

HIGH SCHOOL

Arrested Learning

A survey of youth experiences of police and security at school

National Summary

April 2021



Acknowledgements

This report was written by Kate Hamaji and Kate Terenzi (Center for Popular Democracy), in collaboration with staff and young people from Make the Road New York (MRNY), Make the Road Nevada (MRNV), Latinos Unidos Siempre (LUS), the Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC), and the the Research Hub for Youth Organizing at the University of Colorado Boulder.

We are deeply grateful to the organizers and youth leaders who shaped and fielded this survey and the young people who shared their powerful stories, experiences, and expertise. They are the true authors of this report.



The Center for Popular Democracy

The Center for Popular Democracy is a nonprofit organization that promotes equity, opportunity, and a dynamic democracy in partnership with innovative base building organizations, organizing networks and alliances, and progressive unions across the country.

www.populardemocracy.org



The Research Hub for Youth Organizing at the University of Colorado Boulder

The Research Hub for Youth Organizing supports young people's capacity to claim power and create more just communities through field-driven research. They advance youth participation and leadership by co-creating and sharing research and curriculum with youth organizers, teachers, education leaders and policy makers. Taphy T, Kathryn Wiley, Daniel Garzón, Joanna Mendy, and Ben Kirshner contributed significant research and writing to this report.

www.colorado.edu/education-research-hub



Make the Road Nevada

Make the Road Nevada (MRNV) builds the power of Latinx and working-class communities of color to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, and transformative education. MRNV's vision for Nevada begins with building a strong grassroots foundation in Las Vegas. It ends with elevating the power of working-class immigrant communities in every community around the state. They organize in Latinx and immigrant communities, and develop leaders who advocate for their families, their neighborhoods, and beyond.

www.maketheroadnv.org



The Urban Youth Collaborative

Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC) is a coalition of students from across New York City fighting for transformative education reform that puts students first, with a focus on replacing harmful policing in schools with restorative justice and trauma-informed care. The UYC coalition is made up of members from the Future of Tomorrow of Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, Make the Road New York, and Sistas and Brothas United of the Northwest Bronx.

www.urbanyouthcollaborative.org



Latinos Unidos Siempre

The mission of Latinos Unidos Siempre (LUS) is to work towards the educational, cultural, social and political development of youth of color, by empowering youth to take leadership roles in the community, advocating for social and political change and other forms of systemic and institutional oppression through grassroots organizing.



Make the Road New Jersey

Founded in November 2014 in Elizabeth, Make the Road New Jersey (MRNJ) builds the power of immigrant, working-class and Latinx communities to achieve dignity and respect through community organizing, legal, policy innovation and transformative education. Every week, hundreds of immigrant families - young people and adults - come together to fight for dignity and respect in their communities.

www.maketheroadnj.org

National Summary

The school-to-prison-and-deportation pipeline refers to the policies and practices that punish, isolate, marginalize, and deny access to supportive learning environments for Black, Brown, Latinx, Indigenous, immigrant, and LGBTQIA+ youth, as well as young people with disabilities, instead funneling them into the criminal legal system. For years, Black and Brown youth, parents, educators, and communities have organized to dismantle this system, and to remove police and security from their schools.

To uncover critical information about students' experiences, interactions, and feelings about police and security at school, four community-based organizations across the country fielded in-depth surveys of their youth membership: Latinos Unidos Siempre (LUS), Make the Road Nevada (MRNV), Make the Road New Jersey (MRNJ), and the Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC). The results of this national survey, which reached 630 young people in Nevada, New Jersey, New York, and Oregon, clearly reinforce what young people have already made known: police and security at school do not make them safe. The survey also explored young people's vision for supportive and well-resourced schools.



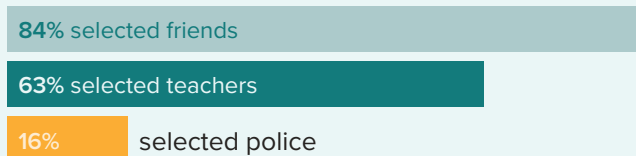
National survey findings include the following:

Respondents (with police at school) have experienced a pattern of disturbing behavior in which school police:*

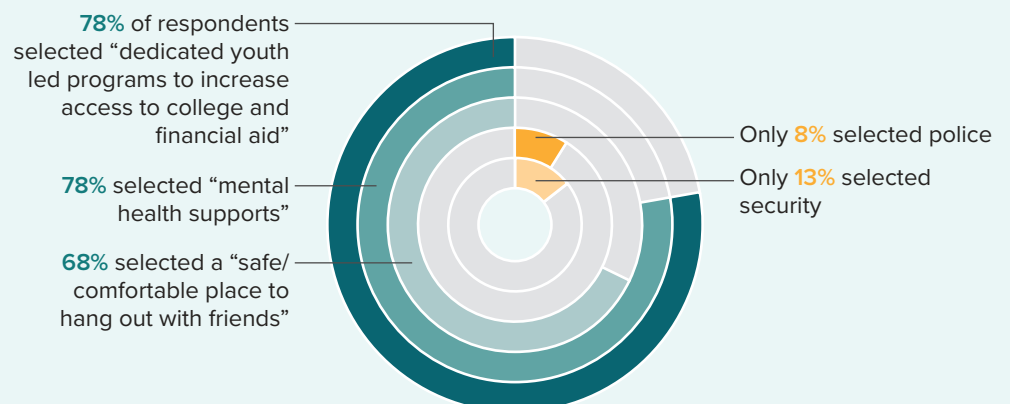
- **Bully, abuse, and traumatize young people:** For example, one in five respondents reported police verbally harass or make fun of students (20%).
- **Prevent young people from learning while at school:** For example, half of respondents reported police taking students out of the classroom (50%).
- **Force young people into the criminal legal system and advance punitive techniques:** For example, more than a quarter of respondents reported arrests at school (26%).
- **Sexually harass young people:** In three out of four jurisdictions, young people experienced or knew someone who experienced sexual harassment at the hands of police at school.

Police and security at school do not make students feel safe, especially compared to other people students interact with at school, like teachers and friends.

When asked what makes respondents feel safe (when physically attending school),

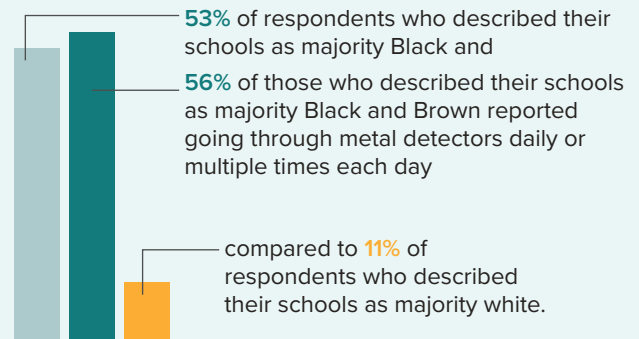


When asked what they would like to see more or better quality of at school, students overwhelmingly selected resources, programs, and supports—not police or security.



* Percentages refer to respondents who reported having experienced, or having known someone who has experienced, negative interactions with school police.

Students at majority Black and majority Black and Brown schools were more likely to go through metal detectors than students at majority white schools.



Additionally, Black and Latinx respondents were often more likely to be targeted with metal detectors than white respondents. Of those with metal detectors at school:

34% of Black respondents have had their belongings taken, compared to 14% of white respondents



19% of Black respondents have been yelled at, compared to 8% of white respondents



34% of Black respondents and 22% of Latinx respondents have been made to take off their shoes, versus 7% of white respondents.



Introduction

For more than three decades, Black and Brown youth, parents, educators, and communities have organized to dismantle the school-to-prison-and-deportation pipeline—one of the most egregious examples of systemic racism and state sanctioned violence in our country. The school-to-prison-and-deportation pipeline refers to the policies and practices that punish, isolate, marginalize, and deny access to supportive learning environments for Black, Brown, Latinx, Indigenous, immigrant, and LGBTQIA+ youth, as well as young people with disabilities, instead funneling them into the criminal legal system.

There is no substantial evidence that such practices make schools any safer.¹ However, there is evidence that placing law enforcement in schools increases referrals to the criminal legal system. Studies show that students are more likely to be arrested and referred to the criminal legal system when school police are present.² The presence of law enforcement makes it more likely that students of color will be arrested for low-level offenses,³ with Black students facing the highest rates of arrest when police are present in schools.⁴

The presence of law enforcement at school also increases the formal processing of offenses and exclusionary disciplinary responses (e.g. suspensions and expulsions).⁵ Black and Latinx students, as well as students from low-income families experience the largest increases in discipline when police are in their school.⁶ The kinds of incidents that result in white students being referred to a principal or counselor end in Black students being referred to the police and prosecutors, despite no difference in behavior.⁷ These policies have an especially harsh impact on immigrant and undocumented students, who can face detention and deportation for even low-level offenses.⁸ Not only are police more likely to target Black and Latinx students, but

they are also more likely to be deployed to schools with higher percentages of students of color.⁹

No amount of public money should go to funding a set of policies so sweeping in both their failure and harmful impact, yet the school-to-prison-and-deportation pipeline costs billions of taxpayer dollars each year.¹⁰ Despite the lack of evidence to support policing in schools, school districts—aided by states and the federal government—continue to funnel millions of dollars each year into policing and the criminalization of Black and Brown young people, while underinvesting in the very resources and supports that truly keep them safe. School surveillance is now a \$3 billion a year industry, which means that each year billions of taxpayer dollars are going to private companies for technologies and equipment used to “harden schools.”¹¹

“ There’s something that I think is so deeply wrong about the fact that a person on campus gets to just walk around with a gun on them. From the past year you can obviously see that cops have a power dynamic issue and I don’t feel comfortable with cops on campus having a gun and being able to use it.

Federal agencies such as the Department of Education and Department of Justice (DOJ) have provided some school districts with military grade weapons¹² and have established grant programs contributing over \$1 billion to “school safety” funding which subsidizes more than 7,240 school resource officers (SROs).¹³ SROs are sworn law enforcement officers deployed to schools.¹⁴ Exposure to a three-year federal grant for school police is associated with a **2.5%** decrease in high school graduation rates, a **4%** decrease in college enrollment rates, and a **6%** increase in middle school discipline rate.¹⁵

State and local funding for school police has increased in recent years as well. Several state legislatures have recently passed legislation enabling the funding of school police and security equipment.¹⁶ Local school district budgets also continue to funnel millions of dollars towards school police, surveillance equipment, and other criminalizing infrastructure.¹⁷



Meanwhile, schools face a chronic underinvestment in guidance counselors, teachers, and school nurses, as well as mental health supports, restorative justice, and culturally responsive learning materials and education.¹⁸

To uncover critical information about students' experiences, interactions, and feelings about police and security at school, four community-based organizations fielded in-depth surveys of their youth membership: Latinos Unidos Siempre (LUS), Make the Road Nevada (MRNV), Make the Road New Jersey (MRNJ), and the Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC). The results of this national survey, which reached 630 young people in Nevada, New Jersey, New York, and Oregon, clearly reinforce what young people have already made known: police and security at school do not make them safe. Findings reveal that respondents often feel targeted by police; that respondents have regular, negative interactions with police and security; and that they overwhelmingly favor

“ I've seen incidents where police have been called in for mental health crises, and it hurts because the way they handle us is not right. Why do they feel it is necessary to handle us this way?

additional resources and supports (like mental health resources, more teachers, and dedicated youth programs to increase college access) over increased funding for police and security.

Young people's vision for police-free schools is possible, and support for this call is growing. In 2020, rooted in the history of many longstanding campaigns led by young people of color, the country saw unprecedented progress towards police-free schools. As just a

few examples, Oakland, California, voted to dismantle its school police department,¹⁹ and places like Milwaukee,²⁰ Minneapolis,²¹ Portland,²² and Madison,²³ all ended school district contracts with local police departments. In total, nearly 40 school districts have taken some action towards removing police from schools.²⁴ **Now is the time to remove police and security from all schools, investing instead in support for young people's education, creativity, and joy.**

Youth Survey Overview

Four community-based organizations who are fighting to dismantle the school-to-prison-and-deportation pipeline in their states—Latinos Unidos Siempre (LUS) in Salem and Keizer, Oregon; Make the Road Nevada (MRNV) in Clark County, Nevada; Make the Road New Jersey (MRNJ) in Elizabeth, New Jersey; and the Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC) in New York City—fielded in-depth surveys with 630 young people between November 2020 and January 2021. The survey was designed to uncover critical information about students’ experiences, interactions, and feelings about police and security at school. The survey also explored young people’s vision for supportive and well-resourced schools.

Latinos Unidos Siempre (LUS)

In recent years, LUS has been calling on Salem-Keizer School District leadership to end the presence of police in schools as the first step to dismantling the school-to-prison-and-deportation pipeline. LUS is also organizing against systemic racism and organized white supremacy in their community. LUS organizers have attended and testified at school board hearings, have hosted marches and demonstrations, and are actively working with the community and local organizations to dismantle and abolish the school-to-prison-and-deportation pipeline.

Make the Road New Jersey (MRNJ)

MRNJ’s Youth Power Project (YPP) has launched a campaign to remove all law enforcement personnel from New Jersey public schools and to redistribute funds to restorative justice practices and student services. This campaign is led by members of the YPP—young people of color whose lives have been impacted by the carceral state, either through direct involvement with the juvenile justice system, school discipline or arrest, or a parent’s incarceration or deportation. MRNJ’s YPP has convened a table of partners (state-wide and local teacher groups, advocacy groups, and youth groups) to take action that involves providing testimony at local school board and/or state budget meetings, hosting Facebook and Instagram livestreams to educate peers, creating a TikTok series, and direct action and mobilization through COVID-safe marches and rallies.

Make the Road Nevada (MRNV)

MRNV and its members have been active in the fight to dismantle the school-to-prison-and-deportation pipeline. Their Youth Power Project (YPP) Youth Council was formed in 2019 by young people who wanted to create more opportunities for youth leaders to engage in local grassroots organizing and fight for issues that build the power of Latinx and working class communities of color. Their goal is to achieve dignity and justice through policy innovation and transformative education. In 2020, the YPP Youth Council decided to launch a campaign for police-free schools in Clark County. They proposed a school board resolution, testified at school board meetings, and have worked to implement critical legislation at the statewide level, all developed and led by their youth leaders.

Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC)

Founded in 2004, UYC is a citywide coalition of youth organizations. In recent years, UYC has won city-wide reforms to address the full consequences of the school-to-prison-and-deportation pipeline in New York City. They have had many victories over the years. In just the past two years, UYC’s work with local allies resulted in a reduction of the maximum number of days a young person could be forced out of school for a suspension from 180 to 20, the hiring of more student support staff, citywide restorative practices, and changes to school police policies which limited the use of handcuffs. Their long term impact is also reflected in the data in which (while acknowledging the impact of COVID-19) showed an 82% reduction in the number of arrests and an 84% reduction in the number of court summons issued in schools between the 2016-2017 and 2019-2020 school years.²⁵

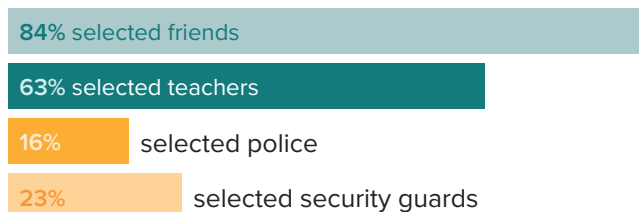
Youth Survey Findings



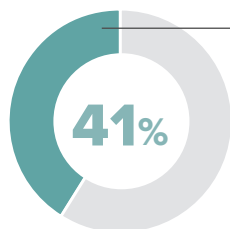
Police and security at school do not make students feel safe.

Police and security at school do not make students feel safe, especially compared to other people they interact with at school, like teachers and friends.

When asked what makes respondents feel safe (when physically attending school),



The percentage of Black respondents who selected police and security was even lower: Only **14%** of Black respondents selected police and **19%** selected security guards.



Of respondents with police at school, **41%** said they feel **unsafe** or **very unsafe** when they see police at school.

“ I feel traumatized by them and purposely avoid seeing them or interacting with them.

A third of respondents have felt targeted by police based on an aspect of their identity.

33% of respondents have felt targeted by police based on race, primary language, sexual orientation, or gender identity, including identity as transgender, gender non-conforming, and intersex.



Of respondents with police at school, nearly half (48%) reported that police are armed with guns.

“ I do not feel safe because I've witnessed their abuse of power and refusal to help me when I asked. . .because they did not take me seriously. They also ridicule the students and try to make them feel small.

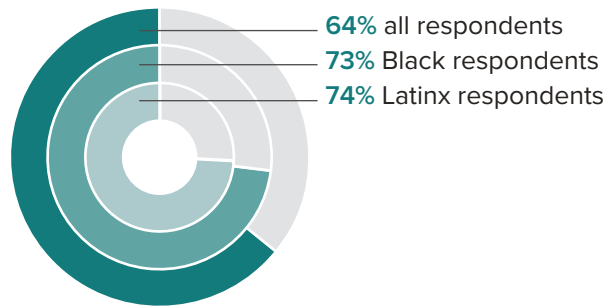
“ I believe security guards in my school do not contribute to students' safety and education. [They] interrupt my class. . .to take people's hoodies and harass students. . .

2

Interactions with and sightings of school police and security guards are common, frequent, and often harmful.

Of respondents with police at school, nearly two thirds (64%) reported having experienced, or having known someone who has experienced, at least one type of negative interaction with school police.

The share of Black and Latinx respondents who reported having or knowing someone who had one of the below experiences was even higher: **73%** of Latinx respondents and **74%** of Black respondents.



Respondents (with police at school) have experienced a pattern of disturbing behavior in which school police:*



Sexually harass young people:

- In **three of the four jurisdictions** young people experienced or knew someone who experienced sexual harassment at the hands of school police.



Bully, abuse, and traumatize young people, for example by:

- Verbally harassing or making fun of students (reported by **one in five** respondents)
- Physically assaulting students (**10%**)
- Pepper spraying students (**10%**)
- Responding to a mental health crisis (**13%**)



Prevent young people from learning while at school, for example by:

- Taking students out of a classroom (**50%**)



Invade young people's physical autonomy, for example by:

- Physically searching students (other than walking through a metal detector) (**34%**)
- Restraining students (**25%**)



Force young people into the criminal legal system and advance punitive techniques, for example by:

- Arresting students (**one in four** respondents)
- Having police respond when a student misses school (**19%**)
- Issuing juvenile reports (**18%**)
- Issuing tickets to go to court (**16%**)

These types of interactions can have devastating impacts for young people. One study found that experiencing an arrest for the first time in high school nearly doubles the odds of a student dropping out, and a court appearance nearly quadruples the odds of a student dropping out.²⁶ Students who were first arrested during the 9th or 10th grade were six to eight times more likely to drop out of school than students who were not arrested.²⁷ Rather than reduce school violence, scholars have found that the presence of police merely criminalizes typical adolescent behavior, such as disorderly conduct, even among similarly situated schools.²⁸

“Students have been handcuffed and treated poorly by the officers. It's a shame our school has more officers than mental health resources.”

“A police officer at school once told me that he was gonna lock me and my friends up in juvenile, that he was just waiting for the perfect time to do it.”

* Percentages refer to respondents who reported having experienced, or having known someone who has experienced, negative interactions with school police.

“ Police were trying to break up a fight and suddenly used mace on a large crowd of students (including those who were spectating), resulting in a lot of students waiting outside the nurse’s office to receive help for their eyes.

“ I was in school for not even 30 minutes when I got called out of my credit recovery class. I got sent to the behavior specialist and was called a gang banger because of my belt. I got racially profiled for how I dressed while the white girls in my school would wear blue bandanas and nothing would happen to them.

“ Once this security guard was harassing me and [had] mistaken me for another student named Juan. This was extremely racist, he kept insisting that I was that student and was asking me why I was lying when I wasn’t.

Students see police at school regularly, including nearly two thirds who see police at school on at least a daily basis.



Of respondents with police at school, **65%** saw police in and around school at least once a day in an average month.

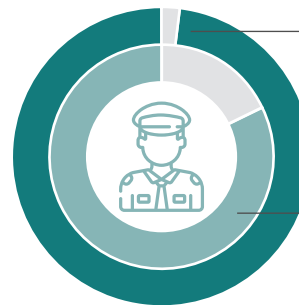
Of these, **14%** saw police 6–10 times daily, and **16%** saw police more than *10 times per day*.

Young people who attend predominantly Black and Brown schools are constantly surrounded by police.

Respondents who said they attend schools that are majority Black or majority Black and Brown were more likely to report high numbers of police sightings: **37%** of respondents attending majority Black schools and **28%** of respondents attending majority Black and Brown schools saw police more than 6 times a day, compared to **16%** of respondents attending majority white schools.

Sightings and interactions with school security guards are also common and frequent.

Of students with security guards at school, **72%** reported at least monthly interactions with security guards (in an average month), with **22%** reporting daily interactions.



98% of respondents saw security guards in and around their schools at least once in an average month.

84% report at least daily sightings.

Of these, **23%** of reported seeing security 6–10 times a day and **21%** reported seeing security more than *10 times per day*.

Research has shown that over time, the **mere presence** of police may have psychological effects on students’ “nervous and immune systems that may result in anxiety, restlessness, lack of motivation, inability to focus, social withdrawal, and aggressive behaviors.”²⁹

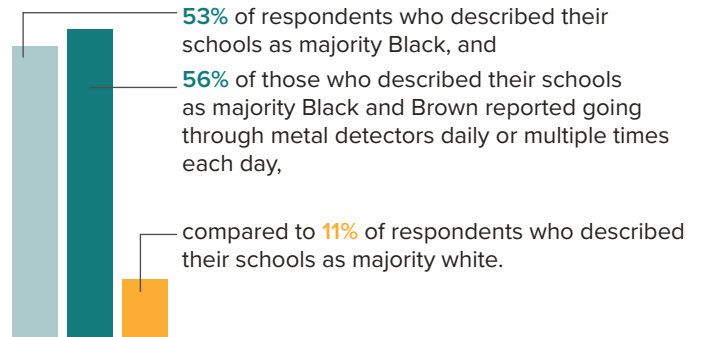
Community studies suggest these adverse consequences are compounded when a person perceives that the negative interaction is motivated by race. Racial discrimination can lead to generalized anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental health issues.³⁰ Racial disparities within disciplinary practices also have broader psychological repercussions for communities of color. A series of recent studies revealed that biased treatment caused youth of color to lose more trust for school officials compared with their white peers, which was further correlated with reduced college attendance.³¹



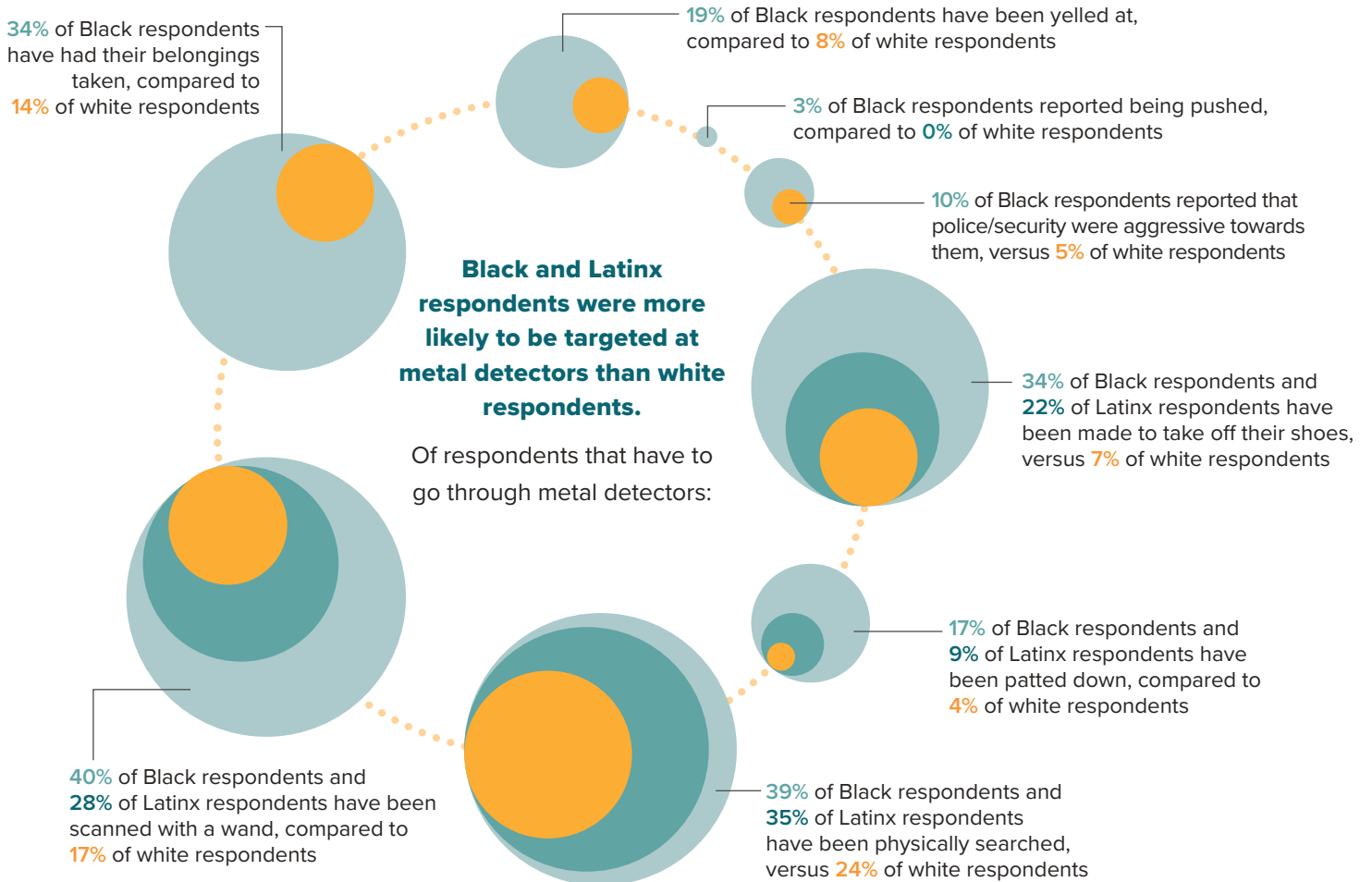
Students go through metal detectors regularly, and many have negative experiences with them.

Trends in responses reveal that the placement and use of metal detectors is racist.

Respondents who described their schools as majority Black and majority Black and Brown were more likely to go through metal detectors daily or multiple times daily, compared to respondents who described their schools as majority white.



“ I don't enjoy going through the metal detectors. It takes a lot of time [in] the morning. It makes me nervous and causes anxiety. . . for me. . . because I don't know what they will take and if they will take my markers or belongings. It affects my grades and relationships with teachers by making me late in the mornings. I don't like it.





More than half of respondents reported being subjected to metal detectors, and most go through metal detectors at least once a day.



55% of all respondents reported having to go through metal detectors.
Of these respondents, 40% reported going through metal detectors at least once a day.

Nearly all respondents reported that students are required to go through metal detectors, but that teachers and other staff are less likely to face the same requirement.

Of those who are required to go through metal detectors,

96% reported that students are required to go through metal detectors

96%

26% reported that teachers, and 22% who reported that school staff, have to go through metal detectors

26%

22%

14% reported that police, and 15% who reported that security guards, have to go through metal detectors.

14%

15%

Going through metal detectors is experienced as an invasive process for respondents.

For example, of those who go through metal detectors,

59% of respondents reported that their bags have been physically searched;

51% have been scanned with a wand;

40% have been made to take off their shoes, belt, jewelry, or other articles of clothing; and

38% have had their belongings taken.

“ One time, police wanded me and asked me to pull my shirt up, and it was very uncomfortable for me because they were treating me as if I was stealing something.

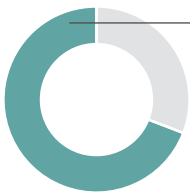
“ [Metal detectors] hold up students from getting to class on time. You could arrive at 7:40AM with enough time to make it to class if not for the extensive line at the metal detectors. When we're late to school, we get detention.

4

Overwhelmingly, students value more support and resources over police and security.

Studies show that investments in counselors,³² mental health resources,³³ and restorative justice³⁴ contribute to school safety, yet there is no substantial evidentiary support for the proposition that police presence in schools and zero-tolerance policies (like suspensions) create safe learning environments.³⁵

More than two thirds of students think police should be removed from schools.



Of those with police at school, **69% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed** with the statement: “Police should be removed from my school and my school should have more support and resources for students (for example, up to date books, more teachers, academic services, counseling, health, restorative practices, etc.)”

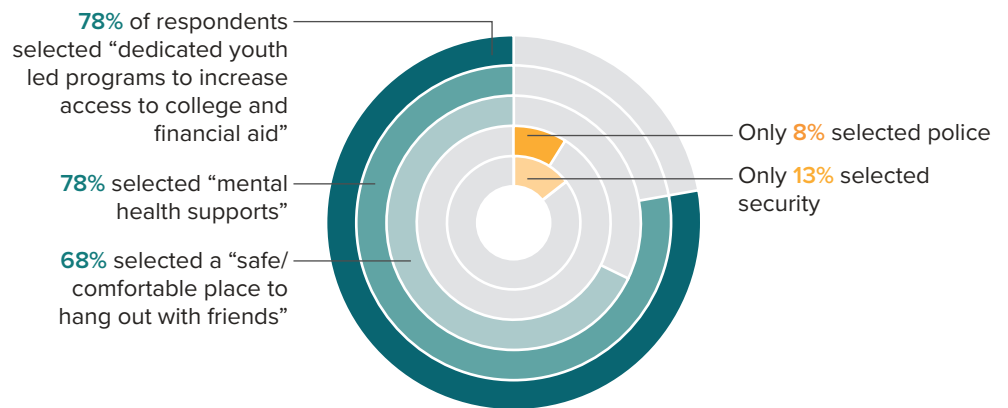
Students would rather increase funding for resources like teachers, nurses, social workers, and mental health supports over police.



When asked to rank investments in order of priority, **most students ranked teachers and mental health supports as the highest priorities** (33% and 44% ranking these options as #1, respectively).

By contrast, more than three fourths of respondents **ranked police as the lowest priority (77%)**.

When asked what they would like to see more or better quality of at school, students overwhelmingly selected resources, programs, and supports—not police or security.



“ I just feel like things would be way better in schools if cops weren’t there - it would be a better experience for students of color. We already have to worry about other [stuff] outside of school, we shouldn’t have to deal with racist cops in a building where we need [to] be learning, not being policed.

Although the majority of respondents value other school personnel over police, most students think there are more police at school than nurses and guidance counselors.



Of respondents with police at school, **half (50%)** said they think their school has **more police than guidance counselors.**

82% of respondents said they think their school has **more police than school nurses.**

Respondents who described their student body as **majority Black or majority Black and Brown reported that there are more police at their schools than guidance counselors at higher rates** than respondents who described their student body as majority white. (68% and 50% respectively, versus 43%).

“ I want to see my school and other schools in my city reconsidering their security measures more closely and invest in another type of security for their students which is about their health and success, what actually matters; when we get hurt we need more nurses, when we get hurt emotionally or have problems at home/friends, we need psychologists, when we want to improve our academic chances to get into a good college, we need counselors.

Conclusion

Whether in New York City; Elizabeth, New Jersey; Clark County, Nevada; or Salem or Keizer, Oregon, the data makes clear that the presence of police does not support students' learning. When asked what makes them feel safe, the vast majority of respondents named teachers and friends—not police and security—as the people at school who make them feel safe. Instead of more police and security, they envisioned dedicated youth programs to help with college application and safe spaces to hang out with friends. Overwhelmingly, they ranked teachers and mental health supports as funding priorities over police and security.

Now is the moment to support and invest in young people's vision for police-free schools.

At every level of government, elected officials must follow the vision of young people. **Black and Brown young people all across the country believe in police-free schools. To achieve police-free schools, every level of government must, to the fullest extent of their power, dismantle school policing infrastructure, culture, and practice; end school militarization and surveillance; and build a new liberatory education system.**³⁶ To accomplish this we must dismantle the power that police have over Black youth, youth of color, immigrant youth, youth with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ youth. We must return power and control over schools and safety to communities, and build a liberatory education system that reflects the society we want to create.³⁷

Youth Mandate

Guidelines for All Levels of Government

These demands, released as part of the **Youth Mandate for Education and Liberation** (youthmandate.com), were developed by the organizations who participated in this survey as well as other organizations across the country. The demands emanate from years of local fights to dismantle the school-to-prison-and-deportation pipeline. This mandate outlines transformative, anti-racist policies to guide the nation and school districts across the country towards building supportive and inclusive learning environments for all students and families, and seeks to redress the harm created by past policies. It has been endorsed by more than 150 youth-led organizations and allies across the country.

I Fund education not incarceration

- A Remove police from schools and divest all funds from police and criminalizing infrastructure in schools.
- B End surveillance of young people including by removing metal detectors, surveillance cameras, banning facial recognition software, prohibiting social media tracking, and ending all other forms of invasive surveillance.
- C Invest in effective non-punitive culturally responsive school climate strategies like restorative justice, mental health supports, and hiring counselors and social workers.
- D Fully and equitably fund public schools, including programs for students with disabilities and schools in low-income communities.
- E Support a pipeline to college, including by providing free access to college and universities and eliminate barriers to entering higher education.

II Restore and strengthen the civil rights of young people in education

- A Provide maximum local democratic control of the education system. Support youth suffrage, especially on elections impacting their education.
- B Ensure that Black and Brown young people have meaningful input into the process to select educational leaders who have a proven track record of working to dismantle the school-to-prison-and-deportation pipeline.
- C Fully fund and staff civil rights and equity offices.
- D Ensure that all school policies are inclusive, non-punitive, and trauma-informed, including ones related to school discipline, immigrant students, LGBTQIA+ students, and students with disabilities, among others.

III Uplift public education; end the private takeover of schools

- A End state and tax-payer funding for charter schools and voucher programs.
- B Implement a moratorium on the expansion of charter schools.
- C Fund the Sustainable Community Schools model.

For this mandate to be realized, local, state, and federal elected officials must take decisive action now.

Methodology and Survey Sample

Survey findings were the result of a 55-question survey conducted by staff and youth leaders from Latinos Unidos Siempre (LUS), Make the Road New Jersey (MRNJ), Make the Road Nevada (MRNV), and Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC) from November 2020 to January 2021. The survey sample included 630 young people living in Salem and Keizer, Oregon; Elizabeth, New Jersey; Clark County, Nevada; and New York City. To take the survey, respondents had to be 21 years old or younger and have attended public school within the last year and a half. Incomplete responses were removed from the sample, except responses that were complete except for the demographic questions (16 respondents).

Respondents were asked to answer questions based on their experiences prior to COVID-19 school closures.

Student Demographics

Respondents identified as: Latinx (63%), Black (21%), white (12%), Asian or Pacific Islander (9%), Native American (1%), and other (5%). (Note: respondents were able to “check all that apply.”)

Respondents’ most commonly spoken languages were English and Spanish. For the majority of students, Spanish was the primary language spoken at home (47% of respondents), followed by English (44%).

Respondents identified as female (63%), male (34%), non-binary/gender non-confirming (3%) and transgender (0.7%).

Respondents were in 6–12th grade or currently not in school (but had attended school within the last year and a half). The majority of respondents were in 10th, 11th, or 12th grade (13%, 26%, and 33% of respondents, respectively). 17% of respondents were not currently in school.

School Demographics

36% of respondents characterized their schools as having an “equal mix of students of color and white students,” 31% as having “majority Black and Brown students,” 14% as having “majority Brown students,” 12% as having “majority white students,” 3% as having “majority Black students,” and 5% as “other.” 49% characterized their schools as having an “approximately equal mix of students from households with low, middle, and high incomes.” 41% of respondents characterized their schools as having a “majority of students from homes with low incomes,” and 10% as having a “majority of students from households with middle and high incomes.”

This data reflects respondents’ assessment of their schools. The report authors did not validate this with demographic data provided by schools or the district.

Endnotes

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