



EDUCATION WEEK
RESEARCH CENTER

Safety and Social- Emotional Learning

Results of a National Survey



Support for this study provided by the NoVo Foundation

About Editorial Projects In Education

Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization based in Bethesda, Md. Its primary mission is to help raise the level of awareness and understanding among professionals and the public of important issues in American education. EPE covers local, state, national, and international news and issues from preschool through the 12th grade. Editorial Projects in Education publishes *Education Week*, America's newspaper of record for precollegiate education, the online *Teacher*, *EdWeek Market Brief*, and the TopSchoolJobs employment resource. It also produces periodic special reports on issues ranging from technology to textbooks, as well as books of special interest to educators.

The Education Week Research Center conducts surveys, collects data, and performs analyses that appear in *Education Week* and special reports such as *Quality Counts*, and *Technology Counts*. The center also conducts independent research studies and maintains the Education Counts online data resource.

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Executive Summary

In April of 2019, the Education Week Research Center conducted a nationally-representative survey of nearly 700 PreK-12 teachers. The objective was to learn more about the intersection between social-emotional learning, student mental health, and school safety. Major findings include:

- Most teachers say their students do not feel very safe at school.
- Asked which three things would most improve school safety, teachers were most likely to call for professional mental health support, social-emotional learning strategies, and programs to help parents address students' SEL challenges.
- When it comes to improving school safety, teachers' biggest asks of lawmakers are more funding for mental health resources and mandates requiring social-emotional learning.
- Although teachers clearly perceive that mental health resources and social-emotional learning are most likely to improve safety, the most common safety strategies currently used by schools are active shooter drills, or other evacuation, lockdown, or shelter-in-place procedures. Trainings in evacuations, lockdowns and similar procedures are the most common type of safety-related professional development.
- About a quarter of teachers own guns. Although gun-owners are significantly more likely to support arming teachers, just 13 percent are in favor of this approach, as compared to 2 percent of non-gun owners.
- Teachers who own guns are more likely to work in small, rural districts in the Southern United States. Gun ownership is more common among secondary teachers and those who specialize in Career Technical Education and history/social studies.
- Although most schools do provide professional mental health supports, just 34 percent offer SEL and only 15 percent have programs that help parents improve their children's social-emotional skills.
- Regardless of whether their schools offer formal SEL programs, most teachers do try to improve social-emotional well-being by using such strategies as helping students build connections with one another or encouraging them to reach out to isolated or friendless peers.
- Just one teacher said that dealing with students' mental health challenges is outside the scope of her professional role. Common teacher responses to student mental health issues include speaking with the child, making referrals to mental health professionals, or seeking such professionals' advice.
- Overall, most teachers say their schools have adequate resources to support student mental health. However, the percentage of respondents who say support is adequate varies significantly by grade level, from 49 percent for elementary teachers to 65 percent in high schools. And just 14 percent of teachers say they themselves are very or extremely well-prepared to address student mental health.
- Less than half of teachers say the solutions or strategies they employ are sufficient to help students with weak social-emotional skills. High school teachers are significantly more likely to say they lack such strategies and also more likely to perceive that their SEL curriculum is inadequate.
- Teachers' top SEL-related challenge is that a focus on academics leaves limited time for social-emotional learning. Teachers also struggle to help students experiencing problems at home.

The teacher social-emotional learning and safety survey was produced with support from the NoVo Foundation.

Introduction

If students and teachers do not feel safe, it is difficult for learning to occur. But how safe do they really feel? And what do teachers think would improve that sense of safety? Is it another security camera, an additional active shooter drill? A social-emotional learning program? Resources for student mental health? What are schools doing now to make schools safer? In the eyes of teachers, how adequate are their efforts?

In April of 2019, the Education Week Research Center set out to address such questions with an online survey of nearly 700 PreK-12 teachers. The objective of the survey was to examine the intersection between multiple factors with the potential to make schools safe. These factors include both “hardening” measures such as reinforced doors and armed teachers, as well as solutions related to students social-emotional skills and mental health.

Overall, the survey identified a disconnect between the types of strategies that teachers most associate with safe learning environments and the approaches most frequently used by schools. The results highlight the need for educators to more closely examine their approach to creating safe schools.

SURVEY DETAILS

Survey Administered: April 2019

Sample: Nationally-representative

Respondents: Preschool, elementary, middle school, and high school teachers

Total Respondents: 697



Growing Kinder from the Inside Out

School isn't just a place to grow academically—it's a place to grow as a person. Our mission is to give teachers the tools they need to help students grow into their best selves. Rooted in research-based social-emotional learning, Second Step helps foster a foundation of empathy. It shows kids how to sort through complicated emotions, make sound decisions, build positive relationships, and manage the strong feelings we all have. Plus it's easy to use and supports teachers in making an even bigger difference in kids' lives.

It's not just better students, it's better people.

**second
step®**

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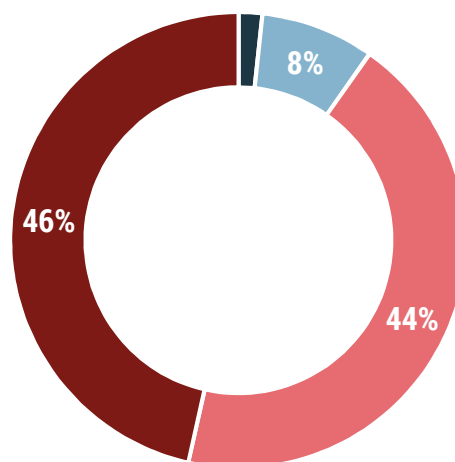
Sense of Safety at School

Learning may take a back seat to fear if students do not feel safe at school.

Less than half of teachers say their students feel very safe on campus.

However, it's worth noting that just 10 percent perceive that their students feel unsafe.

How safe do you believe that your students typically feel at your school?

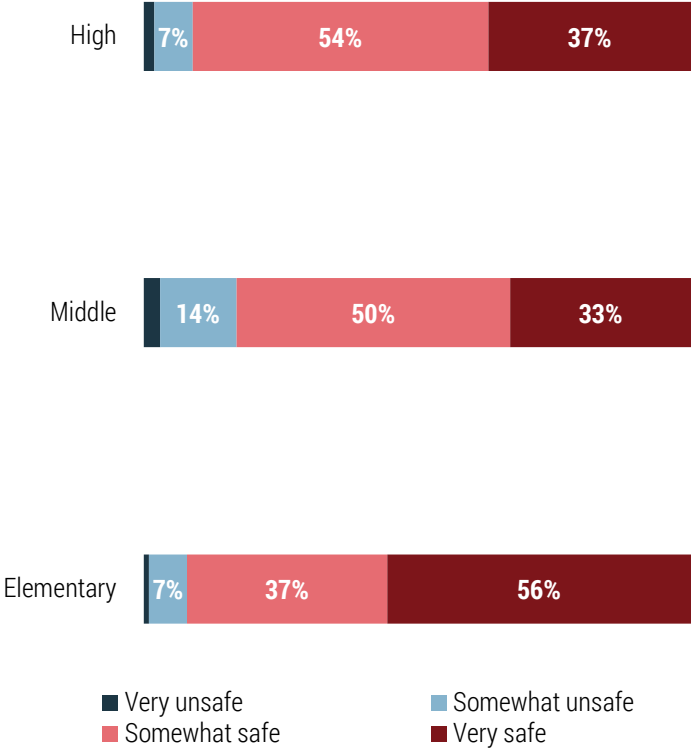


■ Very unsafe ■ Somewhat unsafe ■ Somewhat safe ■ Very safe

Sense of Student Safety Varies by Grade

Just 1 in 3 middle school teachers say their students feel very safe at school as compared to more than half of their elementary peers.

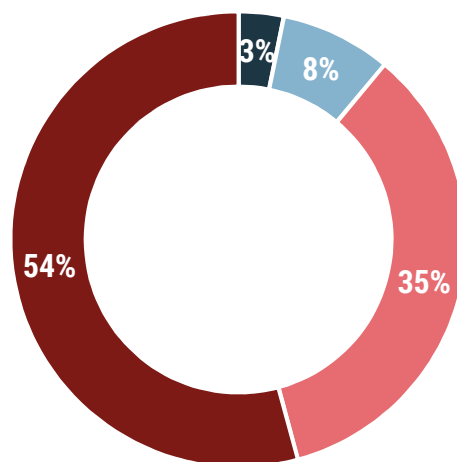
How safe do you believe that your students typically feel at your school?



Teacher Safety

It is difficult to focus on work if one cannot take personal safety for granted. Just over half of teachers feel very safe at school. Only 11 percent feel unsafe.

How safe do you typically feel at your school?



■ Very unsafe ■ Somewhat unsafe ■ Somewhat safe ■ Very safe

What Do Teachers Think Improves School Safety?

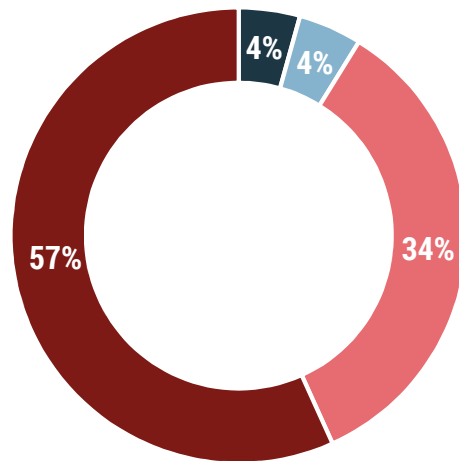
SEL is a Popular Safety Solution

Most teachers perceive that their students do not feel very safe at school.

So what do teachers think will make schools safer?

Nearly all the teachers surveyed (91 percent) say that teaching social and emotional skills to students will improve school safety.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement. Teaching social and emotional skills to students will improve school safety.



■ Completely disagree ■ Somewhat disagree
■ Somewhat agree ■ Completely agree

SEL, Mental Health Support are Top Safety Solutions for Teachers

A survey question presented teachers with a list of 19 options and asked them to pick the three they perceived would have the biggest impact on school safety.

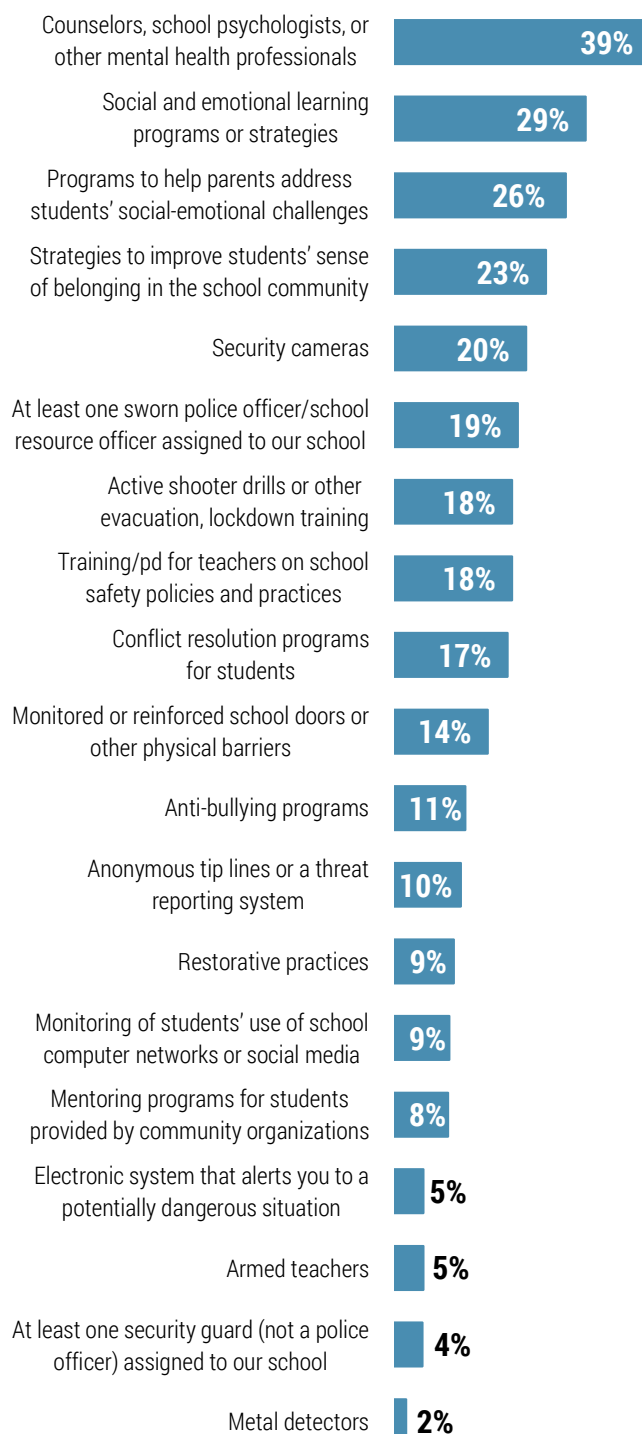
None of the top three choices are “hardening” measures such as security cameras or police officers. Instead, all three focus on students’ social-emotional well-being and mental health.

They are:

1. Counselors, psychologists, or other mental health professionals
2. Social and emotional learning programs or strategies
3. Programs to help parents address students’ social and emotional challenges

Security cameras are the most popular “hardening” measure, followed by assigning sworn police officers to schools.

Which of the following have the biggest impact on making schools safer? Pick three.

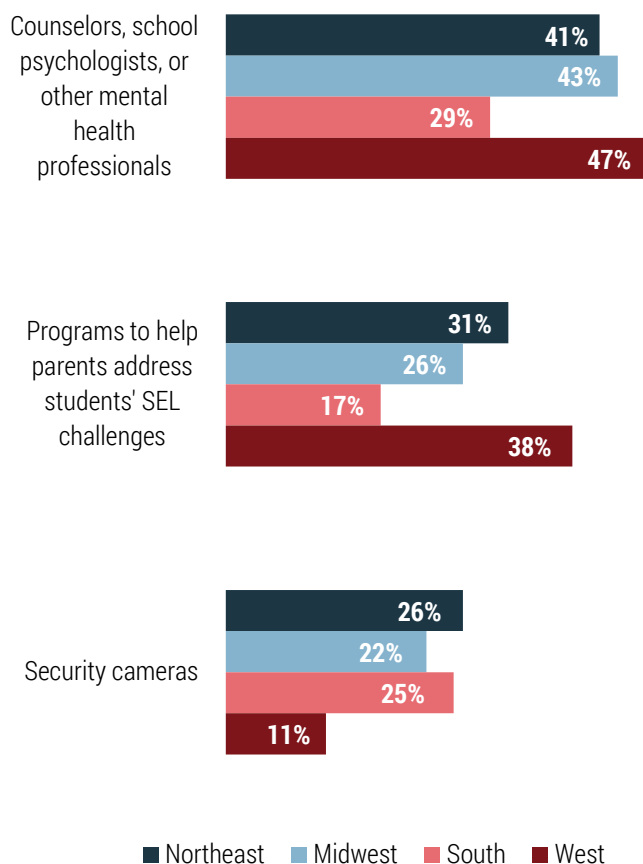


Support for SEL, Mental Health, Security Cameras Varies by Region

Southern teachers are significantly less likely to perceive that mental health support or SEL programs for parents will make a major difference when it comes to school safety.

Western teachers are roughly half as likely as their peers elsewhere in the United States to say that security cameras will make a big difference.

Which of the following have the biggest impact on making schools safer? Pick three.



Restorative Practices More Popular in Urban Settings, Among Middle/Elementary Teachers

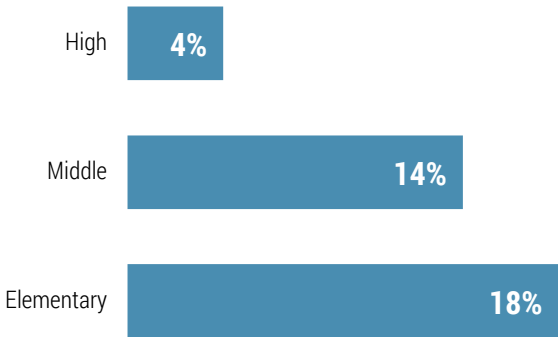
In a K-12 context, restorative practices are a form of student discipline in which those who do harm are called upon to make it up to their victims and communities, with terms often determined by peers, teachers, and other members of the community.

Restorative practices are significantly more popular among teachers in urban schools.

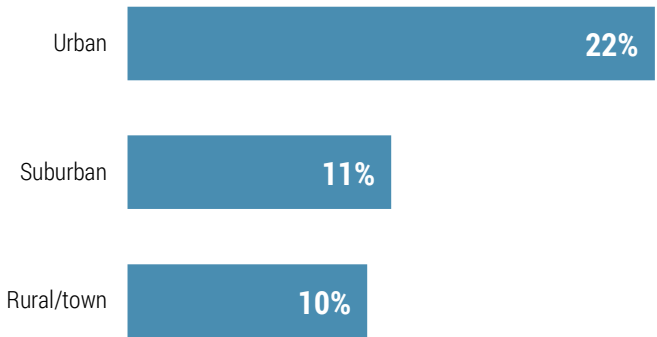
Elementary and middle school teachers are also significantly more likely than their high school peers to perceive that restorative practices improve school safety.

Which of the following have the biggest impact on making schools safer? Restorative practices

Grade Level



Locale



School Safety Solutions Vary By Grade

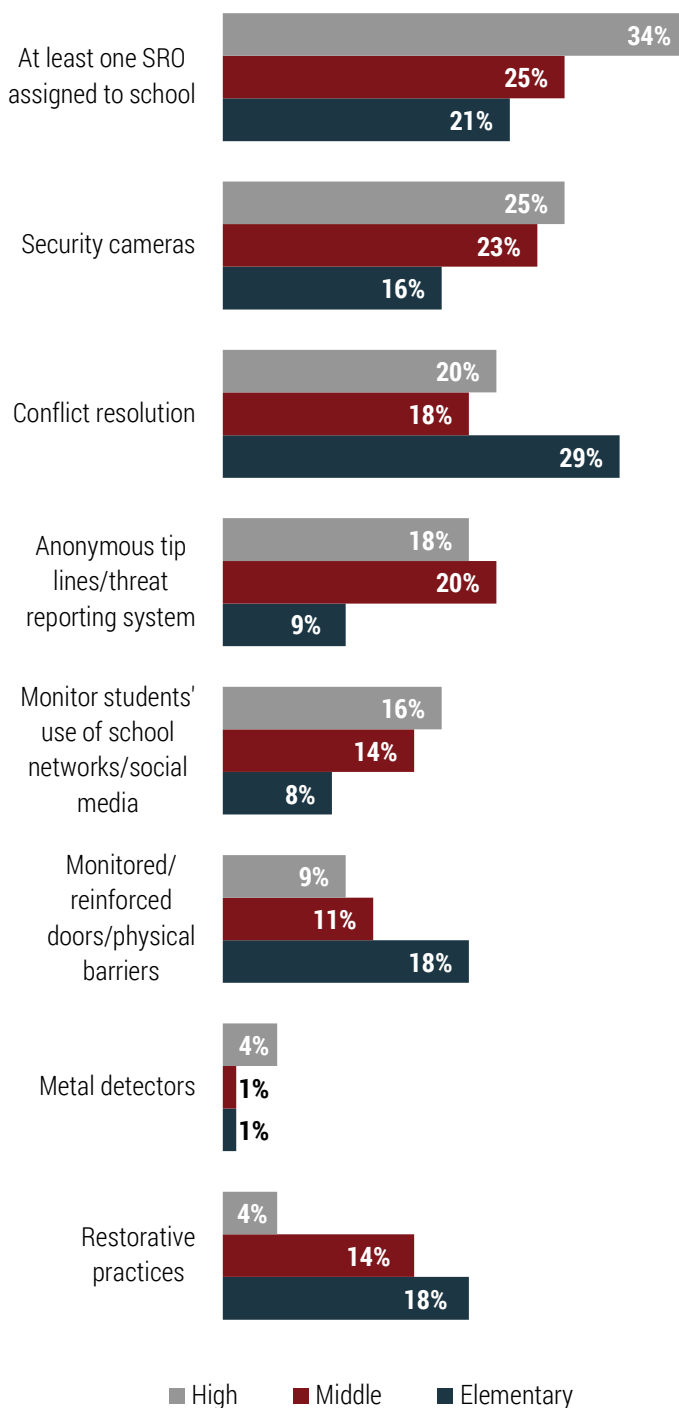
Elementary, middle, and high school teachers have significantly different perceptions about eight factors' potential to improve school safety.

For the most part, older students' teachers are bigger proponents of hardening measures such as security cameras, school resource officers, and metal detectors. An exception is monitored/reinforced doors or other physical barriers: those are twice as popular with elementary than with high school teachers. This is likely because high-profile elementary school shootings are often perpetrated by intruders while the students themselves are more likely to pose a threat in secondary schools.

Conflict resolution and restorative practices are more popular with younger students' teachers.

Anonymous tiplines and social media monitoring garner more support from secondary teachers.

Which of the following have the biggest impact on making schools safer? Pick three.



Arming Teachers Not a Top 3 Priority for Gun Owners

Arming teachers is more popular with educators who own guns or live in a household with guns.

However, even gun owners are unlikely to prioritize arming teachers: Just 13 percent say arming teachers is one of the top three measures that would make schools safer.

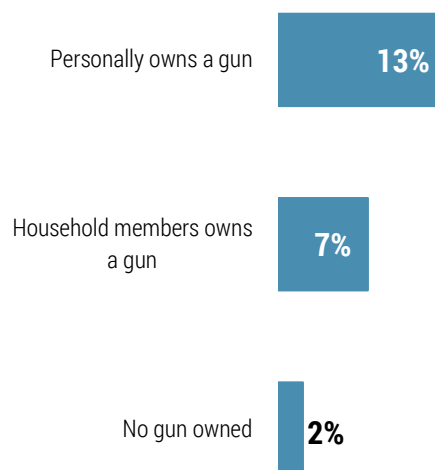
Gun owners say that the three factors that would most improve school safety are:

1. At least one sworn police officer/school resource officer assigned to the school (34 percent)
 2. Counselors, school psychologists, and other mental health professionals (31 percent)
 3. Active shooter drills or other evacuation, lockdown, shelter-in-place training (26 percent)
- Strategies to improve students' sense of belonging (26 percent)

Teachers who do not own guns personally but live in a gun-owning household prioritize mental health support (43 percent); SEL programs/strategies (32 percent); and conflict resolution (30 percent).

Teachers who neither own guns nor live in a gun-owning household have the same three priorities as survey respondents overall (mental health support, SEL programs/strategies, programs to help parents address students' SEL challenges).

Which of the following have the biggest impact on making schools safer? Pick three: Armed teachers

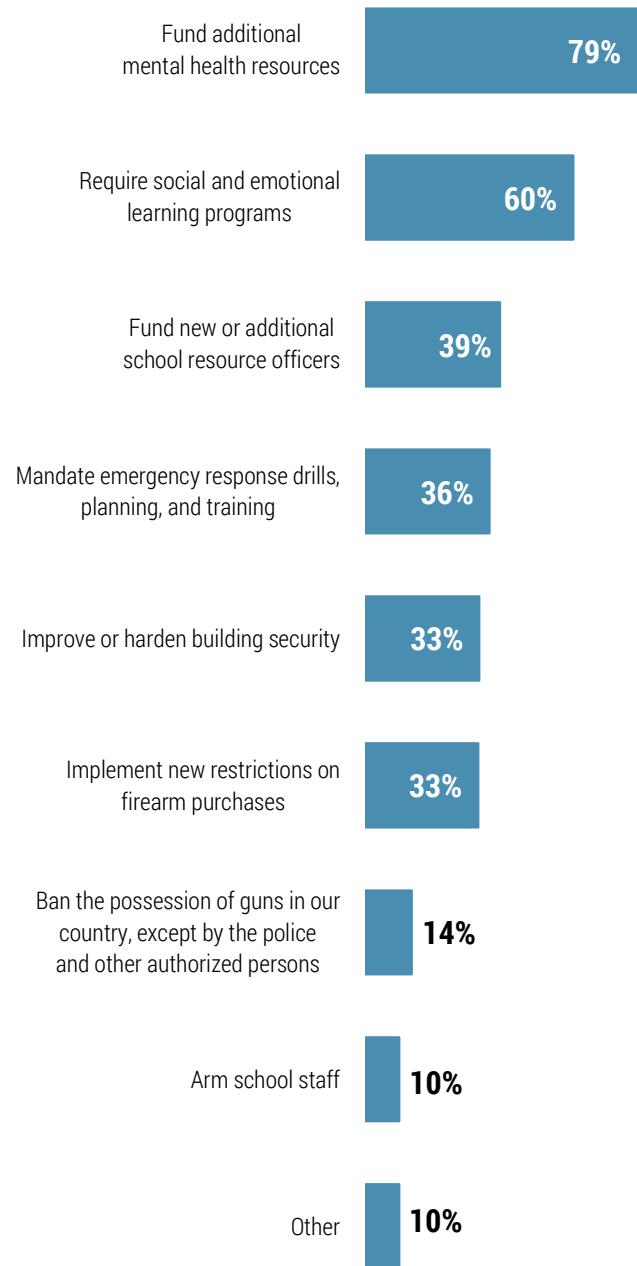


What Do Teachers Think Lawmakers Should Do to Improve School Safety?

Nearly 80 percent of teachers say that lawmakers should make schools safer by funding additional mental health resources.

Requiring social and emotional learning is their second biggest request from elected officials.

Which of the following should lawmakers prioritize when it comes to school safety? Select all that apply.

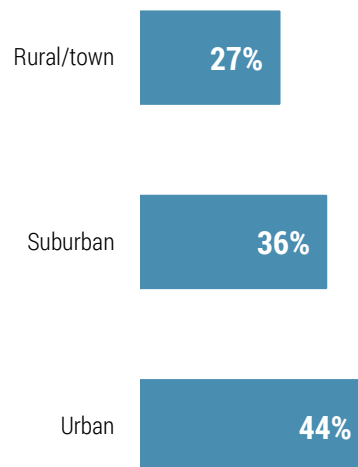


Urban Teachers More Likely to Support Firearm Purchase Restrictions

Nearly half of urban teachers say lawmakers should prioritize firearm purchasing restrictions in order to make schools safer.

By contrast, just over a quarter of rural teachers say such restrictions should be a safety priority.

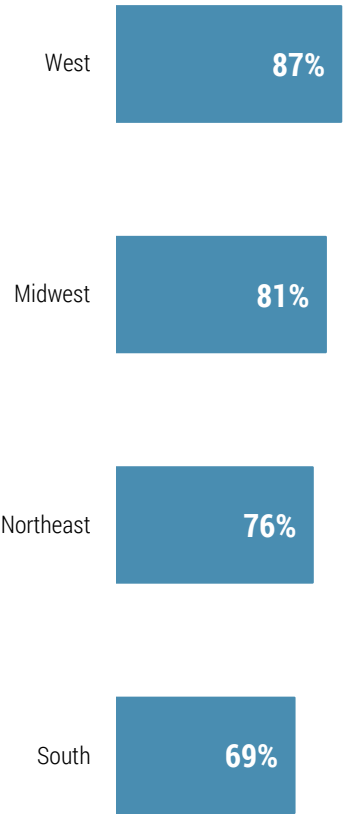
Which of the following should lawmakers prioritize when it comes to school safety? Select all that apply: Implement new restrictions on firearm purchases



**Mental Health Funding Support
Stronger in Western States**

Western teachers are most likely to say lawmakers should prioritize mental health funding in order to make schools safer. Southern teachers are least likely to call for more mental health funding. However, a large majority of teachers in all regions of the United States say mental health funding should be a school safety priority for elected officials.

Which of the following should lawmakers prioritize when it comes to school safety? Select all that apply: Fund additional mental health resources



School Hardening More Popular at High-Poverty Schools

Teachers at high-poverty schools are significantly more likely to say lawmakers' school safety priorities should include improving or hardening building security and funding new or additional school resource officers.

Which of the following should lawmakers prioritize when it comes to school safety? Select all that apply: Improve or harden building security



■ More than 50% low-income ■ 50% or less low-income

Gun Owners Less Likely to Support Mental Health Funding Increase, Mandating SEL

When it comes to school safety legislation, gun owners have some ideas that differ from other teachers.

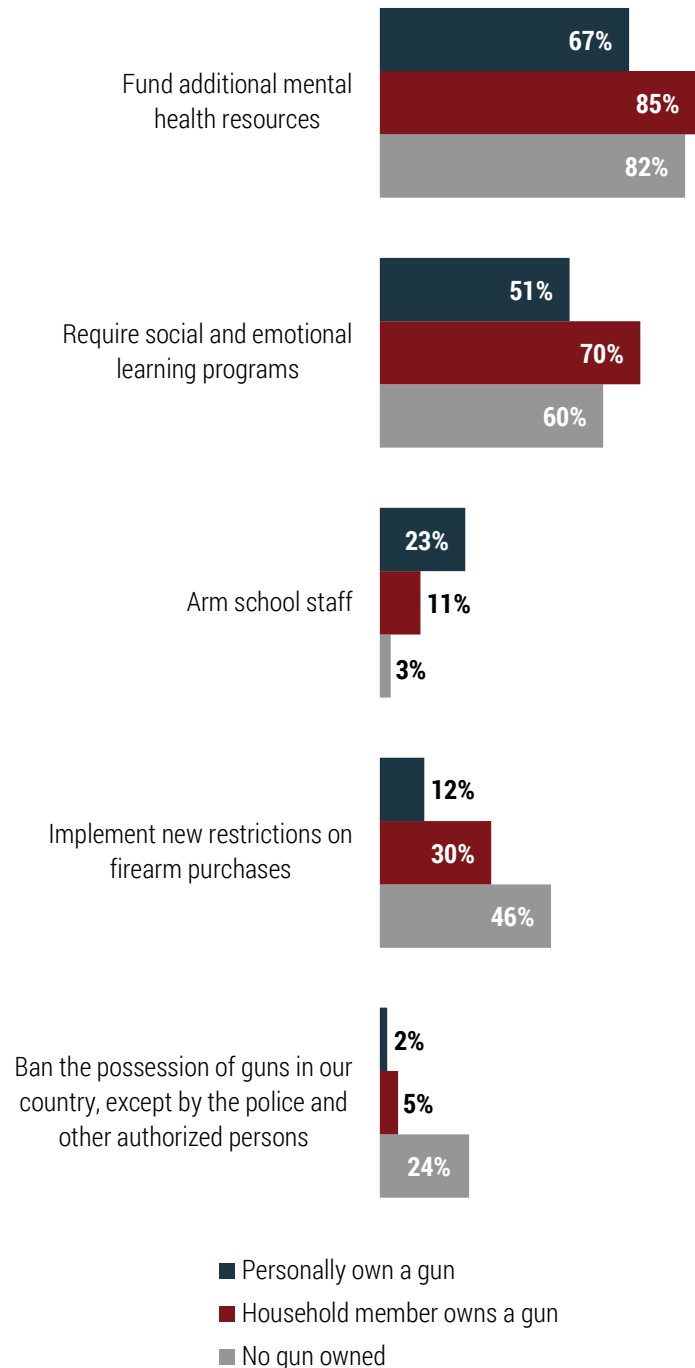
They are significantly more likely than non-gun owners to support arming teachers, though just 23 percent say this should be a school safety priority for lawmakers.

They are significantly less likely to say safety legislation priorities should include mandating social-emotional learning or funding additional mental health resources. That said, additional funding for mental health is the top school safety legislation priority for gun owners and non-gun owners alike.

Interestingly, teachers who live in households with guns but don't personally own firearms, are more likely than gun owners or those who live in gun-free households to say SEL should be mandated.

Gun owners are significantly less likely than non-gun owners to say lawmakers should prioritize implementing new restrictions on firearms purchases or banning the possession of guns altogether, except for police and other authorized people.

Which of the following should lawmakers prioritize when it comes to school safety? Select all that apply.





Establishing a Foundation of Safety and Support with SEL

How social-emotional learning can help foster safe, supportive learning environments

Feeling unsafe at school affects a student's ability to learn, focus, and take academic risks. School safety is a growing concern for many teachers, and many see a strong connection between social-emotional learning (SEL) and students feeling safe and supported in the classroom. There is mounting interest in providing students with mental health support and strategies to strengthen social-emotional skills, but although many educators agree it should be a part of their role to teach these skills, far fewer feel equipped to do so well.

What Exactly Is SEL?

SEL teaches the non-academic skills and strategies that contribute to a positive school climate and set the groundwork for positive experiences beyond the classroom. SEL isn't just a feel-good activity, and it's not a substitute for academic subjects. It focuses on improving cooperation, communication, and decision making. In the long run, SEL provides a framework for developing

the emotional intelligence needed for healthy relationships, academic success, successful careers, and heightened overall happiness.

Growing Support for SEL

The documented benefits of SEL are wide ranging. In a review of 213 school-based SEL programs, students demonstrated significantly improved social-emotional skills, attitudes, and behavior, lower levels of anxiety, and an average 11-percentile-point gain in academic achievement compared to students who did not participate in an SEL program.¹ From a purely financial standpoint, SEL interventions show an average return on investment of \$11 for every dollar spent on a program.²

These results have [sparked a growing interest in SEL](#) in recent years, and today nearly half of the US departments of education incorporate SEL in some form. There is also mounting support from the federal level, with the US House

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I highly recommend Second Step – it provides a comprehensive approach to safety and promoting academic, social, and emotional success. The curriculum in all three components engages students, taps into current research, and employs best teaching practices.

Rebecca L. Bowen, MEd
Elementary Team Leader
Maple Valley, WA

Appropriations Committee drafting an unprecedented [\\$260 million budget](#) to fund SEL-related professional development, continued research, increased mental health presence, and support for community schools.

SEL and Your School

There are a number of excellent programs dedicated to teaching social-emotional skills, and a number of things to consider when determining the best fit for your school or district. Before initiating a search, it's critically important to establish readiness to adopt and sustain an explicit SEL program. Do you have key stakeholder representation on your selection committee to ensure broad-based support for implementation?



When it comes to making your selection, be sure any programs you consider are based on research. The SEL field has come a long way in creating curricula proven to be effective—make the best use of your resources with the best chance of positive outcomes for students by limiting your search to research- and evidence-based programs. Training requirements and resources, ongoing implementation supports, delivery mechanism (who will teach SEL and when), and budget are also key factors. And if you're trying to meet certain SEL standards, ensure that the programs you're considering align accordingly, while taking other major district initiatives into account as well.

Schools need strategies to help foster a safe and supportive learning environment, and SEL is a promising place to start. Rooted in SEL, [Second Step](#) is a research-based program committed to transformative impact, taking a holistic approach in helping schools transform into environments where children can thrive. Building on the foundation of skills taught in Second Step, related [bullying prevention](#),

and [child protection](#) programs that focus on specific prevention and intervention goals are also offered.

How to Sustain an SEL Program

Social-emotional learning efforts need to be sustained over the long term to effectively develop the skill set, but barriers include staff turnover, limited time, and scarce resources. SEL can't be an afterthought—it requires planning and purposeful implementation.

Four key efforts contribute to districtwide sustainability:

- **Explicitly align SEL with your vision and mission.** If SEL isn't seen as highly connected to your vision and mission, then strive to make its value more visible in your district's continuous improvement plans and strategic goals.
- **Establish and maintain buy-in.** Sharing data and student testimonials and asking active supporters to share their positive experiences are all ways to foster support for SEL from staff and families alike.

- **Make it a team effort.** The support of a core leadership team helps ensure continued backing for SEL over time, even when there are staff changes. Meeting frequently to address challenges and sending out feedback surveys help identify where support is needed.

- **Involve new staff or teachers.** Put a plan in place for getting incoming staff on board with SEL—new staff often bring new ideas and energy, and can contribute their strengths to your SEL implementation team.

Set Up For Success

When students are better equipped to manage their own emotions, form positive relationships, and cope with everyday social and academic challenges, they're better equipped not just to learn, but to contribute to a safe classroom and school climate. And with a foundation of strong social-emotional skills, they're better prepared to become not just better students, but better people. **To learn more about SEL and Second Step, visit [SecondStep.org](#)**

1. Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1): 405-432.

2. Belfield, C. et al. (2015). *The economic value of social and emotional learning*. New York: Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Second Step Stories: A Focus on Behavioral Health | BOSTON, MA



Boston Public Schools is on a mission to support students and teachers with its Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model, using Second Step SEL as its universal social-emotional learning program. The Rafael Hernández K-8 School is seeing results, from empowered teachers and a positive shift in student behaviors to schoolwide cultural change.

Learn more about their story at [SecondStep.org/success-stories](#)

“

When I think about Second Step and the work that it allows us to do to access learning, it really is about empowering children and students. And teachers are inspired by that.

Ana Tavares | Principal
The Hernandez School

Committee for Children: 40 Years of Impact

Committee for Children, the nonprofit behind Second Step, is on a mission to ensure children everywhere can thrive. From our start in 1979 as a grassroots effort to the global organization we are today, we've built connections with fellow educators, advocates, and partners to advance best practices in SEL and child protection. We're committed to achieving impact throughout the ecosystem that supports the whole

child, advocating for policies and legislation that improve the emotional well-being of children, and developing programs that blend research with intuitive design that reach more than 15 million children each year in over 70 countries worldwide. We lift up children today, so they're able to create a safe and positive society for the future. Learn more about our work at cfchildren.org

Creating a Supportive Learning Environment



Early Learning-Grade 8

[Second Step SEL](#)

When students are better equipped to manage their own emotions, form positive relationships, make good decisions, and cope with everyday social and academic challenges, they're better equipped to learn.



Kindergarten-Grade 5

[Second Step Bullying Prevention](#)

Research shows that feeling unsafe at school affects a student's ability to learn, focus, and take academic risks. Because safety and student success are on the line, we've been unwavering in our work to prevent bullying.



Early Learning-Grade 5

[Second Step Child Protection](#)

Our history of protecting children from sexual abuse is the origin and soul of our organization. Since our earliest days protecting trafficked children, we've been driven to build communities that wrap children in safety and support.



Kindergarten-Grade 5

[Mind Yeti](#)

Help kids and their adults calm their minds, focus their attention, and connect better to the world around them. Our digital library of research-based, guided mindfulness sessions features diverse voices and immersive soundscapes to settle the Hubhub. Get started for free at MindYeti.com

How We Know Our Programs Work

We've become internationally recognized in social-emotional learning by ensuring all our programs are based on rigorous research. Independent studies consistently show our programs improve safety skills, increase positive social behavior, reduce bullying, and decrease classroom disruptions.

We're Here to Help

Have questions? Our client support team is here to help, and can also direct you to information about federal and state SEL funding opportunities. Contact us at support@secondstep.org

What are Schools Actually Doing to Keep Students Safe?

Hardening Measure Most Common

Teachers clearly perceive that mental health resources and social-emotional learning should be the top school safety priorities.

Yet of 19 school safety measures included on the survey, the most common approach employed is to implement active shooter drills or other evacuation, lockdown, or shelter-in-place training. Eighty-five percent of teachers say their schools offer this type of training.

Just 18 percent of survey respondents say this is one of the three measures most likely to improve school safety.

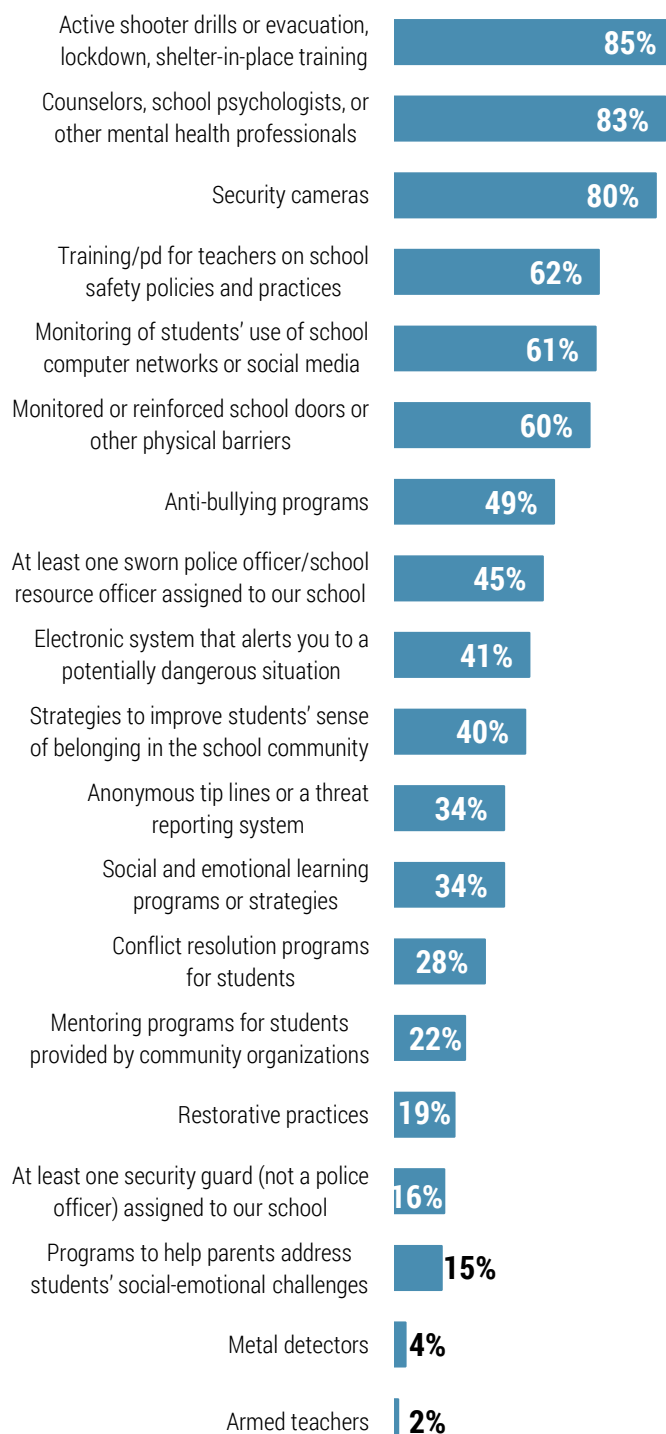
Mental health resources are the second most common approach (83 percent). Teachers say such resources should be the top school safety priority for schools and lawmakers alike.

Less than half of teachers say their schools use SEL-related strategies such as anti-bullying programs (49 percent), strategies to improve students' sense of belonging (40 percent), or social-emotional learning programs (34 percent).

Programs to help parents address students' SEL challenges are among the top three measures that teachers say would improve school safety.

Yet just 15 percent of survey respondents say their schools have such programs.

Which of the following does your school have? Select all that apply.



Hardening Measures More Common at Secondary Schools

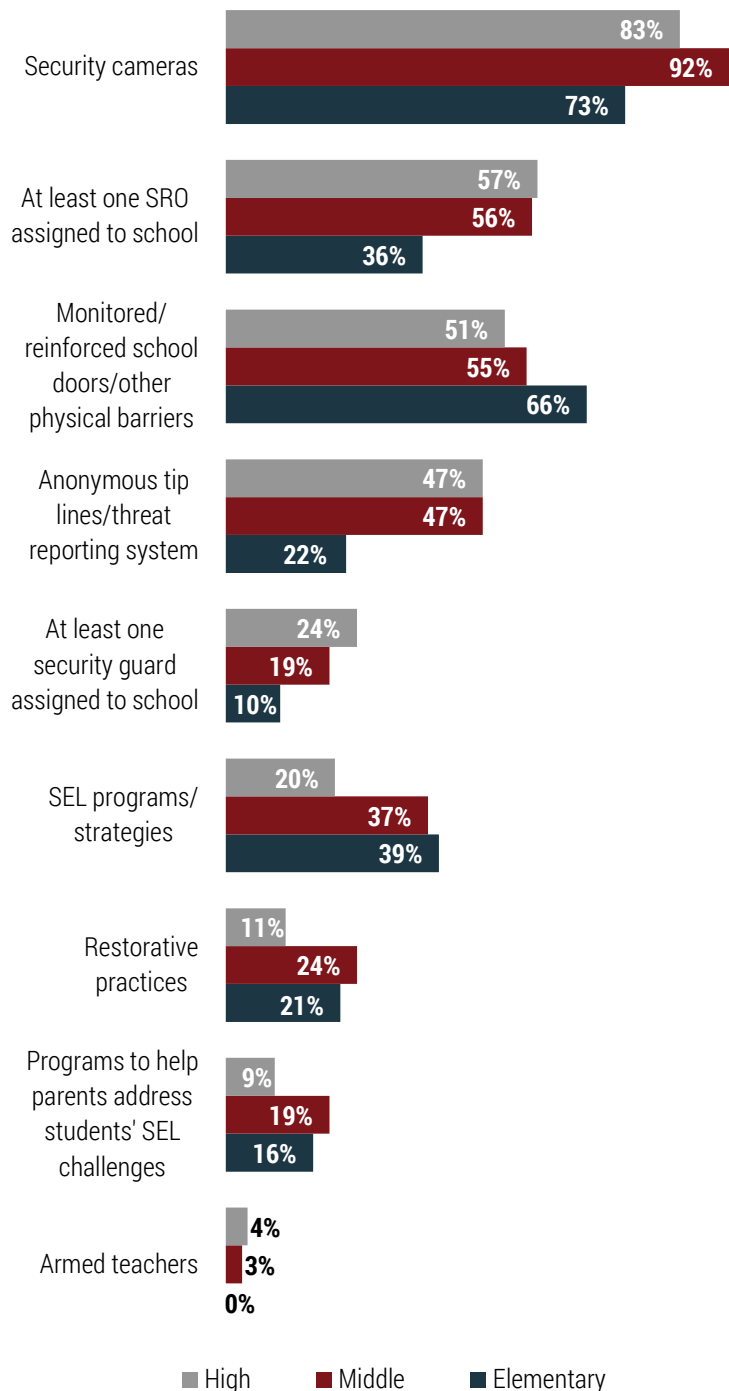
Elementary, middle, and high schools use different approaches to keeping schools safe.

Hardening measures including security cameras, school resource officers, security guards, anonymous threat reporting systems, and armed teachers are all significantly more common at the secondary level.

One hardening measure, monitored or reinforced school entries, is more prevalent at the elementary level.

SEL programs and strategies and restorative practices are significantly more common at the elementary and middle levels.

Which of the following does your school have? Select all that apply.



Smaller Districts Have Fewer Security Measures

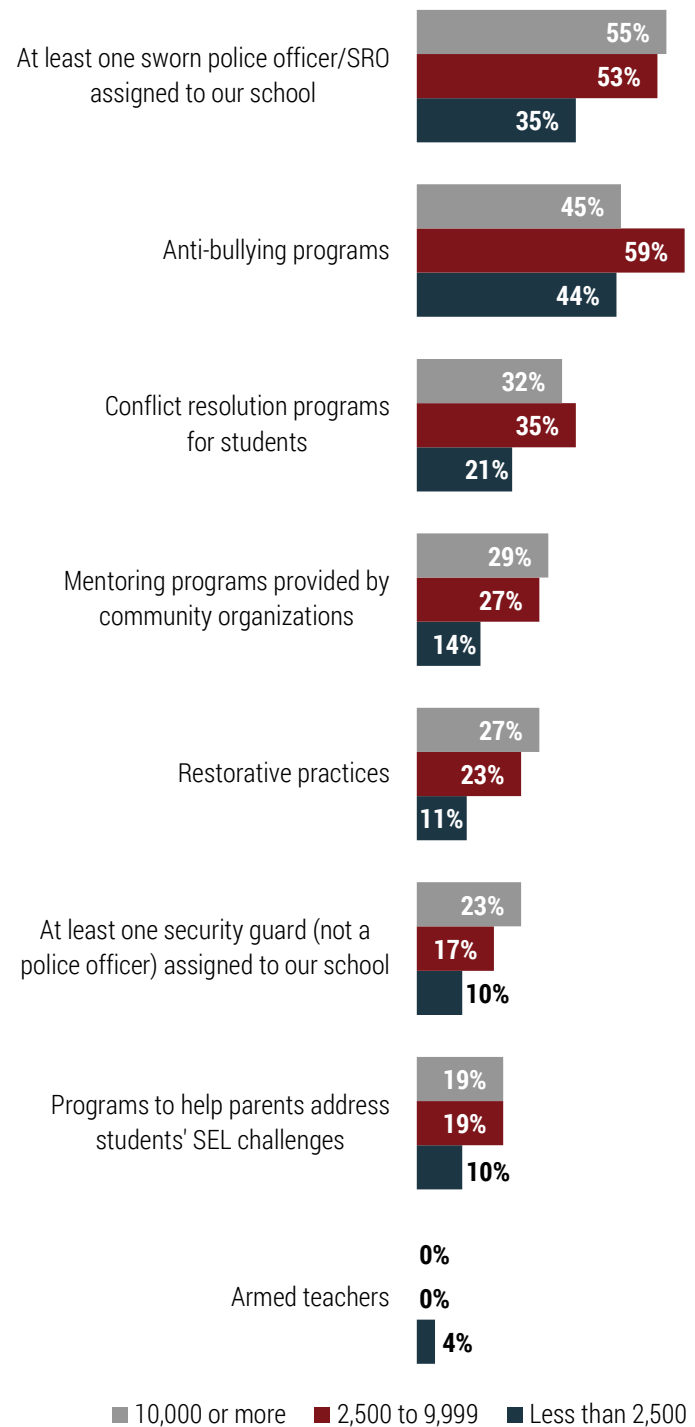
Several school safety measures are significantly less common in smaller school districts with less than 2,500 students.

These measures include hardening measures such as SROs and security guards.

They also include SEL-related approaches such as anti-bullying programs, conflict resolution, mentoring, restorative practices, and programs to help parents address students' SEL challenges.

One measure, armed teachers, is more common in smaller districts. However, it's still rare: just 4 percent of respondents from smaller districts say teachers are armed at their schools.

Which of the following does your school have? Select all that apply.



Safety Measures Favored by Teachers are Less Common in Rural Areas

Rural districts are more likely to be small. So it's perhaps not surprising that, like smaller districts, rural ones are less likely to implement multiple types of security measures

The three approaches that respondents find most likely to improve school safety are less common in rural schools: mental health resources, SEL strategies, and programs to help parents to address students' SEL challenges.

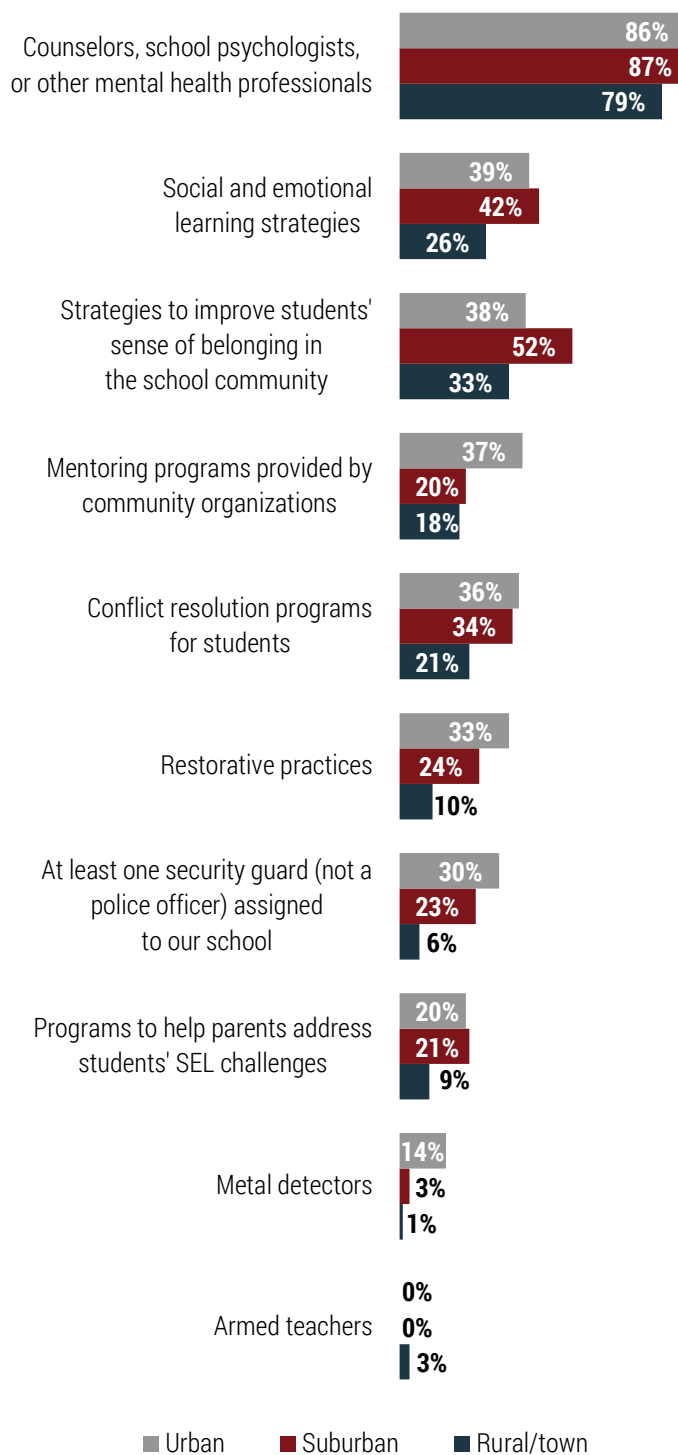
Other SEL-related approaches that are less common in rural schools are programs to improve students' sense of belonging in school, conflict resolution, restorative practices, and mentoring.

Security guards and metal detectors are also less prevalent.

Armed teachers are more prevalent than in urban areas, but remain rare, with 3 percent of rural teachers reporting that their colleagues carry firearms.

Historically, rural regions have had less crime than metropolitan areas. However, in recent years, rural crime rates have been rising: Rural areas now have violent crime rates that exceed the national average.

Which of the following does your school have? Select all that apply.

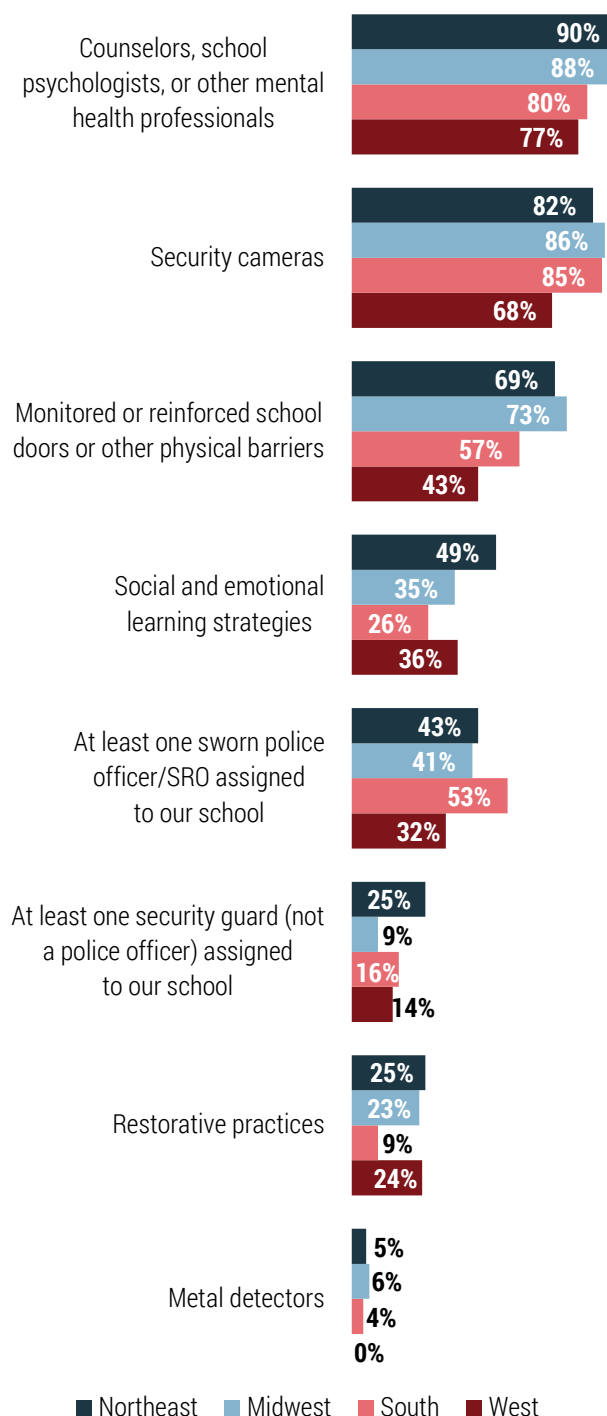


Hardening Measures, Mental Health Supports Less Common in the West

Several hardening measures are significantly less common in the Western United States. These include security cameras, monitored or reinforced school doors or other physical barriers, sworn police officers assigned to schools, and metal detectors. Western teachers are also less likely to report that their schools have mental health supports.

SEL strategies and restorative practices are least common in the South.

Which of the following does your school have? Select all that apply.

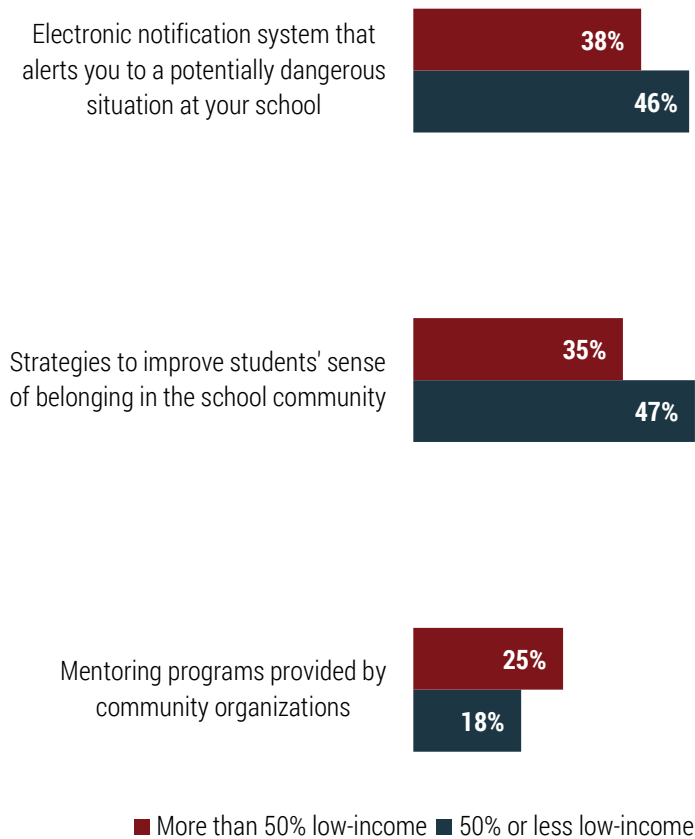


High-Poverty Schools More Likely to Offer Mentoring

Teachers at the highest-poverty schools are significantly less likely to say they have access to strategies that promote students' sense of belonging or to electronic notification systems that alert them to potentially dangerous situations.

However, they are more likely to report that community organizations provide mentoring at their schools.

Which of the following does your school have? Select all that apply.



Most Teachers Using Strategies With Potential to Increase Student Belonging

Teachers clearly believe that social-emotional skills are critical to school safety.

One such skill is the ability to feel a sense of connectedness and belonging in school.

So what are teachers doing to encourage such connectedness?

A majority of teachers say they are using four common strategies with the potential to increase feelings of belonging at school: greeting students by name as they enter the classroom; helping students build connections with peers; and both observing and speaking with students to gauge whether they feel like they belong.

Greeting students by name is the most commonly used strategy asked about on the survey, followed by helping students build connections with one another.

**Which of the following have you done in the past month?
Select all that apply.**

Greeting students by name when they enter the classroom

94%

Helping students build connections and relationships with other students

84%

Observing how students participate in class to gauge whether they feel they belong in the classroom community

83%

Talking with students to gauge whether they feel they belong in the classroom community

66%

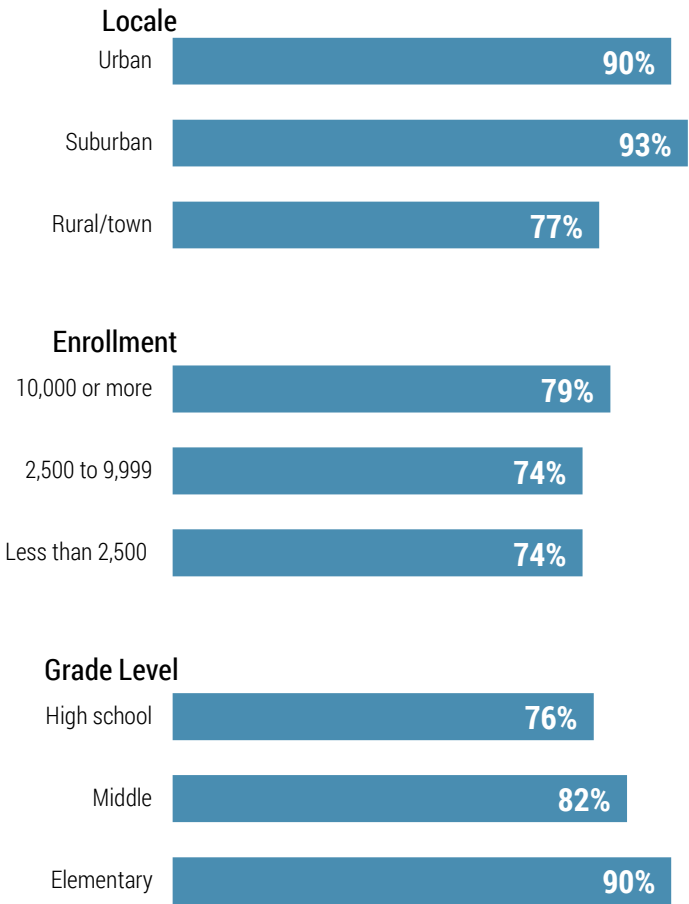
**Rural, Math, High School Teachers
Least Likely to Encourage Students to
Connect with One Another**

Peer-to-peer connections are key to the sense of belonging in school that makes students feel safer.

Across categories, the vast majority of teachers say that, in the past month, they have helped students build connections with one another. However, such strategies are significantly less common among high school teachers and math teachers. They are also less prevalent in small and rural school districts.

Suburban, elementary, and music teachers are most likely to encourage such connections.

**Which of the following have you done in the past month?
Select all that apply: Helping students build connections and
relationships with other students**



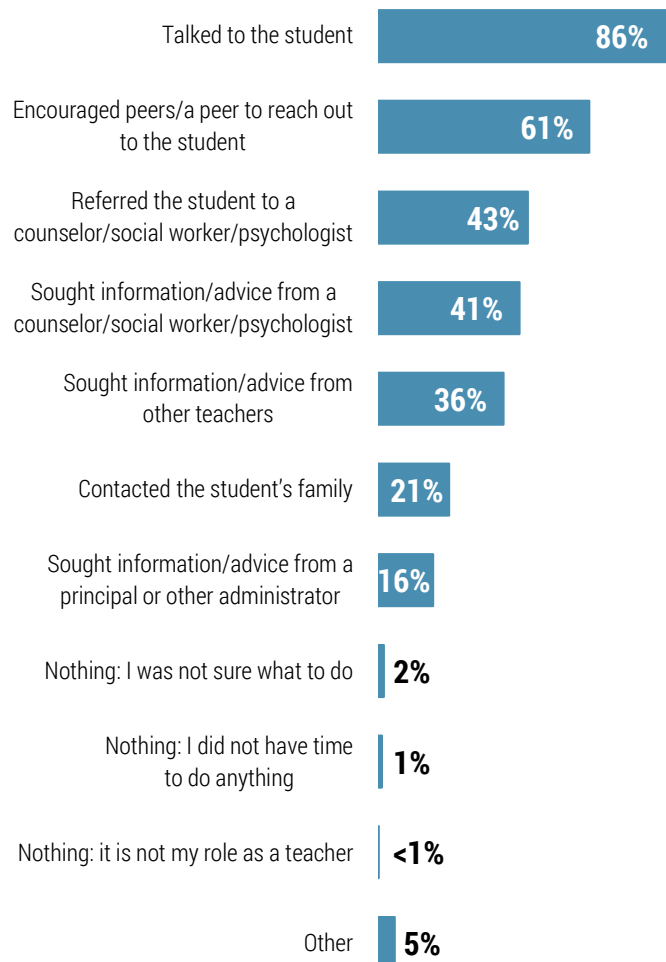
Teachers Talk to Students When They Seem Isolated

What do teachers do when students do not appear to have developed a sense of belonging? When they are isolated or friendless?

The most common response is to talk with the student. A majority of teachers also encourage peers to reach out to the isolated student.

Just two people responded that they would do nothing because it is not their role as a teacher.

The last time a student in your class appeared to be isolated or without friends, how did you respond? Select all that apply.

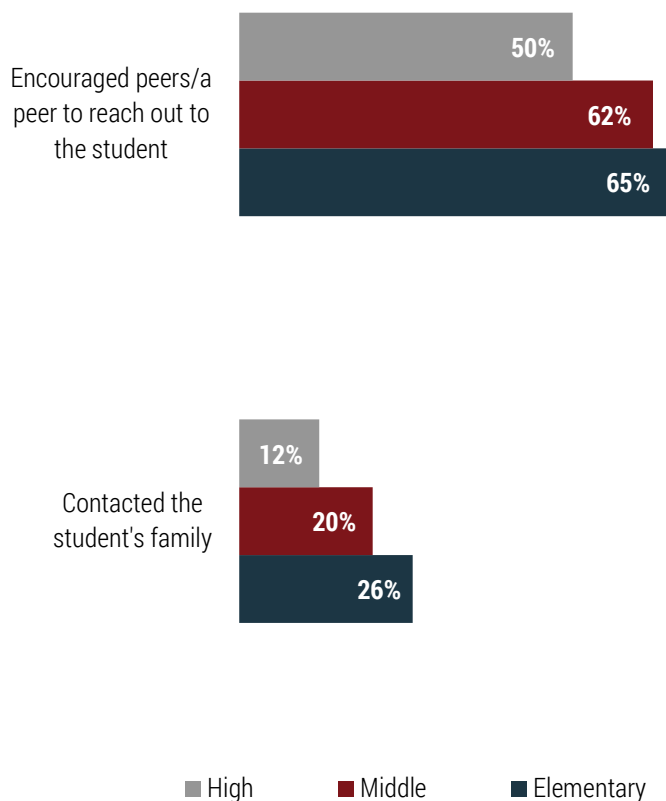


High School Teachers Less Likely to Reach out to Peers, Families of Isolated Students

Middle and elementary teachers are significantly more likely than their high school peers to report that they encouraged peers to reach out to isolated students.

They are also more likely to have contacted isolated students' families.

The last time a student in your class appeared to be isolated or without friends, how did you respond? Select all that apply.



Math Teachers Least Likely to Encourage Peers to Help Isolated Students

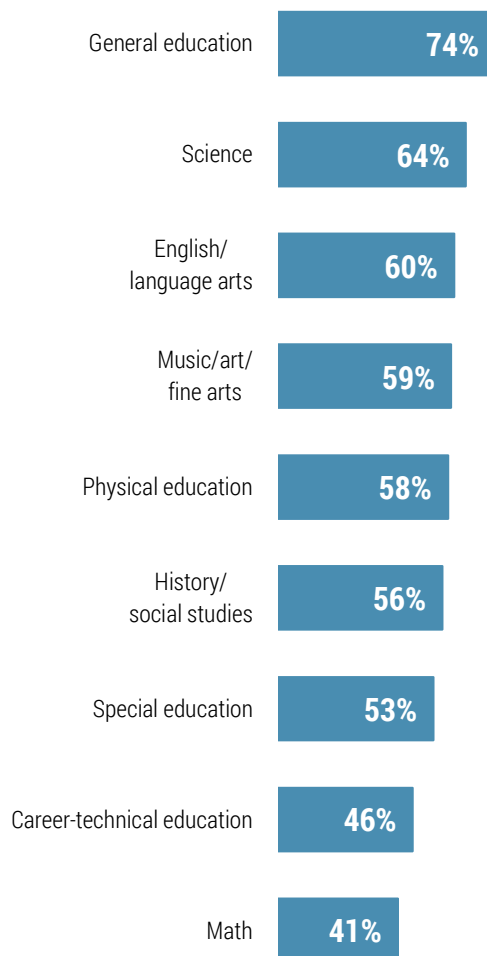
Teachers' responses to isolated students vary significantly by their subject matter specialties.

For instance, nearly three-quarters of general education elementary teachers respond to isolated students by encouraging peers to reach out. Just 41 percent of math teachers take this approach.

This finding reflects the fact that teachers of younger students are more likely to respond to isolation by enlisting assistance from peers. For instance, 63 percent of middle school math teachers encourage peers to reach out to isolated students. By contrast, just 28 percent of high school math teachers do so.

However, real differences do exist by discipline: 58 percent of high school science teachers enlist peer assistance. That's still lower than the rate for middle school science teachers (73 percent). But it's more than twice the rate of high school math teachers.

The last time a student in your class appeared to be isolated or without friends, how did you respond? Select all that apply: Encouraged peers/a peer to reach out to the student

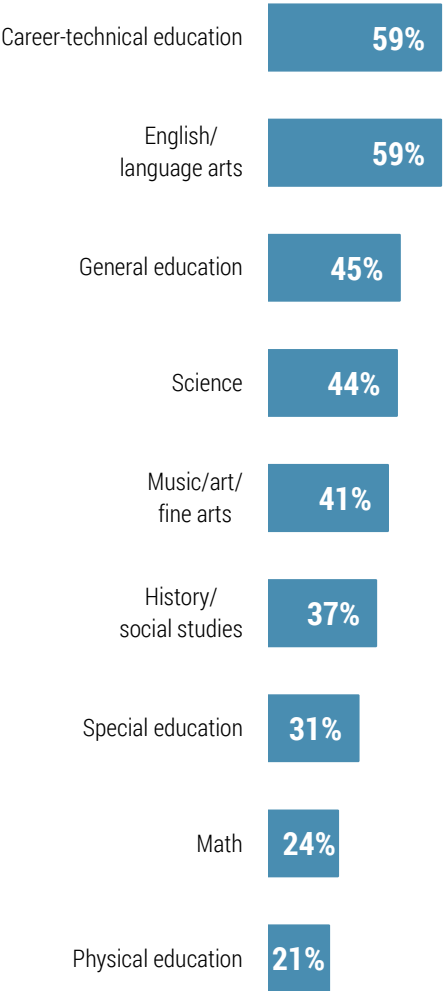


English/CTE Teachers Most Likely to Seek Specialist Advice on Reaching Isolated Students

English and career-tech teachers are most likely to respond to student isolation by seeking advice from counselors, social workers, or psychologists.

Physical education and math teachers are least likely to do so.

The last time a student in your class appeared to be isolated or without friends, how did you respond? Select all that apply: Sought information/advice from a counselor/social worker/psychologist

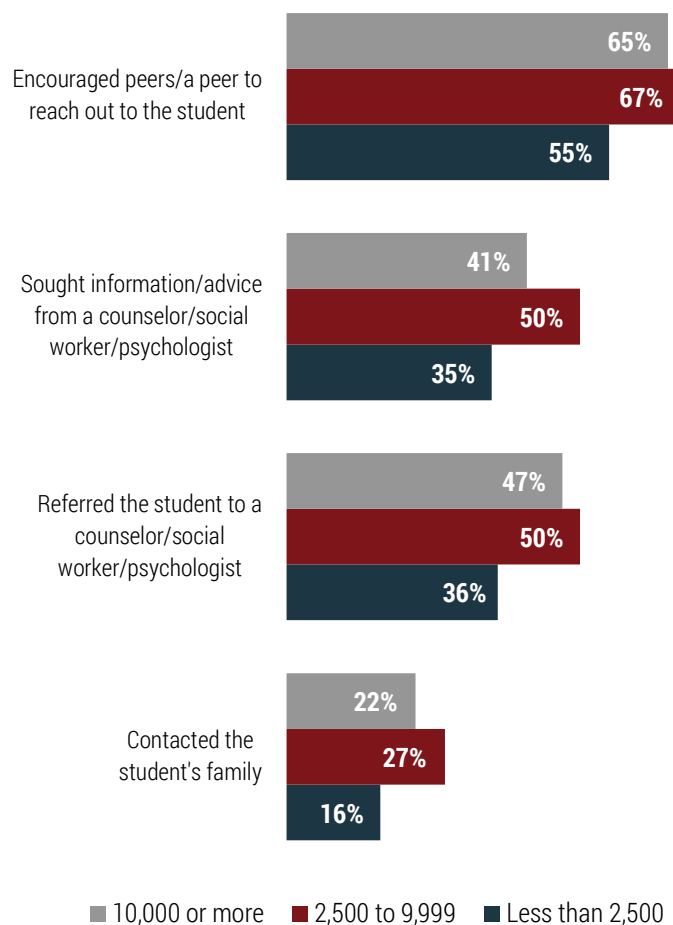


Teachers From Smaller Districts Less Likely to Reach Out to Isolated Students

Teachers from smaller districts with fewer than 2,500 students are significantly less likely than their peers in larger districts to use multiple different strategies to respond to student isolation.

They are less likely to enlist peer assistance; refer students to mental health staff or seek their advice, or contact the student's family.

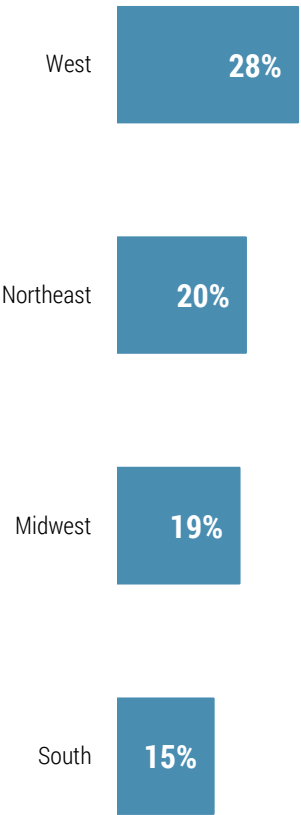
The last time a student in your class appeared to be isolated or without friends, how did you respond? Select all that apply.



Southern Teachers Shy Away From Family Outreach for Isolated Students

Teachers from the South are least likely to respond to isolated student by contacting their families. Western teachers are most likely to reach out to families.

The last time a student in your class appeared to be isolated or without friends, how did you respond? Select all that apply:
Contacted the student's family



**Teachers at High-Poverty Schools
Less Likely to Ask Colleagues For Help
With Isolated Students**

Teachers at high-poverty schools are significantly less likely to respond to student isolation by seeking advice from other teachers.

**The last time a student in your class appeared to be isolated or without friends, how did you respond? Select all that apply:
Sought information/advice from other teachers**

50% or less low-income

41%

More than 50% low-income

33%

Conversations with Students are Most Common Response to Mental Health Challenges

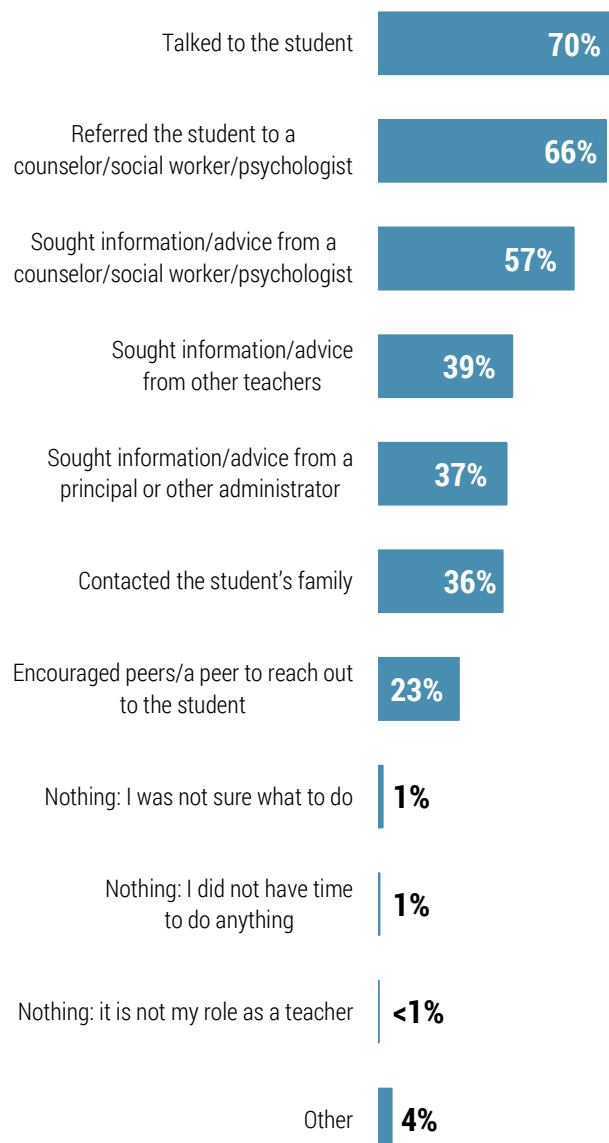
More than 80 percent of teachers say their schools provide mental health support in the form of counselors, school psychologists or other mental health professionals.

However, teachers themselves are on the frontlines of students' lives. So what happens when they notice that a child appears to be having mental health challenges?

Talking to the student is the most common response. A majority of teachers also refer students to a counselor, social worker or psychologist and/or seek a mental health professional's advice.

Just one teacher who responded to the survey indicated that she believes that dealing with students' mental health challenges is outside the scope of her professional role.

The last time a student in your class appeared to have mental health challenges, how did you respond? Select all that apply.



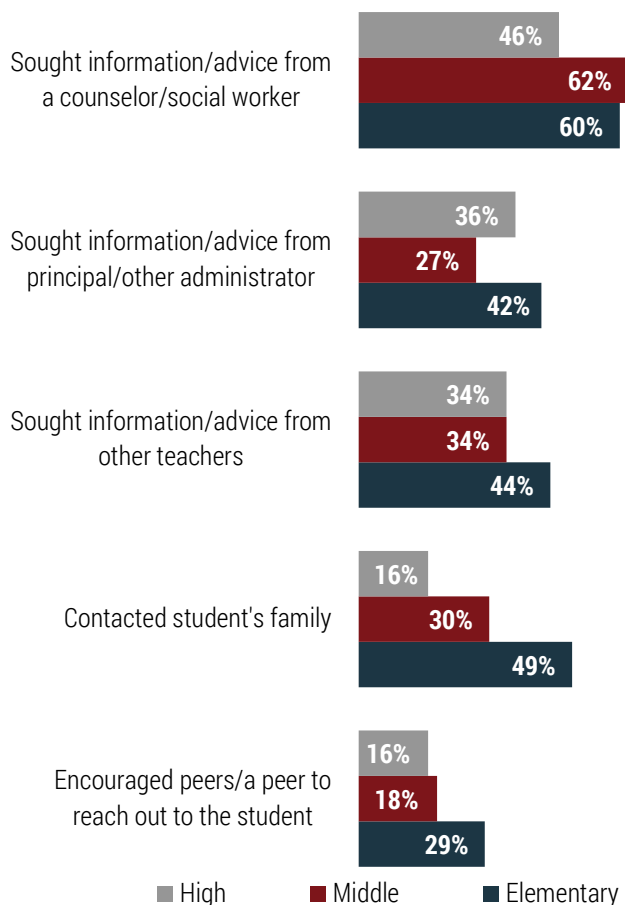
Teachers of Older Students Less Likely to Use Several Strategies for Responding to Mental Health Challenges

Just 16 percent of high school teachers said they contacted family members the last time a student experienced mental health challenges.

By contrast, nearly 1 in 3 middle school teachers and close to half of elementary teachers did so.

Younger students' teachers are also significantly more likely to encourage peers to reach out to the struggling student, and to seek advice from mental health professionals, administrators, and/or other teachers.

The last time a student in your class appeared to have mental health challenges, how did you respond? Select all that apply.



Math Teachers Least Likely to Use Several Strategies to Respond to Student Mental Health Challenges

Teachers of younger students are significantly more likely to use many different types of strategies to respond to students with mental health challenges.

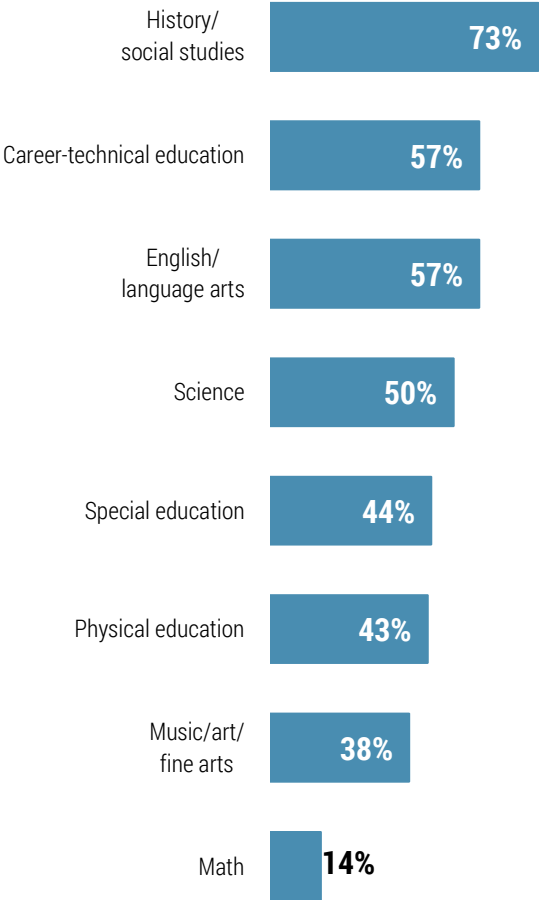
However, even those who teach K-12’s oldest students respond differently to student mental health challenges depending upon their subject matter specialties.

For example, nearly three-quarters of high school history or social studies teachers responded to their most recent student mental health challenge by seeking advice from a counselor, social worker, or psychologist. But just 14 percent of high school math teachers did so.

High school math teachers were also least likely to respond to student mental health challenges by seeking advice from administrators.

The last time a student in your class appeared to have mental health challenges, how did you respond? Select all that apply: Sought information/advice from a counselor/social worker/psychologist

High School Teachers

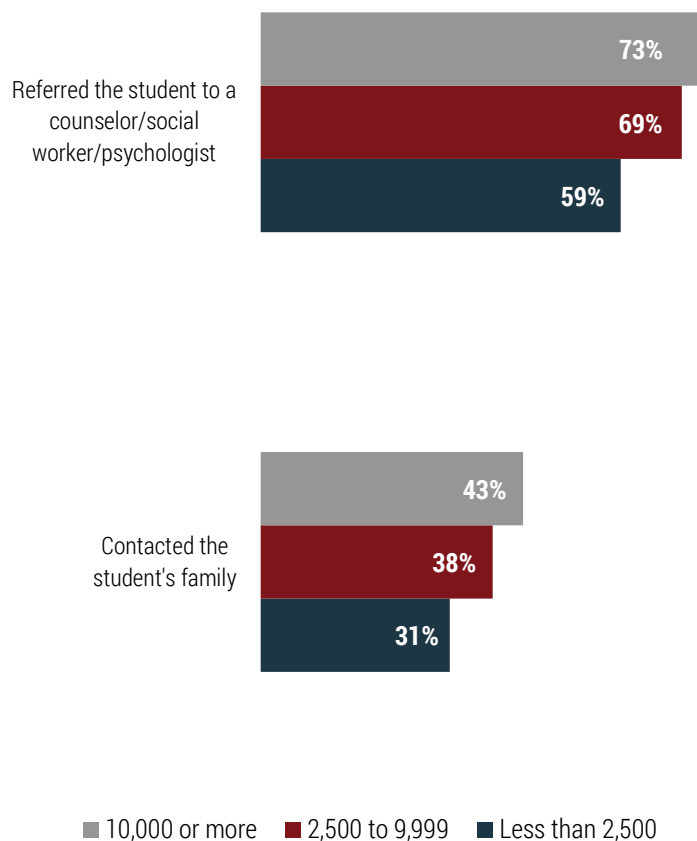


Teachers From Smaller Districts Less Likely to Contact Families, Make Referrals When Students Face Mental Health Challenges

The last time teachers from the nation's largest districts had a student with a mental health challenge, nearly half contacted the family and close to three-quarters made a referral to a mental health professional.

By contrast, in smaller districts with fewer than 2,500 students, less than 1 in 3 contacted the family. And just over half referred the student to a counselor, social worker, or psychologist.

The last time a student in your class appeared to have mental health challenges, how did you respond? Select all that apply.



Rural Teachers Less Likely to Contact Families When Students Face Mental Health Challenges

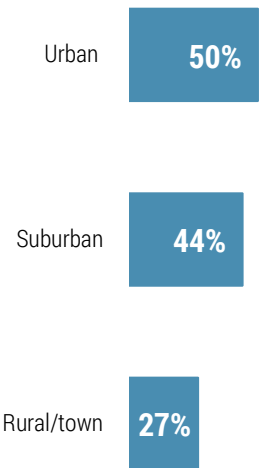
Eighty percent of survey respondents from rural districts are also from smaller districts with fewer than 2,500 students. Compare that to 32 percent of those from suburban districts and 18 percent from urban areas.

So it makes sense that, like those from smaller districts, respondents from rural areas are less likely to contact families.

However, when rural teachers from smaller districts are compared with urban and suburban peers from districts with fewer than 2,500 students, they are still less likely to contact families when students face mental health challenges.

The last time a student in your class appeared to have mental health challenges, how did you respond? Select all that apply: Contacted the student's family

Teachers from districts with fewer than 2,500 students

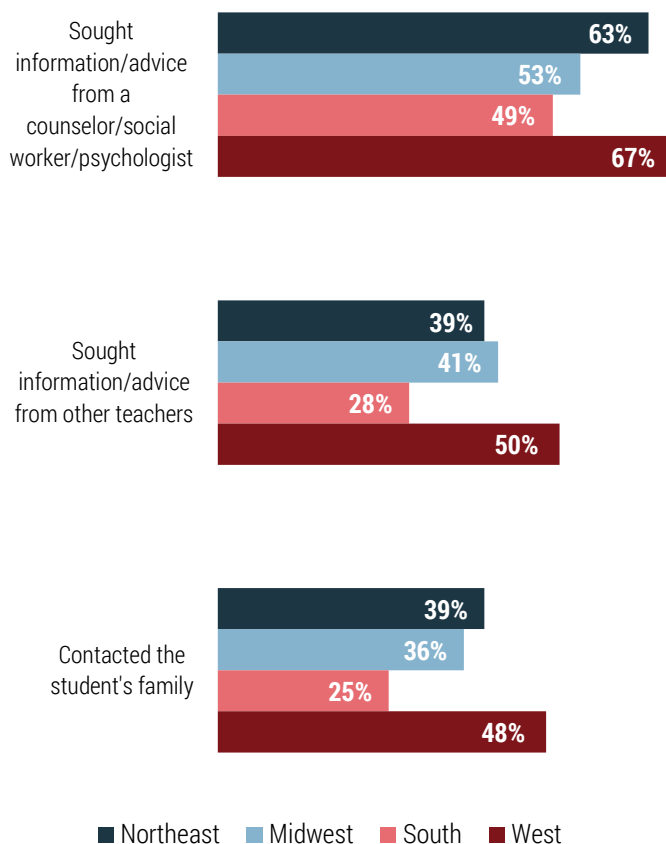


Southern Teachers Less Likely to Seek Peer/Professional Advice, Contact Families When Students Face Mental Health Challenges

Teachers from the Southern United States are significantly less likely than their peers from elsewhere in the nation to respond to student mental health challenges by contacting families or seeking advice from colleagues or mental health professionals.

Teachers from the Western United States are most likely to use all three strategies.

The last time a student in your class appeared to have mental health challenges, how did you respond? Select all that apply.



Do Educators and Schools Have What It Takes to Make Schools Safer?

Most Say Mental Health Support is Adequate

Social-emotional learning and mental health supports are the approaches that teachers believe are most likely to improve school safety.

Although well under half of teachers say their schools provide SEL, a large majority report that mental health supports like counselors and psychologists are in place.

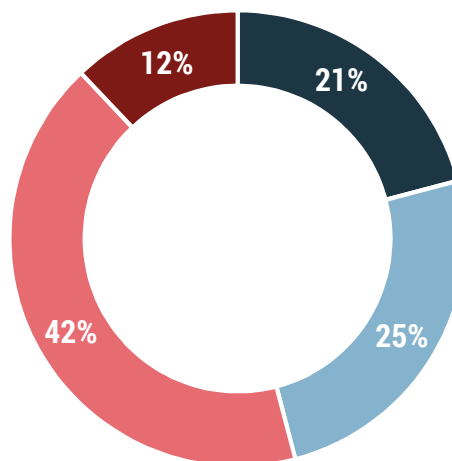
Are such supports adequate?

Yes and no.

A majority of teachers (54 percent) agree that their schools have enough professional mental health support to help students experiencing emotional or psychological distress.

But only 12 percent completely agree.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? My school has adequate support services from counselors, school psychologists, or other professionals to assist students experiencing emotional or psychological distress.



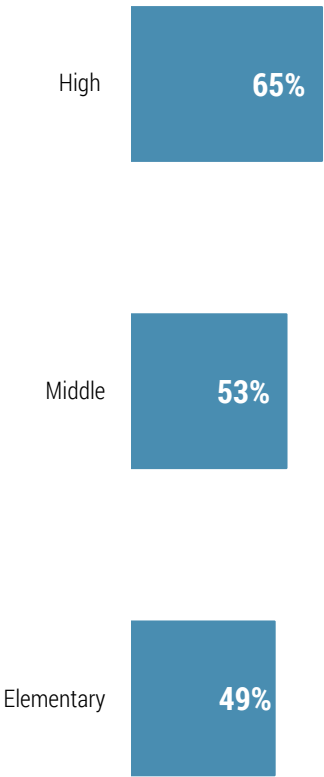
■ Completely disagree ■ Somewhat disagree
■ Somewhat agree ■ Completely agree

Less than Half of Elementary Teachers Say Professional Mental Health Support is Adequate at School

Close to two-thirds of high school teachers say their schools have adequate professional mental health support for students experiencing emotional or psychological distress.

Yet that share falls to less than half for elementary teachers.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? My school has adequate support services from counselors, school psychologists, or other professionals to assist students experiencing emotional or psychological distress.



Teachers Lack Confidence in Their Ability to Address Student Mental Health Needs

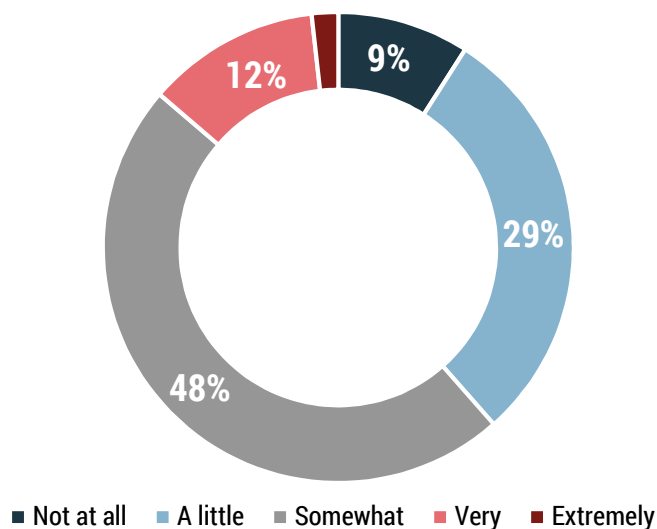
Just 14 percent of teachers say they are very or extremely prepared to address students' mental health needs.

Most (77 percent) say they're somewhat or a little prepared.

The remainder (9 percent) report that they are not at all prepared.

Teachers who indicate that their schools lack adequate support from mental health professionals are more than twice as likely to say that they, themselves, are not at all prepared to support student mental health needs: Thirteen percent of teachers without enough professional support say they themselves are unprepared as compared to 6 percent of their peers from schools with sufficient professional support.

How prepared do you feel to address students' mental health needs?

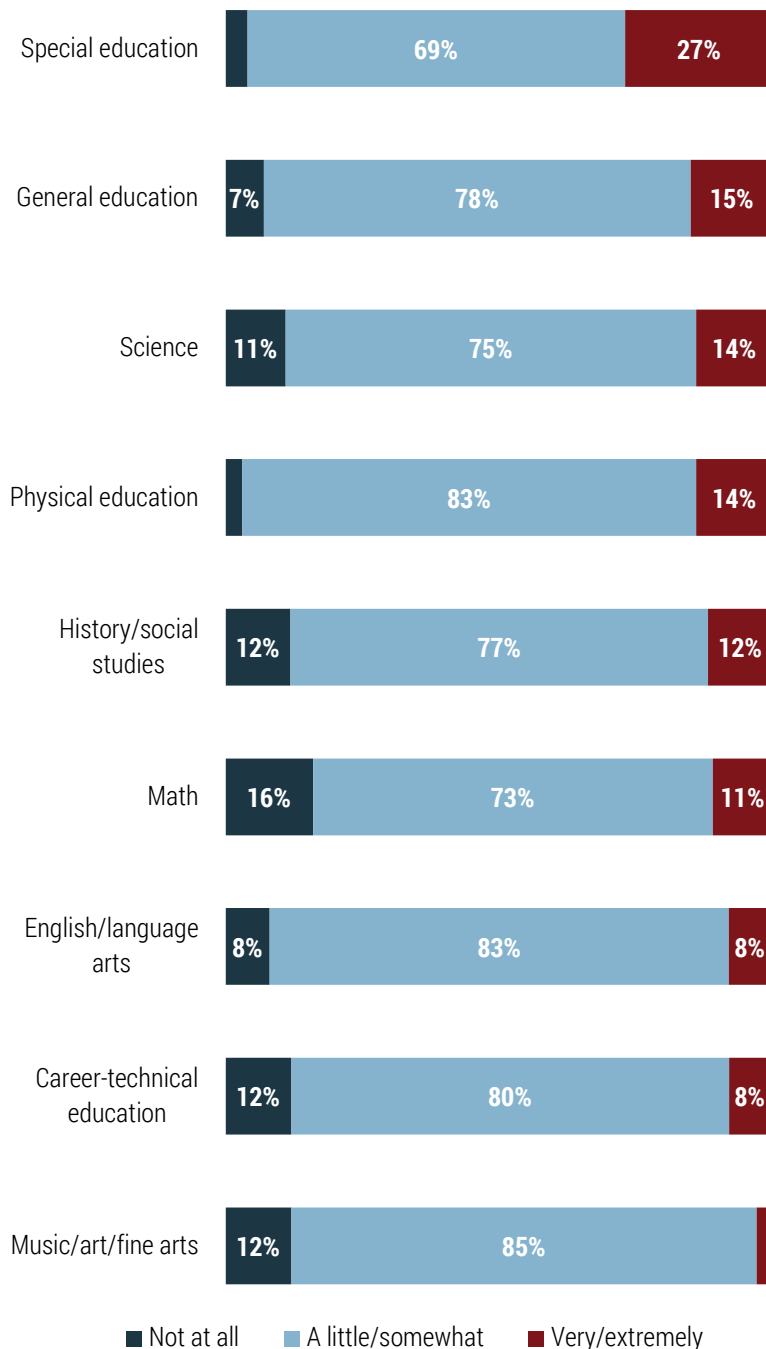


Special Education Teachers Feel Best Prepared to Address Student Mental Health Needs

Special education teachers are significantly more likely to report feeling very or extremely prepared to address students' mental health needs.

Arts teachers are least likely to say they're very or extremely prepared.

How prepared do you feel to address students' mental health needs?



Most Teachers Lack Adequate SEL Solutions

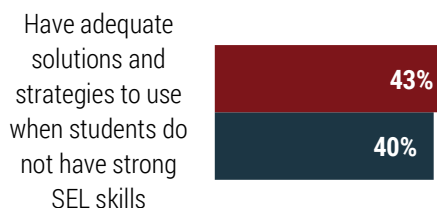
The fundamentals are there: More than three-quarters of teachers believe that it is part of their jobs to help students develop strong social-emotional skills. Roughly two-thirds also say that all students can and should have strong SEL skills.

Yet less than half of teachers (40 percent) say they have adequate social-emotional solutions and strategies to use when students lack strong SEL skills.

And barely half (54 percent) say they're good at helping students develop strong SEL skills.

Just in case teachers might have a less biased picture of their peers than themselves, respondents were also asked to rate their colleagues' SEL-related attitudes and skills. Respondents rated their colleagues' SEL skills slightly higher than their own.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Select the statements you **AGREE** with.



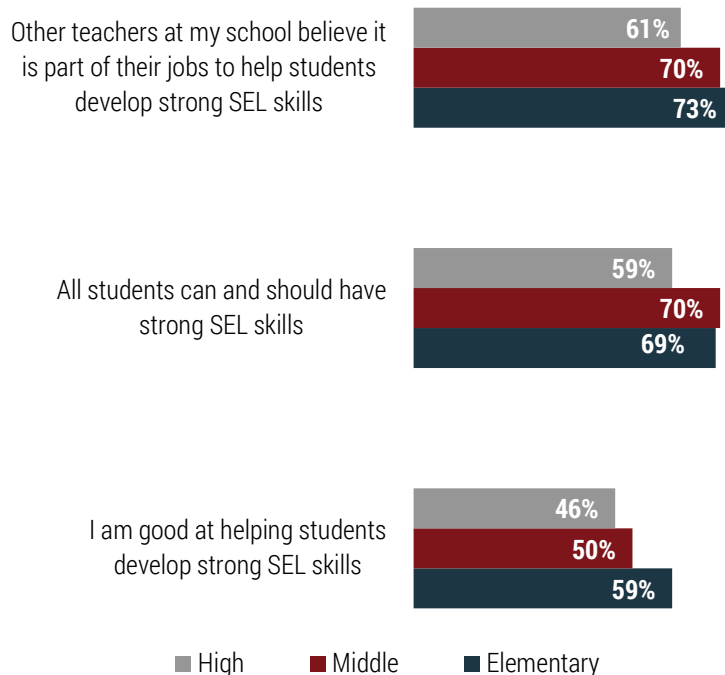
■ Other teachers at my school ■ Me

Elementary Teachers Most Confident in Their Ability to Strengthen SEL Skills of Students

Elementary teachers are significantly more likely than their middle and high school peers to say that they are good at helping students develop strong SEL skills.

Elementary and middle school teachers are also more likely to say that all students can and should have strong SEL skills and to perceive that their colleagues believe that it is part of their jobs to help students develop such skills.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Select the statements you **AGREE** with.

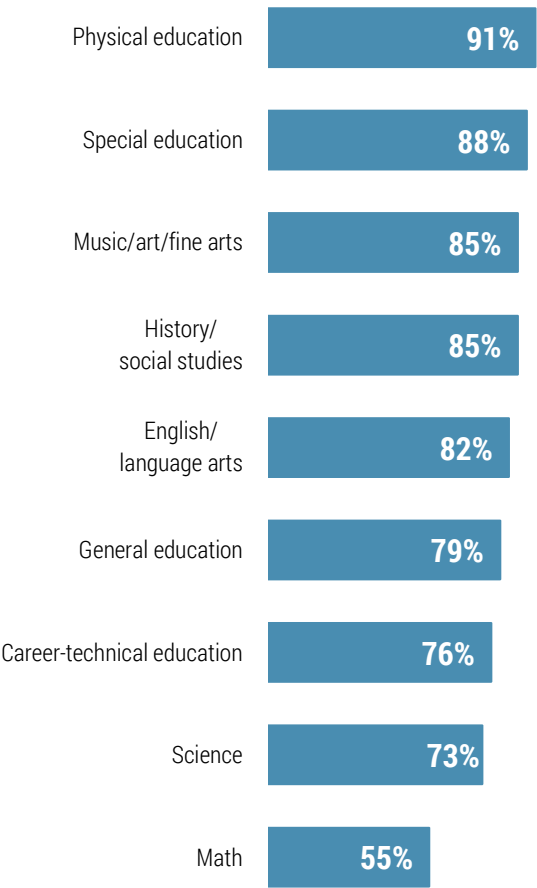


Math Teachers Least Likely to See SEL as Part of Their Jobs

Barely half of math teachers (55 percent) say that it is part of their jobs to help students develop strong SEL skills.

By contrast, more than 91 percent of physical education teachers share that belief.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Select the statements you **AGREE** with. It is part of my job to help students develop strong SEL skills



What Safety Training Have Teachers Experienced?

Mismatch Between Teacher Safety Priorities and Training Experiences

Teachers perceive that mental health supports are the strategy most likely to improve school safety: 39 percent say mental health supports are among the top three ways to make schools safer.

Yet just 14 percent of teachers say they're very or extremely prepared to offer such supports.

And less than 1 in 3 teachers have experienced mental health training.

By contrast, 91 percent of teachers have been trained in evacuations, lockdowns, or other shelter-in-place procedures.

Just 18 percent of teachers place such procedures among the top three ways to make schools safer.

**Have you received training in any of the following areas?
Select all that apply.**

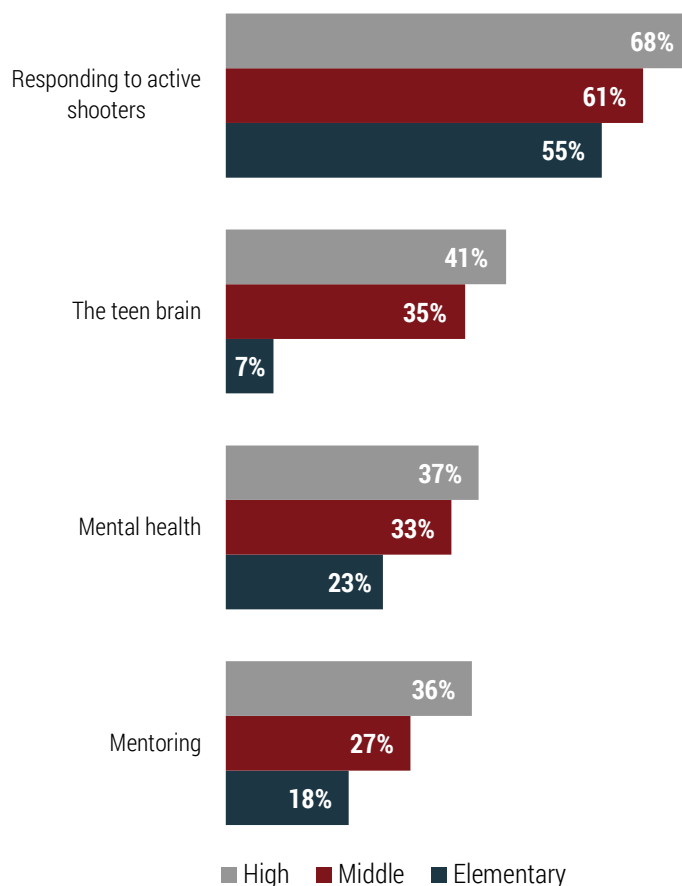


High School Teachers More Likely to Receive Mental Health Training

Thirty-seven percent of high school teachers have received mental health training. By contrast, 1 in 3 middle school teachers and 23 percent of elementary instructors have experienced this type of professional development.

High school teachers are also more likely to have been trained in the teen brain, mentoring, and responding to active shooters.

**Have you received training in any of the following areas?
Select all that apply.**



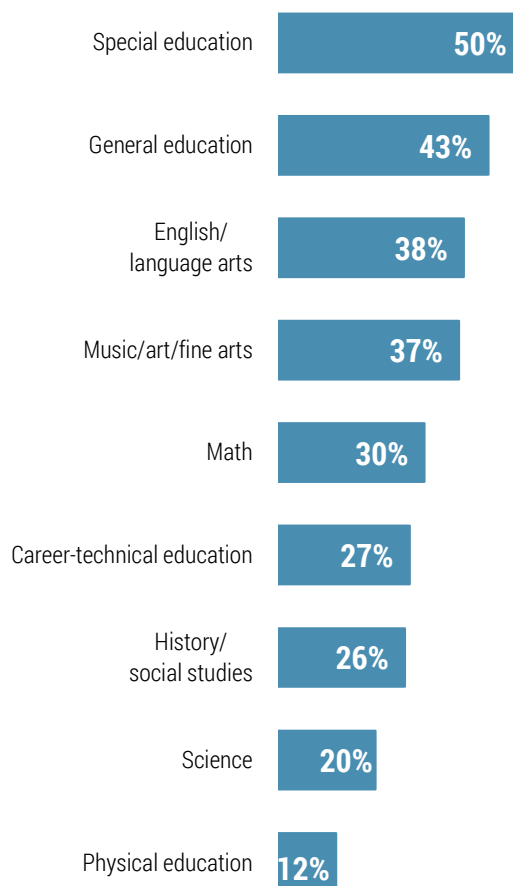
Special Education Teachers Most Likely to Receive Child Trauma Training

Children who experience traumas such as losing a parent or witnessing violence may experience symptoms including depression, academic difficulties, and behavioral challenges.

Training can help teachers spot the signs of trauma and also maintain an environment that helps with healing while avoiding punishing or stigmatizing behaviors stemming from trauma-triggered behaviors.

Overall, 36 percent of teachers have received such training. However, that share varies widely depending on the teacher's discipline: While half of special education teachers and nearly as many elementary generalists have received child trauma training, just 12 percent of physical education instructors and 1 in 5 science teachers have been trained in that area.

**Have you received training in any of the following areas?
Select all that apply. Child trauma**



Challenges Related to Mental Health Supports and SEL

Academics Crowd out SEL

Teachers clearly perceive that social-emotional learning increases school safety.

So why do just 34 percent of respondents say their schools have SEL programs?

One reason may be that a focus on academic content leaves limited time for SEL: This was the top challenge teachers said they faced in supporting students' social-emotional development.

Nearly as challenging was teachers' sense that they lacked support from students' parents and families.

What is your biggest challenge in supporting students' social and emotional development?



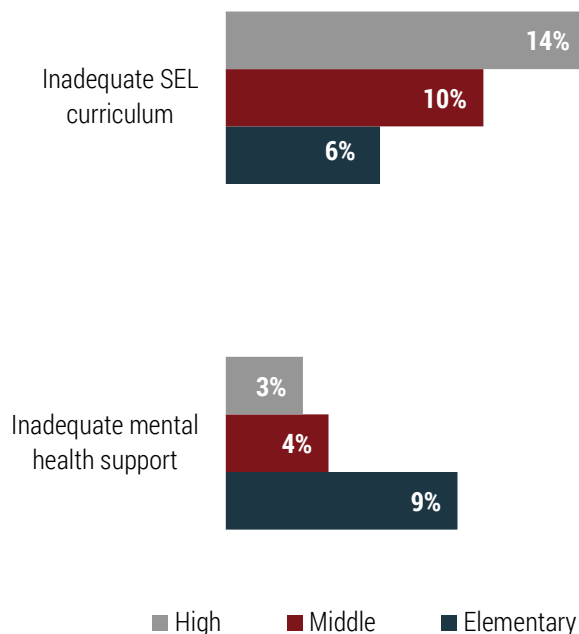
Mental Health Support a Bigger Challenge in Elementary Schools, Inadequate SEL Curriculum More Challenging at Secondary Level

For elementary, middle, and high school teachers alike, the top three SEL-related challenges are the same: an academic focus that leaves limited time for SEL; lack of parent/family support; and inadequate professional development.

However, one challenge, inadequate mental health support, is significantly more prevalent among elementary teachers.

And inadequate SEL curriculum is a challenge that is significantly more common at the secondary level.

What is your biggest challenge in supporting students' social and emotional development?

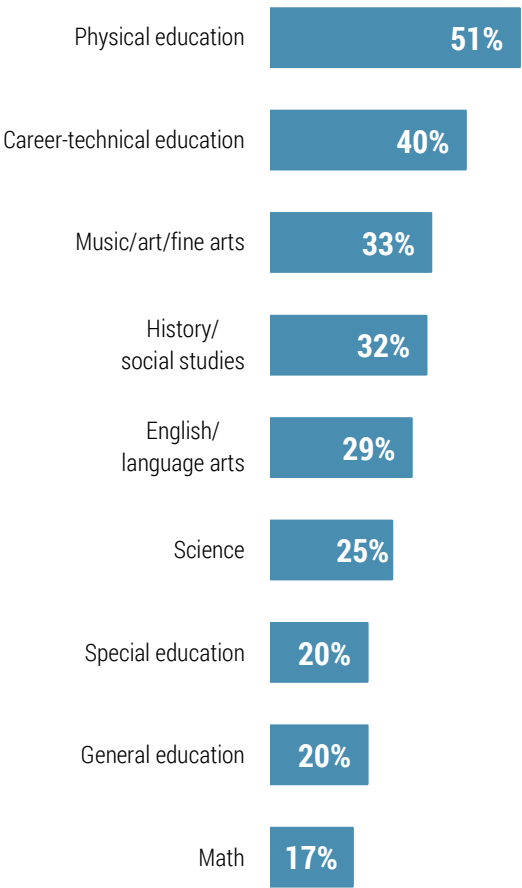


Parental Support a Bigger SEL Challenge for Phys Ed. Teachers

A lack of support from parents and families is a significantly more common SEL-related challenge for physical education teachers. In fact, it's their top challenge.

Parental support is less challenging for math, special education, and general education elementary teachers. Their top challenge is a focus on academic content that leaves limited time for SEL.

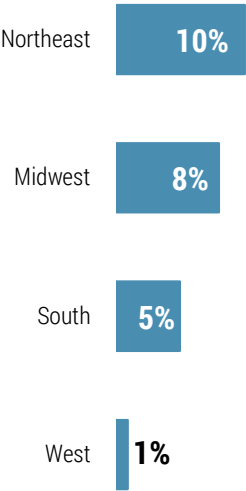
What is your biggest challenge in supporting students' social and emotional development? Lack of support from parents and families of students



**Inadequate Administrative Support
Bigger SEL Challenge in Eastern
United States**

Inadequate administrative support is a significantly less common SEL challenge for teachers in the Western United States.

What is your biggest challenge in supporting students’ social and emotional development? Inadequate support from administrators



Teachers Struggle to Help Students with Out-of-School Problems

Teachers were asked about six challenges related to supporting students' mental health and social-emotional growth.

By far their top challenge was finding ways to help students who appeared to be struggling with out-of-school problems such as family-related troubles.

Their second biggest challenge was finding ways to assist students experiencing emotional or psychological distress.

What is most challenging for you?

Finding ways to help students who appear to be struggling with problems outside of school

43%

Finding ways to help students who appear to be experiencing emotional or psychological distress

23%

Finding ways to help students strengthen their social and emotional skills

15%

Finding ways to help students who are struggling to build positive relationship with classmates

12%

Addressing the concerns of students who feel that their peers might judge them negatively based on their identity

5%

Finding ways to help students who are being bullied by classmates

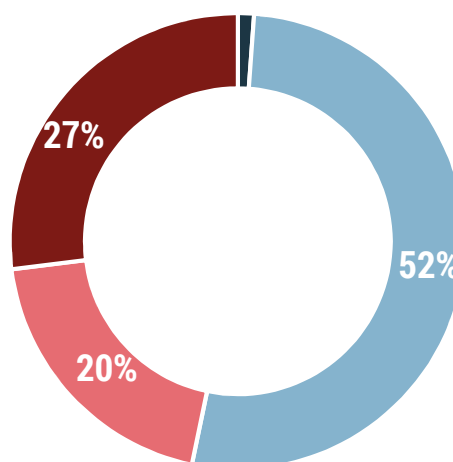
3%

Demographics

Grade Level

Slightly over half of survey respondents teach at the elementary level.

Which of the following best describes the grade level(s) you teach this school year?

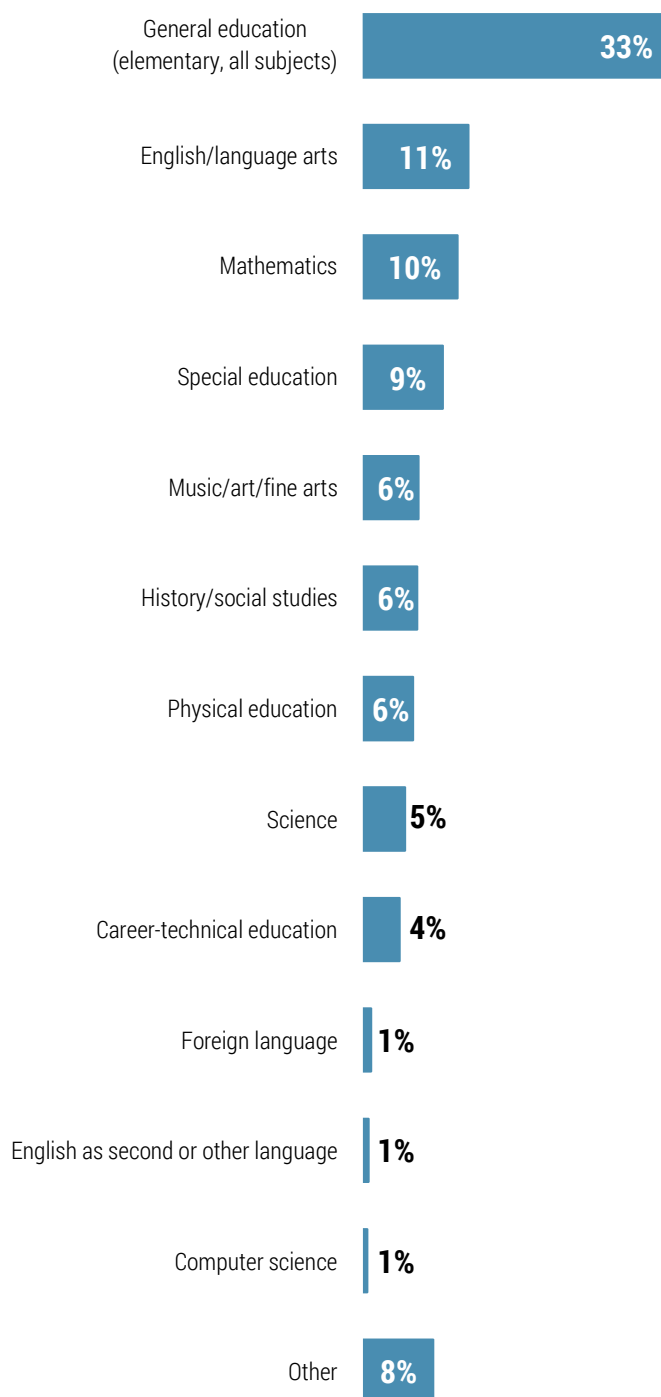


■ Pre-K ■ Elementary ■ Middle school ■ High school

Subject Matter Taught

One in 3 survey respondents are generalists who teach all elementary subjects.

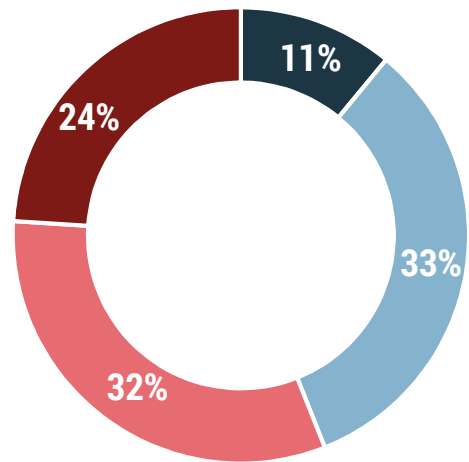
Which of the following best describes the subject you teach this school year?



Location

Survey respondents hail from the District of Columbia and every state in the nation except for Delaware.

Where do you teach?

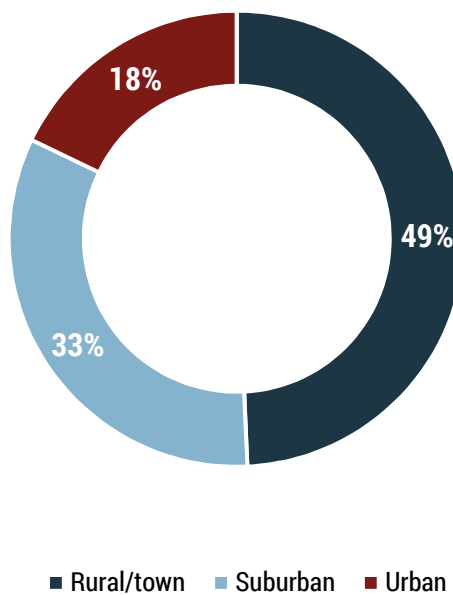


■ Northeast ■ Midwest ■ South ■ West

Locale

Nearly half of survey respondents teach in rural areas.

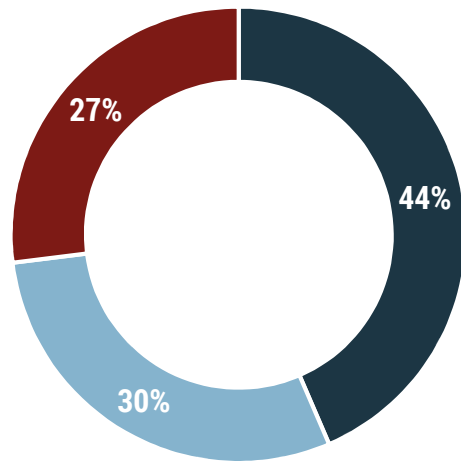
Which of the following best describes the location of your school?



District Size

The majority of survey respondents teach in districts with 2,500 or more students.

Approximately how many students are enrolled in your district?

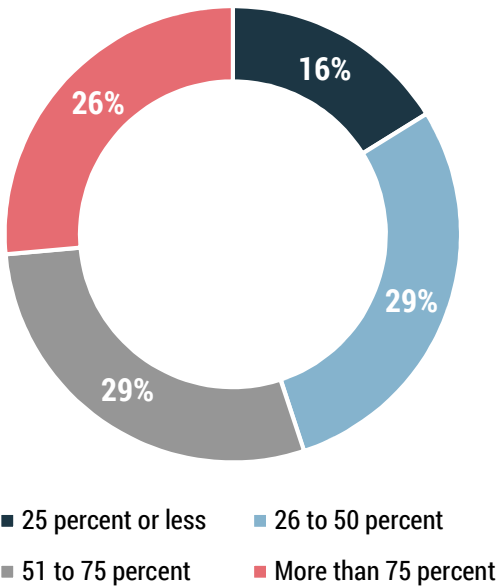


■ Less than 2,500 ■ 2,500-9,999 ■ 10,000 or more

School Poverty Rate

The majority of survey respondents teach in schools in which more than half the students are from low-income families.

Which of the following best describes the percentage of students from low-income families at your school?

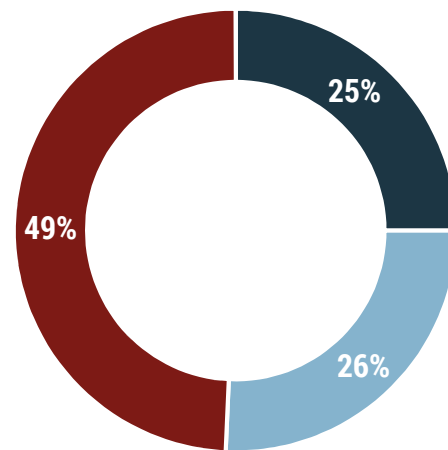


1 in 4 Teachers Own Guns

A quarter of teachers say they own guns.

Nationwide, 30 percent of adults report gun ownership, according to the Pew Research Center.

Do you personally own a gun, or do the gun or guns in your household belong to another household member?



■ Personally own ■ Other household member owns ■ No gun owned

Secondary Teachers are More Likely to Own Guns

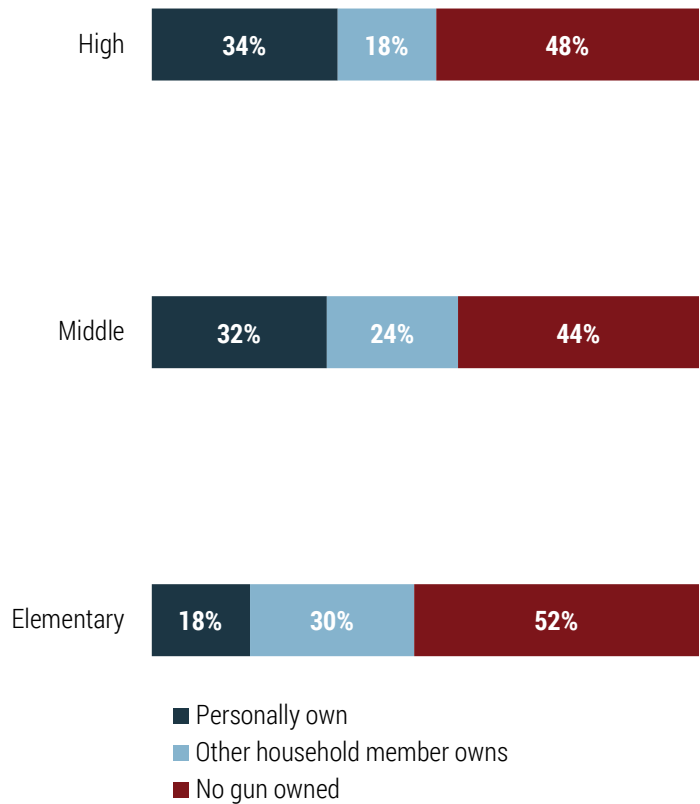
Secondary teachers are significantly more likely than their elementary peers to own guns.

This is likely tied to the fact that, nationwide, men are more likely to own guns: 62 percent of gun owners are male, according to the Pew Research Center.

Like gun owners, secondary teachers are more likely (than elementary teachers) to be male: 11 percent of elementary teachers are male as compared to 36 percent of secondary teachers, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Elementary teachers are significantly more likely than their secondary peers to live in households with guns even though they do not personally own one.

Do you personally own a gun, or do the gun or guns in your household belong to another household member?



More Than Half of CTE Teachers Own Guns

Career-tech education teachers are significantly more likely to own guns than those who specialize in other subjects. Fifty-nine percent own guns.

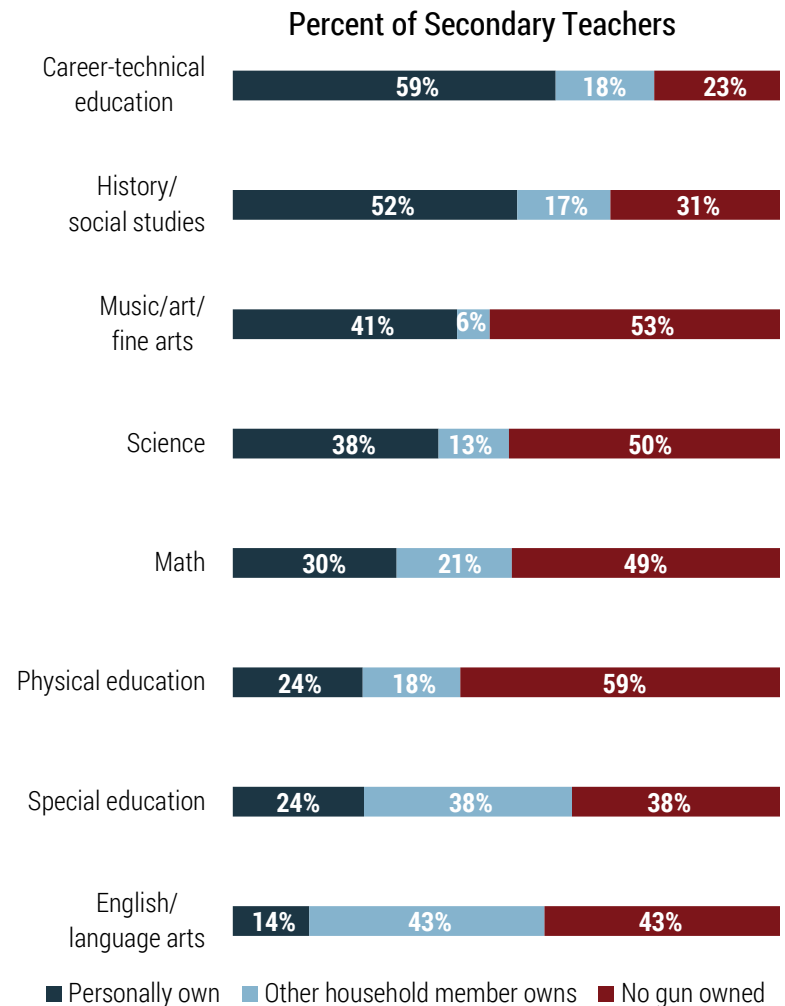
This is likely tied to the fact that CTE is a secondary school subject. As previously stated, secondary teachers are more likely to be male, and males are more likely to own guns.

The share of male CTE teachers (42 percent) is not much higher than the percentage of males overall at the secondary level (36 percent), according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

However, even when compared to their secondary school peers, CTE teachers are significantly more likely to own guns.

Gun ownership is also more common in rural areas. However, CTE teachers who responded to the survey were no more likely to live in rural areas than were their secondary peers specializing in other disciplines.

Do you personally own a gun, or do the gun or guns in your household belong to another household member?

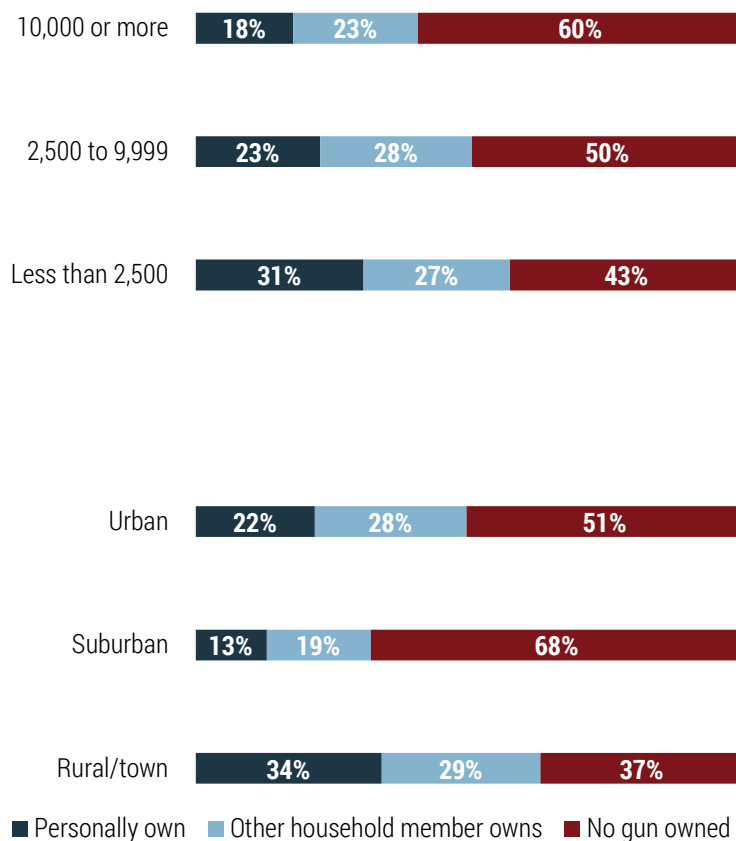


Gun Owners More Common in Rural Schools

In the adult population overall, 46 percent of rural adults own guns as compared to 28 percent of suburban residents and 19 percent in urban areas.

Similarly, gun-owning teachers are more prevalent in rural areas. Rural districts are disproportionately likely to be small. So gun ownership is also more common in smaller school districts. When smaller versus larger rural districts are compared, gun ownership rates are similar across categories.

Do you personally own a gun, or do the gun or guns in your household belong to another household member?



Gun Ownership More Common Among Southern Teachers

Gun ownership is significantly more common among teachers in the Southern United States than in other areas of the country. It's least common in the Northeast.

Similarly, in the overall adult population, gun ownership varies from 36 percent in the South to 16 percent in the Northeast. It's 31 percent in the West and 32 percent in the Midwest.

Do you personally own a gun, or do the gun or guns in your household belong to another household member?

