly encouraged but not mandatory. **Chart 5** reflects the 840 responses received regarding this question. Among the SROs who responded, 22.9% attended the SRO Basic Training offered by the Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training (DOCJT) prior to 2019. One in ten SROs (11.1%) attended the DOCJT Advanced training before 2019, and a small percentage (4.1%) of SROs attended the DOCJT Special Topics training before 2019. The majority of responding SROs (82.9%) attended the new mandatory SRO 1 course and the new SRO 2 course (66.4%). Over half of the respondents (54.1%) attended the new SRO 3 course. A small percentage of respondents

(6.9%) reported having attended the basic class offered by the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). A small percentage of respondents (6.7%) received “other” types of training, and nine respondents received the NASRO advanced training.

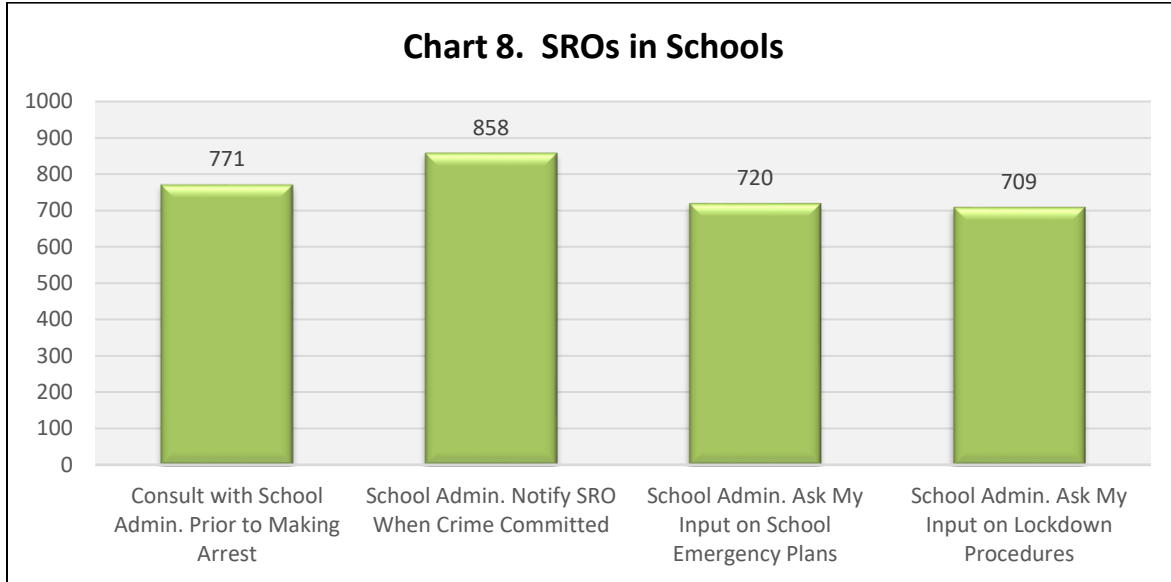
Respondents were then asked the number of schools for which they provided coverage. The responses to that question are presented in **Chart 6**. Of the 896 SROs who responded, most of the responding SROs (65.4%) were assigned to one school. This was a considerable increase from the 2023 report, when half of the SROs were assigned to one school, and a considerable increase from the 2017 report, when only 9.2% of responding SROs reported being assigned to one school only. One in seven (14.8%) of responding SROs were assigned to two schools. One in five SROs (19.8%) split their time between two schools. Although 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 7**. More than one in four respondents were assigned exclusively to high schools (26.8%), while approximately one in five (19.1%) were solely assigned to middle schools. Two in five officers (39.6%) are assigned exclusively to elementary schools. This is a considerable increase from the 2021 survey, when only 25.5% were exclusively assigned to elementary schools, and the 2017 survey, when only 5.4% of responding SROs reported being solely assigned to an elementary school. Of the remaining SROs who responded, 6.6% were assigned to schools of more than one level, and 11.0% responded with "other." SROs in Kentucky still work primarily in high schools and middle schools.

We then asked the SROs how much time was spent working on building relationships with students and staff. Of the participants who responded to this question (874), the vast majority of SROs (73.8%) reported they spent 75% to 100% of their time building relationships. One in five respondents (18.2%) reported that half their time was spent building relationships.



We then asked the SROs about their specific duties as SROs. The responses to those questions are presented in **Chart 8**. Most SROs (94.1%) notify school administration when a crime is committed at their school. Most responding SROs are asked for their input on lockdown procedures (83.3%) and the development of school emergency plans (85.3%). The majority of responding SROs (66.1%) consult with school administrators before making an arrest.

Chart 9. Resources Provided for SROs at School

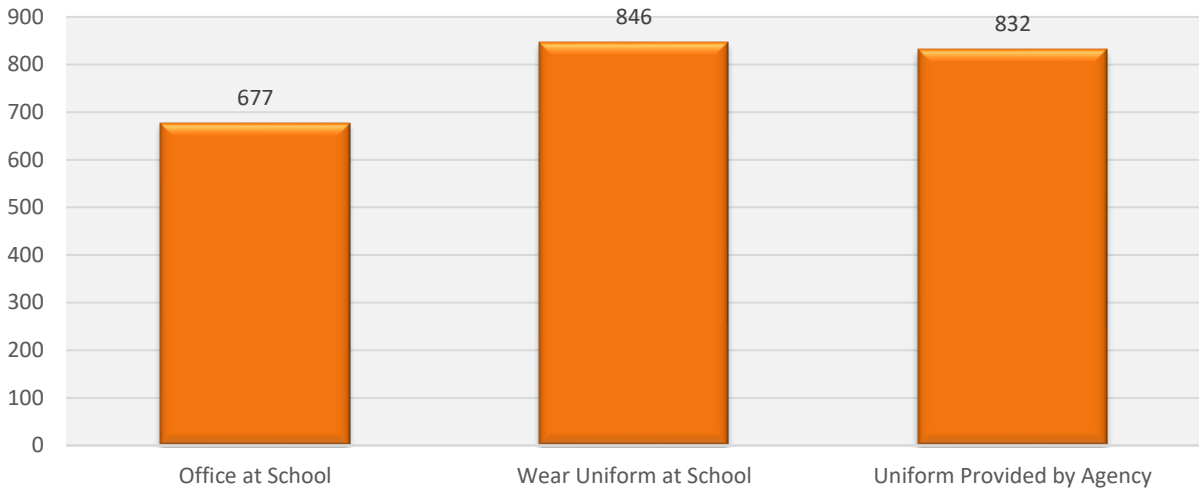
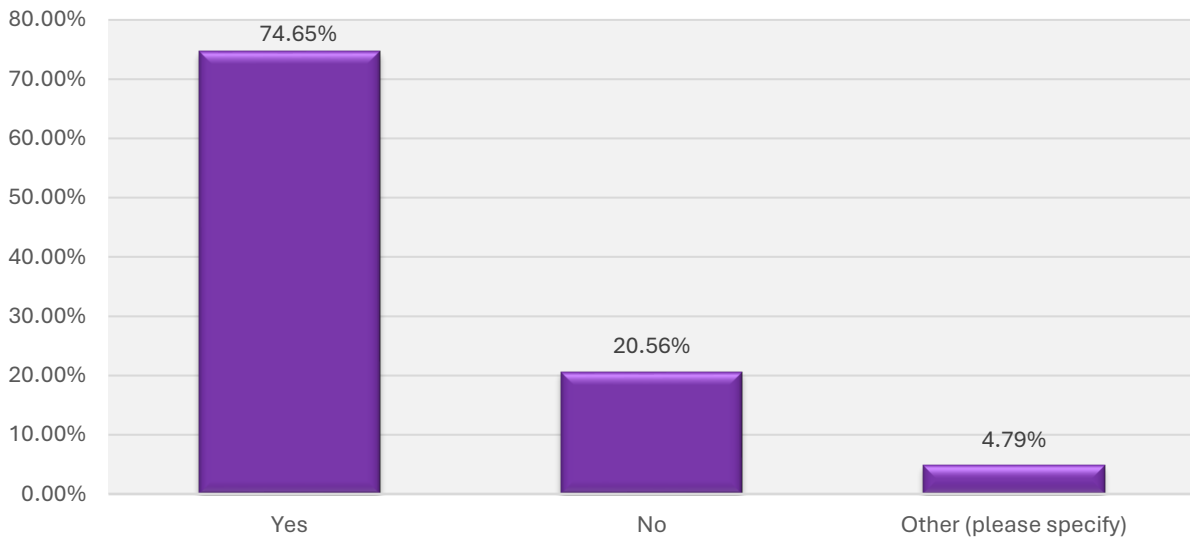
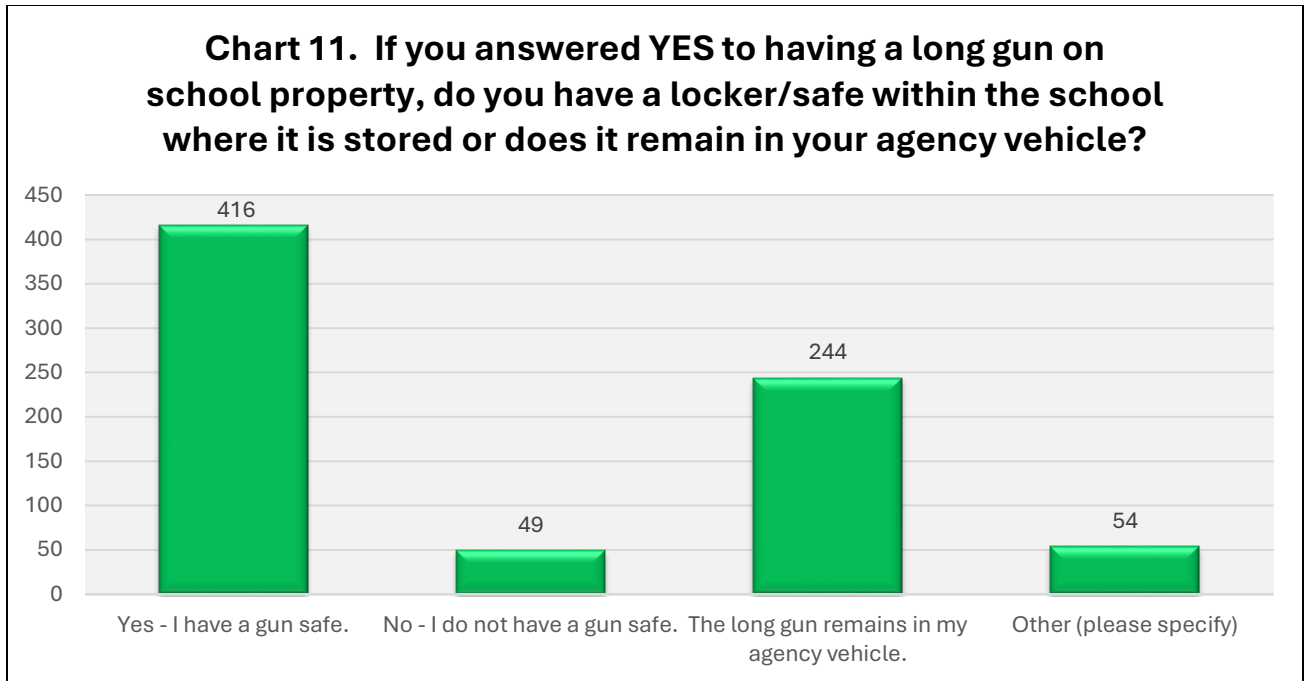


Chart 10. Do you have a long gun in your possession on school property?

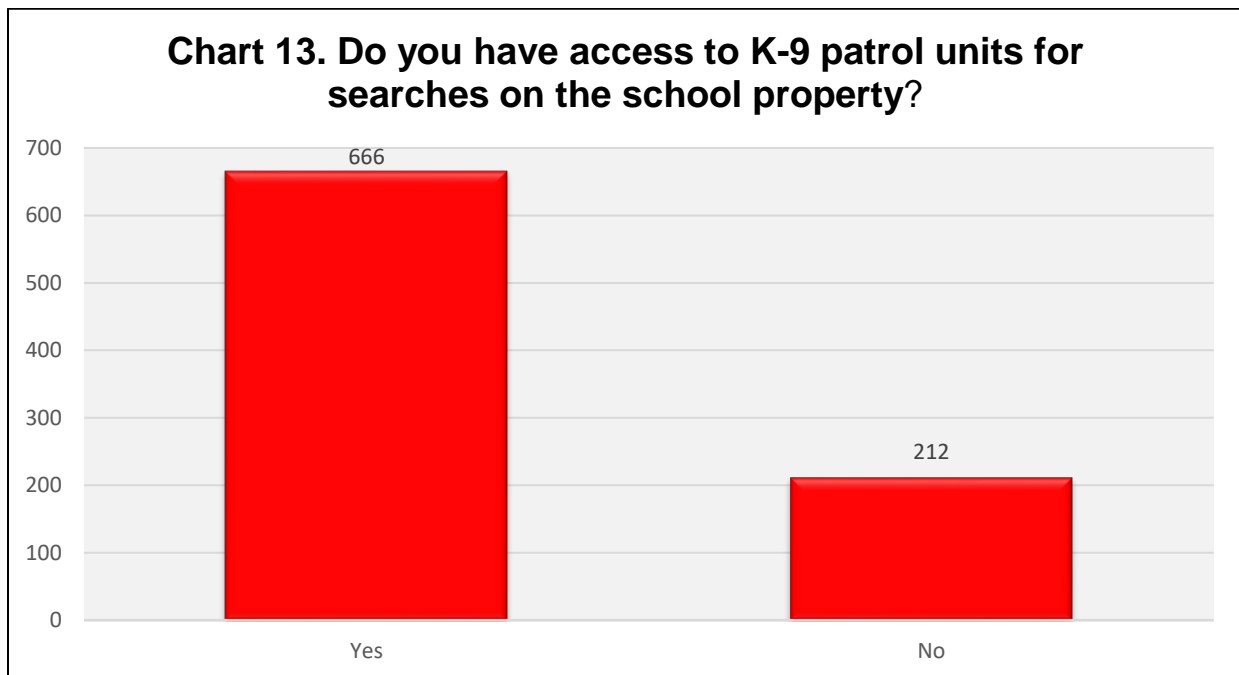




SROs were then asked questions about the resources provided by the school and their law enforcement agency. The responses are presented in **Chart 9, Chart 10, and Chart 11**. Of the SROs who responded to the survey, the vast majority (84.2%) stated they had their own offices at school. Almost all of 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 (97.3%). The majority of responding SROs (74.7%) have a long gun in their possession on school property. Of those officers who indicated having a long gun at school, more than half (54.5%) had a gun safe in their school to store their long gun. One in three of responding SROs (31.9%, n=244) keep their long gun in their agency vehicle.



The majority of SROs responding to this question (78.9%) report that the school or law enforcement agency purchased a gun safe for them (**Chart 12**). Additionally, Most SROs (75.9%) report having access to canine patrol units for searches on the school property (**Chart 13**).



Conclusion

The results suggest that the School Resource Officer program continues to thrive in Kentucky. Kentucky SROs are generally experienced law enforcement officers who enjoy their positions and work well with school administrators, and their programs are well-established, having existed for 10 years or more. SROs are usually assigned to more than one school (typically high school or middle school). However, there has been a significant increase in SROs assigned to just one school and to elementary schools. SROs report spending significant time building relationships with students and school personnel. Given the findings of this report, it appears that SROs in Kentucky work collaboratively with school administration and are assets to the schools they serve. The growth and development of school resource officer programs in Kentucky demonstrate the Kentucky General Assembly's dedication to ensuring that students in the Commonwealth have a safe and secure learning environment.