

**The Experiences of Racialized and
Marginalized Populations
with the
School Resource Officer (SRO) Program at
Edmonton Public Schools**

Final Report

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INTRODUCTION

The Edmonton Public Schools Board of Trustees passed the following motion at their June 23, 2020, public Board meeting:

That the Board of Trustees request an independent review of the school resource officer program to be conducted by a university researcher, including a literature review, environmental scan, qualitative analysis of student and family experiences of SROs and policing, focusing on the experiences of Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and students with disabilities as well as other students from marginalized communities in Edmonton Public Schools.

Drs. Scot Wortley, Sandra Bucerius, and Kanika Samuels were subsequently contracted to conduct an extensive study exploring the SRO program in Edmonton Public Schools.

This document provides the results of an extensive, multi-method evaluation exploring the experiences of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized or marginalized youth and parents with the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program in the Edmonton Public schools (EPSB).¹ In this context, marginalized youth include those who identify as 2sLGBTQ+, those with a non-binary gender identity, and youth who report having a physical or mental disability.

This report includes: 1) A review of the American and Canadian research literature on SRO programs; 2) The results from focus groups and individual interviews with students who identify as Indigenous, Black, racialized or marginalized; 3) The results of focus groups and interviews with the parents of EPSB students who identify as Indigenous, Black, racialized or marginalized; 4) The results from student surveys of youth who identify as Indigenous, Black, racialized and/or marginalized (including those with and without direct experiences with an SRO); 5) The results of surveys with the parents of EPSB students who indicated they have a child who identifies as Indigenous, Black, racialized or marginalized; and 6) A discussion of major study findings and recommendations.

REPORT OUTLINE

- 1) Part A provides a summary of our review of previous studies on School Resource Officers.
- 2) Part B summarizes the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) SRO selection process.

¹ The term “parents” is used to identify both biological and adoptive parents, step-parents, foster parents, guardians and other primary caregivers.

- 3) PART C provides a summary of the demographics of the current study's focus group and individual interviewees. This includes a discussion on general observations.
- 4) PART D summarizes the focus group and individual interviews with current or former Black, Indigenous, other racialized, and/or marginalized Edmonton Public School Board students.
- 5) PART E summarizes the focus group and individual interviews with parents of current or former Black, Indigenous, other racialized, and/or marginalized Edmonton Public School Board students.
- 6) PART F summarizes the survey results among Black, Indigenous, other racialized, and/or marginalized student respondents. This includes students with and without experiences with an SRO.
- 7) PART G summarizes the survey results among the parents of students who identify as Black, Indigenous, other racialized, and/or marginalized. This includes parents with and without experiences with an SRO.
- 8) PART H includes a discussion of major study findings and recommendations based on evaluation results.
- 9) PART I provides academic references.

PART A: LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior to the global movement critically examining the role of the police in modern society, many high schools in the United States and Canada integrated police officers within the school environment. Often referred to as School Resource Officers (SROs), it was argued that these officers kept students safe and improved police-community relations (Abela and Donlevy 2020; Duxbury and Bennell 2020; Jennings, Khey, Maskaly, and Donner 2011). However, a growing body of American research suggests students from racialized backgrounds report experiences of over-surveillance, ultimately maintaining the criminalization of racial minority youth, particularly those who identify as Indigenous and/or Black (Gottfredson, Crosse, Tang, Bauer, Harmon, Hagen, and Green 2020; Mallet 2015; Merkwae 2015; Kochel, Wilson, and Mastroki 2011). To illustrate, Merkwae (2015), argues that SRO's give law enforcement officials additional surveillance power and access to students and thus increase opportunities for legally punitive measures involving school violations. Furthermore, some community activists and researchers have also emphasized the sizeable cost associated with implementing and operating SRO programs and have argued that the money could be better used to fund other services and evidence-based initiatives that would benefit students (Petteruti, 2011).

Canadian SRO programs have not escaped criticism. Vocal critics of SRO programs have argued that having police in schools increases the criminalization and surveillance of Black, Indigenous, students of colour, students who identify as 2sLGBTQ+ and/or having a disability (Police Free Schools, 2021). It is these criticisms that have led to the recent dissolution of many SRO programs within several large Canadian school boards, including Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa, Winnipeg, and Edmonton (Wortley, Bucerius, and Samuels, 2022). However, there lacks methodologically sound and rigorous research that explores the perceptions and experiences of Black, Indigenous and racialized youth from a Canadian context. Most Canadian SRO literature maintains a "race-absent" approach that ultimately fails to explore the systemic challenges faced by Black, Indigenous, and other racialized students. Furthermore, there is a lack of Canadian studies that address the concerns of other marginalized youth, including students who identify as having a disability or as 2sLGBTQ+. As such, research exploring the experiences of both racialized and marginalized students, with SROs in Canada, is severely underdeveloped (Wortley, Bucerius, Samuels 2022).

There are emerging Canadian studies that include disaggregated racial data. These studies suggest that when examining the perceptions and experiences of Black, Indigenous, and racialized students with SROs, there indeed exist notable racial differences; however, those who do not identify as Black or Indigenous (i.e. South Asian, Asian, East Asian, Hispanic persons), are more likely to support police in schools, in comparison to their White, Black and Indigenous counterparts (Argyle, 2021; Wortley, Bucerius, Samuels 2022) Thus, as some Canadian researchers have long argued, it is illogical to group Black, Indigenous, and persons of color into a singular category when exploring perceptions of law enforcement (Spratt and Doob 2014), as racial identities may yield varying experiences and perceptions of the police. To illustrate this point in relation to SROs, using documented survey and interview data showing support for SROs among Indigenous and students of colour (see Argyle 2021), five (5) self-identified immigrant and racialized Vancouver School Board candidates campaigned on listening to their community by reinstating a recently disbanded SRO program (ABC Vancouver, 2022; Chen, 2022; YouTube, 2022). These candidates later won in their respective areas, ultimately solidifying a return of SROs to Vancouver Public Schools (CBC,

2022). This suggests there is more nuance when examining and ultimately understanding how racially diverse peoples perceive and experience SROs within the school environment.

To begin this exploration, it is important to explore and understand the history and perceived utility of SRO programs in publicly funded Canadian schools. The following section aims to provide an overview of the literature exploring SRO programs in the U.S. and Canada. The review will begin with an exploration into the history of SRO programs, including a brief examination of Edmonton SROs, the roles and functions of school-based police officers, and their impact(s) on students. The first section addresses the emergence of law enforcement in schools and the rationale behind school-police partnerships in both the U.S. and Canada. Following, the review examines the perceived role(s) and responsibilities of police officers in schools. Next, the review examines documented effects related to SROs in educational settings, specifically looking at research that has assessed concerns over the potential criminalization of racial minority students. The final section of the literature review provides detail into emerging data that explores the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and racialized youth with SROs in Canada. This aims to demonstrate the lack of research exploring the perceptions of racially diverse sample of youth and parents, thus demonstrating the importance of the current study.

Historical Development of Police in Schools

The precise origins of the SRO concept are unknown. Scholars have traced the first formal SRO program to a school in Flint, Michigan in 1953 (Theriot & Orme, 2016). However, some scholars note partnerships between schools and law enforcement already existed in the 1940s in major cities, including Los Angeles and Indianapolis (Brown, 2018). What is clear is that SRO programs became popular and expanded over time (Weiler & Cray, 2011). The concept grew in the 1960s and 70s as several towns in Florida stationed local officers in select schools. The term “school resource officer”, in fact, is said to have been coined by a Miami police chief (Normore et al., 2015). Other jurisdictions within Arizona and California followed suit and assigned SROs to several schools to foster better relations between youth and local police (Normore et al., 2015). By the late 1970s, Coon & Travis (2012) note that there were close to 100 SRO programs in public schools in the United States. By the 1990s there were over 2000 SROs stationed across schools (Coon & Travis, 2012; Na & Gottfredson, 2013). This key period, for the development and increased use of SRO programs in schools, has been traced to multiple converging factors including the growing juvenile crime rate during the 1980s and ‘90s (Gottfredson et al., 2020; Johnson, 1999), a series of school shootings that occurred during the 1990s (Brown, 2018), and increased federal and state funding for police in schools (Na & Gottfredson, 2013; Nolan, 2018).

Growing concerns about youth and gun violence as well as youth victimization at schools, led to “a punitive transformation of school discipline policies that included zero-tolerance policies, use of exclusionary responses for minor transgressions and increasing use of criminal justice personnel and technology in schools” (Gottfredson et al., 2020, p. 908). The practice of zero tolerance was first introduced in drug legislation in the United States and mandated strict and uniform punishments for drug offenders, irrespective of whether the transgression was minor or a first offence. This approach aimed to deter (would-be) offenders by punishing both major and minor transgressions severely. It did not take long for this strategy to be appropriated and implemented in other arenas, including schools. In 1994, the U.S. government enacted the Gun Free Schools Act which required each state receiving

federal funding, impose a one-year expulsion and referral to a criminal justice program for any student found with a firearm on school grounds (Nolan, 2018). Zero-tolerance policies, including the Safe Schools Act, focused on both weapons and drugs and encouraged partnerships between schools and law enforcement (Nolan, 2018).

According to Johnson (1999), supporters of the partnerships relied on the idea that officers in schools would both reduce and prevent gun-related incidents and other acts of violence due to the uniformed officer's high visibility. To illustrate, crime prevention was highlighted as a key objective of the New York City Impact Schools Initiative, which led to increased presence of officers in New York public middle and high schools (Brady et al., 2007). Brady et al. (2007) reviewed the program's rationale and noted that the initiative was founded upon principles of zero-tolerance and broken windows policing. These principles hold that all misbehaviour – even minor rule violations – must be treated seriously and subject to both enforcement and punishment. According to the broken windows philosophy – the policing of minor infractions will prevent more serious crime and violence. Thus, increasing police and security presence within the school environment should produce an ordered and safer educational setting (Brady et al., 2007). Critics of the program argued these measures facilitated the connection between the criminal justice system and schools, and ultimately led to a transformation of the educational setting (Kupchik & Monahan, 2006). Researchers suggest school discipline became increasingly formalized and highly punitive (Hirschfield, 2008), even for non-serious transgressions (Mallett, 2016).

The focus on security in schools was invigorated by several high-profile school shootings that occurred in the 1990s. For example, in response to the shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) established the "COPS in Schools" (CIS) program (Gottfredson et al., 2020). The grant program provided a total of \$753 million to states and districts between 1999-2005 to hire 6,500 new SROs, which led to a significant number of school based policing programs (Na & Gottfredson, 2013).

Canada also has a long history with SRO programs, with some police-school partnerships dating back to the 1970s (Argyle, 2021; Edmonton Police Service, 2022). Keeping schools safe has always been a key focus of these programs. Highly publicized incidents of school violence, notably the fatal shooting of 15-year-old Jordan Manners in Toronto, led to panic over youth violence and public demands that officials urgently address school safety (Madan, 2016; McDonald, 2020). As a response to the tragedy and solution to mounting panics, the focus was placed on police presence in schools as a means of keeping students safe and maintaining a healthy learning environment (Madan, 2016).

In addition to addressing and deterring youth crime/violence and creating safe school environments, the use of police officers in schools in North America is argued to be a way of improving relations between young people and the police (Coon & Travis, 2012; Hopkins et al., 1992; Jackson, 2002). The presence of police in the school environment, Jackson (2002) notes "may...increase the level of respect that young people may have toward the police and generate a better understanding of the law and the role of law enforcement, which may have a great impact on policing outside of the school environment" (p.632). This idea is rooted within the community policing philosophy. In general, SROs follow a community policing model which emphasizes face-to-face interactions and meaningful collaboration and partnerships between community members and local police (Broll & Howells, 2019). The belief is that young people, through interactions with their SRO, will form positive

perceptions of the police, thus countering less favourable attitudes about the police, in general (Hopkins et al., 1992). This is a critical point of review as research demonstrates positive perceptions and attitudes towards law enforcement are associated with increased cooperation with police, assistance, and law-abiding behaviour (Tyler, 1990). In general, SRO programs are guided by community-based principles which encourage proactive policing.

The Role of Police in Schools

Before delving into the literature that assess the effectiveness and impact of these programs on students and the school environment in general, the role of the SRO must be addressed. What are the SROs' responsibilities in the school? What skills are prioritized? Can an optimal role for SROs be said to exist?

The specific roles and responsibilities of SROs vary according to the individual needs of designated schools. In the U.S. and Canada, standard SRO activities are influenced by the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). NASRO promotes a "triad model" which describes the SRO as: 1) law enforcers; 2) counsellors/mentors; and 3) educators (Broll and Howells 2019; Merkwae 2015; Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, and Winfree 2001).

As law enforcers, SROs engage in traditional law enforcement tasks such as patrolling school property, respond to school administrator calls for service, and/or conduct criminal investigations. As a law enforcer, an SRO also has the capacity to engage in the general surveillance of the student population.

As counsellors/mentors, SROs serve as an informal counsellor or role model by engaging with students, teachers, and school administrators to assist with any personal and/or legal matters that may involve the criminal justice system. In this capacity, SROs may engage in discussions about general student behaviour or advise school officials on how to deal with student disciplinary issues, including student criminality. Furthermore, SROs may engage in informal counselling sessions with parents and/or students and refer students experiencing personal or legal difficulties to relevant programs and/or social services.

As educators, SROs provide legal related insight on various topics that impact public safety including, but not limited to issues around bullying, cyberbullying, sexting, sexual assault, and substance use. Furthermore, it has been argued that within the role as an educator, SROs can help students learn more about policing and the broader criminal justice system (Broll and Howells 2019; Canady et al., 2012; Merkwae 2015; NASRO n.d.; Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, and Winfree 2001)

Despite the identification of these designated tasks, as a result of individual officer discretion and school administration requests and culture, there is a high level of variation in how SROs operate in their schools (Nolan 2018). Some SRO's may engage more in enforcement as opposed to counselling or student education. Others may focus more on counselling and education and subsequently de-emphasize their role as law enforcement agents. It is this extreme variation in SRO roles and activities that contributes to scholarly debate and policy discussion (Goffredson et al., 2020).

Canadian researchers have argued that SROs assigned to high schools tend to adopt the role of law enforcer while SROs in elementary schools mainly perform tasks associated with the role of educator (Broll and Howells, 2019). However, emerging Canadian research suggest SROs within secondary school environments can take on the role of educator, mentor, and law enforcer, simultaneously. The extent of each role is often determined by individual school administrators (Broll and Howells 2019; Duxbury and Bennell 2019; Merkwae 2015; Wortley, Bucerius, Samuels, 2022). However, the general consensus is that through police visibility and meaningful positive engagements between students, school staff and the SRO, criminal activity within schools may decrease.

Some researchers raise concern over the contradictory roles associated with an SRO. They suggest that young people may be conflicted if they view their SRO as a mentor and/or counsellor, yet the SRO also has the legal authority to make a criminal arrest. Law enforcement duties, for an SRO, may take precedence over non-law enforcement duties. (Coon and Travis, 2012; Mallett, 2016; Nolan, 2018; Vitale, 2018). Similarly, within the Canadian context, some critics of SRO programs suggest police officers in schools may be more likely to resort to legal recourse (i.e. criminal charges) for students who are apprehended for behaviours deemed criminogenic (De Costa 2021). However, a recent review of documented SRO incident data from an SRO program based in a Canadian city suggest SROs may be more likely to use alternative measures in their encounters with youth accused of engaging in criminal activities (Wortley, Bucerius, Samuels 2022), but this can depend on the individual officer.

Research on SRO Program Effectiveness and Impact(s)

Gottfredson et al. (2020) and Petrosino et al. (2012) both argue that our knowledge about SRO program effectiveness is greatly limited by a lack of methodologically rigorous research. To illustrate, Gottfredson and colleagues (2020) note that as a result of the growing use of SROs in schools, many studies, prior to 2010, used variables privy to “temporal fluctuations in outcomes” (Gottfredson et al. 2020, pg. 909), and thus could not be used to determine program success. In response, Gottfredson et al. (2020) completed a systematic review of research, conducted between 2010 and 2019, that investigated SRO program effectiveness.

To be considered a methodologically sound study, the researchers sought research that: 1) includes pre-test and post-test measures for both schools with (treatment) and without (control) an SRO; 2) controls for pre-existing differences between the treatment and control schools; 3) isolates the effects of SRO programs as opposed to other school security procedures; 4) considers school-level variation as opposed to student variation, (i.e. attributing student perceptions of the program to student attitudes); and 5) includes a quantitative component (Gottfredson et al. 2020). The proposed criteria were used to distinguish high from low quality studies. High quality studies, the authors maintain, must employ a pre-test/post-test, control group design that better controls for historical effects and thus enables conclusions about program attribution. Anything less can render a study’s results as inconclusive (Na and Goffredson 2013; Goffredson et al., 2020). Ultimately, the researchers found that very few American studies, conducted during this period, satisfied the “high quality study” criteria.

Many scholars have used survey research to conduct their investigation(s) into SRO programs. Some have surveyed students (Jackson, 2002; Theriot & Orme, 2016), school administrators (Time & Payne, 2008), SROs (Broll & Howells, 2019; McKenna & White, 2018), law enforcement officers and/or administrators, parents/guardians (Tanner, 2021) or some include a combination of various stakeholders (Chrusciel et al., 2015; Lambert & McGuinty, 2002). However, to achieve the “high quality study” criteria, Na & Gottfredson (2013) rely on already existing datasets from the U.S. School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to examine the impact of SROs. *Unfortunately, a similar database, does not exist in Canada.* Studies exploring program effectiveness, including those which use the SSOCS have yielded a variety of results. For the purposes of organization, this area of the literature review will be grouped into four major sections: (1) the effect of SRO programs on criminal activity within schools; (2) perceptions and feelings of school safety; (3) the impact of SROs on responses to crime and student misbehaviour; and the (4) the influence of SRO work on student-police relations. Predominately, research evaluating the effectiveness and impact of SRO programs in the United States and Canada will be summarized below.

School crime and violence

Recent studies exploring program utility and effectiveness often focus on school safety. School safety, in this context, relates to criminal engagement on school property. Therefore, researchers explore whether SRO’s have an impact on criminal activity within schools.

Research exploring how SRO programs influence school safety remain mixed. Johnson’s (1999) evaluation of an SRO program in a southern U.S city found that the placement of SROs in schools did, in fact, have an impact on school violence, drug-related behaviour, and gang activities. Specifically, it was noted that the total number of offences in middle and high schools declined following the implementation of SROs. This was one of the first studies that moved beyond examining stakeholder perceptions of program effectiveness. The findings, however, did not have a non-SRO comparison group and relied on one-time period before implementation of an SRO program. Brady et al. (2007) assessed the New York City Impact Schools Initiative which saw an increase of police in New York City public schools. Examining data from a year before program implementation and a year and a half after, Brady et al. (2007) notes a slight decrease in major crimes, but also observed an increase in police involvement in minor non-criminal incidents, increased suspensions, and lower student attendance rates. The authors note, the schools under examination presided in high crime areas, and were thus deemed high risk schools. The researchers concluded that police-school partnership is not a “magic bullet” in producing a safer school environment (Brady et al., 2007).

Using national cross-sectional data from the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), some studies have found a statistically significant relationship between the number of SROs and serious crime in high schools in the United States. Findings suggest an increase in the number of SROs led to a decrease in reported crime incidents, leading researchers to conclude that SROs may deter youth from engaging in serious crime (Jennings and et al. 2011; Maskaly, Donner, Lanterman, and Jennings, 2011). Yet, researchers using the same survey over a three-year period, including a sample of comparative schools, both with and without an SRO, consistently demonstrate that schools with SROs report more crime than schools without an SRO. Through an examination of criminal activities including bullying, as

well as serious and non-serious violent, property, drug, and weapon related crimes, the researchers suggest a review of incidents, over a longer period, demonstrate that there is not enough evidence to conclude that police in schools contribute to enhanced school safety (Devlin, Santos, and Gottfredson 2018; Na and Gottfredson 2013; Nance 2016; Pigott et al. 2017; Swartz, Osborne, Dawson, Edwards and Higgins 2016). Thus, there is minimal evidence to suggest that police in schools contribute to school safety. But, as Kupchik (2010) suggests, SROs may reframe disciplinary incidents, typically dealt with by school administrators, as a criminal offence. Therefore, the notion that SRO officers serve as a proactive measure, and engage with youth with the aim of reducing crime, is questioned. Instead, researchers argue school based officers may be reactive, increasing the likelihood students will be charged with a criminal offence (Swartz et al., 2016). This finding is consistent with the argument that SROs can increase incidents of student criminalization.

Data from a number of other American studies further suggest that schools with SROs have higher arrest rates and out-of-school suspensions than schools without SROs (Owens 2016; Weisburst 2019). A number of studies also demonstrate that SROs have a disproportionate effect on arrest rates for Black students (see Homer and Fisher 2020). Zhang (2018), however, suggests these higher rates were typically found in schools that recently implemented an SRO program. They argue that schools with well-established programs (i.e., an officer in the school 3 years or longer) did not have significantly higher arrest rates. This finding suggests that, upon implementation, SRO programs increase school-based arrests. However, this initial increase may diminish after the program is established and the SRO becomes part of the school community.

As such, to date, the most methodologically rigorous studies exploring the effects of SROs in school consistently demonstrate that the presence of an SRO is “related to increased recording of drug crimes, crimes involving weapons, and serious violent crimes” (Gottfredson et al. 2020, p. 910). Furthermore, in their own analysis of the data, Gottfredson et al. (2020) found that increasing the number of police officers in schools did not lead to a reduction in school violence. In fact, SROs contributed to an increase in the number of students arrested and later referred to a criminal justice intervention. They conclude that there is no evidence to support the notion that SRO programs make schools safer (Na and Gottfredson 2013; Nance 2016).

Canadian Data

Examining the relationship between SROs and crime/violence in the Canadian context, a 2008/2009 evaluation of the SRO program in Toronto schools found that for schools with SROs, “...there were decreases in reported offences (for e.g., assault, theft, mischief) both on school grounds and within 200 meters of the school”, as compared to the 2007/2008 year (the year before program was introduced) (Toronto Police Service et al., 2009, p.30). However, the review also highlighted a small increase in victimization within 200 meters of the school, which suggests that some crime may have been displaced to the neighbouring region as opposed to eliminated altogether. The study utilized data provided by the Toronto Police Service’s Crime Information Analysis Unit. It should also be noted that this evaluation lacked a non-SRO comparison group and thus confident casual conclusions cannot be drawn. A 2011 follow-up evaluation was similarly designed, and it was noted that the *total number* of specific, serious offences (e.g., weapons offences, assault causing bodily harm, aggravated assaults, and robberies) decreased between the 2007/2008 and 2010/2011 period. There was a

decrease in weapons related offences in particular and an increase in student willingness to report a crime to police (Toronto Police Service et al., 2011).

Perceptions and feelings of school safety

Often explored in conjunction with the above are perceptions of safety held by stakeholders such as students, parents/guardians, police administrators, and community members. Several studies have investigated the effect that SROs have on perceptions of safety in schools and generally the results from these studies have been somewhat mixed. Studies suggest that this relationship is quite complex when considering race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other factors.

To illustrate, survey research conducted by Brown & Benedict (2005), May et al. (2004), and Time & Payne, (2008) presented evidence of SROs having a positive influence on perceptions of safety among students and school administrators. Brown & Benedict (2005) surveyed students in Brownsville, Texas about school security practices and issues, including school resource officers. The researchers noted that “the majority of students indicated that the police and security officers treat students fairly and help keep the schools safe. In addition, most students responded that they feel safe when they see the officers and like having officers in the schools” (p.272). Brown & Benedict (2005) did note, however, that students who identify as young men and students who had been violently victimized, were less likely to believe that police officers keep the school safe than other students.

Similar sentiments regarding safety were reported by May et al. (2004) who undertook a survey of school administrators in Kentucky. Most school administrators felt that SROs were an integral part of ensuring safety at their school (May et al. 2004). The researchers also underscored frequency of meetings with the SRO’s law enforcement supervisors as a key predictor of this outcome. The school administrators also revealed that they believed good communication between the SROs and themselves to be just as important, if even more so, than the SROs receiving specialized training (May et al., 2004). Time & Payne (2008) found that almost all the Virginia based school administrators that they surveyed “believed their school resource officer was effective in making students and staff feel safer” (p. 304). Chrusciel et al. (2015), however, surveyed law enforcement executives and public-school principals in South Carolina and found that while the majority supported the placement of SROs in their districts’ schools, there were mixed sentiments about whether SROs are an effective measure to improving school safety through the prevention of violence (e.g., school shootings).

Curran et al. (2020) note that while SROs enhanced feelings of safety among all surveyed stakeholders (parents, teachers, school administrators, students, and SROs), these feelings were more pronounced among school administrators and SROs. This is consistent with other studies that have observed increased perceptions of safety among school administrators and teachers following the implementation of an SRO program as compared to students (Johnson, 1999; May et al., 2004; Madan, 2016).

Canadian Data

Evaluations of Canadian SRO programs have often posed questions related to school safety to respondents. Data from student surveys administered as a part of the 2009 evaluation of the Toronto SRO program found that there was no significant difference in perceptions of safety from when students were first surveyed in October 2008 and again in May 2009 (Toronto Police Service et al., 2009). At both periods students reported feeling “very or reasonably safe” in the school and surrounding neighbourhood (Toronto Police Service et al., 2009, p. 14). The evaluation also noted that “students who spoke informally to their SRO officer during the school year, and those who thought an SRO was a good idea were more likely to say they felt safe in school, while students who thought the program was a bad idea were more likely to say they did not feel safe” (Toronto Police Service et al., 2009, p. 2009). In addition, administrators/teachers, as well as parents, were asked about perceptions of safety. Most administrators and teachers reported feeling safe at school and in the surrounding community area with little difference noted in responses from the beginning to end of the year (Toronto Police Service et al., 2009).

With respect to parents, the study noted that perceptions of their child’s safety seemed to improve over the school year (Toronto Police Service et al., 2009). In the follow up evaluation, there were no changes in feelings of student safety between May 2009 and May 2011 (Toronto Police Service et al., 2011). It was found, however, that “students in schools that have had an SRO for a longer period of time were significantly more likely to say that they thought having the SRO assigned to their school made their school safer” (Toronto Police Service et al., 2011, p.3). Among school administrators, feelings of safety did not improve and there were not enough data to conduct a follow up analysis on parent’s perceptions (Toronto Police Service et al., 2011).

Adding to the evidence base that SROs positively influence perceptions of school safety, a 2005 review of the North End SRO program in Winnipeg noted that the majority of students surveyed indicated that they agreed that the school feels safer as a result of SRO presence. The review also revealed that all parents agreed that SROs provide a safe learning environment for their child (PRA Inc., 2005).

More recently, a review of the Peel Regional Police SRO program examined perceptions of students, school administrators, police executives and SROs, in an attempt to quantify the value that the Peel SRO program delivered to these stakeholders. With respect to feelings of safety, the findings supported the view that SRO presence enhanced perceptions of safety both within the school and neighbouring area for both students and school administrators. Particularly for students, Duxbury & Bennell (2018b) note that:

[A]ll students, regardless of their gender, regardless of whether or not they have made contact with their SRO, regardless of whether or not they have been arrested/stopped by the police, and regardless of whether or not they have been victimized, indicated that they felt significantly safer at school and less stress and anxiety 5+ months after exposure to the SRO program than at the beginning of the semester. (11-12)

The researchers made note of three mechanisms that would help account for the increased perceptions of safety: (1) deterrence²; (2) faster response time³; (3) de-escalation⁴. The findings, however, were not without critique. The student sample for this evaluation only consisted of Grade 9 students, without a thorough review of demographic characteristics, including race or socio-economic background. Therefore, claims made that the evaluation represented the thoughts and perceptions of “all students” were problematic. Furthermore, while surveys were administered to Grade 9 students at the beginning of the school year (September 2015) and at the end of the school year (March 2016), the researchers disclosed that they were unable to ascertain whether the same students filled out the surveys both times nor were they able to match the responses. This severely limits the researchers’ ability to track and account for changes in individuals over time.

In a review of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) SRO program which included a survey among a racially diverse sample of students, parents, and community members, Tanner (2021) found that 38 per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement that police presence make schools safer. Breaking this down by identity, survey results suggest 62 per cent Black, 43 per cent Indigenous, 33 per cent Middle Eastern, 36 per cent Muslim, 48 per cent people with disabilities, and 68 per cent 2sLGBTQ+ identifying participants do not believe police make schools safer.

Thus, while many students, school administrators, parents, and community members believe that school safety is maintained and/or enhanced by SROs, there are differences to be acknowledged in perceptions of safety among individuals from marginalized and/or racialized communities. Other factors like past victimization and gender have also been noted to affect perceptions of safety (Brown & Benedict, 2005; Theriot & Orme, 2016). Therefore, drawing a straightforward conclusion regarding the effect that SROs have on perceptions and feelings of school safety, is challenging. Research demonstrates a complex relationship between SROs and perceptions of safety among various stakeholders. Given the popularity of SRO programs as a tool to make schools safer, several scholars have called for continued investigations into this relationship, particularly relating to students’ feelings of safety at school (Theriot & Orme, 2016).

The school-to-prison pipeline: The Criminalization of Students

Several studies investigating the impacts of SRO programs have reported on the effects that SROs have on students who engage in crime. These findings are often situated in broader discussions around the potential criminalization of students as a result of increased police presence in schools. In other words, research demonstrates that police in schools can, in fact, turn common student indiscretions on school property into criminal offences. This process, which is often referred to as the “school-to-prison-pipeline,” suggests that students who are charged or disciplined by SROs also face school suspensions or expulsions (Brown, Mears, Collier, Montes, Pesta, and Siennick, 2020; Mallett, 2016). To illustrate, some researchers provide evidence that suggests responses to school crime are more severe in the presence of

² Students and school administrators felt that the mere presence of the SRO deterred criminal and deviant behaviour(s) (Duxbury & Bennell, 2018a).

³ Because the officer was stationed in the school, students and school administrators felt that they could count on them to swiftly respond to a situation and prevent it from escalating (Duxbury & Bennell, 2018a).

⁴ Students and school administrators felt that their SRO was familiar with the school and students and thus able to defuse conflict or volatile situations (Duxbury & Bennell, 2018a).

SROs (Fisher & Hennessey, 2016); Homer & Fisher, 2020; Na & Gottfredson, 2013; Nance, 2016; and Zhang, 2019)

Analysing the 2009/2010 SSOCS dataset, Nance (2016) examines the odds of a school official referring a student to the police, if a school has an SRO (at least once a week), in comparison to a school without an SRO. The study controlled for a number of variables, including student demographics, school characteristics, as well as levels of criminal activity and disorder. Results suggest higher odds a student would be referred to the police, by a school official, for committing various criminal offences engaged on school property in a school with an SRO in comparison to a school without an SRO. Due to limitations in the data, Nance (2016) was unable to investigate what happens to a student after being referred to the police (e.g., arrest information). Furthermore, they were unable to examine the race or ethnicity of the students who were referred to the police (Nance, 2016).

Na & Gottfredson (2013) also document the effect of SROs on student referrals to the police for a variety of crimes. Their analysis shows that “as schools increase their use of police officers, the percentage of crimes involving non-serious violent offenses that are reported to law enforcement increases” (Na & Gottfredson, 2013, p. 642). The researchers, however, do not find that racial minority or special education youth were adversely impacted by SRO presence.

Homer & Fisher (2020) set out to examine the association between police presence and student arrests. The researchers analyzed nation-wide data (92,620 schools) available from the U.S Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR). As the study is based on cross-sectional data, the researchers control for student behaviours and school conditions, to limit the impact of selection bias. Homer & Fisher (2020) find that “police presence in schools was associated with a higher arrest rate for all students, but that the magnitude of this relationship differed by student demographic” (p.199). The association between police presence in schools and the arrest rate was stronger for Black students as compared to White and Hispanic students (Homer & Fisher, 2020). In addition, Crosse et al. (2021) examined how increases in SRO staffing impact levels of school crime as well as responses to school crime. The researchers were able to assess how this impact varied by student race and ethnic group. Their findings also suggest “increases in offenses and exclusionary reactions to offenses were most evident for Black and Hispanic as opposed to White students” (Crosse et al., 2021, p.22). These findings support the view that SROs contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline by increasing the likelihood that students, notably Black students and those from other marginalized communities, will be subject to formal exclusionary responses to school offences, which may result in them being pushed out of school and increase their chances of involvement in the criminal justice system (Hirschfield, 2008).

Weisburt (2019) suggests federal funding for SRO programs may be a factor in student arrests. Utilizing data on over 2.5 million students in Texas, Weisburt (2019) found that receiving a federal COPS grant increased disciplinary actions for middle school students by 6 per cent. The author adds that “this disciplinary increase is driven by sanctions for low-level offenses or school code of conduct violations. Over the long-term, exposure to federal funding for school police is associated with small but significant declines in high school graduation rates and college enrollment” (p.361). Variations in student demographic groups were also observed in Weisburt’s (2019) study. Specifically, receipt of federal grants for police in schools had the largest influence on Black students, followed by Hispanic students. This lends further support to the view that certain groups of students experience disciplinary

measures disproportionately, which may have resounding impacts on their academic success and future involvement with the justice system.

Also, of concern is a growing number of U.S. studies which suggest that youth with disabilities (those who identify as having a learning, emotional or behavioural disorder) are overrepresented in school-based arrests (Merkwae 2015 pg.149; Gottfredson et al. 2020; Hirschfield 2008; Skiba, Arredondo, Gray, and Raush 2018; U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights 2014; Welch and Payne 2018). Scholars suggest this is a result of increased police presence in schools. Thus, a number of academics, activists, and policy officials are raising concerns over the negative consequences of SRO programs on youth with disabilities (Merkwae 2015; Nance 2016; Theriot and Cuellar 2016). Disability advocates argue that compared to teachers, and other specialized school staff, police are undertrained with respect to the various disciplinary measures that can be used to informally deal with youth who have behavioural problems (Merkwae 2015; Nance 2016; Theriot and Cuellar 2016).

Consistent with these concerns, May, Rice and Minor (2012) conducted a study to explore whether SROs hold discriminatory beliefs about students with disabilities. Data collected from a sample of 130 American SROs suggest that the majority believe students with disabilities negatively impact the school environment where 55 percent of SROs believe students with disabilities are among the most problematic in the school; 79 percent believe that youth with disabilities should not be treated differently than students with no reported disabilities; and 85 percent of the SROs believe students who possess a disability use their diagnoses as an excuse for disorderly conduct to avoid accountability for their behaviours (May, Rice and Minor 2012).

Disability advocates also argue the police are neither equipped nor trained to tend to students who suffer from emotional, physical or psychological disorders (Merkwae 2015; Theriot and Cuellar 2016). They are less likely to have an advanced degree or diploma in teaching, child development, or psychology. As such they are less informed with respect to the various disciplinary measures that can be used to informally deal with youth who have behavioural problems (Merkwae 2015; Nance 2016; Theriot and Cuellar 2016).

Studies have found that SRO training does not include instruction on “detecting symptoms and behaviours of youths who have been exposed to violence, trauma, or abuse,” or providing techniques on how to defuse student conflict and engage in mediation (Merkwae, 2015, pg. 162-163). Studies have also found that SRO training varies across states and school board jurisdictions, with some SRO training being conducted by schools and other training conducted by police services or independent SRO training organizations (Merkwae, 2015; Abela and Donlevy 2020). Such training disparities contribute to inconsistencies in how SROs address behavioural issues within their schools. Such inconsistencies may place youth who are both racialized and identify as having a disability, at greater risk of arrest and the physical harms often associated with arrest incidents. Indeed, recent reviews of both lawsuits and news stories involving SROs, find that a high proportion of cases involve allegations of excessive use-of-force by SROs, are against Black and students with disabilities (Zeikel 2019; Shaver and Decker 2017; Madan 2016; Ryan et al. 2018). Proponents of SRO programs argue that excessive use of force is rare, and often deemed justified. However, Shaver and Decker (2017) suggest that the growing number of lawsuits and civil rights cases, filed against SRO programs, by racial minority and students with disabilities, demonstrates a growing problem. Thus, contrary to the intended objective of making schools safer, the

regular presence of SROs in schools may be creating an unsafe and hostile environment for these students.

There are, however, some studies that have found evidence contrary to the criminalization hypothesis (Pigott et al., 2018), suggesting there is minimal evidence that the presence of police officers in schools increase incident reporting to the police. Furthermore, Wolf's (2014) study examining the factors that influence SROs arrest decision making suggest that SROs exercise a great deal of discretion and examine a number of factors including severity of student misbehaviour and impact on victim(s), student attitude when confronted with the misbehaviour, and the wishes of parents/guardians of the victim. Most SROs surveyed report that they find alternative measures and arrest as a last resort. The survey, however, was limited by its sample size and did not ask respondents questions about how race or disability may impact their decision to arrest. This is critical as a students' identity may influence police-student interaction (Merkwae, 2015).

In the Canadian context, exploring the race and students who identify as having a disability in SRO research is severely underexplored (Madan 2016; Ontario Association Chiefs of Police, 2020). There are some data that suggest that racial minority students, notably Black students, are more likely than White students to be subjected to harsh disciplinary practices (James and Turner, 2017). This includes suspensions, expulsions, as well as police intervention. But, to date, no Canadian study examines the impact of SROs on school-based arrests, charges, or other disciplinary measures. What is critical to note are the costs associated with harsh disciplinary practices and policies. Exclusionary and harsh disciplinary practices have been linked with decreased levels of school engagement, poorer academic performance, increased dropout rates, and long-run outcomes such as educational attainment and involvement in the criminal justice system (James & Turner, 2017). Therefore, given the research currently available from the United States examining the potential impacts of police in school for racialized students, and those who identify as having a disability, there are valid concerns that SROs may exacerbate and amplify racial and marginalized disparities when it comes to addressing school disciplinary issues.

The influence of SRO work on student-police relations

SRO programs have been regarded by many as a valuable initiative to help students build positive relationships with school officers and also improve relations between youth and police in general. Theriot (2016) utilized survey data to assess high school students' feelings about SROs and sense of school connectedness and found a "complex relationship between students, officers, and students' feelings and perceptions" (Theriot, 2016, p. 459). Theriot (2016) discovered that greater interactions with SROs related to more positive student attitudes about SROs but also lower levels of school connectedness. Almost all the SROs surveyed by Curran et al. (2020) "believed that the work they were doing was helping dispel misunderstandings of the police and the justice system" (p.29). The views of students, however, were more complicated. Students expressed skepticism about police in general, even if they held positive perceptions of their SRO. Nevertheless, the researchers underscored that SROs presence in schools "appears capable of improving students' views toward law enforcement" (Curran et al., 2020, p.30). Curran et al. (2020) also noted that for racialized students or students from a low socio-economic background, in particular, SROs pro-police messaging may result in tensions with their lived experiences and realities of over policing in their communities.

Hopkins et al. (1992) and Jackson (2002) did not find evidence to support the argument that SROs have a significant positive effect on police-student relations. Comparing the attitudes of students in schools with SROs and those in schools without SROs, Hopkins et al. (1992) observed a limited positive effect between presence of SROs and young people's image of the police. However, over the one-year study period, Hopkins et al., (1992) notes that students in both school types "showed a significant deterioration in their attitudes, stereotypes, and general liking of the police" which implies that the intervention failed (p.217). Similarly, Jackson (2002) analyzed a survey of students and did not find that SRO presence in schools changed students' general perceptions of the police. This led Jackson (2002) to conclude that "students are not viewing the SRO through the same perceptual lens through which they view the police in general" (p.647). Support for this conclusion also comes from Hopkins (1994) who conducted semi-structured group discussions with students and found that students demarcated clear boundaries between the officer(s) that was present in the school and those on the street. Hopkins (1994) attributes this to the unique power relations that young people experience with police on the street versus those in school. This ultimately led students to the judgement that "[SROs] are not really police officers" (Hopkins, 1994, p.205).

Further, Maybury's (2017) analysis of survey data obtained from individuals in two colleges in Central Texas revealed that having an SRO present in school had a negligible influence on youth perceptions of the police, but that attitudes towards and interactions with the police, in general, played a larger role in predicting youth's perceptions of law enforcement.

Canadian Data

In the Canadian context, Broll & Howells (2019) found that while SROs rated their relationships with school community members, including students, positively, some school administrators shared contrary accounts. Broll & Howells (2019) maintained that active engagement with students is central to building positive relationships between SROs and youth. This in turn yields a number of benefits such as increased trust in law enforcement, improved intelligence gathering, and increased willingness to assist with investigations. However, a major limitation of this study is that it does not include actual student participants; therefore, in essence, support for some of these claims are based on the police and school administrators, and not students. Furthermore, there is no consideration of concerns about how SRO activities may disproportionately impact racialized and/or marginalized students.

A qualitative study conducted by Salole & Abulle (2015), examined the perceptions of racialized and marginalized youth in Toronto on security measures in schools. When it came to SROs, respondents expressed negative feelings about having officers in schools. The researchers note that "the consistent presence of police officers in their school often meant an unwelcomed collision of their life in school with their life outside of school" and that "youth participants expressed concerns that it was hard to 'start fresh' when everyone was just expecting the worse from them" (Salole & Abulle, 2015, p.8). As such, there remains a gap in our understanding of how racialized and marginalized students are impacted by the presence of SROs. More Canadian based research is needed on this topic to be able to adequately capture and understand the sentiments emerging from this subset of students.

A few Canadian-based SRO program evaluations have addressed the relationship between school police and students. To illustrate, in an initial evaluation of the Toronto SRO program, the report writers highlight that the relationship between police and students improved during the school year. They note “the proportion of students who felt the relationship between police and students was good or excellent, increased from 56% to 67%; those who thought the relationship was excellent almost doubled over the school year” (Toronto Police Service et al., 2009, p. 2). This was also supported by the sentiments of administrators and teachers. In a subsequent review of the same program, all SROs report that they believe their relationship with students improved during the school year. The evaluation also concludes that a decrease in weapons-related offences in and around schools as well as an increase in willingness of students to report a crime, suggest that school-based officers can indeed build stronger and positive relations with students and that this holds significant benefits in terms of crime prevention (Toronto Police Service et al., 2009; Toronto Police Service et al., 2011). This review, however once again, excludes consideration of how race, socio-economic status, and other factors may influence student’s perceptions of and experiences with SROs.

In 2017, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) conducted their own review of the Toronto SRO program amid growing concerns that the program was racially biased. This study included a survey of 15,000 students who attended Toronto schools with SROs⁵ (Foppiano, 2019). While half of the students surveyed stated that having an SRO made them feel safer, over 2,000 students reported that SRO presence made them feel as though they were being watched or targeted at school and 1,055 students indicated that they felt uncomfortable attending schools (Morgan, 2017; Foppiano, 2019). While the review did not break down students’ responses by race, gender, or other factors it nonetheless highlighted the negative impact that SRO programs can have on students. The review ultimately led to the Toronto SRO program being terminated (Morgan, 2017).

Duxbury & Bennell’s (2018a) evaluation of the Peel SRO program employed a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis to identify and quantify the value that officers assigned to Peel high schools offer to stakeholders like students and administrators. With respect to value provided to the school and community, the researchers highlighted several benefits associated with SROs including reduced student and citizen fears of police and stigma associated with police, as well as increased trust between students and community members and the police. Duxbury & Bennell (2018a) concluded that the program enabled the development of positive relationships between officers and students and recommended that the SRO program be continued. A major limitation of this study, however, is that the authors did not effectively interrogate nor even acknowledge the adverse effects of SRO programs on youth from racialized and marginalized backgrounds. In fact, only one in four participants of the study identified themselves as a “visible minority”. These groups of students face a heightened risk of being targeted by SROs and by failing to capture their experiences, the authors conclusions are ultimately put into question. Following this report, Chadha et al. (2020) tabled a review into the culture of the Peel District School Board (PDSB). The authors exposed some disturbing findings and trends, notably that a “culture of fear” pervades the Board, and that the organization had failed to cultivate an equitable and safe learning environment, including its SRO program, for its students, particularly South Asian and Black students. Several months after the review, the Peel Police Service decided to dismantle the SRO program as “a necessary change to disrupt systemic racism in our school communities” (Jiang, 2020).

⁵ As of February 2022, the full TDSB School Resource Officer Program Review cannot be accessed online. Information about the review and main findings were gathered from news reports and other articles that covered the evaluation.

Similar sentiments were also expressed by students in evaluations conducted in Ottawa and Vancouver. As a part of the Ottawa review, students were asked about their level of support for having SROs engage in relationship building with students and families. Tanner (2021) revealed that “a substantial percentage (67%) of current students either disagreed with the idea, weren’t sure, thought it should only be done as a last resort or preferred for it to be done by non-police” (p. 34). Black students and students who identified as 2sLGBTQ+ were more likely to express significant concern. While positive experiences with SROs were noted, other participant accounts revealed “lasting physical and psychological harms that were distinctly linked to Indigeneity, race, class, gender, and ability” (Tanner, 2021, p. 6). For racialized and marginalized students in particular, the author suggests that by having SRO in schools, experiences with police violence in the community, is transplanted into the educational setting. Thus, their encounters and experience with SROs cannot be divorced from a broader historical context and experience of systemic violence and racism, particularly anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism (Tanner, 2021). In Vancouver, Black and Indigenous students expressed feelings of discomfort, fear, and anxiety when asked about their personal experience with the SRO program (Argyle, 2021).

Exploring the Perceptions and Experiences of Black, Indigenous, and Racialized students and parents with SROs – A Canadian context

In an attempt to have a better understanding of Vancouver School Board (VSB) parents’, students’, and community members’ concerns and experiences with SROs, the VSB engaged a third-party consulting firm to conduct one of the first Canadian SRO studies to intentionally centre the experiences and perceptions of Black, Indigenous, and persons of colour (Argyle 2021). Overall, findings from the study suggest there are mixed reviews of the program (Argyle 2021). The authors note that Black and Indigenous participants are more likely to express negative experiences and concerns about racial bias. To illustrate, in consultation with 60 racially diverse students, through 6 focus groups, a few students expressed discomfort with police in their school and felt “race, gender, identity, sexuality, immigration status, and geographic area” could exacerbate negative interactions (pg. 15). As one racial minority student states “I thought the main reason for the SLO⁶ program was to make students feel safe (and to help with any legal matters at the school of course) but so many of my peers and myself don't feel safe when the SO is around” (pg. 16). There are however some positive expressions from racial minority youth as well. One student states “The SLO program changed my high school life forever and I'll never forget that. If there's a kid like me in grade 8 who doesn't know what to do who can't talk to an SLO because the program was dismantled, that kid would be lost. That would've been me, if not for the SLO program.” (pg. 16). The authors note, that overall, students were indifferent to the program; however, a few either expressed a strong desire to retain the program or a strong desire to have the program removed from Vancouver area schools.

The review also included a survey of current VSB students, parents, school staff, and community members. The student survey produced a racially diverse sample where 4% self-identified as Indigenous, 4% identified as Black, 47% identified as a person of colour (Asian, East Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Hispanic), 33% identified as White. An additional 26% did not answer the race question or simply identified themselves as ‘other’.

⁶ Please note, in Vancouver, police in schools programs are known as School Liaison Officer (SLO) programs.

Of those who report that they are familiar with their SRO program, many students expressed positive perceptions of the program, including feelings of safety, building community relationships, and access to supports for students. To illustrate, a student stated they “personally feel more safe. I love knowing that there’s a liaison officer that I can talk to and share anything. It was always a positive experience. I just felt more safe” (pg. 26). Another expressed the importance of the program as “vital to the building of trust and a positive relationship between communities and the police. SLOs have a positive impact and provide volunteer hours through coaching or various programs that have a great impact on schools” (pg. 26).

However, there were also students who expressed concerns over safety and systemic biases. For instance, one student expressed that the SLO “ makes me feel more scared than protected. It makes me feel like the school is saying the kids are dangerous, when I know they aren't. It feels like I am being criminalized for something I didn't do. I would say these experiences are negative” (pg. 26). For some racialized students, seeing police created a feeling of unease as noted by one participant: “As a black student, when the first thing I see when I walk into school in the morning is an armed police officer, it automatically gives me the message that "you aren't really welcome” (pg. 26). The survey results suggest that Black students are more likely than Indigenous students to express perceptions of discomfort and feeling “unsafe” in the presence of their SLO.

The authors note that not all Indigenous or racialized participants express negative perceptions of the program. Some Indigenous students expressed feeling safer in the presence of their SLO, and most other students of colour expressed general positive feelings about the program. Most stressed that the presence of the SLO increased perceptions of safety, encouraged friendly encounters with the police, and contributed to the general belief that SLOs have a positive impact on their school community.

Overall, most students expressed interest in keeping the program. However, Black students were more likely to suggest an end to the program. By contrast, most Indigenous and students of colour suggested keeping the program, with minor changes. These changes included a removal of the police officer’s firearm and uniform, increased respectful engagement, and more sports programs.

In another recent study conducted by independent researchers for the Edmonton Catholic School Board (ECSB), the authors also focused on a sample of students and parents who identify as Indigenous, Black, and/or person of colour who were interviewed and surveyed to gain insight into their perceptions and experiences with the ECSD’s SRO program (Wortley, Bucerius, and Samuels 2022).

Caregiver survey data explored perceptions of their child’s safety in the presence of an SRO, trust in their child’s SRO, SRO job performance, perceptions of racial bias among SROs, and finally whether the SRO program should remain in school. One out of three caregiver survey respondents (35.1%) identified as the member of a racial minority group, while 14.9% of the sample failed to report their racial identity. Of the parents who identified as a racial minority, almost half in the sample (127 of 258 respondents) identified as Filipino (16.8% of the total sample), 4.6% of parents self-identified as Black, 1.8% self-identified as South Asian, 1.8% identified as Indigenous, and 1.0% identified as Asian. Most parents (88.2%) report their child(ren) are of the same racial background as themselves. Approximately 10.0% of the

sample report that their children share half their racial identity (i.e., their children are the product of an interracial relationship).

Almost all parental respondents (84.3%) suggest that the SRO program should remain within ECSD schools. Two-thirds (66.7%) believe the program should be retained without major reform. An additional 17.6% argue that the program should be retained with significant improvements. Only 2.1% of parent respondents call for the termination of the SRO program. However, parental views do vary significantly by racial background.

Results suggest that most Black, Indigenous, and racialized parents(81.8%) feel that the ECSD's School Resource Officer program should remain, but some feel there is room for reform. To illustrate, while almost three out of four White parents (73.9%) believe that the SRO program should be retained without reform or improvement, only 56.2% of racial minority parents felt the same. By contrast, 25.6% of racial minority parents believe that the SRO program should remain with significant improvements, compared to only 12.4% of White parents. Only a small proportion of both racialized parents (1.8%) and White parents (2.2%) feel that the SRO program should be terminated. Furthermore, a higher percentage of racialized parents (16.4%) than White parents (11.2%) are not sure whether the SRO program should be terminated or not.

Student survey data explored perceptions of safety in the presence of an SRO, trust in their SRO, SRO job performance, perceptions of racial bias among SROs, and finally whether they believed the SRO program should be stay. Almost one out of four student survey respondents (24.3%) identified as Filipino, 12.4% as Black, 5.4% as Indigenous, 5.3% as Hispanic, 3.0% as South Asian, 2.3% as South-East Asian, 1.7% as East Asian, and 1.4% as West Asian. An additional 9.1% of the sample identify as multi-racial.

Notable statistically significant racial differences were found when exploring perceived safety in the presence of an SRO. To illustrate, 21.1% of surveyed Black students and 21.7% of surveyed Indigenous students were slightly more likely to report that they were intimidated by their SRO in comparison to White students (15.0%) or students from other racial minority backgrounds.

In regard to perceptions of racial bias, while the majority of Indigenous and Black students perceive that they are not treated differently by the SROs, both Indigenous and Black students are more likely to perceive discrimination than students from other backgrounds. For example, 12.0% of Indigenous students believe that the SROs treat Indigenous students worse than White students, compared to only 5.2% of White students. Similarly, 17.2% of Black students believe that the SROs treat Black students worse than White students, compared to only 6.0% of White students. Furthermore, Black students (18.9%) and Indigenous students (19.2%) are more likely to feel targeted by the SROs than White students (11.5%) or students from other racial backgrounds. Interestingly, overall, students from other racialized groups are less likely to perceive SRO bias than White students.

In regard to program retention, student views do vary by racial background. However, most students who identify as Black, Indigenous or racialized want to see the SRO program retained, even when presented with the option to explore alternative school based programs that do not involve the police. Support for retention of the SRO program was highest among

Filipino students (83.2%), followed by White students (82.6%), Hispanic students (78.6%), other racialized students (77.8%), Indigenous students (74.2%), and Black students (73.9%). Black and Indigenous students were more likely to feel that the program requires major improvements. For example, three out of four White students (72.2%) believe that the SRO program should be retained without reform, compared 60.1% of Black students and 61.8% of Indigenous students.

By contrast, 13.8% of Black students and 12.4% of Indigenous students believe that the SRO program should be retained with significant improvements, compared to only 10.4% of White students. Black (22.6%) and Indigenous students (24.0%) are also more likely than White students (15.8%) to report that they are “unsure” whether the SRO program should be continued or not. Regardless of race, only a small proportion of students -- less than 4% across all racial groups - feel that the SRO program should be terminated.

When expanding the review to other marginalized students (i.e. those who identify as having a disability or as 2sLGBTQ+), support for SRO program retention is not significantly related to student disability status. Students who self-report a disability are just as likely to support retention of the SRO program (77.4%) as students without a disability (80.7%). Non-disabled students are slightly more likely support program retention with improvements (12.5%) than disabled students (11.5%). Only 1.5% of non-disabled students and 2.2% of disabled students recommend program termination.

Support for program retention is significantly higher among heterosexual students (82.5%) than students from the 2sLGBTQ+community (74%). However, the majority of 2sLGBTQ+ students believe the SRO program should continue. Furthermore, only 2.3% of 2sLGBTQ+ students believe that the SRO program should be terminated.

Ultimately data from these recent Canadian studies counter criticisms often used by those who oppose SRO programs. While some Canadian scholar activists claim recent SRO evaluations do not capture the experiences of racialized, self-identified immigrant, disabled, and 2sLGBTQ+ youth (DeCosta and Mohamed, 2021), these sentiments ignore emerging comprehensive survey and focus group data which suggest that a larger proportion of sampled Black, Indigenous, and racialized youth and their parents support SRO programs. This does not undermine those who express concern, however, but the varying response among diverse students and parents indicate that an exploration into police in schools among Black, Indigenous, racialized, and marginalized students requires a nuanced approach.

Conclusion

SRO studies from both the United States and Canada demonstrate varying perceptions and experiences with respect to perceived criminal activity on school property, perceptions of safety in school, police-youth relationship building, and ultimately the perceived need for SROs in school. Some studies suggest that racial differences exist in relation to perceptions and experiences with SRO programs, which in and of itself warrants deeper analysis. This is the goal of the current evaluation. An area that has gained a great deal of attention is in relation to the idea that police in schools further entrench the marginalization of racial minority youth through the process of criminalization. This issue has not been thoroughly explored from the Canadian context. This is due to a lack of race-based data from both law enforcement agencies and school boards across Canada. Therefore, it will be difficult to draw

any conclusions related to the school to prison pipeline debate. However, the current study will address some of the gaps in research exploring SRO programs in Canada through a multi-method approach to explore the experiences and opinions about the SRO program among Edmonton Public School Board racial, disabled, and sexual minority students, in particular. This intends to provide a better understanding of SRO interactions that contribute to both positive and negative feelings associated with police in schools and the subsequent impact the SRO program has had on the Edmonton Public School Board community.

PART B: SELECTION PROCESS FOR SROs in EDMONTON

To get a better sense of how SROs are selected for Edmonton schools, we spoke to five police leaders who have previously worked with the SRO program at EPSB. Some of them are still actively working with the SRO program in Edmonton, however, are currently only in charge of the program with the Edmonton Catholic School Board.

During these conversations, we asked respondents about the selection and complaint process. Below, we are summarizing the main points about the selection process:

Typically, an SRO position is posted on the internal job listings of Edmonton Police Service (EPS) for a period of 2 weeks. Anyone applying for a specialized position within EPS will need to have fulfilled certain criteria to qualify for such positions based on EPS's collective agreement – such as having spent a certain amount of time in patrol positions etc. Any candidate who meets these criteria, can be looked at more closely and theoretically be invited for an interview for the SRO position (i.e., some will be excluded on the basis of not meeting the internal policies and procedures).

The EPS's posting typically specifies what the position entails. In the past, these postings have described the SRO role as having to fulfill the following criteria:

- Provide a visible law enforcement presence within and around the assigned school and thus, proactively prevent crime and disorder.
- Conduct investigations and enforce laws (criminal, provincial or municipal) by appropriate means, as dictated by the statute applicable to the situation while always considering the opportunity to navigate youth away from traditional processing.
- Promote positive youth engagement by participating in student-led or school activities, providing counselling, mediation and mentoring, and helping connect students to school and community resources. Have the ability to work effectively in multi-agency environments.
- Work proactively with the entire school to ensure the highest level of emergency preparedness.
- Work cooperatively with school administrators, staff, students, parents and the community.
- Proactively identify and address school and neighboring community concerns.
- Promote a safe and caring learning environment for students and staff, balancing enforcement with prevention and intervention.
- Identify, develop and manage projects and portfolios which support the SRO Unit mandate.
- Provide or facilitate structured classroom presentations and/or distribution of educational resource materials around current youth topical issues.
- Multi-task in a demanding environment and complete assignments on time with minimum supervision.

When evaluating applications, EPS will pay attention to some of the generic skills that the organization is looking for with respect to *most* of their job postings, such as excellent communication skills and conflict resolution skills, a demonstrated history of strong personal

work standards, investigative ability and self-motivation, a proven ability to work with minimal supervision, and a demonstrated history of effective time management, organization and analytical skills. However, for an SRO position, candidates also need to demonstrate a documented history of youth engagement either through work or personal community engagement. This could, for example, entail having coached a youth sports team in the past, or having led summer camps with youth. At the same time, candidates need to have excellent written, verbal, and presentation skills, given that the SRO role often entails teaching students and/or presenting on special issues such as vaping or sexual consent, and demonstrated excellent public relations abilities. Lastly, given the complexity of school environments, a demonstrated ability to work cooperatively in a multi-disciplinary team environment is considered an asset.

In addition to a candidate's skills, EPS will also pay attention to supervisor feedback that the candidate has received from previous roles held within EPS, internal or external courses they have taken to further their skills and education, as well as their general educational background (with those having higher educational background, being given priority). Given the role of social media and cybercrime in the lives of many students, an understanding and working knowledge of social media and cybercrimes investigations will be considered an asset.

Candidates are scored on a points system based on their skills, youth engagement in the past, supervisory feedback, educational background, and so on. Those scoring the highest will ultimately be selected for an in-person interview.

The candidates who are selected for an interview will be assessed by a committee of four people: two members of the Edmonton Public School administration and two sergeants of EPS. In an ideal scenario the EPSB principals who require a new SRO at their school are part of the selection committee. The staff sergeant (who will ultimately be supervising the new SRO from EPS's side of things) remains neutral in the search.

In the interview itself, the candidates need to respond to school-based scenarios – often taken from previous situations that have occurred in schools. These scenarios and the candidates' responses to them are supposed to assess a candidate's communication skills, their conflict resolutions skills with youth, and their willingness and ability to engage in teamwork. In addition to these school-based scenarios, the candidate is given a topic to present on and to assess their presentation skills for youth (but also for parents and teachers).

All candidates receive scores from the panel based on their performance in the interview – these scores and the general feedback from the panel on the respective candidates are then used to make a final, mutual decision among the panel members. For this final step, the requirements of the particular school play a significant role. As for any other organization/position, fit for the role is crucial. Different schools require SROs with different skills, personality traits, and experiences. As such, the panel will also pay attention as to which candidate fits best the specific requirements of a particular school community.

Once candidates are deemed to be suitable for the SRO role, have undergone the interview process, and are ultimately identified as the top candidate, they will have to undergo a Professional Standard Branch (PSB) check. This database includes information on all criminal and disciplinary reports that have been formally filed against the candidate. When not passing the PSB check, the candidate will be excluded from the selection.

While the selection process is rigorous and should theoretically weed out anyone not suitable for the role, it is, naturally, subject to human error. If and when complaints about a particular SRO arise, they would usually be passed to the principal of the school, who would then discuss, and perhaps request, a potential transfer with the responsible staff sergeant at EPS. Both EPS and EPSB are bound by the standard labour laws as any other organization, so the process of removing someone from an SRO role altogether will need to follow the standard procedures under the Alberta labour laws.

PART C: FOCUS GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

In May 2022, we advertised our study via “SchoolZone”, calling for volunteers to participate in focus groups or individual interviews for current or former students or parents of current or former students directly associated with the Edmonton Public School Board schools. Participation in our focus groups and interviews were open to a number of special interest groups, namely:

- Black
- Indigenous
- South Asian
- East Asian or Southeast Asian
- West Asian or Arab
- Somali
- Any other racialized minority group
- 2sLGBTQ+
- disabled

Interested individuals reached out to the research team via our study email address and self-identified as belonging to one of the identified groups. We offered \$15 for participation (in the form of a gift certificate).

During the summer months, we also advertised the study on social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram. In September 2022, we initiated a second call via “SchoolZone” and EPSB administration emailed 27 community cultural organizations twice to make them aware of the opportunity to participate and ask that they circulate the information among those that they serve.

Furthermore, we liaised with a local organization that has built deep connections with youth and adults across various ethnic and racial communities in Edmonton. The organization is well-known to the Edmonton Public School Board and often acts as credible advocates for youth in the community. During several meetings, we, the researchers and representatives from the organization established a process where ethnic and racialized youth were recruited through the organization. Youth recruited through the organization participated in focus groups that were facilitated by a community broker who had pre-existing rapport with the youth. This was to ensure the youth could safely share their thoughts on and experiences with the SRO program. 25 participants were recruited through this organization. One of these focus groups consisted of eight students with refugee backgrounds, who had only recently arrived in Canada.

While we conducted most interviews and focus groups via Zoom conferencing technology, focus groups organized through the community organization were held in-person. All interviews and focus groups were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Two research assistants, and one of the lead researchers, were then given four randomly assigned focus groups to review. The research team identified common themes emerging from the focus groups and then used them to create a consistent coding scheme. We then tested this scheme against another set of three randomly-chosen focus groups to determine whether any themes needed to be further refined. We eventually reached 85-90% overlap on the randomly chosen focus groups through a repeated process of tests and edits, thereby establishing interrater reliability. We then line-coded each transcript thematically.

During interviews and focus groups we asked participants about their direct experiences with the SRO program, as well as their general thoughts on the program’s successes and shortcomings, how they believe the program may benefit teachers, students, parents and the school environment, whether or not they see the program as having negative effects on marginalized populations, and how they would like to see the program improved, if at all. We also specifically asked all our participants how they would imagine an ideal school environment and whether there are other programs they could imagine that could replace the SRO program. Lastly, we asked them about their thoughts on the dissolution of the program.

Participant breakdown

In total, we had 32 participants represent current students, 30 participants represent former students, 27 participants represent parents of current students, and 11 participants represent parents of former students. We had the greatest uptake among Black students, Indigenous and 2sLGBTQ+ participants in both the former and current student groups. We also had a high number of current student participants of a refugee background. With respect to the caregiver groups of former and current students, we had the greatest uptake among parents of Indigenous and disabled students in both caregiver groups, as well as among parents of current South Asian students.

CURRENT STUDENTS

32 participants total, 9 of which were conducted as one on one interviews

FOCUS GROUP	PARTICIPANTS
Indigenous	5
Black	5
Disabled	1
2sLGBTQ+	6
South Asian	3
Somali	1
East Asian and Southeast Asian	2
West Asian and Arab	1
Other racialized minority groups	8 (refugee background)

FORMER STUDENTS

30 participants total, 10 of which were conducted as one on one interviews

FOCUS GROUP	PARTICIPANTS
Indigenous	5
Black	15
Disabled	-
2sLGBTQ+	4
South Asian	1
Somali	-
East Asian and Southeast Asian	-
West Asian and Arab	3
Other racialized minority groups	2

PARENTS CURRENT STUDENTS

27 participants total, 14 of which were conducted as one on one interviews

FOCUS GROUP	PARTICIPANTS
Indigenous	4
Black	-
Disabled	8
2sLGBTQ+	4
South Asian	5
Somali	-
East Asian and Southeast Asian	4
West Asian and Arab	1
Other racialized minority groups	1

PARENTS FORMER STUDENTS

11 participants total, 5 of which were conducted as one on one interviews

FOCUS GROUP	PARTICIPANTS
Indigenous	5
Black	-
Disabled	3
2sLGBTQ+	1
South Asian	1
Somali	-
East Asian and Southeast Asian	-
West Asian and Arab	-
Other racialized minority groups	1

General observations and limitations

There are a number of general observations about the qualitative data worth noting. Below, we provide summaries of these general observations. In this report, we are providing the summarized findings reflecting the views, perceptions, and experiences of the majority of our participants. We clearly indicate whenever we are presenting views that were only shared by a minority of our participants. With respect to most themes, we could not observe distinct differences between the different focus groups. In the below analysis then, we report on the themes we identified across all groups and interviews and only comment on differences between groups when such differences were clear-cut and pertinent to point out.

Before delving into differences between students and caregivers, below some general observations from our participants about goals of the program:

General observations about goals of the program:

- Participants across all four groups stressed that one goal of the SRO program is to help mediate conflicts between outside police and individual students at the school – for example when students were arrested or stopped by the police on the weekends. Some participants stressed that the SRO is *also* acting as a barrier between school administration and the students and will take on the role of supporting the student and negotiate with the school administration (with the administration generally being perceived as more punitive/harsh).
- Participants also stressed “relationship building” as an important goal of the program. Here, the emphasis is not on having a trusting adult around (though some stressed this, too), but about having someone the students can approach when having legal questions or concerns about their own situations or those of their friends and family. Participants perceived that having an SRO directly within the school system removes the barrier of having to go to a police station to ask similar questions to an unknown officer with whom there is no prior relationship.
- Many participants stressed that SROs add a level of safety to the school community. While “safety” can be defined in various ways, these participants were mostly concerned about safety from outside intruders into the school community, and safety against violence and drug dealing within the school community.
- Some participants across all groups, but particularly among the caregiver groups, stressed that education is a goal of the program. They highlighted the importance of having workshops or classes on cyber bullying, drugs, social media, and sexual misconduct.

Further we can state some general observations about how our participants thought about alternatives to the program:

General observations about alternatives:

- Some parents and former students would prefer to see community liaison representatives instead of police officers, while others are hoping for having both an SRO and a community liaison in the schools. Others prefer to have an SRO only.
- Generally speaking, parents and students with no direct experience were more likely to favour community liaisons as a replacement for the SRO program while those with direct experiences were more likely to favour a combination or an SRO-only program.
- Those who favour community liaisons only or in combination with an SRO suggest that the community liaison should represent their own racial/ethnic group. In other words, our Indigenous participants were hoping for an Indigenous liaison, our Black participants for a Black liaison, etc.
- Some caregiver participants suggested the SRO should be paired with a social worker, similar to other units within EPS.

- Some caregiver participants suggested the position should be reframed under the umbrella of “Health and Safety”, and pay particular attention to student well-being as well as safety.

Lastly, guns and uniforms were a much-discussed topic in all of our focus groups and interviews. Below are some general observations on how our participants thought about guns and uniforms across the four groups:

General observations about uniforms and guns:

- Parents and students almost uniformly agreed across all groups that uniforms are a good idea to easily identify officers.

“*Definitely* because wearin’ that uniform they *should* be wearin’ their uniform... Because they stand out. They stand out as an authoritative figure...”

Or:

“I think uniforms are a good thing, because I think like from a young age I think you should, if they see someone in uniform and the SROs are actually, the program is actually a good thing, then they’ll respect people in uniform and later on understand that ‘oh they are here to help us and protect us if there are any problems.’ So I don’t think that will scare or intimidate kids, because like for example if they are outside of school and they see I dunno, a policeman or a fire fighter they *know* that they need to be respected and they know that they are out there helping people. So I think it translates to that.”

- Parents of both former and current students were hesitant about the idea of SROs carrying guns, with some not wanting the SRO to have a gun altogether, others suggesting that the gun should be stored at a safe place, where it could be accessed by the SRO in extreme circumstances, and still others thinking that they should have a gun on them. Below are some of these opposing views:

“Um you know what, their guns, it’s part of their uniform so I don’t know if they could take away their gun, but um I would say yeah, look at what happened with the shootin’ in the States? So, I would say ‘yes’ to the gun, right?”

Or:

“Yeah, I don’t think the gun is necessary. That kind of thing, that’s an enforcement technique and a militarist technique to instill fear in others, right?... why can’t you help opposite the radio? That’s less intimidating and it’s more welcoming in a school environment, right? Um, so definitely I don’t think that those things, I definitely think that if there is a school that has a lot of incidences of violence or a student body that is maybe a bit more susceptible to not being safe overall, for everybody, then yeah having a radio would be beneficial and having a direct line with somebody at EPS in that police station is important.”

Or:

“I think as long as they explain to them why they do have it on them, that like students will understand and it also prompts them to have a discussion right? To be like, if the students ask them “why do you have a gun on you?” then they could like interact themselves in that conversation and actually help kids understand *why* and that’ll help them with their knowledge and able to have that respect and communication with each other.”

Or:

“Um I definitely think that, I think there’s two ways to look at it. Um, ... I think that yeah, you know, casual or blending in is great because then you seem more approachable, however I think that might take away from um what and who they are and how they identify. And so I’m thinking that if they are, again, the *right* person engaging well, that it shouldn’t really matter about their uniform, that kids can go beyond that. And I think, in my head I’m thinking, well because that way when they see another cop on the street or whatever, they can identify and relate and know what that person’s job and role could be... So I personally think that if it’s done right, that you can have, they’ll be in uniform and yeah, and it wouldn’t be a problem.”

- Some parents felt SROs should carry guns to protect their children from outside intruders. These parents also tended to stress that there is a distinct difference between police in Canada and the United States, and that they believed SROs in Canada have never shot a student.

“If an outsider like someone who does not belong there and is up to now good enters the school, I want a cop right there, with a gun. I don’t want to wait until they call dispatch and 3 hours later someone strolls in. And can we just stop pretending we are the United States? We are not. Why are you saying guns can kill kids? Please show me all those cases where SROs in Edmonton killed students. It’s a nonsense argument.”

- Students were split about the idea of SROs carrying guns:
 - Former students with direct experiences with SROs in schools tended to view guns as a necessary tool for protection/part of the uniform.
 - Current students with no direct experiences with SROs tended to view guns as frightening and were not sure they could get used to the idea.

“ For me, it’s just an odd thought. Why do we need a gun at the school? It would be hard to get used to that. I think it would make me uncomfortable.”

- However, they also mentioned that a gun would make them feel safer when it comes to outsiders:

“The gun would make me feel safer for external happenings which is not the case but what we have read from the States or right? About shootings and so. But um yeah, I would never think at this point I would never think that they could use a weapon against either a student or a school staff, yeah, so.”

PART D: FOCUS GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH CURRENT AND FORMER EPSB STUDENTS

In the following section, we will provide further insights into how former and current students thought about the SRO program, what critiques they had, what experiences they had made and so on. Before delving into the data, we summarize the main findings here:

- Current and former students who had frequent interactions with an SRO generally experienced their respective school administration and/or other school staff they had encountered, such as counsellors, as more punitive than the SRO.
- Current and former students who had frequent interactions and self-described as “having challenges”, “being in trouble”, or regularly “breaking the law” were particularly likely to perceive the SRO as helpful and compassionate.
- Current and former students who had infrequent or no interactions with their respective SROs were more likely to state that they perceived the SRO program to have negative effects on Indigenous, Black, or Arab students.
- Current and former students of South Asian and East Asian or Southeast Asian background generally held more positive views of police in general, including police they encountered outside of the school setting than those with other backgrounds.
- Current and former students of any other background, excluding South Asian and East Asian or Southeast Asian students, generally perceived police outside of the school setting as more negative than SROs.
- Current students of recent immigrant and refugee background often shared that their parents held negative perceptions of police which were often tied to negative experiences they had made in their respective countries of origin. Some recounted that they did not share with their parents that their school had an SRO because they felt that their parents would worry about this situation. Those with immigrant and refugee background who had direct experience with an SRO generally felt positive about the program and indicated that the SRO made them feel safer. They stressed that their experiences with the SRO program did not reflect their parents/caregivers’ experiences with police elsewhere.
- Current and former students had mixed opinions on whether they could imagine a different program (see more details below). Most often, they stated that they would like to see a model that would combine a community liaison representative with an SRO.
- Current students recounted several experiences where outside police had to be called to schools, while the SRO program is paused. They believe drug dealing and violence have increased in their respective schools since the SRO program has been discontinued. Some state that there are certain hallways or washrooms in their schools

that they do not feel safe accessing anymore due to situations in those hallways/washrooms that they perceive to be spaces fraught with criminal activity.⁷

Below, we will first summarize the findings from our focus groups with former students and then summarize the findings from our focus groups with current students.

Former students:

Former students who had regular interactions with their respective SROs and self-described as “having challenges”, “being in trouble”, or regularly “breaking the law” were more likely to perceive the SRO as helpful and compassionate. They had generally experienced their respective school administration and/or other school staff they had encountered, such as counsellors, as more punitive than the SRO.

For example, one former Indigenous student reflected on their relationship with their SRO, stating that the SRO made some discretionary decision that they respected, but also provided support outside of the school setting:

“I oddly actually developed like a pretty good relationship with mine. And he was like a, a pretty good guy like sometimes he would catch me with drug paraphernalia or whatever and he wouldn’t tell the school he would just kind of confiscate it, throw it away. And he also did this thing where instead of getting suspended we could often do these work outs with him in the morning, it was called Boot Camp workouts. So, I often opted for a lot of those. And because of all of my interactions, I just, I did develop like a pretty good relationship with him to the point where he was like, ‘you know if you ever get in trouble outside of school this is my badge number, this is who I am you can tell them to reach out to me, blah-blah-blah’ and everything like that. And it honestly, like it was a pretty good relationship. Like sometimes I would even go into his office and just like hang out and chat and ask him questions about the law and it was through those experiences that I learned, back then, it wasn’t actually illegal to smoke weed it was only illegal to possess it and just certain things.”

The appreciation for discretionary decisions were mentioned by many former students, who experienced their respective SROs as individuals who would set some boundaries, such as reminding students about the school rules and behavior expectations, but would not pursue any formal action when they came across students who were not following some of the school rules. The following participant, for example, recalled that their SRO simply reminded them not to consume drugs without issuing a ticket:

“I smoked weed throughout high school, junior high, and after that we had a pretty good one and I wouldn’t get in trouble as much. He’d kind of hang out in the back area of the park where the high school and the junior highs combine and just yeah, be

⁷ Our data do not allow us to verify such statements. Whether or not EPSB schools have experienced more drug dealing activity and violence since the SRO program has been placed on hold could be examined by looking at recorded incidents and by surveying the student and teacher population on their perceptions (since not every case of violence or drug dealing will be recorded). Furthermore, whether or not EPSB schools are calling on more outside help from police than they used to would – again – have to be examined by comparing calls for service. Our evaluation team has not been provided with such data sources.

like “hey you guys know you’re not supposed to be doing this. It’s not technically on school property but get the hell outta here”

In our focus groups and individual interviews, having grown up with negative perceptions about police was a recurrent theme. Many former students (as well as current students) recounted that they had grown up to believe that police are oppressive, racist, unfair, and violent. At the same time, they stated that their experience with their SRO did not match their initial perceptions and beliefs. For example, another Indigenous former student explained that they had grown up with a very negative perception of police and therefore, were initially “outraged” when finding out that their school would have an SRO. Having grown up with a parent who was involved in criminal activity, and eventually incarcerated, they had experienced frequent police interactions and intrusions in their childhood home. Against the backdrop of their parent’s arrest, this participant experienced many challenges themselves, including frequent drug use, involvement in violence, and involvement in some criminal activity. However, they started building a trusting relationship with their SRO over time and were surprised to learn that SROs could provide options and make discretionary decisions – for example, offering boot camps as opposed to writing tickets when they caught the student with drugs:

“I very much grew up from a mentality like, ‘fuck the police’ blah-blah-blah and very negative connotations associated with them etc. So, I think like in terms of initial reaction it was kind of like, outrage, like why do we need this in the school? What are they going to be doing? Like are they gonna be giving us tickets? Blah-blah-blah. But then when it actually began and you know I got to know him and everything, he never gave me like a ticket or anything like that. Like I said, I think I kinda got lucky and he gave us the option to do these Boot Camps and these workouts and I developed like a pretty good relationship with him.”

This participant further reflected that being given the option of doing workouts with the SRO allowed them to “stay out of trouble”. While this student went through very challenging times, and often found themselves in conflict with the school administration and rules, they felt that their SRO provided the support they needed and vouched for them when they faced an expulsion from the school. While they told us that they eventually still got expelled, they were extremely clear to point out that the SRO provided help and support throughout (including in the transition to a new school) and oftentimes kept them “out of trouble.”

“In terms of how it shifted, and in a weird way there was some positives for me because, like I said, he like helped actually keep me out of trouble. And there was times when he would vouch for me when, like for example, the vice-principal of the school wanted to get me expelled because of how often I was smoking weed etc. etc. and he like vouched for me because of all of those one-on-one interactions that I had, he took the time to get to know my story and get to know me as a person. So, there was many times that he kept me out of trouble. I eventually still got expelled but he did his best to help me along the way. So, I did have more of like a positive kind of experience with mine. And it actually got me into fitness too which I previously did not care about at all (chuckles)”

Similar to this participant, another Indigenous former student commented on the fact that their school administration and principal were keen to strictly enforce rules, while they experienced their SRO to be more supportive when they went through challenging times.

Likewise, even though they also grew up with strong anti-police sentiments, they changed their perception of the SRO when getting to know them.

“I did have an interaction with him for something that I had done wrong and some of my friends had done wrong. Um, but even then I felt like the principal was more upset with us than this police officer. So yeah I think my initial feeling was, negative because I also grew up in an anti-police kind of environment, um, but then getting to know him as a person or whatever, just like sitting and chatting in the halls and stuff like it didn’t really feel like it was a police kind of interaction in the school.”

Other former students commented on the fact that their respective SRO was less judgmental than school administrators. For example, one of our participants of the 2sLGBTQ+ community recounted a story where they were sexually abused and received the support they needed from the SRO, while they perceived the teachers and school administrators to be “mocking” them:

“Like I had teachers that were horribly cruel to me because I’m you know, definitely queer and (smiles) so I’ve experienced that first hand. I did not experience that from him, actually it huh, oh man I’m gonna share so much. So when I was in um late grade 11 I was um taken advantage of, I was rather intoxicated at a party and I was taken advantage of, or sexually assau- or whatever the term we wanna use, by a woman, like a, like a, you know. And when I went to school I was absolutely shaken up and like just not okay and I remember telling one of the teachers, you know, what had happened, and he laughed and was like, “well a girl can’t do that to a girl, so just you know stay away –... from her, it’s fine.” And, and, and I went and I told the uh SRO about it though and he said, “you know that’s absolutely not okay. Do you wanna proceed with dealing with this?” and I said, “No, but I just want –“ see I remember ‘cause it was lunchtime and I was standing and I was whispering ‘cause there were other people and I said “No but I just want you to know so that if anything happens like I know that you know and you can help me.” Right?...I: And uh, and so he knew and I don’t know if he made record of it or how he handled it, but I went from feeling mocked and ashamed of something that happened and uh, the SRO there like even though like it was obviously it, like you know and he literally said, he goes “oh I know her” and he goes, like he was just, yeah. So when the teacher and the principal who ended up you know, being called because of what I had told the teacher, they openly mocked me and even asked like, “what do you want me to do? Just don’t drink so much.”...And uh, but the SRO, when I went and kinda like whispered to him what had happened, he said, like “okay. I know exactly who you are talking about. Okay.” You know? So, um again I’m not sure that he was supposed to do that (chuckles) but uh but uh, and I’m sure he reported it and stuff like he had to do, but he definitely like didn’t push me and nothing came of it which was not necessarily a bad thing.”

A few former students in our focus groups even credited their SRO for having finished high school. For example, this former 2sLGBTQ+ student commented on the fact that the SRO took the time to help them and build a trusting relationship that they could not build with the school counsellors or teachers – and helped them navigate challenges with other adults at school:

“Whereas the SRO I went to [an EPSB high school] and I met with him like first day of school and I let him know like, “hey there’s these adult guys and they’re scary and they scare me” and he took the time to like listen – do you know what I mean? Like it was almost like he was like a, not a counselor but he had that like, he acted in that role for me um because like our school did have a counselor but he wasn’t really approachable. Um and so like I remember sitting at this desk and he pulled out a notebook and he’s like, ‘cause I was getting like phone calls and threats. And he showed me how to document these phone calls, and let me know what he could do as the SRO, what he could like do by contacting other members of EPS, and I just yeah I remember sitting there. So even when I was upset with him, it wasn’t like I was upset with a cop, it was I was upset with him like there was a difference between him the cop and like ‘cause do you know what I mean? And like at [my high school], I don’t even remember like what they look like but I remember what he looked like at uh, at [my high school]. And like I said, when I graduated I made sure to go over there and thank him dearly, ‘cause I don’t think I would have finished school if it wasn’t for him, you know?”

Some former students also commented on the fact that having built a relationship with the SRO allowed them to navigate interactions with police officers outside of school as well. For example, this Indigenous former student recalled that they regularly got into trouble outside of school, but that passing on the contact information of the SRO helped them navigating interactions with police outside of school:

“I mean I guess for me it really was just like the fitness thing and because I was often getting in to trouble outside of school as well. There was one instance where I did like give someone his badge number when I got in trouble with the police outside of that and they’re like “Oh you know Constable x” and then I explained like the little bit of the relationship I had with him and then he let me go without doing anything further. So, in that regard I think that that was a positive.”

Importantly, while former students commented on how they built positive relationships with their respective SRO, often surprising to them given their negative perceptions growing up, they were also clear to state that these positive experiences did not change their overall perceptions of police. In other words, they interpreted their experiences with their respective SROs as positive experiences with a single individual, who was often important during their school careers, but such positive experiences did not translate into perceiving police more positively in general:

“My experiences with my SRO even though it was positive, and it did have positive aspects, by no means does that shift my overall perception of police and the way that they behave outside of the school.”

Other former students did not have tangible positive experiences to share, but indicated that they did not make any negative experiences and believed the SRO could have reacted more harshly if they had wanted to. For example, one of the Indigenous former students commented that:

“I just feel like it wasn’t a bad like I didn’t have a bad experience. But I can’t point anything that says it was good. I mean besides the fact that when I did get in trouble um they kinda, they could have went harder on me but they didn’t.”

Former students identifying as 2sLGBTQ+ were more critical of police in general but stated that they perceived students only getting into trouble with their SROs for things they should not have been doing at school anyways.

“I think there were a couple of times where people I knew might have gotten in trouble for stuff that wouldn’t necessarily have, they wouldn’t necessarily have gotten in trouble or they wouldn’t have gotten in trouble to the extent they did had there not been an SRO. But, at the end of the day like the things they were doing, they shouldn’t have been doing at school anyway, so I wouldn’t really say there was anything bad about having the SRO.”

Other 2sLGBTQ+ former students shared that they were initially surprised by the positive treatment of their respective SROs because they had expected a harsher reaction to their behavior (if and when they behaved in challenging ways, according to their own assessment). They commented that the SRO continuously had their backs, even when they felt they did not always deserve it. For example, one 2sLGBTQ+ former student credited the SRO of getting them through some challenging times and helped them graduate:

“And yeah, I remember the principal, ‘cause I loved him he was so cool and he was so handsome and (laughs) everybody liked him and I just, I remember him laughing like he laughed and he’s like, “it sounds like you drank too much, like don’t do that.” And uh, ‘cause yeah, what a guy. But anyway, yeah so this, you know mean, gruff SRO who was close to retirement had like you know the 80s mustache like super stern guy looking at me and being like “I believe you.” You know? And “I’m here for you if you need me.” And he did, and I felt like, I felt so stupid ‘cause I kept going (chuckles) to him and I’m like, “oh my god I keep doing these bad things and bad things happen” and he could have turned around and been like, “well stop doing bad things.” You know? But instead he, he got it. So, he got me to graduation.”

Another 2sLGBTQ+ former student credited the SRO for assisting students to find a better path for themselves when they were perceived to be getting into trouble. They also stressed the importance of simply having the SRO around and participate in school events:

“To kind of have him around because of how he would participate in other events and then I know that having him around made, I don’t know how to explain it, there were a lot of kids who would interact with the SRO at our school who maybe um were kinda starting to stray to a not-so-good path and having him there guided them into better things? Um and he’s also inspired some of my own friends into potentially pursuing police work because they had such a good interaction long-term with a police officer, that they saw that cops aren’t all bad.”

Likewise, some 2sLGBTQ+ former students stressed that the SRO was available whenever they needed them. They liked being able to pick the SROs brain whenever they felt like it, without having to make appointments or being seen by others:

“ Like it was perfect, you could just go to his office and did not have to walk past he administration or anything; he had his own little enclosed space and you could just walk in without being seen. And that’s important especially for the students with like gang ties and rougher students, that you can just go and not be seen. The only thing

was if someone was in his office but then you'd just say: "hey, I am just here to pick up the paperwork" and leave again and come back later when the coast was clear.""

Some former students put the greatest emphasis on having had someone in the building who could address issues as they arise. They particularly stressed the advantage of having someone present at school, as opposed to having to call outsiders and wait for help when fights broke out. For example, this participant, who is now an aspiring teacher who has worked in schools as a student-teacher, recalled that there were fights "constantly", and that the SRO could assist in such situations whereas the rest of the staff were not trained to help:

"I know that the police officer at [the high school] would go to classes and so on. Like she made students aware that she was there, and she was available. And she would also do the walking around the building, walking on the outside the building, yeah, so in reality as a staff member I also felt more comfortable when the staff were there. Fights would break out all the time, like, I'm not gonna deal with a fight. I have the trainin' now but back then I didn't. Um, yeah, so for me the police officer is there, like it's introduced like the idea of a police officer in the uniform that they are available, that you can talk to them, that you know they're human like you, and if anything happens that there is someone there for backup - and it's not half an hour or an hour later, it's like, five minutes and they're there. And it's not on the staff to deal with everything, 'cause staff are not trained [...]. Yeah, I think they're really important."

Likewise, some former students who self-described of "being in trouble" quite a bit, appreciated the SRO presence because it made them feel safer.

"So in grade 10 I was rather rebellious, and thought, you know, it wasn't so great, but you know, for typical teenage reasons. In grade 11 and 12 frankly he made me feel very safe and I was glad that he was there. So I got into a little bit of trouble in grade 10, so by the time grade 11 rolled around, I uh, I knew that there was going to be a police presence on site and that made me feel better, although of course police officers made me nervous in general um 'cause I hadn't exactly been helpful up until then. But the fact that there was someone with some authority did make me feel better. And then when I met him, I didn't really like him (chuckles) that much when I met him, um but he wasn't bad, but again it was the safety feature that I really appreciated. And just that he was a guy who got it. Like, he understood when to bug us and breathe down our neck and when to leave us alone and check in with us because we had bad days. He got it because he knew us.

Similar to having "an additional adult" around that students could turn to, some students in our focus group were reminiscent about moments they enjoyed with their respective SRO. For example, one of our 2sLGBTQ+ participants stressed how the SRO was approachable for the kids at their school and participated in school events important for the students:

"I think what makes a good one is one who interacts with the student body and like doesn't necessarily, isn't serious all the time. Like there was this event that we would do multiple times a year called 'Karaoke with Constie' so we had this atrium in the school and every now and then they would do like a Karaoke at lunch thing and whenever they were doing it they would ask the Constable to come do a song and usually the students would vote on what song it was and then he would come do it and

he would put on this big performance, even if he didn't know any of the lyrics (smiling) and he would try his best, but also be really silly and goofy with it. And I think that really helped a lot of students see that like, he was more than just a cop, like he wasn't just there to you know punish kids for vaping [chuckles] on school property, um so that was really good. I definitely had a good one at my school because he, you know he didn't just stay in his office and just do his like work-related things. He went and did these silly things and he ate lunch in the cafeteria with some of the students and like supported the school community however he could. And I think stuff like that makes a good SRO."

Another 2sLGBTQ+ former student spoke at length about facing many personal challenges going through high school and subsequently having many interactions with the school administration and the SRO. Similar to the majority of our participants, they experienced the SRO as more lenient than the administration, and as willing to listen to the student's concerns. The student described their SRO as someone who enforced rules when necessary, but was able to "look the other way" when needed:

"So, um, he was one of the people that were willing to sit down and talk to me. Um, he was honest with me and of course we did butt heads at certain times (chuckles) like he tried to – kay. So yeah, so like you know there was the time where he tried to you know, take my cell phone away, you know confiscate it and I was so mad and he said, you know I would get it when I went home for the day. So, I immediately called my mother and said I was sick and I had to go home and I glared at him the whole time (laughs) you know. But uh, there were also moments where you know he was very kind. So even though I didn't appreciate that he was breathing down our backs about smoking and cell phones, this, that and the other thing, um he showed me kindness and compassion, a fair bit, 'cause like I said I had a bit of a rough history. So, by the end of grade 12, you know I was leaving and wishing him the best and made sure to get him a little gift (chuckles) because um he listened to me and uh he understood where I was coming from. He wasn't just punitive; do you know what I mean? Um, so you know he'd walk around at lunch time handing out (chuckles) tickets for smoking and we'd all hate it but um one day he knew that was I was having a reeeally bad day and he came around the corner and I definitely had a cigarette in my hand but I just like dropped it and looked at him like 'sorry' and he just, he didn't say anything and I knew he had saw me, but he kept going. And so I don't know if that's like good for a police officer to do (chuckles) um but you know, he just kept doing. And then later on he checked in with me and asked, you know "how are you doing? How are things?" and uh that was appreciated...He did give me a ticket a different day (laughing), but yeah."

Some former students of "other racialized minority groups" perceived the police officer to adjust their tone and behavior to the situation at hand. They elaborated that they have experienced the SRO as making decisions based on how serious the situation was, or how the students reacted to school rules. For example, one of them stated that the SRO was generally calm and treated all students "almost equally" until "something terrible happened":

"Uh yeah I would say that I have seen that the police treat, based on the acceptance in each individuals. So, I would say, some individuals need to be used like, higher tone and angry and anger tone or something, and others can understand, can accept in a more of a light way. So, I would say like for example, I know like the pants should

be always up and one person came with his pants down and refused most of the time to pull it up, that was like maybe 3 or 2 years ago no 5 years ago and I have seen the police start raising their tone with that guy. But otherwise I would see him calm and treating everybody almost equally until something terrible happened.”

Other former students emphasized that they could rely on the SRO for advice on legal matters:

“I also felt that I could just talk to him on a personal level and he would um you know give me back feedback and if there was like a legal thing he would make sure he’d let me know like whatever it was I was asking him he would just like be pretty forward about it.”

Former students and negative perceptions

Former students who did not have many or any personal interactions with their SROs were not quite as positive in their assessment as those who did. A particularly noteworthy data point with respect to former students with no interactions pertains to questions around bias and discrimination. Independent of which group the participants belonged to or identified as, they did not perceive their own group to be discriminated against by the SRO, but another group. For example, one of our Black participants recounted:

“It was very like an invasion of privacy and also it was more geared towards Muslim kids and kids who didn’t come from the best home life. So, I feel like in those instances ... maybe instead of just immediately expelling kids who already have such odds stacked against them that they should be more directed into maybe the school therapist or stuff like that and not just immediately just kind of expelled and stuff like that.”

In contrast, one of the participants who indicated they were Muslim believed the program and SRO could be biased towards Indigenous students:

“I believe they ticketed a lot of the Indigenous kids in particular for like, there was bias against them. Not just the SRO also the administration and teachers and the office, getting lockers searched and stuff.”

Still others perceived the program to be racially biased in general based on stories they had heard from friends and acquaintances:

“I have heard where you know, these police officers have ruined people’s lives. Like you’re like 16 years old and you’re getting charged with something that just now ruins your whole life because of something that could have been avoided and yeah that is more focused to people of color 1000%.”

While others felt that the program or the SRO was not racially biased but that students of all backgrounds could have challenging interactions with the SRO.

“Well some people would find sometimes that the SRO would instill fear, right? Like yeah, um but never to the point where the SRO was any type of being racial, because

all kids of all different backgrounds saw the SRO, kids of all different backgrounds was disciplined from the SRO. So, it was just sometimes parents thought it would be unfair, or the kids thought it would be unfair if their vape or their drugs were taken away or there was you know they found out that, and they just thought they were being unfair right? But really, they got in trouble because anyone would have been in trouble. You can't have drugs and vapes at school. It's not because I am Black that he takes it. It's because it's drugs and they should not be at school."

The only group of former students who believed they were directly targeted by the SRO were Indigenous former students. While participants in this group were discussing at length how their respective SROs were beneficial to them (see above), they also felt that the SROs were biased towards Indigenous students. However, as a parent participant explained who was also a former student in the 1990s, overt racist actions were more common in the 1990s when they attended school both by police and by school administrators and teachers:

"They were totally targeting us. Like it was so obvious they were targeting us, right? And we were definitely more targeted than a white person. And at that time, in the '90s, like this is the thing like, that was happening, anyway. Everywhere. In schools, with police, in grocery stores. [...] Like there was no attempt at relationship building with the SRO. It was more: let's just criminalize this and make it valid, right?"

Concerns about racial bias about the program and the SROs by former students then were almost exclusively expressed on behalf of a different group, as vicarious experiences, whereas positive views about the program were almost exclusively recounted as personal experiences. This differed for Indigenous former students who reported experiencing bias from all groups of school staff, including SROs. The majority of students, however, expressed that their respective SRO was not biased against any particular group of students. This majority view is expressed by this Black participant:

"I did not ever see him treat anybody unfairly and I, yeah I would say he treated everybody the same, yeah...the one that we had at our school he didn't discriminate anybody. Obviously, I think there are a handful of you know police officers or even school resource officers that maybe they are, but, um the one that we had at our high school wasn't discriminate, so...."

Some former students who did not build personal relationships with their respective SROs expressed concerns about the program or their respective SRO with respect to feeling watched or surveilled while at school. They did not recount these experiences as forms of racial bias or gendered bias, but as negative interactions in general. For example, one participant recounted:

"I would get like glared down the hall and sometimes get like a snarky comment from the SRO when I was out of class. And uh yeah like I remember this time I got called to my math teacher's office when I was in physics class, and so like it wasn't an intercom, it was like classroom phone type situation. And uh so and I didn't know why, so I just got up and went to go to the teacher's classroom and he stopped me in the hallway and said, "Where are you going?" and I was like "Mr. [X]'s room" and he was like "why?" and I was like, "I don't know." And he thought I was like throwing attitude or something 'cause like he got quite pissy with me and uh he just kept

pushing on that like “why?” uh “‘cause he told me to.” “But why?” “But I don’t know.” Like yeah, no idea. “This is an unscheduled call, I have absolutely no idea.” And then yeah and then I, it was actually to pick up a medal ‘cause he had like a medal that I won from the swim competition from the school swim team like earlier that week. Although I don’t know why he had it, he wasn’t involved in the swim team at all. But anyways he had it and so I got it from him and he gave me my medals but he also gave me medals for my classmates, but they weren’t in that physics class they were on spares. So I went to the table to drop a couple of them off and he caught me on my way there and he’s like “where are you going?” and I was like, “yeah to class eventually but I have to drop these off first.” And so he followed me -...Yeah, so the SRO followed me back to my class and then like said something snarky to the teacher that was really irrelevant like “caught this one wandering.”

Likewise, some former students expressed that while the SRO did not make them feel unsafe, they never felt comfortable around the SRO and did not enjoy the thought of having a police officer in school:

“It makes another part of the student body feel unsafe - maybe not so much unsafe as uncomfortable. Um like I don’t think, well personally I never felt like the cop was going to do anything. I never felt like I was in danger because of it, I just felt strange that someone like that was in the school and I never really *enjoyed* the fact that she was there. Um even though like she wasn’t like a bad person or anything it’s just the idea of a cop there, patrolling and everything.”

The majority of former students, however, expressed positive views about the program and their respective SRO:

“I mean the one like we had like he was just, he was just a really friendly guy and he made sure that everybody knew that. He was nice to anybody and um yeah I just think, just like just what I said before I just think in general it’s a good idea. I never saw him being biased towards anyone. When kids got in trouble, there was a reason.”

In line with this view, former students expressed that they believed overall the schools are better off with the SRO program in place. In particular, this student who had dealt with their SRO on many occasions, appreciated the SRO’s approach of acting as a barrier between them and the justice system. Instead of getting charged for troublesome behaviours, the SRO offered alternative measures for the student:

“I think the school would be, I think they’re better off with the school resource officers. Um obviously like one of the biggest things that I would mention is like sometimes you know obviously do stupid things and they don’t really think about the consequences and uh the resource officers would deal with that. So, like instead of like students paying fines or you know having to go to court or things like that, um, he would just make them understand the situation, the seriousness of it, but they wouldn’t have to like pay anything. Most of the time they’d just have to like go into the kitchen and do dishes or something like that, just community service. So, I think yeah, overall it’s a good idea.”

Overall then, while some former students expressed concerns about the program or their respective SRO, the majority of former students who participated in the focus groups

recounted by and large experiences in which they believed the program to be beneficial for them. They often commented on the SRO program *preventing* a “school to prison pipeline – by diverting them away from Criminal Justice involvement and instead offering alternative solutions like community service or working out with the SRO when displaying (self-described) criminal or challenging behaviours. Perhaps most importantly, they experienced the SRO to be less punitive than school administrators.

Current students

Many of the current students who participated only had very limited direct experiences with the SRO program. This is due to the fact that the Edmonton Public School Board had put the program on hold for the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 school years, and much of the 2020/2021 school year was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, many current students simply have not had direct interactions with an SRO in schools.

The current students who had frequent interactions described similar views as the former students. As such, we are concentrating here on some *additional* views not yet described. For students who are currently attending school the topic of “feeling safe” at the school played a prominent role in our focus group discussions. For example, many current students made statements such as the following:

“I feel like having an SRO just increases the general sense of safety. Bullying doesn’t feel like it would really reach a level where it’s a problem.”

“Feeling safe at school” was a particularly dominant theme for our South Asian and Asian participants who believed, for example, that having an SRO at school decreased the likelihood of criminal activity at the school and made them feel safer in the building and on the parking lot:

“I actually thought it was pretty cool ‘cause like we had a police officer in our very own school and I was like grade 7, straight out of elementary, so I was uh, it was pretty easy to make me excited. And anyways, like yeah I felt safer and like I didn’t think that people would be selling drugs in the lockers or something. That’s very different now with the SRO being gone.”

And:

“Yeah, with parking for example, I felt like very safe and I was not looking over my back when the SRO was still there.”

While the topic of safety did not play an equally dominant role in the discussions with other groups, other students mentioned an increased sense of safety as well. For example, Black students commented:

“Not to a significant degree, but uh yeah it does help me feel a little more safe.”

And a student of the group with “other racial backgrounds” added:

“I remember feeling like it was pretty cool, pretty - it made me feel safer honestly. Um and when I first moved in to a school with an SRO it was a big jump in student population. I went from a school of about 700 kids to a school over 2,000 and when I was like, ‘cause that was when I moved from junior high to high school, and when I was thinking about that transition I was like, ‘this is a lot of kids and there’s like four school counsellors, four assistant principals and one main principal.’ Like that’s a lot, that’s not a lot of people to deal with um a lot of different kids and different problems. So, when I learned that there was an SRO who would have a completely different knowledge and skill set than school counsellors and assistant principals I felt a little bit safer knowing there was somebody like that in the school at all times that could help with issues.”

In addition to increasing a sense of safety, some students commented on the fact that they felt the SROs were able to help deter crime and incidents in the school community. For example, one of our Asian participants stated that they felt strongly about the SRO being there so that there weren’t any spots or hallways in the school building that were “unsafe”. At the same time, this participant stressed the importance of relationship building with the SRO:

“The police officers that I met at [my high school] and at other schools, they actually weren’t dismissive, they were approachable and by doing those charitable events they get to know the students and the students get to know that fun side of them too. Like they can be dead serious but they have a fun side and are human too and I think that’s what was really important for the kids to see that you know there’s help out there, but you just need to, you need to let them know. I mean they could see things and deal with it, but it’s also being willing to talk to them. In many cultures police officers are not a good thing – many, many. So I think that’s like that starting point of building that relationship and being that deterrent but also being that um that chance to connect with someone who really, their job is to protect you. Sorry I feel pretty strongly about it, that the SROs should be there. The fact that there’s a hallway that you don’t go down because that’s the drug hallway or the dodgy people I think that’s crazy.”

The theme of relationship building was picked up by many of our participants, who saw it as an asset to have another person in the school to communicate with and turn to when they faced any issues. For example, one of our Black participants commented:

“Well it gives another person in the school community to interact with, I mean I feel like you can just come to them as like another person to talk to essentially. And I would think they’d be more prepared to deal with, you know, any issues you have of course.”

Some current students also appreciated to be able to ask the SRO questions about challenging situations and receive some guidance on how to navigate such situations. For example, one of our 2sLGBTQ+ participants recounted the following experience:

“One thing like one of the times I did interact with him one-on-one I was having some issues with an ex-girlfriend of mine where she was going around and telling a lot of people in her friend group and people that I was friends with that um that I had sexually assaulted her and they were baseless claims. But I was scared, you know, I was losing friends over this. People were going up to me and being like “what the – like what was that, why would you do something like that?” And I was really scared

because as I said, these were baseless claims and I was able to go to my SRO and be like, “what can I do about this? Like, I’m scared, am I gonna get in any trouble?” and he was able to reassure me that based on my account of what happened it would be very hard for her to get anywhere if she did try to pursue like pressing charges against me. And he also said that because there was such a conflict and I guess her idea of what happened and my idea of what happened that he was gonna talk with her and just say, “hey M doesn’t remember it like this. You can’t go around telling people that she did this to you when like there’s not a lot of evidence and that’s not how things actually played out.” And that was reassuring for me.”

In contrast to some of our other groups, our South Asian and East Asian and Southeast Asian participants seemed to have a more positive outlook on policing in general, and did not recount growing up with negative perceptions of police. Some even commented that they had always perceived police as being professional and thought police officers were very respected.

“I would say like before like all of the BLM stuff I feel like police officers were like pretty respected overall, especially since we don’t have many problem with them in America, so like um I think it would just give someone like you can talk to, right? So, it’s like police officers they feel very professional and all and you just, you just feel like you can talk to them, especially with like our school resource officer, he was a very nice guy, like with the few interactions I had with him and yeah.”

They also felt that having an SRO at the school will likely benefit their overall impression of policing and police officers:

“I think it does for me and I think it probably would for a lot of students as well because an SRO is the closest interaction we would like most likely ever get to an actual police officer, so they are quite beneficial.”

While South Asian and East Asian and Southeast Asian students recognized that having school resource officers in school could potentially lead to issues around privacy, they felt that the benefits of having an SRO outweighed the drawbacks:

“Well I think there might be some issues of privacy but I think like the positives overweigh the negatives...Like the SROs are like, they like monitoring students I guess.”

When asked whether they ever observed or experienced SROs treating some students differently than others, they stated they had never experienced the SRO to be discriminatory against students:

“I’m gonna maybe say no to that because um like from what I know, I never actually saw our SRO officer like being discriminatory. He was just like, nice to everyone. And yeah.”

A similar sentiment was mentioned by our Black participants, saying:

“I did see him interact with the students here and there sometimes and that was nice to see...haven’t really seen him mistreat anyone and uh I did also have a few friends and

I've never heard them have any complaints about the SRO. So as far as I'm aware uh, yeah, I think he treated everyone fairly."

South Asian and East Asian and Southeast Asian students confirmed this experience by saying:

"Hard no, like he never was racist or anything else."

Or:

"Our school is majority minorities and there's a large population of peers with special needs. I never saw any sort of bias."

Again and similar to the participants in the former student groups, a recurrent theme among the current students was that they perceived their respective SRO to be less harsh than members of their school administration. In their experiences, the school administration often pushed for harsher disciplinary measures whereas the SROs mediated in such situations and – from the perspectives of students – ensured that the students were treated in a way that they themselves perceived as more fairly. For example, here, a student of "other racialized background" commented on the question whether or not SROs treat all students fairly, by elaborating on not having witnessed or experienced any discriminatory treatment, but that they see a difference between the SROs and the administration:

"I never really heard of any except I guess just disciplinarian enforcement, uh but I did hear that in many ways she uh had some disagreements with the admin about I guess the application of disciplines to things like vaping and stuff, where she personally didn't see an issue with it but she was I guess forced to by the administration. So, I thought that was interesting and I thought that was some positive? But I haven't really had any personal experience with that, but yeah."

Other South Asian and East Asian and Southeast Asian students also expressed that their parents viewed having an SRO at school as positive. Similar to their children who stressed that they perceived the SROs to be increasing "school safety", they felt their parents focused on the impact of school safety when discussing the SRO program:

"My parents had really approved of it because, um, I don't know like you probably heard of this, but uh there was a stabbing like at the school a few weeks back and then my parents they like kept on saying, that like "if there was an SRO officer it wouldn't have happened" and stuff. And yeah, like they generally just think that they would also like reduce crime. I asked them about this earlier, and their response was pretty positive as well."

Some of the current student participants had never experienced an SRO and had a less positive outlook on the program. Specifically, they did not know why there would be SROs in schools given current societal developments and movements, such as Black Lives Matter, and news reports about police shootings in the United States. For example, a Black student expressed:

"To be honest I don't feel worried or scared around cops, but I do understand how like a lot of people could feel, because we come to school to you know learn and

further our education but when you are constantly, you know, I dunno being monitored or like they are just surveilling you feel uncomfortable. And with everything with George Floyd, it's going to make some people uncomfortable.”

Or another student expressed:

“I would have a negative kind of reaction to it just because like I've had family members and like relatives who had like bad experiences with cops and cops in their schools just in general.”

Overall, and similar to the former student group, those with personal experiences tended to believe the program was beneficial. Those with no experiences were often more skeptical, however, concerns about safety in schools, and a perceived increase in drug sales and violence during recent years was discussed as concern among current students with and without personal SRO experience. Importantly, while the focus group numbers are too small to make generalized statements, the concern about safety was most prominent among South Asian and East Asian and Southeast Asian current students.

PART E: FOCUS GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS OF CURRENT AND FORMER STUDENTS

The perceptions of participants in the two caregiver categories (parents of current and parents of former students) were mostly dependent on whether or not the parents had direct interactions and/or experience with the SRO. Those with limited or no experience generally perceived the program as more negative, while those with direct experience and interactions generally perceived the program as more positive.

Parents who expressed negative opinions about the program often referred to the program contributing to a “school to prison pipeline” (see literature review). During the conversations, they equally expressed negative opinions about police in general, often from an abolitionist stance. Overall, many of these parents felt that police had caused too many issues in society, and they were advocating for alternative solutions. Some of these parents had made negative experiences with police in other contexts – either in their country of origin or with police outside of the school setting. Some also held negative opinions on police based on vicarious experiences, i.e., experiences that they had not made themselves, but had been told by trusted others, or had heard through the media. Still others, believed the program was biased against racial minority students, in particular Indigenous and Black students.

“I just don’t understand how this is even a debate. Police have done so much damage in communities, especially, you know, racialized communities. Why are we not considering community-based solutions?”

Some of these parents also believed that students do not feel safe in school when having police officers around, especially when those officers were carrying guns and are in uniform. They stressed that police presence is sending a wrong message to children:

“What message are we sending to the kids if a guy with a gun walks around the school? And in uniform. Aren’t there better ways to deal with issues?”

Others were not generally opposed to the program but stressed that the SRO program should only be reinstated in high schools:

“They *do* generally act as if they are *above* the law (laughs) and do whatever and they have justification for whatever kind of you know force they use. So um you know, uh it really (chuckles) it really has *no* place in lower grades. I mean there’s *absolutely nothing* that those you know children could be doing that requires a sworn officer of the *law* with you know *guns* and the power to um, to press charges. I get it in high schools. But not in the lower grades.”

Still others believed that reinstating the program would send the wrong message amidst funding shortages. These participants believed that the school administration should not spend money on police officers while not having enough Educational Assistants and other staff necessary to teach their children.

“To me, this comes down to money. If we have the money to pay for an SRO and EAs and whatnot, then sure. But my daughter could not have an EA and she needs one. So, if this money is coming from the same place, which I don’t know, then EAs should have priority.”

While some parents who advocated the program expressed that police should “never” be called on students, others who advocated against the program still believed that police intervention is necessary in some cases, but that outside police should be called to the school for such incidents. In other words, they did not want to advocate for a community-based policing model and relationship building between students and police, but preferred police to only be called when they needed to arrest and charge a student:

“It doesn’t seem necessary for that to be institutionalized in a school because they have you know PAL, like the Police Athletic League – I don’t know if they have that in Canada right? We’re from the United States originally. There are things that *police do* that are about like those kinds of community connections that could uh fill that need, or provide that service without having you know the risk of somebody starting on the school-to-prison pipeline or having like typical school age behaviour criminalized um because there is somebody there who sees things through the lens of a criminal code, right? and has the ability again to you know to charge and to arrest. I mean that um I, I would think that for *truly* egregious behaviours that everybody would agree is a crime to begin with, again, you know like bringing like you know box cutter knives and a gun and attempting to kill the principal or something like that like *clearly that a crime* right? You can call the police, like the actual police and they’ll come fast enough, you know when something like that is happening, but you don’t need to have somebody there all the time.”

While most of the parents who advocated against the program did not actually have personal experience with the SRO at their children’s school or the program itself (nor did their children), a minority did draw on personal negative experiences, such as this caregiver:

“Suddenly one of the times I went in um it, the principal said that I had to talk to the SRO, you know the police officer who explained to me that he was going to charge her with assault. Um, you know she had run away from the school, you know which she did – was one of the things that she does you know just running away – um and I don’t remember why she ran away on that particular day, but it doesn’t necessarily matter why she ran away, but you know when she ran away he ran after her. And you know he tackled her and cuffed her and you know to man-handle her back to the school because that’s like the way the SRO handles it as opposed to the way the teachers and EAs had previously handled it, which had never involved you know hand-cuffing and ...you know um and physical force. So, in the, as he was doing that to her, she was of course struggling and resisting and you know lashing out and thrashing with her arms and her legs and so he got her back to the school I think that they called the police van also and put her in that, you know. And then we got back to the school the principal introduced me to him and he explained that he was going to charge her. So it took me 45 minutes to convince him not to charge her. I am the professor, I am an extremely (laughing) like I mean I could successfully advocate for her, right? And I succeeded in getting him to not charge her. Um, but what I um, my concern with the, my deep concern with the program is for all of the parents and parents who don’t have somebody like me, who can manage to make that happen through you know a combination of skills and white privilege. Right?”

In contrast to this caregiver, most parents with personal/direct experience tended to view the program as an asset for their children’s schools. They provided direct experiences involving

an SRO that they perceived to be helpful to their students. They stressed that SROs would often act as a bridge between the school administration and the child, expressing that the school administration was more likely to want to punish the child, while the SRO would try to use diversion measures, such as working out with the student as opposed to suspending or expelling the student. They recounted situations in which the SRO advocated for their children, and sometimes negotiated with the administration – who wanted to expel or suspend their child. For example, this caregiver remembered:

“So, when all this happened, the principal was ready to expel our son and just wasn’t having any of it. And I fully believe it’s because he presents as Indigenous, you know, visibly Indigenous because I know from other parents that their kids did not get expelled for a fight or at least the kid was being heard and both sides were taking into account. So, when I was called to the office, I specifically asked to speak to the SRO who knew my son and he knew the story and he convinced the principal to go another way and they drafted a plan for my son. But it was the SRO who had his back.”

Another caregiver recounted a situation in which their SRO navigated a difficult moment between their daughter and another child. In this case, the SRO intervention helped their daughter to feel safe walking to the bus and comfortable at school after an alleged bullying event:

“Um, I was really impressed with it. Um, he took our screen shots, like it was a lot of social media bullying and social media threats and threats obviously need to be taken seriously, whether we know if they are real or not and he was great about it. He took all of the screen shots that we had, all the messages that we had and everything. He spoke to both girls, he didn’t just take my daughter’s side and go with it, he spoke to the other girl as well and shared what he could of their conversation, just like I’m sure he shared part of what my daughter and I said, so that he could compare kind of what everybody’s doing. And resolution came quickly, the other girl realized she made a mistake, um and the officer was able to help her realize that she shouldn’t be behaving in that way and my daughter even got an apology out of it. So, it was a very positive experience and my daughter went from being afraid to go out after school, um to feeling confident to walk to the bus. We didn’t have any other problems with that girl the rest of the year, in fact they were positive with each other afterwards. They weren’t friends, but they were gentle and they were kind.”

When asked about bias, these parents stated that they did not have such experience and that their children did not experience the SRO to be discriminating:

“Everyone has biases, you, me, teachers, police officers. My daughter never said the SRO was targeting them, and I don’t believe she did. And she looks Cree. So, if you ask me whether we should have them back – 100 percent we should have them back.”

Another caregiver added that in their experience, children at their son’s school felt safe around the SRO independent of their sexual orientation or racial background:

“Bias – no, not in our personal experience. My son is part of the 2sLGBTQ+ community and he never felt threatened, he never felt um he never felt that he couldn’t go there because of his orientation or anything like that. He felt safe being able to reach out either way. And the kids in the hall it wasn’t just all the white kids

that were high-fiving him. And I'd like to point out that he was a big, Black man so that makes a big difference too."

This comment is in line with other parents of 2sLGBTQ+ and disabled students who generally felt the SRO could fulfill an important role in protecting their children against victimization.

Other parents who viewed the program as an asset commented on the SROs' ability to make the schools safer and their expectations as caregivers. In their minds, relationship building and other roles (such as educating children on bullying and other topics) were not part of their expectations of SROs, so, in their minds, the officers went above and beyond of what they expected of them as caregivers:

"So, as a parent like I *fully* expect a police officer to make the school safer. All of this other stuff they did is, to me, just like a bonus and an amazing thing that's you know that's part of their initiative, part of EPS's initiative, I guess. Like I wouldn't have expected an SRO officer to be a listener, to take on a role as almost like a guidance counsellor although I don't really think schools have budgets for guidance counsellors anymore. But they do that, and they are really effective at it, so it's almost like they go above and beyond."

Related to ensuring the overall safety of the school community, many parents commented on the SRO explaining lock down procedures and fire drills to their children, ensuring that they feel safe in the process:

"My son also mentioned that some, the school quite often goes into lockdown because of the neighborhood, so uh, and my daughter even mentioned that 'oh our school went into lockdown' and she mentioned the name of the officer and she said, 'he just showed up and he comforted everybody, everything is good' he went from class to class and explained the situation, so those kinds of incidents."

Further, some parents simply appreciated the presence at the school, and the opportunity for children to form positive relationships with a police officer after potentially not having had the opportunity to do so in the past:

"The presence is nice. Um, having kids have a positive interaction with a police officer or an SRO. Um, some of our kids don't get positive interactions, they've watched their family members be taken away or they get taken away in police cars, or whatever, um and so having that positive interaction shows them that not all officers are out to get them."

The parents who were opposed to the program often stated that they would like to see improved counselling services to address situations in which kids are in trouble instead of dealing with such situations through a police response. These parents stressed the importance of addressing the root causes of challenging behaviours. While there were no racial differences between parents who offered these opinions, these views were mostly shared by parents who did not have direct experiences with SROs. In their view, SROs were mostly handing out tickets to students and treated students "like criminals" as opposed to having conversations with the students who were showing challenging behaviours. This is in contrast to the experiences of former and current students who recounted that their respective SROs

placed an emphasis on having conversations. Very few participants, expressed feeling “like criminals” or faced an increased risk of criminalization in the presence of their SRO (see student sections):

“The thing about SROs being you know in the school is that you’re kinda treating kids like criminals, while they’re just like kids who are fucking up. And in like a perfect sort of utopian world it’s like, you know should we be getting tickets for let’s say drug use, harder drug use, or should there be some sort of other like counselling programming, something better in place to try to work through the issues. Or if someone is constantly getting in to fights and being violent, why is that? Let’s not just suspend you and send you back home to a potentially worse situation than what school is. Like I feel like instead of SROs we should have better like mental health care professionals within the school, not being like ‘here’s a ticket’ but ‘hey let’s have a conversation and let’s work on this.’ And in a perfect world that’s what I would like to see instead of just treating young kids like criminals and writing them off immediately, which is what tends to happen.”

Or:

“If you know if you were caught smoking and you got a ticket from the SRO it’s, you’re really just in that moment kind of getting more of a hate on for him because he’s stopping you from doing what you wanna do. Are you gonna stop smoking because he just gave you a ticket? No, you’re not. So in that sense, same thing, like it’s not the kind of supports that troubled kids need, it’s more of a slap on the hand and in my opinion it’s not going to change their ways. It’s kind of more deeper rooted than getting a simple ticket and saying ‘oh okay I’m not gonna do that anymore, I’m not gonna smoke here anymore I’m not gonna smoke at all anymore.”

Parents of current students, most of whom had never experienced the program in their children’s schools, had extremely varying views about the program. Again, there were no distinct differences with respect to their student’s backgrounds. Some of these parents felt that the SRO program should not be reinstated, other parents felt that having an SRO would provide their children with an increased sense of safety and an additional resource. The three quotes below represent these opposing views:

“The police are clueless, it’s obvious, I don’t want to be sounding like I hate the police, but I don’t want them near my kids. I don’t want them near other people’s kids so they can do that kind of damage to people, ‘cause it costs a lot of people a lot of money with lawyers to get out of those situations where there is bias, racism, just lack of knowledge a general lack of knowledge.”

Or:

“It’s a flimsy argument by people that clearly have no lived experience in any of these things, justifying the presence of criminalization and surveillance of children in schools. Like, yeah SROs don’t do anything except for like, intimidate and like abuse their power and essentially like groom youth to like participate in policing, narc on their peers and yeah uh like either you learn to avoid them and don’t mess with police it’ll just fuck you up, or you learn that oh yeah the institution of policing like society believes that I’m an exceptionality to the rules. And therefore, no matter how many times they punch this kid out, I’m actually not going to face consequences other than maybe the vague threat of suspension. So, it’s the touch point of differentiating between the people that the police will help to commit crimes versus the people that

the police will accuse of committing a dangerous crime and punish like heinously disproportionately to the scale of said crime.”

Versus:

“As a parent of a non-binary kid, like um like if my kid is gonna face prejudice and possible like violence from other kids in later grades, so if, I, something about having a resource there for them to go to if they experience a crime does seem a bit comforting as long as that resource is helping and not discriminating.”

Or:

“I simply feel uncomfortable knowing my child will have no one to turn to when experiencing victimization. These parents who believe police are all corrupt and shoot people on site have clearly watched too much TV and don’t have lived experience with police in Canada. They don’t know what victimization feels like. If you don’t need the cops in your life, sit down. Don’t talk. And it’s mostly privileged lefty folks who talk that way.”

Similar to the student groups with students of South Asian and East Asian and Southeast Asian descent, their parents also focused on the perceived increase of crime and violence on school properties since the program had been placed on hold. Similar to their children, they tended to experience the school environment as less safe since the program has been on hold.

“Um well havin’ an SRO, the SRO took away a lot of the things that the teachers and the admin now have to do - are not trained for... So they took away anything to do with like drugs, weapons, any investigation, technology, bullyin’, those things I’m talkin’ about. Now that they are gone, my children’s school is seeing all these things, it’s like a different place now. Very unsafe.”

Or:

“My daughter can’t go to the washroom because they now deal drugs in there. My son can’t walk down this hallway, because that’s where the fights are. And everyone knows. That is insane to me. How is that ok? So, because some people hate the police, they want all other people feel unsafe. I don’t understand how that’s even allowed.”

Overall then, the perceptions of parents were deeply divided, with some parents feeling extremely strongly that police in general, and by extension the SRO program could harm their children and should not be reinstated, while others felt that the SRO program could not be reinstated soon enough (with some participants explicitly asking when they can finally expect to have the program back).

Recommendations based on focus groups and interviews

At the Board’s request to centre the views and perspectives of students and parents who identify as Black, Indigenous, a person of colour, 2sLGBTQ+, and/or disabled, we, as the researchers, were not tasked with providing recommendations in relation to the SRO program. However, we asked participants across all focus groups and interviews what their ideal program would look like and whether they would like to see the program reinstated or would like to see a different program. We also asked our participants what improvements they would like to see should the program be reinstated. As is already clear from the data presented above, our participants have varying views on the program, on whether or not it

should be reinstated, and on what improvements are necessary. The strongest opposition to the program could be found in the caregiver groups, particularly among parents who took a general abolitionist stance. The strongest support for reinstatement could be found among participants who had direct experiences with their SRO (or their children's SRO) and among students and parents of South Asian, East Asian, and South East Asian backgrounds. While there is no unanimity across the participants, below, we are summarizing recommendations that were expressed by more than three participants across all groups:

1. Students and parents are asking for better communication about the program and more detailed explanations as to what the purpose of the program is. Our focus groups indicated that both students and parents perceive that they have not been educated about the goals of the program. Therefore, the EPSB should improve their messaging about it.
 - a. "You know schools can do a better job of like introducing that person, or like why they are there, because we never really had, I never really had an explanation as to why they were there, it's just like 'oh this person is here, here's this person that's an authority figure that you're scared of and all of this.' But if they could properly like the reason as to why, 'hey this is, he's here to protect you' and also 'if things are like what's going on in the school they kind of know', and 'they are more in tuned with the students', that would be really good."
 - b. "I felt like if they would kind of introduce, like have an introduction to the students in the school as to why they are there and stuff it maybe would have been able to like alleviate some of that fear from kids or for myself. I feel like that would have been helpful."
 - c. "EPSB didn't give us any information. We didn't have any knowledge or anything about this person coming into the school, why they were there. And like, I think that there should be a kind of openness, like 'hey this category of people have gone through this specialized training XYZ and they are here to help you' will maybe try to like help sort of build up that position of a resource. Like explain that this is someone that you *can* go to that can put you in the right direction of mental health supports, or you know, um any sort of like drug counselling, anything, or give you information on the justice system."
2. Students and parents stressed that parents from countries in which they have negative experiences with the police may be particularly hesitant about the program. They recommend the EPSB/SRO needs to significantly improve messaging about *how* this program may be different from other police programs and how EPS may be different from police forces in other contexts.
 - a. "I think that's what was really important for the kids [and parents] to see that you know there's help out there, but you just need to, you need to let them know. I mean they could see things and deal with it, but it's also being willing to talk to them. In many cultures police officers are not a good thing – *many, many*. So, I think that's like that starting point of building that relationship and being that deterrent but also being that um that chance to connect with

someone who really, their job is to protect you. You have to tell kids and parents what police officers do in Canada. Sorry, I feel pretty strongly about it, that the SROs should be there. The fact that there's a hallway that you don't go down because that's the drug hallway or the dodgy people I think that's *crazy*.”

- b. “I think particularly when you think our parents who don't have good experiences, they need to be taught about the program. It needs to be explained to them that police keep us safe. They don't know.”
3. Indigenous parents and students – both former and current – strongly felt that SROs should have background knowledge on colonialism and the traumas inflicted on Indigenous peoples in Canada – both historically and ongoing. They did not suggest that the SROs they have experienced do not already have such training, but instead, suggested that there should be a strong emphasis on ensuring that future SROs were acutely aware of the lingering consequences of colonialism.
 - a. “I feel like having that training of like the Indigenous people and having that background knowledge [...] is super important.”
 - b. “When I was at school, no one knew shit about colonialism and so on. I feel this is now part of the training anyways, but it HAS to be, you know. They need to make sure SROs understand why Indigenous kids may be in trouble. You know what are the causes and stuff.”
4. Students and parents agreed that SROs needed to be compassionate and “good with children” to be successful in the SRO role. They recommended paying close attention to such soft skills in the hiring process, should the SRO program be reinstated.
 - a. “I think it's like, you just you need someone who is like compassionate and who actually cares about the kids. Like you know unfortunately like a lot of people go into positions of power based off of their egos and they like to act out on that. So, like I think the bottom line is you need someone who cares. You just need somebody who cares about the kids and *wants* them to succeed, *wants* them to do good in life and *wants* to have a positive impact on their lives”
 - b. “I think the compassion is really the most important piece there and training.”
5. Likewise, participants stressed that officers should be trauma-informed, educated on gender and sexuality, as well as race-relations and bias.
 - a. “So that skill, that police officer should be there and that they are informed, that they understand gender and sexuality thoroughly and know the correct, the right things to say, what people shouldn't be saying, what constitutes hate speech – informed I guess if you are looking for a skill that you'd say that officer should have.”

- b. “So, a great level of comprehension in dealing with people, like not being biased or having any sign of racism or anything like that. Like it’s really got to be somebody who’s neutral and has that personality.”
- 6. Parents stressed that education via the SRO about social media, drugs, vaping, sexual harassment, and other topics should be made available to all students on a frequent basis.
 - a. “I think if there was an educational role that that officer played, I think maybe if they could be informing about things like what is criminal behaviour – like sometimes you see kids acting terribly in a way that if adults were acting like that in the real world it would be criminal. Like you know like physical violence or you know hate speech or just treating each other awfully...so maybe that officer could be like, ‘hey if you if someone sends you a dirty picture of themselves, if you post that on your social media that’s a crime. You are having a criminal record from that’- like that kind of thing that kids might not realize are crimes. Or like hate speech, if a kid says something really awful to a racialized person or to a Trans person and that’s like, there’s a line where it’s not just being an asshole and it’s like ‘no, you’re actually committing a crime now.’ This sort of thing, this education, needs to happen regularly at schools.”
 - b. “I think the education component is invaluable. My daughter also got pamphlets home about vaping and it was super helpful. I did not know many of these things, so yes, I think it’s super valuable also for us parents.”
- 7. Our participants were split on the idea of guns. Given our participants’ views on guns, the EPSB/EPS should consider whether it is necessary for the SRO to carry a gun. Related to this, however, participants recommended explicit communication from EPSB/EPS as to why SROs carry guns.
 - a. “They should just be clear: this is why it’s necessary for the SRO to have a gun. Here is why. It won’t be used against your children. It’s part of the uniform. If there is an intruder, it can be used.”
 - b. “I don’t know that they need to have a gun but if they do, they should just explain to the children and the parents what it’s for.”
- 8. Some participants recommended to consider alternatives to the program, such as pairing the SRO with a social worker, reframing the position as a Health and Safety position, liaising with community, or liaising with counsellors.
 - a. “I think like, in a perfect world you know we would have this team of people inside the school, like a fully registered PAC psychologist that specializes in youth, in conjunction with like you know just like maybe like a general career counsellor in conjunction then with an SRO who is not in a uniform. This sort of like team of specialized individuals that hopefully would wanna see all of these kids succeed.”

- b. “Well I think I know that Edmonton Police has like units where they pair up a police officer with a trained mental health professional and they intervene in that capacity when it’s needed. And I just, you know, that’s two people now, you wouldn’t wanna have two people in the school, but if there was a way of amalgamating both of those things where you could address both security concerns and mental health or family related, supportive social work concerns. And if that was the role you could somehow create that, I think that would be the better option.”
9. Former students with extensive experience with SROs during their school careers – mostly because they described themselves as “troubled youth who would often break the law” felt strongly that the SRO program should be reinstated and could act as a barrier between the justice system and the school. They fear that having no SRO in place will leave the schools no choice but to call on “outside police” in some situations (such as threats, violence, drug dealing, etc.)
- a. “Officers could be that point and that barrier between the justice system and you know they could be the ‘justice system light’, and that’s like what it was like at my high school, it felt like they were.... you know I got in trouble but I didn’t get in like *that* much trouble – they didn’t escalate it. Whereas it feels like outside of school cops will like escalate things, like you do something wrong - that’s it! You know you’re charged and they just wanna keep that rolling and fulfil their quotas or whatever it feels like. It feels more impersonal, but the school officers are different in that way, I think.”
 - b. “If we come in to high school and we’re having these good interactions with them, positive interactions with them, they are actively helping us, actively supporting us, then I think that could, you know potentially change our outlook on how we see them in the *real world* outside of high school on the streets, that kind of thing. [...] And I think they are dealing with things much more lightly than the administration does or outside police. It’s better to have them around.”
 - c. “As someone who was in trouble a lot, I feel the supports SROs give are better, they are more of a supportive, positive role than others in the school. I don’t know where I’d be without this cop.”
10. Similar to former students, current students and parents of current students felt that having an SRO back in schools would increase school safety while also have situations addressed in more compassionate manners due to a pre-existing relationship between the youth and the resource officer (as opposed to calling on an outside police officer):
- a. “When criminal activity does happen at school, because I was just having a conversation today about drug sales happening on the school property and if you have a resource officer at the school familiar with the kids then maybe it’s dealt with in a different way. I don’t know what different looks like but maybe it’s dealt with in a more constructive way than having someone who is unfamiliar with the kids or the school system. But we need someone to deal with the *actual* criminal stuff that’s happening – not in elementary school that

I know of but in high schools. And, so, um, yeah what do we do with that? Because it needs to be addressed. And I'm just not sure that juvie is the place where these people need to go necessarily, but that's what happens when you call on outside police."

- b. "Like kids would come from other schools 'cause there's some beef or something right? If that escalates out of hand, definitely there's no capacity for admin to deal with that. And there is no method in place right now to have police services immediately there. They are waiting for dispatch, but something that's an actual emergency, it needs to happen fast. But I think that's why we need that SRO to be there, they can bring some weight.... And even the drugs piece...if there's something more like opioid-ish or hard core drug, a social worker can really deal with that. That's different than cannabis, right?"

11. Some parents recommended installing more cameras instead of reinstating the SRO program, while others explained that they prefer reinstating the program:

- a. "If you wanna make your schools more secure, put up more cameras. Like that's where policing is going, is everything's automated. We're using technology. We are using more like um biometric to access certain areas of where kids shouldn't go, certain rooms maybe, those kinds of things and security cameras."
- b. "I mean you behave well because you know you're being watched, but as soon as you're in a corner of the school where you know there isn't a camera, what's to stop you from regulating your own behaviour if the reason you're behaving well is because you just know you're not going to get caught. I don't know, I just, to me having a police officer there that, if they are acting as a role model for kids and there may be some kids that get changed, their paths change as they develop a relationship with this officer, that might be a better long term impact on crime in a community than more cameras?"
- c. "I think at some point the cameras just stop being influential and I think that from my perspective, if we have a resource officer, even if it's not a full-time person, maybe it's a once a week kind of person but it's about establishing a positive relationship with someone. And just another opportunity for my kids, our kids, to you know, if something bad is happening, a place for them to go."

12. Several parents recommended collecting data directly from students to see how they feel about the program. In their minds, asking parents is not the right approach due to generational differences as well as the fact that students have to feel safe in the environment, not the parents themselves. Some parents also recommended asking teachers and principals about their views as they work in the school environment.

- a. "Right so what are the student attitudes and once you gather your data and you see what are the students saying. Are they safe? Are they happy? Are they not? 'Cause really I don't care about parents, I mean I'm a parent, but it's about the students. If my kid is going to school for 7 or 8 hours a day and is

not feeling like they are happy with that, why would I have it, right? So, gather that information and seeing what the student view is.”

- b. “In my view, it’s all about the kids. Ask them what they want and what they need to feel safe. Will everyone be happy? No. But at the end of the day, it’s about what the majority of kids want and whether they want this program or not. Oftentimes, they feel differently than their parents. We fight about topics all the time, right?! It’s a different generation. They should decide what they want. And the teachers need to be asked what they need to feel safe. If they feel unsafe with a cop there, they should not be forced to teach when they feel scared. Because that affects our children. But if they want the SRO to feel safe, they should be able to say that.”

13. Some parents and students were hoping for a rotation system of different officers allowing for more representation of different racial backgrounds and genders.

- a. “Bring them back full time, but do a rotation. Full time and they do a rotation within different schools, but it would always be the same sort of rotation so that if a Black kid who’s being bullied or whatever by some person or whatever group, he would feel comfortable talking to that person. Someone who is maybe Muslim, like that you could see was Muslim or wearing a hijab right? Not a hijab, well a hijab for a woman but also a turban, like get that group of maybe five of them that rotate the high schools but it’s always that five so there’s always representation, they’re all working together as all schools together, right, because then they can, if this is happenin’ at this school you can be damn sure it’s gonna be happenin’ at that school.”
- b. “I think representation, diversity is very important. And really, really culturally, there are so many refugees and things in schools now and I’m gonna say Black students who have no faith in the police station, in the police officers. But they need to build that relationship and that at a high school might be the only place where that happens. So, um, yeah, representation, diversity and being open and being involved in everything, charitable events etc. Maybe rotate different officers so that more representation can happen.”

PART F: STUDENT SURVEY

A survey was administered to all EPSB students in Grades 10 through 12. Students in this grade range were targeted because they had the greatest chance of being exposed to the School Resource Officer (SRO) program prior to its suspension in September 2020. The survey was administered by the survey research team at the University of Alberta. The survey research protocol also received approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. Although students could participate in the survey after receiving an online invitation, teachers were encouraged to give students time to complete the survey during class time.

The survey asked about students' experiences with and opinions about the SRO program. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were included. The open-ended questions allowed students to describe their experiences and opinions in their own words. Students who reported that they had attended a school with an SRO were asked a different set of questions than students who did not attend an SRO school or did not know if their school had an SRO or not (see below).

Students could only access the survey via the use of their own unique password. This ensured that students could only fill out the survey once and that the survey could not be shared with people outside of the EPSB community. The survey was administered to students between May 18th and June 30th, 2022. On average, the survey took between 15 and 33 minutes to complete (22 minutes on average). The response time depended on how much qualitative material individual students wished to share with the research team.

The final sample consisted of 5,349 respondents. However, as requested in the original motion directing this research and confirmed by EPSB administration, the current report focusses only on the responses of racialized students and students from other marginalized groups, including students who self-identify as disabled, students who self-identify as having a non-binary gender identity, and students who self-identify as a member of the 2sLGBTQ+ community. As noted by the EPSB: *"The original research question specified that the study be limited to a distinct subset of students. Thus, responses from students who did not identify as any of the specified groups should not be included in this research."* Both the EPSB and researchers acknowledge that not all voices are represented in this research. However, the intent of this study was specifically to center the attitudes and experiences of racialized and other marginalized individuals.

All current Grade 10 to 12 students were asked to complete the survey so as not to make any student feel pressured to reveal any aspect about themselves they did not already choose to do publicly (e.g., they may not have wanted to say they identified as 2sLGBTQ+ if they had not already shared that information with others). It was also recognized that this was the last cohort of Grade 11 and 12 students who would have experience with the former SRO program in the EPSB and there would not be another opportunity to collect the data from all students. However, based on the specified scope of this study, not all current students were within the parameters of participation. The final sample included in this report excludes 1,307 White, heterosexual student participants who identified as either male or female and did not self-report a physical or learning disability. Data from these participants are available for future analysis.

The final sample used in the current report consists of 4,042 student respondents. All respondents in this sample share at least one of the following four characteristics: 1) They self-identify as Indigenous or the member of another racialized group; 2) They self-identify as having a physical or learning disability; 3) They self-identify as belonging to the 2sLGBTQ+ community; or 4) They self-identify as having a non-binary gender identity.

Sample Description

A detailed description of the student respondents is provided in Table D1. At the time of the survey, a third of the student respondents included in this analysis (37.7%) were enrolled in Grade 10, 34.3% were enrolled in Grade 11, and 25.1% were enrolled in Grade 12. An additional 2.9% of the sample reported enrollment multiple grades.

Approximately one fourth of the student respondents (22.7%) report that they were 15 years-old at the time of the survey, 35.4% were 16 years-old, 27.0% were 17 years-old, 10.7% were 18 years of age, and 3.7% were 19 years of age or older. Only 20 student respondents indicated that they were 14 years of age or younger at the time of the survey (0.5% of the sample).

The student sample is racially diverse. The sample includes 878 South Asian students (22.2% of the sample), 844 Asian students (21.2%), 409 Black students (10.3%), 252 Arab/Middle Eastern students (6.3%), 156 Indigenous students (3.9%), and 97 students who self-identified as Hispanic or Latino (2.4% of the sample). The sample also includes 468 students who self-identified as multi-racial (11.7% of the sample).

It is important to note that 883 student participants self-identified as White – 22.1% of the sample. However, all White participants included in the current analysis self-identified as the member of a marginalized group. In other words, all the White students in the sample self-reported that they were either a member of the 2sLGBTQ+ community, self-reported a non-binary gender identification, or self-reported a physical or learning disability.

Half of the participants self-identify as female (49.4%) and 37.7% self-identify as male. Four hundred and thirty-five respondents (11.0% of the sample) report a non-binary gender identify. Over half of the non-binary respondents (53.1%) self-identify as White.

Six out of ten student respondents were born in Canada (66.0%). A third (34.0%) were born outside of Canada. Six out of ten immigrant respondents (58.5%) report that they moved to Canada as young children (nine years of age or younger). Thus, prior to answering the survey, most students were either born in Canada or had lived here or several years.

The student sample is also religiously diverse: 22.6% Christian, 15.1% Muslim, 8.2% Sikh, 5.9% Hindu, 2.3% Buddhist, 1.1% Indigenous Spirituality and 0.7% Jewish. One fifth of the sample (21.7%) report that they have no religion and 12.2% indicate that they are an atheist.

All respondents were asked if they had either a physical or psychological (learning) disability. A total of 890 respondents (22.0% of the sample) self-report a disability. Four percent of the sample (161 respondents) report a physical disability and 20.4% of the sample (812 respondents) report a psychological/learning disability. Six out of ten disabled respondents (59.6%) self-report a White racial background.

Most of the student respondents (77.3%) report that they currently live with both of their parents. An additional 12.4% reside with their mother only, 2.9% live with their father only, and 1.7% live with “other relatives.” By contrast, few students live in a foster or group home (0.5%), with friends (0.5%), or on their own (0.7%).

With respect to sexual orientation, two-thirds of student participants (66.1%) report that they are heterosexual or “straight.” An additional 7.4% of the sample reports that they are homosexual, 12.9% are bisexual, 3.9% are pansexual, 5.2% identify themselves as questioning. Only 5 respondents (0.1% of the sample) report that they are two spirited. Half of the students (50.0%) who identify as member of the 2sLGBTQ+ community report a White racial identity.

TABLE D1: STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS	NUMBER	PERCENT
<u>GRADE:</u>		
Grade Ten	1,523	37.7
Grade Eleven	1,384	34.3
Grade Twelve	1,014	25.1
Enrolled in multiple grades	119	2.9
<u>AGE:</u>		
14 years of age or younger	20	0.5
15 years-old	919	22.7
16 ears	1,430	35.4
17 ears old	1,092	27.0
18 ears old	431	10.7
19 years of age or older	150	3.7
<u>RACIAL BACKGROUND:</u>		
Black	409	10.3
Indigenous	156	3.9
Asian	844	21.2
South Asian	878	22.0
Latin American/Hispanic	97	2.4
Arab/Middle Eastern/West Asian	252	6.3
White	883	22.1
Bi-Racial/Mixed Race	468	11.7
<u>GENDER IDENTITY:</u>		
Female	1,996	49.4
Male	1,524	37.7
Non-binary	435	10.8
Did not report/missing	86	2.1
<u>PLACE OF BIRTH:</u>		
Canada	2,667	66.0
Other Nation	1,374	44.0
<u>RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION:</u>		
Christian	911	22.6
Muslim	608	15.1
Sikh	329	8.2
Hindu	239	5.9
Buddhist	94	2.3
Indigenous Spirituality	45	1.1
Jewish	29	0.7
No religion	874	21.7
Atheist	491	12.2
Did not report/missing	292	7.2

TABLE D1: STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS (continued)

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS	NUMBER	PERCENT
<u>DISABILITY STATUS:</u>		
Physical Disability	161	4.0
Psychological Disability	812	20.4
Total Disabled (either physical or psychological disability)	890	22.3
No Reported Disability	3,096	77.7
<u>CURRENT LIVING SITUATION:</u>		
Lives with both parents	3,078	77.3
Lives with mother only	495	12.4
Lives with father only	114	2.9
Lives with other relatives	69	1.7
Lives in foster care/group home	18	0.5
Lives on their own	28	0.7
Lives in a shelter	10	0.3
Lives with friends	19	0.5
Other	151	3.8
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION:</u>		
Heterosexual	2,488	66.1
Gay/Lesbian/Homosexual	277	7.4
Bisexual	485	12.9
Pan-sexual	153	4.1
Questioning	206	5.5
Two-Spirit	5	0.1
Other	148	3.9

School Attendance During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Student respondents were asked how they usually attended school during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure D1). A third of students (33.3%) report that they mainly attended school in person during the pandemic. An additional 44.3% attended both in person and online. Less than a quarter of respondents (22.4%) reported that they mainly attended school online.

Student Attitudes Towards Education

Students were first asked how much they like attending school (see Figure D2). One in fourteen respondents (7.3%) reports that they love school, 36.4% report that they like school most of the time, and 34.2% state that they only sometimes like school. By contrast, only 5.5% of respondents report that they hate school and 12.9% indicate that they dislike school most of the time.

Most student respondents report a relatively high level of academic performance (see Figure D3). For example, 54.9% report that they usually receive grades in the 80% to 100% range. An additional 31.7% report average grades between 65% and 79% and 12% report average grades between 51% and 65%. Only 1.3% report that they typically receive grades of less than 50%.

Most student respondents report ambitious educational goals (see Figure D4). Two-thirds of respondents (67.0%) report that they want to achieve a university (63.9%) or community college degree (3.1%). In fact, 42.0% want to earn an advanced graduate (MA/PhD) or professional degree (i.e., law school, medical school, etc.). By contrast, 6.9% indicate that they just want to graduate from high school and less than one percent of respondents (0.6%) report that they plan to drop-out of high school. Finally, one in five respondents (20.1%) state that they have not yet developed their educational goals and 1.4% state that they don't care about their education.

Disciplinary Issues

Students were then asked if, over the past five years, they had experienced any disciplinary problems at school (see Figure D5). Two-thirds of students report that, over the past five years they have never faced a disciplinary-related punishment. However, almost thirty percent of all student respondents (28.6%) report that, over the past five years, they have been given a detention and 12.6% report that they have been suspended from school. Only 30 students (0.7% of the sample) report that they were expelled from school over the past five years.

Perceptions of Personal Safety

All student respondents were asked how safe they feel at school and in the community around their school. The results suggest that students feel somewhat safer at school than in the community around their school (see Figure D6). Six out of ten respondents (59.1%) report that they feel either safe (44.9%) or very safe (14.2%) when they are at school or on school property. An additional 31.8% feel somewhat safe. By contrast, only 6.6% of students report that they feel unsafe at school. By comparison, about half of respondents (49.1%) report that they feel either safe (38.8%) or very safe (10.3%) in the community around their school. An additional 36.6% feel "somewhat safe." However, one out of ten respondents (9.6%) report that they feel unsafe in the community around their school.

Experiences with Bullying, Harassment and Victimization at School

Student respondents were asked about their experiences with criminal victimization, bullying and harassment, at school, over the past five years (see Table D2). The results reveal that bullying and theft are more likely to be experienced by EPSB students than major forms of violence. However, the results show that a significant proportion of students have been victimized at an EPSB school at some time during the last half decade. Some might conclude that this evidence justifies the use of School Resource Officers or some other type of student safety program.

- A third of respondents (32.5%) report that they have been threatened with violence, at school, over the past five years. One out of ten (10.0%) report being threatened with violence on multiple occasions.

- One out of eight students (13.2% of the sample) report that they have been physically assaulted or attacked at school over the past five years.
- One out of every six students (17.9% of the sample) indicates that they have been in a fight at school over the past five years.
- A third of students (33.4%) report that they have been the victim of robbery or theft, at school, over the past five years.
- Almost six out of ten students (58.3%) report that they have been called names, teased, or otherwise bullied at school over the past five years. Over a third (34.2%) report that they have been bullied, teased or called names on multiple occasions.
- One out of every four students (24.1%) reports that they have been the victim of online bullying, by students from their own school, over the past five years.
- Finally, 15.8% of students report that they have been the victim of sexual harassment or assault, at school, over the past five years. Higher rates of sexual victimization are reported by non-binary (33.0%) and female students (19.0%) than male students (6.5%).

Figure D1: How Students Attended School During the COVID-19 Pandemic

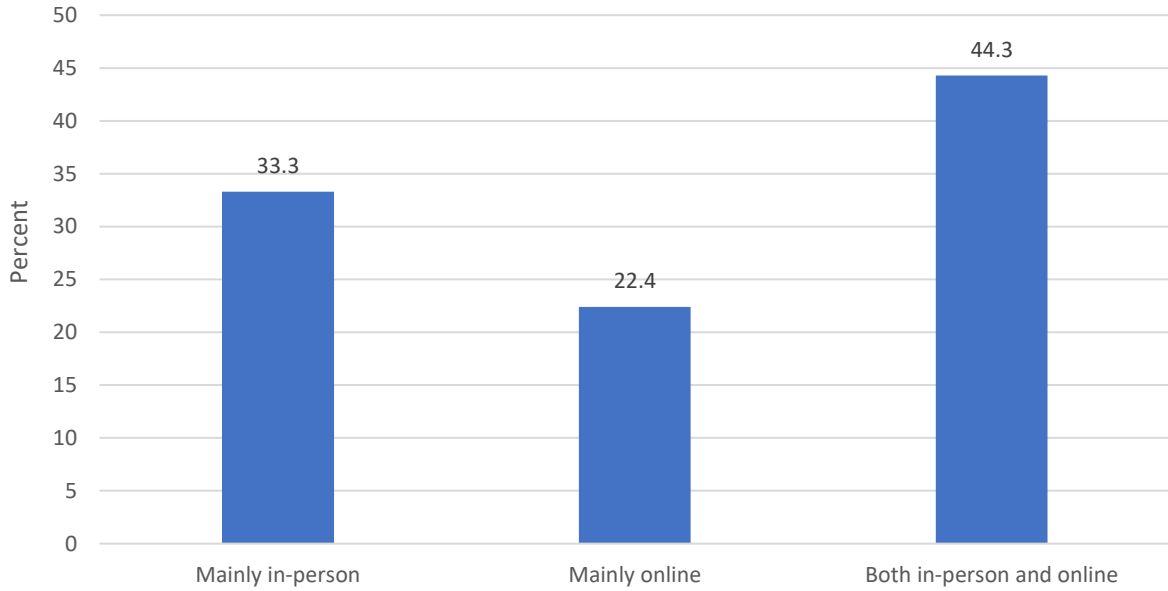


Figure D2: How Students Feel About Attending School

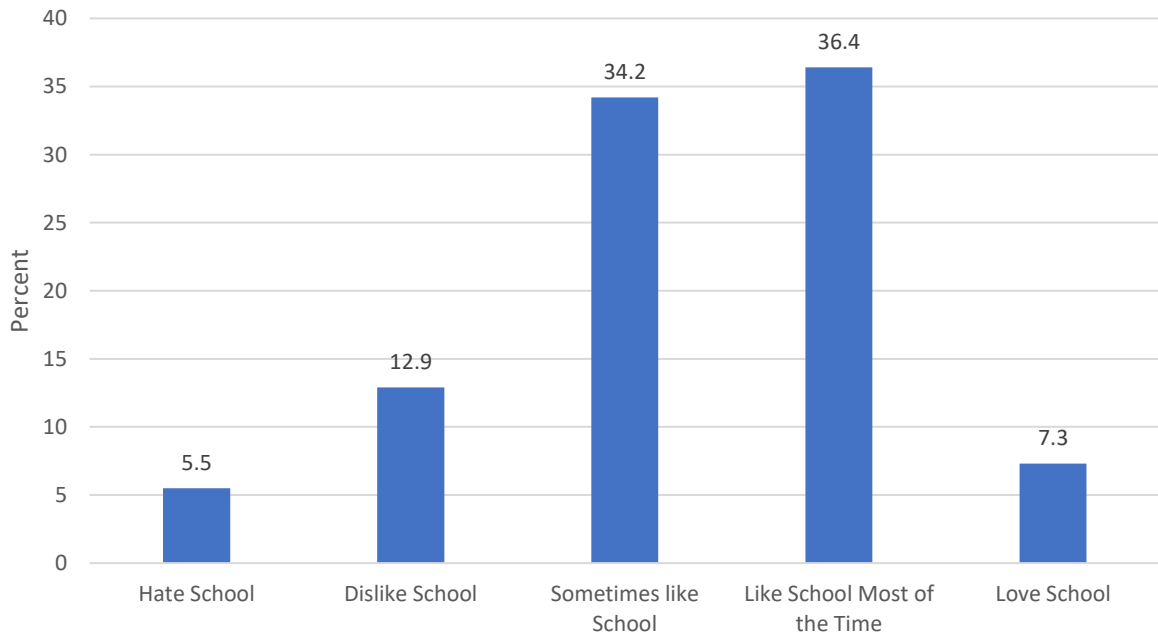


Figure D3: Student Self-Reported Academic Performance

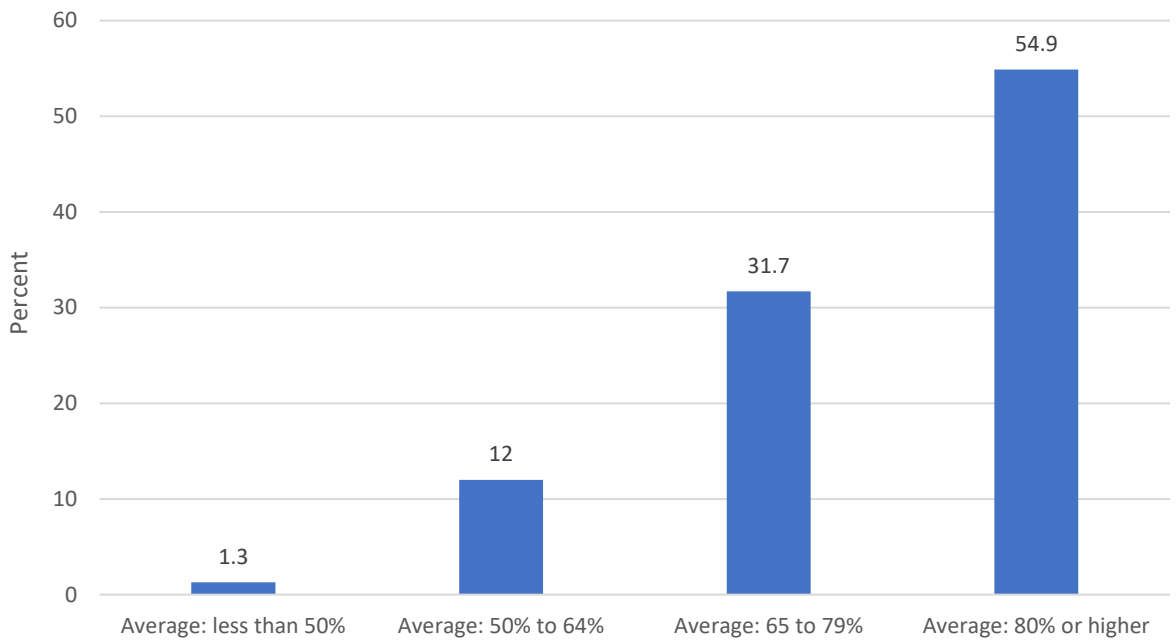
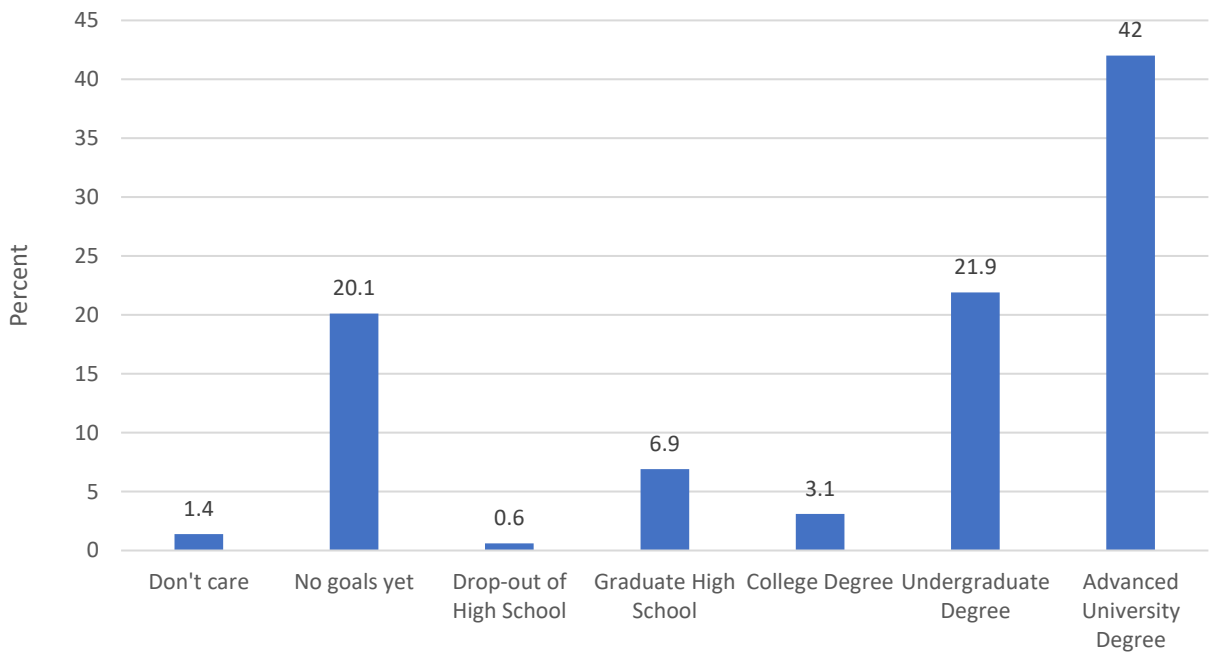


Figure D4: Student Educational Goals



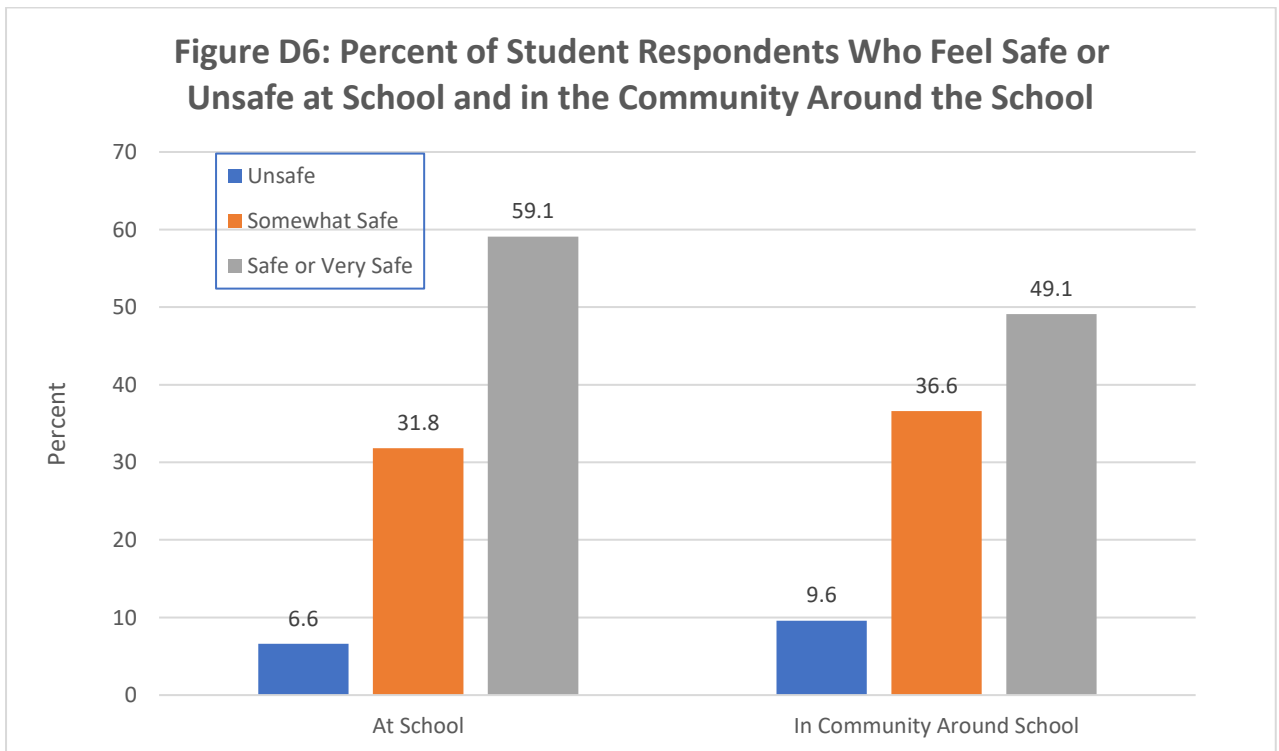
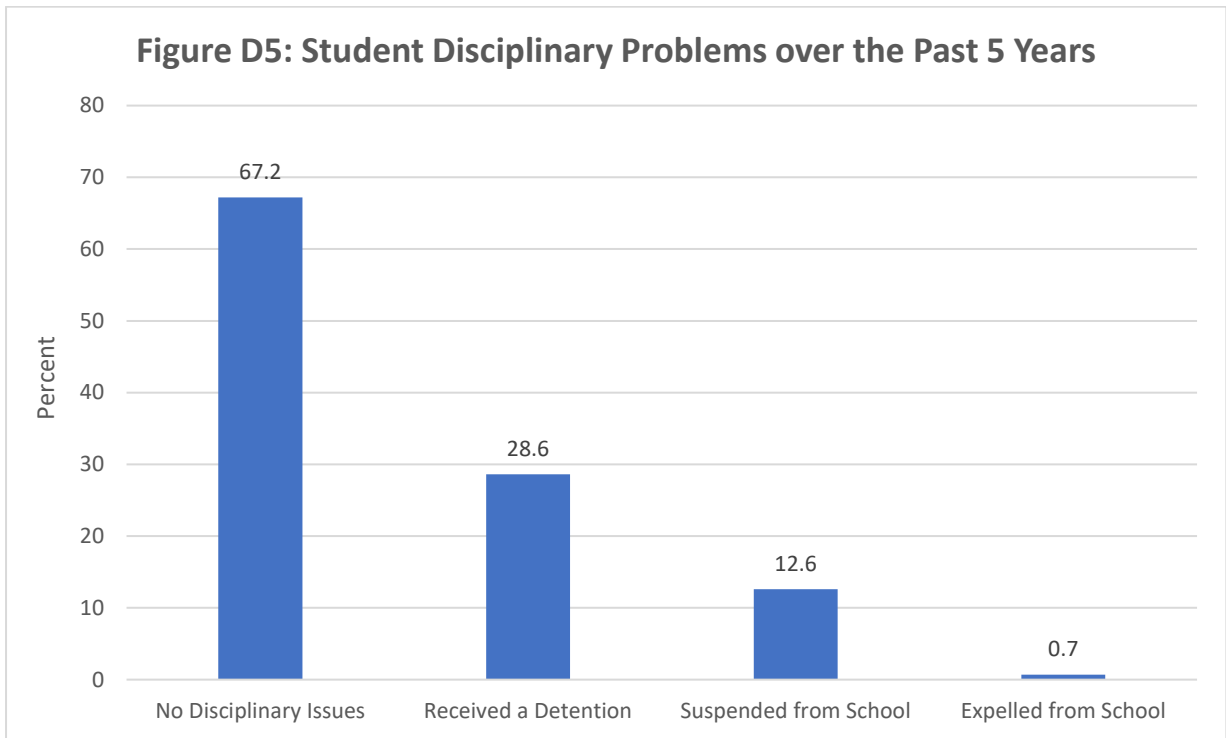
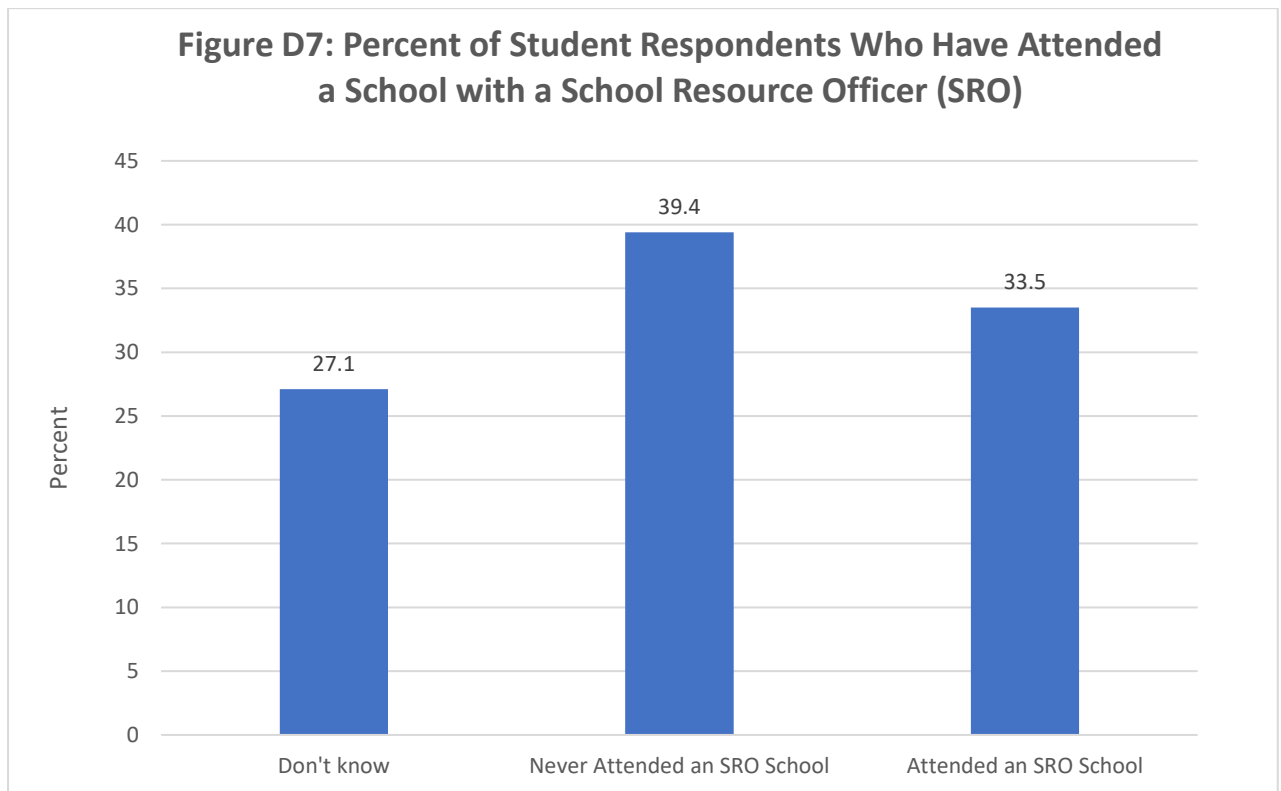


TABLE D2: Percent of Student Respondents Who Have Experienced Various Types of Victimization and Harassment, at School, Over the Past Five Years

TYPE OF VICTIMIZATION OR HARASSMENT	NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE	THREE OR MORE TIMES
Threatened at School	63.2	22.5	10.0
Assaulted or Physically Attacked at School	85.2	10.1	3.1
Been in a Physical Fight at School	80.5	13.5	4.4
Been Robbed or the Victim of Theft at School	64.6	26.9	6.1
Teased, Called Names or Bullied at School	38.9	24.1	34.2
Victim of Online Bullying or Threats by Students from the Same School	73.5	12.7	11.4
Sexually Harassed or Assaulted at School	82.1	9.9	5.8

Contact with the School Resource Officer Program

All respondents were asked if they had ever attended an ESPB school that had a School Resource Officer (SRO). The results indicate that 1,243 students (33.5% of the sample) have attended a school with an SRO -- prior to program suspension (see Figure D7). The results further indicate that 1,460 students (39.4% of the sample) have never attended a school with an SRO. Interestingly, an additional 1,005 students (27.1% of the sample) indicate that they do not know if they ever attended an SRO school or not. Students with and without direct SRO experience were subsequently asked a different series of questions about the SRO program. The results of these different lines of questioning are presented below.



EXPERIENCES AND OPINIONS OF STUDENTS WITH SRO EXPERIENCE

All respondents with SRO experiences were asked the following question: “Think about the last time you were in a school with an SRO. How often would you see the SRO on school property?” The results suggest that most students regularly observed their SRO at school prior to program suspension (see Figure D8). More than half the students (51.9%) replied that they would see their SRO at least once per week. In fact, 35.2% reported that they saw their SRO almost every day. By contrast, only 17.7% of respondents reported that they never or almost never saw their SRO prior to program suspension.

Respondents were then asked how often they had talked to the SRO who was last at their school. Almost half the respondents (44.4%) indicated that they had talked to the SRO at their school at least once and 27.7% indicated that they had talked to their SRO on multiple occasions (see Table D3). However, 55.6% of respondents reported that they had never talked to their school’s SRO.

Respondents were more likely to have witnessed other students engaging with an SRO than to have engaged in a personal conversation (see Table D3). Only a fifth of student respondents (20.0%) report that they have never witnessed or observed other students interacting with an SRO. However, 80.0% have witnessed at least one interaction between a student and an SRO. In fact, 71.4% have observed multiple student-SRO interactions at their school. Frequency of interaction with SROs varies little by student race, gender identity, disability status or sexual orientation.

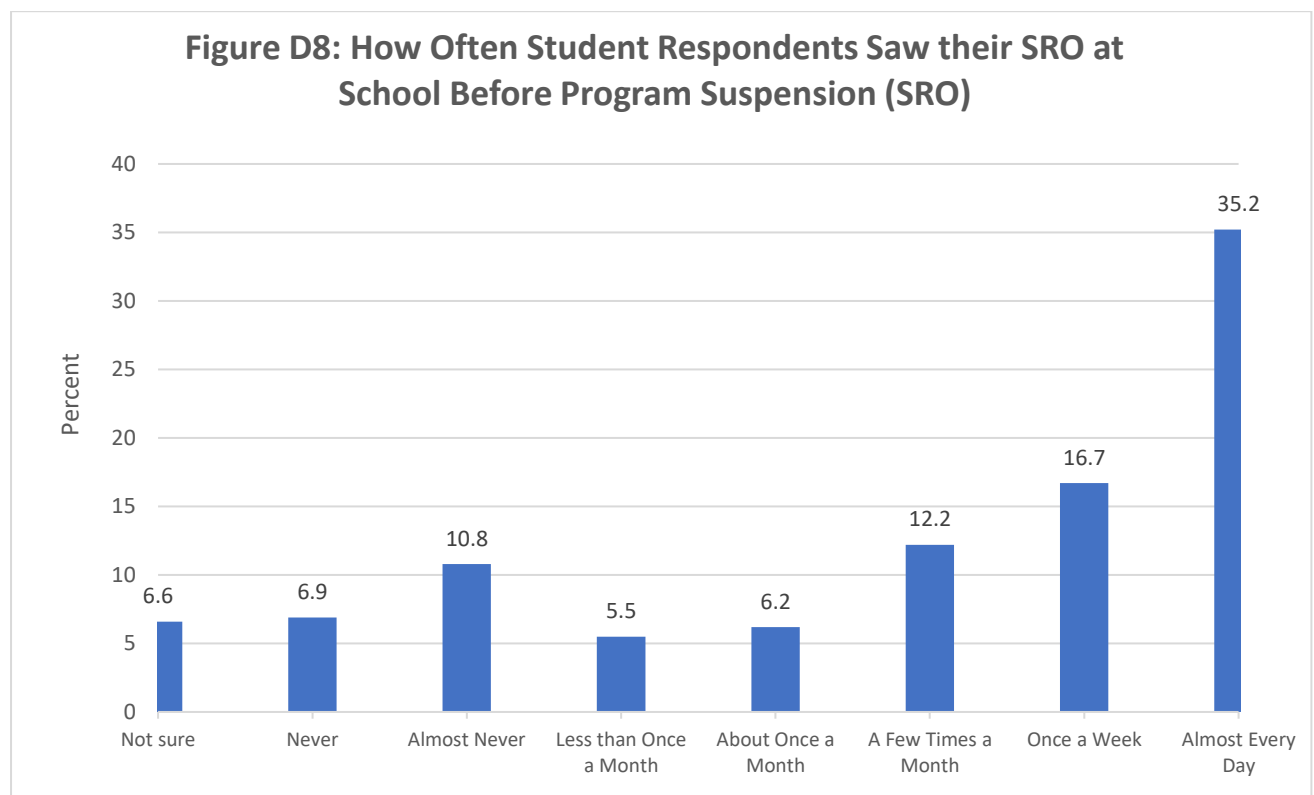


TABLE D3: Percent of Student Respondents Who Report Different Levels of Interaction with School Resource Officers (SROs), over the Past Five Years

Frequency of Interaction	How Often Student Interacted With SROs Over the Past Five Years	How Often Witnessed Other Students Interacting with SROs
Never	55.6	20.0
Once	16.7	8.6
Twice	11.4	12.0
3-5 times	9.4	21.4
6-9 times	2.5	9.5
10-20 times	1.7	8.9
20 times or more	2.7	19.7
Don't know/Unsure	3.0	3.1

Positive and Negative Experiences with SROs

Student respondents were then asked if they had ever had a positive experience with an SRO (see Table D4). The results indicate that 404 students (32.5% of the sample) had at least one positive experience with an SRO. By contrast, only 106 respondents (8.5% of the sample) report having a negative interaction with the SRO at their school.

Positive interactions with SROs, reported by student respondents, include friendly and/or informative conversations, support or assistance following bullying or victimization incidents, counselling students in crisis, mentoring or coaching students during extracurricular activities, lenient or innovative punishments after rule breaking behaviour, delivering lessons on personal safety in class, and generally helping students feel safe and welcome in the school environment. Examples of positive experiences described by students are provided below.

In Their Own Words: Examples of Positive Student Experiences with SROs

I had to talk to an SRO because something was stolen from my wallet in my locker. He was very polite and helped me with the problem. We couldn't find the wallet in the end, but he gave me a good experience.

We had a good conversation about basketball.

A group of older kids (from a visiting team's school) came to our high school and were harassing me and others. They were trying to steal shoes from me and looking to beat up a classmate of mine over a dispute at a party. Obviously, being 2-3 years younger than the older kids, we were afraid and told the SRO about them and he ended up dealing with it. We were safe.

I just had a mutual relationship with Constie. We laughed and joked together. We talked about our days and what we were up to. More of a friendship than an official thing.

A past SRO testified for my brother when he was wrongfully charged on school property. He helped our family and was fair.

A positive experience would just be having a casual conversation with the SRO.

Although I have never spoken to her, she looks very nice, and she looks very kind to students and staff that she is talking with.

Always incredibly helpful with directions and helping students feel welcome. We called her “constie” and almost everyone loved her.

An officer described his role in the school and his tasks. It made him approachable.

An officer once offered me and my friends candy during lunch time, and initiated a short, friendly conversation.

Our SRO was just a fun guy to talk to about anything. Lots of people enjoyed striking up a basic convo with him.

I asked the officer where my class was and he was really helpful. After that we always said hi to each other.

At lunch time or anytime I had a washroom break, I’d stop by and he’d give me chocolate and talk a little bit about good things and he’d mostly advise me to stay safe and always be nice to people. He was just an amazing person to have a small conversation with.

Being friendly in the hallways, saying hi and smiling. Made the school a friendlier place and made you feel safe.

Our SRO was always being respectful and listening to you, having patience. A good person who was part of the school.

Being very friendly and participating in games during gym such as table tennis.

Can talk to them whenever, and they’re nice.

Chatting with them was always cool. One time our SRO let us borrow his handcuffs to film a scene for film class.

Our SRO was an amazing school sponsor and coach to our Senior Boys Volleyball team. Alongside coaching, he was a popular figure in our school and often participated in school Spirit events and was constantly building genuine relationship with students.

During meet the teacher nights they were super friendly with parents and students

During student fights, and during emergency situations, they were there to protect the students and keep people safe. They must not be removed from schools as they play a significant role in maintaining the safety of students and staff. They keep us safe and make us feel safe.

During the beginning of my Grade 10 year our Resource officer did Karaoke and it was awesome. He was so fun.

Felt safe when I knew the SROs were around. Don’t feel that way anymore since the stopped the program.

We just had friendly and open to conversations.

They had a friendly attitude and made everyone feel safe.

Our SRO was a friendly guy who was nice to everyone and made us feel protected.

From my experience, both getting in trouble with an SRO and just talking to them normally, they are very kind and understanding. They help out around the school and all around to make our school a more positive and safe environment, I do not at all understand why the school officials needed to get rid of them.

The SROs gave students a safe place. They made us feel safe.

Good chats and positivity and helping out with questions about our safety and stuff. Felt safe with them around.

The SRO got my stolen property back from a rude classmate and stopped other students from harassing and threatening me all the time.

It was just nice greeting them and asking them about their day. They were very friendly and positive.

Had a concerning talk with the SRO officer about some bad stuff I was doing. They did not talk down or judge me. They got me help and I started doing better at school. I guess they could have arrested me but they gave me a chance..

Had a good conversation about career opportunities within the police force.

Had discussions about basketball played dodge ball with him.

Had lunch in the office with the officer and a police dog. It was pretty cool.

Having a nice conversation and asking about my day

Having a safe place to talk about your problems at school. They helped me with a bullying problem I was having.

Having fun conversations with the SRO's as they walked around the school.

Our SRO always said hi and was so approachable. He was always making jokes and was just funny in general. He made you feel safe, but not in an intimidating way.

He caught me and my friends smoking weed. But he did not freak out. He gave us a break. He called smoking weed "tossing the devil's salad" and explained why it was a bad thing to do at our age.

He complimented my outfit.

He complimented me for having a Oilers hoodie.

He did karaoke with us at a school event.

Our SRO got close with students and really made connections with students and made the school a safer place so you could focus and not worry all the time. Was less anxious with the SRO around.

He got me ice cream after I had a bad experience and talked me through it.

He had dogs and we were allowed to pet and walk them. He was just there to help.

He had two dogs that he brought around school. Everyone loved them. Me and my sibling are impoverished so he had brought us into his office at one point to give us a bag of clothes that his wife didn't need anymore. We didn't feel like we were in trouble/unsafe. He made us better at school.

He had two dogs that he would often bring to school. At lunch or during spares students could take the dogs and walk them around, I spoke with him once to see the dogs and left.

He handcuffed me as part of a demonstration. It was fun.

He helped me feel safe when I just arrived in Canada. I was pretty lonely and scared and felt out of place. But he was always there to talk and help me get used to things.

He helped my friend press charges against the guy who raped her when no one else would do anything.

He just checked up on me when I had bad stuff was going on. He helped me and made me feel safer.

He kept our school feeling safe. We were in an area next to a school and mall and there were often threats and lockdowns. He kept it feeling safe from students who would bring weapons to school or do unethical things on school property.

He let me paint a picture for him instead of getting a out of school suspension. The principal wanted to suspend me, but the SRO said let's try something else. He helped me.

He let me punch his Kevlar vest. Very fun.

He made jokes very often.

He participated in a rap battle. We played basketball together. We had many insightful discussions about life and the future as well.

He taught me the requirement I needed to become a police officer after I asked him about the job!

He treated me as anybody else and was overall friendly. He was kind and helped my friend when they were being harassed. He made us feel safer at school.

He was a nice guy and good to talk to.

He was a nice guy, Cant remember everything we talked about, but it was nice to have an adult to talk to who was not a teacher. He also just gave you a safe feeling.

He was a very kind person that seemed like he genuinely wanted to help.

He was always very nice and friendly.

He was always welcoming.

He was friendly and helped before and after class supervision. He also helped coach some of the school's sports teams sometimes. As well, he held a club in his office for students who were having trouble at school.

He was funny.

He was holding a police training course which was pretty fun. He was nice and understanding and encouraging. He was pretty fun.

He was just a very kind and fun person to talk with.

He was nice.

He was nice to talk to. Really friendly.

He was pretty cool, plus made me feel safe.

He was super nice.

He was very kind to the students and made sure all were safe.

He was very kind. You could go up to him even just for a normal day-to-day conversation or for help if you had a problem.

He was nice and he wasn't ever beating me up.

He would always chat with students and asked how we were doing all the time.

He would be very friendly. Once in grade 10, I needed help with directions and he was helpful.

He would talk to us about how the police system worked and tell us stories about his life. He would walk around with students in the halls at lunch who may have been lonely and talk with them. He would participate in school events all the time such as karaoke and make it a good time all around. He was part of the community and made us know we had protection.

She helped me through my sexual assault. She helped me get the guy charged and get counselling. She helped me feel normal and safe again.

Helped me get my iPhone back when it got stolen. He brought his kids to a school event, always gives high fives.

Helped me learn about weights and boxing.

Helped me through a few threats I was getting. Once he talked to the guys I never had problems again. I was safe.

Helpful, talkative, very nice, funny, fun, etc. A good person for the school.

Helping in finding lost clothing during the winter.

Helping out around the school and keeping us safe.

His dog ate my sandwich so he bought me a new lunch

I feel safe in schools knowing the SROs are there and there is no usage of drugs.

I felt safe when the SRO was there at school.

I got my backpack stolen and the SRO was very kind and helpful with the investigation.

I had a legal studies project in which I needed to interview a member of law enforcement. I interviewed the two of them and it was a very positive experience. They were immensely friendly and explained things to me very well.

I had been walking out of the school to go home and said hi to my SRO. When I left the school I was beat up by this group of girls. So when I went back into the school to fill out an incident report my SRO was so worried for me because they had just seen me. In the end they helped me fill out the incident report and then made sure I had a way to the hospital. They always watched out for me after that and I felt safe.

I had just met them and they let me know they were always there if I needed anything. Very friendly and welcoming.

I had left some of my things in the locker room and my money got stolen and then I talked to the SRO about what can be done. They were able to get the money back for me and then kept checking up on me to see if I was ok.

I had really good conversations with him and he just made me laugh a lot. The SRO that was at my brother's school was also really nice whenever I would see him.

I haven't had a specific positive experience but the SRO at my high school was very friendly and well liked by the school and the student. Gave us a general feeling of safety.

I never really had to talk to a school resource officer for long periods of time. I mostly used this service to just get general answers to questions I had. Despite this, I was given genuine answers that were very helpful. In general, when I last talked to one, they were very helpful.

I remember the police officer being really friendly with the students which made me comfortable to see.

I used to hang out with them, and they would scold me if caught smoking in middle school. She was a nice person. Firm but no too preachy.

I wanted to be a police officer, so I asked the SRO advice and I was pretty much stunned with her help and everything else.

I wanted to go into policing before I wanted to be a physician. The officer offered an amazing insight into his actions to get where he was today.

I was crying in the hallway when she came up and took me for a walk around the school until I calmed down. She let me talk about my problems and always checked upon me after that.

I was in trouble for something I had done wrong and was treated in a fair way by the SRO. They helped teach me how I had done something wrong but did not punish me or suspend me.

I was injured and he helped give me first aid and see if I was ok.

The SRO kept me safe from a very dangerous individual. Somebody who was not allowed to be anywhere near me or my family tried to make contact. They stopped it. The SRO also saved my friend from suicide. They made me feel like I wasn't helpless.

I was offered a free lunch when I could not afford one.

I've seen them dressing up at school events and making jokes.

In general the SRO was very friendly, and sometimes I'd hear them joking around with other students around me. I've never really heard of anyone getting in trouble much by an SRO. They sometimes did programs for kids in trouble so they did not suspended or a criminal record.

The SRO would remind students about safety. Talk about concerns and hazards when he notices them. Enforces protection and safety.

In Jr High, our SRO officer would do workout sessions with a few students with problems in the morning before school. Was overall a very friendly individual who I talked to frequently. He wanted to help kids, not arrest them.

I met a couple of SROs. Both of them were open to discussion, especially about policing. I had a particular interest in how law enforcement and the legal system worked, so I would try to get as much information as possible. Even when not talking about policing, I had great excitement talking to someone - who is generally viewed in a negative way due to the media - who cared about the youth. Overall I'm grateful that I had SROs that had the patience to work at a school full of teenagers.

it was a positive experience with the SRO. Because during my grade 10 year, it wasn't a great time between some friends I had and it led us needing the help of our school resource officer to resolve the issue that was created in our circle of friends and our collective experience that we had with our SRO was awesome because not only were they helpful but they also took in our perspective and did something about it to make us feel safer in our school at the time.

It was just a nice and friendly talk

Just a normal conversation about basketball, what can I do to help myself and my team improve in order to win games!

Just being nice in the hallways

Just general nice conversations

Just generally chatting, having peace of mind having a SRO in the school and knowing we are protected.

Just giving the school presentations about different topics related to staying safe in many aspects of life.

Just little conversations between classes and at lunch

Just saying Hi or Hello within the hallways

Just the way they handle things with the kids, not too aggressive but more like to create conversation instead of an attempt of Interrogation.

Kids asking the SRO to put handcuffs on them for fun

Kind, always on alert. I felt safe at school as I knew the SRO had an opening stance and productive energy. They were there for a reason.

They taught me CPR.

Me and the SRO used to have a conversation about her cute daughter and what she likes to do and saying good morning to her almost every day.

The SRO gave me mental health support when I needed it.

My positive interaction with the SRO was when I had a conversation with them while I was working by their office. They were a very kind person.

My SRO helped my friends and I deal with problems with other people vaping and smoking around the school.

My SRO was a constant support during my high school experience and I am thankful to have an officer in the school at all times. Most students at my school had a very good friendly relationship with our SRO. He would let us hang out in his office during our spares and would go to the local Tims with us. He made us feel special and protected.

My SRO was my coach for volleyball and he would help me with my plays and my conditioning as well.

My SRO was the only officer I've encountered that took me seriously and had charges pressed against someone who had given me death threats. She also was the one to save my life from a suicide attempt at home.

My SRO would help with school charities and often would interact with us in a manner that was constantly entertaining. With charities he would always allow for some fun and would even volunteer to be a part of the reward systems.

Nothing specific. The SRO was just very kind and always did her best to be around and helpful. Nice to talk to even just casually.

Our Constie was the nicest person ever. She was easy to approach and made the school feel much safer.

Our SRO shared her knowledge about her training she had to do to become a police officer and it was a very interesting and informative experience

Our SRO was performing and participating in the talent show. He was also having a push up competition with the other students.

Our SRO was very kind and funny, he'd always greet the students in the halls. He made us feel safe.

Overall kind person; approachable

Played hockey with us after school

Playing dodgeball and football together

Pleasant talks in school and class about gun safety and laws and the harms of drugs.

Provided guidance for my future pathway.

Really helpful and just a great person overall

My School Resource Officer was kind and listened to student concerns for their safety, They used great communication with us students. Personally, I have never needed the SRO, but many friends in the school including myself appreciated that they were there if we needed them. They made us feel safe.

She did a presentation during CALM and she was very nice and respectful.

She gave us a presentation about consent and while I did not think the presentation was good it was nice to have someone I recognized presenting.

She just called me when I was in a bad situation after being a victim. She talked me through it and made me feel better.

She helped me when she found out I was assaulted, being bullied and was self harming. She always helped me and got me the help I needed when the school would not.

She helped me with court when I had charges and she helped me get through Jr. High without quitting.

She is kind to all the new kids at the school and got them settled.

She tried to help me with a bullying situation. She stopped it and I was able to get back to normal life.

She was our badminton coach.

She was really nice. Everyone loved her. She would talk to us and we felt safe with her around. She really was amazing. Miss her after the school got rid of her.

She was very active in our school's Gender-Sexuality Alliance, and actively worked to make the school safer and more inclusive for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and individuals.

She was very helpful when I was dealing with bullies, she got them suspended and I was safe.

She was very nice she just talked to me about how my day was going and how I'm feeling.

She went on an overnight field trip with us in grade 8 and acted as a good mentor and had fun with us. We really enjoyed having her there.

She would sing in karaoke at school and it was fun :) she was a great singer:~!

Smiling in the hallways

Someday on the first week of school they helped me open up my locker because I couldn't get it open.

SRO spoke to class about sexual harassment. Presentation was respectful and informative

SRO was just really nice to me, when I was in the office cause I got in trouble. She helped me avoid trouble after that..

SRO was very kind to all students and very respectful of other's opinions

My SRO stood by my side and fought for me when i was falsely accused of sexual assault. It would have become a real legal issue without her help.

They talked to you when you were having a bad day. They would cheer you up and be there for some people who had mental health problems.

Taught us (in class) important lessons on safety.

The female SRO generally carried a very positive and lighthearted vibe and energy and I found that many of my more troubled friends liked or felt comfortable around them compared to regular teachers.

The SRO helped me during bad times. One interaction included being escorted back to class after a conflict that lead to fear about being in the vicinity of my classroom alone.

The officer came to our class to talk about a recent string of events that had been happening at the school and offered her support. She was really kind and informed.

The officer remembered me from a safety course in my elementary school and asked how I was and was generally just kind. He did this every time I saw him.

The officer would be handling situations very professionally and good.

The officers are very nice and they always kept everything safe.

The resource officer I have experience with was very open and approachable. Not so much a police officer but more so somebody who has experienced so much life and was willing to share lessons and talk about difficult topics.

The SRO at my school would help run dryland workouts with my swim team. It was very fun.

The SRO was incredibly kind and had a friendly relationship with all the students. If I ever felt unsafe or had any trouble at all I would go to my SRO because I knew he would have been happy to help me . He gave out gum and treats to students and had secret handshakes with lots of us. I always felt safe at that school because of him.

The SRO came and gave a presentation to classes about how to behave safely when in situations such as parties that had alcohol or drugs, and how to use them safely. The SRO understood that there would be underage drinking and drug use, and while she did not condone it, she focused

the presentation on how to use those substances safely and in a safe environment, and what the consequences, such as sexual assault or criminal charges, were, and how to deal with them in an appropriate way that promoted student safety. She was understanding and thoughtful when taking questions, and never belittled anyone.

The SRO came into my class to give a talk about the resources they offered and I don't know if every SRO did this but they seemed to genuinely care about the students and being a support for them, like handing out snacks to kids who didn't have lunches and offering an ear if someone needed it.

The SRO in our school was very friendly and fun to talk too. He helped out in anyway he could, not just what an SRO was expected to do.

The SRO at my high school had was an amazing person who you could talk to if you had any questions.

The SRO that was at my highschool also went to my junior high while I was attending the junior high to give a talk about drugs and crime. I remember one person being asked if they could be handcuffed, I forget why, but the SRO obliged and a bunch of us had a good laugh over it.

The SRO was always interacting with other students and me and made sure that we were always comfortable and could reach him at all times.

The SRO was amicable with the students and often a highlight of the pep rally's. I personally never had a direct interaction, but it seemed they were well liked by most of the student population.

The SRO was doing a presentation on the dangers of certain drugs for our CALM 20 class.

The SRO was just checking on everyone at the school to make sure we were safe and behaving. He ended up playing basketball with us for a bit.

The SRO was kind and helped my friend get to class while her sexual assaulter walked by.

The SRO was so kind to all of us. We always went to his office at lunch to chat and walk around the school. He always makes sure that every student is safe and he treated all of us like his own kids .

The SRO was the only one I could indulge in my interest of gunsmithing with. If I did it with anyone else, teachers or students, they would either think I'm a security threat or wouldn't understand a word I would say. I distinctly remember the SRO treating me as an equal, sitting down and talking, having some of the poorly made muffins and overwatered coffee while discussing all the ins and outs of guns.

The SRO was very friendly within our school and worked hard to make our school a welcoming environment

The SRO we used to have ticketed a couple kids that kept speeding in school zones. After this less kids were speeding. Now that there is no SRO anymore, speeding has started again and I have almost been hit a couple times.

The SRO would come into the mental health classroom once a day and talk with students and check in to see how things were going. The SRO would participate in an after-school club I was part of. The SRO would walk around the school and say hi to other students. The SRO would let the students know that if they ever had a problem they could always reach out to the SRO. Made us safe.

The SRO would walk around our school and interact with students even on extra curricular times or school sport events and we loved having him!

The SRO's I've had have always just been another resource to help you, someone neutral to talk to, someone who would have your back and let you vent if need be. Ultimately, they were another councillor. Now they weren't necessarily the same skill wise as most councillors are a little more educated in that department but that almost made it better. The best experience I know of with SROs is when something would happen at a party or gathering or event after school or the weekend. For example, I know of times where peers of mine were sexually assaulted at a party and not wanting to go to the police station or call in or report it in general. They already knew a police officer who was a friendly face who they could talk to. Instead of going and explaining everything to a random officer and being even more scared and stressed than they already were, they were able to talk and seek help from someone they were a little more comfortable with. Now without SROs, there are times that I've known of where the same situation would happen except know one to talk to. Conclusion? They never reported anything and just continued with their life and with that pain.

The SROs and my school had a fund where they helped out a family in need once a year, and my family had been chosen for that year. The SRO also came around when we were on lock down during COVID quarantine to check up on us.

Their presence makes the school much safer in my opinion, I have heard they helped a lot of kids in my school

There was coffee and tea with our SRO. She was the loveliest human being ever! She would give us life examples on what to do and what not to do. She was really cool and helped a lot of kids who are using narcotics and give them away to see the world differently. If I knew her name, I would put it down, but she was the loveliest lady ever.

There were problems with people and online bullying and the SRO stepped in and helped everyone involved.

They came and talked to us about their job in our CALM class.

They came into my gym class and explained to the class what they do and that we could come to them whenever we need help.

They felt like a important part of the school community. They not only made others feel safe, but they were also involved in school activities which made them and others feel like they were part of the school community.

They gave me good advice when I was facing problems.

They had a good talk with me about school/attendance and how it could hurt me.

They had such a positive attitude that it put a smile on everyone's face, even if I never interacted with them directly.

They helped me carry some heavy boxes to the classroom and they were overall just very kind.

They helped me find a class and we're very kind.

They helped me find my phone.

They helped me get through a tough personal situation.

They helped me get through fights and other stuff with other students.

They helped me understand my post-secondary options.

They helped me when I was being followed by people around and outside of school. They stopped the threats and made me feel safe.

They helped with a physical interaction I had with another student. They helped end the beef.

They taught us about the youth justice system and drugs

They were approachable and kind. The officer spoke in a calm and collected manner and established a safe environment during the conversation. The conversation was not about crime but about music, and the officer was positive with the way he responded to me.

They were just polite, always wished kids a good day and smiled.

They were searching bags for any potentially hazardous items at my school's homecoming football game. The SRO was friendly while conducting the search.

They were very helpful in the advice they gave, they made sure to give me two sides to the path/decision I could make.

They were very nice and caring.

They were very polite and respectful.

They would always help us with our problems and we all felt like they had good and genuine intentions in helping us grow and be our best self unlike how we feel about the majority of staff at our school

They would greet me at the entrance from time to time at the start of the school day.

They would like to come in and ask how we were doing with our classes and extracurricular activities

They've taught us more than we could ever know about the real world and its situations but also have been kind and caring throughout all interactions and have a sense of protection and maturity around them.

This SRO was very friendly and would always wander the halls and wave and say hi to everyone, every interaction with them was a good one.

Though I never really interacted with the SRO, having the SRO there helped me feel safe as I know that there is someone that can focus reinforce safety within the school.

Treated me like a real person and was genuinely nice and wanted to help students

Two of them helped me with out of school situations when I was being harassed and threatened and attacked.

Was educated to not consume illegal substances and to stay away from illegal activities

Was just a normal person behind the badge and whatever. Really nice and easy going, but still did their job.

We had a karaoke contest at our school and he sang in it, also worked out with him before

We have a kind conversation about bullying and how other students should treat other students kindly as they are supposed to do. And that was the most positive memory about the officer I could think of.

We just talked about an issue facing my friend and they helped!

We used to have karaoke with Constie and he would also give us snacks all the time.

We were working in the hallway and he came up and talked to us about school and our work. Another time we were practicing for a performance and he stopped to watch and give feedback.

Well, at least he's not an antagonist. He would talk to you and showed that he cared. He was not like every other cop on the street who just try to incriminate you.

When my cell phone got stolen, she really tried to help track it down by asking with my mom for the serial number and she even found a serial number herself. But unfortunately the perpetrator had unlocked the phone and it was nowhere to be found.

When I had an SRO at school, I had a bad family life with my father who was abusive in the past and at the time, the SRO heard of my dad (old report from an incident in 2015) and he was

always there to comfort me and to let me know he would keep my school a safe space away from my dad and would always ask how I was doing, which was pretty important to me considering how bad my life was at the time.

When I was filing a police report with my school's councillor she had me talk to the school's resource officer about a few things. He was very helpful in the whole process.

When I was suspended he checked on me and helped me feel normal when I got back.

Yes, I had a positive interaction! The SRO helped me through when I was in my darkest time. They helped me and showed concern. I miss them now!!

Negative experiences with SROs, reported by student respondents, include poor or dismissive treatment following victimization incidents, intimidation, hyper-surveillance, harsh or aggressive language against students, false allegations, police brutality, harsh or unfair punishment, and allegations that SROs often pay too much attention to "popular" students. Examples of negative student experience with SROs are provided below.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVE STUDENT EXPERIENCES WITH SROs

This was about 3 or 4 years ago. Me and my friends were eating lunch in a stairwell and one of my friends was having an anxiety attack. We were helping them deal with it pretty well, when the SRO comes in and insists on taking them somewhere (I assume the office) to "help them." We all refuse, including the friend in question, and after a short argument with one of us he steps out for a moment to speak with a teacher. In the meantime, we decide to walk away so we don't have to deal with him. For the remainder of lunch, we were walking around the school as a group trying to evade him and the teacher who seemed to be looking for us. We all agreed that it was unnecessary stress, and we would've been better left alone.

A friend of mine had concerns about being threatened with being attacked with a weapon. I helped her to tell the SRO, and he did absolutely nothing aside from telling her to talk it out.

A friend with psychotic episodes was forced into a cop car for having an episode. They turned on the radio, started singing, and ignored their attempts to explain that they were in an abusive situation with their parents and did not want to be sent home.

A student who would often talk to the SRO was the one who the SRO 'took sides with' when there was a conflict.

After they helped me when I was being followed, they told me on a few occasions to stop 'acting up' when I was being bullied, leading me to not trust them and them watching me for no reason

All of my experiences with the SRO were negative. They have far too much power and pose a large threat to students.

All of my SRO interactions were negative. They were always weird and condescending, racist, transphobic, weird ass guy.

They are just annoying and watching you. They should mind their own business.

They are very rude and arrogant people.

As a queer, autistic person, I do not feel safe around cops, police officers and their affiliates. The one time I had to interact with the school resources officer was followed by one of the worst panic attacks of my life.

There was an SRO at my school, but the school still had fairly prominent drug, harassment, and violence issues. I personally had been called a "faggot" almost every day and felt that nothing could be done about it. Seeing the SRO in the halls did not make me feel any different. There were no connotations of security with her. I (personally), as well as other people, had been confronted and threatened by different cliques at the school with violence. I remember being threatened for something I had no involvement in (nor had I even heard of it) and told that if I did not lick their shoes (this is not a joke) I would be beaten up, but I was able to avoid this. There were cameras nearby and I was not far from a teacher, so they must've realized it wasn't worth the trouble. But following this I continually felt very unsafe at school. I felt completely socially rejected because of my sexual and gender identity, and felt threatened for things I did not have any involvement in. The presence of an SRO did not make me feel safe at all. And considering the increasing awareness of police brutality and discrimination, if anything I feel that the presence of police within schools represents the militarization of education. Police have no place in schools.

Attempted to report someone to them. I was terrified, but no further action was taken.

Being full body searched by a female officer from false accusations made by other students. I was humiliated.

The SRO displayed blatant racism and sexism to my capabilities and activities.

The SRO thought I was vaping but it was the girl behind me. Officers don't do shit except get people in trouble for shit they gonna do once the officer walks away anyway. They're useless.

Claimed I did something even though I didn't. She continued to tell me I was lying. I also was not told why I was brought into the room to be questioned. I felt violated.

Condescending view of me and threats of watching me after I had been accused of a crime.

Constantly nagging me for not doing prayer and singing the anthem. Walking into female washrooms to check on us. No privacy.

During an interaction between a couple of students and the SRO, the SRO tried to intimidate and put fear into the kids without a proper reason and never listened to the students. Instead the SRO ripped up his statement and called it BS. The language and professionalism was inadequate and was not tolerable with a student. The SRO should act as a person you can go to for help instead of putting fear into kids and develop a sense of hatred towards any sense of authority.

Friend got caught with some bad stuff in his locker. Cop treated him like a hardened criminal.

General rudeness. Not usually aware of problems at the school. They don't take duties seriously. Stayed in his office all the time.

Got mistaken for a real bully even though we had completely different hair colors and names.

Grabbed me when I was trying to cross the street and questioned me.

He choked my sister and he was 6'3 and 200 lbs and my sis was 5'4 and 100 lbs.

He just thought that I was a bad student and always followed me.

He never fixed the problem and made it seem like a big deal but then never did anything after saying he would.

He put cuffs on me because I was Black. Thought it was funny. I didn't feel that way.

Last SRO was a creep. Inappropriate. Every SRO I've had has targeted students with lower grades/lower family incomes.

I feel unsafe when there is someone with a gun on campus, regardless of whether they're a police officer or not. In my experience, SROs are often rude and entitled. I've seen a child be shoved into a stairwell by an SRO at another school.

I got jumped by an adult who also attended my school when I was fifteen and nothing was done about it because there was no "proof" other than the videos people took that they wouldn't share with the SRO.

I don't like cops and the SRO makes me feel unsafe.

I think SROs are a bad idea because our last one was a flat-out racist individual who targeted large groups of brown kids doing nothing instead of targeting large groups of white kids smoking cigarettes and weed.

I wanted to join the school tennis team but I couldn't due to something that I had done and the SRO didn't want me representing the school.

I was being told I was at fault for being sexually assaulted in class for the clothes I wore, and the SRO told me that.

I was called in to speak with him based off an untrue accusation. He really uprooted my home life, and my mother grounded me because he didn't let me speak to her or talk to me before calling home.

I was involved in an altercation with a student from another school, a former friend. Things got physical and when it was presented to my school my SRO officer was very unwilling to hear my side of the story. I had been previously threatened by this person I got into a fight with and my SRO officer had a ticket written up for me before even conducting a conversation with me. I felt very unsafe and unheard because I know SROs are there to assist and I just felt like mine wasn't fair and didn't care about my safety.

I've gotten in trouble a few times with the SROs and it was not fun.

In general, the presence of cops in school is threatening and intimidating

In junior high, the school officer wanted to teach us a lesson about theft and having locks on our gym lockers. So, her along with some gym teachers stole everyone's stuff from the locker rooms that weren't locked and they put them in the class next to the locker rooms. I thought that was way too excessive and unnecessary. That's touching people's private property and I thought it was terrible. Luckily, I had a lock so I wasn't affected.

The SROs do racial profiling. In the summer of 2020, I got stopped by the SRO from my school who was with the SRO from another school. They approached me on bikes. I was walking my dog, she's a yorkie. This was close to the time that George Floyd had been killed by police officers. As soon as I saw them coming towards me, I knew that they were going to stop me. I started to gently lift my hands away from my sides, so that they would not think I was in possession of any weapons. I was not in possession of any weapons. They stopped on their bikes, one on each side of me. They started to question me, asking if I had been going to any gatherings or playing basketball, acting as if it was a normal interaction. My mother had told me previous to this interaction that police have a history of using different methods of entrapment to try and get people to admit to things they did not do. So I was being very careful of the things I was saying. When they asked me if I had been playing basketball I told them I had been going at 5 am to avoid the busy hours. I had been going at 5am. They then asked me if I knew about any gatherings, I did not, and I told them that I did not. I said all my answers in the whitest accent possible because I knew that they would think I was smart if I did. I already have a Canadian accent, but I feared for my life so I tried to sound extra White.

It's a shame that they treat people differently based on their accents and skin colours. Anyway, it was clear to me that they realized they were not going to get anything out of me so they said some sort of "goodbye" and road way. Probably to try their luck with another person who fit their stereotype of an offender or something. I was wearing a Jordan sweater with the matching pants and some white, black and red Jordan 1s. On my way home I couldn't help but think that what I was wearing along with the colour of my skin is what provoked the very inappropriate interaction.

Inappropriate use of force on a 12-year-old and excused it with the fact "they're known for trouble."

Just whenever he was around everyone was always scared of him and he would always punish people for the wrong reasons and never take an account of other people's stories. I just never liked that he was there.

He was a liar. He got students in trouble by lying about what they did.

Mean vibe around SROs. Mean tone, aggressive looks.

Most are very prejudiced and half the time they do more harm than good. A school should be a place of learning and a lot of kids in Edmonton have had bad experiences with cops so it makes a very threatening environment. Ninety percent of the time they aren't needed at school. If police are needed they can be called.

My best friend was being severely bullied and went to the SRO who proceeded to blame her, resulting in her dropping out of school.

On more than one occasion I have felt threatened by the direct actions of an SRO while on school property. These actions include: Yelling down hallways at students not attending/late for their classes, instigating groups of students crowding halls with unnecessary aggression, and the general action of SROs keeping their hands on their duty belts-while approaching students-that commonly carry protective items resembling that of a police duty belt (the specific items on the belt are unknown to me, but if they are the same items then that is a problem in itself.)

Once my phone battery died when I was close to my school. It was a professional development day. I went to school to seek help or take a call since I had to contact my parents asap. I kindly went to my school resource officer and asked him if he could help me to take a phone call. Unexpectedly he refused at once and told me that he can't help since it was a pd day. I was helpless and disappointed at his attitude.

Personally, I haven't had a negative experience, but I've had friends who were treated pretty unreasonably just because they were 18. And even then, I've seen friends get pulled out of class because teachers assume things and the SRO gets pulled in by a teacher who can't handle their own business.

I was falsely accused and physically assaulted by a school resource officer.

Positive: I was being sent horrid pictures, so I talked to the school resource officer and got them to deal with it. A negative interaction would more so be how they dealt with other situations. Someone was carrying knives and selling them at school and nothing was done by the SRO when they were told about it.

Racism. Our SRO was racist and treated the Black kids terribly.

He said he would take me to jail. I was in Grade 7 and did nothing wrong except talk back.

Our SRO searched me for drugs/cigarettes because I was sitting outside alone. No other reason.

She did not take me seriously. She was not concerned that I was unsafe and experiencing racism and sexism from a teacher.

They snatched my phone out of my hands and called me a baby.

My SRO constantly picked on me and harassed me about situations I wasn't even involved in.

The SRO would let the authority get to his head at some points, and he would then act extremely condescending or give attitude because he has the authority. Some cops let the power get to their head.

That same SRO accused me of selling marijuana. I was innocent, but scared and confused by why he did that.

The SRO in my school was being homophobic when I was receiving threats to my safety regarding my sexuality and gender presentation.

The SRO was making comments about students of colour. Kind of like micro-aggression racism. The SRO was acting like the students of colour weren't as well behaved as the White students.

They called my mother and father and told them false info about my behaviour and friends. They got really upset and it ruined my life for a while.

They abuse their power. They are meant to be there to protect the school, but in reality all they do is scare the kids instead of tackling real issues like substance abuse and bullying.

They blame victims. I've reported multiple assaults at the school and instead I was the one who was punished and left scared.

They just scared me while I was a kid. I felt uncomfortable around them.

They refused to listen to me and made assumptions about my home life

They thought I was someone I wasn't. They didn't care to check and took me into their office for questioning.

They took away my vape and suspended me. That was overkill.

They were investigating an online bully and questioning kids in the office without their parents present. When questioning students, the SRO would threaten them and not give the student an opportunity to respond. The people questioning were three adult males (the principal, vice principal and the SRO officer) and the people being questioned, in this example, were 13 year-old females. In the end they found out that the girl was not behind the bullying and the adults acted as if nothing happened.

I was threatened with charges of assault after I complained about being bullied.

The SRO told me that he couldn't do anything about racist remarks that I had experienced at school and racist graffiti in the bathroom.

The SRO used exaggerated measures and unnecessary tactics. They tried charging me for fighting even though it was an act of self defense.

The SRO was very intimidating. He made me feel very unsafe in my own school. Police officers do not belong in schools.

The SRO warned me for trespassing for being in an open area of my own school.

When I was at high school for a junior high sports tournament, the SRO thought I was trespassing in the school. After they figured out I was competing in the sports tournament, I saw them come into the gym looking around to make sure I actually was involved with the tournament. They treated me like a suspect.

Sometimes I would get called down to the office for things I didn't do cause the teacher did not like me. I always had to be questioned by the SRO. It was upsetting and frightening.

When the SRO arrested me in front of the school when I was just hanging out and doing my own thing. A fight then happened in the halls and I got blamed for it even though I wasn't there.

The SRO wouldn't protect us from a rapist. The SRO and the school never believed the victims of sexual assault at the school and would blame the victims and cover it up.

A total of nine respondents (0.7% of the total sample) explicitly accused the SROs of engaging in racially biased behaviours.

It should be noted that positive and negative experiences with SROs vary significantly by student background characteristics (see Table D5). For example, three out of ten non-Binary respondents (29.5%) report having a positive interaction with an SRO, while 16.7% report having a negative experience.

Similarly, Indigenous, Arab/Middle Eastern and Black respondents are slightly more likely to report a positive experience with an SRO than students from other racialized groups. For example, 40% of Indigenous students report having a positive experience with an SRO, followed by 38.2% of Arab/Middle Eastern students and 37.4% of Black students. By contrast, positive SRO experiences were reported by 31.9% of multi-racial students, 30.8% of Latino/Hispanic students, 29.9% of South Asian students and 26.0% of Asian students.

While Indigenous and Black students are more likely to report positive experiences with an SRO than students from other racial groups, they are also more likely to report negative experiences. For example, 18.3% of Indigenous and 11.3% of Black students report that they have had a negative experience with an SRO, compared to only 4.4% of South Asian students and 3.4% of Asian students.

As with the general sample, students with a self-identified disability were more likely to report a positive experience with an SRO (43.3%) than a negative experience (15.5%). Similarly, 2sLGBTQ+ respondents were also more likely to report a positive experience with an SRO (32.0%) than a negative experience (12.5%).

TABLE D4: Percent of Student Respondents Who Report that they have had Positive and Negative Interactions with School Resource Officers (SROs) over the past Five Years

Frequency	Positive Experiences with SROs	Negative Experiences with SROs
Never	22.3	67.8
One or More	32.5	8.5
Can't remember	45.2	23.7

TABLE D5: Percent of Student Respondents Who Report Positive and Negative Experiences with SROs over the Past Five Years, by Race, Disability Status, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Student Characteristics	Had a Positive Experience with an SRO	Had a Negative Experience with an SRO
<u>Race:</u>		
Black	37.4	11.3
Indigenous	40.0	18.3
Asian	26.0	3.4
South Asian	29.9	4.4
Hispanic/Latin American	30.8	3.8
Arab/West Asian	38.2	7.4
Bi-Racial	31.9	10.4
<u>Disability Status:</u>		
Self-Reported Disability	43.3	15.5
Overall Sample	32.5	8.5
<u>Sexual Orientation:</u>		
2sLGBTQ+ students	32.0	12.5
Overall Sample	32.5	8.5
<u>Gender Identity:</u>		
Non-Binary	29.5	16.7
Overall Sample	32.5	8.5

Evaluation of SRO Job Performance

Student respondents were asked whether they felt the SROs were doing a good job, an average job, or a poor job performing various duties. The results clearly indicate that most students feel that the SROs are doing a good job or average job performing their duties. Few believe they are doing a poor job (see Table D6).

For example, four out of ten student respondents (39.5%) feel that the SROs are doing a good job or very good job preventing fights and other violence at school. An additional 18.1% feel that they are doing an average job. By contrast, 13.6% feel that they are doing a poor job. However, an additional 28.7% of students report that they don't know whether the SROs are doing a good job or a poor job preventing violence in school. Similarly, almost half of student respondents (46.5%) believe the SROs are doing a good job or very good job protecting the school from outside criminals. An additional 15.4% think they are doing an average job. Only 7.9% think they are doing a poor job protecting their school from outsiders. Again, one quarter of student respondents (25.1%) don't know whether the SROs are doing a good job protecting schools from outsiders or not.

A high proportion of student respondents also feel the SROs are doing a good job, very good job or average job: building relationships with students (56.2%), delivering lessons in class (55.6%), mentoring students (47.1%), preventing drug and alcohol use at school (45.9%), preventing vandalism (48.0%), preventing theft and robbery (47.5%), helping student victims of crime (42.1%), preventing bullying at school (44.7%), helping with sports and other extracurricular activities (40.9%), preventing online bullying (33.0%), preventing sexual harassment at school (38.9%) and preventing sexual assault (33.3%). Significantly fewer students (between 15.3% and 29%) feel that the SROs did a poor job performing these various duties.

In general, Asian, South Asian, Hispanic, and Arab/Middle Eastern respondents evaluate SRO job performance more positively than Black, and Indigenous respondents (see Table D7). For example, 50.0% of Hispanic, 45.0% of South Asian, 44.0% of Arab/Middle Eastern, and 42.1% of Asian students believe that the SRO program is doing a good job improving the relationship between young people and the police. This view, by contrast, is held by only 29.9% of Indigenous and 33.0% of Black students. In general, Non-binary, Disabled and 2sLGBTQ+ respondents also rate SRO job performance more negatively than other respondents.⁸

It must also be stressed that, depending on the question asked, between 25.1% and 49.8% of students report that they do not know whether their SRO did a good job or not. This finding alone points to the need for further research into the various tasks SROs are asked to perform and whether the SRO program can achieve specific objectives.

⁸ It should be noted that, due to the large sample size, most of the comparisons highlighted in this report reach statistical significance at the $p > .05$ level. Thus, we suggest that the reader focus on the magnitude of group differences rather than whether they are statistically significant or not.

TABLE D6: Percent of Student Respondents Who Feel that the School Resource Officers Did a Good Job, Average Job, or Poor Job Performing Various Duties

Do the SROs do a good job, an average job, or a poor job:	A Poor Job	An Average Job	A Good Job	A Very Good Job	Don't know
Preventing violence and fights between students at school?	13.6	18.1	23.7	15.8	28.7
Keeping the school safe from criminals in the community?	7.9	15.4	25.8	20.7	30.2
Preventing drug and alcohol use at school?	29.0	18.1	15.4	12.4	25.1
Preventing bullying at school?	24.8	17.7	17.0	10.0	30.5
Preventing online bullying or cyber-bullying between students?	24.5	16.0	10.2	6.8	42.5
Improving the relationship between young people and the police?	17.1	17.5	18.4	20.3	26.7
Giving lessons to students about personal safety and crime prevention?	16.7	15.7	20.9	19.0	27.7
Mentoring or counselling students who need extra help?	15.3	13.2	17.8	16.1	37.6
Helping school staff with coaching, music, and other extracurricular activities?	16.2	15.0	13.4	12.5	42.9
Preventing theft or robbery at school?	16.1	15.8	18.6	13.1	36.4
Preventing vandalism or property damage at school?	18.4	17.6	18.2	12.2	33.5
Helping staff understand what young people are like?	20.7	15.4	12.0	8.5	43.3
Preventing sexual harassment at school?	19.5	12.7	13.6	12.6	41.6
Helping victims of crime and bullying?	15.8	13.4	16.1	12.6	42.1
Helping victims of sexual assault?	16.8	10.5	10.7	12.1	49.8

TABLE D7: Percent of Student Respondents Who Feel that the School Resource Officers Did a Good or Very Good Job Performing Various Duties, by Racial Background

SRO DUTIES	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Hispanic	Arab/Middle Eastern	Bi-Racial
Preventing violence and fights between students at school?	39.7	36.9	40.2	41.2	39.1	36.0	39.6
Keeping the school safe from criminals in the community?	39.7	47.4	53.3	47.6	45.4	50.0	46.2
Preventing drug and alcohol use at school?	34.7	31.5	29.0	30.6	27.3	18.1	24.4
Preventing bullying at school?	30.0	26.3	30.9	30.2	27.2	32.7	22.8
Preventing online bullying or cyber-bullying between students?	24.0	17.5	20.4	18.6	18.1	22.0	10.6
Improving the relationship between young people and the police?	33.0	29.9	42.1	45.0	50.0	44.0	33.3
Giving lessons to students about personal safety and crime prevention?	36.0	35.1	47.4	41.9	40.9	36.0	42.4
Mentoring or counselling students who need extra help?	30.0	22.9	36.1	39.4	50.0	36.0	33.3
Helping school staff with coaching, music, and other extracurricular activities?	25.3	17.5	30.9	32.5	27.3	20.0	27.3
Preventing theft or robbery at school?	33.0	35.1	38.2	35.3	35.2	30.0	25.8
Preventing vandalism or property damage at school?	32.0	24.6	28.9	37.0	27.3	30.0	24.3
Helping staff understand what young people are like?	20.0	17.6	25.6	24.8	22.7	20.0	18.1
Preventing sexual harassment at school?	28.3	26.3	28.3	30.9	27.3	34.0	24.2
Helping victims of crime and bullying?	29.3	25.0	30.9	31.3	27.3	28.0	27.3
Helping victims of sexual assault?	25.3	26.8	22.4	26.1	22.7	30.0	22.2

Perceptions of SRO Treatment and Relationships

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with various statements about student-SRO relationships and the impact the SRO program had at their school. The results suggest that, overall, students have a positive perception of the School Resource Officer (SRO) program at EPSB (see Table D8).

For example, half of all student respondents (49.3%) agree or strongly agree that their SRO made them feel safer at school. Only 16.1% of students disagree with this statement. An additional 34.6% neither agree nor disagree. Similarly, half of all student respondents (50.1%) disagree or strongly disagree that the presence of an SRO made them feel watched or targeted at school. However, a significant minority of students (18.7%) agree that they did feel watched or targeted when they attended a school with an SRO.

Critics sometimes argue that the presence of an SRO can give a school a bad reputation or stigmatize the students who attend that school. Overall, this argument is not supported by the data. For example, most student respondents (53.8%) disagree or strongly disagree that their SRO made them feel like they went to a dangerous or violent school. Only 1% agreed with this statement. Similarly, almost half of student respondents (47.8%) disagree or strongly disagree that the SRO made people in the outside community think that their school was dangerous. However, more than one in five students (22.8%) did agree that the presence of an SRO could hurt their school's reputation.

Respondents were also asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "The SRO at my school treated all students fairly." Over half of the respondents (50.3%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. However, one out of five students (21.2%) disagreed that SROs treated all students at their school fairly.

Only a minority of student respondents perceived SRO bias or discrimination against specific groups. For example, only 12.5% of respondents perceive that their SRO treated Indigenous students worse than White students, only 13.5% perceive that Black students were treated worse than White students, only 10.1% perceive that male students were treated worse than female students, and only 6.8% perceive that 2sLGBTQ+ students were treated worse than heterosexual students. However, it is important to note that, in each case, over forty percent of respondents indicated that they did not know if SROs engaged in biased behaviour against specific groups or not.

It is important to note that Black and Indigenous students were more likely to perceive SRO bias than students from other racial backgrounds. For example, 27.3% of Black student respondents believe that the SROs at their school treated Black students worse than White students, compared to only 9.9% of South Asian and 3.4% of Asian students. Similarly, 22.8% of Indigenous respondents feel that the SROs at their school treated Indigenous students worse than White students, compared to only 11.1% of South Asian and 3.3% of Asian students.

Student respondents are split with respect to whether the SRO program improved relations between students and the police. For example, while 29.8% of respondents agree that the SRO program increased their overall trust in the police, 25.6% disagree with this statement. Almost half the respondents (44.5%) were unsure as to whether the SRO increased student trust in the police or not.

Student respondents were also asked if they felt uncomfortable or intimidated by the SRO at their school. Once again, the students appear split. While 31.1% agree that they did feel intimidated by the SRO at their school, 39.7% report that they did not feel intimidated. An additional 29.2% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

Only a minority of respondents (9.1%) agree that the SRO at their school sometimes abused their power. Most students (52.4%) disagree with this statement. More than a third of student respondents (38.0%) agree that their SRO was an important part of their school community. However, one out of five respondents (20.8%) disagree with this statement.

In general, the survey results suggest that Asian, South Asian, and Arab/Middle Eastern students have a more positive view of the SRO program than Black and Indigenous students. Non-binary, disabled, and 2sLGBTQ+ students also have more negative views than other respondents. Perceptions of the SRO program are also more positive among students who have never been suspended or expelled from school, those who have experienced victimization or bullying at school, and those who report high levels of academic achievement.

It is important to note that, regardless of the question asked, a high proportion of students report that they do not know whether the SRO at their school had a positive impact or not. This is consistent with the fact that a high proportion of students had little contact with the SRO at their school, and, therefore, little knowledge about how the SRO program operates or its impact.

Table D8: Percent of Student Respondents Who Agree or Disagree with Various Statements About the School Resource Officer Program

STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The SRO made me feel safe at school.	6.9	9.2	34.6	32.0	17.3
The SRO made me feel like I was being watched or targeted at school.	22.3	27.8	31.2	12.8	5.9
Sometimes the presence of the SRO made me feel like I went to a dangerous or violent school.	25.0	28.8	28.3	13.1	4.8
Having a police officer at school made people in the community think my school was dangerous or violent.	22.0	25.8	29.4	16.2	6.6
The SROs treated all students fairly.	7.1	7.0	35.6	30.7	19.6
The SROs helped me realize that the police can be nice people.	8.3	9.4	38.2	26.9	17.1
The SROs helped me trust the police more.	12.1	13.5	44.5	17.5	12.3
The SROs often treated Indigenous students worse than White students.	25.0	17.0	45.5	6.6	5.9
The SROs often treated Black students worse than White students.	24.4	17.7	44.4	7.8	5.7
The SROs often treated other racial minority students worse than White students	25.1	17.7	44.4	8.1	5.6
The SROs often treated male students worse than female students.	20.4	18.8	50.7	6.5	3.6
The SROs often treated 2sLGBTQ+ students worse than other students.	24.5	18.0	50.7	4.2	2.6
I felt sad or frustrated when a good SRO left my school.	12.7	12.2	46.2	19.4	9.5
I wish my school had more than one SRO.	16.8	16.5	42.7	15.8	8.2
Sometimes having a police officer at school made me feel uncomfortable or intimidated.	16.5	23.3	29.2	22.0	9.1
Teachers and principals sometimes used the SROs to deal with students they didn't like.	14.7	14.9	48.3	14.9	7.3
Some SROs worked better with students than others.	4.3	4.4	54.1	29.3	7.9
The SRO was an important part of my children's school community.	10.0	10.8	41.2	24.9	13.1

Table D9: Percent of Student Respondents Who Agree or Strongly Agree with Various Statements About the School Resource Officer Program, by Racial Background

STATEMENT	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Hispanic	Arab/Middle Eastern	Bi-Racial
The SRO made me feel safe at school.	42.5	47.4	55.7	55.7	34.7	56.0	42.8
The SRO made me feel like I was being watched or targeted at school.	24.2	22.8	7.9	15.5	34.7	24.0	22.2
Sometimes the presence of the SRO made me feel like I went to a dangerous or violent school.	24.3	22.8	9.4	14.7	26.1	16.0	19.1
Having a police officer at school made people in the community think my school was dangerous or violent.	33.3	19.3	13.4	22.4	39.1	26.0	23.6
The SROs treated all students fairly.	47.4	50.9	57.7	59.0	34.8	52.0	46.2
The SROs helped me realize that the police can be nice people.	35.3	50.9	52.3	52.7	26.1	46.9	38.2
The SROs helped me trust the police more.	28.3	33.3	34.3	33.6	21.7	26.5	26.9
The SROs often treated Indigenous students worse than White students.	20.2	22.8	3.3	11.1	13.0	8.2	11.5
The SROs often treated Black students worse than White students.	27.3	15.8	3.4	9.9	17.4	14.2	11.5
The SROs often treated other racial minority students worse than White students	27.3	15.8	2.8	11.0	18.2	12.5	12.3
The SROs often treated male students worse than female students.	15.2	12.3	4.1	11.0	22.7	10.4	6.1
The SROs often treated 2sLGBTQ+ students worse than other students.	10.2	7.0	3.4	3.7	9.0	6.3	5.4
I felt sad or frustrated when a good SRO left my school.	28.3	24.5	29.8	23.0	18.1	27.6	30.0
I wish my school had more than one SRO.	25.5	26.3	33.8	25.7	9.1	21.2	19.2
Sometimes having a police officer at school made me feel uncomfortable or intimidated.	33.3	35.1	24.4	22.9	31.8	29.1	32.3
Teachers and principals sometimes used the SROs to deal with students they didn't like.	21.4	22.8	8.5	22.0	31.8	18.8	22.3
Some SROs worked better with students than others.	30.6	33.3	27.7	41.7	36.4	35.5	36.1
The SRO was an important part of my school community.	38.2	40.4	40.5	41.0	18.2	35.4	35.3

Perceptions of SRO Racial Bias

All student respondents were asked if they felt that the SRO at their school treated students from their racial background better or worse than students from other racial groups (see Figure D9 and Table D10). Consistent with the results presented above, perceptions of SRO racial bias are much more pronounced among Black and Indigenous students than students from other racial backgrounds. For example, 32.7% of Black respondents and 22.5% of Indigenous respondents feel that the SRO at their school treated students from their racial background worse or much worse than students from other backgrounds. By contrast, this perception was expressed by only 9.0% of South Asian respondents and 3.6% of Asian respondents.

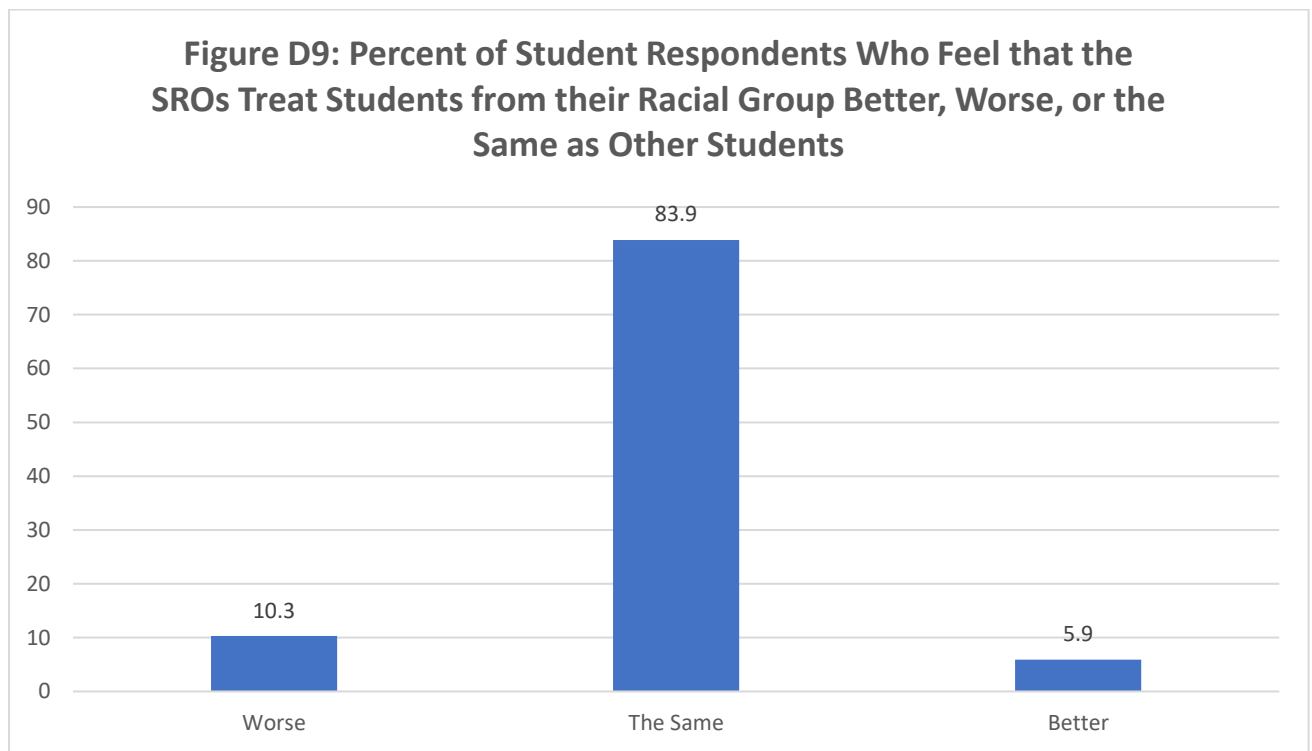


TABLE D10: Percent of Student Respondents Who Believe SROs Treat People from their Racial Group Better, Worse, or the Same as Students from Other Racial Groups

Student Racial Background	Treat Worse	Treat the Same	Treat Better
Black	32.7	65.5	1.7
Indigenous	22.5	72.5	5.0
Asian	3.6	95.2	1.2
South Asian	9.0	88.5	2.5
Hispanic	17.7	76.5	5.9
Arab/West Asian	6.9	93.1	0.0
Bi-Racial	9.2	88.2	2.6

Police Uniforms

All student respondents were asked if they thought that SROs should be armed and in uniform when working at their school (see Figure D10). Three out of ten respondents (29.9%) believe that SROs should be both armed and in uniform when at school. Another 4.0% believe that they should be armed – but out of uniform. However, 42.5% believe SROs should be in uniform at school, but not armed. An additional 7.2% believe that SROs should be neither armed or in uniform. Thus, the proportion of students who feel that SROs should be unarmed at school (49.7%) significantly outweighs the proportion who think SROs should be armed (33.9%).

One out of twenty students (5.3%) feel that SROs should sometimes be in uniform at school, and sometimes not. Several stated that SROs should be in uniform during regular school hours, but out of uniform during special events and extracurricular activities. They felt that being out of uniform would humanize officers and help them develop relationships with students.

One out of ten students in the current sample (11.1%) responded to the question about SRO uniforms by stating that the police should not be in their school at all.

Student Trust in SROs

All respondents were asked if they trusted the SRO at their school more, less, or the same as the regular police (see Figure D11). More than a third of the respondents (38.7%) stated that they trusted their SRO more than the regular police. An additional 35.8% stated that they trusted their SRO just as much as the regular police. Only 4.8% of respondents claimed that they trusted their SRO less than the regular police. However, 20.7% of respondents stated that they trusted neither their SRO nor the regular police.

Student respondents were also asked, if they were to become the victim of a crime, would they rather report the incident to their SRO, the regular police, or would it not matter. Four out of ten respondents (39.4%) indicated that they would rather report their crime to their SRO. An additional 33.2% stated that it would make no difference whether they reported to their SRO or the regular police. One in five respondents (20.0%) stated that they would rather report their victimization to the regular police. One in fourteen respondents (7.3%) stated that they would not report a victimization incident to either their SRO or the regular police.

Figure D10: Percent of Student Respondents Who Want SROs to be Armed and in Police Uniform

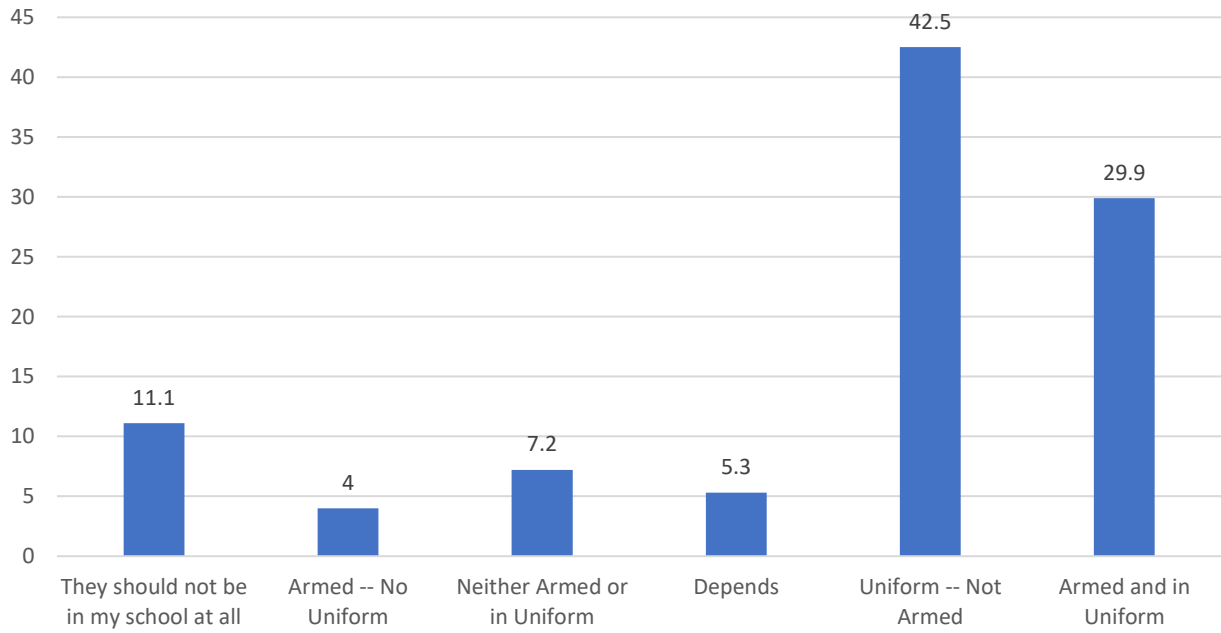
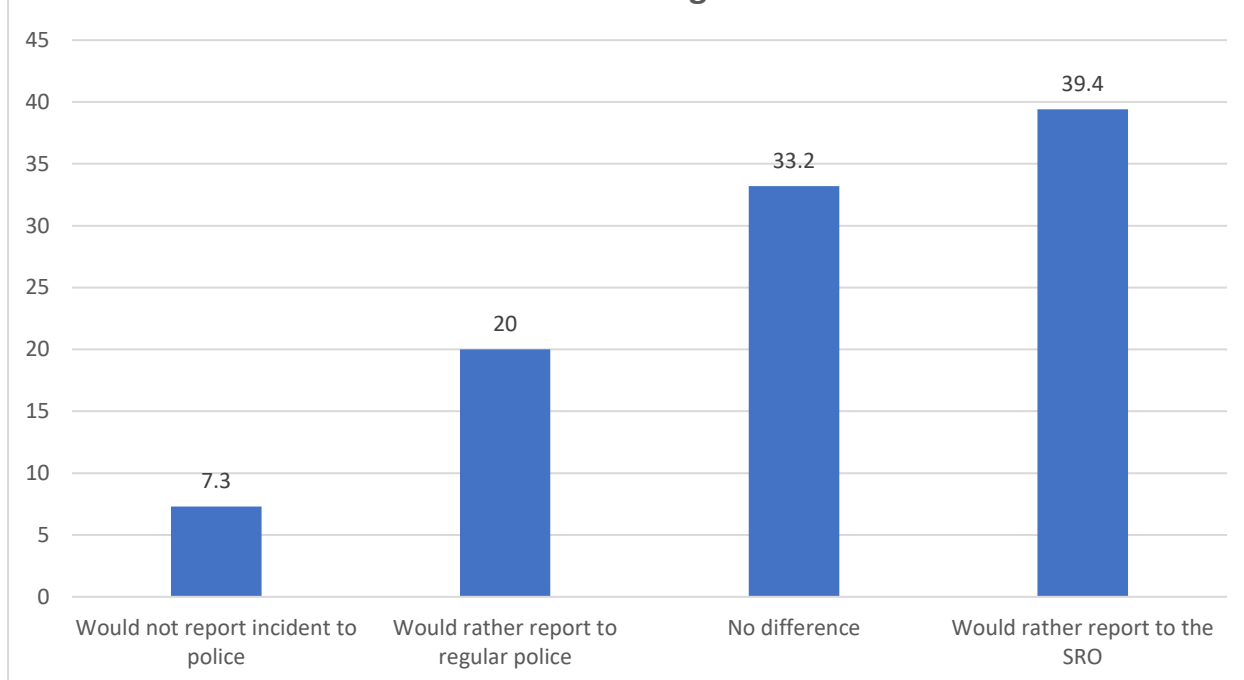


Figure D11: Percent of Student Respondents Who Report that they Trusted their SRO More Than the Regular Police



Figure D12: Percent of Student Respondents Who Would Rather Report a Victimization Incident to their School Resource Officer than the Regular Police



Perceived Benefits and Consequences of the SRO Program

Respondents were asked about the “best things” or “benefits” of having an SRO at their school. The most common responses focussed on the belief that the SROs prevented crime, drug use and violence at school and contributed to student and staff feelings of safety. A smaller proportion of students focussed on the teaching and mentorship role SROs had played at their school and that SROs were another adult they could speak to if they were experiencing problems. Student descriptions of SRO program benefits are provided below.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: BENEFITS OF THE SRO PROGRAM AS IDENTIFIED BY STUDENT RESPONDENTS

- Less people smoked/vaped. When the SROs were here I don’t recall seeing anyone smoke/vape at school. There were less fights. The SROs gave presentations on safety in class. They were a mentor for students. They patrolled often and kept the school safe.
- The created a better relationship between students and law enforcement. They provided an extra resource for students who were struggling. They helped students feel safe at school.
- It was more safe at school when the SROs were here.
- A benefit of having an SRO at school is it helps everyone to be safe and make people less worried about their safety every single day.
- A better sense of safety.
- They are a deterrent to crime at school.

A familiar face to report crime/seek help from as the police *CAN* be intimidating. For example, if you were sexually assaulted at a party where drugs may have been involved, you are more likely to tell your SRO than a regular cop.

A safe place for talking about sexual assaults and the next steps.

They improve all round student safety.

Allowed the students to report crime in an easy and comfortable way. Was a preventative force against drugs such as nicotine and marijuana.

Allows people a chance to have their issues solved in a more personal way. It helps prevent school issues that other police can't solve. The outside cops just arrest.

Allows students to feel safer.

It makes me feel safe that an officer is at school in case something bad happens.

Another figure to look up to (ours was kind). They know the community better so if any incidents were to occur then they would have a better idea of the situation.

Another pair of eyes, helps the public's opinion on the police depending on how students are treated.

Any fight/ crime that happens will be noticed right away with a SRO in the school 24/7.

I saw them arrested an intruder. Made me feel safe that they were protecting us.

As long as they respect the students and took steps to be an active member of the school community they were a benefit.

As someone who was stressed about being in a school downtown (where we had a lot more soft lockdowns and stuff) I was definitely less concerned about my safety in school when I had a SRO.

Because there is a police officer walking around to keep things safe.

Being a part of the community and creating a positive and safe environment were benefits of an SRO.

Being reassured that I can trust someone in case something were to happen.

Better learning environment because you know nothing major will happen like a lockdown because the SRO is already there.

Better protection honestly, keeping watch for weapons.

Better safety

Brings a more secure environment. Made the school feel more safe.

Bullying prevention.

Can prevent bad things before they happen, as well as keep students safe if something were to happen.

Can provide immediate assistance to any issue

Can stop violence in your school, though what I learned in grade 10, was that it may stop the violence on school grounds, but it doesn't stop violence at all. If there is going to be a fight, it will still happen it just might not happen in school. Which makes it so then maybe the fight happens in a more dangerous and isolated place where the victim can't call for help at all.

Confidence in asking questions about the police and what to talk to them about, positive relationships, positive experiences with police.

Convenience. It's the same reason that I would rather report a crime to the SRO, I could give the information to them clearly and comfortably, and then they could just relay it to the regular police, because they should have a clear connection to them, as far as I know. Along with that, drug users and other rule-breakers were afraid of getting caught by our SRO when they were around. There

was a stark difference between when they were and weren't at our school, being that when our SRO was gone, the vapers in the bathroom and the drug users just outside of the school are much more frequent now.

Could possibly make the police more connected to the community.

Creates a safer environment where other students think twice before committing a crime since there is the presence of the SRO.

Cutting down on speeding. Having an armed person that could stop a violent threat to the students. Felt more approachable than regular police.

Discourages various destructive acts, wether physical or emotional, and can allow a better outlook on police for people who have had bad experiences with police or heard bad stories.

The SRO discourages violence at school/

Drug use such as vaping was rarely openly seen compared to now where there is always a crowd of students vaping in each bathroom at any break.

Drug use was less, racially motivated attacks were significantly less, there was someone easily accessible to go to for help, and who could help, without informing parents, the SRO promoted school unity

Easier to access police if there was a situation that needed one.

Easy accessibility to someone who can help with actual issues.

Even if it doesn't actually make the school safer, I just feel a bit safer going to school when the SRO was there.

Everything - stuff is out of control without them. Now I can't even go to the bathroom without being surrounded in drugs and vapers.

I feel a sense of comfort knowing a professional is present in case of times of danger.

Feel safe and protected when the SRO is there.

Feelings of safety. Having a person ask about the law and receiving support from a trusted person.

Feeling safer at school.

Feeling safer if something were to happen.

Feeling safer in the school and having someone to talk to.

feels safer, and felt like someone who was able to connect better with students than teachers. students liked the sro more than teachers in my opinion

Felt safe and secure at school environment.

Felt safer, and they had power to actually do something if we had a real threat

Firstly, we had a kid stabbed then die after the SRO left. Secondly the amount of small annoyances has gone up significantly since she left so yes the SRO benefited my school.

Fixing behaviour problems.

For me it was that police presence that made me feel better when my parents would come to the school because my home situation wasn't the greatest and neither was my mental health.

For the problematic "gangs" they make up at schools. The SRO stops them.

Gave us someone in the school who genuinely understands students and chose to assess the situation before jumping to conclusions. It just felt safe and transparent.

General safety of the school is raised.

Giving students a more direct positive relationship with law enforcement, that was more personal and avoided the usual stereotypes or fears of police.

Good as a deterrent for negative student behaviour when they are in the hallways

Got students to be more familiar around police officers

Having a direct person you see often and developing even a mild connection with them can enforce some students to be a bit more comfortable in expressing their incidents towards a person. If not a friend or a teacher an SRO is another option for students to go to.

Having a good SRO can help make students feel safer about being at school.

Having a main authority around to bond with students and therefore become familiar and comfortable enough for students to go to for help

Having a SRO is a an amazing thing, it teaches kids the law enforcement is not a bad thing, they are there to help. They understand kids,

Having a SRO present at the school gave me a little sense of comfort knowing someone was assigned to keep the shool safe.

Having a SRO present made me feel a little more protected from any danger. While I didn't have much communication with them, knowing that there was an adult who is trained to protect students and staff, and is at school to ensure a safe environment in general, did ease some tensions.

Having an SRO allowed for certain kinds of instances to be dealt with in the moment and not later.

Having an SRO at school made me feel safe to walking the school. I think it also give privilege to the students that gets bullied.

Having an SRO ensured swift first responding.

Having an SRO made the school feel safer, improved trust between the police and students at the school, allowed students who were victims of a crime someone to talk to and trust

Having officers that are meant to work at the school to interact with students who are young and are more likely to be sucked into crime or be a victim of crime, which will allow students to voice their concerns to a public official in the vicinity of the school rather than going to a police station and filling a report there. It would be awkward for teenager to talk to a police officer on duty in the city since those regular officers are busy and are more likely to be aggressive due to the environment they are in. In contrast to this SROs are meant to be approachable by students who want to talk to them. Officer presence is a use of force technically speaking, to de-escalate any situation by just being present at that time.

Having some level of enforcement that could help de-escalate high intensity situations, make students feel somewhat more safe

Having someone to trust if something personal bad happens to you that you will not be able to share to others

Having the presence of a SRO at my school made it feel as if the school was more safe to serious crimes that could possibly happen but while them being there they had no impact to my school at all.

Having the SRO at my school was a benefit in many ways. There was another person you could go to if you were having a problem within the school. Their presence helped keep any bad activity down in general. Overall, they were a very large benefit to the school community in many different ways.

He did a lot to prevent crime and figure out how to prevent repeat offences when there were conflicts or crimes committed. He also improved many students views of the police as a whole.

I didn't have one for very long but I think having a law figure to go to in terms of sexual assault/harassment specifically would be nice if there's an officer who has built relationships with students.

I feel If there was a SRO at school kids think about what they do like for instance is there was a SRO at McNally the kids who killed Karan wouldn't have targeted him at school because they would have been scared cause there was a police officer at school

I felt much safer with the SRO. There were no drug problems in my grade 10 year, but now that the SRO is no longer here, our school can't handle the drug problem. I have also seen more students fist fighting in the halls now that the SRO is no longer here, and it makes me feel unsafe that there is nobody to help stop the fighting.

i felt protected

I felt protected and didn't want to worry about crimes, harassment in school.

I like the personal relationship he built with students including myself.

I received lectures about how the police system worked.

I think it helped having someone who students could become familiar with and grow to trust as an individual who can help, instead of as law enforcement that might help.

I think it helps keep the students in check, I have noticed the school decline since they left i just feel quite uneasy around a lot of the students based on what they say or do but that has never really made a difference to me.

I think it made others feel safer when the SRO was around, especially if we had some scary situations going around news or area.

I think it's cracked down on a lot of issues outside of school property that isn't always in the school's control and it made me feel a little bit safer as a result.

i think its nice to have someone there just in case something happens that you fell like you cant talk to the school or student services about

I think people felt more safe depending on their background

I think that maybe they could understand why teenagers do the things they do. Unlike the police who deal with adults most of the time.

If anything tragic was to happen, there would be an officer there to deal with the situation.

If there was a person who was trying to do something wrong they could stop it. Another benefit of having a SRO at the school is first aid if someone is hurt or ill. Finally, it gives students the opportunity to learn about a possible future Job.

If you know the person, it can feel easier to go to them rather than a police officer if you are a victim of a crime.

If you needed to speak with an officer it was easier to speak with the one in the school than it was to access a police officer

In some cases some violence can be prevented when it comes to students with weapons

In the event that there is a real lockdown, or something bad happens, they're there.

It allows us to have someone to trust and someone who can protect us and teach us how to protect ourselves as well.

It can be another support system students have access to, easier to build trust with the police and may help students feel comfortable reporting crimes. As well as generally helpings with being comfortable and safe at school sometimes.

It can be beneficial to have a resource to reach out to in times of distress or if something bad happens inside the school and in this case, it's more easier to get in touch with SRO rather than the police as it takes time for them to come to the school.

It gave students a sense of security in terms of lockdowns, criminals and gang violence. SRO's feel more approachable than police officers, especially for victims of violent crimes (sexual assault), and it made reporting incidents easier.

It helped maintain peace at school because students didn't want to get in trouble.

It helps scare kids that know they are doing bad things because they feel like they are more likely to get caught, therefore reducing crime and mischief in schools.

It made school more safe for me

It made students feel more safe but at the same time more aware of things around them

It made you feel very safe.

It makes me feel secure knowing that there's law enforcement there

Just knowing that there was a police-adjacent officer at school discouraged people from getting into fights/doing drugs (at least, on school property...). I also feel like he got along well with a bunch of the students. The dogs helped a lot.

Just seemed really cool and helped made me feel safe. It was someone I could've talked to (that didn't have anything to do with academics) if I ever felt the need to.

Knowing someone was at the school who had knowledge of how to de-escalate a situation.

Knowing that school safety was better managed from others. Having someone in the school that you knew you could go to if there was trouble.

Knowing someone who is trained to protect its citizens is there just in case something happens.

Made students feel safe to go to school and helped maintain kids who misbehaved at school.

Made the school safer and supervised

Made the school seem safer in general

Makes the school feel safer, people are less likely to cause as many issues due to their presence.

One good thing was that a lot of people were a little scared of a SRO so a lot of people did not do anything that would get them in trouble.

Open discussions about drugs, alcohol, sexual consent/harassment, bullying, cyberbullying, racism. Everything, the discussion's we would have grade by grade every few weeks were fantastic. so much to learn. Also learning about the police force.

Other students could get the help they needed.

Our previous SRO would council students and provide support.

Our school's in an awful neighbourhood so I guess it's nice to have police around for that, but they're never outside when the creeps are so what's the se. Also they got someone expelled for sexually harassing one of my friends so that's excellent.

Our SRO looked like he was capable of making the school feel safe, so beneficial in the sense of safety and comfort.

Peace of mind

People would feel intimidated to not commit crimes at school.

Sense of safety, good resource to ask about career pathways and very good at making students feel welcome

SRO's are a great way to establish and ensure your child is going to a safe school, and that they have someone on their side when dealing with punishments instead of being afraid from the law and its officers.

The positives of the SRO was that they spread awareness about the importance of safety and what to do if someone is harassing you. They also caught a few of the kids that were vandalism, smoking and making the school a sketchy place.

The school environment felt much safer especially since my school is in an unsafe neighbourhood. Students felt like they had someone on their side and the officer was also very friendly.

The sense of security and safety.

The SRO can decrease tension between students and teachers as well as increase the popularity of the police among younger people

The SRO I had was friendly, and made me feel safe in school. While I never faced any major incidents or crimes, if I ever did I would feel very confident in talking to them about it. I feel that in general, students in my school enjoyed the presence of the SRO, or at the very least did not have any negative thoughts or experiences with them.

The SRO was a safety net if the school staff couldn't deal with a situation

The SRO was fantastic because he approached situations with a grounded mindset. He knows the environment and he knows the situation. I walked alongside him many times and I once again, distinctly remember we came across a kid smoking a joint. Rather than handing him a fine and community service, the SRO took the time to have a simple conversation, letting him off with a warning. When black kids came to him, he spoke to them the same way he spoke to me. When women came to talk, it was the same thing. The benefit of the SRO was that order was maintained beyond a teacher's stern warnings and a sense of reality was put into people's minds.

The SROs made me trust the Police more than I did before. The SRO made me feel like I would not be the victim of a violent crime. I felt safer around the SRO.

Their presence make you feel safe and secure

Their presence would discourage crime.

They help make students feel safe and can be helpful in maintaining law at a school as well as building relationships with student.

They helped keep the school safe and save situations from escalating

They helped other students that were in a dangerous environment outside of school

They keep students from making mistakes, fighting etc.

They liked to communicate with the students and they were really nice

They made it seem safe with another more authoritative figure there

They made me feel heard and felt respected more than regular police officers, especially because I come from a family that's had run ins on the wrong side with them, so I feel like I'm being grouped wrongly when interacting with police who've dealt with the bad apples from my family.

They made me feel safe.

They made the school safer and taught students about legal stuff.

They make it less awkward when there is a serious situation at the school and makes the feeling of security more evident. Having them interact with us as often as possible helps humanize them and get rid of not only the monstrous stereotypes in modern times but also the heroic one

They make me feel safer, and like there are things that can be done about issues at school

They probably prevented or broke up some fights. They enforced some petty crime laws and got kids for smoking weed.

They were a community builder, and an integral part of our school culture. Our school also had one of the best records in the city when it came to preventing vaping on school premises before they

left. During online schooling, they personally visited students with poor internet access to deliver homework assignments, or to investigate why certain students might not be attending classes.

They were locally accessible, so if something had happened to you, you can easily report the incident to the SRO. And from my experience they can also be really friendly and get along with everyone :)

They were nice and friendly

They were really nice. Created a good sense of community.

They were transparent and genuine connections to our EPD that really showed us the roles and responsibilities of a Police men. They made connections with students and made us feel safe in our schools. They showed us that Police men can be good people.

They're immersed in an environment of young people where they can learn more about our perspectives

They're there if you're the type of person that needs immediate help with school related issues, that is in theory if they actually worked

To protect the students from anything that might happen at school, feel safe when you seem police cars at the school. make sure traffic is fine and make sure they are doing the right thing

Very helpful in giving out useful advice that the teachers didnt know the answers to

My school is downtown so it makes sense that we had an SRO. I mean sketchy people were always around and it's not too closed off of a school. They helped me feel safe in a bad area and they were kind so I didn't really feel like there was even a cop around.

Violent and criminal activities would be heavily discouraged with an SRO in the school. Every problem would not be solved perfectly, but things would be better.

Where I go now we go to school in a sketchy area downtown. There are events pretty frequently and having an SRO would bring a major sense of security to the school. Not to mention it's connected to a troubled school which means there's also frequent incidents with other students

You could talk to them about anything without having to feel scared. The SRO at my school was a chill guy who was super understanding. I wish he could've come back this year.

You feel more secure about your own privacy and safety, and if anything ever happens if you feel or you ARE being threatened by a student either from inside or from another school you can go to the SRO right away and they'll know how to help you out.

You know that they actually care for you because they see you every single day so they have an understanding of what you will need or what they need to do.

Respondents were also asked to describe the negative or bad things about having an SRO at their school. Most students responded that they could not identify any negatives. However, the most identified negatives included higher levels of surveillance, the perception of being constantly watched, intimidation, fear of firearms, false accusations, harsh treatment, the increased criminalization of students, and biased treatment towards racial and sexual minorities. Examples of the negative aspects of the SRO program are provided below.

**IN THEIR OWN WORDS: THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE SRO PROGRAM
AS IDENTIFIED BY STUDENT RESPONDENTS**

SROs are a bit intimidating.
A cop at the school is intimidating and uncomfortable.
The SRO created a crippling sense of distrust among students and staff at my school.
A literal cop is always watching you. It makes you feel targeted.
A negative thing about having an SRO at school is that some people might be intimidated by them or be scared of having them around as not everyone is used to being around a police officer or an SRO.
The SRO at my school abused his power and he treated the male students better than the female students.
The police, including SROs, are always abusing their power.
Active intimidation.
Adds more stress and intimidation instead of healing to the Black community.
Affects of parents when they see police in the school. Causes them stress.
All the people I knew who had interactions with the SRO felt like they were being treated unfairly and once they had an interaction with them their relationship with faculty at school was never the same.
A lot of people didn't like it and I found that they made the place a hostile environment more than anything.
Always being watched
Always following you in the halls if they have a suspicion.
Always scared of the police – even the SROs.
Any fight you get in you get a ticket or if you get caught vaping you get a ticket.
There is just a bad stigma around the police. Can't trust them.
Because it depends on the officer, the officer at my school was very accepting and kind with students which made them an enjoyable presence in the school. It varies between people and not every school could be as lucky to get a good person.
Profiling. Being searched everyday for a year at school because of the SRO "hunch."
Being worried that you're always under surveillance.
Bias, Intimidation, Racism in policing.
Biased. They were used to target "suspicious students" and do victim blaming.
Afraid of possible police brutality.
Can be intimidating.
Can be threatening.
SROs can easily abuse their power, subconscious discrimination, may feel threatening to some students.
Can make some individuals uncomfortable, and a bad SRO would negatively impact students and staff's lives, while also making a large negative outlook on the police force.
Can make yo feel watched.
Constant threat of having the police at the school, could make students uncomfortable and treat them unfairly because of their race, identity, or background.
Cops at school can be scary at times.

Could cause more problems with unfair charges and sending kids to jail.

Could make some students uncomfortable (however I haven't heard any of my peers say this).

Could make students feel unsafe because the SRO being there is an acknowledgement that something could happen.

Depending on the SROs past career experiences involving dangerous situations, they might bring those same attitudes to the school environment, thus some SROs might be more aggressive to students as if they were anyone who committed a crime.

Discrimination, feeling unsafe, tasers, guns.

Divisions at school based on how people feel about having an officer. Will pit the pro-cop students against the anti-cop people.

I don't trust police. I don't feel safe having one in my school, especially as a minority. There's been multiple accounts of them treating us worse or just flat out ignoring frequent issues like sexual harassment. Police aren't trained to deal with mental health issues and we need more people who are, rather than someone with a gun.

Even though I've never once gotten in trouble for any reason at school I still felt intimidated.

Even with no personal experience interacting with the SRO, every time I saw them I felt uncomfortable and watched. I felt like I was being criminalized for existing at school.

Everything they don't help they just intimidate coloured students and get you in trouble for the smallest things.

Fear of getting framed.

Fear that I was going to be falsely accused by someone who didn't like me and manipulated the SRO.

Fear! I am afraid of the police and their guns and their power to screw with your life.

Feeling intimidated. I don't like feeling intimidated by police at my school.

Feeling like you're being watched.

Feeling unsafe that there's a police officer at my school.

Felt imitated.

Felt like I was being watched, it made school feel like jail.

Felt like our privacy was being invaded even while in the bathrooms.

Felt targeted.

Felt watched.

For some students it was unsettling having an officer around the school because it may make them feel watched and like they were always in trouble

Afraid of guns. They are scary.

Guns.

Having a SRO walking around made people uncomfortable, many didn't see why they should be there at all times of the day, everyday.

Having an SRO was not the problem, rather it was who the SRO was, how they would speak, their demeanour, etc. I felt that the SRO was mainly to be called upon, rather than the SRO checking for whatever issues themselves.

Having armed people in a school is a bad idea in general.

Having police in any place ever is dangerous.

Having SRO's in the building does not create a safe & comfortable learning experience for all students.

He didn't do anything, people still do drugs and mess stuff up, he didn't actively make things worse to my knowledge but he sure didn't improve anything.

He just stood around talking to staff. When a coloured student walked by, he started walking towards them and asked questions or looked at them with a stink eye.

He literally did not do anything.

He was at the other school more that 4/5ths of the time, so it felt like he never really was there.

He was unfair with discipline and enforced some stereotypes.

Heard terrible stories of how he dealt with students.

His liking of white students over racial minority students.

I also think people could've felt threatened based on their background

I barely ever saw the SRO around, so I don't know if they did much.

I constantly felt like I was being watched, and like myself and other students in my school had possibly done something wrong because of the environment. I have also heard from multiple people that there was racial biases underlined during confrontations and suspicions

I didn't like them being armed. It made me feel uneasy.'

I do not trust officers. Having one makes me and others feel unsafe.

I don't remember the guy really doing much. He just sorta stood around ignoring the students.

I don't like the cops or the government.

I don't like the police very much.

I feel like I'm not safe at school.

I felt intimidated, as the SRO did not make themselves approachable.

I felt like I was being watched.

I kind of felt like there were dangerous people in the school, even though i knew there weren't.

If they are armed i wouldn't feel comfortable with that in the school.

I think it caused some tension between certain groups of students because of general fear of cops in general. It was hard to trust at first which at some points may have prompted some students to be a bit harsh towards the SRO.

I think it could cause people to be untrusting and think oh they are sheltering/watching us and then people would become hostile.

I think my experience differed from other students, and some did feel a bit nervous with someone in a police uniform around, even just because they felt like they were being watched or monitored.

I think that having a SRO around also caused the students to sneak around more and stay "hidden" under the SRO's radar.

I think the negative would be if the SRO is biased or negative to different races.

I think they can use they power and authority to intimidate students rather than a student learning mistakes.

I think they make people uneasy and as a White woman I really don't have to be scared of police the way people of colour often have to be.

i was always getting watched when I was doing my own thing

If armed, they may intimidate students when school should be a place of safety.

If the students are more powerful than the SRO, which means having the advantage to take over one SRO (if they have only one), will most likely not be helpful to safety of other students and the victims.

If they are armed I would feel especially unsafe

If they are power hungry or are an abuser it puts them in a great position to harm children and they aren't checked up on enough there needs to be checks every 3 months and it should be mandatory that students fill out forms like this about how the SRO is doing at their school

If they have a gun, in my opinion that's bad. it's weird and not needed.

In the junior high I went to, my sister (who is special needs) got raped by a girl (who is autistic) during an overnight field trip. I am still unsure what went on, but my family and I didn't even know it happened until about half a year later. Had we known that she experienced it, we may have been able to properly get her away from the person who caused it. The school never ended up dealing with the girl and told my sister to "ignore her." Surely, they could have told us what went on. Maybe the school didn't tell the SRO or something. I'm not sure but it made my experience at that school uncomfortable from then on.

Increased paranoia in general.

Increased tension when she was around.

Intimidated students.

Intimidated the wrong students, most took it as a challenge to see what they could get away with.

Intimidating makes the school seem dangerous.

Intimidating sometimes.

Intimidating, it almost feels like all of your actions are being watched.

Intimidation. Could also change public's opinion if students are treated unfairly

It always felt weird when he would show his weapons to the students, especially the white male students who were known to cause trouble.

It can be intimidating

It can create a bad impression on the school labelling it as "dangerous".

It can feel uncomfortable having police at school.

It can make people feel nervous and scared as they might think their school is a bad school.

It can make people with marginalized identities feel less safe, and for good reason.

it could intimidate students that have had bad experiences with the police

It created a reputation for our school and that it was "full of crime"

It felt a little like you were being watched the whole time.

it felt like we were being watched constantly.

It felt unsafe. It felt wrong having an armed person in our school, the SRO never made a positive difference to the issues faced in the school.

It felt weird having an officer at our school because I always felt like something was going on and I didn't really feel safe not knowing.

It is a little worrying know that the SRO would be armed, and that there is a possibility for the weapon to be stolen or taken. The chance of it happening might have been very small, but it was still something to think of.

It is possible that SROs would target specific groups of people. I am White so I would not have noticed it happen to me, but in my opinion our SRO was very nice and I don't believe she would've done that. I do think however that other SRO's might not be as respectful.

It made it harder for children to ignore the very real issue that occur outside of school and the encroaching incidents that are bound to happen. The security feeling is there but also a sense of unease as you wait for something to happen.

It made many people feel more unsafe and uncomfortable. I felt I was more at risk for being suspended. Even though I'm a good student, I still vape and I knew that the SRO could hold back my education if I was caught too many times. However, I'm almost an adult now and I've been using nicotine since I was 13, so to me, setting back my education with suspensions is a waste of my time.

It made me feel like something bad was going to happen.

It made me wonder if my school was bad. I wondered if enough bad things happened that they got an SRO as a last resource because the teachers couldn't really do anything.

It made the atmosphere very paranoid.

It made the environment more threatening and then outside of that did basically nothing. It made punishment for misbehaving at school sometimes involve law enforcement.

It made the school feel unsafe and more in danger.

It made the school seem a bit dangerous especially if they were armed.

It makes you think that any day at school, there could be a school shooting.

It may make some students uncomfortable, nervous, and anxious as they feel threatened or just worry around police.

It might cause people to feel uncomfortable considering everything that has been going on.

It might create the image of an unsafe school or neighborhood.

it often felt like being watched and that students were not to be trusted.

It sometime created an uncomfortable atmosphere.

It sometimes made me feel uneasy.

It was intimidating.

It was intimidating and the only thing they were there for was to feed their power hungry asses by taking away vapes and giving fines for loitering.

It's a cop. Need I say more? I don't trust them.

It's unnecessary, makes students feel they are not safe at school , students don't feel comfortable in a environment where they are watched by a SRO at school , kids need to feel safe and comfortable in a environment where they are going daily to learn and grow not be worried or scared that the place their going to learn is dangerous.

Just how they'll value White students and treat them better than minorities.

Kids being fined off school property for vapes and cannabis. He just sort of walked around and did nothing.

Kinda scary when we saw them, made going to that school seem like a bad neighborhood.

Lack of ability of to anything.

Limits freedom of people in the school.

Literally everything. So many sexual assaults got reported and were never dealt with. So much bullying, attacks, drugs, fights, cops never stopped any of that.

Made me uncomfortable, didn't help me as they should when I faced issues it was their job to deal with,

Makes minority groups uncomfortable and scared, tolerates abuse of power by fellow police officers.

Makes other students nervous, a lot of students have anxiety.

Makes the school look dangerous.

Making some people feel uncomfortable having an SRO roaming around the school, assuming they may be armed.

Making the school seem scary

Maybe the stigma around it, entailing that the school was a dangerous place

My friends who are minorities felt uncomfortable around them

One bad thing was a lot of people were too scared they felt that they could not go up to him and talk to him it trust him.

One person I know didn't like the SRO because they confiscated their vapes. I think the SRO could have done a better job explaining to this person why the vape was taken away.

People being suspicious.

People can look down on them because they are not known as a "real police person "

People could become more intimidated by them or it could give the school a bad impression.

People feel intimidated.

People feeling intimidated.

People may fear the SRO for the sole reason that their a police officer working at a school

People may feel threatened or insecure about having a police officer nearby.

People perceive your school as dangerous, and people may stray away from your school

People think it's a unsafe school.

Police are (generally) not great at dealing with mental health related issues!!

Police are very intimidating and should have no place in a school because there's children that have had different experiences with different types of authority figures and police are the most intimidating and they should never be around influential kids especially when they have weapons on them because that is just a means for disaster to strike they also intimidate people like why would I want to feel intimidated in my school because there's a police officer there please abuse their power all the time and I don't think they should ever be in a school around kids.

Police officers are terrifying, and I have been assaulted by them because of my mental health. It doesn't really make me feel safe anymore.

Police represent violence, institutionalized discrimination, and abuse of power to a lot of people. I don't think having someone like that in a school helps education. They didn't even help with security that much, from what I saw.

Possible abuse of power

Potential anxiety of having a police officer watching over you.

Potential bias and misuse of authority with disagreeable students.

Profiling, abuse of power, intimidation techniques.

Put some students on edge, thinking something must have happened or happening for them to be at school.

Sadly, there will always be downsides. The SRO program was abused heavily by the principals and while the SRO himself was a fantastic man with upright morals, the principal was a dirt bag. Bringing in (oddly targeted) black kids to the office for something as little as swearing. Meanwhile, I have the mouth of a sailor and I swear, I'm fine. The SRO around these same kids was fine too, it's just the one's commanding that often have bad thoughts.

Seems unnecessary and like a waste of resources

Some children felt threatened. There is a school to prison pipeline and SRO's do not prevent crimes or at-risk students from crimes.

Some individuals could've or may have felt intimidated.

Some kids are scared and feel like the school might be dangerous.

Some may feel uncomfortable with someone sort of watching over them making sure that no one does anything suspicious.

Some people are nervous when SRO was around.

Some people didn't show up to school as they were scared they would get caught doing something.

Some people may be stressed by their presence. Though I'm not bothered by it.

Some people might feel like they are constantly being watched

Some people might feel threatened

Some people might feel uncomfortable in the school. You might feel like you're being watched which we already are constantly. I just think the SRO shouldn't be in the school on a day to day basis because the principals already make several people uncomfortable with watching our every move on the cameras.

Some people who comes from a war country may not feel safe around them because they are wearing their uniform all the time

Some SRO's did not try to have a good relationship with students

Some SROs felt they were “judge, jury, and executioner”

Some students could feel uncomfortable around them because they could've had bad experiences with officers before.

Some students could perhaps feel more intimidated or triggered when seeing a police officer in full uniform.

Some students may feel intimidated.

Some students may have felt intimidated

Some students might feel targeted or feel like they're walking on eggshells at school due to their race, etc.

Some students might feel uncomfortable having someone with a gun in the building.

Some students of certain groups probably felt like they had a target on their back with an SRO around, they also may not always be able to prevent bullying or mistreatment from students or teachers to other students

Some students who may have had negative encounters with the police might feel uncomfortable having a police at school.

Sometimes felt like I was doing something wrong even though I wasn't

Sometimes kids can feel intimidated.

Sometimes made me wonder if my school was getting less safe.

Sometimes seeing a police officer around can be intimidating

Sometimes their nature can be too rough with students. As students we need them to be nicer and friendly without crossing their lines.

Sometimes, I felt like I was being watched.

SRO treated Black and Indigenous kids like we were walking talking criminals. The lighter your skin, the better they treated you.

SRO's made students feel intimidated, and even threatened depending on the situation. On more than one occasion, an SRO would approach students in an aggressive manor without prior interaction, and a lot of SROs keep the complex of a police officer, which makes students have

more hate towards them. Additionally, an aggressive SRO makes a school feel policed, and makes students feel trapped-in or fearful. SRO's being more aggressive towards students not only increased students' bad behaviors, but it decreased the likelihood of violent crimes being reported, especially if the SRO happened to be male.

SROs make so many students incredibly uncomfortable. Having cops and guns in schools makes them feel unsafe and makes minorities feels targeted

SROs intimidate and criminalize students. They don't keep students safe and instead make schools a less safe environment for vulnerable students

Stereotyping.

Students can feel intimidated and under surveillance.

Students felt weird about having an armed and uniformed officer at school, he seemed to not be doing much anyway. Some students, mostly of colour, felt uneasy around him, as a result of our general distrust of law enforcement.

Students of colour may have felt uneasy due to historical trends of discrimination by police against POC.

Teachers and school staff used the SRO as their weapon.

That the one I remember at my schools never really did their job in making other students feel safe. A girl got sexually assaulted by multiple students from the school and nobody helped her, another incident a student was getting bullied and people would pick fights with him and the SROs didn't help him when it was well known.

The danger of having a gun on school property and having fear in a weapon with so much power being so near.

The fact that the SRO didn't really show up as often as they should have.

The intimidation and feeling of dread every time I entered the building. And, the way the SROs can abuse their power

The need to have an SRO at my school made the school feel a bit more unsafe.

The negative is that knowing that your school needs and SRO because of some past incident with may account again.

the negatives of having an SRO is that it provides individuals a feeling of fearfulness if they are near an SRO who is armed.

The police system is corrupt, the good guy with a gun myth is harmful and wrong, the program steals money from the school district as the school district is required to supply at least half of the money required but is severely underfunded in comparison to the over funded police. Why is there a cop in my school? Why is this supposed to make me feel safe when cops have continually abused their power over students and minors and people in general, especially given current statistics regarding such matters.

The presence of weapons built to kill and harm people in the school. The presence of people who notorious for assaulting, killing, and harming people of colour.

The SRO at times can be intimidating to many students. And because of the uniform and presence makes it difficult to let them know everything about an incident.

The SRO in uniform was intimidating for students in my opinion.

The SRO may have to switch between different schools, resulting in them not being at my school all the time.

The SRO's can be biased in various scenarios and therefore not help the students.

The underlying racism and micro aggression that the SRO's had. Most were racially biased and treated students of colour worse than white students.

There are many groups of people, and minorities that are intimidated by police, and have a negative association. It could cause fear or discomfort for many people.

There are too many risks in placing an armed officer in a school environment. SROs can escalate situations because police are not equipped to handle typical issues kids, especially poor kids or minority kids face.

There may be some groups of people who could possibly feel uncomfortable with police in general, but I personally didn't have those kinds of experiences.

There were rumours that a male officer was having inappropriate (to put it lightly, the details were rather explicit) relationships with female students. Halfway through the year, he was replaced by another male. The next year, the officer was replaced again by a female officer this time. This only seemed to confirm the rumours.

They abuse their power, they don't do anything about outside threats, they racially profile kids, they create a tense environment

They also didn't affect the school positively in my opinion. There really wasn't much of a difference and I'm opposed to having officers in schools on principle.

They always made me feel uncomfortable. Having a police officer in the school didn't seem to aid or decrease problems. If anything, it made certain students who already distrusted police to feel hesitant to report issues to the administration, for fear of the SRO's involvement. They rarely seemed to interact positively with students, only those interested in a police career

They brought no change into my school community. Once every now and then we would get a presentation given by SRO. Each time on a different topic but no actions or efforts were put in to make a difference in our actual lives.

They can be intimidating.

They carried weapons that seemed unnecessary when dealing with young teens and preteens. But, made sense for adult criminals.

They consistently retraumatized my friends when they came to them with stories of sexual assault, bullying, and harassment, and then did nothing to punish the perpetrators. The only time a perpetrator was punished, he was suspended, chose to leave, and then reoffended at his next school. In addition, the reason he received a harsher punishment than other offenders was because there was video taken of him sneaking photos under girls' skirts, which is understandable, but what was not understandable was that the student who recorded the video was ALSO suspended because it was a "violation of FOIP" for him to record another student. I firmly believe that the student who took the video did the right thing and should not have been punished. They made my Indigenous friends feel targeted, following them around the school and punishing them for smoking weed off school property at the legal age but not underage White students who vaped in the bathrooms.

They could be racist and discriminative

They did nothing else but stand there dramatically. Also, they had a dog which was weird.

They did nothing I'm not even sure why they were there

They didn't do anything, it mostly just felt like my friends complaining about the SRO being intimidating.

They didn't do a lot. The most I remember the officer doing is directing traffic.

They didn't do anything.

They don't do much.

They felt a really strong disconnect from students that made them feel like they were watching us rather than watching over us.

They intimidated students who disagreed with them, schools don't need officers, they would benefit more from social workers.

They made some students in minority groups feel unsafe

They mainly served to instill fear in students. They kind of just reaffirmed the idea that many of us who grew up in the inner-city had already been made to feel, that we were dangerous, ill-intentioned, and destined for failure. I was one of the higher-achieving students and I don't belong to a marginalized racial group, but even I was sometimes made to feel that way. Some peers of mine who had conflict with the SRO eventually dropped out or flunked out of school. Some of my peers had already begun to be challenged by addiction when we were entering junior high school and the officers had no positive influence on them that I could see. Many of my peers were threatened by other students with violence, and they didn't trust the SRO. Sometimes they would just be blamed by them, and the fact that they had gone to them at all just angered the perpetrator. They only seemed to make things worse.

They make people feel unsafe. They introduce more violence into schools. They target racialized groups. They divert funding from really helpful programs. At my school the one councillor is always booked, if we had more resources available, that would be 10x better for the school than a police officer. They are scary. They are increased surveillance. They officialise petty crimes that can ruin kids lives. They will care more about the school property than the students. They don't prevent sexual assault.

They make some students feel unsafe

They make students feel threatened and unsafe

They make the school environment feel more like a prison or a detention center or a mental health clinic.

They might not treat each student fairly, which can polarize a school community and make it unsafe.

They punished victims and bystanders if a fight broke out, and punished people without evidence as well as held all as guilty until proven innocent which is against the criminal code of Canada.

They still may not do anything after a report is made, regardless of if they could or not.

They tend to look mean and make me uncomfortable.

They were basically a glorified bodyguard, and they never stopped any fights that happened so commonly.

They were intimidating to look at because the police in general have a bad reputation and the gun and baton scared me.

They were probably intimidating to certain ethnic groups

They were racist

They were very intimidating and I felt stressed being around them.

They're unaware of the crime going on inside the school. (sexual assault, bullying).

Very intimidating. Because this is a learning environment, and kids should not need an SRO. Kind of a sad thing.

Impact of SRO Program Suspension

Respondents were asked if they have felt less safe at school, just as safe, or safer since the suspension of the SRO program in 2020 (see Figure D13). One out of four respondents (24.0%) report that they have felt less safe at school since the suspension of the SRO program. An additional 29.5% have felt just as safe. Only 9.3% report that they have felt safer at school since the suspension of the SRO program. It is also important to note that 35.4% of student respondents do not know if they feel less safe at school since the suspension of the SRO program.

Respondents were also asked if they thought student behaviour at their school had worsened since the suspension of the SRO program (see Figure D14). The results indicate that 27.0% of students feel student behaviour has gotten worse, 28.7% believe it has stayed about the same, and 4.0% believe it has gotten better. Four out of ten students (40.2%) don't know if student behaviour has changed since the suspension of the program.

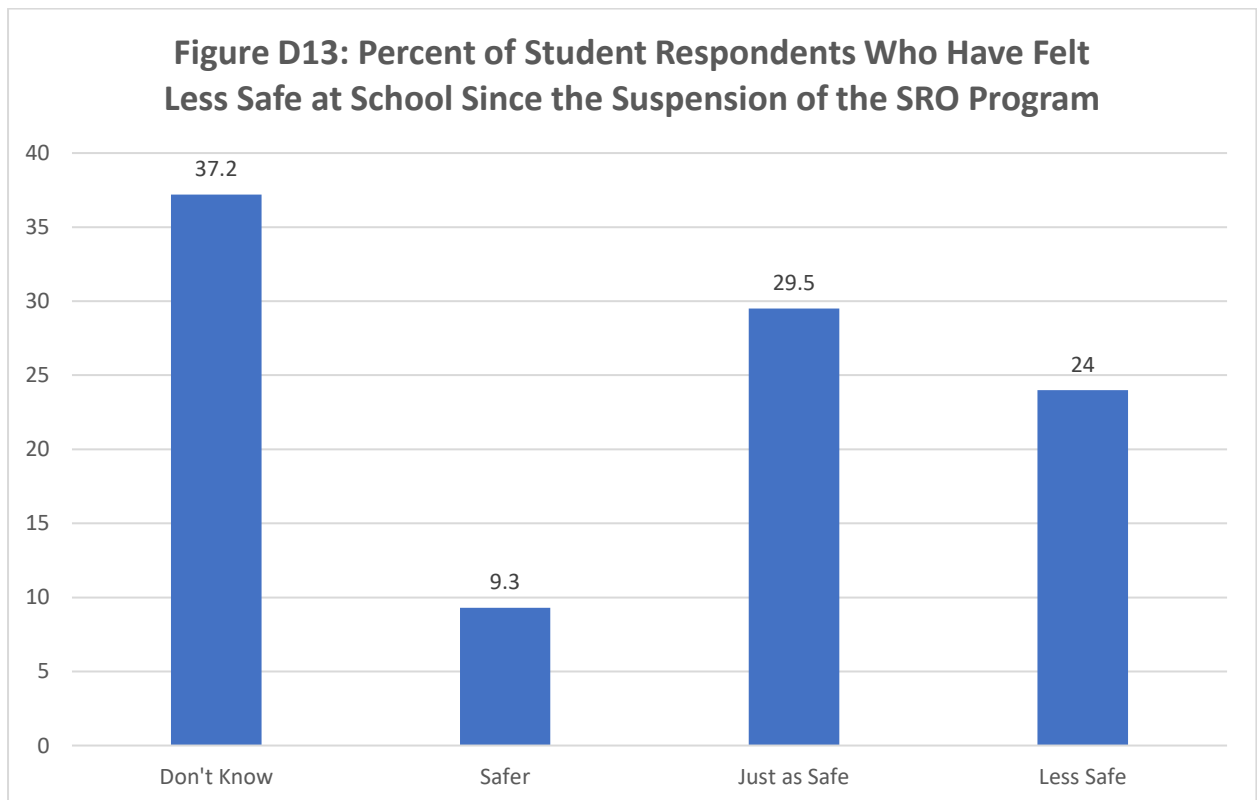
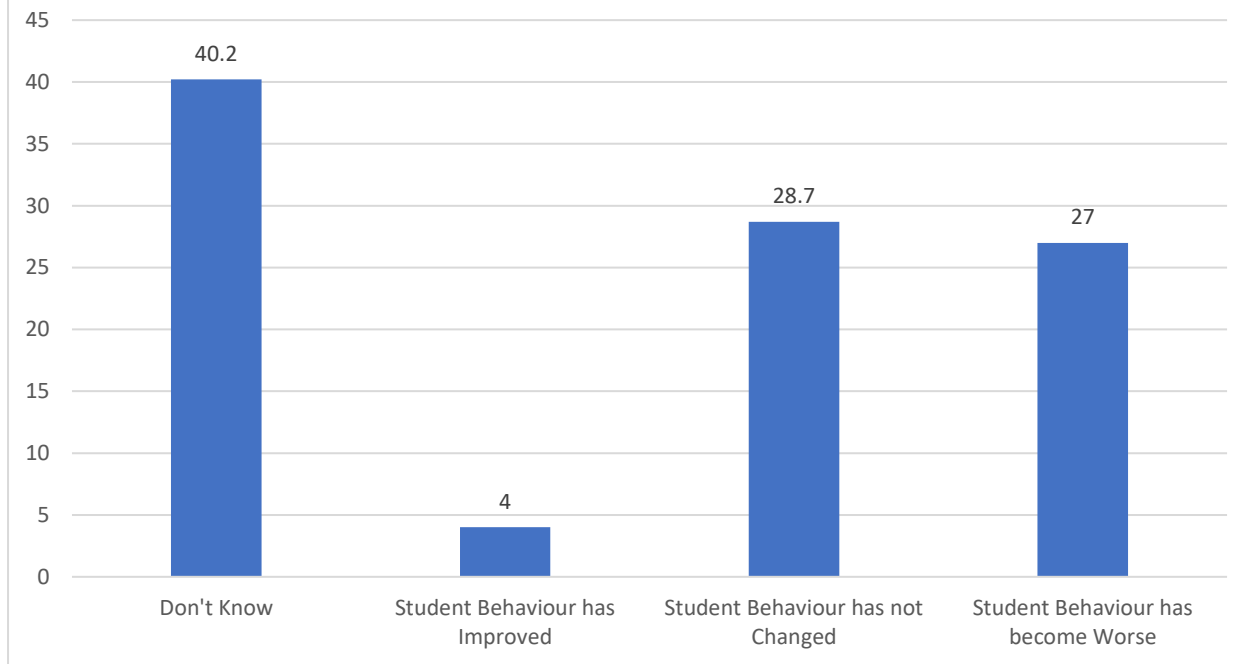


Figure D14: Percent of Student Respondents Who Report That Student Behaviour at School Has Become Worse Since the Suspension of the SRO Program



Status of the SRO Program

Student respondents were asked if they thought the SRO program should be returned or reinstated to their school (see Figure D15). A small majority of students (52.3%) believe that the program should be reinstated. One-fourth (27.8%) think the SRO program should be reinstated without reform. Another fourth (24.5%) believe the program requires improvement. By contrast, only 12.4% believe that the EPSB’s SRO program should be permanently terminated. However, more than a third of students (35.3%) do not know if the program should be reinstated or not.

Across all racial groups, student respondents are more likely to recommend the reinstatement of the SRO program than its permanent removal (see Table D11). However, Indigenous respondents (22.9%) are the racial group most likely to recommend its permanent removal, followed by Black respondents (15.5%). By contrast, very few Asian (2.9%), South Asian (7.4%) and Arab/Middle Eastern students (7.1%) want to see the SRO program permanently removed.

Non-binary respondents are more likely to recommend the reinstatement of the SRO program (42.1%) than its permanent removal (29.3%).

2sLGBTQ+ students are more likely to recommend the reinstatement of the SRO program (47.5%) than its permanent removal (21.4%).

Disabled students are more likely to recommend the reinstatement of the SRO program (55.6%) than its permanent removal (17.7%).

Figure D15: Percent of Student Respondents, With SRO Experience, Who Want the EPSB's SRO Program Reinstated

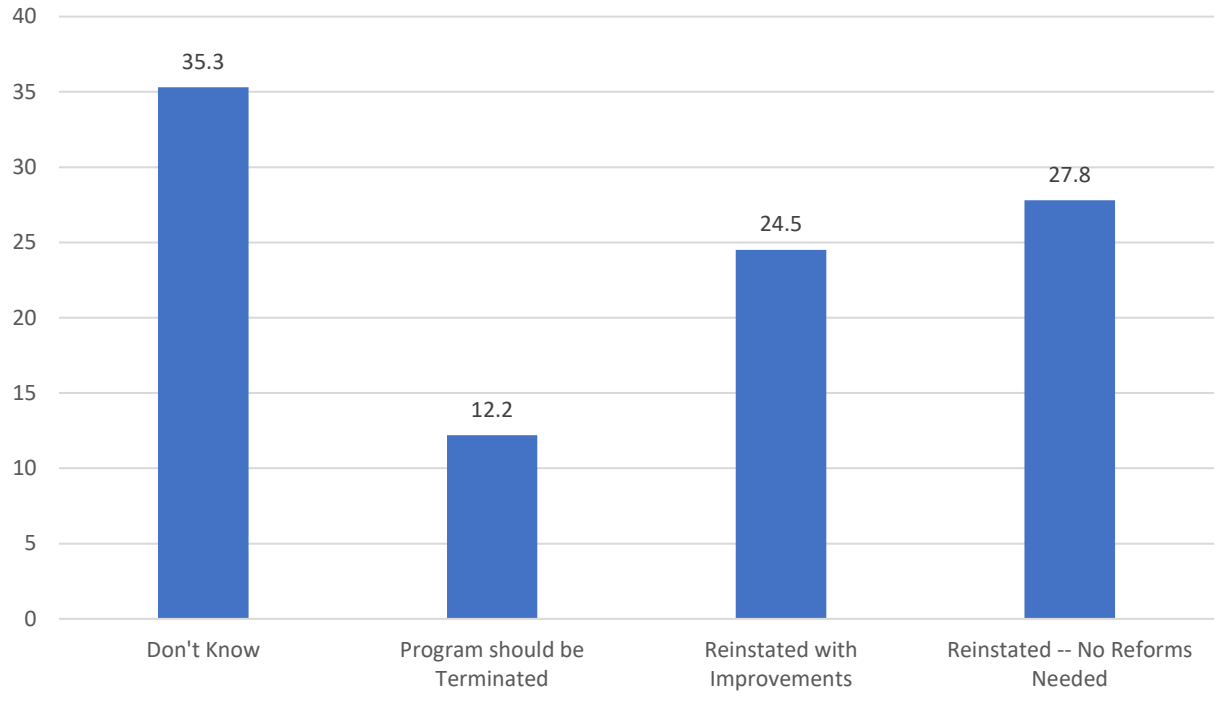


TABLE D11: Percent of Student Respondents Who Want the SRO Program Reinstated, by Race, Disability Status, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Student Characteristics	Reinstate Program with No Reforms	Reinstate Program with Improvements	Permanently Terminate Program	Don't Know
<u>Race:</u>				
Black	27.4	19.0	15.5	38.1
Indigenous	27.1	22.9	22.9	27.1
Asian	29.9	24.8	2.9	42.3
South Asian	31.0	29.2	7.4	32.4
Hispanic	18.2	13.6	13.6	54.5
Arab/Middle Easter	31.0	14.3	7.1	47.6
Bi-Racial	19.0	29.8	11.6	39.7
<u>Disability Status:</u>				
Self-Reported Disability	29.7	25.9	17.7	26.7
Overall Sample	27.8	24.5	12.2	35.3
<u>Sexual Orientation:</u>				
2sLGBTQ+	21.9	25.6	21.4	31.1
Overall Sample	27.8	24.5	12.2	35.3
<u>Gender Identity:</u>				
Non-Binary	16.5	25.6	29.3	28.6
Overall Sample	27.8	24.5	12.2	35.3

Recommendations for Improvement

All student respondents were asked if they had any recommendations for improving the SRO program. A summary of major recommendations are provided below.⁹

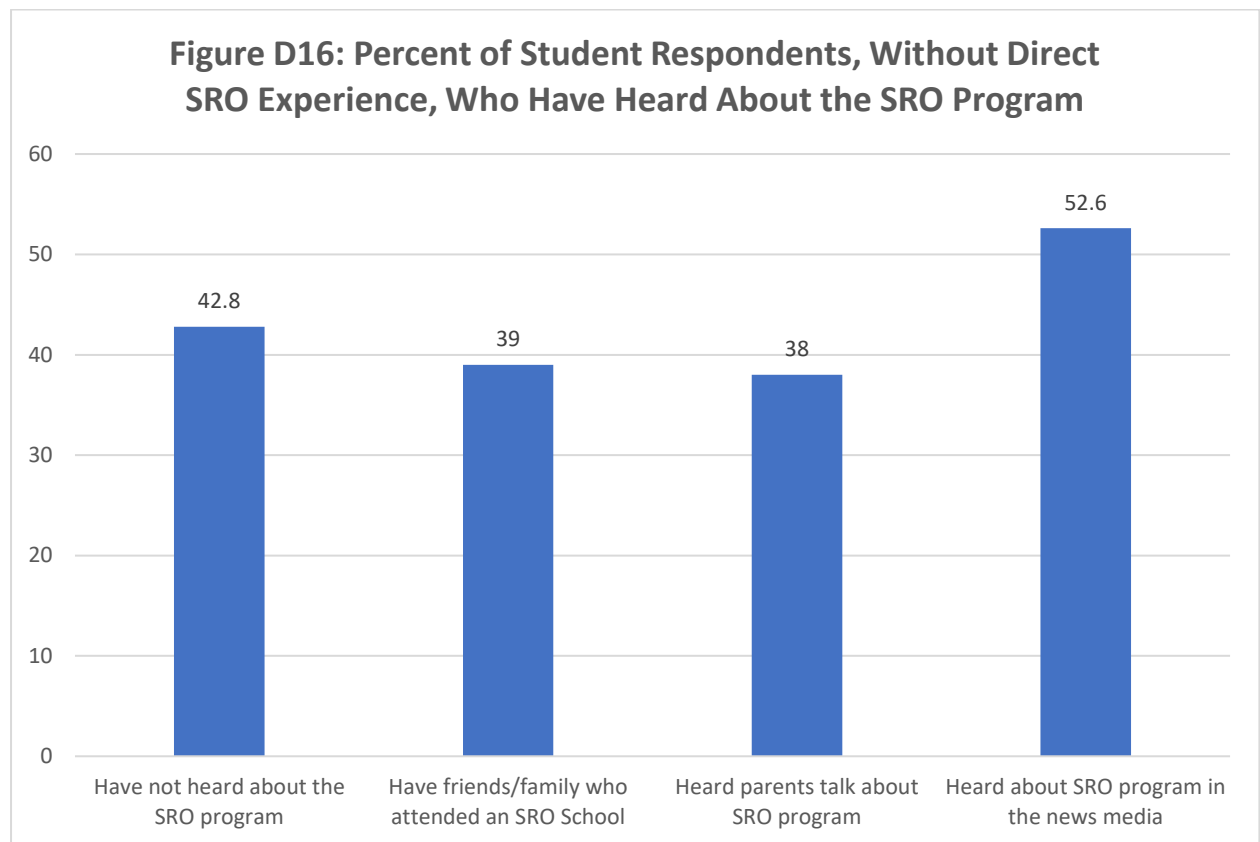
- Many maintain that the SROs should interact more frequently with students in the halls, during extra-curricular activities, and on field trips. They felt that such interactions would increase trust and help both students and youth learn about one another.
- Other students feel that SROs need to be better selected and trained to ensure that they know how to interact with youth from diverse backgrounds. A number of students mentioned that they had experienced both good and bad SROs and wanted to find a way to ensure that only appropriately trained and well-suited officers were given SRO opportunities.
- While a few students feel that the SROs need to engage in greater enforcement activity, others maintained that SROs need focus less on enforcement and more on mentoring and informal mechanisms to deal with student conflicts and discipline.
- Several students identified the need to hire more women, 2sLGBTQ+ and racial minority officers so that the SRO program better reflects the EPSB's diverse student body.
- Other students reported that more needs to be done to eliminate SRO bias and ensure the equal treatment of students from all racial and social backgrounds.
- Some students felt that SRO officers needed better mental health training so that they could better deal with students in crisis.

⁹ In the following discussion the term “many” is used to refer to 100 or more respondents. The term “several” is used to refer to 50 to 99 respondents and the term “some” is used to refer to 49 or fewer respondents.

OPINIONS OF STUDENTS WITHOUT SRO EXPERIENCE

As discussed above, the research team also surveyed 2,465 EPSB students who had no direct experience with the SRO program. Although students in this sample had, to their knowledge, never attended a school with a School Resource Officer, most (57.2%) reported that they had heard about the SRO program prior to completing the survey (see Figure D16).

Four out of ten respondents (39.0%) report that they know family or friends who have attended a school with a SRO, 38.0% have heard their parents talk about the SRO program, and 52.6% have been exposed to the SRO program through the news media.



Perceived Impact of SROs in School

All respondents were asked to imagine that a School Resource Officer had been assigned to their school. They were then asked to agree or disagree with various statements about the impact that this SRO would have on the students at their school (see Table D12). As with students with direct SRO experience, most students without direct experience had a positive or neutral perception of the SRO program. Highlights of major findings are outlined below:

- Almost half the respondents (46.3%) agree or strongly agree that an SRO would make them feel safer at school. By contrast, only 15.6% report that an SRO would not make them feel safer. An additional 38.1% don't know if they would feel safer with an SRO or not.
- More than a third of student respondents (34.3%) agree or strongly agree that an SRO would make them feel watched or targeted at school. However, more than a quarter of the sample (27.7%) believe that they would not feel targeted at school and 38.0% are not sure if they would feel targeted or not.
- Almost a third of the student respondents (29.9%) report that the assignment of an SRO would make them feel that they were attending a dangerous or violent school. However, 37.1% disagree with this statement. An additional 33.0% don't know if an SRO would impact how they feel about their school or not.
- Almost forty percent of respondents (38.4%) believe that the assignment of an SRO to their school would make others think their school is dangerous. However, 31.3% of respondents disagree with this statement and 30.3% are not sure whether an SRO would change the reputation of their school or not.
- Respondents are split with respect to the perceived treatment students would receive if an SRO was assigned to their school. While 29.7% of respondents believe that the SROs would treat all students fairly, 32.6% believe that students would not be treated fairly. An additional 37.7% don't know if students would be treated fairly or not.
- Half of the students surveyed (50.5%) agree that the assignment of an SRO would help them learn more about the police. Only 17.0% of respondents disagree with this statement. An additional 32.5% don't know if an SRO would help them learn more about the police or not.
- One out of four student respondents (27.5%) believe that an SRO would increase their level of trust in the police. However, an equal proportion of the sample (26.1%) disagree or strongly disagree that an SRO would increase their trust in law enforcement. Almost half the sample (46.4%) report that they do not know if an SRO would increase trust or not.
- Compared to students with direct SRO experience, a relatively high proportion of students without experience perceive that an SRO would engage in biased behaviours. For example, 29.2% believe that SROs would treat Indigenous students worse than

White Students, 32.8% believe that they would treat Black students worse than White students, 18.9% believe they would treat male students worse than female students, and 20.7% believe they would treat 2sLGBTQ+ students worse than heterosexual students. However, in each scenario, almost half of the students report that they don't know if SROs would engage in biased behaviour or not.

- The perception of potential SRO bias is lowest amongst Asian and South Asian students, and highest among Black, Indigenous, and 2sLGBTQ+ students (see Table D13).
- A third of student respondents (33.6%) believe that they would be intimidated by SRO officers if they were assigned to their school. However, an equal proportion (32.9%) believe that they would not be intimidated. An additional 33.3% report that they don't know if they would be intimidated or not.
- Almost half of the student respondents (47.5%) worry that teachers and principals will use SROs to deal with students they don't like. By contrast, a fourth of the respondents (23.3%) are not worried about this type of situation.
- Four out of ten student respondents (39.1%) worry that SROs will abuse their powers if assigned to their school. A quarter are not worried (26.0%) about SROs abusing their powers and an additional 34.8% indicate that they do not know if they would be worried or not.
- In general, Asian, South Asian, and Arab/Middle Eastern students evaluate the potential impact of SROs more positively than Black and Indigenous students (see Table D13). Non-binary students, disabled students, students from the 2sLGBTQ+ community, and students with a history of school disciplinary issues also tend to be less positive about SRO program than others. Students with high levels of academic achievement tend to be more positive.

Table D12: Percent of Student Respondents, without Direct SRO Experience, Who Agree or Disagree with Various Statements About the School Resource Officer Program

STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
SROs would make me feel safe at school.	6.7	9.0	38.1	34.4	11.9
SROs would make me feel like I was being watched or targeted at school.	8.3	19.4	38.0	25.6	8.7
The presence of an SRO would make me feel like I went to a dangerous or violent school.	10.4	26.7	33.0	23.0	6.9
The presence of an SRO would make people in the community think my school was dangerous or violent.	9.0	22.3	30.3	29.4	9.0
The SROs would treat all students fairly.	11.9	20.7	37.7	20.1	9.6
The SROs would help me learn more about the police.	5.4	11.6	32.5	43.6	6.9
The SROs would help me trust the police more.	9.5	16.6	46.4	22.9	4.6
The SROs would treat Indigenous students worse than White students.	12.0	16.2	42.6	20.6	8.6
The SROs would treat Black students worse than White students.	11.8	14.9	40.4	22.8	10.0
The SROs would treat other racial minority students worse than White students	11.5	14.9	39.4	24.3	9.9
The SROs would treat male students worse than female students.	11.2	22.2	47.8	14.7	4.2
The SROs would treat 2sLGBTQ+ students worse than other students.	11.9	17.7	49.6	14.8	5.9
Having a police officer at school would make me feel uncomfortable or intimidated.	9.2	23.7	33.5	23.8	9.8
I worry that teachers and principals would use SROs to deal with students they don't like.	6.8	16.4	29.2	33.4	14.1
I worry that SROs would abuse their powers at my school.	7.3	18.7	34.8	26.2	12.9

Table D13: Percent of Student Respondents, without Direct SRO Experience, Who Agree or Strongly Agree with Various Statements About the School Resource Officer Program, by Racial Background

STATEMENT	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Hispanic	Arab/Middle Eastern	Bi-Racial
SROs would make me feel safe at school.	42.3	27.3	48.8	58.8	54.5	48.1	41.9
SROs would make me feel like I was being watched or targeted at school.	40.2	36.4	27.5	32.8	45.4	36.4	34.2
The presence of an SRO would make me feel like I went to a dangerous or violent school.	37.8	19.5	28.0	28.8	29.7	33.6	28.1
The presence of an SRO would make people in the community think my school was dangerous or violent.	45.6	28.6	36.7	36.0	34.5	41.2	40.0
The SROs would treat all students fairly.	26.5	22.1	30.8	37.8	25.5	26.4	27.7
The SROs would help me learn more about the police.	44.7	37.7	52.7	59.9	45.4	45.4	49.7
The SROs would help me trust the police more.	23.5	22.4	27.1	38.0	29.6	29.6	24.9
The SROs would treat Indigenous students worse than White students.	31.7	21.0	24.6	28.3	21.8	24.2	34.2
The SROs would treat Black students worse than White students.	44.7	22.4	28.0	30.3	29.0	27.5	36.7
The SROs would treat other racial minority students worse than White students	43.3	23.7	28.9	33.5	29.1	30.3	39.4
The SROs would treat male students worse than female students.	21.9	12.0	17.2	22.6	20.0	15.7	22.6
The SROs would treat 2sLGBTQ+ students worse than other students.	18.3	18.7	19.6	16.8	14.6	18.4	20.5
Having a police officer at school would make me feel uncomfortable or intimidated.	34.3	32.0	30.8	29.8	34.5	30.8	30.9
I worry that teachers and principals would use SROs to deal with students they don't like.	53.2	41.4	41.3	44.7	47.3	45.4	52.9
I worry that SROs would abuse their powers at my school.	44.2	32.0	37.0	33.3	38.2	37.9	41.0

Perceptions of SRO Racial Bias

Student respondents were asked: “In your opinion, if your school had an SRO, would that SRO treat students from your racial group better, worse or the same as students from other racial groups?” Overall, 23.8% of student respondents, without SRO experience, feel that SROs would treat students from their racial group worse than other students. By contrast, 61.4% believe the SROs would treat all students the same.

Black respondents are most likely to perceive potential SRO bias (see Table D14). For example, 56.5% of Black respondents feel that an SRO would treat students from their racial group worse or much worse than others, compared to 32.6% of Indigenous students, 31.1% of Arab/Middle Eastern students, 27.6% of South Asian students, and 18.6% of Asian students.

It is interesting to note that, regardless of race, perceptions of SRO racial bias are much more pronounced among students without direct SRO experience than students who have attended a school with an SRO. For example, 23.8% of students without SRO experience feel that SROs would treat members of their racial group worse than other students, compared to only 10.3% of students who have actually attended a school that was part of the SRO program. This finding suggests that exposure to SROs may reduce distrust and the perception of racial bias.

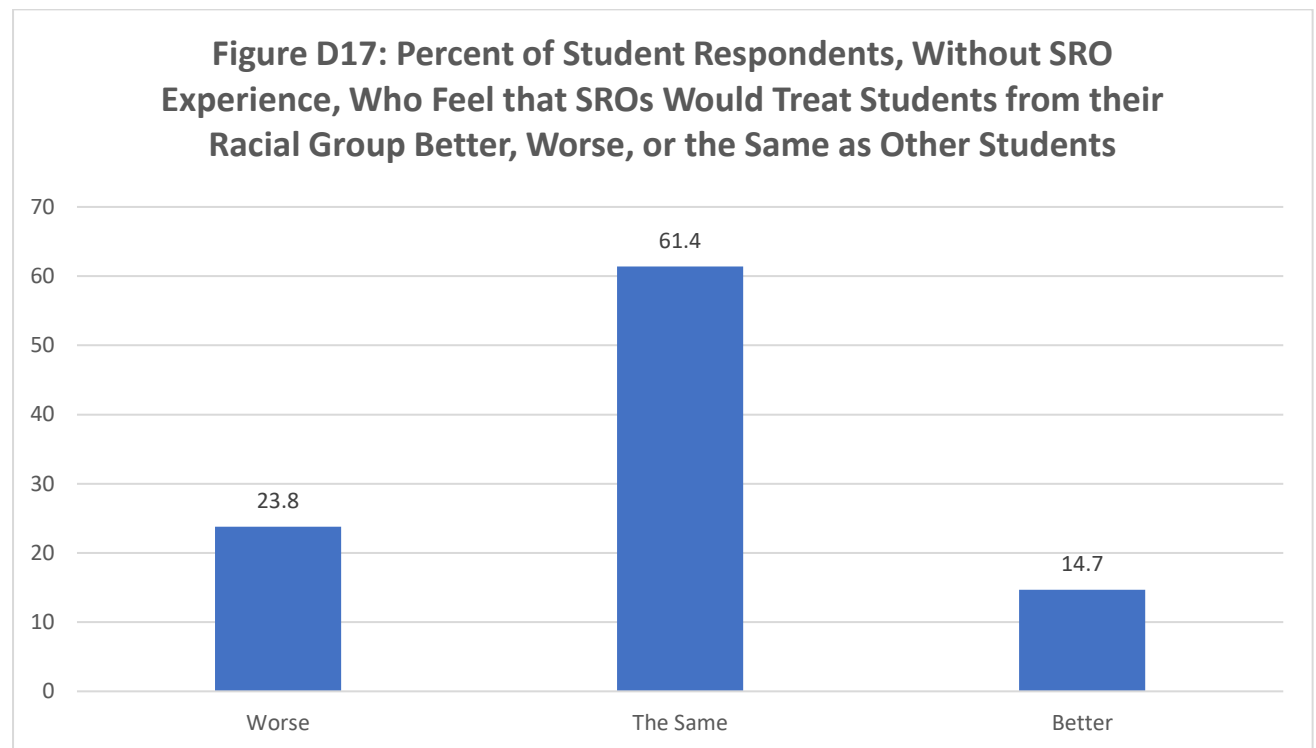


TABLE D14: Percent of Student Respondents, Without SRO Experience, Who Believe SROs Will Treat People from their Racial Group Better, Worse, or the Same as Students from Other Racial Groups

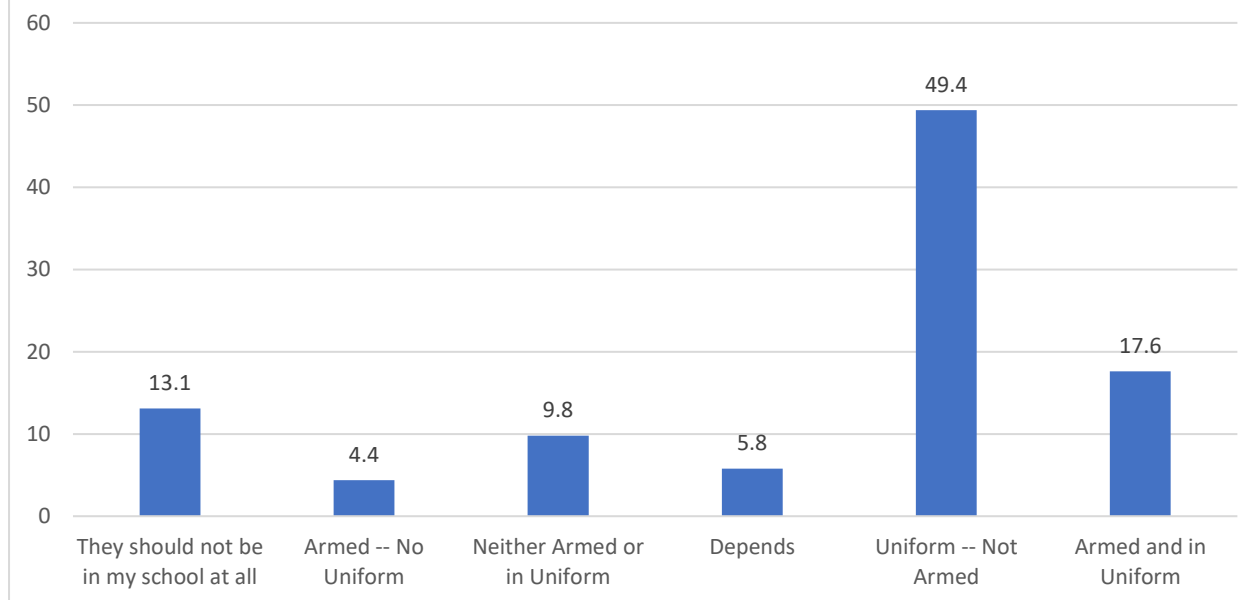
Student Racial Background	Treat Worse	Treat the Same	Treat Better
Black	56.5	39.9	3.6
Indigenous	32.6	62.8	4.6
Asian	18.8	73.8	7.4
South Asian	27.6	69.2	3.2
Hispanic	25.7	71.4	2.9
Arab/West Asian	31.1	65.6	3.3
Bi-Racial	21.7	65.8	12.5

SRO Uniforms

All student respondents were asked if SROs should be armed and in uniform when on school property (see Figure D18). Only 17.6% of the student respondents – with no direct SRO experience -- believe that SROs should be armed and in uniform when at school. An additional 4.4% believe that SROs should be armed but not in uniform. By contrast, 49.4% of respondents believe SROs should be in uniform, but not armed and one in ten respondents (9.8%) believe that SROs should be neither armed nor in uniform. In sum, the proportion of students who want SROs to be unarmed at school (59.2%) far outweighs the proportion who want officers to be armed (22.0%).

One out of twenty students (5.8%) believes that SROs should sometimes come to work in uniform, and be out of uniform on other occasions. These students feel that it might benefit police-student relations to see officers in street clothes. Finally, 13.1% of respondents responded to the question about uniforms by stating that SROs should not be in schools at all.

Figure D18: Percent of Student Respondents, Without Direct SRO Experience, Who Want SROs to be Armed and in Police Uniform



Perceived Benefits and Consequences of the SRO Program

When asked to identify the potential benefits of the SRO program, most respondents claimed that it would reduce crime, violence and drug use at their school and make students feel safer at school. Several students also claimed that SROs can improve the relationship between youth and the police and provide important mentorship opportunities for young people.

Potential consequences of the SRO program, identified by student respondents, include feelings of intimidation and mistrust, the criminalization of common student behaviours, and discrimination against racial minorities, sexual minorities, and disabled students.

Status of the SRO Program

Student respondents were asked if they thought the SRO program should be returned or reinstated to EPSB schools. Almost four in ten students (38.4%) believe that the program should be reinstated. By contrast, only 11.1% believe that the program should be permanently removed. It is important to note, however, that half of the respondents (50.5%) do not know whether the program should be returned or not (see Figure D19).

The survey results reveal that students without direct SRO experience are less likely to recommend the return of the SRO program (38.4%) than students who have attended a school with an SRO (52.3%). Other major findings (see Table D15) reveal that:

- Non-binary respondents are slightly more likely to recommend the permanent suspension of the SRO program (26.7%) than the reinstatement of the program (24.5%).
- Students from all racial groups are much more likely to recommend the reinstatement of the SRO program than its permanent removal. However, Arab/Middle Eastern students are most likely to recommend the permanent removal of the SRO program (14.8%), followed by Black students (10.8%), Indigenous students (8.7%), South Asian students (8.5%) and Asian students (5.7%).
- Respondents with a self-identified disability were more likely to recommend the reinstatement of the SRO program (39.4%) than its permanent removal (17.1%).
- Finally, 2sLGBTQ+ students were more likely to recommend the reinstatement of the SRO program (31.5%) than its permanent removal from the EPSB (18.4%).

Figure D19: Percent of Student Respondents, Without SRO Experience, Who Want the EPSB's SRO Program Reinstated

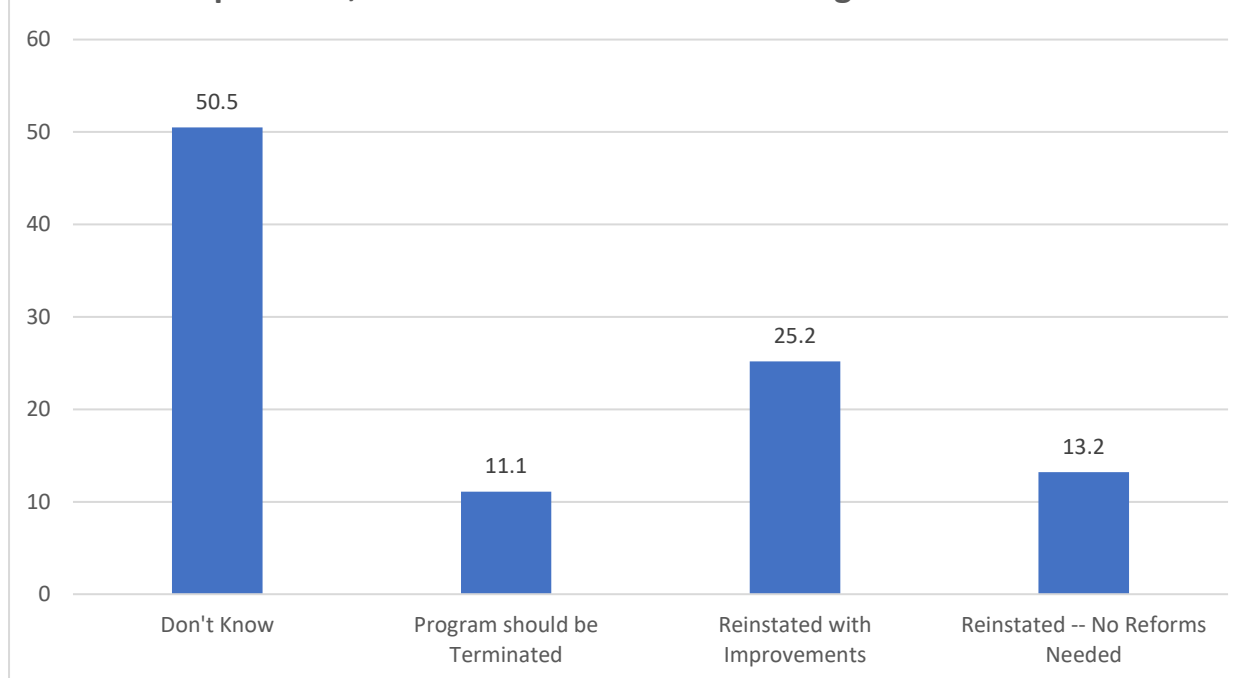


TABLE D15: Percent of Student Respondents, Without Direct SRO Experience, Who Want the SRO Program Reinstated, by Race, Disability Status, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Student Characteristics	Reinstate Program with No Reforms	Reinstate Program with Improvements	Permanently Terminate Program	Don't Know
<u>Race:</u>				
Black	10.8	24.6	10.8	53.8
Indigenous	14.5	23.2	8.7	53.6
Asian	8.5	24.7	5.7	61.1
South Asian	16.6	31.0	8.5	43.9
Hispanic	20.4	24.5	10.2	44.9
Arab/Middle Easter	11.7	20.3	14.8	53.1
Bi-Racial	15.3	25.1	13.3	46.3
<u>Disability Status:</u>				
Self-Reported Disability	15.5	23.9	17.1	43.5
Overall Sample	13.2	25.2	11.1	50.5
<u>Sexual Orientation:</u>				
2sLGBTQ+	7.9	23.6	18.4	50.2
Overall Sample	13.2	25.2	11.1	50.5
<u>Gender Identity:</u>				
Non-Binary	5.9	18.6	26.7	48.9
Overall Sample	13.2	25.2	11.1	50.5

PART G: PARENT SURVEYS

A survey was administered to the parents of EPSB students in Grades 10 through 12. Parents with students in this grade range were targeted because they had the greatest chance of being exposed to the School Resource Officer (SRO) program prior to its suspension in September 2020. Parents received an online invitation and filled out the survey on their own time. The survey was administered by the survey research unit at the University of Toronto and all survey protocols received clearance from the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board.

The survey asked about parents' experiences with and opinions about the SRO program. The survey consisted of both closed-ended (quantitative) and open-ended (qualitative) questions. As outlined below, parents who reported children that had attended a school with an SRO were asked a different set of questions than parents whose children did not attend an SRO school or parents who did not know if their child's school had been part of the SRO program or not.

Parents could only access the survey via the use of their own unique password. This ensured that parents could only fill out the survey once and that the survey could not be shared with people outside of the EPSB community. The survey was administered to parents between May 18th and June 30th, 2022. The survey took between 21 and 37 minutes to complete (average=27 minutes).

As with the student survey, the parent sample was limited to only those that met the parameters specified in the research request: racialized parents and White parents who report having racialized children and parents of all racial backgrounds who report having a child with a disability or a child with a non-binary gender identity. As noted by the EPSB: *"The original research question specified that the study be limited to a distinct subset of parents. Thus, responses from parent who did not identify as any of the specified groups should not be included in this research."*

Based on these research parameters, the final sample used in the current report consists of 1,511 parent respondents. All respondents in this sample share at least one of the following four characteristics: 1) They self-identify as the member of a racialized group; 2) They report that they are the parent of a racialized child; 3) They report that they are the parent of a disabled child; or 4) They report that they are the parent of a child with a non-binary gender identity.

The final sample included in this report excludes 1,633 White respondents who report having only White children and White parents who do not report a child with a disability or non-binary gender identity. Data from these participants are available for future analysis.

Sample Characteristics

Table E1 provides a description of the parent sample. Almost half of the parents surveyed (44.5%) have only one child in the EPSB system. An additional 38.5% of the parent sample have two children and 17.0% have three or more children attending EPSB schools. Other findings reveal that:

- Four out of ten parent respondents (40.6%) have a child in Grade 10, 36.0% have a child in Grade 11, and 30.9% have a child in Grade 12.
- Two-thirds of the parent respondents self-identified as female (66.7%) and 31.0% identified as male. Only 15 respondents (1.0% of the sample) reported a non-binary gender identification.
- A third of the sample (32.1%) identified their age as between 35 and 44 years, 54.1% are between 45 and 54 years, and 10.1% are over 55 years of age. Only 2.1% of the sample is 34 years of age or younger.
- Most parent respondents (60.0%) report that they were born outside Canada.
- The parent sample is racially diverse. A quarter of parent respondents identify as Asian (24.6%), 19.3% as South Asian, 9.3% as Black, 7.4% as Arab/Middle Eastern, 7.4% as multi-racial, 4.0% as Indigenous, and 3.5% as Latino.
- The sample also includes 371 respondents who self-identify as White (24.6% of the sample). However, all White respondents report children from one of the marginalized groups targeted by the study. For example, 76 White respondents (20.5%) report having a disabled child in the EPSB system, 121 (32.7%) report having a child non-binary gender identification, and 200 report having a racialized child (54.1%).
- The parent sample is also religiously diverse. A third of parent respondents (33.7%) report a Christian background, 16.2% are Muslim, 6.0% are Hindu, 5.1% are Sikh, 4.0% are Buddhist, 0.3% are Jewish, and 1.8% report an Indigenous spirituality. In addition, 18.9% report that they have no religion and 5.5% report that they are atheist.
- Three out of four parent respondents (80.2%) report that they are either married (75.2%) or in a common law relationship (4.9%). An additional 12.2% are divorced or separated, 3.9% have never been married, and 1.1% are widowed.
- The parent sample also appears to be highly educated. Only 1.8% of parent respondents report that they have less than a high school education and 9.2% have only achieved a high school degree. By contrast, 65.2% have earned a college or university degree. Indeed, 22.4% of the sample has a graduate or professional degree (MA, PhD, law degree, medical degree, MBA, etc.).
- 7.5% of parent respondents report that they have a child, in Grades 10 through 12, with a physical or mental disability.
- 8.6% of parent respondents report that they have a child, in Grades 10 through 12, with a non-binary gender identification.

TABLE E1: PARENT CHARACTERISTICS

PARENT CHARACTERISTICS	NUMBER	PERCENT
<u># OF CHILDREN IN EPSB SCHOOLS:</u>		
One	645	44.5
Two	559	38.5
Three or More	247	17.0
<u>CHILD'S GRADE:</u>		
Grade Ten	613	40.6
Grade Eleven	544	36.0
Grade Twelve	467	30.9
Child enrolled in more than one grade (10 through 12)	59	3.9
<u>PARENT'S AGE:</u>		
34 years of age or younger	32	2.1
35-44 years	485	32.1
45-54 years	817	54.1
55 years or older	152	10.1
No response	25	1.7
<u>PARENT'S RACIAL BACKGROUND:</u>		
Black	140	9.3
Indigenous	61	4.0
Asian	371	24.6
South Asian	291	19.3
Latin American/Hispanic	53	3.5
Arab/Middle Eastern/West Asian	112	7.4
White	371	24.6
Bi-Racial/Mixed Race	112	7.4
<u>PARENT'S GENDER IDENTITY:</u>		
Female	1,007	66.7
Male	468	31.0
Non-binary	15	1.0
Did not report/missing	20	1.3
<u>PARENT'S PLACE OF BIRTH:</u>		
Canada	604	40.0
Other Nation	906	60.0
<u>RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION:</u>		
Christian	501	33.7
Muslim	241	16.2
Sikh	76	5.1
Hindu	89	6.0
Buddhist	59	4.0
Indigenous Spirituality	26	1.7
Jewish	5	0.3
No religion	281	18.9
Atheist	81	5.5
Did not report/missing	87	5.9

TABLE E1: PARENT CHARACTERISTICS (continued)

PARENT CHARACTERISTICS	NUMBER	PERCENT
<u>PARENT'S MARITAL STATUS:</u>		
Married	1,115	75.2
Common Law Relationship	72	4.9
Divorced/Separated	181	12.2
Single – Never Married	58	3.9
Widowed	16	1.1
Did not report/Missing	31	2.1
<u>PARENT'S EDUCATION:</u>		
Less than high school	26	1.8
High school graduate	136	9.2
Some community college	126	8.5
Some university	122	8.2
Community college degree	183	12.3
BA – undergraduate university degree	452	30.5
Master's Degree (MA)	221	14.9
PhD	42	2.8
Professional Degree (Medical or law degree, MBA, etc.)	70	4.7
Other training	70	4.7
Did not report/Missing	35	2.4
<u>CHILD'S DISABILITY STATUS</u>		
Parent does not report a child with a disability	1,139	92.5
Parent of a child with a disability	114	7.5
<u>CHILD'S GENDER IDENTITY</u>		
Parent reports all children are male or female	1,381	91.4
Parent reports a child with a non-binary gender identity	130	8.6

Children's Experiences at School

More than a third of parent respondents (37.7%) indicated that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, their child mainly attended school in person, 24.8% reported that their child mainly attended school online, and 34.1% indicated that their child attended school equally in person and online (see Figure E1).

Almost two-thirds of parents (62.6%) feel that their children are safe or very safe when they are at school. An additional 31.5% feel that they are somewhat safe. Only 4.6% of parents feel their children are unsafe when they are at school (see Figure E2). Most parents (58.0%) also believe that their children are safe or very safe travelling to and from school. An additional 33.1% feel that their children are somewhat safe. Only 7.6% of parents feel that their children are unsafe during the home-to-school commute.

Only 16.8% of parents report that they are very worried that their child will become the victim of a violent crime at their school (see Figure E3). An additional 25.0% state that they are somewhat worried and 36.6% are a little worried. One fifth of parental respondents (21.5%) claim that they are not worried at all about their child becoming the victim of violence. Similarly, 26.6% of parents are very worried that their child will be bullied at school. An additional 29.9% are somewhat worried and 25.7% are a little worried. Only 15.7% of parents report that they are “not worried at all” about their child becoming the victim of bullying.

Eighty-one percent of parents report that, over the past five years, their child has never faced disciplinary problems at school (see Figure E4). However, 18.8% report that their child has faced a detention and 11.1% report that their child has been suspended from school. Only 1.0% of parents report that their child has been expelled.

Many of the parent respondents report that, over the past five years, their children have experienced some form of victimization at a EPSB school (see Table E2). For example, over half of the parent respondents (52.3%) report that their child has been teased or bullied at school, 29.4% report that their child has been subjected to verbal threats, 26.2% report that their child has been subjected to online bullying, 24.7% report their child has been the victim of robbery or theft, 13.3% report that their child has been physically assaulted, and 9.3% report that their child has been the victim of sexual harassment or assault. In addition, 15.5% of parent respondents are aware that their child has been in a fight at school over the past five years. Parent awareness of student victimization at school may be related to their overall support for the SRO program (discussed below).

Finally, parents were asked if, over the past five years, any of their children had attended a EPSB school that was part of the SRO program (see E5). A quarter of parents (26.3%) report that at least one of their children has attended an SRO school over the past five years. Another quarter of respondents (25.9%) report that their children have not attended an SRO school and 45.8% report that they are not sure if their children have attended an SRO school or not.

Parents with direct SRO experience were subsequently asked a different set of questions about the SRO program than parents without direct experience. In the next section, we begin our analysis with parent respondents who have SRO experience.

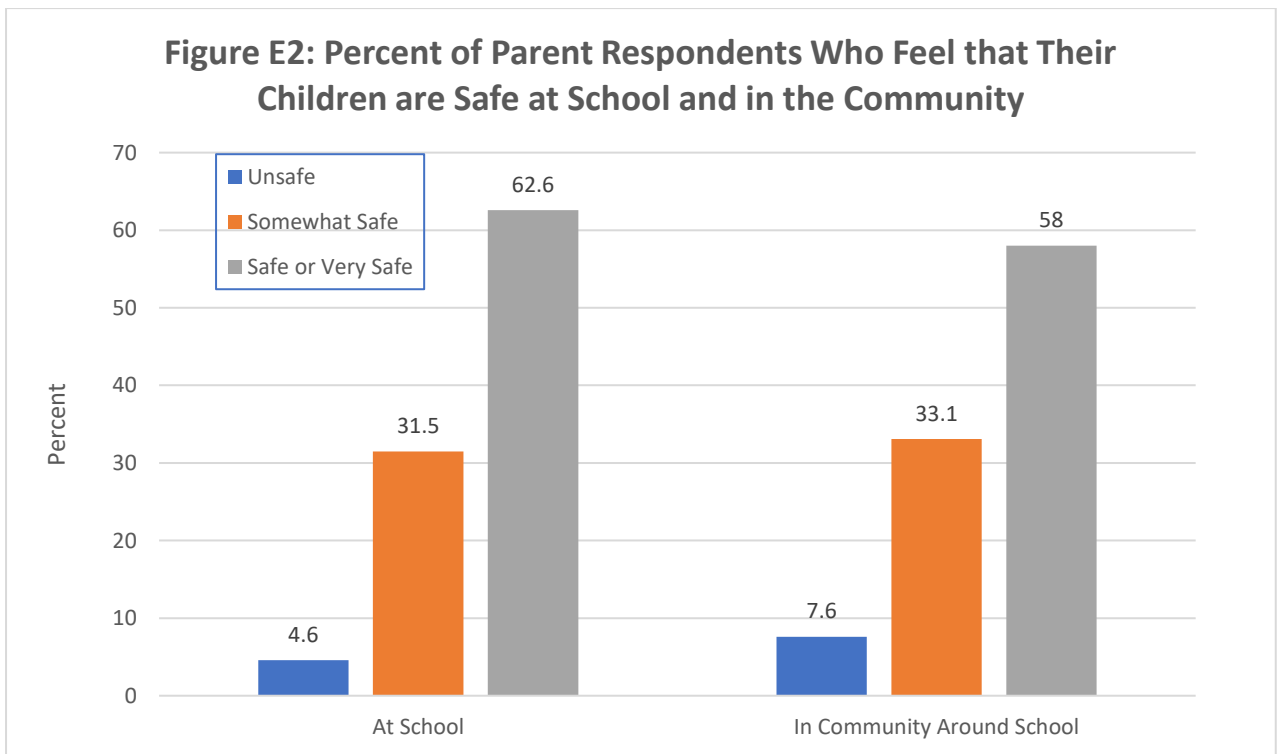
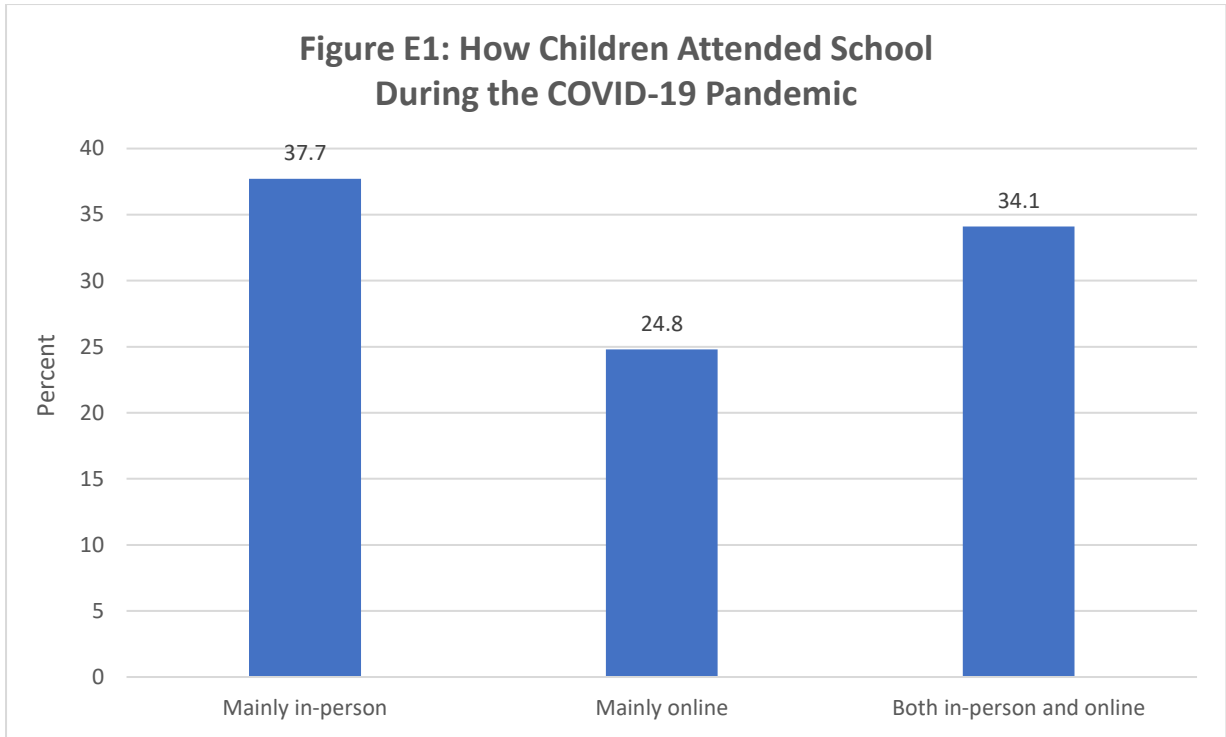


Figure E3:
Percent of Parents Who are Worried that their Children will become the Victim of Violence or Bullying at School

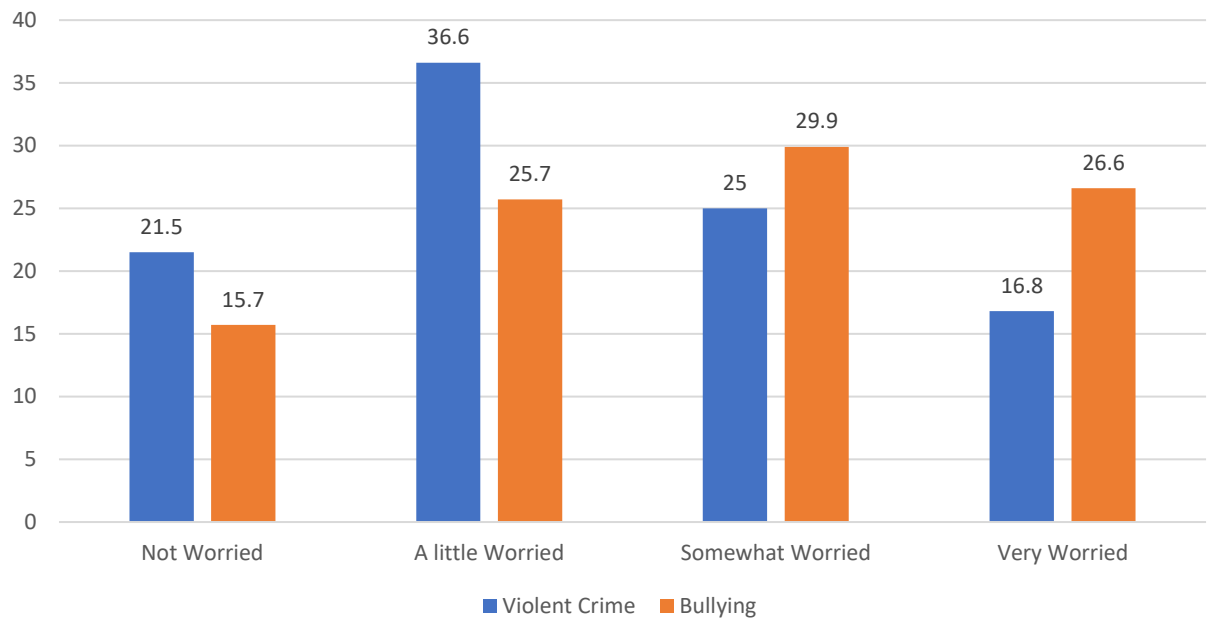


Figure E4: Percent of Parents Who Report that their Children have Experienced Disciplinary Problems at School over the Past 5 Years

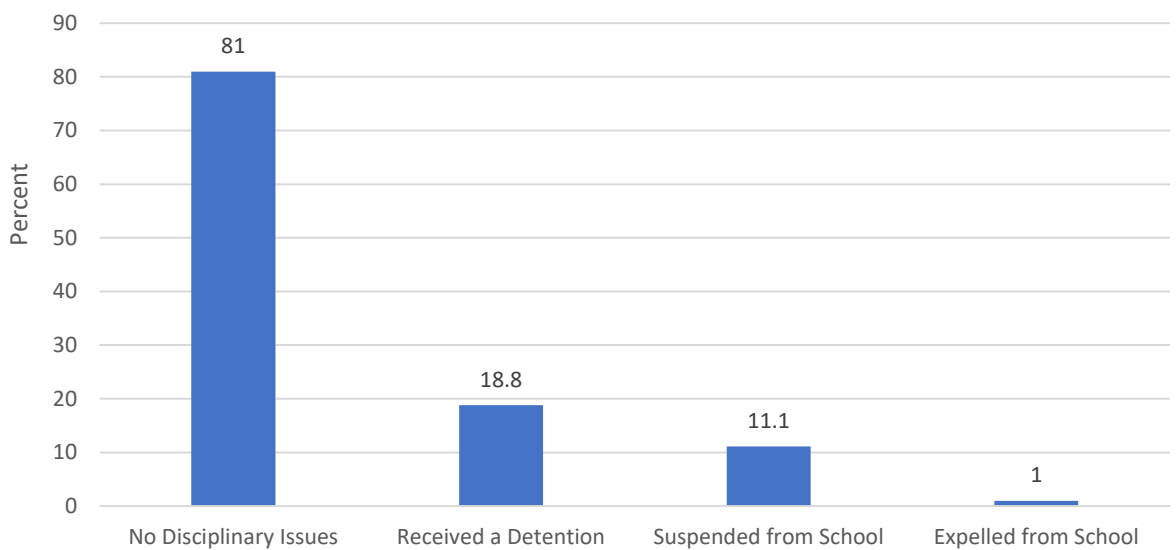
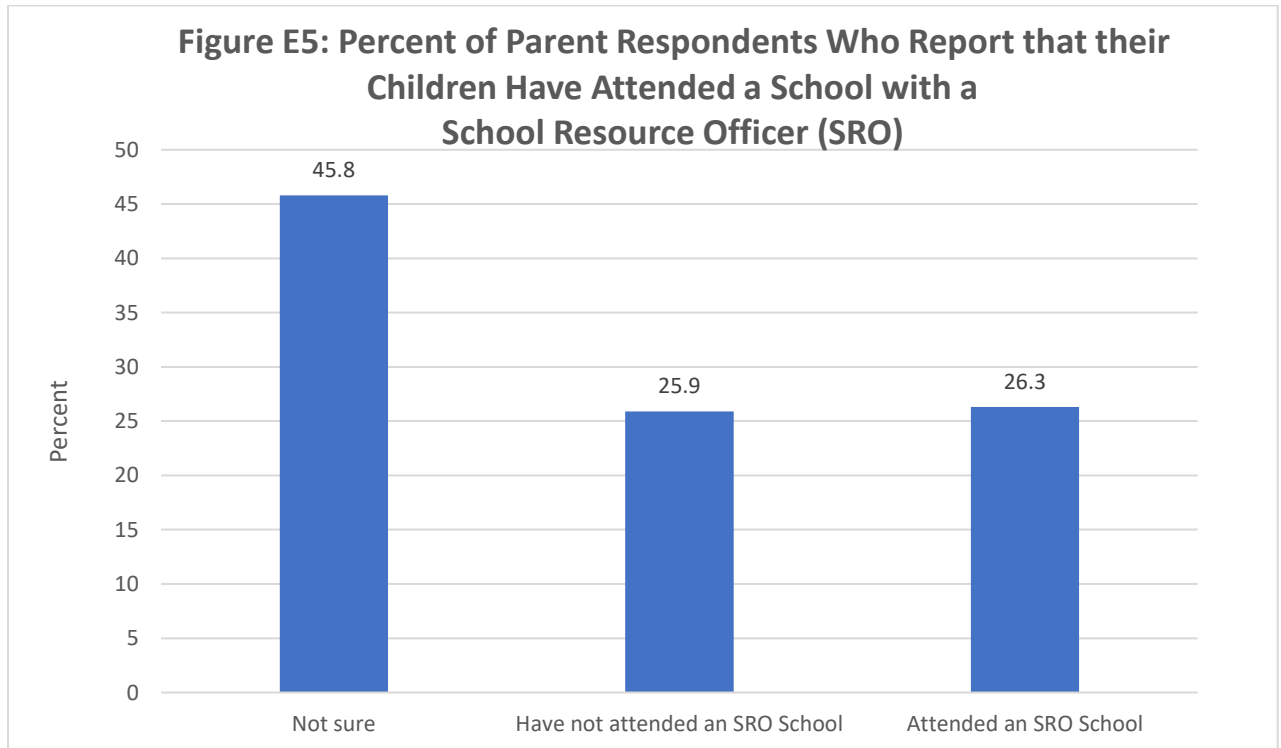


TABLE E2: Percent of Parent Respondents Who Report that their Children Have Experienced Various Types of Victimization and Harassment, at School, Over the Past Five Years

TYPE OF VICTIMIZATION OR HARASSMENT	NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE	THREE OR MORE TIMES	DO NOT KNOW
Threatened at School	58.3	20.2	9.2	12.3
Assaulted or Physically Attacked at School	81.9	10.4	2.9	4.8
Been in a Physical Fight at School	79.8	13.7	1.8	4.7
Been Robbed or the Victim of Theft at School	69.9	20.8	3.9	5.4
Teased, Called Names or Bullied at School	35.5	24.8	27.5	12.2
Victim of Online Bullying or Threats by Students from the Same School	58.3	15.4	10.8	15.5
Sexually Harassed or Assaulted at School	80.5	6.1	3.2	10.2

Figure E5: Percent of Parent Respondents Who Report that their Children Have Attended a School with a School Resource Officer (SRO)



EXPERIENCES AND OPINIONS OF PARENTS WITH SRO EXPERIENCE

Opinions About Program Suspension

Parent respondents were asked what they thought of the EPSB’s decision to suspend the SRO program in 2020 (see Figure E6). Six out of ten parents (60.1%) think the EPSB made a bad decision. By contrast, only 10.5% think the suspension of the SRO program was a good decision. An additional 16.6% of parents don’t know if the decision was good or bad. Interestingly, 12.1% of parents -- whose children had attended an SRO school -- were not even aware that the program had been cancelled.

Regardless of racial background, parents were more likely to view the EPSB’s decision to suspend the SRO program as a bad decision than a good decision (see Figure E7). However, Black parents – whose children had attended an SRO school – were more likely to view the decision to suspend the program as positive. For example, 27.6% of Black parents think the suspension of the SRO program was a good decision, compared to 20% of Middle Eastern parents, 13.5% of White parents (with racialized or marginalized children), 8.7% of Indigenous parents, 2.4% of South Asian parents and only 1.7% of Asian parents.

Parents with a disabled child were much more likely to think the suspension of the SRO program was a bad decision (72.1%) than a good decision (9.3%).

Parents with a child who has a non-binary gender identity were also more likely to view the suspension of the SRO program as a bad decision (42.3%) than a good decision (23.1%).

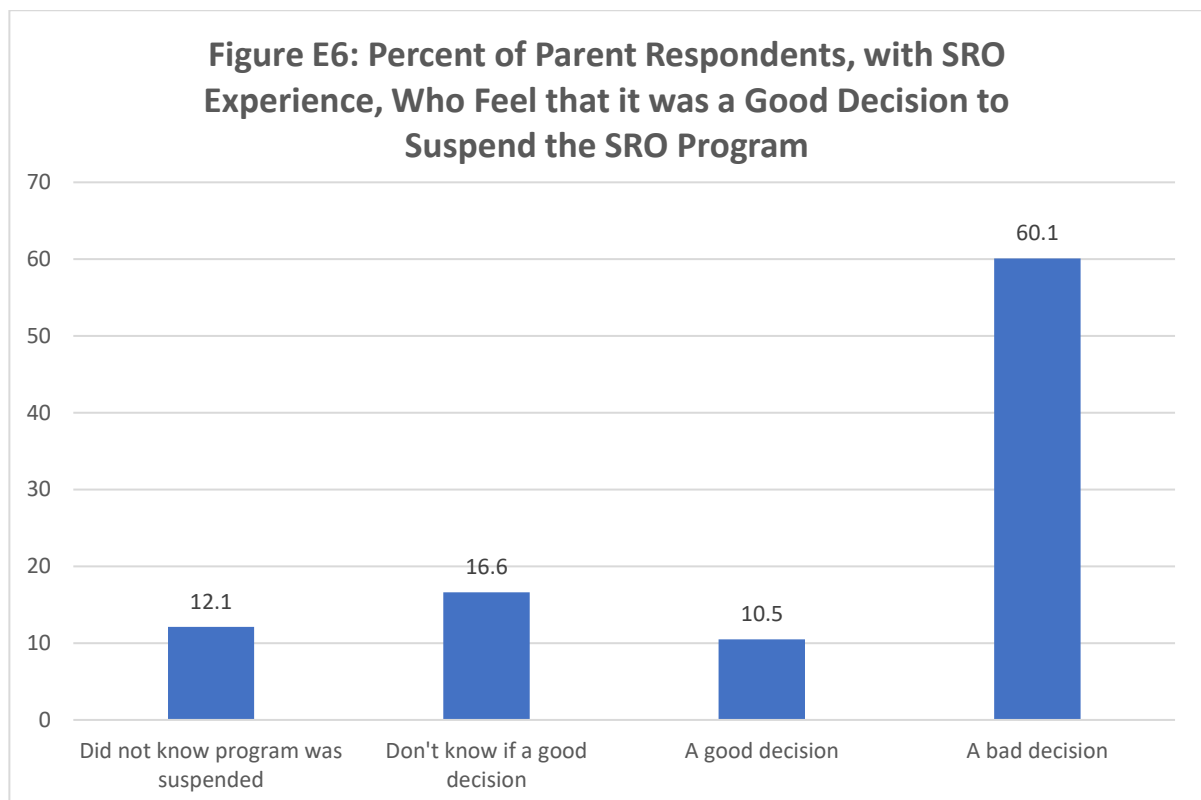
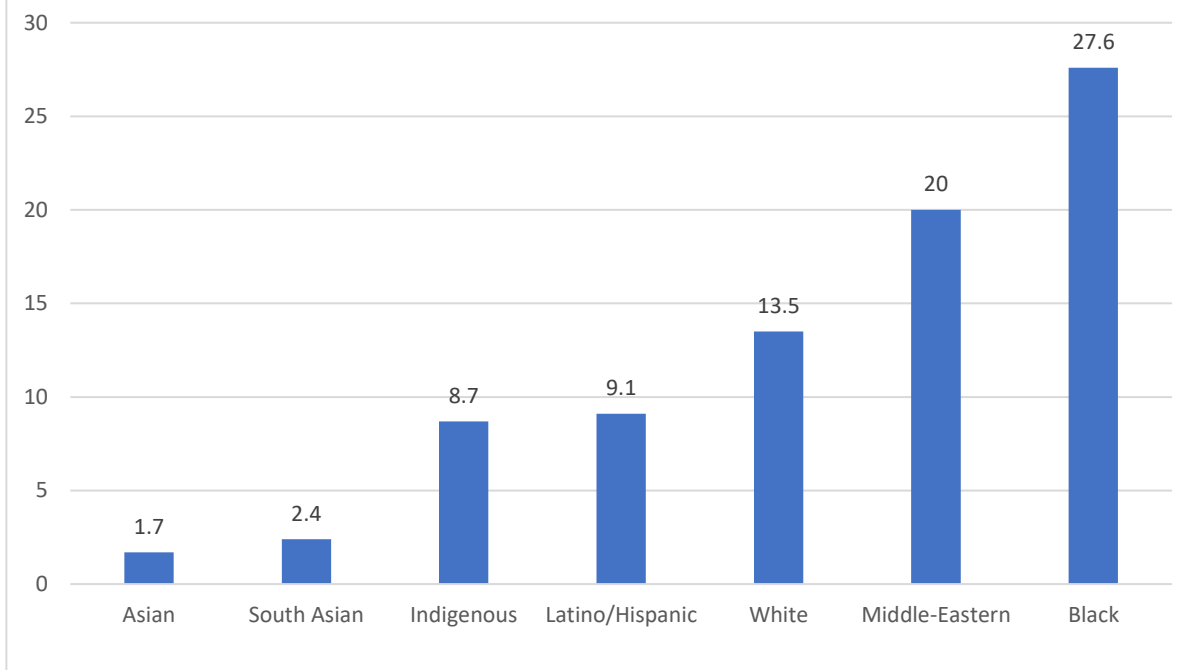


Figure E7: Percent of Parent Respondents, with SRO Experience, Who Feel that it was a Good Decision to Suspend the SRO Program, by Race



Contact with SROs

Parent respondents were then asked if, over the past five years, they had ever met or talked to the School Resource Officer (SRO) that worked at their child’s school (see Figure E8). Over half of the parents (57.6%) report that they never met the SRO that worked at their child’s school. However, 38.6% report that they had met their SRO at least once. Overall, 16.9% report meeting the SRO on only one occasion, while 21.7% report multiple interactions.

Parents were also asked how often they think their children interacted with SROs over the past five years (see Figure E9). One out of three parents (33.7%) believe that their children had never interacted with an SRO. However, 42.3% of parents report that their child had interacted with an SRO at least once. In fact, 37.4% of parents believe that their children had interacted with an SRO on multiple occasions. An additional 24.0% of parents simply did not know how often their children had interacted with an SRO.

Figure E8: Percent of Parents, with SRO Experience, Who Report that they Have Met and Talked to their Child's School Resource Officer (SRO)

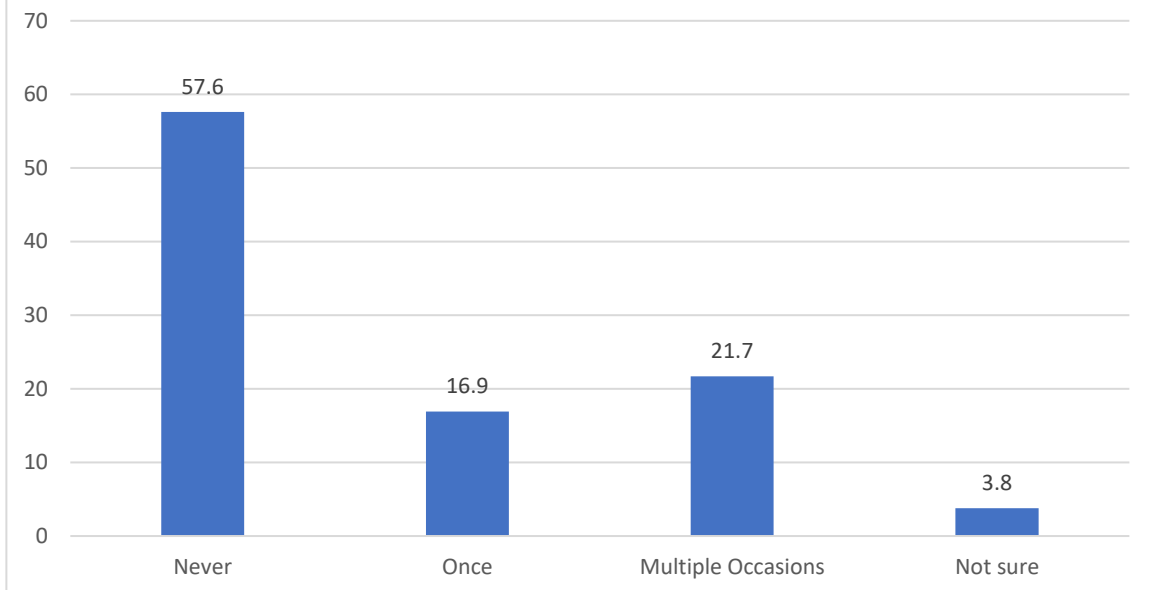
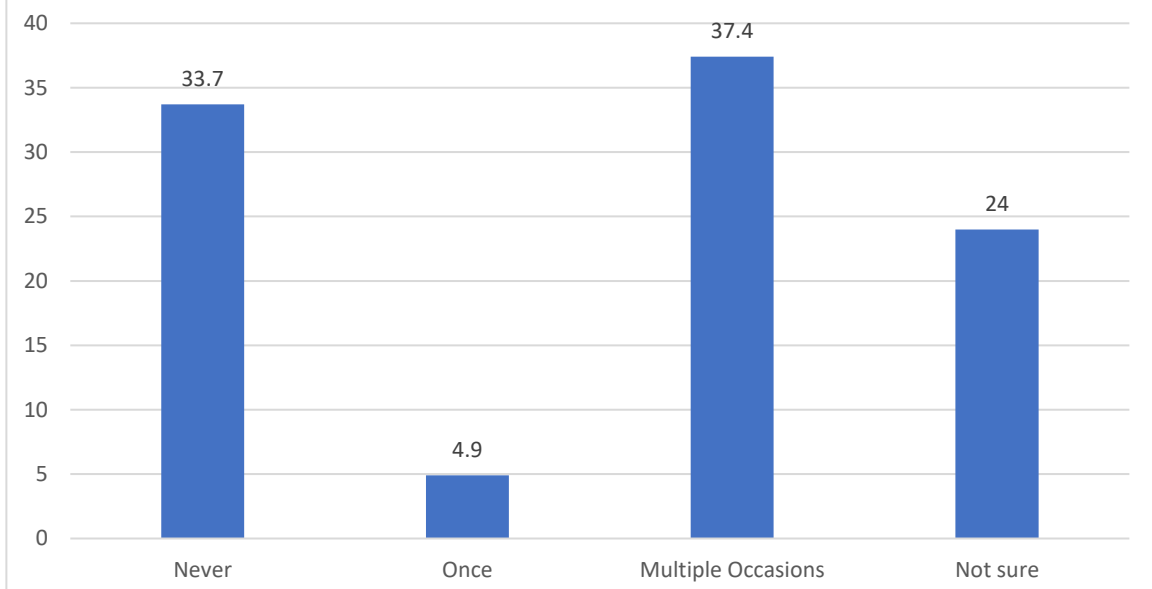


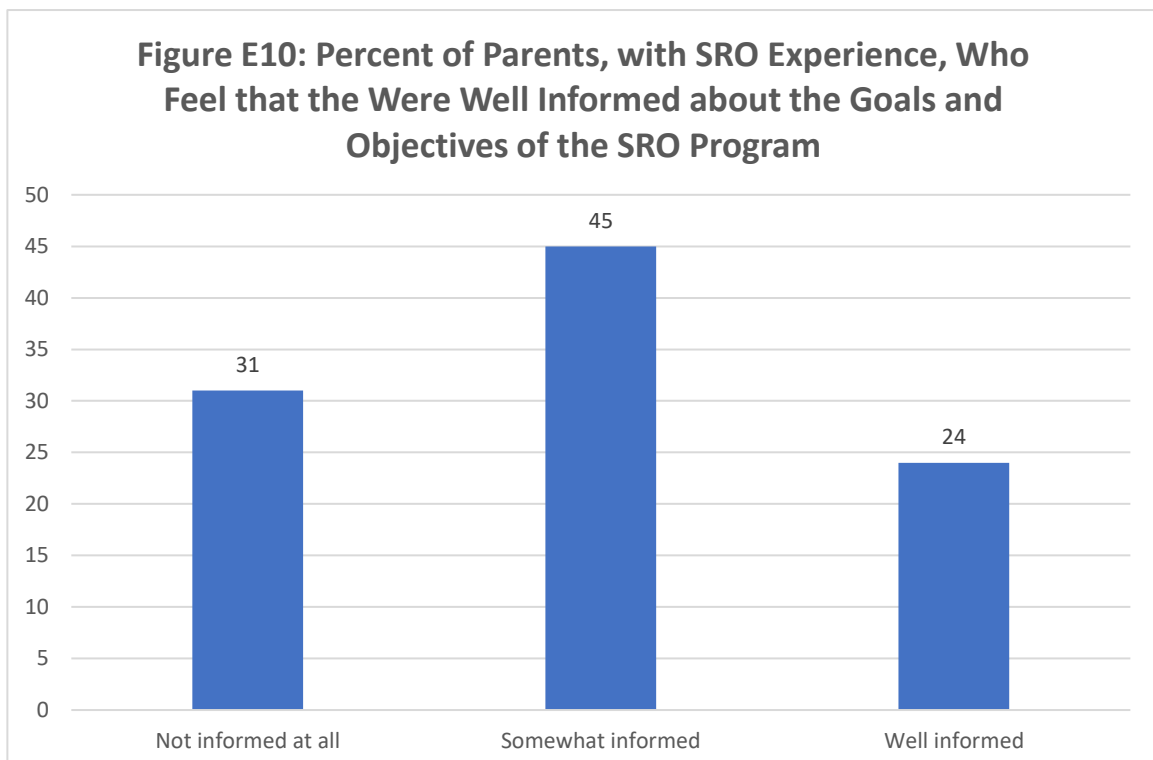
Figure E9: Percent of Parents, with SRO Experience, Who Report that their Children have Interacted with a School Resource Officer (SRO) over the Past Five Years

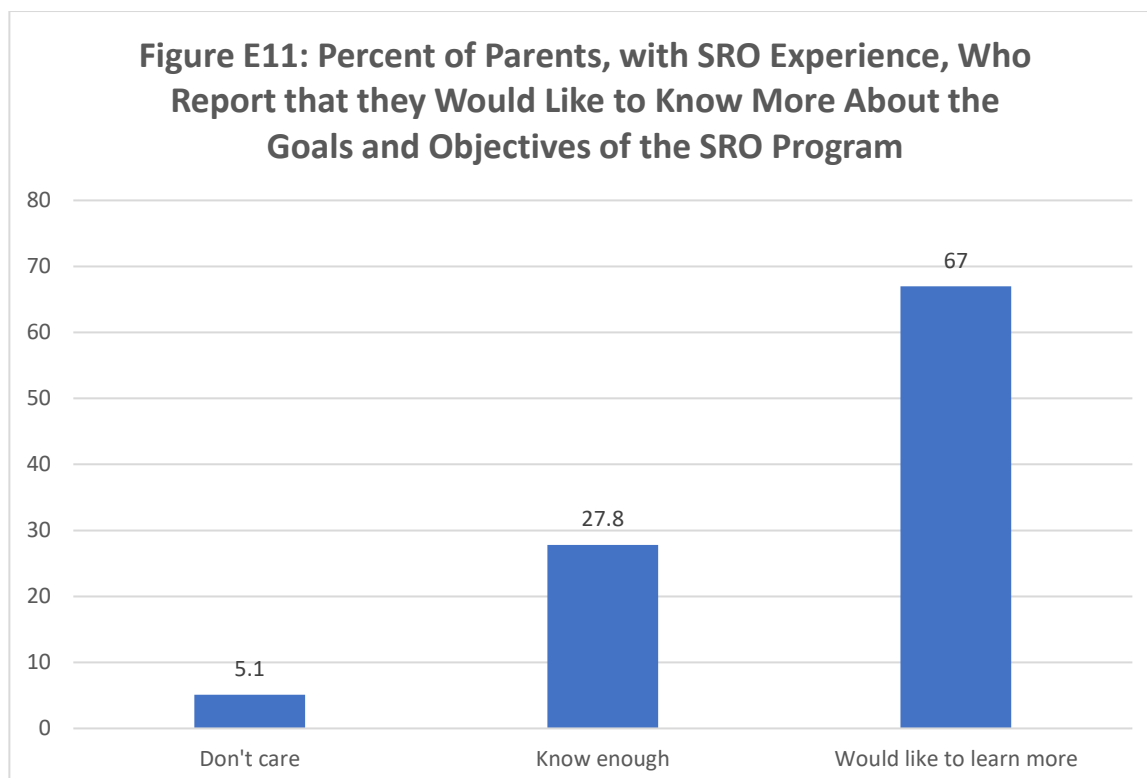


Knowledge of the SRO Program

Parents were asked about how well informed they were about the goals and purpose of the SRO program (see Figure E10). Almost one out of three respondents (31.0%) indicate that they were not informed at all about the SRO program and 45.0% report that they were only somewhat informed. By contrast, only 24.0% report that they were well informed about the SRO program when it was operating at their child’s school.

Parents were then asked if they would have liked to have known more about the SRO program when it was in operation (see Figure E11). Two-thirds of the respondents (67.0%) report that, when in operation, they would have liked to have learned more about the SRO program and its goals and purposes. By contrast, only 27.8% of parent respondents indicated that they already knew enough about the program. One out of twenty respondents (5.1%) indicated that they did not care about the SRO program and thus did not want to learn more about it.





Positive and Negative Experiences

Parent respondents were asked if their children had ever had a positive or a negative experience with an SRO (see Table E3). Almost half of the parents (44.2%) report that their child had a positive experience with an SRO. By contrast, only 5.7% report a negative experience.

Positive experiences with SROs include assistance with bullying or victimization, providing general mentorship or guidance, supporting students through emotional or mental health crises, providing parents with resources to deal with student problems and/or addiction, providing students with diversion programs in order to avoid the justice system, and making students feel safe at school.

Negative experiences include false accusations, failure to address bullying and victimization incidents, hyper-surveillance, and rude or disrespectful behaviour. Two parents made allegations of SRO racial bias against their children.

Across all racial groups, parents were more likely to report positive than negative experiences with SROs (see Table E4). Overall, very few parents (less than 10% across most racial categories) report negative experiences with SROs. However, Black parents were significantly less likely to report positive experiences than parents from other racial backgrounds. For example, 24.1% of Black parents reported that they or their children had a positive experience with an SRO, compared to 56.5% of Indigenous parents, 39.0% of South Asian parents, and 51.7% of White parents (with racialized or marginalized children).

The parents of disabled students were more likely to report a positive experience with an SRO (59.5%) than a negative experience (9.5%).

The parents of children with a non-binary gender identity were also more likely to report a positive experience with an SRO (48.1%) than a negative experience (9.6%).

TABLE E3: Percent of Parent Respondents, with SRO Experience, Who Report that their Children have had Positive and Negative Interactions with School Resource Officers (SROs) over the past Five Years

Frequency	Children had Positive Experiences with SROs	Children had Negative Experiences with SROs
Never	17.0	67.4
One or More	44.2	5.7
Don't know	38.8	26.9

TABLE E4: Percent of Parent Respondents Who Report Positive and Negative Experiences with SROs over the Past Five Years, by Race, Disability Status, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Parent Characteristics	Had a Positive Experience with an SRO	Had a Negative Experience with an SRO
<u>Race:</u>		
Black	24.1	6.9
Indigenous	56.5	4.3
Asian	25.0	1.7
South Asian	39.0	4.9
Hispanic/Latin American	50.0	0.0
Arab/West Asian	26.7	13.3
Bi-Racial	60.9	4.3
White	51.7	7.5
<u>Child's Disability Status:</u>		
Have Child with Disability	59.5	9.5
Overall Sample	44.2	5.7
<u>Child's Gender Identity:</u>		
Child has Non-binary Identity	48.1	9.6
Overall Sample	44.2	5.7

Evaluation of SRO Job Performance

Parent respondents were asked whether they felt the SROs did a good job, an average job, or a poor job performing various duties (see Table E5). The results clearly indicate that most parents – with SRO experience -- feel that the SROs did a good job or average job performing their duties. Few parents believe that the SROs did a poor job.

For example, half of the parent respondents (50.1%) feel that the SROs did a good job or very good job preventing fights and other violence at school. An additional 7.4% feel that they did an average job. By contrast, only 5.3% feel that the SROs did a poor job performing these duties. However, an additional 34.2% of parents report that they don't know whether the SROs did a good job or a poor job preventing violence at school.

Similarly, 49.2% of parents believe the SROs did a good job or very good job protecting the school from outside criminals. An additional 9.1% think they did an average job. By contrast, only 4.1% think they did a poor job protecting their school from outsiders. Again, over a third of parent respondents (37.5%) don't know whether the SROs did a good or bad job protecting schools from outsiders.

A high proportion of parent respondents also feel the SROs did a good job or very good job: building relationships with students (51.7%), delivering lessons in class (45.1%), mentoring students (44.3%), preventing drug and alcohol use at school (43.2%), preventing vandalism (41.6%), preventing theft and robbery (38.1%), helping student victims of crime (38.9%), preventing bullying at school (38.9%), helping with sports and other extracurricular activities (29.3%), preventing online bullying (24.1%), preventing sexual harassment at school (31.9%) and preventing sexual assault (27.3%). Significantly fewer parents (between 3.0% and 13.0%) feel that the SROs did a poor job performing these various duties.

Regardless of race, parents are much more likely to report that the SROs at their child's school did good job performing various duties than a poor job (see Figure E6). However, Indigenous, Hispanic, and South Asian parents tend to evaluate SRO job performance somewhat more positively than Middle Eastern, Asian and Black parents.

The parents of disabled or non-binary students are also more likely to provide a positive than a negative evaluation of how the SROs performed various duties at their child's school.

However, it must also be stressed that, depending on the question asked, between 30.6% and 62% of parents – with SRO experience -- report that they do not know whether their SRO did a good job or not performing various tasks. This finding reaffirms that many parents know little about the SRO program and its effectiveness. It also points to the need for more empirical research into the various duties that SROs are asked to perform and whether the SRO program can achieve specific objectives.

TABLE E5: Percent Parent Respondents Who Feel that the School Resource Officers Did a Good Job, Average Job, or Poor Job Performing Various Duties

Do the SROs do a good job, an average job, or a poor job:	A Poor Job	An Average Job	A Good Job	A Very Good Job	Don't know
Preventing violence and fights between students at school?	5.3	7.4	23.6	26.5	37.2
Keeping the school safe from criminals in the community?	4.1	9.1	22.7	26.5	37.5
Preventing drug and alcohol use at school?	11.8	10.4	25.7	17.5	34.6
Preventing bullying at school?	11.8	14.2	22.6	16.3	35.0
Preventing online bullying or cyber-bulling between students?	13.3	11.9	13.4	10.7	50.7
Improving the relationship between young people and the police?	9.5	8.3	21.7	30.0	30.6
Giving lessons to students about personal safety and crime prevention?	6.9	9.2	17.5	27.6	38.9
Mentoring or counselling students who need extra help?	6.5	7.7	19.2	25.1	41.4
Helping school staff with coaching, music, and other extracurricular activities?	3.6	7.4	13.0	16.3	59.8
Preventing theft or robbery at school?	6.0	8.6	20.2	17.9	47.3
Preventing vandalism or property damage at school?	6.6	7.7	22.3	19.3	44.0
Helping staff understand what young people are like?	5.1	8.6	12.8	12.2	61.4
Preventing sexual harassment at school?	7.5	7.1	16.1	15.8	53.6
Helping victims of crime and bullying?	7.8	10.4	17.2	21.7	43.0
Helping victims of sexual assault?	6.9	4.2	11.9	15.4	61.7

TABLE E6: Percent of Parent Respondents Who Feel that the School Resource Officers Did a Good or Very Good Job Performing Various Duties, by Racial Background

SRO DUTIES	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Hispanic	Arab/Middle Eastern	Bi-Racial
Preventing violence and fights between students at school?	56.5	65.0	47.4	56.7	66.7	38.5	44.8
Keeping the school safe from criminals in the community?	43.5	65.0	43.8	64.8	66.7	38.5	59.0
Preventing drug and alcohol use at school?	52.1	55.0	49.1	54.0	44.4	30.8	45.5
Preventing bullying at school?	40.9	65.0	38.6	37.8	55.5	23.1	47.7
Preventing online bullying or cyber-bullying between students?	36.3	25.0	26.3	27.0	33.3	30.8	27.3
Improving the relationship between young people and the police?	50.0	75.0	47.4	54.0	66.7	23.1	61.4
Giving lessons to students about personal safety and crime prevention?	40.9	50.0	42.1	54.0	55.6	30.8	43.0
Mentoring or counselling students who need extra help?	39.1	50.0	45.6	51.3	55.5	23.1	50.0
Helping school staff with coaching, music, and other extracurricular activities?	30.4	30.0	31.5	32.4	44.4	15.4	38.6
Preventing theft or robbery at school?	39.1	40.0	43.9	47.3	55.5	23.1	37.3
Preventing vandalism or property damage at school?	39.1	55.0	40.3	50.0	44.4	23.1	65.1
Helping staff understand what young people are like?	30.4	30.0	26.3	24.3	55.6	38.3	23.2
Preventing sexual harassment at school?	39.1	40.0	28.0	38.8	44.0	23.1	30.4
Helping victims of crime and bullying?	34.7	45.0	36.9	45.5	55.6	30.8	49.4
Helping victims of sexual assault?	21.7	35.0	29.8	32.4	44.4	23.1	30.4

Perceptions of SRO Treatment and Relationships

Parent respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with various statements about SRO treatment and relationships with students (see Table E7). The results indicate that parents, with SRO experience, are more likely to have a positive than a negative perception of the program. For example, six out of ten parent respondents (59.9%) agree that the presence of the SRO made them feel that their children were safe at school. Only 10.0% of parents disagree with this statement. An additional 14.2% neither agree nor disagree. Other findings reveal that:

- Over half of the parent respondents (51.2%) disagree or strongly disagree that the presence of an SRO made their children feel watched or targeted at school. However, a small minority of parents (11.0%) agree that their children did feel watched or targeted when they attended a school with an SRO.
- Critics sometimes argue that the presence of an SRO can give a school a bad reputation or stigmatize the students who attend that school. Overall, this argument is not supported by the parent survey. For example, most parent respondents (65.5%) disagree or strongly disagree that the SRO made them feel like their children went to a dangerous or violent school. Only 7.5% of parents agree with this statement. Similarly, most parent respondents (54.7%) disagree that the SRO made people in the outside community think that their child's school was dangerous. By contrast, only 8.1% agree that the presence of an SRO could hurt their school's reputation.
- Respondents were also asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "The SRO at my child's school treated all students fairly." Over half of the parent respondents (50.9%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Only 9.9% disagreed. However, 28.6% of parents don't know whether all students were treated fairly or not.
- Similarly, only a minority of parent respondents perceived SRO bias or discrimination against specific groups. For example, only 6.9% of respondents perceive that their child's SRO treated Indigenous students worse than White students, only 8.7% perceive that Black students were treated worse than White students, only 3.3% perceive that male students were treated worse than female students, and only 4.2% perceive that 2sLGBTQ+ students were treated worse than heterosexual students. However, it is important to note that, in each case, over fifty percent of respondents indicated that they did not know if SROs engaged in biased behaviour against specific groups or not.
- Almost half of Indigenous parents (45.0%) disagree with the statement that SROs treated Indigenous students worse than White students. Only 10.0% of Indigenous parents agree with this statement.
- Over a third of Black parents (34.8%) agree that SROs treat Black students worse than White students. By contrast, only 17.4% of Black parents disagree with this statement.

- A large proportion of parent respondents (40.2%) agree that the SRO program at their child's school increased their trust in police. Only 10.5% disagree with this statement.
- Parent respondents were also asked if the SRO made their children feel uncomfortable or intimidated at school. Six out of ten parent respondent (61.6%) disagree with the statement that the SRO caused their child to feel intimidated or watched. Only 8.7% of parents agreed.
- Only a small minority of parent respondents (5.4%) agree that that SRO at their child's school sometimes abused their power. Most parents either disagree with this statement (36.8%) or don't know if the SRO abused their power or not (47.2%).
- Only 8.6% of parent respondents agree that teachers and principals sometimes used the SROs at their child's school to deal with students they did not like. By contrast, a quarter of parents (23.8%) disagree with this statement. Importantly, 53.3% of respondents do not know whether school staff used SROs to deal with students they did not like.
- Over a third of parent respondents (34.7%) agree that some SROs work better with students than others. Only 6.0% of parents disagree with this statement. However, 41.2% of parents answered "I don't know" to this question.
- Over half of the parent respondents (58.3%) agree that their child's SRO was an important part of the school community. Only 9.6% disagree with this statement.
- Almost half of the parent respondents – with SRO experience – wish that their child's school had more than one SRO. Only 14.2% of the parents surveyed disagree with this statement.
- The findings further suggest that Asian, South Asian, and Indigenous parents are more positive about the SRO program than Black parents (see Table E8).
- It is important to note that, regardless of the question asked, a high proportion of parents report that they do not know whether the SRO at their child's school had a positive impact or not. This is consistent with the fact that a high proportion of parents had little contact with the SRO at their child's school, and, therefore, little knowledge about how the SRO program operated.

Table E7: Percent of Parent Respondents Who Agree or Disagree with Various Statements About the School Resource Officer Program

STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a) The SRO made me feel like my children are safe at school.	6.8	3.2	14.2	26.0	33.9	15.9
b) The SRO made me feel like my children were being watched or targeted at school.	30.1	21.1	16.1	7.7	3.3	21.1
c) Sometimes the presence of the SRO made me feel like my Children went to a dangerous or violent school.	37.5	28.0	15.2	5.1	2.4	11.9
d) Having a police officer at school made people think my child's school is dangerous.	29.0	25.7	17.9	5.7	2.4	19.4
e) The SROs treated all students fairly.	4.8	5.1	10.7	23.2	27.7	28.6
g) The SROs helped me trust the police more.	4.8	5.7	30.1	17.9	22.3	19.3
h) The SROs often treated Indigenous students worse than White students.	21.4	9.2	11.3	2.7	4.2	51.2
i) The SROs often treated Black students worse than White students.	22.9	9.2	10.7	4.8	3.9	48.5
j) The SROs often treated 2sLGBTQ+ students worse than other students.	23.2	11.3	10.4	1.5	2.7	50.9
j) The SROs often treated female students better than male students.	20.2	11.6	13.4	2.1	1.2	51.5
l) I wish my child's school had more than one SRO.	7.4	6.8	23.5	24.4	20.5	17.3
m) Sometimes having a police officer at school made my children feel uncomfortable or intimidated.	34.2	27.4	11.3	5.1	3.6	18.5
n) Teachers and principals sometimes used the SROs to deal with students they don't like.	14.3	9.5	14.3	6.5	2.1	53.3
o) Some SROs worked better with students than others.	2.1	3.9	18.2	27.2	7.5	41.2
p) The SRO was an important part of my children's school community.	4.8	4.8	12.2	24.7	33.6	19.9
Sometimes the SROs at my child's school abused their powers.	20.5	16.3	10.7	3.6	1.8	47.2

Table E8: Percent of Parent Respondents Who Agree or Strongly Agree with Various Statements About the School Resource Officer Program, by Racial Background

STATEMENT	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Latino	Arab/Middle Eastern	Bi-Racial
a) The SRO made me feel like my children are safe at school.	39.1	65.0	57.9	67.5	88.9	61.6	77.3
b) The SRO made me feel like my children were being watched or targeted at school.	21.7	20.0	10.3	8.3	11.1	0.0	9.2
c) Sometimes the presence of the SRO made me feel like my Children went to a dangerous or violent school.	21.7	5.0	8.8	0.0	0.0	7.7	2.4
d) Having a police officer at school made people think my child's school is dangerous.	21.7	5.0	5.3	2.8	0.0	23.1	4.8
e) The SROs treated all students fairly.	34.3	65.0	47.4	56.7	88.9	30.8	53.5
g) The SROs helped me trust the police more.	30.4	40.0	42.2	62.1	55.5	23.1	32.6
h) The SROs often treated Indigenous students worse than White students.	17.4	10.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	15.4	4.7
i) The SROs often treated Black students worse than White students.	34.8	10.0	1.8	5.4	0.0	15.4	2.3
j) The SROs often treated 2sLGBTQ+ students worse than other students.	8.7	5.0	3.6	0.0	0.0	7.7	2.3
j) The SROs often treated female students better than male students.	13.0	5.0	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3
l) I wish my child's school had more than one SRO.	52.1	50.0	38.6	64.8	33.3	30.8	41.0
m) Sometimes having a police officer at school made my children feel uncomfortable or intimidated.	21.7	10.0	1.8	2.7	0.0	7.7	7.0
n) Teachers and principals sometimes used the SROs to deal with students they don't like.	8.3	0.0	8.8	5.4	0.0	23.1	4.6
o) Some SROs worked better with students than others.	34.8	20.0	28.1	43.2	33.3	23.1	25.6
p) The SRO was an important part of my children's school community.	39.1	70.0	56.1	75.6	77.8	53.9	65.1
Sometimes the SROs at my child's school abused their powers.	13.0	5.0	1.8	5.4	0.0	15.4	0.0

Perceptions of SRO Racial Bias

All parent respondents were asked if they felt that the SRO at their child's school treated students from their child's racial background better or worse than students from other racial groups (see Figure E12). Overall, only 8.8% of parents feel that SROs treated students from their child's racial group worse than other students. By contrast, 88.7% of parents feel that SROs treated students the same. However, perceptions of SRO racial bias are more pronounced among Black and Indigenous parents than parents from other racial backgrounds (see Table E9). For example, 30.8% of Black respondents and 16.7% of Indigenous respondents feel that the SRO at their child's school treated students from their child's racial background worse or much worse than students from other backgrounds. By contrast, this perception was expressed by only 11.2% of South Asian parents and 0.0% of Asian and Hispanic parents.

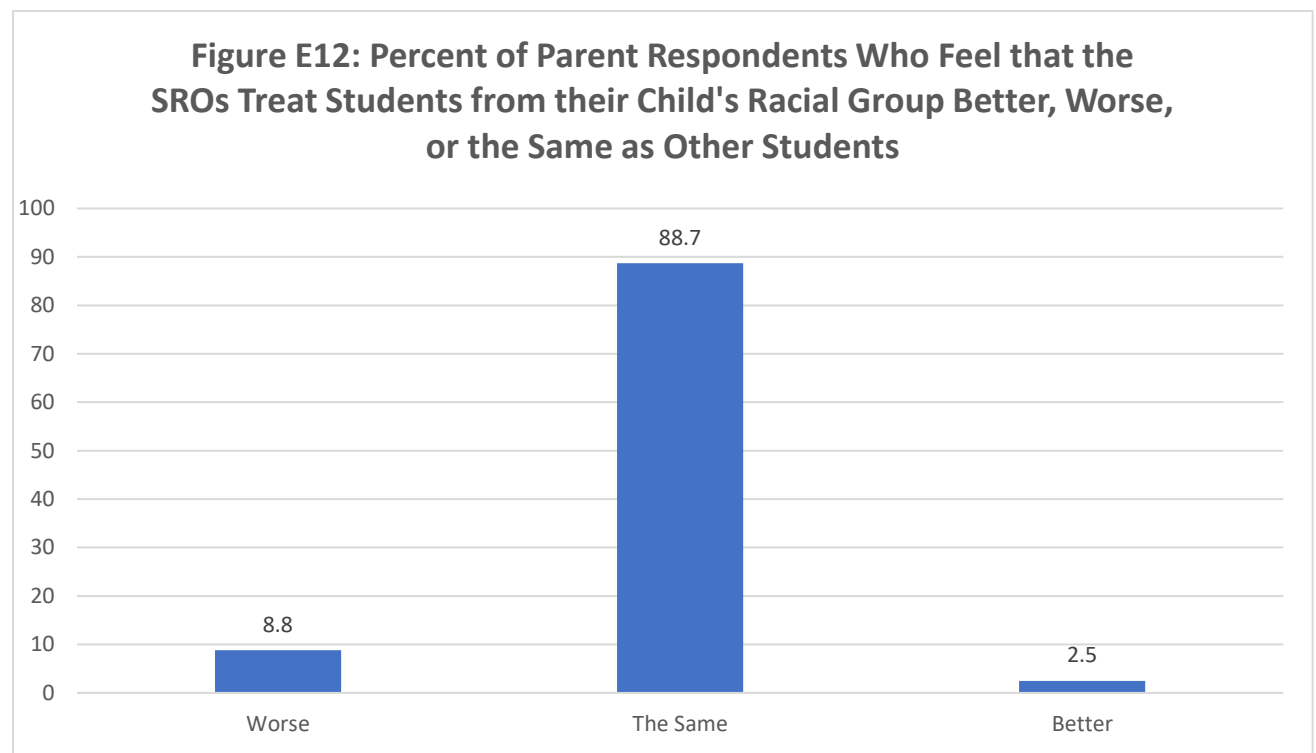


TABLE E9: Percent of Parent Respondents Who Believe SROs Treat People from their Child’s Racial Group Better, Worse, or the Same as Students from Other Racial Groups

Student Racial Background	Treat Worse	Treat the Same	Treat Better
Black	30.8	69.2	0.0
Indigenous	16.7	83.3	0.0
Asian	0.0	100.0	0.0
South Asian	11.2	11.2	0.0
Hispanic	0.0	100.0	0.0
Arab/West Asian	14.3	85.7	0.0
Bi-Racial	5.0	95.0	0.0
White	6.5	86.9	6.5

Police Uniforms

All parent respondents were asked if they thought that SROs should be armed and in uniform when working at their child’s school (see Figure E13). Over a third of parent respondents (35.9%) believe that SROs should be both armed and in uniform – just like regular patrol officers. However, an equal proportion (37.4%) believe SROs should be in uniform but not armed. An additional 11.7% believe that SROs should be neither armed or in uniform when working in school. An additional 7.0% believe that SROs should be armed but out of police uniform. Combined, the proportion of parents who believe that SROs should be unarmed (49.1%) is higher than the proportion who believe SROs should be armed (42.9%).

Parent Trust in SROs

All parent respondents were asked if they trusted the SRO at their school more, less, or the same as the regular police (see Figure E14). Only 14.5% of parents stated that they trusted their child’s SRO more than the regular police. However, 55.3% stated that they trusted their child’s SRO just as much as the regular police. Only 1.8% of parents claimed that they trusted their child’s SRO less than the regular police. An additional 6.6% of parent respondents stated that they trusted neither their child’s SRO nor the regular police.

Parent respondents were asked, if your child was the victim of a crime, would you rather report the incident to your child’s SRO, the regular police, or would it not matter (Figure E15). A third of parent respondents (33.6%) indicated that they would rather report their child’s victimization to an SRO than the regular police. An additional 42.4% stated that it would make no difference whether they reported to an SRO or to the regular police. One in eight parents (12.2%) stated that they would rather report the victimization incident to the regular police. One in sixty respondents (1.5%) stated that they would not report the incident to either a SRO or the regular police.

Figure E13: Percent of Parent Respondents Who Want SROs to be Armed and in Police Uniform

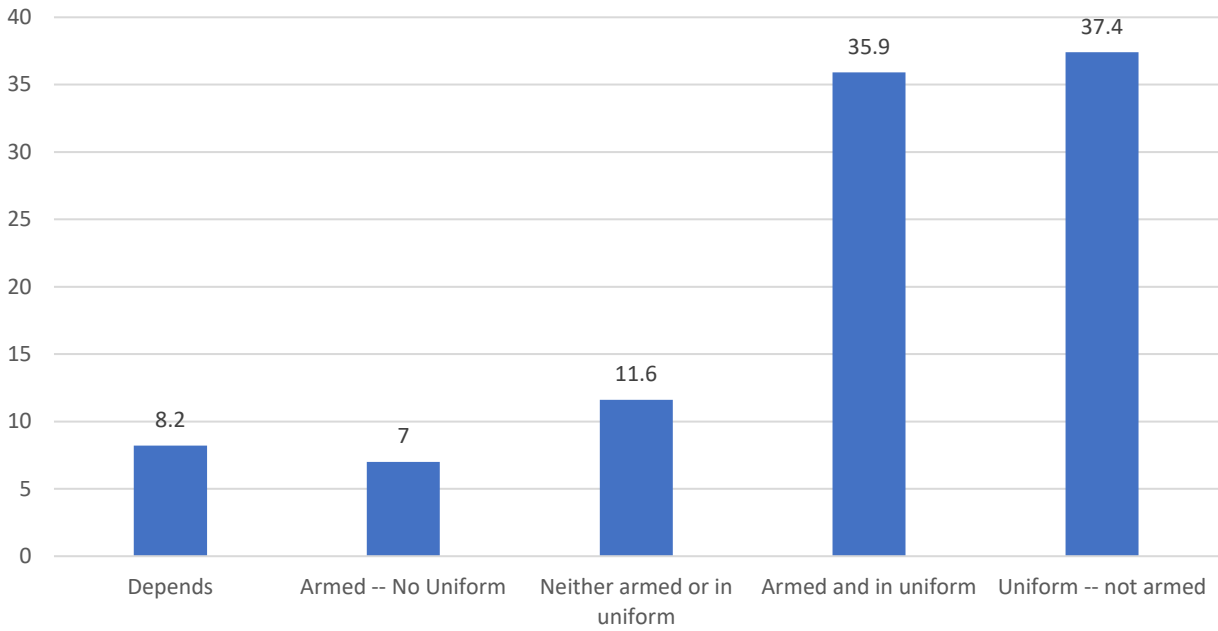


Figure E14: Percent of Parent Respondents Who Report that they Trusted their Child's SRO More Than the Regular Police

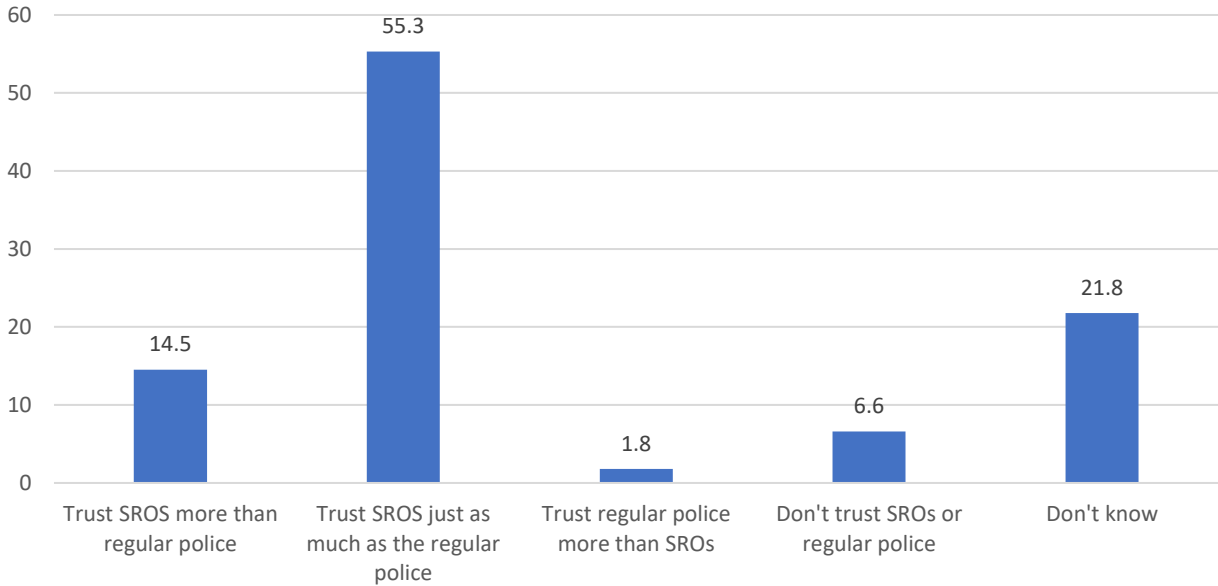
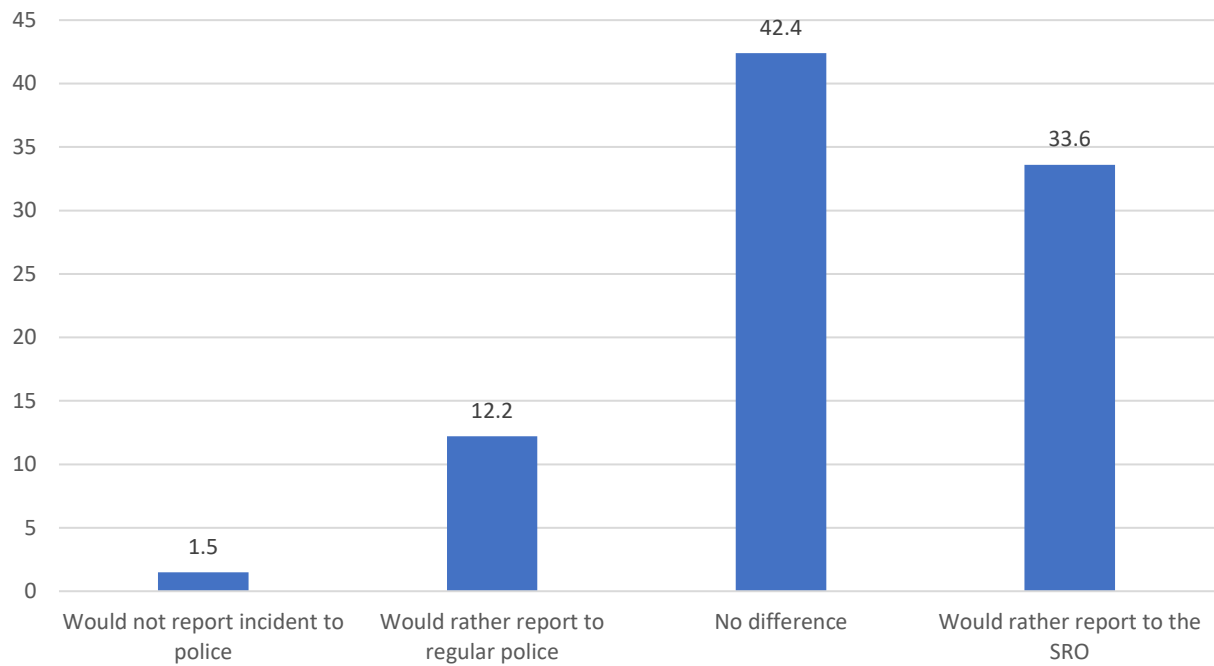


Figure E15: Percent of Parent Respondents Who Would Rather their Child Report a Victimization Incident to their School Resource Officer than the Regular Police



Perceived Benefits and Consequences of the SRO Program

Echoing the results from the student surveys, parent respondents were asked about the “best things” or “benefits” of having an SRO at their child’s school. The most common responses focussed on the belief that the SROs prevented crime, drug use and violence at school and contributed to feelings of both parent and student safety. A smaller proportion of parents focussed on the teaching and mentorship role SROs have played at their child’s school.

Respondents were also asked to describe the negative or bad things about having an SRO at their school. Most parents responded that they could not identify any negatives. However, the most frequently identified negatives included higher levels of surveillance, intimidation, fear of firearms, false accusations, harsh treatment, the increased criminalization of students, and biased treatment towards racial and sexual minorities. The concerns raised by parents were very similar to the concerns raised by students.

Impact of SRO Program Suspension

Parent respondents were asked if they felt their children were less safe, just as safe, or safer since the suspension of the SRO program in 2020 (see Figure E16). Over half of parent respondents (57.8%) report that their children are less safe since the suspension of the SRO program. An additional 15.5% believe their children are just as safe. Only 3.0% report that their children are safer at school since the suspension of the SRO program. One quarter of parent respondents (23.7%) don't know if their children are more or less safe since the suspension of the SRO program.

Respondents were also asked if they thought student behaviour at their child's school had worsened, improved, or stayed about the same since the suspension of the SRO program (see Figure E17). The results indicate that 32.4% of parents feel that student behaviour has gotten worse, 15.0% believe it has stayed about the same, and 1.8% believe it has gotten better. However, half of the parent respondents (50.8%) report that they don't know if student behaviour has changed since the suspension of the SRO program or not.

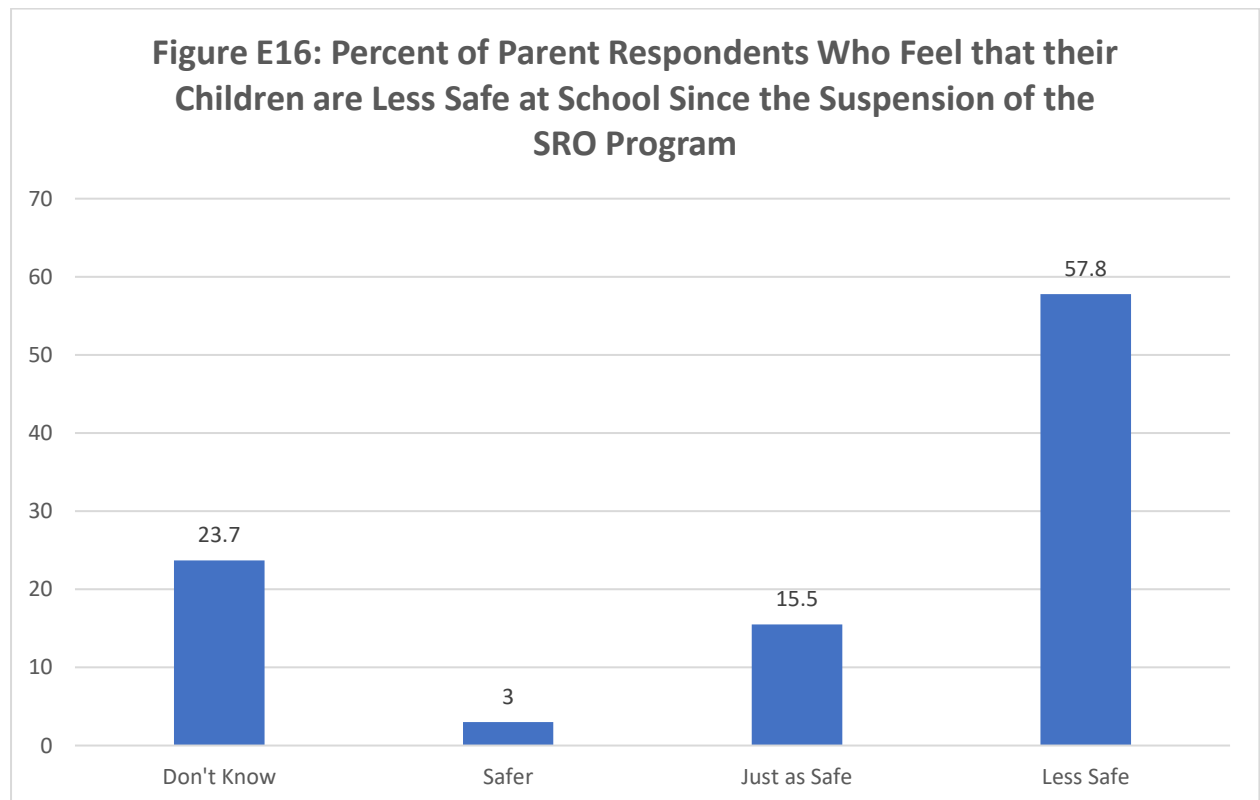
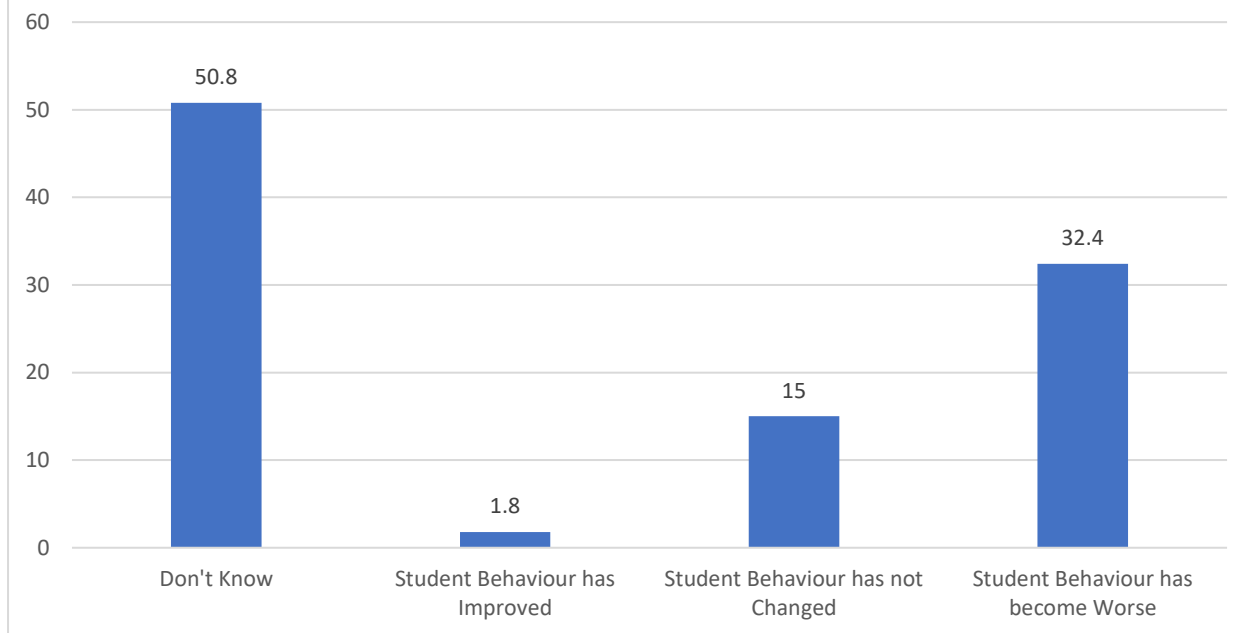


Figure E17: Percent of Parent Respondents Who Report That Student Behaviour at their Child's School Has Become Worse Since the Suspension of the SRO Program



Status of the SRO Program

Parent respondents – with SRO experience -- were asked if they thought the SRO program should be returned or reinstated to the Edmonton Public School Board (see Figure E18). A large majority of the parents surveyed (76.4%) believe that the SRO program should be reinstated. Over half (55.5%) think the program should be reinstated without changes, while 20.9% believe it should be reinstated with major reforms. By contrast, only 8.9% of parents believe that the program should be permanently removed from the EPSB. One out of seven parent respondents (14.7%) do not know if the program should be returned or not.

Across racial groups, most parent respondents want to see the return of the SRO program (see Table E10). However, Black respondents (12.5%) are the racialized group most likely to recommend its permanent removal, followed by Indigenous respondents (10.5%), and South Asian respondents (8.3%). By contrast, zero percent of Asian parents want to see the SRO program permanently removed from EPSB schools. It is also important to note that a relatively high proportion of Asian (32.1%) and Black respondents (29.2%) are not sure if the SRO program should be reinstated or not.

Interestingly, the group most likely to recommend the permanent removal of the SRO program (13.5%) are White parents with racialized or marginalized children.

Eighty percent (80.0%) of parents with disabled children recommend the reinstatement of the SRO program. By contrast, only 7.5% recommend its permanent removal.

Two-thirds of parents with non-binary children (65.9%) want to see the SRO program reinstated. However, one-quarter (25.5%) recommend its permanent removal.

Parent Recommendations for Improvement

- All parent respondents were asked if they had any recommendations for improving the SRO program.
- A number of parents maintain that schools should have more than one SRO and that SROs should get tough on student misbehaviour.
- Others suggest that SROs should interact more frequently with students in the halls and during extra-curricular activities.
- Other parents maintain that SROs need to be better selected and trained to ensure that they know how to interact with youth from diverse backgrounds.
- While some parents believe that the SROs need to engage in greater enforcement activity, others maintain that SROs need focus less on enforcement and more on mentoring and informal mechanisms to deal with student conflicts and discipline.
- Several parents identified the need to hire more women, 2sLGBTQ+ and racial minority officers so that the SRO program better reflects the EPSB's diverse student body.
- Others believe that more needs to be done to eliminate SRO bias and ensure the equal treatment of students from all racial and social backgrounds.
- Finally, several parents felt that more research needed to be done on the effectiveness of the SROs including better data collection with respect to documenting SRO activities in schools.

Figure E18: Percent of Parent Respondents, With SRO Experience, Who Want the EPSB's SRO Program Reinstated

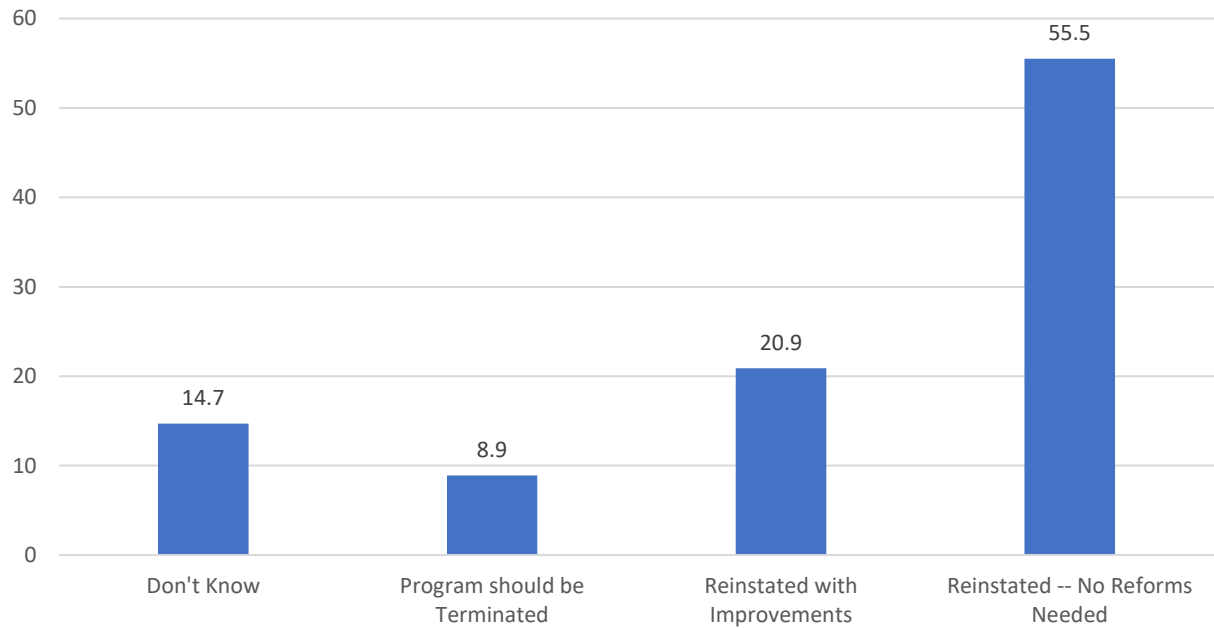


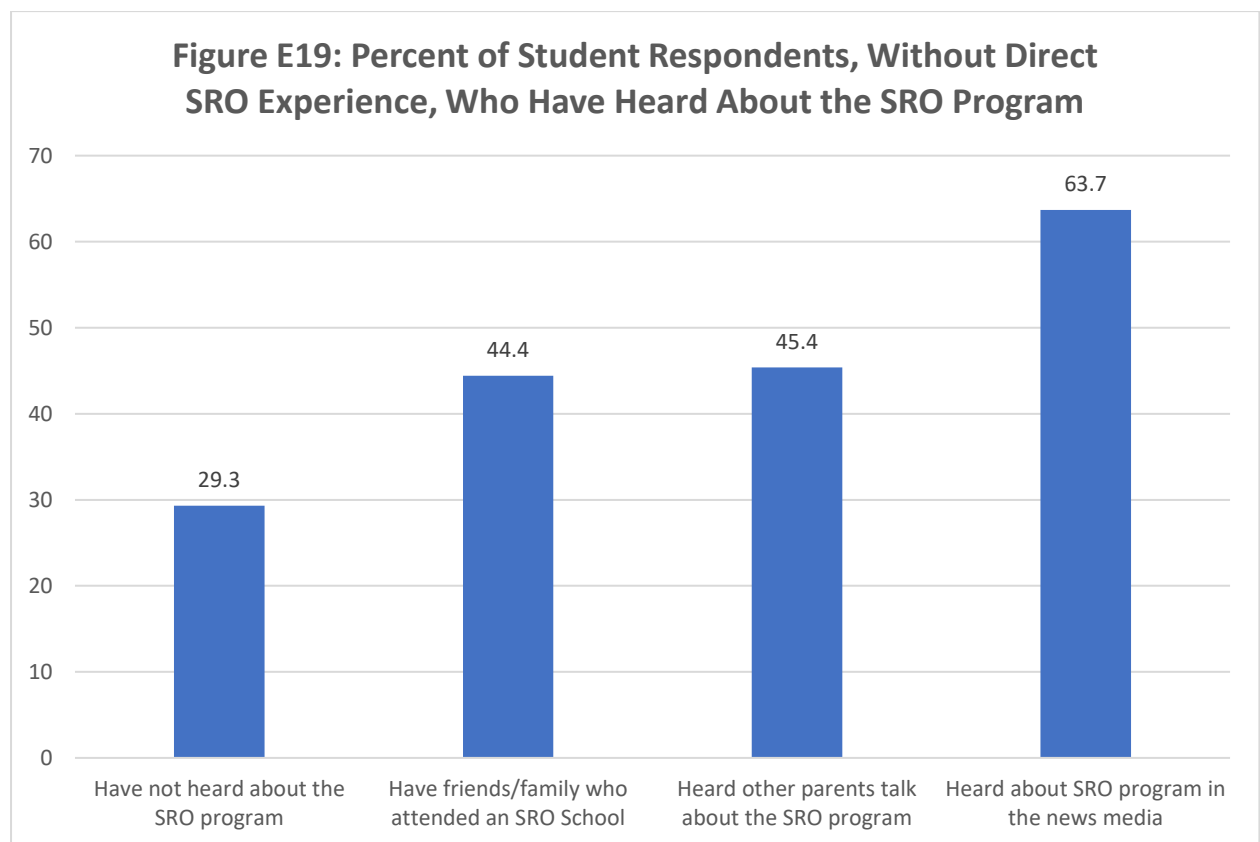
TABLE E10: Percent of Parent Respondents Who Want the SRO Program Reinstated, by Race, Child's Disability Status, and Child's Gender Identity

Student Characteristics	Reinstate Program with No Reforms	Reinstate Program with Improvements	Permanently Terminate Program	Don't Know
<u>Race:</u>				
Black	41.7	16.7	12.5	29.2
Indigenous	63.2	15.8	10.5	10.5
Asian	54.7	13.2	0.0	32.1
South Asian	52.8	30.6	8.3	8.3
Hispanic	87.5	12.5	0.0	0.0
Arab/Middle Easter	41.7	41.7	8.3	8.3
Bi-Racial	70.7	19.5	4.9	4.9
White	52.6	21.8	13.5	12.0
<u>Disability Status:</u>				
Child has a Disability	67.2	12.5	7.5	12.5
Overall Sample	55.5	20.9	8.9	14.7
<u>Gender Identity:</u>				
Has a Non-binary Child	40.4	25.5	25.5	8.5
Overall Sample	55.5	20.9	8.9	14.7

OPINIONS OF PARENTS WITHOUT SRO EXPERIENCE

As discussed above, the research team also surveyed 1,785 EPSB parents who had no direct experience with the SRO program. In this report, this sample is limited to 1,007 racialized parents, the parents of disabled children, or the parents of a child with a non-binary gender identity.

Although the children of these parents have never attended a school with a School Resource Officer, seven out of ten (70.7%) report that they had heard about the SRO program prior to completing the survey (see Figure E19). Almost half of parent respondents (44.4%) report that they have family or friends that have attended a school with a SRO, 45.4% have heard other parents talk about the SRO program, and 63.7% have been exposed to the SRO program through the news media.



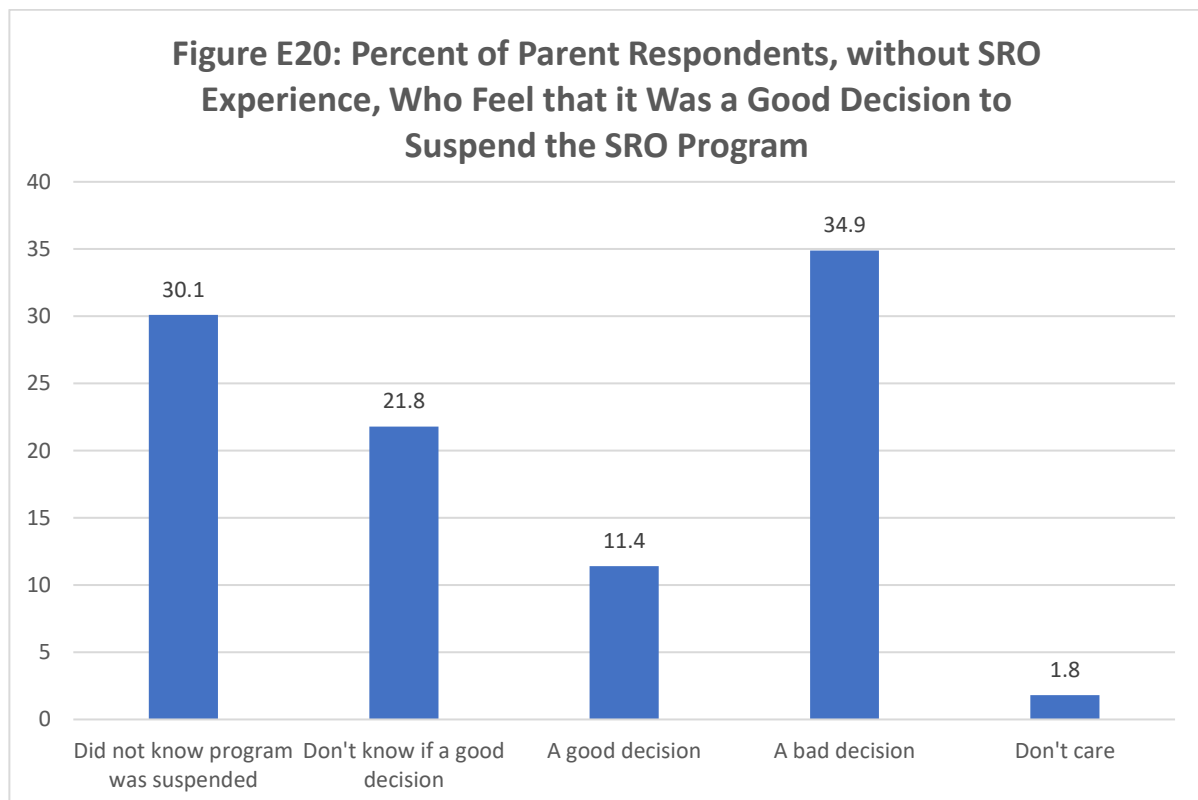
Opinion about the Suspension of the SRO Program

Respondents were asked what they thought about the suspension of the EPSB’s SRO program in 2020 (see Figure E20). Few parents (11.4%) think the suspension of the SRO program was a good decision. By contrast, over a third of respondents (34.9%) think it was a bad decision to suspend the program. However, an additional 21.8% indicate that they do not know if it was a good decision or not. Interestingly, 30.1% of parents without SRO experience did not even know that the SRO program had been suspended.

Across all racial groups, parents were more likely to view the suspension of the SRO as a bad decision rather than a good decision. White parents (with racialized or marginalized children) were most likely to view the suspension of the program as a good decision (15.3%), followed by West Asian parents (10.8%), Asian parents (10.8%), Black parents (9.2%), South Asian parents (8.9%) and Indigenous parents (6.1%).

Almost half the parents of disabled children (44.4%) believe that it was a bad decision to suspend the SRO program. Only 12.7% think it was a good decision.

A third of the parents of non-binary children (33.8%) think it was a bad decision to suspend the SRO program. However, more than a quarter (26.8%) believe it was a good decision.



Perceived Impact of SROs in School

All parent respondents – without previous SRO experience -- were asked to imagine that a School Resource Officer had been assigned to their child’s school. They were then asked to agree or disagree with various statements about the impact that this SRO would have on the students at the school (see Table E11). The results reveal that parents – without SRO experience – are more likely to hold positive rather than negative opinions about the SRO program at Edmonton Public Schools. The results indicate that:

- Almost two-thirds of the parent respondents (60.6%) agree that an SRO would make them feel that their children were safe at school. By contrast, only 11.3% disagree that an SRO would make them feel better about their children’s safety.
- One out of five parent respondents (21.5%) believe that an SRO would make their children feel watched or targeted at school. However, four out of ten parents (41.7%) disagree that an SRO would make their children feel targeted.
- Only 14.0% of the parent respondents agree that the assignment of an SRO would make them feel that their children were attending a dangerous or violent school. Over half of the parent respondents (53.9%) disagree with this statement.
- One out of five parent respondents (19.2%) believe that the assignment of an SRO to their child’s school will make people think that the school is dangerous. However, almost half of the parents surveyed (47.0%) disagree with this statement.
- Almost half of the parent respondents (45.9%) agree that, if assigned, the SRO would treat all the students at their child’s school fairly. By contrast, only 14.6% feel that some students would be treated unfairly. However, an additional 39.5% don’t know if all students would be treated fairly by the SRO or not.
- Over half of the parents surveyed (54.7%) agree that the assignment of an SRO would help their children learn more about the police. Only 11.1% of parent respondents disagree with this statement. However, more than a third of parents (34.2%) don’t know if an SRO would help their children learn more about the police or not.
- Four out of ten parent respondents (40.8%) believe that an SRO would increase their level of trust in the police. Only 14.0% do not believe that an SRO would increase their trust in law enforcement. However, almost half the sample (45.3%) report that they do not know if an SRO would increase their trust in the police or not.
- Only a small proportion of parents -- without SRO experience -- perceive that SROs would engage in biased behaviours. For example, only 15.5% believe that SROs would treat Indigenous students worse than White Students, 16.8% believe that they would treat Black students worse than White students, 9.1% believe they would treat male students worse than female students, and 9.2% believe they would treat 2sLGBTQ+ students worse than heterosexual students. However, in each scenario,

almost half of the parents indicate that they don't know if SROs would engage in biased behaviour or not.

- The perception of potential SRO bias is lowest amongst Asian and South Asian parents, and highest among Black and Indigenous parents (see Table E12). For example, 38.0% of Black parents believe that SROs would treat Black students worse or much worse than White students. Similarly, 37.5% of Indigenous parents believe that SROs would treat Indigenous students worse or much worse than White students.
- One out of five parents (19.0%) agree that their children would be intimidated by the presence of an SRO officer if assigned to their school. However, more than a third (37.5%) believe that their children would not be intimidated. An additional third (33.5%) report that they don't know if their children would be intimidated or not.
- One out of five parent respondents (20.7%) worry that teachers and principals will use SROs to deal with students they don't like. A third of the respondents (34.3%) are not worried about this type of situation. However, 45.0% of parents report that they don't know if SROs will be misused by teachers and principals or not.
- Only 17.0% of parent respondents agree that SROs will abuse their powers if assigned to their child's school. Almost a third of parents (28.8%) disagree with this statement. However, more than half of the parent respondents (54.2%) don't know if SROs will abuse their powers or not.
- Finally, over half of the parent respondents (54.2%) agree that, if assigned, SROs will become an important part of their child's school community. Only 8.4% of respondents disagree with this statement. However, a third of parents don't know if the SRO will become an important part of the school community or not.
- If the program is reinstated, more than a third of parent respondents (36.3%) believe that their child's school should have more than one SRO. By contrast, 18.8% of parents disagree with this statement. However, almost half of the parents (44.9%) don't know if their child's school would benefit from more than one SRO or not.
- In general, Asian, South Asian, and Arab/Middle Eastern parents evaluate the potential impact of SROs more positively than both Black and Indigenous parents (see Table E12).

Table E11: Percent of Parent Respondents, without SRO Experience, Who Agree or Disagree with Various Statements About the School Resource Officer Program

STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
The SRO would make me feel like my children are safe at school.	6.6	4.7	15.9	32.7	27.9	12.2
The SRO would make my children feel watched or targeted at school.	15.7	26.0	22.7	15.0	6.5	14.0
The presence of an SRO would make me feel like my Children went to a dangerous or violent school.	21.5	32.4	20.8	9.6	4.4	11.3
Having a police officer at school would make other people think my child's school is dangerous.	17.2	29.8	21.0	14.6	4.6	12.7
The SROs would treat all students fairly.	6.1	8.5	18.1	31.2	14.7	21.4
The SROs would help my children learn about the police.	3.7	7.4	18.0	39.8	14.9	16.2
The SROs would help me trust the police more.	5.0	9.0	29.4	30.8	10.0	15.9
The SROs would treat Indigenous students worse than White students.	15.2	19.3	21.9	10.1	5.4	28.1
The SROs would treat Black students worse than White students.	15.4	20.1	20.6	11.3	5.5	27.1
The SROs would treat 2sLGBTQ+ students worse than other students.	15.4	21.5	24.2	6.1	3.1	29.7
The SROs would treat female students better than male students.	14.0	21.1	27.8	7.5	1.6	28.0
I wish my child's school had more than one SRO.	7.8	11.0	26.8	25.9	10.4	18.1
Having a police officer at school would make my children feel uncomfortable or intimidated.	15.0	32.5	19.2	14.8	4.2	14.3
Teachers and principals would sometimes use the SROs to deal with students they don't like.	10.9	23.4	20.2	16.5	4.2	24.8
Some SROs would work better with students than others.	3.2	6.6	21.0	36.8	10.9	21.7
The SRO would become an important part of my children's school community.	3.7	4.7	21.4	39.9	14.3	16.2
Sometimes the SROs at my child's school would abuse their powers.	8.6	20.2	23.7	12.8	4.2	30.5

Table E12: Percent of Parent Respondents, without SRO Experience, Who Agree or Strongly Agree with Various Statements About the School Resource Officer Program, by Racial Background

STATEMENT	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Latino	Arab/Middle Eastern	Bi-Racial
The SRO would make me feel like my children are safe at school.	47.0	46.9	67.4	71.4	59.0	61.5	47.2
The SRO would make my children feel watched or targeted at school.	21.0	12.5	19.6	28.9	23.7	16.9	22.6
The presence of an SRO would make me feel like my Children went to a dangerous or violent school.	19.7	6.2	14.1	14.9	18.4	7.9	16.9
Having a police officer at school would make other people think my child’s school is dangerous.	24.7	18.7	17.0	18.0	15.8	14.4	26.4
The SROs would treat all students fairly.	30.1	25.8	50.9	54.4	44.7	43.5	43.4
The SROs would help my children learn about the police.	32.5	50.1	60.0	56.8	55.2	57.9	45.3
The SROs would help me trust the police more.	25.1	18.8	50.2	57.0	47.4	44.7	26.4
The SROs would treat Indigenous students worse than White students.	26.3	37.5	7.4	11.0	13.1	10.5	17.0
The SROs would treat Black students worse than White students.	38.0	34.4	8.9	11.9	18.4	13.1	20.7
The SROs would treat 2sLGBTQ+ students worse than other students.	7.6	18.8	4.5	7.5	7.9	5.3	15.1
The SROs would treat female students better than male students.	8.9	6.2	8.2	9.0	7.9	6.6	11.3
I wish my child’s school had more than one SRO.	34.2	31.3	37.9	43.8	36.9	29.0	26.4
Having a police officer at school would make my children feel uncomfortable or intimidated.	24.1	9.4	17.1	15.6	15.8	13.2	30.1
Teachers and principals would sometimes use the SROs to deal with students they don’t like.	25.4	28.2	18.2	16.1	21.1	18.4	22.6
Some SROs would work better with students than others.	27.8	40.6	44.4	42.8	42.1	39.0	47.1
The SRO would become an important part of my children’s school community.	43.0	53.1	53.2	63.7	55.3	45.5	49.0
Sometimes the SROs at my child’s school would abuse their powers.	25.3	15.6	14.5	12.6	13.1	14.3	26.4

Perceptions of SRO Racial Bias

Parent respondents were asked: “In your opinion, if your child’s school was assigned an SRO, would that SRO treat students from your child’s racial group better, worse or the same as students from other racial groups?” The results suggest that only a minority of parents perceive potential SRO racial bias (see Figure E21). Indeed, 72.4% believe that students will be treated the same by the SRO. Only 15.8% believe that the SROs will treat students from their child’s racial group worse than other students.

Black and Indigenous parents are the most likely to perceive potential SRO bias (see Table E13). For example, 50.0% of Black respondents and 47.1% of Indigenous respondents feel that an SRO would treat students from their racial group worse or much worse than other students. By contrast, only 20.5% of Middle Eastern respondents, 12.9% of South Asian respondents, and 6.4% of Asian respondents believe that students from their racial group would be treated worse.

It is interesting to note that, regardless of race, perceptions of SRO racial bias are much more pronounced among parents without direct SRO experience than parents who have a child who has attended a school with an SRO.

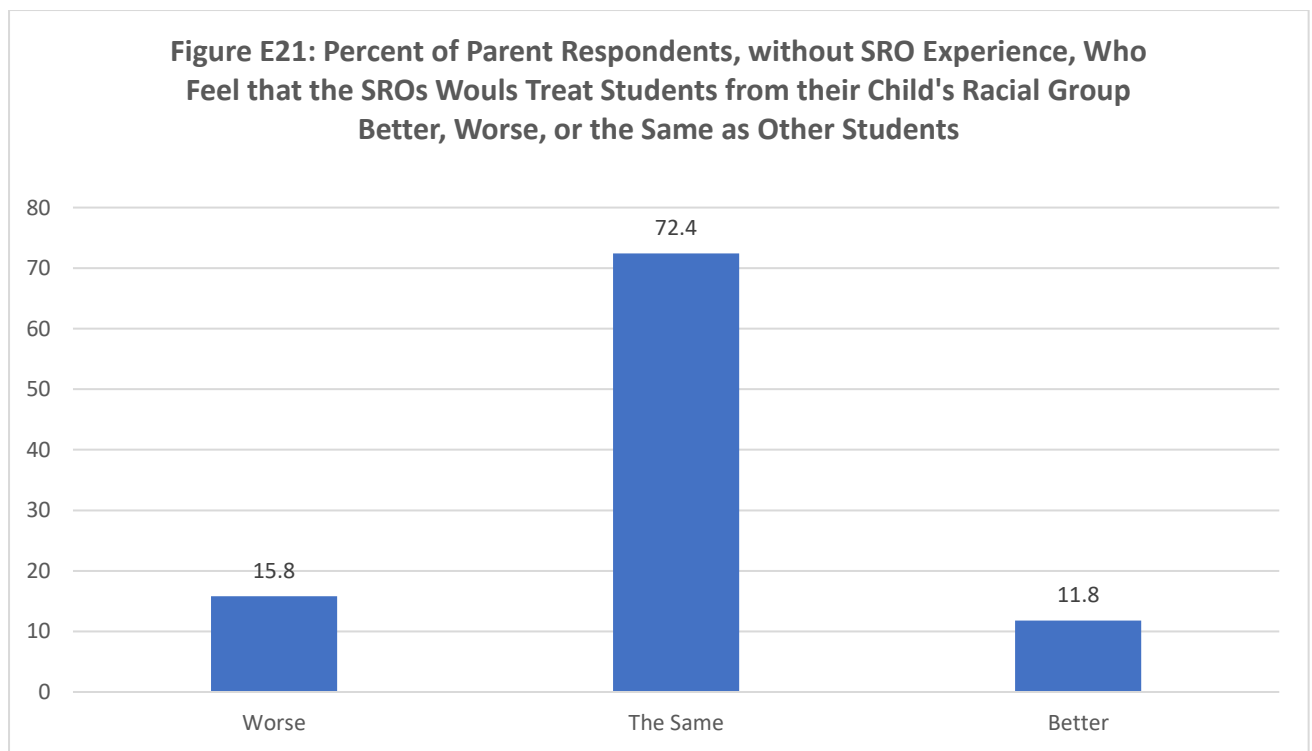


TABLE E13: Percent of Parent Respondents, without SRO Experience, Who Believe SROs Treat People from their Child’s Racial Group Better, Worse, or the Same as Students from Other Racial Groups

Student Racial Background	Treat Worse	Treat the Same	Treat Better
Black	50.0	50.0	0.0
Indigenous	47.1	52.9	0.0
Asian	6.4	83.7	9.9
South Asian	12.9	76.3	10.8
Hispanic	22.2	77.8	0.0
Arab/West Asian	20.5	79.4	0.0
Bi-Racial	14.3	80.0	5.7
White	13.3	61.8	25.0

SRO Uniforms

Parent respondents were also asked if they thought police officers should be armed and in uniform when working at EPSB schools (see Figure E22). More than a third of parent respondents (36.7%) believe that SROs should be armed and in uniform when at school. An additional 3.0% believe that SROs should be armed, but not in uniform. However, 18.6% believe SROs should be in uniform, but not armed. An additional 25.9% believe that SROs should be neither in uniform nor armed. Thus, the proportion of parent respondents who recommend that SROs be unarmed at school (40.9%) is approximately equal to the proportion who think that SROs should be armed (39.7%).

One in sixteen respondents (2.6%) believe that SROs should be armed and in uniform during some school activities, but not others. Some parents feel that SROs out of uniform will help humanize police officers and help them forge a better relationship with students.

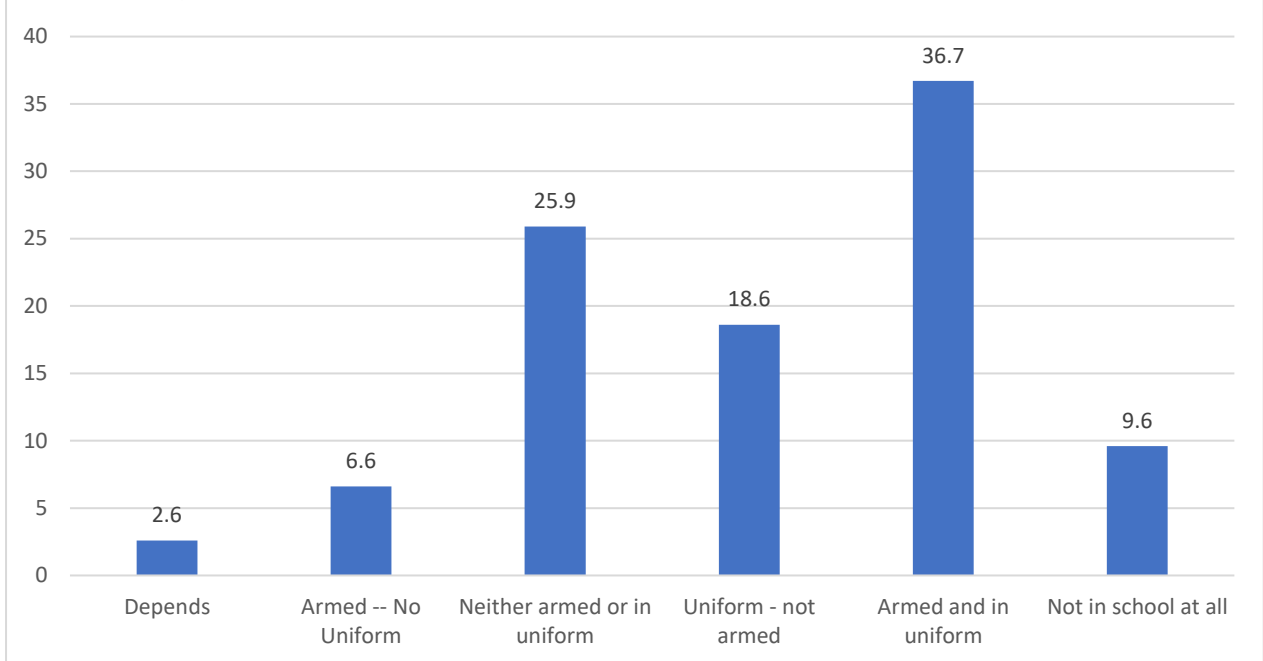
It is important to note that, in response to this question, 9.6% of respondents reported that police should not be in EPSB schools at all.

Perceived Benefits and Consequences of the SRO Program

When asked to identify the potential benefits of the SRO program, most respondents claimed that it would reduce crime, violence and drug use at their child’s school and make students, including their children, feel safer at school. Several parents also claim that SROs can provide mentorship and counselling to troubled students and improve the relationship between youth and the police.

Potential consequences of the SRO program, also identified by student respondents, include feelings of intimidation and mistrust, the criminalization of common student behaviours, and discrimination against racial minorities, sexual minorities, and disabled students. A few parents also stated that they thought the SRO program was too expensive and that the costs of the program should not be the responsibility of the EPSB.

Figure E22: Percent of Parent Respondents, without SRO Experience, Who Want SROs to be Armed and in Police Uniform



Status of the SRO Program

Finally, parent respondents were asked if they thought the SRO program should be returned or reinstated to EPSB schools (see Figure E23). Six out of ten parent respondents (61.5%) believe that the program should be reinstated. Over a third of respondents (35.5%) believe the program should be reinstated without changes. However, a quarter of parents (26.0%) believe the SRO program requires reform. Only 9.7% of parent respondents believe that the SRO program should be permanently removed from the EPSB. However, three out of ten respondents (28.8%) do not know if the program should be returned or not.

Interestingly, the survey results reveal that parents without direct SRO experience are less likely to recommend the return of the SRO program (61.5%) than parents with children who have attended a school with an SRO (76.4%).

Regardless of race, relatively few parents report that they want the permanent removal of the SRO program (see Table E14). Black parents are most likely to recommend permanent removal (12.7%), followed by South Asian parents (4.7%), Asian parents (4.5%) and Indigenous parents (3.2%).

Almost seventy percent of parents with disabled children (69.1%) want to see the SRO program reinstated. By contrast, only 10.9% want to see the program permanently suspended.

Almost half of parents with non-binary children (43.5%) want to see the SRO program reinstated. However, a third (31.9%) want to see the program permanently suspended.

Recommendations for Improving the SRO Program

Parent respondents were asked, if the SRO program is reinstated to EPSB schools, what improvements to the program should be made.

- Many parents believe that the EPSB needs to better inform parents about the presence of SROs in schools and educate them about the purpose of SROs and their various duties. Parents also called for more opportunities to meet with SROs and ask questions about the SRO program.
- Some parents called for better screening and training of SROs to ensure that they know how to interact with students from diverse backgrounds. Others specifically highlighted the need for SROs to receive better training with respect to mental health and how to deal with students experiencing anxiety and other mental health issues.
- A number of parents called for the elimination of racial bias within the SRO program and policing in general. Some suggested that the activities of SRO officers need to be better documented in order to identify and eliminate bias and ensure that students from all backgrounds are treated fairly.
- Some parents called for greater opportunities for SROs to engage with and mentor students in informal settings or during extracurricular activities.
- Finally, several parents suggested that the SRO program needs to be expanded. These parents claimed that SROs need to be armed and have a greater presence in schools in order to better deter crime and violence and keep students and staff safe.

Figure E23: Percent of Parent Respondents, Without SRO Experience, Who Want the EPSB's SRO Program Reinstated

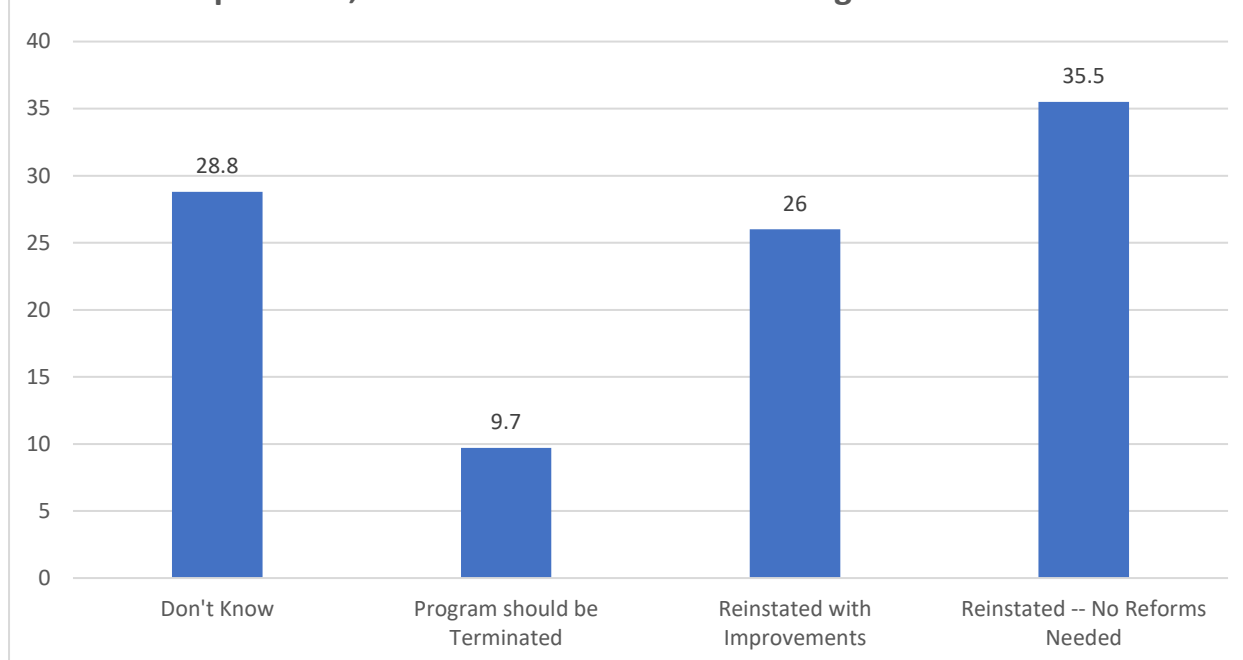


TABLE E14: Percent of Parent Respondents Who Want the SRO Program Reinstated, by Race, Child's Disability Status, and Child's Gender Identity

Student Characteristics	Reinstate Program with No Reforms	Reinstate Program with Improvements	Permanently Terminate Program	Don't Know
<u>Race:</u>				
Black	21.1	28.2	12.7	38.0
Indigenous	29.0	35.5	3.2	32.2
Asian	35.7	27.1	4.7	32.5
South Asian	40.0	30.3	4.6	25.1
Hispanic	21.6	45.9	10.8	21.6
Arab/Middle Easter	39.1	17.2	6.3	37.5
Bi-Racial	42.9	16.3	24.5	16.3
White	37.2	19.9	18.3	24.6
<u>Disability Status:</u>				
Child has a Disability	45.5	23.6	10.9	20.0
Overall Sample	35.5	26.0	9.7	28.8
<u>Gender Identity:</u>				
Has a Non-binary Child	34.8	8.7	31.9	24.6
Overall Sample	35.5	26.0	9.7	28.8

PART H: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Should police be in schools? Should SRO programs be terminated or continue to operate? These questions have produced vigorous debates in both Canada and the United States. Unfortunately, limited research has explored the impact of SRO programs within the Canadian context. The current study contributes to the Canadian research literature by examining the experiences with and perceptions of the SRO program at Edmonton Public Schools. It should be noted that this study focusses exclusively on the experiences and perceptions of racialized and marginalized students and parents. This report does not capture the views and experiences of White, heterosexual, male and female students without a disability or the views of educators, staff, principals, and teachers. Our first set of recommendations pertains to this situation:

1. In our opinion, future analysis should compare the views of White, non-marginalized students with racialized students. This would provide important comparative data and allow the school board to determine whether or not racialized and marginalized students actually view the program more or less positively than White students. The current analysis does not allow us to answer questions such as whether racialized students are more negatively impacted by the SRO program than White students or whether 2sLGBTQ+ or disabled students are more negatively impacted by the SRO program than heterosexual students. The opinions and experiences of White respondents put the opinions and experiences of racialized respondents into context and thus would increase our knowledge about the SRO program. Excluding White, heterosexual, non-disabled students eliminates the major comparison group.
2. The current analysis takes a narrow view of “marginalization” and does not capture, for example, “marginalization” by socioeconomic disadvantage. Sociological studies have repeatedly shown that socioeconomic background severely affect life outcomes of children. Students and families of all racial background can be affected by lower socioeconomic status – a factor that should be considered in future analysis.
3. We recommend including the voices of educators, staff, principals, teachers and other school officials in future analysis. The success of any program, whether in a school community or in any organization, is partially dependent on how a program is received (and perceived), by those who experience it. Better known as “implementation science”, researchers (Rubenstein & Pugh, 2006; Proctor et al., 2011), ultimately suggest that the successful implementation (or removal) of a program has to be supported by the stakeholders working in the setting. In this particular context, this would then include all students, teachers, principals, and other school staff.

A second set of recommendations stems from the lack of additional data sources that would provide insights into SRO activities. Without official school board and police data documenting activities and outcomes associated with the SRO program, such as diversion methods, informal resolution, or arrests, we cannot answer whether the program disproportionately contributes to the criminalization of racialized and marginalized students.

Further, we cannot compare whether the recent removal of the program and subsequent reliance on outside police has contributed to a decline or increase in criminalization of students. To address this situation:

1. We strongly recommend collecting systematic data on any disciplinary activities involving the police, and their outcomes, both with respect to the SRO program (should it be reinstated), and with respect to activities by “outside police” (should the program not be reinstated).
2. When collecting such data, particular attention should be paid to the collection of race-based data and other information about the person’s characteristics that they choose to disclose (such as disability or sexual orientation).

Our third set of recommendations pertains to the SRO program itself. Regardless of racial background, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity, most of the students and parents who participated in this study value the SRO program at EPSB, and are critical of the decision to suspend the program. Regardless of racial background, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, most students and parents want the program reinstated.

Nonetheless, despite these positive impressions, many of our respondents believe that the SRO program can be significantly improved. Below we highlight several recommendations for improving the SRO program at EPSB – if a decision is made to reinstate the initiative. These recommendations reflect both the findings from the current research project as well as promising practices identified in the broader research literature.

Recommendations for Improving the SRO Program

- Many parents and students believe that the EPSB needs to better inform parents and students about the presence of SROs in schools and educate them about the purpose of SROs and their various duties. General updates in school newsletters are seen as a good avenue to keep the school community informed about the SRO program and its activities.
- Parents called for more opportunities to meet with SROs and ask questions about the SRO program, such as at Open Houses and other events.
- Parents and students are asking for improved messaging and explanations about how the program differentiates from regular policing. This is particularly crucial for families who have had negative experiences with the Edmonton Police Service.
- Some parents called for better screening and training of SROs to ensure that they know how to interact with students from diverse backgrounds. Others specifically highlighted the need for SROs to receive better training with respect to mental health and how to deal with students experiencing anxiety and other mental health issues. In this context, many parents and students mentioned that SROs should be “trauma-informed.”

- A number of parents are concerned about racial bias within the SRO program and policing in general. As such, police services need to be better versed on the harms and consequences of racial discrimination within Canadian policing. In January 2021, it was recommended that all Edmonton police officers should take part in unconscious bias training (Edmonton Police Service, 2021). While anti-bias training is often suggested to address any issues related to racial discrimination with police organizations, there lacks sufficient research demonstrating these trainings are an effective strategy (Samuels-Wortley, 2022). Therefore, further research and evaluation into anti-bias training is needed.
- Parents and students recommend paying close attention to soft skills in the hiring process, such as communication skills with children and youth.
- Parents and students of Indigenous background strongly feel that SROs should continue to receive training and acquire background knowledge on the history and consequences of colonialism and the trauma that has been inflicted on Indigenous people, both by police and other institutions.
- Some parents and students recommended to consider alternatives to the program, such as pairing the SRO with a social worker, reframing the position as a Health and Safety position, liaising with community, or liaising with counsellors.
- Some parents called for greater opportunities for SROs to engage with and mentor students in informal settings or during extracurricular activities.
- Parents in particular stressed that education via the SRO about social media, drugs, vaping, sexual harassment, and other topics should be made available to all students on a frequent basis.
- Finally, several parents suggested that the SRO program needs to be expanded. These parents claimed that SROs need to be armed and have a greater presence in schools in order to better deter crime and violence and keep students and staff safe.

While participants offered recommendations for program improvement, the research results reveal that the SRO program is quite popular. Most of our student and caregiver respondents feel that the SRO program prevents crime and violence in school, protects students from criminals in the community, builds relationships between students and the police, provides students with additional adult mentors, and makes students feel safe at school. Few feel that the program targets students according to their race, gender, or sexual orientation.

Former students with extensive experience with SROs during their school careers felt strongly that the SRO program should be reinstated and could act as a barrier between the justice system and the school. They fear that having no SRO in place will leave the schools no choice but to call on “outside police” in some situations (such as threats, violence, drug dealing, etc.) Similar to former students, current students and parents of current students felt that having an SRO back in schools would increase school safety while also have situations addressed in more compassionate manners due to a pre-existing relationship between the youth and the resource officer (as opposed to calling on an “outside police” officer).

In our focus groups and survey, students and parents had an opportunity to suggest and comment on alternative programs and ideas that may better serve their needs and the needs of the school community, such as community liaisons, positions focused on health and safety, and so on. Independent of racial background, disability status, gender, and sexual orientation, only few of our participants prefer an alternative to police presence. This is in contrast to the advocacy scholarship on this topic (DeCosta, 2021).

However, a decision to permanently terminate the SRO program can be supported by a small, yet vocal group of students and parents who feel that the program intimidates youth and subjects them to hyper-surveillance, is biased against racialized and marginalized students, and is too expensive. It can be argued that if even a few students and parents are uncomfortable with the presence of police in school, the SRO program should be cancelled.

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