

How to reduce mass shootings in the United States by Walter L. Williams

The United States has 4% of the world's population but nearly half of all privately owned guns in the world. Over 47,000 people died from gunshots in the United States in 2020, a much much higher rate of death than in any other economically advanced nation. So, some kinds of gun control would be an effective way to reduce mass shootings. However, given the difficulty of getting gun control laws passed, there are other types of solutions that could also help to reduce mass shootings. Here are a few:

1. Make and enforce laws that anyone who owns a gun must have a locked secured place to store that gun, so that someone else (especially a child or teenager) cannot get to it and take it outside the home. Anyone who owns a gun, and does not provide this kind of secured space, will be subject to prosecution as an accessory to a crime if someone else takes their gun and uses it to commit a crime. This prosecution will also apply to someone who purchases a gun, and then gives or sells it to someone else who uses that gun while committing a crime.
2. State and local governments should place an extremely high tax on ammunition that can be used in automatically repeating weapons. An adult over age 21 may purchase two bullets without paying this tax, but anyone purchasing more than two bullets must pay the tax. This will inhibit teenagers from getting their hands on more than a few bullets.
3. The very high vast majority of firearms deaths are caused by males. Recognizing this reality, passing a class on anger management should be required for all males before they begin high school. This age is chosen so that high school dropouts will also be exposed to this class before they drop out. If someone is arrested for committing a crime with a gun, while they are awaiting their court date, they should also be required to pass a class in anger management. If they do not take and pass this class, their time awaiting trial in jail will be longer. Judges should look more favorably on the accused who has passed this course.
4. The average age and sex of a mass shooter is 35 year old male. The most common place for a mass shooting is the shooter's place of business, or former place of business. Businesses would be wise to invest in psychological counseling for their employees. Shooters tend to be "grievance collectors" who hold strong resentments against their boss or other employees. Identifying such persons before they commit violence, and getting them into an anger management class, would help. Also, if a person is going to be fired from their job, employers should give a generous severance pay, stretched out as weekly payments so the person has time to find another job and to cool down from the resentment of being fired.
5. All the responsibility should not be placed on employers. Instead, local governments should provide free psychological counseling for anyone who is referred to them by their employer, by their teacher, or another recognized authority, and establish free anger management classes for anyone who wishes to take them. If an employer or school administrator identifies an employee or student as a potential shooter, the employer might require the employee to take this class, and then give them a bonus when they complete and pass the class.
6. Research shows that mass shooters often are experiencing a financial crisis. Local governments should provide free financial counseling to anyone, to see if their spending

habits could relieve their problems, or if they could be connected to sources of financial aid.

7. According to the book “Stop the Killing: How to End the Mass Shooting Crisis” by Katherine Schweit, 80% to 90% of persons who do gun violence talk about it to others before they do it. First, they think about doing violence. Second, they start planning the killings. Third, they prepare the action by collecting weapons and ammunition. Recognizing that they will be killed when they do the killing, they often give away their prize possessions. Mass shootings are not random events that arise suddenly. If anyone sees these signs, they should report their suspicion to their local police department. This can be an anonymous tip. The police will investigate, to see if the tip is accurate. If police suspect this person is a danger to society, they might require the person to take psychological counseling or an anger management class.

None of these ideas will by themselves solve the problem. But together, they can certainly help to greatly reduce mass shootings. The costs of such programs will be justified by the costs when mass shootings occur, but especially by the number of lives saved.