

A Guide to Mass Shootings in America

There have been at least 61 in the last 30 years—and most of the killers got their guns legally.

—By [Mark Follman](#), [Gavin Aronsen](#), and [Deanna Pan](#)

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It's perhaps too easy to forget how many times this has happened. [The horrific mass murder at a movie theater in Colorado](#) on July 20 and [another at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin](#) on August 5 are the latest in an epidemic of such gun violence over the last three decades. Since 1982, there have been at least 61 mass murders* carried out with firearms across the country, with the killings unfolding in 30 states from Massachusetts to Hawaii. We've mapped them below, including details on the shooters' identities, the types of weapons they used, and the number of victims they injured and killed.

Weapons: Of the 139 guns possessed by the killers, more than three quarters were obtained legally. The arsenal included dozens of assault weapons and semiautomatic handguns. (See charts below.) Just as Jeffrey Weise used a .40-caliber Glock to massacre students in Red Lake, Minnesota, in 2005, so too did James Holmes when blasting away at his victims in a darkened movie theater.

The killers: Just under half of the cases involved school or workplace shootings (11 and 19, respectively); the other 31 cases took place in locations including shopping malls, restaurants, government buildings, and military bases. The average age of the killers was 35. Only one of them was a woman. (See Goleta, Calif., in 2006.) Forty two of them were white males. The youngest killer was a mere 11 years old. (See Jonesboro, Ark., in 1998.) Explore the map for further details—we do not consider the map to be all-inclusive, but based on the criteria we used to identify mass murders, we believe that we've produced one of the most comprehensive rundowns available on this particular type of traumatic violence. (Mass murders represent only a sliver of America's overall gun violence.) For a timeline listing all the cases on the map, including photos of the killers, [jump to page 2](#).

Click on the dots or use the search box just above the map to go to a specific location. (You'll need to zoom in significantly to see the Fort Hood shooting, located close to another Texas massacre in 1991, and to see other proximate incidents in Seattle and elsewhere.)



● Mass murders (single incident) ● Spree killings (multiple incidents)

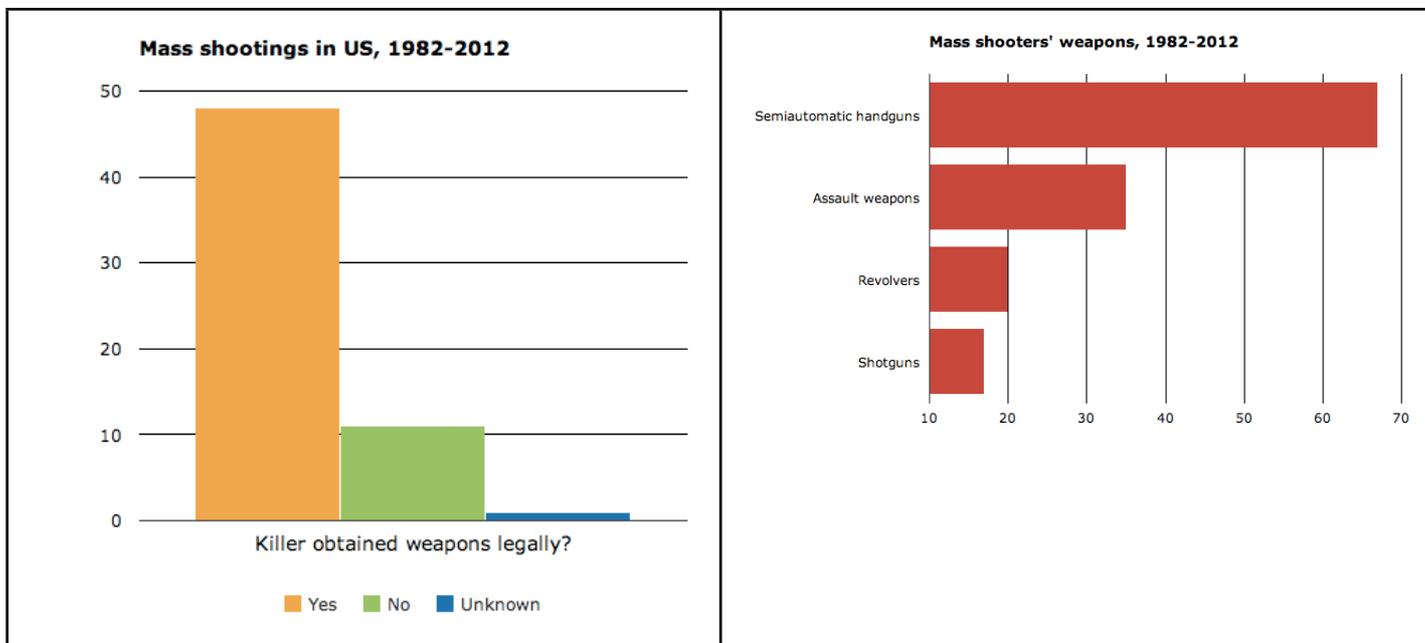
Sources: Research by Mother Jones. (With thanks to the [Associated Press](#), [Canada.com](#), and [Citizens Crime Commission of NYC](#).)

We used the following criteria to identify cases of mass murder:

- **The killings were carried out by a lone shooter.** (Except in the case of the Columbine massacre and the Westside Middle School killings, both of which involved two shooters.)
- **The shootings happened during a single incident and in a public place.** (Public, except in the case of a party in Crandon, Wisconsin, and another in Seattle.) Crimes primarily related to armed robbery or gang activity are not included.
- **The shooter took the lives of at least four people.** An [FBI crime classification report](#) identifies an individual as a mass murderer—as opposed to a [spree killer](#) or a [serial killer](#)—if he kills four or more people in a single incident (not including himself), and typically in a single location.
- **If the shooter died or was hurt from injuries** sustained during the incident, he is included in the total victim count. (But we have excluded cases in which there were three fatalities and the shooter also died, per the previous criterion.)
- **We included six so-called "spree killings"**—prominent cases that fit closely with our above criteria for mass murder, but in which the killings occurred in multiple locations over a short period of time.

For more on how we determined the criteria, [read this follow-up story](#), which includes a telling account from a mass shooting survivor. Also see our [mass shootings explainer](#).

Here are two charts detailing the killers' weapons (mouse over the bars for the numbers):



Source: *Mother Jones*

We've updated and expanded this story with additional research several times since initial publication on July 20, thanks in part to some valuable feedback from MoJo readers. (Thanks also to Professor James Alan Fox of Northeastern University.) For more about the mass shooting at the movie theater in Aurora, Colo., [click here](#), and for the mass shooting at the Sikh temple near Milwaukee, [click here](#).

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Interactive production by [Tasneem Raja](#) and [Jaeah Lee](#)

Image: Clockwise from upper left: Wade Michael Page: [Anti-Defamation League](#); James E. Holmes: Arapahoe County Sheriff's Dept./Zuma; Seung-Hui Cho: Virginia Tech University/[Wikimedia](#); Jared Loughner: Pima County Sheriff's Office/[Wikimedia](#)

[Next Page: A 30-year timeline of mass shootings, with photos of the killers](#)



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