

Washington Statistical Analysis Center

# Violent Crime in Washington's Schools

2008-09 School Year

July 2010

Washington Statistical Analysis Center  
Office of Financial Management, Forecasting Division  
P.O. Box 43113  
Olympia, Washington 98504-3113  
OFM.Forecasting@ofm.wa.gov  
Web site: [www.of.wa.gov/sac/default.asp](http://www.of.wa.gov/sac/default.asp)

With special thanks to

- *Tyson Vogeler, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*
- *Association of Washington School Principals*
- *Washington School Safety Advisory Committee*

for their assistance with the survey.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2009-BJ-CX-K016 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

## ***Executive Summary***

In February 2010, the Washington Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) conducted a survey on the occurrence of violent crimes in public schools, the Washington State Survey on School Crime (WSSSC). In the survey, which was based on the national School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), all public school principals in Washington State were asked to provide information on the frequencies and types of violent crimes that occurred at their schools during the 2008-09 school year. Respondents were also asked to provide information on school characteristics. The following are key findings from the survey results.

## ***Key Findings***

- Overall, Washington is very similar to the nation in the percentage of schools recording violent incidents on campus, 76.3 percent versus 75.5 percent. The state had a higher percentage of schools recording serious violent crime, 21.9 percent, than occurred nationally, 17.0 percent.
- During the 2008-09 school year, middle schools had the highest percentage of schools recording violent crime, 91.7 percent, and the highest rate of violent crime per 1,000 students, 54.4 per 1,000, when compared to other school levels.
- About 18.2 percent of all schools reported at least one violent crime against staff or faculty and 6.5 percent reported at least one serious crime against staff or faculty during the 2008-09 school year.
- Approximately 14.4 percent of schools experienced at least occasional gang violence during the 2008-09 school year.
- During the 2008-09 school year, 18.4 percent of urban schools reported gang violence, more than either suburban or small town/rural schools.
- Schools in high crime neighborhoods and schools with students who live in high crime neighborhoods were more likely to report gang activity and more frequent gang activity.
- About 41.0 percent of schools had a security officer, resource officer, or both at the time of the survey.
- Sixty percent of schools with enrollment of 1,000 or more students had both security and resource officers.

## **Introduction**

Every school day in Washington State, approximately one million students, kindergarten through twelfth grade, attend school. Most parents send their children to school expecting it to be a haven where they can safely pursue their educations. But how safe are our schools? Attention-grabbing headlines over the past decades relate horrific details of school violence in places such as Littleton, Colorado; Jonesboro, Arkansas; and even Moses Lake, Washington. Those incidents in which students go on violent sprees and kill multiple persons at school are rare, but they receive a great deal of attention from the media. Focusing on high-profile cases skews our perceptions and makes an accurate assessment of the extent of school violence difficult to obtain.

In this study, Washington State Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) staff examine the occurrence of violent crime<sup>1</sup> in Washington's schools in an effort to provide a more accurate picture of their level of safety. The research study examines the incidence of violent crime in Washington's public elementary, middle, and secondary schools and analyzes characteristics of these schools in relation to their rates of violent crime. In addition, the study examines the incidents of crime against staff and the occurrence of gang-related violence on school campuses.

## ***Data and Methods***

In order to obtain comparable data across schools on the incidence of violent crime, the study collected information from public primary, middle, and secondary school principals in Washington using a survey based on the national School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS).<sup>2</sup> The SSOCS is conducted by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and is the primary source for crime and safety data nationally at the school-level. The full SSOCS covers topics such as school safety practices and programs, parent community involvement at school, school security, and staff training as well as the frequency of crime and violence at school. The SAC developed a survey specifically for Washington, the Washington State School Survey on Crime (WSSSC), because SSOCS data are not available at the individual state level.

Each public school principal in Washington was sent a letter signed by Governor Christine Gregoire and Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn requesting their participation in the survey. Follow up reminders urging participation were issued by the Washington Association of School Principals through their biweekly electronic newsletter.

In order to minimize the impact on school administrators' time, the SAC limited its survey to the section of the SSOCS survey that addresses frequency of crime and violence at school. Principals or their representatives were asked to provide the count of violent incidents by individual crime types, such as robbery with a weapon, robbery without a weapon, and fight with a weapon. The complete survey instrument is shown in Appendix A. Definitions of terms used in the survey were included to avoid confusion over terminology and to provide consistency in responses.

---

<sup>1</sup> Violent crime includes homicide, shooting, rape, sexual battery, robbery with a weapon, robbery without a weapon, fight with a weapon, fight without a weapon, physical attack with a weapon, physical attack without a weapon, threats of physical attack with a weapon, and threats of physical attack without a weapon.

<sup>2</sup> The Washington State survey is based on questions from the national School Survey on Crime and Safety, which is available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ssocs/questionnaire.asp>

The survey was fielded in February 2010, and school principals were asked to respond to the survey based on violent crime incidents that occurred during the 2008-09 school year, so that a full year of data were available. All responses were submitted through a web-based survey.

The response rate for the survey was low by any standard, 27.0 percent. Response rates were examined by two key characteristics to determine whether certain types of schools were underrepresented in the sample. To adjust for the low response rate, responses were weighted by urbanicity and school type to account for response bias by schools within those categories. Schools in small towns and rural areas were more likely to complete the survey than those in urban areas, so the responses for urban schools were weighted higher to account for the difference. Very little difference was seen in response rates based on level of school – elementary, middle, and high school.

The following section discusses the survey findings including the incidence of violent crime at school by school characteristics. Additional sections discuss gang activity on school campuses, violence against staff and faculty, and the presence of security and resource officers at schools.

## Findings

### Violent Crime

Table 1 displays the percentage of public schools recording and reporting incidents of violent crime. As previously noted, the Washington data are for the 2008-09 school year. Unfortunately, national data were not available for the same year, so the 2007-08 school year's data are shown for comparison.<sup>3</sup> The

Type of Crime	Recorded		Reported	
	WA: 2008-09	US: 2007-08	WA: 2008-09	US: 2007-08
Violent Incidents	76.3%	75.5%	33.8%	37.8%
Physical Attack or Fight without a weapon	71.7%	72.7%	24.7%	28.2%
Threat of Physical Attack without a weapon	47.8%	47.8%	11.6%	19.5%
Serious Violent Incidents	22.0%	17.2%	16.7%	12.6%
Rape*	1.6%	0.8%	1.6%	0.8%
Sexual Assault	3.2%	2.5%	2.9%	2.1%
Physical Attack or Fight with a weapon	3.1%	3.0%	1.9%	2.1%
Threat with a weapon	12.5%	9.3%	6.2%	5.7%
Robbery without a weapon	6.0%	5.2%	5.0%	4.1%
Robbery with a weapon	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.4%

\* Only two incidents of rape were identified in the Washington survey.

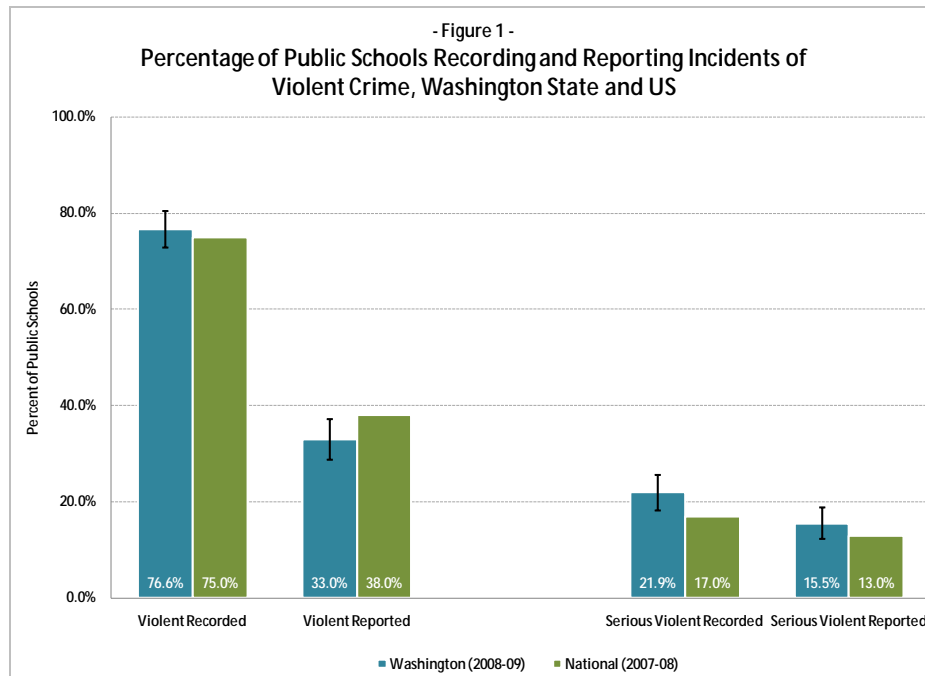
data illustrate that the experience of Washington State is similar to the nation. In Washington, 76.3 percent of schools recorded violent crime incidents compared to 75.5 percent of all national public schools (see Figure 1).<sup>4</sup> A slightly higher percent of schools nationally reported at least one violent incident to law enforcement, 37.8 percent, compared to 33.8 percent of Washington schools. Washington schools were similar on most individual crime types as well. In fact, the same percentage of Washington schools as schools nationally recorded at least one *Threat of Physical Attack without a Weapon*, 47.8 percent.

Serious violent crimes<sup>5</sup>, a subset of violent crime, were recorded at 22.0 percent of public schools with 16.7 percent reporting at least one of those crimes to law enforcement. Washington is higher than schools nationally on both of these measures. Nationally, 17.2 percent of public schools recorded at least one serious violent crime and 12.6 percent reported at least one incident to law enforcement.

<sup>3</sup> National data are from: Dinkes, R., Kemp, J., and Baum, K. (2009). *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2009* (NCES 2010-012/NCJ 228478). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Washington, DC.

<sup>4</sup> 95-percent confidence intervals (CIs) are shown in each figure for estimates from the WSSSC. They are represented by solid black lines with caps for each bar.

<sup>5</sup> **Serious violent crimes** include rape, sexual assault, fight with a weapon, threat with a weapon, attack with a weapon, robbery with a weapon, and robbery without a weapon.



The largest driver of the difference between Washington State and national percentages of serious violent crime appears to be *Threats with a Weapon*, 12.5 percent compared to 9.3 percent. Nationally, schools were more likely to have reported violent incidents than in Washington State, although for serious violent crimes, Washington had a slightly larger percentage of schools reporting incidents to law enforcement agencies, 16.7 percent, compared to 12.6 percent nationally.

*Rape and Robbery with a Weapon* were rare events both in Washington schools and across the US. Among schools participating in the Washington survey, only two survey responses reported rape during the 2008-09 school year. Homicides and shootings at schools in Washington State were also uncommon events. Of the schools responding to the survey, none reported a student, faculty, or staff homicide at their school during the 2008-09 school year.<sup>6</sup> Two shootings were reported at the schools during the same time period.

<sup>6</sup> A review of online sources did not identify any homicides or additional shootings at Washington schools during the survey time period. In February 2010, at the time the WSSSC was in the field, however, special education teacher, Jennifer Paulson, was shot and killed outside a Tacoma public school.

Type of Crime	Recorded		Reported	
	WA: 2008-09	US: 2007-08	WA: 2008-09	US: 2007-08
Violent Incidents	31.7	27.9	4.2	6.3
Physical Attack or Fight without a weapon	25.4	17.0	2.9	3.6
Threat of Physical Attack without a weapon	7.0	9.7	0.8	2.1
Serious Violent Incidents	1.2	1.2	0.7	0.6
Rape*	#	#	#	#
Sexual Assault	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Physical Attack or Fight with a weapon	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1
Threat with a weapon	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.2
Robbery without a weapon	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2
Robbery with a weapon	#	#	#	#

# Rounds to zero.

Of the schools recording crimes, 43.1 percent with violent crime reported at least one to law enforcement compared with 70.8 percent of schools with serious violent crime.

Table 2 provides the rate of violent incidents per 1,000 students. Washington shows a higher rate of violent incidents than the US as a whole, 31.7 and 27.9 respectively. The difference is largely due to a higher rate of *Physical Attack or Fight without a Weapon*. Washington's rate is approximately 50 percent higher than the national rate for that crime category.

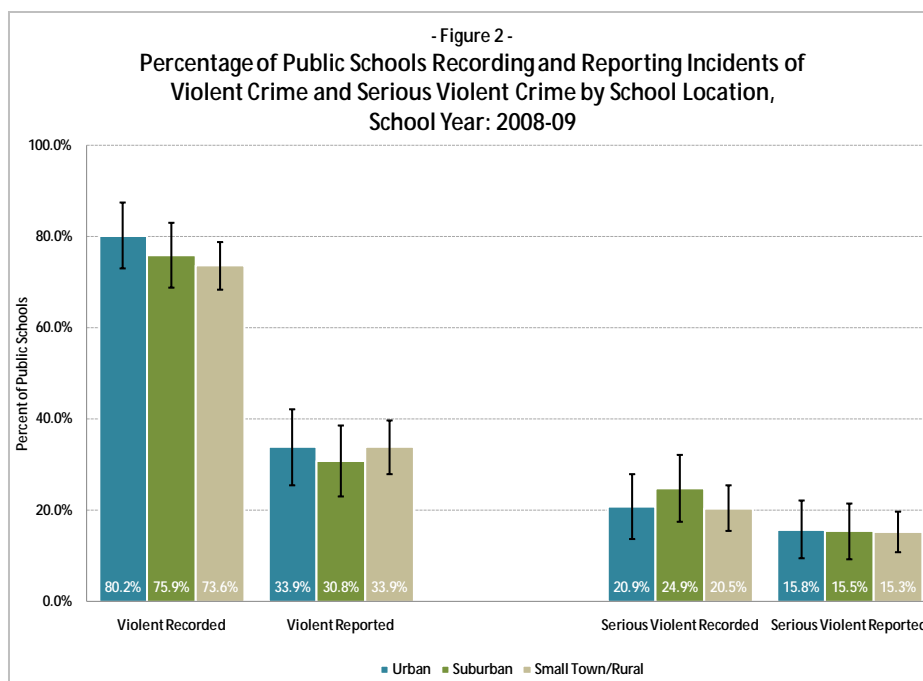
In Washington, the rate of reporting incidents to law enforcement was lower than the national rate, but reporting rates for serious violent crimes are essentially the same. Just over 4 crimes per 1,000 students were reported to police, or 12.9 percent. In the national data, 6.3 crimes per 1,000 students were reported. Overall, 1.2 serious violent crimes were recorded per 1,000 students in Washington and nationally, and about 50 percent of those were reported to police.

The next section examines the occurrence of violent crime in schools by school characteristics.



Crime by Urbanicity

Urbanicity describes a school district's location based on the degree to which it is in a metropolitan area. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instructions' (OSPI) provided a listing of each school district's urbanicity. The survey categories are collapsed into three for the analyses – urban, suburban, and rural/small town.<sup>7</sup>



A slightly higher percentage of urban public schools recorded at least one violent crime during the 2008-09 school year as compared to suburban and small town/rural schools, 80.2 percent, 75.9 percent, and 73.6 percent respectively (see Figure 2). Suburban schools, however, were slightly higher in the recording of serious violent crime with 24.9 percent responding that they had at least one serious violent crime. None of these differences is statistically significant. There is little difference in the

	Violent Crime		Serious Violent Crime	
	Recorded	Reported	Recorded	Reported
Urban	61.3	4.6	1.6	0.7
Suburban	25.7	2.0	1.2	0.4
Small Town/Rural	22.8	6.4	1.2	0.8

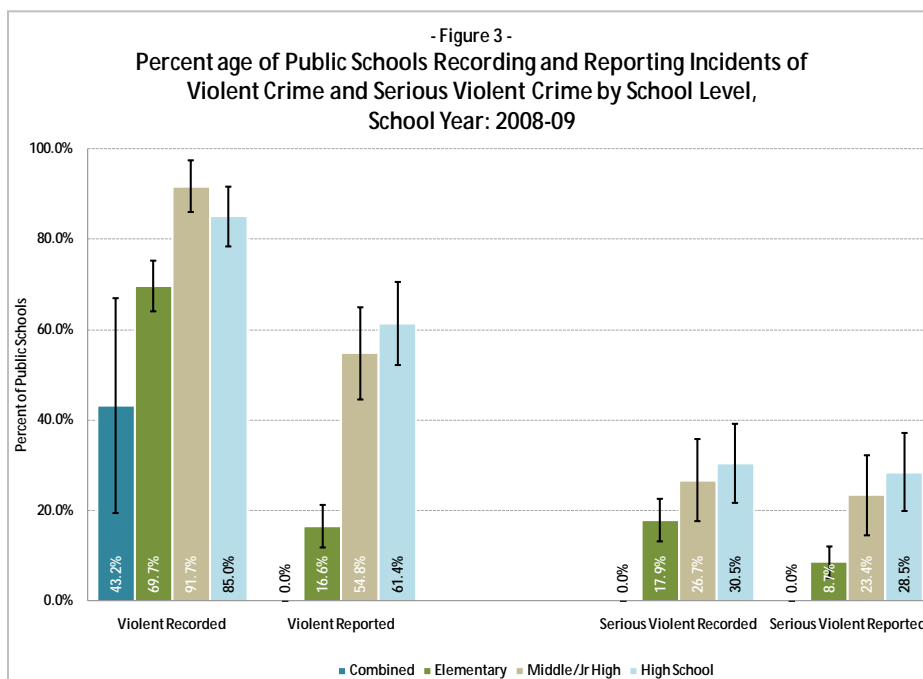
<sup>7</sup> The following geographic/demographic categories were used. **Urban:** Large city Mid-size city; Large town; **Suburban:** Urban fringe of large city; Urban fringe of mid-size city; **Small Town/Rural:** Small town; Rural, inside metropolitan service area; and Rural, outside metropolitan service area

percentage of schools reporting incidents to law enforcement for both violent and serious violent crimes.

Although the percentage of schools recording violent crimes did not differ greatly, the rates of violent crime, as shown in Table 3, did by category of urbanicity. Urban public schools had a much higher rate of recorded violent crimes when compared with schools in the other two categories. Based on the survey, urban schools experienced 61.3 violent crimes per 1,000 students. Suburban and small town/rural rates were much lower, 25.7 and 22.8 per 1,000 students respectively. The rate of serious violent crime in urban schools was greater than in the other two categories- 1.6, 1.2, and 1.2-, but the difference was not nearly as large as was the difference in violent crime rates. Small town/rural schools were most likely to report incidents to law enforcement, both violent and serious violent crimes.

Crime by School Level

In Figure 3, crime levels are shown based on the school grade levels – elementary, middle, high school, and combined.



Approximately nine out of 10 middle schools had recorded violent crimes in 2008-09, the highest percentage of any school level. High schools had the next highest at 85 percent. Schools with combined grade levels had the lowest percentage, 43.2 percent. The differences between the percentages of middle or high schools recording violent crimes and combined or elementary schools are statistically significant. The percentage of schools recording serious violent crimes did not vary as much by school level, although the percentages of middle and high schools recording incidents were higher than the other two categories.

By far, the schools most likely to report violent crimes to law enforcement were middle and high schools, 54.8 percent and 61.4 percent respectively. The differences between these percentages and the percentage of elementary schools reporting violent crimes to law enforcement agencies are

	Violent Crime		Serious Violent Crime	
	Recorded	Reported	Recorded	Reported
Elementary	33.1	0.8	1.3	0.3
Middle	54.4	7.0	1.4	0.9
High School	21.8	7.3	1.2	0.9
Combined	3.9	#	#	#

# No crimes were recorded or reported.

statistically significant. The differences were similar for schools reporting serious violent incidents to law enforcement.

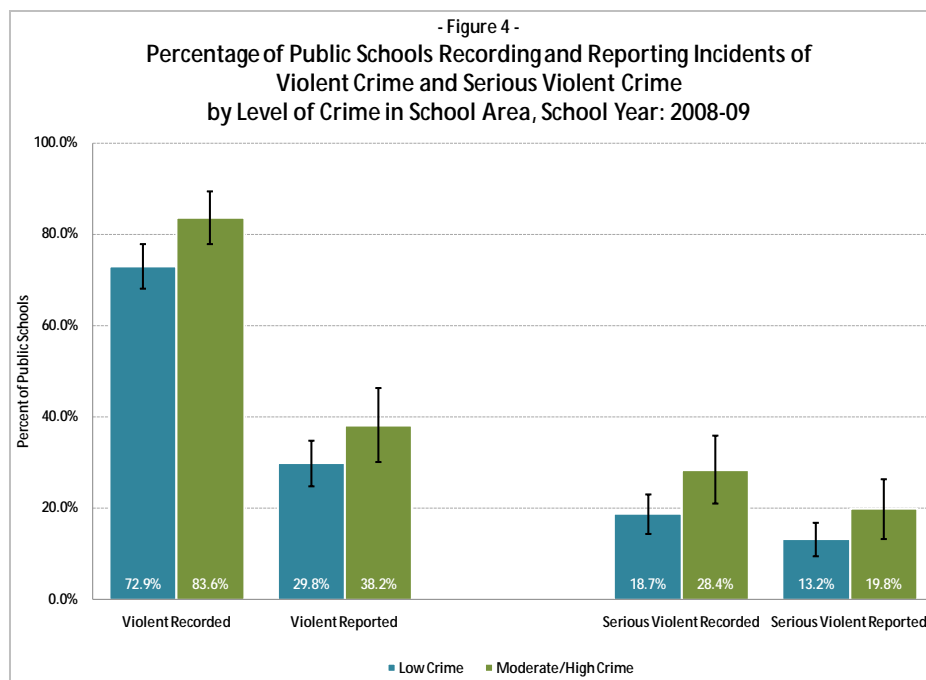
Although the percentage of schools indicating that they had recorded at least one violent crime at school did not differ significantly between middle school and high school, the rate of violent crime per 1,000 students in middle school was over twice the rate reported for high schools (see Table 4). The rate for elementary school students was also higher than the high school rate. This pattern is consistent with national data,<sup>8</sup> although the rates in Washington are slightly higher. The rate of incidents reported to law enforcement is much lower for elementary schools than either middle or high schools.

---

<sup>8</sup> From Indicator of School Crime and Safety: 2009, Table 6.2

Crime by School Area Crime

Principals were asked to describe the level of crime in the areas where their schools are located. Schools located in moderate to high crime areas were slightly more likely to have had recorded violent crimes than schools in low crime areas, 83.6 percent versus 72.9 percent (see Figure 4). This relationship was true for serious violent crime as well – 28.4 percent compared to 18.7 percent.



The percentage of schools reporting violent crimes to law enforcement agencies was higher among the schools in the moderate to high crime areas compared to the low crime areas. For violent crime, the percentages reporting were 29.8 in low crime areas and 38.2 in moderate to high crime areas.

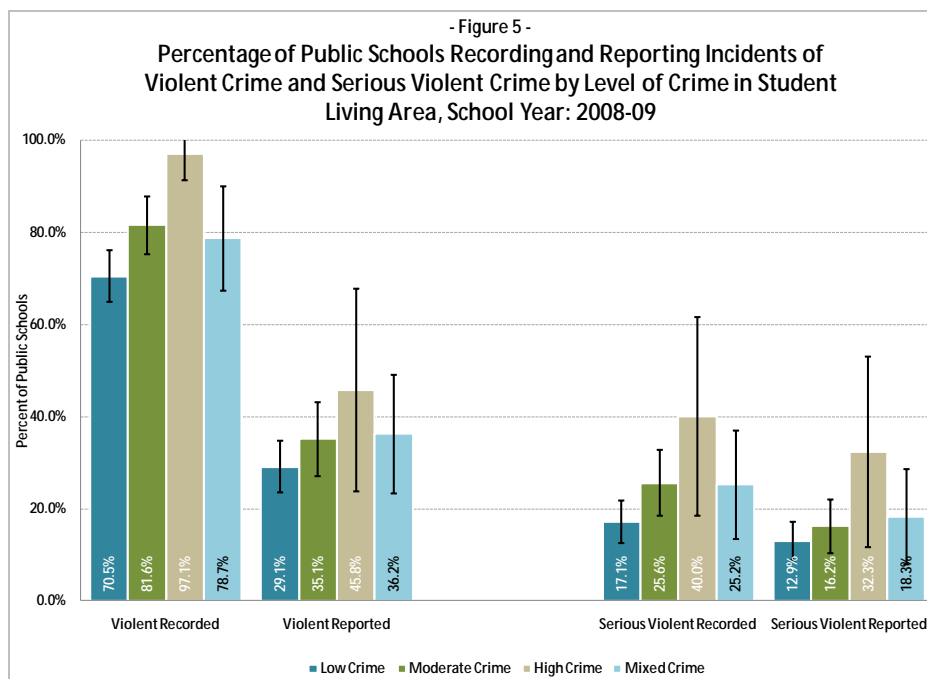
Shown in Table 5, the rate of violent crime per 1,000 students in low crime area schools was approximately half of the rate for schools in moderate to high crime areas, 25.5 per 1,000 compared to 53.2 per 1,000 students. So although the percentage recording crimes differs by about 10 percentage points, the number of crimes at the moderate to high crime areas schools is much larger. The rate for serious violent crime at schools in moderate/high crime areas is also twice the rate as at low crime schools, 1.0 vs. 2.0 per 1,000 students respectively.

	Violent Crime		Serious Violent Crime	
	Recorded	Reported	Recorded	Reported
Low Crime	25.5	3.8	1.0	0.5
Moderate/High Crime	53.2	4.7	2.0	0.8

Schools in low crime areas had lower rates of reporting both violent and serious violent incidents to law enforcement. Although the rate of violent crime was twice as high in the schools in moderate/high crime areas, the rate of reported violent crimes was only 25 percent higher than the rate for schools in low crime areas.

Crime by Student Living Area Crime

The survey also asked for the principals to describe the crime level in the neighborhoods where the students live. A category was provided for schools that have students for neighborhoods with differing crime.



Almost all of the public schools that reported their students lived in high-crime areas, 97.1 percent, recorded at least one violent crime during the 2008-09 school year (see Figure 5). By contrast, of public schools where students live in low crime areas, 70.5 percent recorded at least one violent crime. Moderate crime and mixed crime areas are in between with 81.6 percent and 78.7 percent respectively. The difference in percentages between high crime and other categories is statistically significant.

In addition, schools with students from high crime areas were more likely to have reported a crime to law enforcement. This relationship held for violent and serious violent crimes, 45.8 percent and 32.3 percent respectively.

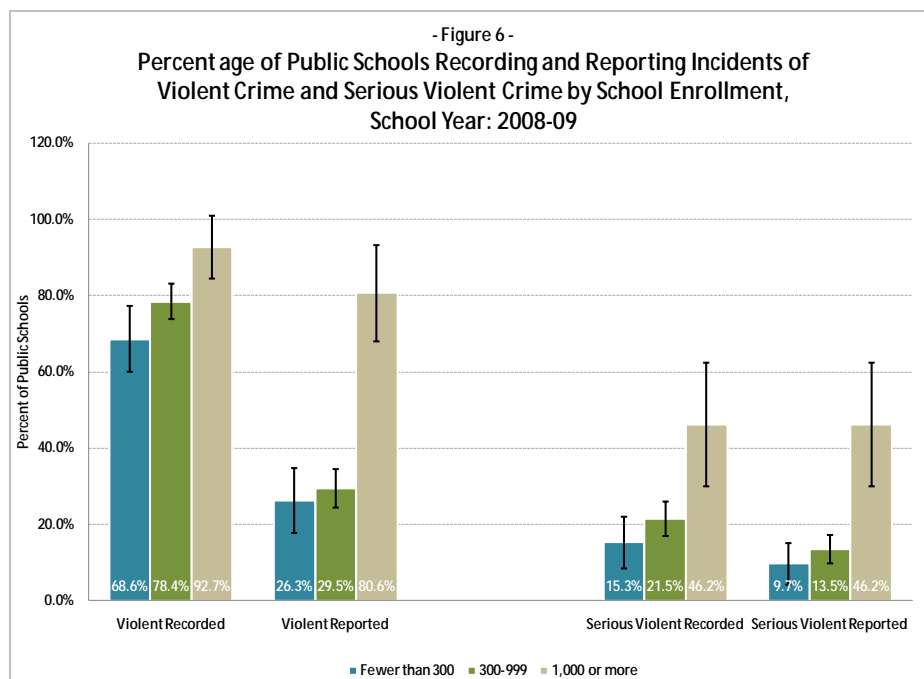
	Violent Crime		Serious Violent Crime	
	Recorded	Reported	Recorded	Reported
Low Crime	21.3	3.3	0.8	0.5
Moderate Crime	47.2	4.0	1.7	0.6
High Crime	97.9	7.0	4.2	1.6
Mixed Crime	33.9	5.6	1.2	0.7

The rate of recorded crimes per 1,000 students at public schools whose students live in high crime areas is twice as high as the next highest category, moderate crime areas, 97.9 versus 47.2 (Table 6). Once again, the rate is not so much driven by the number of schools experiencing violent crimes, but rather by the number of crimes occurring at the schools. The schools with students living in high crime areas also have a rate for serious violent crimes that is more than double the moderate crime areas, 4.2 and 1.7 per 1,000 students. Schools with students from low crime areas have the lowest rates for both violent and serious violent crimes. The schools with the highest rates of violent crime, those in the high crime areas, also had the highest rates of reporting crimes to law enforcement, 7.0 and 1.6 crimes per 1,000 students, for violent and serious violent crimes respectively.



Crime by Student Enrollment

The largest schools in Washington State, those with over 1,000 students, are most likely to report incidents of violent crime, 92.7 percent (see Figure 6). This percentage is statistically different from the percentage recording for schools with 300-999 students and those with fewer than 300 students, which had percentages of 78.4 and 68.6 respectively. The relationship holds for incidents of serious violent crime as well. Nearly half of the largest schools recorded at least one serious violent crime, but only



21.5 percent of the mid-size schools and 15.3 percent of the smallest schools recorded any serious violent crimes.

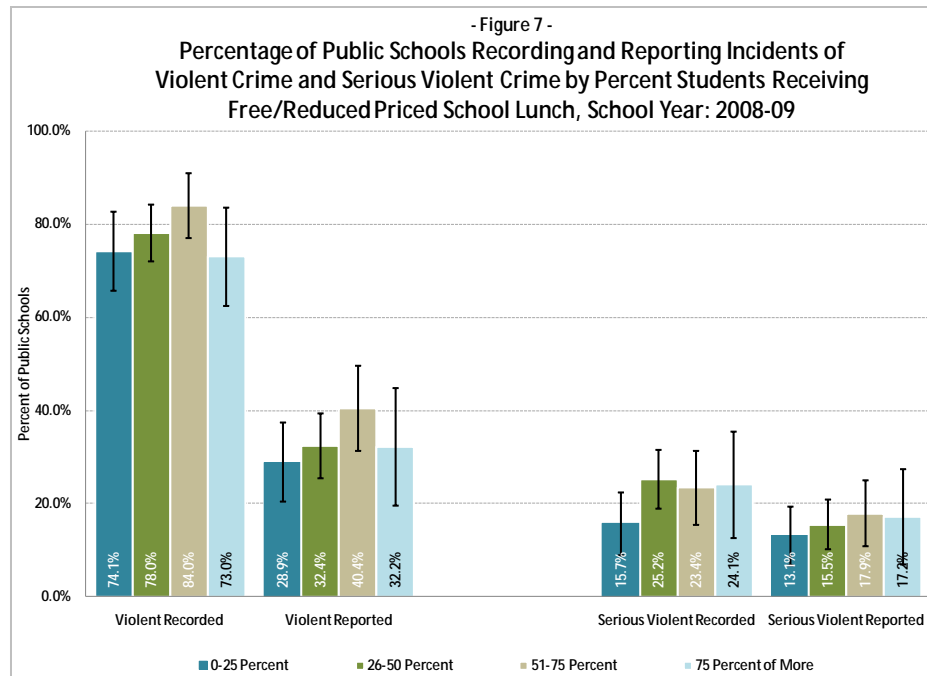
These large schools are also more than twice as likely to have reported a violent incident to law enforcement. Over 80.0 percent of the schools with over 1,000 students reported at least one violent crime to law enforcement and 46.2 reported serious violent crimes. Large schools are most likely to employ resource and/or security officers, so the presence of these officers may account for the large differences in reporting practice.

	Violent Crime		Serious Violent Crime	
	Recorded	Reported	Recorded	Reported
Fewer than 300	26.1	5.9	1.9	1.3
300-999	37.1	2.7	1.2	0.4
1,000 or More	20.3	6.8	1.1	0.8

The rate of violent and serious violent crime did not correspond to the pattern seen in the percentage of schools recording and reporting incidents. For violent crimes, the rate for schools with 300-999 enrollment is the highest, 37.1 per 1,000 students, followed by schools with enrollment of fewer than 300, 26.1 per 1,000, and finally by schools with enrollment of 1,000 or more, 20.3 per 1,000. For serious violent crime, schools with the smallest enrollments had the greatest rate per 1,000 students, 1.9. Likewise the rate of crimes reported to law enforcement varied across school enrollment, but the smallest schools were most likely to report serious violent crimes.

Crime by Poverty Level

The percentage of students receiving free or reduced price school lunch (FRPL) is used in this study as a proxy for the percentage of students living in or near poverty. According to the survey, schools reporting between 50 and 75 percent of their students receiving FRPL had the highest percentage recording violent incidents – 83.8 percent. The highest and lowest percentages of students receiving FRPL had the lowest percentage of schools recording incidents, 73.0 percent and 71.5 percent. None of the differences among these categories is statistically significant, however.



The three categories with the highest percentages of students receiving FRPL were similar in the percentage of schools recording serious violent crimes, between 23.4 and 25.2 percent, while in the lowest category only 15.7 percent of schools recorded any serious violent crimes.

There were no statistically significant differences among categories on percentage of schools reporting violent crime, recording serious violent crime, or reporting serious violent crime.

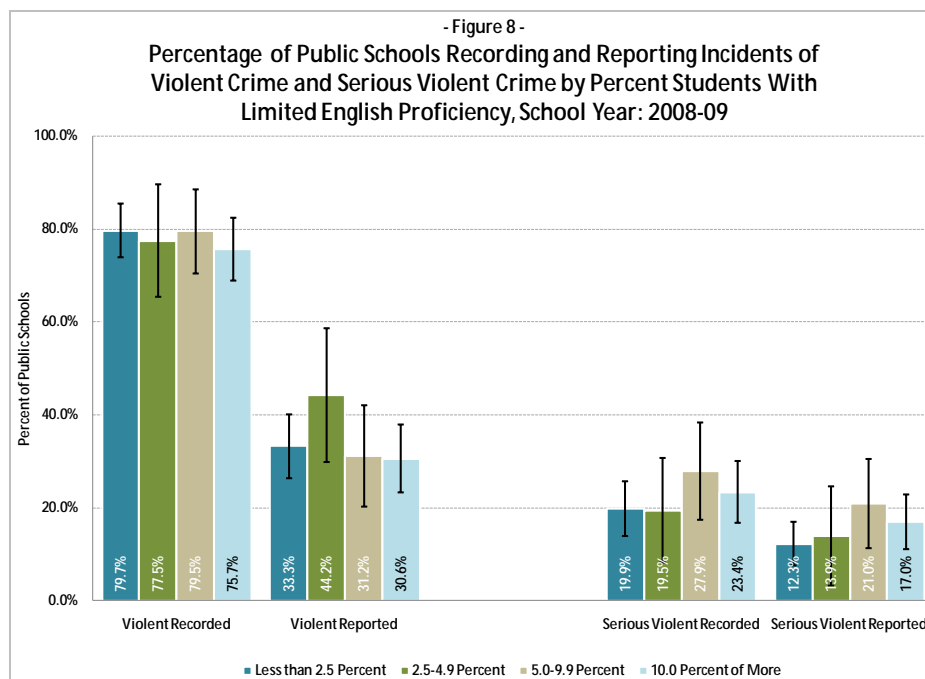
**Table 8: Rate of Violent and Serious Violent Crime Recorded and Reported per 1,000 Students by Students Receiving Free or Reduced Price School Lunch**

	Violent Crime		Serious Violent Crime	
	Recorded	Reported	Recorded	Reported
0-25 Percent	16.0	1.4	0.6	0.3
26-50 Percent	24.9	4.8	1.1	0.6
51-75 Percent	30.7	5.1	1.3	0.6
75 Percent or More	47.6	4.3	1.4	0.6

The rate of violent crime and serious violent crime per 1,000 students increases with the percentage of students receiving FRPL experiencing. The schools with the lowest percentage of students receiving FRPL had a rate of 16.0 violent crimes per 1,000 students, and the schools with the highest percentage had a rate of 47.6 violent crimes per 1,000 students. The two categories in between, 26-50 percent and 51-75 percent, had rates in the middle, 24.9 and 30.7 per 1,000 students. This pattern held true for the recorded serious violent crimes. In reporting crimes, those schools with between 0 and 25 percent of students receiving FRPL had the lowest rate of reporting both violent and serious violent crimes.

Crime by Limited English Proficiency

Principals were also asked to record the percentage of students in their school with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The percentage of students with LEP was not related to the recording of violent incidents at school. Between 75.7 percent and 79.7 percent of schools in each of the four categories recorded at least one violent incident during the school year. Similarly, the percentages of schools recording serious violent crimes did not vary by the percentage of students with LEP.



A larger percentage of schools with 2.5-4.9 percent of students with LEP reported any violent crimes to law enforcement, 44.2 percent, but the other three had similar percentages. For serious violent crime, the 5.0-9.9 percent LEP category had the highest percentage of schools reporting.

Although the percentages in recording violent crimes did not differ much among the schools categorized

	Violent Crime		Serious Violent Crime	
	Recorded	Reported	Recorded	Reported
Less than 2.5 Percent	27.6	6.1	1.0	0.5
2.5-4.9 Percent	23.7	2.6	0.5	0.3
5.0-9.9 Percent	36.4	3.1	1.5	0.6
10.0 Percent or More	47.6	4.3	1.4	0.6

by percent of LEP students, the rates of recorded crime did. Those schools reporting that at least 10.0 percent of their students had LEP experienced the highest recorded rate of violent crime, 47.6 per 1,000 students. Schools in which less than 2.5 percent of students had LEP had a slightly higher rate of violent and serious violent crime than schools in the next higher category, 2.5-4.9 percent of students with LEP.

The schools in the two categories with the highest percentages of LEP students had the highest rates of serious violent crime, 1.5 and 1.4 per 1,000 students.

*Crime Against Staff or Faculty*

Unlike the national school survey on crime and safety, the WSSSC requested information on the number of violent and serious violent incidents against staff or faculty at each school. For the 2008-09 school year, 18.2 percent of all public schools in the state recorded at least one violent crime and 6.5 percent recorded at least one serious violent crime against a staff or faculty member. Table 10 shows the percentage of Washington public schools recording violent and serious violent crimes against staff by selected school characteristics.

	Violent Crime	Serious Violent Crime
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.2%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>
<b>Urbanicity</b>		
Urban	17.5%	6.9%
Suburban	19.9%	7.4%
Small Town/Rural	17.4%	5.5%
<b>School Level</b>		
Elementary	18.6%	6.6%
Middle	22.2%	7.9%
High School	14.0%	5.7%
Combined	14.4%	0.0%
<b>Enrollment</b>		
Fewer than 300	13.1%	4.2%
300-999	18.8%	6.7%
1,000 or more	27.7%	10.5%
<b>School Area Crime</b>		
Low Crime	13.9%	3.8%
Moderate/High Crime	26.1%	10.6%
<b>Home Area Crime</b>		
Low Crime	13.1%	3.8%
Moderate Crime	22.6%	9.9%
High Crime	30.8%	16.8%
Mixed Levels	20.8%	5.6%
<b>FRPL</b>		
0-25 Percent	15.4%	4.5%
26-50 Percent	18.3%	5.3%
51-75 Percent	22.1%	8.0%
75 Percent or More	18.0%	12.6%
<b>LEP</b>		
Less than 2.5 Percent	16.1%	5.2%
2.5-4.9 Percent	19.3%	0.0%
5.0-9.9 Percent	28.0%	11.8%
10.0 Percent or More	16.3%	7.4%

The results show little difference among schools by urbanicity. The percentage of schools recording incidents did not vary much among urban, suburban, and small town/rural schools for violent or serious violent crimes. Middle schools have the highest percentage reporting crimes against staff, 22.2 percent for violent and 7.9 percent for serious violent.

School enrollment also appears to be related to the likelihood of a school recording an incident against staff, increasing from 13.1 percent to 18.8 percent to 27.7 percent for schools with enrollment under 300, 300-999, and over 1,000 students. Schools with enrollment over 1,000 students were also most likely to have recorded a serious violent crime against staff or faculty. The level of school area crime appears to be related to the percentage of schools reporting crimes against staff or faculty. Those schools in moderate to high crime areas are more likely to have recorded at least one violent incident, 26.1 percent, when compared to schools from low crime areas, 13.9 percent. Over 10 percent of schools in moderate/high crime areas recorded at least one serious violent crime against a staff or faculty member whereas only 3.8 percent of schools in low crime neighborhoods did.

	<b>Violent Crime</b>	<b>Serious Violent Crime</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.2</b>
<b>Urbanicity</b>		
Urban	1.3	0.2
Suburban	0.9	0.1
Small Town/Rural	1.0	0.3
<b>School Level</b>		
Elementary	1.5	0.3
Middle	0.9	0.1
High School	0.5	0.1
Combined	1.2	#
<b>Enrollment</b>		
Fewer than 300	1.6	0.5
300-999	1.2	0.2
1,000 or more	0.4	0.1
<b>School Area Crime</b>		
Low Crime	0.7	0.1
Moderate/High Crime	1.7	0.3
<b>Home Area Crime</b>		
Low Crime	0.5	0.1
Moderate Crime	1.2	0.3
High Crime	5.9	0.9
Mixed Levels	1.0	0.1
<b>FRPL</b>		
0-25 Percent	0.5	0.1
26-50 Percent	0.7	0.1
51-75 Percent	0.8	0.1
75 Percent or More	0.9	0.2
<b>LEP</b>		
Less than 2.5 Percent	0.7	0.2
2.5-4.9 Percent	0.7	0.0
5.0-9.9 Percent	2.4	0.2
10.0 Percent or More	0.9	0.3

The percent of schools recording violent crimes against faculty or staff are mixed in relation to the percent of students receiving FRPL at the school. Schools in the 51 – 75 percent category were most likely to report at least one incident of violent crime. The percent recording serious violent crimes does



increase with an increasing percentage of students. About 4.5 percent of schools in the lowest category, 0-25 percent, recorded an incident compared to 12.6 percent for the highest category. The schools with 5.0-9.9 percent of their students with LEP had the greatest percentage recording crime against staff or faculty with 28.0 percent reporting violent crime and 11.8 percent serious violent crime.

Rates of violent and serious violent crime against staff are very small overall, 1.1 and 0.2 per 1,000 respectively. The rates by selected school characteristics are found in Table 11. Although suburban schools had the highest percent recording an incident, they had the lowest rate of crime per 1,000 students and urban the highest, 0.9 and 1.3 per 1,000 students. Elementary schools experienced the highest rate – 1.5 per 1,000 – triple the high school rate, but the percentage of schools recording any incidents was only slightly higher.

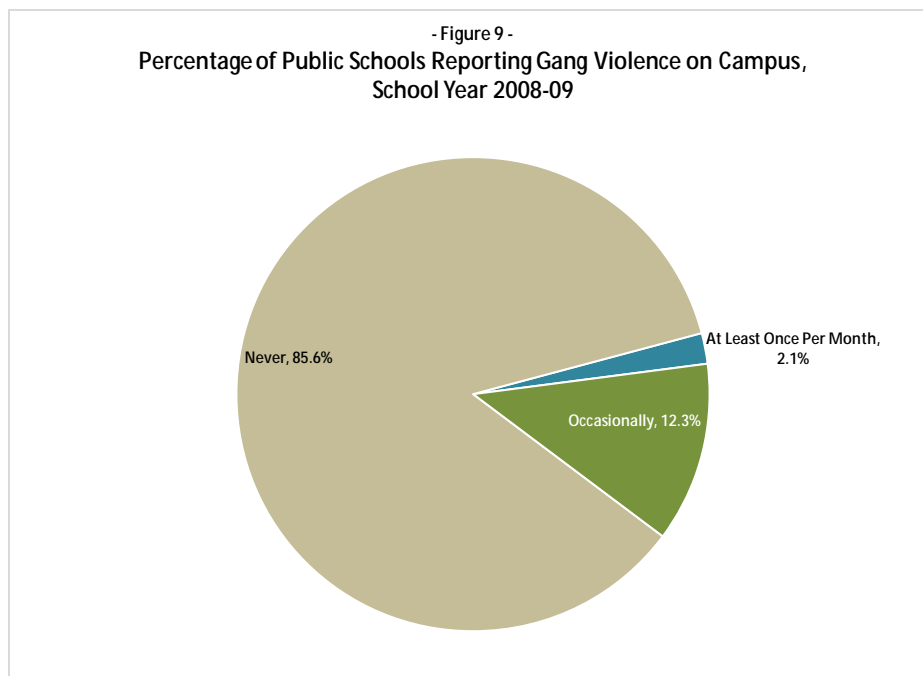
The rate of incidents per 1,000 students was opposite to the percentage of schools recording incidents against faculty or staff based on size of the school enrollment. The rate of violent and serious violent crime decreased as school enrollment increased with schools over 1,000 students having 0.4 violent crimes and 0.1 serious violent crimes per 1,000 students.

Schools in moderate/high crime areas had rates higher than the low crime areas – 1.7 and 0.7 respectively. But the largest differences were found in the crime level of student home areas. By far the highest rate of violent crime against staff was found in schools with students living in high crime areas – 5.9 crimes per 1,000 students. Schools with students living in high crime areas also had the highest rate of serious violent crimes, 0.9 per 1,000 students.

The rate of violent crime increased slightly with an increase in the percentage of students receiving FRPL ranging from 0.5 to 0.9 per 1,000 students depending on the category. There was little difference in the rate of serious violent crime.

### Gang Violence

Gang violence<sup>9</sup> on campus is a concern for school staff and faculty as well as parents and students. In their 2008 report to the legislature, the *Gangs in Schools Task Force* indicated that gang activity was on the rise in schools and that that activity “poses a risk to staff and student safety and school security”.<sup>10</sup> According to the WSSSC, during the 2008-09 school year, 85.6 percent of public schools reported no gang violence on campus. About one in seven schools did experience violence, however. Approximately 12.3 percent of principals reported that their schools experienced occasional gang violence and 2.1 percent reported that they experienced gang violence at least once per month.



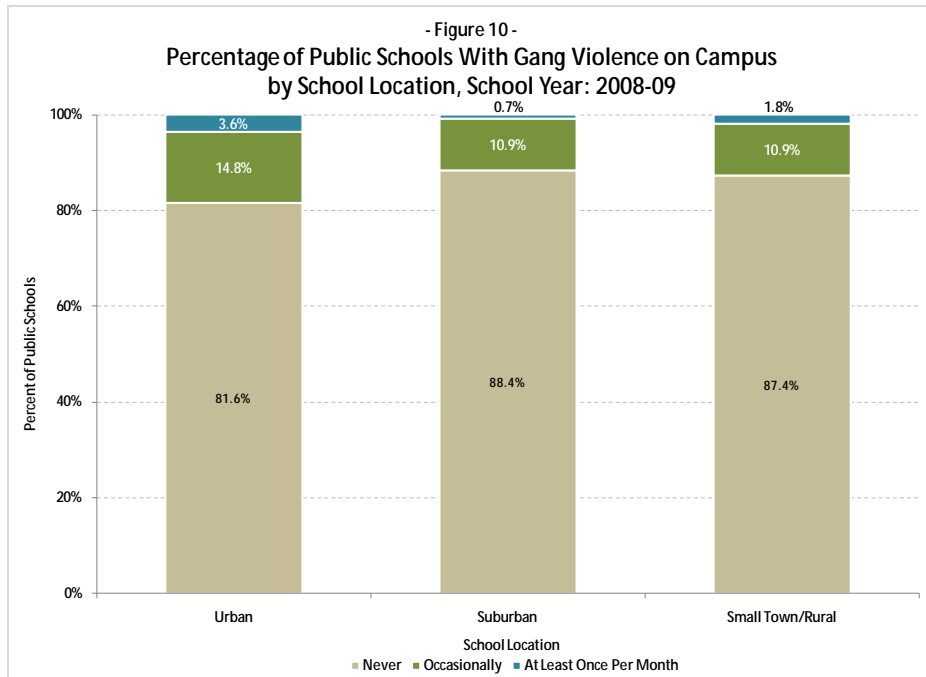
The level of violence varied slightly by the school's location. Of urban public schools, 18.4 percent reported some level of gang violence with 14.8 percent indicating violence was occasional and 3.6 percent monthly. Suburban and small town/rural schools were very similar with 10.9 percent reporting occasional violence. Less than one percent of suburban schools reported monthly gang violence and 1.8 percent of small town/rural schools reported monthly.

High schools, not surprisingly, were the most likely to have gang violence on campus. About 29.2 percent experienced occasional violence and 5.8 percent monthly. Among middle schools, 24.0 percent had some level of violence – 19.5 percent occasionally and 4.5 percent monthly. Four percent of elementary schools reported occasional gang violence on campus. Schools classified as combined grade level did not report any school campus gang violence.

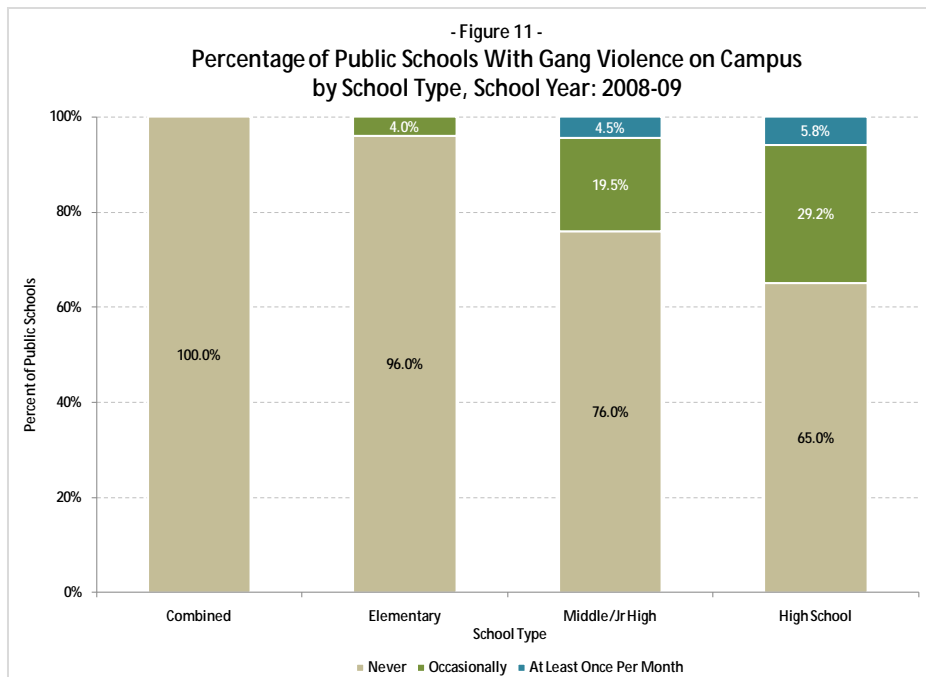
<sup>9</sup> Gang violence includes fights, attacks, or other violence in which gangs were involved.

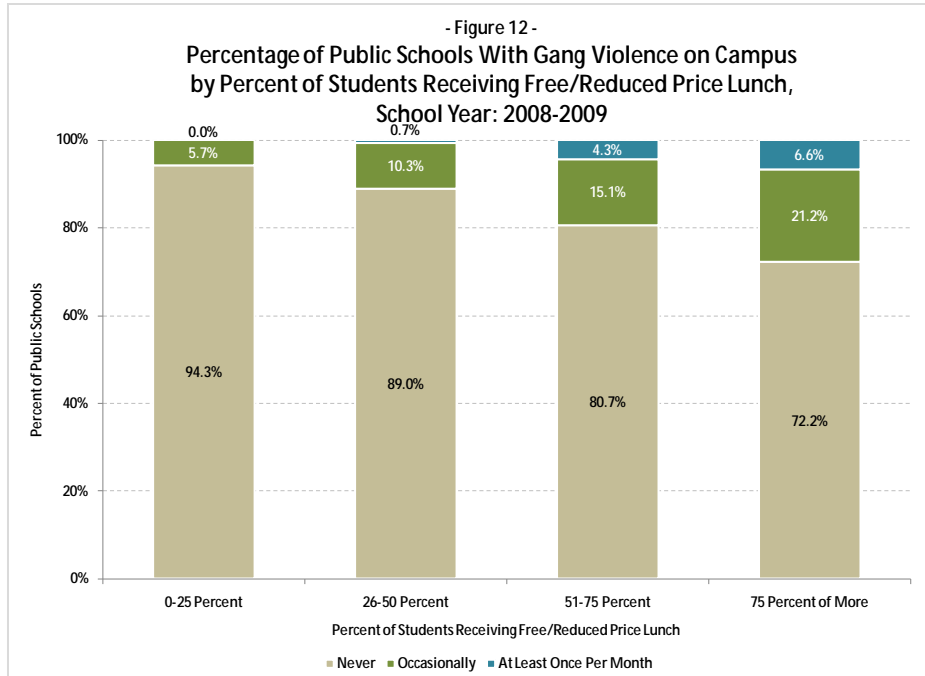
<sup>10</sup> Bleecker, Wendy and Randy Town. *Findings and Recommendations of the Gangs in Schools Task Force*, December 2008. Downloaded from:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/Gangs/pubdocs/GangsinSchoolsTaskForceReport2008.pdf>.

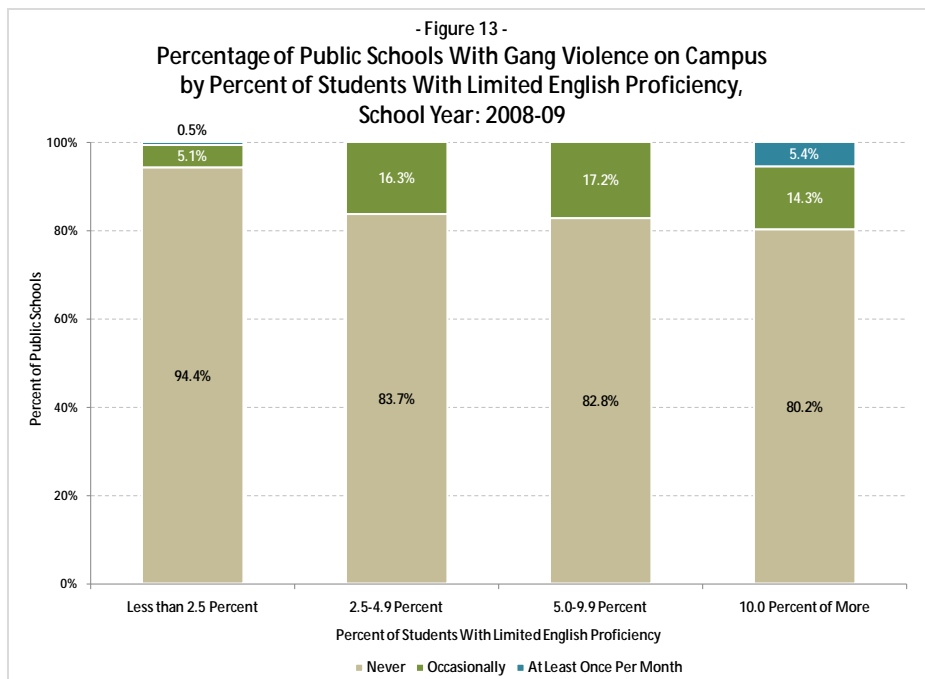


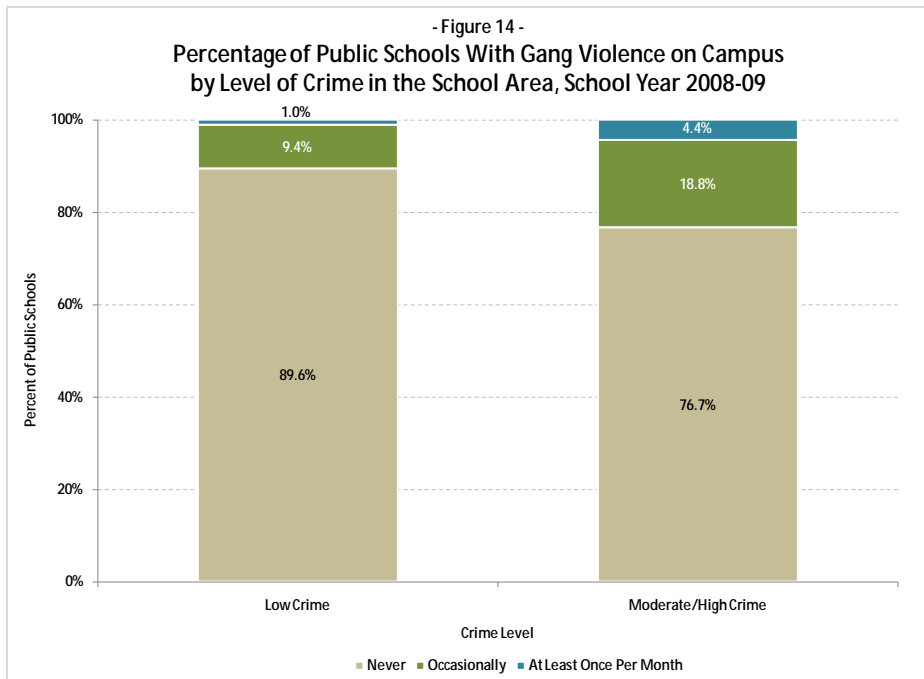
The percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunch (FRPL) is used in this study as a proxy for the percentage of students living in poverty. Schools with the highest percentages of FRPL students were most likely to have gang violence. Almost 28 percent of public schools with 75 percent or more of students receiving FRPL had at least occasional gang violence compared with 4.3 percent in the less than 20 percent FRPL student category.





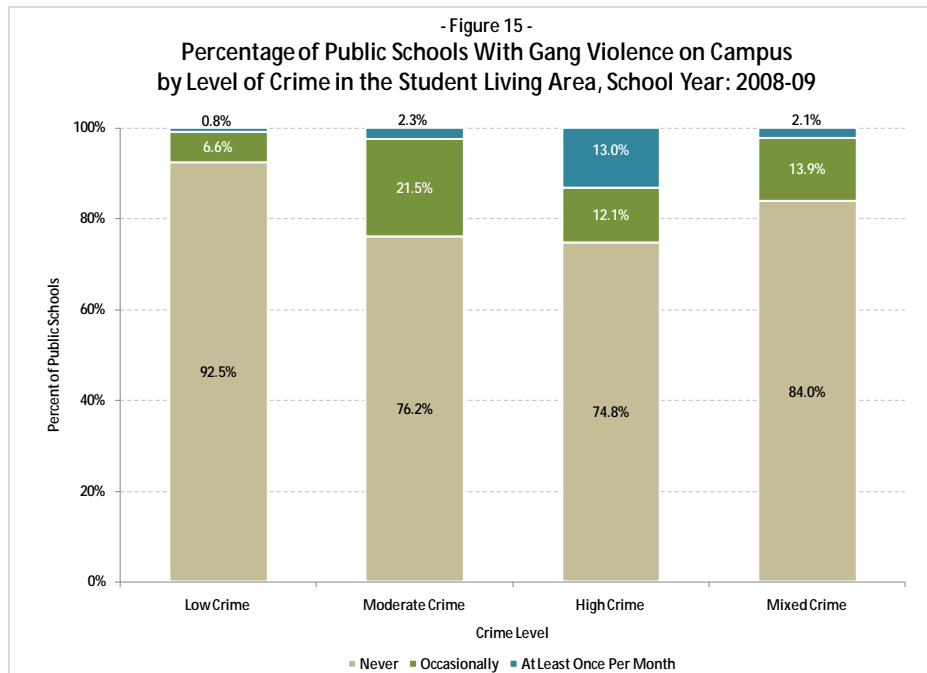
The percentage of students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) is one indicator of the level of diversity in a school. Based on the percentage of students with LEP, the largest difference in gang violence is between those schools with less than 2.5 percent LEP and all other categories. In the lowest category, 5.6 percent of schools had some level of gang violence. For the other three groups - 2.5-4.9 percent, 5.0-9.9 percent, and 10.0 percent or more – between 16.3 percent and 19.7 percent of schools reported gang violence. In schools with more than 10.0 percent of LEP students, approximately 5.4 percent of





experienced gang violence at least once per month.

Two additional indicators examine the level of gang violence as it relates to the level of crime in the school area and the level of crime in the areas in which students live. The areas with moderate to high crime are more likely to experience gang violence. Over 23.0 percent of schools in moderate to high crime areas reported gang violence with 4.4 percent indicating that violence occurred at least once per month.

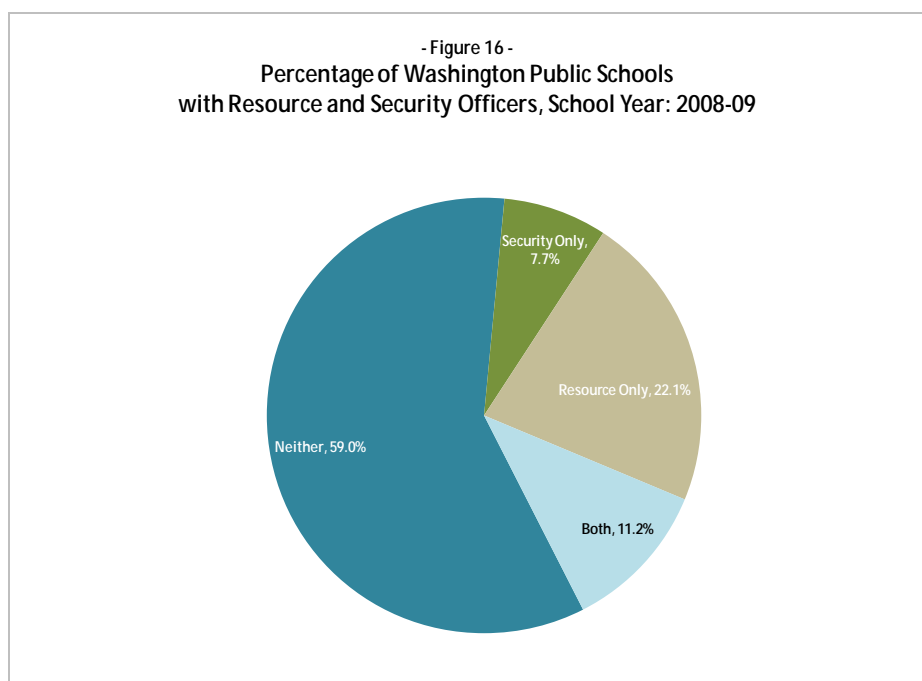


Similarly, when crime in areas where students live is considered, the public schools with students from high crime areas are most likely to experience gang violence and are more likely than the schools with students from moderate crime areas to have gang violence at least once a month – 13.0 percent vs. 2.3 percent. Schools with students from mixed crime areas fall in the middle.

### Resource and Security Officers

According to WSSSC data, 22.1 percent of the public schools in Washington have at least one resource officer and 7.7 percent have at least one security officer (see Figure 16). An additional 11.2 percent have both security and resource officers. The remaining 59.0 percent have no officers of either kind.

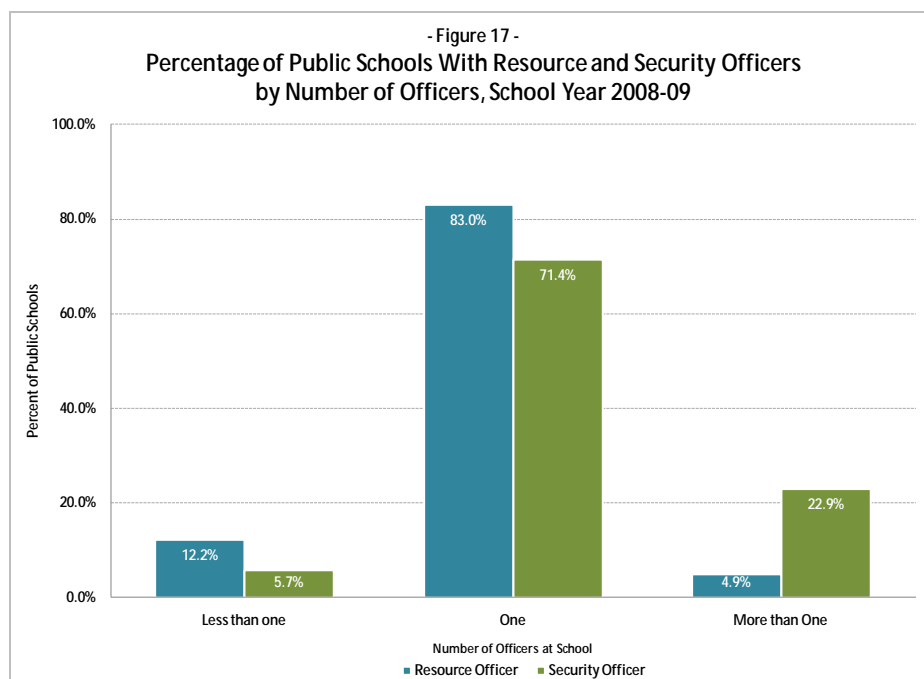
Some schools reported less than a full-time officer or more than one officer, but the majority of schools with officers – 83.0 percent for resource officers and 71.4 percent for security officers- had only one officer of that type (see Figure 17). In total, using weighted survey data,<sup>11</sup> Washington public schools had an estimated 641 resource officers and 471 security officers at the time of the survey.



The characteristics of schools with officers differ somewhat from those from schools without officers. Table 12 shows the percentage of schools with resource and/or security officers by selected school characteristics.

Suburban schools were most likely to have an officer of some kind, typically a resource officer. Over 60 percent of middle and high schools had security or resource officers. Urban schools had the highest percentage of security officers only, 11.8 percent. Over two-thirds of small town/rural schools had no officers.

<sup>11</sup> The response rate for the survey was 26.7 percent. In order to adjust for non-response, the survey data are weighted to adjust to the number of schools in Washington and to adjust for key characteristics such as location and school type.



Nearly one third, 31.2 percent, of high schools had both types of officers. About three quarters of elementary schools had no officers. The largest schools, those with enrollment of 1,000 or more, were the most likely to have officers. Over 60 percent of those schools had both security and resource officers.

	Neither	Security Only	Resource Only	Both
<b>Total</b>	<b>59.0%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>22.1%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>
<b>Urbanicity</b>				
Urban	56.7%	11.8%	21.0%	10.5%
Suburban	50.7%	5.1%	26.0%	10.5%
Small Town/Rural	68.2%	5.7%	20.2%	5.9%
<b>School Level</b>				
Elementary	72.8%	4.5%	20.5%	2.3%
Middle	36.2%	12.3%	35.6%	15.9%
High School	39.1%	12.9%	16.8%	31.2%
Combined	94.4%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%
<b>Enrollment</b>				
Fewer than 300	72.9%	8.9%	13.5%	4.7%
300-999	62.7%	6.6%	24.3%	6.4%
1,000 or more	6.8%	14.3%	18.5%	60.4%
<b>School Area Crime</b>				
Low Crime	62.9%	5.5%	22.0%	9.7%
Moderate/High Crime	50.4%	11.5%	23.5%	14.6%
<b>Home Area Crime</b>				
Low Crime	65.5%	4.1%	22.5%	7.9%
Moderate Crime	51.7%	12.1%	22.1%	14.1%
High Crime	49.1%	16.0%	21.9%	13.0%
Mixed Levels	53.2%	6.6%	23.2%	17.0%



Schools in high crime areas or with students living in high crime areas were also associated with an increased likelihood of having officers. Nearly half of schools in moderate/high crime areas had an officer compared with less than 40 percent for schools in low crime areas. The same was true for schools with students living in high crime areas. Over 50 percent had an officer of some kind compared to about a third of schools with students from low crime areas.

## **Conclusions**

Although the response rate for this survey was low and caution should be taken when interpreting the results, the WSSSC has provided an informative snapshot of the occurrence of violent and serious violent crime in Washington's public schools during the 2008-09 school year. When compared against the nation, Washington State has many similarities in the types and frequencies of violent crimes. Notable differences are Washington's higher percentage of schools recording *Threat with a Weapon* incidents and Washington's higher rate of *Physical Attack or Fight without a Weapon*. More differences appeared in the percentage of schools reporting crimes to law enforcement and rates of reporting crimes, so further work is needed to determine the reasons for different reporting patterns in Washington.

The survey also identified differing levels of violent crime and gang violence based on school characteristics. The relationship of violence to these key characteristics, such as school level, level of crime in the school area, level of crime in student living areas, and school enrollment, can be used to focus prevention efforts. The data on gang violence is particularly useful in gauging the need for improved interventions across the state.

Periodically repeating the survey would provide critical information on whether school crime rates in Washington are increasing or decreasing. Regular updates would also allow for continued monitoring of Washington's experience against the nation. Additionally, improving the response rate in future surveys would permit more detailed analyses and improved accuracy in estimating the level of violence in Washington's schools.

## References

Bleecker, Wendy and Randy Town (2008). *Findings and Recommendations of the Gangs in Schools Task Force, December 2008*. Downloaded from:  
<http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/Gangs/pubdocs/GangsinSchoolsTaskForceReport2008.pdf>

Dinkes, R., Kemp, J., and Baum, K. (2009). *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2009* (NCES 2010–012/NCJ 228478). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Washington, DC.

**Appendix A:** *Washington State School Survey on Crime, 2008-09 School Year*

The Washington State School Survey on Crime (WSSSC) was based on a subset of questions from the national School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS). Several modifications were made to the questions to better support the data needs of stakeholders.

## Washington State School Survey on Crime: 2008-09

### ***Introduction***

This project is supported by Grant No. 2009-BJ-CX-K016 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.

### ***Definitions***

The following words are marked with an asterisk (\*) wherever they appear in the questionnaire. Please use these definitions as you respond.

**"At school/at your school\*"**: Activities happening in school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, and at places that hold school-sponsored events or activities. Unless otherwise specified, this refers to normal school hours or to times when school activities/events were in session.

**"Violence\*"**: Actual, attempted, or threatened fight or assault.

### ***Homicides and Shootings***

During the 2008-09 school year, did any of your school's students, faculty or staff die as a result of a homicide committed **at your school\***?

- No       Yes

During the 2008-09 school year, was there at least one incident **at your school\*** that involved a shooting (regardless of whether anyone was hurt)? Please include those incidents that occurred at school\*, regardless of whether a student or non-student used the firearm.

- No       Yes

### ***Number of Incidents by Type – Introduction***

On the following three pages of the survey, you will be asked to record the number of incidents that occurred **at school\*** during the 2008-2009 school year for the offenses listed. Of those recorded incidents, you are asked to indicate the number in which the victim was a faculty or staff member, and also the number that were reported to police or other law enforcement.

If none, please enter 0.

Provide the number of incidents, not the number of victims or offenders.

Include all incidents, regardless of whether disciplinary action was taken.

Include all incidents, regardless of whether students or non-students were involved.

Include incidents that occurred before, during or after normal school hours.

Please record the number of incidents that occurred at school\* during the 2008-09 school year for the offenses listed. Refer to the following definitions as you respond.

**"Rape\*"**: Forced sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral penetration). This included penetration from a foreign object.

**“Sexual battery\*”:** An incident that included threatened rape, fondling, indecent liberties, child molestation, or sodomy. Classification of these incidents should take into consideration the age and developmentally appropriate behavior of the offender(s).

**“Robbery\*”:** The taking or attempting to take anything of value that is owned by another person or organization, under confrontational circumstances by force or threat of force or violence and/or by putting the victim in fear. A key difference between robbery and theft/larceny is that robbery involves a threat or battery.

**“Weapon\*”:** Any instrument or object used with the intent to threaten, injure, or kill. This included look-alikes if they are used to threaten others.

**“Fighting\*”:** Mutual participation in an incident involving physical violence, where there is no major injury.

**“Physical attack\*”:** An actual and intentional touching or striking of another person against his or her will, or the intentional causing of bodily harm to an individual.

	Total Number of Recorded Incidents	Number of Recorded Incidents in Which a Staff or Faculty Member Was the Victim	Number of the Recorded Incidents Reported to Law Enforcement
Rape* or attempted rape			
Sexual battery* other than rape*			
Robbery* with a weapon*			
Robbery* without a weapon*			
Fight* with a weapon*			
Fight* without a weapon*			
Physical attack* with a weapon*			
Physical attack* without a weapon*			
Threats of physical attack* with a weapon*			
Threats of physical attack* without a weapon*			

**"Gang\*":** An ongoing loosely organized association of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, that has a common name, signs, symbols, or colors, whose members engage, either individually or collectively, in violent or other forms of illegal behavior.

During the 2008-09 school year, how often were **gangs\*** involved in fights, attacks, or other **violence\* at your school\***?

- Daily
- At least once a week
- At least once a month
- Occasionally
- Never

**"School resource officer\*":** A person who provides security and law enforcement services at one or more public schools and is a commissioned law enforcement officer who has been assigned by the employing police department or agency to work in collaboration with your district (from 28A.600 RCW).

**"School security officer\*":** A classified or contracted school district employee other than a school resource officer who provides security services at one or more public schools under the direction of a school building administrator (from 28A.600 RCW).

Does your school have a **school resource officer\***?

- No
- Yes – Please enter the number of school resource officers in the box provided

Does your school have a **school security officer\***?

- No
- Yes – Please enter the number of school security officers in the box provided

What grades does your school include? Please mark all that apply.

- |  |                         |                          |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Pre-kindergarten       | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 9  |
| <input type="radio"/> Kindergarten           | <input type="radio"/> 5 | <input type="radio"/> 10 |
| <input type="radio"/> 1                      | <input type="radio"/> 6 | <input type="radio"/> 11 |
| <input type="radio"/> 2                      | <input type="radio"/> 7 | <input type="radio"/> 12 |
| <input type="radio"/> 3                      | <input type="radio"/> 8 |                          |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) |                         |                          |

As of October 1, 2008, what was your school's total enrollment?

What percentage of your current students fit the following criteria? If none, enter 0 in the box. Please do not enter the percent sign. (25% should be entered as 25)

- a. Eligible for free or reduced price lunch?
- b. Limited English Proficiency (LEP)?
- c. Special education students?
- d. Male?

What geographic/demographic category best describes the locale of your school? School district designations and definitions are listed at the following link: <link to list provided>

- Large city
- Urban fringe of large city
- Mid-size city
- Large town
- Urban fringe of mid-size city

- Small town
- Rural, inside metropolitan service area
- Rural, outside metropolitan service area

How would you describe the crime level in the area(s) in which your students live? Check one response.

- High level of crime
- Moderate level of crime
- Low level of crime
- Students come from areas with very different levels of crime

How would you describe the crime level in the area where your school is located? Check one response.

- High level of crime
- Moderate level of crime
- Low level of crime