

School Shootings

By Alia Sabina López Sandoval

👉 [...] gun control is almost nonexistent; an estimated 4.6 million children are living in a home where at least one gun is kept loaded and unlocked. 👈

Schools are knowledge sanctuaries; they provide us with the tools to become great and learn how to survive in the world. They are the safest environment where kids can grow. Or at least they used to be. Based on Sandy Hook Promise (n. d.), cited by School Safety Solution (n. d.), since 1970, 2,032 school shootings have taken place in the United States. This number has alarmingly increased, with 948 shootings occurring just in December 2012. In fact, 12 children die from gun violence in the United States every day. Another 32 are shot and injured.

School shootings have become a violent and brutal social problem around the world over the last few decades. In the United States, gun control is almost nonexistent; an estimated 4.6 million children are living in a home where at least one gun is kept loaded and unlocked. Guns are also very easy to acquire. A clear example of this situation is the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, where the two shooters were able to purchase semiautomatic rifles, pistols, and several explosives. In less than 20 minutes they killed 12 fellow students, a teacher, and wounded 21 others (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025). This, together with the poor mental health education, has brought to life this tragic issue that is affecting innocent people every day. But even with this information, the U.S. government still claims that the problem does not begin here, but in the mental health of current generations, arguing that shootings have always existed but have just recently increased.

“School is the last place where kids should have to worry about gun violence. Our children deserve better. Our country deserves better” (Everytown, n.d.).

Consequences are not only physical but mostly psychological. The most disturbing effect of this is the feeling of ongoing danger, along with post-traumatic responses such as anxiety and depression. Even when some of these shootings do not involve many casualties, students and staff who witnessed or lived through such a traumatic event are prone to suffer the psychological consequences.

So, if we take into consideration that since the Columbine High School attack, over 394,000 students have been on campus during a school shooting (The Washington Post, 2025), even if only 10% of those students were affected psychologically, that would still be over 39,400 people.

However, gun violence could be preventable if you report the signs. In four out of five school shootings, at least one person had knowledge of the attacker's plan but failed to report it. Most people only recognize a shooter once it is too late. A clear example of this is the short film *Evan* (Sandy Hook Promise, 2016) that shows us how easy it is to notice an attacker but also how easy it is to be distracted from the signs.

From the perspective of a teacher, Elizabeth Pappas answers to a fellow teacher's message on a digital forum (We Are Teachers, 2022). In this message, "B", the fellow teacher, asks for help on what feels like frustration from seeing their second-grade students act numb to the news related to gun violence. Elizabeth's response reassures that this is an unnatural behavior fostered by the frequency of school shootings.

She also makes sure to point out how hard it can be to talk to kids about this, encouraging "B" not to mention it unless they bring it up first. She highlights the challenge of providing children with enough information to keep them safe while leaving out distressing details. She connects this last idea to the psychological effects it can have on children, the fear they might have to live with, and all the trauma it could generate. Lastly, she asserts that children deserve so much better than having these behaviors normalized and the lasting consequences ignored.

Even when the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution states, "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed", this situation leaves us with a contradiction between law and social necessities.

Elizabeth often thinks about how it will be when she sends her own kids to school, knowing that the very school where she worked was threatened twice. She feels scared but knows that she must be confident in the decisions she has made, such as living in a place considered less prone to these attacks and trying to educate her children with no fear, but precaution.

In conclusion, school shootings are a social problem that should not be as common or as normalized as they are nowadays. They affect millions of innocent families, and we must do something to change that as soon as possible. Many organizations are already fighting for our security and raising awareness, but they are not well known. Therefore, they do not receive the support they should. We must acknowledge the situation we are living in and strive to be the generation that makes a change.



School Shootings

References

- Encyclopedia Britannica. (2025). *Columbine High School shootings*. <https://bit.ly/41FHI2D>
- Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund. (n.d.). *How to stop shootings and gun violence in schools*. Everytown Research & Policy. <https://bit.ly/3EQv4zy>
- Forbes staff. (2022, May 28). Gobernador de Texas rechaza revisión de antecedentes penales en venta de armas. *Forbes México*. <https://bit.ly/4i6RCKB>
- Pappas, E. (2022, May 26). Help! Tell me what to say to the children. *We Are Teachers*. <https://bit.ly/43p17ki>
- Sandy Hook Promise. (2016, December 2). *Evan | Sandy Hook Promise* [video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8syQeFtBKc>
- Sandy Hook Promise. (n.d.). *16 Facts About Gun Violence and School Shootings*. <https://bit.ly/3CYf4uG>
- School Safety Solution. (N. d.). *What should teachers know about classroom door lockdowns?* <https://bit.ly/3F16ThG>
- Woodrow, J., Rich, S., Trevor, L., Muyskens, J., &Ulmanu, M. (2025, January 24). More than 394,000 students have experienced gun violence at school since Columbine. *The Washington Post*. <https://bit.ly/4ipLVro>

