



The American School Shooting Study (TASSS)

The American School Shooting Study (TASSS) is a national, open-source database of all known shootings that resulted in at least one injury on K-12 school grounds between 1990-2016; including those that took place on school grounds or close proximity and those known as mass school shootings.

Purpose



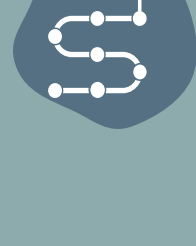
To benefit law enforcement, school officials, and policy makers.



Analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the individuals who perpetrated school shootings.



TASSS was built using open-source data to document the nature of the problem.



Compared fatal and non-fatal attacks to identify possible intervention points.

NIJ-supported researchers examined two theories of criminology in the context of various types of school shootings:

Life-Course Theory

Posits that an individual's bond to society, which evolves over time, is fundamentally related to their tendency towards crime.

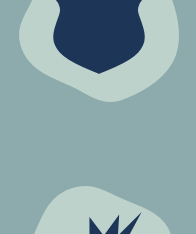
Situational Crime Prevention Theory

This perspective argues that for crime to occur there must first be the opportunity to commit the offense.

To better examine these theories in the context of school shootings, the researchers built TASSS.

Criteria

To be included in the database, the event had to:



Result in a **criminal justice** response.



Take place between **1990 and 2016**.



Include a **firearm that discharged** explosives to propel a projectile.



Occur at a **K-12 school** within the continental **United States**.



Injure or kill at least **one** person with a bullet wound.

Database Research



35

Researchers reviewed over **35** sources.

1,400

Through this research, they identified almost **1,400** potential shootings.

652

Of those, **652** shootings fit the aforementioned criteria.

Overall Event Findings

Based on their study, the researchers were able to determine:

- There were 18 intentional school shootings per year, on average.
- Mass school shootings are rare events compared to all school shootings, with 11 occurring during the 27-year study.
- Adult shooters commit more fatal shootings than adolescents.
- Most of the fatal shootings took place in the 1990's compared to the 2000's.
- The South had over three times as many school shootings as the Northeast.
- A large number of "school shootings" are committed on school grounds, outside the school building by non-students during non-school hours (in other words, are non-school related).
- Of all the school shootings, fatal shootings are not at an all-time high and do not appear to be steadily increasing.

Life Course Theory

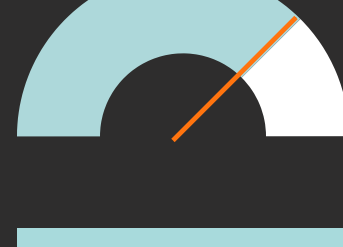
Researchers identified 252 adolescent school shooters and 102 adult shooters. Perpetrator patterns revealed:



School shooters are mostly male.

16

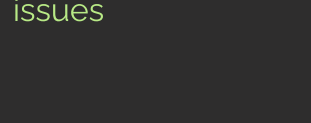
Adolescent school shooters have an average age of 16.



3/4 of adult shooters were unemployed at the time of the attack.

Additionally,

25%



had psychological issues

33%



had criminal records

33%



were gang members

1/3

1/3 of adolescents who committed offenses suffered from access from their peers, and this was more common with those who committed fatal offenses.

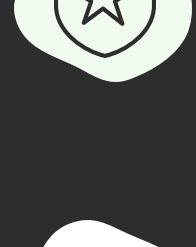
2x

Over twice as many fatal shooters than non-fatal shooters had additional family issues.

25%

1/4 of school shootings are not intentional shootings against others, but are suicides or accidents.

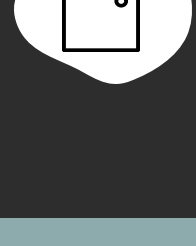
Case studies reinforce the theory that shootings often result when there is **opportunity**, as identified as easy access to school, gun, or both.



Consistent with situational crime prevention theory, shootings in multi-story schools with a police officer present are more likely to be non-fatal.



Many of those who perpetrated violence leaked their intentions - approximately half gave a warning or made threats - over **3/4** of the warnings were not acted on by school officials.



Many of those who perpetrated violence were able to enter school with a gun without being accosted, and many were able to access firearms while underage.



Contrary to expectations, metal detectors increased the odds of a fatal attack when an adult shooter was involved.

Project Limitations

Authors noted all incidents in TASSS were there because of an actual school shooting, and not an attempted shooting.

They posited a useful line of investigation could be to look at "attacked" versus "non-attacked" schools to examine the differential success and use of situational crime prevention interventions like:

- Cameras
- Metal detectors
- Guards
- Officers

Future Directions

Could examine foiled plots to see if situational interventions identified the weapon or the shooter prior to the completion of the offense.

A one-size fits all approach may not work to prevent school shootings as:
Not all shooters are students.
Not all victims are students.
Not all shootings actually took place on school grounds.

Many intentional shootings on school grounds may simply be a manifestation of larger problems on the community level (Researchers suggested).

Schools can focus the appropriate amount of attention on educating students and staff on the importance of sharing leaked information, no matter how difficult it might be to prove.

Article Citation

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This article is based on the grantee report "Understanding the Causes of School Violence Using Open Source Data" (pdf, 84 pages), by J.D. Freilich, S.M. Chermak, N.M. Connell, B. Klein, and E. Greene-Colozzi.



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