Police Involved Civilian Homicides in the U.S. in 2015

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Introduction

Police involved civilian homicides in the United States is the subject of a series published by *The Guardian,* The Counted compiles media reports of homicides resulting from police encounters in the United States. You can explore the data interactively at Interactive. The version used in this paper is dated 2016-08-16.

The Data

The deaths in 2015 represent 1,146 of the current population of the United States, approximately 320,000,000, a vanishingly small percentage. As a percentage of all homicides in 2014, the death represents approximately 7.02%. *See* National Center for Health Statistics, Health, United States, 2015: With Special Feature on Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, Table 17

The database provides[1] information on 2015 police involved civilian homicides and year-to-date 2016 data.

[1] The Counted

Table 1: Source data

Fields	
uid	name
age	gender
raceethnicity	month
day	year
streetaddress	city
state	classification
lawenforcementagency	armed

in CSV (comma separated value form).

"Classification" is the cause of death and "armed" is whether and how the civilian was armed

Short Summary of the Data

A total of 1,146 police involved homicides are reported in the database.[2]

[2] The Counted

Gender

Approximately 95 percent of deaths were men.[3]. Gender of one death was reported as "non-conforming," possibly representing the delays involved in revising reporting systems to account for transgendered citizens.

[3] The Counted

Gender	%
Female	4.62
Male	95.29
Non-conforming	0.09

Table 2: Deaths by Gender

Race/Ethnicity

White deaths are under-represented compared to the national population.[4]. White, non-Hispanic population in 2014 was 62.2%. Census Projections

[4] The Counted

Race/ethnicity	%
Arab-American	0.35
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.09
Black	26.70
Hispanic/Latino	17.02
Native American	1.13
Other	0.09
Unknown	1.92
White	50.70

Table 3: Deaths by race/ethnicity

Age

DEATHS WERE OF ALL AGES [5]. The youngest death was 6 and the oldest, 87. The median age of death (half older and half younger) was 35, and the mean (average) age of death was approximately 37.

[5] The Counted

Table 4: Deaths by age group

Age	%	Age	%	Age	%
5-9	0.09	40-44	8.38	70-74	0.61
15-19	5.15	45-49	9.86	75-79	0.61
20-24	12.83	50-54	7.33	80-84	0.09
25-29	16.06	55-59	5.50	85-89	0.17
30-34	15.45	60-64	3.58	Unknown	0.35
35-39	12.74	65-69	1.22		

Cause of Death

GUNSHOTS ARE THE LEADING CAUSE OF POLICE INVOLVED CIVILIAN HOMICIDES, representing 88.83% of all deaths.[6]

[6] The Counted

Table 5: Deaths by cause

Cause	%
Death in custody	4.10
Gunshot	88.83
Other	0.09
Struck by vehicle	2.71
Taser	4.28

How and whether civilians were armed

CIVILIAN FIREARMS WERE THE MOST COMMON CATEGORY INVOLVED, BUT UNARMED CIVILIANS WERE THE NEXT MOST COMMON, representing 48.43% and 20.07% of all deaths, respectively.[7]

[7] The Counted

Table 6: Deaths by whether and how civilian was armed

Armed	%
Disputed	0.26
Firearm	48.43
Knife	13.35
No	20.07
Non-lethal firearm	4.10
Other	5.41
Unknown	4.54
Vehicle	3.84

Location

MORE DEATHS OCCURRED IN CALIFORNIA THAN IN ANY OTHER STATE, representing 18.41% of all deaths, which is disproportionately higher than its national share of population, 12.07%. American Fact Finder.

Table 7: Deaths by State

State	%	State	%	State	%	State	%
AK	0.44	ID	0.70	MT	0.35	RI	0.09
AL	1.66	IL	2.01	NC	2.27	SC	1.83
AR	0.44	IN	1.83	ND	0.09	SD	0.17
AZ	3.84	KS	0.96	NE	0.79	TN	1.83
CA	18.41	KY	1.66	NH	0.26	TX	9.77
CO	2.79	LA	2.36	NJ	2.09	UT	0.87
CT	0.35	MA	0.87	NM	1.83	VA	1.92
DC	0.61	MD	1.48	NV	1.66	VT	0.09
DE	0.35	ME	0.17	NY	2.27	WA	2.01
FL	6.20	MI	1.75	OH	3.23	WI	1.05
GA	3.40	MN	1.13	OK	3.23	WV	1.05
HI	0.44	MO	1.83	OR	1.48	WY	0.52
IA	0.44	MS	1.05	PA	2.09		

Months and Days of Death

NATIONALLY, DEATHS WERE SPREAD APPROXIMATELY EVENLY among months, days of the week, days of the month and phases of the moon. *There was at least one death on 342 days of the year,* 93.7% of all days. The median number of deaths per day was 3, and the mean number of deaths was slightly larger, 3.35. On 7 days, there were 8 deaths.

Table 8: Dates with highest number of deaths

Date
March 27, 2015
April 21, 2015
September 21, 2015
October 15, 2015
October 24, 2015
December 14, 2015
December 21, 2015

June had the fewest deaths, 80, 6.98%, and July had the most deaths, 124, 10.82%.

Table 9: Deaths by month

Month	%
January	7.94
February	7.24
March	9.86
April	8.90
May	7.50
June	6.98
July	10.82
August	8.90
September	8.46
October	7.94
November	7.24
December	8.20

The day of the month with the fewest deaths was day 31, and the day of the month with the most deaths was day 21

Table 10: Deaths by days of month

Day of month	%	Day	%	Day	%	Day	%
1	2.36	9	3.66	17	4.10	25	2.88
2	2.88	10	3.32	18	2.18	26	3.05
3	3.32	11	3.14	19	2.79	27	3.23
4	3.23	12	3.23	20	3.14	28	3.05
5	3.66	13	3.32	21	4.89	29	2.71
6	4.10	14	3.58	22	3.66	30	2.88
7	2.71	15	4.19	23	3.40	31	1.57
8	3.58	16	3.23	24	2.97		

The day of the week with the fewest deaths was Sunday, 12.65%, and the day of the month with the most deaths was Wednesday, 15.79%.

Table 11: Deaths by day of week

Day of week	%
Monday	13.96
Tuesday	14.92
Wednesday	15.79
Thursday	15.01
Friday	14.75
Saturday	12.91
Sunday	12.65

Folk wisdom attributes increased crime and other aberations to the full moon; *see Lunacy and the Full Moon*. However, deaths are approximately evenly distributed over the phases of the moon.

Table 12: Deaths by phase of moon

Lunar phase	%
New	25.57
Waxing	24.87
Full	23.82
Waning	25.74

Cause of Death and Civilian Armed Status

Cause of Death	Disputed %	Firearm %	Knife %	No %
Death in custody	.	0.09	.	3.84
Gunshot	0.26	48.17	13.26	9.69
Other	.	.	.	0.09
Struck by vehicle	.	0.09	.	2.53
Taser	.	0.09	0.09	3.93

Table 13: Deaths by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part A.

Cause of Death	Non-lethal firearm %	Other %	Unknown %	Vehicle %
Death in custody	.	0.09	0.09	.
Gunshot	4.10	5.15	4.36	3.84
Other	.	.	.	.
Struck by vehicle	.	.	0.09	.
Taser	.	0.17	.	.

Table 14: Deaths by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part B.

Of the 1,146 deaths, 53 were women, approximately 4.62%. All but 6 of those deaths were white or black.

Cause of Death	Disputed %	Firearm %	Knife %	No %
Death in custody	.	.	.	1.89
Gunshot	.	41.51	20.75	9.43
Other	.	.	.	.
Struck by vehicle	.	.	.	13.21
Taser	.	.	.	1.89

Table 15: Deaths of women by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part A

Cause of Death	Non-lethal firearm %	Other %	Unknown %	Vehicle %
Death in custody	.	.	.	.
Gunshot	1.89	.	1.89	7.55
Other	.	.	.	.
Struck by vehicle	.	.	.	.
Taser	.	.	.	.

Table 16: Deaths of women by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part B

Of the 53 deaths of women, 35, approximately 66.04% were white. Tables show percentages of deaths among white women.

Cause of Death	Disputed %	Firearm %	Knife %	No %
Death in custody	.	.	.	.
Gunshot	.	51.43	11.43	8.57
Other	.	.	.	.
Struck by vehicle	.	.	.	14.29
Taser	.	.	.	.

Table 17: Deaths of white women by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part A

Cause of Death	Non-lethal firearm %	Other %	Unknown %	Vehicle %
Death in custody	.	.	.	.
Gunshot	2.86	.	2.86	8.57
Other	.	.	.	.
Struck by vehicle	.	.	.	.
Taser	.	.	.	.

Table 18: Deaths of white women by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part B

Of the 53 deaths of women, 12, approximately 22.64% were black. Tables show percentages of deaths among black women.

Cause of Death	Disputed %	Firearm %	Knife %	No %
Death in custody	.	.	.	.
Gunshot	.	25.00	33.33	16.67
Other	.	.	.	.
Struck by vehicle	.	.	.	8.33
Taser	.	.	.	8.33

Table 19: Deaths of black women by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part A

Cause of Death	Non-lethal firearm %	Other %	Unknown %	Vehicle %
Death in custody	.	.	.	.
Gunshot	.	.	.	8.33
Other	.	.	.	.
Struck by vehicle	.	.	.	.
Taser	.	.	.	.

Table 20: Deaths of black women by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part B

Of the 1,146 deaths, 1,092 were men, approximately 95.29%.

Cause of Death	Disputed %	Firearm %	Knife %	No %
Death in custody	.	0.09	.	3.94
Gunshot	0.27	48.53	12.91	9.62
Other	.	.	.	0.09
Struck by vehicle	.	0.09	.	2.01
Taser	.	0.09	0.09	4.03

Table 21: Deaths of men by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part A

Cause of Death	Non-lethal firearm %	Other %	Unknown %	Vehicle %
Death in custody	.	0.09	0.09	.
Gunshot	4.21	5.40	4.49	3.66
Other	.	.	.	.
Struck by vehicle	.	.	0.09	.
Taser	.	0.18	.	.

Table 22: Deaths of men by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part B

Of the 1,092 deaths of men, 546, approximately 50%, were white. Tables show percentages of deaths among white men.

Cause of Death	Disputed %	Firearm %	Knife %	No %
Death in custody	.	.	.	3.11
Gunshot	.	52.93	11.72	8.06
Other	.	.	.	.
Struck by vehicle	.	.	.	2.75
Taser	.	.	.	3.66

Table 23: Deaths of white men by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part A

Cause of Death	Non-lethal firearm %	Other %	Unknown %	Vehicle %
Death in custody	.	.	.	.
Gunshot	4.95	4.95	4.76	3.11
Other	.	.	.	.
Struck by vehicle	.	.	.	.
Taser	.	.	.	.

Table 24: Deaths of white men by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part B

Of the 1,092 deaths of men, 294, approximately 26.92%, were black. Tables show percentages of deaths among black men.

Cause of Death	Disputed %	Firearm %	Knife %	No %
Death in custody	.	0.34	.	5.44
Gunshot	0.68	45.24	11.22	12.93
Other	.	.	.	0.34
Struck by vehicle	.	0.34	.	1.36
Taser	.	0.34	0.34	5.44

Table 25: Deaths of black men by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part A

Cause of Death	Non-lethal firearm %	Other %	Unknown %	Vehicle %
Death in custody	.	0.34	0.34	.
Gunshot	2.72	4.08	2.72	5.44
Other	.	.	.	.
Struck by vehicle	.	.	0.34	.
Taser	.	.	.	.

Table 26: Deaths of black men by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part B

Of the 1,092 deaths of men, 191, approximately 17.49%, were hispanic. Tables show percentages of deaths among hispanic men.

Cause of Death	Disputed %	Firearm %	Knife %	No %
Death in custody	.	.	.	2.62
Gunshot	0.52	43.46	16.75	10.47
Other	.	.	.	.
Struck by vehicle	.	.	.	1.57
Taser	.	.	.	3.14

Table 27: Deaths of hispanic men by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part A

Cause of Death	Non-lethal firearm %	Other %	Unknown %	Vehicle %
Death in custody	.	.	.	.
Gunshot	4.71	7.85	5.24	3.14
Other	.	.	.	.
Struck by vehicle	.	.	.	.
Taser	.	0.52	.	.

Table 28: Deaths of hispanic men by whether and how officers and civilians were armed, part B

Geographic Analysis of the Data

One way to look at the data geopgrahically is to map the number of deaths by state. In **??** and **??**, we tabulated percentages of deaths occurring by state. We can also show the *numbers*.

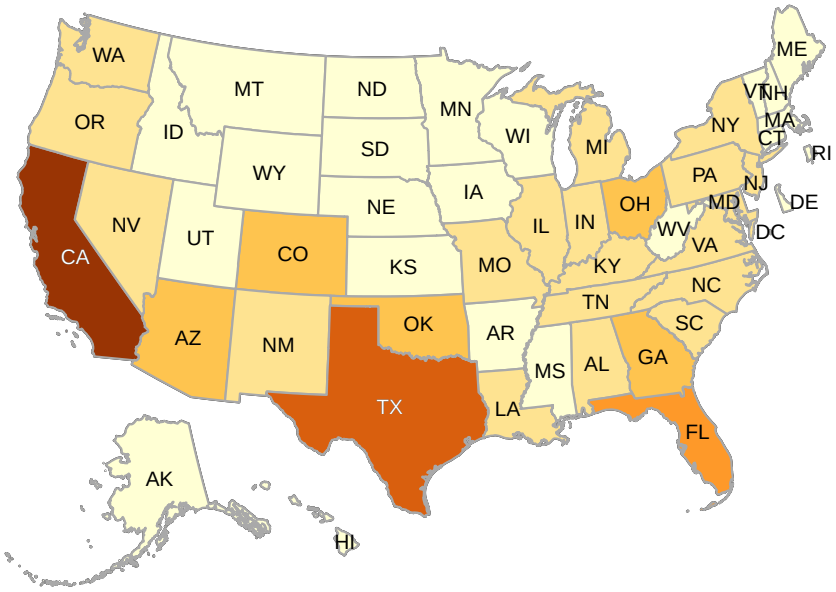
Table 29: Number of Deaths by State

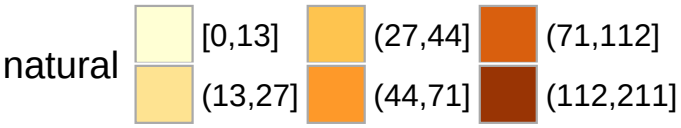
State	Number	State	Number	State	Number	State	Number
AK	5	ID	8	MT	4	RI	1
AL	19	IL	23	NC	26	SC	21
AR	5	IN	21	ND	1	SD	2
AZ	44	KS	11	NE	9	TN	21
CA	211	KY	19	NH	3	TX	112
CO	32	LA	27	NJ	24	UT	10
CT	4	MA	10	NM	21	VA	22
DC	7	MD	17	NV	19	VT	1
DE	4	ME	2	NY	26	WA	23
FL	71	MI	20	OH	37	WI	12
GA	39	MN	13	OK	37	WV	12
HI	5	MO	21	OR	17	WY	6
IA	5	MS	12	PA	24		

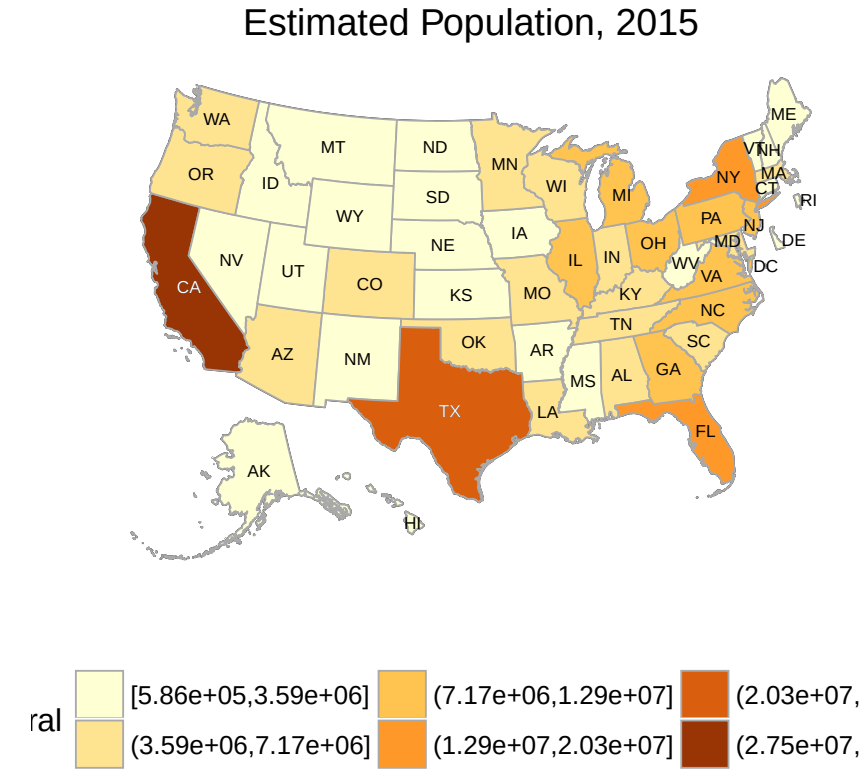
Many Datasets are Distributed Similarly to Population

Counts of some features often parallel counts of population. As a result, a map that shows the raw counts may be difficult to distinguish from a map of population. For example

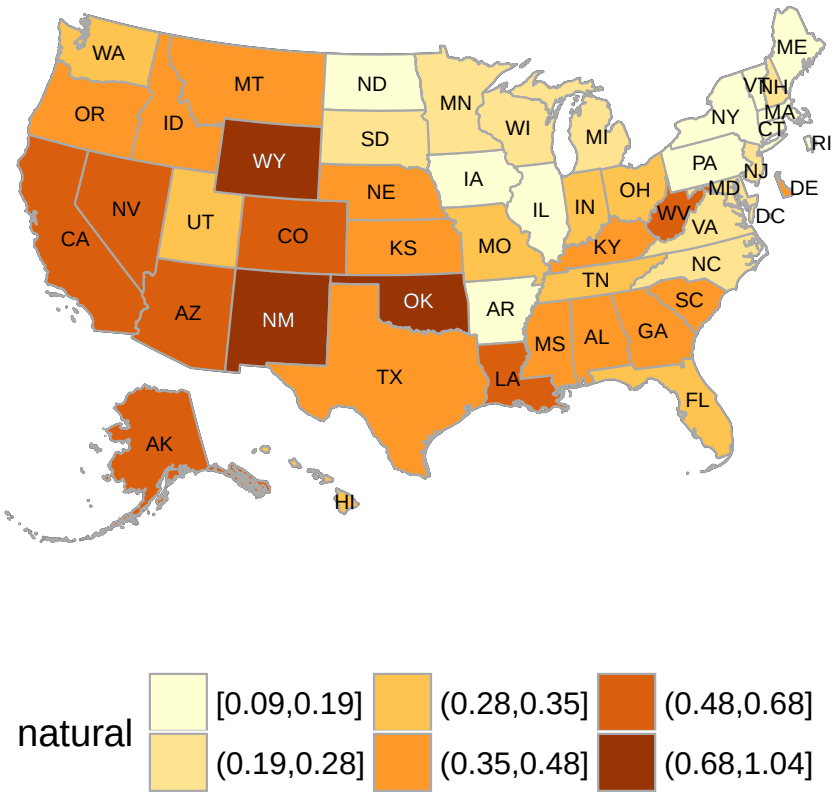
Police Involved Civilian Homicides, 2015







Comparing Figures [tk] police involved civilian homicides are approximately proportional to state population. Some states, such as New York, have fewer police involved civilian homicides than would be expected based only on population, while other states, such as Oklahoma, have more. However, the ratios of police involved civilian homicides per hundred thousand population is a much different picture, showing strong regional differences.



In general, states west of the Mississippi River have higher rates of police involved civilian homicides. North Dakota's low rate is an exception in the West, while Louisiana and West Virigia have higher rates than the other states in the East.

What conclusions can we draw from the short, national summary?

Before attempting an answer, it would be well to remember that the United States is composed of 50 states and the District of Columbia, many of which has hundreds or thousands of separate law enforement agencies that operate in communities that range in diversity from little at all to very diverse in terms of national origin, ethnicity, duration of residence and that may have relatively high or relatively low unemployment and relatively different perspectives on law enforcement.

In short, these data are best to pose questions, rather than to provide answers. For example 13.21% of deaths of women involved situations in which the woman was unarmed and struck by a vehicle.

- Hue Dang
- Nuwnah Laroche
- Barbara Ramey
- Kimberly Bedford
- Kylie Lindsey
- Isabella Chinchilla
- Bendetta 'Lynn' Miller

In reviewing the related news reports, these deaths were accidental in nature (striking pedestrian in intersection, striking pedestrians walking on highway, for example). In one case [8], the officer was convicted of a serious traffic offense for hitting a pedestrian while speeding without lights or siren. Thus, although the relative proportion, 13.21%, of unarmed women struck by vehicles is notable, these deaths are quite unlike deaths inflicted by gunshot on unarmed civilians. Without the addition of facts in addition to those from from news accounts, the 13.21% figure, by itself, is misleading.

[8] Kimberly Bedford

For another example, 4.28% of all deaths were caused by Tasers. Among women, however, only 1.89% were due to Tasers. Yet, among white women 0% of deaths were due to Tasers while 8.33% of deaths of black women were Taser inflicted. That was the death of Natasha McKenna, who was a mentally ill, 5'4" tall, 180-pound woman in handcuffs and leg shackles. Six deputies were attempting to transfer her from a jail cell and administered 4 Taser shocks that proved fatal. The coroner ruled the death accidental. A comprehensive report details the circumstances involved in the administration of the Taser shocks and the difficulties in physically controlling the prisoner that led to the decisions to administer each of them.

Among all women, a single case of death in custody was reported, Jennifer Lobato, an hispanic woman who died from lack of timely medical attention after complaining of feeling unwell. The outside contractor providing medical services decided to delay services until the regularly scheduled evening rounds. Lobato died shortly after the start of rounds before being seen.

The deaths of two women, one[9] and the other[10] are similar in that they were both related to medical treatment in custody (one was being attempted to be transferred to a medical facility; the other died waiting medical attention).

[9] Natasha McKenna
[10] Jennifer Lobato

Percentages of deaths of white and black women killed by police gunshot while in vehicles are comparable. See table TK.

- Alice Brown

- Mya Hall
- Karen Janks
- Christie Cathers

All of the cases of deaths of women in vehicles by police gunshot involved situations in which the drivers were endangering the lives of civilians or officers.

In the one case of a woman, Candace Blakley, classified as "unknown" as to whether she was armed, the cause of death was the unintentional discharge of a rifle by her husband, an officer, off duty at home. The officer was charged with involuntary manslaughter.

There was one case of a woman, Shelly Lynn Haendiges who died by police gunshot when she pointed a pellet gun at him in the course of an armed robbery. The prosecutor did not charge the officer; one of the factors appeared to be that the pellet gun closely resembled an actual semi-automatic pistol. The family supported the officer's action, and attributed the death to their family member's mental illness.

All other causes of deaths of women involve gunshots in situations in which the women were either armed with firearms or knives or were unarmed. Percentages of white women armed with firearms were approximately twice those of black women; percentages of black women armed with knives were approximately three times those of white women. The percentages of unarmed white and black women killed by gunshot are comparable.

In deaths involving civilians armed with knives:

- Kristiana Coignard
- Tiffany Terry
- Janisha Fonville
- Jessica Uribe
- Monique Deckard
- Meagan Hockaday
- Nikki Burtsfield
- Redel Jones
- Norma Guzman
- Phyllis Jepsen
- Siolosega Velega-Nuufolau

each involved situations in which the civilian threatened the officer with a knife; many of these civilians were afflicted with mental illnesses or under the influence of various substances.

The largest category of deaths of women involved death by police gunshot was in situations in which the woman was armed with a firearm.

- Yuvette Henderson
- Betty Sexton
- Crystal Miley
- Stephanie Hill
- Kaylene Stone
- Deanne Choate
- Alexia Christian
- Cassandra Bolin
- Wendy Chappell
- Tamala Satre
- Tina Money
- Margaret Wagner
- Michelle Burg
- Linda Lush
- Marquesha McMillan
- Laura Lemieux
- Somer Speer
- Tashfeen Malik
- Sheilah Huck
- Shirley Weis
- Brenda Kimberling
- Erica Lauro

The circumstances surrounding these deaths range from exchange of gunfire with a mass shooter, to armed robberies to civilians suffering mental disorders, under the influence of alcohol or other drugs and other situations involving civilians armed with firearms whose actions threatened police or bystanders.

Among women, this leaves police involved homicides by gunshot in which the civilian was unarmed. Three of the women were white and two were black.

- Autumn Steele
- Christina Prestianni
- Tamara Seidle
- India Kager
- Bettie Jones

Of these five deaths, two involved off-duty officers killing their girlfriend and wife, respectively; one death occurred when the driver was accidentially shot during a gun fight between her passenger and police; and one death occurred when a woman was accidentally shot as police shot at a young man holding a baseball bat in circumstances. The remaining death was also accidental. It involved a domestic dispute in the couple's front yard. The officer was talking

to the husband. The wife,[11], and a large dog ran out of the house. The dog knocked over the officer. Neither owner restrained the dog. The officer shot to protect himself from the dog and hit the wife by accident.

[11] Autumn Steele

In the only case involving a "non-conforming" civilian Jesse or Jessie Herandez, police killed the transgender driver of a car moving toward an officer in an attempt to avoid an investigation. The department, as a result, changed its policy to declassify vehicles as deadly weapons justifying the response of deadly force in most cases.

Most of the police involved civilian homicides involving deaths of women were of white or black women.Based on her Samoan given and surname, one woman[12] should be classified as "Asian/Pacific Islander" and another[13] should be classified as "Arab-American" as a Pakistani-born person.)

(

[12] Siolosega Velega-Nuufolau

[13] Tashfeen Malik

Table 30: Deaths of Women by Race/Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity	Number
Asian/Pacific Islander	2
Black	12
Hispanic/Latino	3
Unknown	1
White	35

Although police involved civilian homicides involving deaths of women represents less than 5% of all police involved civilian homicides in 2015, it is notable how few are problematic in the sense that they involved an apparent racial animus or a serious lack of judgment on the part of the police. In most cases, we are solely dependent on news accounts of the facts and circumstances; full-scale investigations or trials could lead to different conclusions regarding whether a particular application of deadly force was justified. With few exceptions, such as the woman[14], for example, who was an unintended fatality of a police shooting of a young black man in disputed circumstances, the 2015 police involved civilian homicides of women do not raise questions of a pattern of police misconduct taken as a whole.

[14] Bettie Jones

The proportions of deaths by gunshot of white and black women, for example, are not statistically different. In the table below, *trial* indicates the numbers of black and white women who died in police related homicides. See **??**.

Table 31: 2-sample test for equality of proportions with continuity correction: `outcome out of trial`

Test statistic	df	P value	Alternative hypothesis
6.312e-31	1	1	two.sided