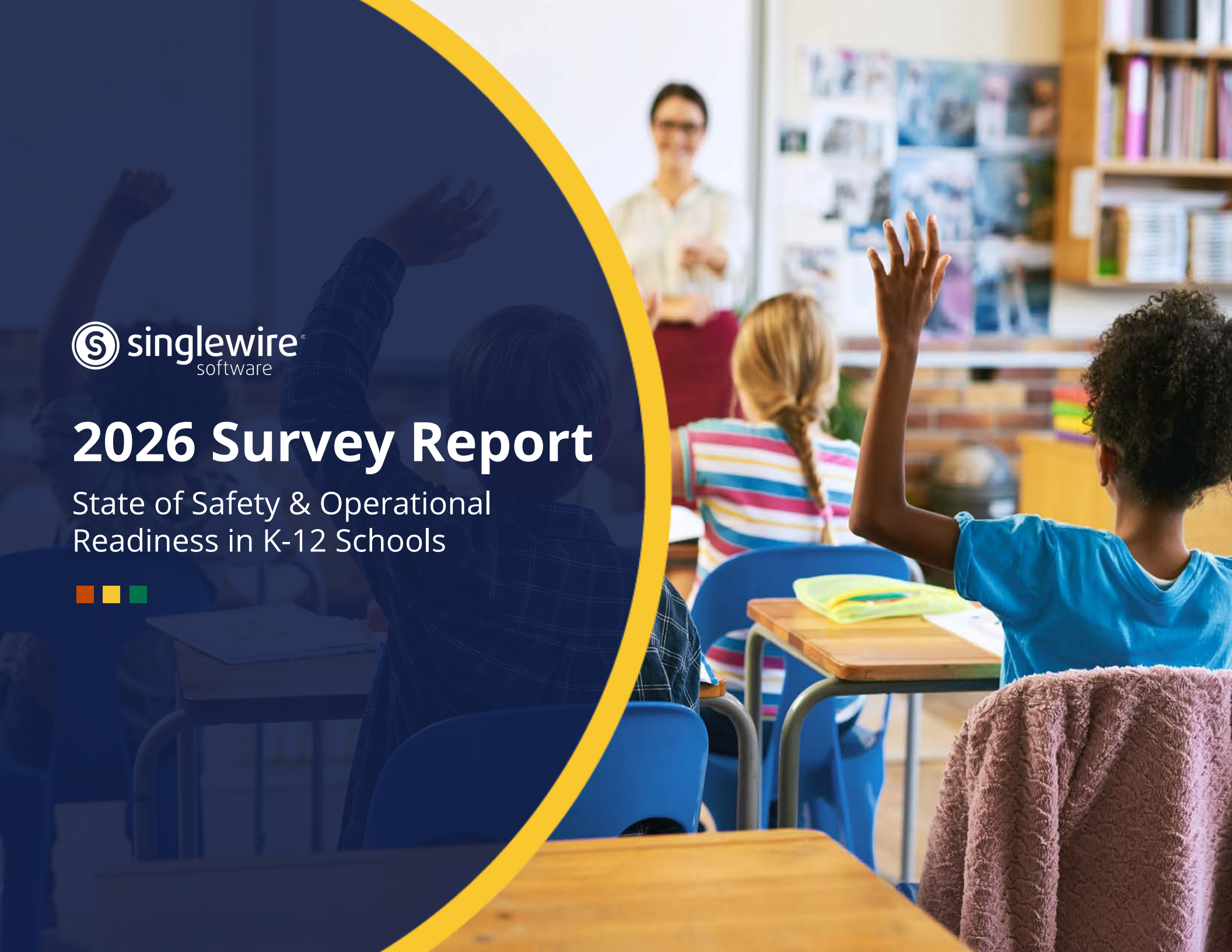




# 2026 Survey Report

State of Safety & Operational  
Readiness in K-12 Schools



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# Introduction



# Introduction

## Data Reveals Gaps and Concerns

In 2025, Singlewire Software surveyed over 500 full-time school staff members on school entrance security. The results revealed a concerning reality: while most schools recognized the importance of entrance security, significant gaps remained. Staffing shortages, limited resources, and confusion around entry procedures created vulnerabilities that could be exploited.

When we explored revisiting the survey for 2026, we realized there was an opportunity to expand our focus. School safety challenges extend beyond the front door, and there is a growing need to find modern solutions to longstanding operational issues. Being able to request help and alert others quickly, being able to track student movement during the course of the school day and during dismissal, and having the right technology to facilitate swift communication and get real-time insights are all top-of-mind concerns for school leaders.

To better understand these challenges, we conducted the [Safety & Operational Readiness Survey](#) in February 2026, once again gathering insights from over 500 full-time school staff members across the U.S. The results highlight what's changed and what's stayed the same when it comes to school entrance security, trends around student dismissal and hall passes, and the methods school staff use to request help when issues arise.

Addressing these operational and safety gaps requires solutions that enhance safety and streamline daily tasks while facilitating easy communication and providing real-time insights. Digital solutions that help account for students, screen visitors, and provide easily accessible ways to send reliable alerts, automate processes while bolstering a school's ability to create a safe and functional environment for students and staff.

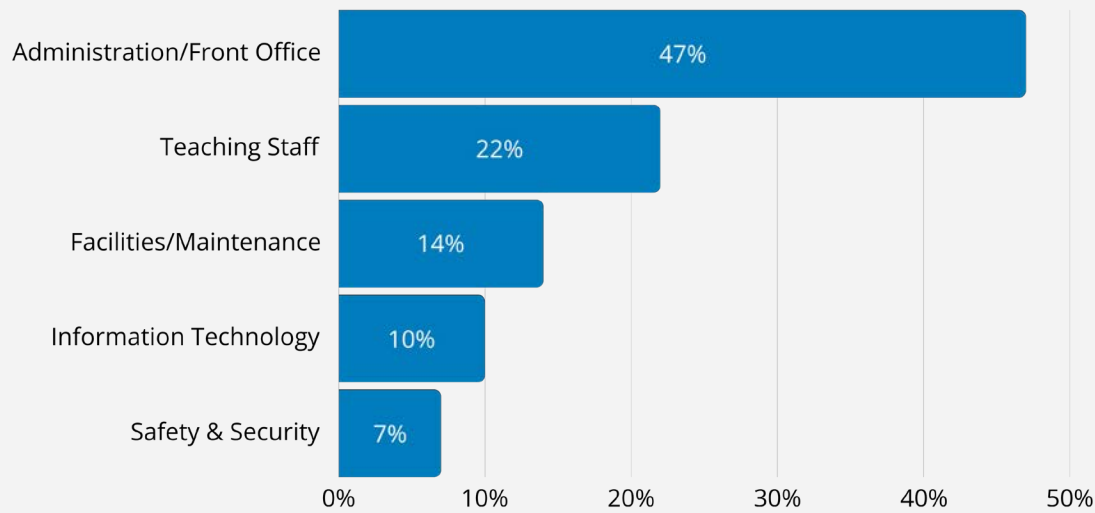


# Survey Respondents

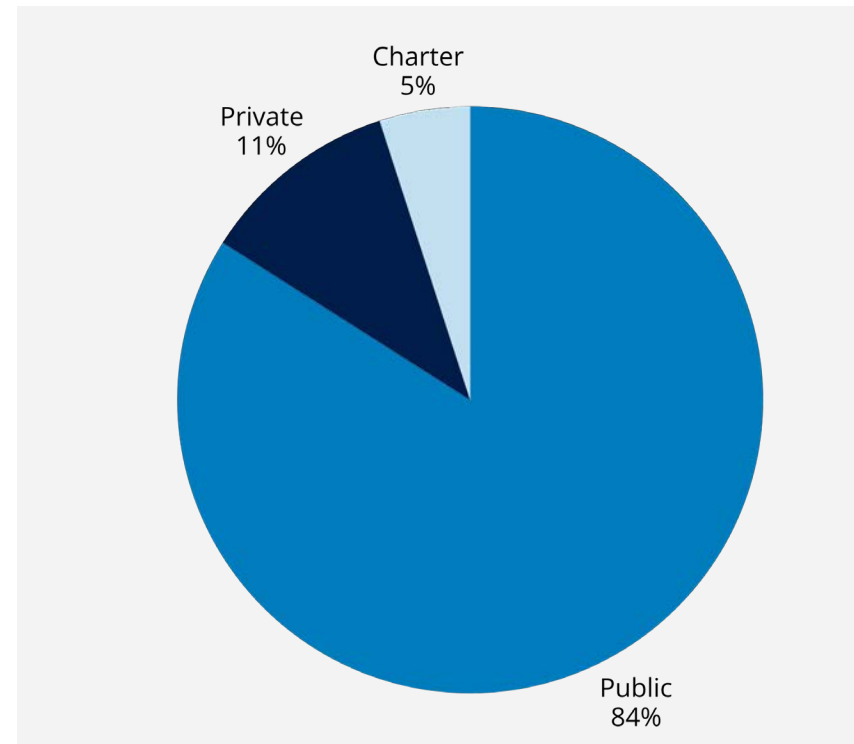


# Survey Respondents

Which of the following categories best describes the role you fill or the department that you work in?

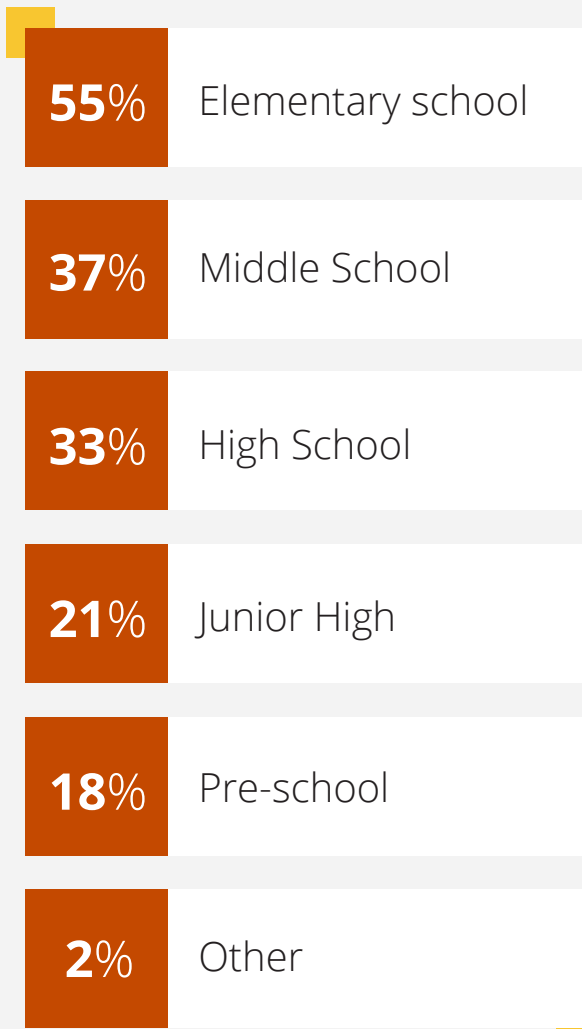


What type of school do you work at?

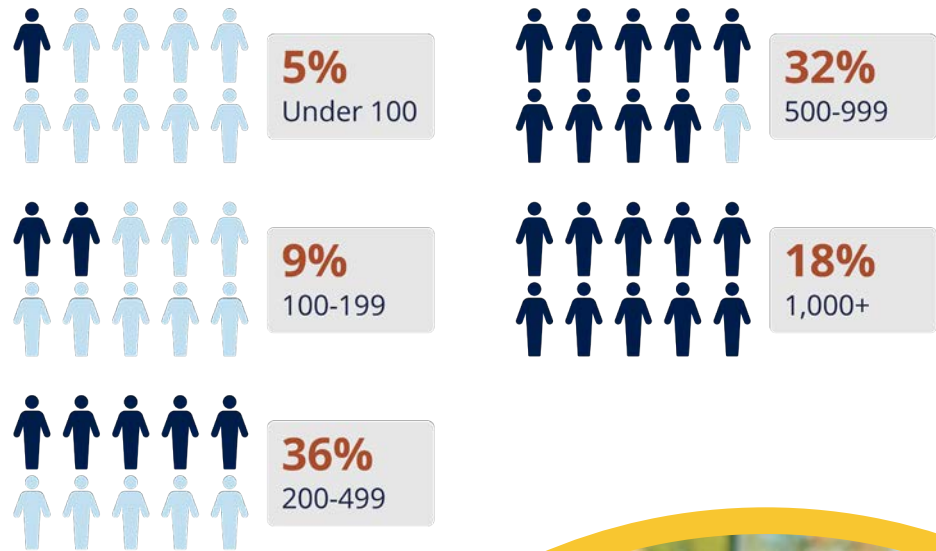


# Survey Respondents

What grade levels are you involved with? (Select all that apply)



How many students are at your school?



# Key Findings

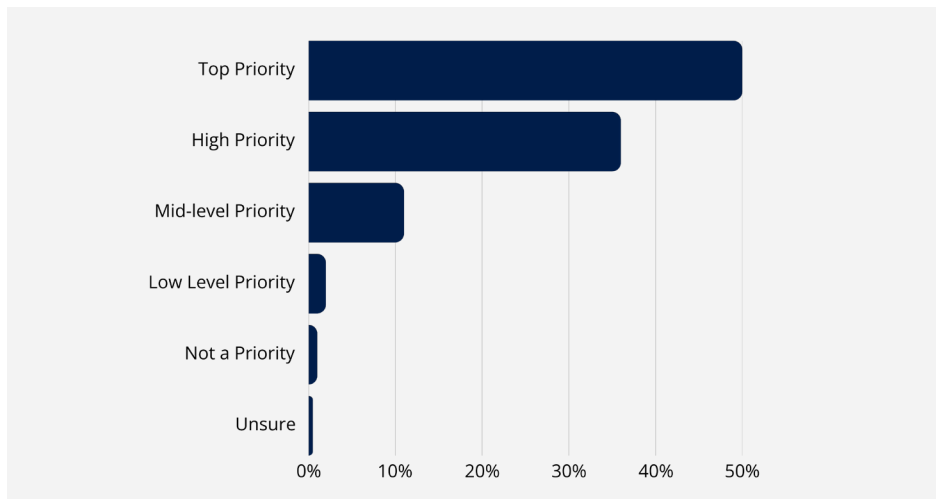


# Key Findings

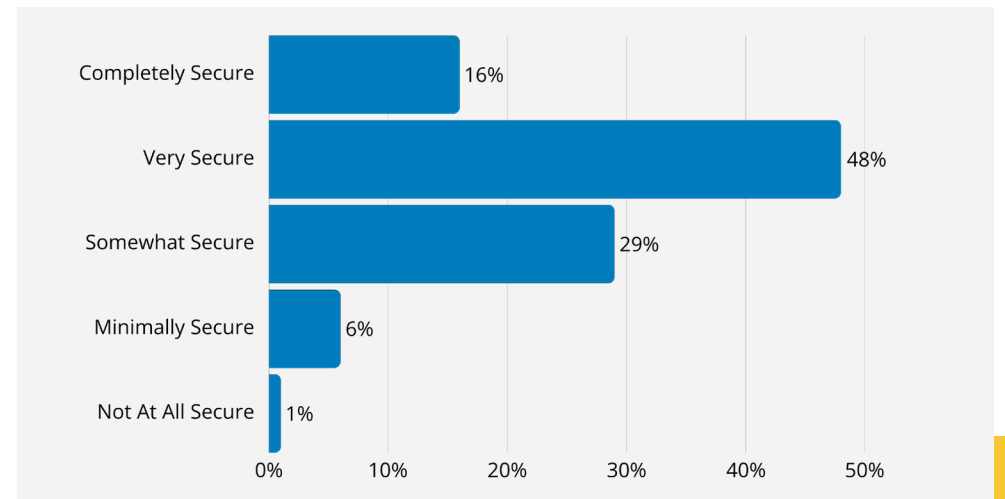
## Entrance security continues to be prioritized, but schools are a long way from being completely secure

School safety starts at the front door, and while **86% say securing the front entrance is a top or high priority**, only 16% felt their front entrance was completely secure. These numbers are consistent with last year's survey, highlighting the ongoing challenge between understanding an issue and implementing a solution that addresses it. **The struggle to secure the entrance seems rooted in a persistent challenge, with lack of staff jumping from 30% in 2025 to 46%** becoming the most cited issue in this year's survey. When this is paired with an inability to restrict access to a single point of entry (32%), a school community not understanding check-in procedures (31%) and having no method in place to verify guest identities (30%) the battle to secure entrances becomes even more difficult to win.

### How is school entrance security currently prioritized as part of your school safety strategy?

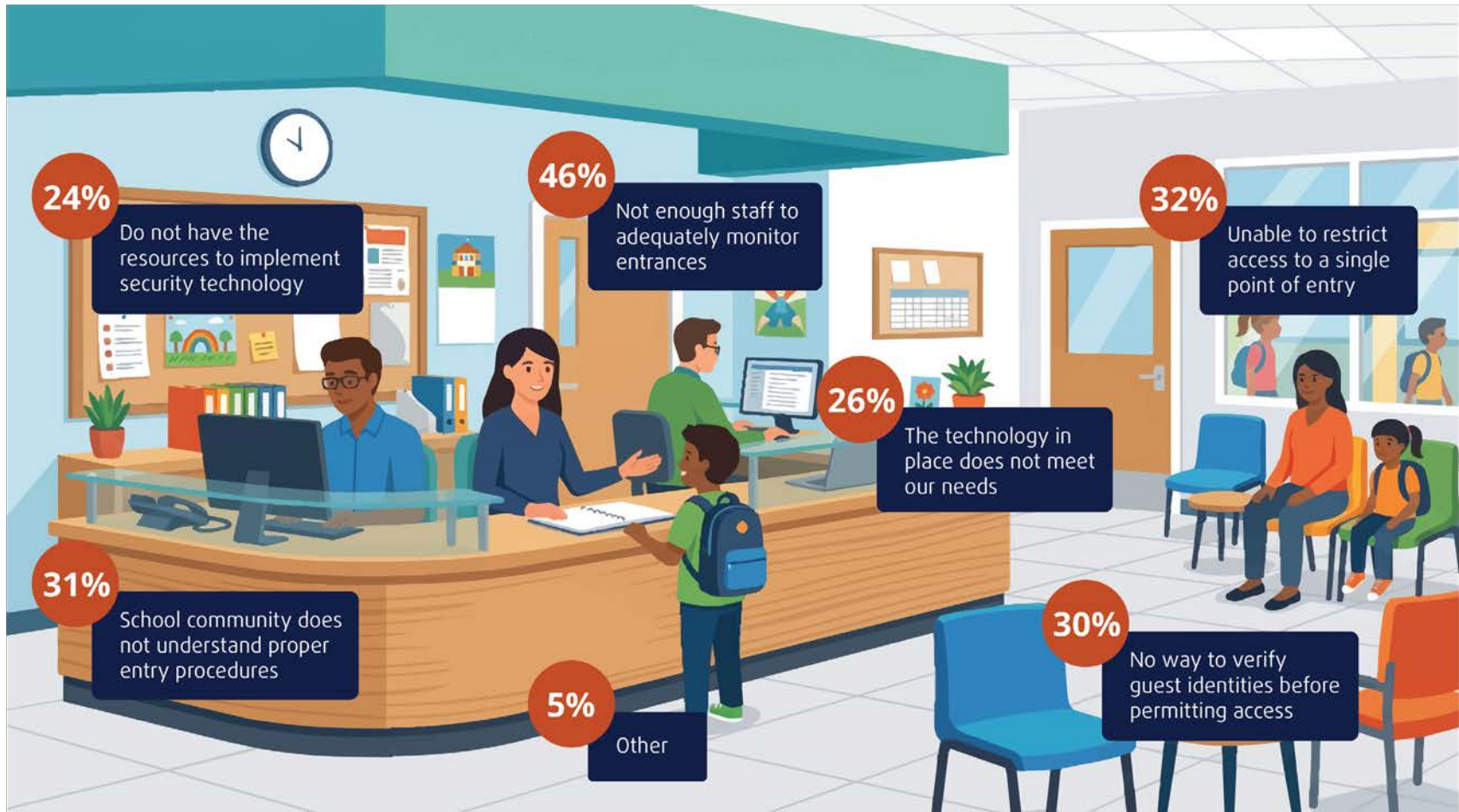


### How secure do you believe your school entrances are?



# Key Findings

What challenges has your school experienced with securing entrances?

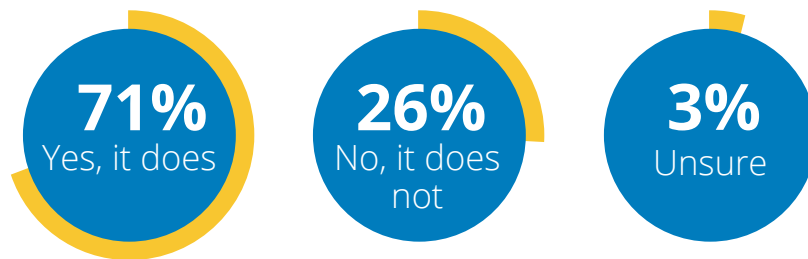


# Key Findings

## Most schools require guests to present IDs, but check-in methods vary greatly

Schools are taking proactive measures to ensure they are letting the right people into their buildings, but some methods are more secure than others. **71% of respondents said their school requires guests to present a photo ID** when they enter, but for 33%, that's the only check conducted. 30% have vestibules where guests must be buzzed in, while 19% use a digital visitor management system that can verify guest IDs. 17% though, are still relying on pen and paper sign-in sheets. Schools are also working to confirm guests have completed the check-in process with 79% requiring guests to wear visitor badges.

### Does your school require guests to present a photo ID when they enter the school?



### Does your school require visitors to wear a badge during their visit?



### What method does your school use for visitor check-in?

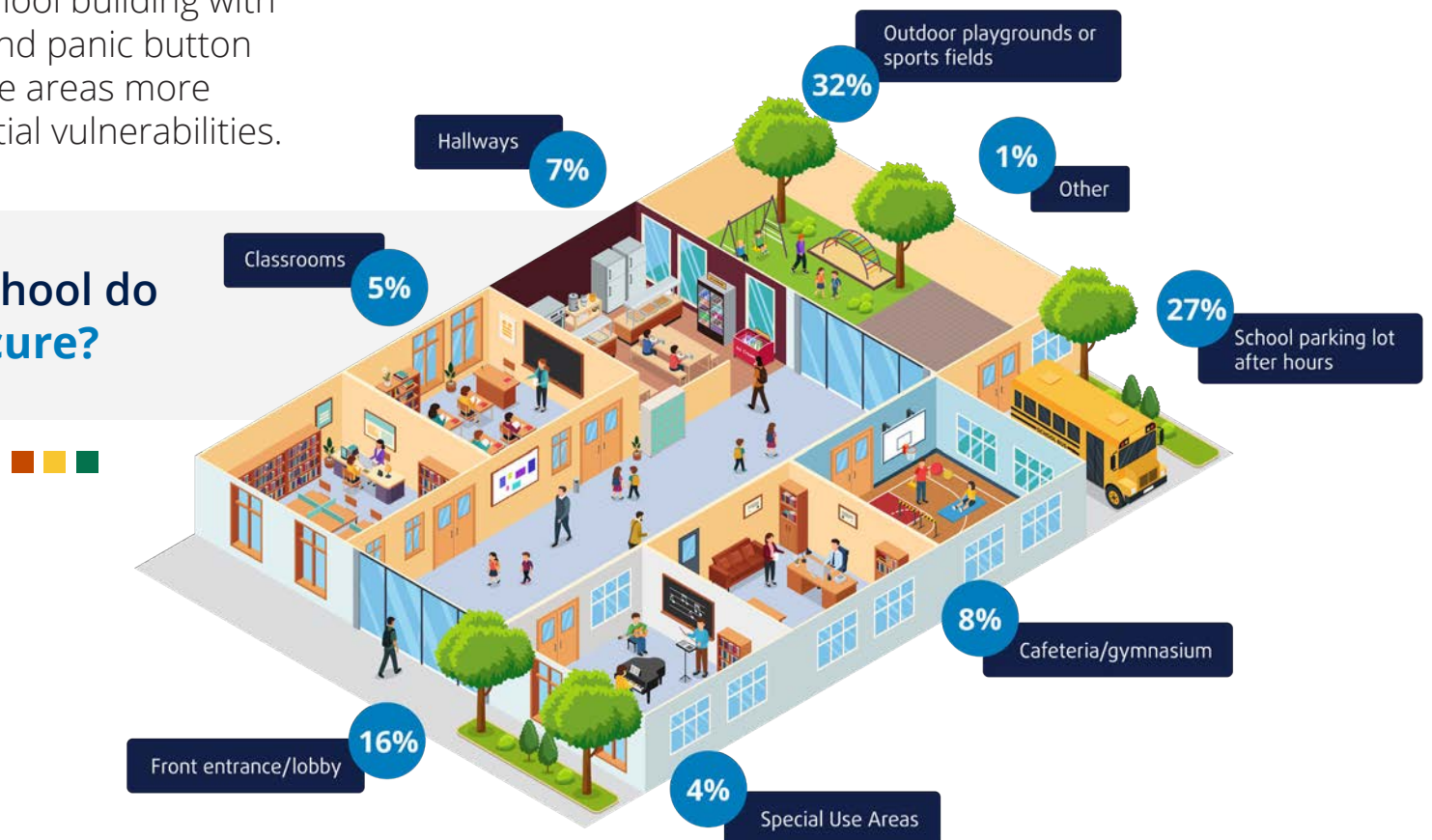


# Key Findings

## High demand to enhance security beyond the school building

While school safety initiatives often focus on how to protect the students and staff within a building, there is a strong desire to ensure the entire property is safe, not just a building. **More than 50% of respondents said outdoor areas and parking lots were the least secure areas of the school.** Being able to stop threats by identifying them as they approach buildings with AI video surveillance, sharing information with outdoor speakers, or offering ways to request assistance outside the school building with wearable panic buttons and panic button apps, can help make these areas more secure and reduce potential vulnerabilities.

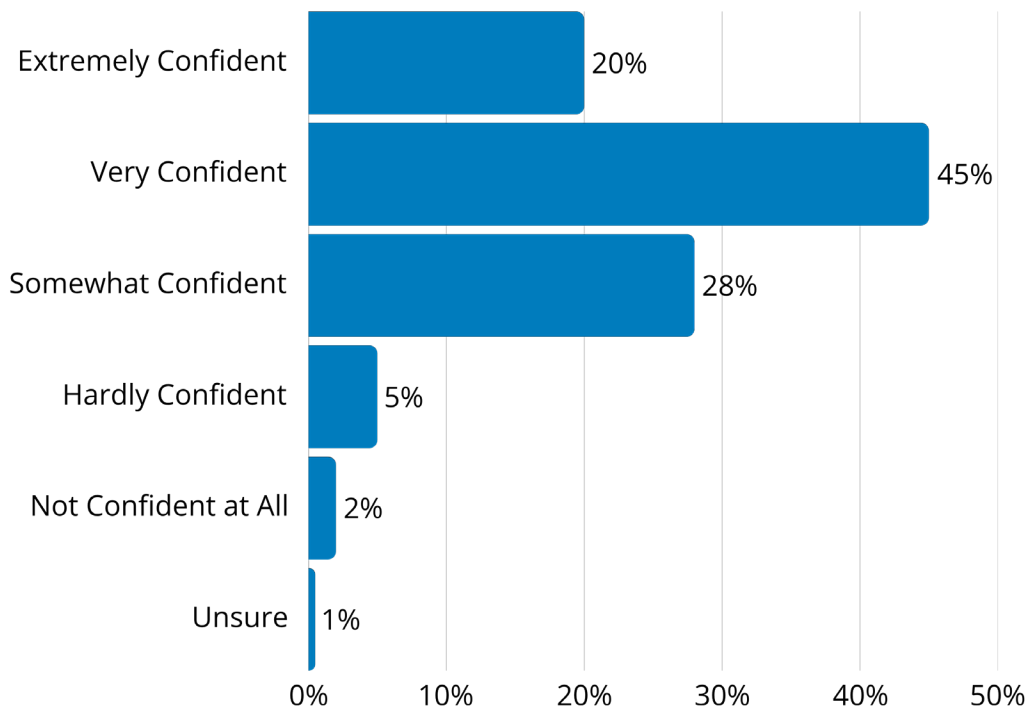
What area of the school do you feel is **least secure**?



# Key Findings

## School staff need better ways to request help

When issues arise, help should arrive as fast as possible, but **only 1 out of 5 staff members feels extremely confident that help will arrive quickly when they request assistance.** This may be due to the time-consuming methods many staff need to rely on when asking for help, like walkie-talkies (32%) and phone calls (31%). There is also a clear lack of methods that offer simple immediate activation for requesting help, with nearly one quarter of respondents saying they have no panic buttons in place at all, and only 10% saying they have access to a wearable panic button. More distressing is the gap that emerges between teachers and administrators. While 45% of administrators have mounted panic buttons, 38% of teachers report having no panic buttons in place.



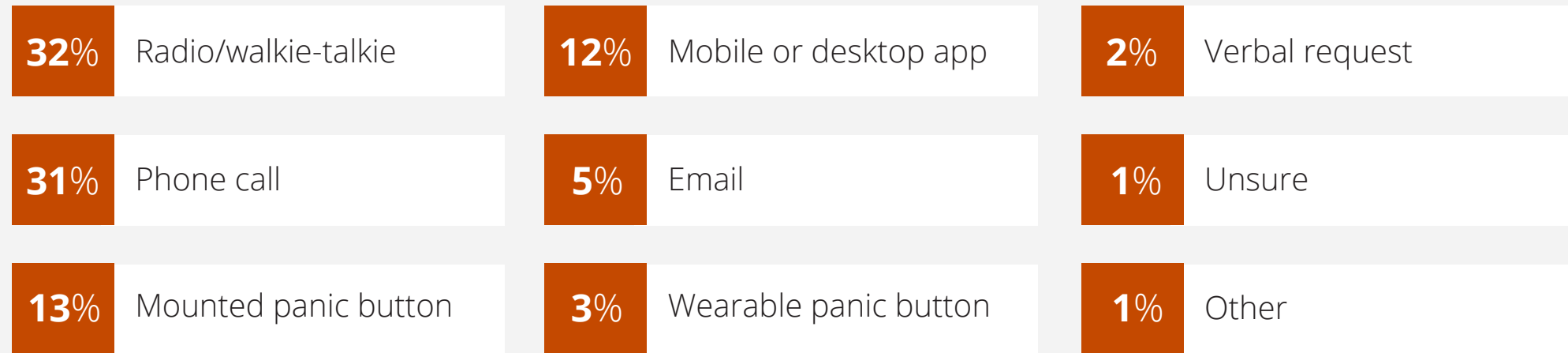
How confident are you that **help will arrive quickly** if you request assistance within your school?



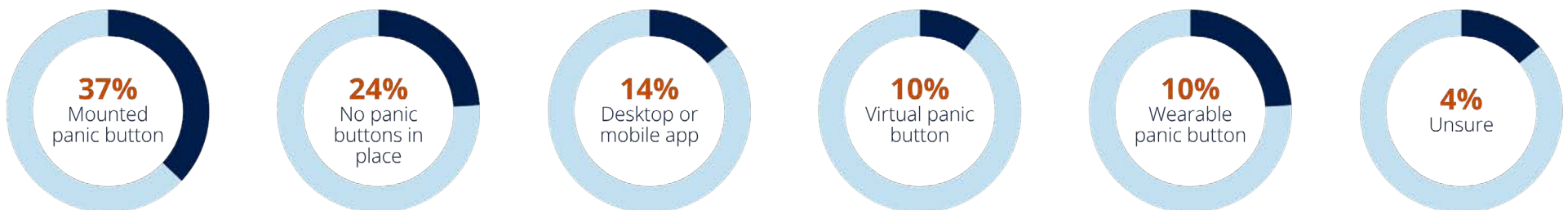
# Key Findings



What is the primary method you use to request assistance when issues arise within your school?



What is the primary type of panic button that your school has in place?



# Key Findings

## Hall passes are stuck in the past, and it's hurting accountability

Many schools may not consider hall passes a safety risk, but our survey revealed that a majority of schools are using processes that are hindering their ability to account for students during the day. **Nearly 75% are still using analog methods to excuse students from class, leaving only 11% of school staff saying they feel confident they can quickly locate students during the school day when they're excused from class.** This is due in part to 19% saying they are not consistently tracking students when they are excused from class, and another 19% saying tracking is only handled on the classroom level, without any centralized visibility. If staff don't know where students are when they're excused from class, it makes it that much harder to protect them when emergencies arise.

## How do students receive permission to be excused from class?



**35%**

Take a physical pass from the classroom or teacher



**24%**

Raise their hand and receive verbal permission



**19%**

Use a digital solution that grants permission and records that they've left the class



**15%**

Write their name on a sign-in/out sheet in the classroom



**3%**

Unsure



**3%**

No formal process in place



**2%**

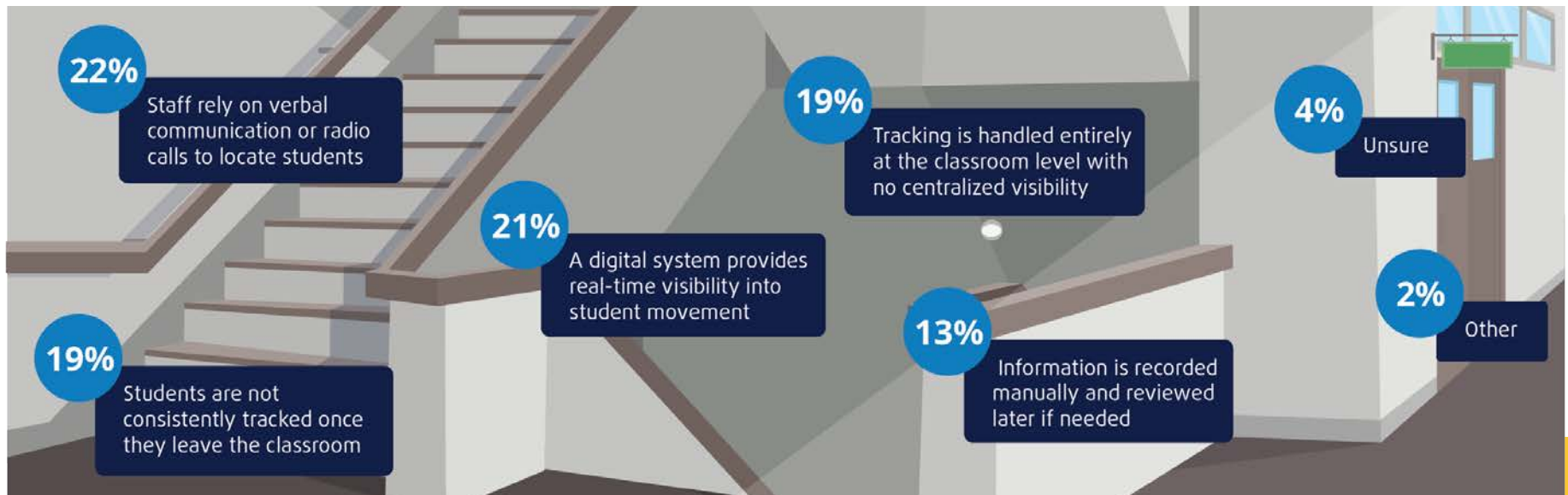
Other

# Key Findings

How confident are you that administrators can quickly determine a student's location during the school day if they are excused from the classroom?

- **11% Extremely confident** - Student locations are tracked in real-time and instantly verifiable
- **34% Very confident** - Student locations are easy to verify
- **38% Somewhat confident** - It depends on the situation or staff involved
- **13% Hardly confident** - Locating students often takes time
- **3% Not confident at all** - There is no reliable way to determine location
- **1% Unsure**

How does your school or district track where students are once they leave the classroom?



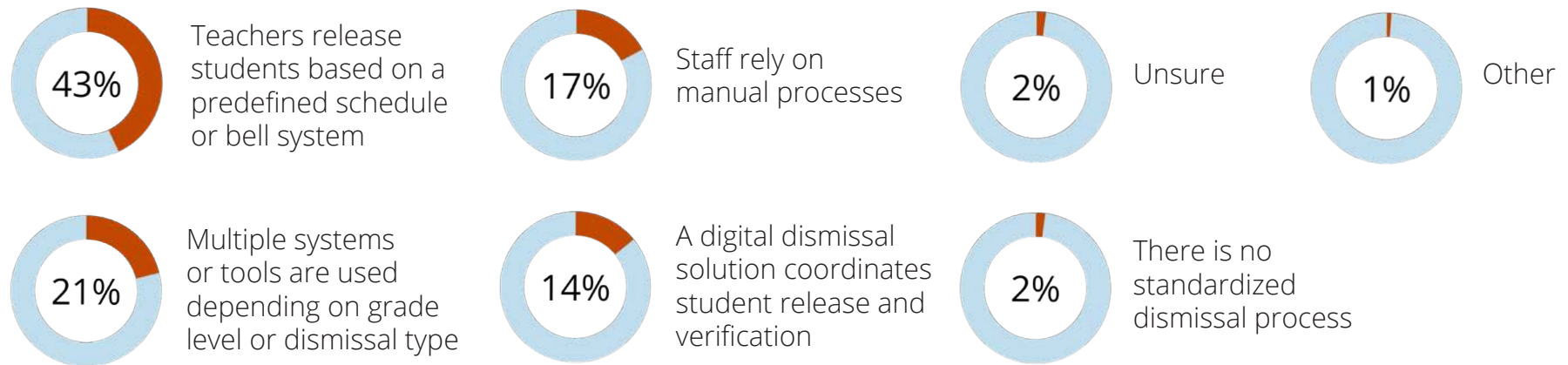
# Key Findings

## The enormous opportunity to improve the school dismissal process

The end of the school day can be chaotic, and staff are feeling the stress. **Only 14% are able to leverage a digital solution** that helps coordinate student release and verify they are being picked up by the correct parent or guardian. The rest are relying on bell schedules (43%), multiple tools or systems that vary by grade level or dismissal type (21%), or manual processes (17%). This is resulting in **63% of respondents saying that they experience dismissal-related issues that require staff intervention at least on a monthly basis**. The struggle can partially be attributed to the lack of formal verification processes in place, with staff relying on verbal (21%) or visual (20%) verification or analog methods like printed lists or spreadsheets (18%).

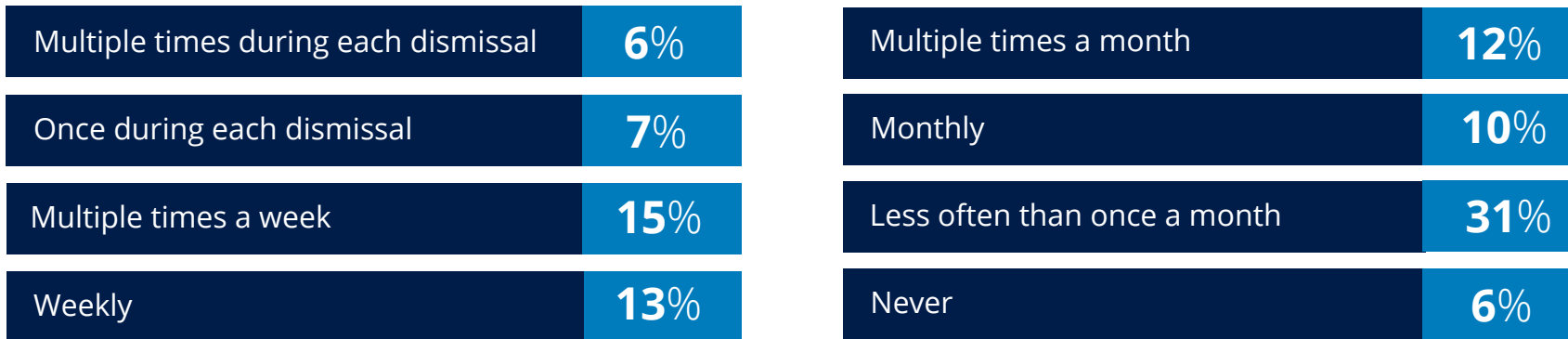


## How is student dismissal managed at your school or district on a typical day?

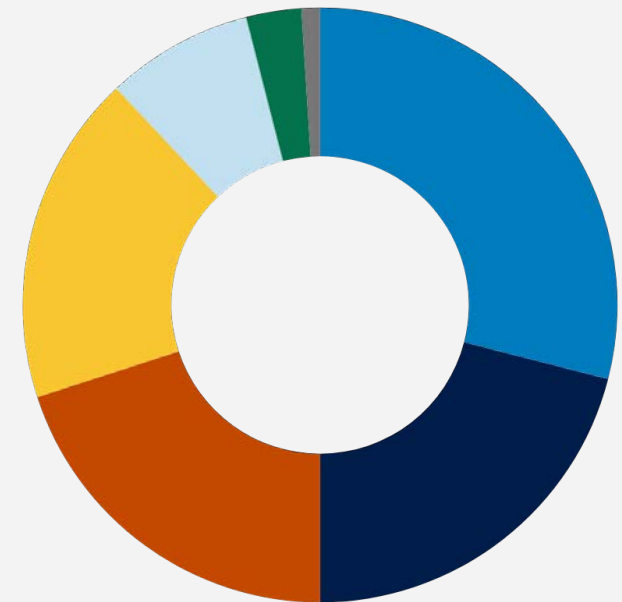
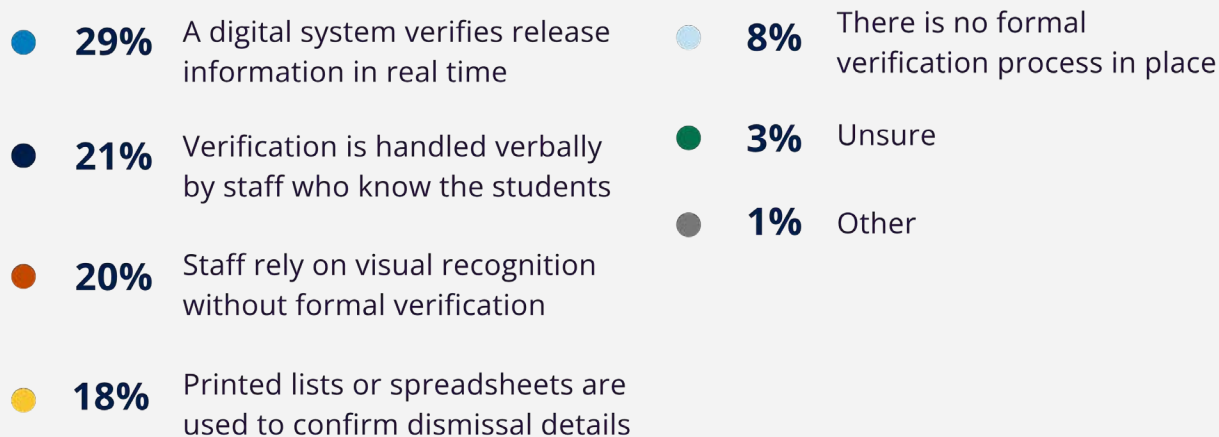


# Key Findings

How often do dismissal-related issues occur that require staff intervention (e.g., student confusion, incorrect pickup, missing information)?



How does your school or district verify that students are released to the correct person or destination during dismissal?



# Key Findings

## Teacher perceptions differ greatly from other school staff

While the data in this survey brings to light a number of substantial safety concerns schools need to address, it also highlights a disparity in perceptions between teachers and other school staff members.

- **Teachers were less likely to rate school entrances as completely or very secure** (55%) versus security staff (79%) and administrators and facilities (64%).
- **Teachers (30%) and administrators (27%) were aligned in saying students were excused from class by raising their hands and receiving verbal permission, but only 7% of security staff believed this method was used**, instead believing sign-out sheets were in place (35% compared to about 15% for teachers and admins).
- **Security was much more confident in their ability to locate students when they were excused from class** (69%) compared to admins (45%) and teachers (35%).
- For end-of-day dismissal, **teachers (29%) were more likely to say that students are not consistently tracked once they leave the classroom** compared to administrators (18%) and security staff (10%).
- Access to panic buttons is also an issue with **45% of admins saying that mounted panic buttons are the primary method in place**, compared to only 19% of teachers. **Nearly 40% of teachers also said there are no panic buttons in place**, compared to just 10% of security staff.

This difference suggests a misalignment in priorities, perceptions and access all of which can contribute to making a school less secure and response times slower when emergencies arise.



# Conclusion and Methodology



# Conclusion and Methodology

## Conclusion



The 2026 report reveals that **while school's are striving to create safe environments for students and staff, significant security, accountability and operational gaps remain.** Staffing shortage and mixed methods for visitor check-in are preventing entrances from becoming completely secure. Reliance on analog processes for hall passes and student dismissal have led to a concerning lack of real-time visibility into student movement. Furthermore, the disparity in confidence levels between administrators and teachers regarding emergency response underscores a critical need for more accessible and reliable methods to request help. These findings suggest that current reactive measures are insufficient and hindering school's abilities to identify issues and respond quickly.

To address these vulnerabilities, schools must transition toward integrated digital ecosystems that enhance both safety and efficiency. Implementing digital visitor management systems and digital hall passes can automate identity verification and provide centralized tracking of student locations. A digital dismissal solution can further streamline end-of-day confusion, ensuring every student is released to the correct destination. Finally, empowering every staff member with wearable panic buttons tied to a critical communication and incident management system ensures that reliable assistance and school-wide alerts are just a button press away, bridging the gap between identifying a threat and executing a coordinated response.

## Methodology

The independent research firm Researchscape conducted this survey. Respondents were **511 staff members at K-12 schools in the United States.** To qualify for the survey, staff members had to work as administrators or front office staff, teachers, part of facilities/maintenance teams, IT teams or as safety and security staff. Responses were gathered in January and February 2026. In some instances, results were weighted to provide a more accurate year-over-year comparison.

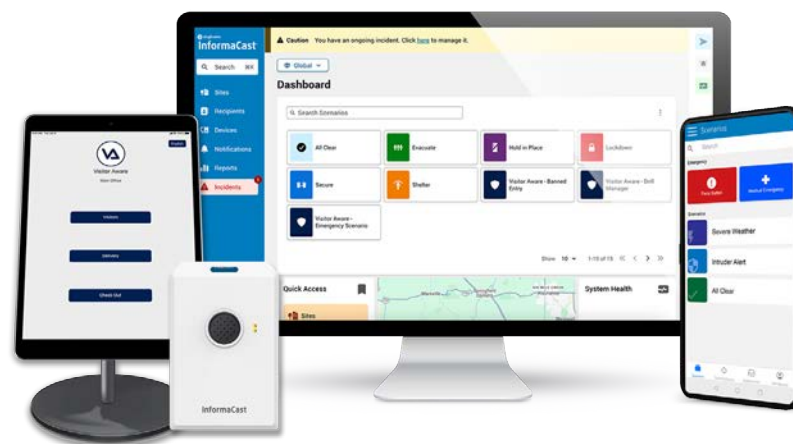


# Solutions from Singlewire Software



Singlewire Software is a leader in developing solutions that help keep people safe and informed and has been a champion of school safety initiatives for more than 15 years. Many of the issues exposed in this report can be directly addressed by Singlewire Software's offerings, including:

- **Visitor Aware:** A visitor management system that creates a standard check-in process at every school and requires minimal staff intervention. Guests are required to present an ID and have their information scanned across sex offender and FBI databases. Permitted guests are given a printed badge, and staff receive discreet alerts when potential issues are flagged.
- **Hall Manager:** A digital hall pass solution that helps grant passes, record student movement, and place restrictions to reduce disruptions and better account for students throughout the day.
- **Dismissal Manager:** A digital school dismissal tool that streamlines end-of-day management, enhances student accountability, and helps ensure every student gets where they should be at the end of the day.
- **Safety Manager:** A digital solution for scheduling, assigning, and running safety drills, with tools for reunification and anonymous tip lines.
- **InformaCast:** A critical communication and incident management platform that delivers school-wide text, audio, and visual alerts and helps coordinate an effective response with real-time insights.
- **InformaCast Wearable Alert Badges:** Alyssa's Law-compliant wearable panic buttons with alerting options for staff assistance and school-wide notification with room-level accurate location information.



For more information, explore our K-12 solutions and take an interactive school tour at [www.singlewire.com/k-12](http://www.singlewire.com/k-12)