



The Consequences of High-Fatality School Shootings for Surviving Students and their Schools

Background

- High-fatality school shootings have left lasting impacts on American society, yet most research has focused on low-fatality incidents, leaving gaps in understanding the severe consequences of mass school shootings. This study was conducted to examine the long-term educational and health effects on survivors of the most infamous high-fatality school shootings, including Columbine, Sandy Hook, and Parkland, to determine whether the severity of these events magnifies their impact compared to lower-fatality shootings.

Study Overview

- Using a difference-in-differences approach, this study analyzes the effects of high-fatality school shootings on surviving students' academic performance, attendance, and long-term health outcomes. The research leverages school-level educational data and mortality records to assess how trauma from these events affects survivors over time.

Learn More

- Levine, P. B. and McKnight, R..(2024), The Consequences of High-Fatality School Shootings for Surviving Students and their Schools. *J. Pol. Anal. Manage.* doi:10.1002/pam.22579
- <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22579>

Key Takeaways

- The authors found that students exposed to the Sandy Hook and Parkland shootings experienced substantial reductions in test scores, particularly in math and English language arts, with effects persisting for years.
- Chronic absenteeism rose sharply in the aftermath of these shootings, with Sandy Hook students exhibiting nearly a threefold increase in missed school days.
- Columbine survivors showed higher mortality rates by age 30, with a notable increase in deaths from suicide and drug overdoses, particularly among male students, demonstrating long-term mental health consequences.
- In smaller school districts like Newtown (Sandy Hook), students in neighboring schools also experienced declines in academic performance, suggesting community-wide trauma and showing the spillover effects of these high-fatality shootings.
- This study finds that the educational consequences of high-fatality school shootings are more severe than those from shootings with fewer casualties, reinforcing the importance of targeted interventions for affected communities.