

The Role of Peer Support and “Similar Others” after Mass Public Shootings



Mass shootings affect numerous individuals with an impacted community, yet not all experiences are the same. Findings from a survey of survivors from across the U.S. highlighted that peer support – especially from other survivors with similar experiences – is crucial to helping individuals impacted by mass shootings along their road to resiliency.

Survivors often connect with other individuals impacted by mass shootings either in their own community or beyond.

More than 90% of the survivors surveyed in the current project reported connecting with other survivors. Often, survivors not only seek out others who have also been impacted by mass shootings, but specifically seek out similar others, or those individuals who have been impacted in a similar way.

Connecting with other mass shooting survivors is consistently rated as helpful.

Roughly 8 out of every 10 survivors rated connecting with other mass shooting survivors as being very or extremely helpful. These connections also consistently were perceived to be among the three most helpful resources (with family and friends) during the immediate (first 30 days), intermediate (31 days to one year), and long-term (beyond one year) periods after the shooting.

Survivors most commonly connect with other survivors in online spaces.

Online peer support groups, as well as social media more broadly, help survivors connect with one another, especially when coming from different communities. Nearly 57% of survivors surveyed indicated that their connections with other survivors were fostered by online peer support groups.

Efforts to support survivors of mass shootings should include creating spaces where affected individuals can come together. This can not only include providing safe spaces for individuals within an impacted community to connect, but also bringing in survivors from other tragedies who can understand their experiences but also share what the survivor may expect later in their own journey.



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