

Terrorism and Targeted Violence (T2V) in the United States: Perpetrator Age Characteristics

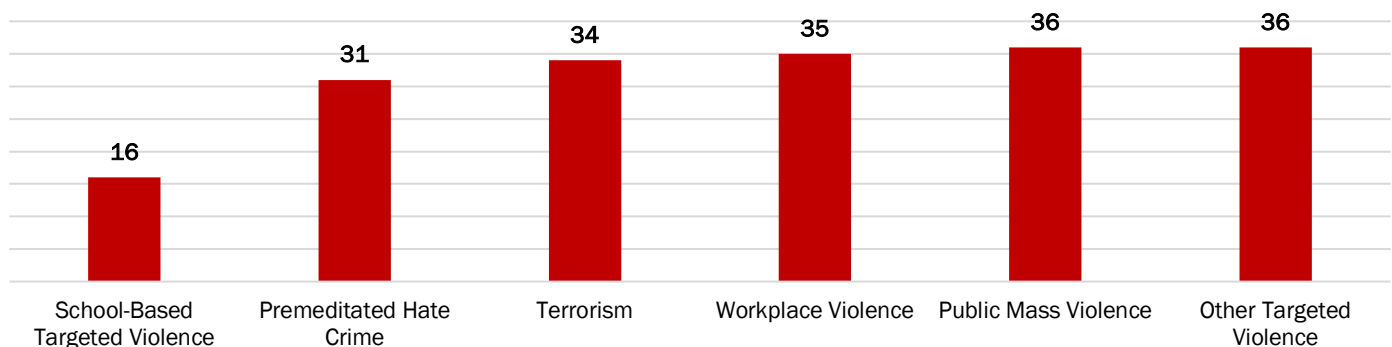
OVERVIEW

This research brief explores the age characteristics of the perpetrators who were responsible for 1,306 terrorism and targeted violence crimes that were committed in the United States from January 1, 2023, through July 31, 2024. The data for this brief come from the forthcoming Terrorism and Targeted Violence (T2V) in the United States database, which includes comprehensive information on foiled, failed, and successful attacks in the U.S. and its territories that were designed to have a significant impact on public safety or the security of critical infrastructure and key resources. The data include terrorism events, premeditated hate crimes, school-based targeted violence, workplace targeted violence, and public mass violence events that were motivated by personal grievances. More information about the T2V database can be found in the “About T2V” section at the end of this brief. The analysis presented here explores the distribution of ages associated with the individuals responsible for the crimes in T2V, paying particular attention to the rates at which juvenile offenders (i.e., individuals under the age of 18 at the time of their arrests and/or attacks) are involved in terrorism and targeted violence in the United States.

AGE BY T2V EVENT TYPE

Median Age of T2V Perpetrators by Event Type

January 1, 2023-July 31, 2024



The median age of the perpetrators in the T2V data is 30 years old.

- ▶ The youngest perpetrator in the data was just six years old when they committed their crime, while the oldest was 77 years old.
- ▶ Approximately 13% of the crimes included in the T2V data during the period under review were committed by individuals under the age of 18.
- ▶ The median age of the perpetrators who committed school-based targeted violence crimes was just 16 years old.
- ▶ However, the individuals responsible for other types of targeted violence crimes committed during this period were much older, with median ages ranging from 31 to 36 years old.¹

¹ The event categories in T2V are not mutually exclusive. Thus, crimes in the data can be classified according to multiple event types (e.g., an event can be both an act of terrorism and a hate crime).

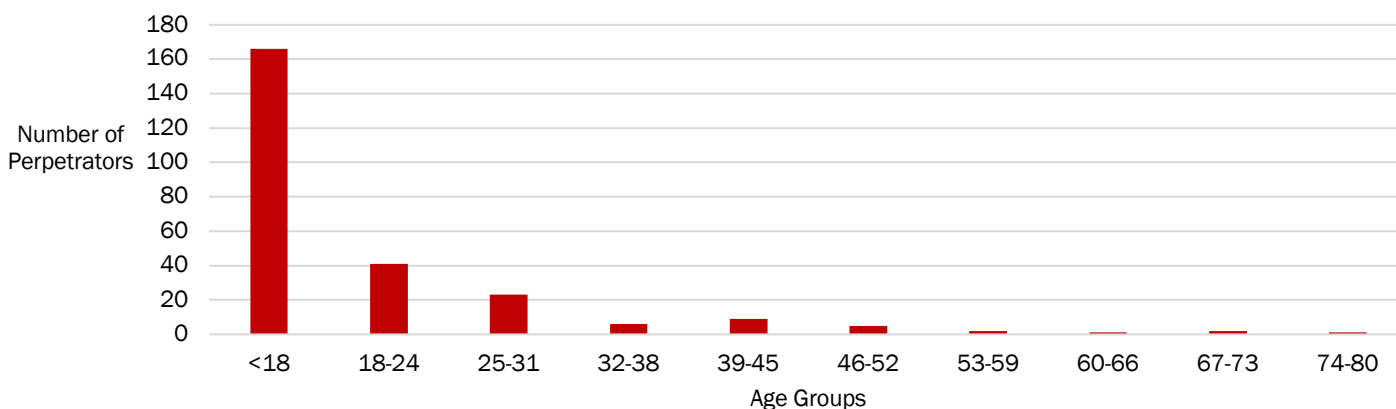
- ▶ Juvenile offenders were responsible for 58.6% of the targeted violence events that were planned to occur, or occurred, at schools, colleges, and universities. However, they were responsible for a much smaller percentage of other targeted violence events.
- ▶ For instance, juvenile offenders were responsible for just 3.2% of the terrorism events and 6.4% of the premeditated hate crimes in the data.

- ▶ Approximately 23% of the crimes committed by juveniles resulted in successful attacks, which are defined as events in which the perpetrators successfully deployed weapons (e.g., fired a gun, detonated an explosive, etc.). By comparison, 55.1% of the targeted violence crimes committed by adult offenders resulted in successful attacks.

SCHOOL-BASED TARGETED VIOLENCE

School-Based Targeted Violence: Perpetrator Age Distribution

January 1, 2023-July 31, 2024

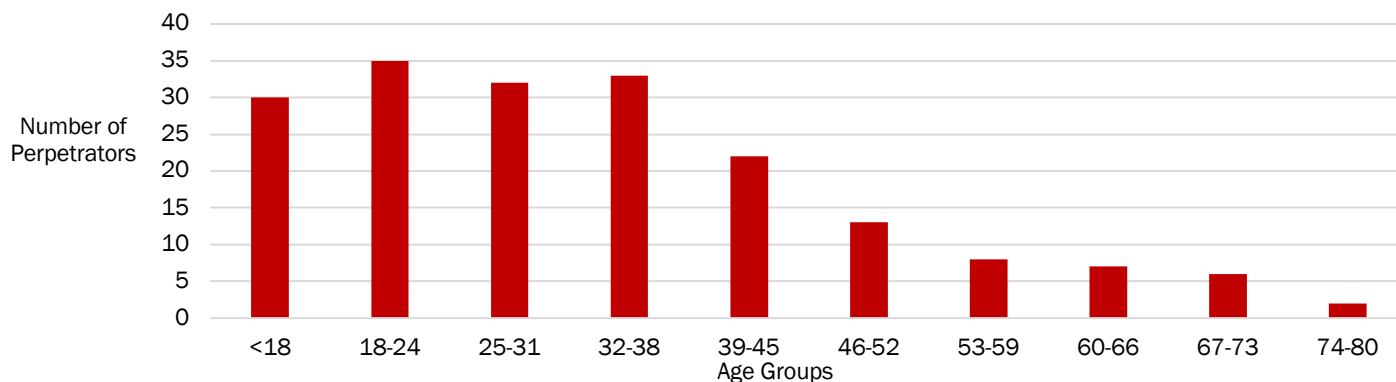


- ▶ From January 1, 2023, through July 31, 2024, there were 248 targeted violence events that were planned to occur, or occurred, at schools, colleges, and universities in the United States.
- ▶ More than 256 individuals were responsible for these crimes, including 174 perpetrators who were under the age of 18 when the events occurred.
- ▶ Most (78.2%) of these school-based targeted violence events were foiled by law enforcement before the perpetrators could attempt their attacks.
- ▶ Of the 54 successful school-based targeted violence events that occurred during this period, 22 (40.7%) involved juvenile perpetrators.

PREMEDITATED HATE CRIME

Premeditated Hate Crime: Perpetrator Age Distribution

January 1, 2023-July 31, 2024



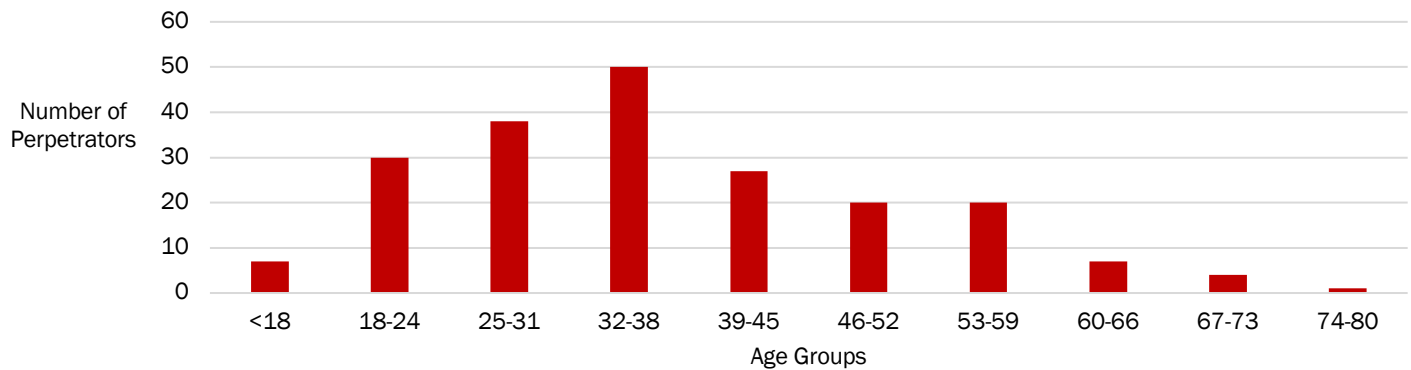
- ▶ From January 1, 2023, through July 31, 2024, there were 264 premeditated hate crime events in the United States and its territories that qualified for inclusion in the T2V data.²
- ▶ 36 juvenile perpetrators participated in these crimes, with the youngest perpetrator being just 11 years old at the time of their crime.

- ▶ Nearly 75% of the premeditated hate crimes committed during this period resulted in successful attacks. However, of these, only 6.2% involved perpetrators under the age of 18.

TERRORISM

Terrorism: Perpetrator Age Distribution

January 1, 2023-July 31, 2024

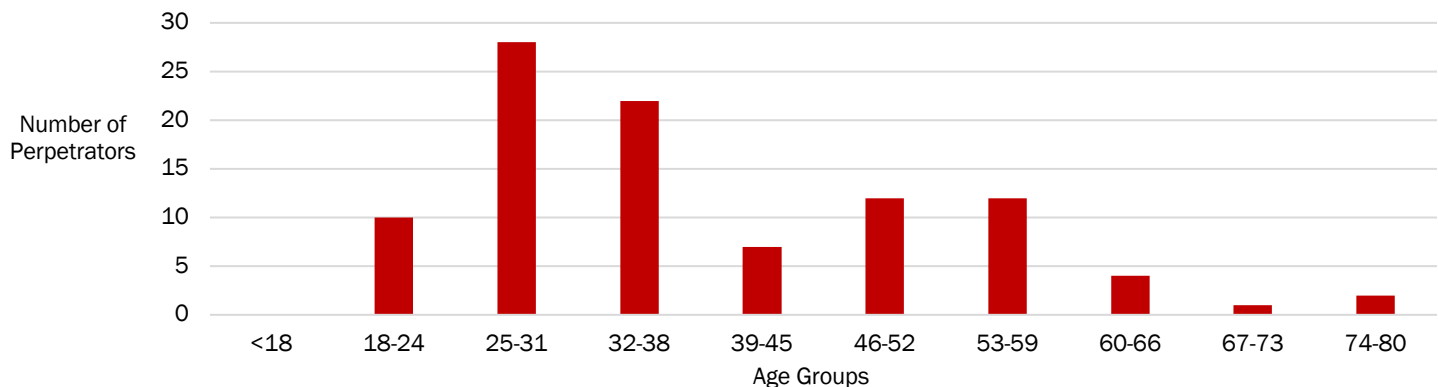


- ▶ There were 317 terrorism crimes committed in the United States and its territories from the start of 2023 through the first seven months of 2024.
- ▶ Approximately 70% of the individuals responsible for these crimes were 30 years old or older at the time of the events.
- ▶ Only 10 of these crimes involved juvenile perpetrators, and only two resulted in successful attacks.
- ▶ More individuals (11) over the age of 60 were responsible for terrorism crimes during this period than perpetrators (7) under the age of 18.

WORKPLACE TARGETED VIOLENCE

Workplace Violence: Perpetrator Age Distribution

January 1, 2023-July 31, 2024



² For a hate crime to be included in T2V, there must be clear evidence in public sources that the perpetrator of the crime selected their victim prior to carrying out the attack. Hate crimes that were spontaneous or random in nature, or occurred after chance encounters, are not included in T2V.

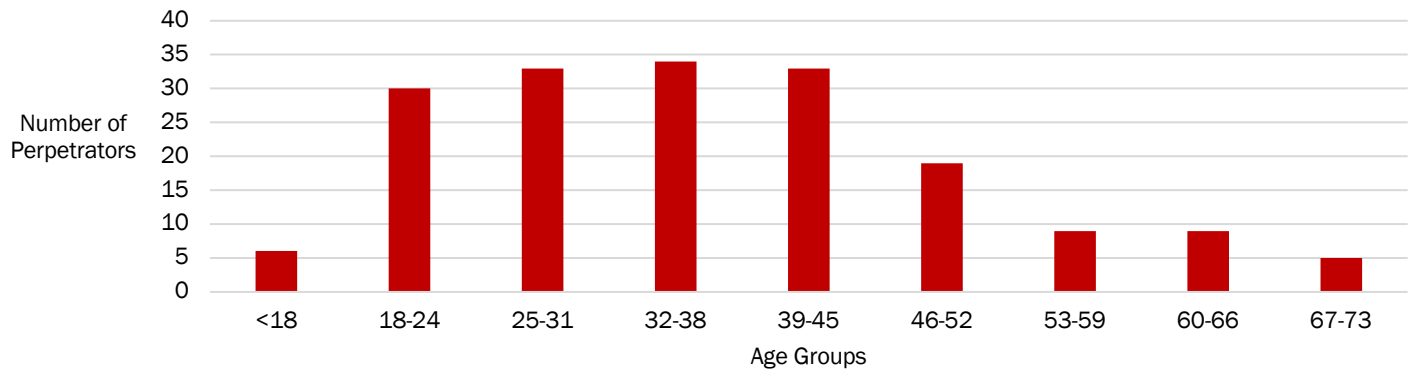
▶ During the 19 month period from the beginning of 2023 through July of 2024, there were 113 workplace targeted violence events that occurred in the United States.

▶ All the perpetrators responsible for these crimes were 18 years old or older when the events occurred.

PUBLIC MASS VIOLENCE

Public Mass Violence: Perpetrator Age Distribution

January 1, 2023-July 31, 2024



▶ From January 1, 2023, through July 31, 2024, there were 273 public mass violence crimes committed in the United States. Of these, 144 (52.7%) resulted in successful attacks. These crimes were intended to cause significant public harm and were motivated by personal grievances rather than a political ideology or bias.

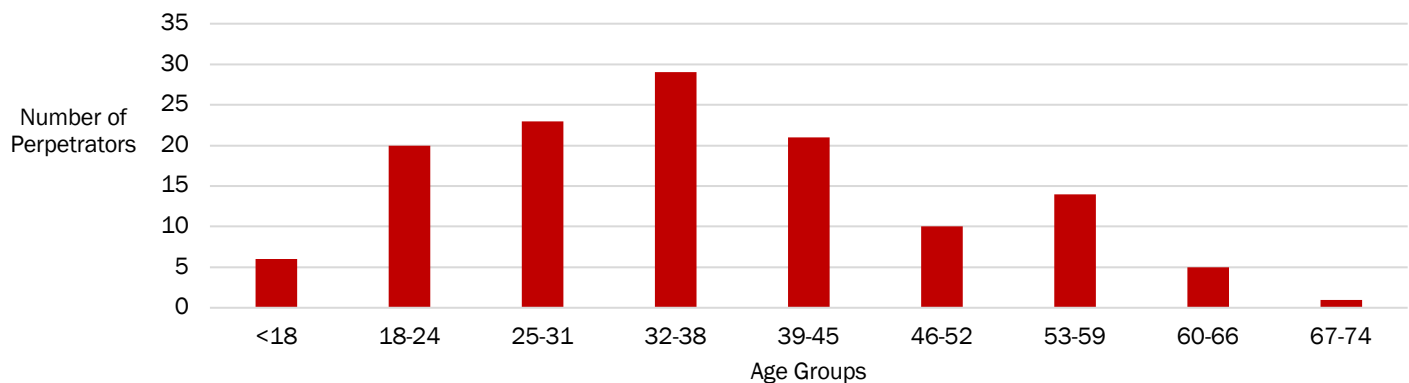
▶ Seven juvenile perpetrators were responsible for five of these crimes. By comparison, there were nearly twice as many perpetrators (13) over the age of 60 who committed similar crimes during this period.

▶ Only one public mass violence crime involving individuals under the age of 18 resulted in a successful attack.

OTHER TARGETED VIOLENCE

Other Targeted Violence: Perpetrator Age Distribution

January 1, 2023-July 31, 2024



▶ There were 209 targeted violence events classified as “other” in the T2V data that occurred in the United States between the start of 2023 and the end of July 2024. These were often low casualty attacks or crimes intended to disrupt or destroy critical infrastructure and were motivated by personal grievances as opposed to a political ideology.

▶ Nearly 30% of the targeted violence events classified as “other” in the T2V data were committed by individuals over the age of 40.

▶ Only seven of these crimes involved perpetrators under the age of 18. Of these, all but one resulted in successful attacks.

IMPLICATIONS

- ▶ Youth involvement in terrorism and targeted violence remains a significant public safety concern. The T2V data show that 168 terrorism and targeted violence crimes that occurred between the start of 2023 and end of July 2024, including 39 successful attacks, involved perpetrators who were under the age of 18. Thus, current efforts to address youth radicalization, especially those which provide access to critical mental health support services, rely on behavioral threat assessment and management teams, and leverage school resources, remains an important component of a robust security strategy.
- ▶ However, the T2V data suggest that more attention should be paid to adults engaging in terrorism and targeted violence in the United States. Indeed, the T2V data show that from January 1, 2023, through July 31, 2024, there were more individuals (254) over the age of 40 responsible for terrorism and targeted violence crimes in the United States than subjects (208) under the age of 18. Moreover, the data reveal that adult offenders were more than twice as likely than their juvenile counterparts to commit successful attacks.
- ▶ These results suggest a critical need to pair efforts aimed at reducing targeted violence among young people with a corresponding strategy to counter radicalization in older age cohorts. While schools provide a natural point of intervention for helping youth at-risk of violence, connecting with adults who are similarly at-risk is a much more challenging task. Efforts should be made to develop and/or support community-based prevention programs that are specifically designed to address the causes of targeted violence among adults.

ABOUT T2V

The terrorism and targeted violence (T2V) in the United States database is a project housed at the University of Maryland that seeks to provide policymakers, practitioners, and researchers with comprehensive data on violent events occurring in the United States and its territories that are designed to have a significant impact on public safety and/or the security of critical infrastructure and community services. The database includes successful, failed, and foiled events that meet the following inclusion criteria:

- ▶ An act that is dangerous to, or potentially dangerous to, human life or the security of critical infrastructure or key resources;
- ▶ Is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any subdivision of the United States;
- ▶ Is intended to intimidate, coerce, or otherwise impact a broader population beyond the target(s) of the immediate act or to generate publicity for the perpetrator and/or their grievances;
- ▶ And occurs within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States.

The T2V data include terrorism events, premeditated hate crimes, targeted violence occurring in school and workplace settings, public mass violence motivated by personal grievances, and other forms of violence that impact public safety and that of critical infrastructure. Mass violent events are defined as attacks that are designed to result in, or resulted in, the death or injury of four or more victims. The T2V data do not include events linked to gang activity, organized crime, interpersonal or intimate partner violence, crimes with a purely financial motive, or hate crimes that were spontaneous or otherwise unplanned by the perpetrator prior to the event. For foiled plots to be included in the data, there must be evidence that the perpetrator(s) had identified a potential target or targets for the attack and engaged in at least one mobilization activity in preparation for committing the crime. This could include acquiring a weapon or the components necessary to assemble a weapon, surveilling a target, raising funds for the attack, recruiting others to participate in the attack, or writing a manifesto or preparing other legacy tokens to be released prior to, or discovered after, an attack. Threats that do not involve at least one mobilization indicator or are described as “hoaxes” or “not credible” are not included in T2V even if they resulted in criminal charges. All data for T2V are compiled using public sources, including high quality news accounts and public court records. The data discussed in this brief are preliminary and subject to change.


PROJECT TEAM

Principal Investigator: **Michael Jensen**
Co-Principal Investigator: **Sean Doody**

Co-Principal Investigator: **Sheehan Kane**
Co-Principal Investigator: **Gary LaFree**

Please direct questions to **Michael Jensen** at majensen@umd.edu.

This research was funded by the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Social Science Technology Center as “Terrorism and Targeted Violence in the United States (T2V): Database, Analysis, and Dissemination” (award #24STFRG00019). The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as necessarily representing the official policies, either expressed or implied, of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the University of Maryland, or START.

START  The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) is a university-based research, education and training center comprised of an international network of scholars committed to the scientific study of terrorism, responses to terrorism and related phenomena. Led by the University of Maryland, START is a Department of Homeland Security Emeritus Center of Excellence that is supported by multiple federal agencies and departments. START uses state-of-the-art theories, methods and data from the social and behavioral sciences to improve understanding of the origins, dynamics and effects of terrorism; the effectiveness and impacts of counterterrorism and CVE; and other matters of global and national security. For more information, visit www.start.umd.edu or contact START at infostart@umd.edu.