

# BUSINESS INSIDER

## The odds that a gun will kill the average American may surprise you

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Mass crowds of adults, teenagers, and children took to the streets on Saturday in support of stricter gun control laws.

About 2 million people attended more than 750 "March for Our Lives" rallies across the US, and the main event held in Washington, DC may have rivaled attendance at the January 2017 Women's March, according to Axios.

The protests occurred just six weeks after 17 people were shot to death at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. In that February 14 mass shooting in Parkland, Florida, a 19-year-old former student is believed to have committed the murders using a legally purchased AR-15 assault rifle.

Teenage survivors of the Parkland shooting helped organize the nationwide marches, which came the same week Congress voted to weaken a restriction on federal research into gun violence — a rule that's been in effect for about 22 years.

It remains to be seen if lawmakers will fund such research by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention after President Donald Trump signed a bill containing the measure into law.

Below is some of the core data we do have on gun violence in the US (highlighted in red; suicides and accidents excluded), and how it compares to other causes of death for Americans:

## Gun violence is a leading cause of death in America

CAUSE OF DEATH	LIFETIME ODDS	CAUSE OF DEATH	LIFETIME ODDS
Heart disease	1 in 6	Airplane, boat, and spaceship incidents	1 in 2,499
Cancer	1 in 7	Assault by sharp object	1 in 2,517
Any injury	1 in 19	Any force of nature	1 in 2,586
Chronic lung disease	1 in 26	Choking on food	1 in 3,461
Any accident	1 in 28	Bicycling	1 in 4,030
Stroke	1 in 29	Police/law enforcement	1 in 7,703
Alzheimer's disease	1 in 37	Accidental gunshot	1 in 8,349
Diabetes	1 in 51	<b>Mass shooting</b>	<b>1 in 11,125</b>
Influenza and pneumonia	1 in 72	Electricity/radiation/heat/pressure	1 in 15,210
Drugs	1 in 72	Heat wave	1 in 16,581
Kidney disease	1 in 82	Sharp objects	1 in 32,403
Poisoning (accidental, including drug overdoses)	1 in 86	Venomous animal or plant	1 in 44,459
Suicide	1 in 92	Foreign-born terrorist	1 in 45,785
Any motor vehicle incident	1 in 108	Tornado	1 in 60,000
Falling	1 in 122	Stinging by hornets, wasps, and bees	1 in 63,215
Alcohol	1 in 123	Cataclysmic storm	1 in 66,324
Murder	1 in 229	Asteroid strike (global impact)	1 in 75,000
<b>Assault by gun</b>	<b>1 in 315</b>	Bus, train, or streetcar	1 in 101,144
Riding inside a car, van, or truck	1 in 491	Dog attack	1 in 112,382
Suffocation	1 in 591	Legal execution	1 in 118,993
Pedestrian	1 in 611	Earthquake	1 in 130,000
Motorcycle	1 in 921	Lightning	1 in 161,831
Drowning	1 in 1,133	Asteroid strike (regional impact)	1 in 1,600,000
Fire or smoke	1 in 1,579	Shark attack	1 in 8,000,000

Note: Most odds based on 2015 death, population, and life expectancy data. Gun deaths were counted as mass shootings when four or more victims were shot. Terrorism odds based on 41-year average (1975-2015).

Sources: National Safety Council; National Center for Health Statistics; Alex Nowrasteh/Cato Institute; Stephen A. Nelson/Tulane University; "Natural Disasters"/Patrick L. Abbott; Gun Violence Archive

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Assaults by firearm kill about 13,000 people in the US each year, which translates to a roughly 1-in-315 lifetime chance of death from gun violence.

That's about 50% more likely than the lifetime risk of dying while riding inside a car, truck, or van. It's also more than 10 times as high as dying from any force of nature, such as a hurricane, tornado, earthquake, flood, or lightning strike.

These measures suggest Americans are more likely to die from gun violence than the combined risks of drowning, fire and smoke, stabbing, choking on food, airplane crashes, animal attacks, and natural disasters.

## Where the data come from

The chart above does not account for a person's specific behaviors, age, sex, location, or other factors that could shift the results; it's an average of the entire US population.

But it clearly shows that gun violence in the US is a leading cause of death, which is how the CDC describes firearm homicides in its National Vital Statistics Reports.

Most of the data comes from [an October 2017 report](#) by the National Safety Council and a [November 2017 report](#) by the National Center for Health Statistics on causes of death in the US, primarily those that occurred in 2015. (The NSC report uses 2014 data wherever newer data was unavailable.)

[Mass shootings](#) aren't part of the data sets above, but the Gun Violence Archive project [keeps a sourced tally](#), which we've independently counted. The organization considers any event where four or more victims were injured (regardless of death) to be a mass shooting.

In [2015](#), some 333 mass shootings left 367 people dead and 1,328 injured, according to their tally. The statistics rose in [2016](#) to 383 mass shootings, 456 deaths, and 1,537 injuries. In [2017](#), there were 346 mass shootings that led to 437 deaths and 1,802 injuries.

Foreign-born terrorism data comes from a [Cato Institute terrorism report](#), and some natural-disaster data comes from [Tulane University](#).

We calculated the lifetime odds of death by applying 2015 life expectancy and population numbers in the US, and our analysis assumes each cause of death won't change drastically in the near future. (Mortality data from previous years suggests these rankings are relatively consistent, with the exception of skyrocketing accidental poisonings due to [the opioid epidemic](#).)

You can view our full dataset and sourcing [here](#).

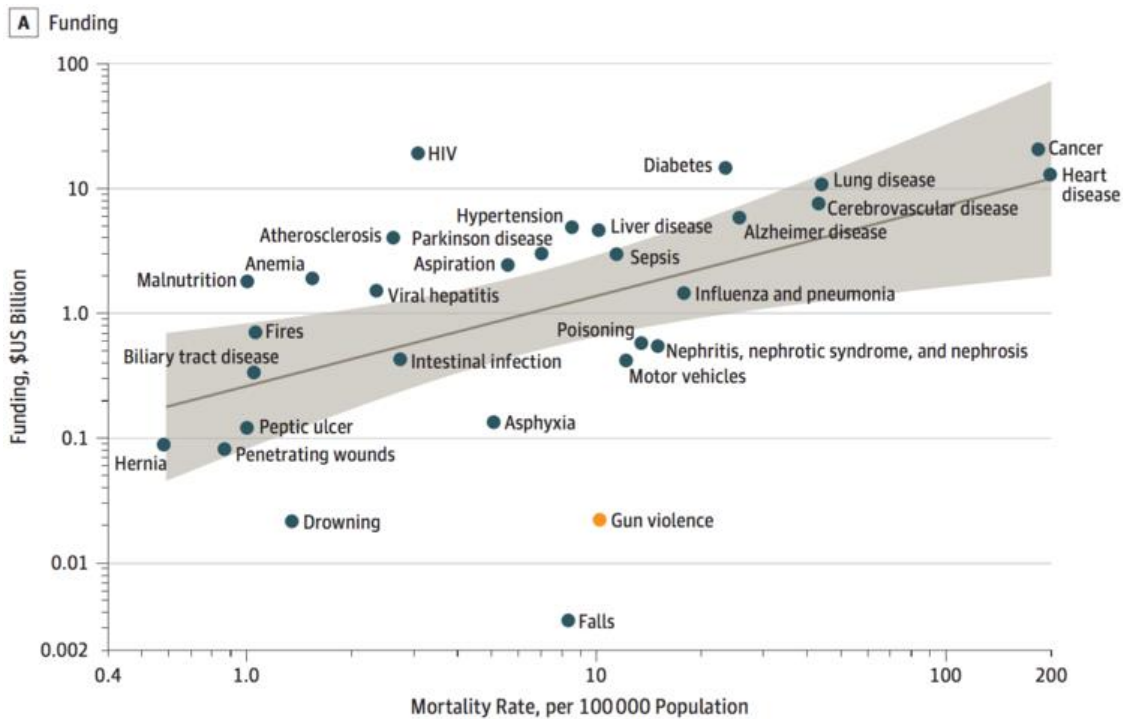
## A dearth of US gun-violence research

Although gun violence is one of the leading causes of death in America, it is also one of the most poorly researched, according to a [January 2017 study](#) published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

"In relation to mortality rates, gun violence research was the least-researched cause of death and the second-least-funded cause of death after falls," the study's authors wrote.

The study ascribed this dearth of research to restrictions — namely an addition to a 1996 congressional appropriations bill called the [Dickey Amendment](#), which stipulated "none of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may be used to advocate or promote gun control."

This is the rule that Congress recently voted to weaken with its new funding bill, which Trump signed on Friday. The [new provision](#) gives the CDC permission to research the causes of gun violence.



Research into gun violence is the most poorly funded relative to other causes of death. Dr. David E. Stark, Dr. Nigam H. Shah/JAMA

The previous restriction language has hindered many scientists from better understanding the problem.

"The fundamental, foundational work of documenting the full scale of the health consequences of firearms has not been done," Sandro Galea, an epidemiologist and the dean of the Boston University School of Public Health, told Mother Jones in a January 2017 story. "It's the kind of project that we do all the time. It just hasn't been done with firearms because there haven't been resources."

With the Dickey amendment change, it now remains to be seen if Congressional appropriators will provide funding for CDC research into gun violence.

What questions have been researched by private institutions like the Harvard Injury Control Research Center show a clear connection between gun ownership, gun availability, homicides, and violent death.

A roundup of gun-control and gun-violence studies by German Lopez at Vox shows Americans represent less than 5% of the world population but possess nearly 50% of the world's civilian-owned guns, police are about three times more likely to be killed in states with high gun ownership, countries with more guns see more gun deaths, and states with tighter gun control laws see fewer gun-related deaths.