



EVERYTOWN RESEARCH & POLICY

Reports of Road Rage Shootings are on the Rise

By: Sarah Burd-Sharps, Director of Research, Kathryn Bistline 4.4.2022

Last year was one of the deadliest years on record for the United States. In 2021, gun homicides and non-suicide-related shootings took approximately 20,700 lives—a 6 percent increase from the first year of the pandemic in 2020, which already saw a significant increase in gun violence over 2019. At the same time, reports of road rage shootings increased significantly. The data is clear: With easy access to guns, road rage can turn deadly.

Experiencing aggressive driving on the road is not uncommon—roughly eight in 10 drivers [surveyed by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety](#) reported experiencing at least one incident in the month before the survey. But the presence of a gun can turn such an encounter from a few unpleasant minutes into a dangerous incident for the drivers involved, their passengers, and pedestrians as well.

Using [Gun Violence Archive's database](#) to analyze road rage incidents involving a gun, Everytown Research & Policy determined that the number of road rage injuries and deaths have increased yearly since 2018. Rising to more than 500 people shot and wounded or killed in over 700 incidents, 2021 was tragically the worst year on record for road rage shootings. In other words, a person was shot and either injured or killed in a road rage incident every 17 hours, on average, during 2021.

In 2021, an average of 44 people per month were shot and killed or wounded in road rage shootings—double the pre-pandemic average.

Road Rage Deaths and Injuries, 2016 to 2021



Source: Everytown analysis of Gun Violence Archive data (accessed March 23, 2022).

Between 2016 and 2019, there were an average of 22 people shot and killed or wounded in road rage shooting incidents each month. In 2020, this jumped to 34. It rose even higher in 2021, reaching 44 gun deaths and injuries from road rage incidents in an average month—double the pre-pandemic average. Over the same period, the proportion of road rage incidents that resulted in gun injury or death increased.

From 2016 to 2019, roughly one-third of road rage incidents involving a gun resulted in injury or death. By 2021, nearly two-thirds did.

Year	Road Rage Incidents With a Gun	% of Incidents Resulting in Injury or Death
2016	610	34%
2017	659	34%
2018	642	33%
2019	694	39%
2020	702	49%
2021	728	62%

Source: Everytown analysis of Gun Violence Archive data (accessed March 23, 2022).

COVID-19 introduced new stressors into people's lives.

We don't definitively know what is driving this increase in road rage shootings, but the pandemic and its continuing effects have brought all kinds of new stressors into people's lives and exacerbated underlying ones. During the pandemic, we also saw [record increases in gun sales](#) and a national increase in shootings. This data

strongly suggests that these changes have played out on our streets and highways, too.

Lack of access to job opportunities, decent housing, and other critical basic needs are key drivers of gun violence. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread economic upheaval while also disrupting the delivery of social services that help alleviate the impact of such stressors. Many local gun violence intervention programs also experienced unprecedented challenges in their work, including strained funding, having to accommodate social distancing measures, and an expansion of their mission to include preventing the spread of the virus.

There's still more research to be done on road rage shooting incidents, but one thing is clear: These trends don't seem to be slowing. That's why action from policymakers to prevent gun violence is more urgent now than ever.

AUTHORS

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Sarah combines her background of work on poverty, gender equity, and economic empowerment at the UN and the Social Science Research Council to lead Everytown's research department. Sarah is co-author of two volumes of *The Measure of America* (Columbia University Press, 2008 and NYU Press, 2010) and pioneering work on youth disconnection. At Everytown, she has co-authored four peer-reviewed journal articles and countless reports and appears regularly in the media to help shape the conversation about our gun violence epidemic.

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