

# SCHOOL SHOOTINGS ARE LEAVING PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN AND CHILD CARE PROVIDERS ON EDGE

In Uvalde, TX, 21 people—2 teachers and 19 young children—were killed in a shooting at Robb Elementary School on June 2, 2022. This is only one of many recent school shootings that have left the country concerned for the safety of children, teachers, and providers at schools and child care centers.

**“I am extremely concerned about the safety of children in public schools. I am terrified to send my daughter to kindergarten and fear school shootings. There needs to be tighter restrictions on purchasing guns, but also more assistance with mental health programs. Schools need to have greater security measures to keep out weapons/dangerous people.”**  
Parent in Michigan



designbysoapbox.com

In the June RAPID survey, which immediately followed the events in Uvalde, we asked parents with young children to tell us how these recent school shootings have impacted their concerns about their children's safety. While all RAPID parents have young children who have not yet started elementary school, many of these children are already in child care settings. Many parents in the survey also have older school-age children, and many may simply be anticipating their young children's fast-approaching enrollment in school.

As part of our June RAPID provider survey, we also asked child care providers to tell us their concerns related to their own safety and the safety of the children in their care. Unlike parents, child care providers and teachers are actually present at school shootings when they happen. They carry the burden of knowing that they may need to put their own lives at risk to protect the children in their care.

To capture these two unique perspectives, we asked parents and child care providers to respond to the following statements on a 1-5 scale that included choices:

- 1 Not at all concerned
- 2 Somewhat concerned
- 3 Concerned
- 4 Very concerned
- 5 Extremely concerned

#### Parents

There have been many school shootings occurring in the United States, including the recent one in Texas. Please rate your level of concern about these events as it relates to your child's safety.

#### Child Care Providers

There have been many school shootings occurring in the United States, including the recent one in Texas. Please rate your level of concern for your own safety/ safety of the children you care for.

Overall, our data show high levels of concern about children's safety and, in the case of providers, personal safety as well. Previous RAPID data have shown elevated levels of emotional distress among parents and providers throughout the pandemic as well as links between parent distress and young children's well-being. Safety concerns related to gun violence may be an important contributor to the persistence of these longerterm struggles with emotional distress in our RAPID families.

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**"I live about 2 hours from the shooting in Texas and it affected our small community (as it did many others). I had nightmares the week after about trying to pick up my child from daycare during an active shooter situation. Our children can't be scared to go to school and parents shouldn't be terrified to send them. I wish I had answers because something needs to change."**

Parent in Texas

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**"I'm highly upset at the response regarding the recent school shooting in Uvalde... We deserve better from our leaders."**

Parent in Texas

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## PARENTS ARE EXTREMELY CONCERNED ABOUT SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

– 43% of parents said that they were "extremely concerned" about the safety of their children given recent school shootings. This

means that nearly half of parents with young children rated their level of concern at the highest possible level.

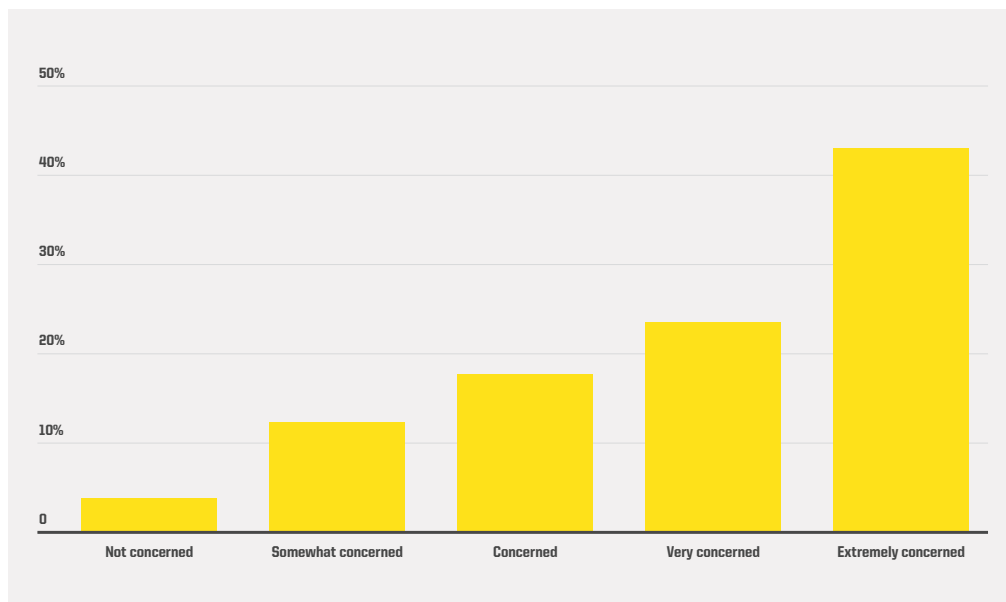
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**"I will [be] homeschooling my children as long as possible due to recent shootings."**

Parent in South Carolina

- The average parent rating across all levels of concern was 3.9, roughly corresponding to the response, “very concerned.”
- Nearly all parents—97%—were at least somewhat concerned about their children’s safety given recent school shootings.
- Across income and racial/ethnic groups, parents’ concerns about school shootings were remarkably similar. This level of consistency in parents’ experiences across demographic groups is rare and likely indicates the universality of concerns about young children’s safety and gun violence in this country.

Level of concern about school shooting among parents of young children



## CHILD CARE PROVIDERS ARE ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR OWN SAFETY AND THE SAFETY OF THE CHILDREN IN THEIR CARE

Child care providers were also concerned about recent school shootings.

- Their average ratings of concern were 2.93 for their own safety and 3.14 for the children in their care, which both roughly corresponded to the middle response choice of “concerned.”
- When specifically rating concern about the children in their care, a quarter of providers said that they were “extremely concerned.”

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**“Teachers often experience second-hand trauma reading about shootings because we can vividly imagine the lockdown and the panic and kids in the bathroom etc. We examine every classroom we go into. The teacher mass exodus should be addressed.”**

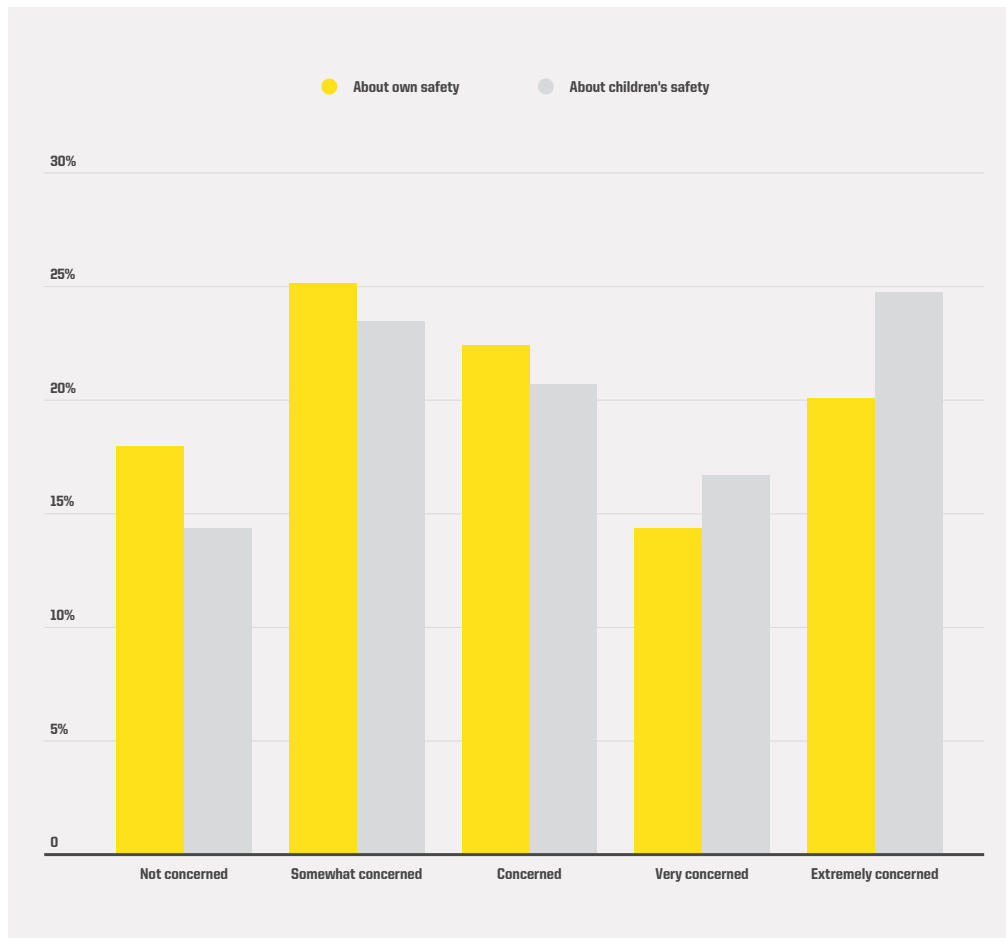
Parent in Connecticut

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**“As a new teacher it has brought a new level of stress to think about doing the safety drills with toddlers and that two adults in my room is all that stands between a shooter and 14-15 children.”**

Provider in Virginia

Level of concern about school shooting among child care providers



**“The shooting in Texas was traumatic, shocking and heartbreaking. WE NEED BETTER GUN CONTROL LAWS!! Why does any person own an AR-15? Why do citizens have more firepower than the police? Why don’t we do background checks? Since you released this survey, there has been another shooting in Tulsa. It is completely insane! PLEASE TELL LAWMAKERS to work together to write legislation for gun safety!”**

Provider in Missouri

## SUMMARY

- Parents are extremely concerned about their children’s safety given recent school shootings. Nearly all were at least “somewhat concerned” and almost half were “extremely concerned.”
- Child care providers are also concerned about recent school shootings. They are concerned about their own safety and also the safety of the children in their care. Although their ratings of concern were not as high as parents, “extremely concerned” was still the most common response when asked about the safety of the children that they care for each day.
- School shootings and other gun violence may be an important contributor to the elevated levels of parent, provider, and children’s distress that we have seen throughout the pandemic.

**“Trainings on active shooters and other safety concerns should be a top priority in any childcare setting. Our job is to keep the children and ourselves safe at all times as well as providing the care and education.”**

Provider in Indiana

## The following resources can help parents and providers talk to children about school shootings and provide support for families

Helping children and adolescents cope with traumatic events  
(National Institutes of Health)

After Crises—  
Helping young children heal

Talking about school shootings  
(New York Times)

What to say to your kids when there is another school shooting

Tips to help students talk about disturbing news

Explaining the news to our kids

ZEROTOTHREE trauma resources—  
Supporting families, young children and gun violence

Children’s Book—  
Once I was very very scared

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**“Even if it is unlikely that my child will die in a school shooting, the drills and conversation and lack of action are traumatic.”**

Parent in California

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**“Caring for other people’s children feels very heavy right now. We have had the weight of protecting them from covid for over two years. Then to have around 30 school shootings so far this year is almost too much to bear. The weight of protecting the children is immense. None of our stabilization grants have been able to be used on security, so we are just adding protective measures as we can afford them.”**

Provider in Ohio

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**“[We need] gun control policies in place to prevent school shootings, children and teachers should not fear being in their school.”**

Provider in Minnesota

# ABOUT THE RAPID PROJECT

Data presented in this fact sheet are based on RAPID household and provider surveys in June 2022.

Analyses on household survey are based on responses collected from 688 caregivers. These caregivers represent a range of voices: 4% are Black/African American, 12% are Latinx, and 43% live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

Analyses on provider survey are based on responses collected from 492 child care providers who represent a range of voices: 7% are Black/African American, 10% are Latinx, and 36% live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. Proportions/percentages are calculated based on the item-level response rates, not on the total sample. The data for these analyses are not weighted.

The RAPID project includes a survey of caregivers with children under age 6 and a survey of child care

providers and other adults who care for children under age 6.

These surveys are designed to gather essential information continuously regarding the needs, health-promoting behaviors, and well-being of children and their families and important adults in their lives.

RAPID collects data monthly from 1,000 caregivers and child care providers in all 50 states. The surveys are national in scope, though not technically nationally representative. RAPID collects snapshots of data across time and can also assess trends longitudinally.

For more information about RAPID study design and methods, see [here](#).

RAPID is under the direction of Philip Fisher, PhD, Director of the Center on Early Childhood at Stanford University

**1,000**

**surveyed monthly**

**103**

**surveys**

**17,000+**

**households**

**50**

**US states**

