



● THREAT LEVEL: HIGH

SCHOOL REVOLT SWEEPS FRANCE

A protest over crowded classrooms has become France's worst urban violence since 2023, six months before a presidential election.

BOTTOM LINE

France's worst urban unrest since 2023 began at a school gate

Lycée blockades that started in Créteil on 18–21 September over missing teachers and overcrowded classes reached more than 1,200 high schools within two weeks. From 28 September the movement turned violent, with arson, attacks on staff and daily clashes with police from Paris to Marseille.

Who is driving the violence is contested. The government says “ultra-violent groups”, La France Insoumise (LFI) and far-left networks hijacked the movement; LFI calls that conspiracism. A Le Figaro poll found 62% of the public consider the students’ grievances justified.



KEY JUDGEMENTS

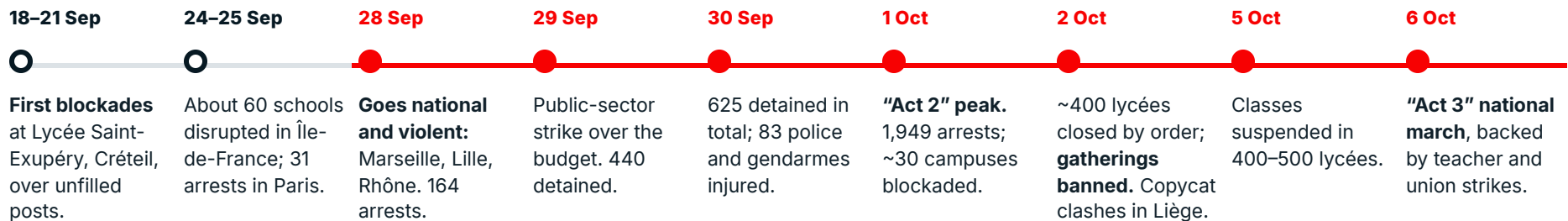
- 01 Not a repeat of 2005 or 2023.** Those riots followed deaths at police hands. This began over school resources and was then overtaken by violent fringes.
- 02 Decentralised and hard to police.** Small, mobile groups, many of them minors, use fireworks mortars and arson. Mass arrests have not yet deterred them.
- 03 Now an election issue.** The right calls it an LFI “dress rehearsal”; LFI calls the policing repression.
- 04 Most likely: gradual decline** over two to four weeks, helped by concessions and the holiday from 17 October.
- 05 Escalation triggers:** a pupil killed or badly hurt by police, or a merger with union strikes over the 2027 budget.

THREATRATE THREAT LEVEL: FRANCE



FROM BLOCKADE TO RIOT

Two weeks from a Créteil school gate to a national crisis



THE GRIEVANCES

Students cite unfilled teaching posts, classes of 32–35, run-down buildings, overloaded timetables and stress over the Parcoursup admissions platform, made worse by September heat of up to 35°C. The draft 2027 budget raises education spending by just 1.7%, below inflation.

THE ESCALATION

Bin fires and barricades gave way to fireworks mortars, Molotov cocktails and arson. A fire engine was burned in Marseille, a teacher doused with petrol in La Ciotat and a police officer beaten in Belfort. Over 100 schools have suffered severe damage.

THE RESPONSE

Mass arrests from 28 September, a crisis meeting chaired by the Prime Minister on 1 October, then about 400 lycées closed by order and gatherings banned by prefects on 2 October. Classes were suspended in 400–500 lycées by 5 October.

16

days from the first blockades to the "Act 3" national march

100+

schools severely damaged, per the Education Ministry

90%

of those taken into custody are minors

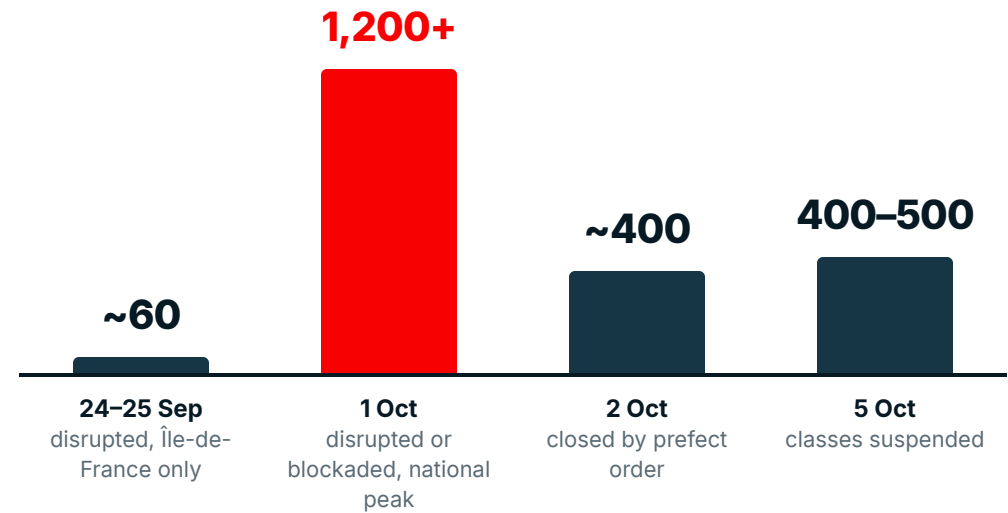
ESCALATION

From one suburb to every major city



Map: ThreatRate. Cities named in reporting to 5 October 2026; Liège shows copycat clashes in Belgium.

HIGH SCHOOLS AFFECTED, BY DATE



Counts use different measures on each date, as reported. 3,700 lycées nationwide.



Roughly one lycée in three

was disrupted or blockaded at the peak: 1,200+ of 3,700.

318 INJURED BY 1 OCTOBER



SIX MONTHS BEFORE A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Both camps are using the unrest to frame 2027

GOVERNMENT AND THE RIGHT

The Prime Minister's office calls the unrest an operation by LFI "and its proxies", carried out by "ultra-violent groups". The right calls it an LFI "dress rehearsal".

Justice Minister Darmanin: make parents pay for damage

Prefects ban gatherings (2 Oct)

LFI AND THE LEFT

LFI denies organising the movement, calls the claim conspiracism and says the protests are spontaneous. It calls the policing repression.

Teachers' unions back the demands, not the violence

Public: 62% say grievances are justified

6

months to the 2027 presidential election

1.7%

rise in education spending in the draft 2027 budget,
below inflation

32-35

pupils per class cited by students

THE STATE'S RESPONSE SO FAR

5,000+

arrests since 28 September,
about 90% minors

~400

lycées closed by order on 2
October

Bans

prefects ban gatherings from 2
October

€10,000

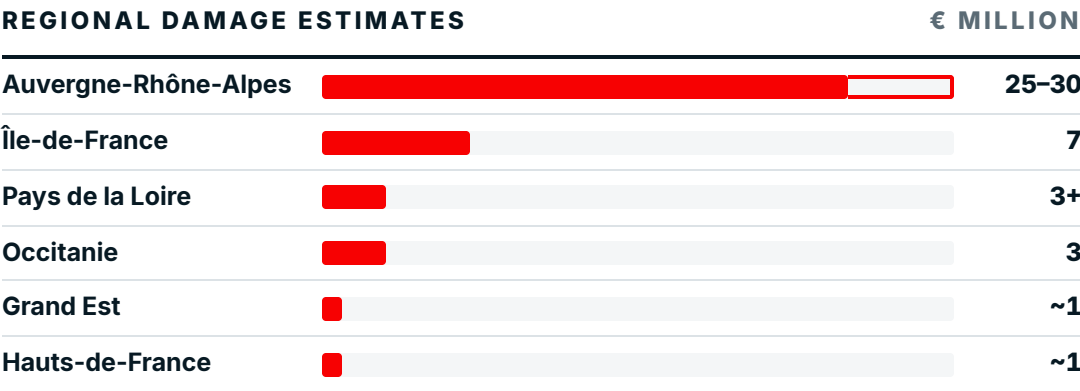
liability per rioter under the fast-
tracked "casseur-payeur" bill

The budget is the bridge between the schools and the wider political fight: the same 2027 budget drove the 29 September public-sector strike, and a merger of the two movements is the main escalation risk.

THE BILL SO FAR

€40m+ in damage to schools, and the bill is still rising

Regional councils, which own France’s lycées, put the damage from two weeks of unrest at more than €40 million: early, partial estimates from six of 13 mainland regions, excluding policing, lost teaching time and most private losses.



Source: regional council presidents, 2–3 October 2026. Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes includes surrounding public property and vehicles; the outlined segment shows the range.

LOSSES BEYOND THE DAMAGE BILL

Lost teaching

HIGH

Up to 500 of 3,700 lycées suspended classes on one day. Exam-year pupils lose weeks before Parcoursup.

Transport

HIGH

Buses and a fire engine burned in Marseille; networks suspended in several cities.

Policing

ELEVATED

Mass deployments, overtime and 5,000+ arrests to process. No cost published yet.

Retail

MODERATE

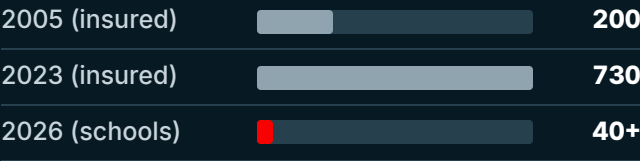
Damage is concentrated around schools; no sign yet of 2023-style looting.

WHO PAYS

The cost is being pushed onto families

- 01 Regions and taxpayers.** Regional budgets carry repairs up front. Valérie Pécresse has threatened to bill Saint-Denis council €100,000 for one school gate.
- 02 Parents.** Darmanin has told prosecutors to pursue parents’ civil liability; a fast-tracked “casseur-payeur” bill would make rioters liable up to €10,000 each.
- 03 Insurers.** The 2026 Finance Law makes riot cover mandatory, with a state reinsurance fund, but no start date is set.

FOR SCALE · RIOT DAMAGE, € MILLION



PAST MASS VIOLENT PROTEST

France has been here before, but never from a school gate

Waves of violent protest recur in France, usually led by young people in big-city suburbs and set off by a confrontation with the state. This movement differs in its trigger and its reach into provincial towns. The closest parallel is 1986.

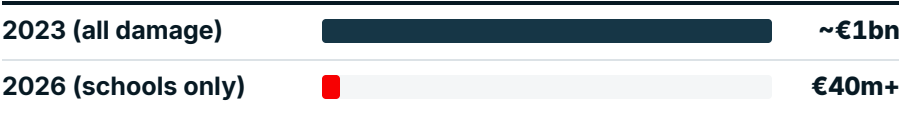


ARRESTS: 2023 VS 2026



2026 count since 28 September; about 90% of those held are minors.

DAMAGE: 2023 VS 2026



2026 figure is a partial estimate from six regions; it excludes policing and private losses.

NEXT TWO TO FOUR WEEKS

Three scenarios: momentum is fading, but one incident could reignite it

LIKELIHOOD: MOST LIKELY

Gradual de-escalation

Teacher-replacement measures, school closures and the 17 October holiday sap momentum. Sporadic violence continues around suburban schools.

Drivers: concessions, closures, the holiday.

LIKELIHOOD: LOW TO MODERATE

Convergence with unions

Students join public-sector strikes against the 2027 budget, bringing weekly national action days and clashes in Paris.

Trigger: students join the budget strikes.

LIKELIHOOD: LOW

2005-style urban riots

A pupil killed or badly hurt by police sets off night-time rioting in the suburbs, no longer tied to schools.

Trigger: a pupil seriously hurt by police.

PUSHES TOWARD ESCALATION

- ▲ A pupil killed or badly hurt by police
- ▲ Merger with union strikes over the 2027 budget
- ▲ Election framing hardening on both sides

PUSHES TOWARD DE-ESCALATION

- ▼ Funding concessions and teacher-replacement measures
- ▼ The All Saints' holiday from 17 October
- ▼ School closures and gathering bans

 Bar length indicates relative likelihood (qualitative ThreatRate assessment, not a probability).

WHAT TO DO NOW

Guidance for organisations with people or operations in France

AREA	RISK	GUIDANCE
Schools & campuses	HIGH	Avoid lycées and universities at the start and end of the school day. Expect closures at short notice.
Demonstrations	HIGH	Avoid the 6 October march and union rallies. Fireworks mortars, tear gas and kettling are likely.
Transport	ELEVATED	Bus and tram services have been suspended in Marseille and elsewhere. Plan around strike days.
Business & travel	MODERATE	Business districts and airports are largely unaffected. Follow prefecture gathering bans.

KEY DATES

6 Oct

"Act 3" national march, backed by teacher and union strikes

17 Oct

All Saints' school holiday begins; expected to sap momentum

2027

Presidential election, six months away; the unrest is now a campaign issue

EARLY WARNING DASHBOARD

Indicators to monitor

● **Police violence**

A pupil killed or badly hurt during an intervention at a school gate.

▲ **ESCALATION**

● **Union convergence**

Students joining public-sector strikes over the 2027 budget; weekly national action days.

▲ **ESCALATION**

● **Spread**

New copycat clashes outside France, as in Liège, or in more provincial towns.

▲ **ESCALATION**

● **Election framing**

Government and LFI rhetoric; new measures such as the “casseur-payeur” bill.

▲▼ **EITHER WAY**

● **Concessions**

Funding or teacher-replacement measures announced for lycées.

▼ **DE-ESCALATION**

● **Holiday lull**

Fewer blockades from 17 October, when the All Saints’ break begins.

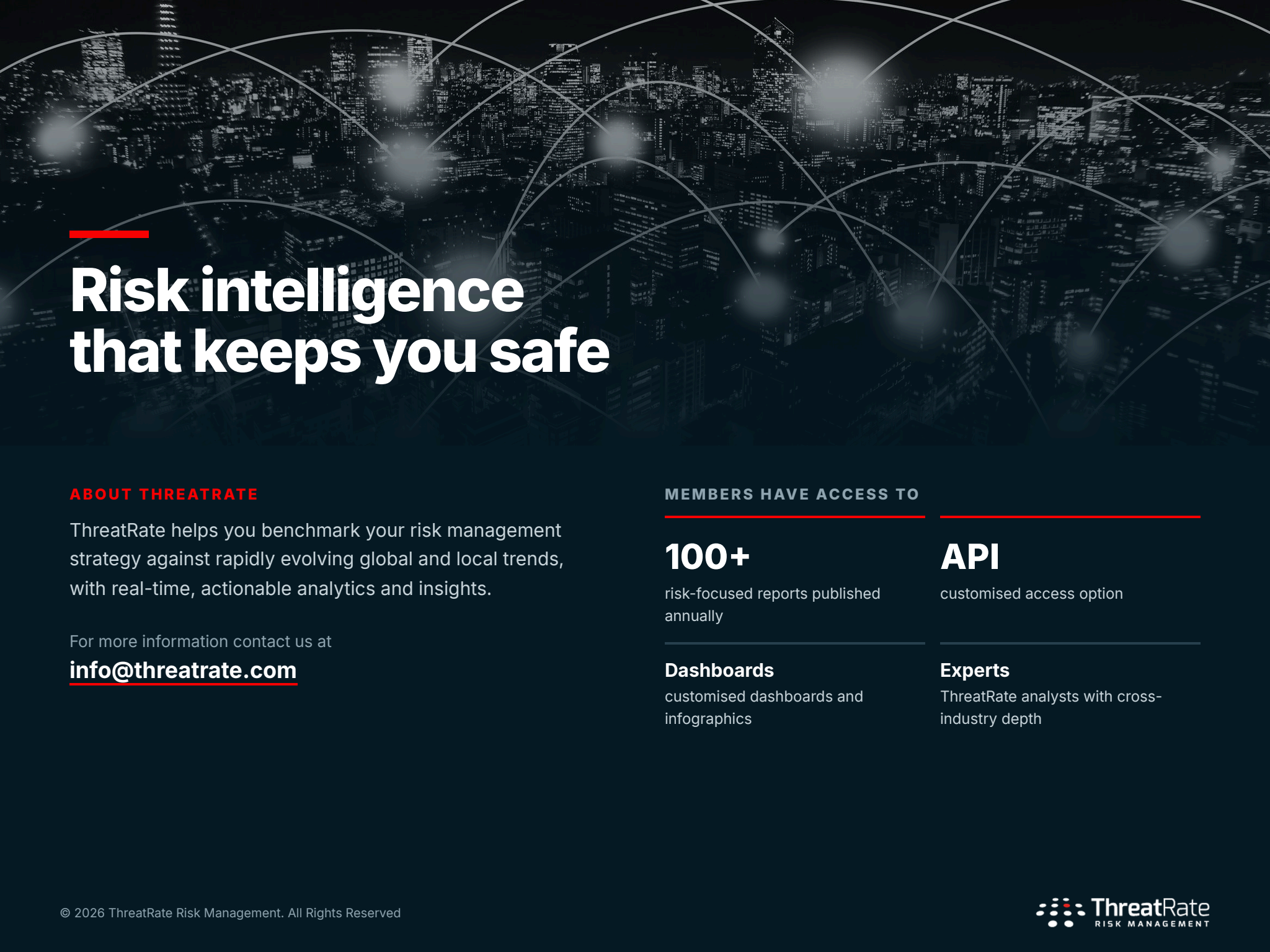
▼ **DE-ESCALATION**

This is a protest about schools that turned violent, not a riot over a police killing. Whether it fades or flares depends on one incident at a school gate.

CONCLUSION

The movement is decentralised, young and hard to police, and mass arrests have not yet deterred it. Its trigger, school conditions, has broad public sympathy, which keeps the political temperature high six months before the election.

The most likely path is a gradual decline over two to four weeks as concessions and the holiday take effect. The most dangerous is a serious injury or death at police hands, or a merger with budget strikes, either of which would turn a school protest into 2005-style urban rioting.



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