

# TEN YEARS OF MASS SHOOTINGS IN THE UNITED STATES: AN EVERYTOWN FOR GUN SAFETY SUPPORT FUND ANALYSIS

A note on the methodological approach to compiling “Ten Years of Mass Shootings in the United States: An Everytown For Gun Safety Support Fund Analysis.”

## METHODOLOGY

Everytown defines a mass shooting as an incident in which four or more people are killed with a firearm, excluding the perpetrator.

### DEFINING A MASS SHOOTING

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The objective of Everytown’s mass shooting investigation is to track, examine, and analyze the nature of multi-victim shootings in the United States, regardless of the circumstances of the crime. As such, this analysis includes mass shooting incidents that occur in both public and private spaces, have any number of shooters, and result from a myriad of motives, such as group violence, domestic violence, or terrorist violence.

Everytown’s definition of mass shootings was originally derived from the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s definition of mass murder, which was not exclusive to mass murders carried out with a firearm.<sup>1</sup> In 2012, Congress passed federal legislation, the Investigative Assistance for Violent Crimes Act of 2012,<sup>2</sup> which lowered the FBI’s threshold for mass murder to three or more people killed. Despite the law, there remains no consensus across organizations nor academics, nor has the government weighed in on a definition of mass shootings specifically.

### MASS SHOOTING DEFINITIONS BY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

| Source | Years | Definition | 2018 incident count |
|--------|-------|------------|---------------------|
|--------|-------|------------|---------------------|

|   |                   |   |                         |
|---|-------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Everytown<br>Mass Shootings in the<br>United States             | 2009 -<br>present | 4+ killed, excluding the shooter  | 19                      |
| Mother Jones<br><a href="#">US Mass Shootings</a>               | 1982 -<br>present | 3+ killed (4+ before 2013), excluding the shooter. Shootings that occurred in a public place only, excluding “conventionally motivated crimes” such as gang violence and armed robbery. | 12                      |
| Gun Violence Archive<br><a href="#">Mass Shooting Incidents</a> | 2014 -<br>present | 4+ shot and injured or killed, excluding the shooter  | 337                     |
| <a href="#">Mass Shooting Tracker</a>                           | 2013 -<br>present | 4+ shot and injured or killed, including the shooter  | 426                     |
| Stanford<br><a href="#">Mass Shootings in America</a>           | 1966 -<br>2016    | 3+ shot an injured or killed, excluding the shooter. Excludes gang-, drug-, and organized crime-related shootings.  | Ceased tracking in 2016 |
| The Violence Project<br><a href="#">Mass Shooter Database</a>   | 1966 -<br>2018    | 4+ shot and killed, excluding the shooter. Shootings must have occurred at least partially in a public place and are not attributable to any underlying criminal activity               | Awaiting publication    |
| USA Today<br><a href="#">Behind the Bloodshed</a>               | 2006 -<br>2017    | 4+ killed, excluding the perpetrator. Not exclusive to firearm mass killings.   | Does not include 2018   |

## DATA COLLECTION

Between 2009 and 2018, 194 mass shooting incidents were identified by Everytown researchers primarily through media reports. Incidents are tracked as they occur and revisited for accuracy as additional information becomes available. To supplement publicly available resources, researchers also requested police and court records for every mass shooting incident and received back 108 records relevant to the analysis in this report. The information contained in these records includes, but is not limited to, incident reports, investigative reports, available court records, and historical criminal records concerning the perpetrators of these incidents.

Everytown researchers track characteristics of each incident such as the types of firearms used and their origin, warning signs exhibited by the perpetrators, and the relationship between the perpetrator and the victims.

## KEY DEFINITIONS

Below are Everytown’s definitions for key variables used in this analysis.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Children and teens                                 | Ages 0 to 19  |
| Domestic violence-related mass shooting            | An incident where the perpetrator shot (either fatally or non-fatally) a current or former intimate partner or family member  |
| Death and injury counts                            | In some mass shootings, people are killed or wounded by a weapon other than a firearm, such as a knife, or are wounded while fleeing the scene. For the purpose of this analysis, the death and injury counts included reflect only those inflicted by a gunshot wound.   |
| Mass shooting                                      | An incident in which four or more people, not including the shooter, are killed with a firearm  |
| Prohibited person                                  | Federal and state laws prohibit people from possessing firearms for a number of reasons, including felony convictions, domestic violence misdemeanor convictions, final domestic violence restraining orders, and having been adjudicated mentally ill by a court of law, among other reasons.  |
| Warning sign                                       | Warning signs that would qualify in this analysis include any of the following, if observed within three years of the shooting: a recent threat of violence, act of violence or attempted act of violence towards self or others; a conviction for certain firearms offenses (including unlawful and reckless use, display or brandishing); a violation of a protective order; evidence of ongoing abuse of controlled substances or alcohol. |
| <b>GUN HARDWARE</b>                                |   |
| Assault weapon                                     | Everytown defines assault weapon to include firearms that would be classified as assault weapons under state laws or in recent legislation, including particular models such as the AR-15 and AK-47, as well as firearms with specific features, such as rifles or shotguns with a pistol grip, flash suppressor, or removable stock, or handguns with a second grip or stabilizing brace. This category excludes manual-action firearms.     |
| High-capacity magazine (HCMs)                      | A high-capacity magazine indicates the presence of an ammunition feeding device that is capable of holding, or which can be readily converted to accept, more than 10 rounds of ammunition.   |
| Mass shootings that "involved" a specific gun type | Several mass shootings involved multiple types of guns—for example, both a handgun and an assault weapon. Mass shootings were included in the count of each weapon type as long as at least one of the guns was of that type.   |
| <b>SHOOTING LOCATIONS</b>                          |   |
| Place of business                                  | Shooting occurred at a place of business, such as a restaurant or gas   |

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
|              | station, regardless of whether any employees were targeted, wounded, or killed   |
| Public place | Shooting occurred entirely in public or occurred both in a private home and in a public space  |
| School       | Shooting occurred at least partially on school grounds, including campuses that serve K-12 students as well as colleges and universities |

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Serial Murder: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives for Investigators," 2005. <http://bit.ly/1hWdFVU>.

<sup>2</sup> Codified at 6 USCS § 455(d)(2)(a).

