Guns, School Shooters and School Safety:
What do we know, what should we do?

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► Our Work

Mental Health / Substance Abuse

Criminal Justice System

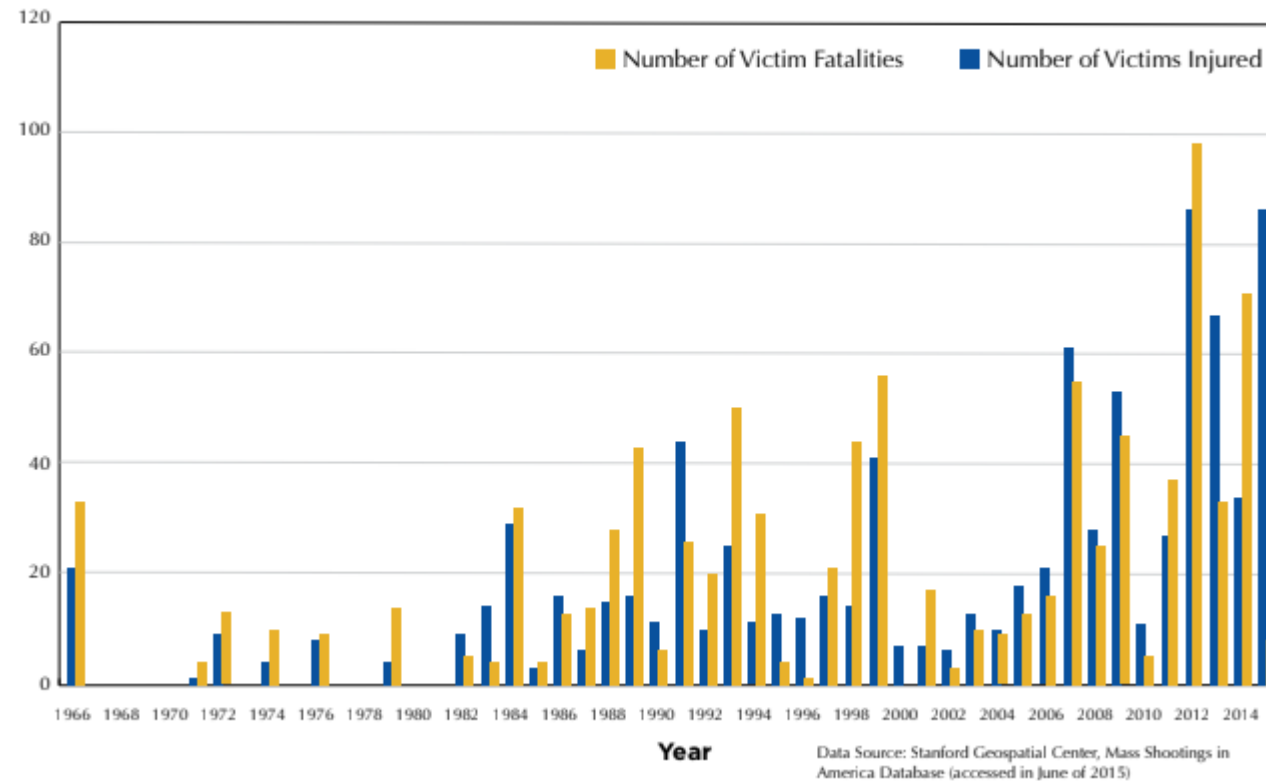School-Based Violence Prevention

Law Enforcement Initiatives
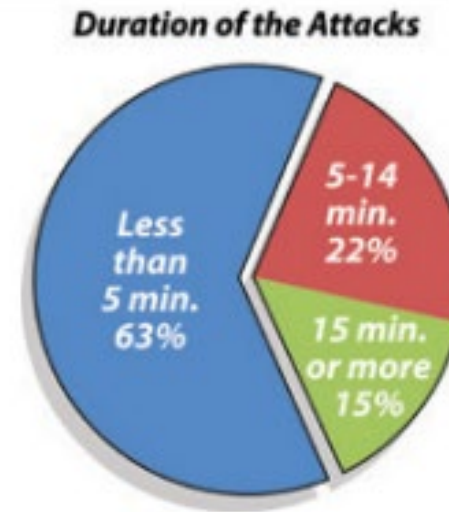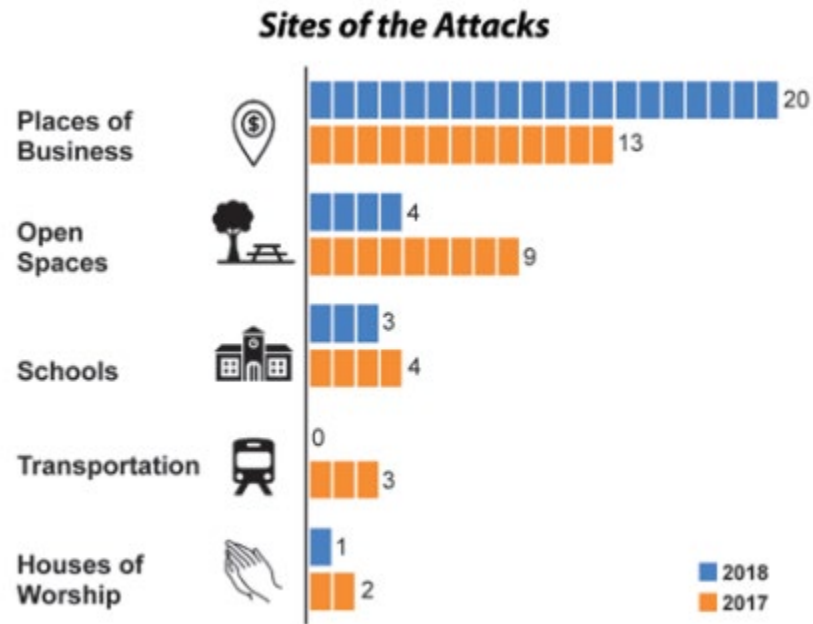
Community & Youth Development

Evidence-Based Practices

Number of Victims of U.S. Mass Shootings, 1966–2015

Data Source: Stanford Geospatial Center, Mass Shootings in America Database (accessed in June of 2015)

Mass Violence in America. (2019 August). National Council for Behavioral Health.

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Sites of the Attacks

Site	2018	2017
Places of Business	20	13
Open Spaces	4	9
Schools	3	4
Transportation	0	3
Houses of Worship	1	2

■ 2018
■ 2017

Duration of the Attacks

Less than 5 min. 63%
5-14 min. 22%
15 min. or more 15%

Mass Attacks in Public Spaces – 2018. (July 2019). United States Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

2000-2017 Active Shooter Incidents and Mass Killings In Schools

KEY OBSERVATION

Active shooter incidents in schools (ASIS) have occurred in 25 states, with California having the most incidents. Sixty-five percent of the incidents occurred in cities with a population of 100,000 or less. Fifty-four percent of the incidents occurred in cities with a population of 50,000 or less.
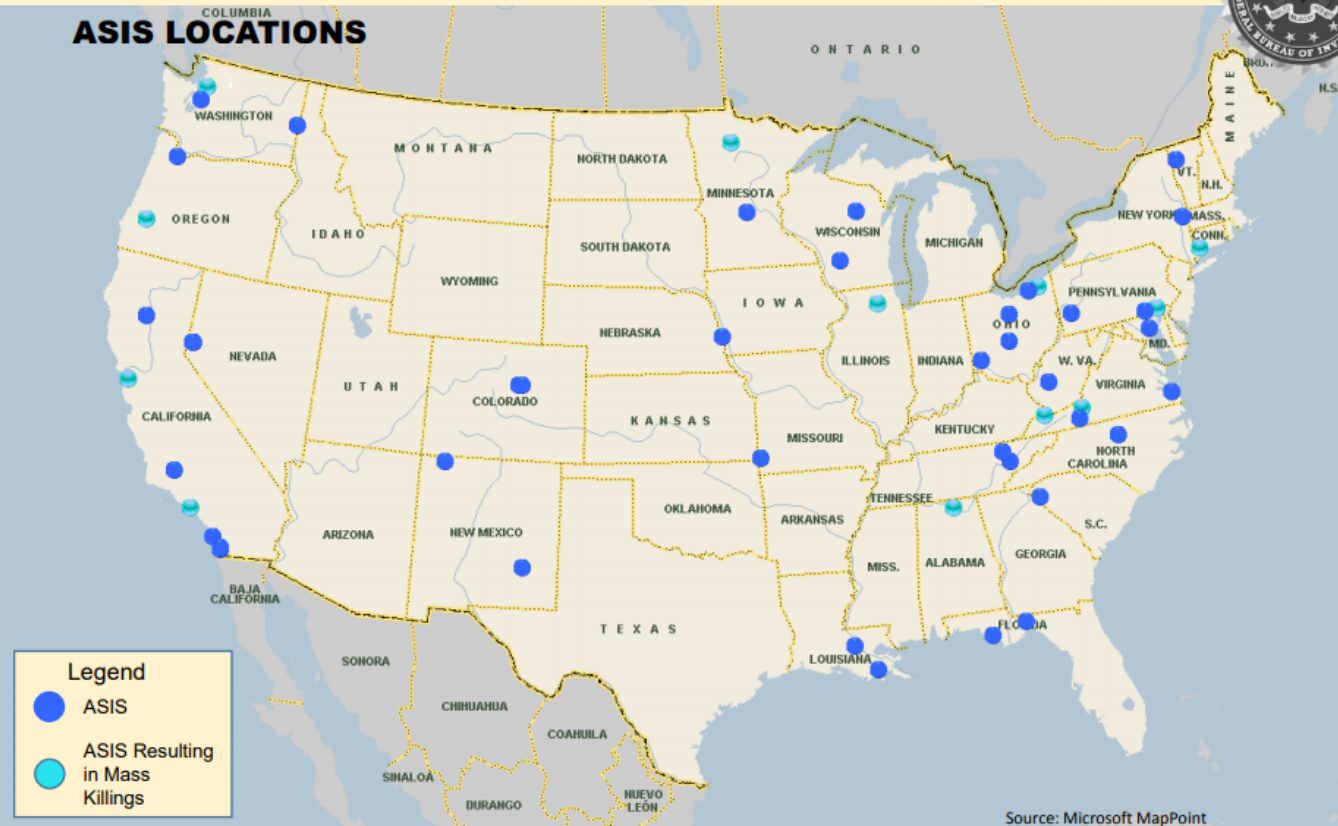
52 ASIS from 2000-2017

STATES WITH THE MOST INCIDENTS

7	California
6	Ohio
4	Virginia
3	Pennsylvania
3	Washington

34 ASIS occurred in cities with a population less than 100,000

ASIS LOCATIONS

Legend
- ASIS
- ASIS Resulting in Mass Killings

Source: Microsoft MapPoint

Sources:
1. FBI; Publication; 2018; "Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2016 and 2017"; UNCLASSIFIED; UNCLASSIFIED; Multiple Sources.
2. FBI; Publication; 2016; "Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2014 and 2015"; UNCLASSIFIED; UNCLASSIFIED; Multiple Sources.
3. FBI; Publication; 2014; "A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013"; UNCLASSIFIED; UNCLASSIFIED; Multiple Sources.

https://publicintelligence.net/fbi-school-shootings-2000-2017/

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2000-2017 Active Shooter Incidents and Mass Killings In Schools
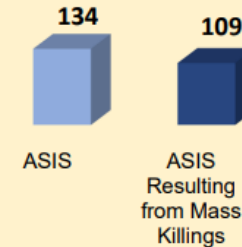
KEY OBSERVATION

The number of active shooter incidents in schools (ASIS) has remained steady over the past 18 years, with an average of 2.8 shootings per year. ASIS are most likely to happen at the high school level or higher (37 out of 52). The average deaths from ASIS was 7.4; however, this includes the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting and the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, where 32 and 26 people died, respectively. Most of the deaths from ASIS resulted during incidents that met the threshold for a mass killing (81 percent).
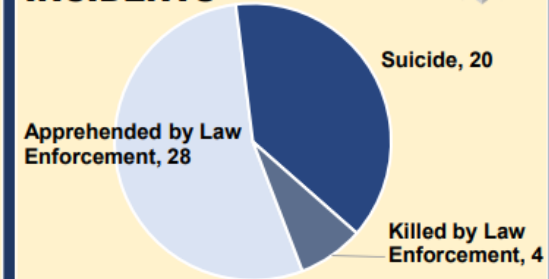
ASIS INSTITUION TYPE

- 22 High Schools
- 15 Institutions of Higher Education
- 6 Middle Schools
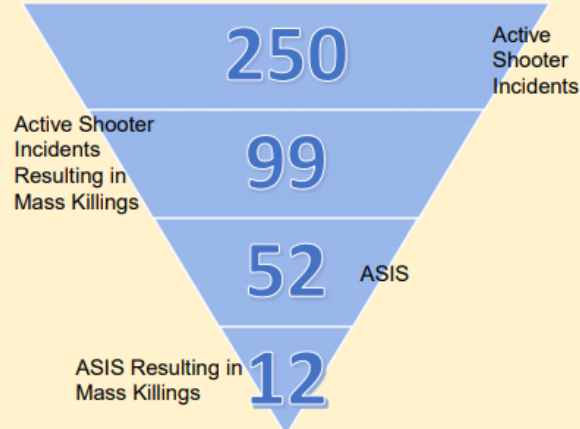- 6 Elementary Schools
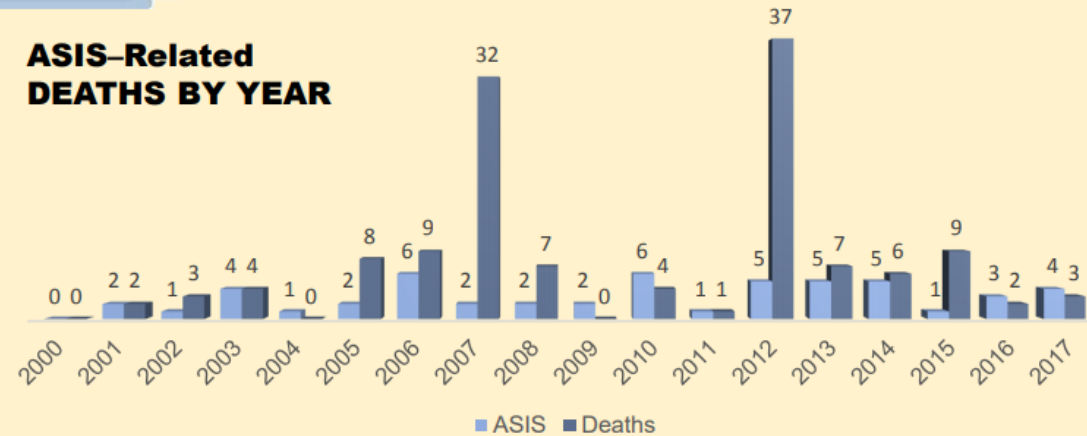- 3 Other*

DEATHS BY INCIDENT TYPE

- 134 — ASIS
- 109 — ASIS Resulting from Mass Killings

RESOLUTION OF INCIDENTS

- Suicide, 20
- Apprehended by Law Enforcement, 28
- Killed by Law Enforcement, 4

ACTIVE SHOOTER INCIDENTS

- 250 — Active Shooter Incidents
- 99 — Active Shooter Incidents Resulting in Mass Killings
- 52 — ASIS
- 12 — ASIS Resulting in Mass Killings

ASIS–Related DEATHS BY YEAR

Year	ASIS	Deaths
2000	0	0
2001	2	2
2002	1	3
2003	4	4
2004	1	0
2005	2	8
2006	6	9
2007	2	32
2008	2	7
2009	2	0
2010	6	4
2011	1	1
2012	5	37
2013	5	7
2014	5	6
2015	1	9
2016	3	2
2017	4	3

■ ASIS ■ Deaths

*There were two shootings during school board meetings and one shooting in an Amish school house.

Sources:
1. FBI; Publication; 2018; "Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2016 and 2017"; UNCLASSIFIED; UNCLASSIFIED; Multiple Sources.
2. FBI; Publication; 2016; "Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2014 and 2015"; UNCLASSIFIED; UNCLASSIFIED; Multiple Sources.
3. FBI; Publication; 2014; "A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013"; UNCLASSIFIED; UNCLASSIFIED; Multiple Sources.

https://publicintelligence.net/fbi-school-shootings-2000-2017/

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Shooting Incidents in Primary and Secondary Schools 2013-18

Category	Count
Total incidents	361
Incidents K-12	220
Accidental discharge of firearm	26
Attempted/completed suicide	30
Gun fired without injury	59
Attacks resulting in injury or death	105
Fatal attacks	25

Source: Compiled from https://everytownresearch.org/

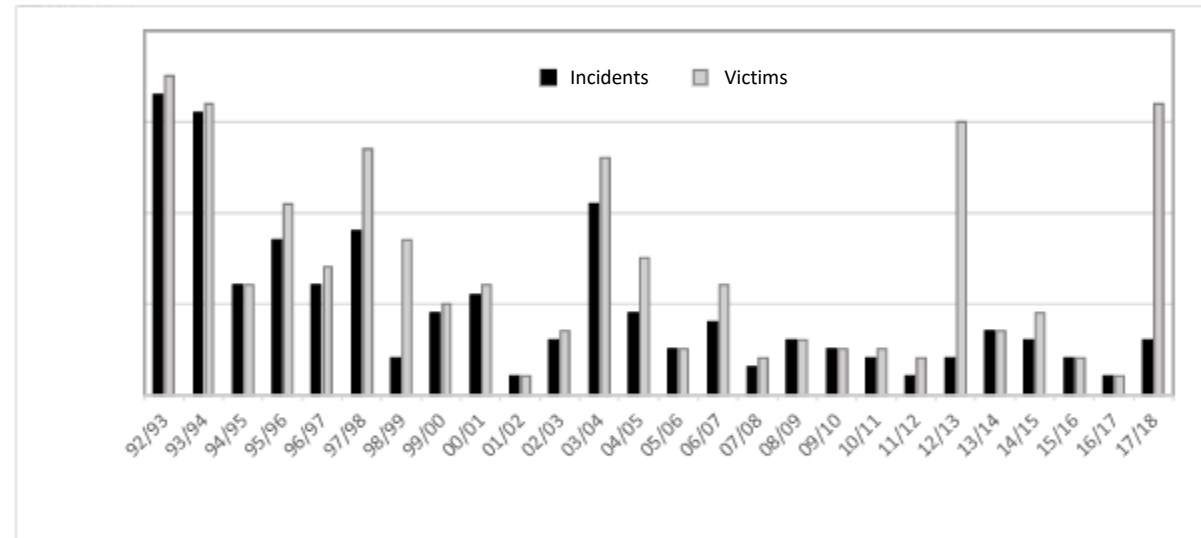Note. Incidents with 4+ victims and at least two deaths (not including the assailant)

Figure 1. Fatal Shootings in Primary and Secondary Schools. Sources: National School

Safety Center and Centers for Disease Control

Flannery, D., Fox, J., Wallace, L., Mulvey, E., & Modzeleski, W. (forthcoming). What do we know about guns and school safety and directions for change? Educational Researcher.
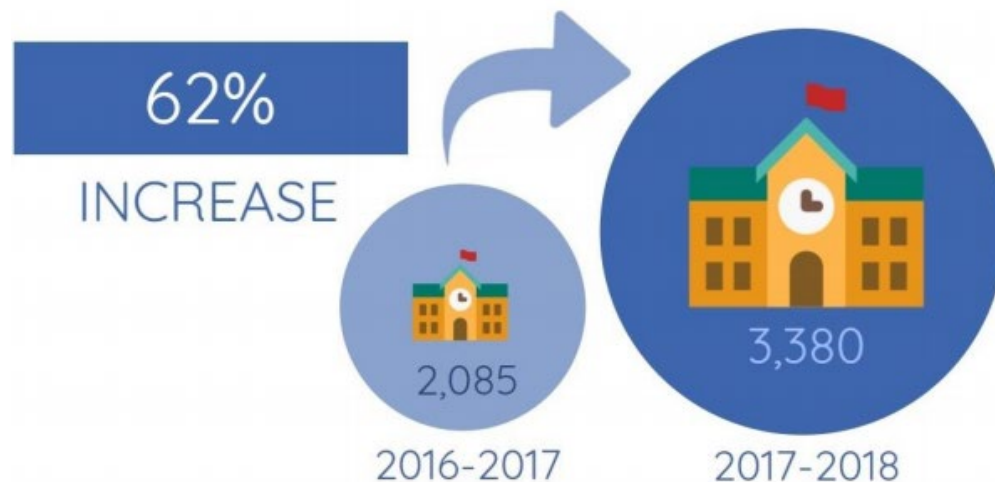
► Prevalence of Violence in Schools

Violence is defined along a continuum of behaviors that schools are concerned with
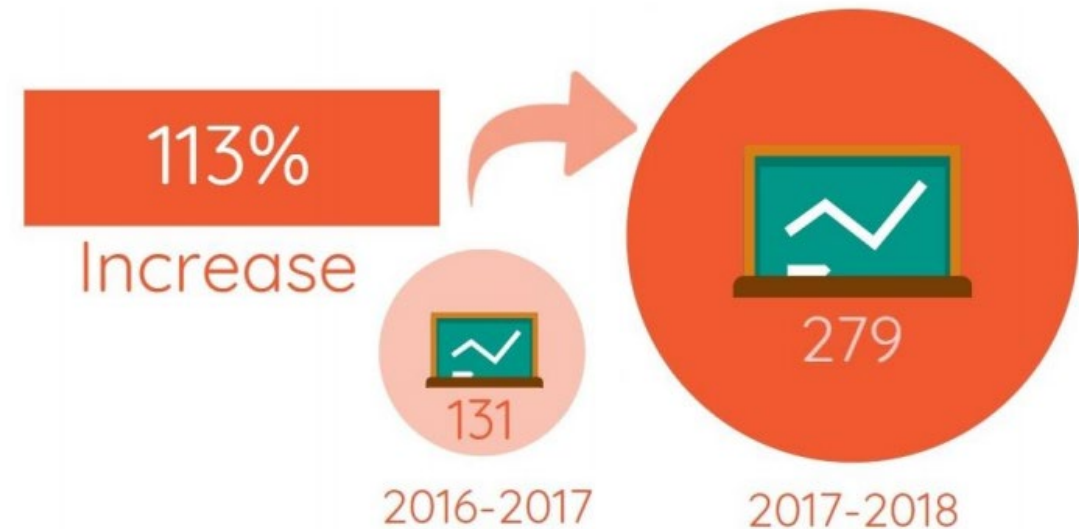
- Physical fighting, aggressive behavior
- Threats
- Bullying
- Injuries with weapons
- Gangs
- Violent extremism (hate groups)
- Gun violence

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Perhaps the most concerning figures are the significant increases in threats and incidents from school year to school year. There were at least 3,380 threats recorded in the 2017-2018 school year, a 62% increase from 2,085 threats in the 2016-2017 school year.
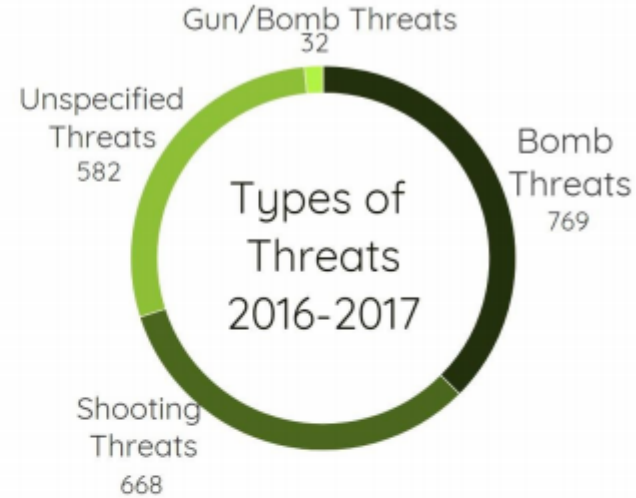
The increase in actual incidents is even more alarming. This past school year included at least 279 incidents of violence compared to 131 events in the 2016-2017 school year – an increase of 113%.

62% INCREASE

2,085
2016-2017

3,380
2017-2018

113% Increase

131
2016-2017

279
2017-2018

Klinger, A. and Klinger, A. (2019). Violent Threats and Incidents in Schools: An Analysis of the 2017-2018 School Year. Educator's School Safety Network. eSchoolSafety.org

Types of threats

The most common threats recorded in the 2017-2018 school year were **shooting threats (38.8% of all threats)**, followed by **generalized or unspecified threats of violence (35.8%)**, and **bomb threats (22.5%)**.

Types of Threats 2016-2017

Gun/Bomb Threats 32

Unspecified Threats 582

Bomb Threats 769

Shooting Threats 668

Types of Threats 2017-2018

Gun/Bomb Threats 61

Bomb Threats 745
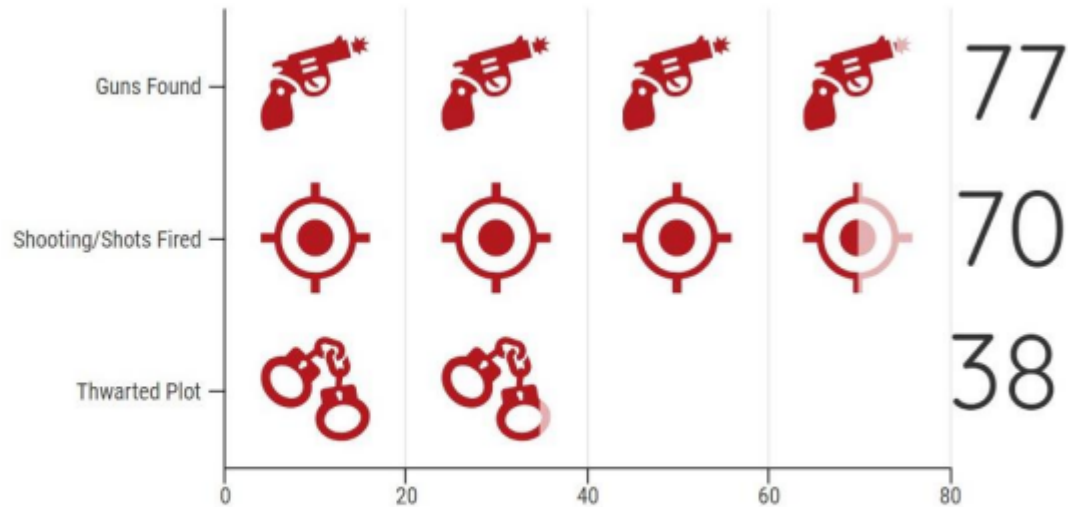
Shooting Threats 1,323

Unspecified Threats 1,215

This is a slight change from the 2016-2017 school year when bomb threats were the most common (34.6%) followed by shooting threats (30%) and unspecified threats (26%).

Klinger, A. and Klinger, A. (2019). Violent Threats and Incidents in Schools: An Analysis of the 2017-2018 School Year. Educator's School Safety Network. eSchoolSafety.org

Types of incidents

The most frequent type of incident during the 2017-2018 school year was **guns found on campus,** (77 instances or **28%** of all incidents), followed by **shootings or shots fired** (70 events or **25%** of all incidents), and **thwarted attacks or plots** (38 events or **14%** of all incidents).

Klinger, A. and Klinger, A. (2019). Violent Threats and Incidents in Schools: An Analysis of the 2017-2018 School Year. Educator's School Safety Network. eSchoolSafety.org

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► School-Associated Violent Crime and Deaths

- Rate has remained stable, about .07/100,000 students– over decades
- Compared to overall rate of deaths from unintentional injury ages 19 and under 15.4/ 100,000 in 2001 → 11.0 in 2010
    → 16.2 in 2015 (61% unintentional, 20% homicides, 19% suicides)
- Increase in multiple homicide incidents
    - Incidents increase parent and student fear of child safety at school
    - Media exposure is intense, and influences subsequent perpetrators
- 55% of all crime victimization against students occurs at school or on the way, while students spend 18% of their waking hours at school.

► School Shooting Incidents 2013-2015

- From 2013 to 2015 the incidence rate of school shootings in each year was 1.11, 1.73 and 1.99 per 10 million.
  - This is an increase

- Over half occurred in K-12 schools, were intentional, and committed by males

- States with lower school shooting incidence rates:
  - Background check laws for firearm and ammunition purchase
  - Higher per capita mental health and K-12 expenditures
  - Higher percent urban population

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► Prevalence of School Shootings

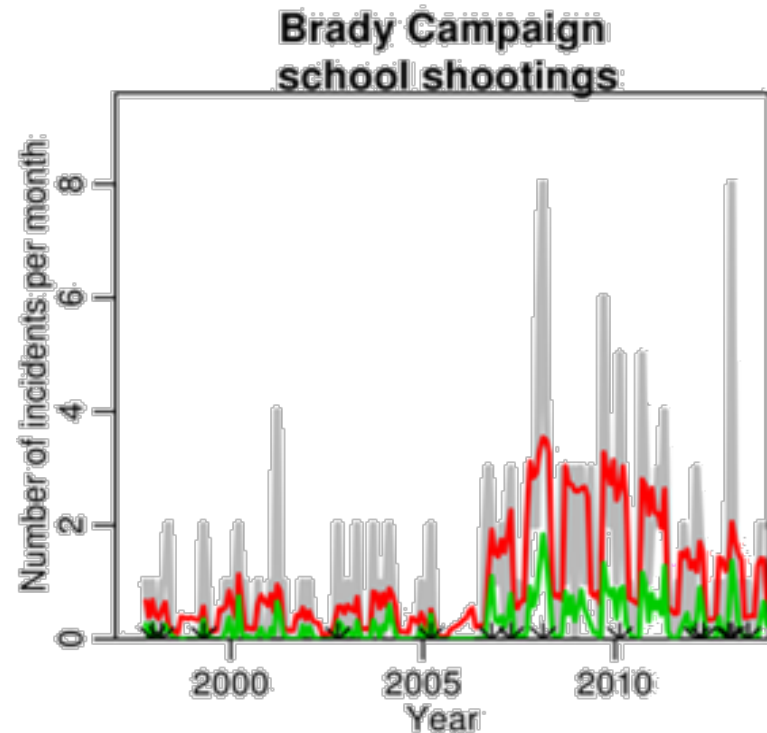- Multiple-homicide incidents get the most attention, though significantly more shootings occur between two persons in school, on school grounds, or at school events
- They have occurred in all types of schools, from elementary through college
- Studies aggregate rare events
- Focus on qualitative methods (interviews, media accounts), retrospective case studies, psychological autopsying of perpetrator

► Prevalence of School Shootings

- Despite perception, the risk of any student being a victim of a homicide at school has remained LOW and STABLE for at least the past two decades
- Challenge because all shootings are not formally classified at school-associated; we only know about homicides and suicides
- Shootings where schools, persons at school are target

► Media Contagion Effect on School Shootings, 1997-2013*

Brady Campaign school shootings

[Chart: Number of incidents per month vs. Year (2000, 2005, 2010) with gray, red, and green lines]

Gray – # of Incidents

Red – Estimate of # of incidents controlling for key factors (e.g. prevalence of mental illness, gun laws, prevalence of gun ownership, etc.)
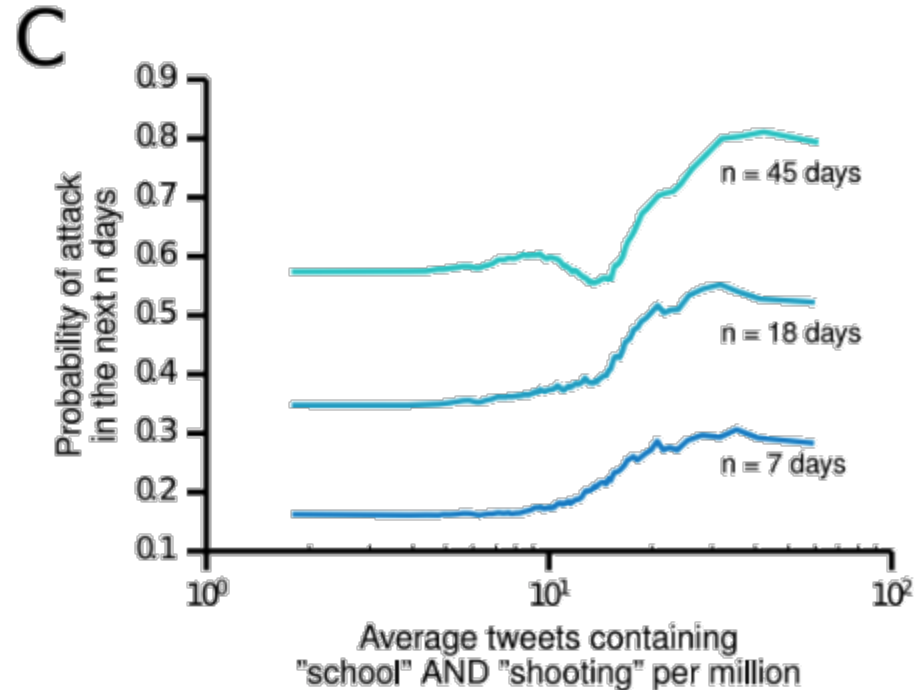
Green – Proportion of the # of incidents explained by the contagion effect.

Incidents have a contagion effect for an average of **13 days** and incite an average of at least .22 new incidents (*p* < .001)

* N = 180 and excluded foiled incidents, incidents that did not actually occur on school property, and incidents occurred after hours or outside the context of school/school events (e.g. Football game).

Towers, S. Gomez-Lievano, A. Khan, M. Mubayi, A. Castillo-Chavez, C. (2015) Contagion in Mass Killings and School Shootings. *PLoS ONE 10(7):* e0117259. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0117259

► Social Media Affects Timing, Location, and Severity of School Shootings

C

Probability of attack in the next n days vs. Average tweets containing "school" AND "shooting" per million

n = 45 days
n = 18 days
n = 7 days

- Probability of a new attack increased with the number of tweets after a shooting

- Based on 72 million tweets containing word 'shooting' and 1.1 .million of these containing the word 'school'

- This is a copycat effect based on social media chatter

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► Mental Health and School Shootings

- No *causal* relationship
  - But there is some association

- More likely to be victims than perpetrators

- Circular reasoning: To do this must have been mentally ill
  - "Why did this young man do this terrible thing?" *Because he is mentally ill*. "And how do you know that he is mentally ill?" *Because he did this horrible act* (Skeem & Mulvey, in press)

- Expansion of mental health services <u>alone</u> will do little to prevent school shootings

► No Specific Profile, But…

- Mental health issues of perpetrators, Langham (2009), identified three types:
  - Traumatized   (Mitchell Johnson, Jonesboro, AR)
    - Prior abuse, parents had substance use, criminal histories
  - Psychotic   (Seung Hui Cho, Virginia Tech)
    - Intact families, no history of abuse, parent substance use or incarceration
    - Shooters signs of schizophrenia, schizotypal personality disorder, delusions
  - Psychopathic   (Eric Harris, Columbine)
    - Also intact families, no histories of abuse or family dysfunction
    - Narcissistic, lack of empathy, no conscience, sadistic behavior

► Current Trends and Controversies

- Mental health is an associated risk factor for school shootings but not a singular cause

- Restricted access to information especially about mental health status (FERPA; HIPAA)

- In most shootings, peers told ahead of time but nobody told an adult

- We know less about successfully averted shootings or single homicide shootings at school

► Challenges

- Low base rate behaviors with small effect sizes
- Trying to predict will lead to more false positives than false negatives
- Thorough psychiatric evaluations to assess risk are time consuming and expensive
- School-based mental health workers mostly work in crisis intervention mode with little time to perform thorough risk assessments
- Risk for suicide vs. risk for interpersonal violence
- We can't just keep doing more of the same

► Ecology (Climate) of Schools and Communities

- Bullying victimization (not all shooters)
- Youth sense of alienation (suburban/rural)
- Significant community social change
- States with high "culture of honor"– strength and social regard for males
- Valorization of violent masculinity
- Access to firearms
- Media coverage contagion effect

► Hardening the Target

- "The Columbine effect"

- Introduction of SRO's into the school can affect school climate and culture

- Traditional roles of a SRO:
  - Law enforcement
  - Provide programs (DARE, GREAT)
  - Counselor (member of PBIS team, TA team)

- Common sense safety and security measures to make it harder for a person with ill intent to get into the building

► Is Arming Teachers A Good Idea?

- Intensive, ongoing training
- Response in a crisis (aim)
- More guns = more accidents, more access
- Law enforcement responding confused by who has a gun
- Liability for accidents and injury
- Local school district decision
  - E.g. rural school districts

► Call for Action to Prevent Gun Violence

Universal approaches promoting safety and well-being for everyone

1 Assessment of school climate Assurance of physically & emotionally safe and positive environments

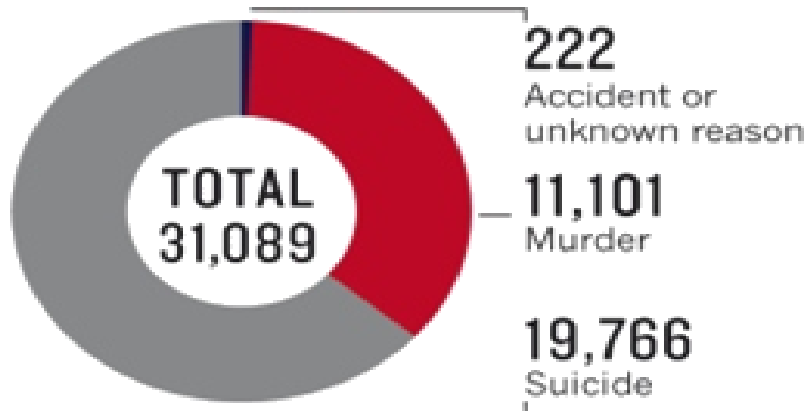**2** Ban on assault-style weapons, high-capacity clips, and products that create fully automatic firearms

3 Adequate staffing of school- and community-based mental health services for at-risk individuals

4 Reform of school discipline to reduce exclusionary practices and foster positive success for students

8 Time-limited restraining orders for recovery of firearms when an individual is planning violence

7 Removal of legal barriers to sharing safety-related information among agencies in cases with violence

6 School- and community-based threat assessment teams – mental health professionals and law enforcement

5 Universal background checks to screen out violent offenders and those with history of violence or terrorism

Practices for reducing risk and promoting protective factors for persons experiencing difficulties

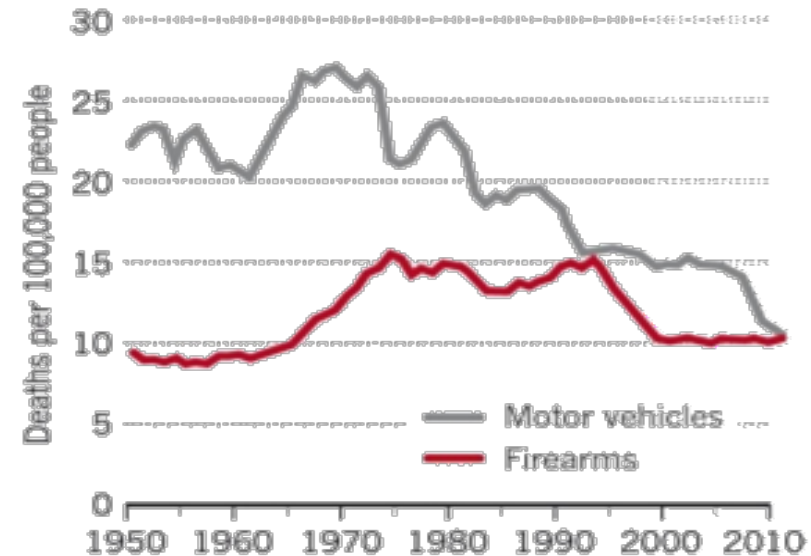Interventions for individuals where violence is present or appears imminent

► Gun vs. Car Fatalities

GUN DEATHS

Firearms accounted for 1.2% of US deaths in 2011, with suicides being the largest fraction.

TOTAL 31,089

222 Accident or unknown reason

11,101 Murder

19,766 Suicide

Unlike deaths from car accidents, the rate of gun fatalities has flattened out. Research restrictions have hampered efforts to explain the gun trend.

Deaths per 100,000 people

— Motor vehicles
— Firearms

1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010

► Gun Violence Prevention in Schools: Core Elements of What Can Work

- Social and emotional learning (SEL)
- School climate and school connectedness
- Threat assessment
- Bystander intervention
- Appropriately trained School resource officers
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- Address gaps on weapons in the school context

Source: Flannery, D. et al (in press). The scientific evidence supporting an eight point public health oriented action plan to prevent gun violence. In Osher et al. (eds). *Keeping Students Safe and Helping them Thrive: A collaborative handbook for education, safety, and Justice professionals, families and communities*. NY: Praeger.

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► What Can We Do? Threat Assessment to Evaluate Risk

This is a support-focused process, not a punitive one, with a plan to connect to services

- Developmental and social histories
  - What are students motives and goals?
  - Is there a relationship with a trusted adult?
  - Others concerned student could harm self or others?

- History of abuse, as victim or perpetrator

- History of violence victimization, bullying

- Reality testing and thought processes

- Risk for violence or homicide perpetration

- Attack-related behaviors

- Dysfunctional peer relations

►What Can We Do? Threat Assessment to Evaluate Risk

- Mood, particularly anger or expression of rejection, hopelessness or despair
- Attitude that violence viewed as acceptable way to solve problems
- Risk for suicide
- Writings or drawings with violent themes
  - Social media activity
- History of trauma or currently experiencing trauma symptoms
- Access to firearms and fascination with firearms

► What Else Can We Do? Bystander Intervention

A bystander is anyone who observes an emergency or situation that looks like someone could use some help.

1. Notice when a situation can lead to violence
2. ID when it is appropriate to intervene
3. Recognize personal responsibility for intervention
4. Know how to intervene
5. Take action to intervene

From http://share.Princeton.edu/get-educated/bystander-intervention

► Programs Promoting Bystander Intervention

- Safe 2 Tell (Columbine): Since 2004 prevented 266 separate school attacks

- Anonymous tip lines

- Active shooter response trainings or protocols
  - A.L.I.C.E. (Alert Lockdown Inform Counter Evacuate)
    - 1600 LE agencies, 1600 K-12 schools, 400 higher education
  - Run, Hide, Fight (FBI video on protocol to implement)
  - CRASE (Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events)

- Say Something (Sandy Hook Promise)

- Moms Demand Action (Parkland)

► Gun Violence Prevention in Schools: Addressing Gaps

- Focus on weapon-related victimization not just guns and mass murder
- Address gangs in schools
- Use a school-centric public health monitoring approach
- Professional discretion and a range of alternatives for weapon-related discipline (no zero tolerance)
- Expand accountability beyond individual schools
- Avoid the harmful
  - School to prison pipeline
  - Undermining student connectedness

Source: Flannery, D. et al (in press). The scientific evidence supporting an eight point public health oriented action plan to prevent gun violence. In Osher et al. (eds). *Keeping Students Safe and Helping them Thrive: A collaborative handbook for education, safety, and Justice professionals, families and communities*. NY: Praeger.

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► Current Trends and Controversies

- Media violence is not a major cause of school shootings (but violent themes in writings)
- Media attention is on the perpetrator and we forget about the surviving victims, witnesses, responders and communities; time to heal, re-experience the trauma (also contagion effect)

- Media as bystander (immediate accounts)
- Zero tolerance policies don't work
- We need to know more about school shooters who are suicidal as well as homicidal
- Emerging differences K-12 vs. higher ed shootings

► Guns, School Shooters, and School Safety

- Support common sense gun laws and policies that limit access to firearms, particularly among juveniles
- Vote for state and federal legislators that will support these laws and policies
- Implement background checks with reliable, readily available, current information
- Permit information sharing among school based threat assessment teams
- Implement low cost, common sense safety and security measures; utilize technology where possible
- Become an advocate
- Add an item on the YRBS assessing student concerns for safety related to school shootings or firearm violence

► Guns, School Shooters, and School Safety

- Encourage and support youth voice
- Do not underestimate the influence of social media on youth in your school
- Get away from singular, simplistic solutions to a complicated problem that requires a comprehensive approach
- If you can stop an intruder from entering your building the threat will be greatly mitigated
- Make decisions with community and staff input based on your unique needs (e.g. rural schools)
- Consider whether local police should have a community-based sub-station in your school or on school property
- Support the development of national standards for law enforcement personnel working in schools

► Additional Resources

- CDC (2016). *Preventing multiple forms of violence: A strategic vision for connecting the dots*. Division of violence prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA.

- Daniels, J. (2019). A prelimnary report on the Police Foundations averted school violence database. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

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- National Association of School Resource Officers (2012). To protect and educate: The School Resource Officer and the prevention of violence in schools. www.nasro.org.

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- US Dept of Education (2018). Federal Commission on School Safety: Protect and Mitigate. Washington, DC.

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