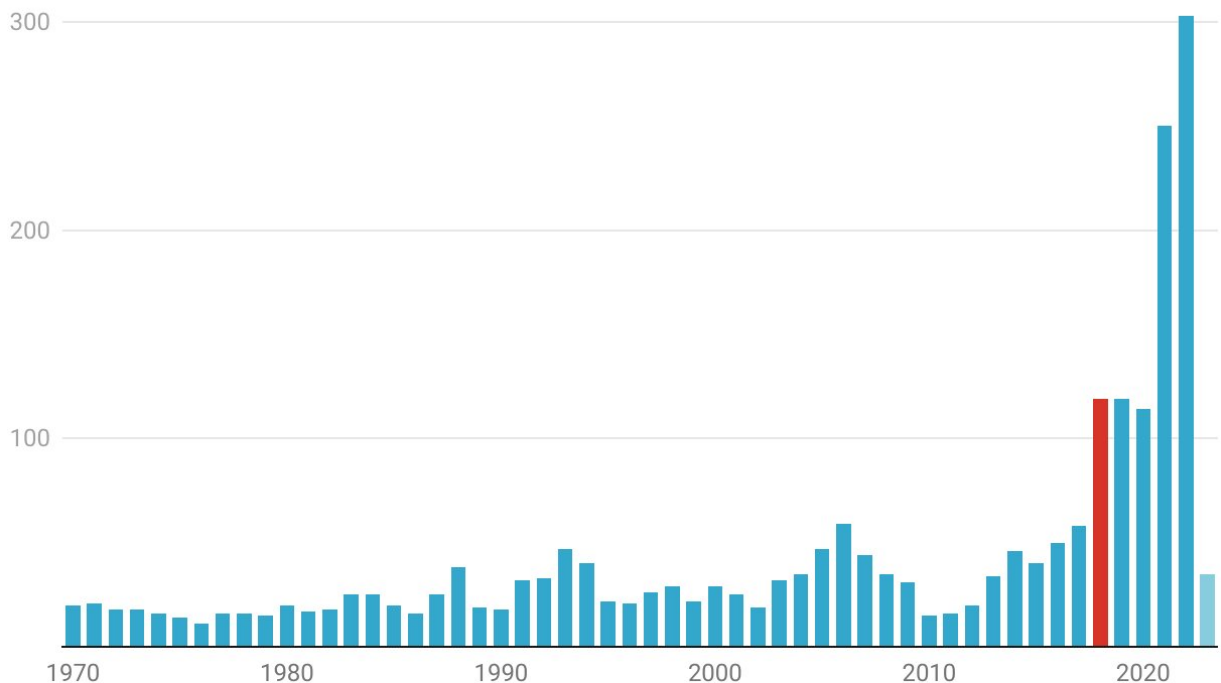


Five years after Parkland, school shootings have only become deadlier and more common, say criminologists

February 10 2023, by David Riedman, James Densley and Jillian Peterson

Since 2018, school shootings have become more common

The mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, was one of 119 school shootings in **2018**. In that year, and every year since, there have been more school shootings than in any year before 2018.



Total for 2023 is through Feb. 2.

Chart: The Conversation, CC-BY-ND • Source: David Riedman, K-12 School Shooting Database • Created with Datawrapper

Credit: The Conversation

In the aftermath of the Parkland, Florida, high school shooting on Valentine's Day 2018, many Americans hoped that, finally, something would be done to address the problem of gun violence in the nation's schools.

Despite the outpouring of grief and calls for action that followed the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, school shootings continue to occur with [alarming frequency](#). While progress has been made in some areas, such as [increased funding](#) for school security and [mental health resources](#), there is still much work to be done to ensure the safety and well-being of students and educators in schools across the country.

On Jan. 6, 2023, in Newport News, Virginia, a [6-year-old student is alleged](#) to have intentionally shot his teacher. He is among the youngest school shooting perpetrators dating back to 1970.

And as criminologists who track any time [a gun is fired at a K-12 school](#), including deliberate attacks, suicides, accidental shootings, gang-related violence and shootings at after-hours school events, we know this case is only the tip of the iceberg.

School shootings got more common, not rarer, after Parkland

Since Parkland, there have been [over 900 shootings](#) in K-12 school settings according to our data. Thirty-two were indiscriminate attacks apparently driven by the intent to kill as many people as possible, including mass casualty events at [Robb Elementary School](#) in Uvalde, Texas, in May 2022 and at [Oxford High School](#), in Oxford, Michigan, in

November 2021.

School gun violence takes many forms. In January 2023, five students were wounded during [shootings at high school basketball games](#) in five different states. These shootings at school games are a "[quiet phenomenon](#)" that gets little national attention. Based on our data on more than [260 shootings at sports events](#), most schools do not have a plan for them, such as what an announcer should say or how people can evacuate.

Another emerging challenge for school leaders is the 264 fights in five years that escalated into shootings. Unlike any planned attacks, these cases were [simple disputes that turned deadly](#) because students were armed at school.

There were a record 302 shootings on school property in 2022. In April, one month before Uvalde, a sniper fired hundreds of shots during dismissal at the [Edmund Burke School](#) in Washington, D.C. Then, in October, at Central Visual Performing Arts High School in south St. Louis, a 19-year-old armed with a semi-automatic rifle and hundreds of rounds of ammunition shot and [killed a teacher and a 15-year-old student, and injured seven other people](#).

Among the 250 shootings at schools in 2021, a 12-year-old girl, who wrote plans to target scores of her [Rigby, Idaho](#), middle school classmates, wounded three students before a heroic teacher disarmed her in the hallway.

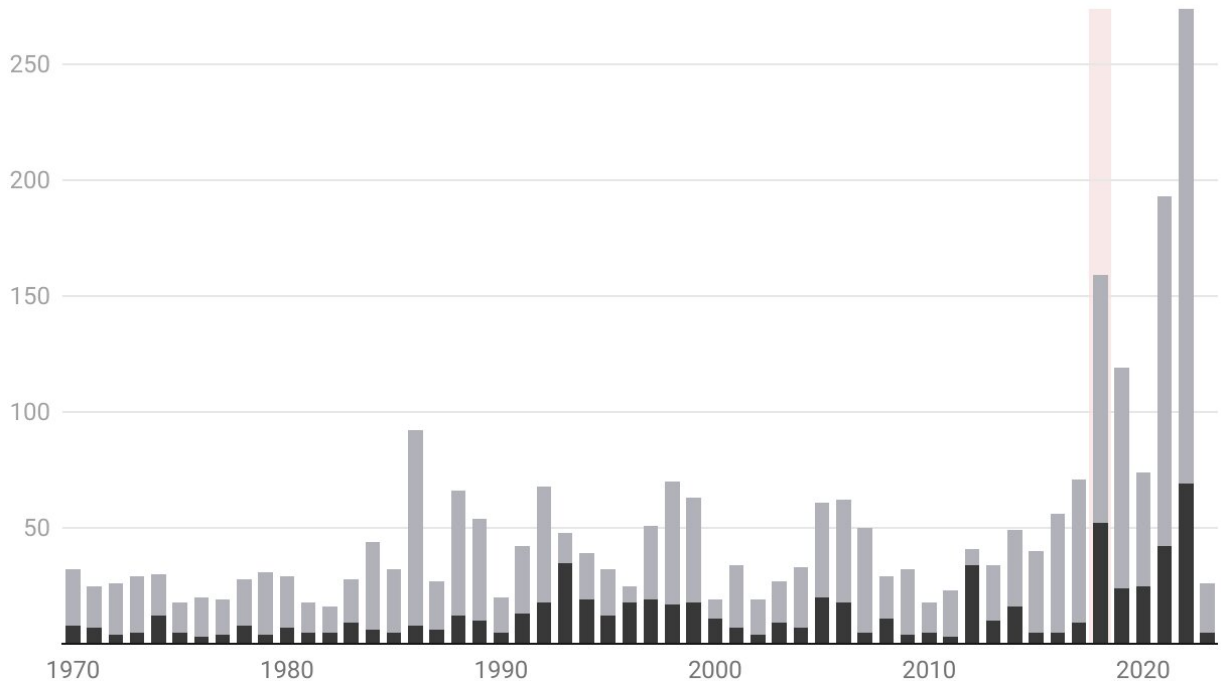
Owing to the pandemic and widespread school closures, in 2020 there were no planned attacks at schools for the [first time since 1981](#). But in 2019, a [student](#) shot five classmates, killing two, before dying by suicide between classes at [Saugus High](#) in Santa Clarita, California. And two students committed a coordinated attack that killed one student and

injured eight others at the [STEM School](#) in Highland Ranch, Colorado.

In total, since Parkland, 198 people have been killed, including 84 students, teachers and school staff, and another 637 people wounded in school shootings.

Since Parkland, school shootings have killed 198 people

The mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, contributed to **2018** becoming the year with the highest number of **deaths** and **woundings** in school shootings since at least 1970. Three of the four full years since 2018 have also had combined shooting casualties higher than in any year from 1970 to 2018.



Total for 2023 is through Feb. 2.

Chart: The Conversation, CC-BY-ND • Source: David Riedman, K-12 School Shooting Database • Created with Datawrapper

Credit: The Conversation

Equipment is not prevention

Since Parkland, [school safety has been a priority](#) for parents and policymakers, but efforts to [physically fortify schools](#) to keep intruders at bay often are detached from the reality that most school shooters are current or former students of the schools they target.

Having been trained in [lockdown procedures since kindergarten](#), students know exactly how a school will respond to an active shooter and even plan for it; they navigate security daily. At Uvalde, the shooter was a former student who [entered through a back door](#). The shooter in St. Louis was a former student who broke a side window to open a locked door.

New equipment designed to protect students from shooters can create a false sense of security and make classrooms feel [more like prisons](#) than places of learning. Following the attack in Uvalde, Texas legislators approved \$110 million for school safety, but nearly half of the money went to [new ballistic shields](#) for school police officers. These shields do not prevent school shootings, or aid during one, because police are [trained to immediately run to the shooter](#), not to their office to get a shield.

Some technologies could even inadvertently endanger students. Most [classroom barricades violate the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) and other federal codes designed to help people evacuate from fires and other dangerous situations. And much like [body armor can make a mass shooter harder to stop](#), so too, potentially, could a school's new bulletproof furniture.

Preventing the next Parkland

Just three weeks before Parkland, on Jan. 23, 2018, 20 students were shot, two fatally, in a planned attack at [Marshall County High](#) in Benton, Kentucky. Three months after Parkland, on May 18, 2018, 10 people

were killed and 13 wounded at [Santa Fe High School](#) in Santa Fe, Texas. Despite [billions spent](#) on security upgrades, schools are stuck in a perpetual cycle of gun violence. If [current trends](#) hold, there will be another 1,000 school shootings over the next five years.

But [research shows](#) that school shootings are not inevitable. They are preventable.

Nearly all school shooters exhibit [warning signs](#) before pulling the trigger, from changes in their behavior to verbal or written threats. From [Parkland](#) to [Uvalde](#), these warnings were not recognized or reported until it was too late. Schools must think beyond metal detectors, security cameras and other [high-tech gadgets and gizmos](#) to invest in multidisciplinary [behavioral intervention and threat assessment](#) systems to respond to warning signs. There is federal money and resources available to do this thanks to the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, passed in the wake of Uvalde in the summer of 2022.

Almost all shootings by children and teens can be prevented by safe storage of firearms and accountability for adult gun owners. When a weapon is stored separately from its ammunition, locked and unloaded, it is much more difficult for someone to quickly use it in a violent attack. While the family [claims the gun was locked](#), safe and separate storage could have prevented a 6-year-old from shooting his teacher. It also could have prevented thousands of guns from being stolen and [diverted into illegal markets](#).

Five years after Parkland, [school shootings](#) have become more frequent and deadly. The status quo is not working. Instead of accepting that more young lives will be lost and that the best schools and police can do is lock down and rehearse emergency responses, we believe school safety must shift to focus on upstream prevention.

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Provided by The Conversation

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