Child deaths by gun violence
(In the News: ongoing)

Media Storm? **YES**

Week of highest news coverage: March 10-16, 2018
Number of news articles week before: 324
Number of news articles that week: 440
Number of news articles during peak month coverage: 1,652

From 2016 to 2020, over 3,500 U.S. children died annually from gun violence, and by 2020, firearms became their leading cause of death. Mass shootings make up less than 1% of these deaths, yet school shootings dominate media coverage. Since 1999, there have been 386 school shootings, with Columbine, Sandy Hook, and Parkland drawing the most attention. Peak coverage came in March 2018 after the Parkland shooting in Florida, where 17 people were killed and 17 were injured.

HEAT

VERY HIGH

- The victims are children, making their deaths especially tragic. Additionally, schools are seen as safe spaces for children, so this setting adds to the brutality of the acts.
- 17 people were killed and 17 more were injured in the Parkland High School shooting, a high number of casualties for a school shooting.
- School shootings produce emotionally impactful evidence to add to the media coverage, including photos of the victims, family statements, police reports, and evidence from investigations and trials.

FUEL

VERY HIGH

- The politicization of gun ownership in the U.S., dating back to the creation of the 2nd Amendment, provides a landscape filled with tension and enduring legal questions.
- Mass shootings trended slightly upward from 2000-2010 and rose dramatically from 2010-2020, and each new school shooting provides fuel for a future shooting.
- Additionally, each shooting bolsters activism on either side of the issue, from funders of the National Rifle Association to supporters of Moms Demand Action, which was founded after Sandy Hook.

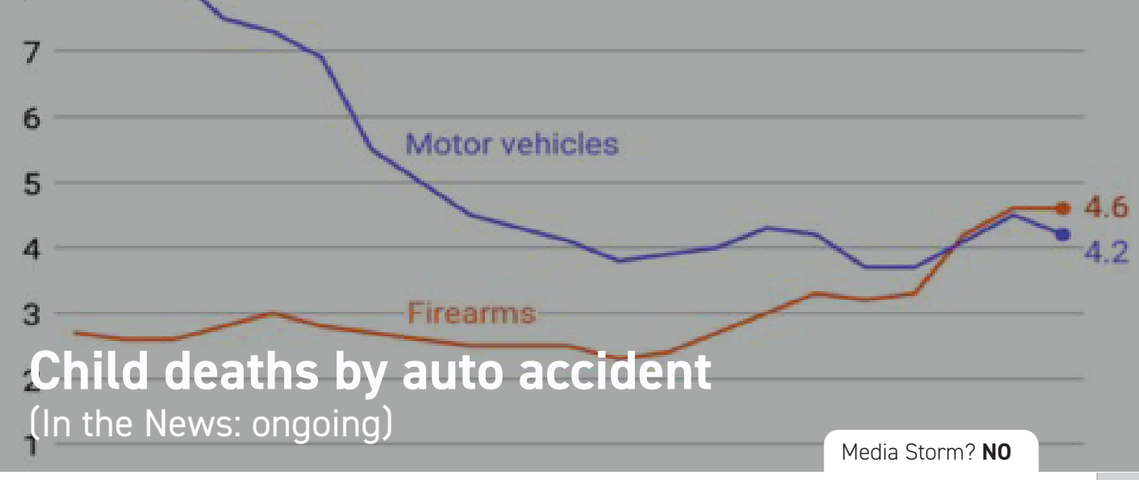
OXYGEN

VERY HIGH

- In 2018 following the Parkland shooting, 67 bills tightening gun control measures were passed by over half of U.S. states – over three times the number of bills passed the previous year.
- There was an influx of documentaries and movies on school shootings and gun violence, including "After Parkland" and "Gunned Down: the Power of the NRA."
- Youth activists took to the streets with national school walkouts the March for Our Lives protests in 2018. Additionally, in the months following the Parkland shooting, the young survivors led the Road to Change bus tour to register youth to vote and the number of volunteers for Moms Demand Action tripled.

OUTCOMES RELATED TO **CHILD DEATHS BY GUNS—SPECIFICALLY, THE PARKLAND SHOOTING—MEDIA STORM:**

- **"Tectonic Shifts" for State Legislation:** States passed an unprecedented number of gun control bills. For example, Florida, the home of Parkland High School, raised the minimum age to purchase a firearm, expanded background checks and waiting periods, banned bump stocks, and expanded gun access for teachers.
- **Increased Federal Funding for Reform:** The STOP School Violence Act of 2018 increased funding for violence prevention research and school security.
- **Education Reform:** The Parkland shooting in Florida prompted a wave of school-related legislation, including



Child deaths by auto accident
(In the News: ongoing)

Media Storm? **NO**

Week of highest news coverage: May 15-21, 2006
Number of news articles week before: 36
Number of news articles that week: 73
Number of news articles during peak month coverage: 227

Car crashes have long been a leading cause of death for children in the U.S. In 2021, an average of three children died each day in crashes. Although this number has steadily declined since 1975, car crashes remain a significant and preventable risk. In 2020, firearms overtook car crashes as the leading cause of death among children. Despite this shift, preventing car-related fatalities continues to be a preventable and notable cause of death for children.

HEAT

MEDIUM

- While child deaths are inherently tragic, death by car crashes lack some heat. Car accident data is routinely collected, lacking the shock value of school shootings that happen as single, high-fatality events.
- School shootings evoke narratives of blame and antagonist-victim dynamics, and they are extremely political, while car crashes are very limited in evoking those dimensions.
- While photos of crash sites and victims may exist, they are rarely circulated in the media or made available to the public, impeding the emotional impact.

FUEL

LOW

- Child deaths due to cars have been declining since 1975. Since then, auto fatality rates for children under 13 dropped 81%.
- In 2020, car crashes were superseded as the leading cause of death for children, dampening the activist and political base for addressing this issue.
- Unlike school shootings, each car crash does not provide fuel for the next, as the media and public lack an overarching narrative of the issue.

OXYGEN

MED LOW

- There were notable activist efforts and government programs that drew attention to this issue in the late 90s and early 2000s, like Corazon De Mi Vida, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and the creation of National Child Passenger Safety Board and Child Passenger Safety Week.
- However, these efforts are few and far between, rarely gaining widespread recognition.
- Celebrities and well-known public figures generally do not widely comment on the issue, making it largely an effort of a distinct group of activists and politicians.

OUTCOMES RELATED TO **CHILD DEATHS BY GUNS—SPECIFICALLY, THE PARKLAND SHOOTING—MEDIA STORM:**

the creation of a School Safety Task Force, K-12 Bystander Reporting Toolkit, and a public safety act bill to expand mental health support for students, reduce gun violence on campus, and enact "red flag" reporting laws.

- **Increased Youth Activism:** The March for our Lives and subsequent school walkouts mobilized a generation of activists. Youth in the movement were 21% more likely to vote, and 43% of young voters said the Parkland shooting influenced their vote in the 2018 midterm elections.