

**SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS IN KENTUCKY
WHO ARE THEY AND WHAT DO THEY DO?**

By:

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The first School Resource Officer (SRO) program in Kentucky was initiated in Jefferson County in 1977. Since that time, the program has grown steadily due primarily to the availability of grants through the federal Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office in the U.S. Department of Justice.

School Resource Officers were first referenced in Kentucky statutes with the passage of the Safe Schools Act in 1998. Kentucky Revised Statute 158.441 defines an SRO as *a sworn law enforcement officer who has specialized training to work with youth at a school site. The officer shall be employed through a contract between a local law enforcement agency and a school district.* The statutory language was extremely important to the development of the SRO program for three reasons: 1) it required SROs to have specialized training; 2) it recognized the importance of having a written contract between the two agencies to clarify the duties of the officer; and 3) it formally recognized SROs as a specialized field of law enforcement.

Every even year (e.g., 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016), the KCSS has updated its database of SROs and has administered questionnaires to the SROs asking questions regarding their characteristics, activities, and perceptions of school safety and the SRO's role in school safety in Kentucky. This report is an outcome of that effort during the spring of 2016.

Data Collection

In the spring of 2016, researchers from the Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS) conducted a study in collaboration with the Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training examining the attributes of School Resource Officers throughout the state of Kentucky. Using an existing database revised in the fall of 2015, an electronic questionnaire was utilized to make

it easier for the SROs to complete the survey. An introductory email was sent out from DOCJT that served as a warning email advising the SROs that the survey would be coming soon. A second email was sent to all SROs in the database in February of 2016. After two weeks, a second email was sent that explained the purpose of the survey and included a link to a SurveyMonkey website where the questionnaire was housed. A final email was sent two weeks later that contained the link and reminded the SROs to complete the survey if they had not already. Of the 247 SROs who received a questionnaire, 175 responses were received, for a response rate of 71.0% percent. This response rate was **10.0% higher** than the 2013 study.

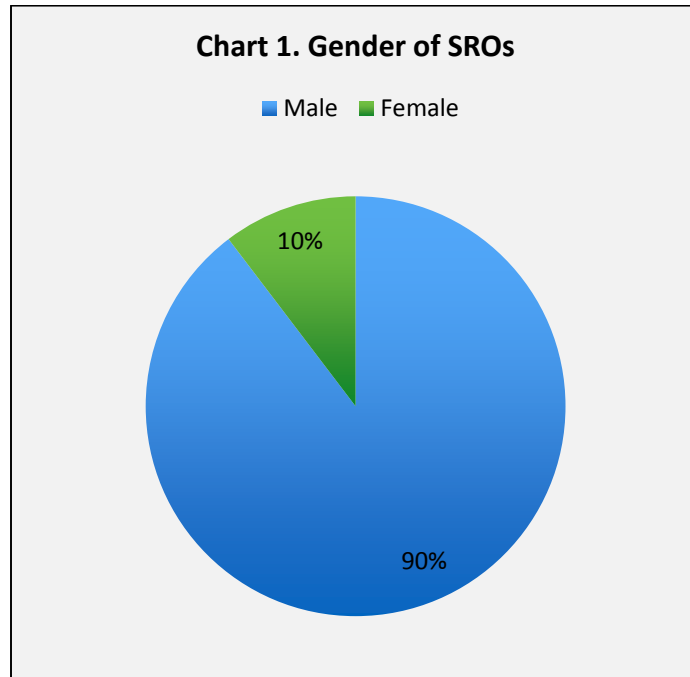
Due to inconsistency in reporting, the questions regarding the population of students at assigned schools, proportion of time spent on duties and activities, maintenance of reports, and perceptions of seriousness of activities were removed from the survey. In previous years we found that these questions were inconsistent and had a high percentage of missing data. Upon discussion with SROs we found that they were hesitant to respond to the survey due to the length and time it took to complete.

The data for this study are comprised from responses received from 175 SRO questionnaires. Practically all respondents provided data for questions on the last page of the questionnaire, indicating that the entire sample probably read the entire questionnaire. Nevertheless, some respondents failed to complete data for some of the questions. The charts provided below (as well as the percentages presented in the text of the report) reflect only valid responses. In other words, the number of responses for some charts is greater than the number of responses for others because some respondents chose not to answer some questions. In most cases, the charts present the raw number of responses while the text presents summary of the

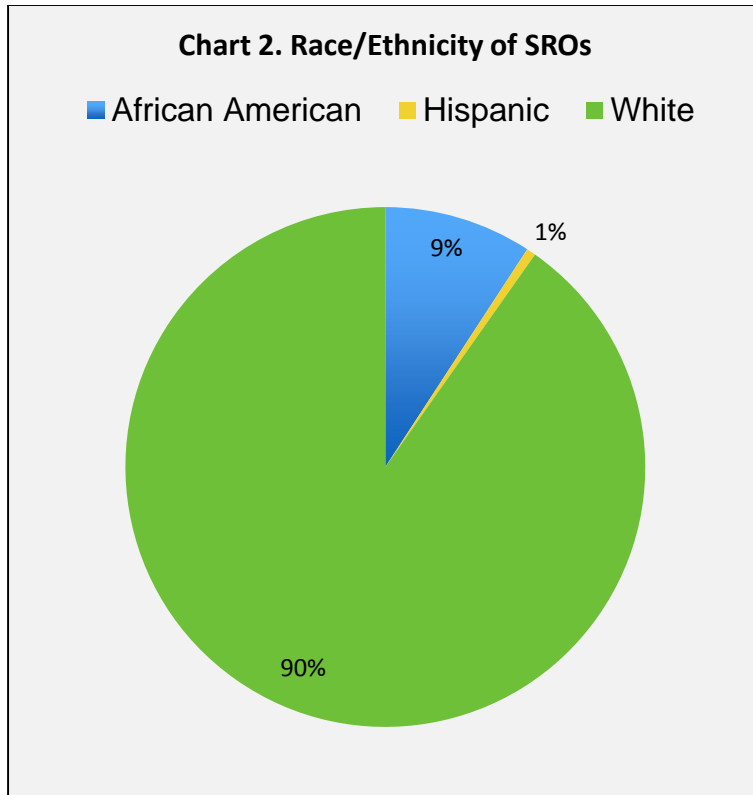
charts, using percentages instead of raw numbers. The tables from which the charts were derived are available upon request.

Results

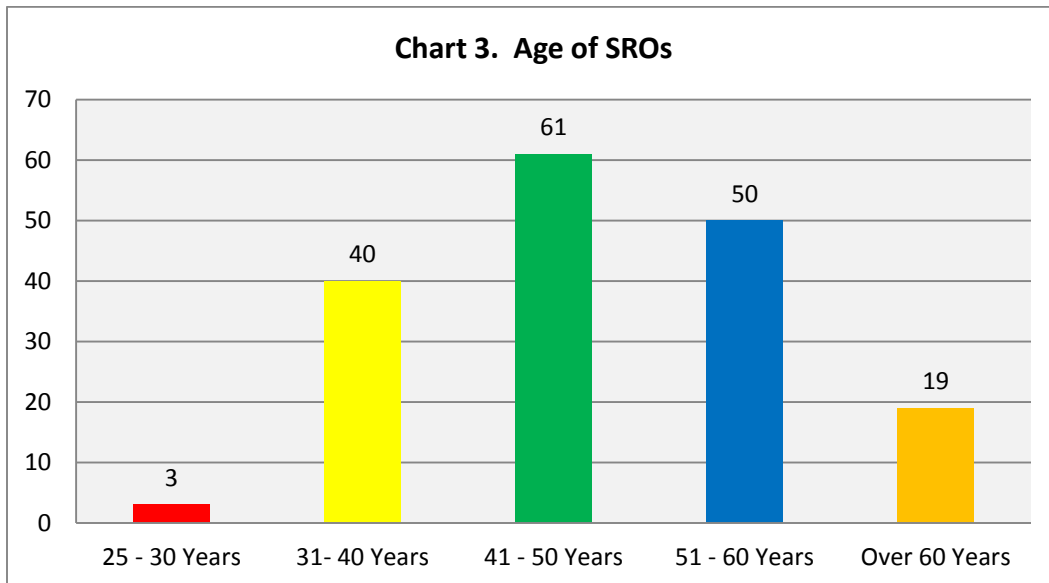
The gender and racial characteristics of the Kentucky SROs who provided data for this study are similar to those who responded in the previous SRO reports.



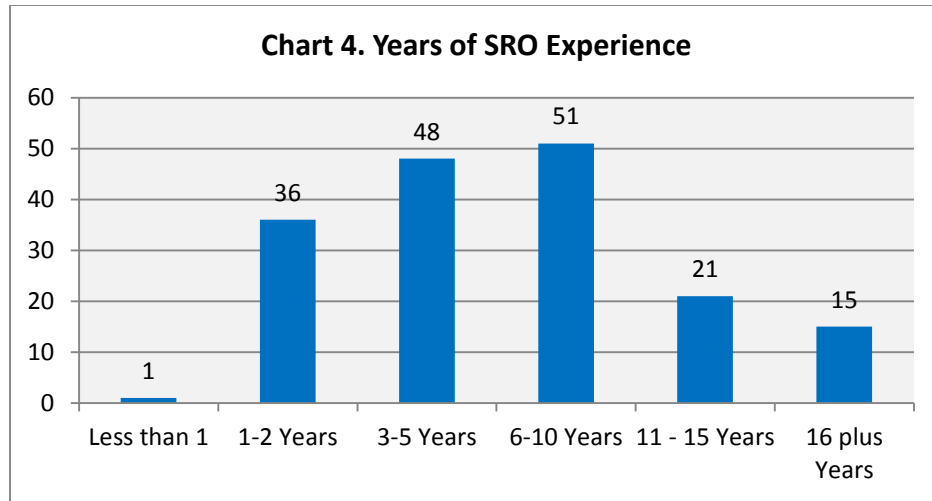
The vast majority (90.0%) of the SROs were male, while 10.0% were female.



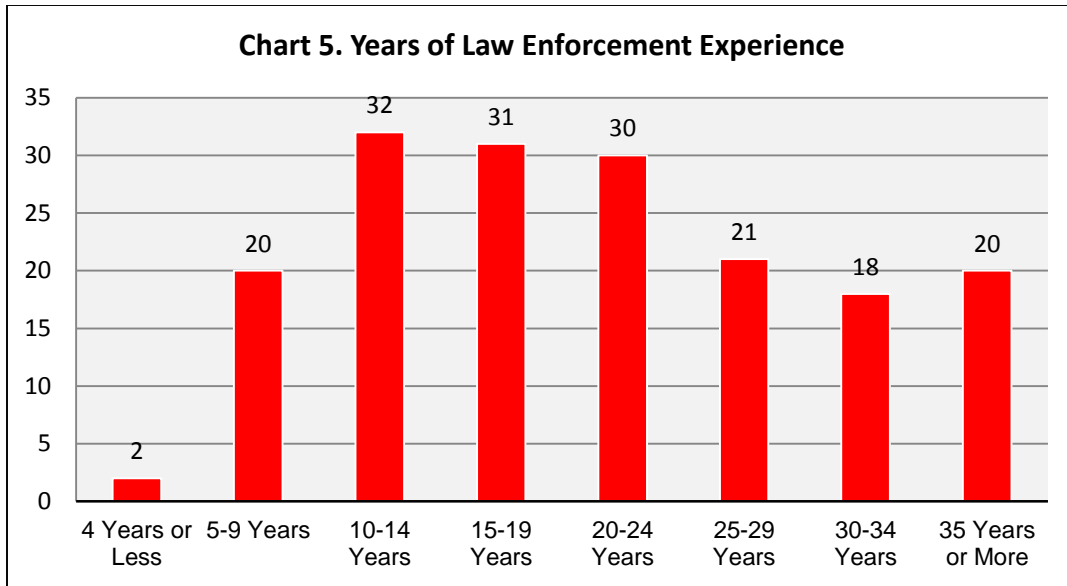
The vast majority of SROs (90.0%) were White, while the remaining SROs were Black (9.0%) and Hispanic (1.0%).



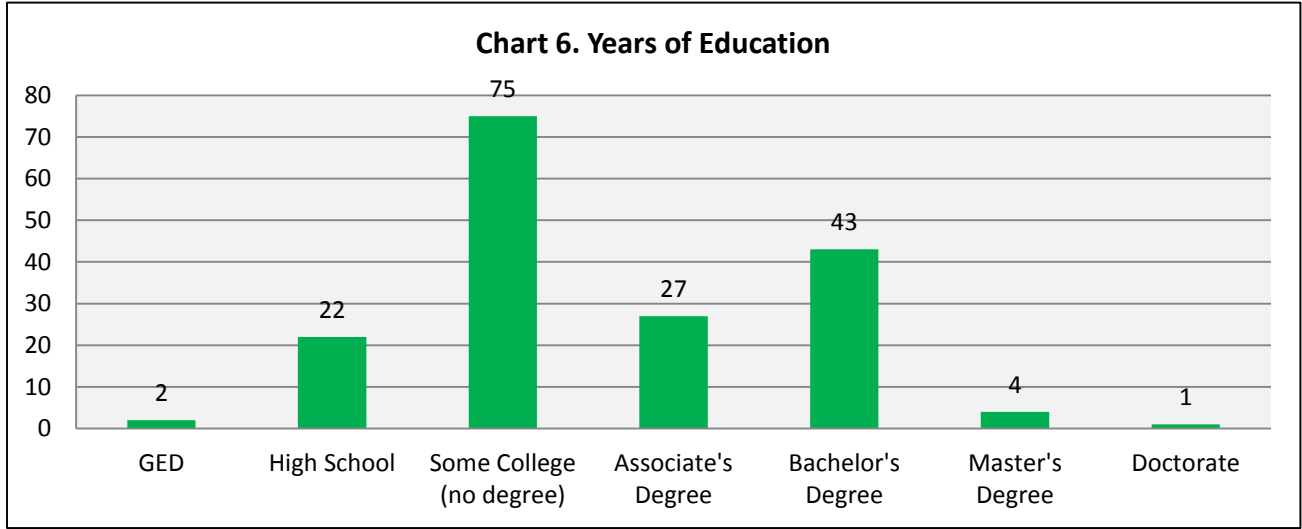
Of the 173 SROs who responded to the question that asked their age, a small percentage (1.7%) were 24 to 30 years of age and 23.1% were between 31 and 40 years of age. More than one in three SROs were 41 - 50 years of age (35.2%). Almost one in three SROs (28.9%) reported being between the ages of 51 and 60 years of age. One in ten SROs were over 60 years of age (10.9%).



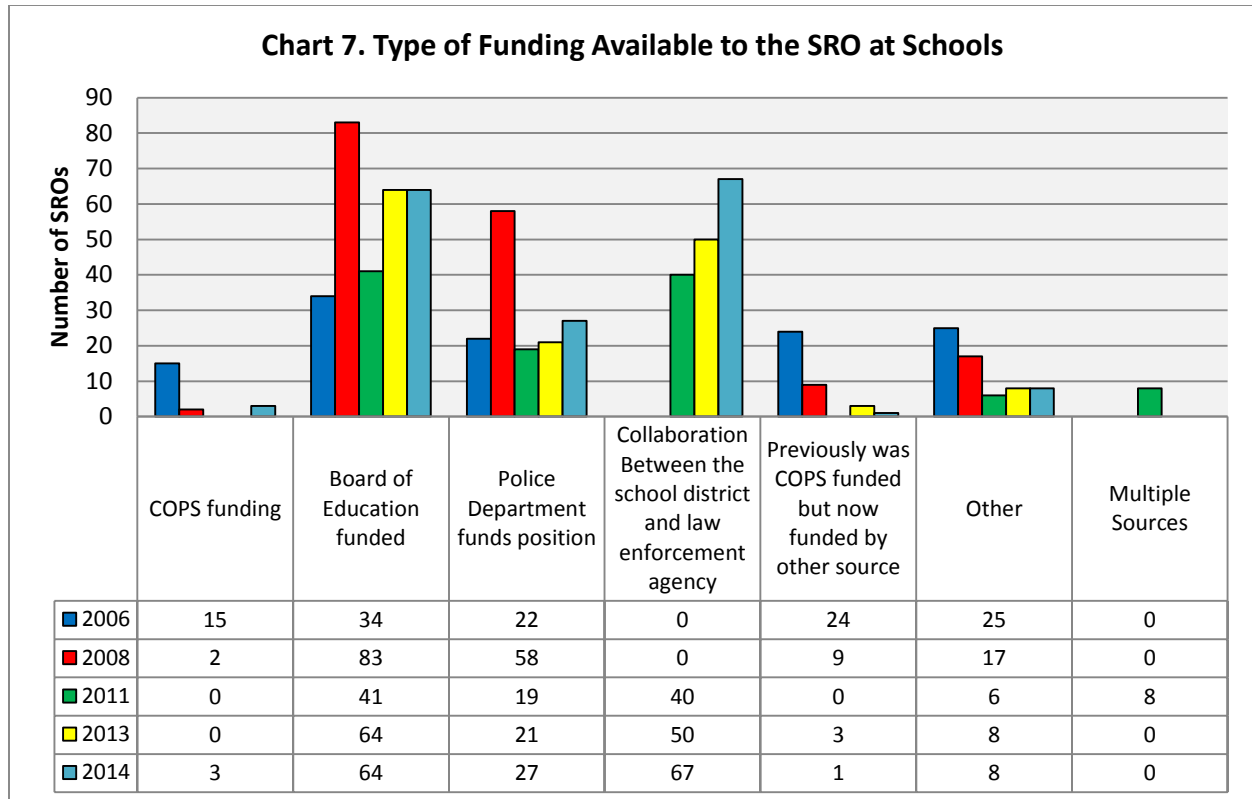
Of the 172 responses to the question asking how much SRO experience the officers had, only one officer had been working as an SRO for a year. The majority of SROs had been working 3-5 years (27.9%) and 6-10 years (29.6%). Of the remaining SROs who responded, one in five had been working as a SRO for 1-2 years (20.9%) and for 11 years or more (20.9%).



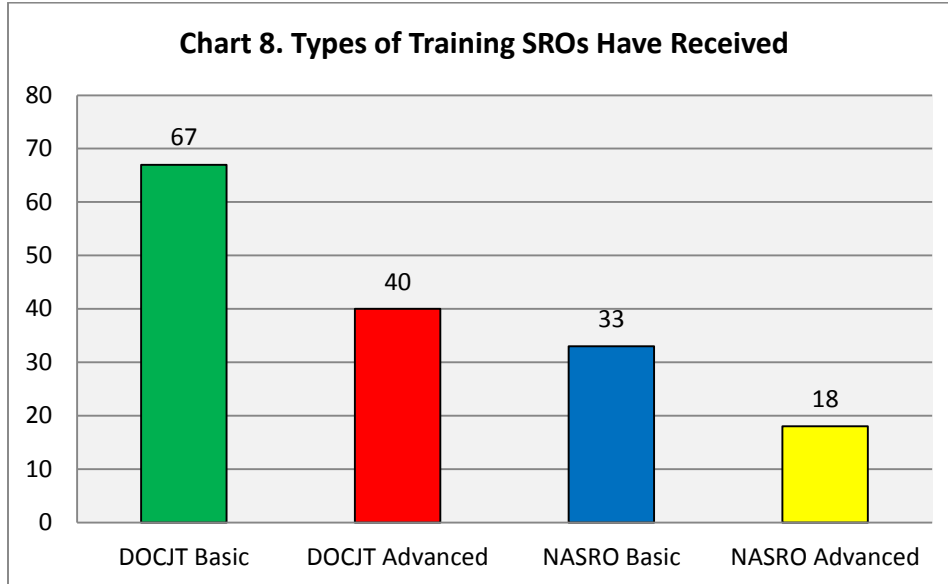
We then asked the respondents how many years they had been employed in law enforcement. Of the 174 officers who responded to that question, only two had less than four years of law enforcement experience. Approximately 1 in 10 (11.4%) had been employed as law enforcement officers for 5-9 years and 35 years or more years and 30 – 34 years (10.3%). One in eight officers (12.0) had 25 – 29 years of experience. More than one in six had been employed as law enforcement officers for 10-14 years (18.3%), 15 - 19 years (17.8%), and 20 - 24 years (17.2%).



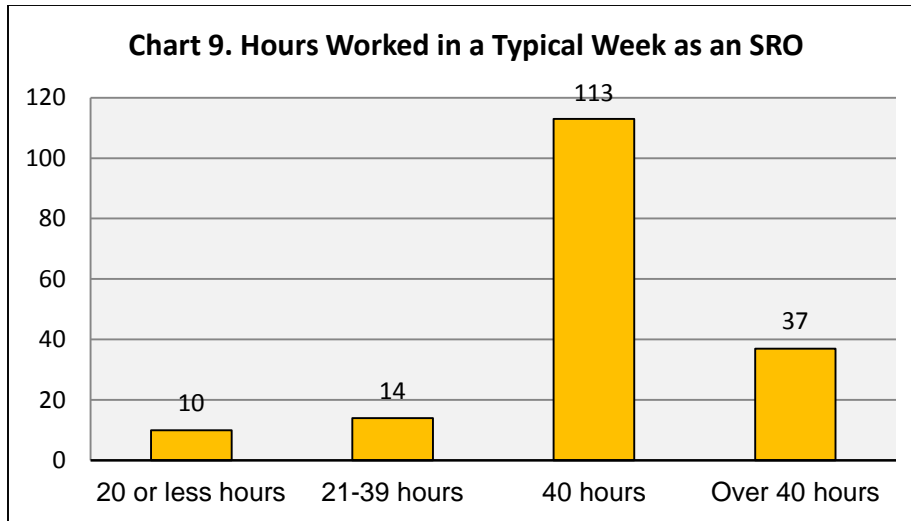
We then asked the SROs how many years of education they had completed. Of the 172 SROs who answered this question, one in eight respondents (12.8%) had completed high school. More than two in five SROs (43.6%) have some college education and one in four SROs (25.0%) earned a bachelor's degree. Four SROs reported having a master's degree, and one SRO reported earning a doctorate degree.



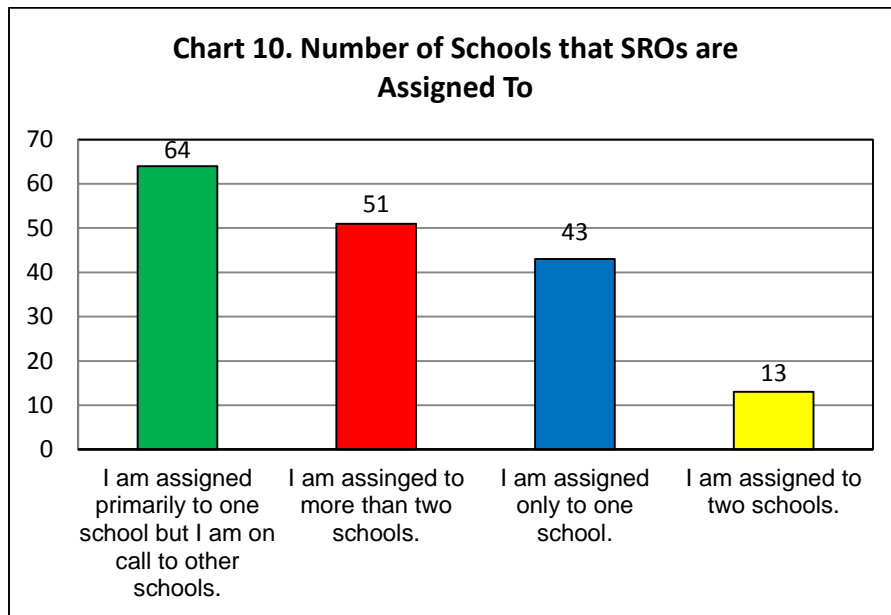
The SROs were then asked how their position was funded. The 170 responses to that question are presented in Chart 7. As is evidenced by the chart above, in 2011 and 2013 no schools were funded by Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) funding, which is a dramatic reduction from 2004, when almost half of the SROs were funded by COPS funding. In 2014 three SROs reported being funded by COPS funding. Most of the SROs were funded either through the Board of Education (37.6%) or through collaboration between the Board of Education and Police Department (39.4%). Of the remaining categories, 15.8% were funded solely by police departments, 5.3% were funded by other sources which were not listed.



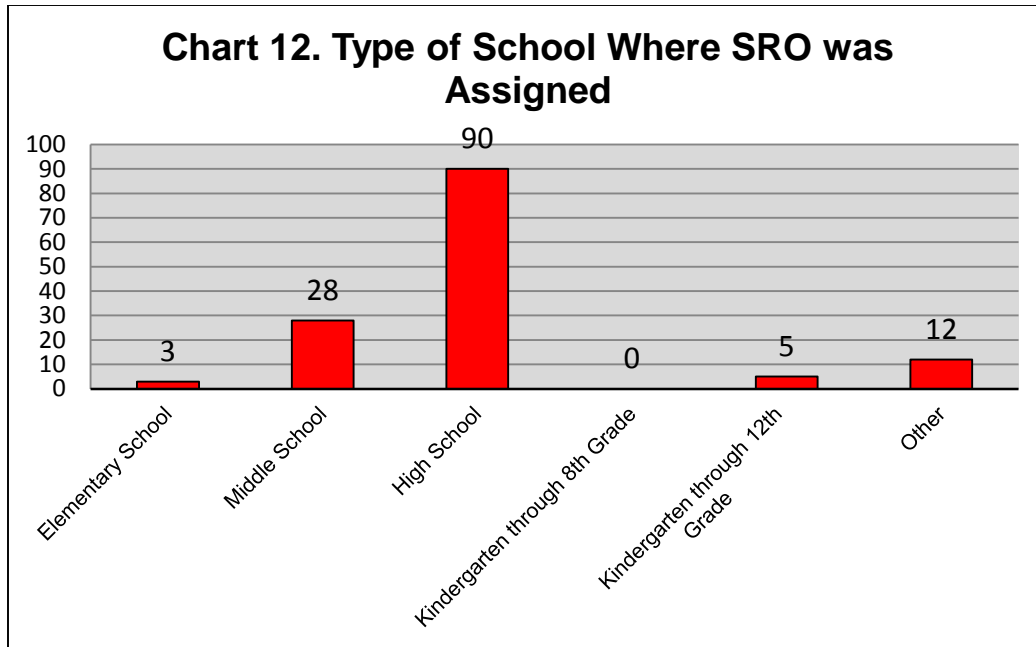
The SROs were then asked what type of SRO training they had received. The responses to that question are presented in Chart 8. Among the SROs who responded, 42.4% had attended the SRO Basic training offered by the Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training (DOCJT). One in five SROs (21.0%) had attended the basic training program offered by the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). That percentage has stayed the same since the survey was last conducted in 2013. One in four SROs (25.3%) attended the DOCJT advanced course which was a 13.5% decrease since 2013. Only 11.4% had attended the NASRO advanced training program, which was a slight increase since 2013.



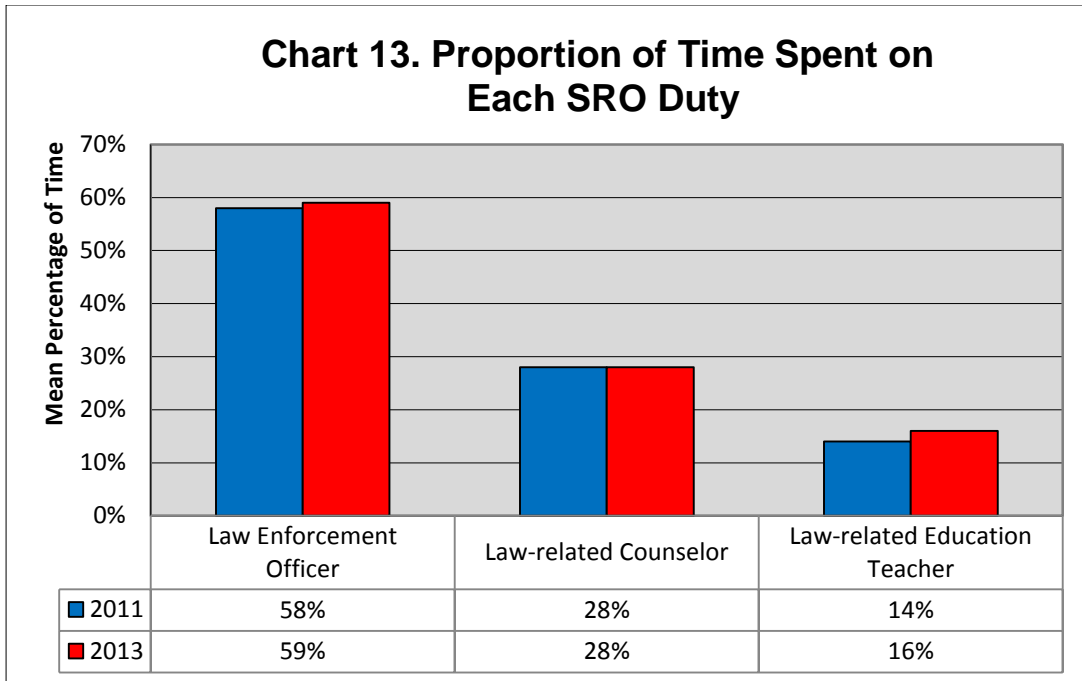
SROs were then asked how many hours per week they worked in the SRO role during the typical school year. The responses to that question are presented in Chart 9. Of the 174 SROs who responded, 64.9% worked full-time as SROs (40 hours per week) during the school year. More than one in five (21.3%) worked more than 40 hours per week. Small percentages had worked 20 hours or less (5.7%) or 21-39 hours (8.0%). Thus, the majority of SROs were full-time SROs during the school year, a trend that matches the findings from the four previous reports.



Respondents were then asked the number of schools for which they provided coverage. The responses to that question are presented in Chart 10. Of the 171 SROs who responded, one in four SROs (25.1%) were assigned to one school while more than one in three (37.4%) were primarily assigned to one school but were on call for other schools. Almost one in three SROs (29.8%) split their time between two schools. This percentage has *increased* by 20.9% since the survey was conducted in 2013. Only a small percentage of SROs (7.6%) were assigned to more than two schools. This percentage decreased by 23% since 2013. Thus, despite the fact that the optimal situation is one SRO per school, most officers are responsible for more than two schools or respond to other schools in their district and that trend appears to be increasing over time.

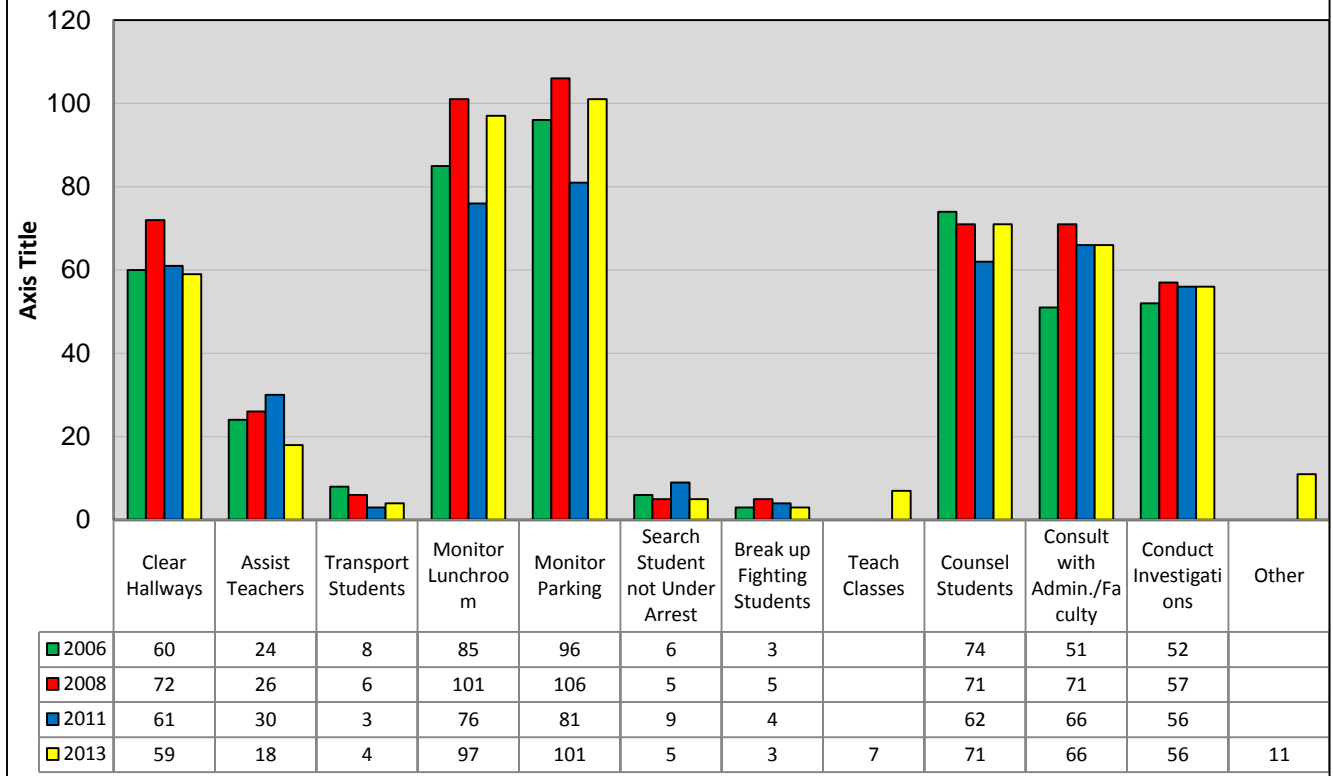


We then asked the SROs the grade levels of the school(s) to which they were assigned. The responses are presented in Chart 12. More than three in five (65.2%) SROs were assigned exclusively to high schools, while approximately one in five (20.3%) were assigned exclusively to middle schools. Only three officers (2.2%) were assigned exclusively to elementary schools. Of the remaining SROs who responded, 3.6% were assigned to schools of more than one level and 8.7% responded with other. Thus, SROs in Kentucky work primarily in the middle and high schools and this has been the case for each of the years for which we have data.

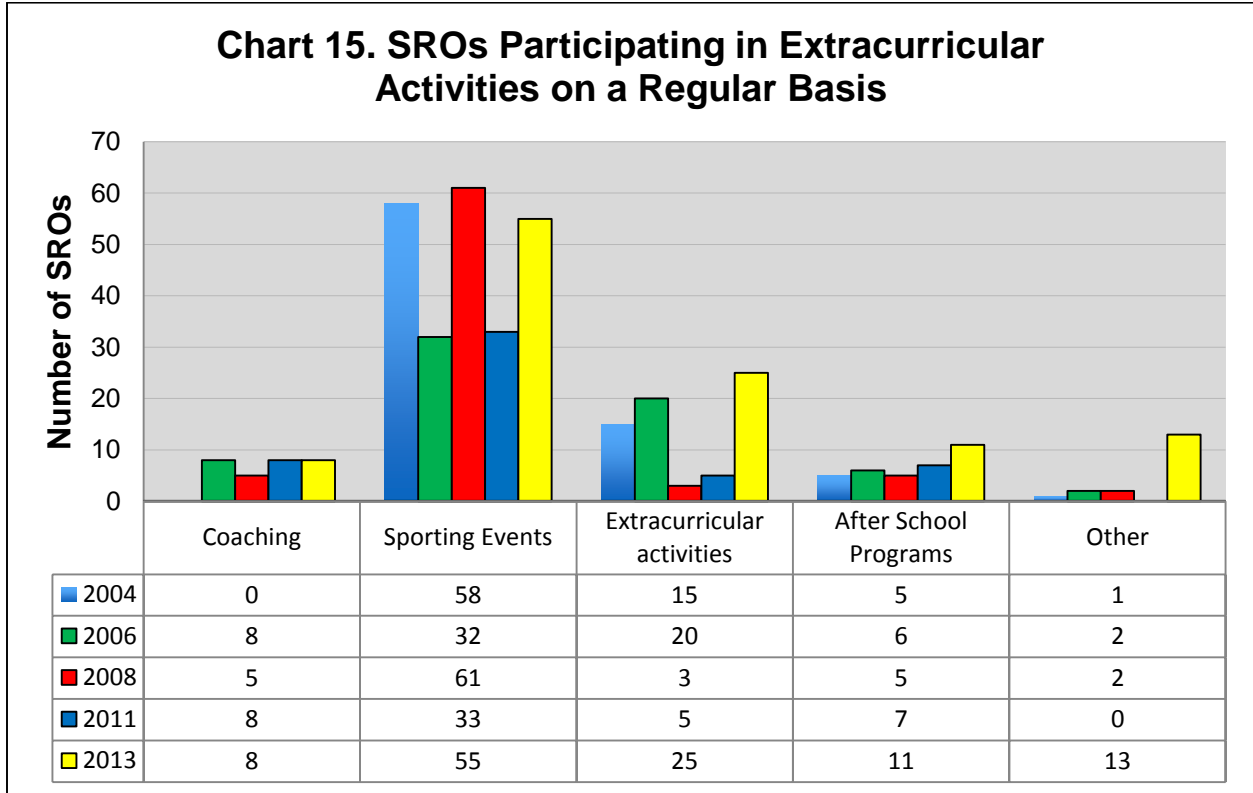


We then asked the SROs how much of their time was spent on each of the SRO duties that NASRO suggests comprise the SRO triad (law-related counselor, law-related educator, and law enforcement officer). The responses to those questions are presented in Chart 13. The SROs in this sample spent the majority of their time (59.0%) as law enforcement officers with less than half their time spent on law related counseling (28.0%) and an even smaller amount spent as law-related educators (16.0%). Thus, at least among this sample of SROs, the “triad” is not an accurate depiction of the way in which SROs actually spend their time. In fact, the SRO’s proportion of time spent on the three tasks would better be described as a “pie,” with one slice teacher, two slices counselor, and three slices law enforcement.

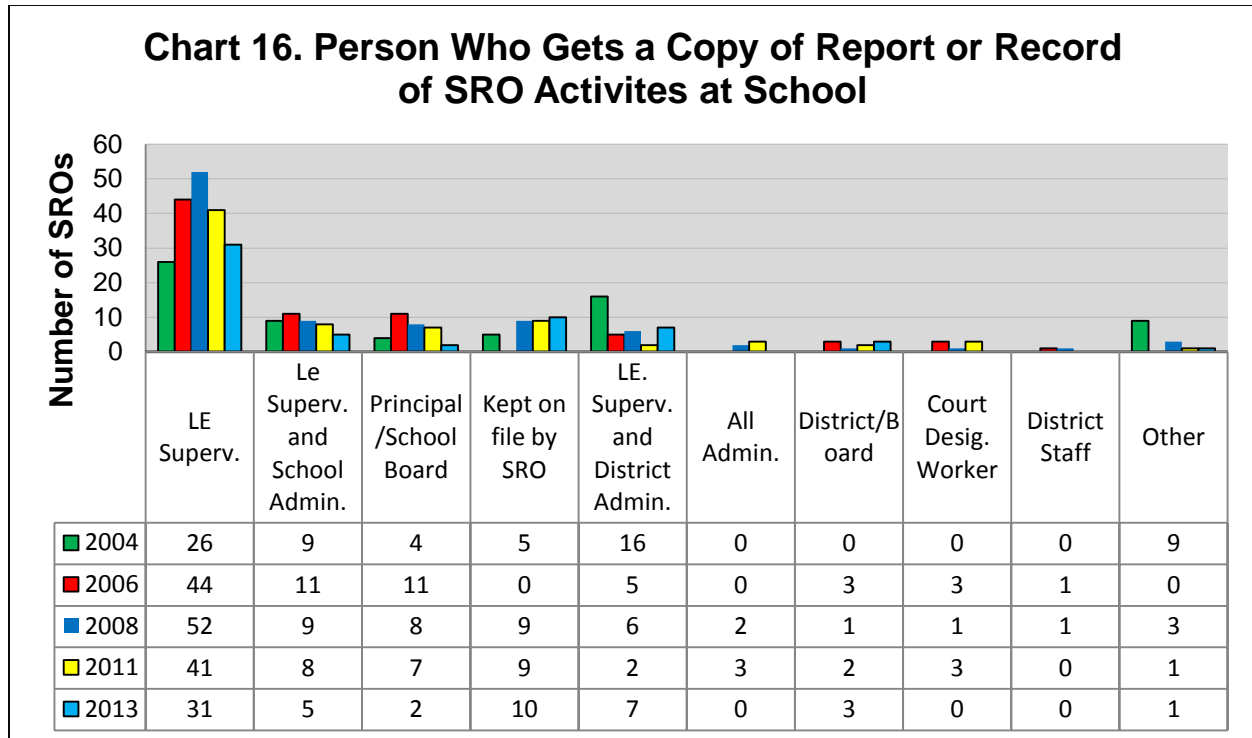
Chart 14. Activities Performed Daily at School



We then asked the SROs about the different types of activities they performed at their assigned schools and the frequency of those activities. The most frequently occurring activity that SROs performed daily was monitoring parking areas; three in four SROs (72.6%) did this activity daily. The second most common daily activity was monitoring lunchrooms (69.8% of the SROs performed this activity daily), then counseling students (51.0%), consulting with faculty and administration (47.4%), clearing halls (42.4%), and conducting investigations (40.3%). The activities that SROs performed less frequently were assisting teachers (13.0%), searching a student not under arrest (3.6%), and breaking up fights between students (2.2%), transporting students (2.9%), and teaching classes (5.0%). In a separate question in the survey, half of the SROs surveyed indicated that they also served as a sponsor for a student organization.



We then asked those SROs who said they participated in extracurricular activities on a regular basis to describe the activities in which they participated. Their responses are presented in Chart 15. The most common extracurricular event in which SROs were involved was sporting events.



We then asked the SROs if they maintained a written record of the activities they performed at school and, if they did, who received a copy of that record. The responses to that question are presented in Chart 16. Of the 59 SROs who responded to the question regarding (1) that they maintained a written record of their activities and (2) who provided information about what was done with that record, over half (52.5%) of the SROs said that the law enforcement supervisor in their department would get a copy. Only 1 in 10 (8.4%) SROs said both the law enforcement supervisor and the school administrator would get a copy of report while one in six (17.0%) reported they would maintain the copy of the report but not share it with others.

Table 1. SROs Perception of Seriousness of Problems During Past School Year

	2004	2006	2008	2011	2013
Theft	31	30	40	21	29
Disorderly Conduct	36	34	28	21	26
Violate Dress Code	41	32	28	27	27
Bullying/Harassment	31	30	24	29	31
Drug Possession	31	18	19	20	21
Fighting	21	23	14	12	7
Drug Distribution	36	14	14	15	15
Illicit Sexual Behavior	7	4	6	3	3
Sexual Harassment	10	8	5	7	3
Knife Possession	7	5	2	2	2
Bomb Threat	4	2	2	0	4
Possession of Other Harmful Objects	3	7	1	0	1
Possession of Gun	2	2	1	0	0

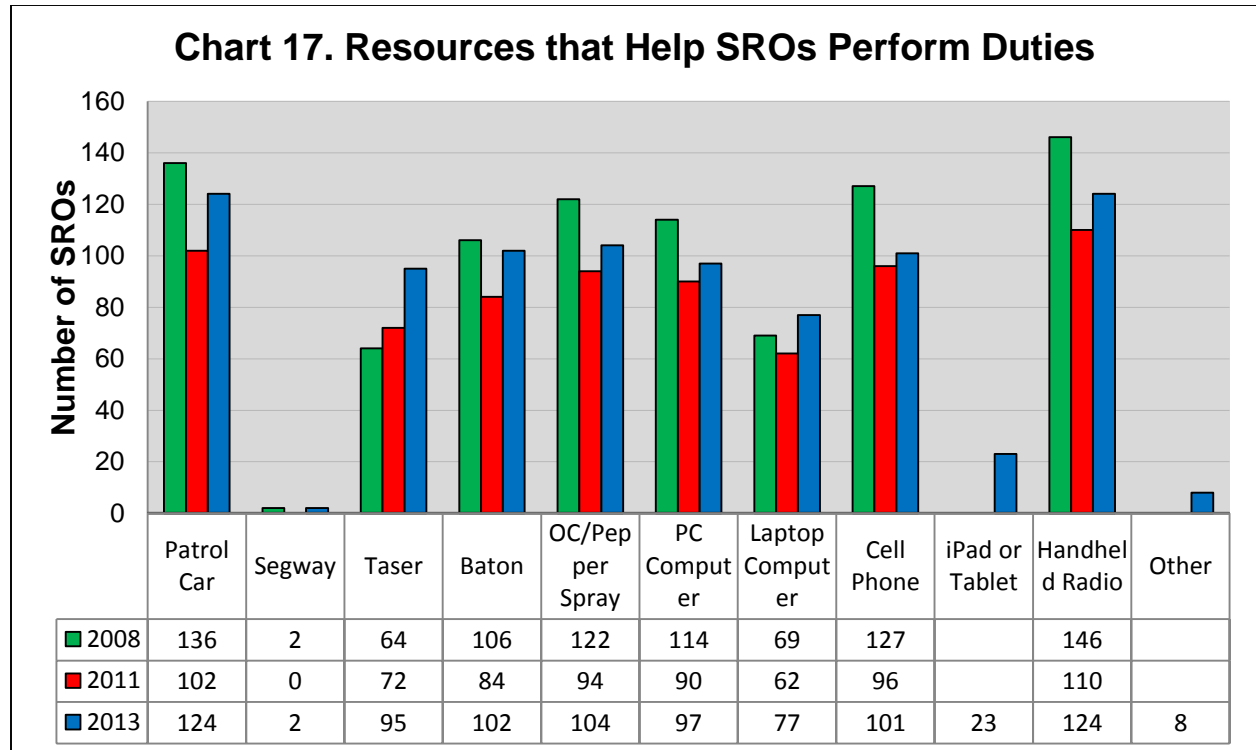
We then asked the SROs their perception of how serious a number of problems were at their school during the past school year. Their responses to those questions are presented in Table 1. Of the SROs who responded to these questions, approximately one in four (22.3%) thought that bullying/harassment was a serious problem at their school while one in five thought that theft (20.8%), violation of dress code (19.4%), and disorderly conduct (18.7%) were serious issues. Of the respondents who answered in this category, none thought that the possession of a handgun was a serious problem at their school.

Table 2. SRO Opinion of School Administrator

	2004	2006	2008	2011	2013
Welcome My Presences	120	112	140	105	122
Has Genuine Concern for Student	124	114	144	108	122
Has Genuine Concern for Teacher	121	113	142	105	122
Low Tolerance for Violence	122	111	140	99	120
Low Tolerance for Gangs	113	108	136	107	121
Low Tolerance for Drugs	124	113	140	103	121
Strict Enforcer of Rules	78	103	135	95	118
Cooperative with LE Investigations	119	112	135	103	123
Support SRO Program	119	111	104	104	123

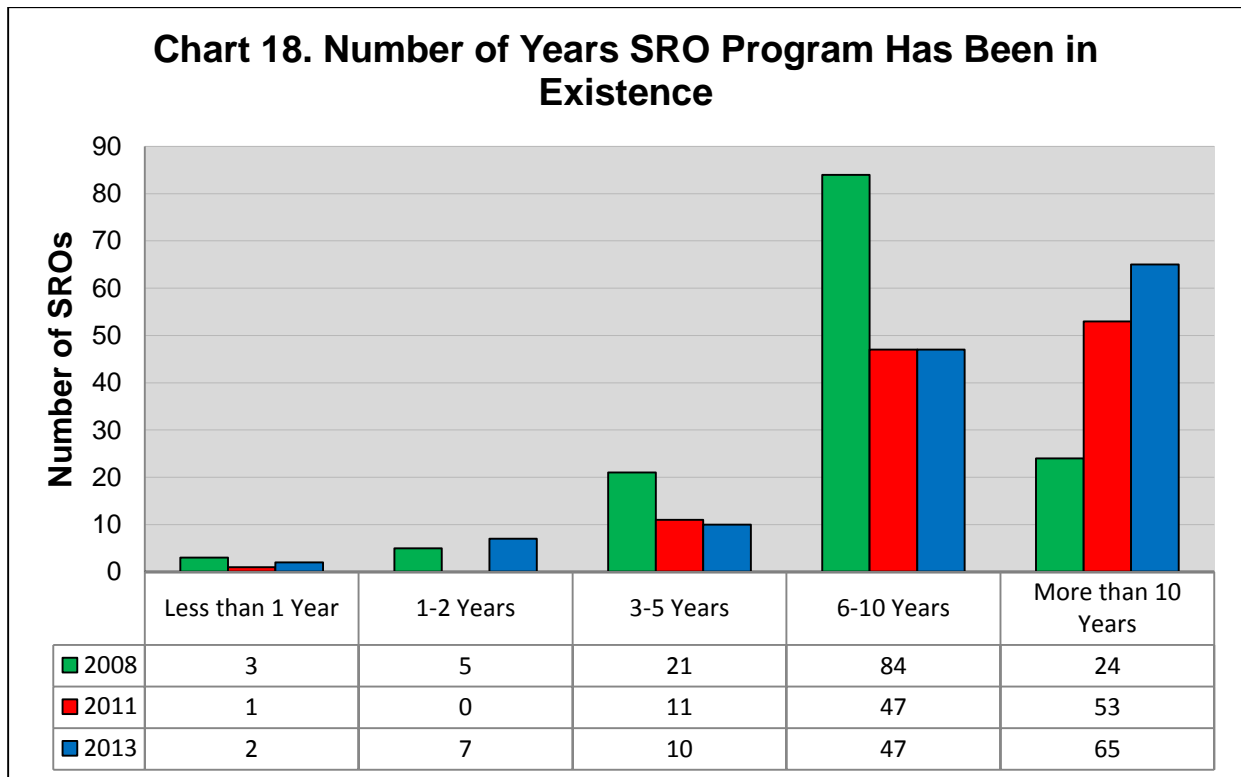
SROs were then asked a series of nine questions designed to allow SROs to give their opinion of the principal at their assigned schools. The responses to that series of questions are presented in Table 2. The vast majority of responding SROs had a high opinion of the principal at the school where they were assigned. The vast majority agreed that the principal at their assigned school: (1) welcomed their presence at the school (87.8%); (2) has a genuine concern for students (87.8%); (3) has a genuine concern for the teachers (87.8%); (4) has a low tolerance for violence (86.3%); (5) has a low tolerance for gangs (94.2%); (6) has a low tolerance for drugs (94.2%); (7) was supportive of the SRO program and was cooperative with law enforcement

investigations (88.5%). The vast majority also felt that the principal at their school was a strict enforcer of rules (84.9%). Overwhelmingly, then, the SROs who responded to this questionnaire thought that the principal at their school was making an effort to reduce crime and violence in the schools and support them in their role as an SRO.

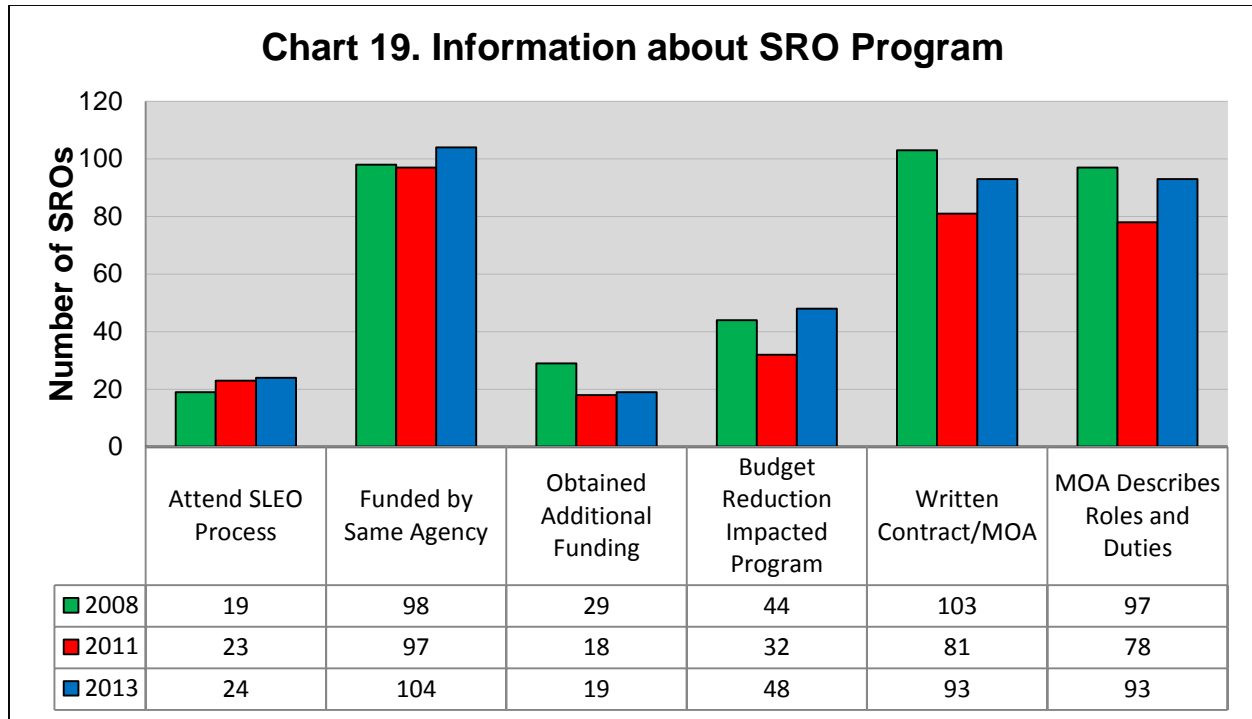


Based on feedback and questions we have received from SROs in earlier reports, we added a number of questions to the current questionnaire in 2008 to examine emerging issues among SROs. We began by asking SROs to identify a number of resources that were available to help them perform their assigned duties. Their responses to these questions are presented in Chart 17. Of the SROs who responded to these questions, the vast majority (89.2%) stated that they had access to handheld radios. Also, the majority (89.2%) stated that patrol cars were available to them at the school while three in four reported that they had access to OC/pepper spray (75.0%), batons (73.4%), and cell phones (72.7%) at the school. Less than three in four

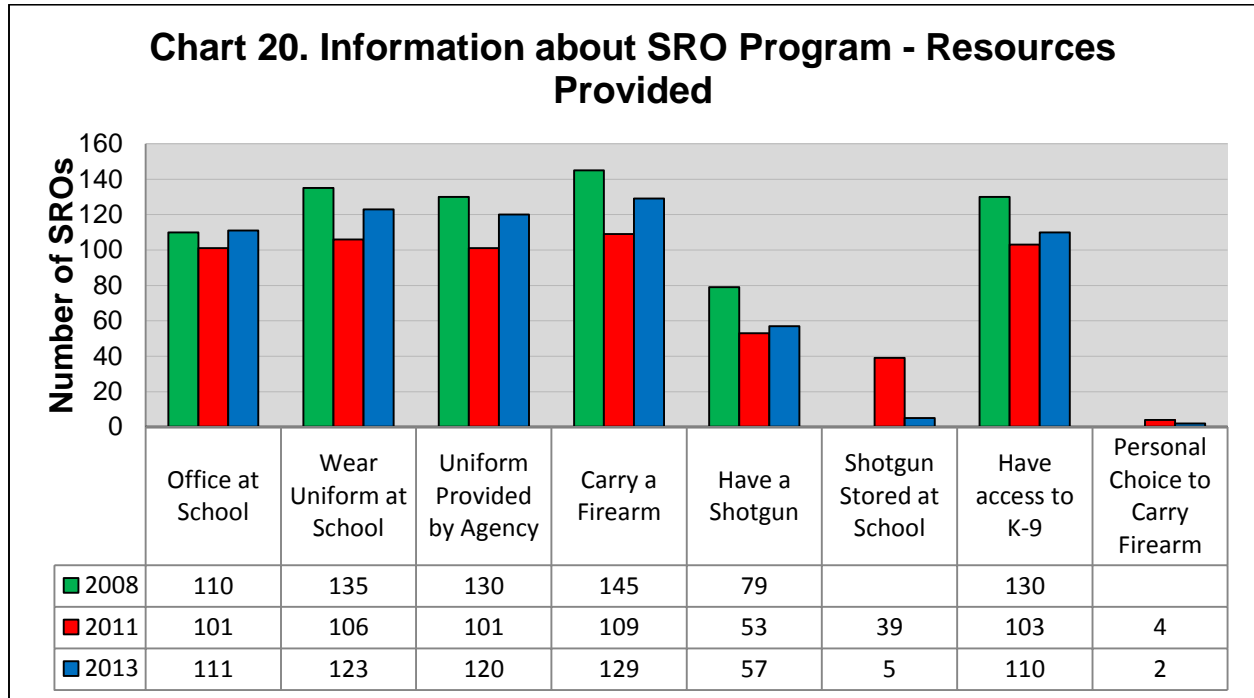
SROs reported having a taser (69.0%) while performing their duties at the school. The majority of SROs reported having access to a PC computer (70.0%) or a laptop computer (55.4%). One in six (16.5%) reported having access to an Ipad or tablet. Only two SROs reported having a Segway on their school campus.



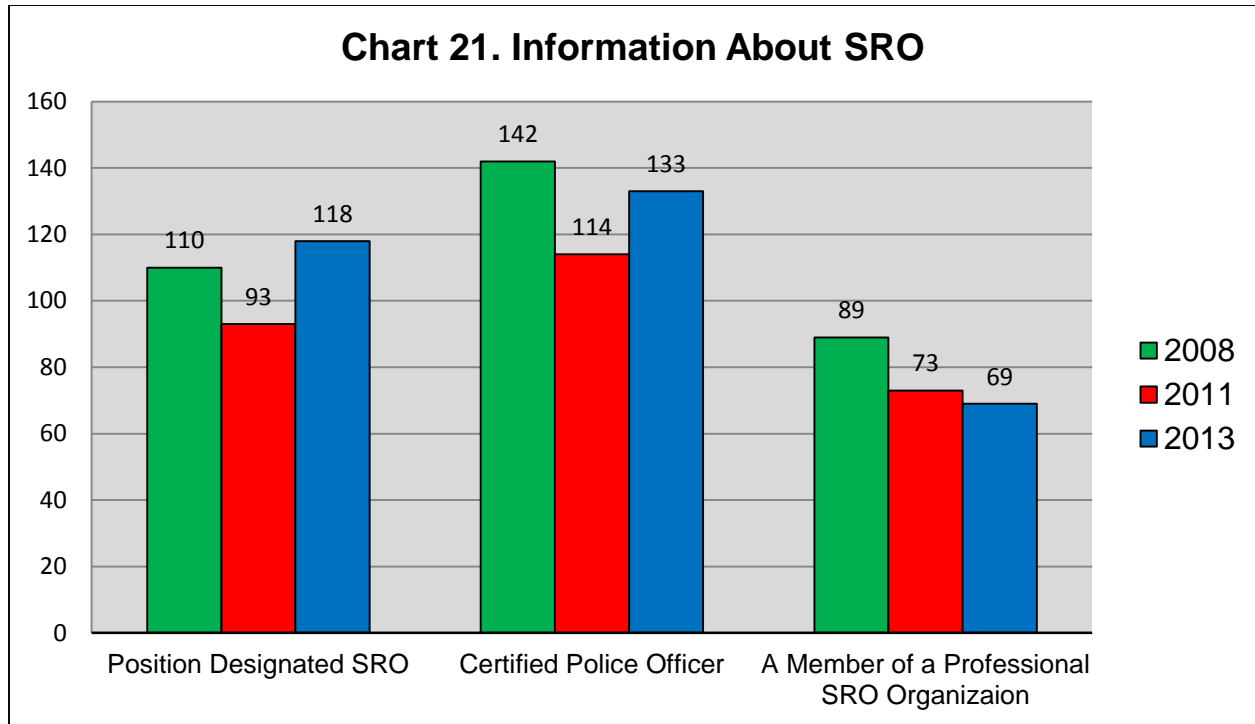
The SROs were then asked how long an SRO program had been in existence in the district to which they were assigned. These responses are shown in Chart 18. According to the 131 officers who responded that question, half of the SRO programs with which they were affiliated had been in existence for over 10 years (49.6%). More than one in three (35.9%) stated that the SRO program had been in existence fore 6 – 10 years. Only one in seven (14.5%) reported their SRO program being in existance 5 years or less. Overall, then, the SROs providing data for this study generally work in districts with well-established SRO programs.



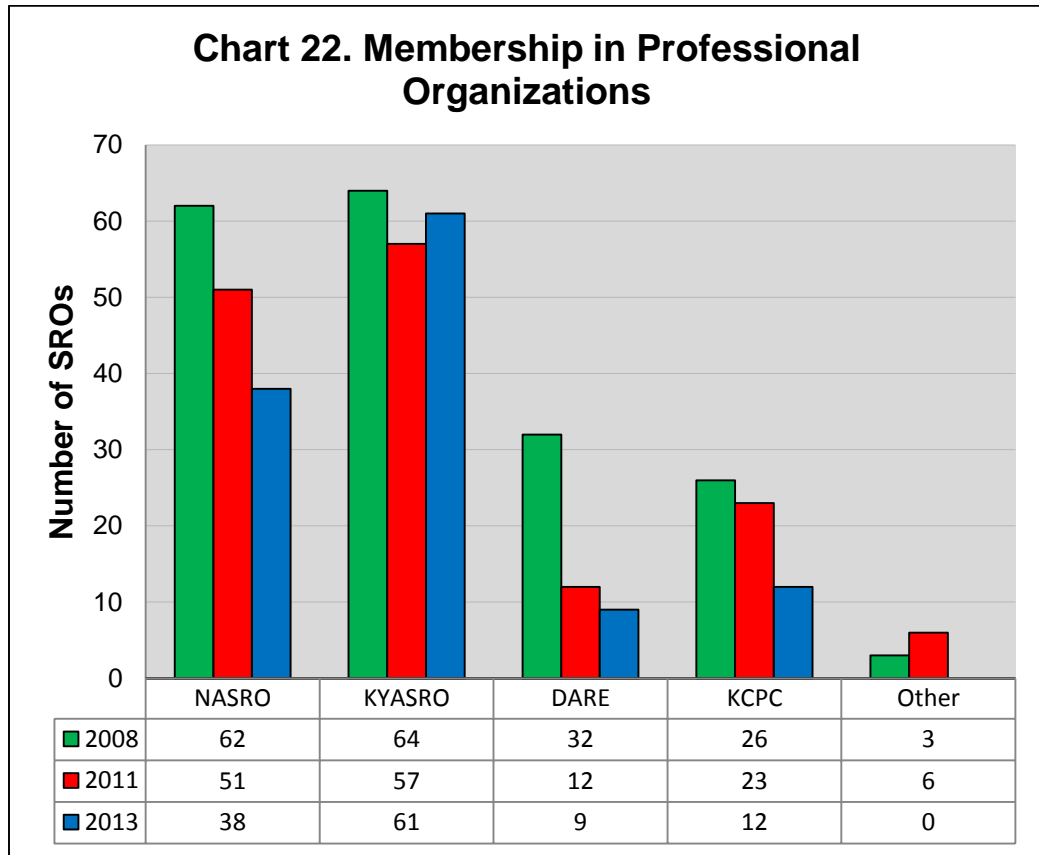
We then asked the SROs a number of questions about their SRO program. The responses are presented in Chart 19. Of the SROs who responded to the survey, over one in six (17.3%) stated that they were a Special Law Enforcement Officer (SLEO). The vast majority (74.8%) reported that since the SRO program began in the district, it had been funded consistently by the same agency. Less than one in seven (13.6%) stated that they had been able to obtain additional grant funds to support the SRO program in the district. More than three in ten SROs (34.5%) reported that the Safe School budget reductions over the past fiscal year had impacted the SRO program. Additionally, the majority of the SROs who responded (80.0%) stated that there was a written contract/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the school(s) where they worked as an SRO and the police department with whom they were employed. This is a 15% decrease since 2011. Finally, the vast majority of SROs (92.0%) who responded to this question, reported that the contract/MOA adequately described the role and duties of the SRO and the relationship between the school administration and the law enforcement agency to which they belonged.



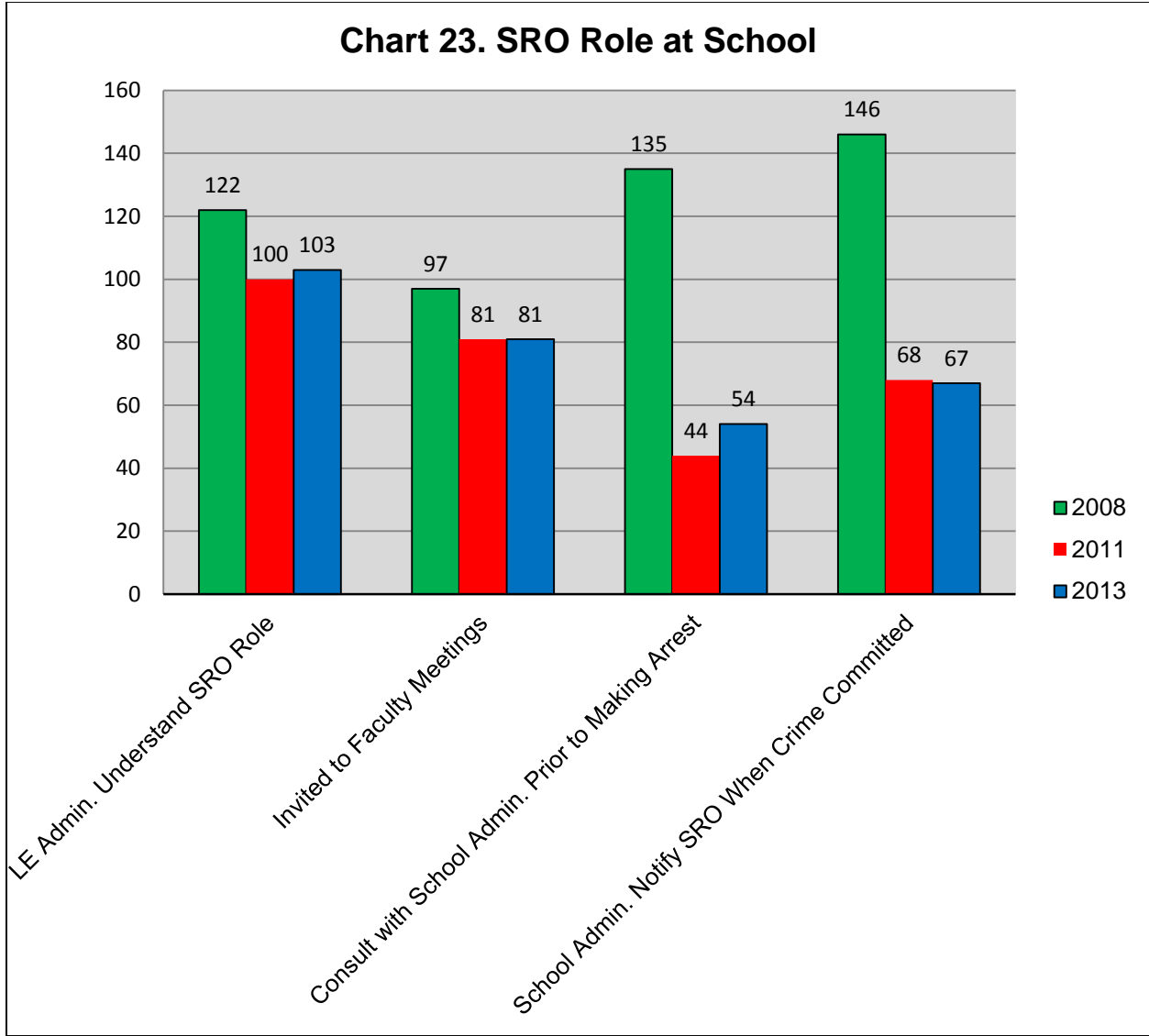
The SROs were then asked questions about their resources provided by the school and their law enforcement agency. The responses are presented in Chart 20. Of the SROs who responded the survey, 9 in 10 (94.8%) stated that they had their own offices located at school. Almost all of the SROs (96.1%) reported that they wore a uniform in their role as an SRO and that uniform was provided by the agency for which they were employed (96.0%). All but one officer (99.1%) carried a firearm on school property, while less than half of the officers (46.7%) had access to .shotgun on school property. Only one in ten (8.6%) had a gun safe in their school to store their shotgun. Additionally, over 9 in 10 SROs (91.6%) had access to canine patrol units for searches on the school property.



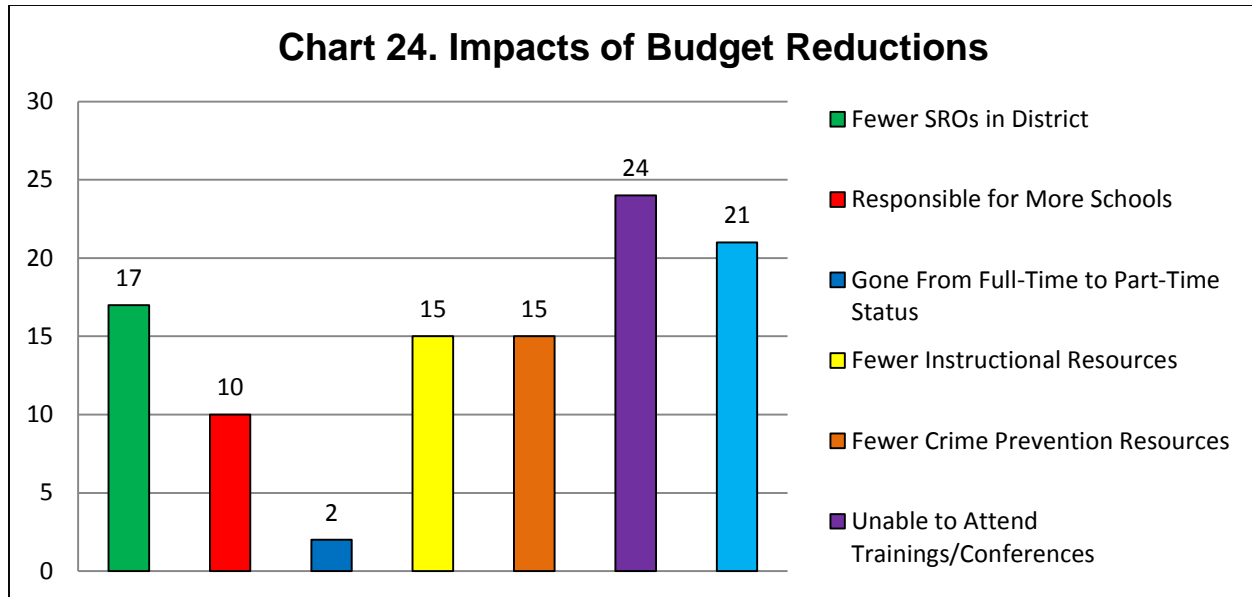
The SROs were then asked information about their positions. The responses are presented in Chart 21. Of the officers who responded the survey, more than four in five (84.8%) stated that their positions were designated “School Resource Officer”. The vast majority (95.7%) reported that they were certified police officers in Kentucky half (50.0%) stated that they were a member of a professional SRO organization.



For those who responded that they were a member of professional SRO organizations, we then asked that they list the organizations to which they belonged. The responses are presented in the Chart 22. Of the SROs that stated that they were member of professional SRO organizations, two in five (44.0%) belonged to the Kentucky Association of School Resource Officers (KYASRO). One in four (27.3%) reported being a member of the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). A small percentage (6.5%) belonged to Drug and Alcohol Reduction Education (DARE) and one in ten (8.6%) belonged to the Kentucky Crime Prevention Coalition (KCPC). The membership to NASRO, DARE, and KCPC has steadily declined since 2008.



We then asked the SROs about changes they would like to see take place and their perception of an effective School Resource Officer. The responses are presented in Chart 23. Of the SROs who responded, almost 9 in 10 (83.1%) stated that the law enforcement administrators understood their role while more than three in five (64.3%) reported that they were invited to faculty meetings. Less than half of the SROs (42.8%) stated that they always consulted with a school administrator prior to making an arrest on school property and more than half (53.2%) agreed that school administrators always notified them when a crime had been committed on school property.



Based on responses to previous surveys and reports based on that survey data, in 2011 we included a number of questions in the report that had not been previously examined. We first asked the SROs about the ramifications of budget reductions in their districts. The responses are presented in Chart 24. Of the 48 SROs who responded “yes” to the question that asked if the Safe Schools budget reductions over the past fiscal year had impacted their program, over half (52.1%) of them stated that they had been unable to attend trainings and conferences that they had previously been able to attend. Slightly fewer officers (45.8%) reported that the requests for new equipment had been unable to be met. One in three SROs who thought budget cuts had impacted funding stated that there were fewer SROs in their districts now and that they were responsible for more schools (37.5%). One in three (33.3%) stated that they had fewer instructional resources to help them do their job and agreed that they had fewer crime prevention resources to help them do their job (33.3%). Finally, three SROs had gone from full-time to part-time status because of budget cuts.

Chart 25. SROs Participation with School Emergency Plans

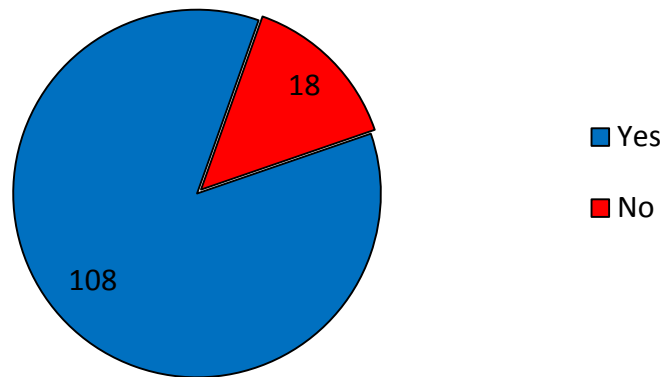
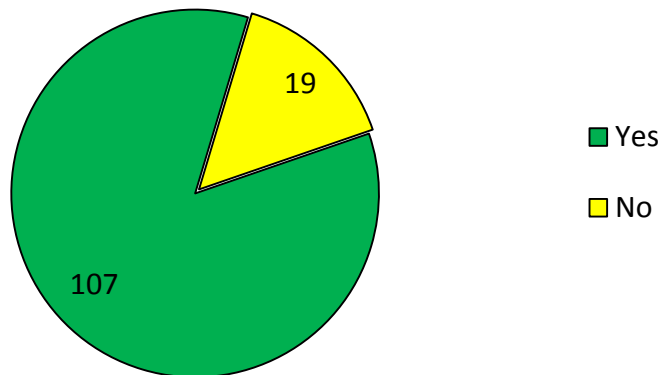


Chart 26. SROs Participation with School Lockdown Procedures



Finally, we then asked the SROs about their participation with emergency management planning and lockdown procedures. The responses to those questions are presented in Chart 25 and Chart 26. Of the 126 SROs who responded to those questions, the vast majority (85%) were asked by administration for their input and participation in both emergency management plans and lockdown procedures.

Conclusion

The results presented here suggest that the School Resource officer program continues to thrive in the state of Kentucky. Kentucky SROS are generally experienced law enforcement officers who enjoy their positions, work well with the school administrators at their school, and feel the schools in which they work are relatively safe environments. SROs generally work at least 40 hours per week in their positions as SROs and are generally assigned to more than one school (typically middle and high schools). Even though they respond that the majority of their time is spent in law enforcement duties, SROs engage in a wide variety of activities at school that would not traditionally be considered law enforcement activities (e.g., monitoring hallways, parking lots, clearing hallways, counseling students). SROs perceive disorderly conduct, theft, dress code violations, verbal harassment, and bullying as the most serious safety problems at their schools and have a wide range of ideas on how to solve these problems. Given the findings from this report, it appears that the SROs who work in schools in Kentucky work collaboratively with school administration and are an asset to the schools in which they perform their duties.