

Study shows rapid rise in mass school shootings in the US

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More people have died or been injured in mass school shootings in the

US in the past 18 years than in the entire 20th century. In a new study published in Springer's *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, researchers have reviewed the history of mass school shootings in the US and found some alarming trends. Lead author Antonis Katsiyannis of Clemson University in the US, together with his colleagues, found the recent killing of 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida is not an isolated occurrence, but part of a deadly epidemic that needs to be addressed.

A [shooting](#) is defined as a "mass shooting" when four or more people are killed (excluding the shooter). Sporadic [school](#) shootings have occurred at various points in the history of the US. For example, in 1940 a junior high school principal killed six adults including the school's district business manager. No similar mass shootings occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. However, school shootings have been steadily increasing since 1979. Overall, the death toll from mass school shootings was 12 in the 1980s and 36 in the 1990s.

During the 20th century, mass school shootings killed 55 people and injured 260 others at schools especially in America's Western region. Most of the 25 shooters involved were white males who acted alone, and only nine were diagnosed as suffering from mental illnesses at the time. Sixty percent of shooters were between 11 and 18 years old.

Since the start of the 21st century there have already been 13 incidents involving lone shooters; they have killed 66 people and injured 81 others.

"In less than 18 years, we have already seen more deaths related to [school shootings](#) than in the whole 20th century. One alarming trend is that the overwhelming majority of 21st-century shooters were adolescents, suggesting that it is now easier for them to access guns, and that they more frequently suffer from [mental health issues](#) or limited

conflict resolution skills," says Katsiyannis.

The authors explain that such violence can be mitigated through deliberate and sensible policy and legislative actions. These include expanded background checks of potential gun owners, and a ban on assault weapons. Mental health issues among adolescent students and adults should also be addressed more thoroughly. School personnel should also implement tiered models of support and school-based mental health services to support students' social, emotional, and behavioral well-being and prevent school violence.

"Preventative efforts not only require policy and legislative action but increased and targeted funding across federal, state, local and private sectors," adds Katsiyannis.

More information: Antonis Katsiyannis et al, Historical Examination of United States Intentional Mass School Shootings in the 20th and 21st Centuries: Implications for Students, Schools, and Society, *Journal of Child and Family Studies* (2018). [DOI: 10.1007/s10826-018-1096-2](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-018-1096-2)

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