

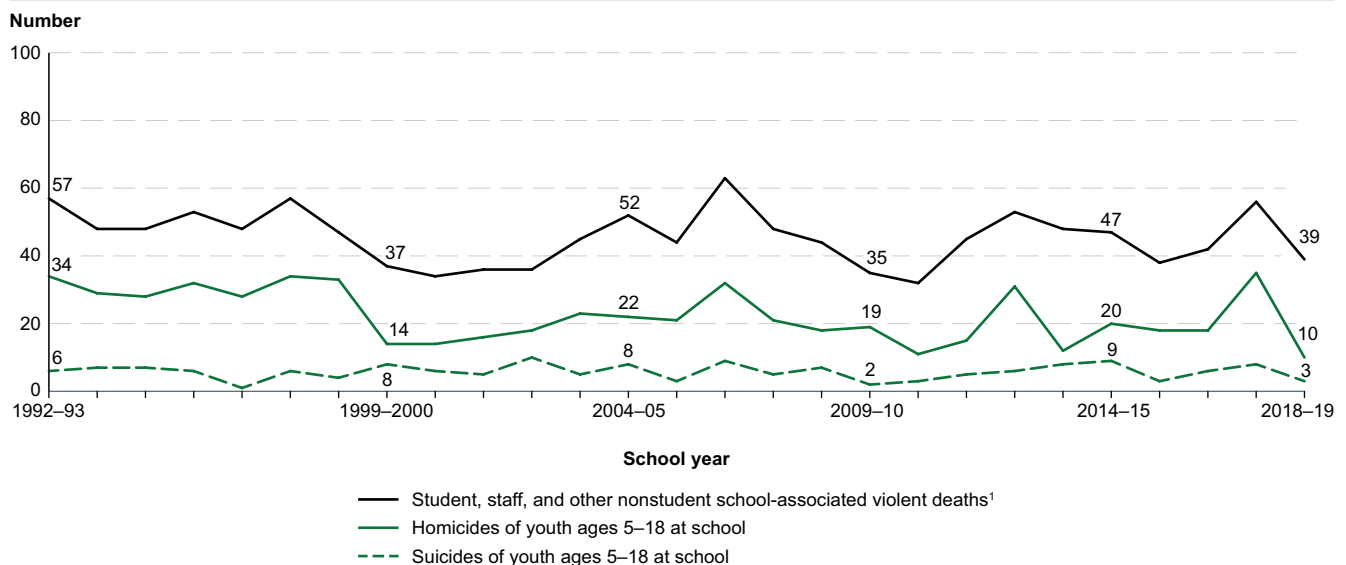
Violent Deaths at School and Away From School and School Shootings

Between 2000–01 and 2020–21, the number of school shootings with casualties per year at public and private elementary and secondary schools ranged from 11 to 93.

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 from the School-Associated Violent Death Surveillance System (SAVD-SS).

It also presents data on total homicides and suicides of youth ages 5–18 from the National Vital Statistics System. This 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 2018–19



¹ 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), 1992–2019 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 2021). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, 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), in which the fatal injury occurred on the campus of a functioning elementary or secondary school in the United States.”¹ 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,² such as students’ parents and community members.

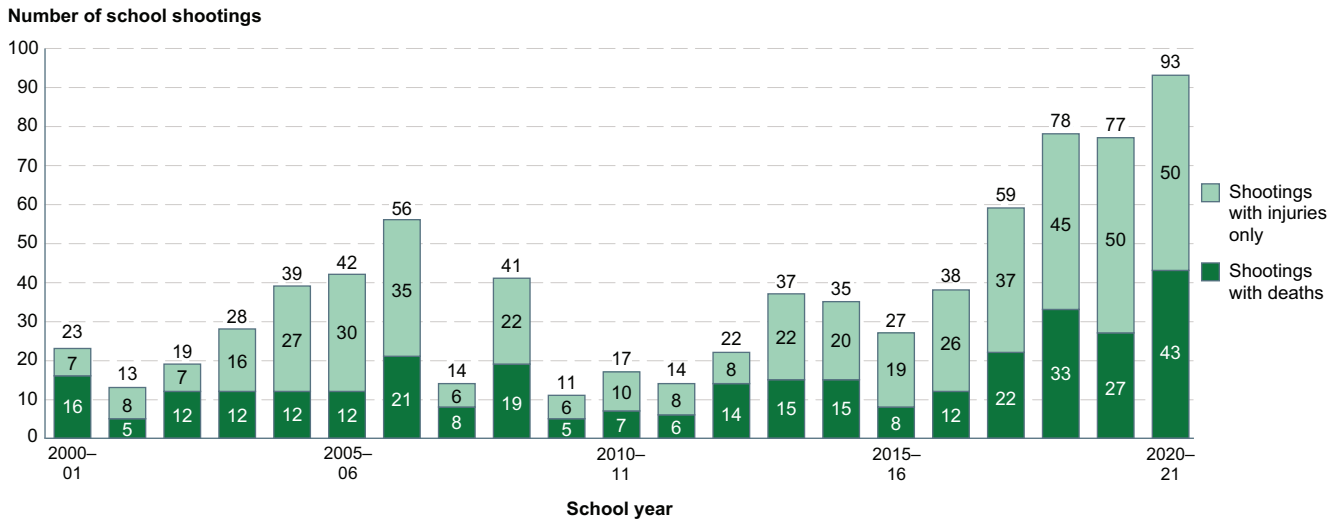
The most recent data released by the SAVD-SS cover the period from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2019. During this period, a total of 39 school-associated violent deaths occurred in the United States, including students, staff, and other nonstudent school-associated victims. Of these 39 school-associated violent deaths, 10 homicides and 3 suicides were of school-age youth (ages 5-18, also referred to as “youth” in this indicator).³ Considering

all persons, there were 29 homicides and 10 suicides. Between 1992-93 (when data collection began) and 2018-19, the number of school-associated violent deaths of all persons fluctuated, ranging from 32 to 63.

During the 2018-19 school year,⁴ a total of 1,508 youth homicides and 2,233 youth suicides⁵ occurred 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 3 percent of the total number of youth homicides between 1992-93 and 2018-19, even though the number of youth homicides at school varied across the years, ranging from 10 to 35.⁶ Between 1992-93 and 2018-19, 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 2. Number of school shootings with casualties at public and private elementary and secondary schools: 2000–01 through 2020–21

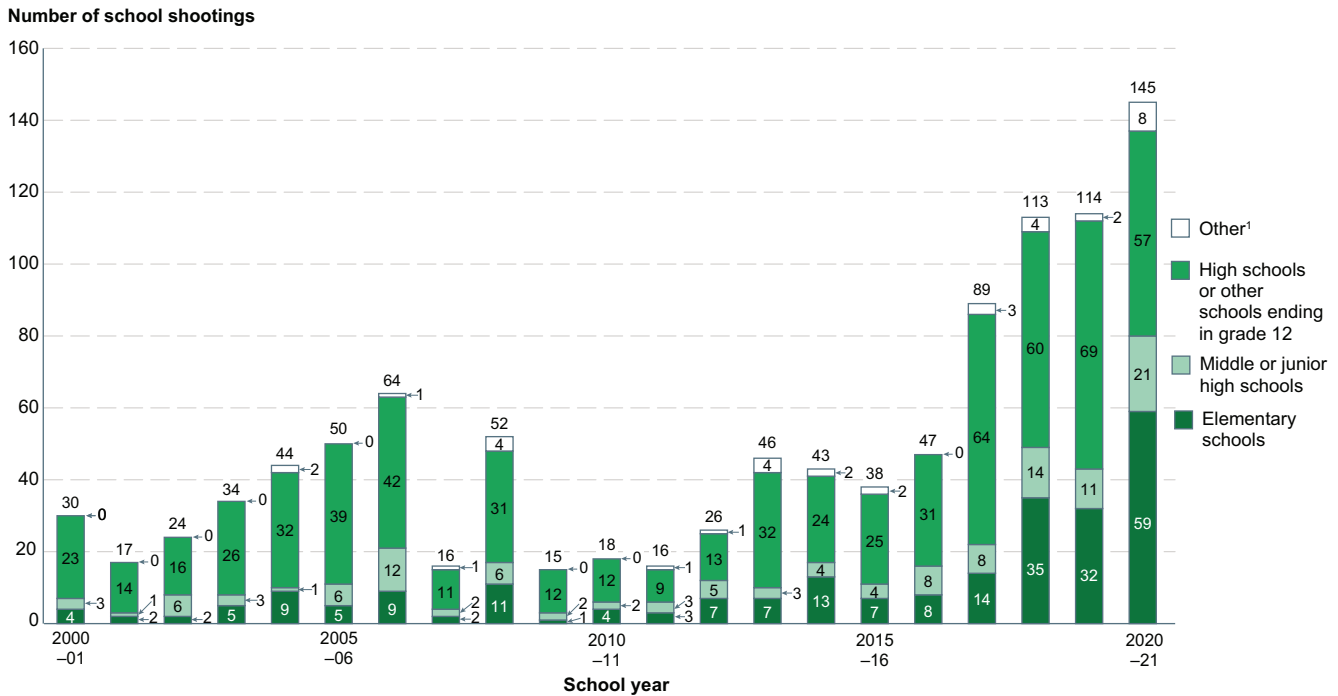


NOTE: “School shootings” include all incidents in which a gun is brandished or fired or a bullet hits school property for any reason, regardless of the number of victims (including zero), time, day of the week, or reason (e.g., planned attack, accidental, domestic violence, gang-related). All data are reported for the school year, defined as July 1 through June 30. 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 and 2020–21 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 16, 2021, from <https://www.chds.us/ssdb/>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, 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. During the coronavirus pandemic, this definition includes shootings that happen on school property during remote instruction.

In 2020-21, the most school shootings with casualties occurred since 2000-01.⁷ Between 2000-01 and 2020-21, the number of school shootings with casualties per year at public and private elementary and secondary schools ranged from 11 to 93. In 2020-21, a total of 93 school shootings with casualties occurred, including 43 school shootings with deaths and 50 school shootings with injuries only. An additional 53 reported school shootings with no casualties occurred in 2020-21 (not shown in the figure), which was also the highest since data collection began in 2000-01.

Figure 3. Number of public and private elementary and secondary schools with shootings, by level of school: 2000–01 through 2020–21



¹ Includes schools for which school-level information was unknown or unspecified as well as those whose school level was "other."
NOTE: Schools that had multiple shootings in a single year are counted only once in that year's total. "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). All data are reported for the school year, defined as July 1 through June 30. 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 and 2020–21 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 16, 2021, from <https://www.chds.us/ssdb/>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 228.12.

2020-21 was the first year since data collection began in which fewer than half of schools that had shootings (including those with and without casualties) were high schools.⁸ In fact, more elementary schools (59) than high schools (57) had shootings in 2020-21. An additional 21 middle or junior high schools and 8 schools of other types also had school shootings.

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 2020-21, the most common known situations associated with school shootings were escalation of dispute (23 incidents);⁹ drive-by (18 incidents);¹⁰ illegal activity (15 incidents);¹¹ and intentional property damage (11 incidents).¹² For more than a third of school shootings (52 incidents) in 2020-21, the situation associated with

the shooting was unknown. The most common locations associated with school shootings were parking lots (51 incidents), beside or in front of school buildings¹³ (40 incidents), football fields, basketball courts, or general fields (15 incidents), and school buses (15 incidents). In terms of when school shootings occurred, there were 33 incidents when morning or afternoon classes were in session, 4 incidents during lunchtime, 23 incidents after or before school or during dismissal,¹⁴ and 7 incidents during a school or sport event. In 2020-21, more than half of shootings (79 incidents) occurred outside school hours.¹⁵

Between 2000-01 and 2020-21, the number of casualties per year as a result of school shootings ranged from 15 to 185. In 2020-21, there were 118 casualties (46 deaths and 72 injuries) from school shootings.

Endnotes:

¹ 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.

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

³ 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.

⁴ Also defined as July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2019.

⁵ 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/10.1080/1381110903479011>.

⁶ 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.

⁷ Due to school closures caused by the coronavirus pandemic, caution should be used when comparing 2019-20 and 2020-21 data with data from earlier years.

⁸ Including other schools ending in grade 12.

⁹ Argument or fight between the shooter and victim prior to the shooting.

¹⁰ Shots were fired by a person in a vehicle at people or another vehicle on school property.

¹¹ Shots were fired during a robbery, sale or exchange of illegal drugs, trespassing, theft of property, or exchange of stolen property.

¹² Shots were fired to cause damage to the school building or vehicles on school property without intent to cause injury.

¹³ Includes courtyards.

¹⁴ Includes after school, before school, dismissal, and the start of school.

¹⁵ Includes at night, in the evening, and not a school day. Also includes unknown periods.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 228.10, 228.12, 228.13, and 228.14

Related indicators and resources: N/A

Glossary: At 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