

Advancing Understanding, and Informing Prevention of Public Mass Shootings: Findings from NIJ Funded Studies – Part 1

November 17, 2020

The webinar will begin shortly.

Presentations

Presentation Title

Trends and Contagion in Mass Public Shootings

Forecasting the Severity of Mass Public Shootings

The Effect of State Gun Laws on Mass Public Shootings; and Exploring Averted Incidents

Presenter

James Alan Fox, Ph.D., Northeastern University

Grant Duwe, Ph.D., Minnesota Department of Corrections

Michael Rocque, Ph.D., Bates College

Disclosure: This project is supported by Award No. 2018-75-CX-0025, awarded by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in these presentations and during this webinar are those of the authors/presenters and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Justice.



NIJ

Trends and Contagion in Mass Public Shootings

James Alan Fox
Northeastern University

NIJ Webinar
November 2020

Littler interest until 2012 trio of mass shootings

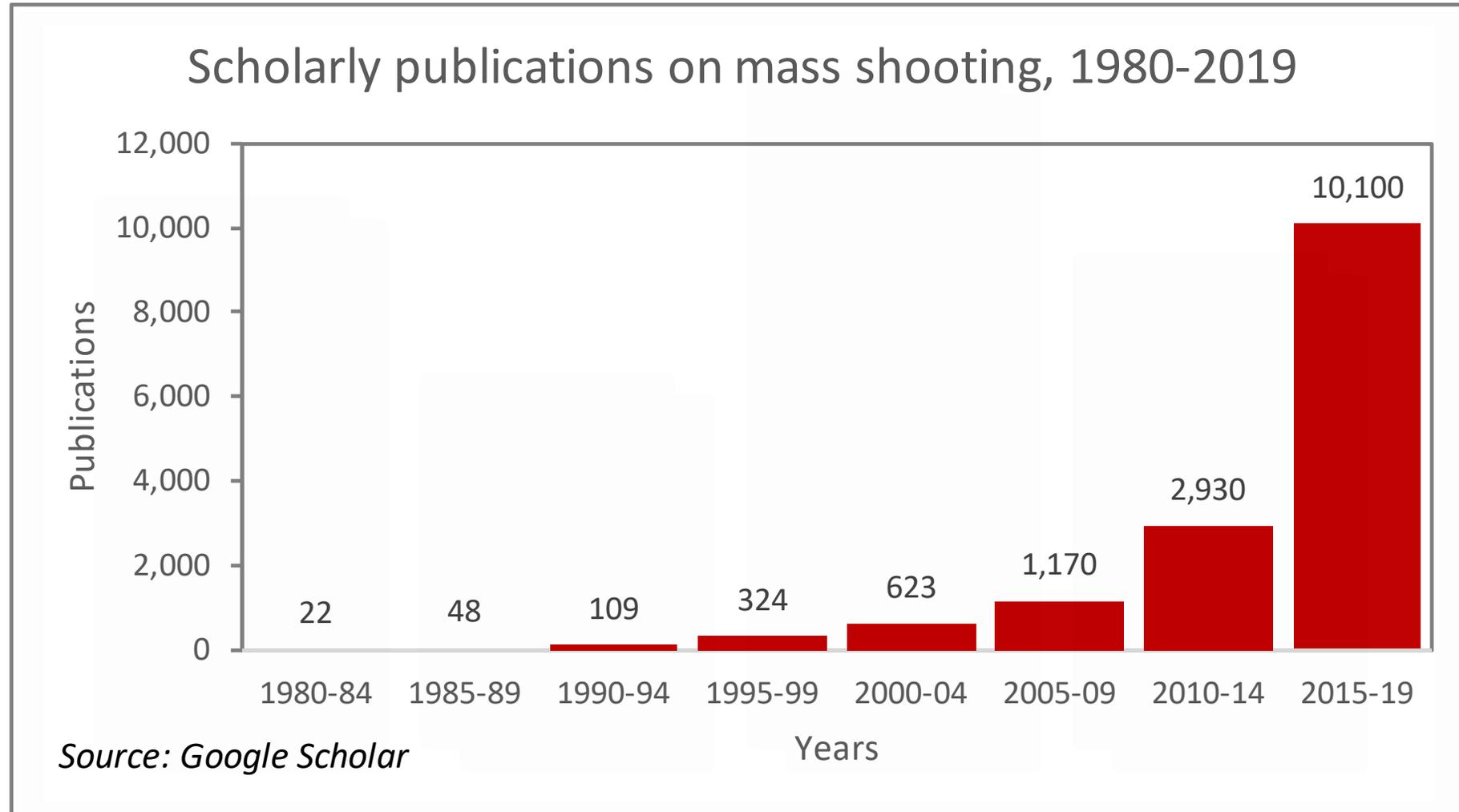


NEW YORK (AP) — The horrific massacre of 26 children and staff at a Connecticut elementary school, along with other mass shootings, was the top news story of 2012, narrowly edging out the U.S. election, according to The Associated Press' annual poll of U.S. editors and news directors



AP
Associated
Press

Heightened scholarly interest



Then came the data

Source	Definition of Mass Shooting Incident	Years Included	Incident Total	Victims Fatally Shot	Average Victims per Incident
Fox/Duwe/Rocque	4+ victims killed by gunfire in public within a 24-hour period excluding felony-related incidents	1976-2019	164	1,164	7.1
Peterson/Densley	4+ victims killed by gunfire in public	1966-2019	172	1,210	7.0
Turanovic/Pratt	4+ victims killed by gunfire in a 24-hour period	1976-2019	808	4,035	5.0
AP/USA Today/NU ^a	4+ victims killed by gunfire	2006-2019	326	1,783	5.5
The Washington Post	4+ victims killed by gunfire in public excluding felony-related incidents	1966-2019	174	1,237	7.1
Everytown for Gun Safety	4+ victims killed by gunfire	2009-2019	236	1,337	5.7
Mother Jones	4+ victims (3+ since 2013) killed by gunfire in public excluding domestic and felony related incidents	1982-2019	118	948 ^b	8.0
Gun Violence Archive	4+ victims killed or injured by gunfire	2013-2019	2,345	2,651 ^c	1.1

^a The AP/USA TODAY/Northeastern University database also track mass killings by means other than gunfire

^b The fatality counts in the Mother Jones databse frequently (but not always) include offender deaths

^c The fatality counts in the Gun Violence Archive include offender deaths

Defining characteristics

- Why mass public shootings with 4+ victim fatalities?
- What kind of event does the public tend to associate with the term “mass shootings”?
- What frightens Americans? The more common or the more deadly?

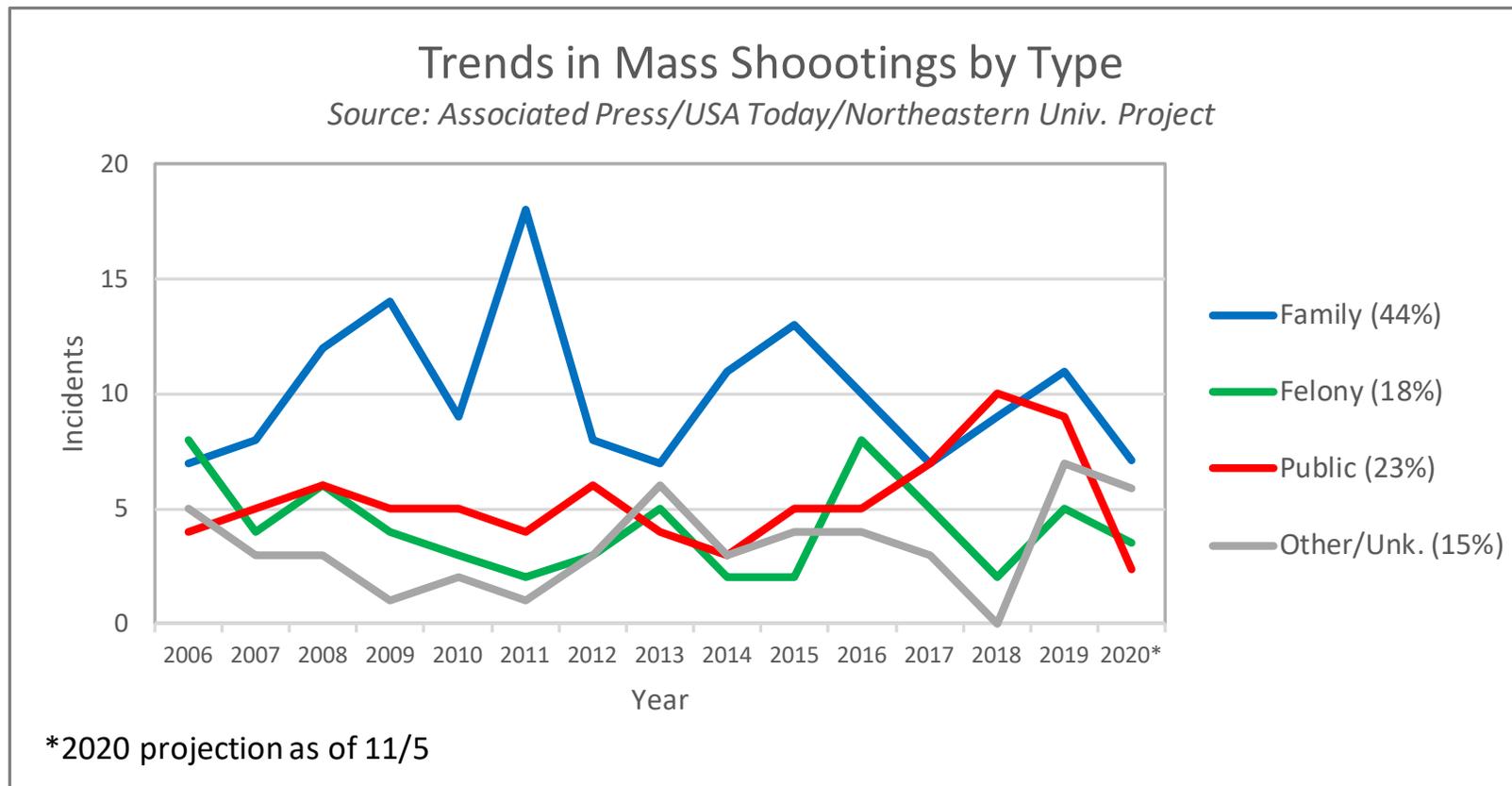
What is a mass shooting?

Meaning of "mass shooting"	Source	#Incidents 2013-19	Average #Fatalities
4+ victims shot	GVA	4345	1.1*
4+ victims fatally shot	AP/USAT/NU	183	5.7
4+ victims fatally shot in public	FDR	40	10.0

*GVA includes assailant deaths in its fatality count

A minority of cases, but the most frightening

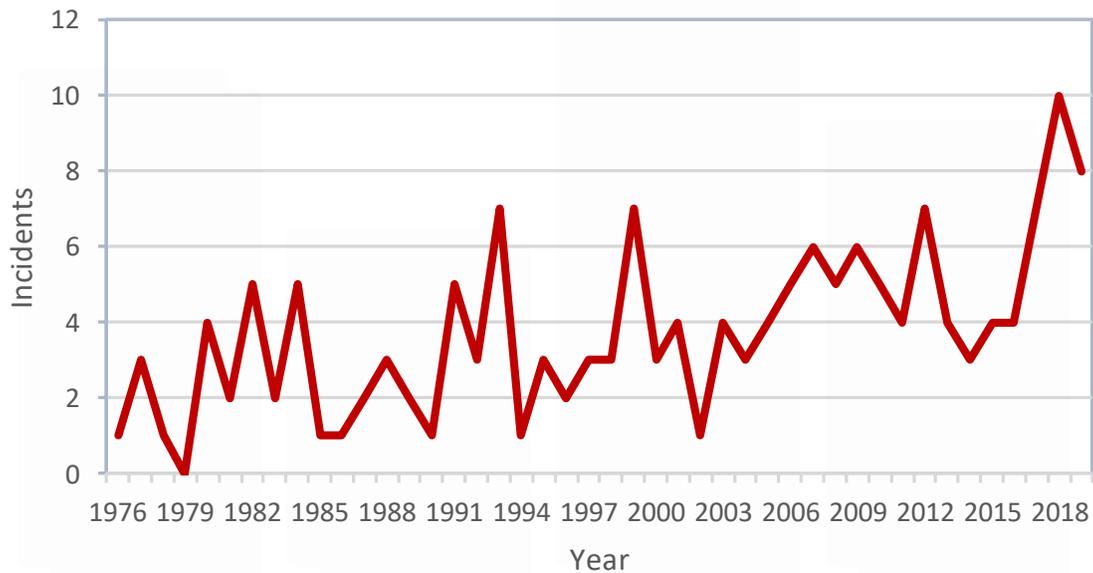
- Mass **public** shootings are more deadly and often indiscriminate
- Can happen at any place, at any time, to anyone



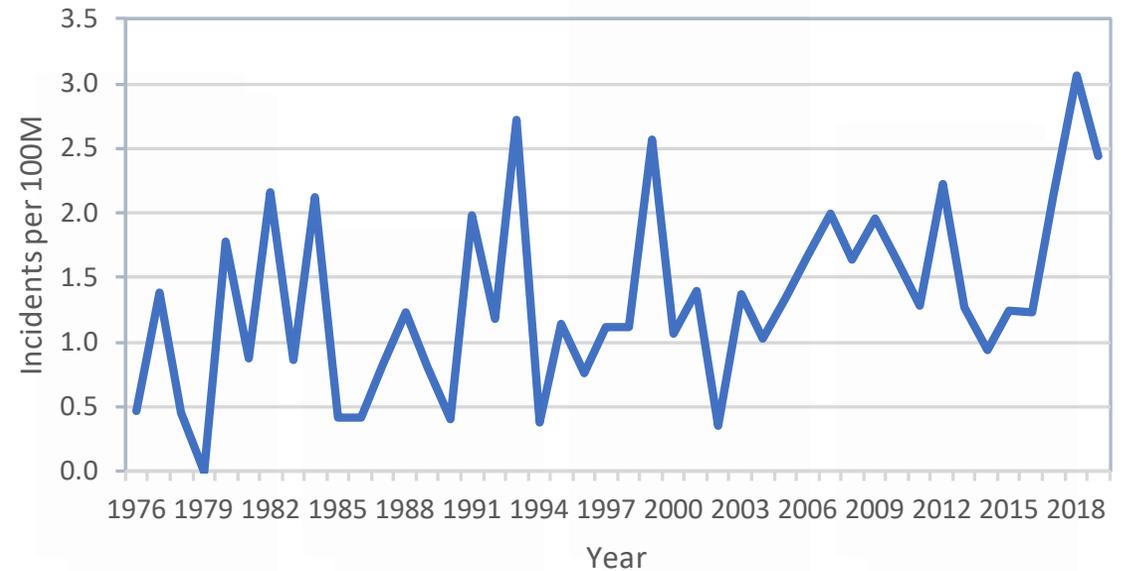
Trends in MPS incidence

- Modest increase in cases from mid-2000s to mid-2010s
- A clear spike in 2018-19

Mass public shootings (MPS), 1976-2019

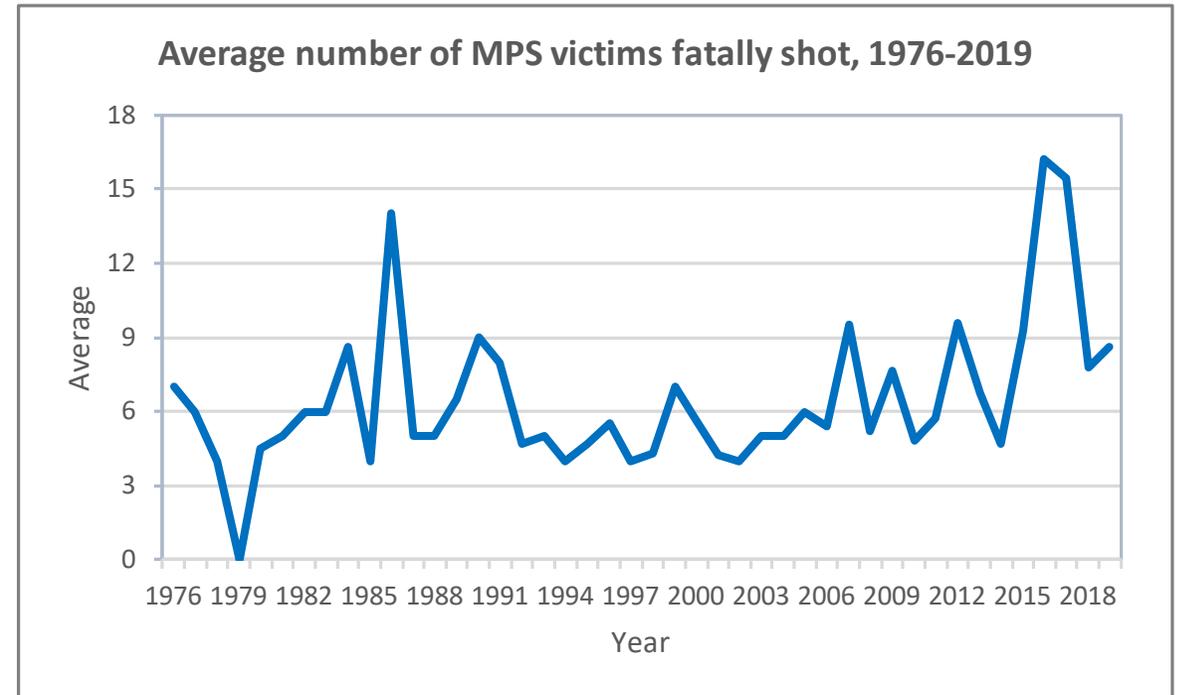
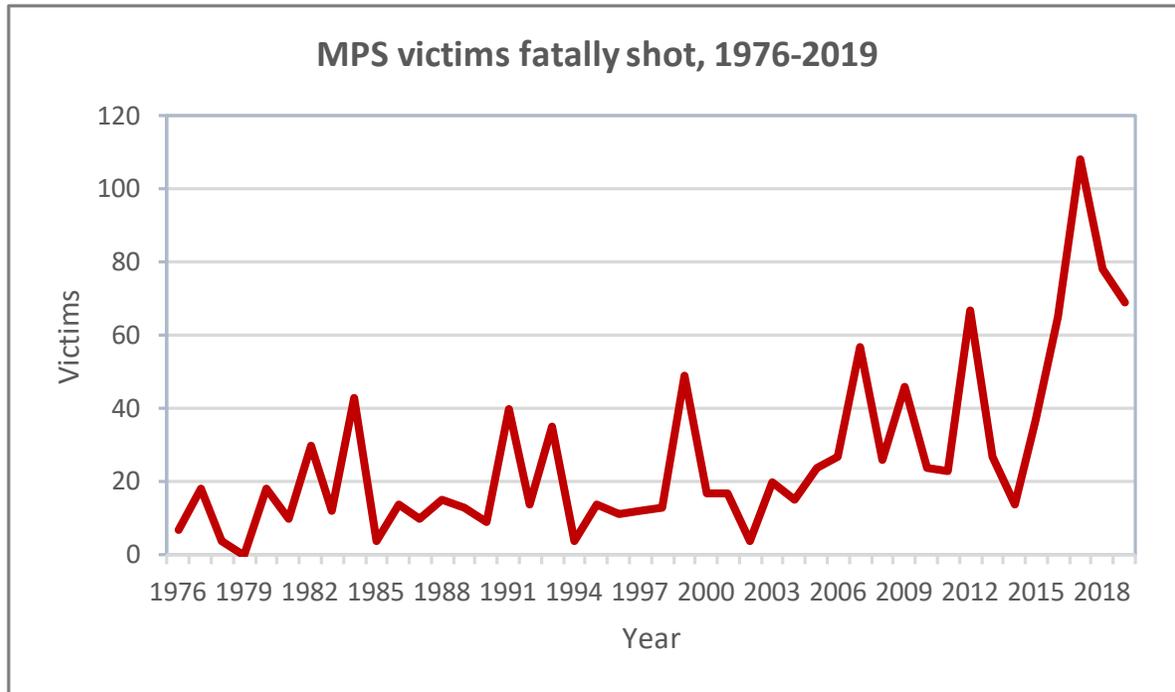


Rate of mass public shootings (MPS), 1976-2019



Trends in MPS severity

- Recent rise in severity (6 ave. victim fatalities pre-2015, 12 since)
- Notably Las Vegas, Orlando, Sutherland Springs, and El Paso



A mass shooting epidemic?

“We Are In The Midst Of An Epidemic Of Mass Shootings”

Joe Scarborough, *Morning Joe*
MSNBC, 2/15/2018



MotherJones

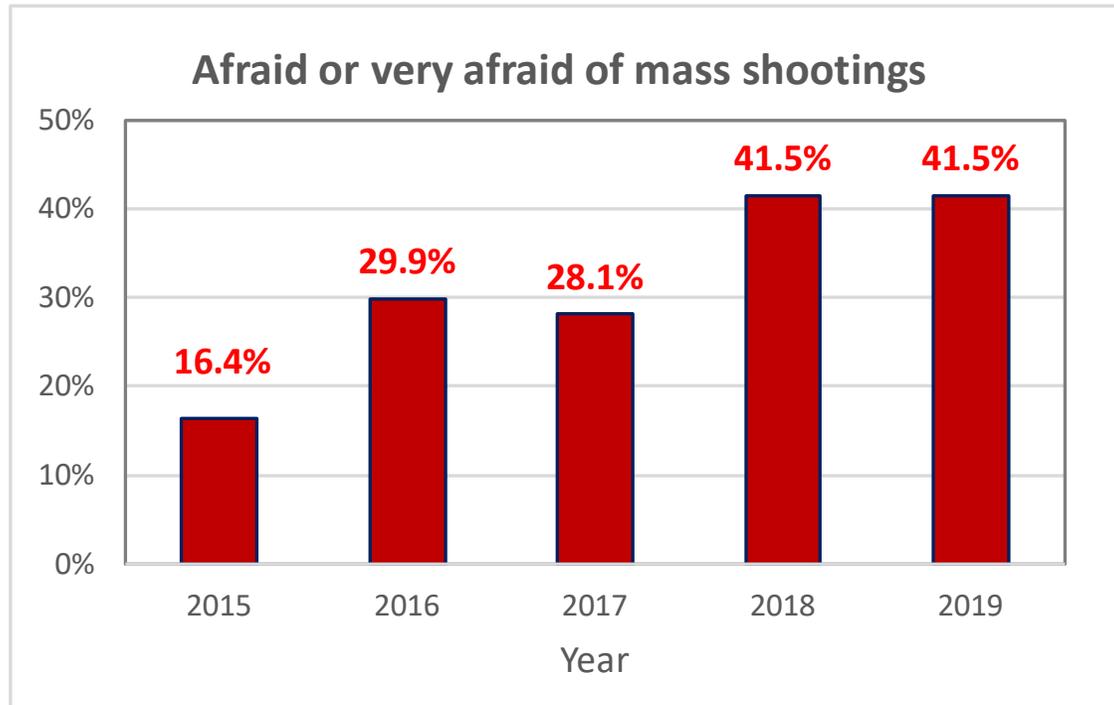
POLITICS AUGUST 18, 2019

Mass Shootings Are an American Epidemic.

[Marisa Fernandez](#) Sep 1, 2019

O'Rourke on CNN:
America's mass shooting
epidemic is "f***ed up"

An epidemic of fear



Source: Chapman University Survey of American Fears

ABC News/Wash Post Poll (Sept 2019):
Six in 10 fear a mass shootings in their community

Ipsos/USA Today Aug 2019 Poll:
21% skipped public events where there would be a lot of people.

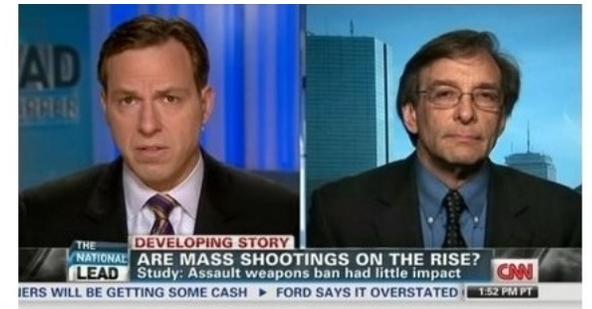
Why the exaggerated sense of risk?

- Misinterpreted data sets
- Confusion from conflicting definitions
- Amount and nature of media coverage

Criminology Professor to CNN's Tapper: Mass Shootings Aren't an 'Epidemic'

On Thursday's *The Lead* on CNN, James Allen Fox used actual crime data to splash cold water on a liberal talking point claiming that mass shootings on the rise: "It's a horrific event when four, five, twelve people are gunned down...**But let's not think that this is an epidemic.**"

The CNN anchor first asked Professor Fox, "I have to say, it's hard to believe, when it seems like every week, we're reporting another mass shooting – many of them at schools – that this isn't an increasing trend. But that's what your data shows. I have



Mass confusion and mass shootings

CBS NEWS NEWS ▾ HURRICANE DORIAN ▾ SHOWS ▾ LIVE ▾

There have been more mass shootings than days this year

DEADLIEST MASS SHOOTINGS IN MODERN U.S. HISTORY

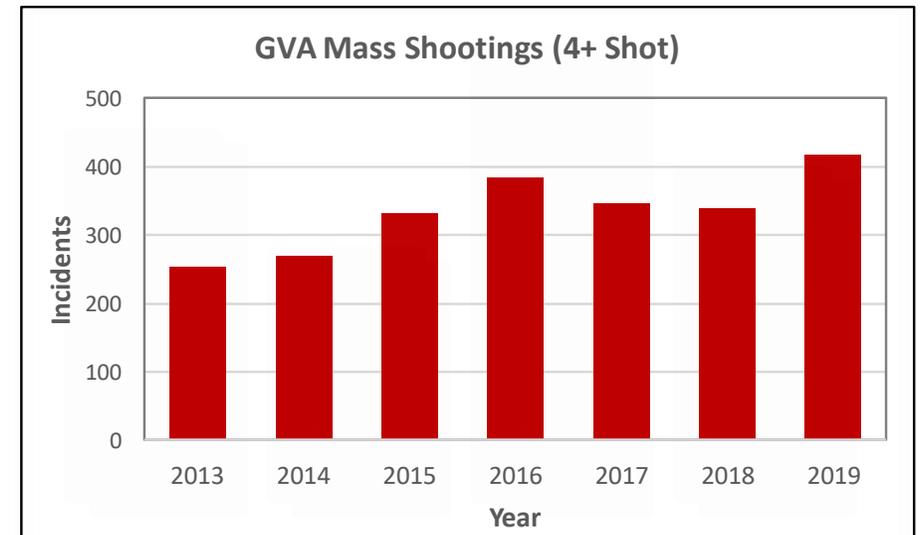
Las Vegas, NV [2017]	58 killed
Orlando, FL [2016]	49
Blacksburg, VA [2007]	32
Newtown, CT [2012]	27
Sutherland Springs, TX [2017]	26
Killeen, TX [1991]	23
El Paso, TX [2019]	22
San Ysidro, CA [1984]	21
San Bernardino, CA [2015]	14

More mass shootings than days this year in U....

REPORT: 05:32 THE TRACE

GVA 2013-2019	
Incidents	2,345
With 4+ killed	187
%4+ killed	8%
Injuries	12,426
Fatalities*	2,651
Ave. fatalities	1.1

*Includes some assailants



No benchmark to assess long-term trend

Seeing is believing



What gets covered the most?

- MPS receive far greater coverage than family and felony cases (Duwe, 2000)
- Which MPS are particularly newsworthy?
 - $N=97$ MPS incidents, 2000-2019
 - Amount of AP State & Local wire coverage
 - Major factors: **higher death toll, younger offenders, schools and churches, terrorism, white victims, arrested assailant**
 - Fox, Gerdes, Duwe, & Rocque, “The newsworthiness of mass public shootings: What factors impact the extent of coverage.” *Homicide Studies*, forthcoming.

Factor impacting news coverage			
#Victims killed	+	0.005	
#Victims injured	+		
Region	East	+	
	Midwest	+	0.074
	South	-	
	West*	+	
Location	Government	+	0.059
	School	+	0.053
	Worship	+	0.044
Off. Age	Under 24	+	0.036
	25-39	+	0.067
Off. Race	If White	+	
Contributor	Terrorism	+	0.020
	Hate	+	
	Grievance	+	
	Mental illness	+	
Outcome	If Arrested	+	0.030
%Victims strangers	+		
%Victims female	+		
%Victims < 18 yo	+		
%Victims white	+	0.008	
Interracial event	+		

$N = 97$

Contagion of mass shootings

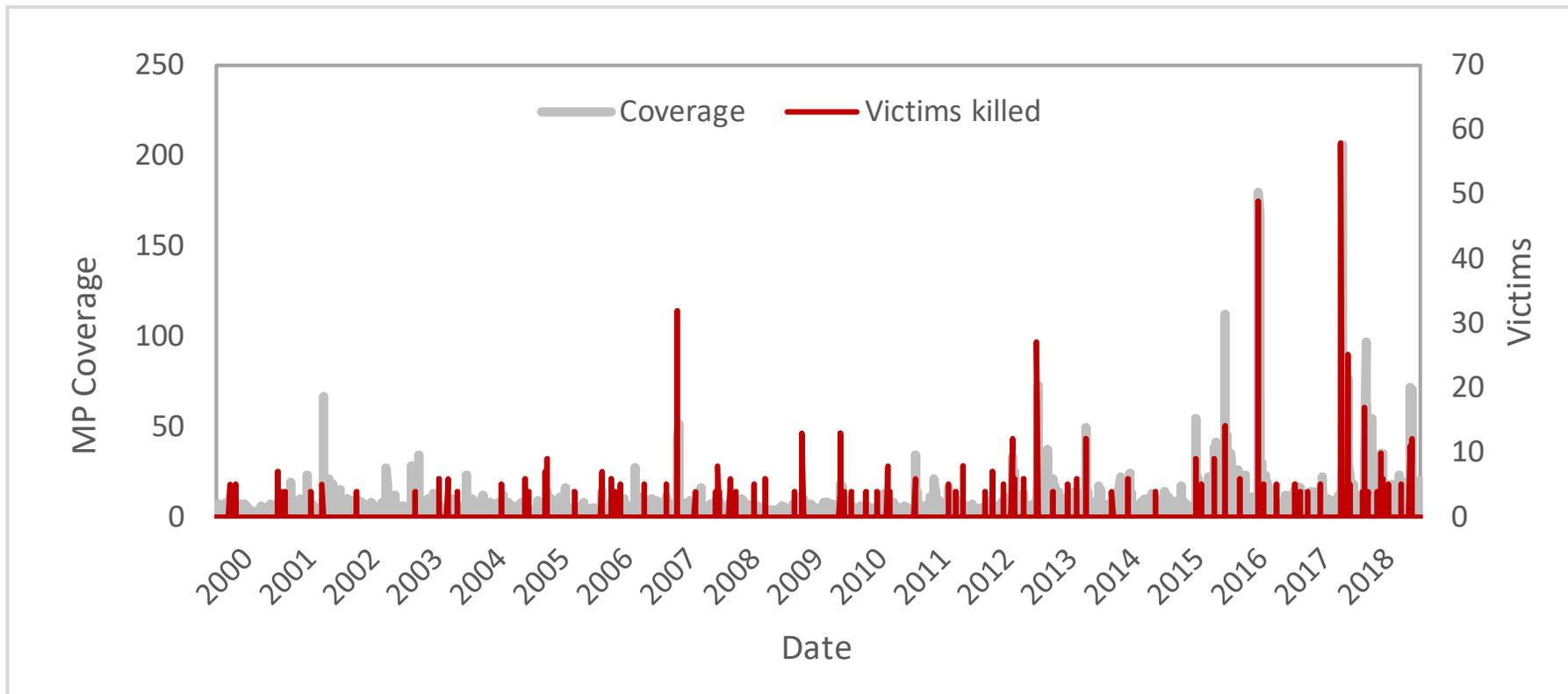
- Is there a price to news coverage?
- “Mass Shootings Can Be Contagious, Research Shows,” NPR, Aug.2019
- “...mass killings involving firearms are incited by similar events in the immediate past. On average, this temporary increase in probability lasts 13 days, and each incident incites at least 0.30 new incidents...” Towers et al. (2015)
- Analyzed the timing of USA Today mass shooting data (2006-13), but no measurement of media
- Most mass shootings receive little coverage



“Don’t name them; don’t show them”

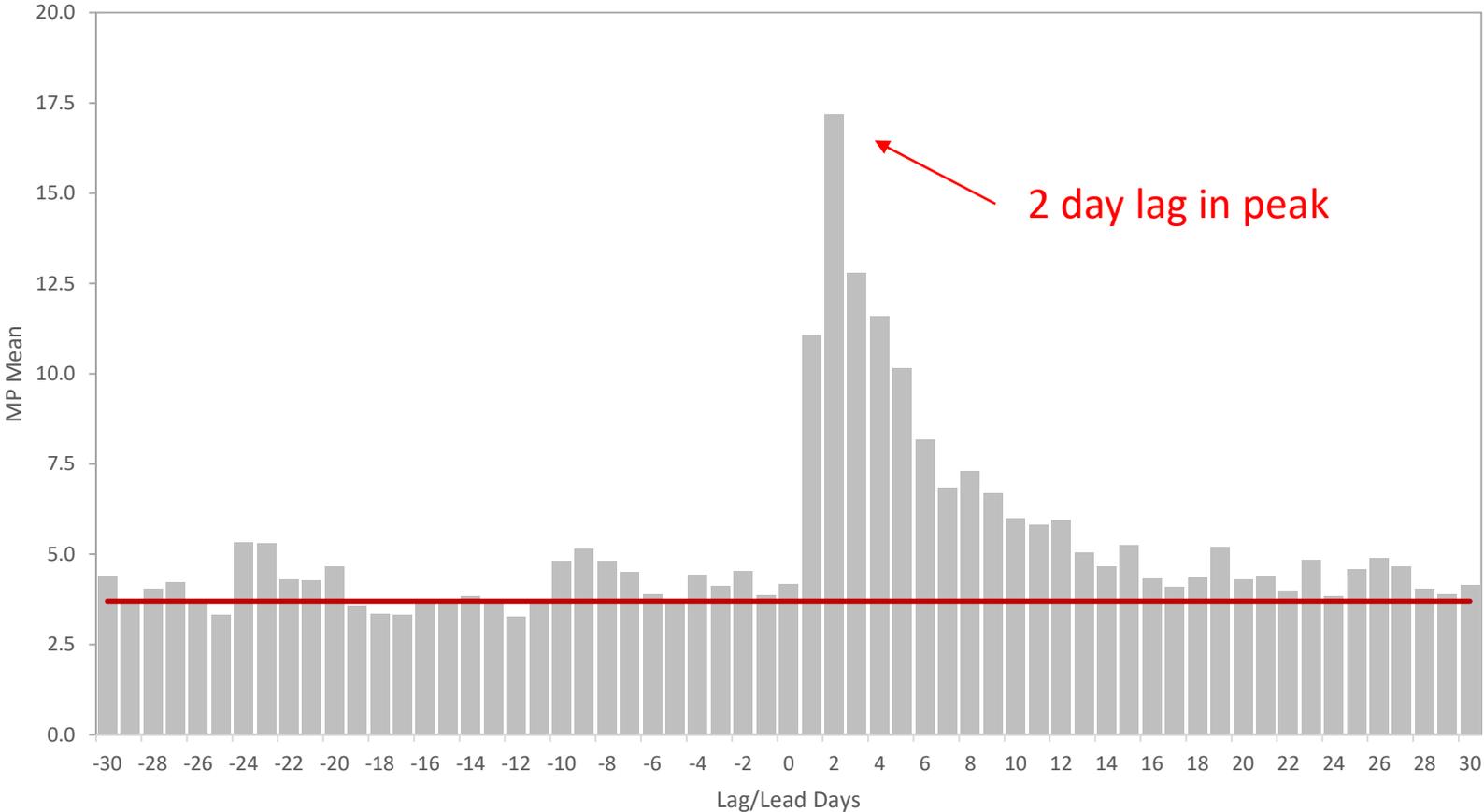
A study of contagion

- Analysis of contagion should reflect the extent of media coverage
- $N=6,940$ daily counts of mass shooting stories (2000-2018) in the AP wire, major U.S. newspapers, and network TV news programs and timing of 89 MPS
- Fox, Sanders, Fridel, Duwe, & Rocque, “The contagion of mass shootings: The interdependence of large-scale massacres and mass media coverage.” (under review)

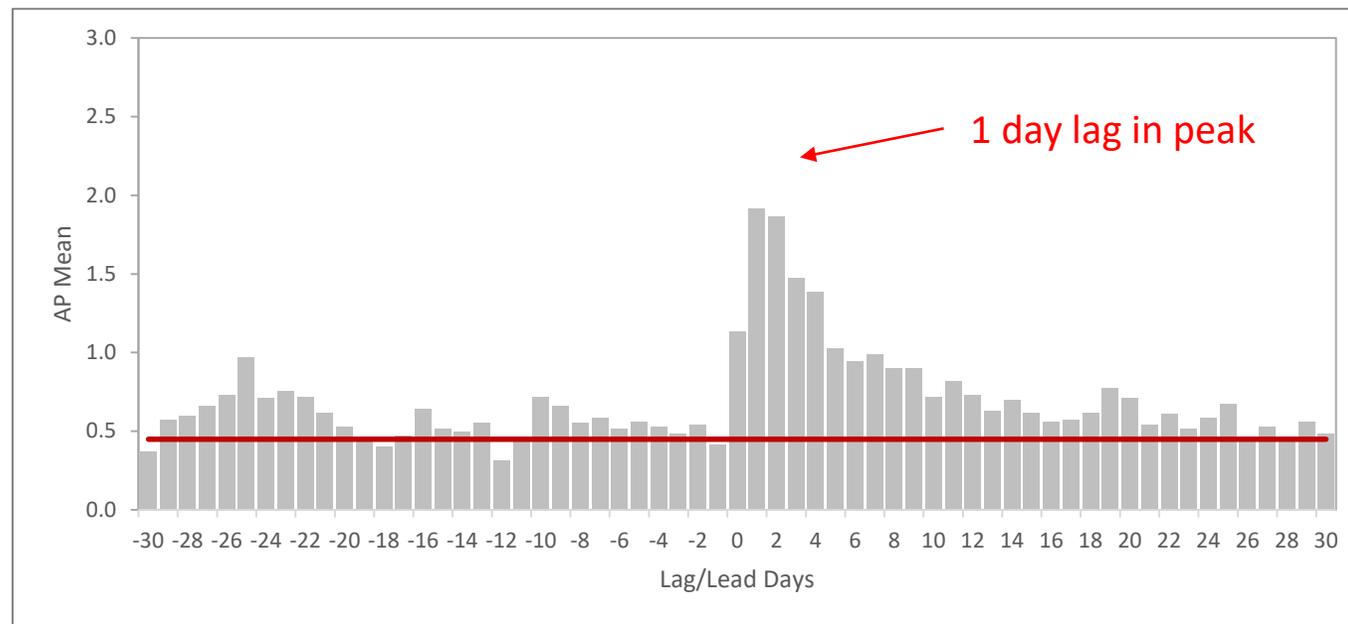


Media coverage pre/post MPS

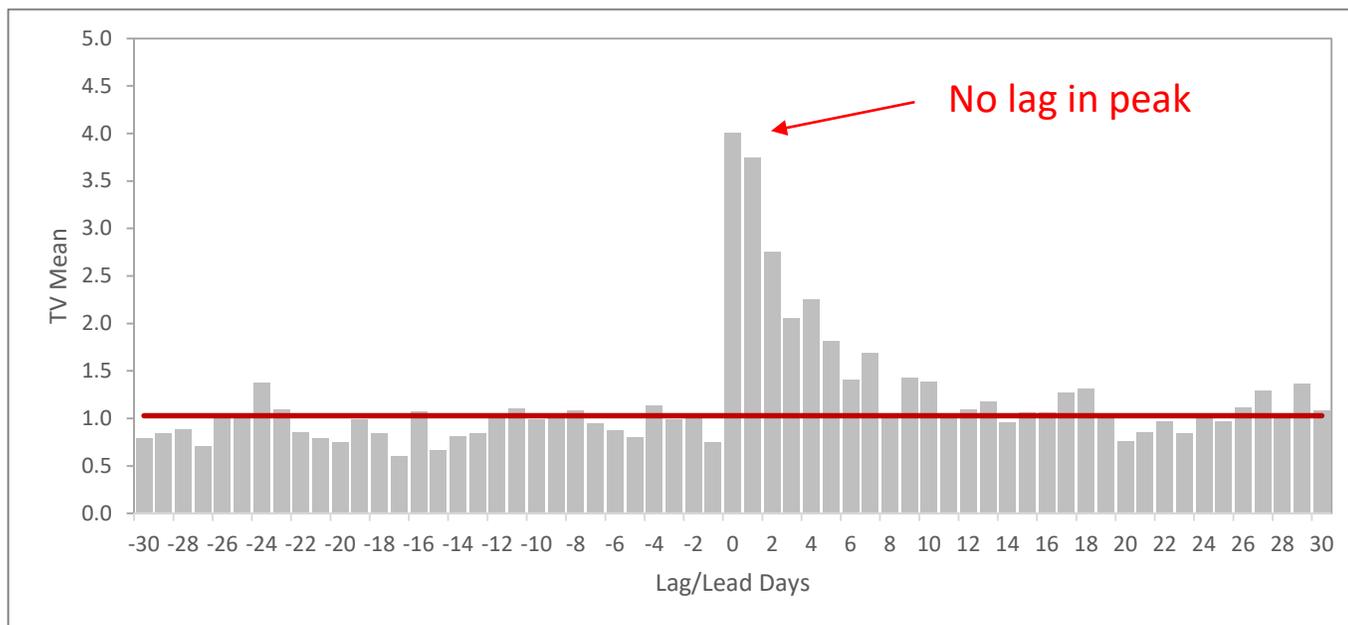
13 major daily newspapers weighted by circulation



Associated Press
National Wire



Network TV
News



Responsible coverage

- The act v. the actor
- Report facts, not fluff
- Don't give perpetrator a platform by publishing rants
- Focus more on strength and resilience, less on pain and suffering



Rise and fall of social contagion (and public obsession)

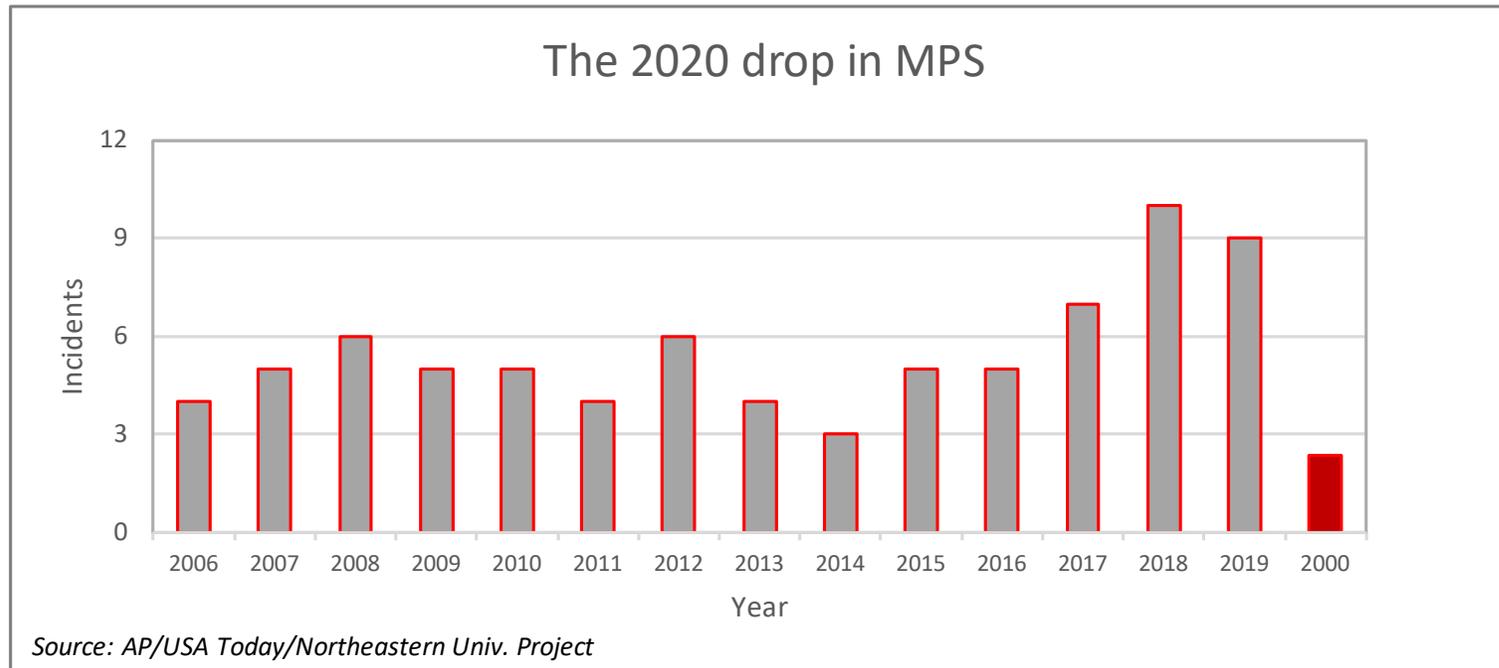
- Eight multiple victim school shooting in 1996-2001
- “School shootings are an epidemic.” Dan Rather, March 5, 2001
- Not another for 4 years

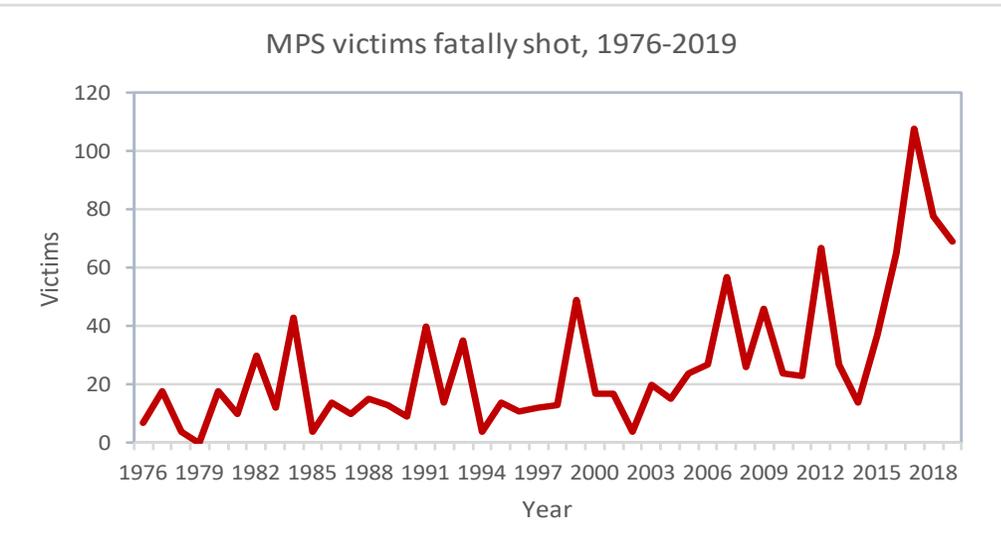
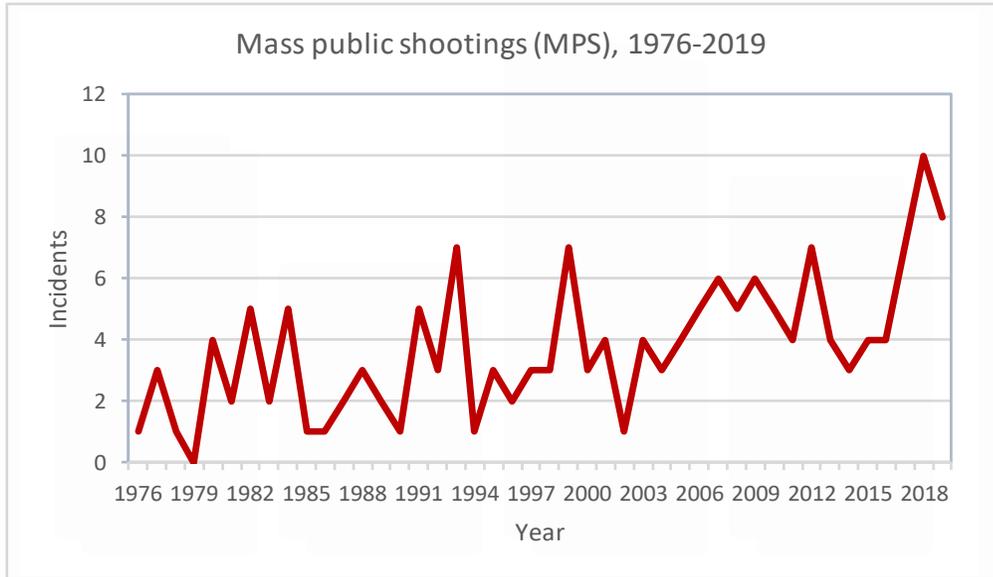
Date	Shooter, Age	School	Location	Killed	Injured
2/2/1996	Barry Loukaitis, 14	Frontier Junior H.S.	Moses Lake, WA	3	1
2/19/1997	Evan Ramsey, 16	Bethel Regional H.S.	Bethel, AL	2	2
10/1/1997	Luke Woodham, 16	Pearl H.S.	Pearl, MS	3	7
12/1/1997	Michael Carneal, 14	Heath H.S.	West Paducah, KY	3	5
3/24/1998	Mitchell Johnson, 13 & Andrew Golden, 11	Westside M.S.	Jonesboro, AR	5	10
5/21/1998	Kipland Kinkel, 15	Thurston H.S.	Springfield, OR	4	25
4/20/1999	Eric Harris, 18 & Dylan Klebold, 17	Columbine H.S.	Littleton, CO	13	23
3/5/2001	Charles "Andy" Williams, 15	Santana H.S.	Santee, CA	2	23
3/21/2005	Jeffrey Weise, 16	Red Lake H.S.	Red Lake, MN	9	5

Note: Incidents with 4+ victims and at least two deaths (not including the assailant)

Looking ahead

- The Sept. 11, 2001 attack on America diverted attention away from the threat of multiple victim school shootings
- Might the COVID-19 pandemic pause in mass public shootings dissipate the social contagion and panic over these incidents?





Speaking of trends and what might lie ahead, what does the future hold in terms of the severity of MPS?

Forecasting the Severity of Mass Public Shootings in the United States

- || Grant Duwe, Ph.D.
- || November 2020

- || NIJ Webinar

Study Overview

- The incidence and severity of mass public shootings have increased since the mid-2000s
 - 2017 Las Vegas: 60 people killed and another 411 victims wounded by gunfire
 - 2016 Orlando: 49 people killed and another 53 victims injured by gunfire
- What is the likelihood of attacks as catastrophic as Orlando or Las Vegas occurring in the next 10 years? Or 20 years?
 - What is the probability of an even worse mass public shooting taking place in the future?
- Presentation provides results from our study (under review)
 - “Forecasting the Severity of Mass Public Shootings in the United States” by Grant Duwe, Nathan Sanders, Michael Rocque and James Alan Fox

Forecasting the Likelihood of Catastrophic Events

- Research in other fields has shown it's possible to develop valid estimates of future likelihood of rare catastrophic events
 - Seismology → Earthquake > 7.0 on Richter scale
 - Terrorism → Attack similar in magnitude to 9/11
- Heavy-tailed distributions
 - Most events are relatively small (low severity) while a small number are very severe
- Mass Public Shootings
 - Tend to follow a heavy-tailed distribution
 - Relatively few have had more than 10 fatal victims or more than 25 total victims who were shot

Why It Matters

- Estimates can help inform decisions about resources
- If the likelihood is very low, then it may be more prudent to divert resources elsewhere
- But what if the likelihood is greater than 10% (or higher) over the next 5 or 10 years?
 - Such an estimate might be relevant for:
 - Modeling trauma capacity of regional hospital systems
 - Understanding potential consequences of policies relating to firearms or mental health
 - Law enforcement assessing risk around large public gatherings

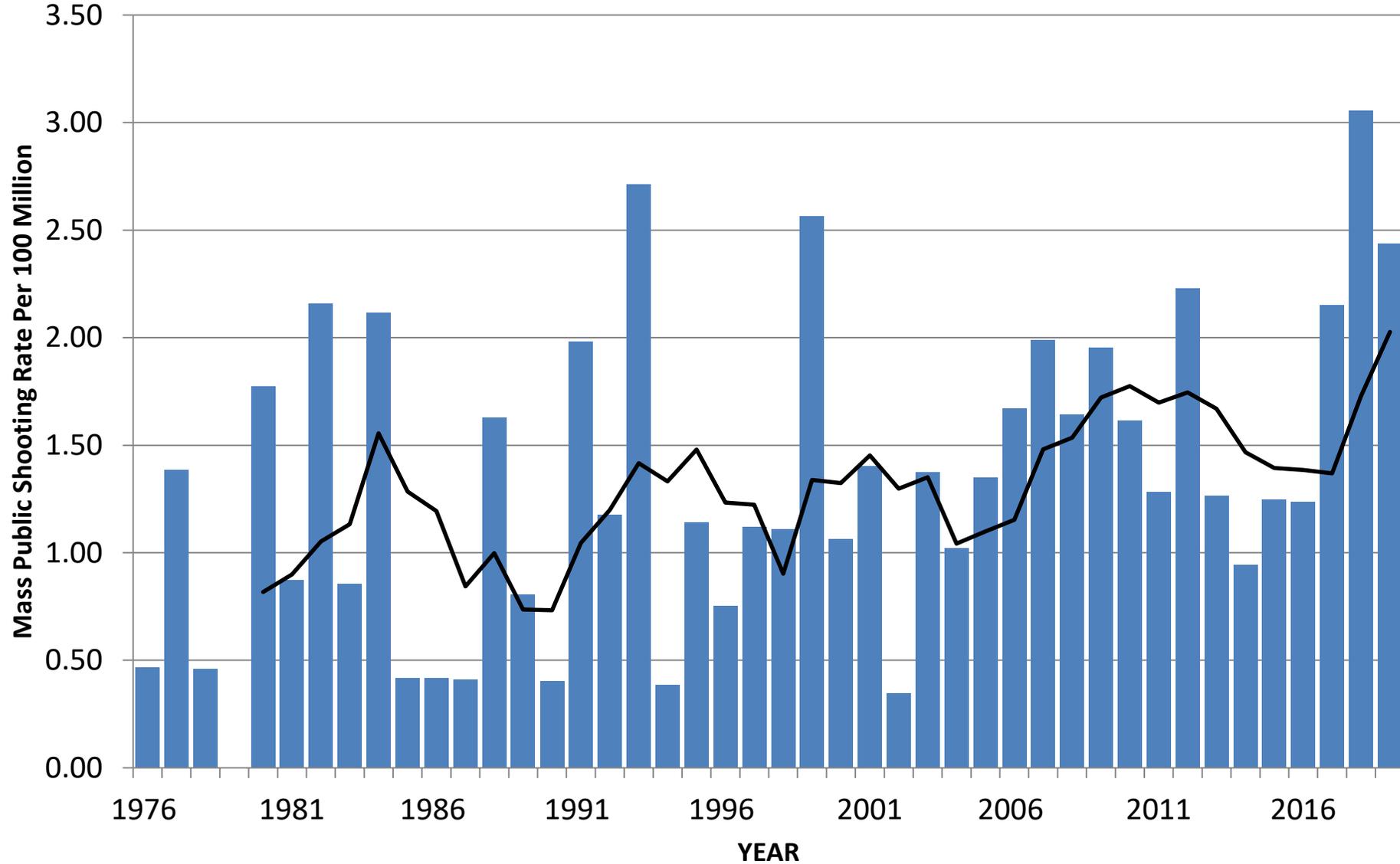
Defining Mass Public Shootings

- Mass murder = incidents in which 4 or more victims are killed within 24-hour period
- “Mass shooting” = any gun-related mass murder
- “Mass public shooting” = incidents in which 4 or more victims are killed with a gun in a public location
 - Exclude cases in connection w/ other criminal activity
 - MPS = most newsworthy mass murders/mass shootings
 - Infamous Examples of MPS
 - Columbine school shooting: 1999
 - Virginia Tech school shooting: 2007
 - Las Vegas massacre: 2017
 - Make up about 12% of all mass murders

Measuring Mass Public Shootings

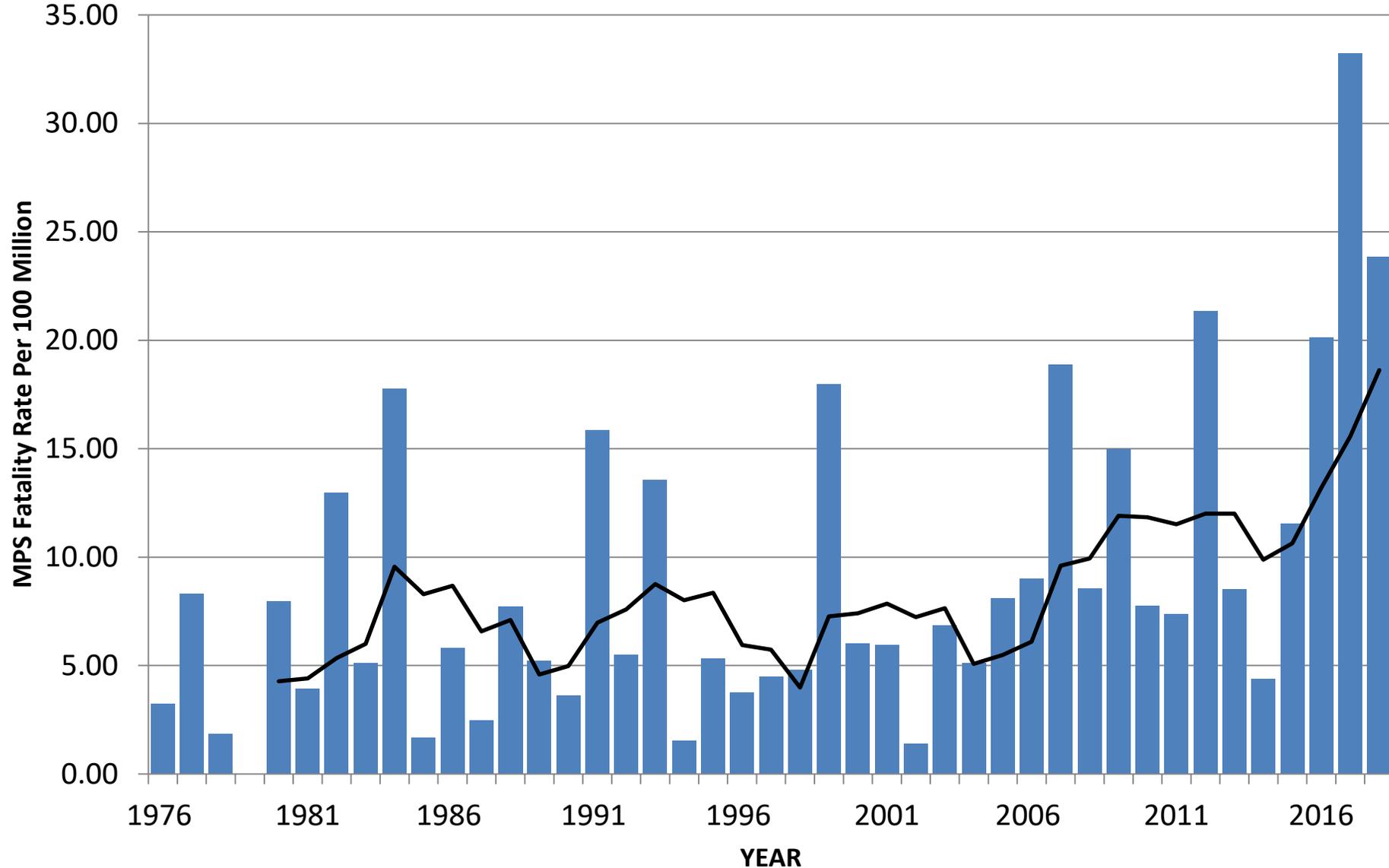
- Triangulated data collection strategy
 - FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR)
 - Identify when and where mass murders have occurred since 1976
 - No information on number of wounded victims or type of location
 - News reports
 - More detailed info but relying only on news coverage → underreporting
 - See Mother Jones or Gun Violence Archive
 - Use both → Strategy also adopted by Congressional Research Service and *USA Today*
- Consulted both published and unpublished lists
- Consensus review by FDR (Fox, Duwe and Rocque)
- Sample = 156 mass public shootings from 1976-2018
 - 2,360 total victims shot, of whom 1,092 were killed

Mass Public Shooting Rate, 1976-2018



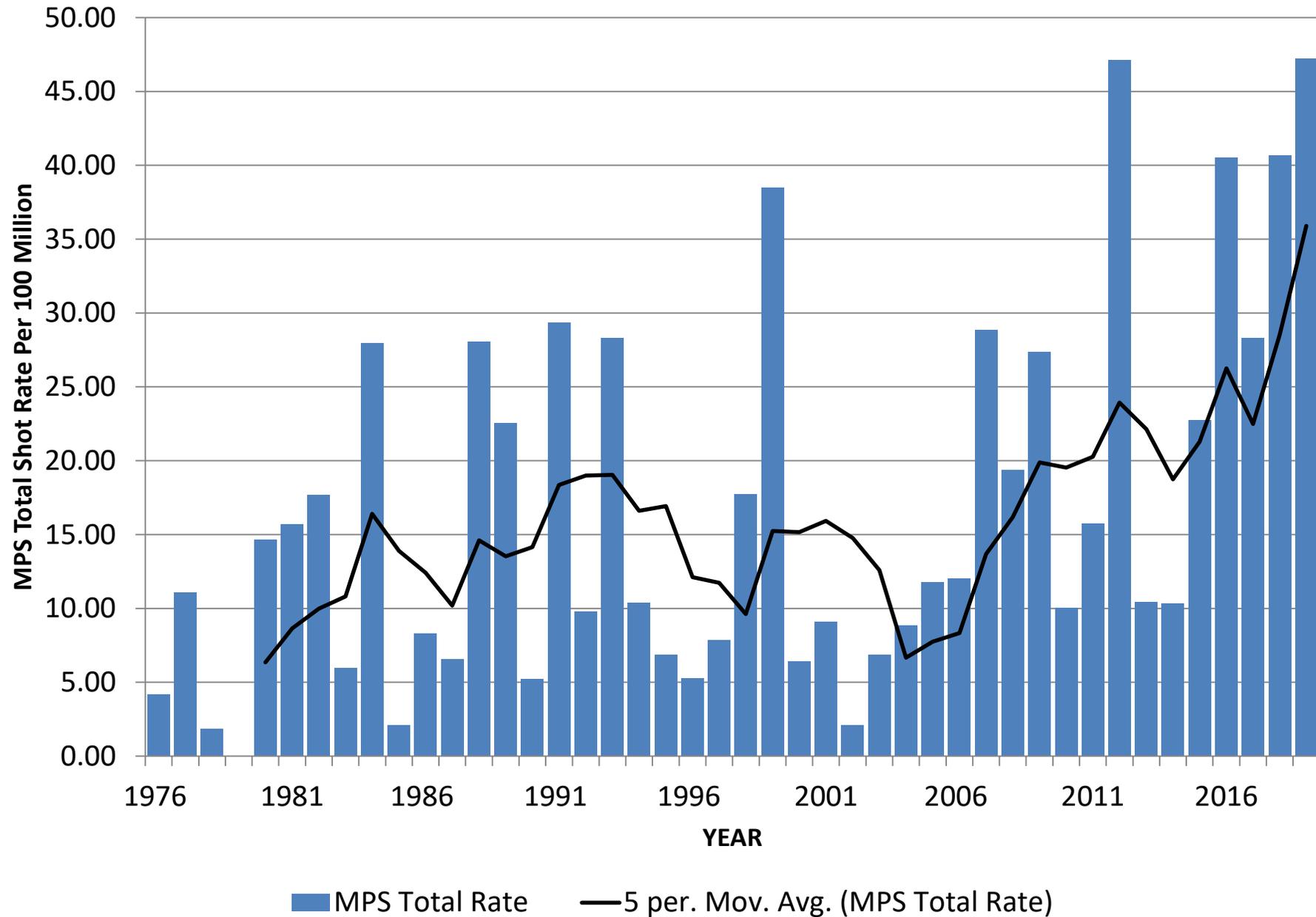
■ MPS Rate — 5 per. Mov. Avg. (MPS Rate)

Severity of Mass Public Shootings, 1976-2018



■ MPS Fatality Rate — 5 per. Mov. Avg. (MPS Fatality Rate)

Severity of Mass Public Shootings, 1976-2018



Forecast Assumptions

- Forecasts influenced by assumptions about future prevalence of mass public shootings
- Following Clauset and Woodard (2013), 3 sets of assumptions about future incidence of MPS
 - Grounded in historical data from 1976-2018
 - Pessimistic: highest prevalence of MPS
 - Status Quo: average prevalence of MPS
 - Optimistic: lowest prevalence of MPS
- Relied on U.S. Census Bureau projections of U.S. population from 2019-2039
 - Calculated anticipated future number of MPS for each year based on size of U.S. population and MPS rates for each scenario

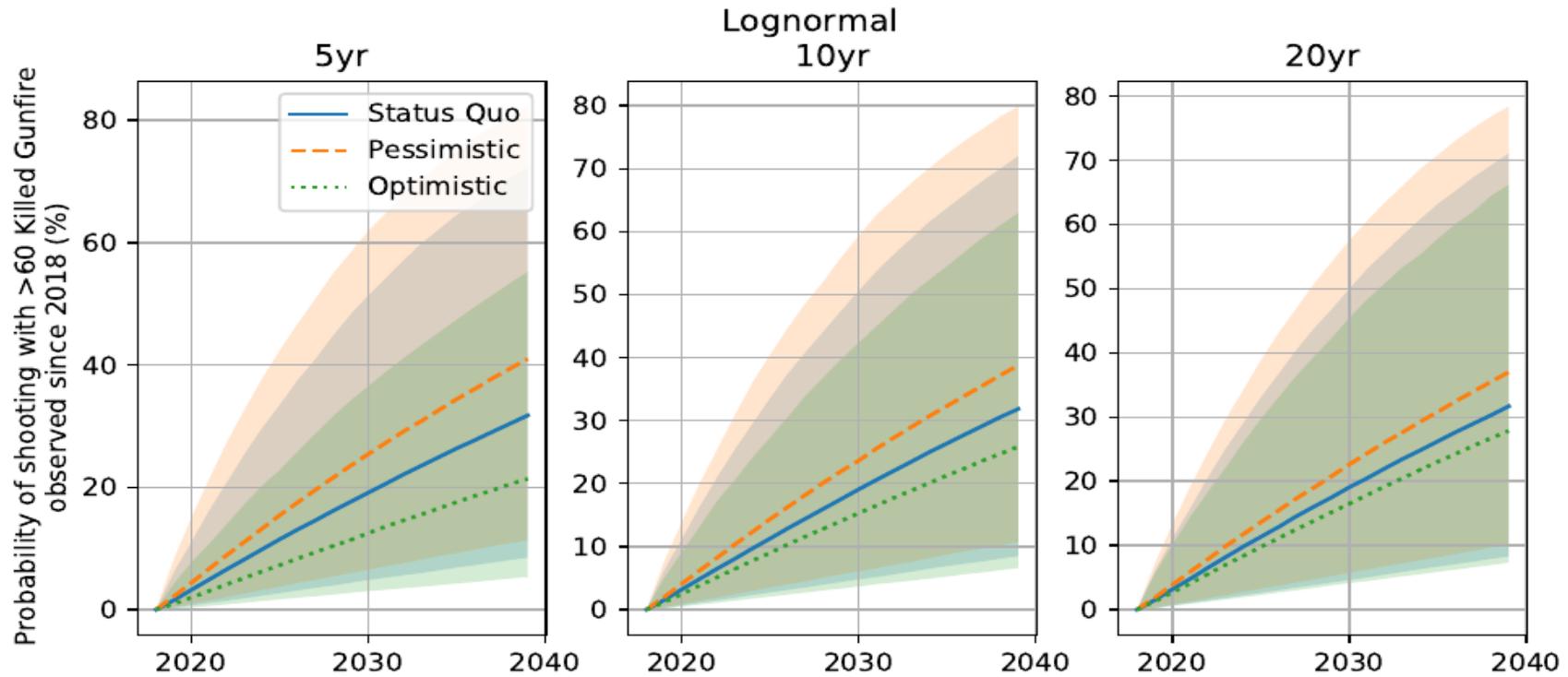
Forecast Parameters

- Generated 108 independent forecasts
 - 3 scenarios (pessimistic, status quo and optimistic)
 - 3 distributions (Pareto, Weibull and lognormal)
 - 3 forecast horizons
 - 5 years
 - 10 years
 - 20 years
 - 2 minimum severity cutoffs: 4 victims and 10 victims
 - 2 severity outcomes
 - Number of victims killed
 - 49 (Orlando)
 - 60 (Las Vegas)
 - 75
 - 100
 - Number of victims shot (killed and wounded)
 - 100
 - 250
 - 500
 - 1,000

Results for Number of Victims Killed by Gunfire

- Estimates varied across forecast parameters but...
- ...even under optimistic conditions over next 10 years:
 - At least 38% for attack as lethal as Orlando
 - At least 26% for attack as lethal as Las Vegas
 - At least 16% for MPS with at least 75 fatal victims
 - At least 9% for MPS with at least 100 fatal victims
- ...and under pessimistic conditions over next 10 years:
 - At least 51% for attack as lethal as Orlando
 - At least 37% for attack as lethal as Las Vegas
 - At least 24% for MPS with at least 75 fatal victims
 - At least 13% for MPS with at least 100 fatal victims

Fatal Victim Results for Lognormal Model



Results for Total Number of Victims Shot

- Under optimistic conditions over next 10 years:
 - At least 41% for MPS with at least 100 victims shot
 - At least 5% for MPS with at least 250 victims shot
 - At least 0.6% for MPS with at least 500 victims shot
 - At least 0.05% for MPS with at least 1,000 victims shot
- Under pessimistic conditions over next 10 years:
 - At least 56% for MPS with at least 100 victims shot
 - At least 8% for MPS with at least 250 victims shot
 - At least 1% for MPS with at least 500 victims shot
 - At least 0.08% for MPS with at least 1,000 victims shot

Summary of Results

- Regardless of forecast parameters used, odds are very low we'll see MPS with as many total gunfire victims as Las Vegas (500+) in near future.
- Odds are higher when focusing on fatalities
 - Even under optimistic conditions, at least:
 - 26% for a MPS with 60 victims killed
 - 9% for a MPS with 100 victims killed
- Likelihood of a MPS as bad as Las Vegas or worse is not trivial
 - Resource allocation decisions
 - Law enforcement
 - Medial professionals
 - Policymakers

Final Thoughts

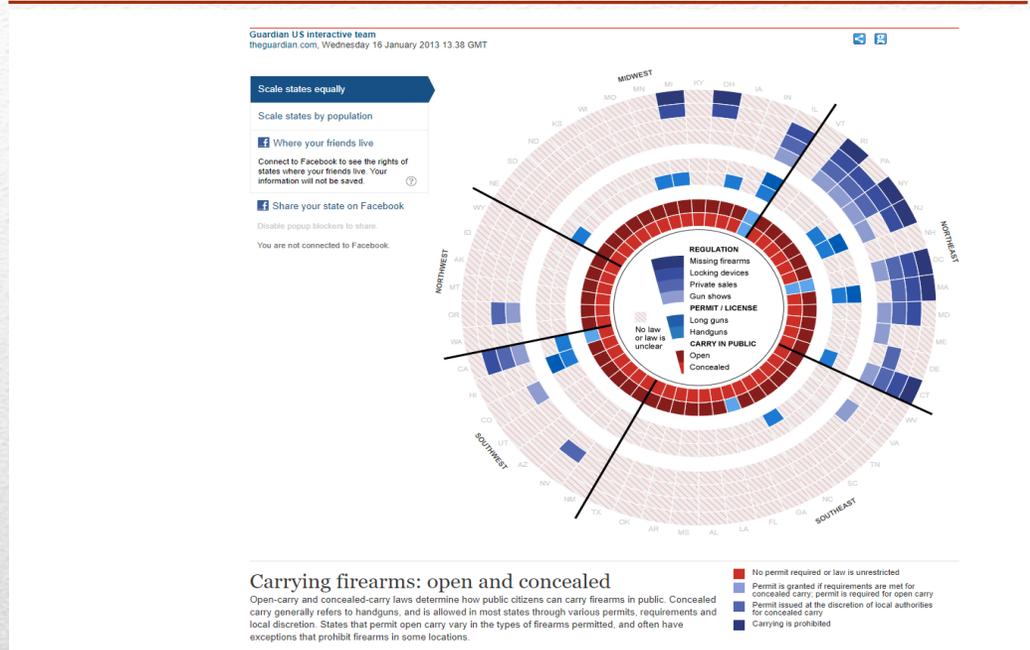
- Main Limitations
 - Study cannot tell us where or exactly when a severe MPS may transpire
 - Variability across parameters
 - Estimates strongly depend on assumptions made about type of distribution and tail location
- Drew upon strategy used in other disciplines that's novel for criminology
 - Provides sound methodology to predict probability of mass casualty events
 - May be applied to other types of violence (often heavy-tailed distribution)
 - Example: serial murder

The Effect of State Gun Laws on Mass Public Shootings; and Exploring Averted Incidents

Michael Rocque, PhD
Bates College



Gun laws vary by state



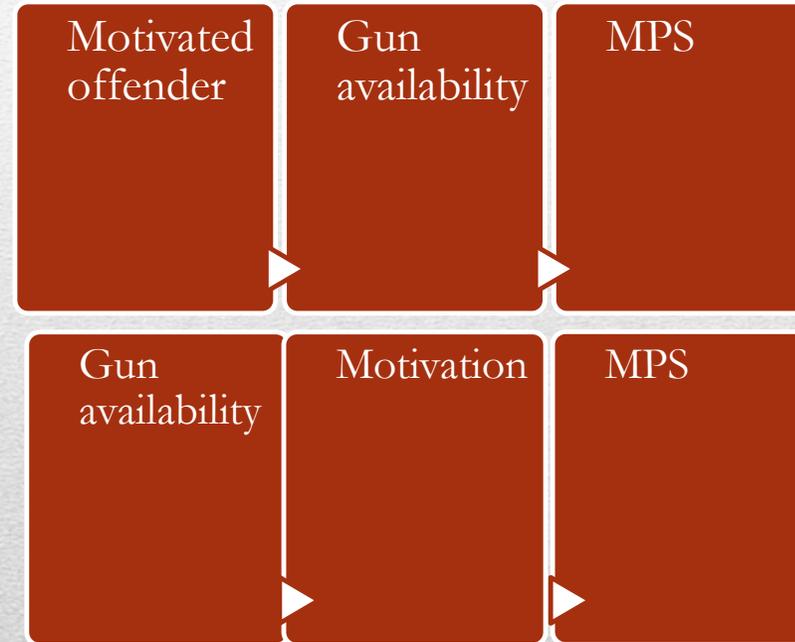
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2013/jan/15/gun-laws-united-states>

Public/Policy interest

- Fear
- Media attention

State gun laws & MPS

- Theory-gun availability (Cook, 1983)
- Mechanisms
 - Direct, routine activities
 - Indirect, motivation



Background

- Three studies find support for stricter gun laws
 - Gius (2015)
 - AWB lower severity
 - Klarevas et al. (2019)
 - LCM bans lower severity
 - Webster et al. (2020)
 - LCM bans lower incidence
- Limitations
 - Unclear definitions of state laws
 - Mass shooting data

Previous work

- Data from 1976 to 2018 on 89 state gun laws and MPS by state

State Laws:

- 1) AWB
- 2) LCM bans
- 3) Permits
- 4) Extreme-risk protection orders
- 5) Universal background checks
- 6) May-issue concealed-carry laws
- 7) Relinquishment of guns for those prohibited
- 8) Violent misdemeanor prohibitions

- MPS dataset: triangulated approach
 - SHR, existing databases, news stories

Current study

Siegel, M., Goder-Reiser, M., Duwe, G., Rocque, M., Fox, J. A., & Fridel, E. E. (2020). The relation between state gun laws and the incidence and severity of mass public shootings in the United States, 1976–2018. *Law and Human Behavior*, 44(5), 347.

Models:

- 1) Logistic regression for incidence
- 2) Zero-inflated negative binomial for incidence and number of fatalities/victims

Red=in count models

Controls:

- a) State pop
- b) Pop density
- c) Black (proportion)
- d) Male 15-29 (proportion)
- e) Poverty rate
- f) Unemployment rate
- g) Alcohol consumption
- h) Divorce rate
- i) Firearm homicide rate
- j) Suicide rate
- k) Incarceration rate
- l) Household gun ownership
- m) Violent crime rate

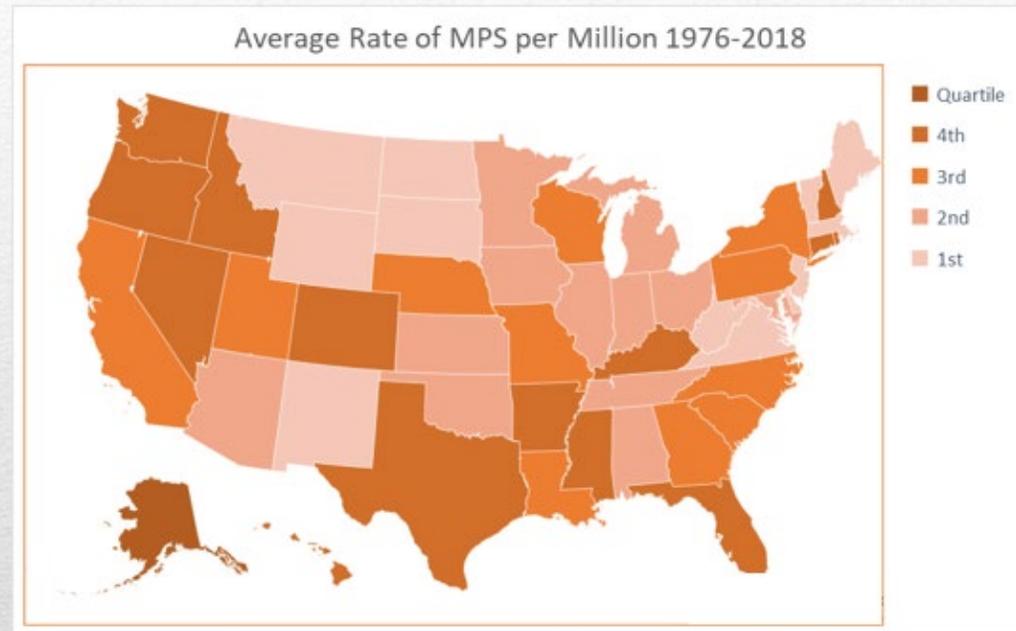
Current study

Total numbers



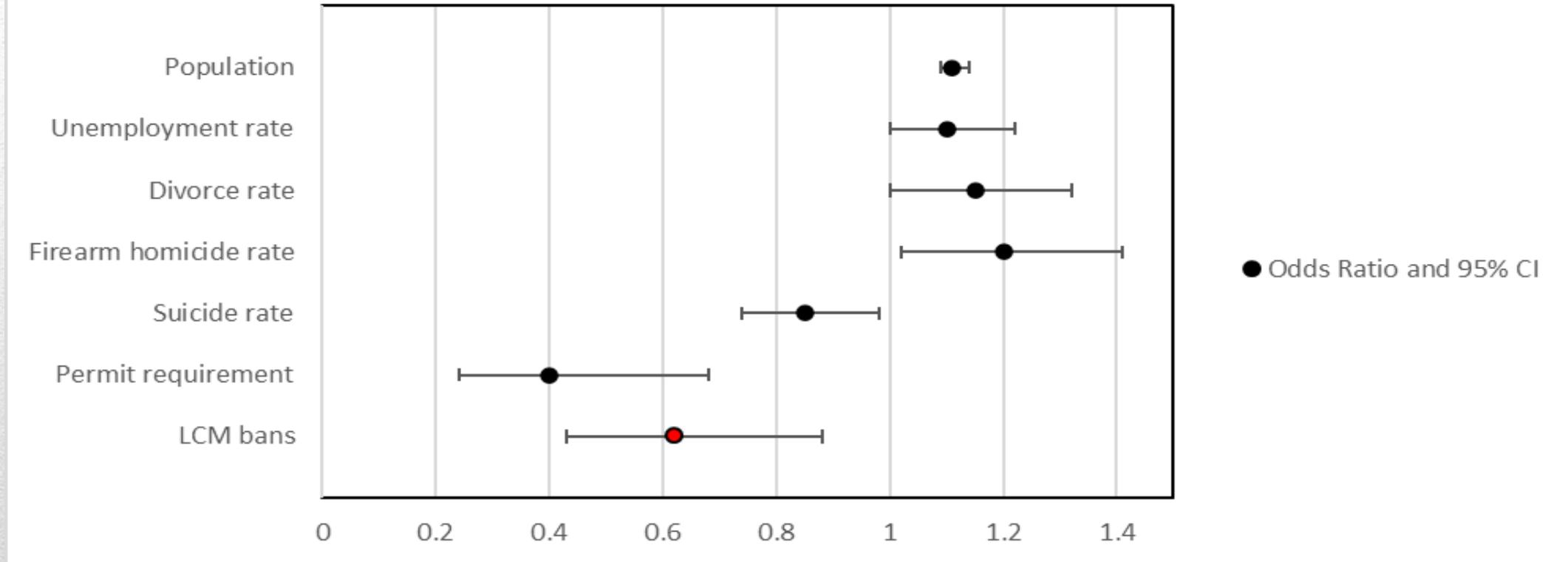
Created with Adobe Spark

Varying incidence



Results

State Laws and MPS 1976-2018



Statistically sig $p < .05$, LCM is for severity model

Results: Gun Laws

AVERTED MASS PUBLIC SHOOTINGS

(with Madison Gerdes and Maddy Clark)

- Research on MPS
 - Individual, contextual, historical factors
 - Leakage, threats (Duwe, 2017; Lankford et al., 2019; Silver et al., 2018 (FBI))
- But what about planned events that were stopped?
 - Do they look like completed cases?
 - Can we learn points of intervention to help prevent future events?

Studying averted MPS

A Comparative Analysis of Attempted and Completed School-Based Mass Murder Attacks

Laura E. Agnif

Received: 12 October 2013 / Accepted: 3 February 2014 /
Published online: 13 February 2014
© Southern Criminal Justice Association 2014

Abstract "School shootings" are rarely studied quantitatively due to the fact that they are relatively rare, albeit powerful events. Therefore, prior research on "school shoot-

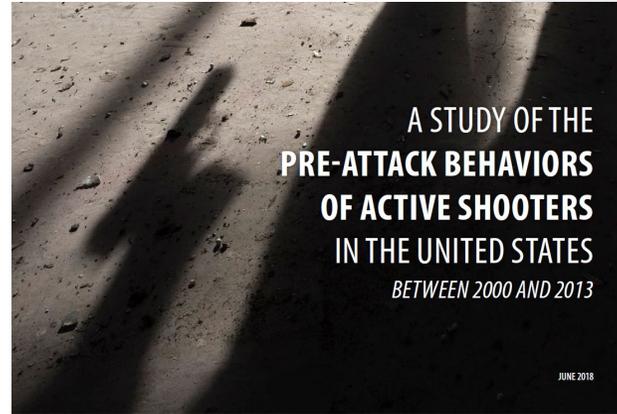
Article

Avertin Student Persiste

Eric Madfis

Abstract

Pulling from in-d and teachers dir considers the ex from informing c role of students' reveals that sch student code of numerous stude associates or co result of being p out of altruistic



Authors

James Silver, Ph.D., J.D., Worcester State University

Andre Simons, Supervisory Special Agent, Behavioral Analysis Unit, FBI

Sarah Craun, Ph.D., Behavioral Analysis Unit, FBI

CRIMINAL JUSTICE STUDIES
2019, VOL. 32, NO. 3, 222-238
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1478883X.2019.1618296>



ARTICLE

Averted targeted school killings from 1900-2016

Robert Stallings and Jacob Christian Hall

Criminal Justice, Lenoir Rhyne University, Hickory, US

se that occur on school grounds. debate. Following the 2018 shoot-lass High School, questions arose les. Typically, the response gener-ives around mental illness, bullying Unfortunately, the views on these re often rooted in a strong belief esultantly, the debate on how to at the debate phase. This study or these events can be prevented killings from 1900-2016 in which t the attack. The analysis revealed ere prevented by other students ending attack to school and law

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 18 May 2018
Accepted: 8 May 2019

KEYWORDS
School shootings; crime prevention; guns

nd mass homicide plots and threateners

Hull, Chatham University, Woodford Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15222, United States

ABSTRACT

Threatened mass homicide events derived primarily from news media sources were examined. This study de-scribes who was responsible for uncovering these near-acts of violence, the intended targets, planning details, recipients, outcomes (legal or other) and the accompanying demographic factors associated with each event. Cases were divided into two groups: high-credibility and low-credibility. The majority of cases, across both groups, were characterized by threateners who were male, aging alone, in their mid-to-late twenties, and who targeted academic institutions. When compared to threateners in the low-credibility group, high-credibility threateners were more likely to have mental health problems and to have created materials suggesting the pre-mediation of a planned mass homicide event. These were most commonly discovered by two groups: (1) friends, family, and acquaintances of the threateners and (2) members of the general public. The findings of this study suggest that some threat acts should be taken more seriously than others and in the absence of a reliable early warning system, tips from friends, family members, acquaintances of threateners, and the general public, could serve as a valuable asset in the prevention of mass homicide.

© 2018 Published by Haworth Ltd.

A Content Analysis of New: of Averted School Ramp

Jeffrey A. Daniels
Ilene Buck
Susan Croxall
Julia Gruber
Peter Kime
Heidi Govert

ABSTRACT. Although the majority of research have focused attention on lethal or injury-producti provides only partial information about school Moore, Petric, Braga, and McLaughlin (2003) sugges-tions turn their attention to those incidents in which a potentially lethal situation was averted. In this article, we present results of a content analy-sis of news reports of school rampages that were foiled. Specifically, we ought to answer five questions: (1) What were the details of the plot? 2) How was the plot discovered? (3) What actions did the school take? 4) What actions did the police take? (5) What were the legal outcomes? significant findings and implications for averting school rampages are discussed in light of the results. doi:10.1300/J202v06n01_06 [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9452. E-mail address: cdocdelivery@haworthpress.com Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2007 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

- Pre-attack behaviors:
 - 77% >week
 - 4-5 concerning behaviors
- Averted MPS
 - Warning signs common
 - Younger, white, more partners, less target specific

American Journal of Criminal Justice
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-020-09552-2>



A Comparative Analysis of Foiled and Completed Mass Shootings

Jason R. Silva

Received: 24 January 2020 / Accepted: 30 June 2020 / Published online: 11 July 2020
© Southern Criminal Justice Association 2020

Abstract

This study provides a comparative analysis of foiled and completed mass shootings in the United States between 2000 and 2019. Specifically, this work quantitatively examines differences in mass shooting perpetrator, motivation, and target characteristics. Findings identify significant predictors of foiled mass shootings including student-aged perpetrators, dyads, fame and ideological motivations, as well as school and religious targets. Completed mass shootings more often involved perpetrators with a criminal history, victim-specific motivations, and targeting workplace or open-space locations. A discussion of findings highlights implications for scholars, law enforcement, policymakers, and the general public.

Keywords Mass shooting · Active shooter · Foiled mass violence · Threat-assessment · School shooting · Terrorism

Existing research

A Comparative Analysis of Attempted and Completed School-Based Mass Murder Attacks

Laura E. Agnich

Received: 12 October 2013 / Accepted: 3 February 2014 /
Published online: 13 February 2014
© Southern Criminal Justice Association 2014

Abstract “School shootings” are rarely studied quantitatively due to the fact that they are relatively rare, albeit powerful events. Therefore, prior research on “school shootings” typically relies on case study methodologies, or involves the use of typologies based on perpetrators’ motivations, their relationships to victims, and/or the total number of victims killed. However, not all cases of multiple-victim homicide attacks that take place in schools involve the use of firearms, and not all school-based multiple-victim homicide attacks result in multiple fatalities, as many such cases are either thwarted in advance by police or fail to result in the *intended* number of victims due to a variety of factors. The present study compares attempted and completed mass murder and rampage style attacks that have taken place at schools, and further compares incidents involving firearms to those that involve other deadly weapons. Utilizing a database of 282 identified cases of mass murder incidents in schools across 38 nations, incidents’ date and location, the demographic characteristics of perpetrators, weapons used, number of victims, and school contexts are examined and compared.

Keywords School shootings · School violence · Mass murder · Comparative · Rampage shootings

American Journal of Criminal Justice
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-020-09552-2>

A Comparative Analysis of Foiled and Completed Mass Shootings



Jason R. Silva¹

Received: 24 January 2020 / Accepted: 30 June 2020 / Published online: 11 July 2020
© Southern Criminal Justice Association 2020

Abstract

This study provides a comparative analysis of foiled and completed mass shootings in the United States between 2000 and 2019. Specifically, this work quantitatively examines differences in mass shooting perpetrator, motivation, and target characteristics. Findings identify significant predictors of foiled mass shootings including student-aged perpetrators, dyads, fame and ideological motivations, as well as school and religious targets. Completed mass shootings more often involved perpetrators with a criminal history, victim-specific motivations, and targeting workplace or open-space locations. A discussion of findings highlights implications for scholars, law enforcement, policymakers, and the general public.

Keywords Mass shooting · Active shooter · Foiled mass violence · Threat-assessment · School shooting · Terrorism

- Different completed data
- Different credibility assessment
- Different data sources

Our project

11

November 18, 2020

- “Any plot, plan, or threat to shoot four or more individuals in a public location within a 24-hour period, absent of other criminal activity (e.g., robberies, drug deals, gang conflict, etc.), in which no injuries (other than to the perpetrator) occurred.”
- Must be credible (specific plan or threat with access to weapon)
 - Plan must be detailed (e.g., maps, targets) or weapons must be accessible. Silva required gun or plan to acquire gun.

Definition

A multi-pronged approach

Existing databases:

- Madfis, n=237
- Agnich, n=32
- Sarteschi, n=38 credible, 22 non
- Averted School Violence
- K-12 School Shooting Database
- Online lists (e.g., ABC)
- Lexis Uni searches

Potential cases identified:

- Each case reviewed (2 researchers)
- Disagreements resolved

- Codebook developed and data collection starting in summer 2019
- Variable information gathered via open sources (news stories, online corrections databases)
- Three coders, with discussion to resolve questions

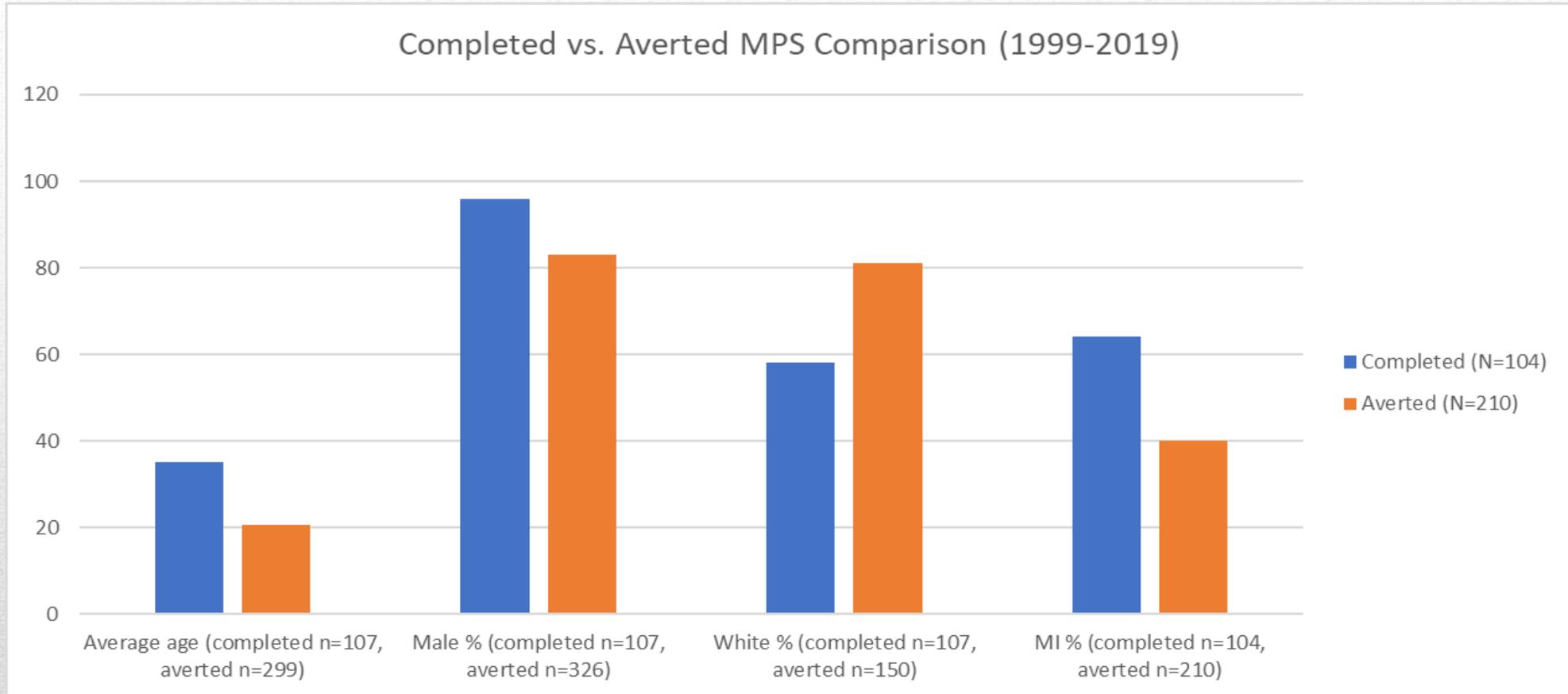
Methods

- Reliability Assessment (Summer, 2020)
 - First a trial, then 10 case reliability assessment
 - Coding focused on “subjective” fields (mental illness, plan/threat length, response, motivation, and credibility)
 - Percent agreement: 47-93%
 - Gwet’s AC: MI=.73; Threat=.40, Plan=.86, Credibility=.92
 - Response and Motivation=text but good agreement, 100% for response and 93% for motivation

- Lots of missing data, information hidden
 - When to move on
- Coding
 - Length variables problematic, initially in days, recoded to categories
- Focused on credibility for agreement
 - At least two coders reviewed every case
- WhatsApp to the rescue!

Challenges

- As of November, 2020: 210 cases
- Date range: 1999-2019
- Offender/incident structured
- Mostly quantitative, some text (motivation/response, location)
- Database is in progress



MI=mental illness; any discussion or diagnosis of mental illness for any suspect involved in a case

Comparison

- Permit/LCM bans related to incidence and severity of MPS across states
 - Mechanism unclear
- Averted MPS project continuing
 - Some similarities and differences
 - Future work will explore the plans in detail to help guide intervention efforts

Conclusion

Thank you

Questions and Answers

Please submit questions to “**all panelists**” in the **Q&A** box.

Indicate which presenter the question is for.