

Auditing Shooting Rampage Statistics by Davi Barker



Firearm prohibitionists love to use tragedy to leverage their agenda. So, it's important for gun rights advocates to stand their ground and fire back (proverbially) whenever this happens.

I posted a graphic on Facebook claiming the average number of people killed in mass shootings when stopped by police is 18.25, and the average number of people killed in a mass shooting when stopped by civilians is 2.2. I based it on 10 shootings I found listed on some timeline somewhere. I honestly don't even remember where. I presented the case studies in a blog post on the Silver Circle blog and I did the math myself.

The graphic was met with great enthusiasm and much skepticism. Leave it to Facebook users to demand an audit on a meme. So, I started over, only much more meticulous this time. I compiled and analyzed 100 shootings, noting my methodology, and I am now prepared to present my findings, complete with links to the data. But here's a spoiler... It's not that different.

The average number of people killed in mass shootings when stopped by police is 14.29

The average number of people killed in a mass shooting when stopped by a civilian is 2.33

I was so close! Here's what I think accounts for the difference. In the first sample there was likely a selection error based on what grabs headlines. Larger shootings get more press, so if you take a small sampling you're going to be working with a data set of the worst shootings. As for the consistency of the civilian statistic, it makes perfect sense if you think about from inside the mind of a heroic civilian with a concealed carry permit. It goes something like this:

BANG!

"Holy crap! That guy shot that other guy."

BANG!

"He's just going to keep shooting people."

BANG!

And the shooter goes down.

Quite a few cases went something like that. In fact, I found only one example of a shooter stopped by civilians who killed more than 3 people. Jared Loughner killed 6 people in Tucson, Arizona before he was tackled by two civilians. An astute reader informed me that at least one of the civilians that helped stop Jared Loughner was carrying a concealed weapon, but he did not use his gun out of concern for innocent bystanders.

I want to be perfectly clear. I am not much of a firearms enthusiast. I don't own a firearm. I've only ever been shooting twice. For me it's not an issue of gun rights. It's about property rights. A person has a natural right to own a hunk of iron in any damn shape they want, and they shouldn't be criminalized until they use that hunk of iron to harm someone. People can argue crime statistics 'till they're blue in face. I frankly don't care about people's ideas for managing society.

What I am is a math enthusiast. So, without further delay, here's how I arrived at these numbers.

Step One: Amassing a data set

I searched for timelines of shootings and selected 5 that appeared the most comprehensive.

1. Info Please
2. CNN
3. Denver Post
4. News Max
5. TruTV

Auditing Shooting Rampage Statistics

by Davi Barker

While doing this I learned some important vocabulary. A “spree shooting” is when a killer murders in multiple locations with no break between murders. As in the Virginia Tech killer who began shooting in one hall, and then walked across campus and continued shooting in another hall. A “mass shooting” is when a killer murders multiple people, usually in a single location. As in the Fort Hood shooter who killed 13 people at one military base. A “school shooting” can be either of these as long as one or more locations is a school. As in the Columbine shooting, which is also classified as a spree shooting because they went from room to room. The term “rampage shooting” is used to describe all of these, and does not differentiate between them. So that is the term I’ll be using from here on out.

As many have pointed out, none of the weapons involved are “automatic weaponry” or “assault rifles” but they are often misreported as such by media outlets that lack knowledge of firearms.

I selected these lists because they were the most comprehensive of those that I found, and I was seeking as large a data set as possible. I combined them all, including the first 10 from my previous post, and removed all redundant data for a total list of 100 shootings.

Step Two: Trimming irrelevant data.

While the list was comprehensive, the details about each shooting were not. In each shooting I had a date and a location, but often important details, like the number of people killed, or how the shooter was apprehended were missing. So, I set to the long task researching each incident to fill in the missing data. I didn’t incorporate the number of wounded people because so many were not reported. But the reason they call a single death a shooting rampage is because there were many injuries. All relevant data is contained in the links in the finished list below or in the timelines linked above. Most of the data came from either Wikipedia, a mainstream news article about the incident, or a handy resource I discovered called Murderpedia.

Next I removed incidents that did not fit within the scope of this analysis. Even though every incident on the list was a shooting, not every incident was a rampage shooting. So, I selected for incidents that included at least some indiscriminate targeting of bystanders. I

removed incidents like Dedric Darnell Owens who shot and killed his classmate Kayla Rolland and then threw his handgun in a wastebasket (*meaning I removed incidents where the shooter killed all he was going to kill and stopped, because neither police or civilians actually reduced the deaths at the scene.) And I removed incidents like Michele Kristen Anderson who killed her entire family at a Christmas Party. So what remained were specifically rampage shootings in which a killer went someplace public and began firing at random people.

Suicide presented a tricky variable in the analysis. Roughly half of the remaining rampage shooters ended their own lives. So, I removed all incidents where the shooter killed themselves before police arrived reasoning that they had killed all they were going to kill and police had no impact in stopping them. Theoretically these incidents could have been stopped sooner by a civilian, but let’s not speculate. What I left in were incidents where shooters commit suicide after engaging the police, either during a shootout with police, or after a chase. I included, for example, Jiverly Wong, who witnesses say stopped shooting and killed himself as soon as he heard sirens but before police arrived, crediting the police’s response time with stopping the murders. But I did not include the shooters themselves in the total number of people killed.

I also removed cases like Edward Charles Allaway who shot up a library, then fled to a nearby hotel and called police to turn himself in, and cases like Darrell Ingram who shot up a high school dance and fled the scene only to be apprehended later after a long investigation. I was only looking for incidents when intervention from police or civilian saved lives.

What remained were 32 cases of gunmen firing indiscriminately whose rampage was cut short through the intervention of either a civilian or a police officer.

Step Three: The List

I divided the remaining cases into two categories, those stopped by police and those stopped by civilians. I included both armed and unarmed civilians for reasons that will become clear in the final analysis. I also removed cases like Dominick Maldonado and Charles Joseph Whitman. Maldonado went on a shooting ram-

Auditing Shooting Rampage Statistics **by Davi Barker**

page in a shopping mall in Tacoma, Washington, and ultimately surrendered to police but was confronted by two legally armed civilians who interrupted his shooting. They did not fire for fear of hitting innocent bystanders. Whitman climbed a tower at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas and began shooting at other students and faculty with a sniper rifle. The police who stopped Charles Whitman were assisted by a civilian with a more powerful rifle. I'm calling incidents like this an assist from civilians and removing them from the analysis as anomalies.

- 9/6/1949 - Howard Barton Unruh went on a shooting rampage in Camden, New Jersey with a German Luger. He shot up a barber shop, a pharmacy and a tailor's shop killing 13 people. He finally surrendered after a shoot-out with police.
- 7/18/1984 - James Oliver Huberty shot up a McDonalds in San Ysidro, California killing 21 people before police shoot and killed him.
- 10/16/1991 - George Hennard entered Luby's Cafeteria in Killeen, Texas and began indiscriminately shooting the patrons. He killed 23 people in all. He commits suicide after being cornered and wounded in a shootout with police.
- 12/7/1993 - Colin Ferguson brought a handgun into a Long Island Rail Road car and opened fire at random. He killed 6 people before passengers Michael O'Connor, Kevin Blum and Mark McEntee tackled him while reloading.
- 11/15/1995 - Jamie Rouse used a .22-caliber semi-automatic rifle to fire indiscriminately inside Richland High School in Lynnville, Tennessee. He killed 2 people before being tackled by a football player and a coach.
- 2/2/1996 - Barry Loukaitis entered Frontier Middle School in Moses Lake, Washington with a rifle and two handguns. He killed 3 people before the Gym teacher, Jon Lane grabbed the rifle and wrestled the gunman to the ground.
- 10/1/1997 - Luke Woodham put on a trench coat to conceal a hunting rifle and entered Pearl High School in Pearl, Mississippi. He killed 3 students before vice

principal Joel Myrick apprehended him with a Colt .45 without firing.

- 12/1/1997 - Michael Carneal brought a pistol, two rifles and two shotguns to his high school in Paducah, Kentucky and opened fire on a small prayer group killing 3 girls. His rampage was halted when he was tackled by another student.
- 4/24/1998 - Andrew Wurst attended a middle school dance in Edinboro, Pennsylvania intent on killing a bully but shot wildly into the crowd. He killed 1 student. James Strand lived next door. When he heard the shots he ran over with his 12 gauge shotgun and apprehended the gunman without firing.
- 5/21/1998 - Kipland Kinkel entered Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon with two pistols and a semi-automatic rifle hidden under a trench coat. He opened fire killing 2 students, but while reloading a wounded student named Jacob Ryker tackled him.
- 4/20/1999 - Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris were the killers behind the Columbine shooting in Littleton, Colorado. The two both commit suicide after police arrived, but what many people do not know is that the school's armed security guard and the police all stood and waited outside the library while executions happened right inside. 15 people died, not including the shooters.
- 7/31/1999 - Mark Barton was a daytrader who went on a shooting rampage through two day trading firms in Atlanta, Georgia. He killed 12 people in all and after a police chase he was surrounded by police at a gas station where he commit suicide.
- 1/16/2002 - Peter Odighizuwa opened fire with a handgun at The Appalachian School in Grundy, Virginia. 3 people were killed before the shooter was apprehended by 3 students, Mikael Gross, Ted Besen, and Tracy Bridges with handguns without firing.
- 8/27/2003 - Salvador Tapia entered an auto parts store in Chicago, Illinois and shot and killed 6 people with a handgun. He then waged a gunbattle with police before a SWAT team fatally wounded him.
- 9/24/2003 - John Jason McLaughlin brought a .22-caliber pistol to Rocori High School in Cold Spring,

Auditing Shooting Rampage Statistics

by Davi Barker

Minnesota. He killed 2 people before PE teacher, Mark Johnson confronted him, disarmed him, and held him in the school office for police to arrive.

- 2/25/2005 – David Hernandez Arroyo Sr. opened fire on a public square from the steps of a courthouse in Tyler, Texas. The shooter was armed with a rifle and wearing body armor. Mark Wilson fired back with a handgun, hitting the shooter but not penetrating the armor. Mark drew the shooter's fire, and ultimately drove him off, but was fatally wounded. Mark was the only death in this incident.

- 3/21/2005 – Jeff Weise was a student at Red Lake High School in Red Lake, Minnesota. He killed 7 people including a teacher and a security guard. When police cornered him inside the school, he shot and killed himself.

- 11/8/2005 – Kenneth Bartley, Jr. brought a .22 caliber pistol to Campbell County Comprehensive High School in Jacksboro, Tennessee and killed 1 person before being disarmed by a teacher.

- 9/29/2006 – Eric Hainstock brought a .22 caliber revolver and a 20-gauge shotgun into Weston High School in Cazenovia, Wisconsin. He killed 1 person before staff and students apprehended him and held him until the police arrived.

- 4/16/2007 – Seung-Hui Cho was the shooter behind the Virginia Tech shooting in Blacksburg, Virginia. Police apprehend the wrong suspect allowing the shooter to walk across campus and open fire again in a second location. He eventually commit suicide after murdering 32 people.

- 12/9/2007 – Matthew J. Murray entered the Youth With A Mission training center in Arvada, Colorado and killed 2 people, then went to the New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado killing 2 more. He was shot and injured by church member Jeanne Asam and commit suicide before police arrived.

- 9/3/2008 – Isaac Zamora went on a shooting rampage in Alger, Washington that killed 6 people, including a motorist shot during a high speed chase with police. He eventually surrendered to police.

- 3/29/2009 – Robert Stewart went on a killing

rampage armed with a rifle, and a shotgun in a nursing home in Carthage, North Carolina. He killed 8 people and was apprehended after a shootout with police.

- 4/3/2009 – Jiverly Wong went on a shooting rampage at a American Civic Association immigration center in Binghamton, New York where he was enrolled in a citizenship class. 13 people were killed before the shooter killed himself. Witnesses say he turned the gun on himself as soon as he heard police sirens approaching.

- 11/5/2009 – Nidal Malik Hasan was the shooter behind the Fort Hood shooting at a military base just outside Killeen, Texas. The shooter entered the Soldier Readiness Processing Center, where personnel are disarmed, armed with a laser sighted pistol and a Smith & Wesson revolver. He killed 13 people before he was shot by a Civilian Police officer.

- 2/12/2010 – Amy Bishop went on a shooting rampage in classroom at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Alabama. She killed 3 people before the Dean of the University, Debra Moriarity pushed her out of the room and blockaded the door. She was arrested later.

- 1/8/2011 – Jared Lee Loughner is charged with the shooting in Tucson, Arizona that killed 6 people, including Chief U.S. District Court Judge John Roll. He was stopped when he was tackled by two civilians.

- 2/27/2012 – T.J. Lane entered Chardon High School in Chardon, Ohio with a handgun and started shooting. 3 students died. The shooter was chased out of the building by a teacher and apprehended by police later.

- 4/22/2012 – Kiarron Parker opened fire in a church parking lot in Aurora, Colorado. The shooter killed 1 person before being shot and killed by a member of the congregation who was carrying concealed.

- 7/20/2012 – James Holmes went into a crowded movie theater in Aurora, Colorado and opens fire with an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle. 12 people were killed, before the shooter surrendered to police.

- 8/5/2012 – Wade Michael Page entered a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin and opened fire kill-

Auditing Shooting Rampage Statistics by Davi Barker

ing 6 people. He committed suicide after being shot by police.

- 12/14/12 - Adam Lanza entered Sandy Hook Elementary School with two handguns and a rifle and went room-to-room shooting students and staff. He killed 27 in all including 20 children, and commit suicide after police arrived.

Step Four: Final analysis

With 15 incidents stopped by police with a total of 217 dead that's an average of about 14.29. With 17 incidents stopped by civilians and 45 dead that's an average of 2.33.

The first point I want to draw your attention to is that roughly half of shooting rampages end in suicide anyway. What that means is that police are not ever in a position to stop most of them. Only the civilians present at the time of the shooting have any opportunity to stop those shooters. That's probably more important than the statistic itself. In a shooting rampage, counting on the police to intervene at all is a coin flip at best.

Second, within the civilian category 11 of the 17 shootings were stopped by unarmed civilians. What's amazing about that is that whether armed or not, when a civilian plays hero it seems to save a lot of lives. The courthouse shooting in Tyler, Texas was the only incident where the heroic civilian was killed. In that incident the hero was armed with a handgun and the villain was armed with a rifle and body armor. If you compare the average of people killed in shootings stopped by armed civilians and unarmed civilians you get 1.8 and 2.6 but that's not nearly as significant as the difference between a proactive civilian, and a covering civilian who waits for police.

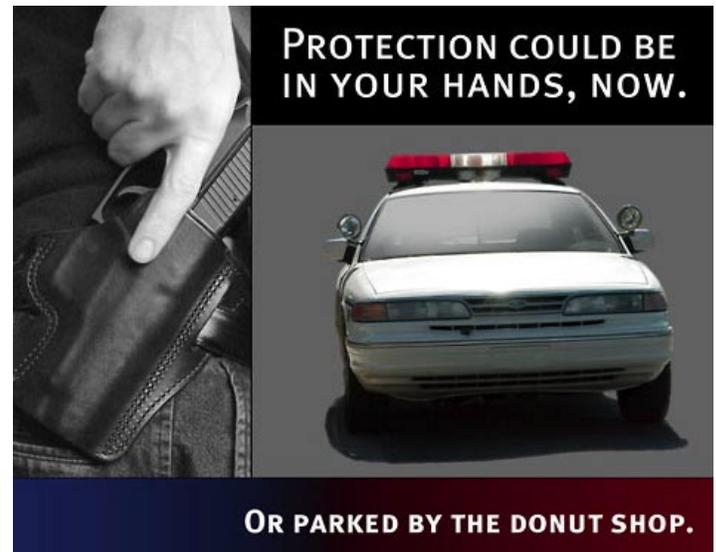
So, given that far less people die in rampage shootings stopped by a proactive civilian, only civilians have any opportunity to stop rampage shootings in roughly half of incidents, and armed civilians do better on average than unarmed civilians, wouldn't you want those heroic individuals who risk their lives to save others to have every tool available at their disposal?

- Updated 12/15/2012 – This article was originally posted shortly after the Dark Knight premier shooting in Aurora, Colorado, but I have continued to refine

the data set and update the statistics. I am especially grateful to all the knowledgeable commenters who have helped correct my errors. I was also contacted by a college professor who I supplied with all my research notes, so they can be peer-reviewed and perhaps published in a more academic setting. So, in light of the recent tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut that has left 27 dead, including 20 children, I updated this article to reflect shootings that have occurred since the Aurora, Colorado shooting, and corrected the errors that readers brought to my attention. I have preserved the integrity of the original analysis and have only updated the raw numbers and a few factual errors.

Source: <http://dailyanarchist.com/2012/07/31/auditing-shooting-rampage-statistics>

“The world is a dangerous place. Not because the people who are evil; but because of the people who don't do anything about it.” Albert Einstein



PROTECTION COULD BE
IN YOUR HANDS, NOW.

OR PARKED BY THE DONUT SHOP.

Utah Concealed Firearms Permits

Les Langford, Certified Instructor

Law Enforcement Services, LLC

Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Wednesday, 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

\$50.00

(801) 226-7080

4-hour class includes:

Fingerprints Photos

Application Handout

Hands-on training with all types of handguns.

www.LawEnforcementServices.biz

