

Terrorism and Targeted Violence (T2V) in the United States: Weapon Types

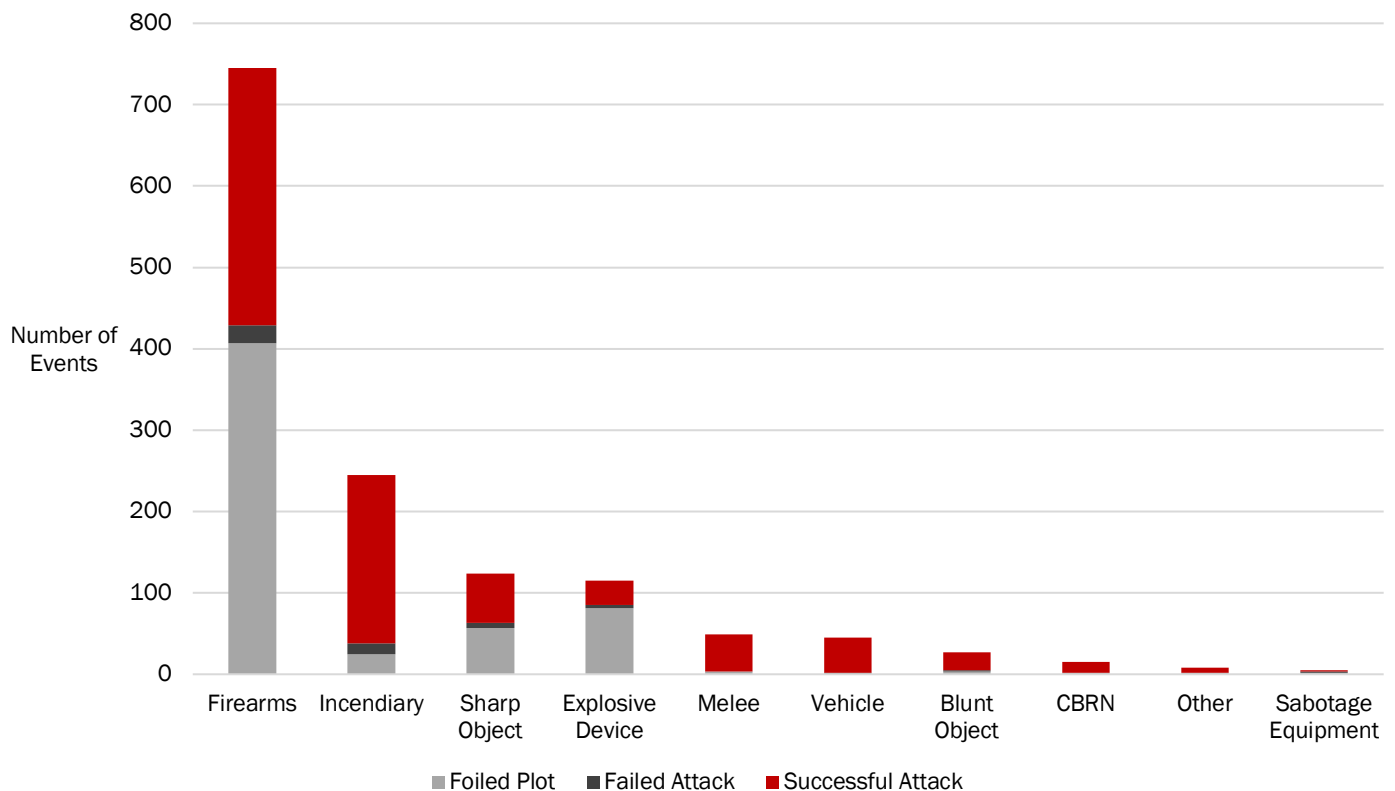
OVERVIEW

This research brief examines the weapons that were used, or were intended to be used, in 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 how often the perpetrators of T2V events used or planned to use various weapons, including firearms, explosives, incendiary devices, and vehicles. It also examines the average lethality of attacks based on the types of weapons used in the incidents.

WEAPONS USED IN T2V EVENTS

T2V Events and Outcomes by Weapon Type

January 1, 2023-July 31, 2024



Note: Events can involve the use or planned use of more than one weapon type. Events involving multiple weapons are added to each of the relevant weapon categories above.

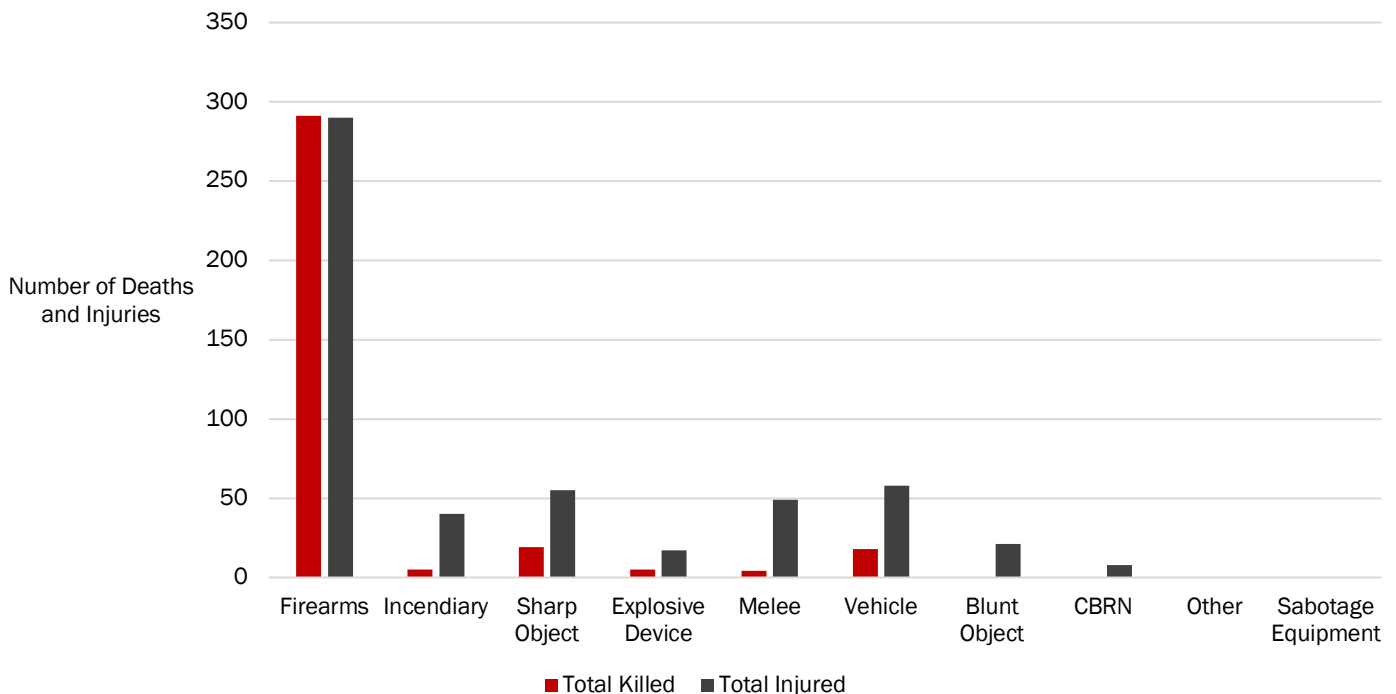
Plots and attacks involving the use of firearms represent 57% of all events in T2V

- ▶ From January 1, 2023, through July 31, 2024, 745 incidents in the T2V data involved the use or planned use of firearms.
- ▶ Of these events, 316 (42.4%) resulted in successful attacks, which are defined as incidents in which the perpetrators deployed weapons against targets.
- ▶ 407 plots (54.6%) involving the planned use of firearms were interdicted by law enforcement before the perpetrators could attempt their attacks.
- ▶ Only 22 incidents (3%) involving firearms resulted in failed attacks in which the perpetrators attempted to deploy their weapons but failed due to equipment malfunctions or operational errors.
- ▶ Incendiary devices (e.g., Molotov cocktails) were the second most frequently used weapon type in the T2V data during the period under review (245 events [18.8%]).
- ▶ Attacks involving the planned or actual use of incendiary devices had a success rate that was nearly twice as high as those involving the use of firearms (84.5% versus 42.4%, respectively).
- ▶ Attacks involving the planned or actual use of sharp instruments (e.g., knives) and explosive devices occurred at similar rates (124 events [9.5%] versus 115 events [8.8%], respectively).
- ▶ However, attacks involving sharp objects were successful far more often than incidents involving the use of explosives (49.2% versus 26.1%, respectively).
- ▶ Attacks involving the planned or actual use of other weapon types were relatively infrequent, ranging from 48 incidents involving the use of one's hands or feet (i.e., melee) to just 5 incidents involving the use of tools to sabotage infrastructure and property targets.
- ▶ 82 incidents involved the planned or actual use of multiple weapon types. These events had a comparatively low (30.5%) success rate.

CASUALTIES BY WEAPON TYPE

Deaths and Injuries by Weapon Type

January 1, 2023-July 31, 2024

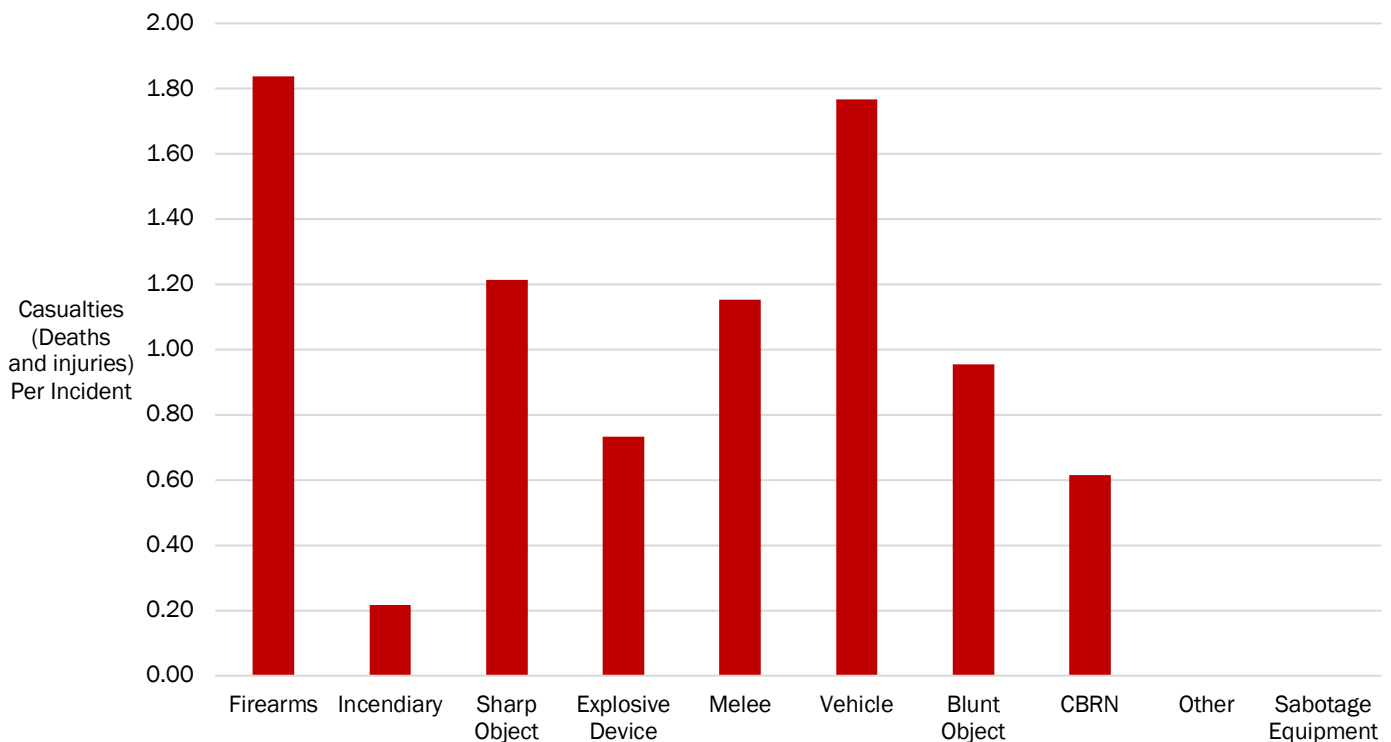


Note: Events can involve the use or planned use of more than one weapon type. Casualties resulting from the use of multiple weapon types are added to each of the relevant weapon categories above. The above casualty figures include perpetrator deaths and injuries.

- ▶ Including perpetrator casualties, incidents involving the use of firearms resulted in 291 deaths and 290 injuries from January 1, 2023, through July 31, 2024.
- ▶ Attacks involving the use of firearms were responsible for 87.1% of all victim fatalities and 63.8% of all victim injuries during the period under review.
- ▶ The next most lethal weapon types in the T2V data during this period were sharp objects and the use of vehicles in ramming incidents.
- ▶ The use of sharp objects in terrorism and targeted violence events during this period resulted in 19 deaths and 55 injuries.
- ▶ Vehicles were used as weapons in 45 incidents that resulted in 18 deaths and 58 injuries.
- ▶ Attacks involving the use of explosives, incendiary devices, blunt objects, and chemical weapons tended to be non-lethal. However, the use of these weapons did produce a combined 85 injuries.
- ▶ The 82 events during this period that involved the use of multiple weapon types resulted in 9 deaths and 32 injuries.
- ▶ From January 1, 2023, through July 31, 2024, no one was hurt or killed in attacks involving the use of sabotage equipment, which is primarily used to disrupt or destroy infrastructure targets.

Average Casualties Per Incident by Weapon Type

January 1, 2023-July 31, 2024



Note: Events can involve the use or planned use of more than one weapon type. Casualties resulting from the use of multiple weapon types are added to each of the relevant weapon categories above. The above casualty figures include perpetrator deaths and injuries.

- ▶ While the use of firearms was responsible for the vast majority of deaths and injuries in T2V events during the period under review, attacks involving the use of vehicles resulted in a similar average rate of casualties (deaths and injuries) per incident (1.84 versus 1.77, respectively).
- ▶ When considering deaths and injuries, attacks involving the use of sharp objects also resulted in a similar per incident rate of casualties (1.21).
- ▶ 35 victims were killed in attacks involving weapons other than firearms. Of these, 30 (86%) were the result of incidents in which the perpetrators used sharp objects and vehicles to attack their victims.
- ▶ Attacks involving the use of multiple weapon types resulted in a comparatively low per incident casualty rate of just 0.50. Only attacks involving the use of incendiary devices had a lower per incident casualty rate (0.22).

IMPLICATIONS

- ▶ Firearms were the most common and the most lethal type of weapon used in terrorism and targeted violence events that occurred in the United States from January 1, 2023, through July 31, 2024.
- ▶ The use of firearms in T2V attacks resulted in seven times as many fatalities as incidents involving the use of all other weapon types combined.
- ▶ Given the widespread availability of firearms and their relative ease of use, these trends are likely to continue. Fortunately, law enforcement has improved its ability to detect and interrupt plots involving the intended use of firearms. During the period under review, law enforcement successfully thwarted 54.6% of the T2V plots in which the perpetrators planned to use handguns, rifles, and other types of firearms.
- ▶ While not as commonly used as other weapon types, attacks that involve the use of vehicles to ram pedestrians have a similar per incident casualty rate as those involving firearms.
- ▶ In all but rare cases, the ownership of firearms and vehicles is legal, and their planned use may not rouse the suspicion of law enforcement. Thus, a continued focus on preventative measures, including bystander reporting, appears to be critical to stopping future attacks.

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

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