

# States of Concern:

## An Analysis of U.S. States with High Rates of School-Based Violent Threats and Incidents.

2016 - 2017 School Year Edition

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### Overview and Summary

In the 2016-2017 school year, 55% of all school-based threats and incidents of violence occurred in just 10 states. Nationally, more than 2,221 threats and incidents impacted at least 3,000 schools. Last year The Educator's School Safety Network published a report on the dramatic escalation of bomb threats and incidents in U.S. schools. The sobering facts we discovered, as well as the continual escalation of threats and violent incidents in schools, prompted us to expand our research to be inclusive of all threats and incidents of violence that occur in U.S. schools.

**At the Educator's School Safety Network, we think it is critical to move beyond mere speculation about the nature or frequency of threats from state to state, to an analysis of actual facts and data.** The Educator's School Safety Network (ESSN), a national non-profit school safety organization, has compiled the most current information on violent threats and incidents analyzed by state to determine the scope and severity of the problem.

It is critical to stop offering opinions, relying on "expert impressions" or utilizing outdated information and anecdotes. Instead, we must objectively and factually determine the nature, scope and severity of the school violence problem in these states of concern.

### **Data Collection Methodology/Limitations**

Currently there is no national, mandated reporting system that records threats or incidents of violence in schools. As a result, this report is built on research conducted by the Educator's School Safety Network. For a detailed discussion of the research and methodology, please refer to: *Violent Threats and Incidents in Schools: An Analysis of 2016-2017 School Year*, available at [www.eSchoolSafety.org/vtir](http://www.eSchoolSafety.org/vtir).

It is highly unlikely that all violent incidents and threats in schools have been included in the data set. In fact, it is likely that numerous events have either not been reported, or inadvertently missed by the data collection methods used. Rather than undermining the findings, this potential "under-reporting" only underscores the significance of the troubling data found in the study.

## Summary of Findings

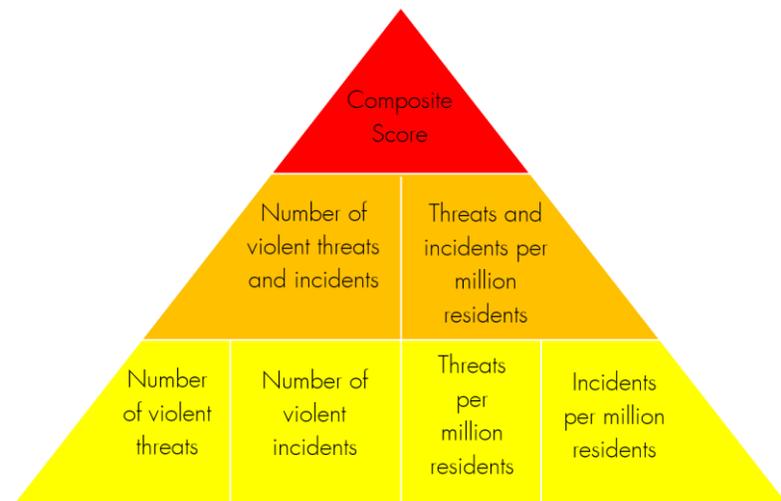
### How do we determine states of concern?

While violent incidents or threats occurred in all 50 states during the 2016-2017 school year, 10 states accounted for 55% of all the violent threats and incidents that occurred in the United States. We noticed that the same states kept appearing in our calculations, and needed a way to quantify “How concerned we are” about each state.

As part of this on-going research, we have identified our States of Concern based on three specific tiers or levels of concern.

These levels are:

<b>Most Concerned</b>	Top 10 states by composite score	Violent threats and incidents N = 2,199
<b>Moderately Concerned</b>	Top 10 states in each of 2 major categories	Violent threats and incidents N = 2,199
<b>Some Concern</b>	Top 10 states in each of 4 sub-categories	Violent threats N = 2,038 Violent incidents N = 161



All 50 states and the District of Columbia were ranked in each category above. The more threats and/or incidents a state experienced, the higher their score in the “number” categories. The more threats or incidents a state experienced per million residents, the higher their ranking in the per capita categories. States were given points based on their ranking to compute a composite score. The additional layer of analysis “per million residents” allows us to put data in perspective for relatively small states.

Please note, for the purposes of these rankings:

- “threats of violence” includes bomb threats, threats involving a weapon (such as a gun), threats involving BOTH guns and bombs, generalized threats of violence, and other school-based threats when the specific nature of the threat was not reported (unknown threats).
- “incidents of violence” includes events where something actually occurred (not just a threat). These included shootings, shots fired, weapons present, suspicious items, actual explosive devices, detonations, intruders, attacks, assaults, etc.

## States of Concern: Most Concerned

The composite score for the top states of concern was determined by a state's ranking in the four sub-categories. The higher a state ranked in each of the four sub-categories, the higher its composite score.

The top 10 states ranked with the highest composite scores have experienced a significant number of both threats and incidents when viewed by the actual number of events as well as per million residents. The higher the overall score, the more concerning the school safety situation is within the state.

The states of greatest concern based on data from the 2016-2017 school year are Ohio, Alabama, Connecticut, Missouri, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Wisconsin, South Carolina, Florida, and Michigan. **These 10 states account for 34% of the threats and incidents tracked in all 50 states** (and DC)

It is important to note that in order for a state to be ranked in the top ten most concerning states, they are ranked quite high in a number of the sub-categories. **Only Ohio ranked in the top ten of every sub-category we studied.**

States of Concern	
by composite score	
1	Ohio
2	Alabama
3	Connecticut
4	Missouri
5	Massachusetts
6	New Jersey
7	Wisconsin
8	South Carolina
9	Florida
10	Michigan

## States of Concern: Moderately Concerned

States of Concern	
# of threats and incidents	
1	California
2	Florida
3	Ohio
4	Texas
5	New York
6	New Jersey
7	Pennsylvania
8	Michigan
9	Alabama
10	Georgia

The rankings for the states of moderate concern was determined by combining the actual number of violent threats AND incidents to compute the top 10 states in two major categories:

- 1) The number of threats and incidents and
- 2) The threats and incidents per million residents.

The states of concern based strictly on number of threats and incidents are listed in the table to the left. These 10 states account for 55% of all the threats and incidents that occurred nationally. The population of some of these states (CA, FL, TX, NY) may contribute to these numbers, but the volume of threats and incidents is still cause for concern.

States of Concern	
Threats and incidents per million residents	
1	Wyoming
2	Alabama
3	Connecticut
4	North Dakota
5	Ohio
6	Missouri
7	Wisconsin
8	Massachusetts
9	South Carolina
10	Rhode Island

To account for these more populous states, we also ranked based on threats and incidents per million residents, which is in the table on the right. Given their comparatively smaller populations, the number of threats and incidents of violence in these states is significant. Wyoming, for example, does not have the most school-based incidents and threats by numbers alone, but it has the highest rate of threats and incidents per million residents, which is cause for concern.

## States of Concern: Some Concerns

The rankings for the states of some concern were determined by computing the top 10 states in the four sub-categories that contributed to the composite score. These sub-categories are:

States of Concern	
# of Incidents	
T1	Texas
T1	California
3	Ohio
T4	Alabama
T4	Florida
T4	New York
7	Utah
T8	Connecticut
T8	Missouri
T8	New Jersey
T8	Georgia
T8	Louisiana

States of Concern	
# of Threats	
1	Florida
2	California
3	Ohio
4	New York
5	Pennsylvania
6	Texas
7	Illinois
8	Michigan
9	North Carolina
10	New Jersey

1. the number of violent threats
2. the number of violent incidents
3. the number of violent threats per million residents
4. the number of violent incidents per million residents.

Because the four sub-category scores combine to form the moderate concern lists (orange tables) and the most concern list (red table), you will notice many of the same states re-appearing multiple times in this report. States with a high composite score will most likely appear on two of the four sub-categories (yellow) lists. **Ohio was the only state to appear in the top 10 in all four sub-categories.**

The top five states by incidents per million residents (chart at near right) had an average of 1.65 incidents per million residents. The five states with the most incidents averaged only .76 incidents per million residents. **This indicates that the states of concern adjusted for state population are experiencing school-based violent incidents more than twice as often as the other states of concern.**

It is also important to note that while the states of concern ranking focuses specifically on a smaller number of U.S. states, every state and every school needs to be concerned as **threats and incidents of violence took place in EVERY STATE during the 2016-2017 school year.**

**No school is immune from experiencing threats or actual incidents of violence regardless of its location.**

States of Concern	
Incidents per million residents	
1	Utah
2	Wyoming
3	Alabama
4	Connecticut
5	North Dakota
6	Louisiana
7	Rhode Island
8	Missouri
9	South Carolina
10	Ohio

States of Concern	
Threats per million residents	
1	Alaska
2	New Hampshire
3	West Virginia
4	Vermont
5	Wyoming
6	Wisconsin
7	Ohio
8	Idaho
9	Delaware
10	North Dakota

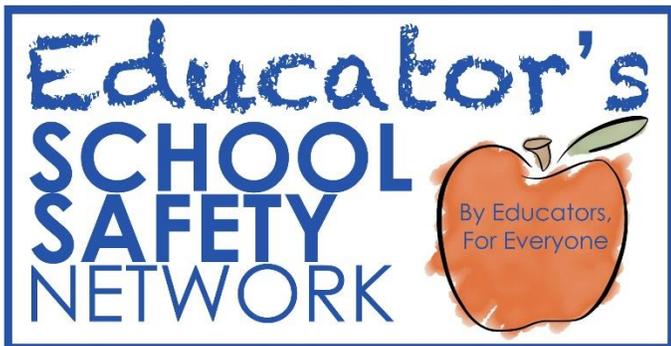
## Recommendations

The states identified in this report have school safety concerns that need to be addressed. We believe there is no short term solution or quick fix for the numerous issues that the threats and incidents of the 2016-2017 school year demonstrate. Instead the situation in the states of concern requires sustained professional development and training for all school stakeholders, not just school administrators, that comes from an education, not law enforcement perspective.

These training recommendations include:

- Education-based training in all-hazards crisis response, not just active shooter training.
- Training in research-based violence prevention approaches that are specific to schools.
- Training designed specifically for schools that deals with planning for, preventing, and responding to bomb threats AND incidents.
- Training for educators on identifying and mitigating vulnerabilities in both the physical site and in school climate and culture.
- Creation and appropriate training of threat assessment teams in all school buildings to allow staff to identify, assess, and manage individuals of concern who may pose a threat of violence to themselves or others.

It is critical for educators and emergency responders to be equally involved in training, prevention, and response as it pertains to violence in schools. Educators must secure a prominent “seat at the table” and be active, equal partners in preventing and responding to violent threats and incidents in schools.



[www.eSchoolSafety.org](http://www.eSchoolSafety.org)

For the complete report, go to:

[www.eSchoolSafety.org/vtir](http://www.eSchoolSafety.org/vtir)

For additional information and training opportunities, go to: [www.eSchoolSafety.org](http://www.eSchoolSafety.org)

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Our research on threats and incidents of violence in schools for the 2016-2017 school year was also compiled into a comprehensive report that provides a more detailed analysis of national data on threats and incidents such as the dates and times of occurrence, information about perpetrators, response protocols employed etc. The report examines not only the findings from the data collected, but also makes recommendations for ways to mitigate and address these safety concerns for schools. The full report is available at <http://www.eSchoolSafety.org/vtir>

### Additional State Level Data:

An appendix to this executive summary is also available that provides more detailed state by state data to assist educators, emergency responders, and other key decision makers in determining what specific aspects of concern need to be addressed in their state. These rankings separate bomb-related incidents and threats from other violent events.

The appendix includes rankings with:

1. The number of bomb threats
2. The number of other violent threats
3. The number of bomb incidents
4. The number of other violent incidents
5. The number of bomb threats per million residents
6. The number of other violent threats per million residents
7. The number of bomb incidents per million residents
8. The number of other violent incidents per million residents

Please contact [info@eSchoolSafety.org](mailto:info@eSchoolSafety.org) to request this additional information.