



## STATES OF CONCERN:

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

2017–2018 School Year Edition

In the 2017-2018 school year, threats of violence in schools increased 62% from the year before. Actual incidents of violence increased a frightening 113% from the previous school year. **More than half (51%) of all school-based threats and incidents of violence in the 2017-2018 school year occurred in just 11 states.**

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 identify states of greatest concern for threats and/or incidents of violence based on data from the 2017-2018 school year.

For more information, training opportunities, or to download the report, visit [www.eSchoolSafety.org](http://www.eSchoolSafety.org).

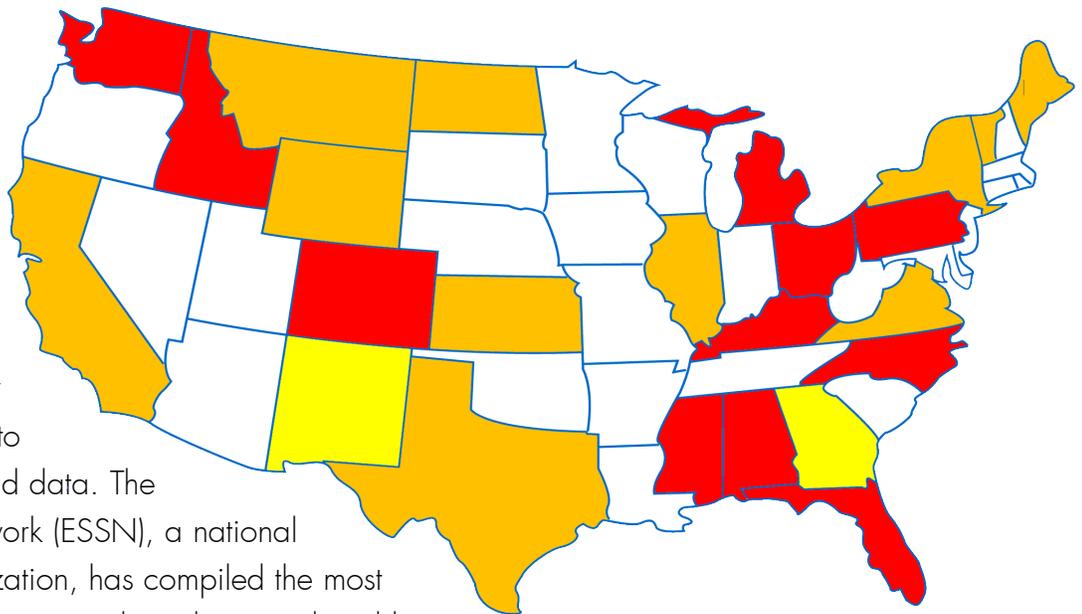
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## Overview and Summary

In the 2017-2018 school year, the 11 states of most concern accounted for **36% of all threats** and **42% of all incidents**, despite accounting for only 28% of the U.S. population. Nationally, there were at least **3,375 threats recorded, a 62% increase** from the 2016-2017 school year. Even more alarming is the increase in actual incidents of violence. In the 2017-2018 school year, there were at least **279 incidents of violence, an increase of 113%** from the 2016-2017 school year.

The increase in threats and violence in schools, along with the current movement for safer schools, makes it critical to move beyond mere speculation about the nature or frequency of threats from state to state, to an analysis of 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.



### 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 2017-2018 School Year*, available at [www.eSchoolSafety.org/violence](http://www.eSchoolSafety.org/violence)

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.

Please note, for the purposes of these reports:

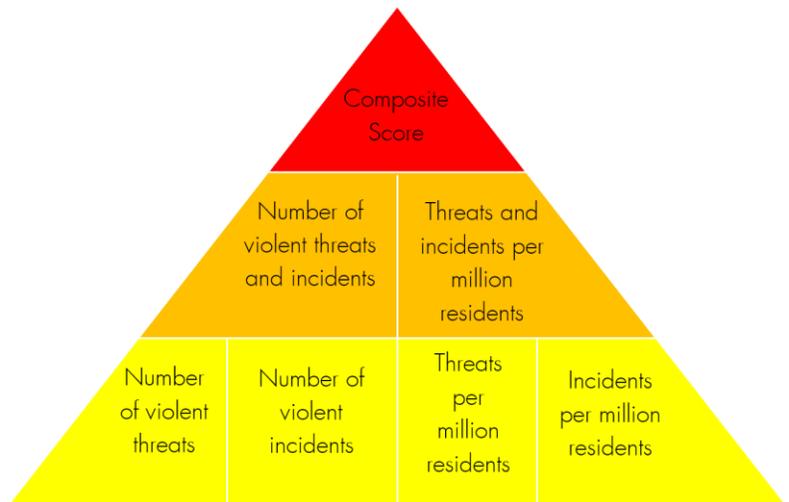
- “Threats of violence” includes bomb threats, threats involving a weapon (such as a gun), threats involving BOTH guns and bombs, generalized threats of violence, and other school-based threats when the specific nature of the threat was not reported (unknown or unspecified threats).
- “Incidents of violence” 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, suicides on campus etc.

## How were the states of concern determined?

While violent incidents or threats occurred in all 50 states during the 2017-2018 school year, threats and incidents occur at different rates in different states. The identification of States of Concern is 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 = 3,654
<b>Moderately Concerned</b>	Top 10 states in each of 2 major categories	Violent threats and incidents N = 3,654
<b>Some Concern</b>	Top 10 states in each of 4 sub-categories	Violent threats N = 3,375 Violent incidents N = 279



All 50 states (and DC) 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” puts the data in perspective for relatively small states.

## 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 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. (Note that because of tie scores, this year there are 11 states of greatest concern.)

The states of greatest concern based on data from the 2017-2018 school year are Michigan, Ohio, Alabama, Kentucky, Washington, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, Florida, North Carolina, Colorado, and Idaho.

Only Ohio and Alabama moved down in their ranking from last year's report. All of the others demonstrated an increasing level of concern that was quite dramatic in some cases. This change, and the state's ranking of concern from the 2016-2017 report, is reflected in the far right column of the table above.

Some states, such as Michigan, Ohio, Alabama, and Florida, were ranked among the top 10 states of concern for the 2016-2017 school year as well as this year. While their rankings have moved a bit, these four states continue to be of great concern.

Other states saw significant increases in violent incidents, threats, or both during the 2017-2018 school year, rocketing them to the top 10 states of concern. **Seven of the 11 states of greatest concern (64%) were not in the top 10 states of concern last year.** Mississippi, for example, was ranked 44<sup>th</sup> overall in the 2016-2017 school year, but dramatic increases in both incidents and threats of violence computed per capita, resulted in a sixth place ranking this year.

States of Concern		
by composite score		Rank last year
1	Michigan	 10
2	Ohio	 1
3	Alabama	 2
4	Kentucky	 39
5	Washington	 15
T6	Pennsylvania	 12
T6	Mississippi	 44
8	Florida	 9
9	North Carolina	 22
T10	Colorado	 24
T10	Idaho	 43

## States of Concern: Moderately Concerned

The ranking 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
- 2) The threats and incidents per million residents.

The states of concern based strictly on the number of threats and incidents are listed in the top table. These **10 states account for 51% of all the threats and incidents that occurred nationally in the 2017-2018 school year**. The population of some of these states (such as California, Texas, Florida, or New York) may contribute to these numbers, but the volume of threats and incidents is still cause for concern. California and Florida were the top two states of concerns in terms of the sheer number of threats and incidents for the second year in a row.

To examine states with lower populations, threats and incidents per million residents were also ranked, which is in the bottom table. Given their comparatively smaller populations, the number of threats and incidents of violence in these states is significant. Maine, 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.

It is important to note that **only Wyoming and North Dakota appeared in this top 10 list last year, indicating a significant increase** occurred in the remaining eight states on this year's list.

States of Concern		
# of threats and incidents		Rank last year
1	California	→ 1
2	Florida	→ 2
3	New York	↗ 5
4	Michigan	↗ 8
5	Pennsylvania	↗ 7
6	Ohio	↘ 3
7	Texas	↘ 4
8	Illinois	↗ 18
9	North Carolina	↗ 15
10	Virginia	↗ 12

States of Concern		
Threats and incidents per million residents		Rank last year
1	Maine	↗ 11
2	North Dakota	↗ 4
3	Idaho	↗ 30
4	Montana	↗ 50
5	Michigan	↗ 14
6	Mississippi	↗ 42
7	Kansas	↗ 28
8	Vermont	↗ 26
9	Wyoming	↘ 1
10	Kentucky	↗ 45

## 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 Most Concerned composite score. These sub-categories are:

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 are used to determine the moderate concern lists (orange tables) and the most concern list (red table), many of the same states appear multiple times in this report.

States with a high composite score will most likely appear on two of the

four sub-categories (yellow) lists. **As the state of greatest concern, Michigan appears in three of the four sub-categories** with a high rate of actual incidents, and a high rate of threats both in the sheer number as well as per capita. Conversely, California is first in the number of incidents and threats, but not when computed per capita given it has the highest population of all U.S. states.

States of Concern		
# of Incidents		Rank last year
1	California	→ 1
2	Florida	↑ 4
3	Ohio	→ 3
4	Texas	↓ 1
5	Washington	↑ 13
6	Georgia	↑ 8
7	Michigan	↑ 13
8	North Carolina	↑ 21
9	Pennsylvania	↑ 13
10	Alabama	↓ 4

States of Concern		
# of Threats		Rank last year
1	California	↑ 2
2	New York	↑ 4
3	Florida	↓ 1
4	Michigan	↑ 8
5	Pennsylvania	→ 5
6	Ohio	↓ 3
7	Texas	↓ 6
8	Illinois	↓ 7
9	North Carolina	→ 9
10	Virginia	↑ 11

States of Concern		
Incidents per million residents		Rank last year
1	Wyoming	↑ 2
2	Vermont	↑ 51
3	Alabama	→ 3
4	Montana	↑ 51
5	Washington	↑ 18
6	Idaho	↑ 51
7	Mississippi	↑ 51
8	Colorado	↑ 19
9	Nebraska	↑ 20
10	New Mexico	↑ 24

States of Concern		
Threats per million residents		Rank last year
1	Maine	↑ 24
2	North Dakota	↑ 10
3	Idaho	↑ 8
4	Montana	↑ 45
5	Michigan	↑ 16
6	Kansas	↑ 26
7	Mississippi	↑ 14
8	Kentucky	↑ 40
9	Vermont	↓ 4
10	New Mexico	↑ 36

## Several states had significant changes from their rankings last year:

1. **Washington state** was not in the top 10 in any metric for the 2016-2017 school year. This year, however, it is one of the states of concern for incidents both by the numbers and when figured per capita.
2. **Alabama** continues to be a top 10 state of concern for incidents for the second year in a row, both in the number and per capita. It remains third in the nation in incidents per capita for the second year in a row.
3. **Kentucky** went from 40<sup>th</sup> in threats per million residents in the 2016-2017 school year to 8<sup>th</sup>, a significant increase.
4. **Vermont, Montana, Idaho** were ranked as a concern in both threats and incidents per capita. These three states were in last place for incidents per million residents in the 2016-2017 school year, and moved to 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> places respectively for the 2017-2018 school year. Mississippi, also ranked 51<sup>st</sup> in incidents last year, ranked in 7<sup>th</sup> place in both threats and incidents per capita, moving it to the 6<sup>th</sup> most concerning state overall. In threats per capita, Montana moved from 45<sup>th</sup> in the 2016-2017 school year to 4<sup>th</sup> this year.

The top ten states by incidents per million residents had an average of 2.05 incidents per million residents. The remaining states averaged only .68 incidents per million residents. This indicates that the states of concern adjusted for state population are experiencing school-based violent incidents more than three times as often as other states.

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 2017-2018 school year.

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

For a detailed analysis of the threats and incidents of violence that occurred in the 2017-2018 school year (including type, location, perpetrator, etc.) that are the basis for these rankings, see the *Violent Threats and Incidents in Schools: An Analysis of 2017-2018 School Year*, report, available at [www.eSchoolSafety.org/violence](http://www.eSchoolSafety.org/violence)

## Table of State Level Data:

	Ranking	# Threats	# Incidents	Threats per mil	Incidents per mil		Ranking	# Threats	# Incidents	Threats per mil	Incidents per mil
MI	1	196	13	19.67	1.30	ME	T 25	54	1	40.42	0.75
OH	2	170	14	14.58	1.20	WY	T 25	9	2	15.54	3.45
AL	3	64	10	13.13	2.05	TX	28	162	14	5.72	0.49
KY	4	77	6	17.29	1.35	WI	29	88	2	15.18	0.35
MS	T 5	55	5	18.43	1.68	MD	30	52	7	8.59	1.16
PA	T 5	177	11	13.82	0.86	NE	31	21	3	10.94	1.56
WA	T 5	73	14	9.86	1.89	AZ	T 32	51	8	7.27	1.14
FL	8	214	20	10.20	0.95	IN	T 32	59	5	8.85	0.75
NC	9	103	13	10.03	1.27	IL	34	120	4	9.37	0.31
CO	T 10	59	9	10.52	1.61	AR	35	34	3	11.32	1.00
ID	T 10	41	3	23.88	1.75	NJ	36	78	4	8.66	0.44
SC	12	57	7	11.34	1.39	NH	37	21	1	15.64	0.74
NY	T 13	221	10	11.13	0.50	OK	38	35	2	8.90	0.51
VA	T 13	96	7	11.33	0.83	LA	39	33	3	7.04	0.64
MT	15	21	2	19.99	1.90	UT	40	15	3	4.84	0.97
IA	16	47	4	14.94	1.27	ND	41	20	0	26.48	0.00
CA	T 17	265	21	6.70	0.53	CT	T 42	44	0	12.26	0.00
OR	T 17	60	4	14.48	0.97	MN	T 42	45	1	8.07	0.18
NM	19	33	3	15.80	1.44	AK	T 44	11	0	14.87	0.00
MA	20	82	5	11.95	0.73	HI	T 44	10	1	7.01	0.70
GA	21	65	13	6.23	1.25	DE	46	11	0	11.44	0.00
TN	22	55	9	8.19	1.34	SD	47	10	0	11.50	0.00
MO	T 23	56	7	9.16	1.15	NV	48	14	1	4.67	0.33
VT	T 23	10	2	16.03	3.21	WV	49	19	0	10.46	0.00
KS	T 25	55	2	18.88	0.69	DC	50	3	0	4.32	0.00
						RI	51	4	0	3.77	0.00

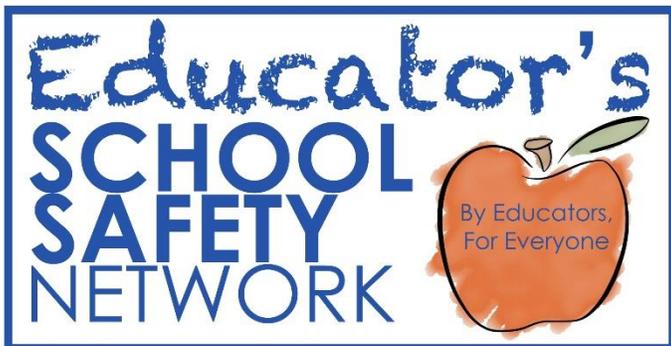
## Recommendations

The states identified in this report have school safety concerns that need to be addressed. There is no short-term solution or quick fix for the numerous issues that the threats and incidents of the 2017-2018 school year raise. Instead, solutions for the states of concern lie in sustained professional development and training for all school stakeholders 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.



For additional information and training opportunities:

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

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