



# MITIGATING ATTACKS ON HOUSES OF WORSHIP - SECURITY GUIDE

## OVERVIEW

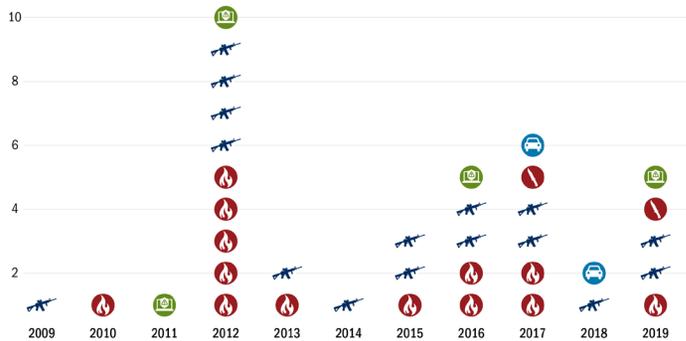
Acts of targeted violence against houses of worship are a real—and potentially growing—problem in the United States and a top priority for the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). As the Nation’s risk advisor, CISA has prepared the *Mitigating Attacks on Houses of Worship – Security Guide* based on original analysis to help houses of worship develop a comprehensive security strategy to mitigate future incidents.

The guide is available with CISA’s suite of resources for [Faith Based Organizations and Houses of Worship](#).

## ANALYTICAL FINDINGS

To better understand the nature of the problem, CISA drew on open source research to compile 37 incidents of targeted violence covering the ten-year period from 2009 to 2019. The analysis drawn from these case studies directly informs the guidance presented here and reveals several noteworthy trends.

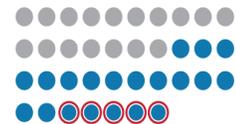
- CISA observed a significant spike in incidents of targeted violence in 2012 and a discernible increase in the number of incidents between 2015 and 2019.



### 37 incidents

64 fatalities

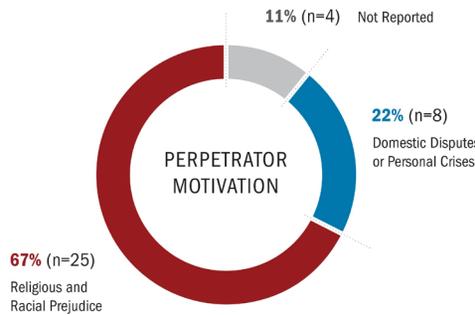
59 injured



- Incident Types**
- Active Shooter
  - Arson/Bombing
  - Stabbing
  - Vehicle Ramming
  - Cyber Attack

**54% (n=20) were armed assaults, five qualified as mass shootings**

- CISA determined that 67 percent (n=25) of the attacks were motivated by hatred of a racial or religious identity associated with the targeted house of worship, and that 22 percent (n=8) were connected to a domestic dispute or personal crisis. The motivation for the remaining 11 percent (n=4) is unknown. Of the 36 known perpetrators in these incidents, 58 percent (n=21) engaged in some form of planning behavior indicating their intention to carry out an attack.



### 36 identified perpetrators

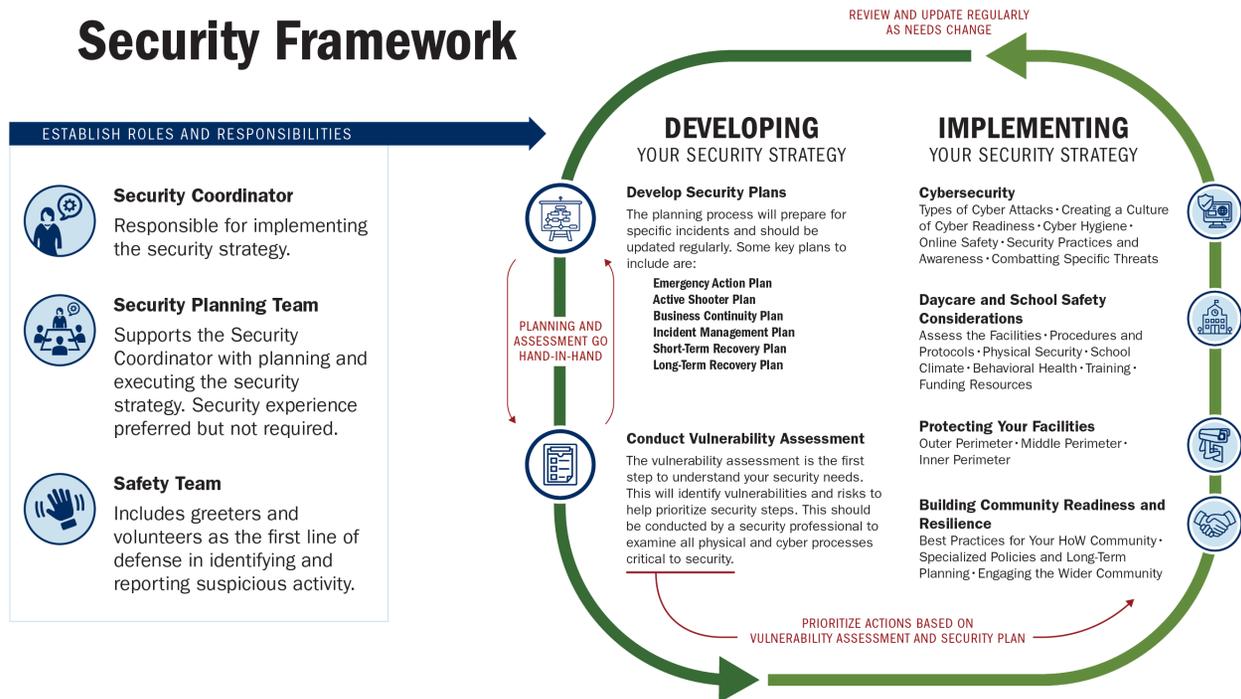


**58% (n=21) engaged in planning behavior**

Within this analysis, CISA also describes several commonly used tactics and methods demonstrated by the perpetrators. These tactics and methods point to specific areas of vulnerability that houses of worship can address through the security framework included within this guide. The bottom line is that *houses of worship can best protect themselves by adopting a comprehensive and multi-layered security strategy.*

## SAFEGUARDING HOUSES OF WORSHIP

CISA encourages all houses of worship to assess their current security policies and posture and offers the following framework as a guide to developing and implementing a robust strategy to safeguard life and property. This framework is designed to be adapted to the unique circumstances of every house of worship, and CISA encourages every organization and community to reevaluate their needs and revise their security practices on a regular basis.



These security options will not deter every threat to a house of worship, but a comprehensive approach offers the best solution to protect people, property, and data from an attack. Houses of worship should tailor this knowledge to the needs of their communities while maintaining the open and welcoming atmosphere that makes houses of worship a critical part of the social fabric of the United States.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**Connect with CISA:** [cisa.gov/publication/cisa-services-catalog](https://cisa.gov/publication/cisa-services-catalog)

**Connect with a Protective Security Advisor:** [cisa.gov/protective-security-advisors](https://cisa.gov/protective-security-advisors)

**Connect with CISA's Resources for Faith Based Organizations:** [cisa.gov/faith-based-organizations-houses-worship](https://cisa.gov/faith-based-organizations-houses-worship)

**Apply CISA's Houses of Worship Security Self-Assessment:** [cisa.gov/publication/houses-worship-security-self-assessment](https://cisa.gov/publication/houses-worship-security-self-assessment)

**Utilize the Power of Hello:** [cisa.gov/employee-vigilance-power-hello](https://cisa.gov/employee-vigilance-power-hello)

**Watch CISA's Protecting Houses of Worship Video:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPhOHOC7cio](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPhOHOC7cio)

For more information or to seek additional help, contact us at [Central@cisa.gov](mailto:Central@cisa.gov).