

2021

SCHOOL CRIME IN TENNESSEE

- *SCHOOL CRIME OFFENSE BREAKDOWN*
- *VICTIM ANALYSIS*
- *OFFENDER DEMOGRAPHICS*



A PUBLICATION OF THE TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS CENTER | CRIME STATISTICS UNIT



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DAVID B. RAUSCH
Director

November 17, 2022

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation is releasing its annual School Crimes Study. This study presents the nature, volume, and extent of reported crimes on school campuses, excluding colleges and universities in 2021.

The study is based on data submitted to the TBI through the Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System (TIBRS) program, which collects data on all crimes occurring in Tennessee. All law enforcement agencies as well as colleges and universities, are mandated to report crime statistics to the TBI. This study is produced from the TIBRS program and includes comparison statistics.

This study will hopefully assist law enforcement, school administrations, and government officials in planning their efforts in the fight against crime and continue to create awareness that crime exists as a threat to our communities. The threats to society by criminal activity must be addressed by efforts from all law-abiding citizens, as well as law enforcement agencies.

Thank you to all participating law enforcement agencies for their hard work and contributions to making this report a thorough and accurate picture of crime in Tennessee. It is only with their support that the state continues to maintain such a successful TIBRS program.

Sincerely,

David B. Rausch
Director



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INTRODUCTION

This study presents information on characteristics surrounding crime in Tennessee schools, focusing upon public and private school systems, excluding colleges, universities, and technical schools. The period covered in this study is from 2019 to 2021. This study was completed by using data provided to the Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System (TIBRS).

- This report is based on incidents submitted by law enforcement agencies.
- Since the offense of Justifiable Homicide is not considered a crime, the offense is excluded from this study.
- It is important to understand the characteristics surrounding school crime, the offenders who reportedly commit these offenses, and the demographics of the victims. A better understanding of these characteristics will assist law enforcement, policy makers, school administrators, and the public in developing strategies to reduce the amount of crime occurring at schools in Tennessee.
- In an effort to expedite the collection of data, TBI transitioned from monthly data submissions to weekly submissions. Since August 1, 2020, the TBI Statistical Analysis Center has been maintaining a watchful eye on the weekly crime rates and continues to do so.

Situations surrounding school crime vary based on the offender's motive and intended victim. For example, incidents involving student offenders and student victims constitute the stereotypical definition of crime at schools where the offender and victim are present to participate in school related activities. However, there are situations involving adult and/or juvenile offenders and victims where the school serves only as the location of the offense committed. Crimes perpetrated by offenders against victims who are not school or staff and have no other relation to the school, i.e., a drug deal committed in a school parking lot or an assault involving multiple offenders and victims would be examples of such situations.

INCIDENT BASED REPORTING

Incident based reporting views a crime and all of its components as an incident. In order to obtain incident data, facts recorded and preserved about the incident are organized into specific categories or segments. The mechanism used for recording these facts is a data element. Data elements provide information about crime and its involvement with victims, offenders, property, arrestees, etc.

TIBRS DEFINED

The Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System (TIBRS) program is designed to collect data on every single crime occurrence and on each incident and arrest within the occurrence.

METHODOLOGY

This study specifically addresses incident characteristics, offender characteristics, arrestee characteristics, offense characteristics, and victim characteristics.

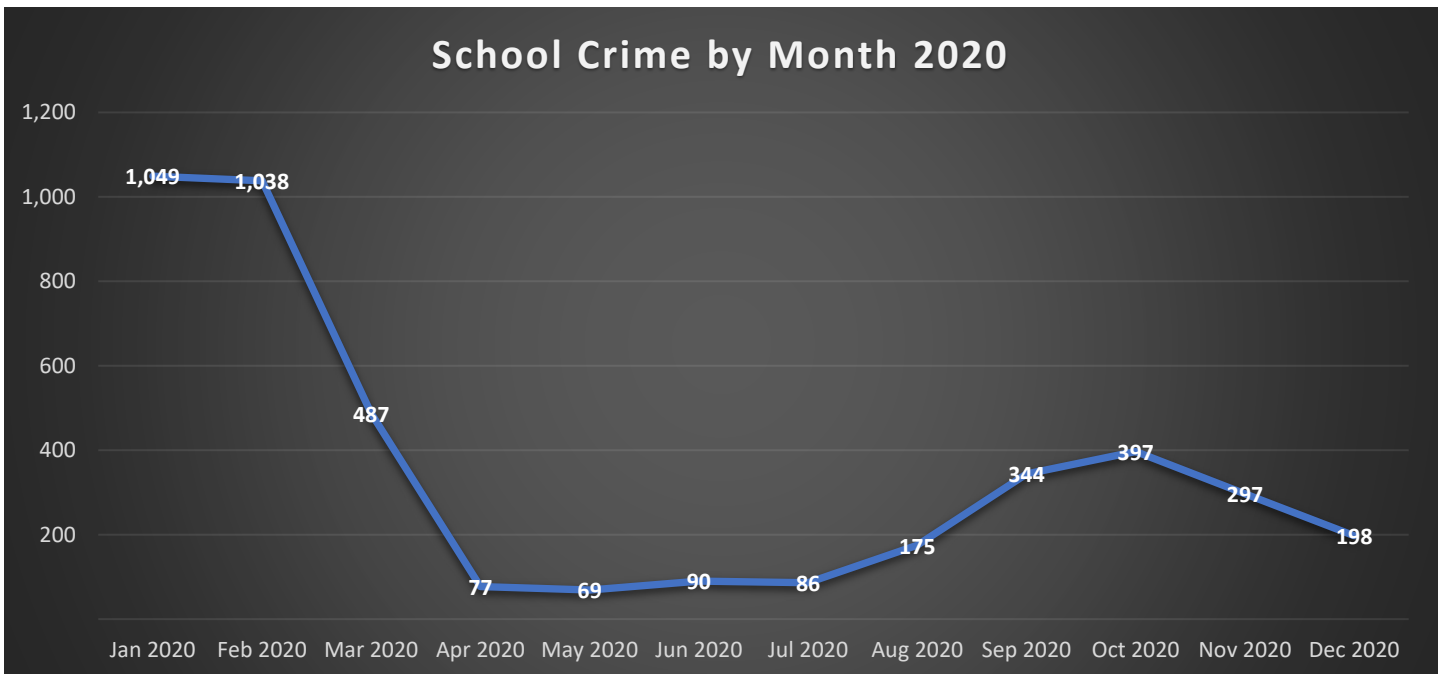
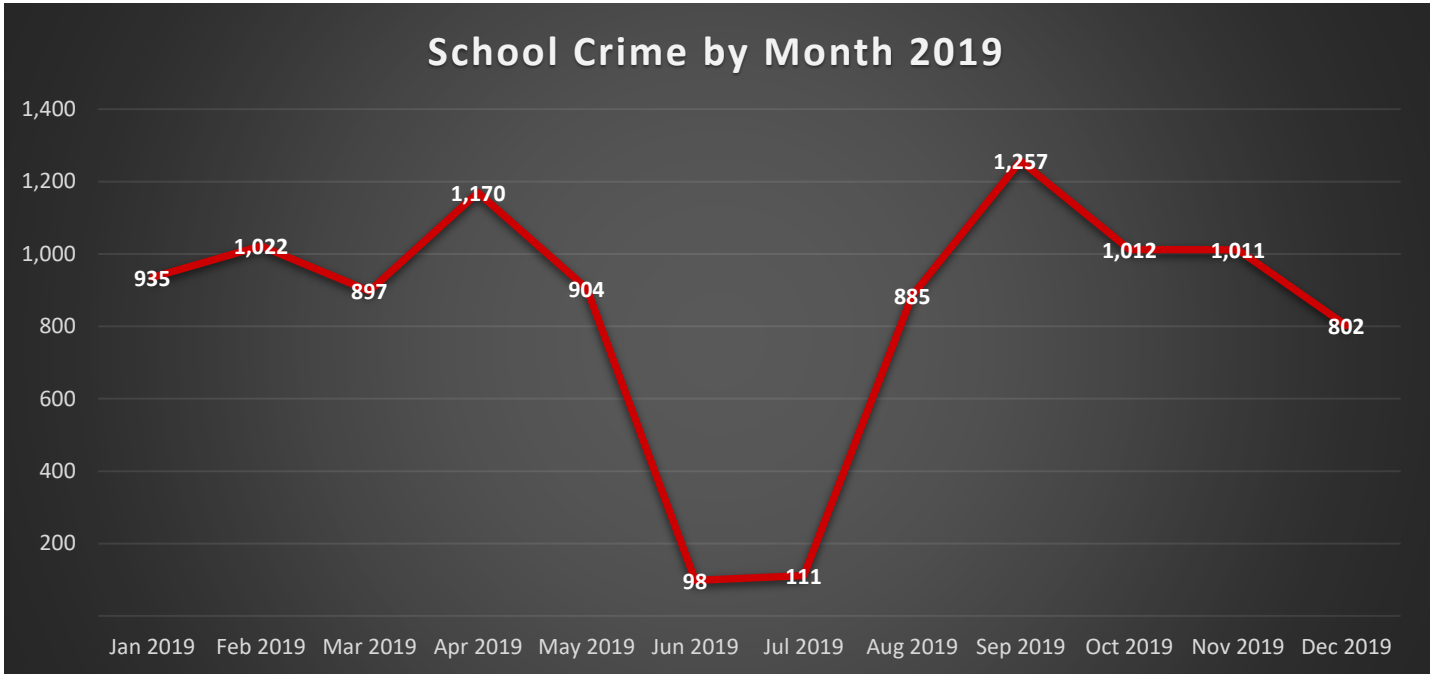
QUICK FACTS

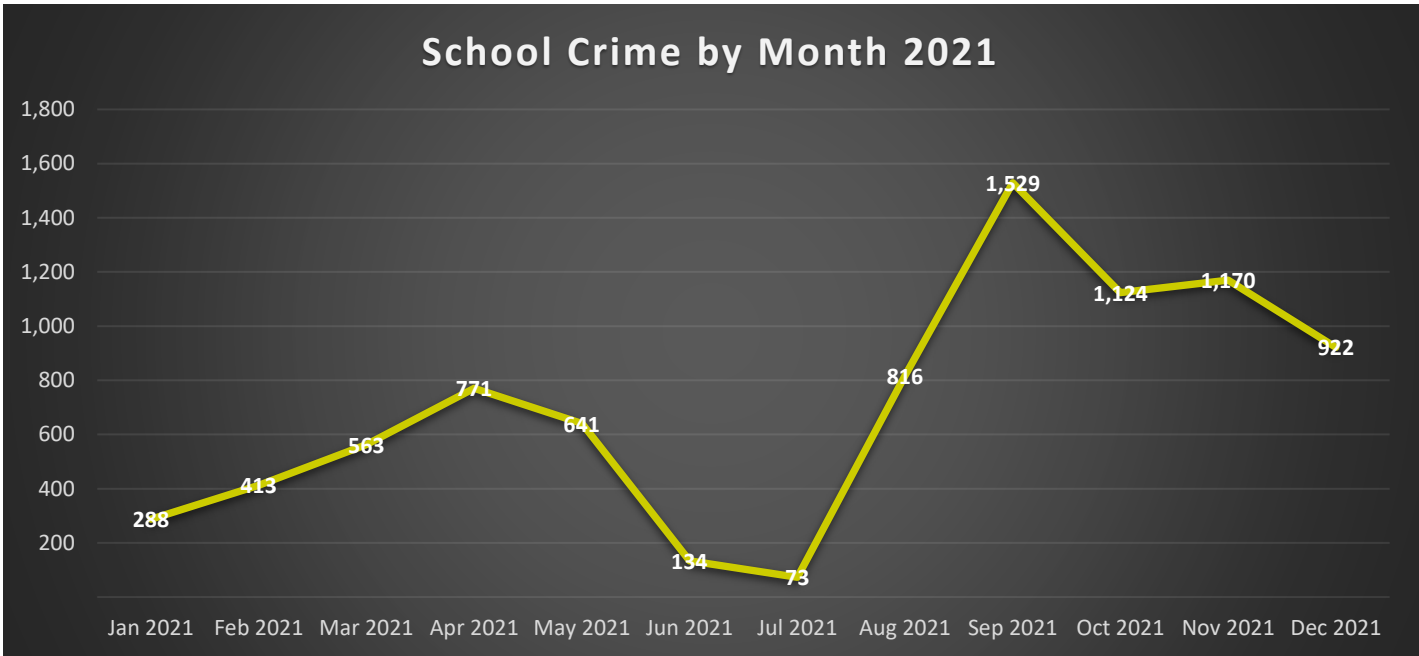
- From 2019 to 2021 a total of 22,855 crimes were reported by Tennessee law enforcement agencies with a location code of School – Elementary/Secondary.
- The overall number of reported offenses fell 16.43% from 2019 to 2021.
- Simple Assault was the most frequently reported offense at 37.41% of reported offenses.
- The month of September had the highest number of reported crimes.
- The largest percentage of school crime happened between 12:00pm and 2:59pm, encompassing 33.63% of incidents.
- Wednesday was the most frequently reported day of the week for school crimes.
- The most commonly reported weapon type was Personal Weapons (Hands, Fists, Feet, Arms, Teeth, etc.) at 77.69%.
- Females made up 50.9% of school crime victims, while Males made up 48.86%.
- Males made up 61.88% of the school crime offender total, with Females comprising 28.34%. The remainder of offenders were categorized as either Missing (5.09%) or Unknown (4.7%).
- While the rate of school crimes raised 96.05% from 2020 to 2021, the cause of this likely stemmed from the re-opening of schools following the mass closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As schools opened statewide in August 2021, incident numbers returned to levels approximating equivalent months during the pre-pandemic 2019 school year.

GROUP A OFFENSES

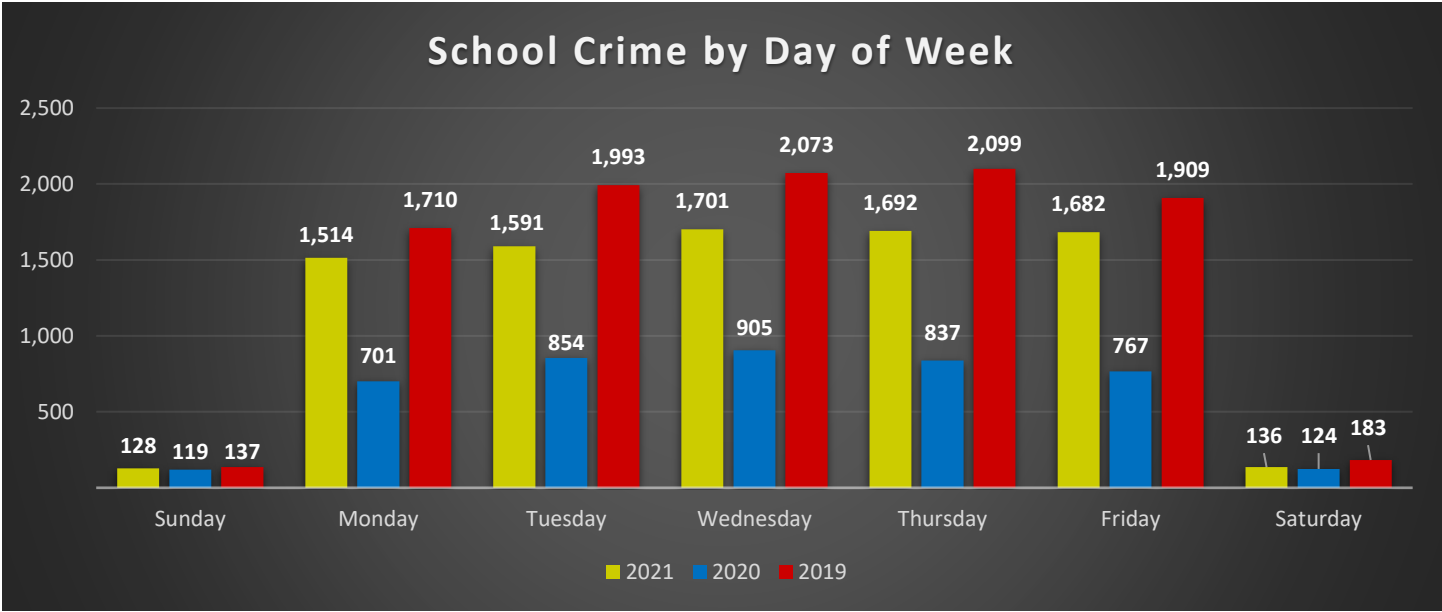
In 2021 a total of 8,444 incidents were reported as having occurred at an elementary/secondary school, showing a 96.05% increase from the reported 4,307 incidents in 2020. While this massive increase is certainly of some significance, it may be explained as 2021 being when schools began to re-open after they were closed for the majority of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This number still shows a decrease from pre-pandemic, 2019 numbers, a 16.43% decrease from the reported 10,104 incidents.

GROUP A OFFENSES BY TIME

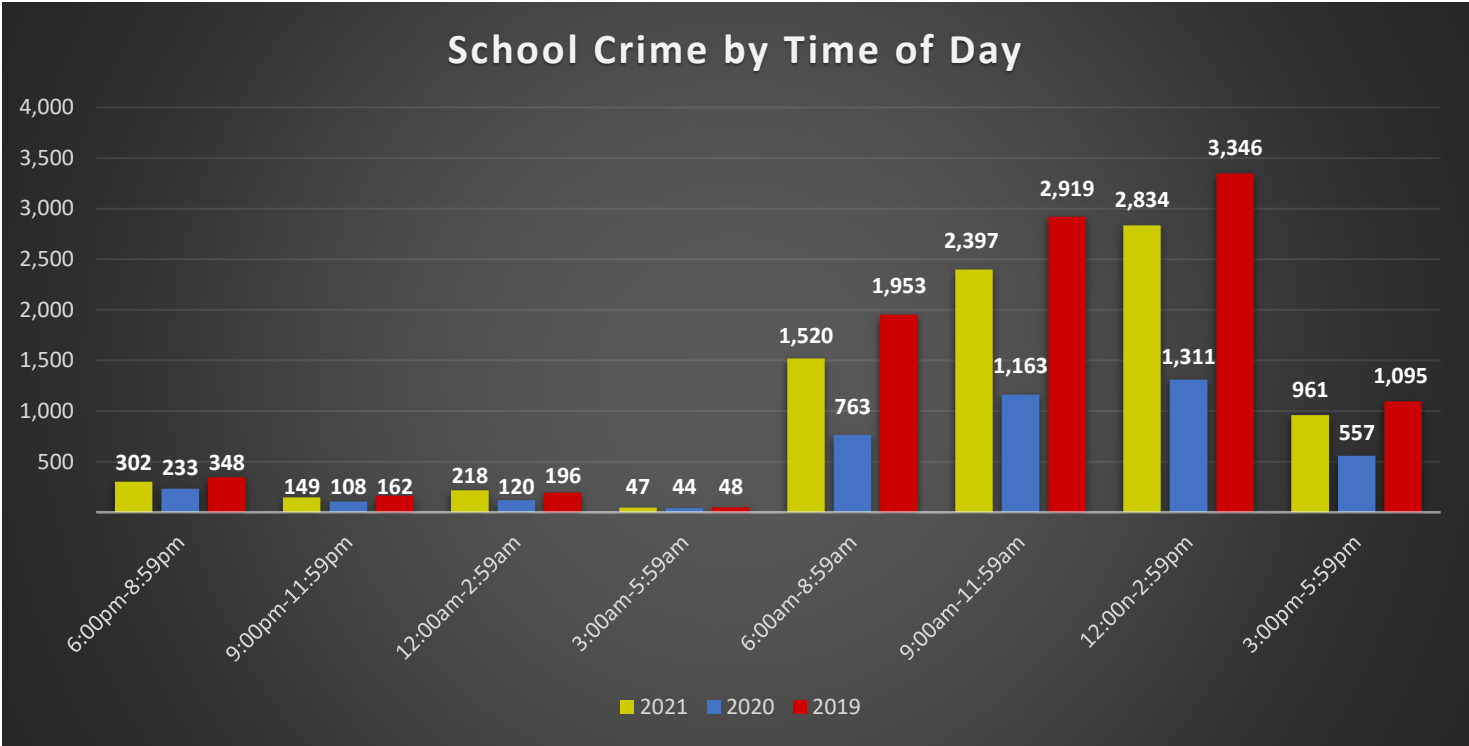




School crime incidents unsurprisingly coincide with the school year, with the most common month for a school crime incident having been reported in 2021 was September, accounting for 18.11% of incidents. September also happened to be the first full month in which the majority of Tennessee schools returned to a completely in-person class schedule. Conversely, the lowest numbers came in during July, accounting for 0.86% of incidents, which both came before the formal return to in-person classes, as well as being the middle of summer break. Reported incidents at the beginning of the school year (e.g. August-December), show a nearly identical trend to those shown in 2019, when schools were running in a similar fashion.

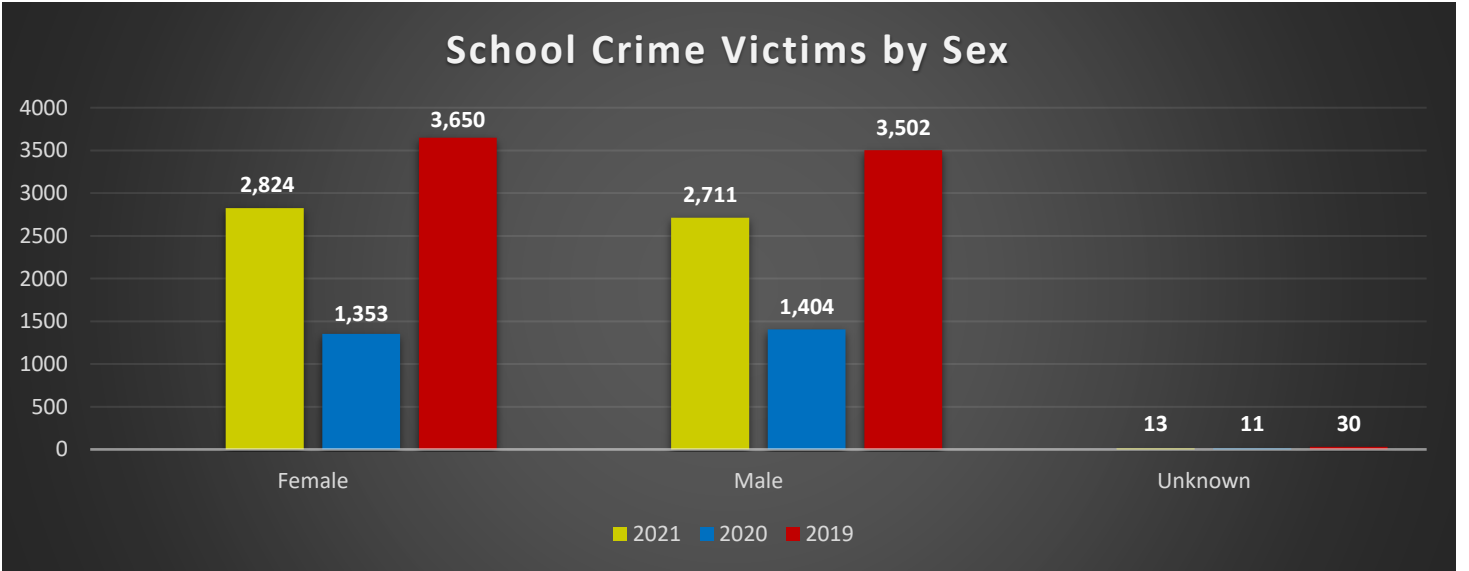


School crime incidents unsurprisingly occur mostly during weekdays when the schools are open, with Wednesday being the most common day for incidents to occur, with 20.14% of reported incidents, followed closely by Thursday and Friday, with 20.04% and 19.92% respectively.



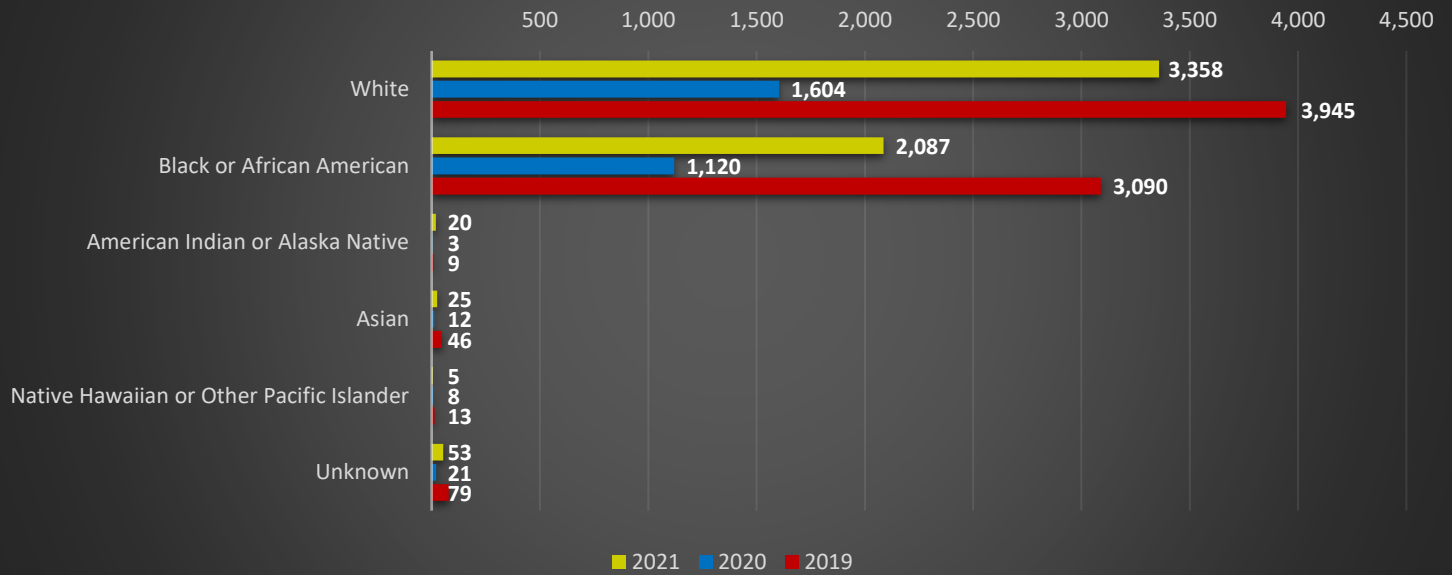
Similar to the other reported aspects regarding times in which school crimes were reported, time of day directly correlates with the time of day that school is in session. The majority of reported incidents are shown to have occurred around midday with 12:00pm-2:59pm accounting for 33.63% of incidents, and 9:00am-11:59am accounting for 28.44% of incidents. Conversely, the night and early morning show almost no incidents, with 3:00am-5:59am accounting for only 0.56% of incidents.

VICTIM DEMOGRAPHICS



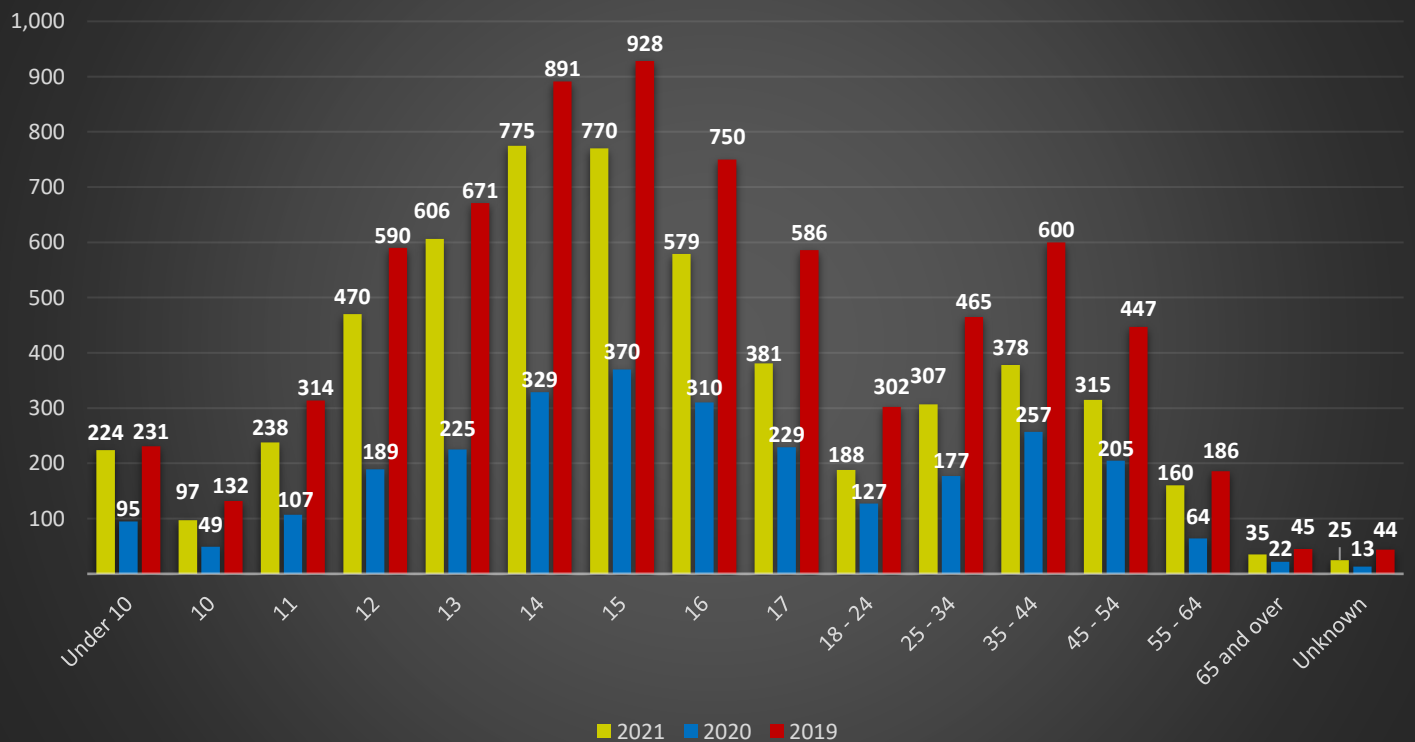
When looking at school crime victims by sex, the rates between Males and Females were fairly consistent, with Females making up 50.9% of incident victims, and Males making up 48.86%, with the remaining being listed as Unknown.

School Crime Victims By Race



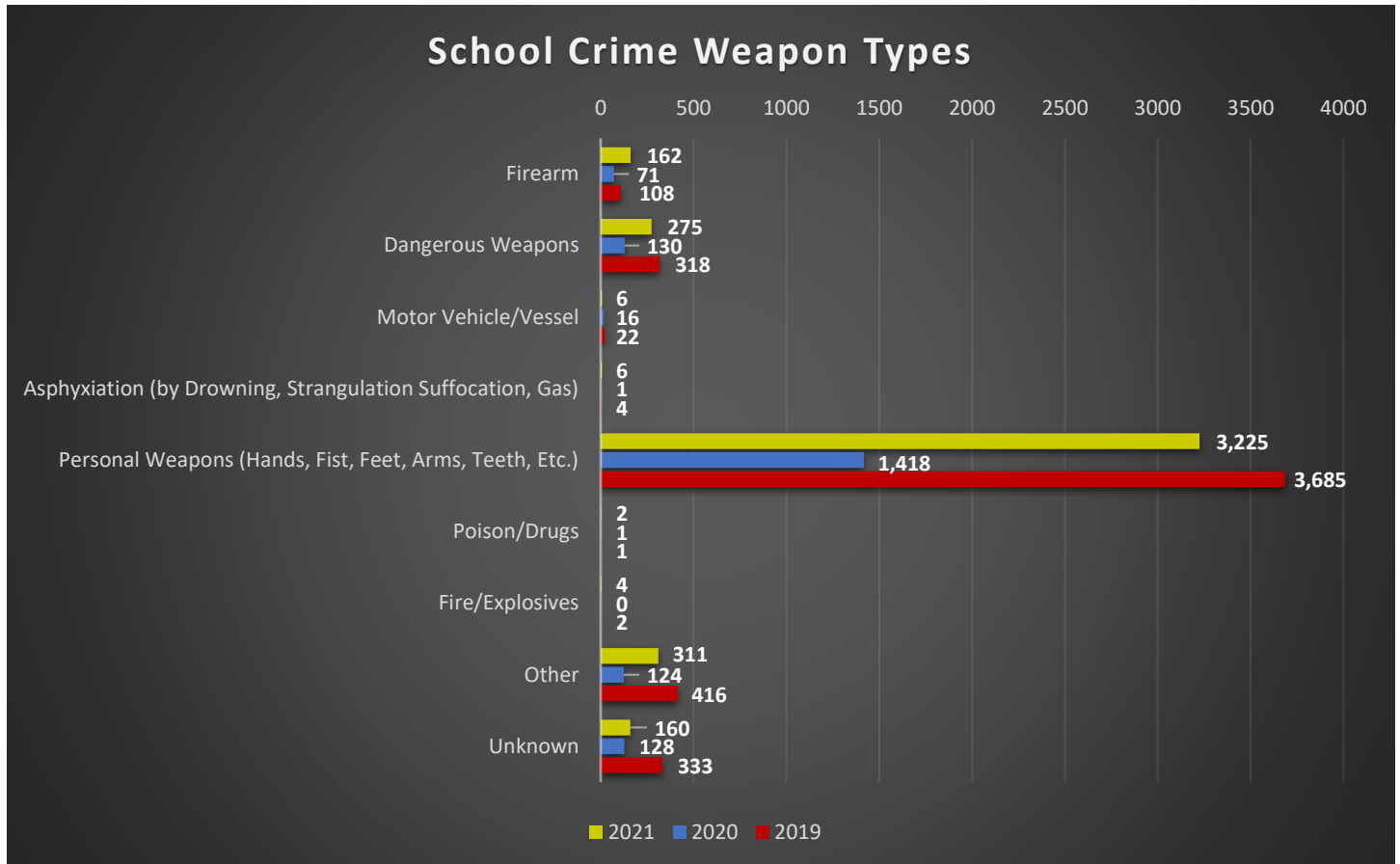
While examining the race of reported school crime victims, the vast majority fall into the categories of either White, at 60.53% of reported victims, and Black or African American, making up 37.62% of reports. The remainder is split between the groups American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and those categorized as Unknown.

School Crime Victims by Age



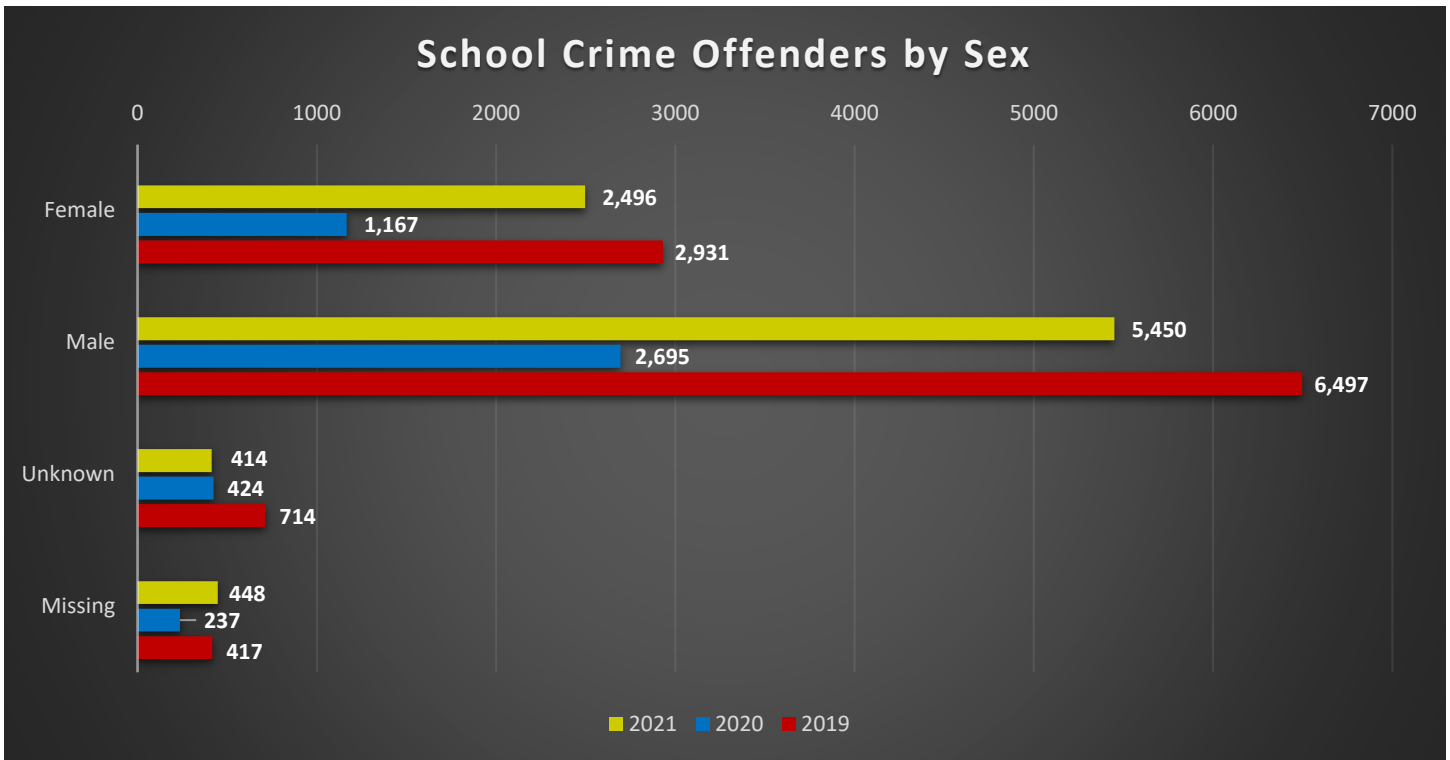
The last victim characteristic examined was age which shows something approximating a bell curve among student aged victims, with ages 14 and 15 representing the peak of the curve, accounting for 13.97% and 13.88% of reported school crime victims respectively. Victims aged 18 or older or were listed as Unknown and made up 25.38% of reported victims.

SCHOOL CRIMES BY WEAPON TYPE

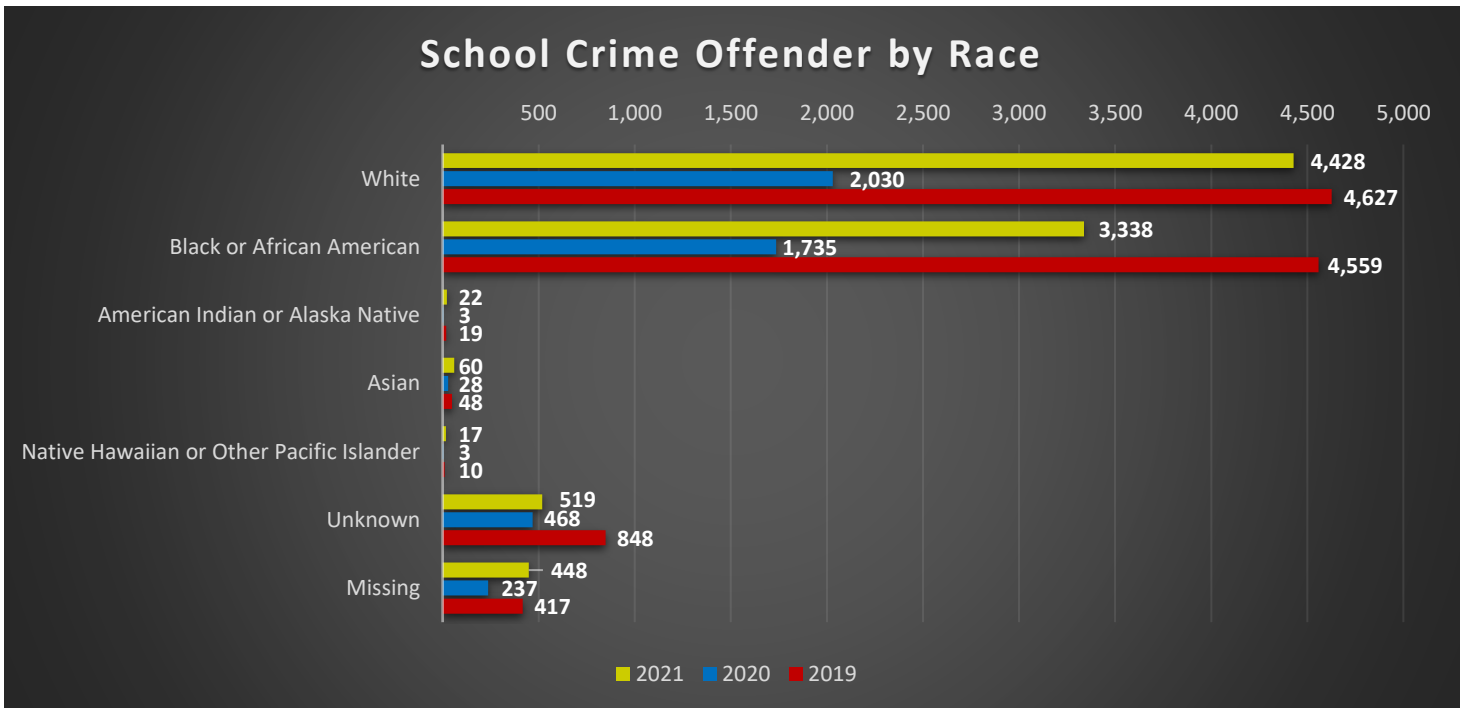


When looking at weapons reported to have been used in school crime offenses, the vast majority are shown to be of the category Personal Weapons, making up 77.69% of reported weapons. Behind that were those weapons categorized as Other, meaning that they could not fit cleanly into one of the more defined categories, with 7.49% of reported weapons.

OFFENDER DEMOGRAPHICS



When looking at offender data for school crime offenses, offenders categorized as Male made up more than double the amount of reported offenders compared to Female, accounting for 61.88% and 28.34% of reported offenders respectively. The remaining 9.78% of school crime offenders were reported as either Unknown, or the data was missing.



School crime offenders categorized as White made up the majority of reported race demographics with 50.14% of reported race demographics. Black or African American made up the other large portion of reported offender races, at 37.79%

SCHOOL CRIME CLEARANCES

SCHOOL CRIME CLEARANCES						
CATEGORY	CLEARANCES			PERCENT CHANGE		
	2019	2020	2021	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2019 to 2021
Cleared by Arrest	4,582	1,955	3,946	-57.33%	101.84%	-13.88%
Death of Offender	0	0	1	0%	-	-
Prosecution Declined	346	199	427	-42.49%	114.57%	23.41%
In Custody of Other Jurisdiction	0	1	5	-	400%	-
Victim Refused to Cooperate	677	220	585	-67.5%	165.91%	-13.59%
Juvenile/No Custody	493	168	314	-65.92%	86.9%	-36.31
Total Crime Clearances	6,098	2,543	5,278	-58.3%	107.55%	-13.45%

Note: Any percentage marked with a dash (-) denotes an infinite increase, which cannot be represented.

Between 2019 and 2021, a total of 13,919 of 22,855 reported school crime incidents were cleared either by arrest or through exceptional means, resulting in a 60.9% clearance rate. Of these clearances, 75.31% were Cleared by Arrest, with the remaining 24.69% being Exceptional Clearances.

An offense is cleared exceptionally when an element beyond law enforcement control prevents a physical arrest. All four of the following must be met in order to clear an offense by exceptional means:

1. The investigation must have established the identity of at least one offender. This means the agency knows at least one offender's sex, race, age, ethnicity, and resident status.
2. Sufficient probable cause must have been developed to support the arrest, charging, and prosecution of the offender.
3. The exact (present) location of the offender must be known so that an arrest could be made.
4. There must be a reason outside of law enforcement control which prevents arrest.

Within 2021 exceptional incident clearances, the most common type reported was Victim Refused to Cooperate, making up 43.92% of reports.

A point to remember regarding clearance statistics is in a multiple offense incident, the exceptional clearance of any one offense involved clears the entire incident. An incident cannot be cleared exceptionally when an arrest has been made in connection with the incident because the incident would then be cleared by arrest.

SUMMARY

From 2019 to 2021, 22,855 crimes were reported by Tennessee law enforcement agencies with a location code of School – Elementary/Secondary. The overall number of offenses showed a 16.43% decrease since 2019. Simple assault was the most frequently report offense type at 37.41%. September had the highest reported amount of school crimes. The most frequently reported time of day for school crimes to occur was 12:00pm – 2:59pm at 33.63% of incidents with Wednesday being the most common day for crimes to occur. School crime victims tended to be female, making up 50.9% of victims. The most common race of victims was White at 60.53%. School crime offenders were generally Male at 61.88% with the most common race reported being White at 50.14%. In 2021, 62.51% of school crimes were reported to have been cleared either by arrest or by exceptional means.



Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, November 2022. Publication Authorization Number 348515, electronic copies only. This publication was promulgated at a cost of \$0.00 per copy.