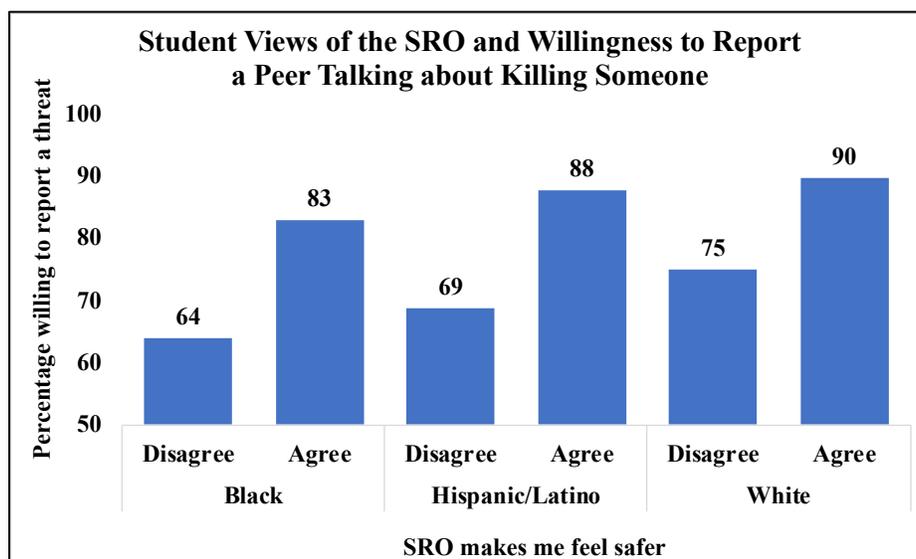


Practical Findings from the Virginia School Climate Survey

Students Who View Their SROs Positively Are More Willing to Report Threats

Because schools are safer when students are willing to seek help for a classmate who threatens violence, the 2020 Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey asked students whether they would report a classmate who talked about killing someone. Although most (83%) high school students are willing to report a threat, this study sought factors that would increase threat reporting. The 2020 survey obtained data from 99,363 high school students who were asked whether their School Resource Officers (SROs) make them feel safer at school (see [Issue 18](#)). Nearly three-fourths (72%) of students agreed (strongly agree or agree) that the SRO made them feel safer at school.

Students who viewed their SRO positively were markedly more willing to report a peer’s threat of violence (see chart). Black and Hispanic students were slightly less willing to report threats than White students, but the effect of a positive view of the SRO was stronger for Black and Hispanic students than for White students.



Note. The sample included students self-reporting as Black (13,278), Hispanic (of any race, 16,903), or White (52,665). Additional groups and analyses available in the technical report.

Practical Suggestions. Although these are correlational findings, they suggest that it is important for SROs to build positive relationships with students. Students are more likely to report threats to school adults when they perceive them as supportive and trust that they will be treated fairly. Students should learn about the importance of reporting threats and the threat assessment process from the school’s threat assessment team. The [National Association of School Resource Officers](#) has helpful advice on standards and best practices for SROs.

Study Overview. The Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey was administered in the winter of 2020 as part of the annual School Safety Audit (§ 22.1-279.8.A) by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) in the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Education. This project was supported by grant #NIJ 2017-CK-BX-007 awarded to the University of Virginia by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the researchers at the Youth Violence Project of the University of Virginia and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Center for School and Campus Safety at the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. More detailed analyses are available from the [Virginia Youth Violence Project](#). A full list of one-page research summaries is also [available](#).