



# ISSUE DESCRIPTION



COMMITTEE Economic and Social Council  
ISSUE Addressing the social aspects of school shootings  
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## Introduction

School shootings have been present ever since the past century, however, in the 2000s the number of these cases has been increasing immensely. These armed attacks happen at educational institutions, such as elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges or universities. The perpetrators are usually students themselves, but in certain cases authorities have found outsiders to be accountable for the attacks. The victims are generally other students or faculty members. This is an issue appearing around the whole world, although according to statistics it is clear that the USA is the country most affected by it. Across the states in the past years the number of these occurrences has been growing constantly and alarmingly. In the present days, one can hear about new incidents frequently. Serious steps have to be taken in order to tackle this problem, and create a safe and appropriate environment for pupils to obtain their education in.

## Definition of Key Terms

**School shootings:** An event in which a student at an educational institution shoots and injures or kills at least one other student or faculty member on the grounds of that institution.

**NEA:** The National Education Association is the largest voluntary association of educators in the United States. It advocates for a better public education across the country.

**AFT:** The American Federation of Teachers is an American trade union for classroom educators, school personnel, and public employees. It is engaged with advancing public education, healthcare and public services for students and its communities.

**K-12 education:** Education for children from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

**PTSS:** Post-traumatic stress syndrome is a psychiatric disorder that some people develop after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event, such as combat, a natural disaster, a serious accident or sexual assault.

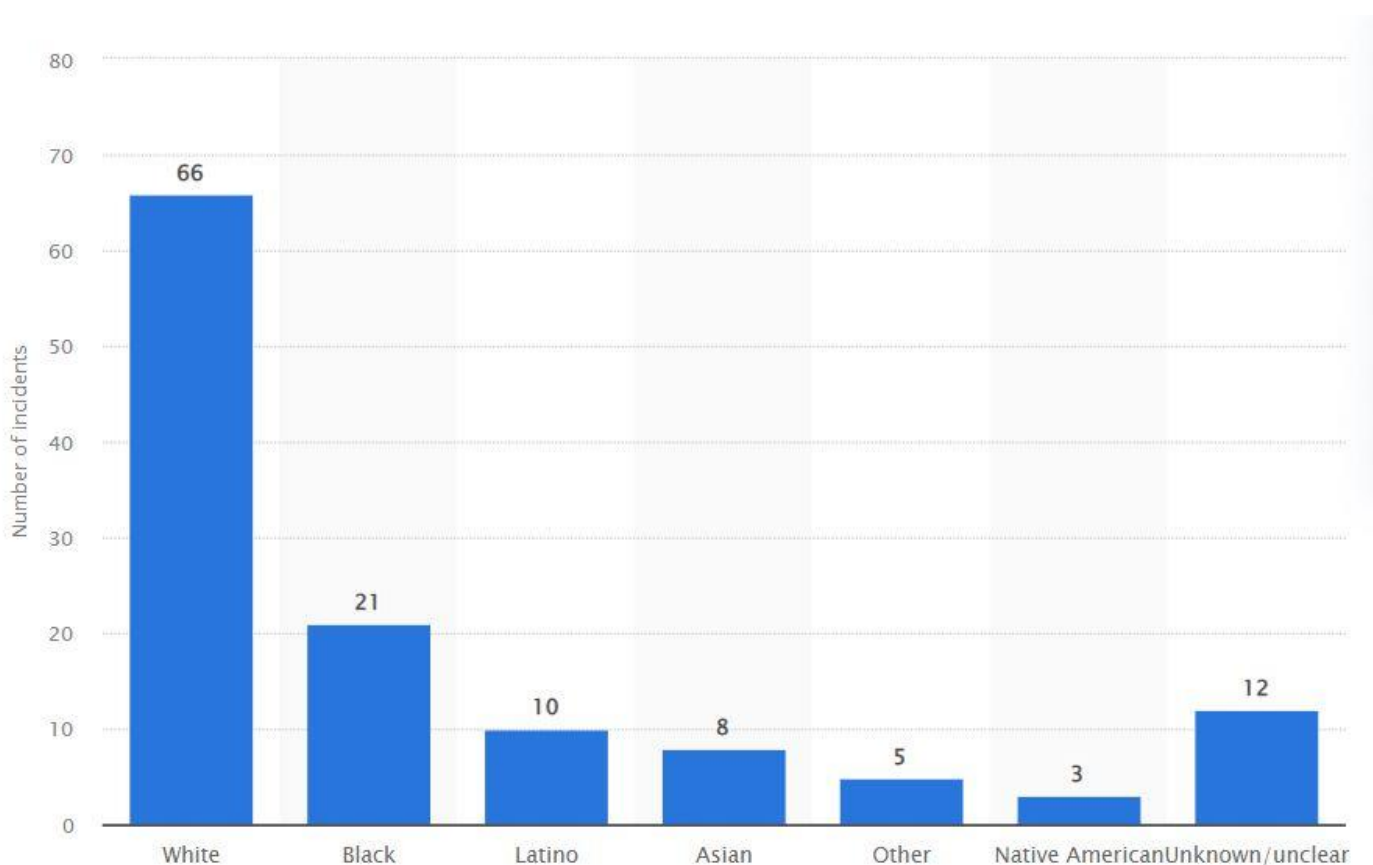
**Lobbying:** Any attempt by individuals or private interest groups to influence the decisions of the government.

## General Overview

### THE MOTIVES AND BACKGROUNDS OF STUDENT PERPETRATORS

The National Association of School Psychologists says that there is no such concept as a uniform profile of those who would participate in such events as perpetrators. Developing profiles and making generalizations could be misleading and dangerous as the chance of including children who would never consider committing an act of violence and excluding some who might would be high. Although making these kinds of assumptions would be harmful on a personal level, identifying the commonalities behind shootings might be beneficial. If one could notice a possible sign of potential risk, violent acts could be avoided by a teacher or caregiver paying special attention to the student.

The majority of K-12 school shooters are found to be white males.



Almost half of the perpetrators have been previously faced with a form of rejection from fellow students or relatives. Some of them even experienced bullying. Also more than half of K-12 shooters have a history with psychological conditions, such as depression, bipolar disorder, suicidal ideation or psychotic episodes. However, it is important to emphasize that the vast majority of children diagnosed with any sort of mental illness do not commit an act of mass

violence. Simply blaming mental conditions could lead to unfairly stigmatizing people with diagnoses, and ignoring other potential aspects.

Two facts important to note are the following: even though school shootings are most common in the United States of America, sadly it is possible for such events to occur in other countries as well, and we cannot simplify the causes of these tragedies to just one or two aspects, in order to be able to remedy or at least better the situation we must see it for what it is an indredibly complex phenomenon including a variety of factors. The issue of school shooting is, although not exclusively, a social one, thus we must address as many social factors as possible.

## SERIOUS FACTORS

Gun laws are governed by states almost entirely, and this results in greatly disparate enactments in different states. Some of them have rather lenient gun regulations, such as open carry laws, meaning that one can openly carry a firearm in public. Everytown for Gun Safety estimates that about half of the American citizens who own any kind of firearm do not store them securely. Approximately 5.4 million children live in a home with at least one unlocked and loaded gun. According to the Justice Department's National Institute of Justice, about 80% of perpetrators of K-12 school mass shootings stole guns from family members as most of them are under the age of 18, so they cannot legally acquire firearms.

With the pandemic every educational institute across the world had and still has to overcome several obstacles. Covid had a significant impact on the social well-being of students and teachers. By switching to remote learning, the lack of physical contact and social interactions resulted in numerous people feeling lonely and isolated. Due to the pandemic, school services decreased, and this could be a huge contributor. According to recent surveys by the National Education Association, half of the educators want to quit or retire early. This tendency will lead to fewer adults connected to students who could see the warning signs.

## THE EFFECTS OF HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTINGS ON STUDENTS

Extremely violent acts can affect students and schools severely. For instance, test scores show that school shootings can result in decaying performance. It can also occur that students drop out from high school and either enroll in a different one or never finish their studies. Furthermore, their behavior can change drastically. Being exposed to violence can cause several mental or physical conditions, such as PTSD or damage to some parts of the brain.

## Major Parties Involved

**United States of America:** The USA is clearly the most involved country as the number of cases in other countries are insignificant in comparison to the American numbers. Since 2018 there have been 102 school shootings in which at least one person was injured or killed.

**Everytown for Gun Safety:** It is the largest gun violence prevention organization in America. They are fighting for more strict laws regarding firearms regulation. They have four volunteer networks: Moms Demand Action, Students Demand Action, Mayors Against Illegal Guns and Everytown Survivor Network. They campaign for new solutions for lax gun laws, build awareness and invest in several programs which could help victims and prevent violence.

**National Rifle Association:** The group was originally designed to “promote and encourage rifle shooting on a scientific basis,” according to one of the co-founders. The association engages in political activities, so it formed a lobbying arm, the Institute for Legislative Action and has its own Political Action Committee. It is among the most powerful special interest lobby groups in the country with its substantial budget.

## Timeline of Events

### THE MOST TRAGIC SCHOOL SHOOTINGS IN RECENT HISTORY IN THE USA

**April 20, 1999, Colorado** - Two students committed suicide after exchanging fire with police, killing 13 and wounding additional 24 people.

**March 15, 2005, Minnesota** - A 16-year-old committed suicide after killing 7 people and wounding additional 5.

**October 2, 2006, Pennsylvania** - A gunman captured 10 girls (aged 6-13) and killed 5 before committing suicide.

**April 16, 2007, Virginia** - A senior opened fire, killing 32 people and injuring dozens before committing suicide.

**April 2, 2012, California** - A 43-year-old former student killed 7 and wounded 3 people, and was unfit to stand trial because of suffering from long-term paranoid schizophrenia.

**December 14, 2012, Connecticut** - A 20-year-old gunman committed suicide after killing 20 first-graders and 6 adult staff members with a semi-automatic rifle.

**May 23, 2014, California** - A college student killed 6 and wounded 13 people in shooting and stabbing attacks in the area near the campus. After a gun battle with police he committed suicide.

**October 1, 2015, Oregon** - 26-year-old college student after exchanging gunfire with police, killing 10 and wounding 7 people committed suicide.

**November 14, 2017, California** - A gunman killed 5 and left 18 people injured after ramming a truck into a gate at an elementary school.

**February 14, 2018, Florida** - A former student killed 17 and wounded 17 people.

**May 18, 2018, Texas** - After students heard gunfire fire alarms were activated and students began to evacuate. 10 people were killed and 14 were injured.

## SCHOOL SHOOTING INCIDENTS, DEATHS AND INJURIES BETWEEN 2018 AND 2021

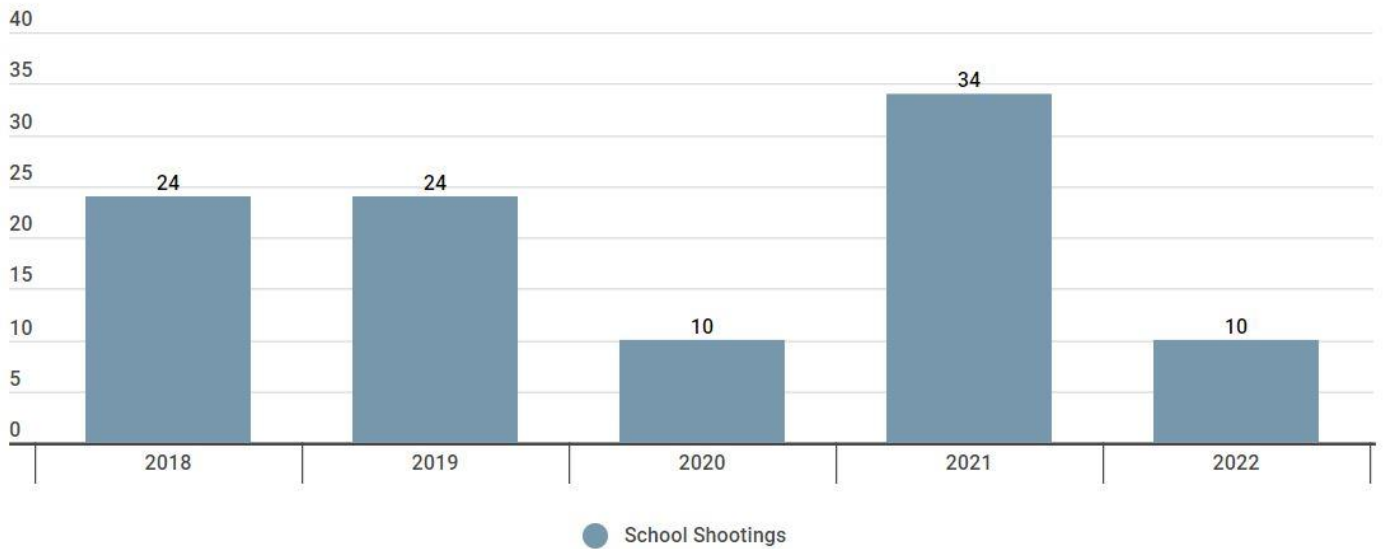
**2018** - There were 24 shootings, including the death of 35 people and 79 were injured.

**2019** - There were 24 shootings, including the death of 8 people and 32 were injured.

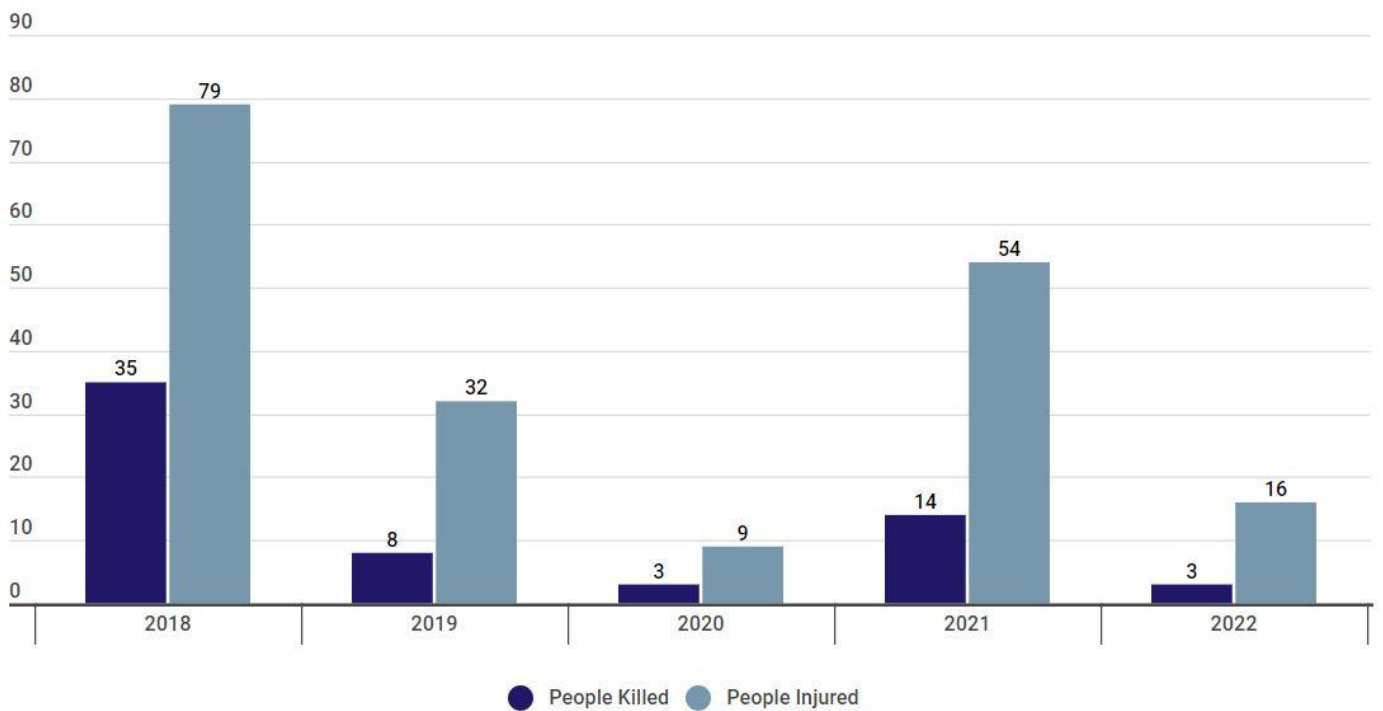
**2020** - There were 10 shootings, including the death of 3 people and 9 were injured. (The low number may be due to the shift to online learning.)

**2021** - There were 34 shootings, including the death of 14 people and 54 were injured.

There have been 102 school shootings in which at least one person was injured or killed since 2018.



There have been 63 people killed and 190 people injured from school shootings since 2018.



## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association together created a comprehensive plan focused on interventions that can prevent any kind of gun violence in American schools. This plan consists of the following:

- a. Pass Extreme Risk Laws
- b. Encourage Secure Firearm Storage
- c. Raise the Age to Purchase Semiautomatic Firearms
- d. Require Background Checks on All Gun Sales
- e. Create Evidence-Based Threat Assessment Programs in Schools
- f. Implement Expert-Endorsed School Security Upgrades
- g. Initiate Effective, Trauma-Informed Emergency Planning
- h. Create Safe and Equitable Schools

## Possible Solutions

Bringing more strict laws into force would create safer streets and schools. If fewer people would have access to firearms, the chance of them falling into the wrong hands would be lower. Besides, UN Member States should consider limiting or completely abolishing open carry laws. When purchasing guns, customers should be highly advised to place them securely, especially if they share a household with underage people. Additionally, the police should occasionally monitor registered gun owners whether they have locked their firearms properly.

It is important to consider, however, that a gun is not sufficient to commit a school shooting: a motive is also needed. Hopefully, if we can focus on the causes of the phenomenon helpful measures can be implemented so that members of the young generations will not be tempted to turn to these acts of violence. Taking mental health issues as important as one's physical health would also be favourable. In schools, seeking the help from school psychologists or other professionals should be advised. Regular mental health check-ups should be introduced in schools and workplaces. Sometimes people do not dare to talk about their problems with friends, family members or teachers, or even if they do, the help of those people might not be as effective. The guidance only a professional could provide may prevent tragedies. Other widespread issues such as bullying, social isolation and in some cases even substance abuse should be addressed as well.



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