Input from the Focus Group Sessions Regarding SRO Survey Results

WCPSS Safety and Security Committee Meeting

February 24, 2021

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Desired Outcomes

- Receive an overview of the Focus Group Sessions that were designed to gain deeper understanding of the SRO survey results

- Gain insight into the input collected from the Focus Group Sessions facilitated with stakeholders

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SRO Program Review

Preview of Discussion

- SRO Incident Data Findings

- Fall SRO Survey Findings

- SRO Focus Group Results

- Similarities Across Data Collections

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Context: SRO Incident Data Findings

SRO Incidents and Referrals

- 75 SROs at 75 schools within the district
  - 34 HS
  - 37 MS
  - 4 ES SROs support 10 different schools

- Offenses declined between 2017 and 2018, and have held steady since then

- Referrals have shifted toward less punitive consequences over the past few years

- Slight improvements in disproportionality among student subgroups

Context: Fall Survey Findings

Survey Results

- Over 54,000 respondents

- A majority of respondents (parents, students, staff, and community) reported favorable perceptions overall and see SROs as an important part of the school security plan

- Many respondents were unsure or unaware about SROs and their role in the school

- Modest differences among subgroups (e.g., grade span & racial/ethnic groups, etc.)

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SRO Focus Groups

Focus Group Logistics

- December through early February: focus groups convened to explore themes to better unpack the survey findings

- 15 total sessions
  - Students
  - Teachers
  - Principals
  - Parents/Community Members
  - Local Law Enforcement Officers
  - Central Services Security Staff

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Focus Group Process (*continued*)

- Consistent protocols and questions were used with every group for fairness and to allow analysis across stakeholder groups

- The facilitator guided the participants through a dialogue using the following format:
  - The session facilitator introduced the first question and the participants had 1-2 minutes to respond in writing
  - A group dialogue then occurred based on the comments the participants entered for the specific question (10-12 mins. per question)
  - Comments were unpacked until a deeper understanding was gained
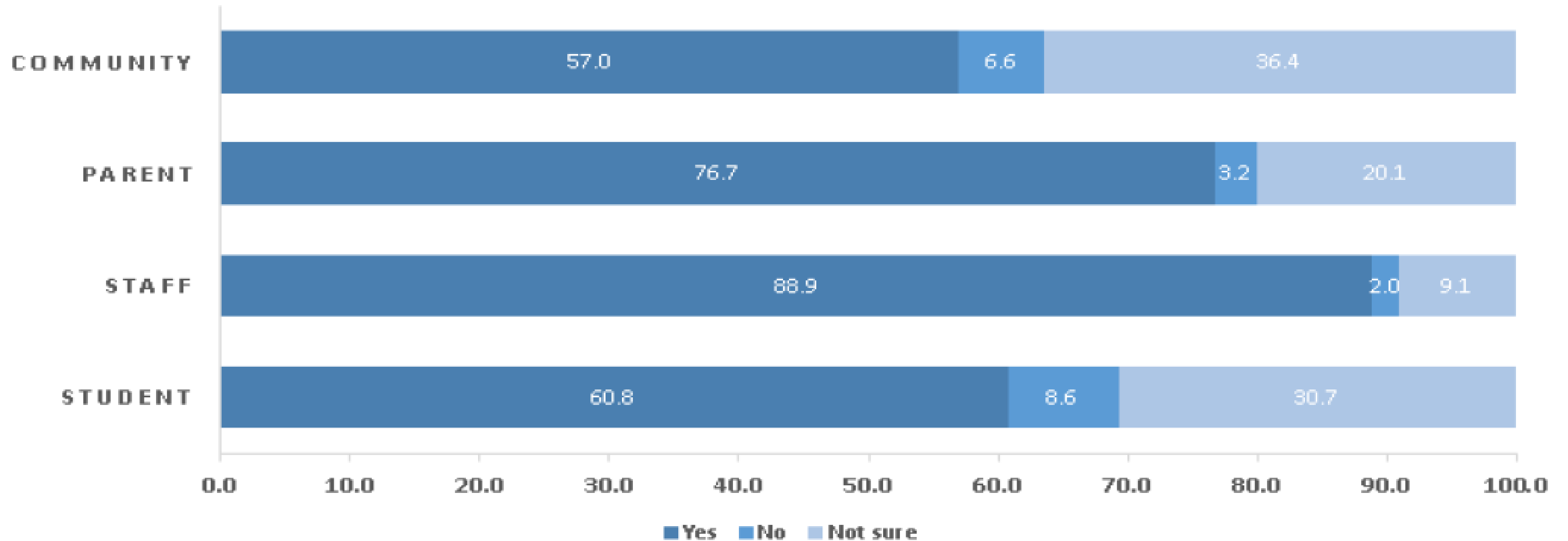 - The focus sessions lasted approximately one hour

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SRO Focus Groups

Focus Group Process

- Conducted online via Google Meet
  - One facilitator, one notetaker, one tech support
  - Multiple reminders to participants ahead of time

- Sampling strategy for participants strikes a balance between wide representation of voices *and* ensuring that stakeholders who are most invested were given opportunity

- Survey results summary shared with participants as context for the conversation

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Do you think most WCPSS students are treated appropriately by the SRO in your school?

	Yes	No	Not sure
COMMUNITY	57.0	6.6	36.4
PARENT	76.7	3.2	20.1
STAFF	88.9	2.0	9.1
STUDENT	60.8	8.6	30.7

■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure

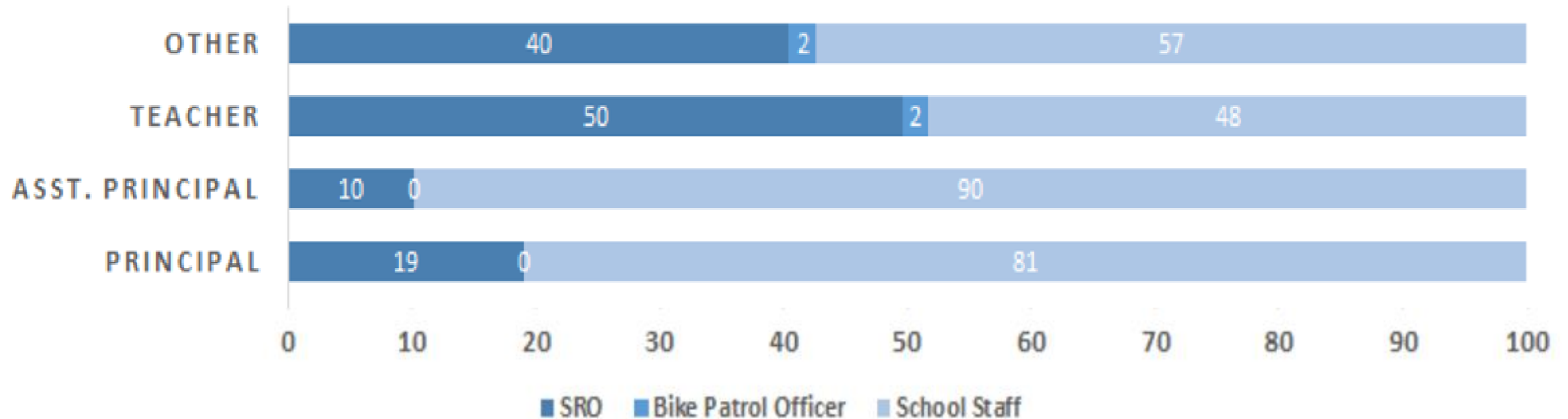**WAKE COUNTY**
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SRO Focus Group Results

Among respondents, a theme that emerged from the comments shared. . . .
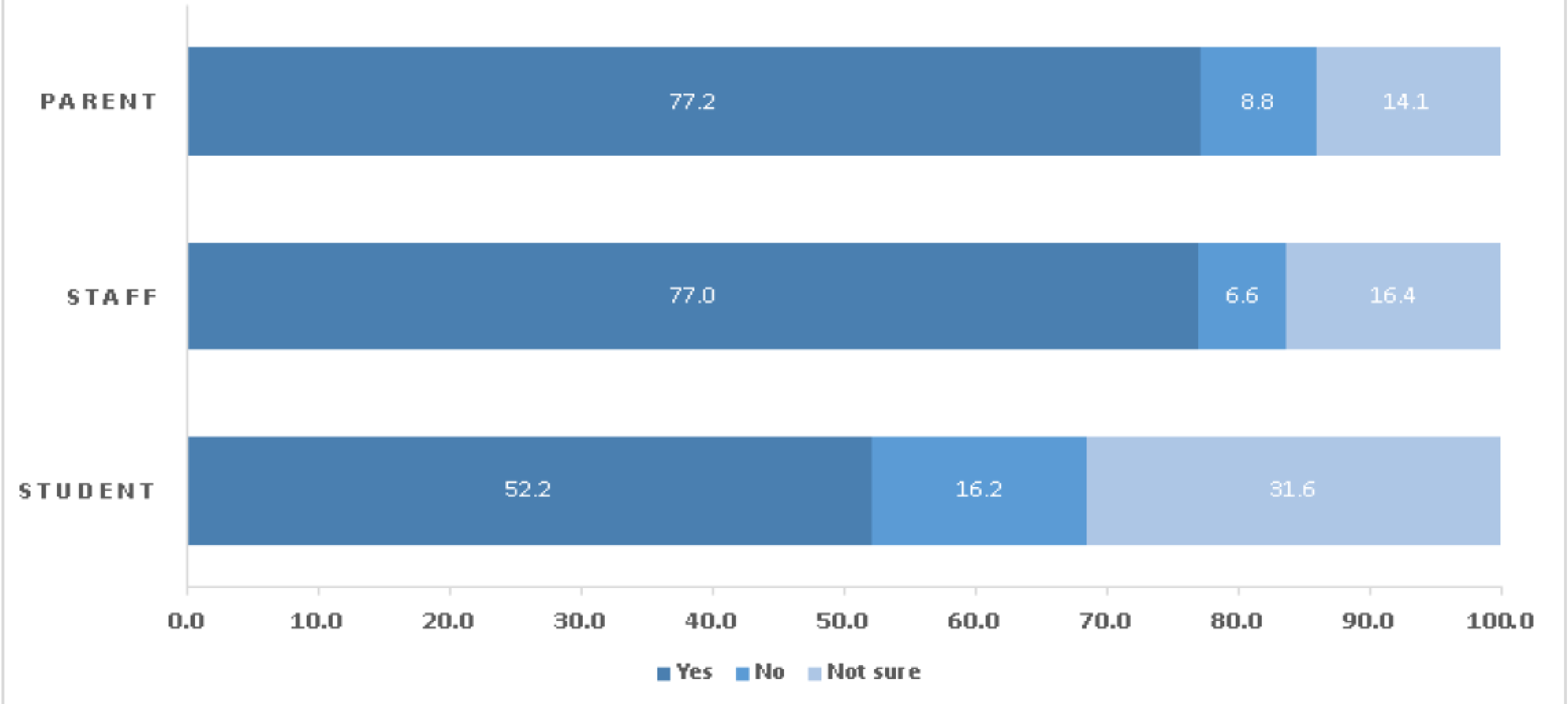
The role of SROs is not clearly defined, communicated, and understood by all stakeholders.

Who should be the primary responder - students fighting?

Does the presence of an SRO at your school help create a welcoming environment?

	Yes	No	Not sure
PARENT	77.2	8.8	14.1
STAFF	77.0	6.6	16.4
STUDENT	52.2	16.2	31.6

■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure

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Among respondents, a theme that emerged from the comments shared. . . .

The frequency of positive, non-disciplinary interactions and intentional relationship-building are key determinants of how SROs are perceived.

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Other Similarities Looking Across Data Collections

SRO Incident Data

Survey Results

Focus Group Results

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Equity as a Theme

- <u>SRO Incident Data</u>: From 2016-17 through 2018-19 there has been a decrease in referrals, particularly for Black and Hispanic students. Yet there is still disproportionality.

- <u>Surveys</u>: Responses were very positive overall. There are subgroups of stakeholders, especially among students, who were less positive.

- <u>Focus Groups</u>: Some felt that the disproportionate impact speaks to the need for changes; others felt that there is no role for police in schools.

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The Selection of an Officer in a SRO Role as a Theme

- <u>Number of SROs in WCPSS</u>: 75 SROs at 75 schools within the district (34 HS SROs support 28 schools; 37 MS SROs; 4 ES SROs support 10 schools)

- <u>Surveys</u>: Schools should have more say in who is assigned; Respondents reflect interest in more training for SROs

- <u>Focus Groups</u>: Some SROs see themselves as police first; might need more counselors, etc., for those non-law enforcement functions instead

Summary Across Data Sources

- Incidents and number of referrals are trending in the right direction overall. Disproportionality, however, remains a concern.

- The majority of stakeholders have positive perceptions of SROs. Areas suggested for focus are to reduce ambiguity and even some pockets of negative perceptions, particularly among certain subgroups of stakeholders.

- Focus groups suggest that a lack of communication and definition of the SRO role, along with a lack of intentionality around positive relationship building may be a missed opportunity and could be driving some of the negative and ambiguous responses in the survey data.

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Dialogue and Questions

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WHAT **STARTS** HERE **CHANGES** EVERYTHING.

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