

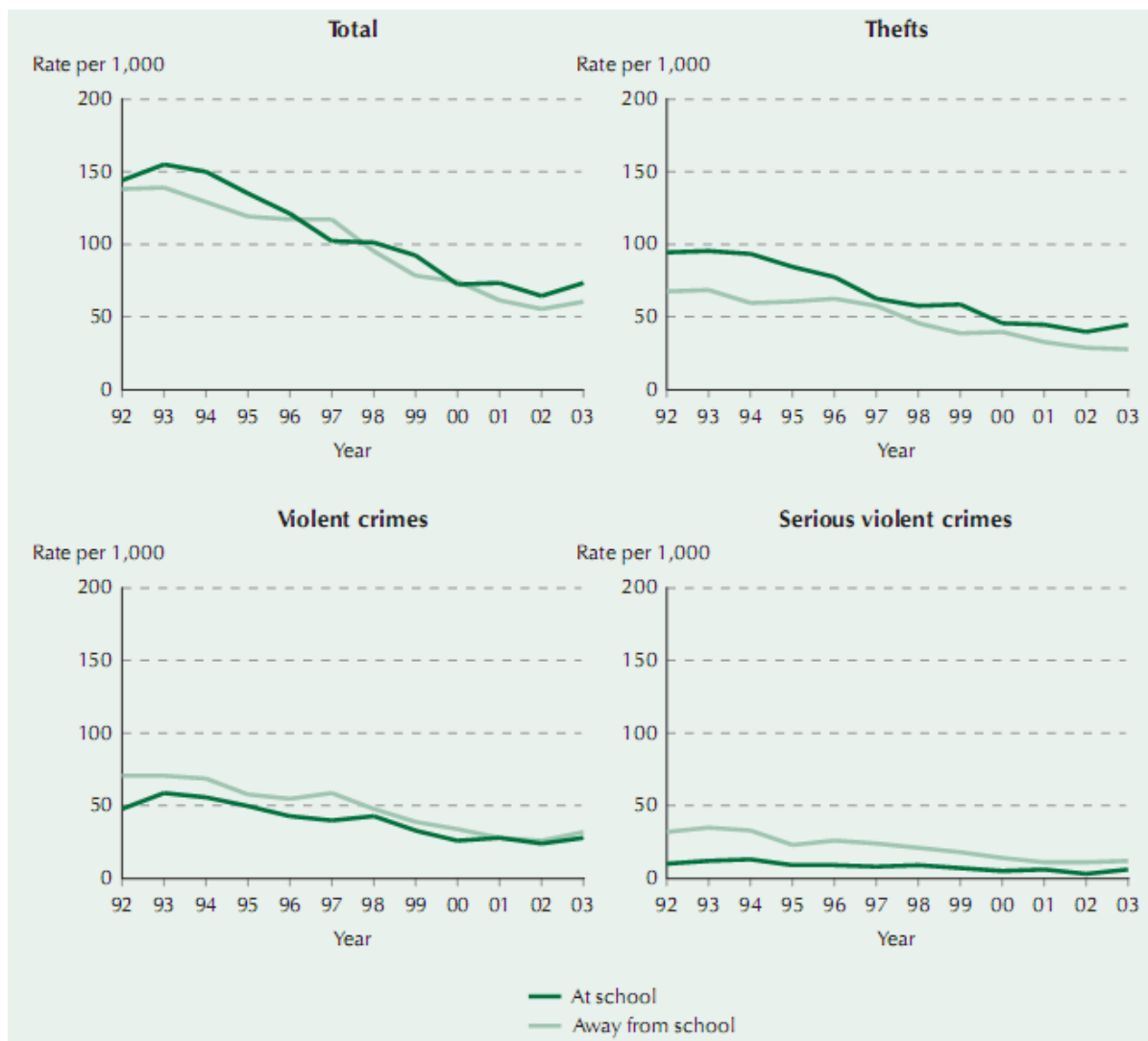
What University Mass Murder Incidents Share with Other Sets of Incidents

Laura E. Agnich

Key Questions

1. What is the general picture of crime, particularly violence, in U.S. schools?
2. How prevalent are school-based mass murders?
3. How do U.S. incidents compare to international incidents?
4. How do university mass murder incidents compare to incidents in other types of schools?

Student Victimization 1992-2003



Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) 1992-2003; in Fig. 2.1 “Rate of Student-Reported Nonfatal Crime Against Students ages 12-18 per 1,000 Students...” National Center for Education Statistics, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Indicators of School Violence and Safety, November 2005

Patterns of violent victimization in schools

1. Younger students are more likely to experience violent victimization
2. Males are victimized more often than females
3. Of those who report having seen a gun at school, a higher number report being victims of a violent crime at school

Violent victimization has been declining since the early 1990's

1. Schools are the site of less than 1% of youth homicides*
2. The youth homicide rate in general has been decreasing since the mid-1990's**
3. At the same time, explosive mass murders like the incidents at Columbine and Virginia Tech are on the rise

Sources: * National School Safety Center's Report on School Associated Violent Deaths, 2008

**FBI Uniform Crime Reports

School-based mass murder incident data

1. Definition:

1. *Actual or attempted* first-degree multiple homicide incident involving two or more victims in a U.S. school

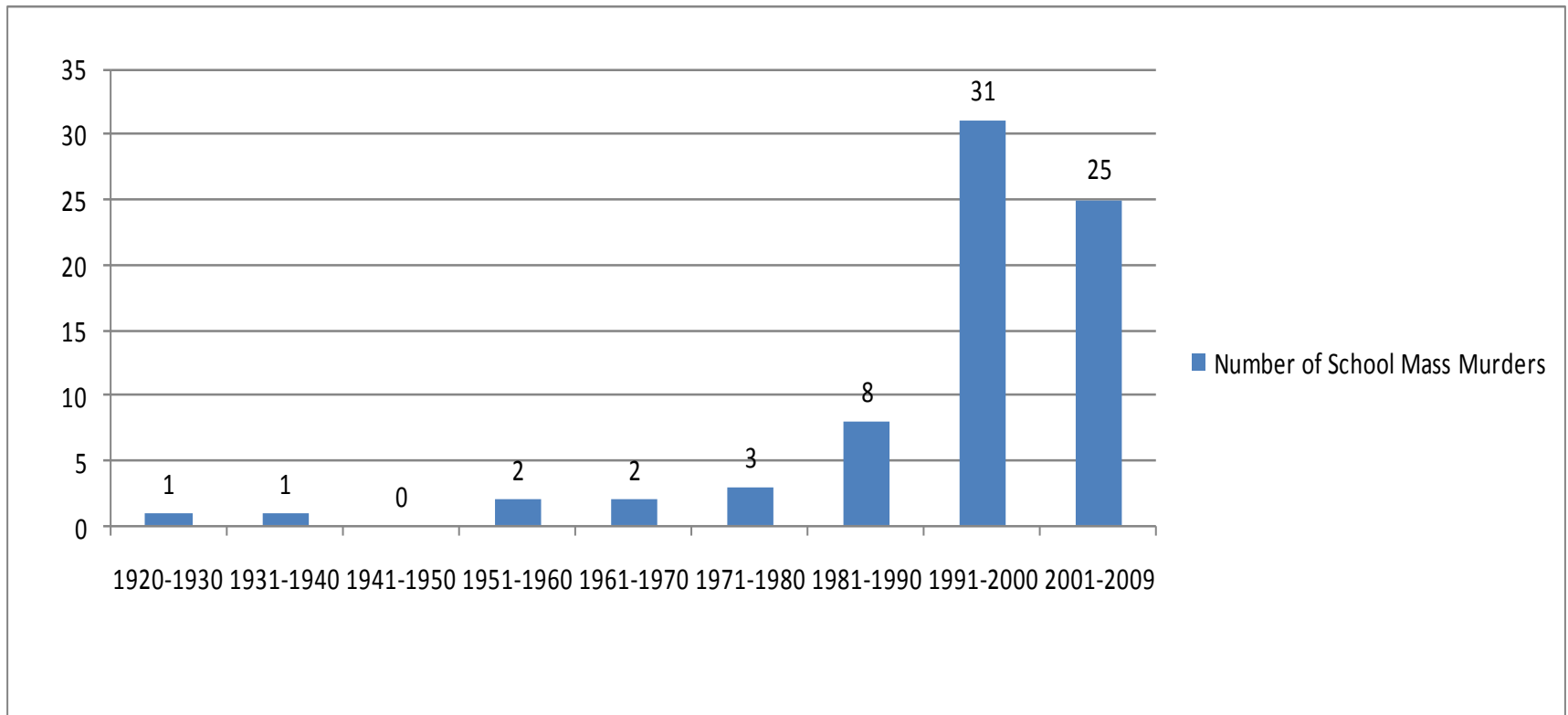
2. Data derived from:

1. Major newspapers, published interviews, reports and television news transcripts, the U.S. Census and the National Center for Education Statistics

3. Including information on:

1. Perpetrators, victims, schools, communities, etc.

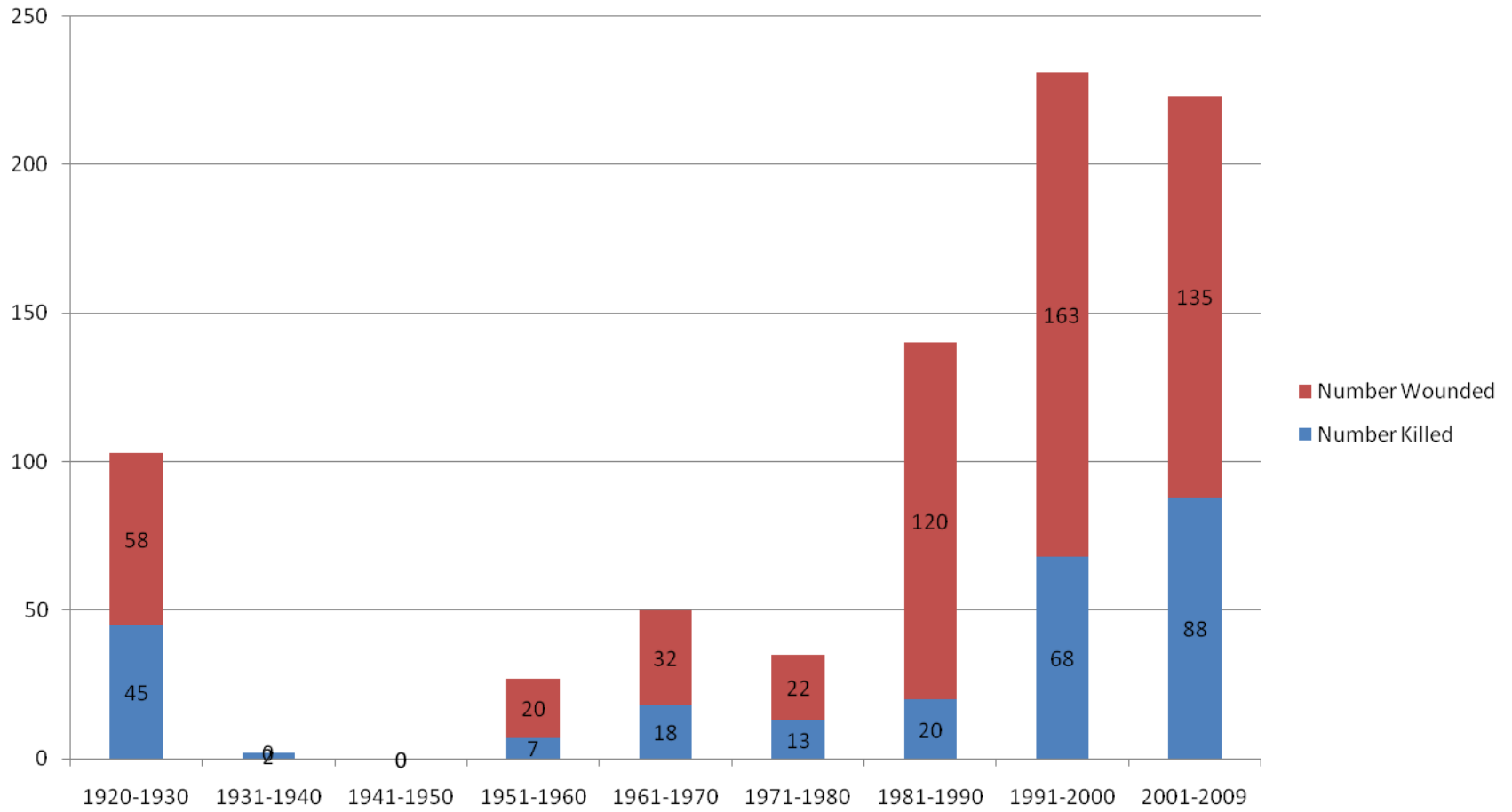
Total School-Based Mass Murder Incidents 1927-2009



*73 total incidents, all school types (elementary, middle, high school, college/university)

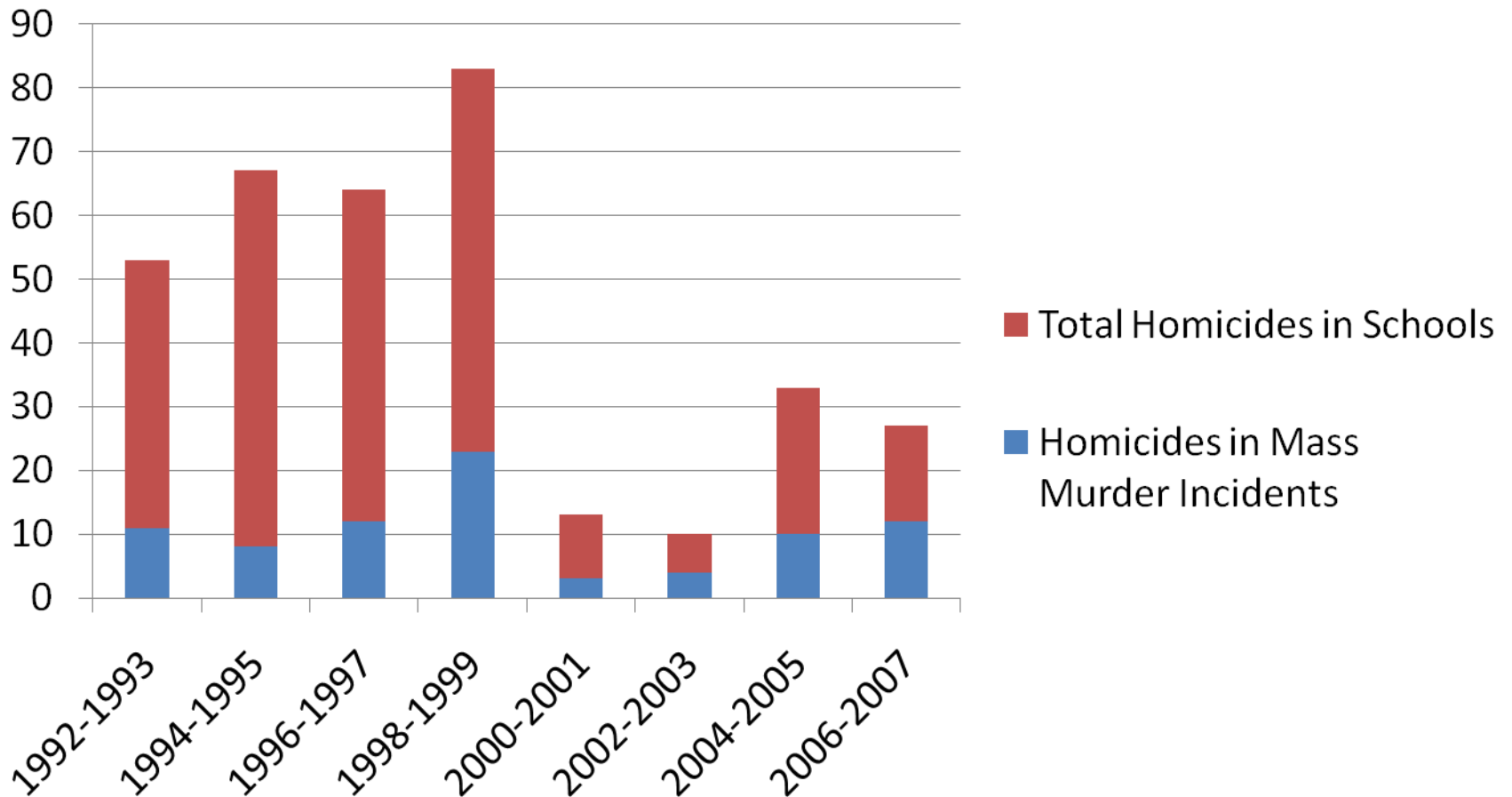
**2 incidents took place in schools not easily classified into the 4 main school types: the 2006 shooting in West Nickel Mines, PA that took place in a one-room school house and the 1992 shooting at Simon's Rock of the Bard (a high school/college hybrid school) in Great Barrington, MA.

Total Killed and Wounded in School-based Mass Murder Incidents 1927-2009



All school types (73 incidents)

Proportion of Homicides Due to Mass Murder in K-12 Schools 1992-2007



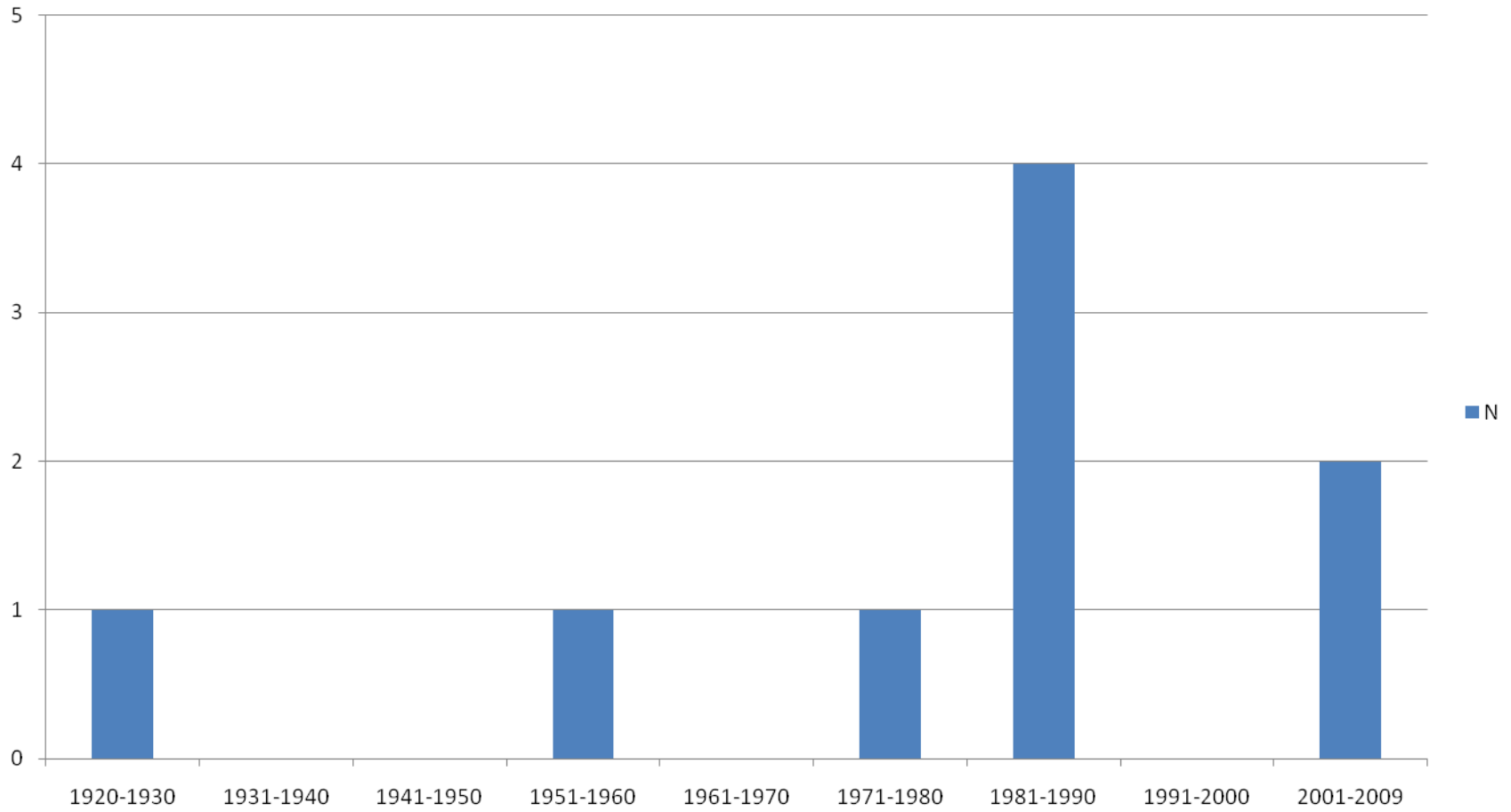
*N=54 mass murder incidents in elementary, middle and high schools 1992-2007

Source: National School Safety Center, School Associated Violent Deaths Report 1992-2007, November 2008

How do university mass murder incidents compare to incidents in other types of schools?

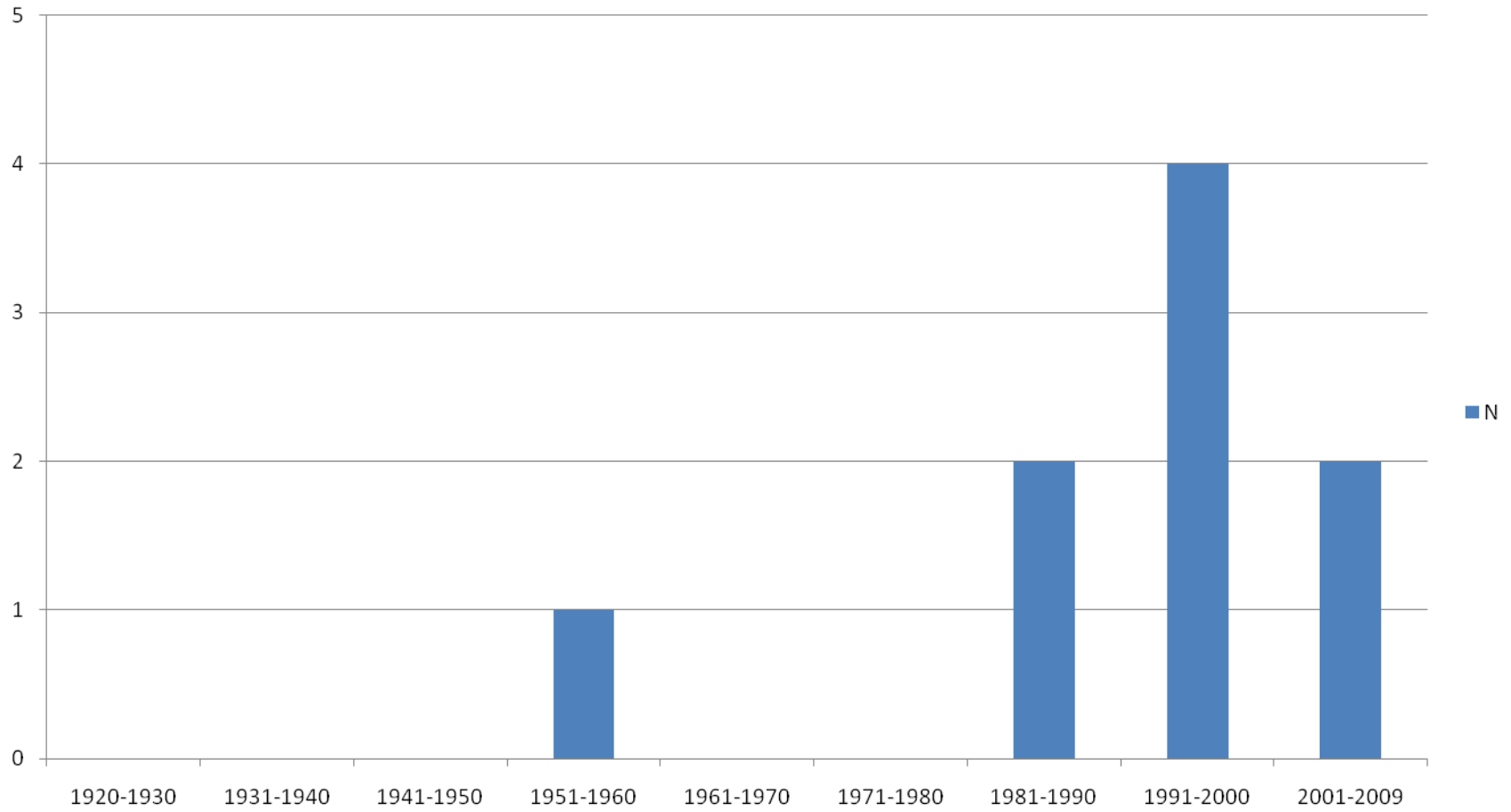
1. Number of incidents over time
2. Perpetrators' characteristics
3. Number of victims/lethality
4. Surrounding community (rural, urban, suburban)
5. Region of the U.S.

Elementary School Mass Murder Incidents



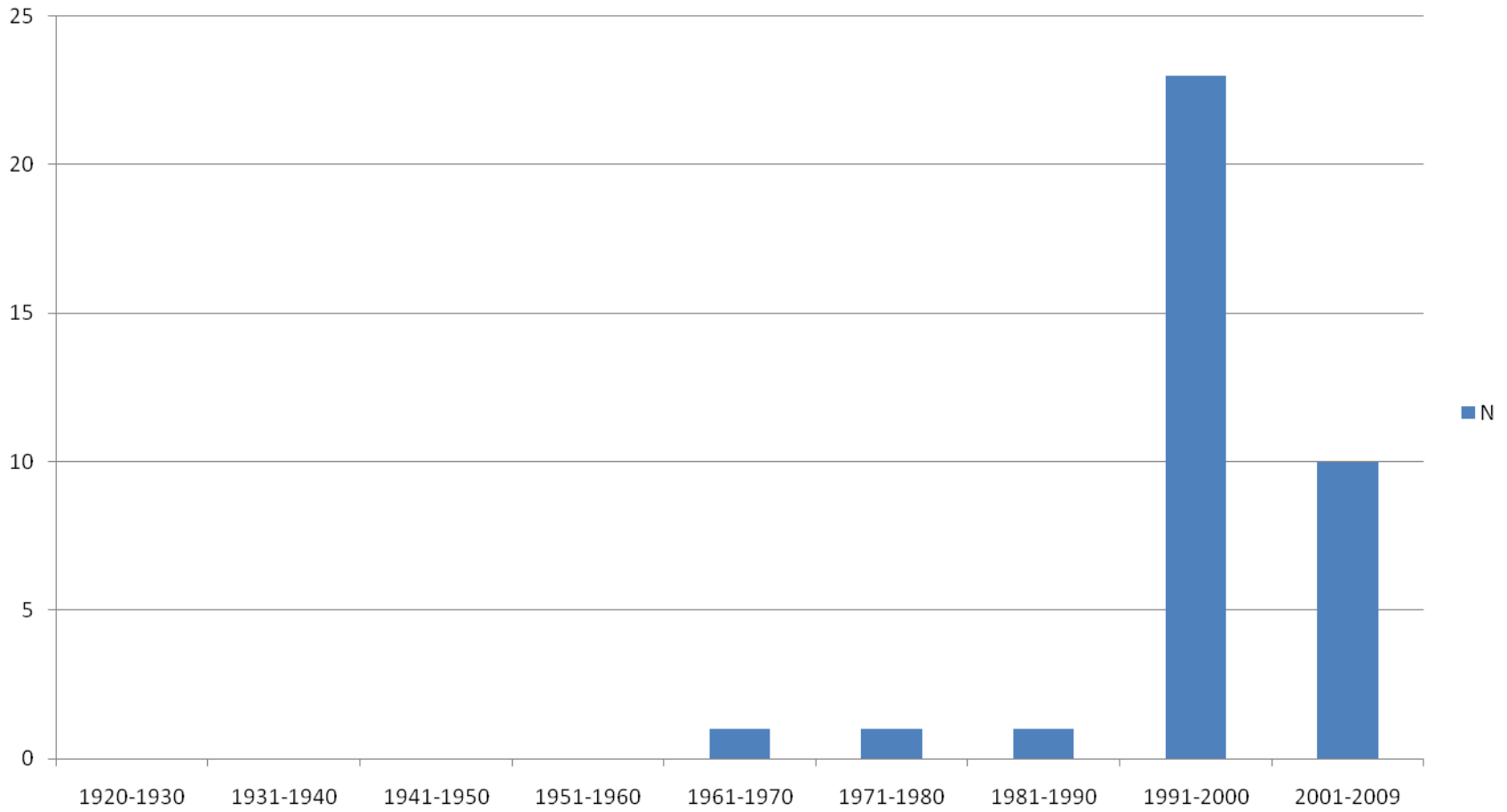
Total = 9 incidents

Middle School Mass Murder Incidents



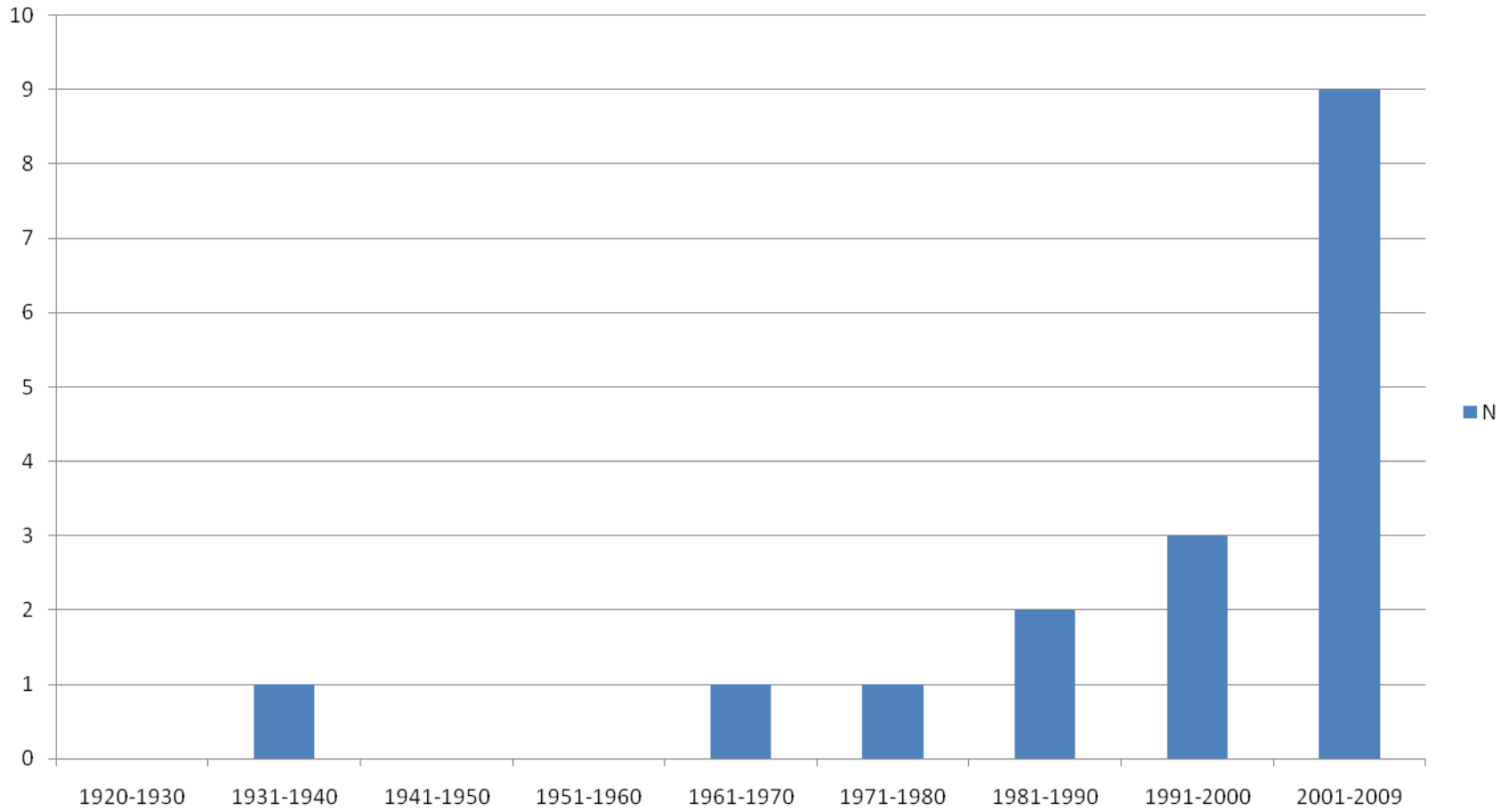
Total = 9 incidents

High School Mass Murder Incidents



Total = 36 incidents

College/University Mass Murder Incidents



Total = 17 incidents

Why did middle and high school shootings peak in the 1990's, while college shootings increased in the 2000's?

1. Cohort effects

1. 24 hour news cycle, internet, youth culture, “me” generation

2. University bureaucracy

1. Easy to fall through cracks
2. Lack of communication between departments
3. Misinterpretation of HIPPA guidelines

3. Target hardening/security practices

Target Hardening/Security Practices

1. Easier to target harden high schools, total institutions



Appx. 18,000 students go through McBryde Hall during the semester. Nearly all the undergraduate population of Virginia Tech takes a class in this building.

Perpetrators (71 incidents; 81 perpetrators)

	Elementary (9)	Middle (9)	High (36)	College (17)
Number of Perpetrators	10	10	41	20
Teams of 2	1	1	3	
Teams of 3			1	
Teams of 4				1
Mean Age	36.5	13.6	17.3	29.2
Gender:				
Male	7	10	41	18
Female	3			2
Race/ethnicity:				
White	10	10	33	8
Black			3	7
Hispanic			3	1
Asian				4
Native Am.			2	

Multiple Perpetrators

1. 5 teams of two:

1. A husband and wife team blew up a Cokeville, Wyoming elementary school in 1986.
2. Two boys, ages 13 and 11, killed five and injured ten in their Jonesboro, Arkansas middle school in 1998.
3. Three teams of two boys perpetrated high school shootings in Detroit, Michigan in 1992, Miami, Florida in 1998, and Columbine, Colorado in 1999.

2. 1 team of 3:

1. Three boys ages 18, 18 and 17 killed 1 and wounded 3 at Henry Ford High School in Detroit, MI in 2008

3. 1 team of 4:

1. Four young men ages 19, 19, 20 and 20 killed 1 and injured 2 at the University of Central Arkansas

Gender of perpetrators

1. 5 were women

1. Three targeted elementary schools (one with her husband)

1st female school shooter: Brenda Spencer, 1979.
Grover Cleveland Elem. San Diego, CA.

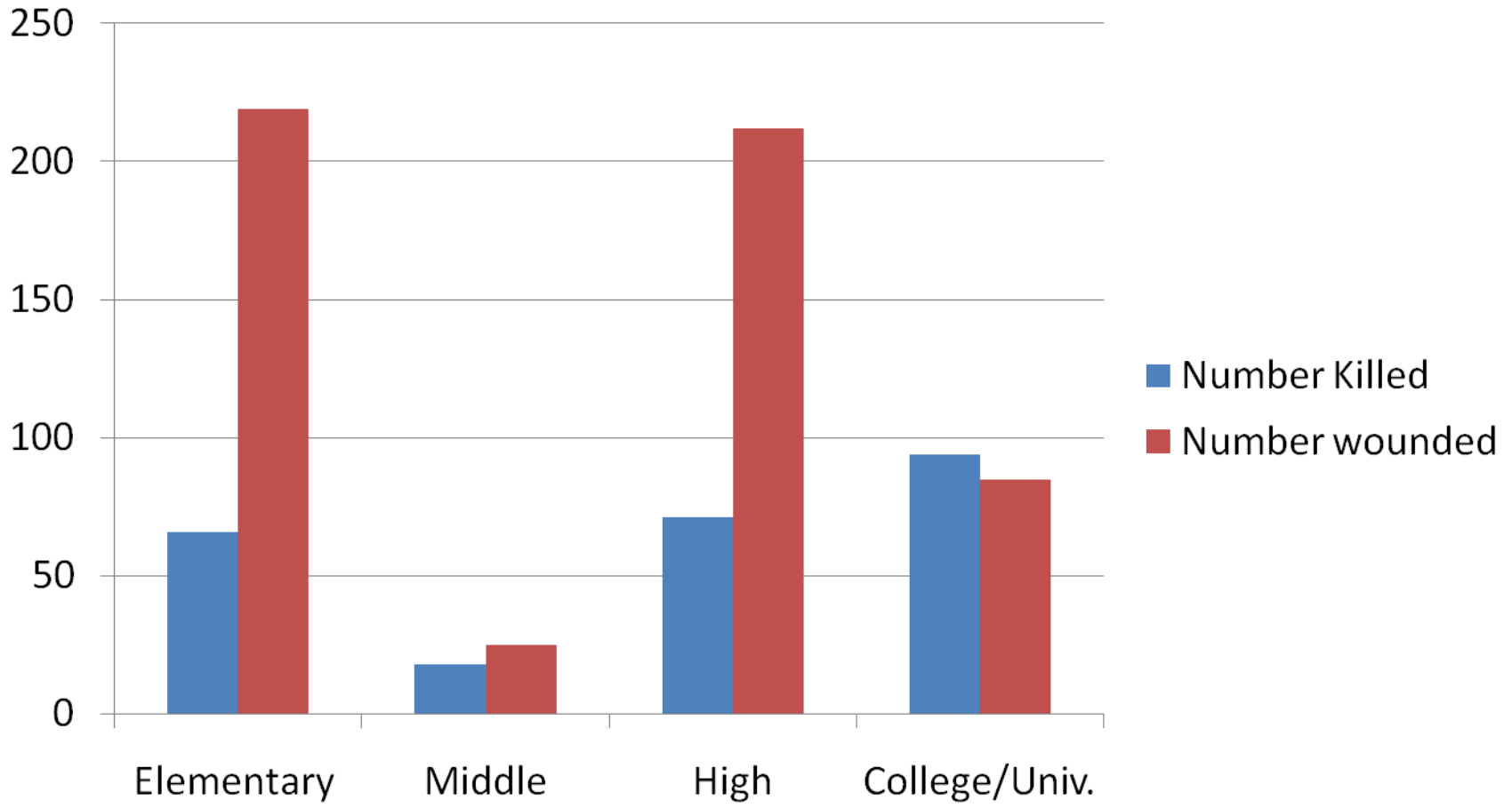
2. The other 2 were college shootings (Penn State 1996, LA Technical College 2008)

2. 100% of the 10 MS and 41 HS shooters were male

Race/ethnicity of perpetrators

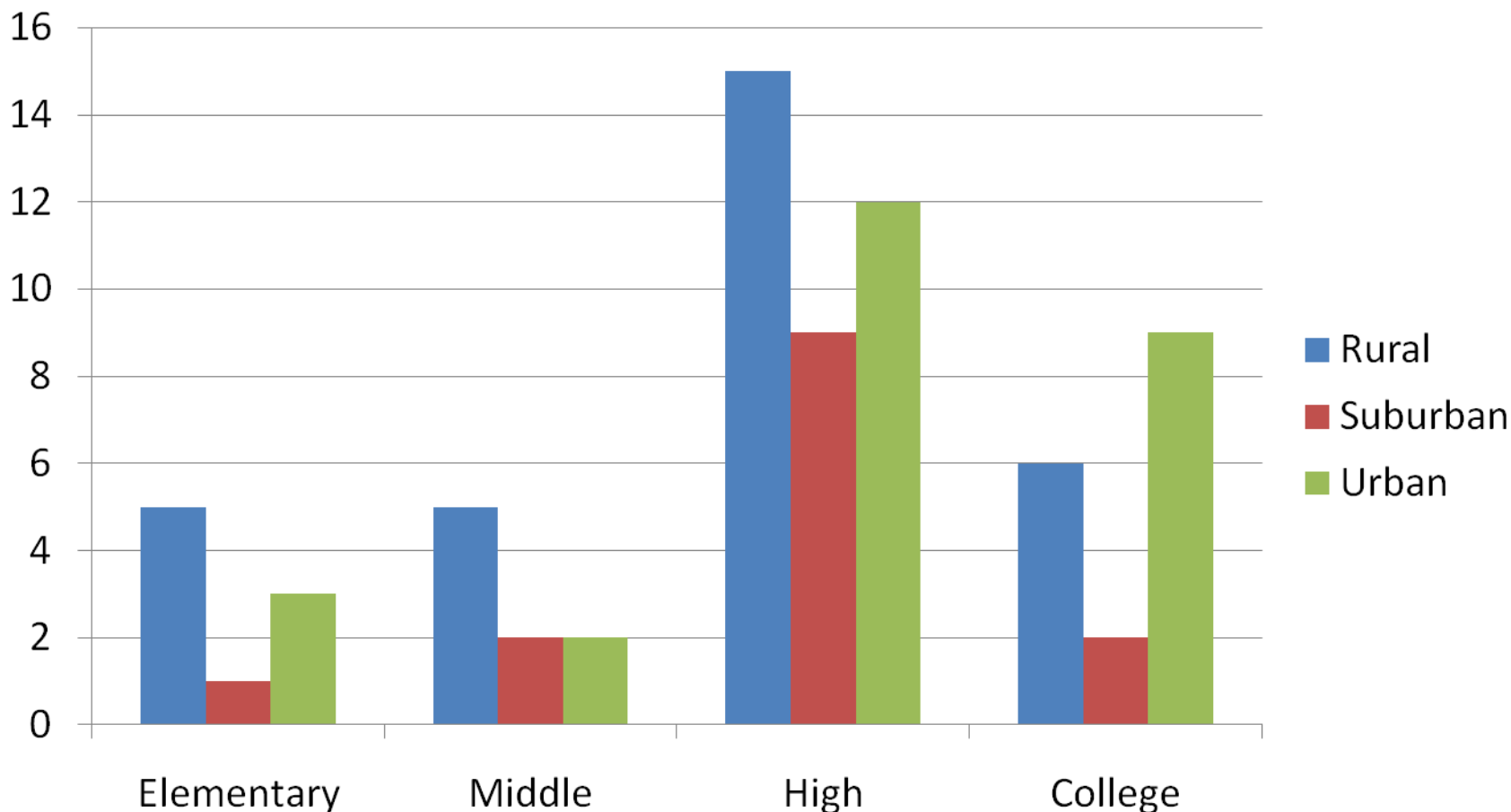
1. Problems identifying race/ethnicity
2. Problem with my broad definition of school-based mass murder incident
3. All elementary and middle school perpetrators were white
4. Majority of high school perpetrators were white
5. Only 8/20 college perps were white (40%), 4 were Asian (20%)
6. Asian perpetrators are only represented among college shooters- all were 1st generation immigrants to the U.S.

Lethality of Mass Murders by School Type



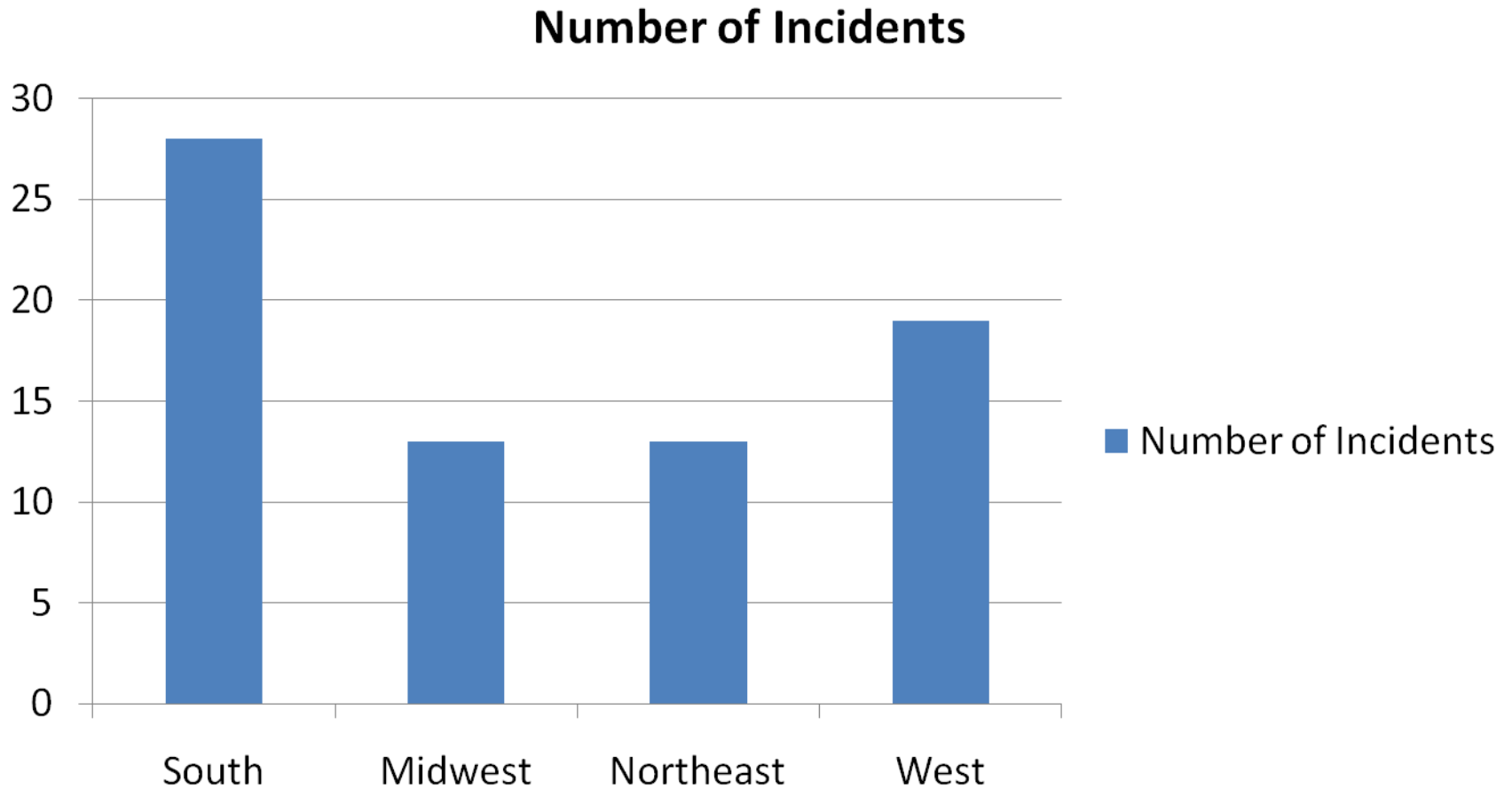
69 out of 73 incidents involved the use of a firearm

The schools' context

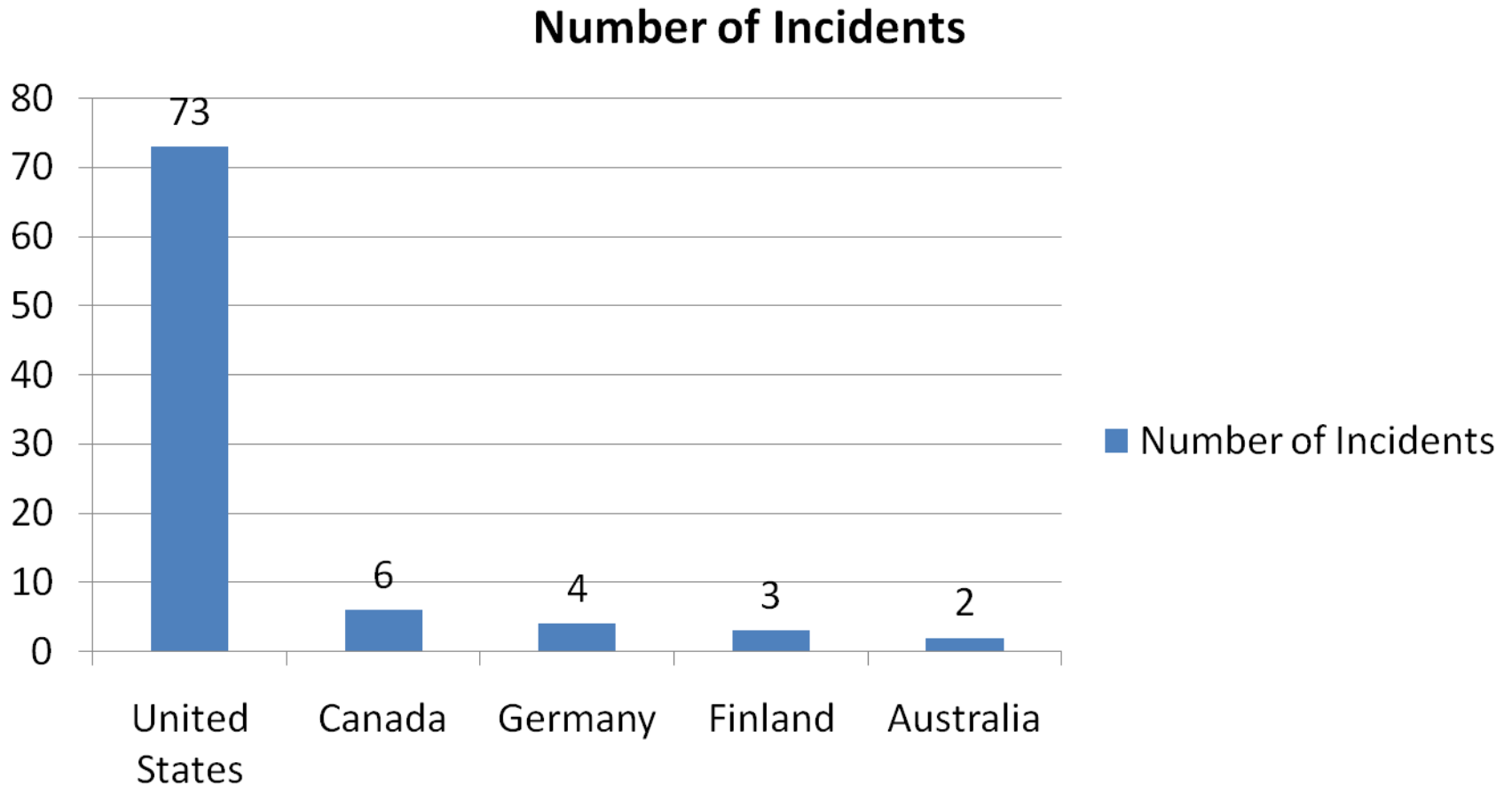


I determined the context of the school by using the National Center for Education Statistics' current and/or past classification of the school. I classified schools as "rural" if they were coded by the NCES as located in a rural, remote, fringe, small town or small city. I classified the school as located in an urban setting if the NCES coded it as a mid-size or large city, and as suburban if the school was listed as located on the fringe of a mid-size or large city, or suburb by NCES. I substantiated the NCES codes by cross-referencing them with secondary data, such as newspaper articles that described the events. For college incidents, I also used NCES data on the number of students enrolled, NCES data on the other schools located in the same city or town as the college, and information from the colleges' websites.

Region of the country

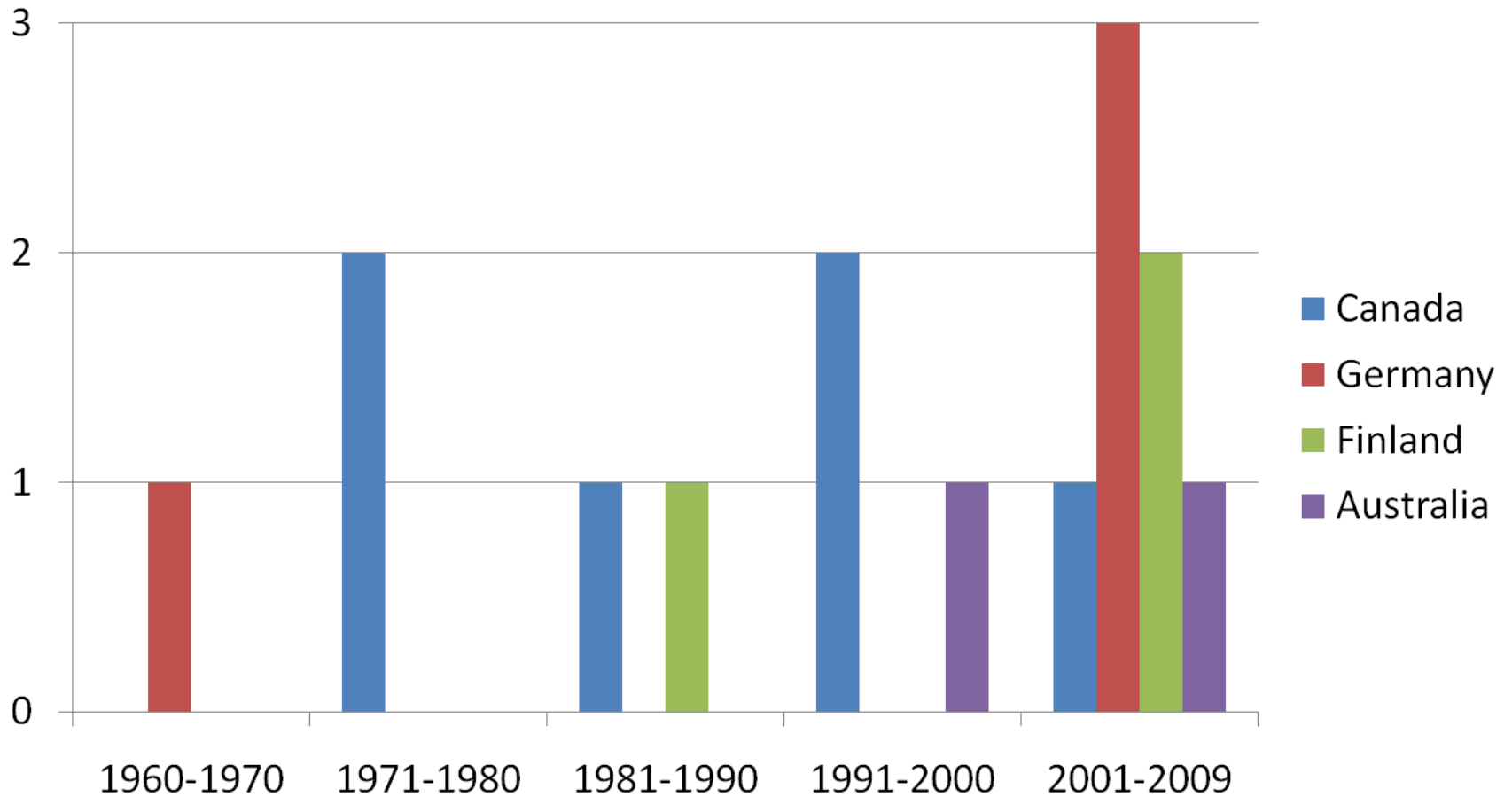


International School-based Mass Murder Incidents



There have been 24 total incidents internationally. 1 incident in each of the following countries: Ireland, Argentina, China, France, Scotland, Japan, UK, Denmark and Norway

International Incidents Over Time



International Perpetrators

	Elementary (5)	High (11)	College (8)
Number of Perpetrators	5	11	8
Mean Age	41.8	19.2	35.6
Gender:			
Male	5	11	8
Female			
Continent:			
North America		3	3
South America		1	
Europe	4	8	2
Asia	1		1
Australia			2

Lethality of International Incidents

1. Total of 24 incidents: 140 killed/186 wounded, compared to total of 73 U.S. incidents: 257 killed/551 wounded
2. 19 out of 24 international incidents involved a firearm (71/73 U.S. incidents did)
3. Other weapons included: flamethrowers, a lance, a mace, kitchen knives, a machete and explosives.

Some key questions

1. Why are high school incidents more prevalent than college incidents overall, both in the U.S. and internationally?
2. Why have college incidents been increasing over time?
3. Why have international incidents been increasing since the 1990's? (In Finland, Germany and Australia)

What do university incidents share with high school incidents?

1. Perpetrators

1. Desire for notoriety / to terrorize the nation through mass media outlets
2. Leaks vs. creative writing
3. Starts with small acts of violence
 1. Save the permanent record – i.e. Eric Harris
 2. Violence against women – Cho

2. Media Issues

3. Portrayal of Community Healing Process

What do university incidents share with high school incidents?

1. Media Framing

1. Myths about perpetrators

1. Loners, bullying, conservative ideology

2. Community division over media presence on campus

3. Division about portrayal of killers

2. Community healing

1. Rush to healing

2. Individual vs. community levels of grief