THE VIOLENCE PROJECT

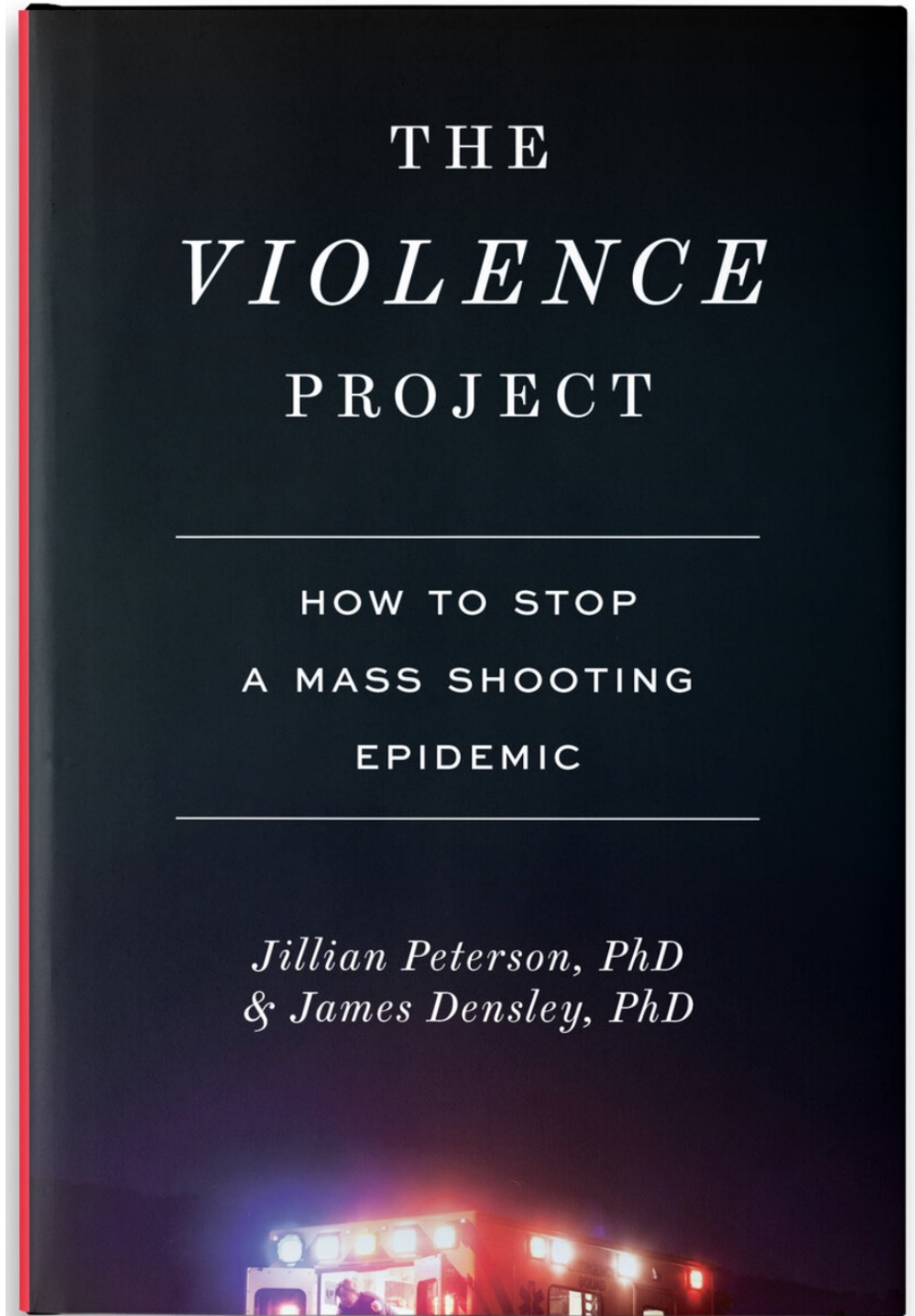
@theviolencepro

Holistic Violence Prevention for Schools

James Densley, PhD

Association of Metropolitan School Districts BOD

October 7, 2022



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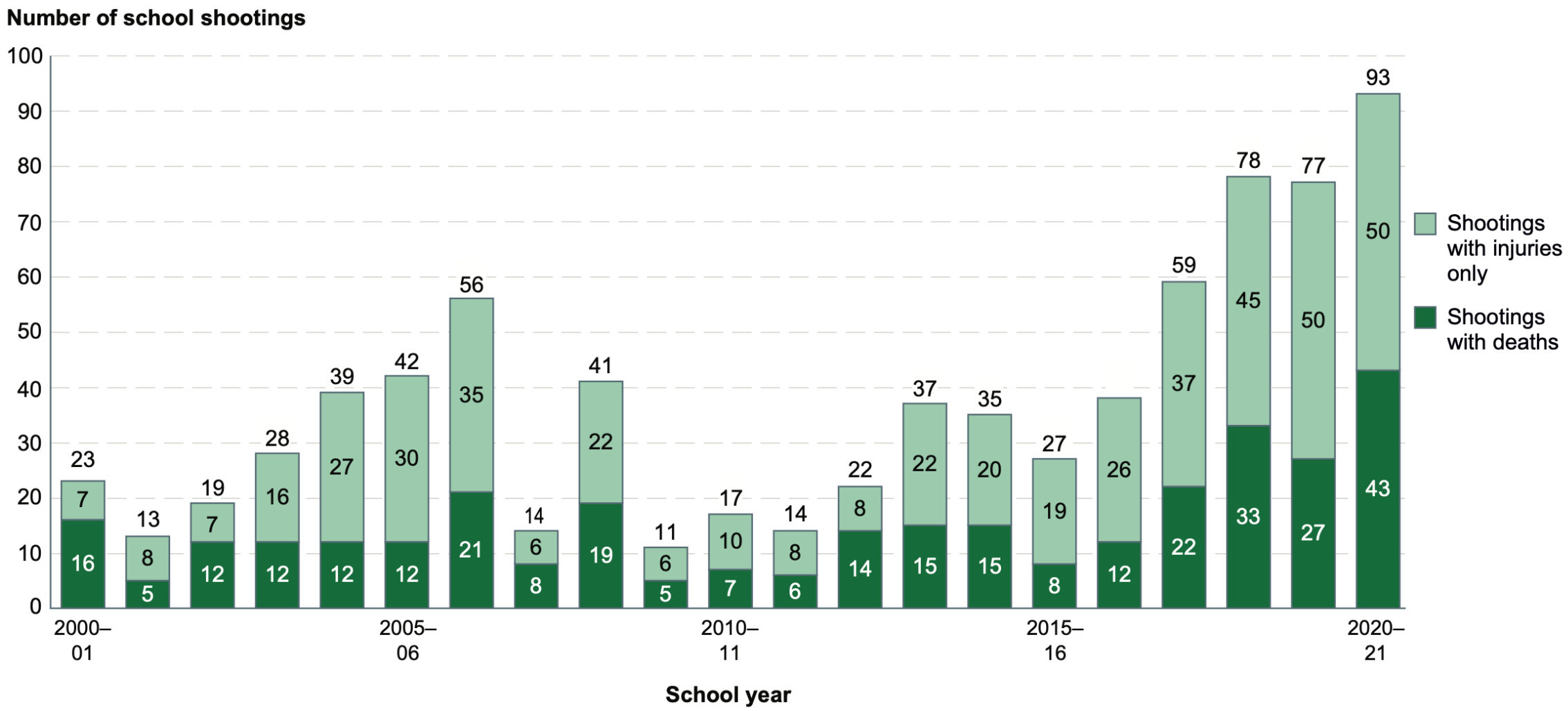
Practice vs Prevention

Figure 1. Number of school shootings with casualties at public and private elementary and secondary schools: 2000–01 through 2020–21



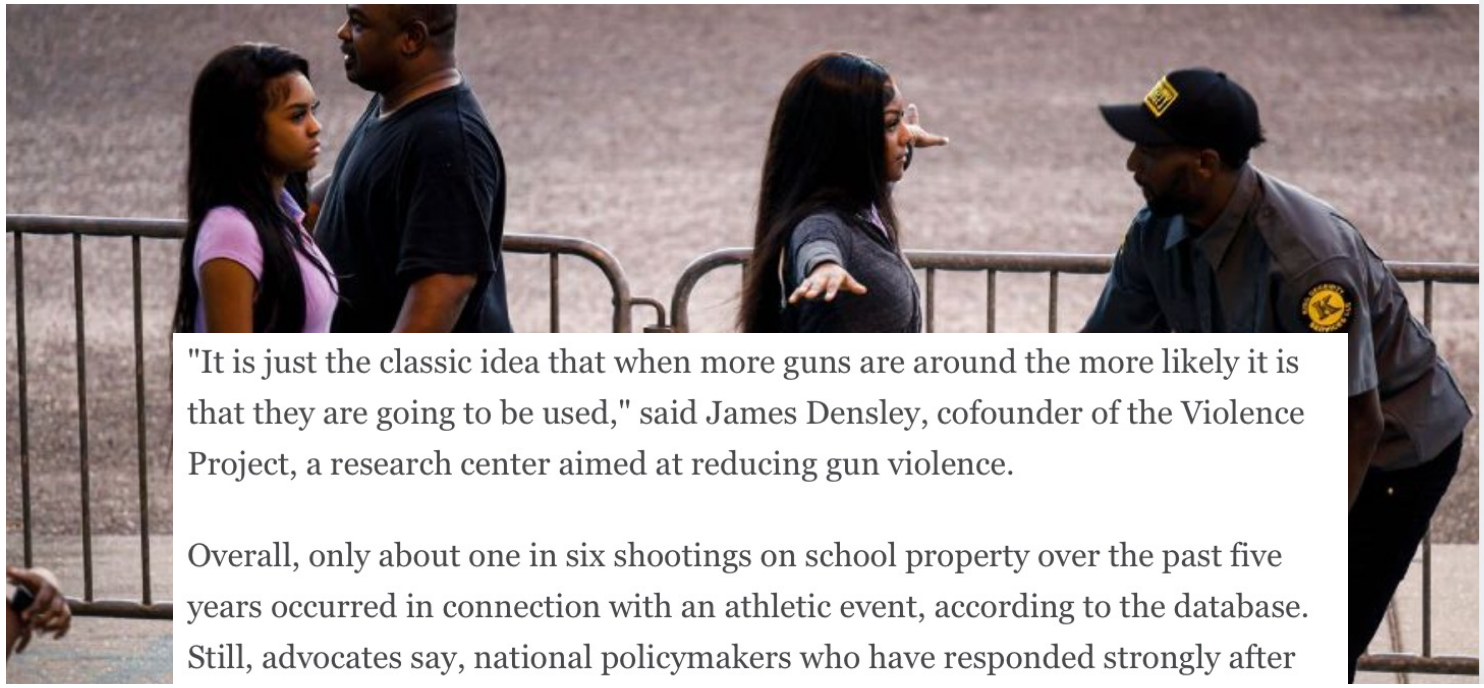
NOTE: "School shootings" include all incidents in which a gun is brandished or fired or a bullet hits school property for any reason, regardless of the number of victims (including zero), time, day of the week, or reason (e.g., planned attack, accidental, domestic violence, gang-related). All data are reported for the school year, defined as July 1 through June 30. Data in this figure were generated using a database that aims to compile information on school shootings from publicly available sources into a single comprehensive resource. For information on database methodology, see *K–12 School Shooting Database: Research Methodology* (https://www.chds.us/ssdb/resources/uploads/2020/09/CHDS-K12-SSDB-Research-Methods-Sept-2020.pdf). Due to school closures caused by the coronavirus pandemic, caution should be used when comparing 2019–20 and 2020–21 data with data from earlier years. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, Naval Postgraduate School, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, K–12 School Shooting Database. Retrieved September 16, 2021, from https://www.chds.us/ssdb/. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 228.12.

Shootings At School Sporting Events By Year

YEAR	SHOOTINGS	DEATHS	INJURIES
2022	37	3	34
2021	38	6	35
2020	10	3	7
2019	26	3	32
2018	20	3	17
2017	12	2	11
2016	10	0	15
2015	8	1	12
2014	9	1	7

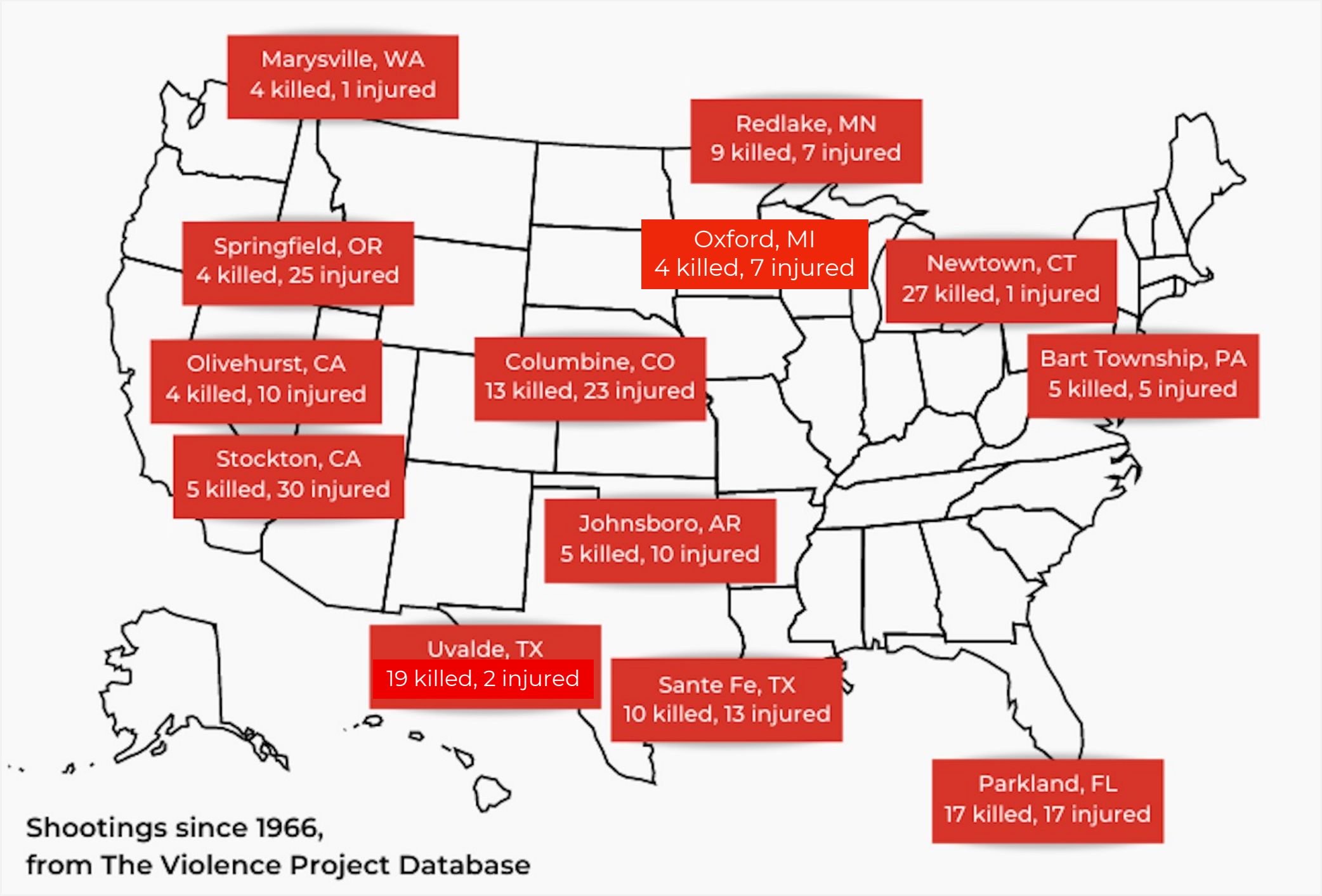
'A quiet phenomenon': The rise of gun violence at school sports

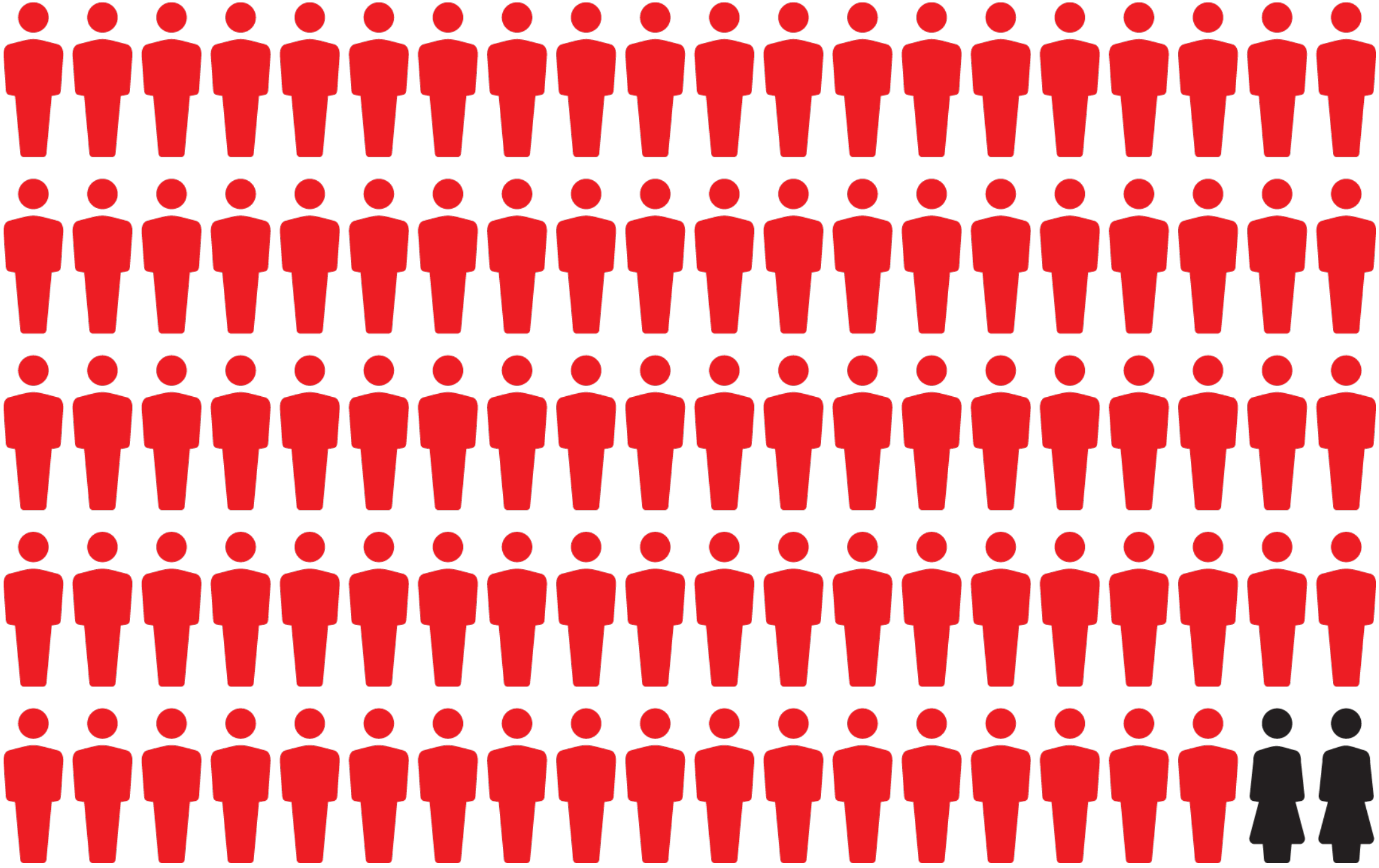


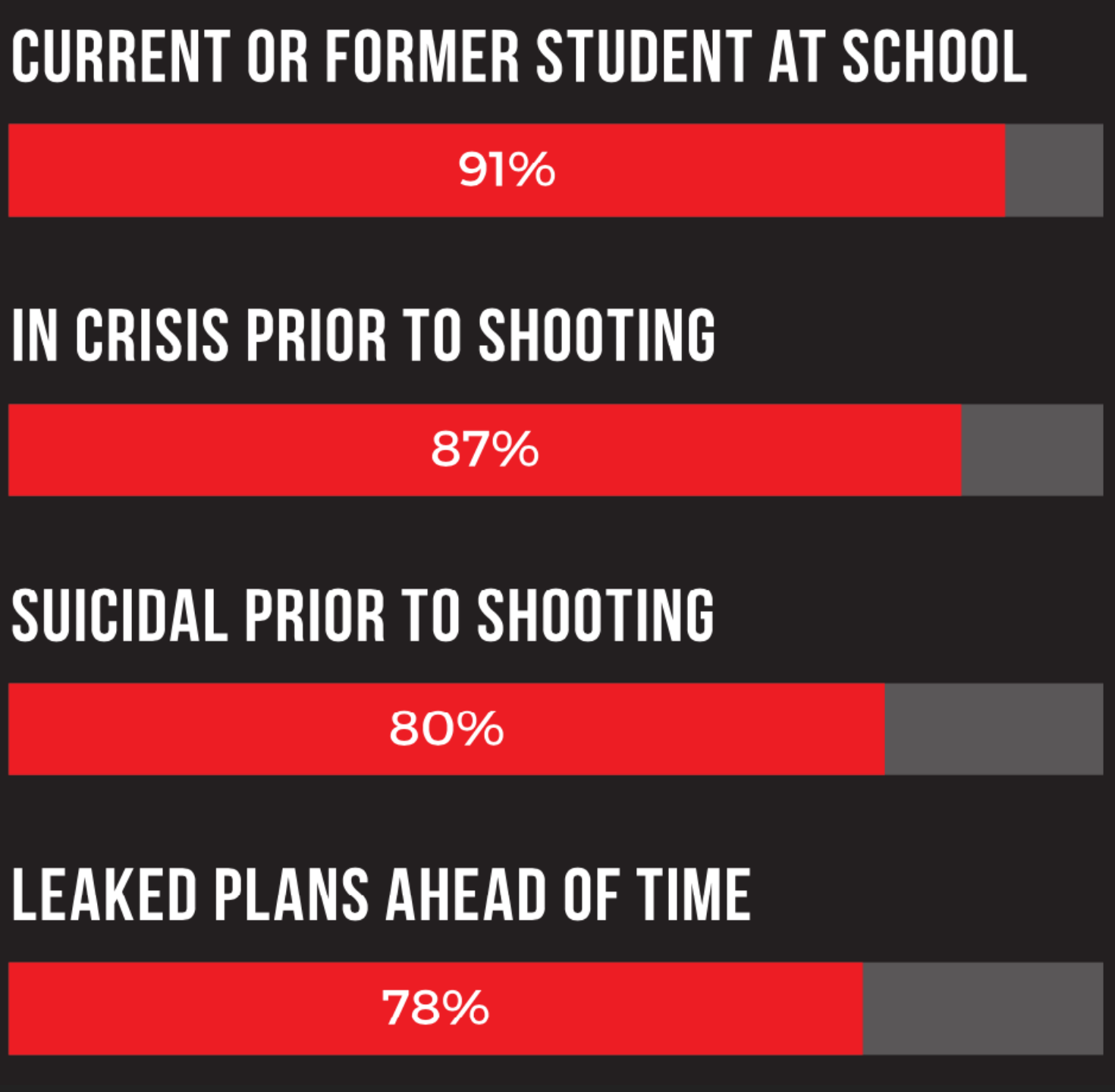
"It is just the classic idea that when more guns are around the more likely it is that they are going to be used," said James Densley, cofounder of the Violence Project, a research center aimed at reducing gun violence.

Overall, only about one in six shootings on school property over the past five years occurred in connection with an athletic event, according to the database. Still, advocates say, national policymakers who have responded strongly after in-school shootings should pay more attention to violence happening outside the classroom.

"This is a quiet phenomenon that people were not even aware of until recently," Densley said.


Marysville, WA
4 killed, 1 injured
Redlake, MN
9 killed, 7 injured
Springfield, OR
4 killed, 25 injured
Oxford, MI
4 killed, 7 injured
Newtown, CT
27 killed, 1 injured
Olivehurst, CA
4 killed, 10 injured
Columbine, CO
13 killed, 23 injured
Bart Township, PA
5 killed, 5 injured
Stockton, CA
5 killed, 30 injured
Johnsboro, AR
5 killed, 10 injured
Uvalde, TX
19 killed, 2 injured
Sante Fe, TX
10 killed, 13 injured
Parkland, FL
17 killed, 17 injured
Shootings since 1966,
from The Violence Project Database




CURRENT OR FORMER STUDENT AT SCHOOL
91%
IN CRISIS PRIOR TO SHOOTING
87%
SUICIDAL PRIOR TO SHOOTING
80%
LEAKED PLANS AHEAD OF TIME
78%

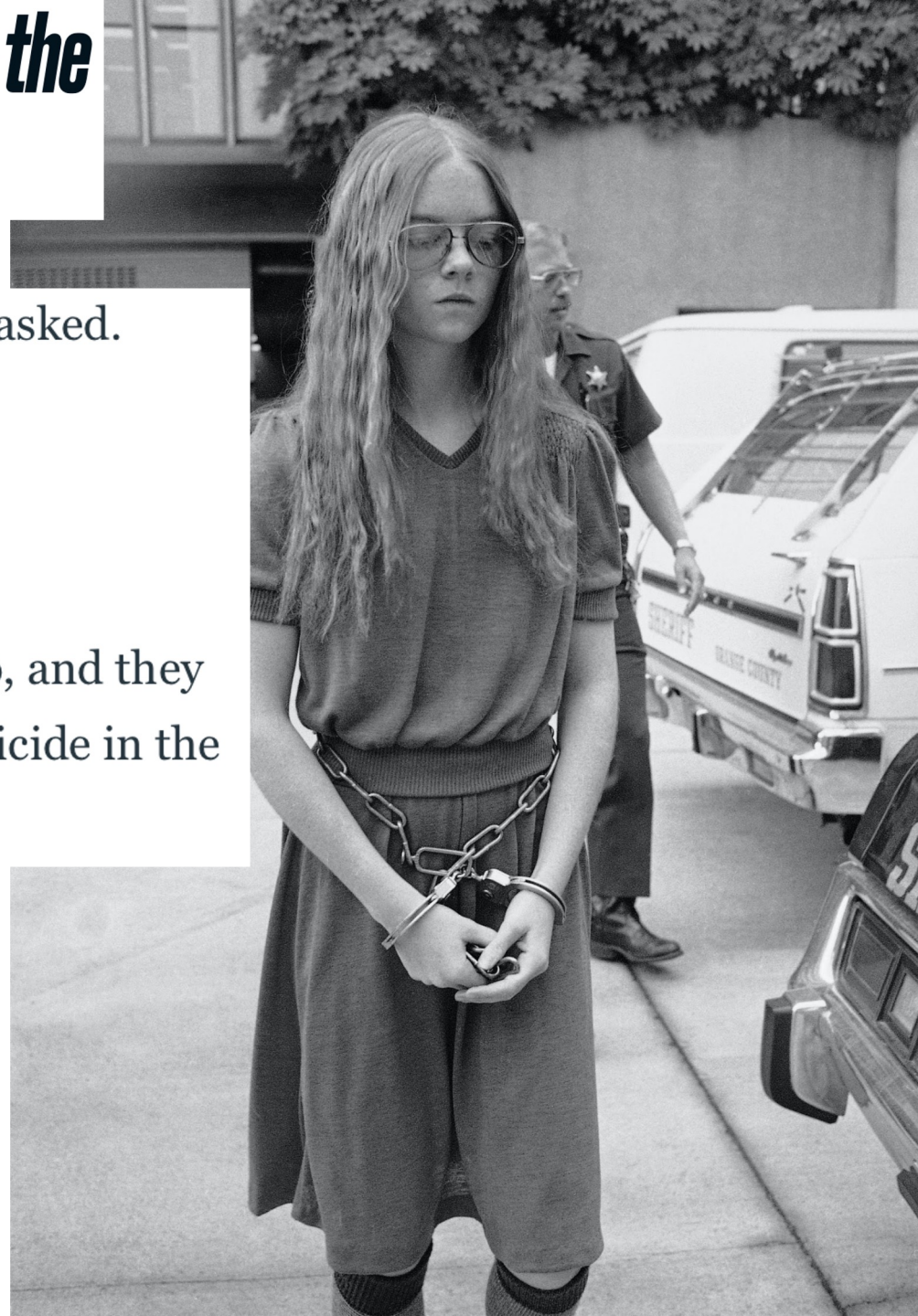
The First Modern School Shooter Feels Responsible for the Rest

“So, why did you commit this crime?” the head parole commissioner asked.

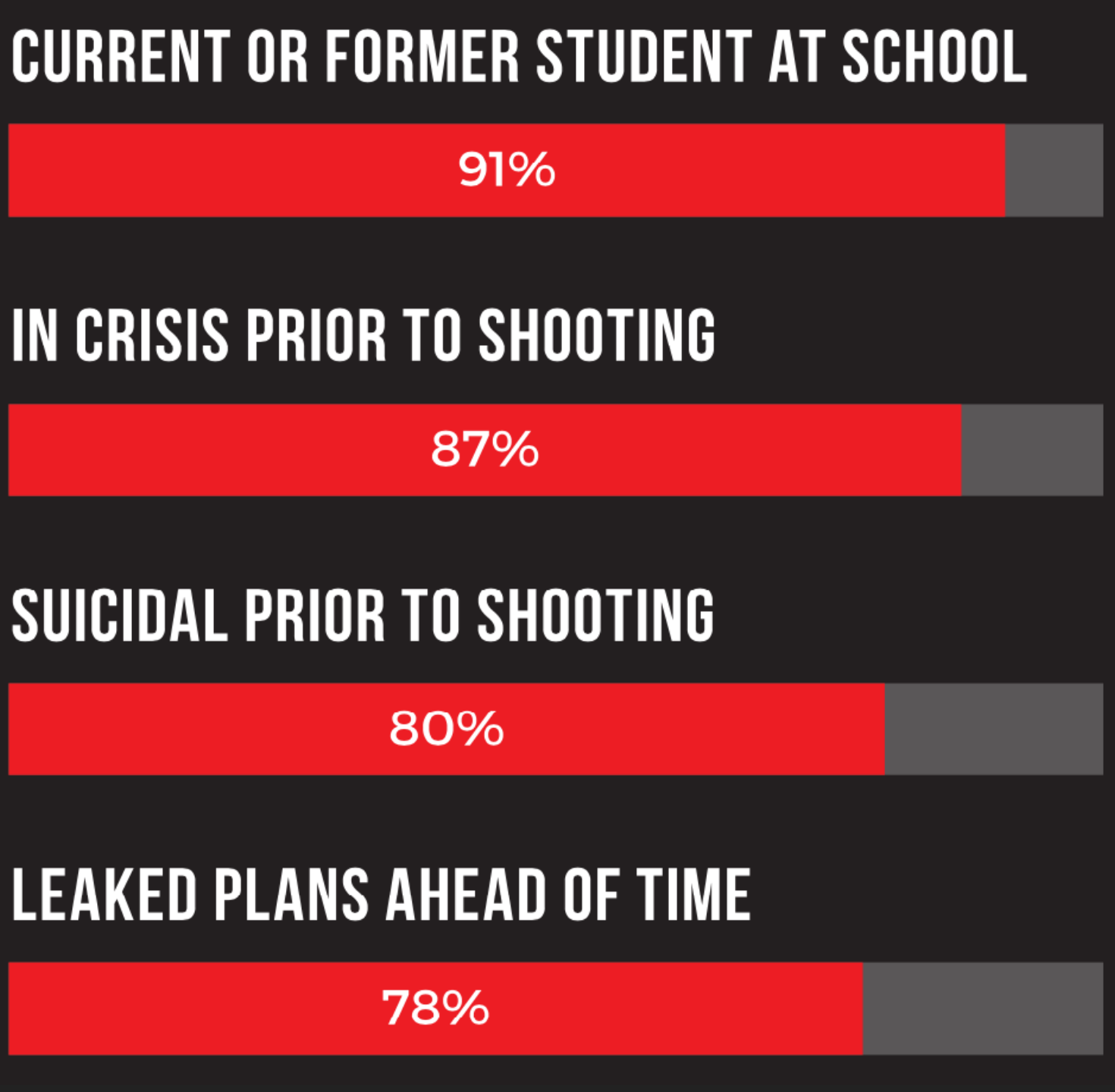
“Because I wanted to die,” she said. “I was trying to commit suicide.”

“Why pick the school across the street?” the commissioner asked.

“Because I knew that if I fired on the school the police would show up, and they would shoot me and kill me,” she said. “And every time I had tried suicide in the previous year I had screwed it up.”



The Grover Cleveland Elementary School shooting,
San Diego, CA
January 29, 1979
The principal and a custodian were killed
8 children and a police officer were injured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School shootings didn't start in 1999 at Columbine. Here's why that disaster became a blueprint for other killers and created the 'Columbine generation'

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

How Columbine became a blueprint for school shooters

Jillian Peterson & James Densley April 17, 2019

I heard about some of these shooters either in movies or news articles and I wanted to know what they had done. … I was curious. After researching the Columbine massacre, I found a link to other school shootings and decided to read on them. A few I had already heard about when they happened. And I wanted to be better informed. I related a lot to [the Columbine shooter] and [the Thurston High School shooter]. [The Columbine shooter] was about my age and suffered from depression like I was. He committed suicide and I also longed for suicide at times.

(Peterson & Densley, 2021, p. 101)

THE NEW YORKER

ANNALS OF PUBLIC SAFETY OCTOBER 19, 2015 ISSUE

THRESHOLDS OF VIOLENCE

How school shootings catch on.

By Malcolm Gladwell

October 12, 2015

On the evening of April 29th last year, in the southern Minnesota town of Waseca, a woman was doing the dishes when she looked out her kitchen window and saw a young man walking through her back yard. He was wearing a backpack and carrying a fast-food bag and was headed in the direction of the MiniMax Storage facility next to her house. Something about him didn't seem right. Why was he going through her yard instead of

In the years since Columbine, school shootings changed; they

"Social processes are driven by our *thresholds* ... the number of people who need to be doing some activity before we agree to join them ... each new participant's action makes sense in reaction to and in combination with those who came before"

Threshold Models of Collective Behavior[1]

Mark Granovetter
State University of New York at Stony Brook

Models of collective behavior are developed for situations where actors have two alternatives and the costs and/or benefits of each depend on how many other actors choose which alternative. The key concept is that of "threshold": the number or proportion of others who must make one decision before a given actor does so; this is the point where net benefits begin to exceed net costs for that particular actor. Beginning with a frequency distribution of thresholds, the models allow calculation of the ultimate or "equilibrium" number making each decision. The stability of equilibrium results against various possible changes in threshold distributions is considered. Stress is placed on the importance of exact distributions for outcomes. Groups with similar average preferences may generate very different results; hence it is hazardous to infer individual dispositions from aggregate outcomes or to assume that behavior was directed by ultimately agreed-upon norms. Suggested applications are to riot behavior, innovation and rumor diffusion, strikes, voting, and migration. Issues of measurement, falsification, and verification are discussed.

BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION OF THE MODELS

Because sociological theory tends to explain behavior by institutionalized norms and values, the study of behavior inexplicable in this way occupies a peripheral position in systematic theory. Work in the subfields which embody this concern—deviance for individuals and collective behavior for groups—often consists of attempts to show what prevented the established patterns from exerting their usual sway. In the field of collective behavior, one such effort involves the assertion that new norms or beliefs "emerge"

[1] This report is heavily indebted to three co-workers. Christopher Winship is responsible for important aspects of the formalization, Douglas Danforth and Bob Phillips have carried out a large part of the mathematical analysis and computer programming. All have given valuable substantive help as well. Specific contributions are footnoted in the text. I have also benefited from the thoughtful comments of participants in seminars and colloquia I have given at Harvard, Wesleyan, Columbia, Stanford, Stony Brook, UCLA, and Temple. The work has been done mainly in the stimulating atmosphere of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, where the criticisms of Robert Axelrod, Brian Barry, and Arthur Goldberger led to improvements. The center's support was made possible in part by the Andrew Mellon Foundation and the National Science Foundation. Partial support for the research was provided by a sabbatical leave from Harvard University and by National Science Foundation grant SOC 76-11185 to the author.

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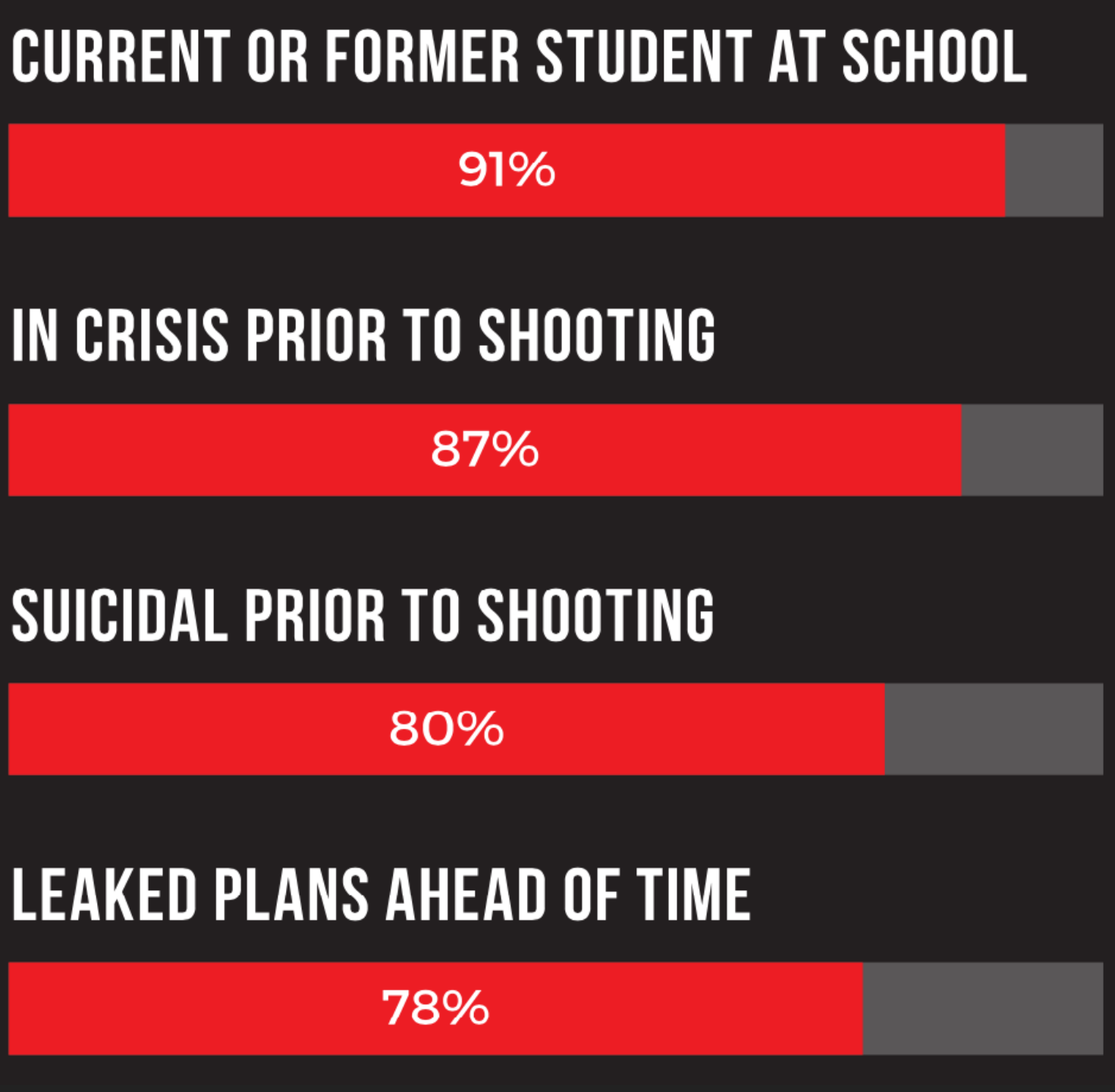
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EducationWeek®

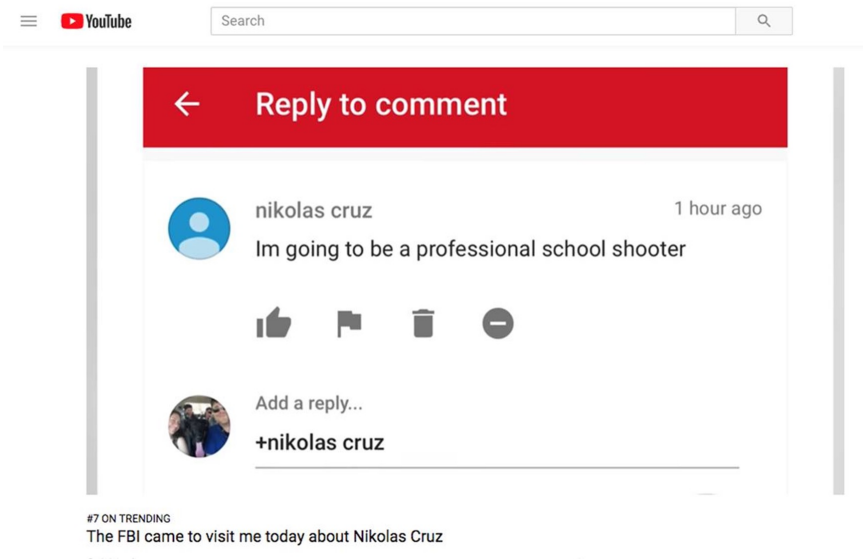
Assessing Shooting Threats Is a Matter of Life or Death. Why Aren't Experts Better at It?

Los Angeles Times

The alarming rise in school shooting threats

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Opinion: School shootings are increasing — and changing. Easily accessible guns are to blame.



JAMA Network Open

Original Investigation | Public Health

Communication of Intent to Do Harm Preceding Mass Public Shootings in the United States, 1966 to 2019

Jillian Peterson, PhD; Gina Erickson, PhD; Kyle Knapp, BA; James Densley, PhD

Abstract

IMPORTANCE Understanding the motivation of a mass shooter's intent to do harm can help practitioners and policy makers develop more effective intervention strategies.

OBJECTIVE To examine the prevalence of communication of intent to do harm, known as leakage, in a sample of 170 mass public shooters from 1966 to 2019; the characteristics of perpetrators who do and do not leak their plans; and whether leakage is a form of fame-seeking behavior or a cry for help among individuals who are in crisis or suicidal.

DESIGN, SETTING, AND PARTICIPANTS This cross-sectional study included perpetrators who killed 4 or more people in a public space from 1996 to 2019 and were included in a comprehensive database of US mass shootings. That database was built from August 2017 to December 2019, and analysis took place from January to May 2021.

MAIN OUTCOMES AND MEASURES Leakage was identified and coded using publicly available records. Any communication to a third party of an intent to do harm prior to the shooting was coded as leakage. Logistic regression models were used to examine the risk factors associated with leakage. Models estimating leakage were examined to assess the 2 hypothesized pathways to leakage (the cry-for-help model and the fame-seeking model).

RESULTS The 170 participants in this sample included 166 (97.7%) male perpetrators and 3 (2.3%) female perpetrators, with a mean (SD) age of 34 (12) years. Overall, 161 participants had known race and ethnicity: 11 (6.8%) Asian individuals, 35 (21.7%) Black individuals, 14 (8.7%) Latinx individuals, 7 (4.4%) Middle Eastern individuals, 3 (1.9%) Native American individuals, 89 (55.3%) White individuals, and 2 (1.2%) individuals with other race and ethnicity. Overall, 79 mass shooters (46.5%) leaked their plans. Of perpetrators who leaked their plans, 35 (44.3%) leaked specific plans about a mass shooting, and 44 (55.1%) leaked nonspecific plans about generalized violence. The study findings indicate that leakage was associated with receiving counseling (odds ratio, 7.0; 95% CI,

Key Points

Question What factors are associated with a mass shooting perpetrator's decision to communicate their intent to do harm?

Findings This cross-sectional study of 170 perpetrators found that nearly half leaked their plans, with 44.3% of them leaking specific plans about a mass shooting. Leakage was associated with receiving counseling and suicidality, which suggests it may be best characterized as a cry for help from perpetrators prior to their act.

Meaning These findings suggest that leakage is a critical moment for mental health intervention to prevent gun violence.

Author affiliations and article information are listed at the end of this article.

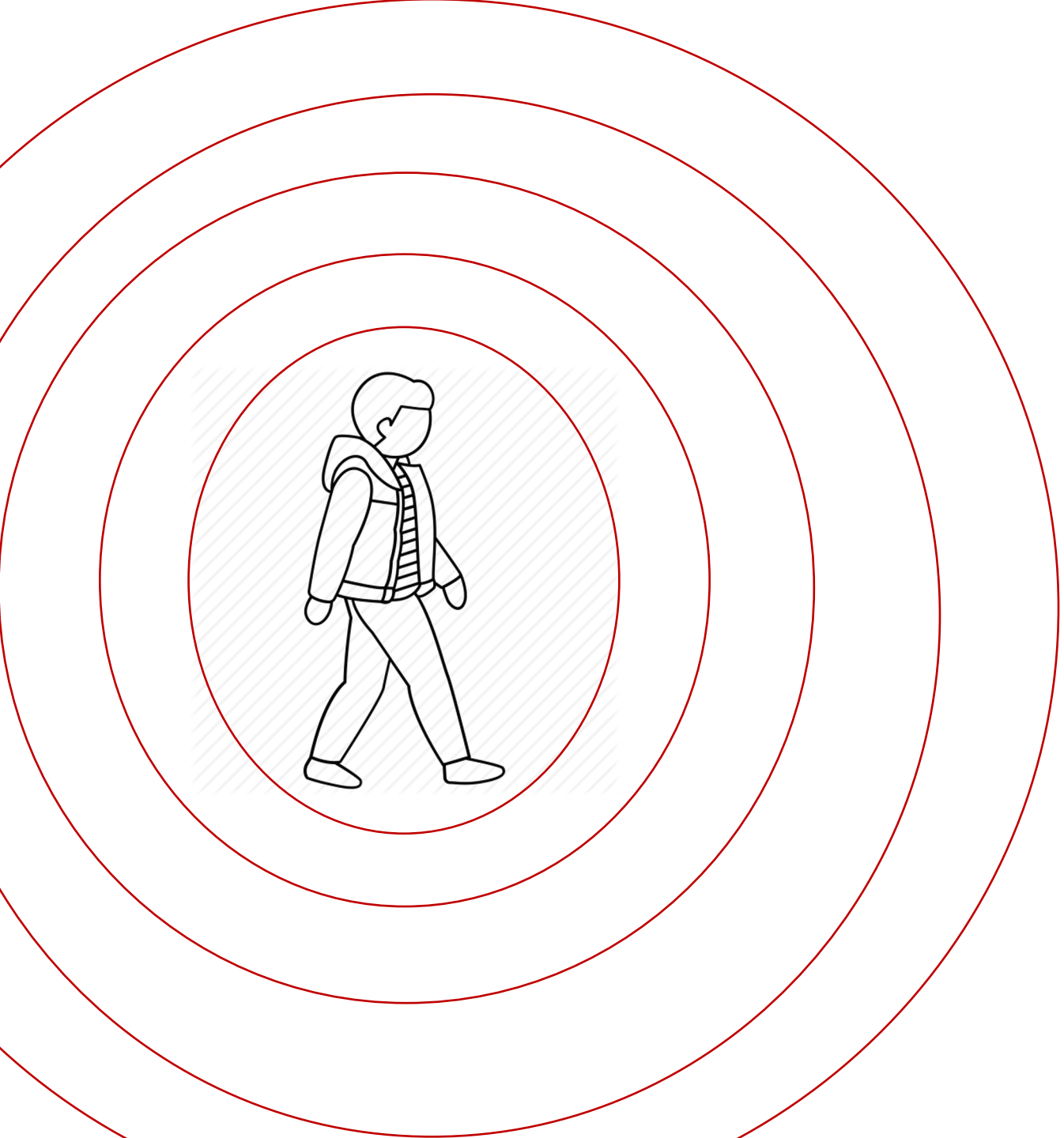
What this means for prevention

Insiders: Most likely perpetrator is in the building

In crisis: Crisis intervention & crisis response teams

Suicidal: Suicide prevention, not punishment

Leakage: Reporting systems, relationships



Diffusion of Benefits

THE VIOLENCE PROJECT

off-ramp

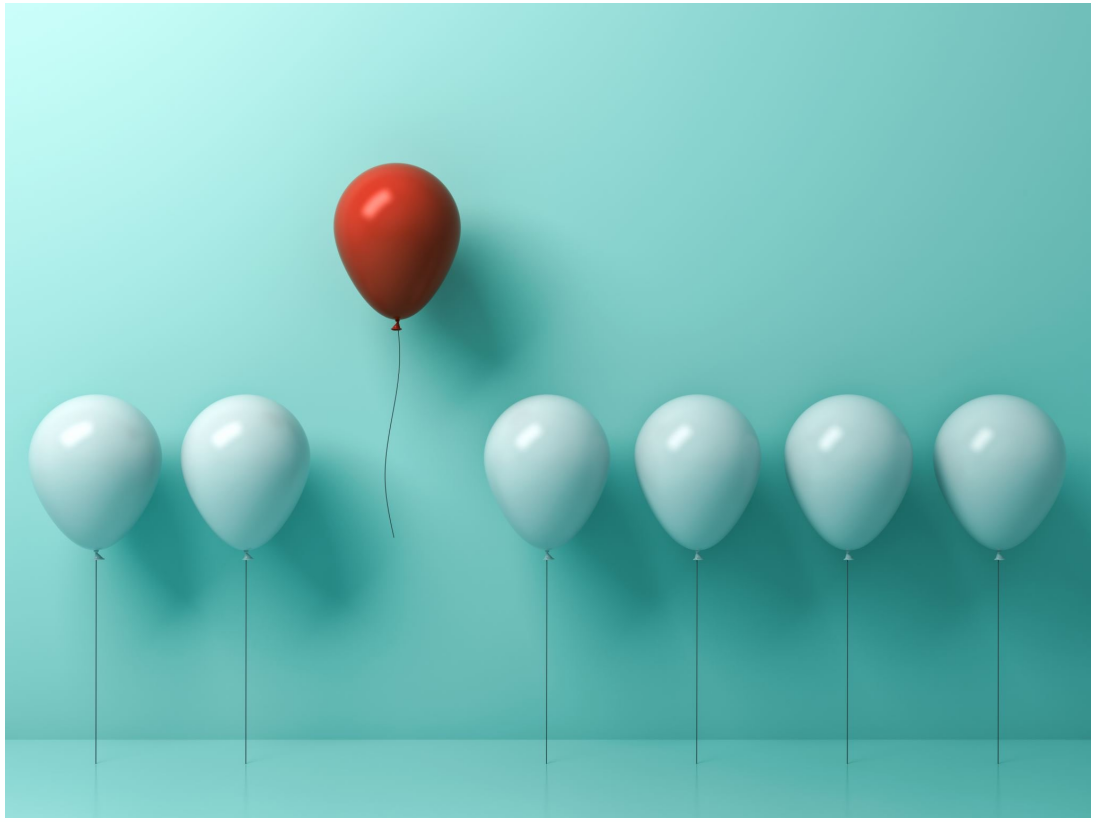
The Off-Ramp Project

The road to violence is long – let's build more exits.

HOME ▼ · RESOURCES ▼ · ONLINE TRAINING ▼ · POLICY · CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS · CONTACT

A hub of information, training, and resources for anyone who has been impacted by a mass shooting or is interested in preventing the next one.

Crisis Intervention



1 MANAGE YOURSELF

- Emotional contagion
- Don't panic
- Don't take it personally
- Recognizing your limits

2 MANAGE THE ENVIRONMENT

- Get rid of any audience
- Reduce distractions
- De-escalate the space
- Create time and space

3 NON-VERBAL DE-ESCALATION

- Body Position
- Eye Contact
- Tone of Voice
- Mirroring

4 VERBAL DE-ESCALATION

- Open-ended, simple questions
- Active listening - empathy
- Focus on feelings
- Give 2 simple options

off-ramp

Crisis Response Teams

The R-Model

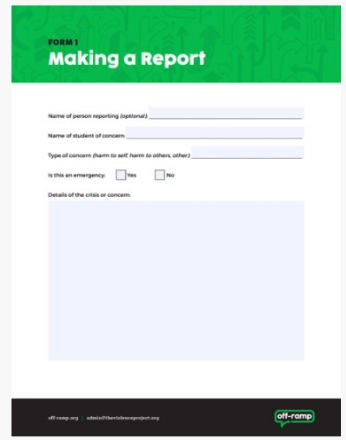
Ready • Respond • Refer • Revisit

K-12 School Crisis Response Teams

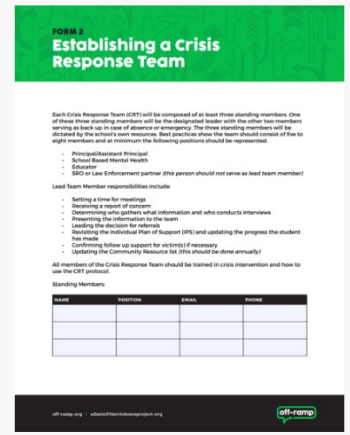
off-ramp.org | admin@theviolenceproject.org

off-ramp

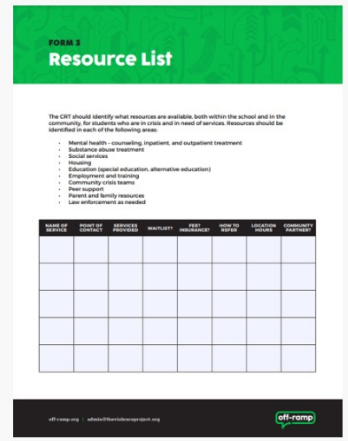
Fillable Forms



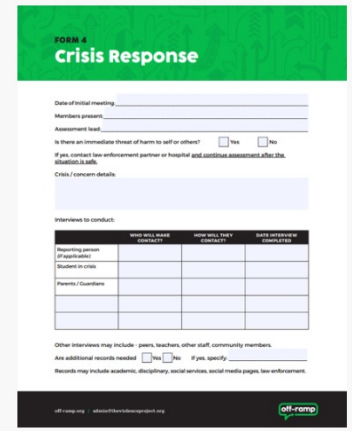
Form 1: Making a Report



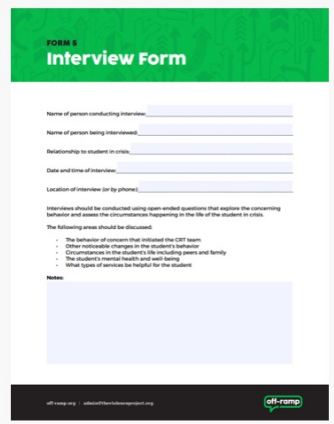
Form 2: Establishing A Crisis Response Team



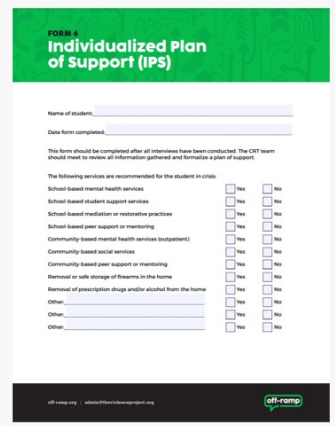
Form 3: Resource List



Form 4: Crisis Response



Form 5: Interview Form



Form 6: Individualized Plan of Support

Form 7: Revisit

DO YOU HAVE **INFORMATION** ABOUT **THREATS** TO A **SCHOOL** OR **PLACE** OF **WORSHIP?**

Send tips to the Minnesota BCA
and help solve a crime.

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Minnesota BCA
Bureau of Criminal Apprehension

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Say Something Anonymous Reporting System allows you to submit secure & anonymous safety concerns to help identify and intervene upon at-risk individuals BEFORE they hurt themselves or others.

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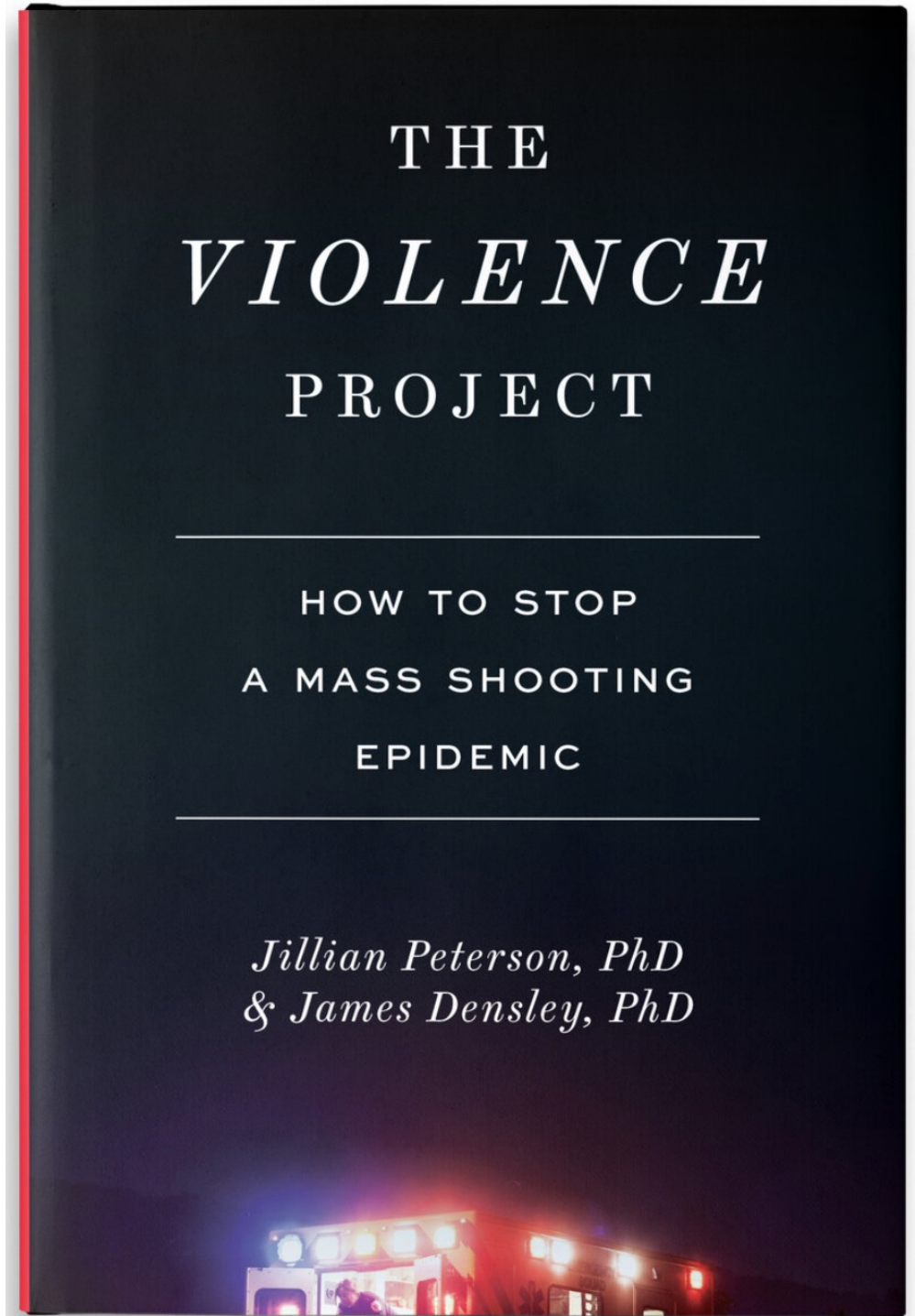
Download on the App Store

I WAS_**ALMOST A SCHOOL SHOOTER**

"When you literally have nothing to lose you can do anything and that thought is absolutely terrifying."

Aaron



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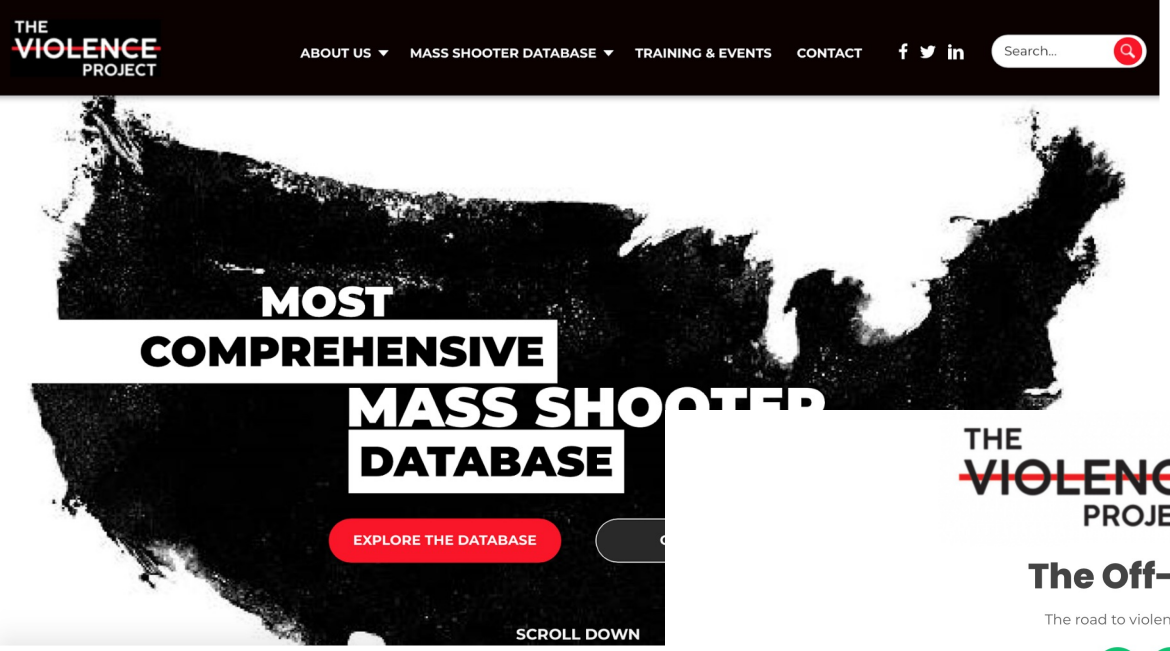

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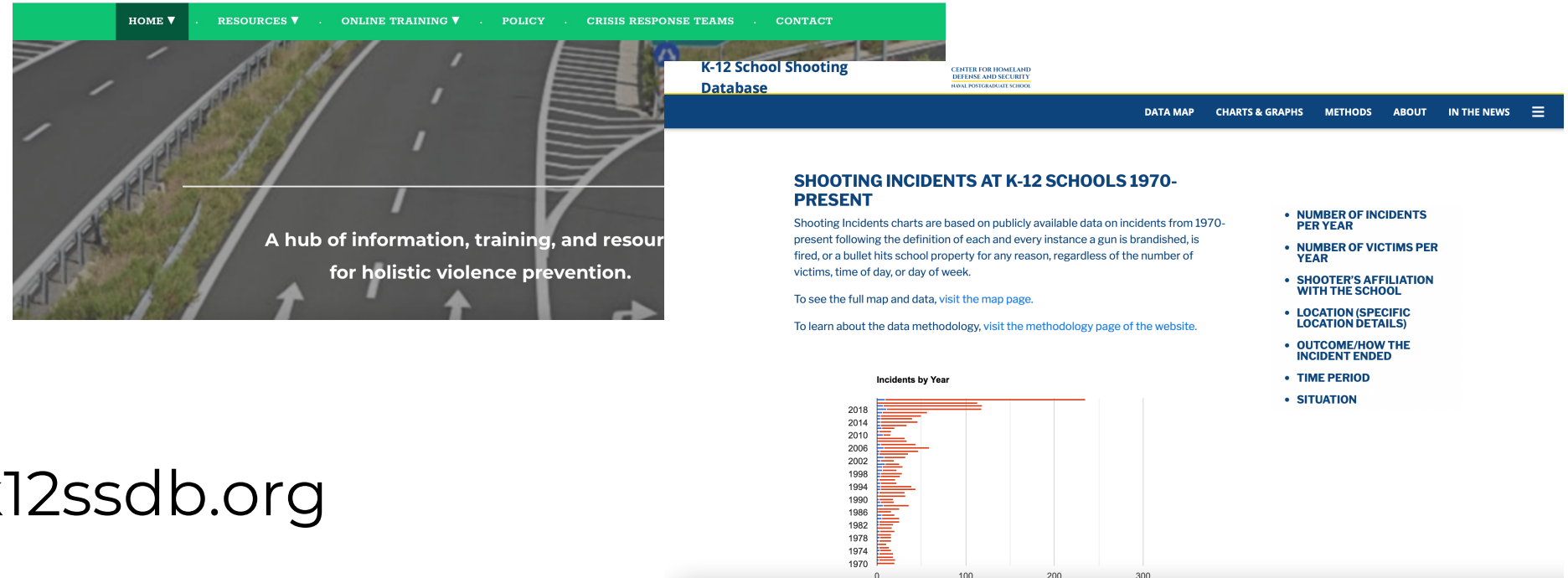
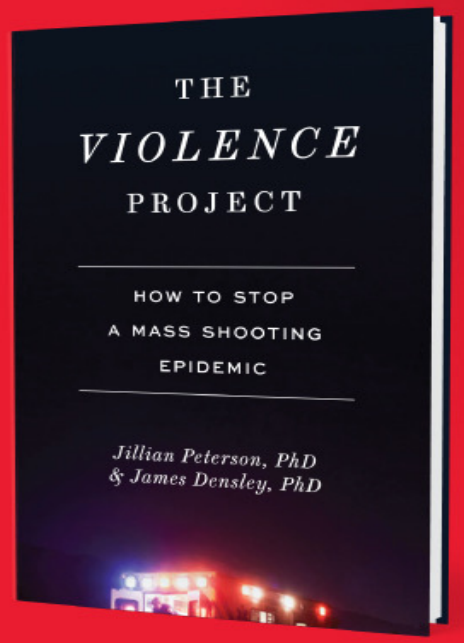


https://k12ssdb.org



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—*Wall Street Journal*

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