



Written by [Ed Hiserodt](#) on June 5, 2022

Spinning School Tragedies

Could it be that progressives are exaggerating the prevalence of school shootings? Might the radical left be spinning the actual occurrences to further their goal of eventual firearms confiscation?

Freelance writer Dana D. Kelley, in a June 3 [column](#) for the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, makes a case that statistics broadcast by major media are intentionally misleading. Of course, each of the victims is a tragedy, particularly for parents, relatives, and friends. But if we are to craft public policy from these events, we should deal with factual data.



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How many have died in K-12 shootings in the past 40 years? Several thousand? Hundreds? The answer is 98 victims, including Uvalde.

Naysayers might suspect this information comes from conservative media or right-wing activists. On the contrary, it is gleaned from an extensive online database operated by the left-leaning [Mother Jones Magazine](#). In “*US Mass Shootings, 1982-2022: Data from Mother Jones’ Investigation*,” a “mass shooting” is defined as at least three people killed.

Uvalde has brought the issue center stage in 2022. What about the recent history of such events in the United States? The year 2018 witnessed two school mass shootings that claimed 22 lives. Last year, four died in one incident. There were no mass shootings at schools in 2019 or 2020.

In this century, there have been seven school mass shootings. If we go back to 1982, there have been 12 such tragic events, four in which the assailant wielded an undefined “assault rifle.” If we include colleges, there have been 148 deaths in six incidents since 1982.

Again, each victim is a tragedy. But should our children be afraid to go to school lest they may be gunned down? Do we really need to equip students with bullet-proof backpacks? It seems a heartless question, but if we are to deal logically with the problem, we need to answer one question: What is the likelihood of an individual student being murdered in a mass shooting?

Kelley says there are approximately 45 million students that have attended 131,000 K-12 schools every weekday for 40 years. For a 180-day scholastic year, the eight to nine billion students involved have had approximately 340 billion day-chances to be killed. Such numbers are hard to fathom, so we’ll make an analogy of a trip from New York to Los Angeles — some 2,789 miles by land. How far is 1/340 billionth of the trip?

About 0.0005 inches.

How does this compare to other dangers faced by K-12 students? Kelley mentions that last year alone, suicide claimed more than 25 times the number of school mass shooting victims of the past 40 years. Auto accidents took 40 times as many kids’ lives (under age 19), again just last year.



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Nevertheless, *Education Week* called Uvalde the 27th shooting of the year, conveniently leaving out the word “mass.” According to the *Mother Jones*’ definition of three or more victims, there were two such killings other than Uvalde that happened inside a school, and both were characterized by authorities as gang related. Most shootings listed were non-fatal, in parking lots or school vehicles, while two involved accidental discharges.

School shootings are horrible to even contemplate. But as Kelley points out, children are more likely to be struck by lightning than by bullets of a mass school shooter. Politicians who attempt to exploit headlines do nothing to actually protect children and much to harm the country.



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