One misconception regarding school shooters is that they typically come from stable, intact, middle- to upper-middle-class families, e.g., from "good homes." Though this is true of some perpetrators, it is not true of many of them. This document presents information on the families of some school shooters in the United States. This is far from being a complete list, including only those for whom there is information regarding their childhoods, though even this is sometimes minimal. They are listed in chronological order.

The concept of "stable, intact, middle-class families" is really several concepts that are difficult to define. For my purposes, "stable" and "intact" refer to how functional the families were, regardless of whether or not the parents’ marriage (if they had one) was legally intact. For example, Evan Ramsey’s father spent ten years in prison. During this time Ramsey’s mother became alcoholic and lived with a series of violent men. Even if the marriage were still legally intact during the father’s imprisonment (which it appears to have been), Ramsey did not grow up in an intact or a stable family.

Indicators of broken homes, instability, or dysfunction include parental absence, separation, divorce, infidelity, parental alcoholism or drug addiction, criminal behavior, domestic violence, and child abuse. Information regarding finances is often unavailable but some details are provided.

In some cases, all that is known is that the parents divorced (or separated). Despite the lack of details, it should be kept in mind that divorce or separation are often preceded by years of discord and may be the result of infidelity, domestic violence, or addiction. In addition, the process of divorcing when children are involved can be highly-charged and tumultuous for all parties.

Out of this sample of 50 school shooters, only 10 (20%) grew up in a stable home with both biological parents. In other words, 80% of the sample either grew up in dysfunctional families or without their parents together (for at least part of their lives).

| Charles Whitman               | Father beat his wife               |
|                              | Father beat his children           |
|                              | Mother left father when Whitman was adult |
| Edward Allaway               | Father alcoholic factory worker    |
| Brenda Spencer               | Parents divorced                   |
| Van Hull                     | Broken home, lived with grandmother until age 9 |
| Laurie Dann                  | [Marriage intact; no known dysfunction] |
| James Wilson                 | Four generations of mental illness, violence, and drug abuse |
|                              | Father beat him with belt, hit him in head with a can, hit him with shoes |
|                              | Father threatened to shoot him     |
|                              | Mother reportedly beat him         |
|                              | Grandparents reportedly beat him   |
|                              | When he had psychological problems, family didn’t take him to professionals, but gave him relatives’ medications (pain killers, sedatives, anti-psychotics, anti-depressants) |
Patrick Purdy  Mother married and divorced three times  Parents separated after father threatened to shoot mother  Mother was alcoholic  Mother neglected and abused him  He was removed from home temporarily due to neglect  At 13, mother kicked him out; lived on streets of Los Angeles; prostituted to survive  Later on, mother was homeless

Eric Houston  Mother physically abused by multiple relatives  Aunt molested by Houston's grandfather  Uncle killed three people in a fight  Father was violent alcoholic who cheated on his wife, fought with her, and abandoned the family  Mother was suicidal  Father re-entered Houston's life, was still alcoholic and used hard drugs

Scott Pennington  Father had severe alcoholism and drug abuse; reportedly suffered mental impairment from substances  Father beat wife  Father abused Pennington  Very poor: no telephone, toilet, or running water

Toby Sincino  Parents separated/estranged  Lived with father in trailer

Jamie Rouse  Father was severe alcoholic and drug addict  Spent night in jail four times  Fired from many jobs for drinking  Substant abuse nearly bankrupted family  Father beat kids with belt and paddle  Father punched holes in walls  Father blasted six pet cats with shotgun and flung carcasses into tree

Barry Loukaitis  Parents marriage fell apart  Father had affair  Mother told Loukaitis she planned to tie up husband and his girlfriend and kill herself in front of them

Jillian Robbins  Parents divorced  Mother married second husband  Mother divorced second husband  Mother married second husband a second time  Mother divorced second husband a second time  Father remarried

Evan Ramsey  Father in prison for ten years for armed rampage and taking hostages  Older brother arrested for armed robbery, theft, firearms charges, and assault  Mother severe alcoholic  Mother had series of violent boyfriends  Mother had boyfriend with long list of arrests, including firearms and sexual assault (was registered sex offender)  Mother arrested for drunk driving and public drunkenness  Ramsey placed in ten foster homes over two years  Abused and molested in foster home  Very poor: social worker found family in unheated apartment with outside temperature of 22 degrees below zero

Luke Woodham  Parents divorced  Woodham devastated by father's departure from his life
Michael Carneal  [Marriage intact; no known dysfunction]

Andrew Golden  [Marriage intact; no known dysfunction]

Mitchell Johnson  Parents had stormy marriage that ended in divorce
  Father smoked marijuana
  Father fired for stealing from company
  Father had explosive temper, punched holes in walls
  Father beat him; punched him in the face, threw him against walls
  Mother remarried; moved far away from ex-husband
  Johnson visited father in summers; hated and feared him

Andrew Wurst  [Marriage intact; no known dysfunction]

Kip Kinkel  [Marriage intact; no known dysfunction]

Eric Harris  [Marriage intact; no known dysfunction]

Dylan Klebold  [Marriage intact; no known dysfunction]

T. J. Solomon  Parents divorced
  Contact with father ceased at age 4
  Reported loss of father as worst thing that ever happened to him
  Mother said father abandoned her
  Father said mother left him for his best friend
  Father institutionalized for suicide risk

Seth Trickey  [Marriage intact; no known dysfunction]

Nathaniel Brazill  Parents never married
  Mother had multiple abusive relationships with men
  Stepfather beat mother, threatened her with a knife; she got PFA against him
  Stepfather assaulted Brazill
  After four years of abuse, mother got divorce
  Mother married again
  17 domestic incident reports in six years before Brazill’s shooting
  Grandfather and uncle were alcoholic
  Mother got drunk to the point of vomiting

Andy Williams  Parents divorced, lived in different parts of the country

Jason Hoffman  Parents never married
  Father was alcoholic, charged with public drunkenness and malicious mischief
  Father arrested for abusing Hoffman as toddler
  Father assaulted mother

James Sheets  Father absent throughout his life

John McLaughlin  Parents marriage rocky; separated for six months
  McLaughlin lived in fear of recurring and/or permanent separation

Jeffrey Weise  Parents never married
  Father drank
  Father killed himself in armed standoff with police
  Mother alcoholic and physically abusive
  Mother jailed for driving while intoxicated
  Mother jailed for assault
  Mother suffered brain damage in car accident
  After mother’s accident, stepfather took his two children and left Weise
  Lived variously with mother, father, relatives, and foster families
Alvaro Castillo
Mother and seven of nine siblings suffered from “severe mental illness”
Father beat mother in front of the children
Father did not believe in physicians or medicine, thought cold water cured everything;
when sick, the children had to take cold showers
At age 5, father told him childhood was over and he could no longer have friends
Mother wanted to leave, but father threatened to kill her if she did

Duane Morrison
While married, mother apparently had affair that produced him
Parents separated
Father abused him to the point of terror, beating him with fists and belt buckles
Father may have molested him (see “Duane Morrison: A Profile” on www.schoolshooters.info)
Siblings reported that childhood was “hellacious”
Mother died when he was 15
He moved in with aunt; she died a few years later

Eric Hainstock
Household was filthy
Mother may have been alcoholic
Father was unemployed
Father hit him with belt and piece of wood
Father charged with felony child abuse (charges later dropped)
Woman who dated father had two PFAs against him
Both parents reportedly “beat him, kicked him, slapped him, and threw things at him”
Father made him hold hot sauce and hot peppers in his mouth
Father made him run as punishment for so long that he wet his pants
Father worked him like a “slave” and used strange punishments
Adoptive mother physically abused him
Stepfather physically abused him
Stepbrother sexually abused him
Showed up at school with split lip, another time with no shirt, and another time “filthy
and smelling”
Mother gave up parental rights when he was 8 and abandoned him

Seung Hui Cho
[Marriage intact; no known dysfunction]

Asa Coon
Parents divorced (or never married); father not involved
Mother subject of neglect case with court
House and yard filthy
Often went to school dirty, unkempt, and poorly clothed
Social services investigated home due to scratches, burns, and flea bites
Older brothers had many charges: intimidation, burglary, assault, sale of counterfeit
drugs, firearms violations, and more
In less than two years, police made five visits to the home due to domestic violence,
assault, property crime, and a hit-and-run

Steven Kazmierczak
Parents divorced

Amy Bishop
[Marriage intact; no known dysfunction]

Bruco Eastwood
Parents divorced

Robert Butler, Jr.
Parents never married; lived together on and off for four years, and then separated permanently
T. J. Lane Parents never married
Mother and father both charged with domestic violence
Mother reportedly had drinking problem
Mother reportedly punched and bit father
Mother jailed for violent behavior
Father arrested for fighting with police officer who intervened in domestic dispute
Father imprisoned for beating and kidnapping a woman
Father held woman's head under running water and bashed it into wall, leaving a dent
Father charged with threatening to kill a woman
Father imprisoned for attacking a woman for nine hours in front of three young children
Father charged with attempted murder and felonious assault
Lane lived variously with parents and both sets of grandparents

Adam Lanza Parents divorced
Estranged from father and brother

John Zawahri Father beat mother
Father threatened to kill mother and take the children
Mother left father
Mother had restraining order
Father stalked mother, showing up at her apartment and workplace

Jose Reyes Father violent toward mother
Reyes witnessed domestic violence
Father had affair
Mother discovered affair and separated
Father moved in with other woman, broke off contact with children
Mother wanted a divorce, but feared for her life
Parents eventually reconciled
Father hit him, once so badly that he was arrested and charged with child abuse

Karl Pierson Parents divorced

Elliot Rodger Parents divorced

Aaron Ybarra Father arrested five times for drunk driving
Father incarcerated after third DUI
Father convicted of failing to obey an officer, driving with a suspended license, and violating ignition interlock on vehicle
Father tried to kill himself: drank a bottle of whiskey and slit his throat with a knife
Father embezzled $400,000 from trust fund for relative

Jared Padgett Parents separated

Jaylen Fryberg During Jaylen's early years, father had child with another woman (not Jaylen's mother)
Father committed domestic violence against the other woman (she got a PFA)
Father violated PFA against the woman when Jaylen was 13

Myron May Broken home
Moved in with grandmother at age 12

Chris Harper-Mercer Parents struggled financially
Filed for bankruptcy in 1992
Parents divorced
Father filed for bankruptcy in 2002