

EDUCATION

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EFP Takeaways

The Effects of Campus Shootings on School Finance and Student Composition

Background

Between 1999 and 2018, 210 shootings have occurred on public school campuses in the United States. While there may be an increase in resources for schools after such shootings, those resources could be crowded out by the need for security and student support. Additionally, school shootings could discourage student enrollment. Lang (Kate) Yang and Maithreyi Gopalan examine the effects of campus shootings on both school finance indicators and student composition. Their work is published in vol. 18, issue 2 of *EFP*.

The Study

To explore the impact of campus shootings on school finance, the authors use data on public school districts' revenue, expenditure, debt, and staffing. Additionally, they use school-level data on student enrollment, for both public and private schools. The authors employ difference-in-differences and event-study analyses to estimate the effect of campus shootings on per-pupil spending and school enrollment.

For more details:

- View the [full issue](#).
- See the [full article in *Education Finance and Policy*](#).
- [Sign up here to receive future *EFP Takeaways*](#).
- Summary of:
Yang, L. & Gopalan, M. (2023). The Effects of Campus Shootings on School Finance and Student Composition. *Education Finance and Policy*, 18 (2): 277-301.

Findings

The authors find that districts exposed to shootings experience an increase of about 19 percent (or ~\$129 per pupil on average) in revenues from the federal government, relative to districts that do not have campus shootings. This increase in revenue allows the districts to spend more on noninstructional activities (~\$86 per pupil or a 7 percent increase on average) including student support services, without reducing instructional spending. The short-term increase in the spending on student support services, however, does not persist over time. There is a short-term increase in the number of school support staff and guidance counselors for one or two years post-shooting; however, this increase also seems temporary.

Districts exposed to shootings also take on more debt to pay for increased capital spending. Long-run debt repayment may exert pressure on districts if the increase in federal transfers is comparatively short-lived. Concerningly, they find that the schools and districts exposed to shootings face long-lasting declines in student enrollment (4 percent drop). This decline is particularly pronounced in elementary school grades and is almost entirely driven by children from relatively better-off households. These findings on enrollment suggest that shootings further exacerbate socioeconomic segregation across schools.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of federal grants for schools in the aftermath of the shootings. But more importantly, their results also point to the need for sustained funding towards pupil support and other noninstructional expenses, as well as a holistic approach to battle the stigma effect of campus shootings, instead of a narrow focus on violence prevention that federal grants often tend to focus on.