A PLAIN-ENGLISH FACT CHECK

GUNS, CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN AMERICA

By the Numbers, 2000 to 2026



GUN DEATHS | MASS SHOOTINGS | SELF-DEFENSE | POLICE | PRISONS

Guns, Crime, Police and Prisons, Checked Against the Record

ANDREW DOMINGUEZ

TRINFINITY Enterprises

GUNS, CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN AMERICA

By the Numbers, 2000 to 2026

What the records show about gun deaths, violent crime, mass shootings, self-defense, police, prisons, and the claims people make about all of it

Andrew Dominguez

Fact Check Series

Trinfinity Enterprises

Guns, Crime and Punishment in America: By the Numbers, 2000 to 2026

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The information in this book stops at November 12, 2026. Current figures come from the newest official reports available on that date, and each one carries the date of its source. Crime and death statistics are revised as late reports come in, so check the sources named in the footnotes for the latest figures.

This book is for general information only. It is not legal advice. Self-defense law differs from state to state and changes often. Talk with a qualified attorney about your own situation.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call or text 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, any time of day.

Questions and corrections: andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com

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Introduction: How to Read This Book

The information in this book stops at November 12, 2026.

From 2000 through 2025, about 938,000 people died from gunshot wounds in the United States. That count comes from the death certificates collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the 2025 part of it is still provisional.[1] Most people who hear a number like that assume it is mostly murder. It is not. About 59 out of every 100 of those deaths were suicides. About 37 out of every 100 were homicides. The rest were accidents, police shootings and deaths whose cause could not be determined.

That one fact shows why I wrote this book. Almost everything most of us hear about guns and crime comes from a headline, a speech, a cable news segment or a post on social media. Some of it is true. Some of it is half true. Some of it is flatly wrong. And the same number is often told one way by one side and the opposite way by the other. I wanted one place where a regular reader could see the whole picture for the 26 years from 2000 to 2026, with every number tied to a source they can open and check.

This book does not take a side in the gun debate. It does not grade states on their gun laws or tell you what laws to support. It lays out what the records show, side by side, and lets you decide what they mean.

What this book covers

The book has ten parts.

- **Part One** gives the big picture: how many people have died, where the numbers come from, and whether violence in America has really gone up or only seems to have.
- **Part Two** covers guns and crime: gun murders, murders with other weapons, all violent crime (not just killings), the race of victims and offenders, and where crime guns come from.
- **Part Three** covers gun suicide, accidental shootings and the deaths of children and teens.
- **Part Four** covers mass shootings: the competing definitions, the full record since 2000, and what is known about the shooters, including mental health, psychiatric drugs, gender identity, sexual orientation and politics. It also covers school shootings.
- **Part Five** covers guns for protection: who owns guns and why, defensive gun use, and stand-your-ground laws.
- **Part Six** covers police: people shot and killed by police, and officers killed and assaulted.
- **Part Seven** covers punishment: how many people are in prison and jail, how that number rose and fell, what people are locked up for, and what officials say caused the drop after 2009.

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[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Trace, "Gun death rate increased in 2017, CDC data shows (The Rounds)", December 2018. https://www.thetrace.org/rounds/gun-death-rate-2017-increase-cdc-suicide. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Trace, "Gun deaths held steady in 2018, CDC data shows", February 2020. https://thetrace.org/2020/02/gun-deaths-suicide-cdc-data-2018. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

- **Part Eight** compares states, regions and other countries, looks at guns and domestic violence, and covers gun laws: what the Supreme Court decided, what research says about specific laws, and what Americans want.
- **Part Nine** tests 31 common claims and gives each one a verdict.
- **Part Ten** shows where things stand on November 12, 2026, and lists what nobody knows.

At the back you will find every public mass shooting since 2000 in one table, a list of state self-defense laws, a glossary, a guide to checking these numbers yourself, a timeline, a year-by-year summary, state-by-state gun death rates, gun death rates by race and sex, and the full list of sources.

What this book does not do

This book does not tell you what to think about guns, crime or prisons. It does not recommend a law. When people disagree about what the facts mean, I tell you who says what and where they said it.

It is not legal advice. If you own a gun for protection, learn your own state's law from a qualified attorney or your state's official sources.

It also does not name mass shooters in the text. Shooters appear only by the name of the event, such as "Las Vegas Strip massacre," which is how the main databases list them. Their names add nothing to the numbers.

The date the information stops at

Crime numbers come out late and get revised. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) releases each year's national crime figures the following summer or fall. The CDC's final death counts take about a year, and its newest figures are "provisional," meaning they will change a little as late death certificates come in.

The cutoff for this book is **November 12, 2026**. On that date the newest full year for most data was 2024 or 2025. You will see the year of every figure in the text, in table titles and in chart titles. If a source has a newer edition by the time you read this, the footnotes will lead you to it.

Three kinds of numbers

Crime and death numbers come in three main forms. I always tell you which one I am using.

1. **Counts.** How many people died or how many crimes were reported. Counts are easy to understand, but the country's population grew a great deal between 2000 and 2025, so a bigger count does not always mean more danger.
2. **Rates.** The count divided by the population, usually shown "per 100,000 people." Rates let you compare years, states and groups of different sizes. When a source "age-adjusts" a rate, it removes the effect of one group being older or younger than another.
3. **Shares.** What part of a total something makes up, such as "guns were used in 76 out of every 100 homicides."

Where the facts come from

Every factual sentence, table or chart in this book traces back to a source in a footnote. Each footnote gives the source's title, its author or agency, its date, a link and the date I opened it. To keep pages readable, I put one footnote at the end of a paragraph or table, listing every source used in it.

I used sources in this order of preference:

Tier	What it includes	Examples
1. Primary and official	The government's own records and data	CDC death data, FBI crime reports, Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) surveys and prison counts, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) reports, Secret Service studies
2. Nonpartisan analysis	Research groups that do not lobby for a side	Government Accountability Office (GAO), RAND Corporation, Pew Research Center, Gallup, National Conference of State Legislatures
3. Scholarly	Peer-reviewed research and university databases	Medical and criminology journals, The Violence Project, the Small Arms Survey
4. Journalism, data projects and fact-checks	News databases and fact-checks, used to point back to primary sources	Gun Violence Archive, Mother Jones, The Washington Post, Associated Press, FactCheck.org
5. Advocacy groups	Groups that argue a side	Used only to show what a side argues or where no neutral count exists, always labeled

I do not use social media posts, chain emails, forums, video channels or anonymous web pages as evidence. When a claim spread that way, I may describe it and then check it against real records.

Two of the most-used sources in this book, the Gun Violence Archive and the Mother Jones mass shooting database, are run by private groups, not the government. I use them because the federal government does not keep a full count of mass shootings. In the words of the Gun Violence Archive, "The FBI does not define Mass Shooting in any form."[2] I explain how each one counts and where they differ.

Facts, interpretations and unknowns

I keep three kinds of statements apart.

- **Confirmed facts** are things the records show, such as the number of gun deaths in 2024.

[2] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

- **Interpretations** are what someone makes of the facts, such as whether a law caused a change. When I give one, I say whose interpretation it is.
- **Unknowns** are things the records don't settle. When I could not confirm something, I mark it **[Not verified]** and say what I searched.

Some of the questions people most want answered are exactly the ones the government does not track. The FBI and CDC do not record a killer's sexual orientation, gender identity, political views or prescription drugs. What we know about those things comes from private databases built from news stories, court files and police reports. I tell you, every time, how many cases had no information at all.

The four verdicts

In Part Nine, I test 31 common claims. I use only four verdicts, the same ones used in every book in this series:

Verdict	Meaning
True	Primary sources confirm it as usually stated.
Partly true	There is a real fact underneath, but the usual version leaves out or twists something important. I say exactly which part is true.
False (debunked)	Primary sources contradict it.
Inconclusive	The evidence is not enough to say either way, or the research disagrees. I say what would settle it.

A word about fairness

Gun violence touches race, politics, religion, mental illness and the Constitution. People on every side have real reasons for what they believe. When the facts favor one side on a question, I say so plainly. When they favor the other side on the next question, I say that just as plainly. You will find facts in here that make gun-control supporters uncomfortable and facts that make gun-rights supporters uncomfortable. That is what happens when you follow the records instead of a script.

A note on words: I use "homicide" for any killing of one person by another, which is how the CDC counts death certificates. Homicide includes murder, manslaughter and some self-defense killings. I use "murder" when the source is the FBI, which counts murder and nonnegligent manslaughter as crimes reported by police. The two numbers are close but never the same.

Part One: The Big Picture

Chapter 1: 26 Years of Gun Deaths

Start with the plainest question: how many Americans have died by gunfire since 2000, and how did they die?

The CDC counts every death certificate in the country. Each certificate records the cause of death and the "intent," meaning whether the death was a suicide, a homicide, an accident, a police shooting (the CDC calls this "legal intervention") or undetermined. Those records give the most complete count of gun deaths that exists.[3]

Here is the yearly count.

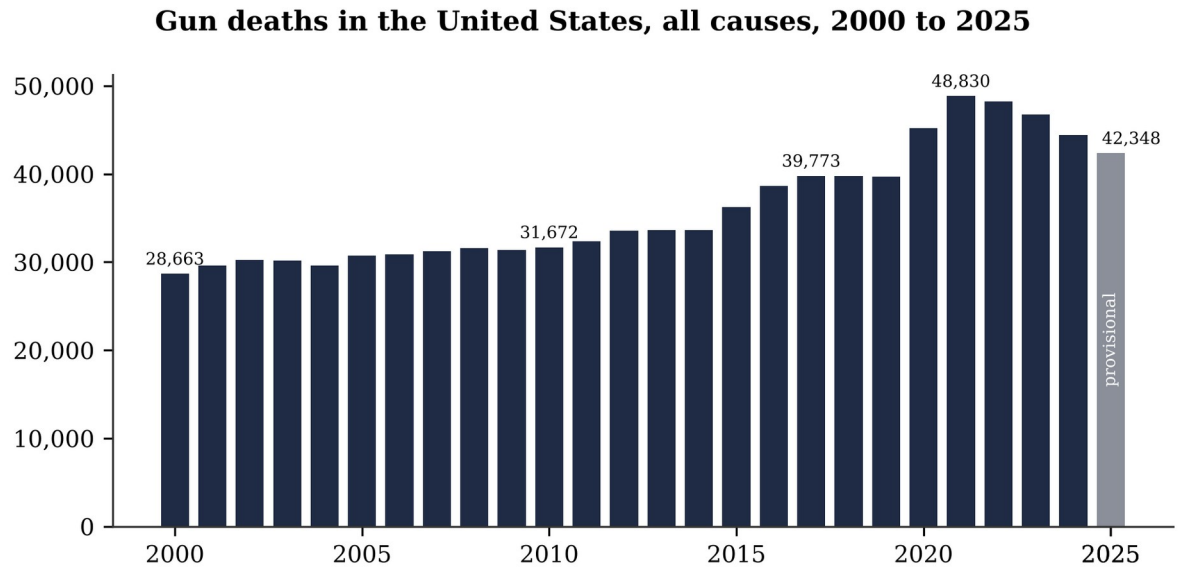
Year	All gun deaths	Gun suicides	Gun homicides	All other gun deaths
2000	28,663	16,586	10,801	1,276
2001	29,573	16,869	11,348	1,356
2002	30,242	17,108	11,829	1,305
2003	30,136	16,907	11,920	1,309
2004	29,569	16,750	11,624	1,195
2005	30,694	17,002	12,352	1,340
2006	30,896	16,883	12,791	1,222
2007	31,224	17,352	12,632	1,240
2008	31,593	18,223	12,179	1,191
2009	31,347	18,735	11,493	1,119
2010	31,672	19,392	11,078	1,202
2011	32,351	19,990	11,068	1,293
2012	33,563	20,666	11,622	1,275
2013	33,636	21,175	11,208	1,253

[3] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Year	All gun deaths	Gun suicides	Gun homicides	All other gun deaths
2014	33,594	21,386	11,008	1,200
2015	36,252	22,018	12,979	1,255
2016	38,658	22,938	14,415	1,305
2017	39,773	23,854	14,542	1,377
2018	39,740	24,432	13,958	1,350
2019	39,707	23,941	14,414	1,352
2020	45,222	24,292	19,384	1,546
2021	48,830	26,328	20,958	1,544
2022	48,204	27,032	19,651	1,521
2023	46,728	27,300	17,927	1,501
2024	44,447	27,593	15,364	1,490
2025 (provisional)	42,348	28,060	12,857	1,431
Total, 2000-2025	**938,662**	**552,812**	**351,402**	**34,448**

"All other" is the total minus suicides and homicides. It covers accidents, police shootings and deaths of undetermined intent. The totals for 2017 and 2018 come from The Trace's report of the CDC's final counts, because the CDC data sets I used skip those two years; the 2025 row is provisional and will change slightly.[4]

[4] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Pew Research Center, "Gun suicides in the U.S. have increased, but gun homicides have fallen since 2021 (chart data from CDC)", April 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/chart/gun-suicides-have-increased-in-the-u-s-in-recent-years-but-gun-murders-have-fallen-since-2021/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Trace, "Gun death rate increased in 2017, CDC data shows (The Rounds)", December 2018. https://www.thetrace.org/rounds/gun-death-rate-2017-increase-cdc-suicide. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Trace, "Gun deaths held steady in 2018, CDC data shows", February 2020. https://thetrace.org/2020/02/gun-deaths-suicide-cdc-data-2018. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Gun deaths in the United States, all causes, 2000 to 2025

Three things stand out.

First, most gun deaths are suicides. Over the 26 years, suicides were 552,812 of 938,662 gun deaths, or about 59 out of every 100. Homicides were about 37 out of every 100. In every single year from 2000 to 2025, more Americans used a gun to kill themselves than were killed by someone else with a gun. Part Three covers suicide in detail.

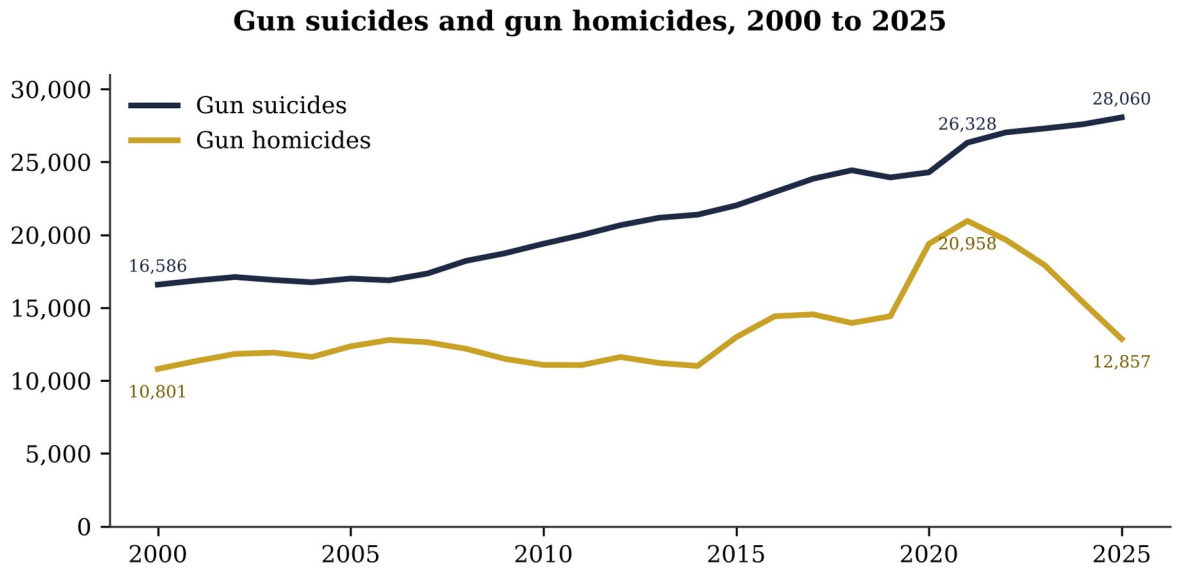
Second, the total climbed for most of the period, jumped in 2020 and has fallen since 2021. Gun deaths rose slowly from about 29,000 a year in the early 2000s to about 39,700 by 2017-2019. Then they leaped to 45,222 in 2020 and peaked at 48,830 in 2021, the highest count on record. Since then they have fallen four years in a row, to a provisional 42,348 in 2025.[5]

Third, the two big parts moved differently. Gun suicides rose almost every year, from 16,586 in 2000 to a record 27,593 in 2024 and a provisional 28,060 in 2025. Gun homicides were fairly flat through 2014, rose in 2015 and 2016, spiked in 2020 and 2021, and then dropped steeply. The provisional 2025 count of 12,857 gun homicides is the lowest since 2014.[6]

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[5] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[6] Pew Research Center, "Gun suicides in the U.S. have increased, but gun homicides have fallen since 2021 (chart data from CDC)", April 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/chart/gun-suicides-have-increased-in-the-u-s-in-recent-years-but-gun-murders-have-fallen-since-2021/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: CDC data as charted by Pew Research Center (2000-2024); CDC Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence dataset (2025, provisional).

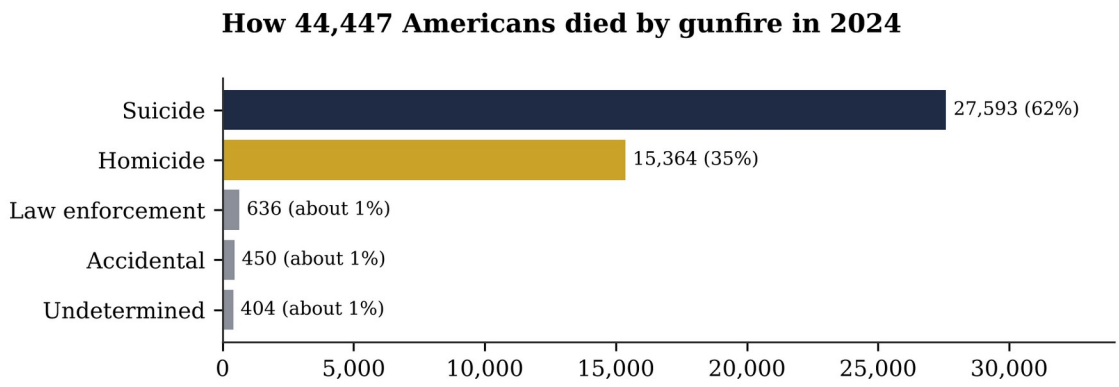
Gun suicides and gun homicides, 2000 to 2025

How 44,447 people died in 2024

The most recent year with final CDC numbers is 2024. Pew Research Center broke down that year's 44,447 gun deaths this way:[7]

How they died, 2024	Deaths	Share
Suicide	27,593	62%
Homicide	15,364	35%
Police shootings ("legal intervention")	636	1.4%
Accidents	450	1.0%
Undetermined	404	0.9%

[7] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



How 44,447 Americans died by gunfire in 2024

Pew also pointed out that 2024's total was the fifth-highest since 1968, but that the gun death rate, adjusted for population and age, was 12.8 per 100,000 people. That is well below the peak of 16.3 per 100,000 in 1974. The gun suicide rate in 2024, 7.6 per 100,000, was just under the record of 7.7 set in 1977. The gun homicide rate, 4.7, was well below its 1974 peak of 7.2.[8]

How often guns are the weapon

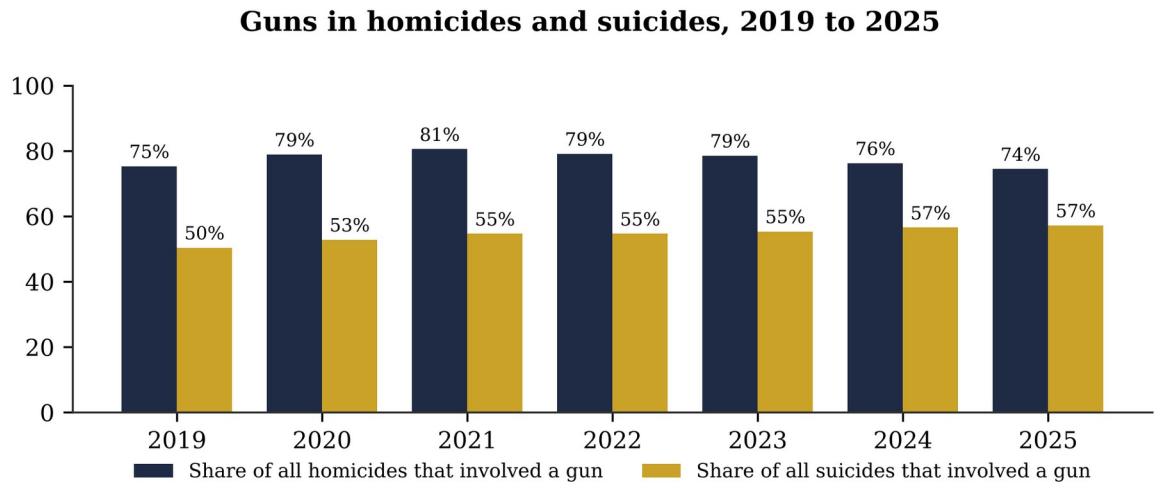
Guns are the most common way Americans kill each other and the most common way they kill themselves.

In 2024, 15,364 of the 20,162 homicides counted by the CDC involved a gun, or 76 out of every 100. Of 48,824 suicides, 27,593 involved a gun, or 57 out of every 100.[9] The CDC's provisional 2025 counts show 12,857 gun homicides out of 17,271 homicides (about 74 out of 100) and 28,060 gun suicides out of 49,067 suicides (about 57 out of 100).[10]

[8] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[9] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[10] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: CDC Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence, national dataset (counts; 2025 provisional). Percentages are the author's arithmetic.

Guns in homicides and suicides, 2019 to 2025

Who dies

Gun deaths fall heavily on men. The CDC reports that men account for 86 out of every 100 gun deaths and 84 out of every 100 gun injuries.[11] In 2021, the CDC's provisional count showed 17,604 male gun homicide victims and 3,362 female victims, and 22,930 male gun suicides compared with 3,390 female.[12]

Gun deaths are also a young person's risk. The CDC says firearm injuries were among the five leading causes of death for Americans aged 1 to 44 in 2024, and the second leading cause for children and teens aged 1 to 19.[13] Chapter 10 covers children and teens.

But the risk does not fall off with age. The CDC's provisional rates for 2024 show gun deaths per 100,000 people at 17.7 for ages 15 to 24, 18.5 for ages 25 to 34, 16.7 for ages 35 to 44, 14.5 for ages 45 to 54, 13.2 for ages 55 to 64, 11.4 for ages 65 to 74, 15.8 for ages 75 to 84 and 17.4 for ages 85 and older. The rate for men was 22.6; for women, 3.7.[14] The rate is highest for young adults, dips in middle age and rises again among the oldest Americans.

The wounded

Deaths are only part of the count. The CDC says more than seven of every ten gun injuries treated by doctors come from assaults, and nearly two of every ten are accidents.[15] The Gun Violence Archive, a private group that logs shootings from police and news reports, counted 31,847 people injured by

[11] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Fast Facts: Firearm Injury and Death", updated September 2, 2026. https://www.cdc.gov/firearm-violence/data-research/facts-stats/index.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[12] Thomas R. Simon and others, CDC, "Notes from the Field: Increases in Firearm Homicide and Suicide Rates - United States, 2020-2021, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 71(40):1286-1287", October 7, 2022. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7140a4.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[13] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Fast Facts: Firearm Injury and Death", updated September 2, 2026. https://www.cdc.gov/firearm-violence/data-research/facts-stats/index.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[14] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - VSRR Quarterly provisional estimates for selected indicators of mortality (dataset 489q-934x)", updated June 23, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/NCHS/NCHS-VSRR-Quarterly-provisional-estimates-for-selected-indicators-of-mortality/489q-934x. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

gunfire in 2024 and 26,361 in 2025, not counting suicide attempts.[16] Its counts are not official, and Chapter 2 explains why.

[15] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Fast Facts: Firearm Injury and Death", updated September 2, 2026. https://www.cdc.gov/firearm-violence/data-research/facts-stats/index.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[16] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Chapter 2: Where the Numbers Come From

Before going further, it helps to know who is counting. Americans argue about gun numbers partly because they are quoting different sources that measure different things. None of these sources is "wrong." They answer different questions.

The six main sources

Source	Who runs it	What it counts	Strength	Weakness
National Vital Statistics System	CDC	Every death certificate, with cause and intent	Covers every death in the country	Says nothing about the killer or the motive; final data take about a year
Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) and the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)	FBI	Crimes reported to local police	Shows weapon, victim and offender details	Depends on thousands of police agencies reporting; many killers are never identified
National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)	BJS	A large household survey asking people if they were victims, whether or not they called police	Counts crimes never reported to police	Cannot count homicides (the victims cannot answer); based on a sample
National Prisoner Statistics and jail surveys	BJS	People in state and federal prisons and local jails	Official counts from every state	Released one to two years late
Gun Violence Archive	Private nonprofit	Shootings found in police reports and news stories	Close to real time; counts injuries and mass shootings	Not official; depends on what gets reported; revises its numbers
Mother Jones, The Violence Project and others	News organization and university researchers	Public mass shootings, with details on the shooters	Detailed case files	Each uses its own definition; small number of cases

[17] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Table 1: Volume and Rate per 100,000 Inhabitants, 2000-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/table-1. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization, 2024 (NCJ 310547), Table 10", September 29, 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cv24.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Gun Violence Archive, "General Methodology", last edited

Why the CDC and FBI numbers differ

The CDC and FBI both count killings, but they do not count the same thing.

The CDC counts *homicides*: every death a medical examiner or coroner rules was caused by another person. That includes murder, manslaughter and some killings in self-defense. The FBI counts *murder and nonnegligent manslaughter* reported to police. It does not count justifiable killings, such as a homeowner shooting a burglar, as murder.

In 2019, a normal year just before the pandemic, the CDC counted 19,141 homicides.[18] The FBI counted 16,425 murders.[19] The gap is about 2,700.

The gap is bigger for gun deaths. The CDC counted 14,414 gun homicides in 2019.[20] The FBI's detailed "Supplementary Homicide Reports," which list the weapon, covered only 13,927 of that year's murder victims, and in those, a firearm was recorded for 10,258.[21] The FBI number is lower partly because not every police agency sends in the detailed reports.

That is why this book uses the CDC for the count of how many people died, and the FBI and BJS for details about the crimes and the people involved.

A change in how the FBI counts

Starting with 2021 data, national figures rely on the FBI's newer National Incident-Based Reporting System, which records much more detail about each crime than the older summary system. Because not every police agency reports, the FBI and BJS publish *estimates* for the whole country. When the Bureau of Justice Statistics published its 2025 homicide report, it said its figures from 2021 on come from the new system's estimates, while earlier years come from the older Supplementary Homicide Reports.[22] The practical effect for readers: be careful comparing exact FBI counts before and after 2021. Percent changes the FBI itself publishes, which compare the same agencies year to year, are safer.

May 31, 2023. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/methodology. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Mother Jones, "A Guide to Mass Shootings in America", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/07/mass-shootings-map/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Violence Project, "Methodology (Version 10, January 2026)", January 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/methodology. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[18] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[19] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Table 1: Volume and Rate per 100,000 Inhabitants, 2000-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/table-1. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[20] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[21] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 8: Murder Victims by Weapon, 2015-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-8.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[22] Lizabeth Remrey, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Homicide Victimization in the United States, 2025 (NCJ 312197)", October 2026. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/hvus25.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Revisions matter too. BJS's 2023 homicide report put the 2023 homicide rate at 5.9 per 100,000. Its 2025 report, using updated estimates, put the same year at 6.1.[23] When I give a figure, I tell you which edition it came from.

Two kinds of private counts

The Gun Violence Archive (GVA) collects shootings from police, media, government and other public reports and says it verifies each incident before counting it.[24] It is the main source for "mass shooting" counts in news stories. In February 2024 it stopped publishing suicide counts, so I do not use it for suicides.[25]

Mother Jones, a news magazine, first published its database of public mass shootings in 2012 and keeps it updated; it covers events back to 1982.[26] The Violence Project, a research center started at Hamline University, keeps a database of public mass shooters back to 1966, coded from many details about each shooter's life. The National Institute of Justice, the research arm of the Justice Department, has published a summary of that database.[27] Both count only a narrow kind of mass shooting, which Part Four explains.

What no one counts

Some questions people ask most often have no official answer:

- **Sexual orientation and gender identity.** Neither the FBI nor the CDC records these for killers or victims in the national data used in this book.
- **Political views.** There is no official national count of politically motivated killings. A 2023 report by the Government Accountability Office said "The FBI does not track domestic terrorism incidents because it is not required to do so."[28]
- **Prescription drugs.** No national data system records whether a killer was taking a psychiatric drug.
- **Defensive gun use.** No official system counts the times a gun is used to stop a crime.

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[23] Lizabeth Remrey, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Homicide Victimization in the United States, 2023 (NCJ 309889)", May 2025, revised August 19, 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/hvus23.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Lizabeth Remrey, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Homicide Victimization in the United States, 2025 (NCJ 312197)", October 2026. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/hvus25.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[24] Gun Violence Archive, "General Methodology", last edited May 31, 2023. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/methodology. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[25] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[26] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[27] The Violence Project, "Methodology (Version 10, January 2026)", January 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/methodology. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. National Institute of Justice, "Public Mass Shootings: Database Amasses Details of a Half Century of U.S. Mass Shootings with Firearms, Generating Psychosocial Histories", February 3, 2022. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[28] U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Domestic Terrorism: Further Actions Needed to Strengthen FBI and DHS Collaboration to Counter Threats (GAO-23-104720)", February 22, 2023. https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-104720. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

- **Total guns in private hands.** There is no national gun registry, so the number of guns is an estimate.

For each of these, the best we have comes from surveys or private databases. I give you their numbers and tell you how many cases they could not classify.

Chapter 3: Has Violence Really Gone Up, or Does It Only Seem That Way?

Ask Americans whether crime is rising and most will say yes, almost every year. The records tell a more complicated story. Violence fell for most of this period, spiked sharply in 2020 and 2021, and then fell faster than at almost any time on record. Here are the numbers, followed by the measured reasons it may feel otherwise.

The murder rate since 2000

The FBI's national murder figures for 2000 through 2019 come from its Table 1 series.[29]

Year	Murders (FBI)	Rate per 100,000
2000	15,586	5.5
2001	16,037	5.6
2002	16,229	5.6
2003	16,528	5.7
2004	16,148	5.5
2005	16,740	5.6
2006	17,309	5.8
2007	17,128	5.7
2008	16,465	5.4
2009	15,399	5.0
2010	14,722	4.8
2011	14,661	4.7
2012	14,856	4.7
2013	14,319	4.5
2014	14,164	4.4
2015	15,883	4.9
2016	17,413	5.4
2017	17,294	5.3
2018	16,374	5.0
2019	16,425	5.0

The FBI's 2001 figure does not include the deaths of September 11, 2001.[30]

The murder rate drifted down from 5.5 in 2000 to 4.4 in 2014, rose to 5.4 in 2016 and settled at 5.0 in 2018 and 2019.

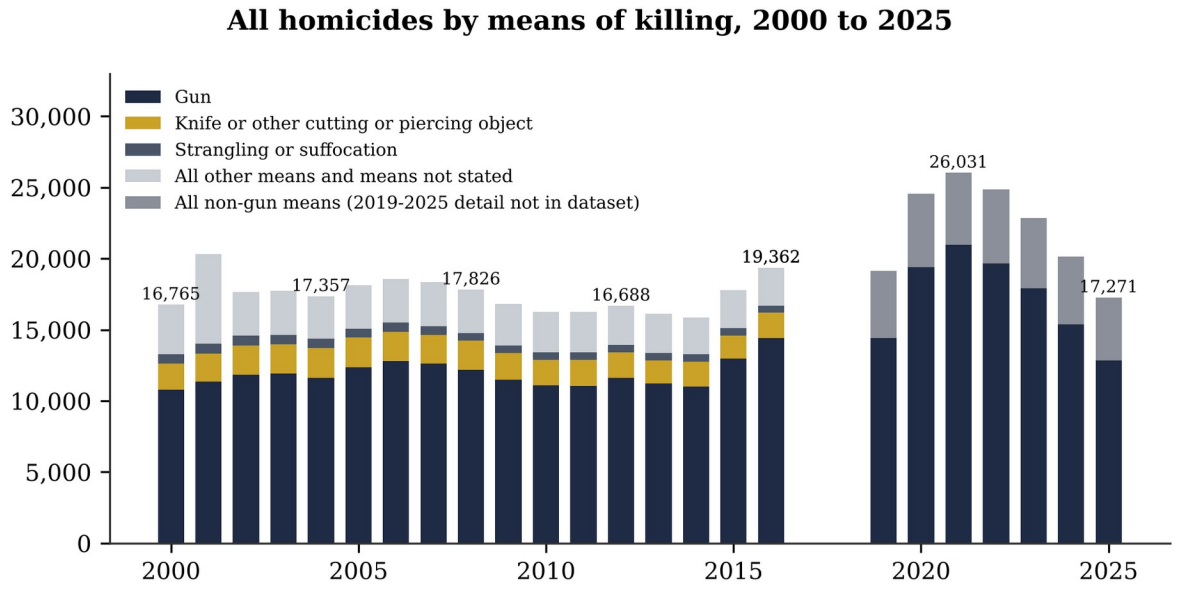
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[29] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Table 1: Volume and Rate per 100,000 Inhabitants, 2000-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/table-1. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[30] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Table 1: Volume and Rate per 100,000 Inhabitants, 2000-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/table-1. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Then came 2020. Murders rose nearly 30 percent in one year, according to the Associated Press's report of FBI data.[31] Pew Research Center called it the largest single-year increase on record.[32] The CDC's count of all homicides went from 19,141 in 2019 to 24,576 in 2020 and 26,031 in 2021.[33]

And then it reversed. The FBI reported that murders fell an estimated 14.9 percent in 2024.[34] In August 2026, the FBI reported that murders fell another 18.1 percent in 2025, and that "The 2025 murder rate of 4.1 per 100,000 inhabitants is tied with 1955 and 1956 for the lowest murder rate."[35] The Bureau of Justice Statistics, using its own estimates, put the 2025 homicide rate at 4.3 per 100,000, down from 5.2 in 2024 and 6.1 in 2023.[36]



All homicides by means of killing, 2000 to 2025

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[31] Associated Press, via PBS NewsHour, "Murders dropped nearly 15% last year, FBI data shows", August 5, 2025. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/murders-dropped-nearly-15-last-year-fbi-data-shows. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[32] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about crime in the U.S.", April 24, 2024. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/24/what-the-data-says-about-crime-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[33] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[34] Federal Bureau of Investigation, "FBI Releases 2024 Reported Crimes in the Nation Statistics (press release)", August 5, 2025. https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-releases-2024-reported-crimes-in-the-nation-statistics. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[35] Chris Williams, LiveNOW from FOX, "US homicide rate falls to 75-year low as violent crime declines, FBI says", August 15, 2026. https://www.fox9.com/news/fbi-homicide-rate-violent-crime. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Associated Press, via WTOP, "Homicides dropped 18.1% in 2025 to the lowest rate since 1956, FBI says", August 2026. https://wtop.com/national/2026/08/homicides-dropped-18-1-in-2025-to-the-lowest-rate-since-1956-fbi-says/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Homeland Security Today, "FBI Releases 2025 Crime Data Showing Sharp Drop in Violent Offenses", August 2026. https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/law-enforcement-and-public-safety/fbi-releases-2025-crime-data-showing-sharp-drop-in-violent-offenses/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[36] Lizabeth Remrey, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Homicide Victimization in the United States, 2025 (NCJ 312197)", October 2026. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/hvus25.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

So, on murder, the answer for the period as a whole is: no, it did not keep going up. It rose during 2015-2016 and very sharply in 2020-2021, and by 2025 it had fallen to about the lowest rate since the 1950s.

All violent crime, not just murder

Murder is the rarest violent crime. Most violent crime is assault, robbery and rape, and much of it is never reported to police. The best measure of all violent crime is the BJS household survey, the NCVS, which asks people directly.

Over the long run, the drop has been large. Pew Research Center summarized the trend this way: the FBI's violent crime rate fell 49 percent from 1993 to 2022, and the BJS survey's violent victimization rate fell 71 percent over the same years.[37] BJS reported that the rate of nonfatal gun violence against people age 12 and older fell 76 percent from 1993 to 2018, and the gun homicide rate fell 41 percent.[38]

Within this book's period, the BJS survey's rate of violent victimization per 1,000 people age 12 and older (shown as two-year averages) went like this:[39]

Years	Violent victimizations per 1,000 people
2008	26.3
2010	20.8
2012	24.4
2014	21.6
2016	19.1
2018	21.9
2019	22.1
2020	18.7
2021	16.4

The FBI reported that violent crime fell 4.5 percent in 2024 and another 9.3 percent in 2025, with robbery down 18.5 percent and aggravated assault down 7.2 percent in 2025.[40]

Notice something important: the 2020-2021 spike in murders did not show up as a spike in all violent crime in the victim survey. The survey rate actually fell in 2020 and 2021. The pandemic years were unusual: killings rose while total reported victimizations dropped.

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[37] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about crime in the U.S.", April 24, 2024. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/24/what-the-data-says-about-crime-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[38] Grace Kena and Jennifer L. Truman, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Trends and Patterns in Firearm Violence, 1993-2018 (NCJ 251663)", April 2022. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/tpfv9318.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[39] Alexandra Thompson and Susannah N. Tapp, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Violent Victimization by Race or Hispanic Origin, 2008-2021 (NCJ 305262; the web page also shows a later edition, NCJ 309041, August 2024)", July 2023. https://bjs.ojp.gov/violent-victimization-race-or-hispanic-origin-2008-2021. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[40] Federal Bureau of Investigation, "FBI Releases 2024 Reported Crimes in the Nation Statistics (press release)", August 5, 2025. https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-releases-2024-reported-crimes-in-the-nation-statistics. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Chris Williams, LiveNOW from FOX, "US homicide rate falls to 75-year low as violent crime declines, FBI says", August 15, 2026. https://www.fox9.com/news/fbi-homicide-rate-violent-crime. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

So why does it feel like violence keeps rising?

People's sense that crime is rising is not imagined. Some measures did rise. But the public's view has also been out of step with the records for decades. Here is what can be measured.

1. Most Americans believe crime is rising almost every year, even when it is falling. Pew Research Center wrote in 2024 that "Americans tend to believe crime is up, even when official data shows it is down." In 23 of the 27 Gallup surveys since 1993, at least 60 percent of Americans said there was more crime nationally than the year before. In every one of those surveys, fewer people said crime had risen in their own area than said it had risen nationally.[41] In other words, most people think the country is getting worse even when they don't see it where they live.

2. The 2020-2021 jump was real, and it was the largest on record. Anyone who formed a view in those years was reacting to a true and historic increase in killings.[42]

3. Public mass shootings and attacks did become more common. The kinds of shootings that dominate national news did rise during this period. The Mother Jones database lists 24 public mass shootings from 2000 through 2011 and 94 from 2012 through 2023 (it lowered its threshold from four killed to three in 2013, which adds some cases). The FBI designated 223 "active shooter" incidents from 2020 to 2024, which it said was 70 percent more than in 2015-2019.[43] The number of these events is small compared with all killings, but they get far more attention. Part Four has the details.

4. Gun suicides kept rising. Total gun deaths are driven mostly by suicides, which rose almost every year and set records in 2024 and 2025.[44] Someone who hears "gun deaths are near a record" is hearing a true statement, but it is mostly about suicide, not crime.

5. Assaults on police officers rose. The FBI reported 90,178 assaults on officers in 2025, at a rate of 13.8 per 100 officers, which it called the highest assault rate in the past 10 years.[45] Chapter 21 covers this.

6. Fewer crimes are being solved. Pew reported that police cleared 52.3 percent of murders in 2022, down from 64.1 percent in 2013.[46] "Cleared" means police arrested someone or closed the case for

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[41] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about crime in the U.S.", April 24, 2024. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/24/what-the-data-says-about-crime-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[42] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about crime in the U.S.", April 24, 2024. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/24/what-the-data-says-about-crime-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Associated Press, via PBS NewsHour, "Murders dropped nearly 15% last year, FBI data shows", August 5, 2025. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/murders-dropped-nearly-15-last-year-fbi-data-shows. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[43] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Homeland Security Today, "FBI Releases New 2024 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Report", June 2025. https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/fbi-releases-new-2024-active-shooter-incidents-in-the-united-states-report/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[44] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[45] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

reasons outside their control, such as the suspect's death. A falling clearance rate means more killings go without an arrest.

7. Most violent crime is never reported to police. BJS found that only 41.5 percent of violent crimes were reported to police in 2022.[47] That means police numbers, which drive most news stories, see less than half of what happens. It also means victim surveys can show a different trend than police counts.

What I could not find is a federal study that measures how much news coverage or social media shapes these beliefs. Many people believe it does, and some researchers have studied it, but I did not find an official source that settles it, so I leave it out.

Unsolved killings

Clearance rates deserve a closer look because they shape how safe people feel and whether killers are caught.

Year	Murders cleared by police
2013	64.1%
2022	52.3%

[48]

Put plainly, in 2022 roughly half of the murders reported to police did not end in an arrest or other clearance that year. The FBI's yearly clearance figures for other years were not available to me in a form I could verify, so I give only the two years Pew reported. **[Not verified: yearly clearance rates for 2000-2012 and 2023-2025.]**

The bottom line for Part One

- About 938,000 Americans died by gunfire from 2000 through 2025. About 59 out of 100 were suicides.
- Gun homicides were fairly flat from 2000 to 2014, rose in 2015-2016, spiked in 2020-2021, and fell steeply through 2025.
- By the FBI's count, the 2025 murder rate tied the lowest since the 1950s.
- All violent crime, measured by asking victims, is far below the early 1990s and fell in this period.
- Americans have believed crime was rising in almost every year since 1993, whatever the numbers showed.

[46] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about crime in the U.S.", April 24, 2024. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/24/what-the-data-says-about-crime-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[47] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about crime in the U.S.", April 24, 2024. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/24/what-the-data-says-about-crime-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[48] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about crime in the U.S.", April 24, 2024. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/24/what-the-data-says-about-crime-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Part Two: Guns and Crime

Chapter 4: Gun Homicide: Who Is Killed

From 2000 through 2025, the CDC counted 351,402 gun homicides.[49] That is an average of about 13,500 a year, or about 37 a day. Who were they?

Men and the young

As Chapter 1 showed, men are about 86 out of every 100 gun death victims.[50] For gun homicide the gap is even wider: in 2021, the CDC's provisional count showed 17,604 men and 3,362 women killed by gunfire, a rate of 11.04 per 100,000 for men and 2.11 for women.[51]

The CDC says gun homicide rates are highest among people aged 15 to 34.[52]

Race and Hispanic origin

Gun homicide falls very unevenly across racial groups. This is one of the most consistent findings in every federal data set, and it is not new.

The CDC's injury mortality data set gives age-adjusted gun homicide rates by race for 2000 through 2016.[53]

Gun homicide deaths per 100,000 people (age-adjusted)	2000	2005	2010	2014	2016
Black, non-Hispanic	15.0	16.7	14.6	14.4	19.2
Hispanic	4.8	5.0	3.4	2.9	3.7

[49] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Trace, "Gun death rate increased in 2017, CDC data shows (The Rounds)", December 2018. https://www.thetrace.org/rounds/gun-death-rate-2017-increase-cdc-suicide. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Trace, "Gun deaths held steady in 2018, CDC data shows", February 2020. https://thetrace.org/2020/02/gun-deaths-suicide-cdc-data-2018. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[50] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Fast Facts: Firearm Injury and Death", updated September 2, 2026. https://www.cdc.gov/firearm-violence/data-research/facts-stats/index.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[51] Thomas R. Simon and others, CDC, "Notes from the Field: Increases in Firearm Homicide and Suicide Rates - United States, 2020-2021, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 71(40):1286-1287", October 7, 2022. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7140a4.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[52] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Fast Facts: Firearm Injury and Death", updated September 2, 2026. https://www.cdc.gov/firearm-violence/data-research/facts-stats/index.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

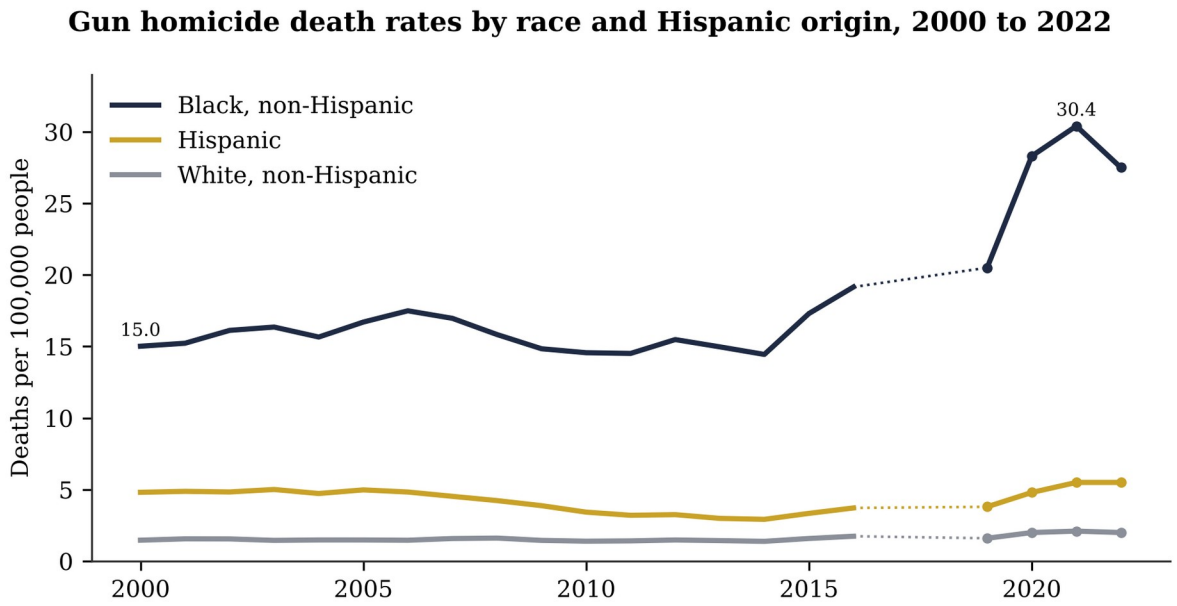
[53] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Gun homicide deaths per 100,000 people (age-adjusted)	2000	2005	2010	2014	2016
White, non-Hispanic	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.7
All Americans	3.8	4.2	3.6	3.5	4.6

A CDC report published in October 2023 gave the rates and counts for 2019 through 2022 (2022 provisional), including Native Americans and Asian Americans.[54]

Gun homicides: rate per 100,000 (and count)	2019	2020	2021	2022
Black, non-Hispanic	20.5 (8,438)	28.3 (11,832)	30.4 (12,721)	27.5 (11,565)
American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic	6.4 (154)	7.9 (191)	7.7 (185)	9.3 (224)
Hispanic	3.8 (2,301)	4.8 (2,947)	5.5 (3,455)	5.5 (3,500)
White, non-Hispanic	1.6 (3,129)	2.0 (3,969)	2.1 (4,064)	2.0 (3,828)
Asian or Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	1.0 (202)	1.0 (208)	1.2 (241)	1.1 (233)
All Americans	4.4 (14,414)	5.8 (19,384)	6.3 (20,958)	5.9 (19,637)

[54] Scott R. Kegler, Thomas R. Simon and Steven A. Sumner, CDC, "Notes from the Field: Firearm Homicide Rates, by Race and Ethnicity - United States, 2019-2022, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 72(42):1149-1150", October 20, 2023. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7242a4.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Gun homicide death rates by race and Hispanic origin, 2000 to 2022

In 2021, the worst year, Black Americans died by gun homicide at a rate of 30.4 per 100,000, about 14 times the rate for white Americans (2.1). Black Americans were 12,721 of the 20,958 gun homicide victims that year, or about 61 out of every 100.[55] For comparison, Black Americans were 12.5 percent of the U.S. population in 2018, according to the Census estimates BJS used.[56]

The 2020-2021 spike also hit Black Americans hardest. Their rate rose from 20.5 in 2019 to 30.4 in 2021. The white rate rose from 1.6 to 2.1. The CDC's 2022 report noted that Black Americans had the highest gun homicide rate in every age group.[57]

BJS found the same pattern in its own figures for 2014-2018, which count people age 12 and older: the gun homicide rate was 22.0 per 100,000 for Black Americans, 6.2 for Native Americans, 4.6 for Hispanic Americans, 1.8 for white Americans and 1.2 for Asian and Pacific Islander Americans.[58]

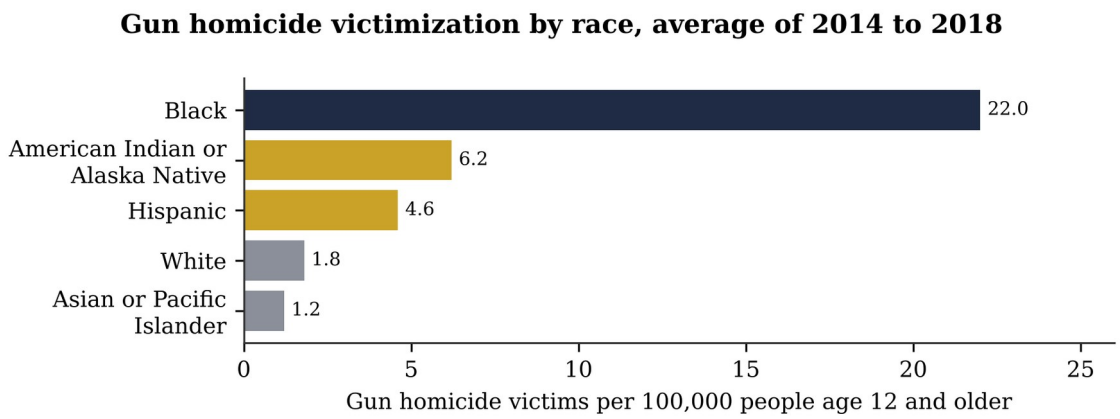
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[55] Scott R. Kegler, Thomas R. Simon and Steven A. Sumner, CDC, "Notes from the Field: Firearm Homicide Rates, by Race and Ethnicity - United States, 2019-2022, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 72(42):1149-1150", October 20, 2023. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7242a4.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[56] Allen J. Beck, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Race and Ethnicity of Violent Crime Offenders and Arrestees, 2018 (NCJ 255969)", January 2021. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/revcoa18.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[57] Scott R. Kegler, Thomas R. Simon and Steven A. Sumner, CDC, "Notes from the Field: Firearm Homicide Rates, by Race and Ethnicity - United States, 2019-2022, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 72(42):1149-1150", October 20, 2023. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7242a4.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Thomas R. Simon and others, CDC, "Notes from the Field: Increases in Firearm Homicide and Suicide Rates - United States, 2020-2021, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 71(40):1286-1287", October 7, 2022. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7140a4.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[58] Grace Kena and Jennifer L. Truman, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Trends and Patterns in Firearm Violence, 1993-2018 (NCJ 251663)", April 2022. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/tpfv9318.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Trends and Patterns in Firearm Violence, 1993-2018 (April 2022), Table 6.

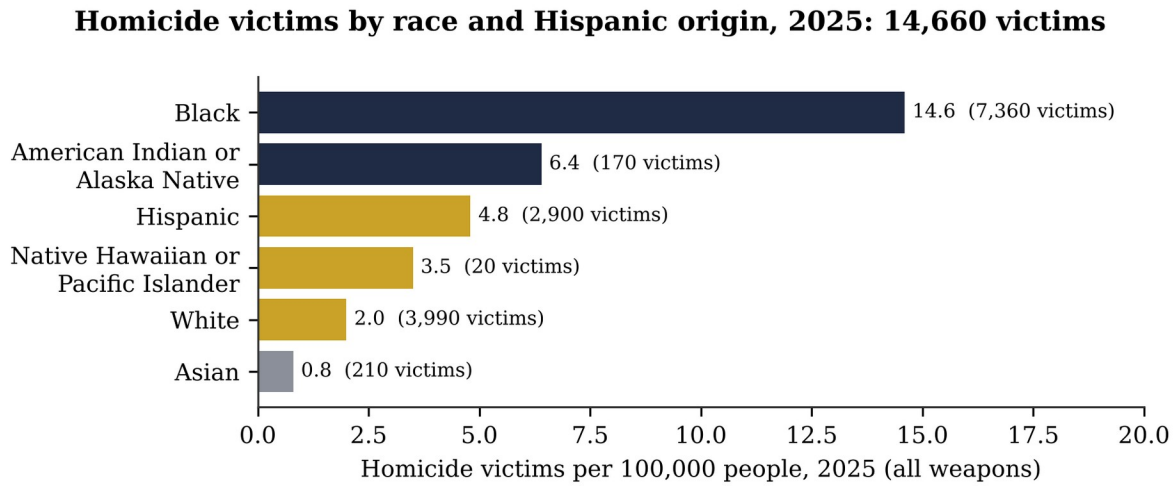
Gun homicide victimization by race, average of 2014 to 2018

The newest year: 2025

The most recent national picture comes from BJS's report on homicide in 2025, published in October 2026. It counts all homicides, not just gun homicides.[59]

Homicide victims, 2025	Number	Share	Rate per 100,000
Black, non-Hispanic	7,360	50.2%	14.6
White, non-Hispanic	3,990	27.2%	2.0
Hispanic	2,900	19.8%	4.8
Asian, non-Hispanic	210	1.4%	0.8
American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic	170	1.2%	6.4
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	20	0.2%	3.5
All	**14,660**	**100%**	**4.3**

[59] Lizabeth Remrey, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Homicide Victimization in the United States, 2025 (NCJ 312197)", October 2026. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/hvus25.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Homicide Victimization in the United States, 2025 (October 2026), Table 1. Racial groups exclude Hispanic people.

Homicide victims by race and Hispanic origin, 2025

The 2025 report also shows how often each group was killed with a gun. Overall, 75.6 percent of homicide victims in 2025 were killed with a firearm. The share was 86.2 percent for Black victims, 72.0 percent for Hispanic victims, 61.0 percent for Asian victims, 60.8 percent for white victims and 48.0 percent for Native American victims.[60] BJS's 2023 report showed the national firearm share climbing from 68.2 percent in 2014 to 79.6 percent in 2023.[61]

The drop from 2021 to 2025 was large for every group. But the gap between groups remained. In 2025, the homicide rate for Black Americans was a little over seven times the rate for white Americans.

What these numbers do and do not say

These are counts of victims. They describe who was killed, not why. They do not, by themselves, tell you the cause of the gap. Researchers and advocates on every side offer explanations, including poverty, neighborhood segregation, gangs and the drug trade, family breakdown, policing, and access to guns. The federal data in this book do not test those explanations, so I don't pick one. Chapter 7 covers what the records show about offenders.

[60] Lizabeth Remrey, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Homicide Victimization in the United States, 2025 (NCJ 312197)", October 2026. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/hvus25.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[61] Lizabeth Remrey, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Homicide Victimization in the United States, 2023 (NCJ 309889)", May 2025, revised August 19, 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/hvus23.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Chapter 5: Guns and Other Weapons

You will often hear one of two opposite claims. One side says, "Guns don't kill people, people kill people; take away guns and killers will use something else." The other side says, "Guns are the problem; other weapons are a footnote." This chapter puts the numbers for every weapon side by side for the same years, so you can see what each side gets right.

All homicides, by means, from death certificates

The CDC records how every homicide victim died. From its injury mortality data set, here are four years spread across the period.[62]

Homicides by means (CDC)	2000	2005	2010	2016
Firearm	10,801	12,352	11,078	14,415
Cutting or stabbing	1,805	2,097	1,799	1,781
Suffocation (including strangling)	658	633	544	502
Fire or burns	181	157	92	131
Poisoning	56	89	79	135
Drowning	39	49	52	44
All other specified means	1,762	1,033	880	810
Not specified	1,463	1,714	1,735	1,544
All homicides	**16,765**	**18,124**	**16,259**	**19,362**

"All other specified means" combines the CDC's categories for falls, transport and all other specified causes.

The share of homicides committed with a gun went from 64 percent in 2000 to 74 percent in 2016. By 2024, it was 76 percent.[63]

The key comparison: gun homicides versus all other homicides

Subtracting gun homicides from all homicides gives the number of people killed by every other means combined. The CDC's yearly figures give this picture:[64]

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[62] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[63] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

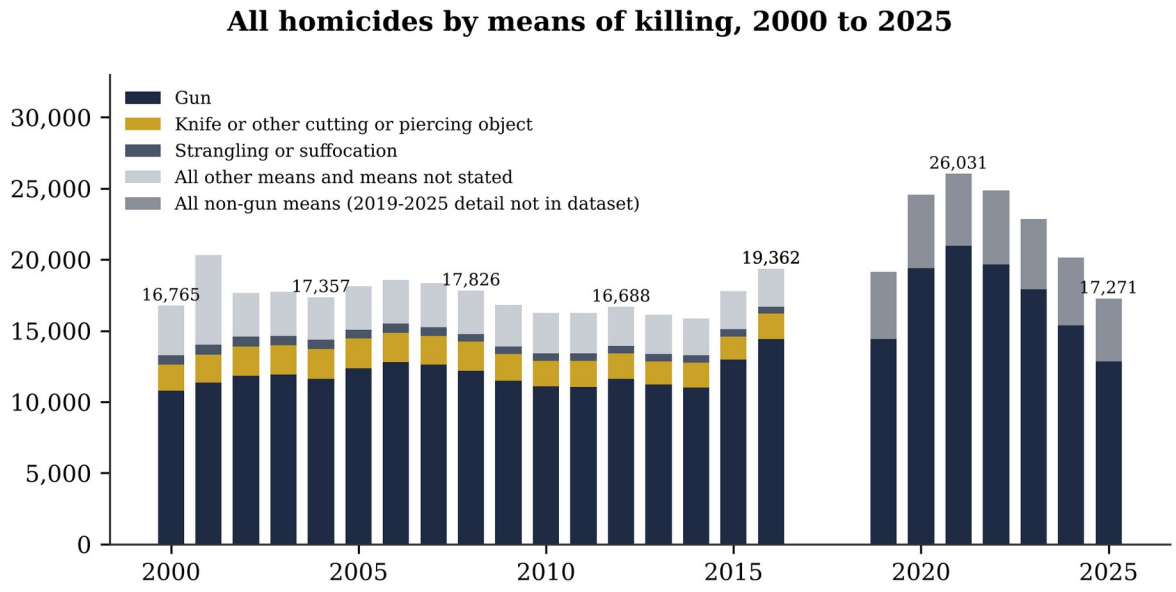
Year	Gun homicides	Homicides by all other means	All homicides
2000	10,801	5,964	16,765
2005	12,352	5,772	18,124
2010	11,078	5,181	16,259
2016	14,415	4,947	19,362
2019	14,414	4,727	19,141
2020	19,384	5,192	24,576
2021	20,958	5,073	26,031
2024	15,364	4,798	20,162
2025 (provisional)	12,857	4,414	17,271

Two facts come out of this table.

First, killings by all other means combined were fairly steady, between about 4,400 and 6,000 a year, and slowly drifted down over the 26 years.

Second, nearly all of the big swings in American homicide were swings in gun homicide. From 2019 to 2021, all homicides rose by 6,890. Gun homicides rose by 6,544 of that, about 95 out of every 100 added deaths. Non-gun homicides rose by only 346. When homicide fell from 2021 to 2025, gun homicides again made up most of the drop.

[64] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



All homicides by means of killing, 2000 to 2025

Murder victims by weapon, from police reports

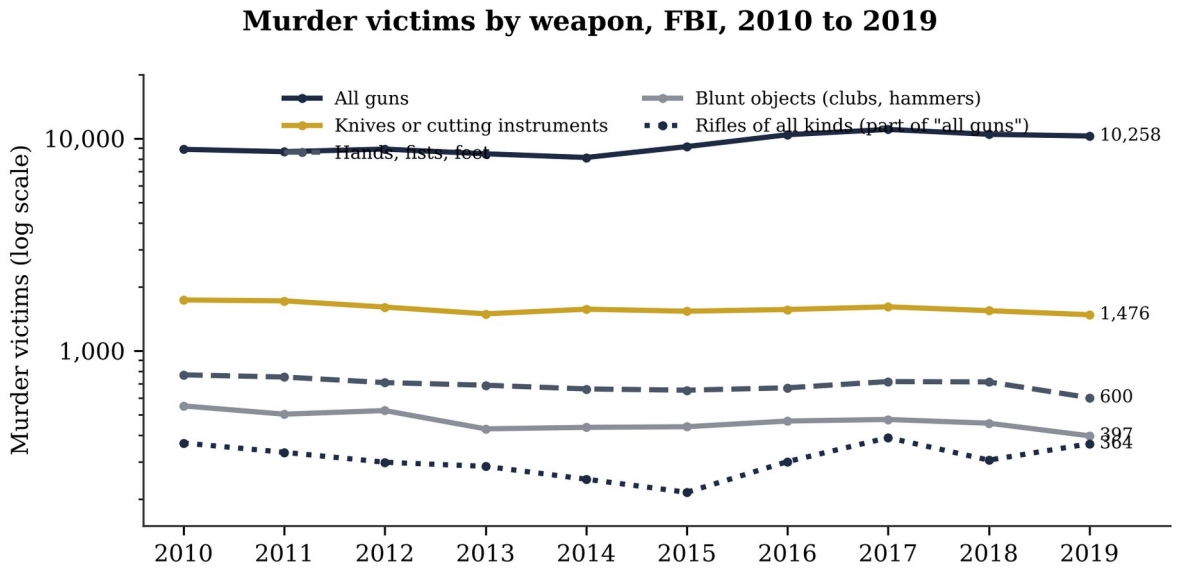
The FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports break murders down by weapon in more detail. These cover only the murders for which police agencies sent in the detailed reports, so the totals are lower than the CDC's.[65]

Murder victims by weapon (FBI)	2010	2013	2016	2019
All firearms	8,874	8,454	10,398	10,258
… handguns	6,115	5,782	6,778	6,368
… rifles	367	285	300	364
… shotguns	366	308	247	200
… other guns	93	123	172	45
… firearm, type not stated	1,933	1,956	2,901	3,281
Knives or cutting instruments	1,732	1,490	1,562	1,476
Blunt objects (clubs, hammers, etc.)	549	428	466	397

[65] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2014, Expanded Homicide Data Table 8: Murder Victims by Weapon, 2010-2014", 2015. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2014/crime-in-the-u.s.-2014/tables/expanded-homicide-data/expanded_homicide_data_table_8_murder_victims_by_weapon_2010-2014.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 8: Murder Victims by Weapon, 2015-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-8.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Murder victims by weapon (FBI)	2010	2013	2016	2019
Personal weapons (hands, fists, feet, pushing)	769	687	668	600
Strangulation	122	85	97	64
Asphyxiation	98	95	93	92
Fire	78	94	78	81
Narcotics	45	53	119	93
Poison	11	11	12	16
Drowning	10	4	9	7
Explosives	4	2	1	3
Other weapons or not stated	872	850	1,852	840
Total	**13,164**	**12,253**	**15,355**	**13,927**

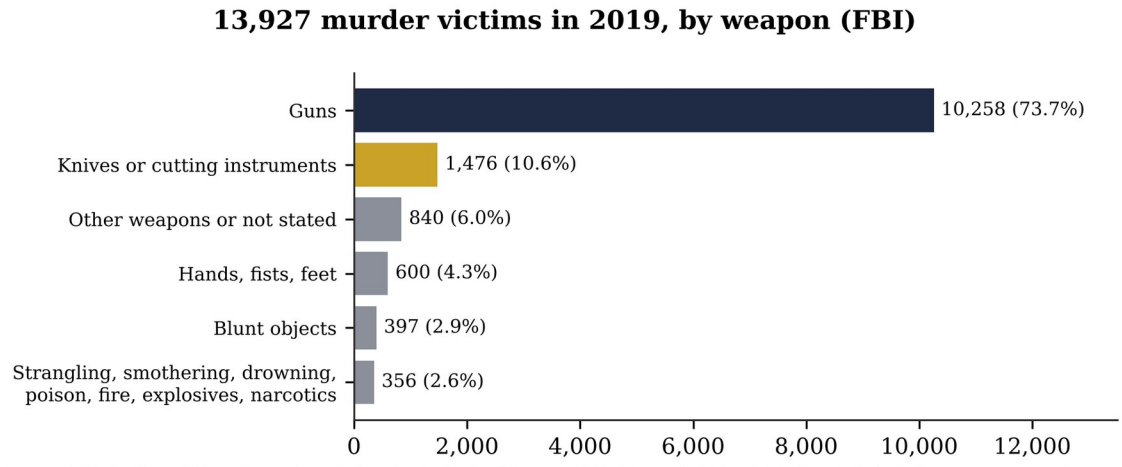
The FBI warns that its 2019 table "may not match previously published data" because agencies update their reports. The jump in "other or not stated" in 2015 and 2016 (1,727 and 1,852) is not explained in the FBI table.[66]



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting, Expanded Homicide Data Table 8, Crime in the United States 2014 and 2019. Covers only murders reported with supplementary data.

Murder victims by weapon, FBI, 2010 to 2019

[66] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 8: Murder Victims by Weapon, 2015-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-8.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



13,927 murder victims in 2019, by weapon (FBI)

What the FBI table shows

- **Handguns dominate.** Every year from 2010 to 2019, handguns were the weapon in roughly six to seven thousand murders. In 2024, among 11,717 murders where the weapon was known, handguns were 53 percent, rifles 3 percent, shotguns 1 percent, and other or unstated firearms 42 percent, according to Pew's reading of FBI data.[67]
- **Rifles of every kind, including the AR-15-style rifles at the center of the "assault weapon" debate, are a small share.** In 2019 the FBI recorded 364 murders with rifles of any kind. Knives were used in 1,476 murders that year, about four times as many. Hands, fists and feet were used in 600. Even if some of the 3,281 "firearm, type not stated" murders were rifles, the FBI's own figures show more people murdered with knives than with rifles every year from 2010 to 2019.[68]
- **But guns as a whole far outnumber every other weapon combined.** In 2019, firearms were the weapon in 10,258 of 13,927 murders, or 74 out of 100. All non-gun weapons together, including "other or not stated," came to 3,669.[69]

The same balance held in 2025. BJS's estimate for that year's 14,660 homicides: firearm 75.6 percent, knife 11.6 percent, hands and feet ("personal weapons") 6.0 percent, blunt object 2.5 percent, other weapon 6.2 percent, unknown 4.0 percent.[70] (BJS's shares add to slightly more than 100 percent. That

[67] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[68] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 8: Murder Victims by Weapon, 2015-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-8.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2014, Expanded Homicide Data Table 8: Murder Victims by Weapon, 2010-2014", 2015. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2014/crime-in-the-u.s.-2014/tables/expanded-homicide-data/expanded_homicide_data_table_8_murder_victims_by_weapon_2010-2014.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[69] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 8: Murder Victims by Weapon, 2015-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-8.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

suggests some victims are counted under more than one weapon, but I did not confirm the reason in the report.)

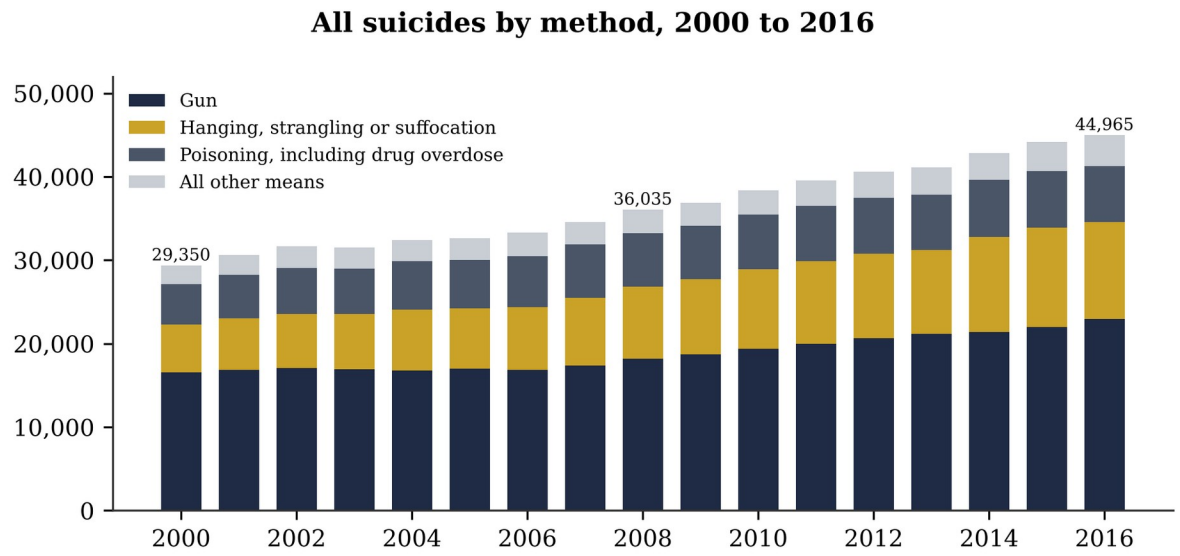
Suicides by method

The "other weapons" question applies to suicide too, and here the record gives the other side its strongest point. The CDC's figures show that suicides by means other than a gun rose sharply over this period.[71]

Suicides (CDC)	2000	2005	2010	2016	2024
Firearm	16,586	17,002	19,392	22,938	27,593
Suffocation (mostly hanging)	5,688	7,248	9,493	11,642	not in data set
Poisoning	4,859	5,744	6,599	6,698	not in data set
All other means	2,217	2,643	2,880	3,687	not in data set
All suicides	**29,350**	**32,637**	**38,364**	**44,965**	**48,824**
All suicides other than firearm	12,764	15,635	18,972	22,027	21,231

[70] Lizabeth Remrey, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Homicide Victimization in the United States, 2025 (NCJ 312197)", October 2026. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/hvus25.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[71] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: CDC NCHS Injury Mortality: United States dataset (latest year 2016).

All suicides by method, 2000 to 2016

Non-gun suicides rose from 12,764 in 2000 to 22,027 in 2016, faster than gun suicides did. Suicide by suffocation, mostly hanging, doubled. So the rise in American suicide over this period was not only a gun story. Chapter 9 covers suicide in detail.

What each side gets right

People who say "guns are not the issue" are right that:

- Most murders are committed with handguns, not the rifles that dominate the political debate.
- More people are murdered with knives than with rifles of every kind.
- Non-gun suicides rose sharply in this period, so suicide is driven by more than access to guns.

People who say "guns are the issue" are right that:

- Guns are used in about three of every four homicides and more than half of suicides.
- Almost all of the rise and fall in homicide from 2019 to 2025 was a rise and fall in gun homicide, while killings by other means barely moved.

Both sets of facts are true at the same time. The data show *how* people were killed. They do not, by themselves, show whether fewer guns would mean fewer deaths, or how many killings would happen by other means if guns were harder to get. That question is argued in the research, and I note in Part Nine where the evidence is solid and where it is not.

Chapter 6: All Violent Crime, Not Just Killing

Homicide is the most serious violent crime, but it is a tiny share of all violence. To see the big picture, you have to look at assaults, robberies and rapes too. The best source for that is the BJS National Crime Victimization Survey, which interviews people in a large national sample of households and counts crimes whether or not anyone called the police.

How often guns are involved

In 2024, Americans age 12 and older suffered about 6.7 million violent victimizations (rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault and simple assault). BJS wrote: "Of the approximately 6.7 million violent victimizations in 2024, about 660,000 (10%) involved a firearm."[72]

Violent victimizations (BJS survey)	2023	2024
All violent victimizations	6,419,060	6,671,640
Victimizations involving a firearm	575,340	658,870
Share involving a firearm	9.0%	9.9%

[73]

When you look at all violent crime, not just killings, guns are involved in about 1 in 10 cases. Most violence is fists, threats, knives and other weapons.

But "involved" has a wide meaning here. A gun is "involved" when the offender had, showed or used one. When a gun is used, the crime is much more likely to end in death. Over 1993 to 2018, BJS found that 71.2 percent of homicides involved a firearm, compared with 22.6 percent of robberies and 26.8 percent of aggravated assaults.[74]

Nonfatal gun crime, year by year

BJS's survey tracked nonfatal violent crimes involving a gun from 1993 through 2018.[75]

Year	Nonfatal gun victimizations	Rate per 1,000 people age 12+
2000	610,200	2.7
2001	563,100	2.5
2002	540,000	2.3

[72] Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization, 2024 (NCJ 310547), Table 10", September 29, 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cv24.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

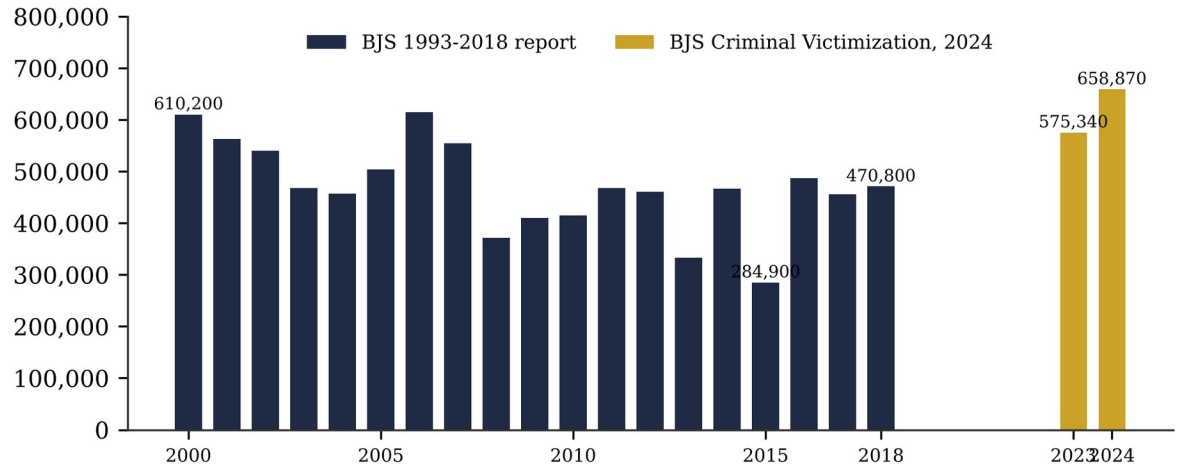
[73] Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization, 2024 (NCJ 310547), Table 10", September 29, 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cv24.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[74] Grace Kena and Jennifer L. Truman, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Trends and Patterns in Firearm Violence, 1993-2018 (NCJ 251663)", April 2022. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/tpfv9318.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[75] Grace Kena and Jennifer L. Truman, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Trends and Patterns in Firearm Violence, 1993-2018 (NCJ 251663)", April 2022. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/tpfv9318.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Year	Nonfatal gun victimizations	Rate per 1,000 people age 12+
2003	467,300	2.0
2004	456,500	1.9
2005	503,500	2.1
2006	614,400	2.5
2007	554,800	2.2
2008	371,300	1.5
2009	410,100	1.6
2010	415,000	1.6
2011	467,900	1.8
2012	460,700	1.8
2013	333,000	1.3
2014	466,100	1.7
2015	284,900	1.1
2016	486,600	1.8
2017	456,300	1.7
2018	470,800	1.7

Nonfatal violent crimes involving a gun, people age 12 and older



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Trends and Patterns in Firearm Violence, 1993-2018 (April 2022), Table 2; Criminal Victimization, 2024 (Sept. 2025), Table 10. 2019-2022 not shown.

Nonfatal violent crimes involving a gun, people age 12 and older

For comparison, in 1993 there were 1,529,700 such crimes, a rate of 7.3 per 1,000. Nonfatal gun crime in 2018 was about one-third of its 1993 level. The 2023 and 2024 figures above (575,340 and 658,870) come from a later BJS report and use the same survey; they show nonfatal gun crime higher than in

2018, at a rate of 2.0 and 2.3 per 1,000.[76] Survey numbers bounce from year to year because they are based on a sample, so single-year changes should be read with care.

Who is victimized by violent crime overall

Here the picture by race looks very different from the homicide picture. BJS's survey for 2017-2021 shows that white, Black and Hispanic Americans suffered violent crime at nearly the same overall rate.[77]

Violent victimizations per 1,000 people age 12+, 2017-2021	All violent crime	Robbery	Aggravated assault	Serious violence (excluding simple assault)
White, non-Hispanic	19.8	1.6	3.2	6.4
Black, non-Hispanic	19.4	2.8	3.8	8.0
Hispanic	18.4	2.5	3.8	7.8
Asian or Pacific Islander	9.8	0.9	1.1	3.1
Other (Native American and multiracial)	54.8	5.3	8.5	18.0
All	**19.5**	**1.9**	**3.4**	**6.9**

Native American and multiracial Americans, grouped together by BJS as "Other," had by far the highest rate of violent victimization: 54.8 per 1,000, almost three times the national rate. Black and Hispanic Americans had higher rates of the more serious crimes, robbery and aggravated assault, than white Americans, but a similar overall rate. Asian Americans had the lowest rates.[78]

For nonfatal gun crimes specifically, BJS's 2014-2018 rates were 2.7 per 1,000 for Black Americans, 1.9 for Hispanic, 1.3 for white and 0.9 for Asian Americans. People aged 18 to 24 had the highest rate of any age group, 3.8 per 1,000.[79]

The lesson of this chapter

Looking at all violent crime does change the picture, in two ways.

[76] Grace Kena and Jennifer L. Truman, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Trends and Patterns in Firearm Violence, 1993-2018 (NCJ 251663)", April 2022. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/tpfv9318.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization, 2024 (NCJ 310547), Table 10", September 29, 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cv24.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[77] Alexandra Thompson and Susannah N. Tapp, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Violent Victimization by Race or Hispanic Origin, 2008-2021 (NCJ 305262; the web page also shows a later edition, NCJ 309041, August 2024)", July 2023. https://bjs.ojp.gov/violent-victimization-race-or-hispanic-origin-2008-2021. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[78] Alexandra Thompson and Susannah N. Tapp, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Violent Victimization by Race or Hispanic Origin, 2008-2021 (NCJ 305262; the web page also shows a later edition, NCJ 309041, August 2024)", July 2023. https://bjs.ojp.gov/violent-victimization-race-or-hispanic-origin-2008-2021. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[79] Grace Kena and Jennifer L. Truman, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Trends and Patterns in Firearm Violence, 1993-2018 (NCJ 251663)", April 2022. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/tpfv9318.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

- Guns are involved in about 1 in 10 violent crimes overall, but in about 3 in 4 homicides. Guns are rare in everyday violence and dominant in killings.
- Differences between racial groups are much smaller for violent crime overall than for homicide. The huge gap in homicide shows up mainly in the most lethal violence.

Chapter 7: The Race of Victims and Offenders

This chapter answers a question many people ask but few sources answer directly: when someone is the victim of a violent crime, what is the race of the person who did it? I give the official numbers for white, Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American victims, for murder and for all violent crime. Before the numbers, three cautions.

1. **Many offenders are never identified.** In murder cases, police often never learn who the killer was, so the offender's race is unknown. In the FBI's 2019 data, offender race was unknown for 4,752 of 16,245 offenders, or 29.3 percent.[80]
2. **In the FBI's murder tables, Hispanic is an ethnicity, not a race.** The FBI records race and Hispanic ethnicity separately, so Hispanic offenders and victims are counted under a race, most often "white." In the FBI's 2019 offender table, ethnicity was unknown for more than half of offenders.[81]
3. **For nonfatal crime, offender race comes from what the victim saw.** BJS's survey asks victims to describe the offender, so these figures are "perceived" race.[82]

Murder offenders in 2019

The FBI's 2019 offender table is the last full national table of its kind before the switch to the new reporting system.[83]

Murder offenders, 2019 (FBI)	Number	Share of all offenders	Share of offenders whose race was known
Black	6,425	39.6%	55.9%
White (includes most Hispanic offenders)	4,728	29.1%	41.1%
Other races	340	2.1%	3.0%
Race unknown	4,752	29.3%	(excluded)
Total	**16,245**	**100%**	

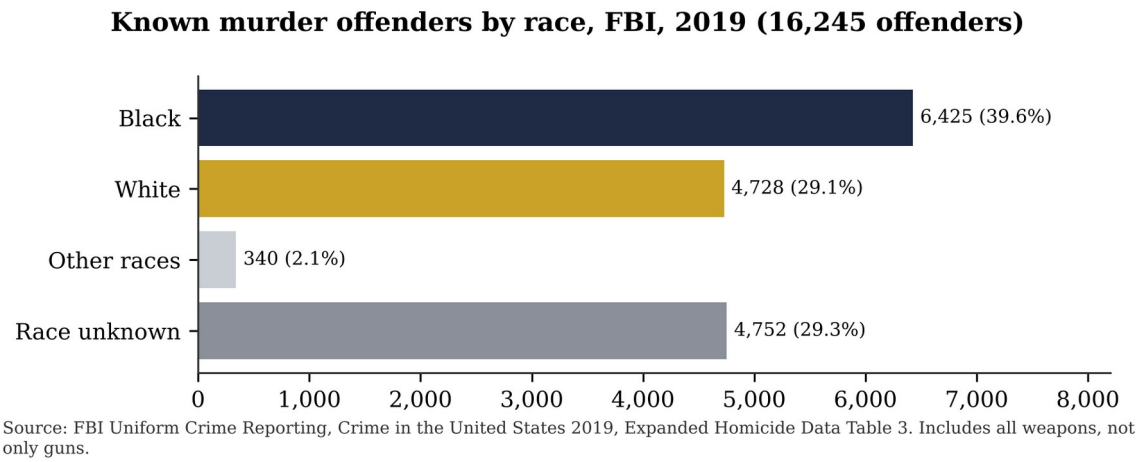
[80] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 3: Murder Offenders by Age, Sex, Race, and Ethnicity, 2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-3.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[81] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 3: Murder Offenders by Age, Sex, Race, and Ethnicity, 2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-3.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2013, Expanded Homicide Data Table 6: Race, Ethnicity, and Sex of Victim by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex of Offender, 2013", 2014. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/offenses-known-to-law-enforcement/expanded-homicide/expanded_homicide_data_table_6_murder_race_and_sex_of_vicitm_by_race_and_sex_of_offender_2013.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[82] Alexandra Thompson and Susannah N. Tapp, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Violent Victimization by Race or Hispanic Origin, 2008-2021 (NCJ 305262; the web page also shows a later edition, NCJ 309041, August 2024)", July 2023. https://bjs.ojp.gov/violent-victimization-race-or-hispanic-origin-2008-2021. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[83] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 3: Murder Offenders by Age, Sex, Race, and Ethnicity, 2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-3.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

The third column is my own arithmetic, dividing by the 11,493 offenders whose race was known. Of offenders whose sex was known, 10,335 were male and 1,408 female; sex was unknown for 4,502.[84]



Known murder offenders by race, FBI, 2019

Who kills whom: single-victim, single-offender murders

The FBI's most direct table on this question covers murders with exactly one victim and one offender. This is the source of most "white-on-Black" and "Black-on-white" figures you hear. Here are three years.[85]

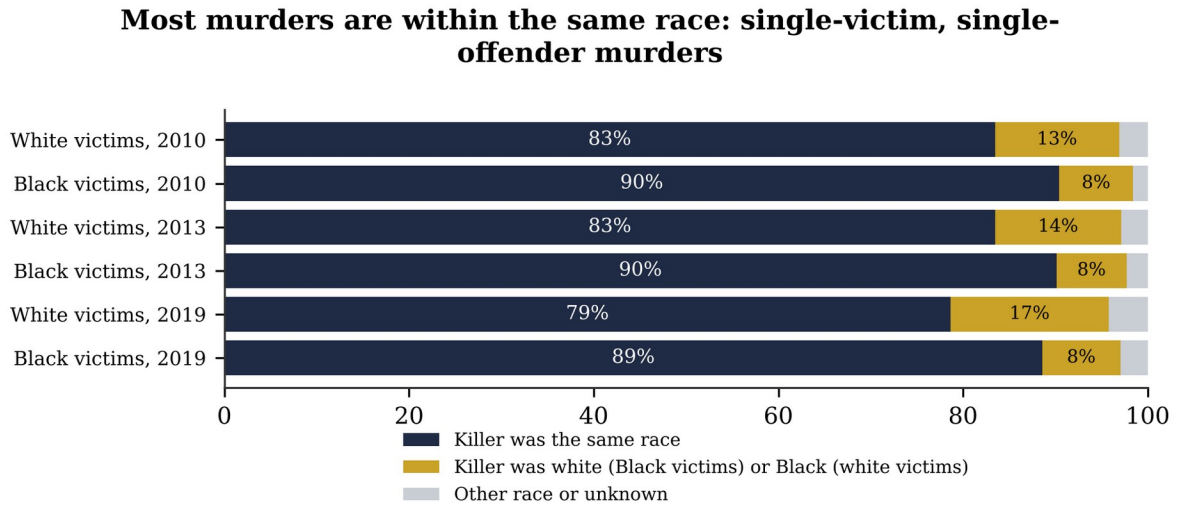
Victim's race	Year	Total	Offender white	Offender Black	Offender other race	Offender race unknown
White	2010	3,327	2,777	447	40	63
White	2013	3,005	2,509	409	49	38
White	2019	3,299	2,594	566	56	83
Black	2010	2,720	218	2,459	7	36
Black	2013	2,491	189	2,245	20	37
Black	2019	2,906	246	2,574	23	63
Other race	2010	179	47	30	98	4
Other race	2013	159	32	27	96	4

[84] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 3: Murder Offenders by Age, Sex, Race, and Ethnicity, 2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-3.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[85] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2010, Expanded Homicide Data Table 6: Race and Sex of Victim by Race and Sex of Offender, 2010", 2011. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2010/crime-in-the-u.s.-2010/tables/10shrtbl06.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2013, Expanded Homicide Data Table 6: Race, Ethnicity, and Sex of Victim by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex of Offender, 2013", 2014. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/offenses-known-to-law-enforcement/expanded-homicide/expanded_homicide_data_table_6_murder_race_and_sex_of_vicitm_by_race_and_sex_of_offender_2013.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 6: Murder, Race, Sex, and Ethnicity of Victim by Race, Sex, and Ethnicity of Offender, 2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-6.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Victim's race	Year	Total	Offender white	Offender Black	Offender other race	Offender race unknown
Other race	2019	247	57	40	138	12

Read across a row. In 2019, of 3,299 white murder victims killed by one person, 2,594 were killed by a white offender (78.6 percent) and 566 by a Black offender (17.2 percent). Of 2,906 Black victims, 2,574 were killed by a Black offender (88.6 percent) and 246 by a white offender (8.5 percent). These percentages are my arithmetic from the FBI table.



Source: FBI, Crime in the United States 2010, 2013 and 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 6. Percentages are the author's arithmetic. The FBI counts most Hispanic people as white in this table.

Most murders are within the same race

Put in plain terms for 2019:

- **White on white:** 2,594 murders.
- **Black on Black:** 2,574 murders.
- **Black on white:** 566 murders.
- **White on Black:** 246 murders.

So most murder is within the same race. And in murders across racial lines, Black offenders killing white victims outnumbered white offenders killing Black victims by more than two to one in every year shown (447 to 218 in 2010, 409 to 189 in 2013, 566 to 246 in 2019). Because white Americans greatly outnumber Black Americans in the population, the rates behind these counts differ even more than the counts do.

The FBI's 2013 table also separated Hispanic victims: of 588 Hispanic victims in single-victim, single-offender murders, 486 were killed by an offender the FBI classed as white (which, in the FBI's tables, includes most Hispanic offenders) and 87 by a Black offender.[86]

[86] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2013, Expanded Homicide Data Table 6: Race, Ethnicity, and Sex of Victim by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex of Offender, 2013", 2014. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/offenses-known-to-law-enforcement/expanded-homicide/expanded_homicide_data_table_6_murder_race_and_sex_of_vicitm_by_race_and_sex_of_offender_2013.xls. Accessed November

What is missing: The FBI's murder tables lump Asian, Native American and Pacific Islander offenders together as "other," and they do not separate Hispanic offenders. The two BJS homicide reports for 2023 and 2025 count victims by race but do not include an offender-by-victim table.[87] **[Not verified: national murder counts by victim race and offender race for Hispanic, Asian and Native American Americans separately, and for any year after 2019.]**

All violent crime: who victimizes whom

For nonfatal violent crime, the BJS survey gives a full five-group table. It covers 2017 through 2021 combined. The numbers are total incidents over those five years, based on the race of the offender as the victim saw it.[88]

Victim's race	All incidents (5 years)	Offender white	Offender Black	Offender Hispanic	Offender Asian or Pacific Islander	Offender other	Offender race unknown
White	15,795,650	8,721,450	2,382,400	1,535,050	187,150	513,140	1,821,890
Black	3,095,610	371,540	1,884,250	243,880	11,850	86,100	341,240
Hispanic	4,057,480	1,006,400	741,600	1,423,520	55,410	65,770	548,520
Asian or Pacific Islander	829,570	219,520	191,970	57,530	113,220	5,760	122,640
Other (Native American and multiracial)	1,412,090	681,920	234,750	127,740	27,830	178,530	139,760

BJS marks some cells, such as Black victims with Asian offenders, as based on too few survey cases to be reliable. The "all incidents" column includes incidents where the number of offenders was unknown, so the row parts do not always add to the total.[89]

Converted to shares of incidents where the victim could tell the offender's race (my arithmetic):

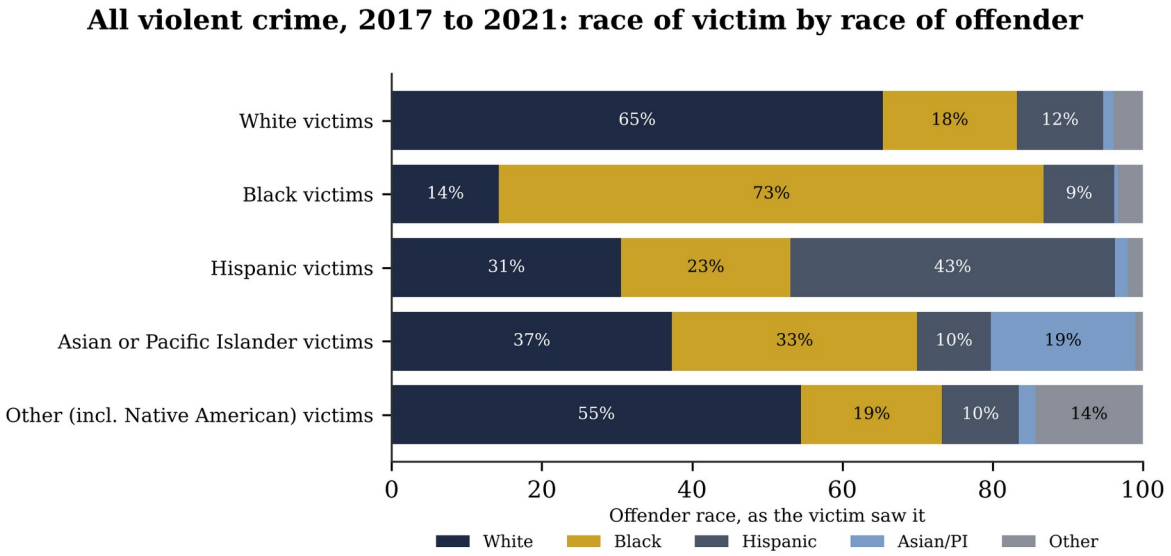
12-13, 2026.

[87] Lizabeth Remrey, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Homicide Victimization in the United States, 2023 (NCJ 309889)", May 2025, revised August 19, 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/hvus23.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Lizabeth Remrey, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Homicide Victimization in the United States, 2025 (NCJ 312197)", October 2026. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/hvus25.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[88] Alexandra Thompson and Susannah N. Tapp, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Violent Victimization by Race or Hispanic Origin, 2008-2021 (NCJ 305262; the web page also shows a later edition, NCJ 309041, August 2024)", July 2023. https://bjs.ojp.gov/violent-victimization-race-or-hispanic-origin-2008-2021. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[89] Alexandra Thompson and Susannah N. Tapp, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Violent Victimization by Race or Hispanic Origin, 2008-2021 (NCJ 305262; the web page also shows a later edition, NCJ 309041, August 2024)", July 2023. https://bjs.ojp.gov/violent-victimization-race-or-hispanic-origin-2008-2021. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Victim's race	Offender white	Offender Black	Offender Hispanic	Offender Asian or PI	Offender other
White	65.4%	17.9%	11.5%	1.4%	3.8%
Black	14.3%	72.5%	9.4%	0.5%	3.3%
Hispanic	30.6%	22.5%	43.2%	1.7%	2.0%
Asian or Pacific Islander	37.3%	32.6%	9.8%	19.3%	1.0%
Other (Native American and multiracial)	54.5%	18.8%	10.2%	2.2%	14.3%



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Violent Victimization by Race or Hispanic Origin, 2008-2021 (July 2023), Table 2. Rape, sexual assault, robbery and assault, age 12+. Shares of incidents where the victim could tell the offender's race; the author's arithmetic.

All violent crime, 2017 to 2021: race of victim by race of offender

What this table shows:

- **Most violent crime is within the same group for white, Black and Hispanic victims,** but less so than murder. About 65 percent of violent crimes against white victims were by white offenders, and about 73 percent against Black victims were by Black offenders.
- **Black-on-white violent crime outnumbered white-on-Black violent crime in raw counts.** Over the five years, BJS's survey estimated 2,382,400 incidents with a white victim and a Black offender, and 371,540 with a Black victim and a white offender. That is about 476,000 a year compared with about 74,000 a year (my arithmetic, dividing by five).
- **Asian American victims were more often victimized by people of other groups than by other Asian Americans.** About 19 percent of incidents with Asian victims involved an Asian offender; 37 percent involved a white offender and 33 percent a Black offender, though BJS notes these smaller groups have wider margins of error.
- **Native American and multiracial victims** were most often victimized by white offenders (about 55 percent) and by offenders of their own group (about 14 percent).

A fair reading of these numbers needs two more facts. First, white Americans are the largest group, so they are both the most common victims and the most common offenders in raw counts; raw counts across groups of very different sizes can mislead. Second, these are perceptions by victims, gathered in a survey, not convictions.

Offenders compared with population

BJS compared the race of violent offenders, as described by victims, with the race of people arrested and with the population, for 2018.[90]

2018	Share of U.S. population	Share of nonfatal violent offenders (victim survey)	Share of people arrested for nonfatal violent crimes (FBI)
White, non-Hispanic	60.4%	52.2%	45.9%
Black, non-Hispanic	12.5%	28.9%	33.0%
Hispanic	18.3%	14.2%	17.6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.7%	1.6%	1.9%
Asian	5.7%	1.8%	1.3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%
Two or more races	2.2%	1.0%	not reported

For robbery, the victim survey identified 51.1 percent of offenders as Black, 31.0 percent as white and 15.6 percent as Hispanic. For aggravated assault: 44.8 percent white, 33.9 percent Black, 16.6 percent Hispanic.[91]

Black Americans made up a larger share of violent offenders than of the population, as described by victims and as reflected in arrests; Asian Americans made up a much smaller share. Why is a matter of ongoing debate among researchers, and these tables do not settle it.

[90] Allen J. Beck, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Race and Ethnicity of Violent Crime Offenders and Arrestees, 2018 (NCJ 255969)", January 2021. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/revcoa18.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[91] Allen J. Beck, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Race and Ethnicity of Violent Crime Offenders and Arrestees, 2018 (NCJ 255969)", January 2021. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/revcoa18.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Chapter 8: Where the Guns Come From

How many guns are there?

No one knows exactly how many guns Americans own, because the United States has no national gun registry. The most-cited estimate comes from the Small Arms Survey, a research center in Geneva, Switzerland. It estimated that American civilians held 393,347,000 firearms in 2017, or 120.5 guns for every 100 people, out of a population it put at 326,474,000. Its worldwide estimate was 857 million civilian guns, and it estimated Americans held 393 million of them. Only 1,073,743 of the American guns were registered.[92]

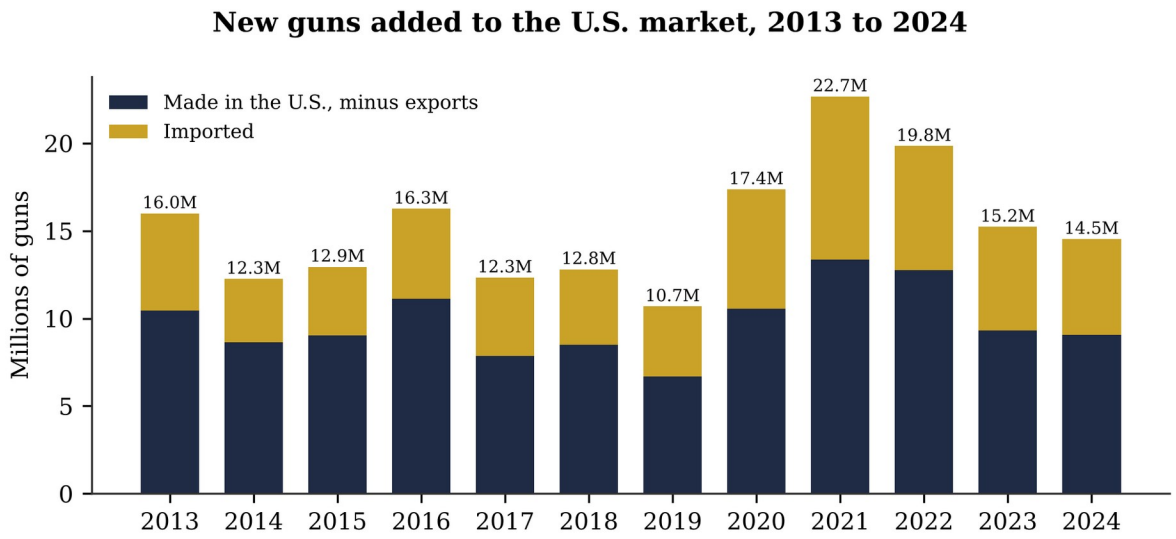
New guns every year

The ATF publishes the number of guns made in the United States and imported each year. Some American-made guns are exported, so the number added to the U.S. market is roughly manufacturing plus imports minus exports.[93]

Year	Guns manufactured	Imported	Exported	Added to U.S. market (my arithmetic)
2013	10,844,792	5,539,539	393,121	15,991,210
2014	9,050,626	3,625,268	420,932	12,254,962
2015	9,358,661	3,930,211	343,456	12,945,416
2016	11,497,441	5,137,771	376,818	16,258,394
2017	8,327,792	4,492,256	488,300	12,331,748
2018	9,052,628	4,305,851	554,237	12,804,242
2019	7,011,945	3,986,663	317,482	10,681,126
2020	11,064,078	6,831,376	529,138	17,366,316
2021	13,806,940	9,319,846	460,705	22,666,081
2022	13,395,031	7,070,561	631,185	19,834,407
2023	9,772,259	5,933,210	479,033	15,226,436
2024	9,474,540	5,457,760	399,902	14,532,398

[92] Small Arms Survey, "Civilian Firearms Holdings, 2017 (annex to Estimating Global Civilian-Held Firearms Numbers)", June 2018. https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/SAS-BP-Civilian-held-firearms-annexe-REV1.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[93] Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "Firearms Commerce in the United States: Statistical Update 2025 (Publication 5390.1)", 2025. https://www.atf.gov/media/30936/download. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: ATF, Firearms Commerce in the United States, Statistical Update 2025, Exhibits 1-3. Totals are the author's arithmetic (manufactured minus exported plus imported).

New guns added to the U.S. market, 2013 to 2024

Over these 12 years, about 182.9 million guns were added to the U.S. market by this rough measure. 2021 was the biggest year. Of the guns made in America in 2024, 4,025,829 were pistols, 639,742 revolvers, 2,823,770 rifles and 599,775 shotguns, with 1,385,424 listed as miscellaneous firearms.[94]

Background checks

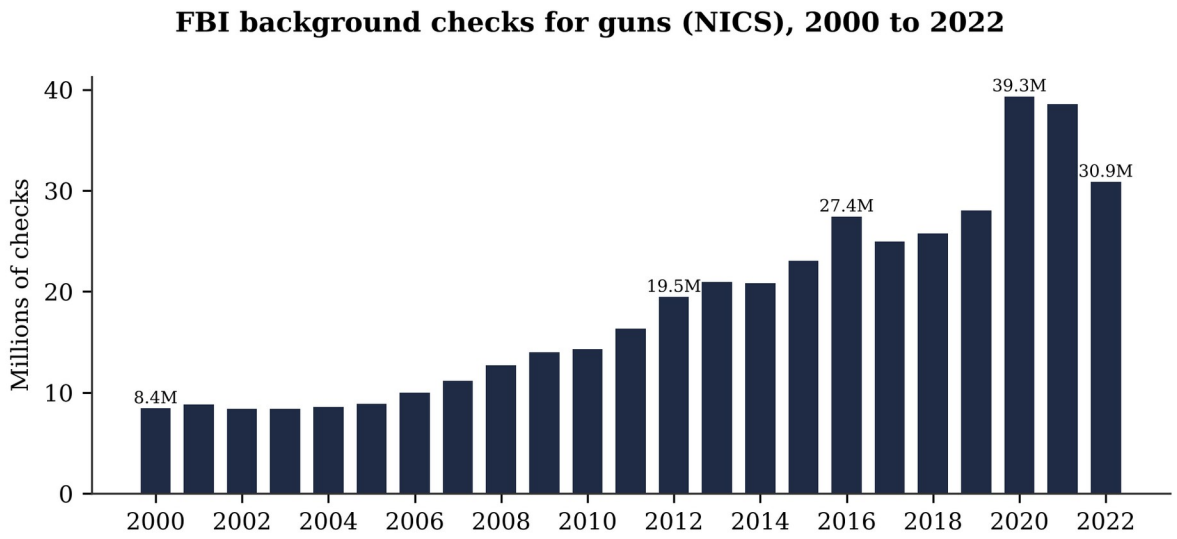
Gun sales are often estimated from the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). But NICS counts checks, not sales. A check can be for a permit, a pawn transaction or a renewal, and some states run checks on permit holders every month. So NICS numbers show trends, not exact sales.

Year	NICS checks	Year	NICS checks
2000	8,427,096	2012	19,463,832
2002	8,367,069	2014	20,860,241
2004	8,579,891	2016	27,425,512
2006	9,993,057	2018	25,769,441
2008	12,692,985	2020	39,326,079
2010	14,320,489	2022	30,861,706

[95]

[94] Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "Firearms Commerce in the United States: Statistical Update 2025 (Publication 5390.1)", 2025. https://www.atf.gov/media/30936/download. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "Annual Firearms Manufacturing and Export Report, Year 2024 Final (data as of January 30, 2026)", 2026. https://www.atf.gov/media/29786/download. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[95] Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Instant Criminal Background Check System monthly reports, as compiled by BuzzFeed News, "NICS Firearm Background Checks (data through September 2023)". https://github.com/BuzzFeedNews/nics-firearm-background-checks. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



FBI background checks for guns (NICS), 2000 to 2022

Checks more than quadrupled from 2000 to 2020. These yearly totals come from a public copy of the FBI's monthly reports compiled by BuzzFeed News; the FBI's own yearly totals may differ slightly.[96]

How criminals get guns

The best national evidence on where criminals get guns comes from a 2016 BJS survey of 24,848 state and federal prisoners. About 1 in 5 (21 percent) said they possessed or carried a gun when they committed the crime that sent them to prison, about 287,400 people.[97]

Of those who said where they got the gun:[98]

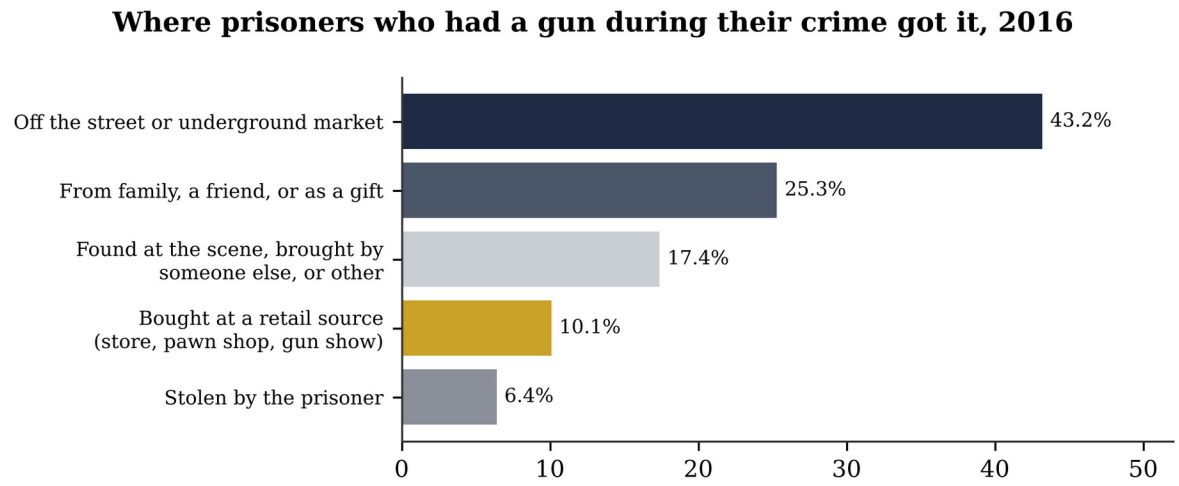
Source of the gun	Share of prisoners
Off the street or underground market	43.2%
From an individual (family member, friend, someone else)	25.3%
Retail source (gun shop 7.5%, pawn shop 1.6%, flea market 0.4%, gun show 0.8%)	10.1%
Theft	6.4%
Other (including found at the crime scene, 6.9%)	17.4%

[96] Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Instant Criminal Background Check System monthly reports, as compiled by BuzzFeed News, "NICS Firearm Background Checks (data through September 2023)". https://github.com/BuzzFeedNews/nics-firearm-background-checks. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[97] Mariel Alper and Lauren Glaze, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Source and Use of Firearms Involved in Crimes: Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016 (NCJ 251776)", January 2019. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/suficspi16.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[98] Mariel Alper and Lauren Glaze, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Source and Use of Firearms Involved in Crimes: Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016 (NCJ 251776)", January 2019. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/suficspi16.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

BJS summarized: "Among prisoners who possessed a gun during their offense, 90% did not obtain it from a retail source." Only 0.8 percent got it at a gun show. Just 8.2 percent got it from a licensed dealer, and 6.7 percent said a background check was done.[99] (Some prisoners named more than one source, so the shares add to more than 100 percent.)



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Source and Use of Firearms Involved in Crimes: Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016 (Jan. 2019), Table 5. Prisoners could name more than one source.

Where prisoners who had a gun during their crime got it, 2016

These findings cut against two popular claims at once. They contradict the claim that gun shows are a main source of crime guns. And they show that background checks at stores were rarely how these offenders got their guns. But they also show that most crime guns came from family, friends and illegal sellers, which is a market that background-check rules at stores do not reach. Each side in the gun debate cites part of this survey; both parts are true.

[99] Mariel Alper and Lauren Glaze, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Source and Use of Firearms Involved in Crimes: Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016 (NCJ 251776)", January 2019. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/suficspi16.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Part Three: Suicide, Accidents and Children

Chapter 9: Gun Suicide, the Largest Part of the Story

If you remember one fact from this book, make it this one: most Americans who die by gunfire die by their own hand. From 2000 through 2025, the CDC counted 552,812 gun suicides, compared with 351,402 gun homicides.[100]

If you or someone you know is struggling, call or text 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

The trend

Gun suicides rose in almost every year of the period:

Year	Gun suicides	Year	Gun suicides
2000	16,586	2014	21,386
2002	17,108	2016	22,938
2004	16,750	2018	24,432
2006	16,883	2020	24,292
2008	18,223	2022	27,032
2010	19,392	2024	27,593
2012	20,666	2025 (provisional)	28,060

[101]

That is a rise of about 69 percent in the count from 2000 to 2025. Part of that rise is population growth. But the rate rose too. Pew Research Center reported that the age-adjusted gun suicide rate in 2024, 7.6 per 100,000, was just below the record of 7.7 set in 1977, and that the number of gun suicides in 2024 was the highest on record.[102] The CDC's provisional count for 2025 is higher still.[103]

[100] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Trace, "Gun death rate increased in 2017, CDC data shows (The Rounds)", December 2018. https://www.thetrace.org/rounds/gun-death-rate-2017-increase-cdc-suicide. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Trace, "Gun deaths held steady in 2018, CDC data shows", February 2020. https://thetrace.org/2020/02/gun-deaths-suicide-cdc-data-2018. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[101] Pew Research Center, "Gun suicides in the U.S. have increased, but gun homicides have fallen since 2021 (chart data from CDC)", April 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/chart/gun-suicides-have-increased-in-the-u-s-in-recent-years-but-gun-murders-have-fallen-since-2021/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[102] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[103] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Guns are the most common method of suicide in America. In 2024, 27,593 of the 48,824 suicides counted by the CDC involved a gun, or 57 out of every 100.[104]

Who dies by gun suicide

Gun suicide is overwhelmingly male. In 2021, the CDC's provisional count showed 22,930 male gun suicides (a rate of 15.65 per 100,000) and 3,390 female (2.27).[105]

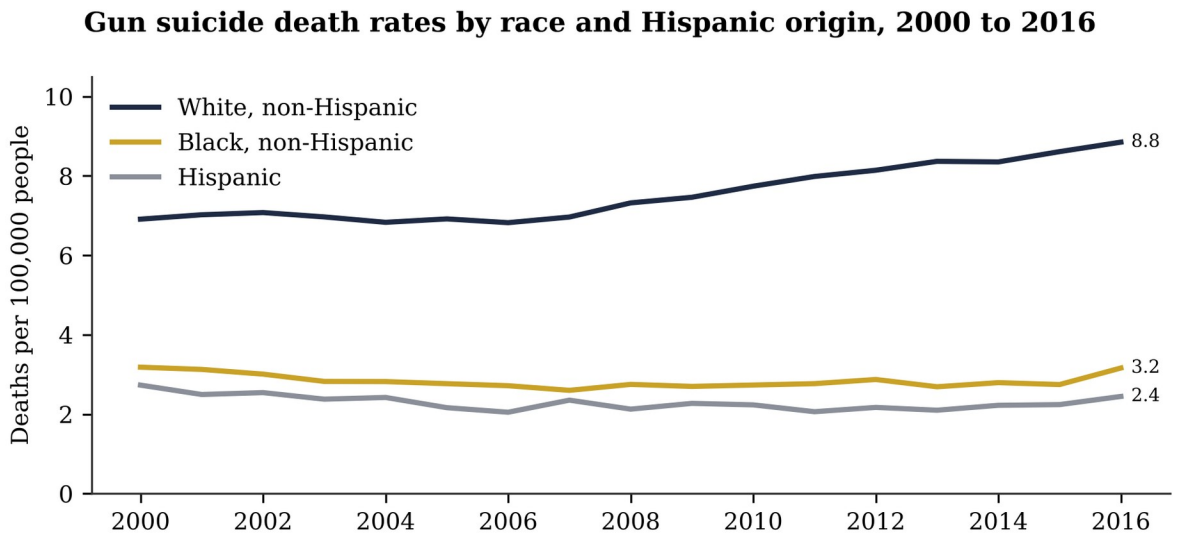
It also falls differently across racial groups than gun homicide does. For gun homicide, Black Americans have by far the highest rate. For gun suicide, white Americans do. The CDC's age-adjusted rates:[106]

Gun suicide deaths per 100,000 (age-adjusted)	2000	2005	2010	2014	2016
White, non-Hispanic	6.9	6.9	7.7	8.4	8.8
Black, non-Hispanic	3.2	2.8	2.7	2.8	3.2
Hispanic	2.7	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.4
All Americans	5.9	5.7	6.1	6.4	6.8

[104] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[105] Thomas R. Simon and others, CDC, "Notes from the Field: Increases in Firearm Homicide and Suicide Rates - United States, 2020-2021, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 71(40):1286-1287", October 7, 2022. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7140a4.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[106] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: CDC NCHS Injury Mortality: United States dataset, age-adjusted rates (latest year in the dataset is 2016).

Gun suicide death rates by race and Hispanic origin, 2000 to 2016

The CDC's 2022 report on 2020-2021 found that among people under 45, Native Americans had the highest gun suicide rates, and among people 45 and older, white Americans did.[107] The CDC data set I used for race-specific suicide rates ends in 2016; **[Not verified: race-specific gun suicide rates for 2017-2025 from a CDC source I could open.]**

Where gun suicide is highest

Gun suicide is highest in rural Western states. Pew's analysis of 2024 CDC data listed the states with the highest gun suicide rates as Wyoming (19.7 per 100,000), Alaska (18.7), Montana (16.9), New Mexico (14.3) and Idaho (13.7). The lowest were the District of Columbia (1.5), Hawaii (1.9), New Jersey (2.1), Massachusetts (2.3) and New York (2.3).[108]

Suicide by other means

Chapter 5 showed that suicides by means other than guns also rose sharply, from 12,764 in 2000 to 22,027 in 2016, with suicide by suffocation (mostly hanging) roughly doubling.[109] The overall rise in American suicide over this period was not only a gun story. But guns remained the most common method in every year.

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[107] Thomas R. Simon and others, CDC, "Notes from the Field: Increases in Firearm Homicide and Suicide Rates - United States, 2020-2021, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 71(40):1286-1287", October 7, 2022. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7140a4.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[108] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[109] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

What the numbers mean for the gun debate

Suicide is where the gun debate is often quietest and the numbers are largest. People who focus on crime sometimes leave suicide out of gun death counts, and people who quote total gun deaths sometimes don't mention that most are suicides. Both habits mislead. A fair statement is: guns are involved in most American suicides, and suicides are most American gun deaths.

Chapter 10: Children, Teens and Accidents

How many children and teens die

Gun deaths of children and teens are a small share of all gun deaths, but they draw special attention, and the numbers rose sharply in this period.

The health policy research group KFF analyzed CDC data and reported that "In 2020 and 2021, firearms contributed to the deaths of more children ages 1-17 years in the U.S. than any other type of injury or illness." In 2021, 2,571 children aged 1 to 17 died from guns, a rate of 3.7 per 100,000, up from a low of 1.8 in 2013. Counting ages 1 to 19, "firearms were involved in 4,733 child and teen deaths" in 2021.[110]

The CDC's own summary, updated in September 2026, says firearm injuries were "the second leading cause of death among children and teens ages 1-19" in 2024.[111] So the often-repeated claim that guns are the leading cause of death for American children was true for 2020 and 2021 by KFF's measure (ages 1 to 17), but by 2024, by the CDC's measure (ages 1 to 19), guns were second. Part Nine rates this claim.

KFF also compared the United States with peer countries. It found the U.S. firearm death rate for children and teens was "over 9.5 times" the rate in Canada, and that the United States accounted for 97 percent of child and teen gun deaths among the wealthy peer countries it studied.[112]

Children and teens shot, not counting suicide

The Gun Violence Archive counts children (0 to 11) and teens (12 to 17) killed or injured in shootings, excluding suicides.[113]

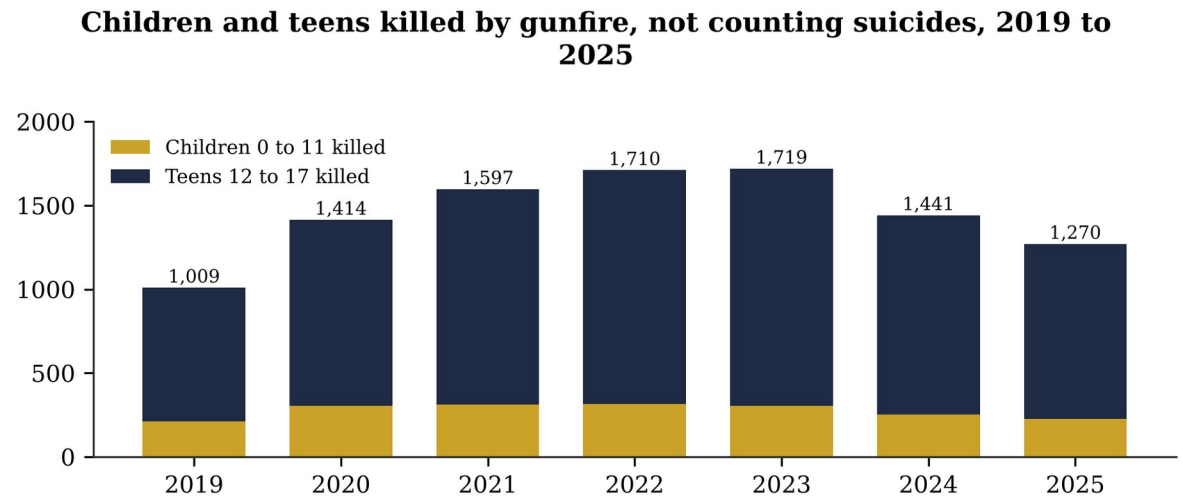
Year	Children 0-11 killed	Children 0-11 injured	Teens 12-17 killed	Teens 12-17 injured
2019	211	485	798	2,344
2020	304	700	1,110	3,087
2021	313	747	1,284	3,413
2022	314	681	1,396	3,836
2023	303	647	1,416	3,915
2024	251	554	1,190	3,262
2025	227	463	1,043	2,757
2026 (through Nov. 10)	198	336	758	2,242

[110] Matt McGough, Nirmita Panchal, Cynthia Cox and Krutika Amin, KFF, "Child and Teen Firearm Mortality in the U.S. and Peer Countries", July 18, 2023. https://www.kff.org/mental-health/issue-brief/child-and-teen-firearm-mortality-in-the-u-s-and-peer-countries/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[111] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Fast Facts: Firearm Injury and Death", updated September 2, 2026. https://www.cdc.gov/firearm-violence/data-research/facts-stats/index.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[112] Matt McGough, Nirmita Panchal, Cynthia Cox and Krutika Amin, KFF, "Child and Teen Firearm Mortality in the U.S. and Peer Countries", July 18, 2023. https://www.kff.org/mental-health/issue-brief/child-and-teen-firearm-mortality-in-the-u-s-and-peer-countries/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[113] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: Gun Violence Archive, Past Summary Ledgers (Nov. 12, 2026). Excludes suicides.

Children and teens killed by gunfire, not counting suicides, 2019 to 2025

For teens, the peak came later than for adults: 1,416 killed in 2023, compared with 798 in 2019. Since then the numbers have fallen, but in 2025 more teens were killed than in 2019.[114]

Accidental shootings

Accidental gun deaths are a small part of the total. The CDC counted 450 in 2024.[115] The Gun Violence Archive counts "unintentional" shooting incidents, which include injuries as well as deaths:[116]

Year	Unintentional shooting incidents (GVA)
2014	1,477
2016	2,231
2018	1,693
2020	2,311
2022	1,654
2024	1,467
2025	1,351

Accidental shootings peaked in 2016 and 2020 in this count, two years when gun background checks jumped (see Chapter 8), and have declined since. That timing is a pattern in the numbers, not proof that one caused the other.

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[114] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[115] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[116] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Part Four: Mass Shootings

Chapter 11: What Counts as a Mass Shooting

Ask four experts how many mass shootings happened in 2024 and you can get four answers that differ by more than 200 times. None of them is lying. They are counting different things. Before looking at any mass shooting number, you have to know whose definition it uses.

The main definitions

Who counts	What they count	Shooter counted?	Includes gang, robbery and family killings?
Gun Violence Archive, "mass shooting"	4 or more people shot (killed or wounded) in one incident, same general time and place	No	Yes
Gun Violence Archive, "mass murder"	4 or more people killed in one incident	No	Yes
Mother Jones	3 or more killed (4 or more before 2013) by a lone shooter in a public place	No	No
The Violence Project	4 or more killed with a firearm in a public place, not tied to underlying criminal activity	No	No
FBI, "active shooter"	One or more people actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area	Not a body count	Mostly no
U.S. Secret Service, "mass attacks"	3 or more people harmed in a public or semi-public place, by any weapon	No	Some

[117] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Mother Jones, "A Guide to Mass Shootings in America", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/07/mass-shootings-map/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Violence Project, "Methodology (Version 10, January 2026)", January 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/methodology. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Homeland Security Today, "FBI Releases New 2024 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Report", June 2025. https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/fbi-releases-new-2024-active-shooter-incidents-in-the-united-states-report/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Ted Hesson, Reuters (via Yahoo News), "Half of U.S. mass attacks sparked by personal, workplace disputes -report", January 25, 2023. https://www.yahoo.com/news/half-u-mass-attacks-sparked-100403110.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

The Gun Violence Archive calls its definition "a purely statistical threshold." It also notes that "The FBI does not define Mass Shooting in any form."[118] Mother Jones's original definition required that "The perpetrator took the lives of at least four people." In January 2013 it lowered the bar "to three or more victims killed."[119] The Violence Project counts "incidents with four or more murdered victims using firearms (excluding the offender) in a public location, not attributable to underlying criminal activity."[120] The FBI's active shooter definition is "one or more individuals actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area."[121]

One year, four answers

Here is what each count found for 2024.

2024	Count
Gun Violence Archive mass shootings (4+ shot)	503
Gun Violence Archive mass murders (4+ killed)	29
FBI active shooter incidents	24
Mother Jones public mass shootings (3+ killed)	2

[122]

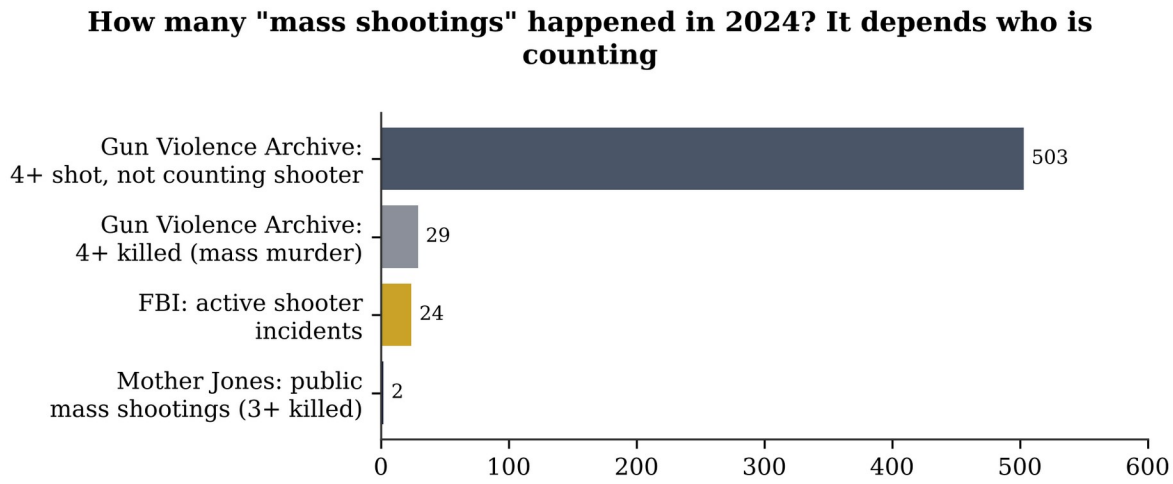
[118] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[119] Mother Jones, "A Guide to Mass Shootings in America", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/07/mass-shootings-map/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[120] The Violence Project, "Methodology (Version 10, January 2026)", January 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/methodology. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[121] Homeland Security Today, "FBI Releases New 2024 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Report", June 2025. https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/fbi-releases-new-2024-active-shooter-incidents-in-the-united-states-report/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[122] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Homeland Security Today, "FBI Releases New 2024 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Report", June 2025. https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/fbi-releases-new-2024-active-shooter-incidents-in-the-united-states-report/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



How many mass shootings happened in 2024? It depends who is counting

The Gun Violence Archive's count is large because it includes every shooting in which four or more people were hit, whatever the setting or motive. In 2024, only 29 of its 503 mass shootings killed four or more people. The Mother Jones and Violence Project counts are small because they include only the kind of attack most people picture when they hear "mass shooting": a shooter opening fire on strangers or coworkers in a public place.

When you hear a mass shooting number, ask which definition is behind it. A claim like "there were more than 500 mass shootings last year" is true by one definition and wildly misleading if you picture 500 attacks like Las Vegas or Uvalde.

Chapter 12: The Record, 2000 to 2026

Public mass shootings (Mother Jones)

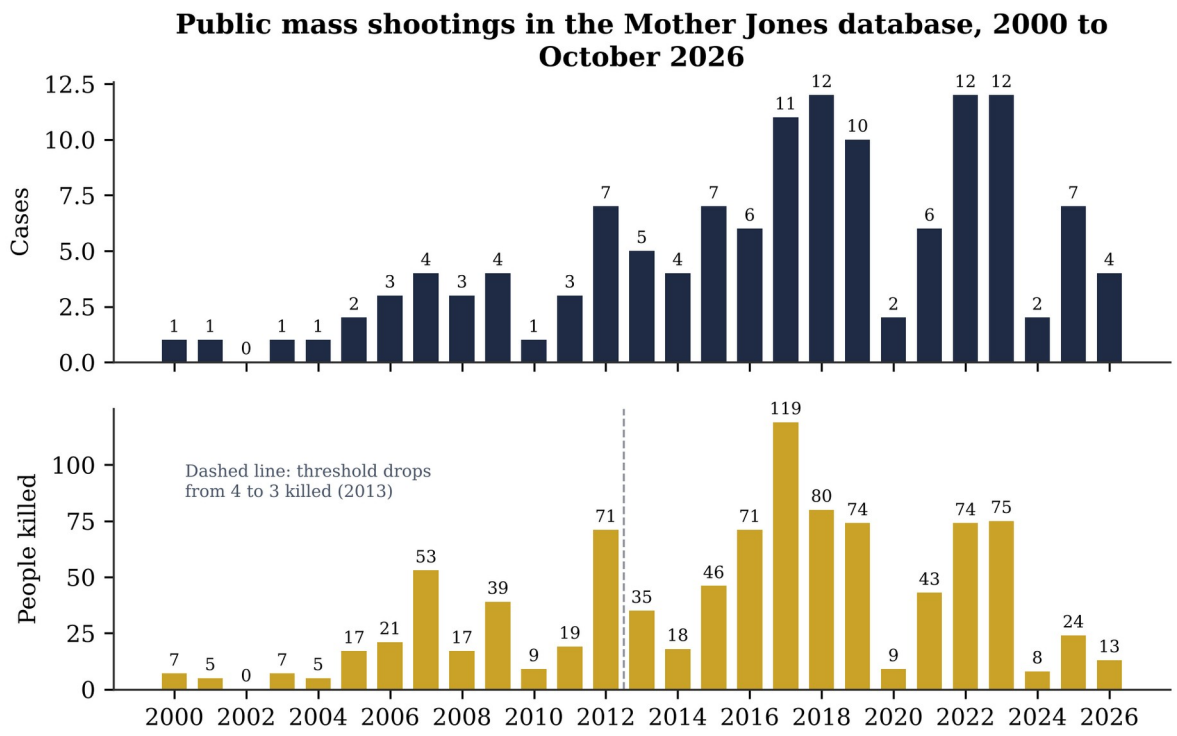
The Mother Jones database lists 131 public mass shootings from January 1, 2000, through October 15, 2026, in which 959 people were killed and 1,420 wounded, not counting the shooters.[123] Appendix A lists every one of them, with the number killed and wounded.

Year	Cases	Killed	Year	Cases	Killed
2000	1	7	2014	4	18
2001	1	5	2015	7	46
2002	0	0	2016	6	71
2003	1	7	2017	11	119
2004	1	5	2018	12	80
2005	2	17	2019	10	74
2006	3	21	2020	2	9
2007	4	53	2021	6	43
2008	3	17	2022	12	74
2009	4	39	2023	12	75
2010	1	9	2024	2	8
2011	3	19	2025	7	24
2012	7	71	2026 (to Oct. 15)	4	13
2013	5	35	**Total**	**131**	**959**

[124]

[123] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. J. A. Acosta (GitHub), copy of the Mother Jones spreadsheet through September 2024, "MJ Mass Shootings - Data Cleaning and Analysis". https://github.com/JA-Acosta/mj_mass_shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[124] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. J. A. Acosta (GitHub), copy of the Mother Jones spreadsheet through September 2024, "MJ Mass Shootings - Data Cleaning and Analysis". https://github.com/JA-Acosta/mj_mass_shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: Mother Jones, US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026 (updated Oct. 16, 2026). Victims only; shooters not counted. 2026 is partial.

Public mass shootings in the Mother Jones database, 2000 to October 2026

The pattern is clear even with the 2013 change in definition. From 2000 through 2011, the database lists 24 cases. From 2012 through 2023, it lists 94. The worst years were 2017 (11 cases, 119 killed, including Las Vegas) and 2018 (12 cases, 80 killed). Then the count fell sharply: 2 cases in 2024, 7 in 2025 and 4 so far in 2026.

The deadliest public mass shootings since 2000

Date	Event (as named by Mother Jones)	State	Killed	Wounded
Oct. 1, 2017	Las Vegas Strip massacre	Nevada	60	546
June 12, 2016	Orlando nightclub massacre	Florida	49	53
Apr. 16, 2007	Virginia Tech massacre	Virginia	32	23
Dec. 14, 2012	Sandy Hook Elementary massacre	Connecticut	27	2
Nov. 5, 2017	Texas First Baptist Church massacre	Texas	26	20
Aug. 3, 2019	El Paso Walmart mass shooting	Texas	23	22

Date	Event (as named by Mother Jones)	State	Killed	Wounded
May 24, 2022	Robb Elementary School massacre	Texas	21	17
Oct. 25, 2023	Maine bowling alley and bar shootings	Maine	18	13
Feb. 14, 2018	Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting	Florida	17	17
Apr. 3, 2009	Binghamton shootings	New York	14	4
Dec. 2, 2015	San Bernardino mass shooting	California	14	21
Nov. 5, 2009	Fort Hood massacre	Texas	13	31

[125]

Mother Jones's counts can include people who died later of their wounds, and they sometimes differ slightly from other sources. For El Paso, Mother Jones's current sheet lists 23 killed and 22 wounded; an older copy listed different figures, and I use the current one.[126]

Gun Violence Archive: the broad count

The Gun Violence Archive's yearly ledgers give the broadest count.[127]

Year	Mass shootings (4+ shot)	Mass murders (4+ killed)
2014	272	not in ledger
2015	332	not in ledger
2016	384	not in ledger
2017	346	not in ledger
2018	335	not in ledger
2019	414	32
2020	611	21

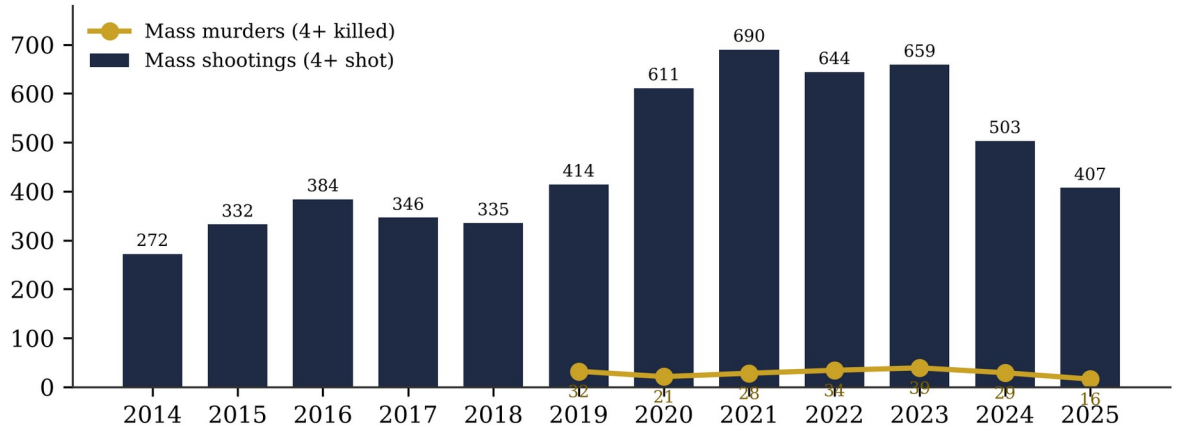
[125] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. J. A. Acosta (GitHub), copy of the Mother Jones spreadsheet through September 2024, "MJ Mass Shootings - Data Cleaning and Analysis". https://github.com/JA-Acosta/mj_mass_shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[126] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. J. A. Acosta (GitHub), copy of the Mother Jones spreadsheet through September 2024, "MJ Mass Shootings - Data Cleaning and Analysis". https://github.com/JA-Acosta/mj_mass_shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[127] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Year	Mass shootings (4+ shot)	Mass murders (4+ killed)
2021	690	28
2022	644	34
2023	659	39
2024	503	29
2025	407	16
2026 (through Nov. 10)	408	23

Gun Violence Archive mass shootings and mass murders, 2014 to 2025



Source: Gun Violence Archive, Past Summary Ledgers (published Nov. 12, 2026). Mass murder counts are shown from 2019, the first year in the ledgers.

Gun Violence Archive mass shootings and mass murders, 2014 to 2025

By this count, mass shootings jumped from 414 in 2019 to 690 in 2021, then fell to 407 in 2025. The Gun Violence Archive revises its figures as it verifies incidents. For example, Pew Research Center reported 645 and 660 for 2022 and 2023, while the archive's ledger as published on November 12, 2026, shows 644 and 659.[128]

FBI active shooter incidents

The FBI's active shooter reports count a different kind of event: a shooter attacking people in a populated place, whether or not anyone dies. The FBI counted 61 incidents in 2021, 50 in 2022, 48 in 2023 and 24 in 2024. In 2024, 23 people were killed, not counting the shooters.[129] The FBI designated 223 active shooter incidents from 2020 to 2024, which it said was 70 percent more than in 2015-2019.[130]

[128] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[129] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Police Magazine, "FBI Reports Active Shooter Incidents Down 50% Last Year", June 4, 2025. https://www.policemag.com/news/fbi-reports-active-shooter-incidents-down-50-last-year. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Katherine Schweit, a former FBI official, summarized the FBI data for 2000 through 2024 as 556 incidents with 3,921 people killed or wounded.[131]

Secret Service: mass attacks of every kind

The U.S. Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center studied 173 "mass attacks" in public or semi-public places from 2016 through 2020, in which three or more people were harmed. Those attacks killed 513 people and injured 1,234. Firearms were used in 73 percent of them.[132] The rest used vehicles, knives and other weapons. Chapter 13 covers what the Secret Service found about the attackers.

How mass shootings compare with all gun deaths

Public mass shootings are a very small share of gun deaths. In 2023, a bad year, the Mother Jones count shows 75 people killed in public mass shootings.[133] The CDC counted 17,927 gun homicides and 46,728 total gun deaths that year.[134] So public mass shooting victims were about 0.4 percent of gun homicide victims and about 0.16 percent of all gun deaths. Even by the Gun Violence Archive's broad "mass murder" count, mass killings are a small share of the total.

That does not make them unimportant. They are the events that most shape how Americans think about gun violence, and they are the events that most often lead to new laws. But someone who judges American gun violence mainly by mass shootings is looking at well under 1 percent of it.

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[130] Homeland Security Today, "FBI Releases New 2024 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Report", June 2025. https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/fbi-releases-new-2024-active-shooter-incidents-in-the-united-states-report/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[131] Katherine Schweit, Police1, "Understanding the FBI 2024 active shooter data: Context, trends and takeaways", July 2, 2025. https://www.police1.com/active-shooter/understanding-the-fbi-2024-active-shooter-data-context-trends-and-takeaways. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[132] U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, "Mass Attacks in Public Spaces: 2016-2020 (announcement)", January 2023. https://www.secretservice.gov/node/5876. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Ted Hesson, Reuters (via Yahoo News), "Half of U.S. mass attacks sparked by personal, workplace disputes -report", January 25, 2023. https://www.yahoo.com/news/half-u-mass-attacks-sparked-100403110.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[133] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[134] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Chapter 13: Who the Shooters Are

This chapter describes public mass shooters as a group, using the main databases. The numbers are small, so a few cases can move the percentages.

Sex and age

Public mass shooters are almost all men. The Violence Project reports that 98 percent of the public mass shooters in its database were male, with an average age of 34.[135] In the 131 Mother Jones cases since 2000, the shooter was male in 125, female in 3, and in 2 cases a man and woman attacked together. One case (Nashville, 2023) was coded "T->M" in an older copy of the database, and the current sheet codes it female with a note.[136] Chapter 15 covers gender identity.

The average age of shooters in the Mother Jones cases since 2000 was about 34, and the median (middle) age was about 31, by my count of the 130 cases with an age listed.[137]

Race

Race of shooter, Mother Jones cases, 2000 to Oct. 2026	Cases	Share
White	67	51%
Black	22	17%
Latino	10	8%
Asian	8	6%
Native American	3	2%
Other	5	4%
Unknown or not listed	16	12%
Total	**131**	**100%**

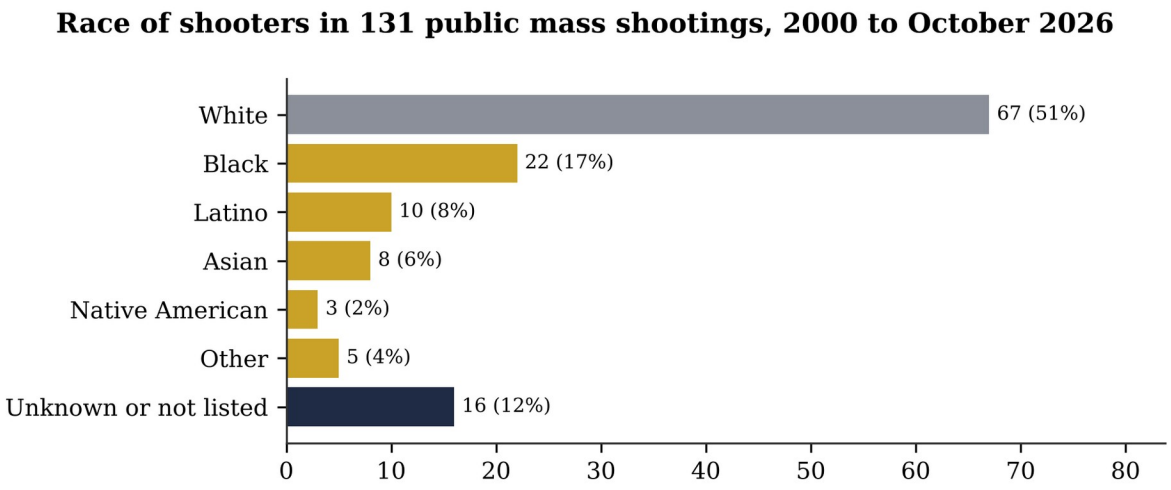
[138]

[135] The Violence Project (Hamline University and Metropolitan State University), "Key Findings", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/key-findings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[136] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. J. A. Acosta (GitHub), copy of the Mother Jones spreadsheet through September 2024, "MJ Mass Shootings - Data Cleaning and Analysis". https://github.com/JA-Acosta/mj_mass_shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[137] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. J. A. Acosta (GitHub), copy of the Mother Jones spreadsheet through September 2024, "MJ Mass Shootings - Data Cleaning and Analysis". https://github.com/JA-Acosta/mj_mass_shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[138] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. J. A. Acosta (GitHub), copy of the Mother Jones spreadsheet through September 2024, "MJ Mass Shootings - Data Cleaning and Analysis". https://github.com/JA-Acosta/mj_mass_shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: Mother Jones mass shootings database, race field as coded by Mother Jones. Author's count.

Race of shooters in 131 public mass shootings, 2000 to October 2026

The National Institute of Justice's summary of The Violence Project's data for 1966 through 2019 found shooters were 52.3 percent white, 20.9 percent Black, 8.1 percent Latino, 6.4 percent Asian, 4.2 percent Middle Eastern and 1.8 percent Native American.[139] The Violence Project's current key findings put white shooters at 64 percent overall, but note that "representation varies by location type."[140]

For context, white non-Hispanic Americans were 60.4 percent of the population in 2018, Black Americans 12.5 percent, Hispanic Americans 18.3 percent and Asian Americans 5.7 percent.[141] So white shooters were about their share of the population or somewhat below it, depending on the database and years; Black shooters were somewhat above their share of the population; Hispanic shooters were below. Asian shooters were about their share. Part Nine rates the claim that "most mass shooters are white."

Notice how different this is from the picture for all murders in Chapter 7. Public mass shooters and everyday killers are, as groups, quite different people.

How they got their guns

The Violence Project found that 64 percent of public mass shooters "obtained firearms legally."[142] The National Institute of Justice's summary for 1966-2019 said 77 percent bought at least some of their guns legally, 13 percent bought one illegally, and for 32.5 percent the source could not be confirmed.[143] In the

[139] National Institute of Justice, "Public Mass Shootings: Database Amasses Details of a Half Century of U.S. Mass Shootings with Firearms, Generating Psychosocial Histories", February 3, 2022. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[140] The Violence Project (Hamline University and Metropolitan State University), "Key Findings", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/key-findings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[141] Allen J. Beck, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Race and Ethnicity of Violent Crime Offenders and Arrestees, 2018 (NCJ 255969)", January 2021. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/revcoa18.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[142] The Violence Project (Hamline University and Metropolitan State University), "Key Findings", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/key-findings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Mother Jones cases since 2000, the database says the weapons were obtained legally in 81 cases and partly legally in 2, illegally in 11, and was blank, unknown or "to be determined" in 37.[144]

The same NIJ summary found handguns were used in 77.2 percent of cases and "assault rifles" in 25.1 percent (some shooters used both).[145]

Warning signs and history

The Violence Project's key findings describe a pattern that shows up again and again:[146]

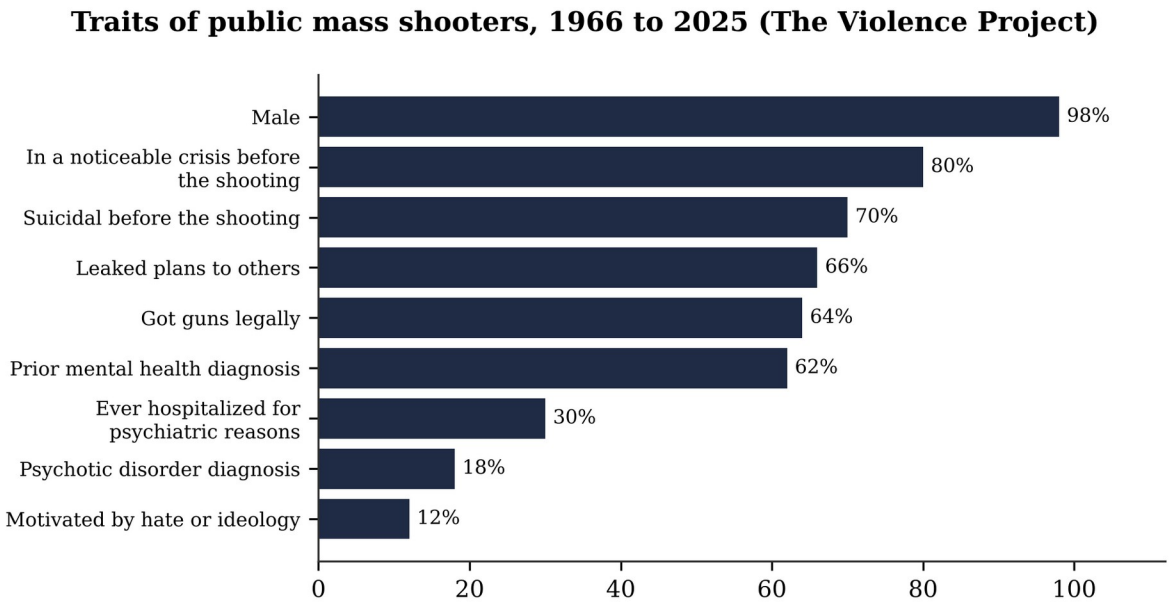
Trait of public mass shooters (The Violence Project, 1966-2025)	Share
Male	98%
In a noticeable crisis before the shooting	80%
Suicidal before the shooting (statements or attempts)	70%
Experienced childhood trauma	68%
Leaked their plans to others	66%
Obtained their guns legally	64%
Prior mental health diagnosis	62%
Ever hospitalized for psychiatric reasons	30%
Diagnosed with a psychotic disorder	18%
Motivated by hate or ideology	12%

[143] National Institute of Justice, "Public Mass Shootings: Database Amasses Details of a Half Century of U.S. Mass Shootings with Firearms, Generating Psychosocial Histories", February 3, 2022. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[144] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. J. A. Acosta (GitHub), copy of the Mother Jones spreadsheet through September 2024, "MJ Mass Shootings - Data Cleaning and Analysis". https://github.com/JA-Acosta/mj_mass_shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[145] National Institute of Justice, "Public Mass Shootings: Database Amasses Details of a Half Century of U.S. Mass Shootings with Firearms, Generating Psychosocial Histories", February 3, 2022. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[146] The Violence Project (Hamline University and Metropolitan State University), "Key Findings", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/key-findings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: The Violence Project, "Key Findings" (Hamline University, accessed Nov. 13, 2026). Public mass shootings: 4+ killed with a gun in a public place.

Traits of public mass shooters, 1966 to 2025 (The Violence Project)

The NIJ summary of 1966-2019 added that 64.5 percent had a prior criminal record, 62.8 percent a history of violence, 27.9 percent a history of domestic violence, and 28.5 percent military experience.[147]

The Violence Project lists motives as: interpersonal conflict, 35 percent; employment grievance, 26 percent; domestic or family, 16 percent; hate or ideology, 12 percent.[148]

What the Secret Service found

The Secret Service's study of 173 mass attacks from 2016 to 2020 found that "Over half of the attackers experienced mental health symptoms prior to or at the time of their attacks," "One-quarter of the attackers subscribed to a belief system involving conspiracies or hateful ideologies," and "Half of the attackers were motivated by grievances."[149] ABC News reported the study's finding that "One third of attackers in this study were prohibited by federal law from purchasing or possessing a firearm."[150]

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[147] National Institute of Justice, "Public Mass Shootings: Database Amasses Details of a Half Century of U.S. Mass Shootings with Firearms, Generating Psychosocial Histories", February 3, 2022. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[148] The Violence Project (Hamline University and Metropolitan State University), "Key Findings", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/key-findings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[149] U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, "New Secret Service Research Examines for the First Time Five Years of Mass Violence Data (press release on Mass Attacks in Public Spaces: 2016-2020)", January 25, 2023. https://www.secretservice.gov/node/5878. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[150] Luke Barr, ABC News (Good Morning America), "Gun was used as a weapon in majority of recent mass attacks: US Secret Service", January 25, 2023. https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/news/story/gun-weapon-majority-recent-mass-attacks-us-secret-96641944. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Two numbers that disagree

The Violence Project's key findings page says 62 percent of shooters had a prior mental health diagnosis. Its database page says 70 percent. The two pages do not explain the difference; it may come from different counting periods or different groups of cases.[151] I report both rather than pick one.

[151] The Violence Project (Hamline University and Metropolitan State University), "Key Findings", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/key-findings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Violence Project, "Mass Shooter Database (202 cases, 1966-2025)", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/mass-shooter-database/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Chapter 14: Mental Illness and Psychiatric Drugs

Two claims come up after almost every mass shooting. One is that the shooters are mentally ill. The other is that they were on antidepressants or other psychiatric drugs, and that the drugs caused the violence. Here is what the records show.

Mental illness

Many public mass shooters had mental health problems, but most were not psychotic, and the share depends heavily on how "mental illness" is defined.

- The Violence Project found 62 percent had a prior mental health diagnosis (70 percent on its database page), but only 18 percent had been diagnosed with a psychotic disorder, the kind of severe illness involving delusions or hallucinations.[152]
- The NIJ summary found psychosis played a primary role in about 10 percent of cases and a minor role in about a third.[153]
- The Secret Service found "Over half" of mass attackers had mental health symptoms before or during their attacks. Those symptoms included depression and suicidal thoughts.[154]
- The Mother Jones database marks "prior signs of mental health issues" as "yes" for 67 of the 131 cases since 2000 (51 percent), "no" for 12, and unclear, unknown or blank for the other 52.[155]

So the claim that mass shooters have mental health problems is partly true: many did, often depression, crisis or suicidal thoughts. But most were not legally insane or psychotic, and most people with mental illness are never violent. Part Nine rates this claim.

Psychiatric drugs

Here the evidence is much stronger than most people realize, and it mostly points one way.

FactCheck.org reviewed the main data in October 2025, after Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. suggested on Fox and Friends that psychiatric drugs might be behind school

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[152] The Violence Project (Hamline University and Metropolitan State University), "Key Findings", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/key-findings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Violence Project, "Mass Shooter Database (202 cases, 1966-2025)", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/mass-shooter-database/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[153] National Institute of Justice, "Public Mass Shootings: Database Amasses Details of a Half Century of U.S. Mass Shootings with Firearms, Generating Psychosocial Histories", February 3, 2022. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[154] U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, "New Secret Service Research Examines for the First Time Five Years of Mass Violence Data (press release on Mass Attacks in Public Spaces: 2016-2020)", January 25, 2023. https://www.secretservice.gov/node/5878. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[155] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. J. A. Acosta (GitHub), copy of the Mother Jones spreadsheet through September 2024, "MJ Mass Shootings - Data Cleaning and Analysis". https://github.com/JA-Acosta/mj_mass_shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

shootings, following the August 27, 2025, shooting at Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis.[156] Its findings and related studies:

- **Columbia University researchers** studied 852 mass shootings from 1990 through 2023 (three or more killed, not counting the shooter; organized crime, terrorism and war excluded). Only 34 shooters, about 4 percent, had any known lifetime antidepressant use. Five (0.6 percent) had used antipsychotics. In all, 56 (6.6 percent) had any known psychiatric drug use. More than half of those were not actively taking the medication at the time.[157]
- **The Violence Project** found that 24 percent of public mass shooters from 1966 to 2024 had taken some prescribed psychiatric medication at some point, and that "22 perpetrators in our database were known to have taken SSRI medications, which is 11% of mass shooters."[158]
- **For comparison,** about 13 percent of American adults had used an antidepressant in the past 30 days, according to CDC figures cited by FactCheck.org.[159]
- **A 2019 review** of school shootings from 2000 to 2017 found that "most school shooters were not previously treated with psychotropic medications."[160]
- **A 2020 Swedish study** found a small link between SSRIs and violent crime within individuals, but fewer than 3 percent of SSRI users committed a violent crime, and its lead author said the findings "will not be directly relevant to mass shootings."[161]

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's "black box" warning on antidepressants is about suicidal thinking and behavior, not violence toward others. FactCheck.org reported that the FDA's 2004 analysis found suicidal thinking or behavior in about 4 percent of patients on the drugs compared with 2 percent on placebo, with no suicides in the trials.[162]

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[156] Jessica McDonald, FactCheck.org, "RFK Jr. Misleads About Antidepressants and School Shootings", October 15, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/10/rfk-jr-misleads-about-antidepressants-and-school-shootings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[157] Ragy R. Girgis, Hannah Hesson and Gary Brucato, "Antidepressant use and suicide among U.S.-based mass murderers who use firearms: 1990-2023, Psychiatry Research (doi 10.1016/j.psychres.2025.116737); summarized by Eric W. Dolan, PsyPost, October 12, 2025", 2025. https://www.psypost.org/new-study-finds-no-evidence-linking-antidepressant-use-to-mass-shootings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Jessica McDonald, FactCheck.org, "RFK Jr. Misleads About Antidepressants and School Shootings", October 15, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/10/rfk-jr-misleads-about-antidepressants-and-school-shootings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

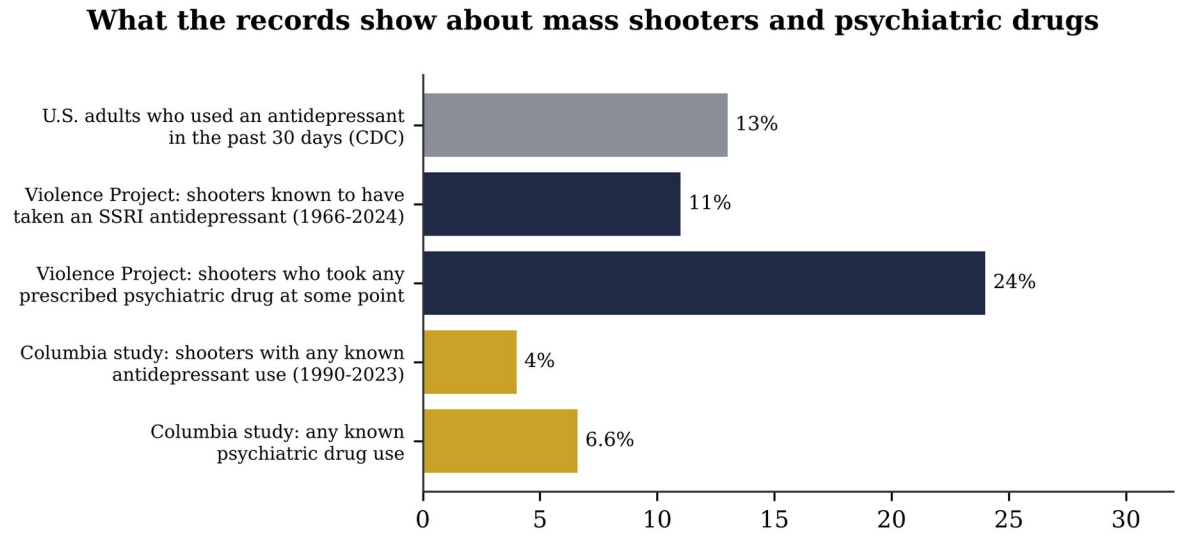
[158] Jessica McDonald, FactCheck.org, "RFK Jr. Misleads About Antidepressants and School Shootings", October 15, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/10/rfk-jr-misleads-about-antidepressants-and-school-shootings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[159] Jessica McDonald, FactCheck.org, "RFK Jr. Misleads About Antidepressants and School Shootings", October 15, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/10/rfk-jr-misleads-about-antidepressants-and-school-shootings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[160] Jessica McDonald, FactCheck.org, "RFK Jr. Misleads About Antidepressants and School Shootings", October 15, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/10/rfk-jr-misleads-about-antidepressants-and-school-shootings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[161] Jessica McDonald, FactCheck.org, "RFK Jr. Misleads About Antidepressants and School Shootings", October 15, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/10/rfk-jr-misleads-about-antidepressants-and-school-shootings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[162] Jessica McDonald, FactCheck.org, "RFK Jr. Misleads About Antidepressants and School Shootings", October 15, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/10/rfk-jr-misleads-about-antidepressants-and-school-shootings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



What the records show about mass shooters and psychiatric drugs

The unknown share: These studies rely on public records. A shooter's medical records are private, and many are never released. The Columbia researchers noted that public sources may miss confidential use.[163] So the true share could be higher than the 4 to 11 percent found. But to make the claim that psychiatric drugs drive mass shootings, the share of shooters on those drugs would have to be well above the share of the general public, and the available records show the opposite.

[163] Ragy R. Girgis, Hannah Hesson and Gary Brucato, "Antidepressant use and suicide among U.S.-based mass murderers who use firearms: 1990-2023, Psychiatry Research (doi 10.1016/j.psychres.2025.116737); summarized by Eric W. Dolan, PsyPost, October 12, 2025", 2025. https://www.psypost.org/new-study-finds-no-evidence-linking-antidepressant-use-to-mass-shootings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Chapter 15: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

After the March 2023 shooting at a Christian school in Nashville, and again after later attacks, claims spread that transgender people commit a large or growing share of mass shootings. Some public figures gave specific numbers. Here is what the counts show.

Transgender shooters

FactCheck.org examined the question in September 2025, after Sebastian Gorka cited seven transgender mass shooters.[164]

- **Gun Violence Archive (broad definition, 4+ shot):** Of 5,748 mass shootings from January 1, 2013, through September 15, 2025, five involved a confirmed transgender or nonbinary shooter. That is less than 0.1 percent. The archive's director, Mark Bryant, said the number "could be as high as eight" if unconfirmed cases were included.[165]
- **The Violence Project (public mass shootings, 4+ killed):** Of 201 shooters from 1966 through 2024, one was transgender (the 2023 Nashville shooting), or 0.5 percent. The rest were 196 men and 4 women who were not transgender.[166] The Violence Project's database codes the Nashville case as "Transgender."[167]
- **Population share:** The Violence Project's co-founder, James Densley, told FactCheck.org that "about 1% of the U.S. population identifies as transgender."[168]

FactCheck.org also noted that the gender identity of the shooter in an August 2025 attack in Perry, Iowa, "hasn't been established." A researcher, Ragy Girgis of Columbia University, told it that gender identity is "not a causative factor in mass shootings."[169]

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[164] Ashley Wang, FactCheck.org, "Few Mass Shooters Have Been Transgender", September 17, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/09/few-mass-shooters-have-been-transgender/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

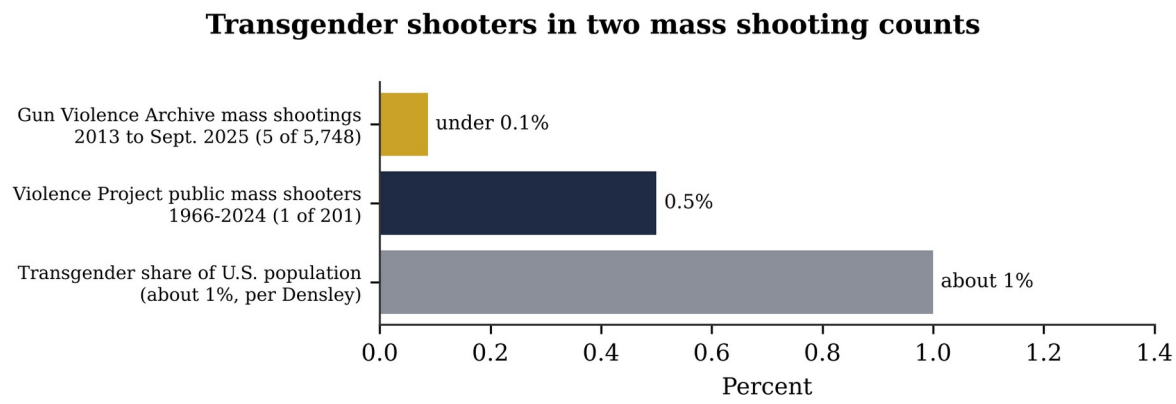
[165] Ashley Wang, FactCheck.org, "Few Mass Shooters Have Been Transgender", September 17, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/09/few-mass-shooters-have-been-transgender/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[166] Ashley Wang, FactCheck.org, "Few Mass Shooters Have Been Transgender", September 17, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/09/few-mass-shooters-have-been-transgender/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[167] The Violence Project, "Mass Shooter Database (202 cases, 1966-2025)", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/mass-shooter-database/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[168] Ashley Wang, FactCheck.org, "Few Mass Shooters Have Been Transgender", September 17, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/09/few-mass-shooters-have-been-transgender/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[169] Ashley Wang, FactCheck.org, "Few Mass Shooters Have Been Transgender", September 17, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/09/few-mass-shooters-have-been-transgender/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: FactCheck.org, "Few Mass Shooters Have Been Transgender," Sept. 17, 2025 (counts from Gun Violence Archive and The Violence Project).

Transgender shooters in two mass shooting counts

By both counts, transgender people make up a smaller share of mass shooters than of the population. The claim that transgender people commit a large or outsized share of mass shootings is false by every count I found. Part Nine rates it.

A note on the Annunciation Catholic Church shooting of August 27, 2025, in Minneapolis, in which two children (ages 8 and 10) were killed and, by later counts, 28 people were injured: it falls below the Mother Jones and Violence Project thresholds because fewer than three (or four) people were killed, so it does not appear in their counts. Federal officials called it "domestic terrorism and an anti-Catholic hate crime," and the motive was still under investigation in the reporting I found.[170] Whether it is among the five Gun Violence Archive cases counted through September 15, 2025, is not stated in the FactCheck.org article. **[Not verified: the list of the five cases.]**

Sexual orientation

No national data set I found records the sexual orientation of mass shooters in a way that can be counted. The FBI and CDC do not record it. Mother Jones and The Violence Project do not report a count by sexual orientation in the sources I used. **[Not verified: any count of mass shooters by sexual orientation.]** Any claim you see that gay or straight people commit a certain share of mass shootings is not based on a public data set I could find.

The same is true of everyday murder: the FBI's offender tables record age, sex, race and ethnicity, but not sexual orientation or gender identity.[171]

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[170] Wikipedia (used only to locate facts; check its cited news reports), "Annunciation Catholic Church shooting", accessed November 12, 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annunciation_Catholic_Church_shooting. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[171] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 3: Murder Offenders by Age, Sex, Race, and Ethnicity, 2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-3.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Chapter 16: Politics and Ideology

Is political violence mostly from the left or the right? Few questions about guns produce angrier arguments, and few have worse data. As the Government Accountability Office reported in 2023, "The FBI does not track domestic terrorism incidents because it is not required to do so."[172] NPR reported in 2025 that "there is no public, official, unified and comprehensive database of domestic terrorism incidents in the U.S."[173]

So the numbers in this chapter come from private and academic counts. Each uses its own definitions, and each has critics. I give you the main ones side by side.

How much killing is political?

Very little, compared with all murders. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which tracks extremist killings, counted 13 extremist-related murders in 2024, down from 20 in 2023 and 28 in 2022. Over the decade 2015-2024, it counted 429.[174] In the same decade, the FBI's yearly murder counts ran in the tens of thousands (Chapter 3). The Violence Project found hate or ideology was the motive in 12 percent of public mass shootings.[175]

The ADL count: killings by extremists

The ADL is an advocacy group that fights antisemitism and extremism, so I place it in tier 5. Its count is widely cited and its definitions are public.

- Of the 429 extremist-related killings it counted in 2015-2024, 328 (76 percent) were by right-wing extremists, 79 (18 percent) by domestic Islamist extremists, and the remaining 22 by others, including left-wing extremists.[176]
- In 2024, "All the extremist-related murders in 2024 were committed by right-wing extremists of various kinds": 8 by white supremacists and 5 by far-right anti-government extremists.[177]
- Firearms were used in 79 percent of extremist-related murders over the decade, and in 7 of the 13 in 2024.[178]

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[172] U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Domestic Terrorism: Further Actions Needed to Strengthen FBI and DHS Collaboration to Counter Threats (GAO-23-104720)", February 22, 2023. https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-104720. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[173] NPR, "A report claims left-wing terrorism is rising. The data paints a complicated picture", October 25, 2025. https://www.npr.org/2025/10/25/nx-s1-5583997/political-violence-left-right-wing. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[174] ADL Center on Extremism (Anti-Defamation League), "Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2024", February 2025. https://www.adl.org/resources/report/murder-and-extremism-united-states-2024. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[175] The Violence Project (Hamline University and Metropolitan State University), "Key Findings", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/key-findings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

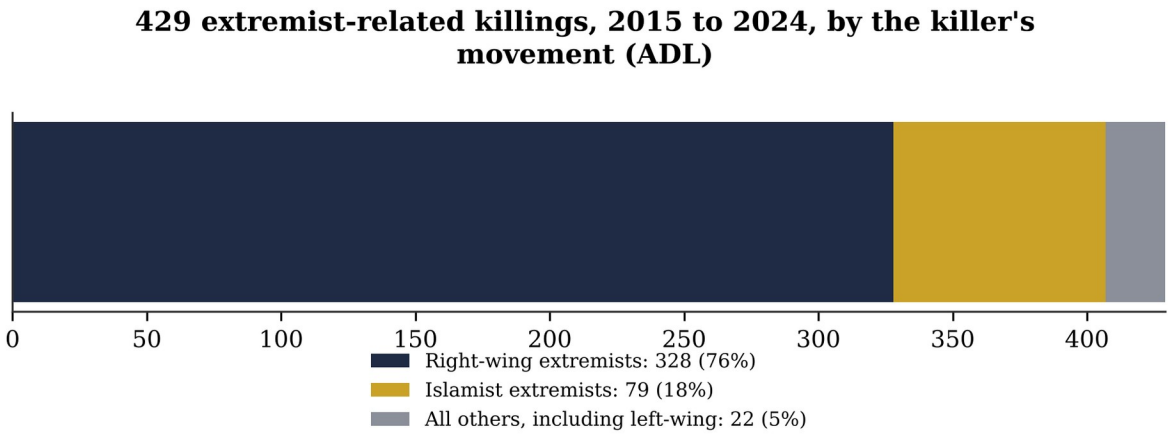
[176] ADL Center on Extremism (Anti-Defamation League), "Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2024", February 2025. https://www.adl.org/resources/report/murder-and-extremism-united-states-2024. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[177] ADL Center on Extremism (Anti-Defamation League), "Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2024", February 2025. https://www.adl.org/resources/report/murder-and-extremism-united-states-2024. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[178] ADL Center on Extremism (Anti-Defamation League), "Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2024", February 2025. https://www.adl.org/resources/report/murder-and-extremism-united-states-2024. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

- In early 2025, the ADL said it had "already documented 15 extremist-related murders in 2025 so far," 14 of them in the January 1, 2025, New Orleans attack by a man who pledged allegiance to the Islamic State.[179]

An important caveat: the ADL counts any killing by an extremist "regardless of the motive or the ideology." Over the decade, it said ideological and non-ideological killings were "roughly equivalent (217 to 212)." In 2024, only 3 of the 13 were "clearly" ideological.[180] So the ADL count is a count of killings by extremists, not only of killings for a political cause. In other words, about half of the killings it counts were not committed for a political cause, even though the killer belonged to an extremist movement. The ADL did not count the December 2024 killing of the UnitedHealthcare chief executive, saying "hostility towards the healthcare system or health insurance companies is not in itself an ideology."[181]



Source: ADL Center on Extremism, Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2024 (Feb. 2025). Includes killings with no ideological motive; 79% involved guns.

429 extremist-related killings, 2015 to 2024, by the killer's movement (ADL)

The CSIS count: attacks and plots

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a nonpartisan research group, published a study in September 2025 by Daniel Byman and Riley McCabe covering "750 terrorist attacks and plots in the United States between January 1, 1994, and July 4, 2025."[182]

CSIS average attacks and plots per year	Left-wing	Right-wing
1994-2000	0.6	21

[179] ADL, "ADL Data Shows Extremist-Related Murders Set to Increase in 2025 Despite Third Straight Decrease in 2024 (press release)", February 21, 2025. https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/adl-data-shows-extremist-related-murders-set-increase-2025-despite-third. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[180] ADL Center on Extremism (Anti-Defamation League), "Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2024", February 2025. https://www.adl.org/resources/report/murder-and-extremism-united-states-2024. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[181] ADL Center on Extremism (Anti-Defamation League), "Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2024", February 2025. https://www.adl.org/resources/report/murder-and-extremism-united-states-2024. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

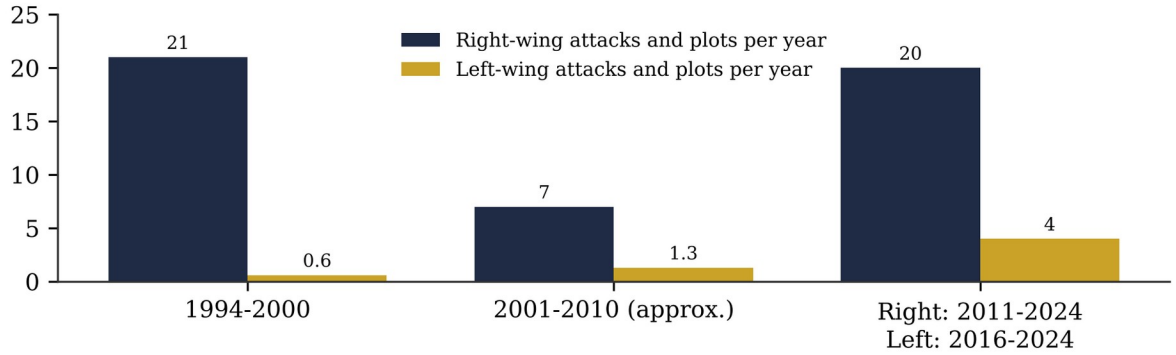
[182] Daniel Byman and Riley McCabe, Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Left-Wing Terrorism and Political Violence in the United States: What the Data Tells Us", September 25, 2025. https://www.csis.org/analysis/left-wing-terrorism-and-political-violence-united-states-what-data-tells-us. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

CSIS average attacks and plots per year	Left-wing	Right-wing
Next decade	1.3	7
2016-2024 (left) / 2011-2024 (right)	4.0	20

[183]

- In the first half of 2025 (through July 4), CSIS counted five left-wing incidents and "only one right-wing terrorist incident."[184]
- But deaths tell a different story. Over the past decade, "left-wing attacks have killed 13 victims, compared with 112 and 82" for right-wing and jihadist attacks. "Since 2020, only two fatalities have resulted from left-wing terrorist attacks."[185]
- CSIS stressed that its labels "do not correspond to mainstream political parties."[186]

Average terrorist attacks and plots per year, by political direction (CSIS)



Source: Byman and McCabe, CSIS, Sept. 25, 2025. Counts all weapons and include plots that were stopped.

Average terrorist attacks and plots per year, by political direction (CSIS)

Byman told NPR, "The decline in right-wing attacks is actually much more striking."[187] Other researchers disputed the 2025 comparison. Michael Jensen and Amy Cooter, writing in Just Security, argued the CSIS

[183] Daniel Byman and Riley McCabe, Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Left-Wing Terrorism and Political Violence in the United States: What the Data Tells Us", September 25, 2025. https://www.csis.org/analysis/left-wing-terrorism-and-political-violence-united-states-what-data-tells-us. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[184] Daniel Byman and Riley McCabe, Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Left-Wing Terrorism and Political Violence in the United States: What the Data Tells Us", September 25, 2025. https://www.csis.org/analysis/left-wing-terrorism-and-political-violence-united-states-what-data-tells-us. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[185] Daniel Byman and Riley McCabe, Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Left-Wing Terrorism and Political Violence in the United States: What the Data Tells Us", September 25, 2025. https://www.csis.org/analysis/left-wing-terrorism-and-political-violence-united-states-what-data-tells-us. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[186] Daniel Byman and Riley McCabe, Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Left-Wing Terrorism and Political Violence in the United States: What the Data Tells Us", September 25, 2025. https://www.csis.org/analysis/left-wing-terrorism-and-political-violence-united-states-what-data-tells-us. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[187] NPR, "A report claims left-wing terrorism is rising. The data paints a complicated picture", October 25, 2025. https://www.npr.org/2025/10/25/nx-s1-5583997/political-violence-left-right-wing. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

numbers for 2025 were based on very small counts ("just five plots and attacks") and cited a different database that found "154 terrorist plots and attacks" in the first half of 2025, up 85 percent from the first half of 2024. Jensen disclosed that he formerly worked on that database.[188] NPR reported that the Department of Homeland Security "discontinued funding" in March 2025 for that database.[189]

The GAO count

The GAO reported that the Department of Homeland Security's intelligence office tracked "231 domestic terrorism incidents with known offenders" from 2010 through 2021. Of those, 80 were racially or ethnically motivated and 73 were anti-government or anti-authority. The FBI's domestic terrorism caseload grew from 1,981 cases in fiscal year 2013 to 9,049 in fiscal year 2021.[190]

Recent high-profile killings

Two killings in 2025 drew national attention to political violence and are not fully covered by the decade-long counts above.

- **The killing of Charlie Kirk**, the conservative activist, on September 10, 2025, at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah. He was shot with a bolt-action rifle. A 22-year-old suspect surrendered and was charged with aggravated murder; he pleaded not guilty on September 1, 2026, and his trial was pending as of this book's cutoff. Utah's governor, Spencer Cox, said the suspect held a "leftist ideology."[191] It was a single killing, so it does not appear in mass shooting counts.
- **The Annunciation Catholic Church shooting** in Minneapolis on August 27, 2025, described in Chapter 15.[192]

These descriptions come from a Wikipedia summary of news reports; I used it only to locate the facts, and the original reports are cited there. **[Not verified against the original court filings.]**

What the political data can and cannot say

- **Confirmed:** Over 2015-2024, by the ADL's count, right-wing extremists committed most extremist-related killings. By CSIS's count, right-wing attacks and plots outnumbered left-wing ones in almost every period, and right-wing and jihadist attacks killed far more people over the past decade.
- **Confirmed:** CSIS found left-wing incidents rose after 2016 and, in the first half of 2025, outnumbered right-wing ones.

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[188] Michael Jensen and Amy Cooter, Just Security, "Correctly Assessing Left-Wing Terrorism and Political Violence in the United States", October 21, 2025. https://www.justsecurity.org/122278/correctly-assessing-left-wing-terrorism-and-political-violence-in-the-united-states/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[189] NPR, "A report claims left-wing terrorism is rising. The data paints a complicated picture", October 25, 2025. https://www.npr.org/2025/10/25/nx-s1-5583997/political-violence-left-right-wing. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[190] U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Domestic Terrorism: Further Actions Needed to Strengthen FBI and DHS Collaboration to Counter Threats (GAO-23-104720)", February 22, 2023. https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-104720. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[191] Wikipedia (used only to locate facts; check its cited news reports), "Assassination of Charlie Kirk", accessed November 12, 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassination_of_Charlie_Kirk. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[192] Wikipedia (used only to locate facts; check its cited news reports), "Annunciation Catholic Church shooting", accessed November 12, 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annunciation_Catholic_Church_shooting. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

- **Interpretation:** Whether 2025 marks a lasting shift is disputed among the researchers themselves.
- **Unknown:** There is no official, complete national count. Every number here depends on the definitions of the group that made it.

Chapter 17: Shootings at Schools

How school shootings are counted

School shooting counts also depend heavily on definitions. The K-12 School Shooting Database, kept by researcher David Riedman, counts any time "a gun is fired, brandished with intent to harm, or a bullet hits school property for any reason," including at night and on weekends.[193] The Washington Post's database is narrower: it counts gunfire at primary and secondary schools "during school hours," on campuses "immediately before, during or just after classes," and leaves out after-hours events and private suicides.[194] I use The Washington Post's data here because its yearly data are public and narrowly defined.

The record

School year	Shootings	Killed	Wounded	School year	Shootings	Killed	Wounded
1999-2000	14	5	9	2012-2013	8	27	7
2000-2001	12	4	22	2013-2014	20	4	19
2001-2002	5	1	5	2014-2015	6	4	4
2002-2003	9	3	8	2015-2016	10	1	8
2003-2004	10	5	8	2016-2017	15	3	19
2004-2005	11	9	14	2017-2018	29	34	69
2005-2006	16	3	15	2018-2019	23	3	14
2006-2007	14	8	21	2019-2020	19	4	10
2007-2008	9	3	9	2020-2021	17	3	11
2008-2009	6	2	2	2021-2022	57	35	64
2009-2010	9	2	5	2022-2023	44	14	42
2010-2011	11	4	11	2023-2024	29	9	34
2011-	9	6	6	**Total**	**412**	**196**	**436**

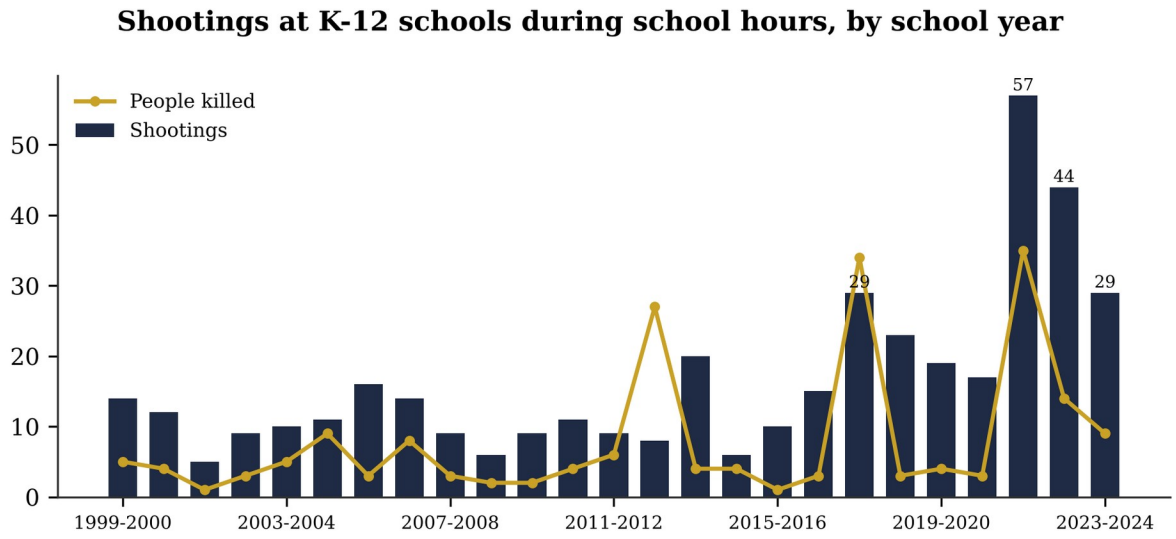
[193] David Riedman, "K-12 School Shooting Database: All Shootings", 2025. https://k12ssdb.org/all-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[194] The Washington Post, "School shootings database (data release, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)", data through January 2025. https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-school-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

School year	Shootings	Killed	Wounded	School year	Shootings	Killed	Wounded
2012							

[195]

These totals are my count of the records in The Washington Post's public data release, which runs through January 2025. "Killed" and "wounded" include students, staff and others, and may include shooters in some cases as the Post records them.



Shootings at K-12 schools during school hours, by school year

The pattern: about 5 to 20 shootings a year from the 1999-2000 school year through 2016-2017, a jump to 29 in 2017-2018 (the year of the Parkland shooting), and a much larger jump to 57 in 2021-2022 (the year of the Uvalde shooting), when schools reopened after the pandemic. The count then fell to 44 and then 29.

Most school shootings are not mass shootings. In The Washington Post's data, more than half are classed as "targeted," meaning aimed at a specific person.[196] A small number of attacks account for most deaths: Sandy Hook (27 killed, as counted by Mother Jones), Robb Elementary in Uvalde (21) and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland (17).[197]

Mother Jones's public mass shooting database lists these school and college cases since 2000: Virginia Tech (2007), the Amish school shooting (2006), Northern Illinois University (2008), Oikos University (2012), Sandy Hook (2012), Marysville-Pilchuck High School (2014), Umpqua Community College (2015),

[195] The Washington Post, "School shootings database (data release, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)", data through January 2025. https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-school-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[196] The Washington Post, "School shootings database (data release, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)", data through January 2025. https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-school-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[197] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Parkland (2018), Santa Fe High School (2018), Oxford High School (2021), Uvalde (2022), the University of Virginia (2022), Michigan State University (2023), the Nashville Christian school (2023), Apalachee High School (2024), Brown University and MIT (2025, a spree) and Silver Rail Elementary in Bend, Oregon (October 15, 2026).[198]

[198] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. J. A. Acosta (GitHub), copy of the Mother Jones spreadsheet through September 2024, "MJ Mass Shootings - Data Cleaning and Analysis". https://github.com/JA-Acosta/mj_mass_shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Part Five: Guns for Protection

Chapter 18: Who Owns Guns, and Why

How many Americans own a gun

Gallup has asked Americans the same question for decades: "Do you have a gun in your home?" Since 2000 the answer has stayed in a fairly narrow band, between 37 and 48 percent of households.[199]

Year	Gun in the home	Year	Gun in the home
2000 (April)	42%	2013	37%
2001	40%	2014	42%
2002	41%	2015	41%
2003	43%	2016	39%
2004	38%	2017	42%
2005	40%	2018	43%
2006	43%	2019	37%
2007	42%	2020	42%
2008	42%	2021	42%
2009	40%	2022	45%
2010	39%	2023	42%
2011	45%	2024	48%
2012 (December)	43%	2025	42%

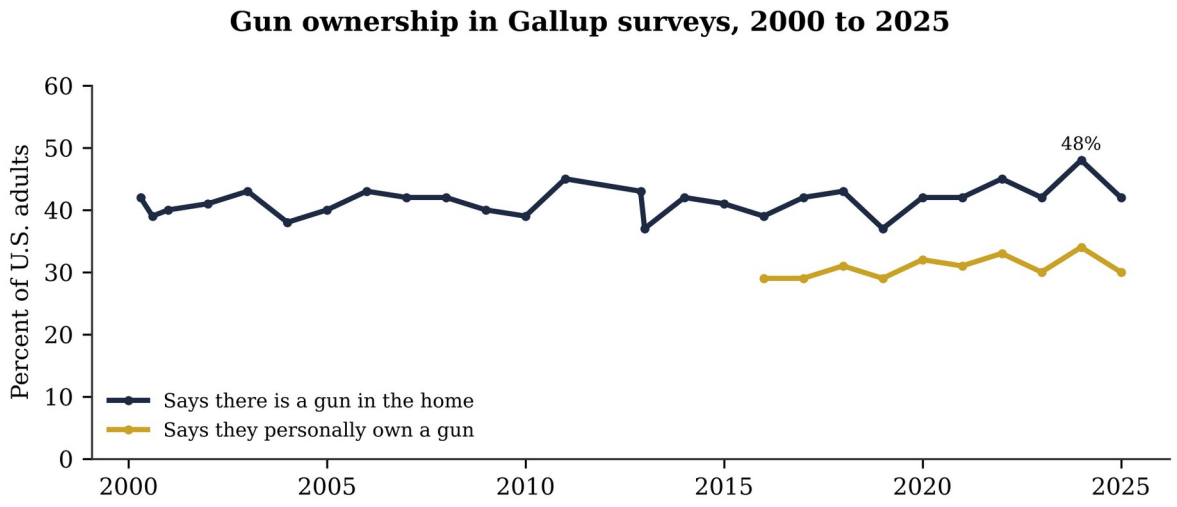
[200]

Gallup also asks whether people personally own a gun. That figure ran from 29 percent in 2016 to 34 percent in 2024, and 30 percent in 2025.[201]

[199] Gallup, "Guns (historical trends)", updated June 15, 2026. https://news.gallup.com/poll/1645/guns.aspx. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[200] Gallup, "Guns (historical trends)", updated June 15, 2026. https://news.gallup.com/poll/1645/guns.aspx. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[201] Gallup, "Guns (historical trends)", updated June 15, 2026. https://news.gallup.com/poll/1645/guns.aspx. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Gun ownership in Gallup surveys, 2000 to 2025

Put these numbers next to Chapter 8. From 2013 through 2024, about 183 million new guns were added to the American market, and background checks more than quadrupled from 2000 to 2020. Yet the share of households with a gun did not change much. Both facts can be true if many of the new guns went to people who already owned guns, and if some went to new owners while some older owners left the count. The surveys cannot settle exactly how the new guns were spread.

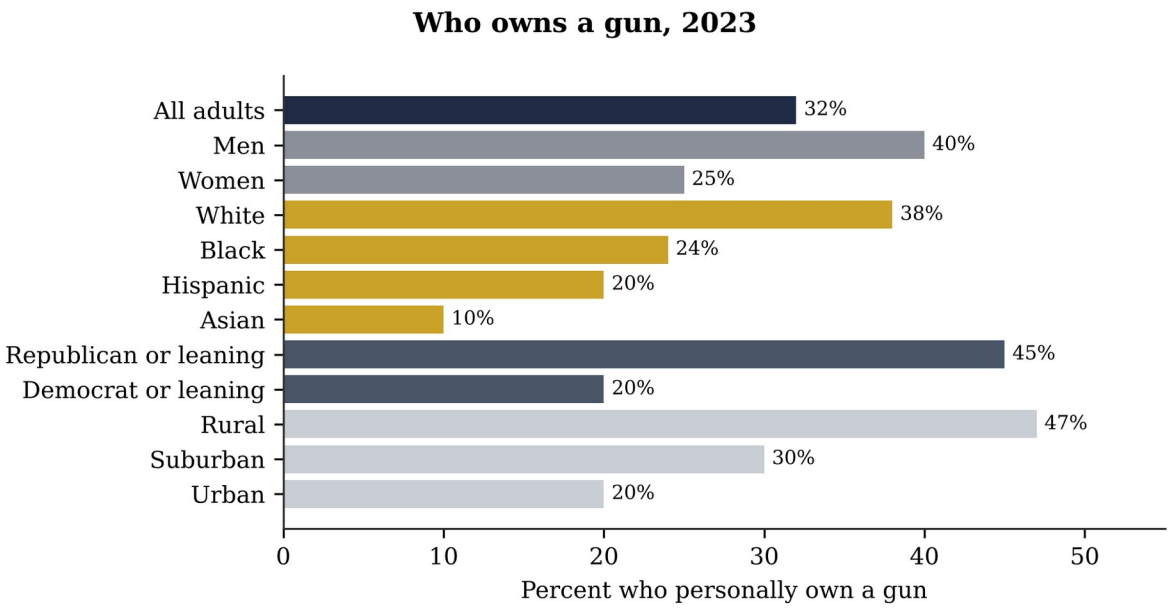
Who owns guns

Pew Research Center's June 2023 survey of 5,115 adults found that 32 percent of adults personally owned a gun and another 10 percent lived with someone who did.[202]

Group (Pew, 2023)	Personally own a gun
Republicans and Republican-leaning	45%
Democrats and Democratic-leaning	20%
Men	40%
Women	25%
White adults	38%
Black adults	24%
Hispanic adults	20%
Asian adults	10%
Rural residents	47%
Suburban residents	30%
Urban residents	20%

[202] Katherine Schaeffer, Pew Research Center, "Key facts about Americans and guns", July 24, 2024. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/07/24/key-facts-about-americans-and-guns/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Pew Research Center, "For Most U.S. Gun Owners, Protection Is the Main Reason They Own a Gun", August 16, 2023. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2023/08/16/for-most-u-s-gun-owners-protection-is-the-main-reason-they-own-a-gun/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[203]



Source: Pew Research Center, "Key facts about Americans and guns," July 24, 2024 (survey of June 5-11, 2023).

Who owns a gun, 2023

Why they own them

Protection is the top reason. Of gun owners in Pew's 2023 survey, 72 percent said protection was a major reason they owned a gun, up from 67 percent in 2017. Other major reasons were hunting (32 percent), sport shooting (30 percent), collecting (15 percent) and work (7 percent).[204]

That makes the next two chapters, on defensive gun use and stand-your-ground laws, central to the whole debate.

[203] Katherine Schaeffer, Pew Research Center, "Key facts about Americans and guns", July 24, 2024. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/07/24/key-facts-about-americans-and-guns/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[204] Katherine Schaeffer, Pew Research Center, "Key facts about Americans and guns", July 24, 2024. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/07/24/key-facts-about-americans-and-guns/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

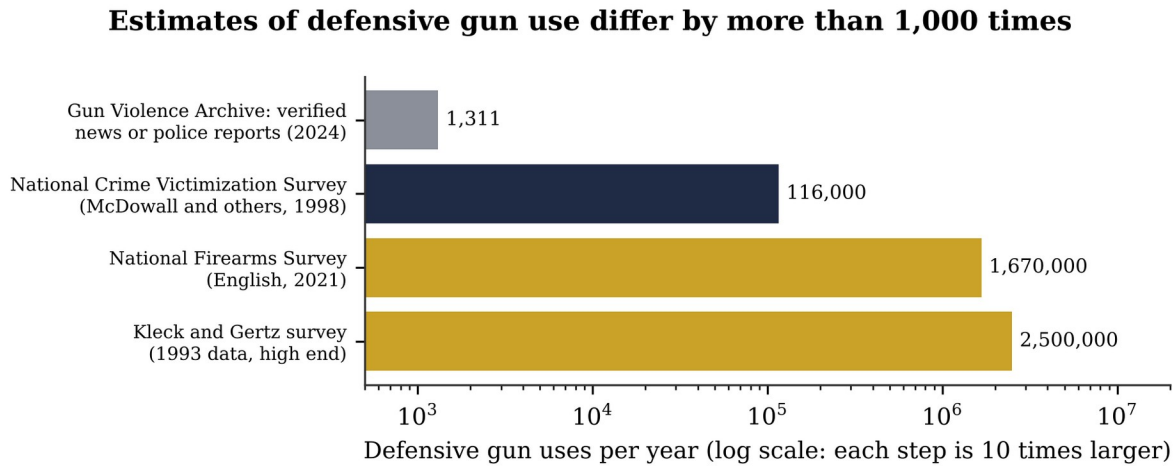
Chapter 19: Defensive Gun Use

How often do Americans use a gun to protect themselves? This may be the most disputed number in the entire gun debate. Estimates differ by more than a thousand times. Here is why, and what each estimate actually measures.

The estimates

Source	Estimate	How it was measured
Gun Violence Archive	About 1,200 to 2,100 verified incidents a year (2014-2025)	Incidents found in police and news reports and verified
National Crime Victimization Survey (BJS), as analyzed by McDowall, Loftin and Wiersema (1998)	About 116,000 a year	Large federal survey; asks about defensive actions only after a person reports a crime
William English, 2021 National Firearms Survey	About 1.67 million incidents a year	Online survey of about 54,000 adults, including 16,708 gun owners, in 2021
Gary Kleck and Marc Gertz (1995, survey taken in 1993)	2.2 to 2.5 million a year	National survey that asked everyone about defensive gun use

[205]



Estimates of defensive gun use differ by more than 1,000 times

[205] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Challenges of Defining and Measuring Defensive Gun Use", March 2, 2018. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/essays/defensive-gun-use.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. William English, Georgetown University, "2021 National Firearms Survey (draft report, SSRN 3887145; as filed with the Maryland General Assembly)", July 13, 2021. https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2023/jud/1ZlFKxrhCvRHyEwtrOCrskWhtKiqmlapv.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Why the estimates differ so much

RAND Corporation, a nonpartisan research organization, explained the gap in a 2018 essay.[206]

- **Different questions.** The federal crime survey asks about defending yourself only after you report being the victim of a crime. Private surveys ask everyone directly. RAND says the federal survey "almost certainly underestimates the true number."
- **Rare events and false positives.** When something is rare, even a small share of people who answer "yes" by mistake, or who remember an older event as recent, can multiply the estimate. RAND gave the example that if 1 percent of people truly had a defensive gun use, a small rate of mistaken "yes" answers could roughly double the estimate.
- **Different definitions.** Some surveys count a gun mentioned, shown or fired. Others count only cases tied to a crime.
- **The National Research Council's view.** A 2004 review by the National Research Council found that estimates "differ by a factor of 20 or more."
- **Plausibility checks.** Researcher David Hemenway argued in 1997 that one high survey estimate implied that 207,000 attackers a year were shot by defenders, a number he considered implausible.

RAND also noted a 2000 study by McDowall, Loftin and Presser that asked the same people both kinds of questions: "The NCVS identified 24 cases, and the NSDS identified between 48 and 72 cases."[207] Even in a head-to-head test, the two methods gave answers two to three times apart.

The 2021 National Firearms Survey

The newest large survey is William English's 2021 National Firearms Survey, run online by the firm Centiment from February 17 to March 23, 2021. It found that "31.1% of gun owners, or approximately 25.3 million adult Americans, have used a gun in self-defense," and estimated "approximately 1.67 million incidents per year." It reported that "in most defensive incidents (81.9%) no shot was fired."[208]

The yearly figure comes from a lifetime count spread over an estimated 30 adult years per person, which assumes defensive uses are spread evenly over a lifetime. The survey has been cited in court cases over gun laws, and in at least one federal case the state defendants moved to have it excluded.[209] The versions I found were a draft report dated July 13, 2021, and an expanded version dated May 13, 2022, both posted online.

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[206] RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Challenges of Defining and Measuring Defensive Gun Use", March 2, 2018. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/essays/defensive-gun-use.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[207] RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Challenges of Defining and Measuring Defensive Gun Use", March 2, 2018. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/essays/defensive-gun-use.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[208] William English, Georgetown University, "2021 National Firearms Survey (draft report, SSRN 3887145; as filed with the Maryland General Assembly)", July 13, 2021. https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2023/jud/1ZlFKxrhCvRHyEwtrOCrskWhtKiqmlapv.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

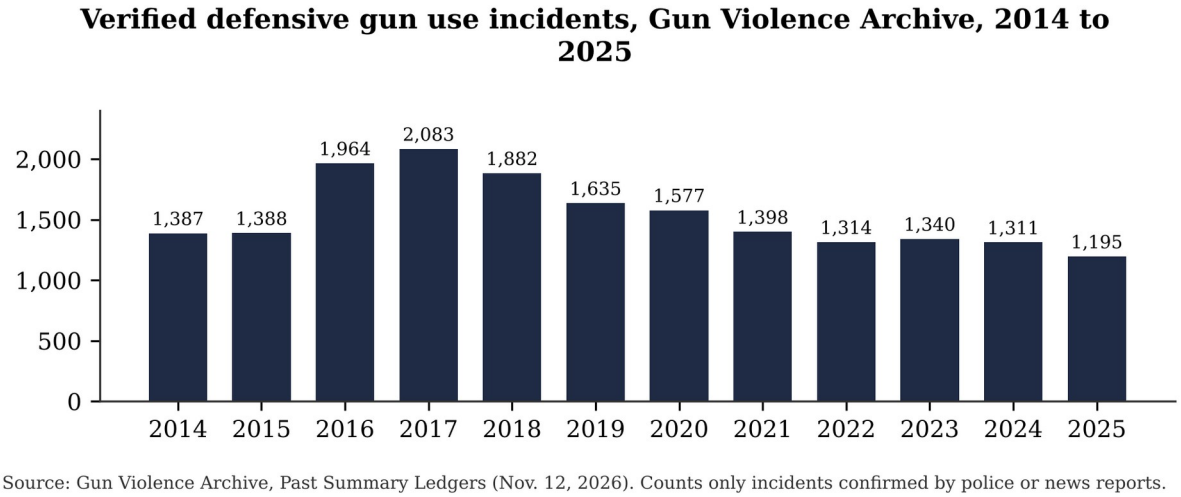
[209] William English, Georgetown University, "2021 National Firearms Survey (draft report, SSRN 3887145; as filed with the Maryland General Assembly)", July 13, 2021. https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2023/jud/1ZlFKxrhCvRHyEwtrOCrskWhtKiqmlapv.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Verified defensive uses (Gun Violence Archive)

The Gun Violence Archive defines a defensive gun use as "The reported use of force with a firearm to protect and/or defend one's self or family" and says "Only verified incidents are reported."[210]

Year	Verified defensive uses (GVA)
2014	1,387
2015	1,388
2016	1,964
2017	2,083
2018	1,882
2019	1,635
2020	1,577
2021	1,398
2022	1,314
2023	1,340
2024	1,311
2025	1,195

[211]



Verified defensive gun use incidents, Gun Violence Archive, 2014 to 2025

These are only cases that reached police or the news. A homeowner who scares off an intruder by showing a gun, and never calls police, will not be counted. So this is a floor, not an estimate of the total.

[210] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[211] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

What can be said for certain

- **Confirmed:** Americans do use guns to defend themselves. Every source agrees on that.
- **Confirmed:** Protection is the top reason Americans give for owning a gun.
- **Unknown:** How often it happens. Credible methods give answers from about 1,200 verified cases a year to more than 2 million survey-based cases a year. RAND's review of research on stand-your-ground laws rated the evidence on how those laws affect defensive gun use as "inconclusive."[212]

Part Nine rates the claim that "millions of Americans use guns in self-defense every year" as inconclusive.

[212] RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Effects of Stand-Your-Ground Laws", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/stand-your-ground.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Chapter 20: Stand-Your-Ground Laws

What the law is

Under traditional self-defense law in many states, a person attacked outside the home had a "duty to retreat" if they could do so safely before using deadly force. In the home, the "castle doctrine" generally removed that duty. Stand-your-ground laws remove the duty to retreat in other places too. As RAND puts it, "Stand-your-ground laws remove the duty to retreat in some cases of self-defense outside the home."[213]

These laws do not make every shooting legal. A person still has to reasonably believe deadly force was needed, and the details vary from state to state. This book does not give legal advice; check your own state's law.

Where and when

RAND says "Utah passed the first stand-your-ground law in 1994," and Florida's 2005 law started a wave: by January 1, 2025, 35 states "had stand-your-ground statutes or statutes that expand castle doctrine."[214] Florida's law took effect on October 1, 2005.[215]

Counts of "stand-your-ground states" differ because some sources count only laws passed by legislatures, some add states where courts or jury instructions apply the same rule, and some include laws that only expand the castle doctrine.

Source	Count	Notes
National Conference of State Legislatures	"at least 31 states" by statute	Plus Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands
Giffords Law Center (advocacy group)	30 states by statute, plus 8 by court decision or jury instruction	Same statute list as NCSL except Washington, which Giffords counts as court-based
Wikipedia summary	38 states (30 by statute, 8 by case law)	Lists 11 duty-to-retreat states, with D.C. and Wisconsin in between
RAND	35 states with stand-your-ground statutes or expanded castle doctrine statutes, as of Jan. 1, 2025	Counts castle-doctrine expansions in Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Nebraska and Wisconsin

[216]

[213] RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Effects of Stand-Your-Ground Laws", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/stand-your-ground.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[214] RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Effects of Stand-Your-Ground Laws", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/stand-your-ground.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[215] Wikipedia, "Stand-your-ground law", accessed November 12, 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stand-your-ground_law. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[216] National Conference of State Legislatures, "Self Defense and Stand Your Ground", undated web page. https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-your-ground. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Stand Your Ground Laws", modified July 24, 2026. https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/

Appendix B lists every state. In this book I use the Giffords and NCSL lists, which agree on 30 states with statutes covering all public places: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia and Wyoming. The 8 states with the same rule by court decision or jury instruction are California, Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, Virginia and Washington.[217]

Known enactment dates for some of these laws: Utah, 1994; Florida, October 1, 2005; Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas, all between 2006 and 2011; Pennsylvania, 2011; Iowa, 2017; Idaho, 2018; and Arkansas, North Dakota, Ohio and South Dakota, 2021.[218] **[Not verified: exact enactment dates for Alabama, Alaska, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia and Wyoming from a source I could open.]**

What the research shows

This is one of the few gun-law questions where the research is fairly consistent.

- **RAND** reviews gun-policy research and rates the strength of evidence. On stand-your-ground laws, it says: "There is supportive evidence that stand-your-ground laws increase total and firearm homicides." "Supportive" is RAND's strongest rating. RAND found 15 studies on homicide; among the higher-quality studies, those on firearm homicide found higher rates in 7 of 8. RAND rated the evidence on defensive gun use, mass shootings, police shootings and suicide as inconclusive.[219]
- **A 2021 systematic review** in the American Journal of Public Health, covering 25 studies, found that "Stand-your-ground laws were associated with no change to small increases in violent crime," that "Florida-based studies showed robust increases (24% to 45%) in firearm and total homicide," and that the evidence "contradicts claims that expanding self-defense laws deters violent crime."[220]

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stand-your-ground-laws/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Wikipedia, "Stand-your-ground law", accessed November 12, 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stand-your-ground_law. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Effects of Stand-Your-Ground Laws", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/stand-your-ground.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[217] Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Stand Your Ground Laws", modified July 24, 2026. https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/stand-your-ground-laws/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. National Conference of State Legislatures, "Self Defense and Stand Your Ground", undated web page. https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-your-ground. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[218] RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Effects of Stand-Your-Ground Laws", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/stand-your-ground.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Alexa R. Yakubovich and others, "Effects of Laws Expanding Civilian Rights to Use Deadly Force in Self-Defense on Violence and Crime: A Systematic Review, American Journal of Public Health 111(4):e1-e14", April 2021. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7958062/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. National Conference of State Legislatures, "Self Defense and Stand Your Ground", undated web page. https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-your-ground. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Stand Your Ground Laws", modified July 24, 2026. https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/stand-your-ground-laws/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Wikipedia, "Stand-your-ground law", accessed November 12, 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stand-your-ground_law. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[219] RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Effects of Stand-Your-Ground Laws", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/stand-your-ground.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[220] Alexa R. Yakubovich and others, "Effects of Laws Expanding Civilian Rights to Use Deadly Force in Self-Defense on Violence and Crime: A Systematic Review, American Journal of Public Health 111(4):e1-e14", April 2021.

- **A 2022 study** in JAMA Network Open, looking at 41 states, found that "SYG laws were associated with an 8% to 11% national increase in monthly rates of homicide and firearm homicide," with "the largest increases (16.2% to 33.5%) clustering in the South (eg, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana)."[221] The University of Oxford, where the lead author worked, summarized it as about "700 additional homicides every year," and said "Florida saw the highest increase with a 28% monthly rise in homicides."[222]

Part of any rise in homicides could be killings that would have been crimes before and are now legal self-defense, since the CDC counts both as homicide. The studies above tried to account for this in different ways, but none can perfectly separate a lawful defensive killing from an unlawful one. What the research does not support is the claim that these laws reduce violent crime.

Did the places with mass shootings have stand-your-ground laws?

As requested for this book, here is how the 131 public mass shootings since 2000 (Chapter 12) line up with each state's current law. Appendix A lists every case with its state's rule.[223]

State's rule today	Public mass shootings, 2000 to Oct. 2026	Share
Stand-your-ground by statute (30 states)	63	48%
Stand-your-ground by court decision or jury instruction (8 states)	45	34%
Duty to retreat (11 states) or in between (Wisconsin and D.C.)	23	18%

Was a stand-your-ground statute in force on the day of the shooting? For 46 of the 131 cases, yes. For 28, no: either the state has no such rule (23 cases) or the shooting happened before the law was passed (5 cases). For 12 cases in statute states, I could not confirm the date the law took effect. For the 45 cases in court-rule states, I could not confirm when the court rule took hold.[224]

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https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7958062/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[221] Michelle Degli Esposti, Douglas J. Wiebe, Antonio Gasparrini and David K. Humphreys, "Analysis of "Stand Your Ground" Self-defense Laws and Statewide Rates of Homicides and Firearm Homicides, JAMA Network Open 5(2):e220077", February 21, 2022. https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2789154. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[222] University of Oxford (Oxford Sparks), "US Stand Your Ground laws are associated with 700 additional homicides every year", February 23, 2022. https://www.oxfordsparks.ox.ac.uk/news/us-stand-your-ground-laws-are-associated-with-700-additional-homicides-every-year/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[223] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Stand Your Ground Laws", modified July 24, 2026. https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/stand-your-ground-laws/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. National Conference of State Legislatures, "Self Defense and Stand Your Ground", undated web page. https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-your-ground. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[224] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Stand Your Ground Laws", modified July 24, 2026. https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/stand-your-ground-laws/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. National Conference of State Legislatures, "Self Defense and Stand Your Ground", undated web page. https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-

This table shows only where shootings happened. It says nothing about whether the law had any effect. Many mass shooters were suicidal before their attacks (70 percent, by The Violence Project's count in Chapter 13), so there is little reason to think they weigh self-defense law. And the table mostly tracks population: California alone had 21 cases and Texas 11. Some laws were also passed after the shootings in their states, so Appendix A marks whether the law was in place at the time when that can be determined.

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your-ground. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Effects of Stand-Your-Ground Laws", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/stand-your-ground.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Part Six: Police

Chapter 21: People Killed by Police, and Officers Killed

People shot and killed by police

Death certificates and private counts give very different numbers for police killings. The CDC recorded 636 deaths from "legal intervention" by firearm in 2024.[225] The Washington Post's Fatal Force database, a private count, recorded nearly twice as many people shot and killed by police officers.[226]

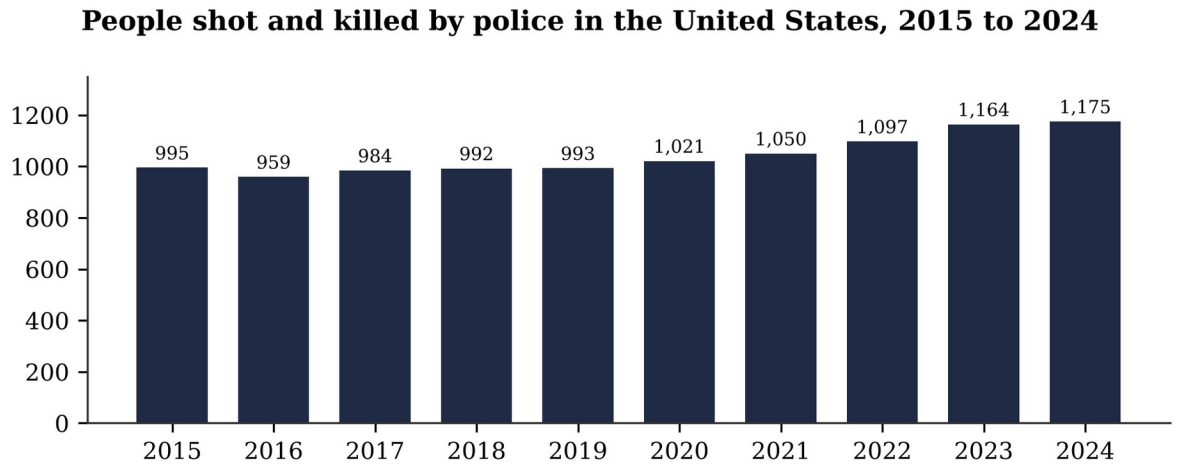
Year	People shot and killed by police (Washington Post)
2015	995
2016	959
2017	984
2018	992
2019	993
2020	1,021
2021	1,050
2022	1,097
2023	1,164
2024	1,175
Total	**10,430**

[227]

[225] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[226] The Washington Post, "Fatal Force Database 2015-2024 (data release)". https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-police-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[227] The Washington Post, "Fatal Force Database 2015-2024 (data release)". https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-police-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: The Washington Post, Fatal Force database 2015-2024 (GitHub data release). Author's count of records by year.

People shot and killed by police in the United States, 2015 to 2024

The Gun Violence Archive's separate count of people killed by officers is higher still: 1,290 in 2019, 1,452 in 2024 and 1,404 in 2025, with 1,201 in 2026 through November 10. The two use different methods, so their counts differ.[228]

From the 10,430 records in The Washington Post's data for 2015-2024 (my count):[229]

Detail	Number	Share
Armed with a gun (alone or with another weapon)	6,153	59.0%
Armed with a knife only	1,776	17.0%
Recorded as unarmed	565	5.4%
Armed with a vehicle only	372	3.6%
Armed with a replica gun	331	3.2%
Male	9,943	95.3%
Mental illness noted as a factor	2,057	19.7%
Officer's body camera noted as on	1,799	17.2%

By race: white, 4,659 (44.7 percent); Black, 2,486 (23.8 percent); Hispanic, 1,717 (16.5 percent); Asian, 184 (1.8 percent); Native American, 146 (1.4 percent); and race not recorded, 1,188 (11.4 percent).[230] Black Americans were 12.5 percent of the population in 2018,[231] so they were shot and killed by police at

[228] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[229] The Washington Post, "Fatal Force Database 2015-2024 (data release)". https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-police-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[230] The Washington Post, "Fatal Force Database 2015-2024 (data release)". https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-police-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

roughly twice their share of the population. White Americans were the largest group in raw numbers. Those two facts are both true and both get used, by different sides, as if the other did not exist.

Being shot by police after pointing a gun at an officer is very different from being shot while unarmed. The data show that most people killed by police were armed with a gun, and about 1 in 20 was recorded as unarmed.

Officers killed and assaulted

The FBI's Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted program counts officers feloniously killed in the line of duty, meaning killed by someone on purpose, as opposed to accidents.[232]

Year	Officers feloniously killed	Year	Officers feloniously killed
2006	48	2016	66
2007	58	2017	46
2008	41	2018	57
2009	48	2019	48
2010	55	2020	46
2011	72	2021	73
2012	49	2022	61
2013	27	2023	60
2014	51	2024	64
2015	41	2025	53

[233]

These figures are read from the FBI report's charts. CBS News reported the 2021 figure as 71 rather than 73; I use the FBI report's figure.[234]

In 2025, 43 of the 53 officers killed were killed with a firearm. The FBI said 81.1 percent had gunshot wounds. Five were killed in ambushes. The most common circumstance was responding to "unlawful or suspicious activity" (20 officers). By region, 21 were killed in the South, 14 in the Midwest, 11 in the

[231] Allen J. Beck, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Race and Ethnicity of Violent Crime Offenders and Arrestees, 2018 (NCJ 255969)", January 2021. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/revcoa18.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

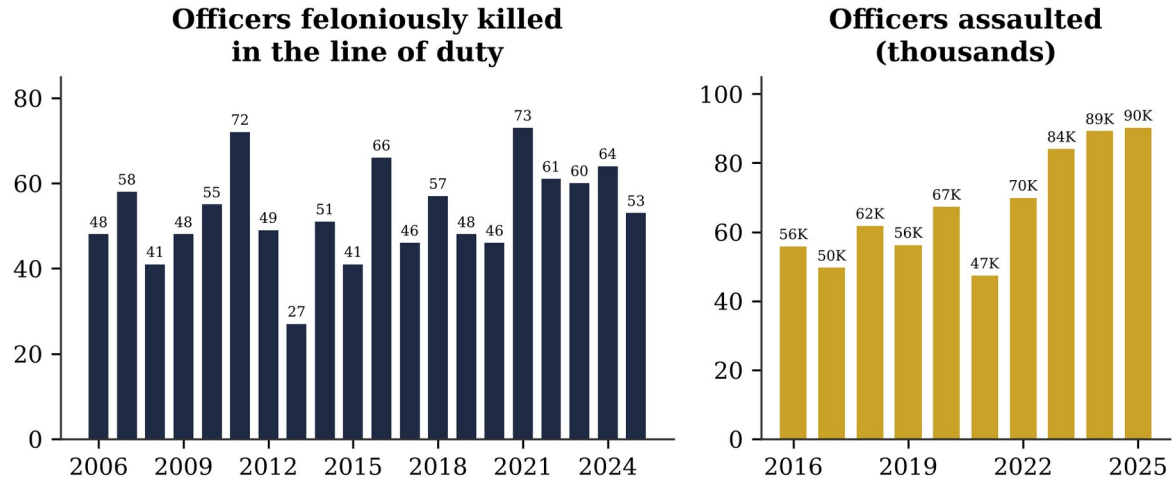
[232] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[233] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[234] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Sarah N. Lynch, CBS News, "Police officers killed in the line of duty decreased in 2025, FBI finds", May 11, 2026. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/police-officers-killed-line-of-duty-decrease-2025-fbi-finds/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

West and 7 in the Northeast.[235] The FBI's count of officers killed by firearm was 42 in 2021, 35 in 2022, 36 in 2023, 46 in 2024 and 43 in 2025.[236]

The FBI's 2025 report gives this description of the 49 offenders: sex was reported for 47, of whom 95.7 percent were male; race was reported for 45, of whom 64.4 percent were white, 31.1 percent Black, 2.2 percent Native American and 2.2 percent Pacific Islander.[237]



Source: FBI, Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025 (May 2026). Assault counts depend on how many agencies report each year.

Officers killed and assaulted, FBI, 2006 to 2025

Assaults on officers rose sharply. Agencies covering 653,044 officers reported 90,178 assaults on officers in 2025, a rate of 13.8 per 100 officers, which the FBI called the highest assault rate in the past 10 years.[238] Because the number of reporting agencies changes from year to year, the rate is a better guide than the raw count. The FBI's assault counts for earlier years were 55,772 (2016), 67,242 (2020), 84,015 (2023) and 89,180 (2024); its 2021 figure of 47,329 is much lower than the years around it. The report I read does not explain why; 2021 was the first year of the FBI's switch to its new reporting system (Chapter 2), so I treat that figure with care.[239]

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[235] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[236] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[237] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[238] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[239] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

The Gun Violence Archive's count of officers shot and killed is similar but not the same as the FBI's: 69 in 2019, 59 in 2020, 69 in 2021, 72 in 2022, 55 in 2023, 76 in 2024 and 81 in 2025.[240] The two use different definitions and sources.

Putting the two together

In 2024, The Washington Post counted 1,175 people shot and killed by police, and the FBI counted 64 officers feloniously killed.[241] Both numbers matter. Most people killed by police were armed, often with a gun, and officers face real and rising danger from assaults. And private counts of people killed by police run far higher than the number recorded on death certificates.

[240] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[241] The Washington Post, "Fatal Force Database 2015-2024 (data release)". https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-police-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Part Seven: Punishment

Chapter 22: Prisons and Jails, 2000 to 2026

The number behind bars has moved a great deal since 2000. It rose for most of the 2000s, peaked in 2009, fell for ten years, dropped sharply in 2020 and has crept up since.

Two kinds of lockups

- **Prisons** hold people convicted of crimes and usually sentenced to more than a year. They are run by the states and by the Federal Bureau of Prisons.
- **Jails** are run by counties and cities. They hold people waiting for trial who have not been released, and people serving short sentences, usually under a year.

BJS counts both, in separate reports.

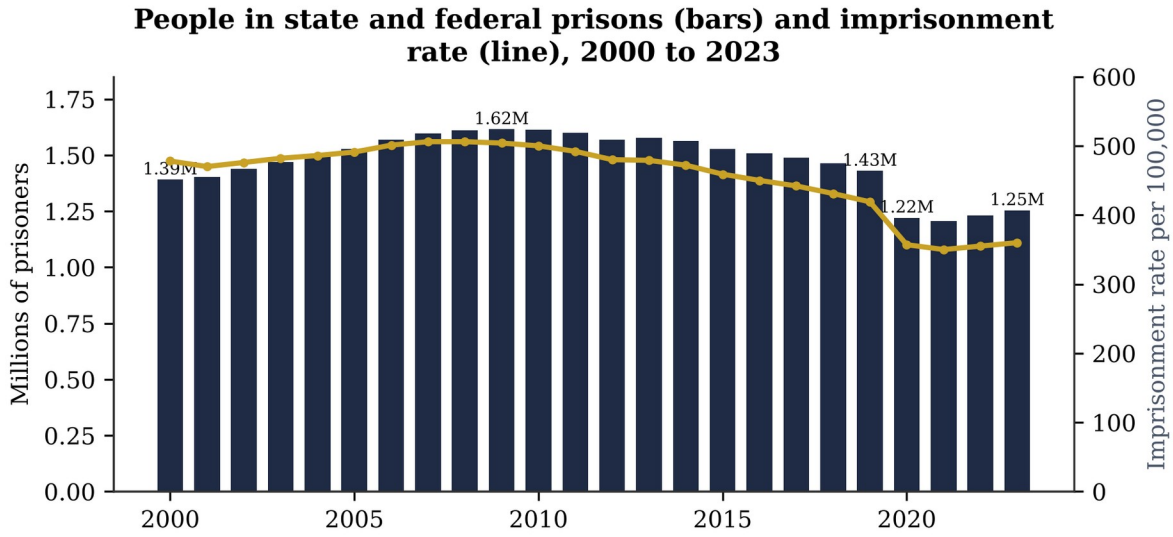
People in prison, year by year

Yearend	People in state and federal prisons	Sentenced prisoners per 100,000 residents
2000	1,391,261	478
2001	1,404,032	470
2002	1,440,144	476
2003	1,468,601	482
2004	1,497,100	486
2005	1,527,929	491
2006	1,569,945	501
2007	1,598,245	506
2008	1,609,759	506
2009	1,615,487	504
2010	1,613,803	500
2011	1,598,968	492
2012	1,570,397	480
2013	1,576,950	479
2014	1,562,319	472
2015	1,526,603	459
2016	1,508,129	450
2017	1,489,189	442
2018	1,464,385	431
2019	1,430,165	419
2020	1,221,164	357
2021	1,205,087	350
2022	1,230,143	355

Yearend	People in state and federal prisons	Sentenced prisoners per 100,000 residents
2023	1,254,224	360

[242]

Counts are everyone under state or federal prison authority at the end of the year. The rate counts only sentenced prisoners (usually those serving more than a year). Figures for 2000-2008 come from BJS's 2009 report, 2009-2012 from its 2019 report and 2013-2023 from its 2023 report; BJS revises older years slightly in later reports. BJS's 2019 report put the 2008 rate at 506, the same as 2007, and described 2009 as the "all-time peak of 1,615,500 prisoners."[243] The 2023 report is the most recent full national count available at this book's cutoff.



Source: BJS, Prisoners in 2009 (2000-2008), Prisoners in 2019 (2009-2012) and Prisoners in 2023 Statistical Tables (2013-2023). Yearend counts under state or federal jurisdiction; rate counts sentenced prisoners.

People in state and federal prisons and imprisonment rate, 2000 to 2023

The key numbers:

- **Peak:** 1,615,487 prisoners at the end of 2009. The imprisonment rate peaked at 506 per 100,000 in 2007 and 2008.[244]
- **Ten years of decline:** By the end of 2019, the count was 1,430,165, down about 11 percent from the peak.[245]

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[242] Heather C. West, William J. Sabol and Sarah J. Greenman, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2009 (NCJ 231675)", December 2010. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p09.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2019 (NCJ 255115)", October 2020. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[243] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2019 (NCJ 255115)", October 2020. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[244] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2019 (NCJ 255115)", October 2020. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

- **The 2020 drop:** In one year the count fell to 1,221,164, a drop of about 15 percent.[246]
- **Since then:** The count rose to 1,254,224 at the end of 2023, "an increase of 24,100 persons (up 2%) from 2022."[247]
- **Overall:** From the 2009 peak to the end of 2023, the number of prisoners fell by about 361,000, or about 22 percent (my arithmetic). The imprisonment rate fell from 506 to 360, about 29 percent.

Women are a small but growing share. The number of women in state or federal prison rose from 87,800 at yearend 2022 to 91,100 at yearend 2023, almost 4 percent.[248]

People in jail

Local jails held 658,700 people at midyear 2024, compared with 744,600 at midyear 2014, a 12 percent drop. The jail incarceration rate fell from 234 to 194 per 100,000 residents. Jail admissions fell even more, from 11.5 million in 2014 to 7.9 million in 2024.[249] **[Not verified: the jail population for each year from 2000 to 2013 and its peak year, which BJS's 2024 report does not state in the text I could read.]**

Adding the two together, roughly 1.9 million people were held in American prisons and jails in 2023-2024 (my arithmetic, combining the 2023 prison count and the 2024 jail count, which are not from the same date).

Prison by race

Imprisonment rates fell for every major group from 2013 to 2023, but large gaps remain.[250]

Sentenced prisoners per 100,000 residents	2013	2023	Change
Black, non-Hispanic	1,348	929	down 31%
American Indian or Alaska Native	846	809	down 4%
Hispanic	630	429	down 32%

[245] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2019 (NCJ 255115)", October 2020. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[246] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2020 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 302776)", December 2021. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p20st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[247] Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

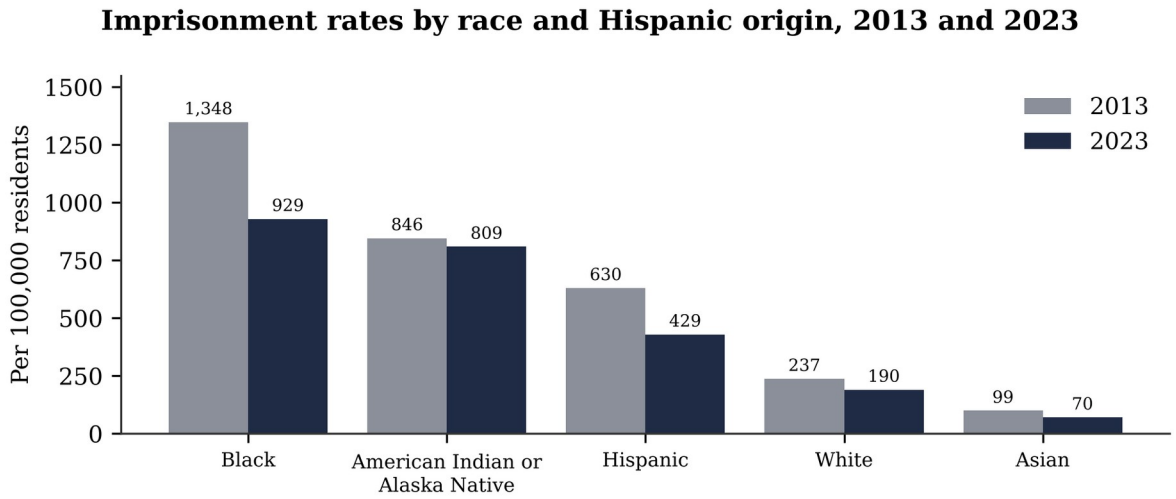
[248] Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[249] Zhen Zeng, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Jail Inmates in 2024 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 311504)", September 2026. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/ji24st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[250] Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Sentenced prisoners per 100,000 residents	2013	2023	Change
White, non-Hispanic	237	190	down 20%
Asian (including Pacific Islanders)	99	70	down 29%

The "Change" column is my arithmetic.



Source: BJS, Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (Sept. 2025), Table 5. Sentenced prisoners per 100,000 residents of all ages. Racial groups exclude Hispanic people; Asian includes Pacific Islanders.

Imprisonment rates by race and Hispanic origin, 2013 and 2023

In raw numbers, at the end of 2023 there were about 394,500 Black, 370,500 white, 282,700 Hispanic, 19,700 Native American and 15,200 Asian sentenced prisoners.[251] In 2023, the Black imprisonment rate was almost five times the white rate (929 compared with 190), down from almost six times in 2013 (1,348 compared with 237). Native Americans saw the smallest decline.

What people are in prison for

This is where federal and state prisons look completely different. State prisons hold about seven of every eight prisoners, so they shape the national picture. (State prisons held 1,097,597 of 1,254,224 prisoners at the end of 2023.[252])

State prisons: the top 10 offenses

BJS's most recent detailed breakdown of state prisoners by their most serious offense that I could retrieve is for the end of 2018.[253]

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[251] Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[252] Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Rank	Most serious offense, sentenced state prisoners, yearend 2018	Prisoners
1	Murder and non-negligent manslaughter	177,700
2	Rape and sexual assault	162,700
3	Robbery	155,000
4	Aggravated or simple assault	135,900
5	Drug offenses other than possession (mostly trafficking)	129,900
6	Burglary	106,500
7	Other public-order offenses	73,800
8	Weapons offenses	58,000
9	Drug possession	46,500
10	Other violent offenses	43,500
	Next: larceny or theft 38,700; fraud 22,400; other property 21,900; drunk or drugged driving 21,400; negligent manslaughter 18,600; motor vehicle theft 10,200	

[254]

BJS summarized: "An estimated 14% of sentenced state prisoners were serving time for murder or non-negligent manslaughter and 13% were serving time for rape or sexual assault at year-end 2018." It also reported that "a larger percentage of black (62%) and Hispanic (62%) prisoners than white prisoners (48%) were serving time for a violent offense."[255]

The top four are all violent crimes. Together they account for about 631,000 of the roughly 1.25 million sentenced state prisoners in 2018, about half (my arithmetic).

The newest broad breakdown is for the end of 2021, from BJS's 2022 report:[256]

Sentenced state prisoners, yearend 2021	Prisoners	Share
Violent offenses	642,526	62.9%

[253] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2019 (NCJ 255115)", October 2020. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[254] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2019 (NCJ 255115)", October 2020. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[255] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2019 (NCJ 255115)", October 2020. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[256] Bureau of Justice Statistics, as reproduced by Drug Policy Facts, "Prisoners in 2022 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 307149), sentenced state prisoners by most serious offense, yearend 2021", November 2023, revised August 29, 2025. https://drugpolicyfacts.org/table/stateoffense. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Sentenced state prisoners, yearend 2021	Prisoners	Share
Property offenses	132,804	13.0%
Drug offenses	127,348	12.5%
Public-order offenses (including weapons and drunk driving)	111,881	11.0%
Other or unspecified	6,729	0.7%
Total	**1,021,288**	**100%**

The shares are my arithmetic from BJS's counts.

Federal prisons: a different list

Federal prisons hold people convicted of federal crimes, which are mostly drug trafficking, gun, immigration and fraud offenses. At the end of the federal fiscal year 2023 (September 30, 2023), the Federal Bureau of Prisons held 137,477 sentenced people.[257]

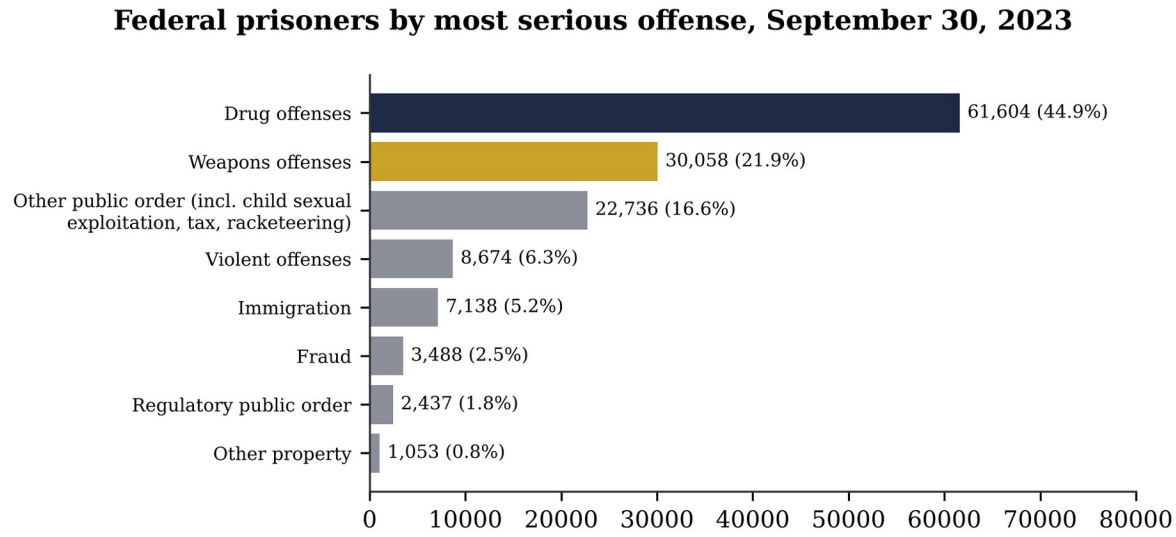
Rank	Most serious offense, federal prisoners, Sept. 30, 2023	Prisoners	Share
1	Drug offenses	61,604	44.9%
2	Weapons offenses	30,058	21.9%
3	Other public-order offenses (including child sexual exploitation material, tax and racketeering)	22,736	16.6%
4	Violent offenses	8,674	6.3%
5	Immigration offenses	7,138	5.2%
6	Fraud	3,488	2.5%
7	Regulatory public-order offenses	2,437	1.8%
8	Other property offenses	1,053	0.8%
	Offense not recorded	289	

Shares are of the 137,188 prisoners with a recorded offense; BJS's own rounded figures are drug 45 percent, weapons 22 percent, other public order 17 percent, violent 6 percent and immigration 5 percent.[258] BJS's federal table uses only these eight broad groups, so a federal "top 10" is not available from this source.

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[257] Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Federal Justice Statistics, 2023 (NCJ 309946), Table 9", March 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/fjs23.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[258] Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Federal Justice Statistics, 2023 (NCJ 309946), Table 9", March 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/fjs23.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Federal prisoners by most serious offense, September 30, 2023

Weapons offenses are the second-largest group in federal prison, about 30,000 people, or more than one in five federal prisoners.

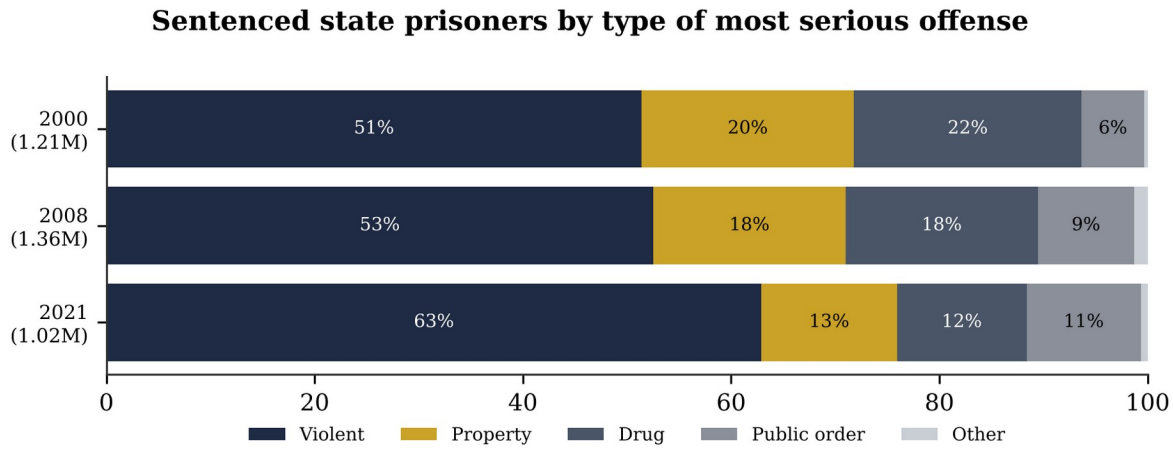
How the mix has changed since 2000

BJS's 2009 report estimated the offenses of state prisoners in 2000 and 2008. Put next to the 2021 figures, the change is striking.[259]

Sentenced state prisoners by offense	2000	2008	2021	Change, 2000 to 2021
Violent	620,000	715,400	642,526	up 4%
Property	246,000	251,800	132,804	down 46%
Drug	263,800	251,400	127,348	down 52%
Public order	72,400	125,900	111,881	up 55%
Other	4,100	17,800	6,729	up 64%
Total	**1,206,200**	**1,365,400**	**1,021,288**	**down 15%**

The "Change" column is my arithmetic. The 2000 and 2008 figures are BJS estimates rounded to the nearest 100.

[259] Heather C. West, William J. Sabol and Sarah J. Greenman, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2009 (NCJ 231675)", December 2010. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p09.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Bureau of Justice Statistics, as reproduced by Drug Policy Facts, "Prisoners in 2022 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 307149), sentenced state prisoners by most serious offense, yearend 2021", November 2023, revised August 29, 2025. https://drugpolicyfacts.org/table/stateoffense. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: BJS, Prisoners in 2009, Table 7 (2000 and 2008 estimates); BJS, Prisoners in 2022 Statistical Tables as reproduced by Drug Policy Facts (yearend 2021).

Sentenced state prisoners by type of most serious offense

This table answers one part of the question, "Why did the number of prisoners go down?" The drop in state prisons came almost entirely from **fewer people in prison for drug and property crimes.** From 2000 to 2021, the number of state prisoners held for drug offenses fell by about 136,000, more than half. The number held for property offenses fell by about 113,000. The number held for violent offenses was slightly higher in 2021 than in 2000. As a result, the share of state prisoners held for violent crimes rose from about half in 2000 (51 percent) to almost two-thirds (63 percent) in 2021.

Why the numbers fell after 2009: what officials say

Why did prison and jail numbers fall after 2009, according to the people who run and study them? Here is what I could confirm from official and nonpartisan sources, and what I could not.

1. COVID-19 caused the 2020 drop. BJS was direct about this: "The COVID-19 pandemic was largely responsible for the decline in prisoners under state and federal correctional authority." It explained that "Courts significantly altered operations for part or all of 2020, leading to delays in trials and/or sentencing of persons," and that states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons adopted "expedited releases of persons in prison based on their crimes, time served, and behavior; and releases to home confinement." BJS also cautioned that some of these changes "may be temporary."[260] The count has risen every year since 2021.[261]

2. California's 2011 "realignment" law. The Public Policy Institute of California, a nonpartisan research group, reports that the state's prison population peaked at "over 173,000" in 2006 and has "since declined, with the biggest reductions occurring just after realignment, a 2011 law aimed at lowering the prison population, and in the first year of the pandemic." California held 90,600 prisoners in December 2025.[262]

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[260] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2020 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 302776)", December 2021. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p20st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[261] Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[262] Public Policy Institute of California, "California's Prison Population", accessed November 13, 2026. https://www.ppic.org/publication/californias-prison-population/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

3. Fewer people held for drug and property crimes. As the table above shows, the decline in state prisons came from fewer drug and property prisoners, not fewer violent offenders.[263] The BJS reports I read do not say how much of this came from changes in laws, changes in policing and arrests, or fewer crimes being committed.

4. Federal sentencing changes. The First Step Act, a federal law approved on December 21, 2018, lets eligible federal prisoners earn "10 days of time credits for every 30 days" of recidivism-reduction programs, which can move them to prerelease custody or supervised release sooner. It also let courts reduce sentences for certain drug offenses committed before August 3, 2010, as if the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 had been in effect at the time.[264] The Federal Bureau of Prisons reports 68,007 "First Step Act Releases," 4,167 court orders granted for "Fair Sentencing / Retroactive Sentence Reductions" and 5,015 compassionate releases or sentence reductions approved. Its web page gives no "as of" date.[265] BJS reported that in 2023 alone, 2,967 women and 11,969 men were released from federal prison under the act.[266] The federal prison count fell from 208,118 in 2009 to 156,627 in 2023.[267]

5. State parole and sentencing laws. BJS has tied specific state declines to specific laws. For example, it tied Missouri's prison decline in 2019 to a change in the state's parole-eligibility law for nonviolent offenders.[268] A full list of state laws passed in this period was not in the sources I could open.

6. Fewer people going through jail. Jail admissions fell from 11.5 million in 2014 to 7.9 million in 2024.[269] Fewer people entering jail means fewer people moving on to prison. The BJS report does not give the reasons.

What I could not confirm:

- **Marijuana legalization.** Many states legalized recreational marijuana during this period. I did not find an official or nonpartisan source that measures how much legalization reduced the number of people in prison or jail. Drug possession was already a small share of state prisoners (46,500 at the end of 2018, about 4 percent).[270] **[Not verified: any measured effect of marijuana legalization on prison counts.]**

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[263] Heather C. West, William J. Sabol and Sarah J. Greenman, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2009 (NCJ 231675)", December 2010. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p09.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Bureau of Justice Statistics, as reproduced by Drug Policy Facts, "Prisoners in 2022 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 307149), sentenced state prisoners by most serious offense, yearend 2021", November 2023, revised August 29, 2025. https://drugpolicyfacts.org/table/stateoffense. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[264] U.S. Congress, "First Step Act of 2018, Public Law 115-391 (S. 756)", approved December 21, 2018. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-115publ391/html/PLAW-115publ391.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[265] Federal Bureau of Prisons, "First Step Act (FSA Numbers)", undated web page, accessed November 13, 2026. https://www.bop.gov/inmates/fsa/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[266] Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[267] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2019 (NCJ 255115)", October 2020. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[268] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2019 (NCJ 255115)", October 2020. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[269] Zhen Zeng, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Jail Inmates in 2024 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 311504)", September 2026. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/ji24st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

- **"Easier on crime."** Whether sentencing became more lenient overall is a judgment, not a number. What the records show is that fewer people were in prison for drug and property crimes, that some federal and state laws shortened sentences or widened release, and that the number held for violent crimes did not fall. Whether those changes were wise is a question for readers, not for this book.
- **Falling crime.** Murder and violent crime were mostly lower in the 2010s than in 2000 (Chapter 3), and fewer crimes can mean fewer prison sentences. I did not find a federal source that measures how much of the prison decline came from lower crime.

What happens after release

BJS followed 401,288 state prisoners released in 2005 in 30 states for nine years. It found: "An estimated 68% of released prisoners were arrested within 3 years, 79% within 6 years, and 83% within 9 years." Together they had 1,994,000 arrests over those nine years.[271] These are arrests, not convictions or returns to prison.

Guns and prison

Two links tie this chapter back to the rest of the book:

- About 1 in 5 state and federal prisoners (21 percent) said they had a gun during the crime that sent them to prison, according to BJS's 2016 survey.[272]
- Weapons offenses were the most serious offense for about 58,000 state prisoners at the end of 2018 and about 30,000 federal prisoners in 2023.[273]

[270] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2019 (NCJ 255115)", October 2020. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[271] Mariel Alper, Matthew R. Durose and Joshua Markman, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism: A 9-Year Follow-up Period (2005-2014) (NCJ 250975)", May 23, 2018. https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/2018-update-prisoner-recidivism-9-year-follow-period-2005-2014. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[272] Mariel Alper and Lauren Glaze, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Source and Use of Firearms Involved in Crimes: Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016 (NCJ 251776)", January 2019. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/suficspi16.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[273] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2019 (NCJ 255115)", October 2020. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Federal Justice Statistics, 2023 (NCJ 309946), Table 9", March 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/fjs23.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Part Eight: Places and Patterns

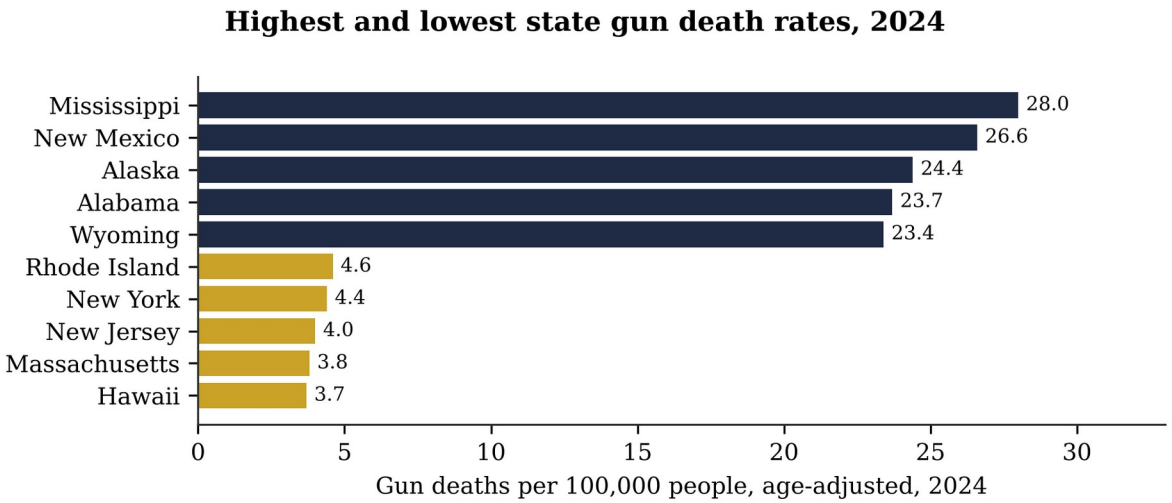
Chapter 23: States and Regions

National numbers hide huge differences between states. Gun deaths, gun suicides and gun homicides each follow their own map.

Total gun death rates by state, 2024

Pew Research Center's analysis of 2024 CDC data, counting all gun deaths (suicides, homicides and others), age-adjusted per 100,000 people:[274]

Highest	Rate	Lowest	Rate
Mississippi	28.0	Hawaii	3.7
New Mexico	26.6	Massachusetts	3.8
Alaska	24.4	New Jersey	4.0
Alabama	23.7	New York	4.4
Wyoming	23.4	Rhode Island	4.6



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of CDC WONDER data, April 28, 2026. Includes suicides, homicides and all other gun deaths.

Highest and lowest state gun death rates, 2024

Gun homicide versus gun suicide by state, 2024

The states with the most gun homicide and the states with the most gun suicide are mostly different places.[275]

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[274] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[275] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Highest gun homicide rate	Rate	Highest gun suicide rate	Rate
District of Columbia	18.0	Wyoming	19.7
Mississippi	16.9	Alaska	18.7
Louisiana	13.0	Montana	16.9
Alabama	11.6	New Mexico	14.3
New Mexico	10.3	Idaho	13.7

Lowest gun homicide rate	Rate	Lowest gun suicide rate	Rate
New Hampshire	0.9	District of Columbia	1.5
Maine	1.2	Hawaii	1.9
Rhode Island	1.2	New Jersey	2.1
Idaho	1.3	Massachusetts	2.3
North Dakota	1.3	New York	2.3

The pattern: gun homicide is highest in the Deep South and in Washington, D.C. Gun suicide is highest in the rural Mountain West and Alaska. The District of Columbia has both the highest gun homicide rate and the lowest gun suicide rate in the country. Idaho has one of the lowest gun homicide rates and one of the highest gun suicide rates. New Mexico is on both "highest" lists.

Mass shootings by state

The states with the most public mass shootings since 2000 in the Mother Jones database are mostly the states with the most people: California (21 cases), Texas (11), Florida (8), Washington, Pennsylvania and Colorado (6 each), and Illinois and Wisconsin (5 each).[276] Appendix A lists every case.

Officers killed, by region

Of the 53 officers feloniously killed in 2025, 21 were killed in the South, 14 in the Midwest, 11 in the West and 7 in the Northeast.[277]

Prisons, by state

In 2023 the states with the highest imprisonment rates (sentenced prisoners per 100,000 residents) were Mississippi (652), Louisiana (617), Arkansas (596) and Oklahoma (545), compared with 360 for the

[276] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. J. A. Acosta (GitHub), copy of the Mother Jones spreadsheet through September 2024, "MJ Mass Shootings - Data Cleaning and Analysis". https://github.com/JA-Acosta/mj_mass_shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[277] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

country as a whole.[278] Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama appear near the top of the gun homicide list too. These lists show where things are high; they do not show why.

[278] Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Chapter 24: How the United States Compares with Other Countries

Comparisons between countries are harder than they look, because countries count deaths differently. The figures below come from global estimates.

Gun death rates

Pew Research Center cited estimates from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), a research center at the University of Washington, for 2023. By those estimates:[279]

- The U.S. gun death rate was 13.2 per 100,000 people.
- Venezuela (45.8) and El Salvador (40.4) had much higher rates.
- The U.S. gun homicide rate was 6.2 per 100,000.
- The U.S. gun suicide rate was 6.7 per 100,000, second only to Greenland (21.2).

So the United States does not have the world's highest gun death rate. At least two Latin American countries, Venezuela and El Salvador, have much higher rates. But among wealthy countries, the U.S. stands far apart. KFF found that the U.S. firearm death rate for children and teens was "over 9.5 times" Canada's, and that the United States accounted for 97 percent of child and teen gun deaths among the wealthy peer countries it studied.[280]

Guns per person

The Small Arms Survey estimated in 2018 that American civilians held about 393 million guns, or 120.5 per 100 people, as of 2017, out of an estimated 857 million civilian guns worldwide.[281] By that estimate, Americans, about 4 percent of the world's people, held about 46 percent of the world's civilian guns (my arithmetic: 393 divided by 857). **[Not verified: the U.S. share of world population from a source cited in this book. The 4 percent figure is a widely used approximation.]**

What this comparison can and cannot show

Comparing countries is the strongest-sounding evidence in the gun debate and among the weakest for proving cause. Countries differ in poverty, drug trade, gangs, policing, health care and culture, not only in guns. The comparison shows that the United States has far more guns and far more gun deaths than other wealthy countries. It does not, alone, prove that one causes the other, and it does not tell you which policy would change it.

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[279] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[280] Matt McGough, Nirmita Panchal, Cynthia Cox and Krutika Amin, KFF, "Child and Teen Firearm Mortality in the U.S. and Peer Countries", July 18, 2023. https://www.kff.org/mental-health/issue-brief/child-and-teen-firearm-mortality-in-the-u-s-and-peer-countries/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[281] Small Arms Survey, "Civilian Firearms Holdings, 2017 (annex to Estimating Global Civilian-Held Firearms Numbers)", June 2018. https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/SAS-BP-Civilian-held-firearms-annexe-REV1.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Chapter 25: Guns and Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is one of the areas where national gun data are weakest. Here is what the sources in this book show.

- **Mass shooters often have a history of domestic violence.** The National Institute of Justice's summary of The Violence Project's database found that 27.9 percent of public mass shooters from 1966 to 2019 had a history of domestic violence.[282]
- **Some mass shootings are themselves domestic.** The Violence Project lists "domestic or family" as the motive in 16 percent of public mass shootings.[283] Many family killings happen in homes and are not counted in public mass shooting databases at all; the Gun Violence Archive's broad count includes them.[284]
- **Murder-suicides are common.** The Gun Violence Archive counted between 570 and 686 murder-suicide incidents a year from 2019 through 2025 (628 in 2019, 570 in 2020, 594 in 2021, 672 in 2022, 686 in 2023, 672 in 2024 and 679 in 2025).[285] The archive does not say in its yearly ledger how many of these were between partners or family members.
- **Women are killed less often than men, but more often at home.** The CDC counted 3,362 female gun homicide victims in 2021, compared with 17,604 male victims.[286] The share of those killed by a partner is not in the sources I used.

[Not verified: a national count of intimate-partner gun homicides for 2000-2025 from a federal source I could open.] The FBI's detailed homicide tables record the relationship between victim and offender, and BJS has published studies of intimate-partner homicide, but I was not able to retrieve them for this book. If a future edition adds them, this chapter will grow.

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[282] National Institute of Justice, "Public Mass Shootings: Database Amasses Details of a Half Century of U.S. Mass Shootings with Firearms, Generating Psychosocial Histories", February 3, 2022. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[283] The Violence Project (Hamline University and Metropolitan State University), "Key Findings", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/key-findings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[284] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[285] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[286] Thomas R. Simon and others, CDC, "Notes from the Field: Increases in Firearm Homicide and Suicide Rates - United States, 2020-2021, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 71(40):1286-1287", October 7, 2022. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7140a4.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Chapter 26: Gun Laws in Court, in Research and in Public Opinion

This book does not grade gun laws or recommend any. But three questions come up in almost every gun argument: what the Supreme Court has said, what the research shows about specific laws, and what Americans want. Each has a checkable answer.

What the Supreme Court decided, 2008 to 2026

Since 2008 the Supreme Court has decided a series of Second Amendment and gun-law cases that set the rules courts use today.

Date	Case	Vote	What the Court held
June 26, 2008	District of Columbia v. Heller	5-4	Washington, D.C.'s ban on registering handguns, and its rule that guns at home be kept disassembled or bound by a trigger lock, violated the Second Amendment.
June 28, 2010	McDonald v. Chicago	5-4	The Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms for self-defense applies to the states, not just the federal government.
March 21, 2016	Caetano v. Massachusetts	Unsigned opinion	Stun guns are covered by the Second Amendment, even though they did not exist when it was written.
June 23, 2022	New York State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen	6-3	New York's rule that a person show "proper cause" to get a license to carry a handgun was unconstitutional. The right extends to carrying a handgun for self-defense outside the home.
June 14, 2024	Garland v. Cargill	6-3	ATF "exceeded its statutory authority" when it classified bump stocks as machineguns.
June 21, 2024	United States v. Rahimi	8-1	A person a court has found to be a credible

Date	Case	Vote	What the Court held
			threat to another person's physical safety "may be temporarily disarmed consistent with the Second Amendment."
March 26, 2025	Bondi v. VanDerStok	Not verified	ATF's 2022 rule covering kits that can readily be made into a working gun frame or receiver "is not facially inconsistent" with federal law.
June 5, 2025	Smith and Wesson Brands v. Estados Unidos Mexicanos	Not verified	Mexico's lawsuit against American gun makers was barred by the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act.
June 18, 2026	United States v. Hemani	9-0	Prosecuting this defendant, an unlawful drug user who kept a gun in his home, was "inconsistent with the Second Amendment."
June 25, 2026	Wolford v. Lopez	Not verified	Hawaii's default ban on carrying handguns onto private property open to the public, without the owner's express permission, "violates the Second and Fourteenth Amendments."

[287] Oyez (Cornell Legal Information Institute, Justia and Chicago-Kent College of Law), "Case pages: District of Columbia v. Heller (07-290); McDonald v. Chicago (08-1521); Caetano v. Massachusetts (14-10078); United States v. Rahimi (22-915); Garland v. Cargill (22-976); United States v. Hemani (24-1234)", accessed November 13, 2026. https://www.oyez.org/cases/2007/07-290. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Supreme Court of the United States, "New York State Rifle and Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen, No. 20-843, slip opinion", June 23, 2022. https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/20-843_7j80.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Supreme Court of the United States, "Opinions of the Court - 2023 Term (slip opinions list: United States v. Rahimi; Garland v. Cargill)", accessed November 13, 2026. https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/slipopinion/23. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Supreme Court of the United States, "Opinions of the Court - 2024 Term (slip opinions list: Bondi v. VanDerStok; Smith and Wesson Brands, Inc. v. Estados Unidos Mexicanos)", accessed November 13, 2026. https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/slipopinion/24. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Supreme Court of the United States, "Opinions of the Court - 2025 Term (slip opinions list: United States v. Hemani; Wolford v. Lopez)", accessed November 13, 2026. https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/slipopinion/25. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

The holdings above are short summaries. The Court's own words are in the opinions, which are free on the Supreme Court's website. Where the Court's case listing gave only the author of the opinion and I could not confirm the vote from a source I read, the table says "Not verified."

What these cases do and do not show. They show what the Constitution allows, as the Court reads it. They say nothing about whether a law reduced or increased crime. That is a separate question, answered by research, not by courts.

Federal gun laws passed or ended, 2000 to 2026

Date	Law	What it did
September 13, 2004	Federal assault weapons ban ends	The 1994 ban (the Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protection Act, part of the 1994 crime law) was written to be "repealed effective as of the date that is 10 years after" its enactment on September 13, 1994. Congress did not renew it.
October 26, 2005	Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act	Bars many civil lawsuits against gun makers, distributors, dealers and importers for "damages ... resulting from the misuse of their products by others." This is the law the Supreme Court applied in the Mexico case above.
January 8, 2008	NICS Improvement Amendments Act	Aimed "to improve the National Instant Criminal Background Check System," the FBI's gun-buyer check system.
December 21, 2018	First Step Act	A criminal justice law, covered in Chapter 22.
June 25, 2022	Bipartisan Safer Communities Act	Its firearms title covers juvenile records in background checks, a definition of "engaged in the business" of selling guns, federal grants for state crisis intervention (including "red flag") programs, new federal gun trafficking crimes, and the definition of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence. It also funded mental health and school safety programs.

[288]

The table lists laws by their official text. It does not judge their effects; the RAND ratings below cover the research on several of these kinds of laws.

Ghost guns: privately made firearms

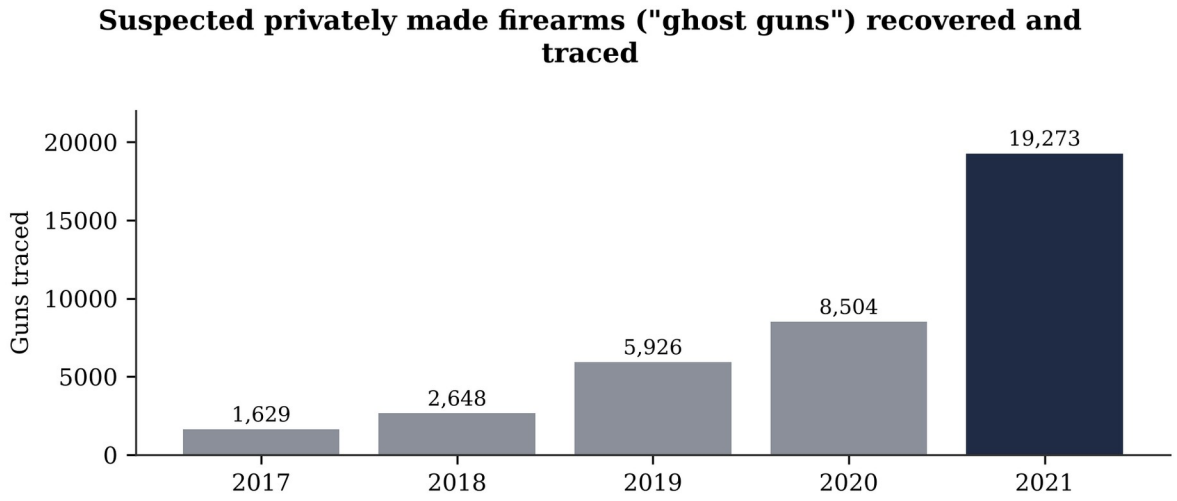
"Ghost gun" is the popular name for a gun built at home from a kit or parts, with no serial number. ATF calls them privately made firearms. Police recover them at crime scenes and submit them for tracing like any other gun.

ATF reported that police submitted 37,980 suspected privately made firearms for tracing from 2017 through 2021, and that the yearly number "increased by 1,083% from 2017 (1,629) to 2021 (19,273)."[289]

Year	Suspected privately made firearms recovered and traced
2017	1,629
2018	2,648
2019	5,926
2020	8,504
2021	19,273
Total	37,980

[288] U.S. Congress, "Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, Public Law 103-322, Title XI, Subtitle A (Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protection Act), 108 Stat. 1796", approved September 13, 1994. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-108/pdf/STATUTE-108-Pg1796.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. U.S. Congress, "Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, Public Law 109-92", approved October 26, 2005. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-109publ92/html/PLAW-109publ92.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. U.S. Congress, "NICS Improvement Amendments Act of 2007, Public Law 110-180 (H.R. 2640)", approved January 8, 2008. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-110publ180/html/PLAW-110publ180.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. U.S. Congress, "First Step Act of 2018, Public Law 115-391 (S. 756)", approved December 21, 2018. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-115publ391/html/PLAW-115publ391.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. U.S. Congress, "Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, Public Law 117-159 (S. 2938)", approved June 25, 2022. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-117publ159/html/PLAW-117publ159.htm. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[289] Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA): Crime Guns - Volume Two, Part III: Crime Guns Recovered and Traced Within the United States and Its Territories", 2024. https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-ii-part-iii-crime-guns-recovered-and-traced-us/download. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.



Source: ATF, National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment, Volume Two, Part III (2024). Total 2017-2021: 37,980.

Suspected privately made firearms traced, 2017-2021

Of the 37,980, ATF counted 22,546 pistols (59.4 percent), 5,446 rifles (14.3 percent), 4,459 machineguns (11.7 percent), 1,588 frames or receivers (4.2 percent) and 345 silencers (0.9 percent).[290] ATF added that "it is probable that current trace data significantly underrepresents" how many are recovered, because not every agency submits them. These are guns recovered by police, not a count of crimes, and the report does not cover years after 2021. The VanDerStok case above upheld the 2022 rule that brought gun kits under federal law.

What the research says about specific laws

The RAND Corporation, a nonpartisan research organization, has reviewed gun policy studies since 2018. Its latest review, updated January 29, 2026, covers research through December 2024. RAND rates the evidence for each law and each outcome on a five-step scale: no studies, inconclusive, limited, moderate and supportive. "Supportive" is its strongest rating, and requires at least three studies finding significant effects in the same direction using at least two independent data sets.[291]

Law	What RAND found, and how strong the evidence is
Background checks	Reduce firearm and total homicides (moderate). Effects on suicide, mass shootings and police shootings inconclusive.
Minimum age to buy	A higher minimum purchase age reduces firearm suicide among young people (supportive). Effects on mass shootings and violent crime inconclusive.

[290] Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA): Crime Guns - Volume Two, Part III: Crime Guns Recovered and Traced Within the United States and Its Territories", 2024. https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-ii-part-iii-crime-guns-recovered-and-traced-us/download. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[291] RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "What Science Tells Us About the Effects of Gun Policies", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/key-findings/what-science-tells-us-about-the-effects-of-gun-policies.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Law	What RAND found, and how strong the evidence is
Domestic violence prohibitions	Reduce intimate partner homicide (moderate).
Extreme risk ("red flag") orders	Reduce firearm and total suicides (limited). Effects on mass shootings and violent crime inconclusive.
Prohibitions tied to mental illness	Reduce violent crime (limited). Effect on suicide inconclusive.
Surrender of guns by people barred from owning them	Reduce firearm intimate partner homicide (limited).
Licensing and permit-to-purchase	Reduce firearm and total homicides (limited) and mass shootings (limited).
Assault weapon and high-capacity magazine bans	High-capacity magazine bans reduce mass shootings and their deaths (limited). Effects on violent crime and suicide inconclusive.
Safety training requirements	Inconclusive.
Sales reporting and registration	Inconclusive.
Lost or stolen gun reporting	No studies met RAND's standards.
Stand-your-ground laws	Increase total and firearm homicides (supportive; Chapter 20).

[292]

Two things stand out. First, for most laws and most outcomes, RAND rates the evidence "inconclusive." That does not mean a law does nothing. It means good studies have not settled the question. Second, the strongest findings run in both directions politically: evidence supports background checks and higher minimum ages reducing deaths, and also supports stand-your-ground laws increasing homicides. **[Not verified: RAND's ratings for child-access prevention laws, concealed-carry laws and waiting periods. The parts of RAND's table I could read did not include them, so they are left out.]**

What Americans want

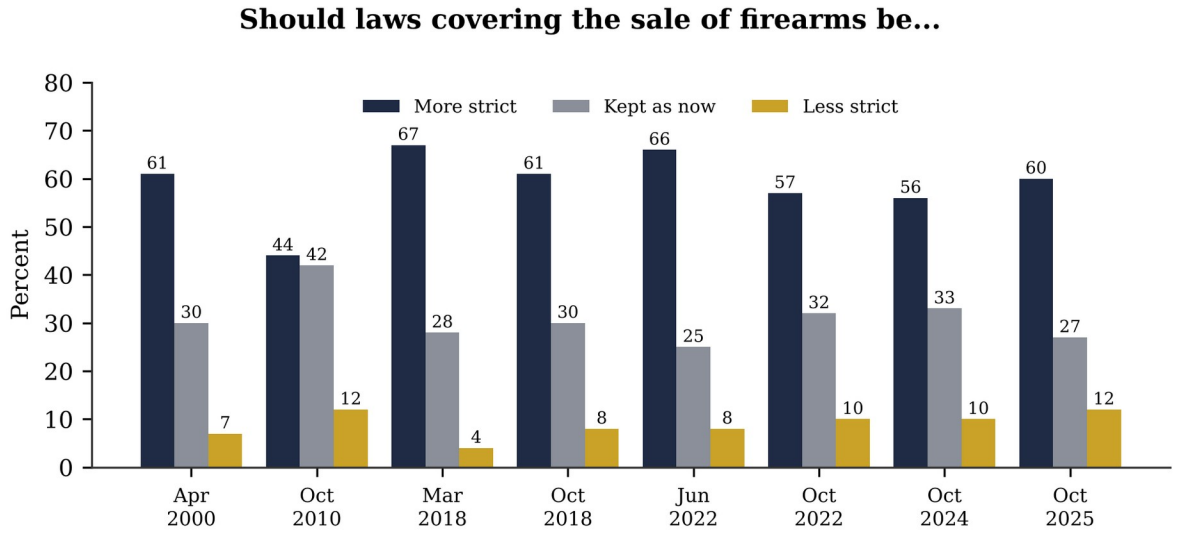
Gallup has asked the same question for decades: "In general, do you feel that the laws covering the sale of firearms should be made more strict, less strict, or kept as they are now?"[293]

Survey	More strict	Less strict	Kept as now
April 2000	61%	7%	30%
October 2010	44%	12%	42%
March 2018 (after	67%	4%	28%

[292] RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "What Science Tells Us About the Effects of Gun Policies", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/key-findings/what-science-tells-us-about-the-effects-of-gun-policies.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Effects of Stand-Your-Ground Laws", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/stand-your-ground.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[293] Gallup, "Guns (historical trends)", updated June 15, 2026. https://news.gallup.com/poll/1645/guns.aspx. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Survey	More strict	Less strict	Kept as now
Parkland)			
October 2018	61%	8%	30%
June 2022 (after Uvalde)	66%	8%	25%
October 2022	57%	10%	32%
October 2024	56%	10%	33%
October 2025	60%	12%	27%



Source: Gallup, Guns (historical trends), selected surveys. "No opinion" not shown.

Gallup: should gun sale laws be more strict?

In every survey shown, more Americans wanted stricter laws than looser ones, but the "more strict" share has moved a lot: from 44 percent in 2010 to 67 percent just after the Parkland shooting in 2018. Support jumped after the Parkland and Uvalde shootings and then eased within months. The table shows selected surveys; Gallup's page lists them all. Public opinion is not evidence that any law works. It shows only what people want.

Part Nine: Checking the Claims

This part tests 31 claims that come up again and again in arguments about guns, crime and punishment. Each one gets one of the four verdicts explained in the Introduction: True, Partly true, False (debunked) or Inconclusive. Each verdict points back to the chapter with the full numbers.

Claim 1: "Most gun deaths are murders."

Verdict: False (debunked).

From 2000 through 2025, about 59 of every 100 gun deaths were suicides and about 37 were homicides. In 2024, suicides were 62 percent of gun deaths and homicides 35 percent. Suicides outnumbered homicides in every year of the period.[294] (Chapter 1.)

Claim 2: "Gun deaths are at record highs."

Verdict: Partly true.

The number of gun deaths hit a record of 48,830 in 2021, and gun suicides set records in 2024 and (provisionally) 2025. But total gun deaths have fallen every year since 2021, and the gun death rate in 2024, adjusted for population and age, was 12.8 per 100,000, well below the 1974 peak of 16.3.[295] Whether the claim is true depends on the year, the measure (count or rate) and which kind of death you mean. (Chapters 1 and 9.)

Claim 3: "Murder and violent crime are out of control and higher than ever."

Verdict: False (debunked).

Murders did jump nearly 30 percent in 2020, the largest one-year increase on record. But they fell 14.9 percent in 2024 and 18.1 percent in 2025, and the FBI said the 2025 murder rate of 4.1 per 100,000 tied 1955 and 1956 for the lowest on record. Violent crime fell 9.3 percent in 2025. Over the longer term, the violent crime rate fell 49 percent from 1993 to 2022 by FBI figures and the violent victimization rate fell 71 percent by BJS's survey.[296] (Chapter 3.)

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[294] Pew Research Center, "Gun suicides in the U.S. have increased, but gun homicides have fallen since 2021 (chart data from CDC)", April 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/chart/gun-suicides-have-increased-in-the-u-s-in-recent-years-but-gun-murders-have-fallen-since-2021/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[295] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[296] Associated Press, via PBS NewsHour, "Murders dropped nearly 15% last year, FBI data shows", August 5, 2025. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/murders-dropped-nearly-15-last-year-fbi-data-shows. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about crime in the U.S.", April 24, 2024. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/24/what-the-data-says-about-crime-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, "FBI

Claim 4: "Most violent crimes involve a gun."

Verdict: False (debunked).

BJS found that about 660,000 of about 6.7 million violent victimizations in 2024, or about 10 percent, involved a firearm.[297] Guns are used in a large majority of *homicides* (about 76 percent in 2024), but most violent crime is assault without a gun.[298] (Chapter 6.)

Claim 5: "More people are murdered with knives than with rifles."

Verdict: True.

In every year from 2010 to 2019, the FBI recorded more murders with knives or cutting instruments than with rifles of all kinds. In 2019, it was 1,476 with knives and 364 with rifles. Hands, fists and feet were used in 600.[299] Some "firearm, type not stated" murders may have involved rifles, but the gap is large. (Chapter 5.)

Claim 6: "Assault rifles are used in most gun murders."

Verdict: False (debunked).

Handguns are the weapon in most gun murders where the type is known. In 2024, among murders with a known weapon, handguns were 53 percent and rifles of every kind 3 percent.[300] Rifles were also a minority weapon in public mass shootings: the NIJ summary found handguns in 77.2 percent of public mass shootings and "assault rifles" in 25.1 percent.[301] Rifles are used in some of the deadliest mass shootings, but not in most murders. (Chapters 5 and 13.)

Releases 2024 Reported Crimes in the Nation Statistics (press release)", August 5, 2025. https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-releases-2024-reported-crimes-in-the-nation-statistics. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Chris Williams, LiveNOW from FOX, "US homicide rate falls to 75-year low as violent crime declines, FBI says", August 15, 2026. https://www.fox9.com/news/fbi-homicide-rate-violent-crime. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[297] Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization, 2024 (NCJ 310547), Table 10", September 29, 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cv24.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[298] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[299] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2014, Expanded Homicide Data Table 8: Murder Victims by Weapon, 2010-2014", 2015. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2014/crime-in-the-u.s.-2014/tables/expanded-homicide-data/expanded_homicide_data_table_8_murder_victims_by_weapon_2010-2014.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 8: Murder Victims by Weapon, 2015-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-8.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[300] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[301] National Institute of Justice, "Public Mass Shootings: Database Amasses Details of a Half Century of U.S. Mass Shootings with Firearms, Generating Psychosocial Histories", February 3, 2022. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Claim 7: "Guns are not the problem. Take away guns and killers will just use other weapons."

Verdict: Inconclusive.

The records show *how* people were killed, not what would happen if guns were harder to get. Here is what the records show: homicides by all means other than guns stayed between about 4,400 and 6,000 a year from 2000 to 2025 and slowly fell, while gun homicides rose and fell sharply. About 95 of every 100 extra homicides from 2019 to 2021 were gun homicides.[302] Meanwhile, non-gun suicides rose sharply, which shows people do turn to other means.[303] What would settle the question is strong research on how specific changes in gun access affect total killings, not just gun killings. RAND reviews that research law by law; its stand-your-ground review is described in Chapter 20.[304] (Chapters 5 and 9.)

Claim 8: "Criminals get most of their guns at gun shows."

Verdict: False (debunked).

In BJS's 2016 survey of prisoners who had a gun during their crime, 0.8 percent got it at a gun show. Most got it on the street or from an individual. Only 10.1 percent got it from any retail source.[305] (Chapter 8.)

Claim 9: "Most mass shooters got their guns legally."

Verdict: True.

The Violence Project found 64 percent of public mass shooters "obtained firearms legally." The NIJ summary for 1966-2019 found 77 percent bought at least some of their guns legally. The Mother Jones database marks 81 of 131 cases since 2000 as legally obtained, with 37 unknown.[306] Note the Secret Service's broader study found one-third of mass attackers were legally barred from having a gun.[307] (Chapter 13.)

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[302] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[303] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[304] RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Effects of Stand-Your-Ground Laws", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/stand-your-ground.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[305] Mariel Alper and Lauren Glaze, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Source and Use of Firearms Involved in Crimes: Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016 (NCJ 251776)", January 2019. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/suficspi16.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[306] The Violence Project (Hamline University and Metropolitan State University), "Key Findings", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/key-findings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. National Institute of Justice, "Public Mass Shootings: Database Amasses Details of a Half Century of U.S. Mass Shootings with Firearms, Generating Psychosocial Histories", February 3, 2022. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Claim 10: "There are more guns than people in America."

Verdict: True (by the best estimate available).

The Small Arms Survey estimated 393.3 million civilian guns in 2017, or 120.5 per 100 people.[308] There is no national registry, so this is an estimate, but it is the most widely cited one, and roughly 10.7 million to 22.7 million new guns a year were added to the U.S. market from 2013 through 2024 (my arithmetic from ATF figures).[309] (Chapter 8.)

Claim 11: "Guns are the leading cause of death for American children."

Verdict: Partly true.

KFF found firearms caused more deaths of children aged 1 to 17 than any other cause in 2020 and 2021. But the CDC's own summary for 2024 lists firearm injuries as "the second leading cause of death among children and teens ages 1-19."[310] The claim depends on the year and the age range. Gun deaths of children and teens remain far higher in the United States than in other wealthy countries. (Chapter 10.)

Claim 12: "Most mass shooters are white men."

Verdict: Partly true.

They are overwhelmingly men (98 percent, by The Violence Project's count).[311] About half of public mass shooters since 2000 in the Mother Jones database were white (51 percent), and the NIJ summary of 1966-2019 found 52.3 percent white.[312] White Americans are about 60 percent of the population,[313] so white shooters are roughly at or somewhat below their population share, and Black shooters are somewhat above theirs. "Most are white" is true by a slim majority in some counts. "White men are uniquely likely to be mass shooters" is not supported by these numbers. (Chapter 13.)

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[307] Luke Barr, ABC News (Good Morning America), "Gun was used as a weapon in majority of recent mass attacks: US Secret Service", January 25, 2023. https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/news/story/gun-weapon-majority-recent-mass-attacks-us-secret-96641944. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[308] Small Arms Survey, "Civilian Firearms Holdings, 2017 (annex to Estimating Global Civilian-Held Firearms Numbers)", June 2018. https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/SAS-BP-Civilian-held-firearms-annexe-REV1.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[309] Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "Firearms Commerce in the United States: Statistical Update 2025 (Publication 5390.1)", 2025. https://www.atf.gov/media/30936/download. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[310] Matt McGough, Nirmita Panchal, Cynthia Cox and Krutika Amin, KFF, "Child and Teen Firearm Mortality in the U.S. and Peer Countries", July 18, 2023. https://www.kff.org/mental-health/issue-brief/child-and-teen-firearm-mortality-in-the-u-s-and-peer-countries/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Fast Facts: Firearm Injury and Death", updated September 2, 2026. https://www.cdc.gov/firearm-violence/data-research/facts-stats/index.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[311] The Violence Project (Hamline University and Metropolitan State University), "Key Findings", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/key-findings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[312] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. National Institute of Justice, "Public Mass Shootings: Database Amasses Details of a Half Century of U.S. Mass Shootings with Firearms, Generating Psychosocial Histories", February 3, 2022. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[313] Allen J. Beck, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Race and Ethnicity of Violent Crime Offenders and Arrestees, 2018 (NCJ 255969)", January 2021. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/revcoa18.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Claim 13: "Transgender people commit a large or growing share of mass shootings."

Verdict: False (debunked).

Of 5,748 mass shootings counted by the Gun Violence Archive from January 2013 through mid-September 2025, five involved a confirmed transgender or nonbinary shooter (possibly up to eight). Of 201 public mass shooters in The Violence Project's database from 1966 through 2024, one was transgender. About 1 percent of Americans identify as transgender.[314] By both counts, transgender people are a smaller share of shooters than of the population. (Chapter 15.)

Claim 14: "Antidepressants and psychiatric drugs are behind mass shootings."

Verdict: False (debunked).

The largest study found that about 4 percent of mass shooters from 1990 to 2023 had any known antidepressant use, and 6.6 percent any known psychiatric drug use, while about 13 percent of American adults take an antidepressant in a given month. The Violence Project found 11 percent of public mass shooters were known to have taken an SSRI.[315] Public records may miss some private prescriptions, but there is no evidence that mass shooters use these drugs more than the general public, and the FDA's warning on antidepressants concerns suicidal thinking, not violence toward others.[316] (Chapter 14.)

Claim 15: "Mass shooters are mentally ill."

Verdict: Partly true.

Many had mental health problems: 62 to 70 percent had a prior diagnosis in The Violence Project's data, and more than half of mass attackers studied by the Secret Service had mental health symptoms. But only 18 percent had a psychotic disorder, and the NIJ summary found psychosis played a primary role in

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[314] Ashley Wang, FactCheck.org, "Few Mass Shooters Have Been Transgender", September 17, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/09/few-mass-shooters-have-been-transgender/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[315] Ragy R. Girgis, Hannah Hesson and Gary Brucato, "Antidepressant use and suicide among U.S.-based mass murderers who use firearms: 1990-2023, Psychiatry Research (doi 10.1016/j.psychres.2025.116737); summarized by Eric W. Dolan, PsyPost, October 12, 2025", 2025. https://www.psypost.org/new-study-finds-no-evidence-linking-antidepressant-use-to-mass-shootings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Jessica McDonald, FactCheck.org, "RFK Jr. Misleads About Antidepressants and School Shootings", October 15, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/10/rfk-jr-misleads-about-antidepressants-and-school-shootings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[316] Jessica McDonald, FactCheck.org, "RFK Jr. Misleads About Antidepressants and School Shootings", October 15, 2025. https://www.factcheck.org/2025/10/rfk-jr-misleads-about-antidepressants-and-school-shootings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

about 10 percent of cases.[317] Crisis, suicidal thinking and grievances were more common than severe mental illness. (Chapters 13 and 14.)

Claim 16: "Right-wing extremists commit most extremist killings in America."

Verdict: True (for 2015-2024, by the main counts).

The ADL counted 328 of 429 extremist-related killings from 2015 through 2024 (76 percent) as committed by right-wing extremists. CSIS found right-wing attacks killed 112 people over the past decade, compared with 82 for jihadist attacks and 13 for left-wing attacks.[318] The ADL's count includes killings by extremists that were not politically motivated, and there is no official national count.[319] (Chapter 16.)

Claim 17: "Left-wing political violence now outnumbers right-wing violence."

Verdict: Partly true.

CSIS counted five left-wing terrorist attacks and plots and one right-wing one in the first half of 2025, and found left-wing incidents had risen to an average of 4.0 a year from 2016 to 2024. But right-wing incidents averaged about 20 a year from 2011 through 2024, and left-wing attacks killed far fewer people.[320] Other researchers disputed the 2025 comparison, citing a different database that found sharply more plots and attacks overall in early 2025.[321] The claim is true for one half-year of incidents in one database, not for deaths and not for the period as a whole. (Chapter 16.)

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[317] The Violence Project (Hamline University and Metropolitan State University), "Key Findings", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/key-findings/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Violence Project, "Mass Shooter Database (202 cases, 1966-2025)", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/mass-shooter-database/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, "New Secret Service Research Examines for the First Time Five Years of Mass Violence Data (press release on Mass Attacks in Public Spaces: 2016-2020)", January 25, 2023. https://www.secretservice.gov/node/5878. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. National Institute of Justice, "Public Mass Shootings: Database Amasses Details of a Half Century of U.S. Mass Shootings with Firearms, Generating Psychosocial Histories", February 3, 2022. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[318] ADL Center on Extremism (Anti-Defamation League), "Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2024", February 2025. https://www.adl.org/resources/report/murder-and-extremism-united-states-2024. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Daniel Byman and Riley McCabe, Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Left-Wing Terrorism and Political Violence in the United States: What the Data Tells Us", September 25, 2025. https://www.csis.org/analysis/left-wing-terrorism-and-political-violence-united-states-what-data-tells-us. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[319] ADL Center on Extremism (Anti-Defamation League), "Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2024", February 2025. https://www.adl.org/resources/report/murder-and-extremism-united-states-2024. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Domestic Terrorism: Further Actions Needed to Strengthen FBI and DHS Collaboration to Counter Threats (GAO-23-104720)", February 22, 2023. https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-104720. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[320] Daniel Byman and Riley McCabe, Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Left-Wing Terrorism and Political Violence in the United States: What the Data Tells Us", September 25, 2025. https://www.csis.org/analysis/left-wing-terrorism-and-political-violence-united-states-what-data-tells-us. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[321] Michael Jensen and Amy Cooter, Just Security, "Correctly Assessing Left-Wing Terrorism and Political Violence in the United States", October 21, 2025. https://www.justsecurity.org/122278/correctly-assessing-left-wing-terrorism-and-political-violence-in-the-united-states/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. NPR, "A report claims left-wing terrorism is rising. The data paints a complicated picture", October 25, 2025. https://www.npr.org/2025/10/25/nx-s1-5583997/political-violence-left-right-wing. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Claim 18: "Black Americans commit most murders."

Verdict: Partly true.

In the FBI's 2019 data, Black offenders were 39.6 percent of all murder offenders and 55.9 percent of offenders whose race was known. White offenders (a category that includes most Hispanic offenders) were 29.1 percent of all offenders and 41.1 percent of those whose race was known. Race was unknown for 29.3 percent.[322] So among offenders whose race was recorded, Black offenders were a majority in 2019, but nearly 3 in 10 offenders were never identified by race. Black Americans were also a majority of murder victims (Chapter 4). (Chapter 7.)

Claim 19: "Interracial murder is common; white Americans are mostly killed by Black Americans."

Verdict: False (debunked).

Most murders are within the same race. In 2019, of 3,299 white victims in single-victim, single-offender murders, 2,594 (78.6 percent) were killed by a white offender and 566 (17.2 percent) by a Black offender. Of 2,906 Black victims, 2,574 (88.6 percent) were killed by a Black offender and 246 (8.5 percent) by a white offender.[323] It is true that Black-on-white murders outnumbered white-on-Black murders, by about two to one in raw numbers. (Chapter 7.)

Claim 20: "Stand-your-ground laws reduce crime."

Verdict: False (debunked).

RAND rates the evidence that stand-your-ground laws *increase* total and firearm homicides as "supportive," its strongest rating. A 2021 review of 25 studies said the evidence "contradicts claims that expanding self-defense laws deters violent crime." A 2022 study of 41 states found the laws were associated with 8 to 11 percent more homicides and firearm homicides.[324] The evidence on whether the laws change defensive gun use is inconclusive. (Chapter 20.)

Claim 21: "Americans use guns to defend themselves millions of times a year."

Verdict: Inconclusive.

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[322] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 3: Murder Offenders by Age, Sex, Race, and Ethnicity, 2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-3.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[323] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Expanded Homicide Data Table 6: Murder, Race, Sex, and Ethnicity of Victim by Race, Sex, and Ethnicity of Offender, 2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-6.xls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[324] RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Effects of Stand-Your-Ground Laws", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/stand-your-ground.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Alexa R. Yakubovich and others, "Effects of Laws Expanding Civilian Rights to Use Deadly Force in Self-Defense on Violence and Crime: A Systematic Review, American Journal of Public Health 111(4):e1-e14", April 2021. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7958062/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Michelle Degli Esposti, Douglas J. Wiebe, Antonio Gasparrini and David K. Humphreys, "Analysis of "Stand Your Ground" Self-defense Laws and Statewide Rates of Homicides and Firearm Homicides, JAMA Network Open 5(2):e220077", February 21, 2022. https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2789154. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Estimates range from about 1,200 to 2,100 verified incidents a year (Gun Violence Archive) to about 116,000 (federal survey) to 1.67 million (2021 National Firearms Survey) to 2.5 million (Kleck and Gertz, 1990s). RAND explains why the methods disagree and says the federal survey "almost certainly underestimates the true number."[325] What would settle it is a large, transparent survey using the same questions year after year, checked against police records. (Chapter 19.)

Claim 22: "School shootings are rising."

Verdict: True (for the period as a whole).

The Washington Post's count of shootings at K-12 schools during school hours ran between 5 and 20 a year from the 1999-2000 school year through 2016-2017, then rose to 29 in 2017-2018 and to a record 57 in 2021-2022. It was 29 in 2023-2024, still higher than any year before 2017-2018.[326] (Chapter 17.)

Claim 23: "Most people in prison are there for drug crimes."

Verdict: False for state prisons; true for federal prisons.

At the end of 2021, 12.5 percent of sentenced state prisoners were held for drug offenses, and 62.9 percent for violent offenses.[327] State prisons hold most of the nation's prisoners. In federal prisons, drug offenses were the largest group in 2023, at about 45 percent.[328] (Chapter 22.)

Claim 24: "Most people killed by police are unarmed."

Verdict: False (debunked).

In The Washington Post's records of 10,430 people shot and killed by police from 2015 through 2024, 5.4 percent were recorded as unarmed. About 59 percent were armed with a gun.[329] The same data show Black Americans were killed by police at about twice their share of the population. (Chapter 21.)

Claim 25: "The United States has the highest gun death rate in the world."

Verdict: False (debunked).

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[325] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Challenges of Defining and Measuring Defensive Gun Use", March 2, 2018. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/essays/defensive-gun-use.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. William English, Georgetown University, "2021 National Firearms Survey (draft report, SSRN 3887145; as filed with the Maryland General Assembly)", July 13, 2021. https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2023/jud/1ZlFKxrhCvRHyEwtrOCrskWhtKiqmlapv.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[326] The Washington Post, "School shootings database (data release, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)", data through January 2025. https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-school-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[327] Bureau of Justice Statistics, as reproduced by Drug Policy Facts, "Prisoners in 2022 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 307149), sentenced state prisoners by most serious offense, yearend 2021", November 2023, revised August 29, 2025. https://drugpolicyfacts.org/table/stateoffense. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[328] Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Federal Justice Statistics, 2023 (NCJ 309946), Table 9", March 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/fjs23.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[329] The Washington Post, "Fatal Force Database 2015-2024 (data release)". https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-police-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

By the global estimates Pew Research Center cited for 2023, the U.S. gun death rate was 13.2 per 100,000. Venezuela (45.8) and El Salvador (40.4) were far higher.[330] The true part: among wealthy countries, the United States stands far apart. KFF found the U.S. firearm death rate for children and teens was "over 9.5 times" Canada's.[331] (Chapter 24.)

Claim 26: "Most criminals' guns are stolen."

Verdict: Inconclusive.

In the 2016 BJS survey of prisoners who had a gun during their crime, only 6.4 percent said they got it by theft. But 43.2 percent got it off the street or from the underground market, and the survey does not say how those guns first left legal hands.[332] So few offenders stole the gun themselves, but no national source in this book shows how many crime guns were stolen at some point. (Chapter 8.)

Claim 27: "Ghost guns are flooding the streets."

Verdict: Partly true.

The rise is real. Police submitted 1,629 suspected privately made firearms for tracing in 2017 and 19,273 in 2021, an increase ATF put at 1,083 percent.[333] But the latest ATF figures I could read end in 2021, ATF says trace data probably undercount these guns, and the report does not show what share of all crime guns they make up. "Flooding" goes beyond what the numbers show. (Chapter 26.)

Claim 28: "The Supreme Court has ruled that the Second Amendment rules out gun restrictions."

Verdict: False (debunked).

The Court has struck down some laws: Washington, D.C.'s handgun ban in Heller (2008), New York's "proper cause" rule for carry licenses in Bruen (2022) and Hawaii's default ban on carrying onto private property open to the public in Wolford (2026). But it has also upheld restrictions. In Rahimi (2024), by 8 to 1, it held that a person found to be a credible threat to another's safety "may be temporarily disarmed consistent with the Second Amendment," and in VanDerStok (2025) it let ATF's rule on gun kits stand.[334] (Chapter 26.)

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[330] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[331] Matt McGough, Nirmita Panchal, Cynthia Cox and Krutika Amin, KFF, "Child and Teen Firearm Mortality in the U.S. and Peer Countries", July 18, 2023. https://www.kff.org/mental-health/issue-brief/child-and-teen-firearm-mortality-in-the-u-s-and-peer-countries/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[332] Mariel Alper and Lauren Glaze, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Source and Use of Firearms Involved in Crimes: Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016 (NCJ 251776)", January 2019. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/suficspi16.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[333] Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA): Crime Guns - Volume Two, Part III: Crime Guns Recovered and Traced Within the United States and Its Territories", 2024. https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-ii-part-iii-crime-guns-recovered-and-traced-us/download. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[334] Oyez (Cornell Legal Information Institute, Justia and Chicago-Kent College of Law), "Case pages: District of Columbia v. Heller (07-290); McDonald v. Chicago (08-1521); Caetano v. Massachusetts (14-10078); United States v. Rahimi (22-915); Garland v. Cargill (22-976); United States v. Hemani (24-1234)", accessed November 13, 2026. https://www.oyez.org/cases/2007/07-290. Accessed

Claim 29: "Most Americans want stricter gun laws."

Verdict: True.

In Gallup's October 2025 survey, 60 percent said laws covering the sale of firearms should be made more strict, 27 percent said kept as they are and 12 percent said less strict. Support has not always been a majority: it was 44 percent in October 2010.[335] The question asks about gun sale laws in general, not about any specific law. (Chapter 26.)

Claim 30: "Most people who leave prison are arrested again."

Verdict: True.

BJS followed 401,288 state prisoners released in 2005 and found that 83 percent were arrested at least once within nine years.[336] These are arrests, not convictions, and the study covers people released in 2005, not later years. (Chapter 22.)

Claim 31: "Police officers are being killed in record numbers."

Verdict: False (debunked).

The FBI counted 53 officers feloniously killed in 2025, down from 64 in 2024. The highest year from 2006 through 2025 was 2021, with 73.[337] The true part: assaults on officers are up. The FBI counted 90,178 in 2025, a rate of 13.8 per 100 officers, the highest rate in 10 years.[338] (Chapter 21.)

November 12-13, 2026. Supreme Court of the United States, "New York State Rifle and Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen, No. 20-843, slip opinion", June 23, 2022. https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/20-843_7j80.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Supreme Court of the United States, "Opinions of the Court - 2023 Term (slip opinions list: United States v. Rahimi; Garland v. Cargill)", accessed November 13, 2026. https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/slipopinion/23. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Supreme Court of the United States, "Opinions of the Court - 2024 Term (slip opinions list: Bondi v. VanDerStok; Smith and Wesson Brands, Inc. v. Estados Unidos Mexicanos)", accessed November 13, 2026. https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/slipopinion/24. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Supreme Court of the United States, "Opinions of the Court - 2025 Term (slip opinions list: United States v. Hemani; Wolford v. Lopez)", accessed November 13, 2026. https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/slipopinion/25. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[335] Gallup, "Guns (historical trends)", updated June 15, 2026. https://news.gallup.com/poll/1645/guns.aspx. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[336] Mariel Alper, Matthew R. Durose and Joshua Markman, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism: A 9-Year Follow-up Period (2005-2014) (NCJ 250975)", May 23, 2018. https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/2018-update-prisoner-recidivism-9-year-follow-period-2005-2014. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[337] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[338] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Part Ten: Where Things Stand

Chapter 27: The Numbers on November 12, 2026

Here is where the main measures stood at this book's cutoff, each with the latest year available.

Measure	Latest figure	Year	Direction
All gun deaths	42,348 (provisional)	2025	Down four years in a row from the 2021 record of 48,830
Gun suicides	28,060 (provisional)	2025	Highest on record
Gun homicides	12,857 (provisional)	2025	Lowest since 2014
FBI murder rate	4.1 per 100,000	2025	Tied for lowest since 1955-1956
Homicide victims (BJS estimate)	14,660; 4.3 per 100,000	2025	Down from 6.1 in 2023
Share of homicides by firearm	75.6%	2025	About three in four, as through most of the period
Violent victimizations involving a gun	About 660,000 of 6.7 million (10%)	2024	Roughly 1 in 10
Public mass shootings (Mother Jones)	7 cases, 24 killed; 4 cases, 13 killed through Oct. 15	2025; 2026	Well below 2017-2023
Mass shootings, 4+ shot (Gun Violence Archive)	407; 408 through Nov. 10	2025; 2026	Down from 690 in 2021
People shot and killed by police (Washington Post)	1,175	2024	Highest in the 2015-2024 data
Officers feloniously killed (FBI)	53	2025	Down from 64 in 2024
Assaults on officers (FBI)	90,178; 13.8 per 100 officers	2025	Highest rate in 10 years
People in state and federal prisons	1,254,224	2023	Up 2% from 2022; 22% below the 2009 peak
People in local jails	658,700	Midyear 2024	Down 12% from 2014
New guns added to the U.S. market (my arithmetic from ATF)	About 14.5 million	2024	Down from about 22.7 million in 2021

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Chapter 28: What Nobody Knows

Some of the most important questions in this book have no reliable national answer. These gaps are worth knowing, because they are where most false claims live.

1. **The political views of killers.** No official national count exists. Private counts disagree on definitions. (Chapter 16.)
2. **The sexual orientation of killers.** No national data set records it. (Chapter 15.)
3. **The medications shooters were taking.** Medical records are private. Studies rely on what becomes public. (Chapter 14.)
4. **How often guns are used in self-defense.** Estimates range over more than a thousand times. (Chapter 19.)
5. **How many guns Americans own.** There is no registry. The best estimate is a few years old. (Chapter 8.)
6. **The race of nearly 3 in 10 murder offenders.** Many killers are never identified. (Chapter 7.)
7. **Why the murder rate jumped in 2020 and fell after 2021.** Many explanations have been offered. The federal data in this book describe the change but do not test the causes. (Chapter 3.)
8. **How much of the prison decline came from law changes, from lower crime and from marijuana legalization.** The sources I could open do not divide it up. (Chapter 22.)
9. **Intimate-partner gun homicides for the whole period.** I could not retrieve a federal count for this book. (Chapter 25.)
10. **Any official count of mass shootings.** The federal government has no single definition. (Chapter 11.)

Chapter 29: Closing

I set out to put 26 years of numbers in one place, with every figure tied to a source you can open. Here is what those numbers say, as plainly as I can put it.

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[339] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Chris Williams, LiveNOW from FOX, "US homicide rate falls to 75-year low as violent crime declines, FBI says", August 15, 2026. https://www.fox9.com/news/fbi-homicide-rate-violent-crime. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Lizabeth Remrey, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Homicide Victimization in the United States, 2025 (NCJ 312197)", October 2026. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/hvus25.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization, 2024 (NCJ 310547), Table 10", September 29, 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cv24.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Washington Post, "Fatal Force Database 2015-2024 (data release)". https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-police-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Zhen Zeng, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Jail Inmates in 2024 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 311504)", September 2026. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/ji24st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "Firearms Commerce in the United States: Statistical Update 2025 (Publication 5390.1)", 2025. https://www.atf.gov/media/30936/download. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Most Americans who die by gunfire take their own lives. Gun homicide rose, spiked and then fell to some of the lowest rates in modern records. Most violent crime does not involve a gun, but most killings do. Handguns, not rifles, are the weapon in most gun murders, and more people are murdered with knives than with rifles. Most murders are within the same race, and the burden of gun homicide falls most heavily on young Black men. Public mass shootings rose sharply through the 2010s and are a very small share of gun deaths. Most mass shooters are men in crisis who bought their guns legally; very few are transgender, and the evidence does not show psychiatric drugs driving the attacks. Stand-your-ground laws are associated with more homicides, not fewer. Americans do use guns to protect themselves, but no one can say reliably how often. The number of people in prison peaked in 2009 and has fallen by about a fifth, mostly because fewer people are held for drug and property crimes.

Every one of those sentences is backed by a source in the footnotes. Some of them will please one side of the gun debate; some will please the other. That is the point. The numbers belong to everyone, and the arguments are better when both sides start from the same facts.

Appendix A: Every Public Mass Shooting, 2000 to October 2026

This table lists every public mass shooting from January 1, 2000, through October 15, 2026, in the Mother Jones database (Chapter 12). Mother Jones counts a shooting in a public place by a lone shooter (with a few cases of two attackers) in which four or more people were killed before 2013, and three or more from 2013 on, not counting the shooter. It excludes armed robberies, gang violence and killings inside private homes. "Killed" and "wounded" do not include the shooter. Events are listed by the name Mother Jones uses; shooters are not named.[340]

"State rule today" shows each state's self-defense rule as of 2026: a stand-your-ground statute (30 states), stand-your-ground by court decision or jury instruction (8 states), in between (Wisconsin and the District of Columbia) or a duty to retreat (Chapter 20). "In place at the time?" answers whether a stand-your-ground statute was in force on the date of the shooting: "Yes" where the enactment date is known and came before the shooting, or where the shooting came after 2021, by which time every current statute had been passed; "No" where the state has no stand-your-ground rule or the shooting came before the law; "Not verified" where I could not confirm the date; and, for the 8 court-rule states, the date the court rule took hold was not verified.[341] This table shows only where shootings happened. It does not show any effect of the laws.

#	Date	Event	Place	Killed	Wounded	State rule today	In place at the time?
1	12/26/2000	Wakefield massacre	Wakefield, Massachusetts	7	0	Duty to retreat	No
2	2/5/2001	Navistar shooting	Melrose Park, Illinois	5	4	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
3	7/8/2003	Lockheed Martin shooting	Meridian, Mississippi	7	8	SYG statute	Not verified

[340] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Mother Jones, "A Guide to Mass Shootings in America", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/07/mass-shootings-map/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. J. A. Acosta (GitHub), copy of the Mother Jones spreadsheet through September 2024, "MJ Mass Shootings - Data Cleaning and Analysis". https://github.com/JA-Acosta/mj_mass_shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[341] Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Stand Your Ground Laws", modified July 24, 2026. https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/stand-your-ground-laws/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. National Conference of State Legislatures, "Self Defense and Stand Your Ground", undated web page. https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-your-ground. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Effects of Stand-Your-Ground Laws", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/stand-your-ground.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Alexa R. Yakubovich and others, "Effects of Laws Expanding Civilian Rights to Use Deadly Force in Self-Defense on Violence and Crime: A Systematic Review, American Journal of Public Health 111(4):e1-e14", April 2021. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7958062/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Wikipedia, "Stand-your-ground law", accessed November 12, 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stand-your-ground_law. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

#	Date	Event	Place	Killed	Wounded	State rule today	In place at the time?
4	12/8/2004	Damageplan show shooting	Columbus, Ohio	5	7	SYG statute	No
5	3/12/2005	Living Church of God shooting	Brookfield, Wisconsin	7	4	In between	No
6	3/21/2005	Red Lake massacre	Red Lake, Minnesota	10	5	Duty to retreat	No
7	1/30/2006	Goleta postal shootings	Goleta, California	8	0	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
8	3/25/2006	Capitol Hill massacre	Seattle, Washington	7	2	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
9	10/2/2006	Amish school shooting	Lancaster County, Pennsylvania	6	5	SYG statute	No
10	2/12/2007	Trolley Square shooting	Salt Lake City, Utah	6	4	SYG statute	Yes
11	4/16/2007	Virginia Tech massacre	Blacksburg, Virginia	32	23	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
12	10/7/2007	Crandon shooting	Crandon, Wisconsin	6	1	In between	No
13	12/5/2007	Westroads Mall shooting	Omaha, Nebraska	9	4	Duty to retreat	No
14	2/7/2008	Kirkwood City Council shooting	Kirkwood, Missouri	6	2	SYG statute	Not verified
15	2/14/2008	Northern Illinois University shooting	DeKalb, Illinois	5	21	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified

#	Date	Event	Place	Killed	Wounded	State rule today	In place at the time?
16	6/25/2008	Atlantis Plastics shooting	Henderson, Kentucky	6	1	SYG statute	Not verified
17	3/29/2009	Carthage nursing home shooting	Carthage, North Carolina	8	3	SYG statute	Not verified
18	4/3/2009	Binghamton shootings	Binghamton, New York	14	4	Duty to retreat	No
19	11/5/2009	Fort Hood massacre	Fort Hood, Texas	13	31	SYG statute	Not verified
20	11/29/2009	Coffee shop police killings	Parkland, Washington	4	1	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
21	8/3/2010	Hartford Beer Distributor shooting	Manchester, Connecticut	9	2	Duty to retreat	No
22	1/8/2011	Tucson shooting	Tucson, Arizona	6	13	SYG statute	Not verified
23	9/6/2011	IHOP shooting	Carson City, Nevada	5	7	SYG statute	Not verified
24	10/12/2011	Seal Beach shooting	Seal Beach, California	8	1	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
25	2/21/2012	Su Jung Health Sauna shooting	Norcross, Georgia	5	0	SYG statute	Yes
26	4/2/2012	Oikos University killings	Oakland, California	7	3	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
27	5/20/2012	Seattle cafe shooting	Seattle, Washington	6	1	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified

#	Date	Event	Place	Killed	Wounded	State rule today	In place at the time?
28	7/20/2012	Aurora theater shooting	Aurora, Colorado	12	70	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
29	8/5/2012	Sikh temple shooting	Oak Creek, Wisconsin	7	3	In between	No
30	9/27/2012	Accent Signage Systems shooting	Minneapolis, Minnesota	7	1	Duty to retreat	No
31	12/14/2012	Sandy Hook Elementary massacre	Newtown, Connecticut	27	2	Duty to retreat	No
32	3/13/2013	Mohawk Valley shootings	Herkimer County, New York	5	2	Duty to retreat	No
33	4/21/2013	Pinewood Village Apartment shooting	Federal Way, Washington	5	0	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
34	6/7/2013	Santa Monica rampage	Santa Monica, California	6	3	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
35	7/26/2013	Hialeah apartment shooting	Hialeah, Florida	7	0	SYG statute	Yes
36	9/16/2013	Washington Navy Yard shooting	Washington, D.C.	12	8	In between	No
37	2/20/2014	Alturas tribal shooting	Alturas, California	4	2	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
38	4/3/2014	Fort Hood shooting 2	Fort Hood, Texas	3	12	SYG statute	Yes
39	5/23/2014	Isla Vista	Santa	6	13	SYG by	Court

#	Date	Event	Place	Killed	Wounded	State rule today	In place at the time?
		mass murder	Barbara, California			court rule	rule; date not verified
40	10/24/2014	Marysville-Pilchuck High School shooting	Marysville, Washington	5	1	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
41	6/11/2015	Trestle Trail bridge shooting	Menasha, Wisconsin	3	1	In between	No
42	6/17/2015	Charleston Church Shooting	Charleston, South Carolina	9	1	SYG statute	Yes
43	7/16/2015	Chattanooga military recruitment center	Chattanooga, Tennessee	5	2	SYG statute	Not verified
44	10/1/2015	Umpqua Community College shooting	Roseburg, Oregon	9	9	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
45	10/31/2015	Colorado Springs shooting rampage	Colorado Springs, Colorado	3	0	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
46	11/27/2015	Planned Parenthood clinic	Colorado Springs, Colorado	3	9	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
47	12/2/2015	San Bernardino mass shooting	San Bernardino, California	14	21	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
48	2/20/2016	Kalamazoo shooting spree	Kalamazoo County, Michigan	6	2	SYG statute	Yes
49	2/25/2016	Excel Industries mass shooting	Hesston, Kansas	3	14	SYG statute	Not verified

#	Date	Event	Place	Killed	Wounded	State rule today	In place at the time?
50	6/12/2016	Orlando nightclub massacre	Orlando, Florida	49	53	SYG statute	Yes
51	7/7/2016	Dallas police shooting	Dallas, Texas	5	11	SYG statute	Yes
52	7/17/2016	Baton Rouge police shooting	Baton Rouge, Louisiana	3	3	SYG statute	Yes
53	9/23/2016	Cascade Mall shooting	Burlington, Washington	5	0	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
54	1/6/2017	Fort Lauderdale airport shooting	Fort Lauderdale, Florida	5	6	SYG statute	Yes
55	4/18/2017	Fresno downtown shooting	Fresno, California	3	0	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
56	5/12/2017	Rural Ohio nursing home shooting	Kirkersville, Ohio	3	0	SYG statute	No
57	6/5/2017	Florida awning manufacturer shooting	Orlando, Florida	5	0	SYG statute	Yes
58	6/7/2017	Pennsylvania supermarket shooting	Tunkhannock, Pennsylvania	3	0	SYG statute	Yes
59	6/14/2017	San Francisco UPS shooting	San Francisco, California	3	2	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified

#	Date	Event	Place	Killed	Wounded	State rule today	In place at the time?
60	10/1/2017	Las Vegas Strip massacre	Las Vegas, Nevada	60	546	SYG statute	Not verified
61	10/18/2017	Edgewood business park shooting	Edgewood, Maryland	3	3	Duty to retreat	No
62	11/1/2017	Walmart shooting in suburban Denver	Thornton, Colorado	3	0	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
63	11/5/2017	Texas First Baptist Church massacre	Sutherland Springs, Texas	26	20	SYG statute	Yes
64	11/14/2017	Rancho Tehama shooting spree	Rancho Tehama, California	5	10	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
65	1/28/2018	Pennsylvania carwash shooting	Melcroft, Pennsylvania	4	1	SYG statute	Yes
66	2/14/2018	Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting	Parkland, Florida	17	17	SYG statute	Yes
67	3/9/2018	Yountville veterans home shooting	Yountville, California	3	0	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
68	4/22/2018	Waffle House shooting	Nashville, Tennessee	4	4	SYG statute	Not verified
69	5/18/2018	Santa Fe High School shooting	Santa Fe, Texas	10	13	SYG statute	Yes
70	6/28/2018	Capital Gazette	Annapolis, Maryland	5	2	Duty to retreat	No

#	Date	Event	Place	Killed	Wounded	State rule today	In place at the time?
		shooting					
71	9/6/2018	Fifth Third Center shooting	Cincinnati, Ohio	3	2	SYG statute	No
72	9/12/2018	T&T Trucking shooting	Bakersfield, California	5	0	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
73	9/20/2018	Rite Aid warehouse shooting	Perryman, Maryland	3	3	Duty to retreat	No
74	10/27/2018	Tree of Life synagogue shooting	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	11	6	SYG statute	Yes
75	11/7/2018	Thousand Oaks nightclub shooting	Thousand Oaks, California	12	22	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
76	11/19/2018	Mercy Hospital shooting	Chicago, Illinois	3	0	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
77	1/23/2019	SunTrust bank shooting	Sebring, Florida	5	0	SYG statute	Yes
78	1/24/2019	Pennsylvania hotel bar shooting	State College, Pennsylvania	3	1	SYG statute	Yes
79	2/15/2019	Harry Pratt Co. warehouse shooting	Aurora, Illinois	5	6	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
80	5/31/2019	Virginia Beach municipal building shooting	Virginia Beach, Virginia	12	4	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
81	7/28/2019	Gilroy garlic festival	Gilroy, California	3	12	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not

#	Date	Event	Place	Killed	Wounded	State rule today	In place at the time?
		shooting					verified
82	8/3/2019	El Paso Walmart mass shooting	El Paso, Texas	23	22	SYG statute	Yes
83	8/4/2019	Dayton entertainment district shooting	Dayton, Ohio	9	27	SYG statute	No
84	8/31/2019	Odessa-Midland shooting spree	Odessa, Texas	7	25	SYG statute	Yes
85	12/6/2019	Pensacola Naval base shooting	Pensacola, Florida	3	8	SYG statute	Yes
86	12/10/2019	Jersey City kosher market shooting	Jersey City, New Jersey	4	3	Duty to retreat	No
87	2/26/2020	Molson Coors shooting	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	5	0	In between	No
88	3/16/2020	Springfield convenience store shooting	Springfield, Missouri	4	0	SYG statute	Not verified
89	3/16/2021	Atlanta massage parlor shootings	Atlanta, Georgia	8	1	SYG statute	Yes
90	3/22/2021	Boulder supermarket shooting	Boulder, Colorado	10	0	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
91	3/31/2021	Orange office complex shooting	Orange, California	4	1	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified

#	Date	Event	Place	Killed	Wounded	State rule today	In place at the time?
92	4/15/2021	FedEx warehouse shooting	Indianapolis, Indiana	8	7	SYG statute	Yes
93	5/26/2021	San Jose VTA shooting	San Jose, California	9	0	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
94	11/30/2021	Oxford High School shooting	Oxford, Michigan	4	7	SYG statute	Yes
95	2/28/2022	Sacramento County church shooting	Sacramento, California	4	0	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
96	5/14/2022	Buffalo supermarket massacre	Buffalo, New York	10	3	Duty to retreat	No
97	5/24/2022	Robb Elementary School massacre	Uvalde, Texas	21	17	SYG statute	Yes
98	6/1/2022	Tulsa medical center shooting	Tulsa, Oklahoma	4	0	SYG statute	Yes
99	6/9/2022	Concrete company shooting	Smithsburg, Maryland	3	1	Duty to retreat	No
100	6/16/2022	Church potluck dinner shooting	Birmingham, Alabama	3	0	SYG statute	Yes
101	7/4/2022	Highland Park July 4 parade shooting	Highland Park, Illinois	7	46	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
102	7/17/2022	Greenwood Park Mall shooting	Greenwood, Indiana	3	2	SYG statute	Yes

#	Date	Event	Place	Killed	Wounded	State rule today	In place at the time?
103	10/13/2022	Raleigh spree shooting	Hedingham, North Carolina	5	2	SYG statute	Yes
104	11/13/2022	University of Virginia shooting	Charlottesville, Virginia	3	2	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
105	11/19/2022	LGBTQ club shooting	Colorado Springs, Colorado	5	25	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
106	11/22/2022	Virginia Walmart shooting	Chesapeake, Virginia	6	6	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
107	1/21/2023	LA dance studio mass shooting	Monterey Park, California	11	10	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
108	1/23/2023	Half Moon Bay spree shooting	Half Moon Bay, California	7	1	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
109	2/13/2023	Michigan State University shooting	East Lansing, Michigan	3	5	SYG statute	Yes
110	3/27/2023	Nashville Christian school shooting	Nashville, Tennessee	6	6	SYG statute	Yes
111	4/10/2023	Louisville bank shooting	Louisville, Kentucky	5	8	SYG statute	Yes
112	5/6/2023	Texas outlet mall shooting	Allen, Texas	8	7	SYG statute	Yes

#	Date	Event	Place	Killed	Wounded	State rule today	In place at the time?
113	5/15/2023	New Mexico neighborhood shooting	Farmington, New Mexico	3	6	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
114	7/3/2023	Philidelphia neighborhood shooting	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	5	2	SYG statute	Yes
115	8/23/2023	Orange County biker bar shooting	Trabuco Canyon, California	3	6	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
116	8/26/2023	Jacksonville Dollar General store shooting	Jacksonville, Florida	3	0	SYG statute	Yes
117	10/25/2023	Maine bowling alley and bar shootings	Lewiston, Maine	18	13	Duty to retreat	No
118	12/6/2023	UNLV shooting	Las Vegas, Nevada	3	1	SYG statute	Yes
119	6/21/2024	Arkansas grocery store shooting	Fordyce, Arkansas	4	10	SYG statute	Yes
120	9/4/2024	Apalachee High School shooting	Winder, Georgia	4	9	SYG statute	Yes
121	7/28/2025	NYC Park Avenue shooting	Manhattan, New York	4	1	Duty to retreat	No
122	7/28/2025	Reno casino shooting	Reno, Nevada	3	3	SYG statute	Yes

#	Date	Event	Place	Killed	Wounded	State rule today	In place at the time?
123	8/1/2025	Montana bar shooting	Anaconda, Montana	4	0	SYG statute	Yes
124	8/11/2025	Austin parking lot shooting	Austin, Texas	3	0	SYG statute	Yes
125	9/27/2025	North Carolina waterfront bar shooting	Southport, North Carolina	3	8	SYG statute	Yes
126	9/28/2025	Michigan Mormon church shooting	Grand Blanc, Michigan	4	8	SYG statute	Yes
127	12/13/2025	Brown University and MIT shooting	Providence, Rhode Island	3	9	Duty to retreat	No
128	3/1/2026	Austin bar shooting	Austin, Texas	3	13	SYG statute	Yes
129	5/18/2026	San Diego mosque shooting	San Diego, California	3	0	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
130	8/1/2026	In-N-Out Burger shooting	Twin Falls, Idaho	3	7	SYG statute	Yes
131	10/15/2026	Silver Rail Elementary shooting	Bend, Oregon	4	2	SYG by court rule	Court rule; date not verified
		Total, 131 cases		**959**	**1420**		

Appendix B: State Self-Defense Rules

This list follows the Giffords Law Center and National Conference of State Legislatures lists of stand-your-ground statutes, the Giffords list of states that apply the same rule by court decision or jury instruction, and the Wikipedia summary of duty-to-retreat states.[342] Laws change; check your state's current law before relying on this list.

State	Rule	State	Rule
Alabama	Statute	Montana	Statute
Alaska	Statute	Nebraska	Duty to retreat
Arizona	Statute	Nevada	Statute
Arkansas	Statute (2021)	New Hampshire	Statute
California	Court rule	New Jersey	Duty to retreat
Colorado	Court rule	New Mexico	Court rule
Connecticut	Duty to retreat	New York	Duty to retreat
Delaware	Duty to retreat	North Carolina	Statute
District of Columbia	In between	North Dakota	Statute (2021)
Florida	Statute (Oct. 1, 2005)	Ohio	Statute (2021)
Georgia	Statute	Oklahoma	Statute
Hawaii	Duty to retreat	Oregon	Court rule
Idaho	Statute (2018)	Pennsylvania	Statute (2011)
Illinois	Court rule	Rhode Island	Duty to retreat
Indiana	Statute	South Carolina	Statute
Iowa	Statute (2017)	South Dakota	Statute (2021)
Kansas	Statute	Tennessee	Statute
Kentucky	Statute	Texas	Statute
Louisiana	Statute	Utah	Statute (1994, the first)
Maine	Duty to retreat	Vermont	Court rule
Maryland	Duty to retreat	Virginia	Court rule
Massachusetts	Duty to retreat	Washington	Court rule
Michigan	Statute	West Virginia	Statute
Minnesota	Duty to retreat	Wisconsin	In between

[342] Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Stand Your Ground Laws", modified July 24, 2026. https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/stand-your-ground-laws/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. National Conference of State Legislatures, "Self Defense and Stand Your Ground", undated web page. https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-your-ground. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Wikipedia, "Stand-your-ground law", accessed November 12, 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stand-your-ground_law. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

State	Rule	State	Rule
Mississippi	Statute	Wyoming	Statute
Missouri	Statute		

"Statute" means a law passed by the legislature removing the duty to retreat in public places. "Court rule" means the same principle applies through court decisions or jury instructions. "In between" means the source describes the state as neither a clear stand-your-ground nor a clear duty-to-retreat state. NCSL counts Washington among its statute states; Giffords and Wikipedia count it as a court-rule state. RAND's broader count of 35 states as of January 1, 2025, adds states that expanded the castle doctrine, including Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Nebraska and Wisconsin.[343] Years shown are those I could confirm (Chapter 20).

[343] RAND Corporation, Gun Policy in America, "The Effects of Stand-Your-Ground Laws", updated January 29, 2026. https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/stand-your-ground.html. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. National Conference of State Legislatures, "Self Defense and Stand Your Ground", undated web page. https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-your-ground. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Stand Your Ground Laws", modified July 24, 2026. https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/stand-your-ground-laws/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Appendix C: Glossary

Active shooter (FBI). "One or more individuals actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area."

Age-adjusted rate. A rate adjusted so that groups or years with older or younger populations can be compared fairly.

Castle doctrine. The rule that a person attacked in their own home does not have to retreat before using force in self-defense.

Clearance (cleared case). A crime police consider solved, usually by an arrest, or closed for reasons outside their control.

Defensive gun use. Using a gun to protect oneself or others from a threat, whether or not it is fired.

Duty to retreat. The rule that a person must try to escape safely, if they can, before using deadly force in self-defense outside the home.

Homicide. The killing of one person by another. The CDC counts all homicides on death certificates, including some that are legally justified.

Intent (CDC). How a death certificate classifies an injury death: suicide, homicide, unintentional (accident), legal intervention (police) or undetermined.

Jail. A local lockup, usually run by a county or city, for people awaiting trial and people serving short sentences.

Legal intervention. The CDC's term for deaths caused by police or other law enforcement acting in the line of duty.

Mass murder (Gun Violence Archive). Four or more people killed in one incident, not counting the shooter.

Mass shooting (Gun Violence Archive). Four or more people shot, killed or wounded, in one incident, not counting the shooter.

Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter (FBI). The willful killing of one person by another, as reported to police. Does not include justifiable killings or accidents.

NCVS. The National Crime Victimization Survey, a BJS household survey that counts crimes whether or not they were reported to police.

NIBRS. The National Incident-Based Reporting System, the FBI's newer, more detailed crime reporting system.

NICS. The National Instant Criminal Background Check System, which the FBI and some states use to check gun buyers. It counts checks, not sales.

Prison. A state or federal institution holding people convicted of crimes and usually sentenced to more than a year.

Provisional. Early numbers that will be revised as late reports arrive.

Public mass shooting. A shooting in a public place in which several people (three or four, depending on the source) are killed, not tied to gang violence, robbery or family killings at home. Used by Mother Jones and The Violence Project.

Rate per 100,000. The number of events for every 100,000 people, which allows comparison across years and places of different sizes.

Recidivism. Committing new crimes after release. BJS measures it by rearrest, reconviction or return to prison.

SSRI. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor, a common type of antidepressant.

Stand-your-ground law. A law removing the duty to retreat before using deadly force in self-defense in places outside the home where a person has a right to be.

Supplementary Homicide Reports. The FBI's older detailed homicide data, giving weapon, victim and offender details for murders reported by participating agencies.

Appendix D: How to Check These Numbers Yourself

Every number in this book can be checked. Here is where to start.

Gun deaths (CDC). The CDC's WONDER database lets anyone look up deaths by cause, intent, year, state, age, sex and race. The CDC also publishes data sets on data.cdc.gov; this book used the "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National" data set (t6u2-f84c) for 2019-2025 and the "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States" data set (nt65-c7a7) for 1999-2016.[344]

Crime (FBI). The FBI's Crime Data Explorer publishes national and state crime statistics. Older years (through 2019) are on the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting website, organized as "Crime in the United States" by year.[345]

All violent crime, prisons and jails (BJS). The Bureau of Justice Statistics publishes the yearly "Criminal Victimization," "Prisoners" and "Jail Inmates" reports at bjs.ojp.gov. Each report has a PDF and downloadable data tables.[346]

Officers killed and assaulted. The FBI's yearly report is on the Crime Data Explorer.[347]

Mass shootings. The Gun Violence Archive's "Past Summary Ledgers," the Mother Jones database (with a link to its spreadsheet) and The Violence Project's database are all public.[348]

Police shootings. The Washington Post publishes its Fatal Force data on GitHub.[349]

Tips:

- **Check the year.** Many claims compare different years or use a year that has since been revised.

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[344] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[345] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Table 1: Volume and Rate per 100,000 Inhabitants, 2000-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/table-1. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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[347] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[348] Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Violence Project, "Mass Shooter Database (202 cases, 1966-2025)", accessed November 12, 2026. https://www.theviolenceproject.org/mass-shooter-database/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[349] The Washington Post, "Fatal Force Database 2015-2024 (data release)". https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-police-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

- **Check the definition.** "Mass shooting," "gun death" and "violent crime" each mean different things to different sources.
- **Check counts versus rates.** A rising count can hide a falling rate as the population grows.
- **Check for unknowns.** If a source says "unknown" for a large share of cases, a percentage based on the known cases may not tell the whole story.
- **Check who is counting.** An advocacy group may be accurate, but read its definitions closely.

Appendix E: Timeline, 2000 to 2026

Date	Event
2005, Oct. 1	Florida's stand-your-ground law takes effect.[350]
2006-2011	Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas pass stand-your-ground statutes.[351]
2007, Apr. 16	Virginia Tech shooting: 32 killed.[352]
2007-2008	Imprisonment rate peaks at 506 per 100,000.[353]
2009	Prison population peaks at about 1,615,500.[354]
2011	California's "realignment" law; Pennsylvania's stand-your-ground law.[355]
2012, Dec. 14	Sandy Hook Elementary shooting: 27 killed.[356]
2013, January	Mother Jones lowers its mass shooting threshold from four killed to three.[357]
2014	FBI murder rate falls to 4.4 per 100,000, the low point of the 2000-2019 period.[358]
2016, June 12	Orlando nightclub shooting: 49 killed.[359]
2017, Oct. 1	Las Vegas Strip shooting: 60 killed, 546 wounded,

[350] Wikipedia, "Stand-your-ground law", accessed November 12, 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stand-your-ground_law. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[351] Alexa R. Yakubovich and others, "Effects of Laws Expanding Civilian Rights to Use Deadly Force in Self-Defense on Violence and Crime: A Systematic Review, American Journal of Public Health 111(4):e1-e14", April 2021. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7958062/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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[353] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2019 (NCJ 255115)", October 2020. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[354] E. Ann Carson, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2019 (NCJ 255115)", October 2020. https://bjs.ojp.gov/redirect-legacy/content/pub/pdf/p19.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[355] Public Policy Institute of California, "California's Prison Population", accessed November 13, 2026. https://www.ppic.org/publication/californias-prison-population/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. National Conference of State Legislatures, "Self Defense and Stand Your Ground", undated web page. https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-your-ground. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[356] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[357] Mother Jones, "A Guide to Mass Shootings in America", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/07/mass-shootings-map/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[358] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Table 1: Volume and Rate per 100,000 Inhabitants, 2000-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/table-1. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[359] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Date	Event
	the deadliest since 2000.[360]
2018, Feb. 14	Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, Parkland, Florida: 17 killed.[361]
2018, December	First Step Act becomes federal law.[362]
2019, Aug. 3	El Paso Walmart shooting: 23 killed.[363]
2020	Murders rise nearly 30 percent, the largest one-year increase on record. Prison population falls about 15 percent, largely because of COVID-19.[364]
2021	Record 48,830 gun deaths. Arkansas, North Dakota, Ohio and South Dakota pass stand-your-ground statutes. Record 690 Gun Violence Archive mass shootings.[365]
2021-2022 school year	Record 57 shootings at K-12 schools in The Washington Post's count.[366]
2022, May 24	Robb Elementary School shooting, Uvalde, Texas: 21 killed.[367]
2023, Oct. 25	Lewiston, Maine, shootings: 18 killed.[368]

[360] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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[362] Federal Bureau of Prisons, "First Step Act (FSA Numbers)", undated web page, accessed November 13, 2026. https://www.bop.gov/inmates/fsa/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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[365] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Stand Your Ground Laws", modified July 24, 2026. https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/stand-your-ground-laws/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[366] The Washington Post, "School shootings database (data release, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)", data through January 2025. https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-school-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[367] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[368] Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Date	Event
2024	Murders fall an estimated 14.9 percent. FBI active shooter incidents fall to 24. Gun suicides reach a record 27,593.[369]
2025, Jan. 1	New Orleans attack by a man pledging allegiance to the Islamic State kills 14.[370]
2025, Aug. 27	Annunciation Catholic Church shooting, Minneapolis: 2 children killed.[371]
2025, Sept. 10	Charlie Kirk killed at Utah Valley University.[372]
2025	Murders fall another 18.1 percent; murder rate of 4.1 ties the lowest since 1955-1956. 53 officers feloniously killed; record rate of assaults on officers.[373]
2026, Oct. 15	Silver Rail Elementary shooting, Bend, Oregon: 4 killed, the latest public mass shooting in the Mother Jones database before this book's cutoff.[374]
2026, Nov. 12	Information cutoff for this book.

[369] Federal Bureau of Investigation, "FBI Releases 2024 Reported Crimes in the Nation Statistics (press release)", August 5, 2025. https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-releases-2024-reported-crimes-in-the-nation-statistics. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Police Magazine, "FBI Reports Active Shooter Incidents Down 50% Last Year", June 4, 2025. https://www.policemag.com/news/fbi-reports-active-shooter-incidents-down-50-last-year. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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[371] Wikipedia (used only to locate facts; check its cited news reports), "Annunciation Catholic Church shooting", accessed November 12, 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annunciation_Catholic_Church_shooting. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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Appendix F: Year by Year, 2000 to 2026

This appendix gathers the main yearly numbers from the chapters into one place, year by year. Each figure comes from the sources cited in the chapter where it first appears; the sources for each year are listed in that year's footnote. Blank items mean the source does not cover that year. CDC figures for 2025 are provisional. "Deadliest public mass shooting" uses the Mother Jones database (3 or more killed from 2013; 4 or more before).

2000

- Gun deaths (CDC): 28,663, including 16,586 suicides and 10,801 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 15,586, a rate of 5.5 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,391,261; imprisonment rate 478 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 8,427,096.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 1 case, 7 killed. Deadliest: Wakefield massacre (Wakefield, Massachusetts), 7 killed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2000-2001 school year (Washington Post): 12.[375]

2001

- Gun deaths (CDC): 29,573, including 16,869 suicides and 11,348 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 16,037, a rate of 5.6 per 100,000 (the FBI figure does not include the deaths of September 11, 2001).
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,404,032; imprisonment rate 470 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 8,820,045.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 1 case, 5 killed. Deadliest: Navistar shooting (Melrose Park, Illinois), 5 killed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2001-2002 school year (Washington Post): 5.[376]

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[375] Heather C. West, William J. Sabol and Sarah J. Greenman, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2009 (NCJ 231675)", December 2010. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p09.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Table 1: Volume and Rate per 100,000 Inhabitants, 2000-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/table-1. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Instant Criminal Background Check System monthly reports, as compiled by BuzzFeed News, "NICS Firearm Background Checks (data through September 2023)". https://github.com/BuzzFeedNews/nics-firearm-background-checks. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Pew Research Center, "Gun suicides in the U.S. have increased, but gun homicides have fallen since 2021 (chart data from CDC)", April 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/chart/gun-suicides-have-increased-in-the-u-s-in-recent-years-but-gun-murders-have-fallen-since-2021/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Washington Post, "School shootings database (data release, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)", data through January 2025. https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-school-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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2002

- Gun deaths (CDC): 30,242, including 17,108 suicides and 11,829 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 16,229, a rate of 5.6 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,440,144; imprisonment rate 476 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 8,367,069.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): none listed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2002-2003 school year (Washington Post): 9.[377]

2003

- Gun deaths (CDC): 30,136, including 16,907 suicides and 11,920 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 16,528, a rate of 5.7 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,468,601; imprisonment rate 482 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 8,402,244.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 1 case, 7 killed. Deadliest: Lockheed Martin shooting (Meridian, Mississippi), 7 killed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2003-2004 school year (Washington Post): 10.[378]

12-13, 2026. Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Instant Criminal Background Check System monthly reports, as compiled by BuzzFeed News, "NICS Firearm Background Checks (data through September 2023)". https://github.com/BuzzFeedNews/nics-firearm-background-checks. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Pew Research Center, "Gun suicides in the U.S. have increased, but gun homicides have fallen since 2021 (chart data from CDC)", April 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/chart/gun-suicides-have-increased-in-the-u-s-in-recent-years-but-gun-murders-have-fallen-since-2021/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Washington Post, "School shootings database (data release, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)", data through January 2025. https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-school-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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2004

- Gun deaths (CDC): 29,569, including 16,750 suicides and 11,624 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 16,148, a rate of 5.5 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,497,100; imprisonment rate 486 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 8,579,891.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 1 case, 5 killed. Deadliest: Damageplan show shooting (Columbus, Ohio), 5 killed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2004-2005 school year (Washington Post): 11.[379]

2005

- Gun deaths (CDC): 30,694, including 17,002 suicides and 12,352 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 16,740, a rate of 5.6 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,527,929; imprisonment rate 491 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 8,867,055.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 2 cases, 17 killed. Deadliest: Red Lake massacre (Red Lake, Minnesota), 10 killed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2005-2006 school year (Washington Post): 16.[380]

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2006

- Gun deaths (CDC): 30,896, including 16,883 suicides and 12,791 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 17,309, a rate of 5.8 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,569,945; imprisonment rate 501 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 9,993,057.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 3 cases, 21 killed. Deadliest: Goleta postal shootings (Goleta, California), 8 killed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2006-2007 school year (Washington Post): 14.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 48.[381]

2007

- Gun deaths (CDC): 31,224, including 17,352 suicides and 12,632 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 17,128, a rate of 5.7 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,598,245; imprisonment rate 506 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 11,162,272.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 4 cases, 53 killed. Deadliest: Virginia Tech massacre (Blacksburg, Virginia), 32 killed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2007-2008 school year (Washington Post): 9.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 58.[382]

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suicides in the U.S. have increased, but gun homicides have fallen since 2021 (chart data from CDC)", April 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/chart/gun-suicides-have-increased-in-the-u-s-in-recent-years-but-gun-murders-have-fallen-since-2021/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Washington Post, "School shootings database (data release, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)", data through January 2025. https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-school-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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2008

- Gun deaths (CDC): 31,593, including 18,223 suicides and 12,179 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 16,465, a rate of 5.4 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,609,759; imprisonment rate 506 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 12,692,985.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 3 cases, 17 killed. Deadliest: Kirkwood City Council shooting (Kirkwood, Missouri), 6 killed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2008-2009 school year (Washington Post): 6.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 41.[383]

2009

- Gun deaths (CDC): 31,347, including 18,735 suicides and 11,493 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 15,399, a rate of 5.0 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,615,487; imprisonment rate 504 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 13,984,953.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 4 cases, 39 killed. Deadliest: Binghamton shootings (Binghamton, New York), 14 killed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2009-2010 school year (Washington Post): 9.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 48.[384]

2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Instant Criminal Background Check System monthly reports, as compiled by BuzzFeed News, "NICS Firearm Background Checks (data through September 2023)". https://github.com/BuzzFeedNews/nics-firearm-background-checks. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Pew Research Center, "Gun suicides in the U.S. have increased, but gun homicides have fallen since 2021 (chart data from CDC)", April 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/chart/gun-suicides-have-increased-in-the-u-s-in-recent-years-but-gun-murders-have-fallen-since-2021/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Washington Post, "School shootings database (data release, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)", data through January 2025. https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-school-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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2010

- Gun deaths (CDC): 31,672, including 19,392 suicides and 11,078 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 14,722, a rate of 4.8 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,613,803; imprisonment rate 500 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 14,320,489.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 1 case, 9 killed. Deadliest: Hartford Beer Distributor shooting (Manchester, Connecticut), 9 killed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2010-2011 school year (Washington Post): 11.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 55.[385]

2011

- Gun deaths (CDC): 32,351, including 19,990 suicides and 11,068 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 14,661, a rate of 4.7 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,598,968; imprisonment rate 492 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 16,336,732.

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- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 3 cases, 19 killed. Deadliest: Seal Beach shooting (Seal Beach, California), 8 killed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2011-2012 school year (Washington Post): 9.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 72.[386]

2012

- Gun deaths (CDC): 33,563, including 20,666 suicides and 11,622 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 14,856, a rate of 4.7 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,570,397; imprisonment rate 480 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 19,463,832.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 7 cases, 71 killed. Deadliest: Sandy Hook Elementary massacre (Newtown, Connecticut), 27 killed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2012-2013 school year (Washington Post): 8.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 49.[387]

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2013

- Gun deaths (CDC): 33,636, including 21,175 suicides and 11,208 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 14,319, a rate of 4.5 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,576,950; imprisonment rate 479 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 20,966,704.
- New guns added to the U.S. market (ATF, author's arithmetic): about 16.0 million.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 5 cases, 35 killed. Deadliest: Washington Navy Yard shooting (Washington, D.C.), 12 killed.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2013-2014 school year (Washington Post): 20.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 27.[388]

2014

- Gun deaths (CDC): 33,594, including 21,386 suicides and 11,008 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 14,164, a rate of 4.4 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,562,319; imprisonment rate 472 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 20,860,241.
- New guns added to the U.S. market (ATF, author's arithmetic): about 12.3 million.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 4 cases, 18 killed. Deadliest: Isla Vista mass murder (Santa Barbara, California), 6 killed.
- Mass shootings, 4 or more shot (Gun Violence Archive): 272.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2014-2015 school year (Washington Post): 6.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 51.[389]

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2015

- Gun deaths (CDC): 36,252, including 22,018 suicides and 12,979 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 15,883, a rate of 4.9 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,526,603; imprisonment rate 459 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 23,026,288.
- New guns added to the U.S. market (ATF, author's arithmetic): about 12.9 million.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 7 cases, 46 killed. Deadliest: San Bernardino mass shooting (San Bernardino, California), 14 killed.
- Mass shootings, 4 or more shot (Gun Violence Archive): 332.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2015-2016 school year (Washington Post): 10.
- People shot and killed by police (Washington Post): 995.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 41.[390]

2016

- Gun deaths (CDC): 38,658, including 22,938 suicides and 14,415 homicides.

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- Murders reported to police (FBI): 17,413, a rate of 5.4 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,508,129; imprisonment rate 450 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 27,425,512.
- New guns added to the U.S. market (ATF, author's arithmetic): about 16.3 million.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 6 cases, 71 killed. Deadliest: Orlando nightclub massacre (Orlando, Florida), 49 killed.
- Mass shootings, 4 or more shot (Gun Violence Archive): 384.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2016-2017 school year (Washington Post): 15.
- People shot and killed by police (Washington Post): 959.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 66.[391]

2017

- Gun deaths (CDC): 39,773, including 23,854 suicides and 14,542 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 17,294, a rate of 5.3 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,489,189; imprisonment rate 442 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 24,955,919.
- New guns added to the U.S. market (ATF, author's arithmetic): about 12.3 million.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 11 cases, 119 killed. Deadliest: Las Vegas Strip massacre (Las Vegas, Nevada), 60 killed.
- Mass shootings, 4 or more shot (Gun Violence Archive): 346.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2017-2018 school year (Washington Post): 29.
- People shot and killed by police (Washington Post): 984.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 46.[392]

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2018

- Gun deaths (CDC): 39,740, including 24,432 suicides and 13,958 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 16,374, a rate of 5.0 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,464,385; imprisonment rate 431 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 25,769,441.
- New guns added to the U.S. market (ATF, author's arithmetic): about 12.8 million.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 12 cases, 80 killed. Deadliest: Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting (Parkland, Florida), 17 killed.
- Mass shootings, 4 or more shot (Gun Violence Archive): 335.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2018-2019 school year (Washington Post): 23.
- People shot and killed by police (Washington Post): 992.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 57.[393]

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https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Crime in the United States, 2019, Table 1: Volume and Rate per 100,000 Inhabitants, 2000-2019", 2020. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/table-1. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Instant Criminal Background Check System monthly reports, as compiled by BuzzFeed News, "NICS Firearm Background Checks (data through September 2023)". https://github.com/BuzzFeedNews/nics-firearm-background-checks. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Pew Research Center, "Gun suicides in the U.S. have increased, but gun homicides have fallen since 2021 (chart data from CDC)", April 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/chart/gun-suicides-have-increased-in-the-u-s-in-recent-years-but-gun-murders-have-fallen-since-2021/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Trace, "Gun death rate increased in 2017, CDC data shows (The Rounds)", December 2018. https://www.thetrace.org/rounds/gun-death-rate-2017-increase-cdc-suicide. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Washington Post, "Fatal Force Database 2015-2024 (data release)". https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-police-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Washington Post, "School shootings database (data release, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)", data through January 2025. https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-school-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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2019

- Gun deaths (CDC): 39,707, including 23,941 suicides and 14,414 homicides.
- Murders reported to police (FBI): 16,425, a rate of 5.0 per 100,000.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,430,165; imprisonment rate 419 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 28,007,320.
- New guns added to the U.S. market (ATF, author's arithmetic): about 10.7 million.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 10 cases, 74 killed. Deadliest: El Paso Walmart mass shooting (El Paso, Texas), 23 killed.
- Mass shootings, 4 or more shot (Gun Violence Archive): 414.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2019-2020 school year (Washington Post): 19.
- People shot and killed by police (Washington Post): 993.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 48.[394]

2020

- Gun deaths (CDC): 45,222, including 24,292 suicides and 19,384 homicides.
- Murders rose nearly 30 percent, the largest one-year increase on record.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,221,164; imprisonment rate 357 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 39,326,079.
- New guns added to the U.S. market (ATF, author's arithmetic): about 17.4 million.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 2 cases, 9 killed. Deadliest: Molson Coors shooting (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), 5 killed.
- Mass shootings, 4 or more shot (Gun Violence Archive): 611.

Washington Post, "Fatal Force Database 2015-2024 (data release)". https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-police-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Washington Post, "School shootings database (data release, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)", data through January 2025. https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-school-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2020-2021 school year (Washington Post): 17.
- People shot and killed by police (Washington Post): 1,021.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 46.[395]

2021

- Gun deaths (CDC): 48,830, including 26,328 suicides and 20,958 homicides.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,205,087; imprisonment rate 350 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 38,573,127.
- New guns added to the U.S. market (ATF, author's arithmetic): about 22.7 million.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 6 cases, 43 killed. Deadliest: Boulder supermarket shooting (Boulder, Colorado), 10 killed.
- Mass shootings, 4 or more shot (Gun Violence Archive): 690.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2021-2022 school year (Washington Post): 57.
- People shot and killed by police (Washington Post): 1,050.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 73.[396]

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2022

- Gun deaths (CDC): 48,204, including 27,032 suicides and 19,651 homicides.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,230,143; imprisonment rate 355 per 100,000.
- Gun background checks (NICS): 30,861,706.
- New guns added to the U.S. market (ATF, author's arithmetic): about 19.8 million.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 12 cases, 74 killed. Deadliest: Robb Elementary School massacre (Uvalde, Texas), 21 killed.
- Mass shootings, 4 or more shot (Gun Violence Archive): 644.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2022-2023 school year (Washington Post): 44.
- People shot and killed by police (Washington Post): 1,097.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 61.[397]

2023

- Gun deaths (CDC): 46,728, including 27,300 suicides and 17,927 homicides.
- People in state and federal prisons at yearend (BJS): 1,254,224; imprisonment rate 360 per 100,000.
- New guns added to the U.S. market (ATF, author's arithmetic): about 15.2 million.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 12 cases, 75 killed. Deadliest: Maine bowling alley and bar shootings (Lewiston, Maine), 18 killed.
- Mass shootings, 4 or more shot (Gun Violence Archive): 659.
- Shootings at K-12 schools during the 2023-2024 school year (Washington Post): 29.

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[397] Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "Firearms Commerce in the United States: Statistical Update 2025 (Publication 5390.1)", 2025. https://www.atf.gov/media/30936/download. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Instant Criminal Background Check System monthly reports, as compiled by BuzzFeed News, "NICS Firearm Background Checks (data through September 2023)". https://github.com/BuzzFeedNews/nics-firearm-background-checks. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Pew Research Center, "Gun suicides in the U.S. have increased, but gun homicides have fallen since 2021 (chart data from CDC)", April 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/chart/gun-suicides-have-increased-in-the-u-s-in-recent-years-but-gun-murders-have-fallen-since-2021/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Washington Post, "Fatal Force Database 2015-2024 (data release)". https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-police-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Washington Post, "School shootings database (data release, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)", data through January 2025. https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-school-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

- People shot and killed by police (Washington Post): 1,164.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 60.[398]

2024

- Gun deaths (CDC): 44,447, including 27,593 suicides and 15,364 homicides.
- Murders fell an estimated 14.9 percent (FBI).
- New guns added to the U.S. market (ATF, author's arithmetic): about 14.5 million.
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 2 cases, 8 killed. Deadliest: Arkansas grocery store shooting (Fordyce, Arkansas), 4 killed.
- Mass shootings, 4 or more shot (Gun Violence Archive): 503.
- People shot and killed by police (Washington Post): 1,175.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 64.[399]

2025

- Gun deaths (CDC): 42,348, including 28,060 suicides and 12,857 homicides (provisional).
- Murders fell an estimated 18.1 percent; the murder rate of 4.1 per 100,000 tied 1955 and 1956 for the lowest on record (FBI).
- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 7 cases, 24 killed. Deadliest: NYC Park Avenue shooting (Manhattan, New York), 4 killed.

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[398] Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "Firearms Commerce in the United States: Statistical Update 2025 (Publication 5390.1)", 2025. https://www.atf.gov/media/30936/download. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Derek Mueller and Rich Kluckow, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2023 - Statistical Tables (NCJ 310197)", September 2025. https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p23st.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Pew Research Center, "Gun suicides in the U.S. have increased, but gun homicides have fallen since 2021 (chart data from CDC)", April 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/chart/gun-suicides-have-increased-in-the-u-s-in-recent-years-but-gun-murders-have-fallen-since-2021/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Washington Post, "Fatal Force Database 2015-2024 (data release)". https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-police-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. The Washington Post, "School shootings database (data release, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)", data through January 2025. https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-school-shootings. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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- Mass shootings, 4 or more shot (Gun Violence Archive): 407.
- Officers feloniously killed (FBI): 53.[400]

2026

- Public mass shootings (Mother Jones): 4 cases, 13 killed. Deadliest: Silver Rail Elementary shooting (Bend, Oregon), 4 killed.
- Mass shootings, 4 or more shot (Gun Violence Archive): 408 through November 10.[401]

[400] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mapping Injury, Overdose, and Violence - National (dataset t6u2-f84c; yearly counts 2019-2025, 2025 provisional)", 2019-2024 data as of June 22, 2026; 2025 data as of November 5, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/Mapping-Injury-Overdose-and-Violence-National/t6u2-f84c. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Chris Williams, LiveNOW from FOX, "US homicide rate falls to 75-year low as violent crime declines, FBI says", August 15, 2026. https://www.fox9.com/news/fbi-homicide-rate-violent-crime. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Gun Violence Archive, "Past Summary Ledgers", published November 12, 2026. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 2025", May 2026. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/resources/reports/Officers%20Killed%20and%20Assaulted%20in%20the%20Line%20of%20Duty%2C%202025.pdf. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Mark Follman and others, Mother Jones, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2026: Data From Mother Jones' Investigation", updated October 16, 2026. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Pew Research Center, "Gun suicides in the U.S. have increased, but gun homicides have fallen since 2021 (chart data from CDC)", April 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/chart/gun-suicides-have-increased-in-the-u-s-in-recent-years-but-gun-murders-have-fallen-since-2021/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

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Appendix G: State by State

Gun death rates for every state and the District of Columbia, from the CDC's quarterly provisional mortality estimates. Rates are deaths per 100,000 people, age-adjusted, for the 12 months ending in December of each year. The homicide and suicide columns count deaths by all means, not just guns. The last column is the state's self-defense rule today (Chapter 20 and Appendix B). States are ranked by their 2024 gun death rate.[402]

These are provisional figures and can differ slightly from final CDC data. They match the final 2024 state figures reported by Pew Research Center for the states Pew named.[403]

Rank	State	Gun deaths, 2023	Gun deaths, 2024	All homicides, 2024	All suicides, 2024	Self-defense rule
1	Mississippi	29.4	28.0	19.7	15.1	SYG statute
2	New Mexico	25.3	26.6	13.2	24.6	SYG by court rule
3	Alaska	23.5	24.4	7.7	29.7	SYG statute
4	Alabama	25.6	23.7	13.3	15.9	SYG statute
5	Wyoming	21.5	23.4	4.8	27.8	SYG statute
6	Louisiana	28.3	22.9	15.2	14.1	SYG statute
7	Arkansas	21.9	20.6	8.5	19.0	SYG statute
8	Montana	21.5	20.2	4.5	26.8	SYG statute
9	Tennessee	22.0	19.8	10.0	16.4	SYG statute
10	District of Columbia	30.6	19.7	23.3	5.7	In between
11	Missouri	21.4	19.6	9.4	17.8	SYG statute
12	South Carolina	19.1	19.5	9.9	16.0	SYG statute
13	Oklahoma	19.9	19.1	7.2	20.9	SYG statute
14	Kentucky	18.4	18.5	7.0	17.9	SYG statute
15	Georgia	18.6	17.6	9.2	14.3	SYG statute
16	South Dakota	12.3	17.3	6.6	21.9	SYG statute

[402] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - VSRR Quarterly provisional estimates for selected indicators of mortality (dataset 489q-934x)", updated June 23, 2026. https://data.cdc.gov/NCHS/NCHS-VSRR-Quarterly-provisional-estimates-for-selected-indicators-of-mortality/489q-934x. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Stand Your Ground Laws", modified July 24, 2026. https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/stand-your-ground-laws/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026. National Conference of State Legislatures, "Self Defense and Stand Your Ground", undated web page. https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-your-ground. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[403] John Gramlich, Pew Research Center, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", April 28, 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/28/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Rank	State	Gun deaths, 2023	Gun deaths, 2024	All homicides, 2024	All suicides, 2024	Self-defense rule
17	Indiana	18.3	17.2	7.3	16.8	SYG statute
18	Nevada	18.4	17.2	7.0	19.6	SYG statute
19	Arizona	18.5	16.9	6.4	18.9	SYG statute
20	North Carolina	16.4	16.3	7.8	14.1	SYG statute
21	Idaho	17.9	15.9	1.8	21.2	SYG statute
22	Colorado	16.6	15.3	5.1	20.8	SYG by court rule
23	West Virginia	16.8	15.3	5.9	16.4	SYG statute
24	Kansas	16.3	15.2	5.6	17.9	SYG statute
25	Ohio	15.0	14.6	6.6	15.2	SYG statute
26	Oregon	14.2	14.2	4.0	20.0	SYG by court rule
27	Texas	14.9	13.9	5.9	14.2	SYG statute
28	Utah	14.8	13.3	2.3	19.5	SYG statute
29	Virginia	13.8	12.8	5.6	12.9	SYG by court rule
30	Florida	13.7	12.7	5.5	13.9	SYG statute
31	Illinois	13.5	12.4	8.7	10.8	SYG by court rule
32	North Dakota	12.8	12.2	2.5	19.2	SYG statute
33	Wisconsin	12.7	12.1	4.8	14.8	In between
34	Maine	14.0	11.9	2.6	19.2	Duty to retreat
35	Michigan	13.9	11.9	5.7	13.7	SYG statute
36	Pennsylvania	13.6	11.9	5.6	13.3	SYG statute
37	Delaware	12.0	11.8	6.9	11.8	Duty to retreat
38	Iowa	10.5	11.8	3.4	17.1	SYG statute
39	Maryland	12.3	11.6	9.0	9.7	Duty to retreat
40	Washington	13.0	11.0	4.4	14.5	SYG by court rule
41	Nebraska	10.6	10.9	3.1	14.9	Duty to retreat

Rank	State	Gun deaths, 2023	Gun deaths, 2024	All homicides, 2024	All suicides, 2024	Self-defense rule
42	Vermont	12.0	10.6	3.2	14.7	SYG by court rule
43	New Hampshire	9.6	10.2	1.4	16.4	SYG statute
44	Minnesota	8.9	9.8	3.4	13.7	Duty to retreat
45	California	8.0	7.0	4.5	9.6	SYG by court rule
46	Connecticut	6.2	5.8	3.0	10.0	Duty to retreat
47	Rhode Island	4.8	4.6	2.0	8.9	Duty to retreat
48	New York	4.7	4.4	3.5	8.1	Duty to retreat
49	New Jersey	4.6	4.0	2.9	6.7	Duty to retreat
50	Massachusetts	3.7	3.8	2.2	8.3	Duty to retreat
51	Hawaii	4.9	3.7	2.8	13.7	Duty to retreat
	United States	**13.7**	**12.8**	**6.2**	**13.7**	

Appendix H: Gun Deaths by Race and Sex, 1999 to 2016

These tables come from the CDC's "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States" data set, which breaks down injury deaths by race, Hispanic origin and sex through 2016. Rates are deaths per 100,000 people, age-adjusted so that groups with older or younger populations can be compared fairly. "White" and "Black" mean non-Hispanic white and non-Hispanic Black; Hispanic people may be of any race. The data set does not give separate rates for Asian or Native American people. For later years by race, see Chapter 4.[404]

Gun homicide rate

Year	All	White	Black	Hispanic	Men	Women
1999	3.8	1.5	14.8	5.0	6.3	1.3
2000	3.8	1.5	15.0	4.8	6.3	1.2
2001	3.9	1.6	15.2	4.9	6.6	1.3
2002	4.1	1.6	16.1	4.8	6.8	1.3
2003	4.1	1.5	16.4	5.0	6.9	1.2
2004	4.0	1.5	15.7	4.7	6.7	1.1
2005	4.2	1.5	16.7	5.0	7.1	1.2
2006	4.3	1.5	17.5	4.8	7.3	1.3
2007	4.2	1.6	17.0	4.5	7.2	1.2
2008	4.1	1.6	15.8	4.2	6.8	1.2
2009	3.8	1.5	14.8	3.9	6.3	1.2
2010	3.6	1.4	14.6	3.4	6.1	1.1
2011	3.6	1.4	14.5	3.2	6.0	1.2
2012	3.8	1.5	15.5	3.2	6.3	1.2
2013	3.6	1.4	15.0	3.0	6.1	1.1
2014	3.5	1.4	14.4	2.9	5.9	1.1
2015	4.2	1.6	17.3	3.3	7.1	1.2
2016	4.6	1.7	19.2	3.7	7.8	1.4

[405]

Gun suicide rate

Year	All	White	Black	Hispanic	Men	Women
1999	6.0	6.9	3.3	2.8	11.1	1.5
2000	5.9	6.9	3.2	2.7	11.0	1.5
2001	5.9	7.0	3.1	2.5	11.1	1.4

[404] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

[405] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "NCHS - Injury Mortality: United States (dataset nt65-c7a7, 1999-2016)", updated June 12, 2018. https://data.cdc.gov/Injury-Violence/NCHS-Injury-Mortality-United-States/nt65-c7a7. Accessed November 12-13, 2026.

Year	All	White	Black	Hispanic	Men	Women
2002	5.9	7.1	3.0	2.5	11.1	1.4
2003	5.8	7.0	2.8	2.4	10.8	1.4
2004	5.6	6.8	2.8	2.4	10.4	1.5
2005	5.7	6.9	2.8	2.2	10.6	1.4
2006	5.5	6.8	2.7	2.0	10.3	1.4
2007	5.6	7.0	2.6	2.4	10.4	1.4
2008	5.8	7.3	2.7	2.1	10.7	1.4
2009	5.9	7.5	2.7	2.3	10.9	1.5
2010	6.1	7.7	2.7	2.2	11.2	1.5
2011	6.2	8.0	2.8	2.1	11.2	1.6
2012	6.3	8.1	2.9	2.2	11.5	1.7
2013	6.4	8.4	2.7	2.1	11.5	1.8
2014	6.4	8.4	2.8	2.2	11.4	1.8
2015	6.5	8.6	2.7	2.2	11.6	1.8
2016	6.8	8.8	3.2	2.4	12.0	1.9

[406]

The two tables show the same pattern found throughout this book. Gun homicide falls hardest on Black Americans, and gun suicide falls hardest on white Americans. Men die at several times the rate of women in both.

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