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Americans are more likely to die from gun violence than many leading causes of death combined

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October 2, 2017

- **A gunman in Las Vegas killed dozens and injured hundreds at a country music festival on Sunday.**
- **Some 11,000 people in the US are killed in firearm assaults each year.**
- **Gun violence is a leading cause of death in America, but research on the problem is bootstrapped due to federal funding restrictions passed by Congress.**

A gunman fired on a Las Vegas country music festival on Sunday evening, killing at least 59 and injuring more than 525 people.

Police identified the shooter as Stephen Paddock, a 64-year-old man from Nevada. Members of the SWAT team who raided Paddock's room on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino said they believe he took his own life.

The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's sheriff also said officers found 23 guns in his room, including what appeared to be at least one modified automatic weapon. Nineteen additional guns were later found in his home, police said.

The motive is not yet known for the attack, though the FBI on Monday contradicted ISIS's claim that it was responsible for the massacre, saying Paddock appeared to have "no connection with an international terrorist group."

Whatever spurred the event, it is now the deadliest mass shooting in US history — and Paddock's victims join a growing number of people in the US that were intentionally killed at the end of a gun.

Below is how the lifetime odds of dying from gun violence (highlighted in red, gun suicides and accidents excluded) stack up against many 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 7	Any force of nature	1 in 2,938
Cancer	1 in 7	Choking on food	1 in 3,461
Any injury	1 in 20	Bicycling	1 in 4,485
Chronic lung disease	1 in 28	Accidental gunshot	1 in 6,904
Any accident	1 in 30	Police/law enforcement	1 in 8,719
Stroke	1 in 30	Airplane and spaceship incidents	1 in 9,820
Alzheimer's disease	1 in 43	Electricity/radiation/heat/pressure	1 in 15,210
Diabetes	1 in 53	Mass shooting	1 in 15,325
Influenza and pneumonia	1 in 73	Heat wave	1 in 16,581
Kidney disease	1 in 84	Sharp objects	1 in 38,168
Suicide	1 in 95	Venomous animal or plant	1 in 44,459
Poisoning (accidental, including drug overdoses)	1 in 96	Foreign-born terrorist	1 in 45,808
Any motor vehicle incident	1 in 114	Tornado	1 in 60,000
Falling	1 in 127	Stinging by hornets, wasps, and bees	1 in 63,215
Murder	1 in 256	Cataclysmic storm	1 in 66,324
Assault by gun	1 in 370	Asteroid strike (global impact)	1 in 75,000
Riding inside a car, van, or truck	1 in 536	Bus, train, or streetcar	1 in 101,144
Suffocation	1 in 615	Dog attack	1 in 112,382
Pedestrian	1 in 646	Legal execution	1 in 118,993
Motorcycle	1 in 1,037	Earthquake	1 in 130,000
Drowning	1 in 1,188	Lightning	1 in 161,831
Fire or smoke	1 in 1,498	Asteroid strike (regional impact)	1 in 1,600,000
Assault by sharp object	1 in 2,325	Shark attack	1 in 8,000,000

NOTE: Most odds based on 2014 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).

SOURCE: 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 11,000 people in the US each year, which translates to a roughly 1-in-370 lifetime chance of death from gun violence. That's almost 50% more likely than the lifetime odds of dying while riding inside a car, truck, or van.

These measures also 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 forces of nature.

Where the data come from

The chart above does not account for a person's specific behaviors, age, sex, location, or other factors that can shift the results; it's an average of the entire US population. But it clearly shows gun violence is a leading cause of death in the US.

The data primarily come from a [2017 report](#) by the National Safety Council and a National Center for Health Statistics' [report](#) on causes of death in the US for 2014. The latter report was released in June 2016 and contains the most current information available.

[Mass shootings](#) aren't part of the above data sets, 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, and in 2014, some 274 mass shootings killed 264 people.

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

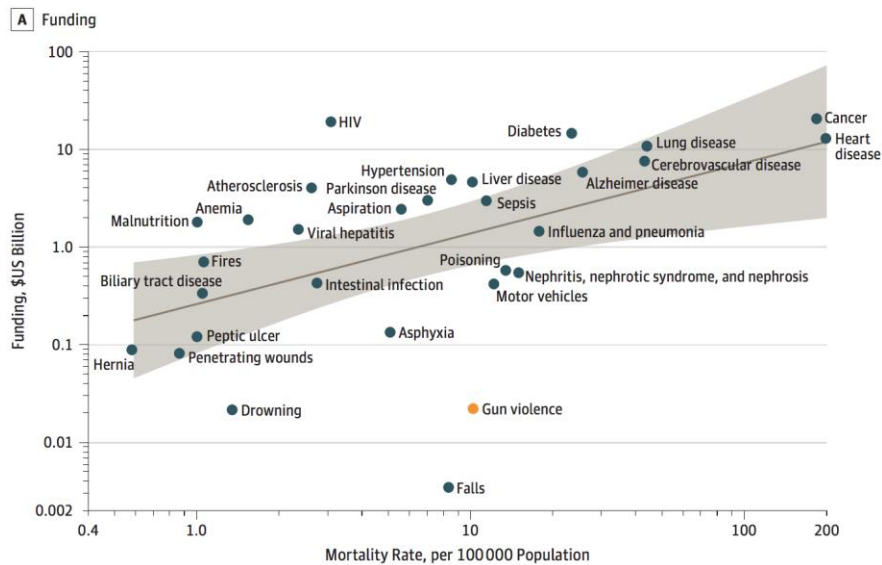
We calculated the lifetime odds of death by applying 2014 life expectancy and population numbers in the US, and our analysis assumes each cause of death won't change drastically in the near future. (Mortality data from prior years suggests these rankings are relatively consistent, with the exception of skyrocketing accidental poisonings due to [the opioid epidemic](#).)

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 a 21-year-old congressional appropriations bill called the "[Dickey Amendment](#)" that 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."



Research into gun violence is the second-most poorly funded relative to other causes of death. [Dr. David E. Stark, Dr. Nigam H. Shah/JAMA](#)

This and other federal funding restrictions are still active, hindering many scientists from understanding the problem.

"The fundamental, foundational work of documenting the full scale of the health consequences of firearms has not been done," Dr. 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."

But 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 violence studies by writer 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, among other sobering statistics.