



Voices of Child Health in Chicago REPORT

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REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Two-thirds of Chicago parents are worried about shootings at their children's schools and three in four parents are worried about shootings at another public place.

A lower proportion of children were worried about shootings, but even among children with relatively lower levels of concern, concern about mass shootings in schools was associated with lower well-being and higher stress.

Children's worry about school shootings differed by age, race/ethnicity, and city region.

Parents' and Children's Concern About Mass Shootings

Mass shootings have been a public health crisis for many years, increasing in frequency steadily since 1966.¹ These events are defined as shootings that occur in a short time span (minutes to hours), in a public space, and include four or more victims. The increase in mass shootings over the last several decades has prompted preparatory actions such as implementing active shooter drills and emphasizing the importance of situational awareness for youth. However, 60.2% of youth report that the active shooter drills made them feel scared and hopeless.²

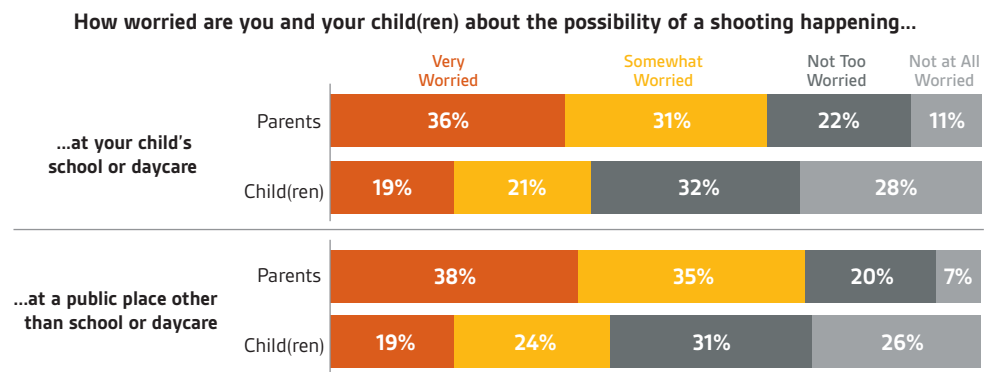
U.S. youth report worrying about shootings occurring in the places they frequent, and this worry is linked to higher rates of anxiety.^{3,4} Recently, Chicago schools have struggled with an increase in after-school shootings with nine children killed within the past year.⁵ Since 2018, there have been 157 school shootings reported in the U.S.⁶ The collective mental health trauma after mass shooting tragedies, and youth fears about mass shootings, are critical issues for youth health and well-being, particularly in the context of the ongoing youth mental health crisis.

In this month's *Voices of Child Health in Chicago Report*, we provide insight on parent and child fears regarding mass shootings in Chicago. We asked over 1,000 Chicago parents from all 77 community areas in the city about their own and their children's concern about mass shootings at schools and other public places.

Chicago parents' and children's concern about school shootings

We asked parents how worried they and their children were about the possibility of a shooting at their child's school or daycare. Two out of three parents reported that they were worried about this (36% were very worried, 31% were somewhat worried, Figure 1). This is similar to levels of worry reported by parents in national polls, in which 68% of parents noted they were at least somewhat worried that a shooting could occur in their child's school environment.³

Figure 1. Proportion of parents and children at each level of worry for shootings at school and at another public place

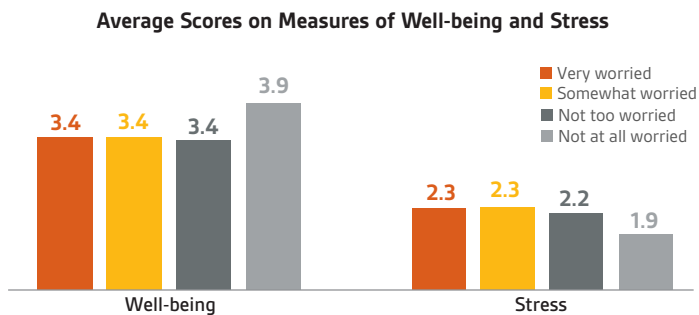


In our survey, parents reported lower levels of worry for their children, with 19% saying their children were very worried and 21% somewhat worried (Figure 1). Other research that directly asked U.S. adolescents about their own levels of worry found a higher proportion of adolescents (57%) were worried a shooting could happen at their school, which may suggest that parents in our survey underestimated the level of worry their children experience about school shootings.⁷

We explored how the level of youth concern about school shootings was associated with youth scores on measures of well-being and stress. Youth who were worried about shootings at their school had lower well-being scores and higher stress scores, and this was even true for youth who were "not too worried,"

compared with youth who were “not at all worried” (Figure 2). In other words, for youth in Chicago, any level of fear about school shootings was connected to lower well-being and heightened stress.

Figure 2. Child well-being and stress by level of worry about school shootings



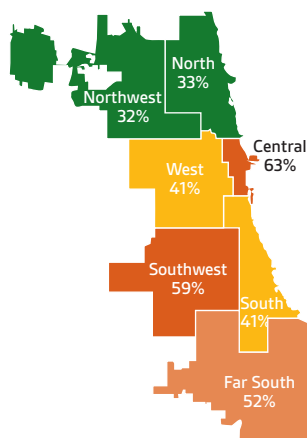
Concerns about mass shootings in other public places

We also asked parents about their concern regarding shootings in a public place that is not daycare or school. Nearly three in four parents reported being worried about this (38% very, 35% somewhat). And parents reported that 19% of children were very worried, 24% somewhat worried (Figure 1).

Differences in worry by demographics

Parent and child concern also differed by race/ethnicity and by city region. For instance, over half of Latinx parents said their children were worried about shootings in schools (32% very worried, 23% somewhat worried), followed by Asian/other-race parents (19% very worried, 27% somewhat worried), Black parents (20% very worried, 20% somewhat worried), and White parents (10% very worried, 18% somewhat worried). Additionally, parents from the Central and Southwest city regions were most likely to say their children were worried about school shootings, whereas parents from North and Northwest regions were least likely to say their children were worried (Figure 3). Parents also reported that children who were 11 years old or older were most likely to be worried (22% very worried, 25% somewhat worried) about a shooting at school or daycare, compared with children aged 0–5 years old (18% very worried, 8% somewhat worried).

Figure 3. Proportion of children who were very or somewhat concerned about school shootings by city region, per parent report



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RESOURCES LIST

First, keeping firearms safely out of young hands, and stored properly, is crucial. Gun-safe storage tips include storing them locked, unloaded and separate from ammunition.

- Safe storage toolkit from Strengthening Chicago Youth: <https://scv-chicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Gun-Safety-Toolkit-FINAL.pdf>
- Safety information from the American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Handguns-in-the-Home.aspx>
- Tips for asking about firearms in the home: <https://www.bradyunited.org/program/end-family-fire/asking-saves-kids>

If you or your child are in distress and are seeking mental health resources, the following can be reached out to:

- <https://www.namichicago.org> or 833.626.4244
- www.crisistextline.org or text HOME to 741741
- <https://988lifeline.org> or dial 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Connecting with organizations such as Everytown or contacting your representatives are other ways you can work to demand action to reduce shootings and gun violence⁸:

- <https://www.everytown.org/>
- <https://elections.il.gov/ElectionOperations/DistrictLocator/DistrictOfficialSearchByAddress.aspx>
- https://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/

HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

This report is based on data from the Voices of Child Health in Chicago Parent Panel Survey. The survey is administered to a sample of Chicago parents by Lurie Children’s and NORC at the University of Chicago via internet and telephone. The survey is administered to our panel of parents three times each year. The data in this report was collected from October through November 2022. The sample consisted of 1,140 Chicago parents, step-parents, or guardians who had at least one child under 18 years of age in the household (referred to as “parents” in this report). Parents were from all 77 community areas in Chicago. All analyses were conducted with statistical weighting so that the results are representative of the parent population in the City of Chicago during the time period of data collection. For more information about the VOCHIC Parent Panel Survey, visit luriechildrens.org/ParentPanel and our page on Open Science Framework at <https://osf.io/cjz82/>.

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