

# Fears About School Safety Decline

Parents are less fearful about their children's safety at school this fall than at any time in the last three years, according to a Gallup Poll released Wednesday. In another survey, however, school safety officers say significant safety threats persist in the nation's schools.

According to the [Gallup Poll](#), conducted Aug. 4-6, 24 percent of parents of children grades K-12 said they fear for their oldest child's safety when he or she is at school. Seventy-six percent said they do not.

When Gallup asked the same question in June 1998, shortly after several shooting incidents at schools across the country, 37 percent of parents said they feared for their child's safety at school, while 62 percent did not.

Parental fear peaked after the April 20, 1999, shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo. A Gallup Poll conducted the following day found 55 percent of K-12 parents expressing fear.

The newest Gallup numbers found few K-12 parents reporting that their children worry about being unsafe at school. Just 8 percent say their children have expressed worry about feeling unsafe when they go back to school, while 91 percent say their children have no such worries.

Ironically, the Gallup Poll reporting a decline in parents' fears coincides with another survey, in which school safety officers say significant safety threats persist both from within and outside the nation's schools.

Tuesday's [report](#) by the National Association of School Resource Officers said more than 90 percent of school-based police officers surveyed believe that schools are "soft targets" for potential terrorist attacks, and more than 70 percent said aggressive behavior in elementary school children has increased in their districts in the past five years.

**<https://ethicsdaily.com/fears-about-school-safety-decline-cms-2994/>  
August 21, 2003 Bob Allen**

More than 76 percent of school safety officers said their schools are not adequately prepared to respond to a terrorist attack. More than 87 percent said the numbers of crimes that occur on campuses are underreported, and a majority said they believe a federal No Child Left Behind Act requirement for states to label “persistently dangerous” schools will lead to further underreporting of school crime. A significant percentage, 41 percent, said funding for school safety is being decreased in their schools.

“Less than one month away from the two-year anniversary of 9/11, and roughly six years since the first in the series of high profile school shootings, we find very significant percentages of school-based police officers telling us that the threats to school safety are ever-strong and that preparedness levels for responding to school crises remain significantly inadequate,” the study’s authors concluded.

Ninety-five percent of the officers surveyed said a congressional “Education Homeland Security Act” to fund school terrorism training, improve security and crisis planning and support school resource officer programs would make schools more safe.

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