

FBI Phase II Study Key Findings



The FBI Phase II study, released in 2018, examined active shooter incidents between 2000 and 2013.

The study explored pre-attack behaviors and characteristics of active shooters. The Phase II study builds on a previous report that focused on the circumstances surrounding active shooter events. Key findings include:

- The 63 active shooters examined in this study did not appear to be uniform in any way. This means they could not be readily identified prior to attacking based on demographics alone.
- Active shooters take time to plan and prepare for the attack, with 77% of the subjects spending a week or longer planning their attack and 46% spending a week or longer actually preparing (procuring the means) for the attack.
- A majority of active shooters obtained their firearms legally, with only very small percentages obtaining a firearm illegally.
- The FBI could only verify that 25% of active shooters in the study had ever been diagnosed with a mental illness. Of those diagnosed, only three had been diagnosed with a psychotic disorder.
- Active shooters typically experienced multiple stressors- an average of 3.6 separate stressors- in the year before they attacked.
- On average, each active shooter displayed 4 to 5 concerning behaviors over time that were observable to others around the shooter. The most frequent concerning behaviors were related to the active shooter's mental health, problematic interpersonal interactions and leakage of violent intent.
- For active shooters under age 18, school peers and teachers were more likely to observe concerning behaviors than family members. For active shooters 18 years old and over, spouses/domestic partners were the most likely to observe concerning behaviors.
- When concerning behavior was observed by others, the most common response was to communicate directly to the active shooter (83%) or do nothing (54%). In 41% of the cases, the concerning behavior was reported to law enforcement.
- In those cases where the active shooter's primary grievance could be identified, the most common grievances were related to an adverse interpersonal or employment action against the shooter (49%).
- In the majority of cases (64%), at least one of the victims was specifically targeted by the active shooter.



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