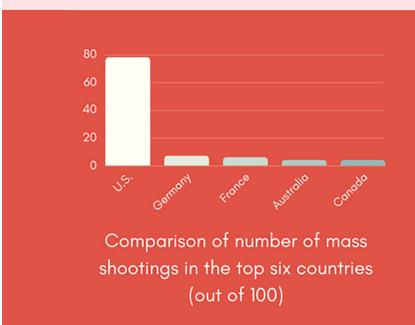


THE CULTURE OF MASS SHOOTINGS AND
GUNS IN AMERICA

NUMBER OF GUN-RELATED HOMICIDES IN
THE PAST FOUR YEARS:



Ninety-six Americans die every day from gun violence. There are over 33,000 deaths per year and nearly 79,000 injuries annually. Guns also account for more than two-thirds of US homicides.



Americans own about 48% of the estimated 650 million civilian-owned guns in the world

U.S. MASS SHOOTERS...



The NRA estimates there are between 8.5 million and 15 million assault rifles in circulation in the U.S.

A LOADED DEBATE: GUNS IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

Student journalists from across the country gather at the annual Southern Interscholastic Press Association (SIPA) conference, where they discuss how they are dealing with the issues of gun control and school shootings.

BY MACKENZIE CAUDILL,
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As students walk the halls of their high schools, a sense of fear remains unspoken as the idea of death looms in the back of their minds. Their bodies tense at the sound of a textbook slamming the floor. They sit anxiously in anticipation of when the next tragedy will occur.

Student journalists from across the south gather at the annual Southern Interscholastic Press Association (SIPA) conference and recognise the effects from the numerous mass shootings across the country have had on themselves and their school communities.

"We had a lockdown drill and it was pretty scary because for the first time I felt like it wasn't just a drill," junior Marie Stanford from Parkview High School in Atlanta, Georgia said. "People were like, 'This could actually happen, we need to be serious about this.' People are genuinely scared."

Myeisha Madkins, a senior at Oxford High School in Oxford, Mississippi has been experiencing that same fear at school and it has triggered some major policy changes within her school.

"The doors are only unlocked between class change. There really aren't people in the hallways anymore. Teachers are starting to keep their doors closed," Madkins said.

"There's a lot of talk like 'You can't sit here at lunch now.'"

Mississippi Scholastic Press Director R.J. Morgan was friends with a few kids that were involved in a local high school shooting when he was younger. Morgan believes the event has left a permanent mark in the minds of these adults today.

"The issue of school shootings is a major concern for me. When I was in junior high, my high school had a school shooting," Morgan said. "It's really a thing for our community to go through these, every, and it seems like they're happening more and more often. I have friends that they say when they go into any area the first thing they do is plot an escape route. They're constantly aware of their surroundings to the point of how would I escape if something happened. When a school shooting happens it changes you."

Although Oxford High School has made changes to general policy, Madkins does not feel as if her school is well prepared for the event of a school shooting.

"I feel like my high school isn't very structurally built for a crisis like that. I feel like we don't really have a good procedure for what to do if a shooter were to come in," Madkins said. "Whenever we have a drill, it's during a class period and we know about it up front. Maybe if we had more drills to accommodate a real life situation,

I wouldn't worry about it that much."

For Stanford, the shootings have sparked a school-wide conversation and inspired kids to speak out on the issue by staging a walk out on March 14.

"The school has definitely been changing a lot, the whole atmosphere. Everyone's pretty scared about it and talking about it a lot and it's brought up a huge conservation with our principal," Stanford said. "He doesn't want anyone to do the walkout, so he's not going to be super supportive about it and they're saying we might give out disciplinary action if anyone does the walkout and people are mad about that and on top of everything people are just mad about gun control in general."

According to First Flight High School program advisor Steve Hanf, conversations have been opened up in classrooms regarding the subject.

"Most of us who are advisors have classrooms where everything and anything gets talked about and very comfortably so. So you have a lot of students who are willing to open up about what they think," Hanf said.

Parkview High School senior Peter Fedyk believes the issue can be resolved with unified gun control for all states.

"I feel like it should be a little bit more harshly regulated and maybe on the national scale because the states having different laws on gun

control is a bit messy and if the nation had a unified and a bit more strict gun regulation then I feel like that would definitely cut down on the amount of mass school shootings America has," Fedyk said.

Amy Van Ennghuysen, a junior at Sparkman High School, does not believe there should be more gun control but rather that guns should be inserted into schools through teachers.

"I think that teachers should be allowed to have them at school for situations like that. I think that students should have pepper spray or tasers on them for certain reasons," Ennghuysen said.

The developing debate about gun control in this nation following the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida is picking up speed and Stanford believes it is important for young people to be heavily involved.

"I've just been super upset about it. Seeing the Stoneman Douglas shooting people talk out, we need a change. I think it's great that people are finally starting to listen to our generation," Stanford said. "The politicians, kids of our age have been asking questions like 'Is the NRA giving you money for your campaign?' and they're finally having to answer these questions about gun control."