



Homeland
Security

National Threat Evaluation and Reporting

Q U A R T E R L Y B U L L E T I N



Quarter 1 – Fiscal Year 2022

Research in Focus



The National Threat Evaluation and Reporting (NTER) Program's mission is to strengthen information sharing and enhance Homeland Security partners' ability to identify and prevent targeted violence and mass attacks, regardless of ideology.^a NTER's quarterly bulletin is designed to help inform Department of Homeland Security (DHS) customers of research developments and resources to examine Homeland threats through a threat assessment and management perspective.

Hot Topics

Combating Violent Extremism Among Minors

The Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team (JCAT)—comprised of the National Counterterrorism Center, DHS, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)—released a [First Responders Toolbox](#) in September to help increase awareness for law enforcement and public safety personnel about the potential mobilization of minors to violence. Some minors may be particularly vulnerable to violent extremism activity that appeals to their developmental and psychological needs, such as the desire for a sense of belonging and identity, attention seeking through a sense of rebellion, and increased online social interaction.^b An increase in risk factors and decrease in protective factors could more easily influence minors to engage in risky behaviors and activity. Therefore, establishing prevention plans and programs tailored to these vulnerabilities is a step toward countering acts of violence. To support violence prevention efforts, the JCAT has identified some considerations for first responders and bystanders when working to combat violent extremism among minors. For a complete list of these considerations and for more information on products and resources, please visit www.dni.gov/index.php/nctc-home.



Active Shooter or Disrupted Actor

There are many studies that analyze acts of targeted violence, but few that focus on disrupted attacks and how that planned attack was interrupted. The FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) compared 63 active shooters and 63 disrupted actors incidents between 2012 and 2016, resulting in a list of factors to consider during a threat assessment and management process.^c The study suggested that disrupted actors are more likely to be connected to others online compared to active shooters. Bystanders in an online environment are also more likely to report observed concerning behaviors to non-law enforcement, suggesting the virtual environment is a critical place to identify warning signs and concerning behaviors of potential targeted violence actors. You can read about the summary of factors in the FBI BAU's two

Disclaimer: The DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis endorses the views of our federal partners referenced in this document; however, DHS does not endorse the views of other private institutions referenced in this document.

quick reference guides: *(In)action: Variation in Bystander Responses Between Active Shooters and Disrupted Actors and Possible Attackers* (located in Appendix A) and *Possibly Attackers? A Comparison of Active Shooters and Disrupted Actors* (located in Appendix B).

Workplace Violence Prevention and Response

According to a 2019 survey conducted for the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), only 45 percent of American workers were aware of workplace violence prevention programs at their companies. This issue is especially problematic in hospital environments, where incidences of violence are five times more likely to occur compared to other industries (note: these are not necessarily incidents of terrorism or targeted violence). To close this gap and set a standard in workplace violence prevention among all Joint Commission-accredited hospitals, the new and revised publication of the [Requirement, Rationale, Reference \(R3\)](#) report will be available on 1 January 2022. The report will provide in-depth rationale and references for best practices in ongoing staff education and training, the management of safety and security risks, methods in monitoring the threat environment, and creating a culture of safety practices. For non-healthcare specific references, other agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Department of Labor (DOL) provide a general framework for violence prevention in the workplace.

School Environmental Indicators as Risk Factors

The [Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety](#), a joint effort by the National Center for Education Statistics and the Bureau of Justice Statistics, highlights key findings on 22 school crime and safety indicators. While some indicators overlap with risk factors and warning behaviors in threat assessment, such as bullying and carrying a weapon, other indicators portray some unfavorable school conditions, such as gangs, hate-related speech, availability of illegal drugs, and student perceptions of safety. These school environmental indicators may need further examination to determine their impact on an individual's propensity to commit violence. To assess your school threat environment, the [Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools \(REMS\) Technical Assistance \(TA\) Center](#) website offers a suite of assessment tools, including Behavioral Threat Assessment, to keep schools well informed of their capacity and need in maintaining a safe school environment.

Resources

Below are additional resources to assist in violence prevention and increase awareness and understanding of current trends in threat assessment and targeted violence.



- [Insider Threat Mitigation | CISA](#)
The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) works with businesses, communities, and government partners at all levels to provide training and other tools and resources related to critical infrastructure security. Some valuable resources to reference are the Insider Threat Mitigation Guide, fact sheets, and videos on understanding the insider threat and the pathway to violence.
- [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\) | DOL](#)
Congress created OSHA, part of the US Department of Labor, to ensure safe and healthful working conditions for workers by setting and enforcing standards and by providing training, outreach, education, and assistance. More specifically, OSHA's workplace violence website provides information on the extent of violence in the workplace, assessing the hazards in

different settings and developing workplace violence prevention plans for individual worksites.

- [State and Local Anti-Terrorism Training \(SLATT\) Program](#)

The SLATT is a Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) program, a component within the US Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs. It provides no-cost training and resources to state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement officers and members of the intelligence community involved in counterterrorism and response.

- [REMS Technical Assistance Center](#)

The US Department of Education's Office of Safe and Supportive Schools has developed the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center to help education agencies and their community partners manage safety, security, and emergency management programs by building the preparedness capacity at the local, state, and federal levels. REMS TA offers technical assistance, community of practice collaboration space, and at-a-glance guidance, helping schools with emergencies ranging from active shooter situations to hurricanes.

Threat Assessment Spotlight

Workplace Violence Prevention Program at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

DHS USCIS published its Workplace Violence Prevention Program Management Directive in August 2020. The Management Directive established USCIS' policy for promoting the safety, security, and productivity of USCIS personnel by addressing behaviors of concern, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking affecting the workplace. The USCIS' Office of Human Capital and Training, Workplace Violence Prevention Program (WVPP) is responsible for conducting this important mission. Prevention is key, and USCIS requires employees and contractors who have a reasonable concern for their personal safety, or the safety of another, to report behavior(s) of concern to the WVPP without delay. To support an effective and timely response to reported behaviors of concern, the WVPP leads six multi-disciplinary Situational Advisory Teams (SATs) geographically distributed across the country and comprised of members from labor and employee relations, field security, and legal counsel. The WVPP's major initiatives for fiscal year 2022 are implementing mandatory supervisor and workforce training to ensure all employees and supervisors are educated on the program mission, agency policy, reporting requirements, and increasing staff to support the program's growing operational needs. Key workforce awareness and education initiatives this coming year are domestic violent extremism, gender-based violence, and suicide risk. For further information, please contact: WVPP@uscis.dhs.gov.

Program Updates

- The NTER Program recently launched its forward-facing website. Please visit <https://www.dhs.gov/national-threat-evaluation-and-reporting-program> for the latest NTER information.
- The [DHS Violence Prevention Resource Guide, published in August 2021](#), highlights available DHS resources and funding opportunities in the violence prevention space.

- NTER's Master Trainer Program (MTP) is now accepting applications for future cohorts. For more information and to apply, please e-mail NTER.MTP@hq.dhs.gov.
- NTER continues to provide ad-hoc training and technical assistance on Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI) programs to Federal, State, Local, Tribal, Territorial and Private Sector partners. You can find more information about technical assistance and training resources [here](#).



Who to Contact

To learn more about the NSI, Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management, or the NTER Program, please contact NTER@hq.dhs.gov.



Appendix A



QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE – FBI BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS UNIT (BAU)



(In)action: Variation in Bystander Responses Between Active Shooters and Disrupted Actors

Threat assessment teams are tasked with the challenge of assessing the level of concern that a person will go on to commit an act of targeted violence and managing/mitigating that threat. Findings illustrate several key variables help differentiate between active shooters and disrupted actors who do **not** commit violence. Sixty-three active shooters were compared to sixty-three disrupted actors/persons of concern (POCs) who were reported to the FBI's Behavioral Threat Assessment Center (BTAC), Behavioral Analysis Unit 1 (BAU-1), between 2012 and 2016 and did **not** go on to commit a mass attack as of November 2019.¹ Disrupted actors were considered "high risk" because the cases had exceeded threat assessment capabilities at the local level. They were referred to and accepted by BTAC as requiring their attention. While results reported below can provide guidance to threat investigations, statistics should not be interpreted as probabilities of an attack, but rather helpful factors to consider during threat assessment/threat management. Statistics indicative of disrupted actors having less risk do not suggest that a concerning behavior should be minimized or a case should not be referred to BTAC or handled by a multi-disciplinary threat assessment threat management team (TATM).

Summary

The two groups appear so similar in their isolation and opportunity for bystanders that perhaps it was the intervention of the threat assessment team and report to law enforcement ultimately that mitigated the threat.

Isolation

Active shooters were less likely to be virtually connected than high-risk disrupted actors. Both groups were similar in their level of physical connections.

	Active Shooters	Disrupted Actors
Yes, physically connected	85.7%	84.1%
Yes, virtually connected	27.0%	63.5%

How Bystanders Noticed Concerning Behaviors

While active shooters were more likely to present concerning behaviors verbally and physically, high-risk disrupted actors were more likely to present concerning behaviors in written and online forms.

	Active Shooters	Disrupted Actors
Written	27.0%	65.1%
Verbal	95.2%	82.5%
Online	15.9%	39.7%
Physical actions	85.7%	76.2%

Bystander Actions

Bystanders of active shooters were more likely to discuss the observed concerning behaviors with friends or do nothing and bystanders of high-risk disrupted actors were more likely to report to non-law enforcement or to do something else (other). Both groups were equally as likely to discuss the concerning behaviors with the subject. This research supports the idea that the prevalence of bystander inaction (i.e. doing nothing) in the active shooter population is a stark reminder of the need to increase opportunities for bystanders to report the concerning behavior they observe.

	Active Shooters	Disrupted Actors
Discussed directly with subject	82.5%	82.5%
Reported to non-law enforcement	50.8%	61.9%
Discussed with friends	49.2%	41.3%
Other	1.6%	11.1%
Did nothing	54%	14.6%

¹ Craun, S. W., Gibson, K. A., Ford, A. G., Solik, K., & Silver, J. M. (2020). (In)action: Variation in bystander responses between persons of concern and active shooters. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, 7, 113-121. Doi: 10.1037/tam0000146

Operational Considerations

Bystander intervention is critical as high-risk disrupted actors rarely refer themselves to threat assessment teams. Understanding the mechanisms that impede or facilitate reporting of concerning behavior is of extreme importance for threat assessment teams to understand. It is through the actions of these bystanders and the work of threat assessment teams that persons of concern can obtain the interventions they need, and violence can be averted.

Who Notices

The majority of both active shooters and high-risk disrupted actors were not physically isolated in the year preceding the attack or threat assessment. Additionally, both the fully isolated offenders and those with connections had concerning behaviors that were noticed by others. This finding mirrors the findings of Silver et al. (2018)², that there were no differences in leakage between offenders who were socially isolated and those that were not. The odds were lower of being an active shooter if the subject was virtually connected.

How They Notice

The likelihood of being an active shooter was lower if a bystander noticed a concerning behavior via written medium.

- Gives bystanders tangible evidence of concerns and the need to take it seriously, but not usually indicative of an attack
- Most who leak do not do so through written medium (also noticed in Silver et al. (2018)³ where it was identified that public mass shooters were more likely to have verbal leakage. In this study, while verbal leakage was recognized commonly there was no difference between active shooters and high-risk disrupted actors)
- Bystanders need to take verbal leakage as seriously as written

What They Notice

In this study, BTAC also assessed which stressors and concerning behaviors presented themselves between active shooters and high-risk disrupted actors.⁴ It was identified that high-risk disrupted actors were more likely to demonstrate leakage and anger.

- That in combination with everything seen in this study (less virtually connected, less written, bystander that does nothing) it is understandable how active shooters slip through the cracks with inaction

It was noted that there are many differences in stressors and concerning behaviors prior to attack or threat assessment. Therefore, a combination of bystander action and threat assessment team mitigation strategies can help divert potentially dangerous high-risk disrupted actors.

Bystander Actions

Odds of being an active shooter are higher if the subject had at least one bystander who did nothing when they noticed concerning behaviors. The key to threat management is others noticing concerning behaviors and giving assistance. This study highlights the potential for bystander inaction to be perceived as permission to act violently by the person of concern.

The BTAC is the only multi-agency behavioral threat team in the U.S. Government. For assistance concerning an ongoing investigation, including operational support and consultation from the BTAC, please contact your local FBI office Threat Management Coordinator (TMC).

² Silver, J., Simons, A., & Craun, S. (2018). *A study of the pre-attack behaviors of active shooters in the United States between 2000 and 2013*. Washington, DC: Federal Bureau of Investigation

³ *ibid*

⁴ Gibson, K. A., Craun, S. W., Ford, A. G., Solik, K., & Silver, J. M. (2020). Possible attackers? A comparison between the behaviors and stressors of persons of concern and active shooters. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, 7, 1-12. Doi:10.1037/tam0000147

Appendix B

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE – FBI BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS UNIT 1 (BAU-1)

Possible Attackers? A Comparison of Active Shooters and Disrupted Actors

Threat assessment teams are tasked with the challenge of assessing the level of concern that a person will go on to commit an act of targeted violence and managing/mitigating that threat. Findings illustrate several key variables help differentiate between active shooters and disrupted actors who do not commit violence. Sixty-three active shooters were compared to sixty-three disrupted actors/persons of concern (POCs) who were reported to the FBI's Behavioral Threat Assessment Center (BTAC), Behavioral Analysis Unit 1 (BAU-1), between 2012 and 2016 and did not go on to commit a mass attack as of November 2019.¹ Disrupted actors were considered "high risk" because the cases had exceeded threat assessment capabilities at the local level. They were referred to and accepted by BTAC as requiring their attention. While results reported below can provide guidance to threat investigations, statistics should not be interpreted as probabilities of an attack, but rather helpful factors to consider during threat assessment/threat management. Statistics indicative of disrupted actors having less risk do not suggest that a concerning behavior should be minimized or a case should not be referred to BTAC or handled by a multi-disciplinary threat assessment threat management team (TATM).

Summary

The two groups appear so similar in their stressors and concerning behaviors that perhaps it was the intervention of the threat assessment team and report to law enforcement ultimately that mitigated the threat. Of the 50 variables measuring stressors, subject behaviors and concerning behaviors to others, only a small portion of them were significantly different between the two groups. However, it is important to remember all variables are important to the threat assessment process.

Stressors

Active shooters are more likely to have experienced feelings of humiliation than high-risk disrupted actors. When possible to determine when the humiliating event occurred, it was most often experienced within two years of the attack.

	Active Shooters	Disrupted Actors
Experienced feelings of humiliation	52.4%	23.8%
Experienced humiliating event within 2 years prior to attack	69%	N/A

Concerning Behaviors

Active shooters are more likely to have someone recognize their violent media use than high-risk disrupted actors. However, disrupted high-risk actors are more likely to have someone recognize their anger problems and leakage than active shooters. This may be a result of isolation differences between the two groups or because violent media usage was not considered as concerning as anger problems or leakage and therefore did not result in affirmative threat mitigation.

	Active Shooters	Disrupted Actors
Violent media use	19.1%	6.4%
Anger problems	33.3%	60.3%
Leakage	55.6%	74.6%

Other Prior Behaviors

Active shooters were less likely to have a history of stalking behaviors, or a history of mental health diagnoses than high-risk disrupted actors.

	Active Shooters	Disrupted Actors
History of stalking	11.1%	38.1%
Mental health diagnosis	25.4%	47.6%

Operational Considerations

This study demonstrates what practitioners have known all along: threat assessment is complicated, nuanced, dynamic, and individualized. The results support the idea that to be disrupted, someone has to recognize and report the behavior. In cases where disruption occurred, we saw a greater level of recognition of the concerning behaviors.

¹ Gibson, K. A., Craun, S. W., Ford, A. G., Solik, K., & Silver, J. M. (2020). Possible attackers? A comparison between the behaviors and stressors of persons of concern and active shooters. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, 7, 1-12. Doi:10.1037/tam0000147

Active Shooters	
Feelings of Humiliation	During threat assessment it is important to look for a humiliating event. Humiliation is a sense of being publicly victimized and exposed to be somehow deficient, which can then lead to feelings of shame and anger. When a timeframe of the event could be determined, 69% experienced humiliation within the two years prior to the attack. When assessing threats, it is important to remember that what is "humiliating" to one person, may not be humiliating to another. The subject's feelings or reactions may seem disproportionate to their situation, but it is their perspective that matters in understanding the threat they pose. Be mindful as a stakeholder not to create a humiliating event through the threat assessment/threat management process.
Concern Due to Violent Media Content	Active shooters were more likely to have another person feel unease due to their interest in violent media (unusual interest in visual or aural depictions of violence). Bystanders may not recognize the significance of this variable without observance of other concerning behaviors (i.e., anger and leakage).
Disrupted Actors	
Concern Due to Leakage	Leakage is the intentional or unintentional sharing of one's violent plans (e.g., death, homicidal, suicidal themes). Although it is more common seen in disrupted actors, it was still seen in over half of active shooters and should always be taken seriously.
Concern Due to Anger Problems	The fact that active shooters are less likely to have others concerned about their anger may be because active shooters are more predatory and covert in their actions, increasing capability for an attack. Unlike disrupted actors whose overt anger causes concern in others, active shooters may have turned their anger into goal-directed behavior.
History of Stalking	While stalking was more often seen in the group that did not go on to complete an act of mass violence, this should not be construed as an indication that stalking should be taken lightly, but rather likely led to problematic behaviors being referred to law enforcement. If bystanders are concerned enough to refer a case to law enforcement, threat assessment teams should use due diligence in mitigating the threat and recognizing the challenges evident with this type of fixated offender. It is important to note that stalkers and active shooters share similar predatory aspects as they consider, plan, and prepare.
Mental Health Diagnosis	While an official diagnosis provides some indication of a subject's psychological state of mind, threat assessors should focus specifically on subjects' behaviors, mental wellness, and overall stressors. Awareness of a subject's state of mind, coping mechanisms, and how they handle confrontation allows for more strategic planning if the need arises to intervene or address concerns with the subject.
Suicidality/Homicidality	Bystanders ²
There is no significant difference in suicidality between the two groups, however, both show more suicidality than the general population as almost half of the active shooters had suicidal ideation/behavior sometime prior to the attack and 100% were subsequently homicidal. These results show that both groups struggle with suicidality - broadcasting the need of intervention and support from others. With targeted violence there is a thin line between suicidality and homicidality. When only examining disrupted actors, those who were suicidal were almost twice as likely to be homicidal as compared to the disrupted actors who were not suicidal. Emphasis on suicidality provides a gateway for intervention, which then assists in the prevention of homicidality.	The research on threat management is starting to illuminate different individual layers, which allows for the picture to become more clear on who may perpetrate an act of violence. Bystanders are a part of the threat assessment/threat management process and inform the threat picture. While active shooters may be more covert in their actions, research shows that they still present opportunities for intervention. The two groups appear so similar in their stressors, concerning behaviors, and other previous behaviors, this highlights the importance of bystander observations and the threat assessment/threat management process as key in preventing acts of targeted violence.
The BTAC is the only multi-agency behavioral threat team in the U.S. Government. For assistance concerning an ongoing investigation, including operational support and consultation from the BTAC, please contact your local FBI office Threat Management Coordinator (TMC).	
² Craun, S. W., Gibson, K. A., Ford, A. G., Solik, K., & Silver, J. M. (2020). (In)action: Variation in bystander responses between persons of concern and active shooters. <i>Journal of Threat Assessment and Management</i> , 7, 113-121. Doi: 10.1037/tam0000146	

^a Targeted violence is defined as an unlawful act of violence dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources, in which actors or groups intentionally target a discernible population of individuals or venue in a manner that poses a threat to homeland security based on: an apparent terrorist motive indicated by the population or venue targeted, or by the particular means of violence employed; the significance of actual or potential impacts to the Nation's economic security, public health, or public safety, or to the minimal operations of the economy and government; or the severity and magnitude of the violence or harm and impact of either upon the capabilities of state and local governments to effectively respond without Federal assistance.

^b Violent Extremism: Per the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), violent extremism is to conduct or threaten activities that are dangerous to human life in violation of the criminal laws; appearing to be intended to intimidate or coerce a population; and influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping, as per the definition of domestic terrorism in 18 U.S. Code 2331 (5). The mere advocacy of political or social positions, political activism, use of strong rhetoric, or generalized philosophic embrace of violent tactics may not constitute violent extremism and is constitutionally protected.

^c Disrupted Actors: Per FBI BAU, disrupted actors is defined as individuals who were reported to the FBI's Behavioral Threat Assessment Center (BTAC), Behavioral Analysis Unit 1 (BAU-1), between 2012 and 2016 and did not go on to commit a mass attack as of November 2019.