

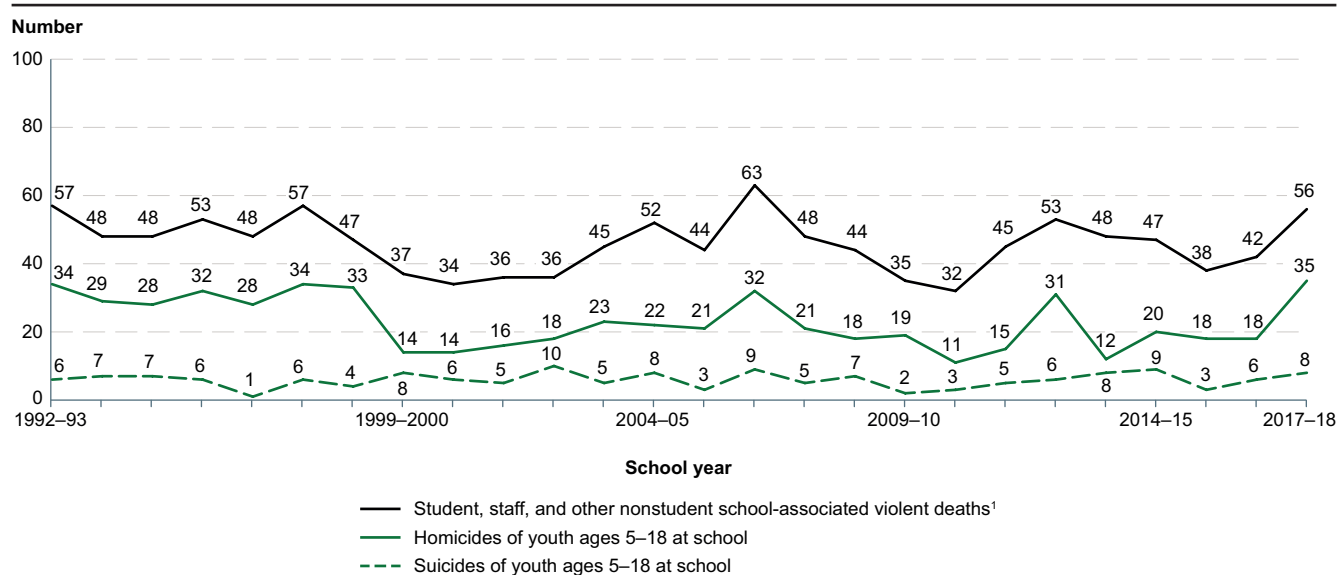
# Violent Deaths at School and Away From School and School Shootings

Between 2000–01 and 2019–20, the number of school shootings with casualties per year at public and private elementary and secondary schools ranged from 11 to 75.

Violent deaths and shootings at schools are rare but tragic events with far-reaching effects on the school population and surrounding community. This indicator first presents data on school-associated violent deaths that were collected through the School-Associated Violent Death Surveillance System (SAVD-SS), as well as data on

total homicides and suicides of youth ages 5-18, collected through the National Vital Statistics System by school year. The indicator then examines data on school shootings and casualties from the K-12 School Shooting Database (K-12 SSDB) from the Center for Homeland Defense and Security.

**Figure 1. Number of student, staff, and other nonstudent school-associated violent deaths and number of homicides and suicides of youth ages 5–18 at school: School years 1992–93 to 2017–18**

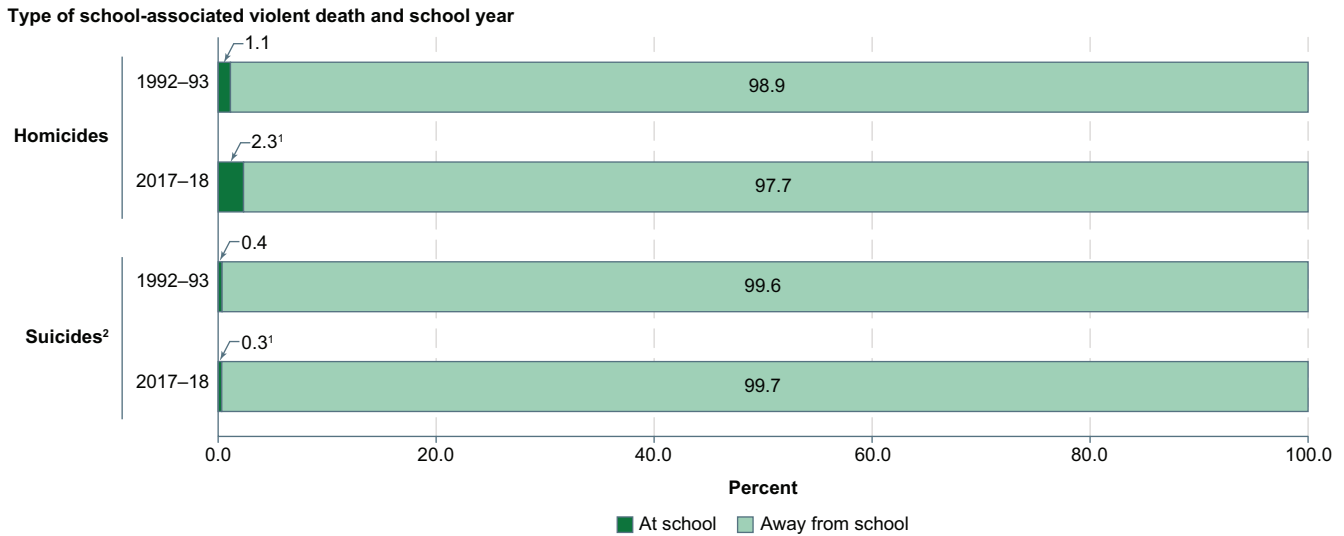


<sup>1</sup> A school-associated violent death is defined as “a homicide, suicide, or legal intervention death in which the fatal injury occurred on the campus of a functioning elementary or secondary school in the United States,” while the victim was on the way to or from regular sessions at school, or while the victim was attending or traveling to or from an official school-sponsored event. Victims may include nonstudents as well as students and staff members.  
 NOTE: “At school” includes on the property of a functioning elementary or secondary school, on the way to or from regular sessions at school, and while attending or traveling to or from a school-sponsored event. In this indicator, the term “at school” is comparable in meaning to the term “school-associated.” All data are reported for the school year, defined as July 1 through June 30. Data from 1999–2000 onward are subject to change until law enforcement reports have been obtained and interviews with school and law enforcement officials have been completed. The details learned during the interviews can occasionally change the classification of a case.  
 SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1992–2018 School-Associated Violent Death Surveillance System (SAVD-SS) (partially funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students), previously unpublished tabulation (November 2020). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 228.10.

The SAVD-SS defines a school-associated violent death as “a homicide, suicide, or legal intervention death (involving a law enforcement officer),<sup>1</sup> in which the fatal injury occurred on the campus of a functioning elementary or secondary school in the United States.” School-associated violent deaths also include those that occurred while the victim was on the way to or from regular sessions at school or while the victim was attending or traveling to or from an official school-sponsored event. Victims of school-associated violent deaths may include not only students and staff members but also others at school,<sup>2</sup> such as students’ parents and community members.

The most recent data released by the SAVD-SS cover the period from July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2018. During this period, there were a total of 56 school-associated violent deaths in the United States, which included 46 homicides, 9 suicides, and 1 legal intervention death.<sup>3</sup> Of these 56 school-associated violent deaths, 35 homicides and 8 suicides were of school-age youth (ages 5-18; also referred to as “youth” in this indicator). Between 1992-93 (when data collection began) and 2017-18, the number of school-associated violent deaths of all persons fluctuated, ranging from 32 to 63.

**Figure 2. Percentage distribution of homicides and suicides of youth ages 5–18, by location: School year 1992–93 and 2017–18**



<sup>1</sup> The 2017–18 data from the School-Associated Violent Death Surveillance System (SAVD-SS) are subject to change until interviews with school and law enforcement officials have been completed. The details learned during the interviews can occasionally change the classification of a case.

<sup>2</sup> Total youth suicides exclude self-inflicted deaths among 5- to 9-year-olds. Total youth suicides include only persons ages 10 and over because determining suicidal intent in younger children can be difficult.

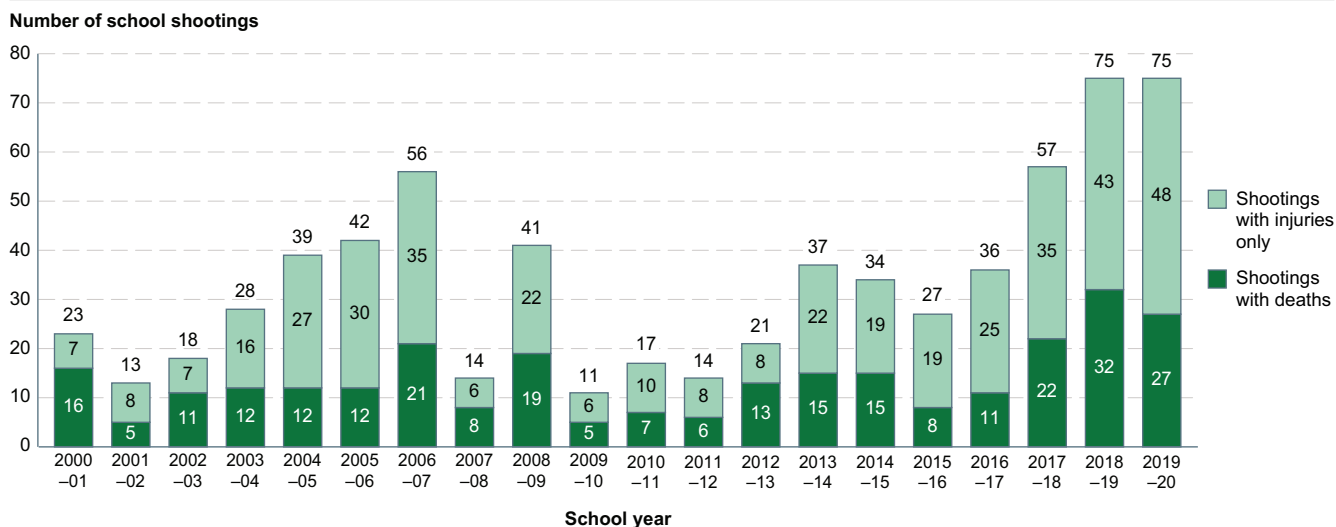
NOTE: “At school” includes on the property of a functioning elementary or secondary school, on the way to or from regular sessions at school, and while attending or traveling to or from a school-sponsored event. All data are reported for the school year, defined as July 1 through June 30.

SOURCE: Data on homicides and suicides of youth ages 5–18 at school are from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1992 and 2018 School-Associated Violent Death Surveillance System (SAVD-SS) (partially funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students), previously unpublished tabulation (November 2020); and data on total homicides and suicides of youth ages 5–18 are from the CDC, National Center for Health Statistics, 1992 and 2018 National Vital Statistics System (NVSS), previously unpublished tabulation prepared by CDC’s National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (November 2020). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 228.10.

During the 2017-18 school year,<sup>4</sup> there were a total of 1,502 youth homicides and 2,408 youth suicides<sup>5</sup> in the United States, including those occurring both at school and away from school.

The percentage of youth homicides occurring at school remained at less than 2.4 percent of the total number of youth homicides between 1992-93 and 2017-18, even

though the number of youth homicides at school varied across the years, ranging from 11 to 35.<sup>6</sup> Between 1992–93 and 2017–18, the number of youth who died by suicide at school each year ranged from 1 to 10. The percentage of youth suicides occurring at school remained at less than 1 percent of the total number of youth suicides over these years.

**Figure 3. Number of school shootings with casualties at public and private elementary and secondary schools: 2000–01 through 2019–20**

NOTE: "School shootings" include all incidents in which a gun is brandished or fired or a bullet hits school property for any reason, regardless of the number of victims (including zero), time, day of the week, or reason (e.g., planned attack, accidental, domestic violence, gang-related). Data in this figure were generated using a database that aims to compile information on school shootings from publicly available sources into a single comprehensive resource. For information on database methodology, see K-12 School Shooting Database: Research Methodology (<https://www.chds.us/ssdb/resources/uploads/2020/09/CHDS-K12-SSDB-Research-Methods-Sept-2020.pdf>). Due to school closures caused by the coronavirus pandemic, caution should be used when comparing 2019–20 data with data from earlier years. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, Naval Postgraduate School, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, K-12 School Shooting Database, retrieved September 4, 2019, from <https://www.chds.us/ssdb/>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 228.12.

School shootings are of high concern to all those interested in the safety of our nation's students. The K-12 SSDB aims to compile information on school shootings from publicly available sources into a single comprehensive database. The SSDB defines "school shootings" as incidents in which a gun is brandished or fired on school property or a bullet hits school property for any reason, regardless of the number of victims, time of day, day of the week, or reason.

Between 2000-01 and 2019-20, the number of school shootings with casualties per year at public and private elementary and secondary schools ranged from 11 to 75.<sup>7</sup> In 2019-20, there were a total of 75 school shootings with casualties, including 27 school shootings with deaths and 48 school shootings with injuries only. There were an additional 37 reported school shootings with no casualties in 2019-20. The majority of the school shootings (including those with and without casualties) in 2019-20 occurred at high schools.<sup>8</sup> Sixty-seven high schools had school shootings in 2019-20, compared with 32 elementary schools, 11 middle or junior high schools, and 2 schools of other types.

Data are also available on the type of situation associated with school shootings (including those with and without casualties) as well as on the location and time period of the shootings. In 2019-20, the most common situations associated with school shootings were escalation of dispute (45 incidents);<sup>9</sup> drive-by (10 incidents);<sup>10</sup> accidental (9 incidents);<sup>11</sup> illegal activity (9 incidents);<sup>12</sup> indiscriminate shooting (6 incidents);<sup>13</sup> and intentional property damage (6 incidents).<sup>14,15</sup> The most common locations associated with school shootings were parking lots (40 incidents); beside or in front of school buildings<sup>16</sup> (25 incidents); football fields, basketball courts, or general fields (19 incidents); and school buses (7 incidents). In terms of when school shootings occurred, 32 incidents occurred during school hours, including 18 incidents when classes were in session, 3 incidents during lunch time, and 11 incidents during dismissal. In 2019-20, another 80 incidents occurred at other times.<sup>17</sup>

Between 2000-01 and 2019-20, the number of casualties per year as a result of school shootings ranged from 15 to 182. In 2019-20, there were 120 casualties (32 deaths and 88 injuries) from school shootings.

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**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> A legal intervention death is defined as a death caused by a law enforcement agent in the course of arresting or attempting to arrest a lawbreaker, suppressing a disturbance, maintaining order, or engaging in another legal action.

<sup>2</sup> In this indicator, the term “at school” is comparable in meaning to the term “school-associated.”

<sup>3</sup> Data are subject to change until interviews with school and law enforcement officials have been completed. The details learned during the interviews can occasionally change the classification of a case.

<sup>4</sup> Also defined as July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Total youth suicides exclude self-inflicted deaths among 5- to 9-year-olds. Total youth suicides include only persons ages 10 and over because determining suicidal intent in younger children can be difficult. For more information, see Crepeau-Hobson, F. (2010). The Psychological Autopsy and Determination of Child Suicides: A Survey of Medical Examiners. *Archives of Suicide Research*, 14(1): 24-34. Retrieved December 29, 2020, from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13811110903479011>.

<sup>6</sup> Single incidents occurring at school with a large number of school-age victims could result in large variations in the number of youth homicides at school between two years. Please use caution when making comparisons over time.

<sup>7</sup> Due to school closures caused by the coronavirus pandemic, caution should be used when comparing 2019-20 data with data from earlier years.

<sup>8</sup> Including other schools ending in grade 12.

<sup>9</sup> Argument or fight between the shooter and victim prior to the shooting.

<sup>10</sup> Shots fired by a person in a vehicle at people or another vehicle on school property.

<sup>11</sup> No intent to fire the weapon (e.g., showing off gun and it went off; gun in backpack went off).

<sup>12</sup> Shots fired during a robbery, sale or exchange of illegal drugs, trespassing, theft of property, or exchange of stolen property.

<sup>13</sup> Targeted at random victims with the intent to kill or injure as many as possible (e.g., fired into a crowd, shot students in the hallway or random classrooms).

<sup>14</sup> Shots fired to cause damage to the school building or vehicles on school property without intent to cause injury.

<sup>15</sup> There were 18 incidents for which there was not enough information available to determine the associated situation.

<sup>16</sup> Includes courtyards.

<sup>17</sup> Includes after school, before school, in the evening, at night, not a school day, school events, the start of school, sport events, and unknown time periods.

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**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 228.10, 228.12, 228.13, and 228.14

**Related indicators and resources:** N/A

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**Glossary:** At school; Elementary school; Homicide; Legal intervention death; Private school; Public school or institution; School shootings (K-12 School Shooting Database); School-associated violent death; Secondary school; Suicide