

Screen Time, Exposure to Violence, & Kids' Mental Health

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Overview

- **Introduction**
- **Screen time, broadly**
- **Gaming**
- **Violence: on-screen & IRL**
- **Resources & Questions**

with sprinklings of

What we can do!

throughout



Study Finds Every Style Of Parenting Produces Disturbed, Miserable Adults



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Screen Time

- Includes: TV, video games, social media, internet use
- Reality: children 8-12 average 6 hours a day, children 13-18 average 9 hours a day
- Most leisure time is now on screens
- Kids and teens are physically safe and emotionally fragile

iGen / Gen Z

Why Today's Super-Connected Kids are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood (Author: Jean Twenge, Ph.D.)

- Growing up slowly & sheltered (jobs, driving, etc)
- Texting, internet, gaming, tv, social media
- More social media interaction than social interaction in person
- The New Mental Health Crisis (loneliness, anxiety, depression)
- More safety, less community

Cognitive Implications

- Decline in printed books, newspapers, magazines
- Kids & teens reading for pleasure less & less
- Impact on academics
 - **SAT:** 13 point decline since 2006
 - **Critical Reading:** 12 point decline since 2005

Multitasking

- Texting & social media are not so great for attention span and reading comprehension
- ~30% of time 8-18 year olds are multitasking
- Middle and high school students studied for 6 minutes at a time before texting or social media
- College students who rated high on multitasking had harder time filtering out irrelevant info

Socioemotional Health

HEALTH • MENTAL HEALTH/PSYCHOLOGY

Young Americans Are the Loneliest, According to a New Study



- In 1985, 10% of Americans said they had no one to fully confide in; present day 25%
- Teens who spend more time on screens are more likely to be unhappy/lonely/depressed than those that spend more time on non-screen activities

Depression & Anxiety

- Depression rates increased 21% (boys) and 50% (girls) between 2012-2015
- In 2016, for the first time, college students rated their mental health as “below average”
- Increases in mental health issues **paralleled** smartphones
- Key cross-cutting problems: **sleep & exercise**

Suicide & Self Harm

- 66% of kids who have been cyberbullied have at least one suicide risk factor (considering or making a plan)
- Since 2007, the homicide rate among teens has steadily declined but the suicide rate has steadily increased
- Child & teen ED visits due to SI tripled from 2008-2015
- Concerns about “contagion”

Mental Health in the Media

- Media portrayal of mental illness is skewed
 - Exaggerated, oversimplified, stigmatized
- Treatments exist but are rarely (if ever) shown
 - e.g. 13 Reasons Why
- But! We can use this as a **starting point for discussion** for mental health & mental illness with kids

What we can do!

Tech for Good

- With self-regulation & awareness, technology can be positive (bear with me...)
- Need to feel connected to others
 - Taking and sharing pictures and videos
 - Find new communities, expand network (e.g. via music, games, social media)

Screen Time Guidelines

- <18 months: video-chatting only
- 2 to 5 years: <1 hour per day of high-quality programs
- >6 years: **consistent limits** on **time** spent using media & **types** of media
 - Make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviors essential to health
- Designate media-free times together (e.g. dinner, driving) & media-free locations at home (e.g. bedrooms)
- Have ongoing communication about treating others with respect online and offline

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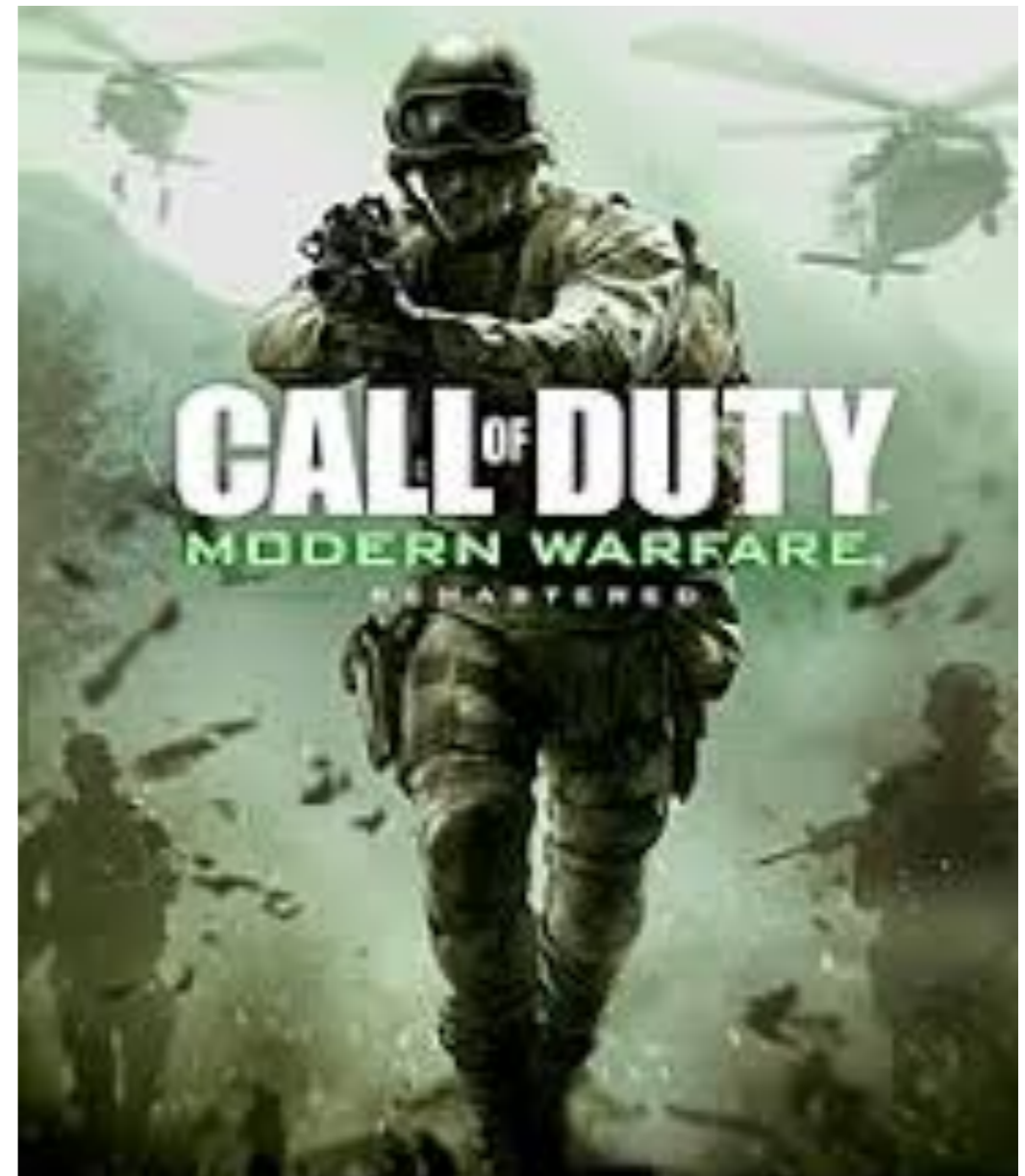
Gaming in 1979



Gaming Today

Now an 82 billion dollar industry

- **Common game types:**
 - Strategy (e.g. Candycrush)
 - Sports (e.g. FIFA)
 - Role (e.g. Fortnite)
 - Action games (i.e. using avatars)
- **Most popular: shooter games**



Gaming Disorder

- Recognized by World Health Organization; symptoms include:
 - Lack of control over gaming (frequency, intensity, duration)
 - Increased priority given to gaming
 - Continuation of gaming despite consequences
- Mixed results, but some studies showing similar brain patterns to other disorders of addictions
- Significant comorbidity (ADHD, Anxiety, Depression)

What we can do!

Gaming Concerns

- Do you spend a lot of time thinking about games?
- Do you feel moody/irritable when not playing?
- Do you feel the need to play more/more exciting games?
- Hard to cut back?
- Lose interest in other activities?
- Are there negative consequences (sleep loss, academics, etc.)?
- Do you lie about how much?
- Do you game to escape problems or feelings?

Violence in Video Games

*From APA 2015 Review**

Consistent increase in:

- Aggressive behaviors
- Aggressive cognitions
- Aggressive affect

Consistent decrease in:

- Prosocial behavior
- Empathy
- Sensitivity to aggression

Very highly correlated, but no direct causal relationship

**Mostly on boys; limited studies under age 10*

Violence in Video Games

- No single factor can cause a nonviolent person to act aggressively
- Heavy exposure to violent media can be a risk factor for violent or aggressive behavior
- Children who are exposed to multiple risk factors (e.g. conflict at home, aggression, substance abuse) **& also** consume violent media are at highest risk

What we can do!

Containing Violent Content

- Exposure to violent media is one risk factor for aggressive behavior that parents have (some) control over
- Choose media that reflects own personal values
- Common Sense Media as a resource to guide media selections
- Doing research about TV shows, movies, or games before kids interact with them will go a long way in helping them avoid the bad stuff

What we can do!

Technology Takeaways

- Fine line between permissive and restrictive — the goal is to **mentor**
- Nurture **face-to-face** interactions
- Model “**single-tasking**” over multi-tasking
- **Delay and decrease screens:** at meals, at bedtime
- Promote **exercise** and **social interaction** IRL
- **Set limits** on time & content, and stick to them
- **Consider:** what is the function and is there impairment?
- **Walk the walk:** use yours as you would like them to use theirs!

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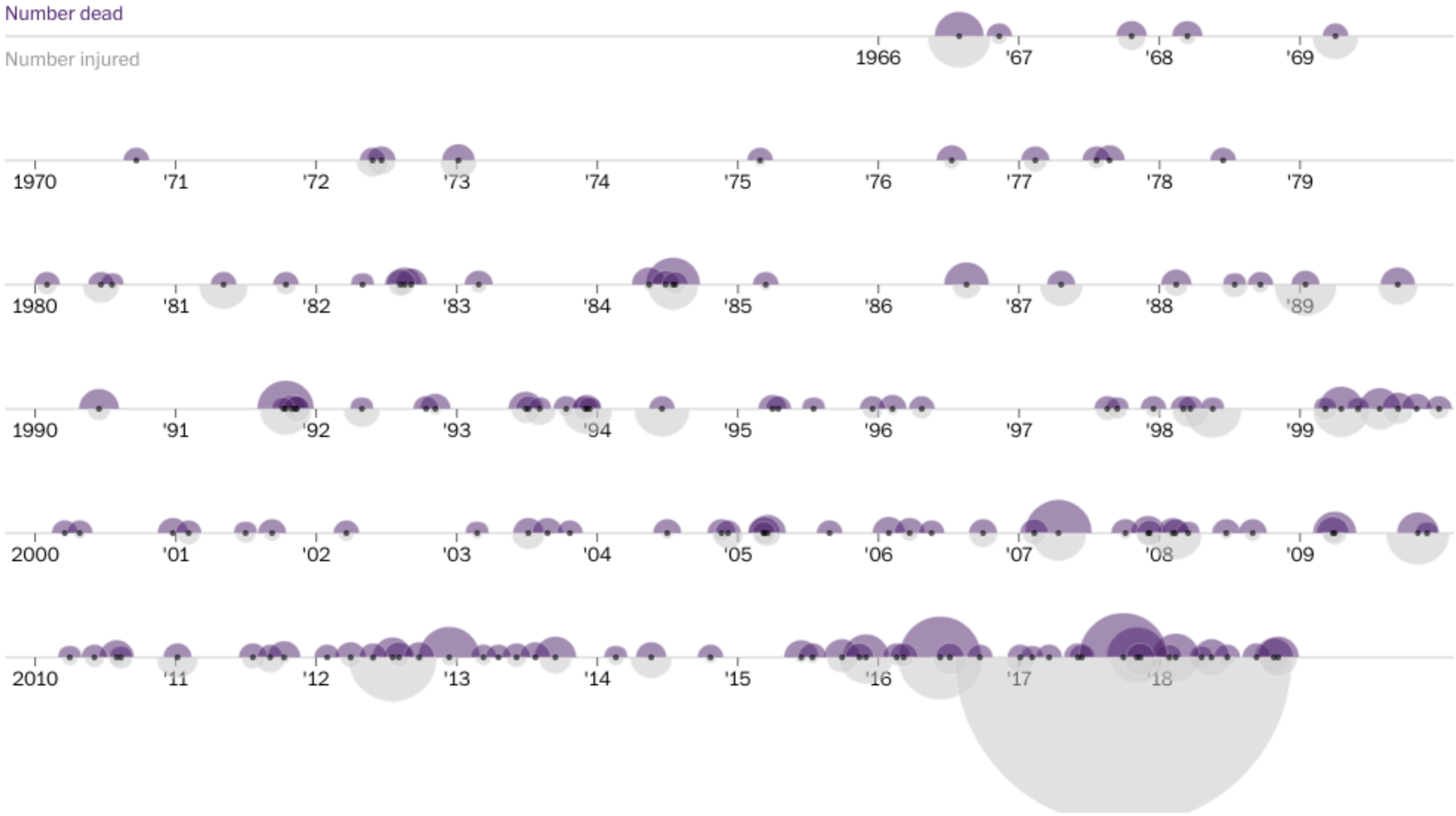
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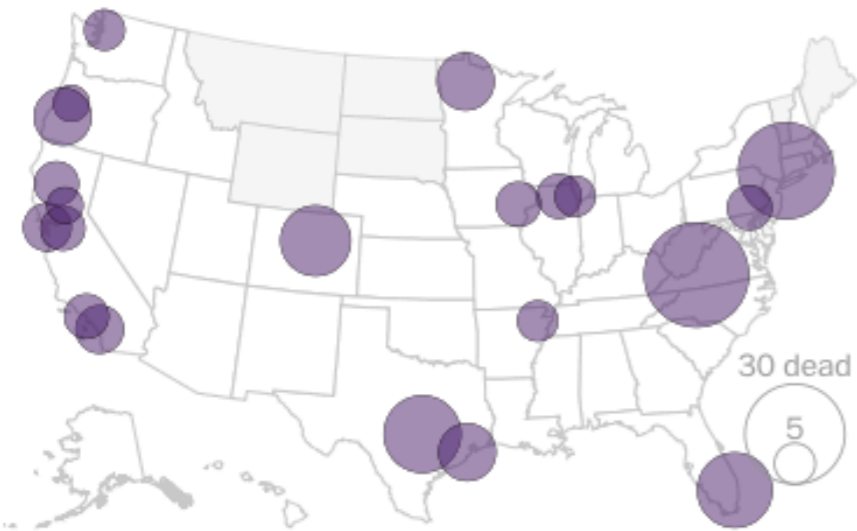
School Shootings

- Gun violence **is real** and **very scary**
- Gun violence **does occur at schools**
- But, it is still **statistically rare**

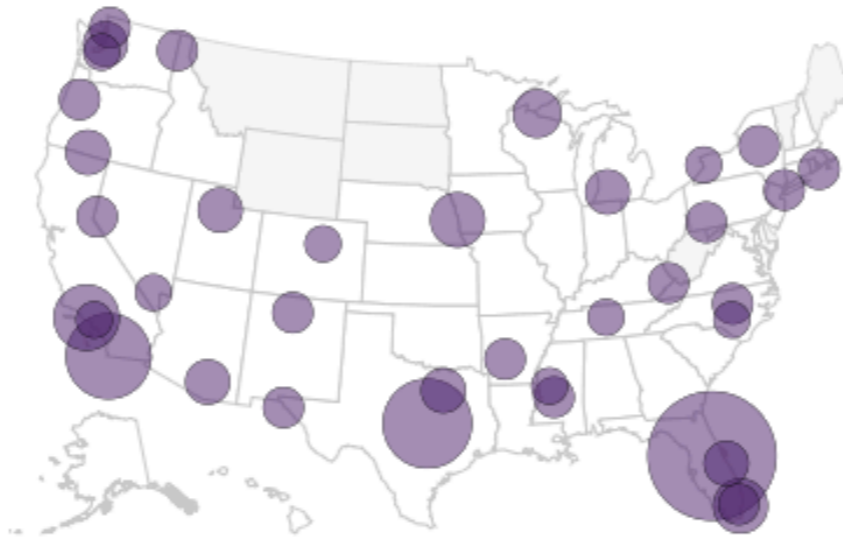


Via Washington Post (2018): [The terrible numbers that grow with each mass shooting](#)

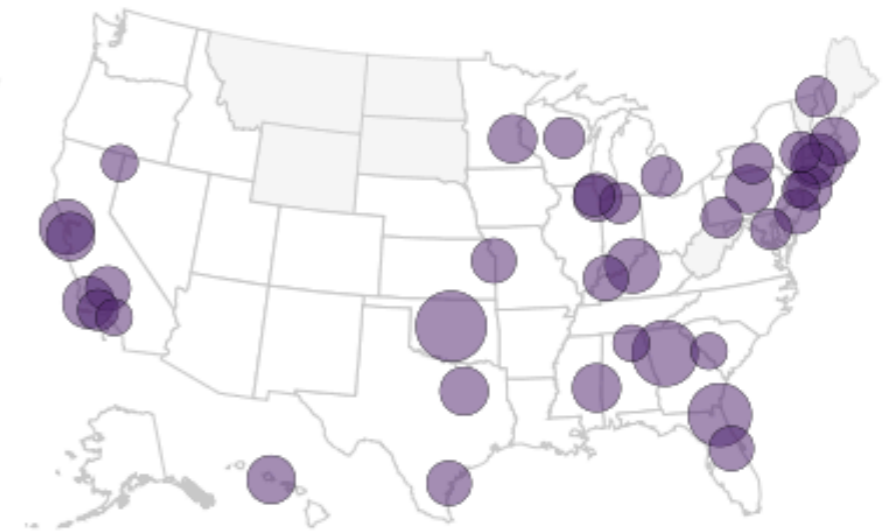
SCHOOLS



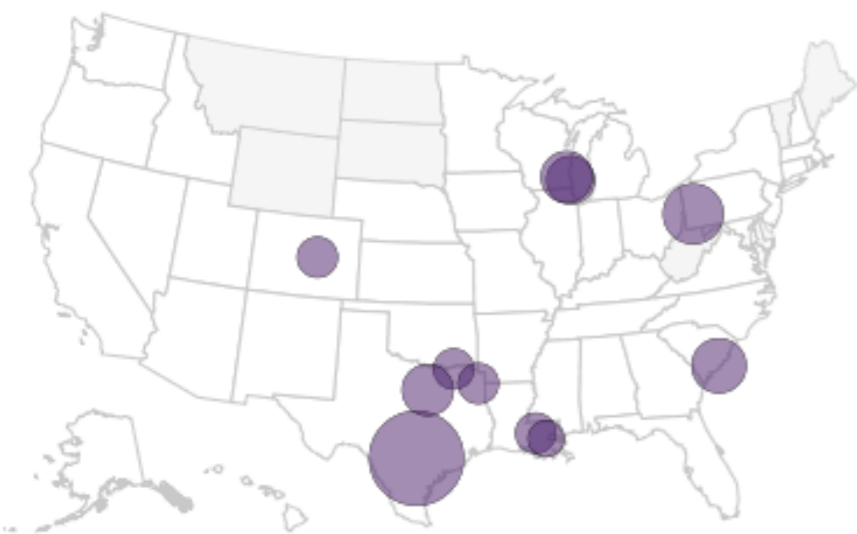
STORES, RESTAURANTS AND BARS



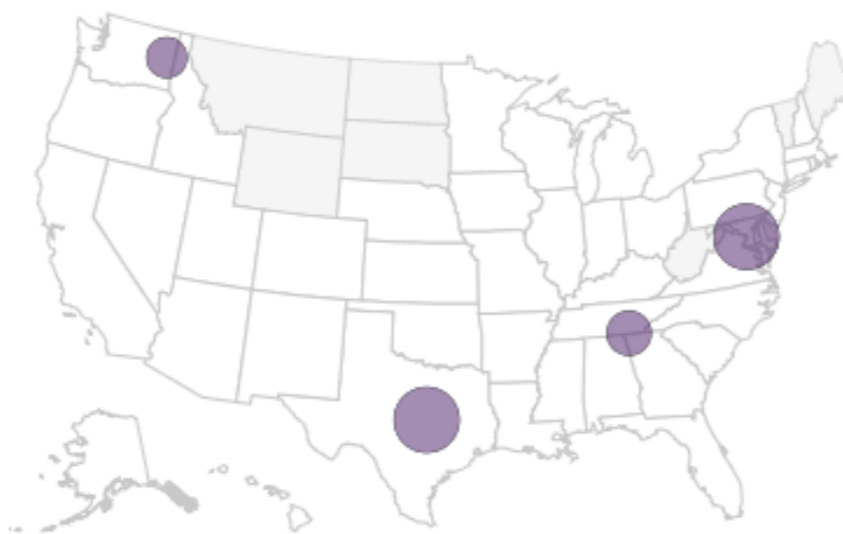
OFFICES



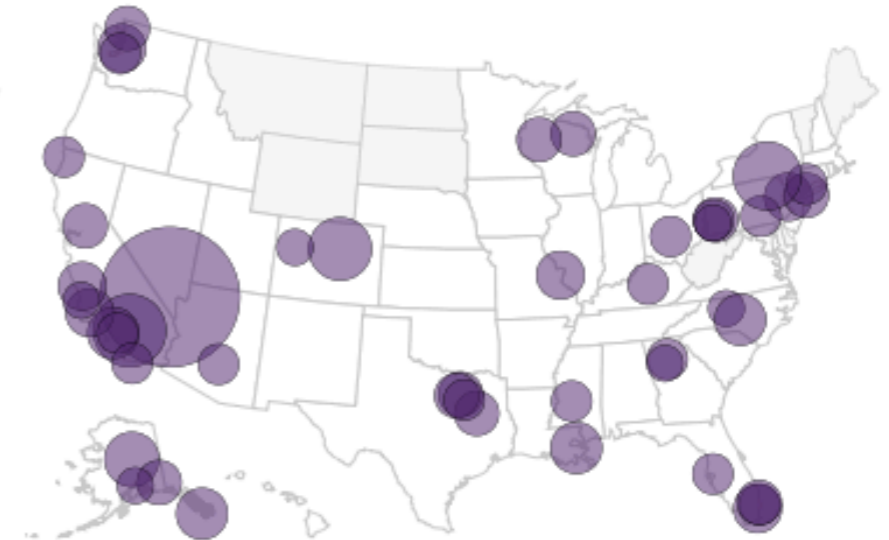
PLACE OF WORSHIP



MILITARY BASES



OTHER PLACES



Via Washington Post (2018): [The terrible numbers that grow with each mass shooting](#)

Common Kids' Reactions After a Shooting

Sadness, anger, anxiety, grief, helplessness are all **totally normal and appropriate responses** to mass violence! Can manifest as:

- Difficulty concentrating/paying attention
- Withdrawal
- Acting out
- Irritability, defiance
- Increased anxiety separating from caregivers and/or leaving home
- Sleep and/or appetite changes

Should I be concerned about my child's reaction?

- In general, symptoms should lessen within a few weeks
- Three key markers of “clinical” anxiety:
 1. Avoidance
 2. Interference
 3. Distress

How can we apply what we know about anxiety?

- **Avoidance feedback loop** - the more you avoid something, the more anxious you will be about it
- Gold standard anxiety treatment is **exposure therapy**
- Not avoidance, but also not flooding
- Encourage two distinct types of “coping self-talk”
 1. This probably wont happen to me
 2. Even if it does, we can handle it and know what to do

What we can do!

How do we talk to kids about shootings?

1. Start the conversation
2. Find out what your child already knows **& listen**
3. Gently correct inaccurate information
4. Encourage them to ask you questions
5. Limit media exposure

What we can do!

Key Points for Kids

- Tell the **truth** in a **developmentally appropriate way**
- Explain that **sometimes people don't use guns well**
- Tell kids that **they are safe**
- Tell kids that **adults are going to take care of them**

The goal: balance the truth without overwhelming them

Take Care of Yourself

- Children's and teen's reactions are strongly influenced by how parents, relatives, teachers, and other caregivers respond to the attack; **but adults are impacted too!**
- Take time to reflect on the event has impacted you
- Take care of your needs: drink water, exercise, sleep, eat
- Help each other & support your community
- Give yourself a break and relax — with your children

What we can do!

Gun Violence Takeaways

- Foster **open communication** at home
- Balance being **honest & developmentally appropriate**
- Be a **positive role model**
- **Avoid avoidance**
- **Be patient**
- **Seek extra help if needed & tell them it's ok to need it!**

Thank you!

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Resources

If you are concerned about your child:

- Duke Children's Evaluation Center (DCEC)

919-385-3232 | Lakeview Pavillion, Durham NC 27705

- Child Development & Behavioral Health Clinic (CDBH)

919-668-5559 | 402 Trent Drive, Durham NC 27705

Additional (accurate!) information:

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network (<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/all-nctsn-resources>)
- Common Sense Media (<https://www.common Sense Media.org/>)