

What can data tell you about the aftereffects of nuclear war?

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With all the saber rattling out of Washington, D.C., and North Korea lately, the potential for nuclear war is arguably higher than it has been in recent memory — at least that we civilians know about. The idea that a singular act of aggression could trigger a chain reaction of events with devastating consequences led one filmmaker and data visualization artist to embark on a data-driven journey into what a nuclear third-world war could look like. As [Gizmodo reported](#), by crunching the numbers in the multi-part series [The Shadow Peace](#), Neil Halloran shows, via population pyramids, just how devastating an all-out nuclear war could be on humanity.

He said the size of the nuclear weapons themselves is not the central issue; it is more so the sheer number of weapons in existence. He compares the spike in deaths as a result of World War II, which occurred over a six-year period, to a potential nuclear war, saying the loss of life would be much more immediate and much worse. By the numbers, Halloran said a minority of deaths from a nuclear blast would be immediate, while the majority of deaths would occur within the following three weeks. An even smaller number of people would die past that three-week mark from other complications such as cancer.

Though the gist of the series' first installment gives a bleak worst-case-scenario view of the situation, Halloran also cites improvements in achieving peace using relatively simple tools like disarmament, nonproliferation and no-first-strike agreements. Long story short, these efforts are working to decrease the overall risk of a large-scale nuclear war, but must be adhered to in order to be effective.

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