

PsychLaw Journal

Interesting Information About Psychology From Dr. Max Wachtel

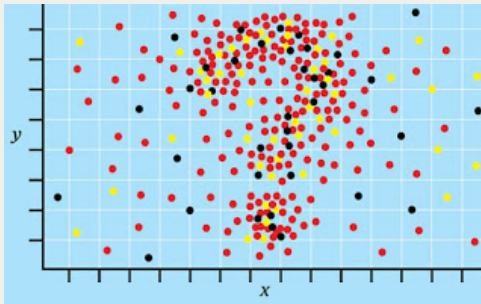
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SCHOOL SHOOTINGS: WHAT ARE THE ODDS?

🕒 12:34 PM 👤 MAXIMILLIAN WACHTEL, PH.D. 💬 34 COMMENTS



What can data tell us about the prevalence of school shooting incidents in the United States, and can we use that information to predict the likelihood of a school shooting taking place at your child's school next year?

In order to attempt an answer to that question, let's focus on 2012 first. This year, there have been four shootings at K-12 schools (note: I had to ignore two shootings on US college campuses to come up with this number). Here are the incidents:

- 1. February 10, 2012:** A student shot and killed himself in front of 70 classmates at a public high school in Walpole, New Hampshire.
- 2. February 12, 2012:** A former student killed three students and injured six in a shooting at a public high school in Chadron, Ohio.
- 3. March 6, 2012:** A disgruntled former teacher shot and killed the headmistress of a private religious high school in Jacksonville, Florida.
- 4. December 14, 2012:** 27 people, including the shooter, were killed in a Newtown, Connecticut public elementary school. The shooter also killed one other person at his home prior to going to the school.

But really, how common are school shootings in the United States? Four seems like an excessive number. After culling through the incidents from the last thirteen years, here are the number of US school shootings per year (data from infoplease.com):

2000: 4
 2001: 5
 2002: 2
 2003: 3
 2004: 0
 2005: 2
 2006: 4
 2007: 2
 2008: 3
 2009: 0
 2010: 1
 2011: 2
 2012: 4

It appears that 2012 is on the high end, although it is not completely atypical. Taking a strict average over the last thirteen years, the US experiences 2.46 school shootings per year.

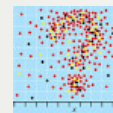
It is also interesting to note that these shootings have taken place all over the country and in all regions.

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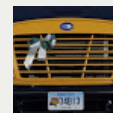
School Shootings: What Are The Odds?

What can data tell us about the prevalence of school shooting incidents in the United States, and can we use that information to predict ...



9 News Story About My 2012 Denver Rock and Roll Marathon Finish

Here is a link to a recent 9 News story about my Denver Rock and Roll Marathon run on September 22, 2012. I dedicated my run to the memo...



School Shootings: What Are The Odds, Part III

In Part I of this series, I estimated the likelihood of a school shooting taking place at a particular US school in any given year. In P...



Does Publicizing Mass Murder Cause An Increase In Homicide?

Does one murder cause another murder? This is a difficult question to answer. The most recent study examining whether or not there wa...



What Happens If Someone Is Found Incompetent to Stand Trial?

Being found incompetent to stand trial does not mean a person will never face his charges. Incompetent to Stand Trial is not a legal defe...

Another Attempt At My Video Blog Post

It appears that people are not able to watch the video that I embedded in my last post. For some reason, it works fine on my computer, but e...



The Burden of Proof for Competency to Stand Trial: Cooper v. Oklahoma (1996)

In 1989, Byron Cooper broke into a home and was robbing it, when the 86 year-old owner confronted him. Mr. Cooper attacked and killed the...

There does not seem to be a difference between socioeconomic status or rural/urban setting. However, most school shootings take place at high schools. Of the 32 US school shootings from 2000 through 2012, 23 of them took place in a high school. Only three took place in an elementary school. Five took place in a middle school. One took place in a one-room Amish K-12 schoolhouse.



Now that we have an understanding of the number of school shootings in a given year, we need to know how many schools there are. The best estimate from the Center for Education Reform is that there are about 132,656 K-12 schools, both public and private, in the United States. There are about 99,000 public schools, but I am including private schools in my calculation because a number of the school shootings over the last 13 years took place at private religious schools.

So, what are the odds that a school shooting will occur in your child's school in 2013? If you take the average number of school shootings per year and compare it to the number of schools in the US, you get 2.46:132,656. Reducing that down reveals the following statistic:

The chances of any particular K-12 school in the United States experiencing a shooting incident in any given year is approximately 1 in 53,925.

Breaking the numbers down a little further reveals the following statistics:

The chances of a school shooting taking place in a US high school in any given year: 1 in 21,000.

The chances of a school shooting taking place in a US elementary or middle school in any given year: 1 in 141,463. (data for the number of elementary and middle schools is not separated by agencies keeping track of such numbers)

Please note, this is not a scientific study. I relied on publicly available numbers and a probability statistic calculation that is simple enough to be taught to middle school students. It is obviously much more complicated than I have presented it to be—there are a number of factors that would need to be examined prior to claiming that 1 in 53,925 is wholly accurate. And, not every shooting incident is as horrendous as the one in Newtown, Connecticut. In some shootings, only the shooter died. In other incidents, no one was killed. But, in each incident, at least one gun was fired in a school.

Also keep in mind, your chances of dying in a car crash in 2013 is approximately 1 in 7775, which is about the same as your chances of dying due to any type of gun violence in the next year.

The question we now need to ask ourselves is what is an acceptable level of risk? Are we willing to ride in cars? Are we willing to keep guns around? Are we willing to send our kids to school?

As far as the school shooting question goes, there is extremely little chance your child's school will experience a school shooting incident in 2013. But, we are virtually guaranteed to have a few school shootings somewhere in the US in the next year. It probably won't happen to us. It probably won't happen in our city. It probably won't even happen in our state.

But, it will happen to someone. It seems like we should do something about that, don't you think?

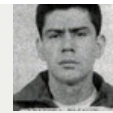
Thanks for reading— Max Wachtel, Ph.D.

www.CherryCreekPsychology.com

www.Facebook.com/drmaxwachtel

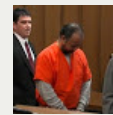
www.Twitter.com/mwachtel

Posted in: [gun violence](#), [mass murder](#), [school shooting](#)



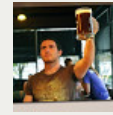
Know Your Miranda Rights: Miranda v. Arizona (1966)

Ernesto Miranda's Mugshot You have the right to remain silent. Anything you do say can and will be used against you in a court of l...



The Language Of Psychopaths

Ariel Castro, heading out of court after a hearing earlier this year. In preparation for an interview on 9 News yesterday about the sent...



The Picture I Would Have Chosen For The Cover Of This Week's Rolling Stone

This is a photograph of Alex Teves. He is a former student of mine at the University of Denver. I have taught hundreds of students over t...

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School Shootings: What Are The Odds, Part II

School Shootings: What Are The Odds?

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34 comments:

**Fred@jccsecurityconsultants.com** says:

January 7, 2013 at 7:51 AM

Armed security guards is not the answer but can be a part of the discussion. My experience in law enforcement suggests that complacency will be a factor since the probability of a school shooting is low. Armed security guards will not be vigilant and diligent 100% of the time. Having an emergency action plan in place, conducting drills and having security awareness seminars in place could help.

Reply

**Fred@jccsecurityconsultants.com** says:

January 7, 2013 at 7:52 AM

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Reply

**Ted Coffelt** says:

January 8, 2013 at 2:39 PM

Emergency plans are reactive. Proactive measures like 15 minute surveillance, secure entries etc. must be in place to prevent access to the premises.

Reply

**Ted Coffelt** says:

January 8, 2013 at 2:40 PM

Emergency plans are reactive. Proactive measures like 15 minute surveillance, secure entries etc. must be in place to prevent access to the premises.

Reply

**Anonymous** says:

January 23, 2013 at 4:53 PM

Well more people die from lots of things besides school shootings.. lets focus on those. Like wars? Hahaha SHEEP WAKE THE HELL UP!

Reply

**Crawford K McDonald** says:

March 27, 2013 at 5:26 AM

These drills will greatly increase the chances of a shooting taking place, in the same fasion that DARE programs in fact encourage kids to try drugs.

Reply

**lizabaker** says:

June 17, 2013 at 3:05 AM

The news regarding all those shootings have made the whole world worry a lot of what really is happening in today's society. I am pretty sure many would be serious in taking [master's degree in forensic psychology](#) to be able to help in solving the growing number of these cases.

Reply

**Anonymous** says:

June 24, 2013 at 12:59 PM

Prevention is the answer. Mental Health First Aid - Youth training is being delivered throughout the country. This is an 8- hour evidence base program for anyone. The program has been replicated in 14 countries. It teaches how to intervene early and assist people prior to a psychiatric emergency. This program is monitored and maintained by the National Council on Behavioral Health. See thier web site for more information.

Reply

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▶ January (1)

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Education is very important for us and [buying college papers](#) with reliable prices. Thank you for share about it.

Reply



Fazly rabby says:

May 15, 2014 at 10:23 PM

The Internet erased all boundaries and rolled the entire world into one - paperless, fast, and reliable sharing of information with a click of the mouse.[how to write an essay](#)

Reply



Stewart Agron says:

May 16, 2014 at 11:28 PM

This is just anecdotal, but in my time with the homeschooling community it struck me that a particularly irrational set of people were the ones most likely to homeschool. The homeschooling moms I knew all believed in some sort of conspiracy or other and they were all irrationally afraid for their children's safety.
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Reply



fourges william says:

May 27, 2014 at 4:34 AM

removed by the author.

This comment has been

Reply



fourges william says:

May 28, 2014 at 11:39 PM

It is recently become an school shooting the odds one and still it is on going and people are doing it.
[marketing coursework help - courseworkbox](#)

Reply



Sohail khan says:

June 5, 2014 at 1:44 PM

Its very nice article and very great ideas and available here [essay writing service](http://www.essaypanda.org/) and place order <http://www.essaypanda.org/> to get latest essay services online.

Reply



steve7876 says:

September 6, 2014 at 2:59 AM

This plan is ideal for our customers for whom system availability is business critical, [Apple passbook](#) and who require software investment protection.

Reply



usnam sb says:

September 7, 2014 at 2:21 PM

school studies necessary then anything and here [Essaythinker review](#) available for students. We recommended here our essay services.

Reply



Gujjar rehman says:

September 8, 2014 at 1:12 PM

Do you want to learn meditation online? Light Watkins has been providing meditation course from many year in new york. Get the [best audio course online](#) and best personal trainer now.

Reply



steve7876 says:

September 8, 2014 at 8:20 PM

(1) Thanksgiving (1) The Batman Shootings (1) The Sixth Sense (1) therapy (1) tragedy (1) training director (2) Transfer Case (1) trustworthiness (1) truth serum (1) Twitter (2) Tyler Clementi (1) ultimate legal issue (1) unethical (1) University of Denver (2) unloaded (1) unusual crimes (1) upper class (1) USA Today (1) Vacation (1) Video Blog (3) video games (1) violence (3) waiting room (1) walk on song (1) war on drugs (1) warning signs (1) Waube v. Warrington (1935) (1) website (1) weird crimes (1) Wisconsin Shooting (1) word salad (1) Yeskey (1) youtube (1) zone of danger (2)

We are curious; those who distribute viruses, worms and Trojan horses know it. Don't open emails with breaking news in the subject line. Online criminals use them for carrying out very effective attacks aimed at infecting computers with malicious code [bracelets](#)

Reply



Sophia Call says:

September 10, 2014 at 1:01 AM

This post is very interesting. By the way, [buying college papers](#) here means that you will achieve success in studies.

Reply



md.easin1988 says:

September 21, 2014 at 10:10 PM

my partner and i returned when i linked up AND ALSO my spouse and i planned an romantic dinner inside her, reserving a special seat it overviewed Chicago. That are funny simply how opposite MY world's during which – months previously she had graduated high school ALONG WITH had lived a good more 'regular' life. I, towards the other hand, had dropped out regarding college decades before AS WELL AS had lived a good very unique AND lavish life – traveling, running large companies, exotic cars IN ADDITION TO expensive food. [Ryan Eagle Scammer](#)

Reply



steve7876 says:

October 2, 2014 at 5:32 AM

I just love your photos!! I can hardly wait to go in the spring... we will start in Paris and then made a mad dash through the countryside. [hotel pas cher la rosiere](#)

Reply



steve7876 says:

October 8, 2014 at 4:45 AM

Do you want to learn meditation online? Light Watkins has been providing meditation course from many year in new york. [Home meditation online](#) Get the best meditation audio course online and best personal trainer now.

Reply



Robiul says:

October 25, 2014 at 11:48 PM

So study around the web page a bit and create sure they use some type of information encrypting technological innovation for the purchasing process. [Ryan Eagle Scammer](#) Confidence tricksters will stop at nothing to be able to fool you into exposing details that could potentially turn you into a victim.

Reply



hanks7777 says:

October 26, 2014 at 1:04 AM

At the point when the time to leave secondary school draws close, the one thing that mists the brain of the last year understudies or new school hopefuls is the way to get confirmation in a decent school, and be the first decision of any school while in secondary school. [essay writing service](#)

Reply



Leslie Holder says:

October 30, 2014 at 8:55 AM

[writessays](#)

Yes, I would like to see. Assignment: do memories hinder or help people in their effort to learn from the past and integrate past and present. Of your essay to begin. New essay topics the essay topics have changed beginning with summer/fall 2014. In many cases, the approximate time is all that is wanted; unfortunately 1894, though approximate, may be incorrect, and will usually be marked accordingly.

Reply



tanez moia says:
November 2, 2014 at 12:42 PM

Thus right now there you've this! At this point you discover how car yahoo and google can potentially enable you to assess charges, along with quality on the internet easily and quickly [car search](#)

Reply

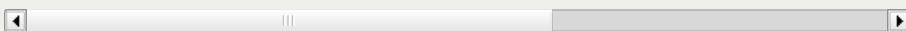
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