Connecticut K-12 Schools Safety and Security Needs Assessment Report
2022

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CT Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation

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The CT Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation is an official university-level research center at Western Connecticut State University, a member of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system. The Center formed in 2021 from an agreement between the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection and Western Connecticut State University. The Center provides professional development related to all aspects of school safety planning, and it conducts research on prevention, crisis, safety, and trauma related to students and schools. The Center also establishes relationships among area school districts and community stakeholders to create both formal and informal networks. Moreover, the Center provides consultation and on-site support to school districts.

Mission
The Connecticut Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation serves as a school crisis and safety resource to schools across the entire state of Connecticut. Specifically, the mission of the Center is to conduct research, training, and offer technical assistance on student resilience, school crisis, trauma-informed schools, and other topics relevant to school safety.

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Executive Summary

Purpose

The main objective of this assessment was to examine the perspectives of a variety of school employees to determine the needs related to safety, security, and mental health issues in Connecticut schools.

Methods

A survey was developed and deployed to school professionals servicing the Connecticut schools with a variety of roles. The survey, comprised of 22 questions and covering 8 sections, was conducted over the internet.

Key Findings

- The most prevalent safety concerns in schools were mental health (76%), bullying (57%), culture and climate (43%), and cyberbullying (41%).
- In the category of physical safety training needs, 55% of respondents identified school behavioral threat assessment, 37% identified safety and security assessments, and 31% identified digital threat assessment.
- The most prevalent request for emergency operations training was for active shooter response training at 39%, followed by emergency operation plan development at 26%, parent reunification at 21%, exercise design at 19%, and the National Association for School Psychologists PREP<u>a</u>RE training at 18%.
- The requested law enforcement trainings include the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) Basic School Resource Officer (SRO) course with 25% of the responses, NASRO Advanced SRO course with 12% of the responses, SRO Supervisors and Management training with 15% of the responses, and other trainings with 3% of the responses.
- Regarding the frequency of school climate surveys, 55% indicated they are done at least once per year and 37% did not know how often they were done.
- Regarding which school climate instrument was used to measure climate in their school buildings, a large percentage (48%) indicated unknown.
- When asked which threat assessment model was used in their district, most (75%) indicated unknown.
- When asked about threat reporting, a large percentage (48%) reported not knowing which method is used.

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Introduction

The mission of the Connecticut Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation is to conduct research, training, and offer technical assistance on student resilience, school crisis, trauma-informed schools, and other topics relevant to school safety across the state of Connecticut. It is essential that the Center understands the safety needs of Connecticut schools. The needs assessment provides that understanding by giving valuable insight into the safety concerns and needs of the professionals that service the school community. The main objective of this assessment was to examine the perspectives of a variety of school employees to determine the needs related to safety, security, and mental health issues in Connecticut schools.

Project Design

The objective of this research was to identify the safety and security concerns of the professionals servicing K-12 schools throughout the state of Connecticut. The study also sought to identify the most ideal training time and delivery methods. The survey consisted of eight sections: consent, demographics, safety concerns and training needs, school climate, threat reporting and assessment, mental health crisis response, future research, and training delivery and scheduling. The survey consisted of 22 questions (see Appendix A). The questions were delivered on the Survey Select platform and sent to a variety of mailing lists across employee categories with the goal of casting the widest net.

Results

The first part of the survey includes a consent to participate. The total number of respondents who consented to take the survey was 823. However, the highest response rate for any question was 763 respondents and the lowest response rate was 556.

Demographics

The five questions pertaining to demographics included school type, position/role, grade levels, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) region, and district category.

There were 761 respondents for the school type question. 93% identified as servicing a public K-12 school, 2% identified a Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS), 1% identified a non-public K-12 school, and 4% identified other as their school environment (See Figure 1: School Type).
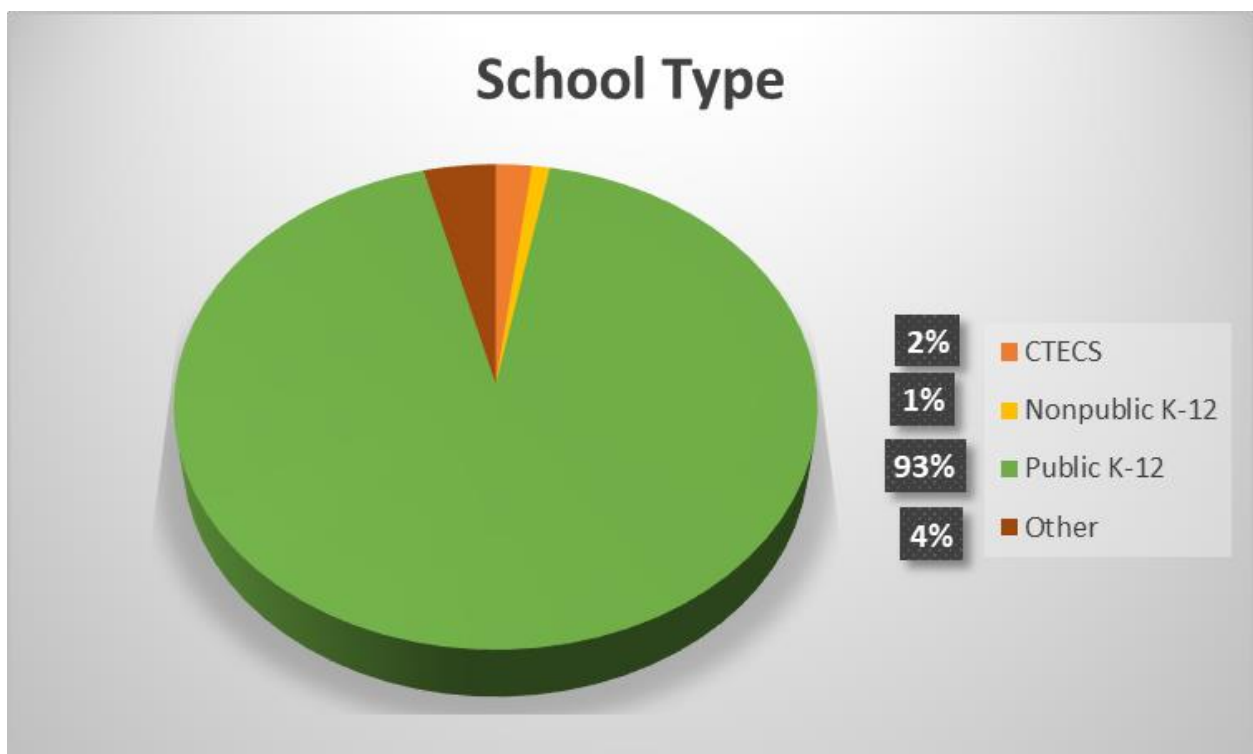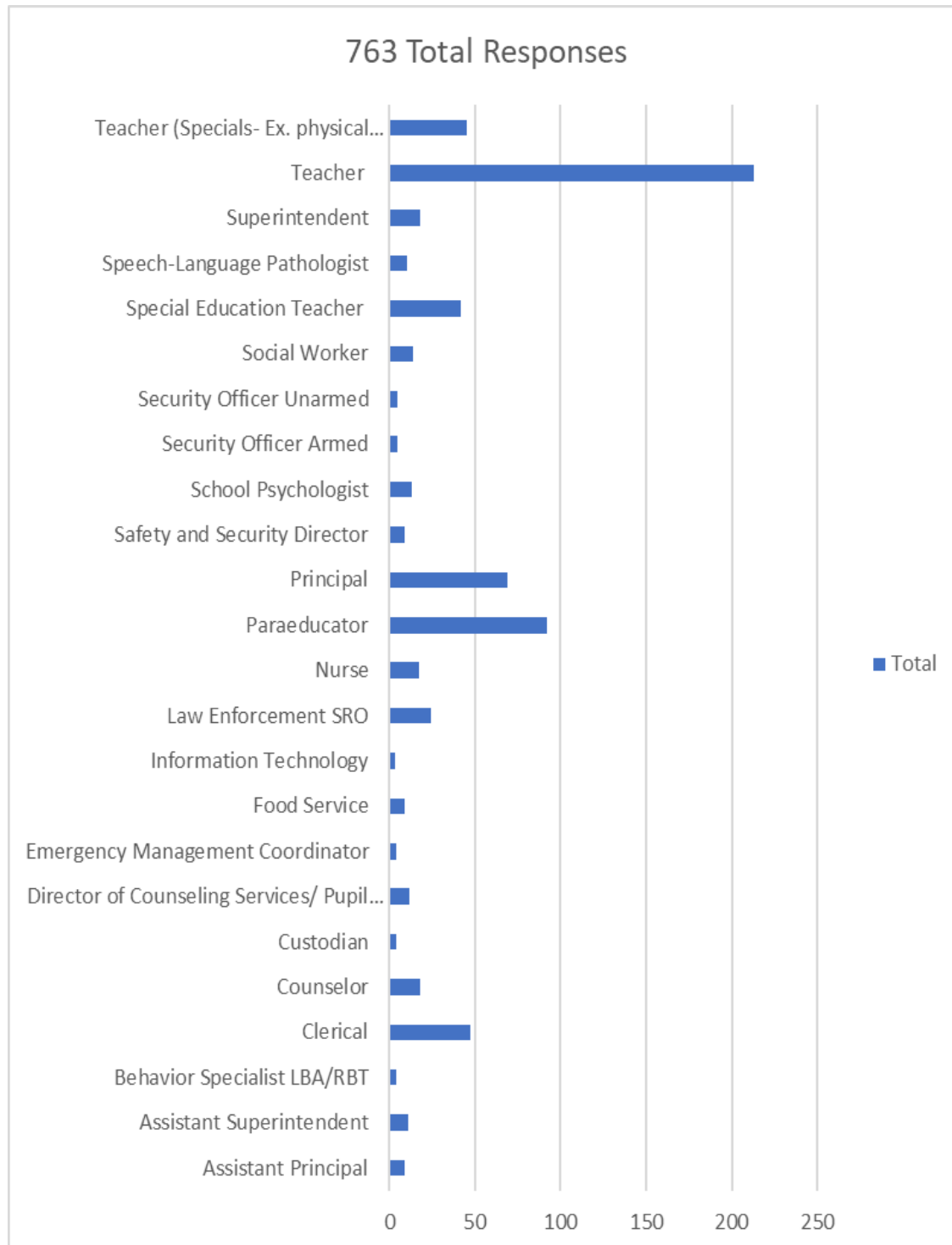

Figure 1: School Type

A total of 763 respondents identified their role in the survey. The highest number of responses were from teachers at 213, paraeducators at 92, and principals at 69. However, there were responses from many other disciplines within the school community (see Figure 2: Role).

Figure 2: Role

There were 757 respondents who identified the grade levels they service. Respondents could choose multiple grade levels including Pre-K, All Levels K-12, Kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. The lowest response was 13% for Pre-K and the highest response was 27% for grade 12. However, all of the grade levels were represented (see Figure 3: Grade Levels).
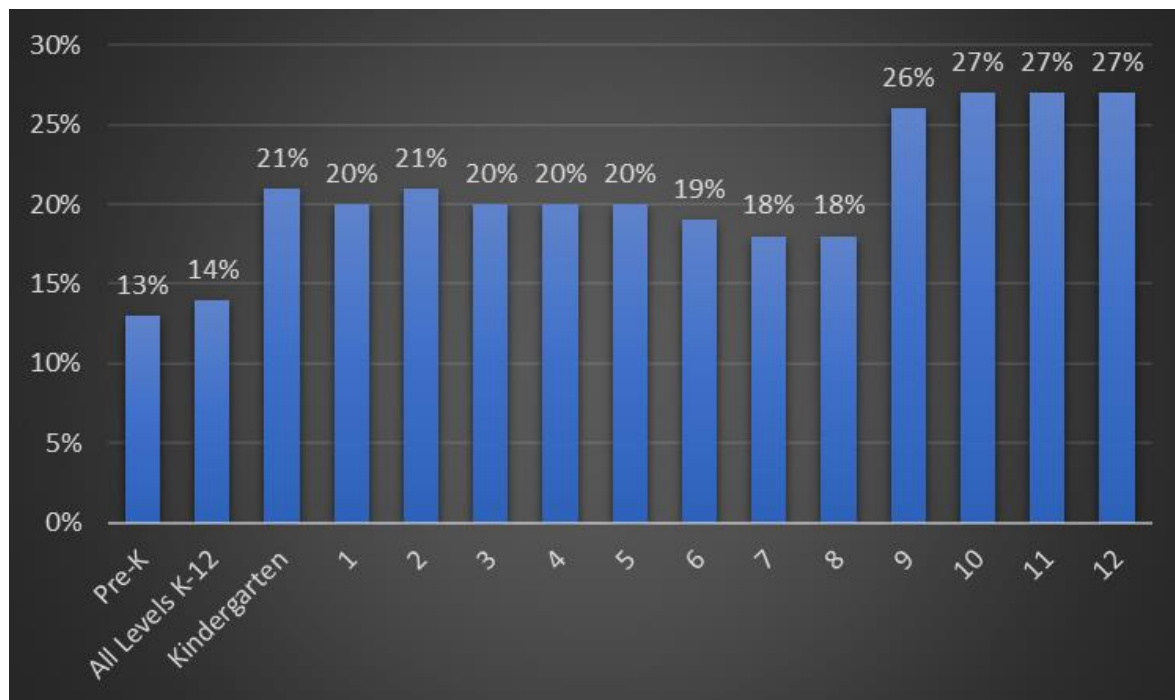
Figure 3: Grade Levels

The Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security's (DEMHS) regions were used to identify geographic participation. A total of 760 respondents identified their region. There were 22% of respondents from Region 1, 19% of respondents from Region 2, 31% of respondents from Region 3, 6% of respondents from Region 4, and 22% of respondents from Region 5 (see Figure 4: DEMHS Region).
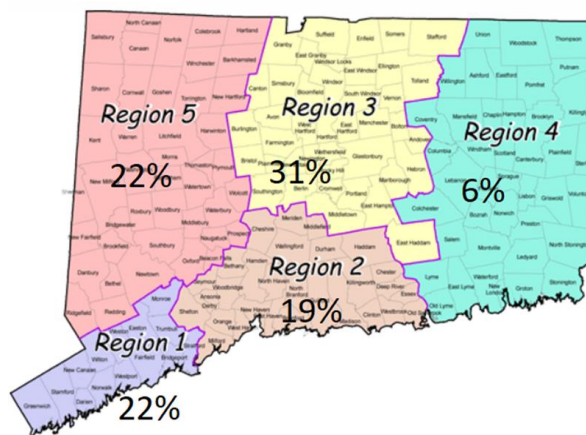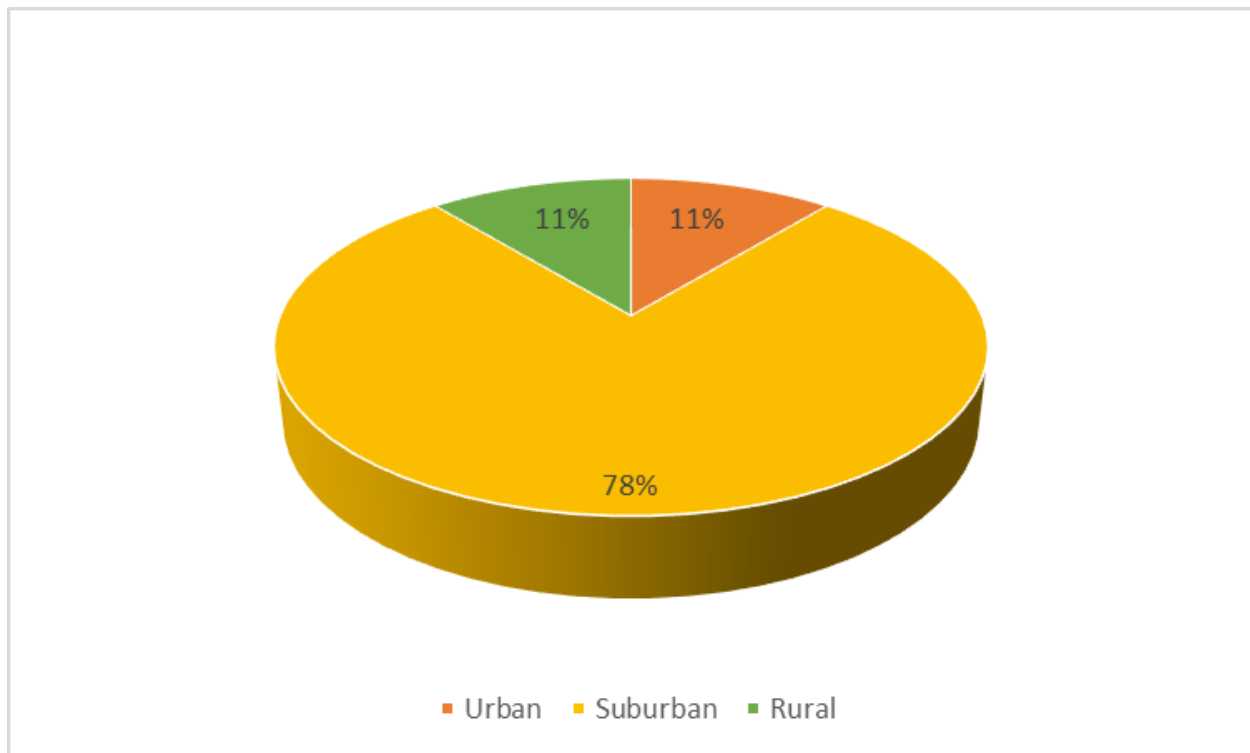

Figure 4: DEMHS Regions

There were 757 responses for the school district category. The largest response was 78% for suburban. Both urban and rural were 11% each (see Figure 5: District Category).


Figure 5: District Category

Safety Concerns and Training Needs

The safety concern question focused on the most prevalent safety concern on the campus that the respondent serves. The training needs questions were categorized into psychological and emotional, physical safety, emergency operations, law enforcement, and other. There were 654 respondents for the safety concerns and training needs questions.

The respondents could choose multiple safety concerns occurring on their school campus (see Figure 6: Safety Concerns). The most prevalent safety concerns in schools were mental health at 76%, bullying at 57%, culture and climate at 43%, and cyberbullying at 41%. Approximately 27% identified fighting, including both physical and verbal assaults as a safety concern. The next highest ranking safety concern was substance abuse at 26%. Both suicide and cybersecurity/digital safety reached 14%. Concern over domestic violence/abuse/neglect was 11%. Active threats, emergency management/operations planning, and sexual harassment/assault were each 6%. Theft, weapons on campus, and other were 5%. Dating violence and gang activity each reached 3%. Finally, 2% identified human trafficking as a safety concern.
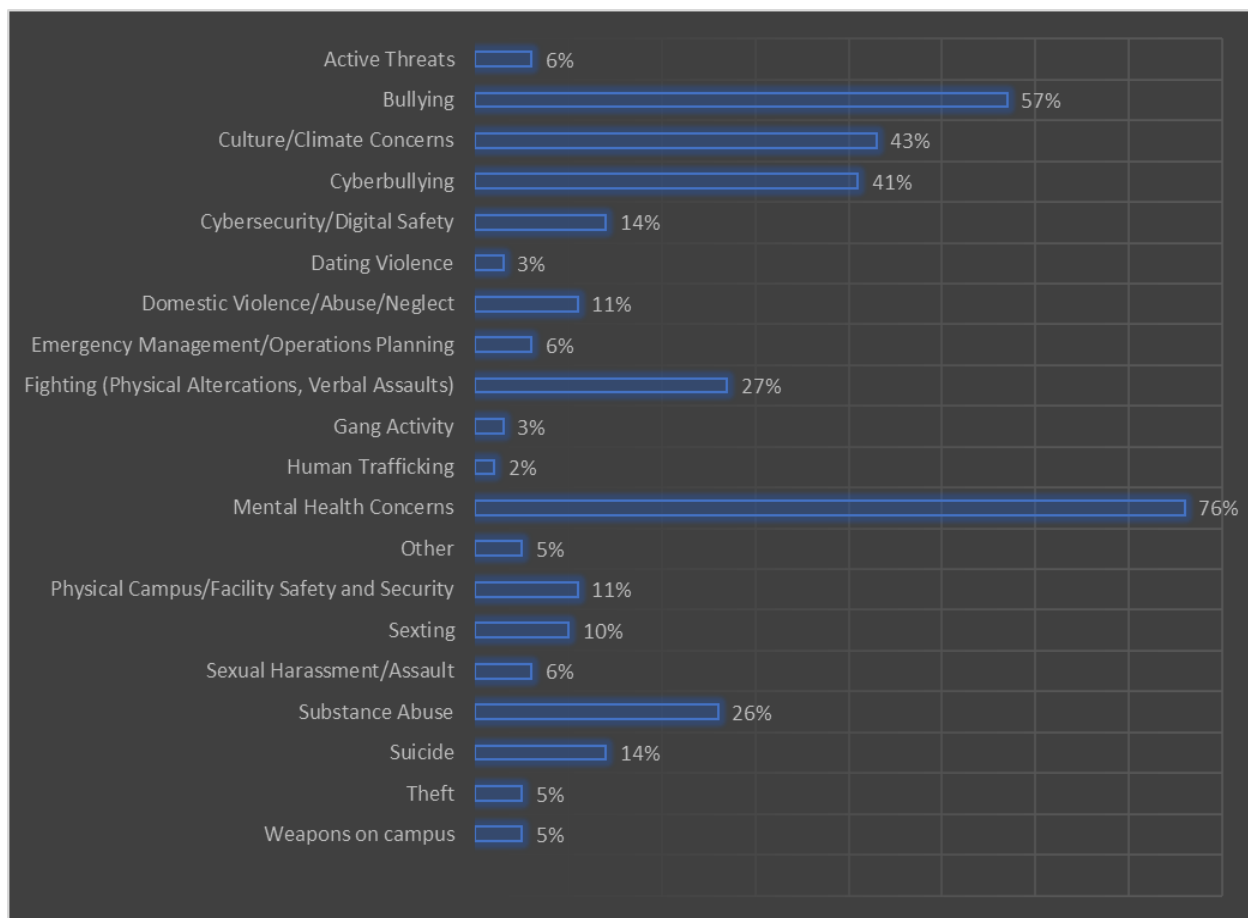
Figure 6: Safety Concerns

The highest training needs were for adolescent mental health at 59%, social emotional learning at 54%, improving school climate at 52%, and bullying and cyberbullying prevention at 46% (see Figure 7: Psychological and Emotional Training). Moreover, 38% of the respondents wanted to see training on mindfulness, 31% on restorative practices, and 23% on suicide prevention. 19% of respondents wanted training on Sandy Hook Promise "Say Something," and 20% wanted training on Sandy Hook Promise "Start with Hello." Finally, 7% of respondents request training on dating violence prevention, and 5% identified other training needs.
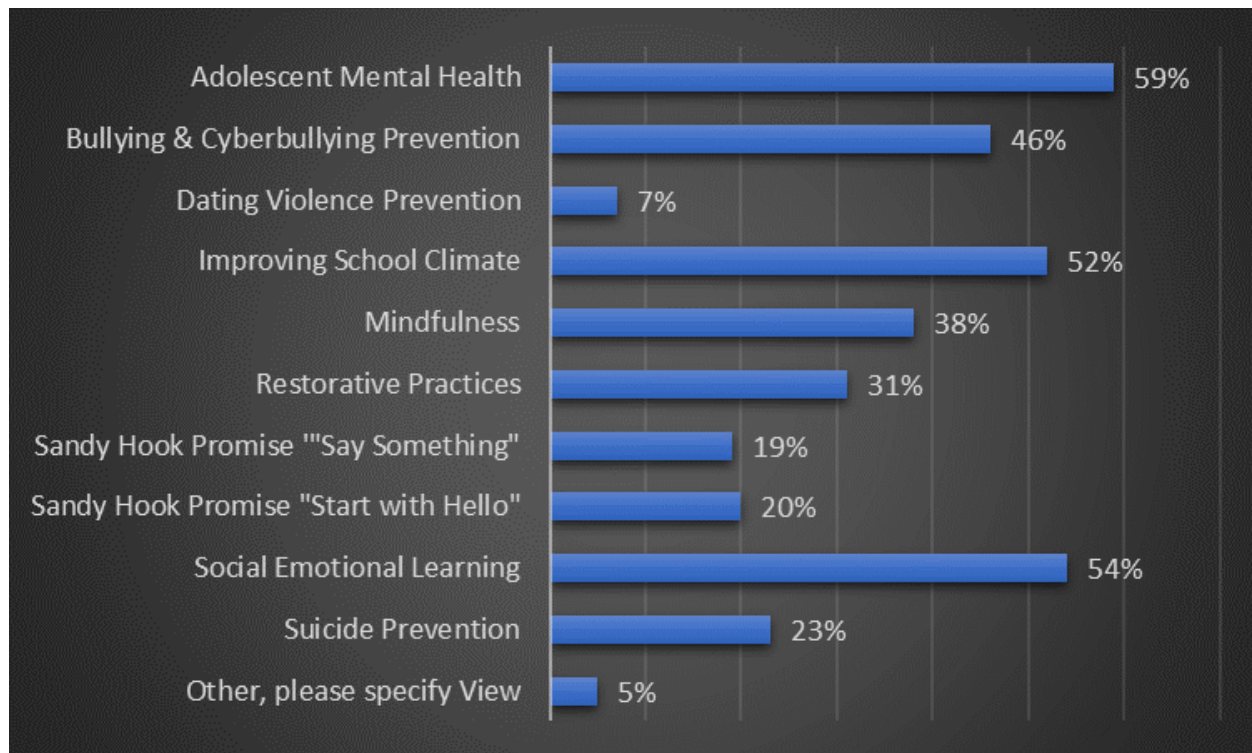
Figure 7: Psychological and Emotional Training

In the category of physical safety training needs, 55% of respondents identified school behavioral threat assessment, 37% identified safety and security assessments, and 31% identified digital threat assessment (see Figure 8: Physical Safety Training Needs). There were 22% of the responses for attitudinal inoculation for violent extremism, 8% for crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), 6% for human trafficking, 4% for gang awareness, and 2% for other.
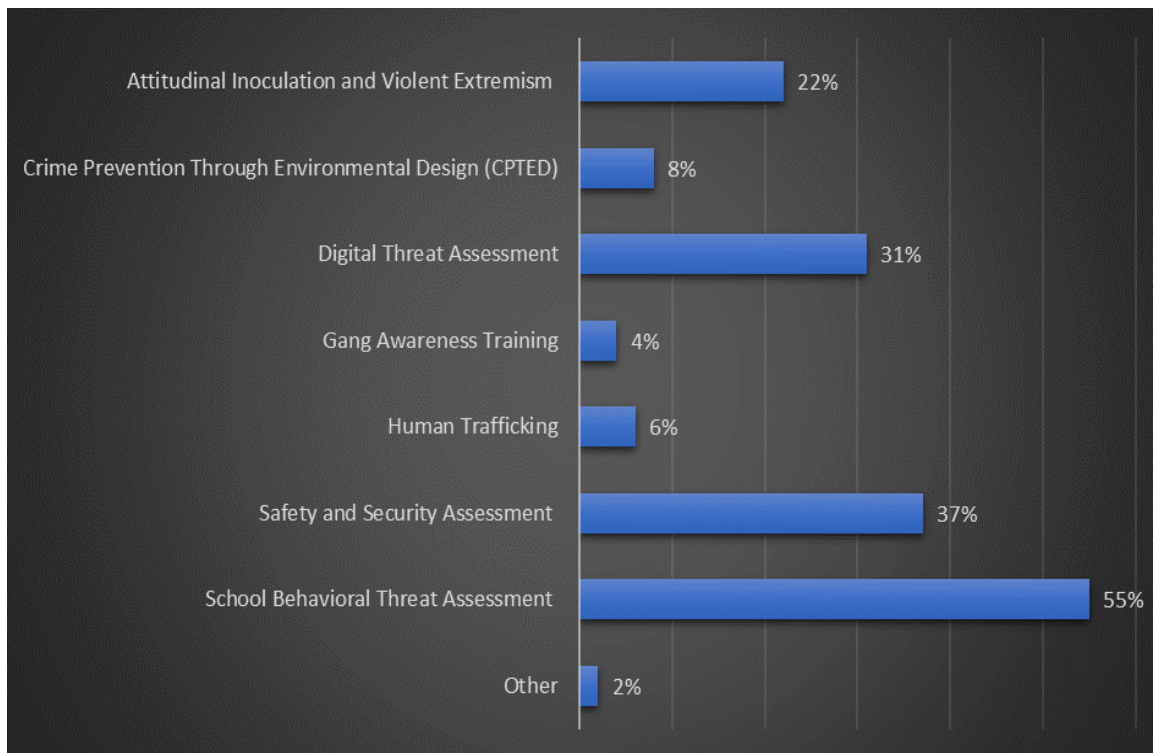
Figure 8: Physical Safety Training Needs

The most prevalent request for emergency operations training was for active shooter response training at 39% (see Figure 9: Emergency Operations Training Needs). The next four highest requests were for emergency operation plan development at 26%, parent reunification at 21%, exercise design at 19%, and the National Association for School Psychologists PREPaRE training at 18%. 11% of the respondents selected both G-364 Multi-Hazard Emergency Response Training for Schools and Incident Command System (ICS) training. Finally, 9% requested bomb incident management training, 9% requested Public Information Officer (PIO) training, and 5% identified other trainings.
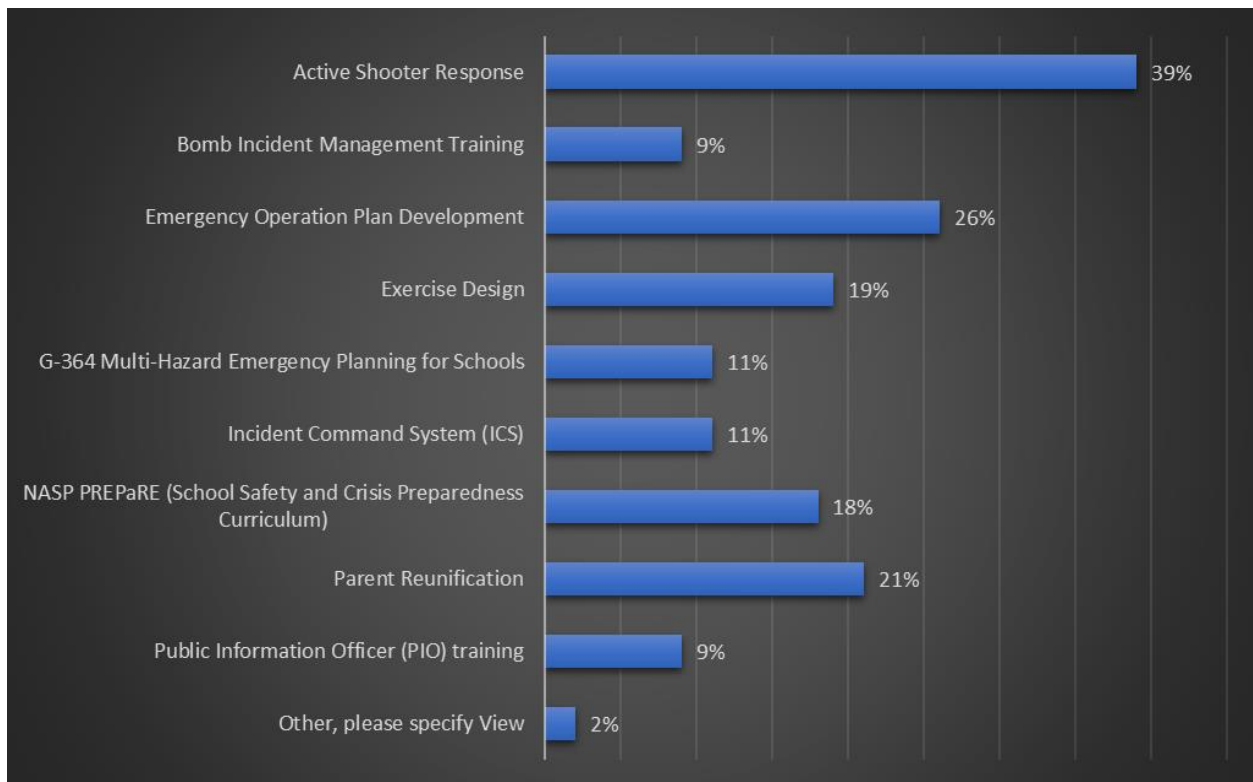
Figure 9: Emergency Operations Training Needs

The requested law enforcement trainings include the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) Basic School Resource Officer (SRO) course with 25% of the responses, NASRO Advanced SRO course with 12% of the responses, SRO Supervisors and Management training with 15% of the responses, and other trainings with 3% of the responses (see Figure 10: Law Enforcement Training Needs).
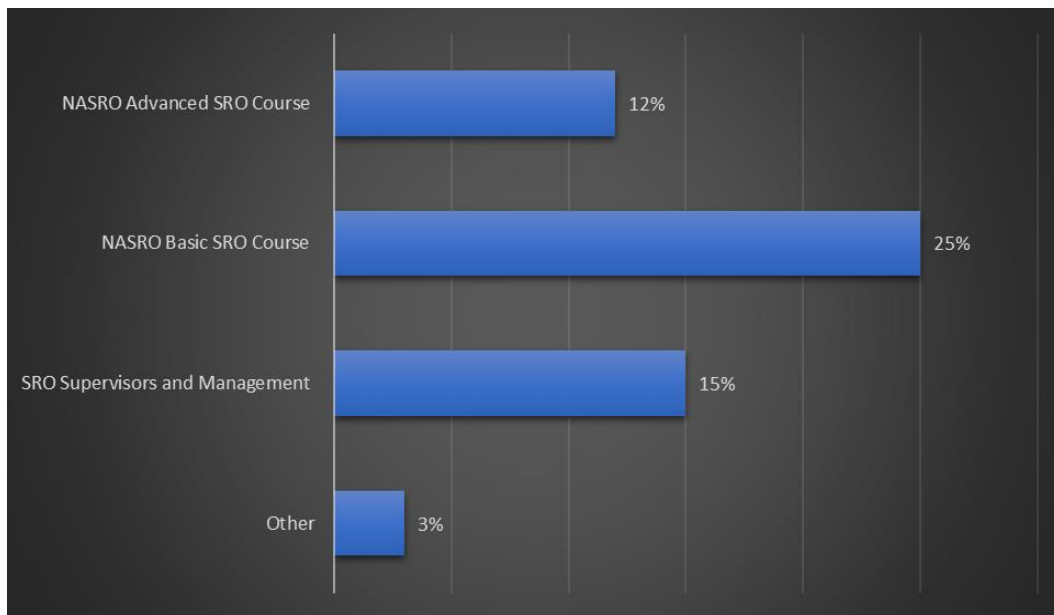
Figure 10: Law Enforcement Training Needs

The final survey question on training addressed organizational change. 42% of the respondents identified Appreciative Inquiry, a strength based organizational change approach, as a needed training (see Figure 11: Other Training). 3% of the respondents identified other training needs.
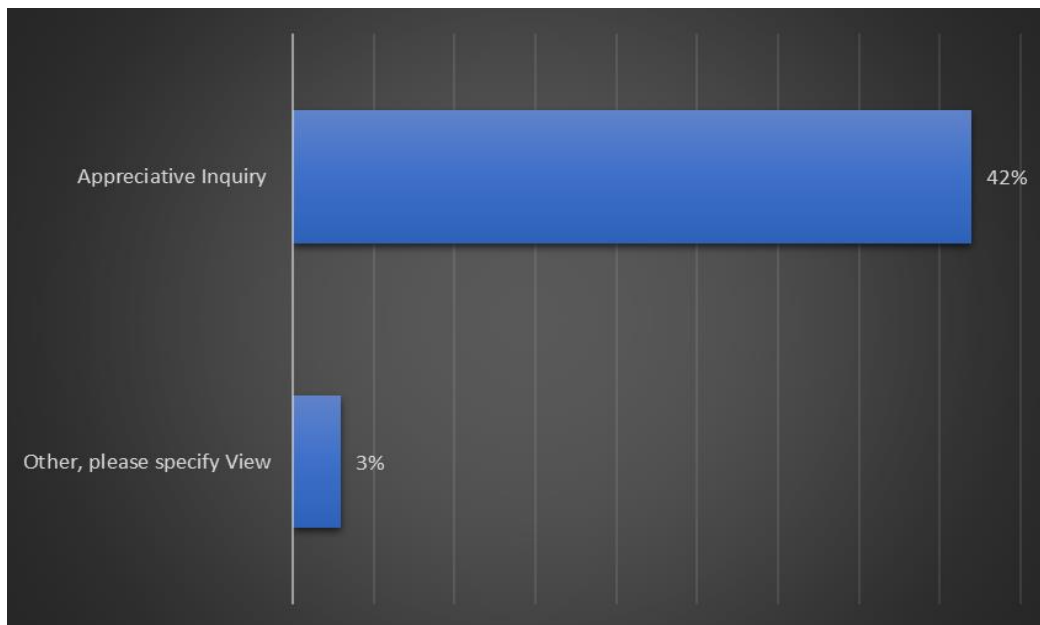
Figure 11: Other Training

School Climate

A section of the survey focused on the frequency of school climate surveys and the instrument used to measure the climate. 632 respondents answered the regularity of school climate surveys (see Figure 12: Regularity of School Climate Surveys). 55% of respondents identified that they complete school climate surveys at least once a year and 5% of respondents selected every other year. However, 37% of respondents selected unknown frequencies. Moreover, 2% of respondents identified every several years and 1% selected not applicable.
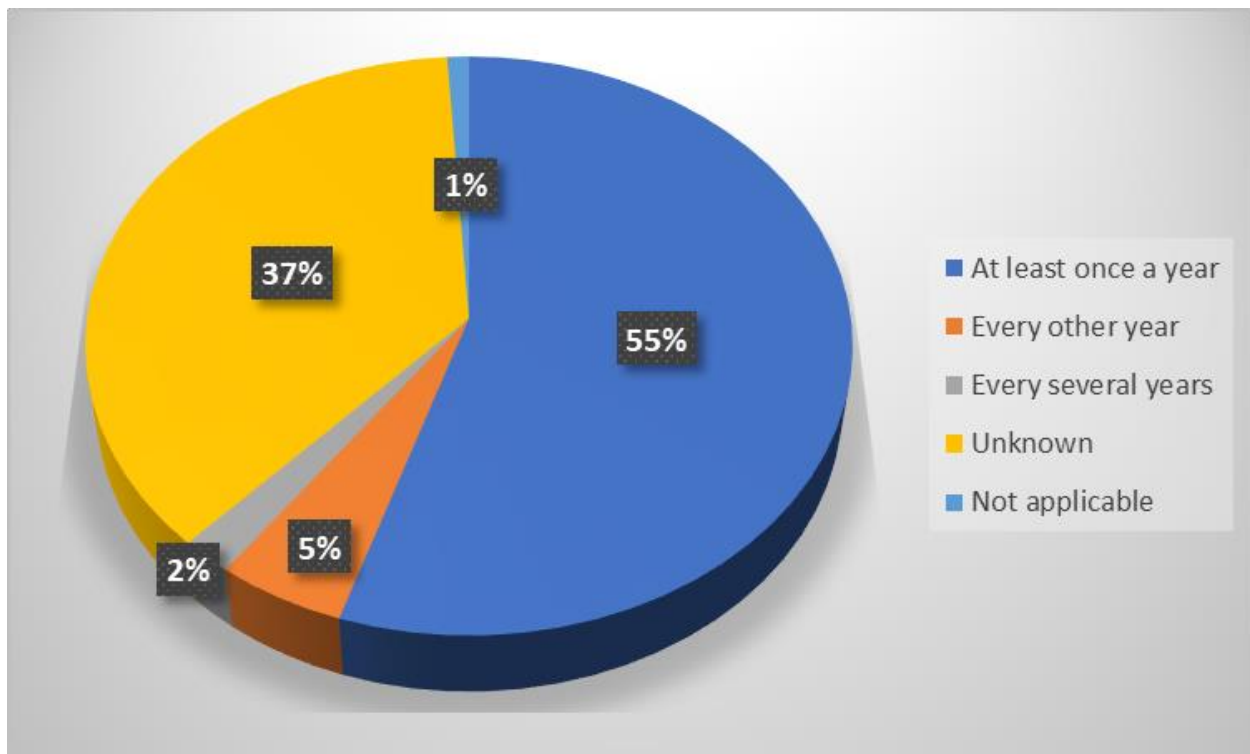

Figure 12: Regularity of School Climate Surveys

There were 632 respondents for the question on the school climate model that their school uses (see Figure 13: School Climate Instrument). 48% of respondents selected unknown, 25% identified a district developed school climate survey, 17% selected the Panorama School Climate Survey, 4% identified the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI), and 1% selected National Center for Education Statistics U.S. Department of Education School Climate Survey (EDCLS). There were 2% who selected not applicable and 3% identified others.
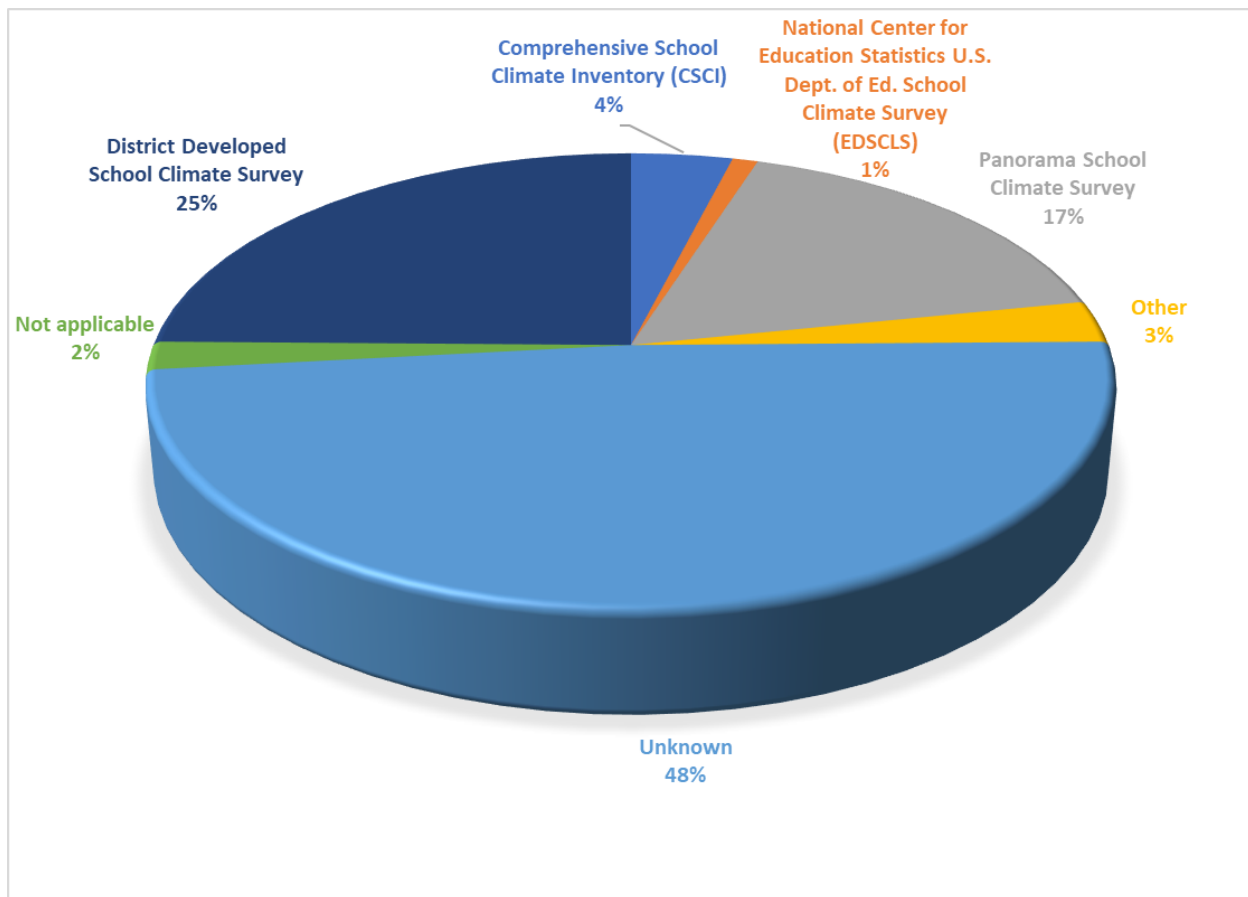
Figure 13: School Climate Instrument

Threat Reporting and Assessment

In the threat reporting and assessment section, the questions identified what model the school uses to assess threats or threatening behavior, and the reporting methods for threats or threatening behavior. 619 respondents answered the threat assessment model question (see Figure 14: Threat Assessment Model). 7% of the respondents identified that their school uses the Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG) model, 15% of the respondents used an informal model, and 3% of respondents identified other models. However, 75% of the respondents selected unknown- not aware of the threat assessment model used in their school.
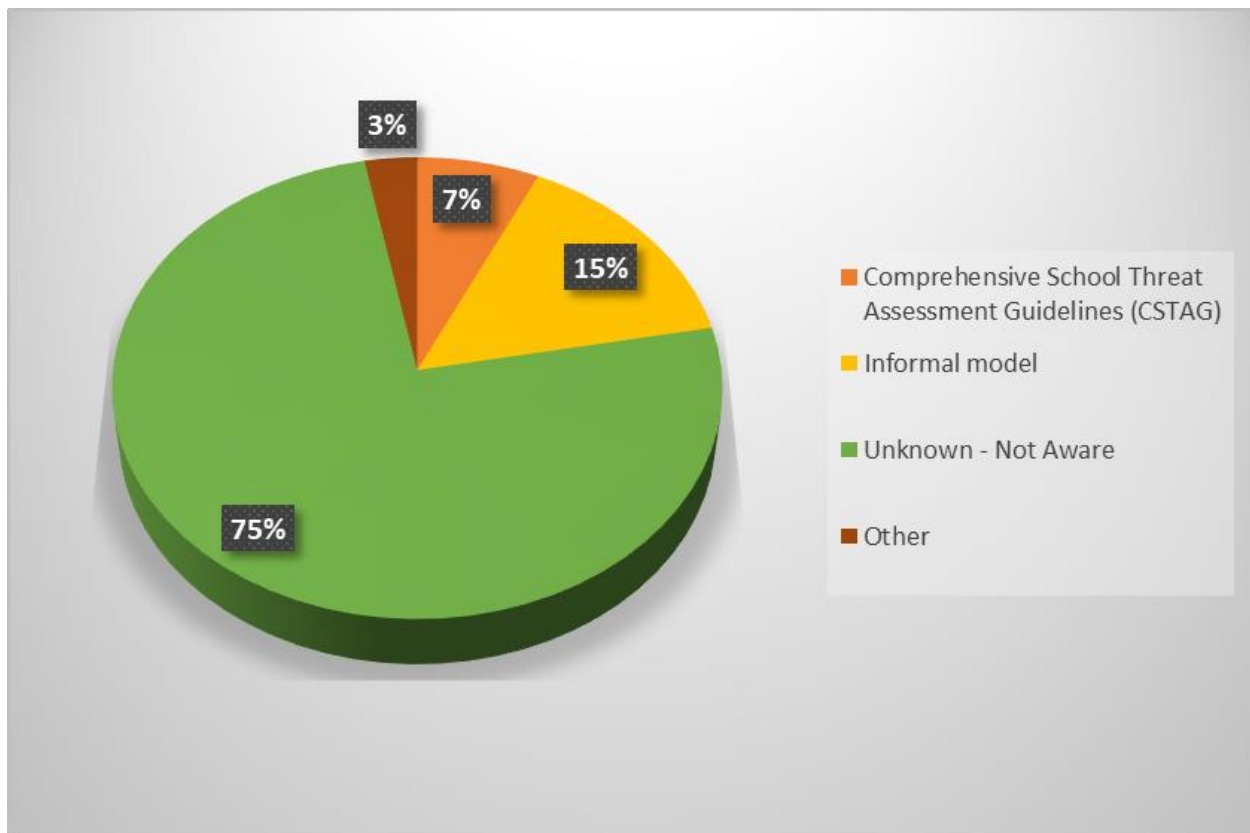
Figure 14: Threat Assessment Model

There were 634 respondents for the threat reporting method survey question and the respondents could select multiple methods (see Figure 15: Threat Reporting Method). 44% of the respondents selected in-person reporting, 26% identified Anonymous Alerts, 15% selected Say Something Report System (Sandy Hook Promise), and 3% identified other reporting methods. However, 48% selected unknown for the threat or threatening behavior reporting method.
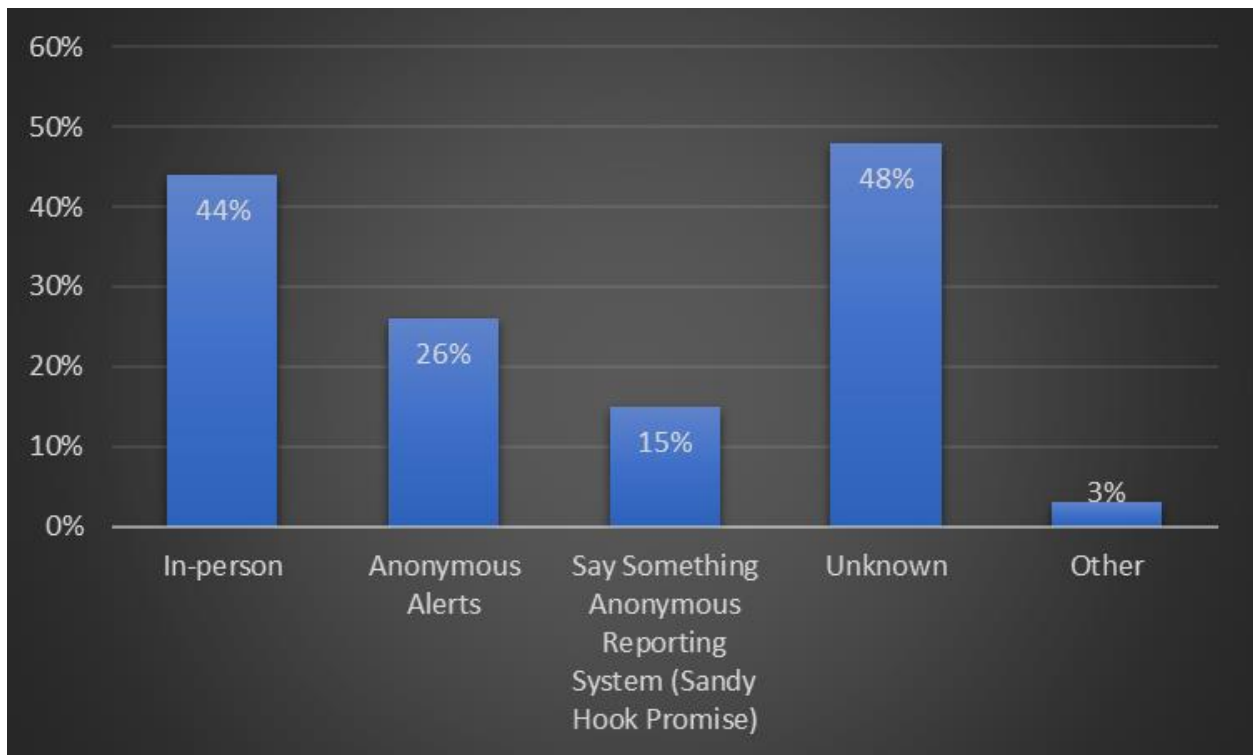
Figure 15: Threat Reporting Method

Mental Health Crisis Response

There was one question in the mental health crisis section which identified the resources the school uses to address a mental health crisis. There were 631 responses to this question and the respondents could select multiple resources (see Figure 16: Mental Health Crisis Resources). 64% of respondents use district resources, 12% use neighboring districts, 48% selected community resources, 16% identified private practices, 18% utilize a Regional Crisis Team, 52% use Mobile Crisis Intervention Services (2-1-1/9-8-8), 1% identified other resources, and 26% selected unknown- not aware.
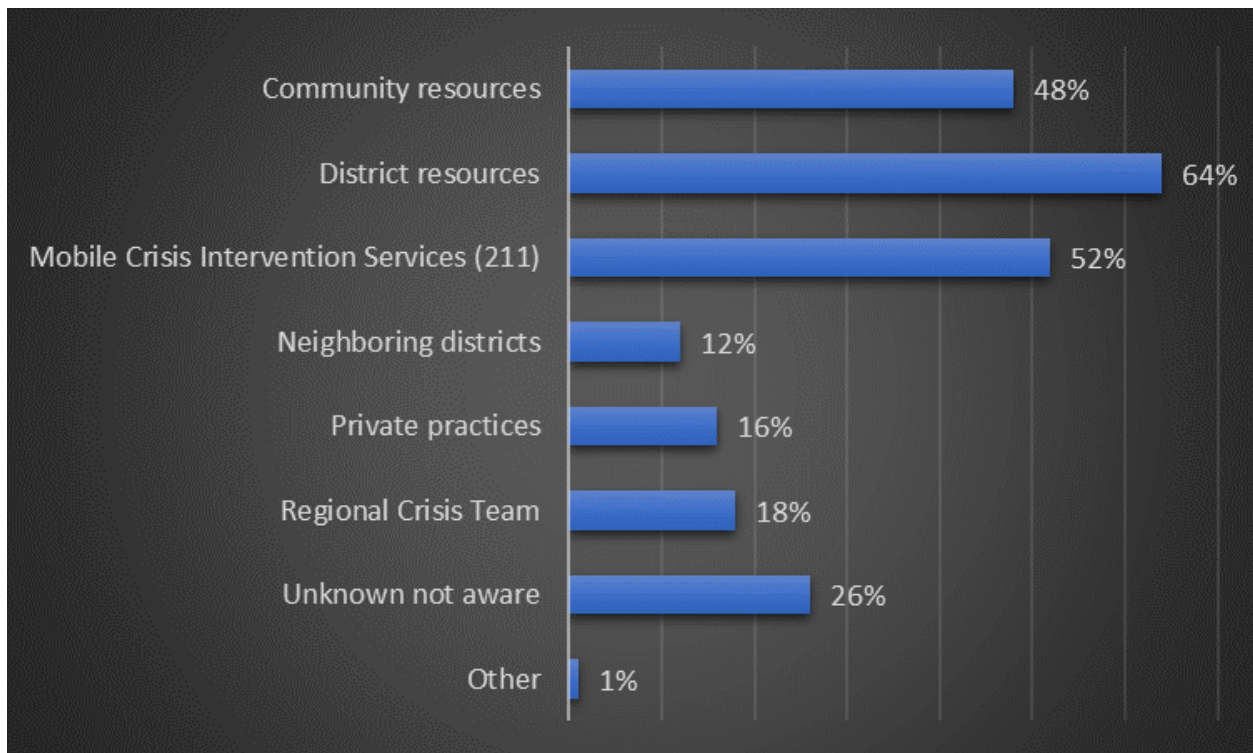
Figure 16: Mental Health Crisis Resources

Future Research

One question in the future research section sought to identify what areas needed additional research in the state of Connecticut. There were 627 respondents to the question, and they could choose multiple answers (see Figure 17: Future Research). The highest-ranking areas chosen were student disciplinary practices at 63%, school climate at 55%, and behavioral threat assessment at 47%. The next three most popular choices were restorative practices at 37%, security drills impact on mental health at 30%, and violence intervention at 27%. Finally, 14% of the respondents selected attitudinal inoculation for violence prevention and counter-radicalization efforts, and 2% identified other research topics.
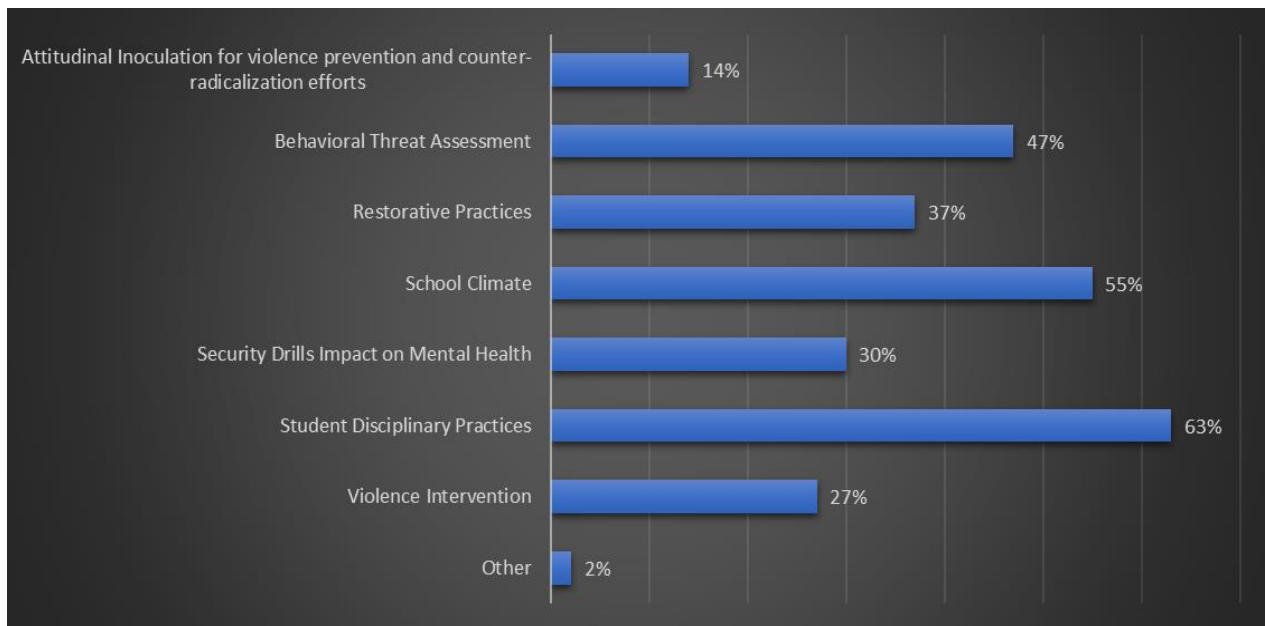
Figure 17: Future Research

Training Delivery and Scheduling

The final four questions of the survey captured the timing of training, the delivery format for training and resources, and the best months of the year for training. There were 596 respondents to the most ideal training time and respondents could choose multiple answers (see Figure 18: Training Time). 96% of the respondents chose work weekdays, 10% selected work week evenings/nights, 2% chose weekend days, and no one selected weekend evenings/nights.
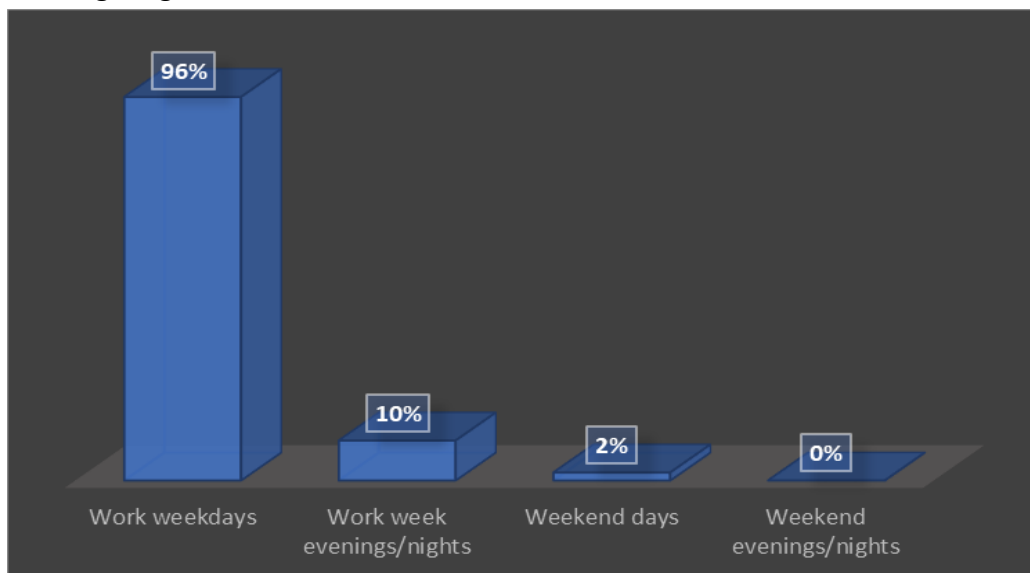
Figure 18: Training Time

There were 614 responses to the survey question on training format (see Figure 19: Training Format). The highest two ranking formats were face-to-face at 64% and live virtual at 55%. 34% of respondents chose self-paced online learning modules, 28% selected pre-recorded virtual, 20% selected hybrid models, and 1% chose other models. There were also 614 responses to the survey question on resource format (see Figure 20: Resource Format). 59% of the respondents chose downloadable documents, 56% chose video tutorials, 42% selected physical manuals/books/handouts/signage, and 0% identified other formats.
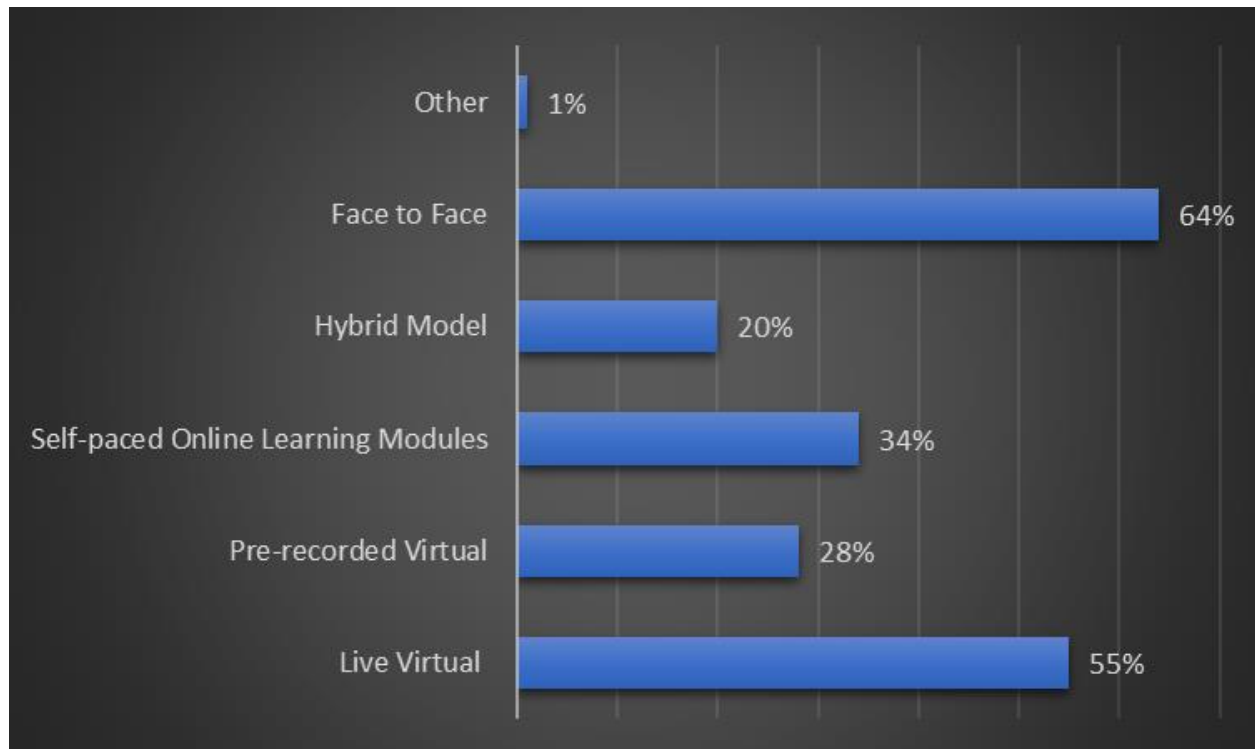
Figure 19: Training Format
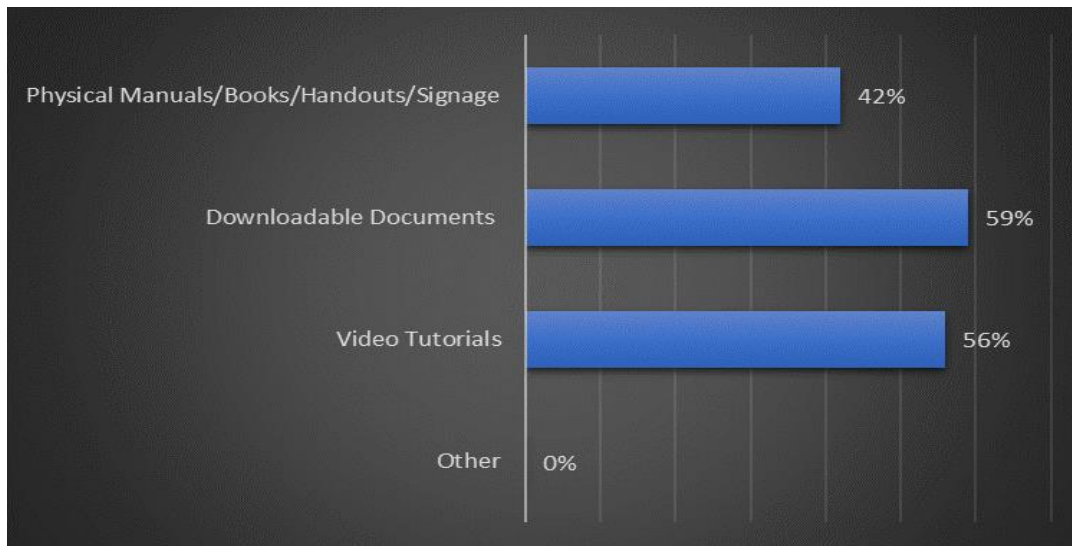
Figure 20: Resource Format

The final question of the survey focused on the best time of the year for training and there were 556 responses (see Figure 21: Time of Year). The highest-ranking months were March at 42%, August at 41%, September at 37%, October at 34%, and November at 31%. January and February each received 27%. Finally, the lower scoring months were April at 18%, May at 15%, December at 13%, June at 9% and July at 9%.
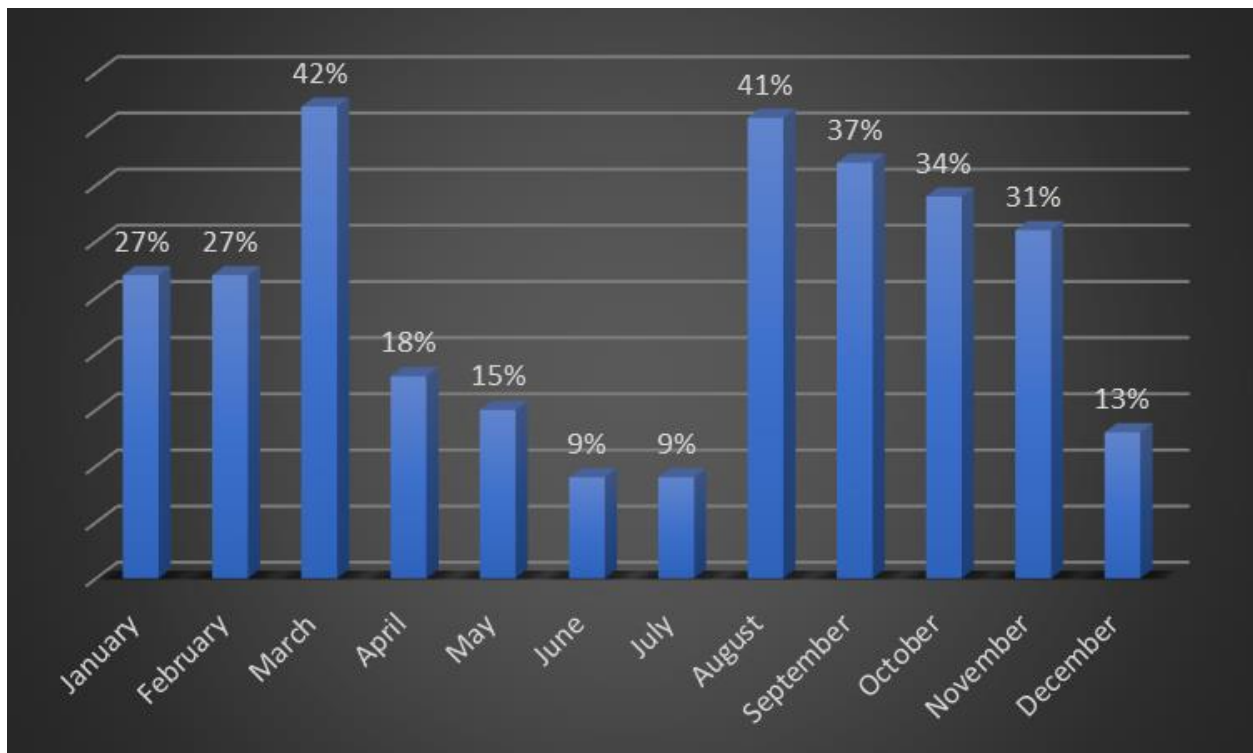
Figure 21: Time of Year

Conclusion

The Connecticut Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation undertook a survey of school employees across the entire state. The survey was comprised of 22 questions querying eight distinct areas. 823 participants opened the survey and gave consent to respond. The results revealed interesting needs among the school staff in the state. The most prevalent safety concerns in schools were mental health (76%), bullying (57%), culture and climate (43%), and cyberbullying (41%). In the category of physical safety training needs, 55% of respondents identified school behavioral threat assessment, 37% identified safety and security assessments, and 31% identified digital threat assessment. The national trend has been one of significant school threats on a regular basis. Connecticut schools have not been immune to this trend, and have been faced with a significant amount of threats. The most prevalent request for emergency operations training was for active shooter response training at 39%, followed by emergency operation plan development at 26%, parent reunification at 21%, exercise design at 19%, and the National Association for School Psychologists PREPaRE training at 18%. The requested law enforcement trainings include the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) Basic School Resource Officer (SRO) course with 25% of the responses, NASRO Advanced SRO course with 12% of the responses, SRO Supervisors and Management training with 15% of the responses, and other trainings with 3% of the responses. When asked about the frequency of school climate surveys, 55% indicated they are done at least once per year and 37% did not know how often they were done. When asked which school climate instrument was used to measure climate in their school buildings, most 48% indicated unknown. When asked which threat assessment model was used in their district, most (75%) indicated unknown. When asked about anonymous threat reporting, most (48%) reported not knowing which method is used. Most respondents preferred in-person training (64%), and 96% preferred training during the work day. There are additional findings contained within this report. Results will be used to conduct research and training for Connecticut schools.

Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. This study is being conducted by Amery Bernhardt from the CT Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation. This is an anonymous survey and participation is voluntary. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. This survey will help the Connecticut Center for School Safety to identify school safety needs throughout the state. The responses are essential to help plan for future training and collaborative efforts. Questions regarding the study should be directed to Amery Bernhardt at Bernhardta@wcsu.edu. Questions concerning the rights of the subjects involved in research studies should be directed to the WCSU IRB Chair at irb@wcsu.edu.

   By selecting "Yes" I confirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I agree to participate in this anonymous survey.*
   (Select Yes or No)

   ○ Yes ○ No

2. **Which of the following best describes the school environment you work in or serve?**
   (Select the best option)

   ○ Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS)

   ○ Approved Private Special Education Program

   ○ Nonpublic K-12 school

   ○ Public K-12 school

   ○ Public charter school

   ○ Regional Educational Service Center

   ○ Other, please specify

   _____

3. **Which of the following best describes your position?***

   ○ Assistant Principal

   ○ Assistant Superintendent

   ○ Behavior Specialist LBA/RBT

   ○ Bus Driver

   ○ Clerical

   ○ Counselor

○ Custodian

○ Director of Counseling Services/ Pupil Services

○ Emergency Management Coordinator

○ Facilities Management

○ Food Service

○ Information Technology

○ Law Enforcement Officer (Not Assigned to a School)

○ Law Enforcement School Liaison

○ Law Enforcement SRO

○ Maintenance

○ Nurse

○ Occupational Therapist/ Physical Therapist

○ Paraeducator

○ Principal

○ Safety and Security Director

○ School Psychologist

○ Security Officer Armed

○ Security Officer Unarmed

○ Social Worker

○ Special Education Teacher

○ Superintendent

○ Teacher

○ Teacher (Specials- Ex. physical education, arts, and technology)

○ Other, please specify

[   ]

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4. **Which grade levels do you serve?**

(Select all that apply)

☐ Pre-K

☐ All Levels K-12

☐ Kindergarten

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

☐ 6

☐ 7

☐ 8

☐ 9

☐ 10

☐ 11

☐ 12

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5. **What DEMHS Region is your district in? (See map)**
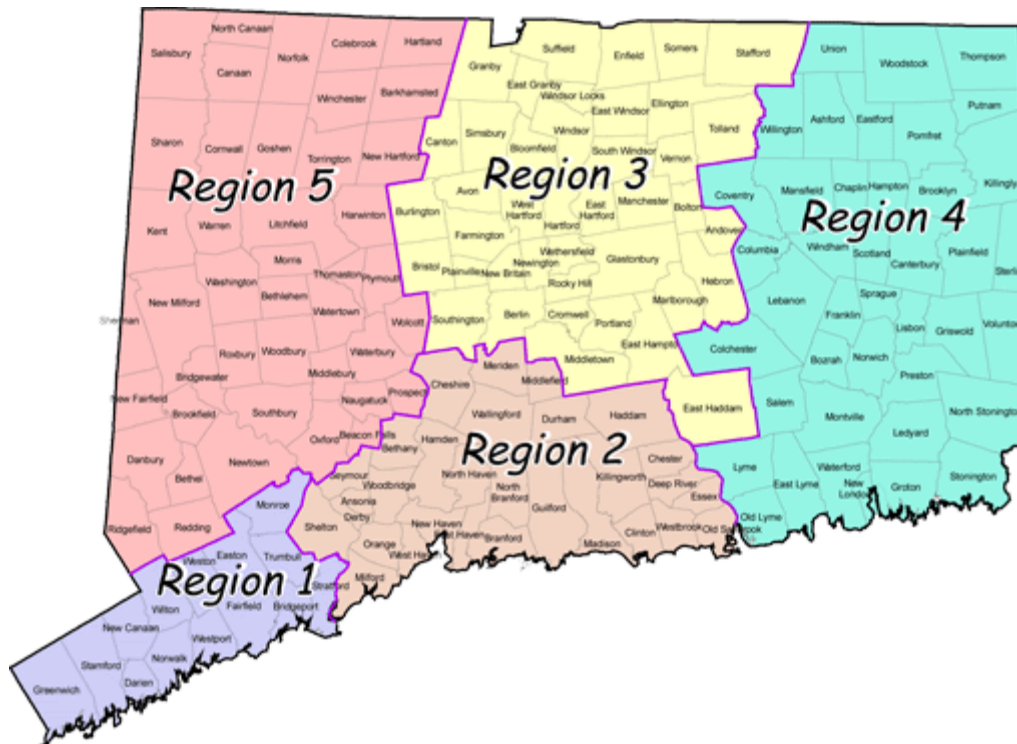
(Only select one region)

○ 1

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

6. **Which category best describes your district?**
(Select one choice)

○ Urban

○ Suburban

○ Rural

Safety Concerns and Training Needs

7. **Currently, what are the most prevalent safety concerns occurring on the campuses you serve?**
(Select all that apply)

☐ Active Threats

☐ Bullying

☐ Culture/Climate Concerns

☐ Cyberbullying

☐ Cybersecurity/Digital Safety

☐ Dating Violence

☐ Domestic Violence/Abuse/Neglect

☐ Emergency Management/Operations Planning

☐ Fighting (Physical Altercations, Verbal Assaults)

☐ Gang Activity

☐ Human Trafficking

☐ Mental Health Concerns

☐ Physical Campus/Facility Safety and Security

☐ Sexting

☐ Sexual Harassment/Assault

☐ Substance Abuse

☐ Suicide

☐ Theft

☐ Weapons on campus

☐ Other, please specify

[   ]

8. **Please select trainings from this list that you would like offered during the 2022-2023 school year. (Psychological and Emotional).**
(Select all that apply)

☐ Adolescent Mental Health

☐ Bullying & Cyberbullying Prevention

☐ Dating Violence Prevention

☐ Improving School Climate

☐ Mindfulness

☐ Restorative Practices

☐ Sandy Hook Promise '"Say Something"

☐ Sandy Hook Promise "Start with Hello"

☐ Social Emotional Learning

☐ Suicide Prevention

☐ Other, please specify

[   ]

9. **Please select trainings from this list that you would like offered during the 2022-2023 school year. (Physical Safety).**
(Select all that apply)

☐ Attitudinal Inoculation and Violent Extremism (Helping students resist persuasive arguments for engaging in violence)

☐ Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

☐ Digital Threat Assessment (Improves skills for using social meeting and the internet for investigating threats of violence)

☐ Gang Awareness Training

☐ Human Trafficking

☐ Safety and Security Assessment (Helps identify hazards and threats to the school)

☐ School Behavioral Threat Assessment (Focuses on violence prevention through assessment, referral, monitoring, and support)

☐ Other, please specify

[ ]

10. **Please select trainings from this list that you would like offered during the 2022-2023 school year. (Emergency Operations).**
(Select all that apply)

☐ Active Shooter Response

☐ Bomb Incident Management Training

☐ Emergency Operation Plan Development

☐ Exercise Design (Provides the methodology for emergency response exercise planning)

☐ G-364 Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools

☐ Incident Command System (ICS)

☐ NASP PREPaRE (School Safety and Crisis Preparedness Curriculum)

☐ Parent Reunification

☐ Public Information Officer (PIO) training

☐ Other, please specify

[ ]

11. **Please select trainings from this list that you would like offered during the 2022-2023 school year. (Law Enforcement).**
(Select all that apply)

☐ NASRO Basic SRO Course (National Association of School Resource Officers Basic SRO Course)

☐ NASRO Advanced SRO Course (Builds on the Basic SRO Course)

☐ SRO Supervisors and Management (Provides Guidance on Managing/Supervising the SRO Program)

☐ Other, please specify

[ ]

12. **Please select trainings from this list that you would like offered during the 2022-2023 school year. (Other).**
(Select all that apply)

☐ Appreciative Inquiry (Positive Deviance) (Strengths Based Organizational Change Approach)

☐ Other, please specify

|_____|

School Climate

13. **How often does your school conduct school climate assessments?**
(Select one)

○ At least once a year

○ Every other year

○ Every several years

○ Unknown

○ Not applicable

14. **What instrument does your school use to assess school climate?**
(Select one)

○ Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI)

○ National Center for Education Statistics U.S. Dept. of Ed. School Climate Survey (EDSCLS)

○ Panorama School Climate Survey

○ District Developed School Climate Survey

○ Unknown

○ Not applicable

○ Other, please specify

|_____|

Threat Reporting and Assessment

15. **What model does your school use to assess threats or threatening behavior?**
(Select one)

○ Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG)

○ Informal model

○ Unknown - Not Aware

○ Other, please specify

[   ]

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16. **What method does your school use to report threats or threatening behavior?**
(Select all that apply)

☐ In-person

☐ Anonymous Alerts

☐ Say Something Anonymous Reporting System (Sandy Hook Promise)

☐ Unknown

☐ Other, please specify

[   ]

Mental Health Crisis Response

17. **What resources would your school/district use during a mental health crisis?**
(Select all that apply)

☐ District resources

☐ Neighboring districts

☐ Community resources

☐ Private practices

☐ Regional Crisis Team

☐ Mobile Crisis Intervention Services (211)

☐ Unknown not aware

☐ Other, please specify

Future Research

18. **Please select areas of school safety that you would want researched in Connecticut.**
(Select all that apply)

☐ Attitudinal Inoculation for violence prevention and counter-radicalization efforts

☐ Behavioral Threat Assessment

☐ Restorative Practices

☐ School Climate

☐ Security Drills Impact on Mental Health

☐ Student Disciplinary Practices

☐ Violence Intervention

☐ Other, please specify

Training Delivery and Scheduling

19. **What is the most ideal timing for you or your staff to attend training?**
(Select all that apply)

☐ Work weekdays

☐ Work week evenings/nights

☐ Weekend days

☐ Weekend evenings/nights

20. **In which format do you prefer to attend/receive training?**
(Select all that apply)

☐ Live Virtual (e.g., live Zoom events)

☐ Pre-recorded Virtual (e.g., recorded Zoom events)

☐ Self-paced Online Learning Modules

☐ Hybrid Model

☐ Face to Face

☐ Other, please specify

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21. Different types of resources are better suited for different types of formats, depending on their content and purpose. **However, in general, in what format do you prefer to receive resources (e.g, document templates, guidance documents, instructional or "how-to" guides/manuals, etc.)?**
(Select all that apply)

☐ Video Tutorials

☐ Downloadable Documents (e.g., PDFs, Word documents, Excel files, etc.)

☐ Physical Manuals/Books/Handouts/Signage

☐ Other, please specify

[   ]

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22. **When is the best time of year for you or your staff to attend training?**
(Select all that apply)

☐ January

☐ February

☐ March

☐ April

☐ May

☐ June

☐ July

☐ August

☐ September

☐ October

☐ November

☐ December