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Violence Policy Center

Black Homicide Victimization in the United States

An Analysis of 2014 Homicide Data

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THE EPIDEMIC OF BLACK HOMICIDE VICTIMIZATION

The devastation homicide inflicts on black teens and adults is a national crisis, yet it is all too often ignored outside of affected communities.

This study examines the problem of black homicide victimization at the state level by analyzing unpublished Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data for black homicide victimization submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).¹ The information used for this report is for the year 2014 and is the most recent data available. This is the first analysis of the 2014 data on black homicide victims to offer breakdowns of cases in the 10 states with the highest black homicide victimization rates and the first to rank the states by the rate of black homicide victims.

It is important to note that the SHR data used in this report comes from law enforcement reporting at the local level. While there are coding guidelines followed by the law enforcement agencies, the amount of information submitted to the SHR system, and the interpretation that results in the information submitted (for example, gang involvement) will vary from agency to agency. While this study utilizes the best and most recent data available, it is limited by the quantity and degree of detail in the information submitted².

NATIONAL DATA

According to the FBI SHR data, in 2014 there were 6,095 black homicide victims in the United States. The homicide rate among black victims in the United States was 16.38 per 100,000. For that year, the overall national homicide rate was 4.19 per 100,000. For whites, the national homicide rate was 2.52 per 100,000. Additional information contained in the FBI SHR data on black homicide victimization is below.

GENDER

Of the 6,095 black homicide victims, 5,263 (86 percent) were male, and 829 (14 percent) were female. The homicide rate for black male victims was 29.54 per 100,000. In comparison, the overall rate for male homicide victims was 6.70 per 100,000. For white male homicide victims it was 3.65 per 100,000. The homicide rate for female black victims was 4.28 per 100,000. In comparison, the overall rate for female homicide victims was 1.73 per 100,000. For white female homicide victims it was 1.41 per 100,000.

- 1 The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program collects basic information on serious crimes from participating police agencies and records supplementary information about the circumstances of homicides in its unpublished Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR). Submitted monthly, supplementary data consists of: the age, sex, race, and ethnicity of both victims and offenders; the types of weapons used; the relationship of victims to offenders; and, the circumstances of the homicides. According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program, supplementary data are provided on only a subset of homicide cases. Additionally, SHR data are updated throughout the year as homicide reports are forwarded by state UCR programs.
- 2 In 2014, as in years past, the state of Florida did not submit any data to the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report. Also in 2014, data from Alabama was not available from the FBI. Data from Florida and Alabama was not requested individually because the difference in collection techniques would create a bias in the study results. In addition, according to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, limited SHR data was received from Illinois for 2014.

AGE

Four hundred eighty black homicide victims (eight percent) were less than 18 years old and 140 black homicide victims (two percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 31 years old.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 83 percent of black victims (4,800 out of 5,773) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 73 percent (3,506 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 573 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 214 victims killed by bodily force, and 124 victims killed by a blunt object. In comparison, 64 percent of white victims and 74 percent of victims of all races were killed with guns.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 72 percent of black victims (1,966 out of 2,746) were killed by someone they knew. Seven hundred eighty victims were killed by strangers.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 71 percent (2,581 out of 3,645) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 50 percent (1,291 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender, and 16 percent (424 homicides) were reported to be gang-related.

Of these gang-related homicides, 30 percent (129 homicides) were in California, which may be in part due to more comprehensive reporting. In California, 55 percent of non-felony related homicides of black victims were reported to be gang-related.

There were 115 incidents reported as justifiable homicides of black victims killed by law enforcement in 2014. The SHR does not specifically identify killings by law enforcement that are *not* ruled justifiable. In the wake of controversial incidents of black citizens killed by law enforcement, media reports have focused on the lack of reliable statistics on lethal incidents involving law enforcement.³ In December 2015, the FBI announced that it would dramatically expand its data collection on violent police encounters by 2017.⁴ In October 2016, the U.S. Department of Justice outlined a plan to improve the collection of law enforcement use of force data.⁵

STATE RANKINGS

In 2014, the national black homicide victimization rate was 16.38 per 100,000. For that year, Missouri ranked first as the state with the highest black homicide victimization rate. Its rate of 34.98 per 100,000 was more than double the national average for black homicide victimization. The 10 states with the highest black homicide victimization rates are listed in the following chart. Additional information for each of these states can be found in Appendix One, including: age and gender of victims; most common weapons used; relationship of victim to offender; and, the circumstances of the homicides. According to the SHR data, 19 states had a black homicide victimization rate higher than the national per capita rate of 16.38 per 100,000. For an alphabetical listing of all states that submitted data to the FBI, please see Appendix Two.

3 See, for example, "Nobody knows how many Americans the police kill each year," *fivethirtyeight.com*, August 19, 2014; "How many police shootings a year? No one knows," *The Washington Post*, September 8, 2014.

4 "FBI to sharply expand system for tracking fatal police shootings," *The Washington Post*, December 8, 2015.

5 "Justice Department Outlines Plan to Enable Nationwide Collection of Use of Force Data," Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs, October 13, 2016 (<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-outlines-plan-enable-nationwide-collection-use-force-data>).

NUMBER OF BLACK HOMICIDE VICTIMS AND RATES BY STATE IN 2014, RANKED BY RATE

Ranking	State	Number of Homicides	Homicide Rate per 100,000
1	Missouri	250	34.98
2	Indiana	186	29.49
3	New Mexico	15	28.48
4	Nebraska	26	28.17
5	Pennsylvania	387	26.07
6	Michigan	360	25.52
7	Alaska	7	24.29
8	Wisconsin	91	24.04
9	Nevada	58	22.44
10	Louisiana	332	21.98

CONCLUSION

Blacks in the United States are disproportionately affected by homicide. For the year 2014, blacks represented 13 percent of the nation's population, yet accounted for 50 percent of all homicide victims.⁶

The devastation homicide inflicts on black teens and adults is a national crisis that should be a top priority for policymakers to address. An important part of ending our nation's gun violence epidemic will involve reducing homicides in the African-American community.

For black victims of homicide, like all victims of homicide, guns — usually handguns — are far and away the number-one murder tool. Successful efforts to reduce America's black homicide toll, like America's homicide toll as a whole, must put a focus on reducing access and exposure to firearms.

⁶ FBI Supplementary Homicide Report 2014, U.S. Census Bureau population estimates.

Appendix One: Additional Information for the 10 States with the Highest Rates of Black Homicide Victimization

Missouri

There were 250 black homicide victims in Missouri in 2014.

The homicide rate among black victims in Missouri was 34.98 per 100,000 in 2014.

Ranked 1st in the United States

Age	Twenty-two homicide victims (9 percent) were less than 18 years old and 1 victim (less than 1 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 29 years old.
Gender	Out of 250 homicide victims, 217 were male and 33 were female.
Most Common Weapons	For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 87 percent of victims (216 out of 247) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 52 percent (112 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 89 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 16 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 7 victims killed by bodily force, and 4 victims killed by a blunt object.
Victim/Offender Relationship	For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 75 percent of victims (58 out of 77) were killed by someone they knew. Nineteen victims were killed by strangers.
Circumstance	For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 64 percent (62 out of 97) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 77 percent (48 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Indiana

There were 186 black homicide victims in Indiana in 2014.

The homicide rate among black victims in Indiana was 29.49 per 100,000 in 2014.

Ranked 2nd in the United States

Age	Eighteen homicide victims (10 percent) were less than 18 years old and 2 victims (1 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 29 years old.
Gender	Out of 186 homicide victims, 164 were male and 22 were female.
Most Common Weapons	For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 85 percent of victims (150 out of 177) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 76 percent (114 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 29 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 12 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 7 victims killed by bodily force, and 4 victims killed by a blunt object.
Victim/Offender Relationship	For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 81 percent of victims (70 out of 86) were killed by someone they knew. Sixteen victims were killed by strangers.
Circumstance	For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 45 percent (51 out of 113) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 49 percent (25 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

New Mexico

There were 15 black homicide victims in New Mexico in 2014.

The homicide rate among black victims in New Mexico was 28.48 per 100,000 in 2014.

Ranked 3rd in the United States

Age	The average age was 32 years old.
Gender	Out of 15 homicide victims, 12 were male and 3 were female.
Most Common Weapons	For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 79 percent of victims (11 out of 14) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 27 percent (3 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 8 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There was 1 victim killed with a knife or other cutting instrument, and 1 victim killed by a blunt object.
Victim/Offender Relationship	For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 89 percent of victims (8 out of 9) were killed by someone they knew. One victim was killed by a stranger.
Circumstance	For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 75 percent (9 out of 12) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 56 percent (5 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Nebraska

There were 26 black homicide victims in Nebraska in 2014.

The homicide rate among black victims in Nebraska was 28.17 per 100,000 in 2014.

Ranked 4th in the United States

Age	Five homicide victims (19 percent) were less than 18 years old and 1 victim (4 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 30 years old.
Gender	Out of 26 homicide victims, 24 were male and 2 were female.
Most Common Weapons	For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 77 percent of victims (20 out of 26) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 80 percent (16 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 2 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 2 victims killed by bodily force, and 2 victims killed by a blunt object.
Victim/Offender Relationship	For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 69 percent of victims (9 out of 13) were killed by someone they knew. Four victims were killed by strangers.
Circumstance	For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 67 percent (10 out of 15) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 70 percent (7 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Pennsylvania

There were 387 black homicide victims in Pennsylvania in 2014.

The homicide rate among black victims in Pennsylvania was 26.07 per 100,000 in 2014

Ranked 5th in the United States

Age	Twenty-nine homicide victims (8 percent) were less than 18 years old and 8 victims (2 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 31 years old.
Gender	Out of 387 homicide victims, 340 were male and 47 were female.
Most Common Weapons	For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 87 percent of victims (319 out of 368) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 81 percent (259 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 52 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 31 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 10 victims killed by bodily force, and 4 victims killed by a blunt object.
Victim/Offender Relationship	For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 87 percent of victims (93 out of 107) were killed by someone they knew. Fourteen victims were killed by strangers.
Circumstance	For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 49 percent (135 out of 274) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 70 percent (95 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Michigan

There were 360 black homicide victims in Michigan in 2014.

The homicide rate among black victims in Michigan was 25.52 per 100,000 in 2014.

Ranked 6th in the United States

Age	Twenty-eight homicide victims (8 percent) were less than 18 years old and 13 victims (4 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 32 years old.
Gender	Out of 360 homicide victims, 297 were male and 63 were female.
Most Common Weapons	For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 83 percent of victims (266 out of 319) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 62 percent (164 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 91 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 31 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 10 victims killed by bodily force, and 9 victims killed by a blunt object.
Victim/Offender Relationship	For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 83 percent of victims (111 out of 133) were killed by someone they knew. Twenty-two victims were killed by strangers.
Circumstance	For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 83 percent (128 out of 154) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 53 percent (68 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Alaska

There were 7 black homicide victims in Alaska in 2014.

The homicide rate among black victims in Alaska was 24.29 per 100,000 in 2014.

Ranked 7th in the United States

Age	One homicide victim (14 percent) was less than 18 years old. The average age was 34 years old.
Gender	Out of 7 homicide victims, 6 were male and 1 was female.
Most Common Weapons	For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 43 percent of victims (3 out of 7) were shot and killed with guns. There were 3 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 4 victims killed by bodily force.
Victim/Offender Relationship	For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 83 percent of victims (5 out of 6) were killed by someone they knew. One victim was killed by a stranger.
Circumstance	For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 86 percent (6 out of 7) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 50 percent (3 homicides) involved an argument between the victim and the offender.

Wisconsin

There were 91 black homicide victims in Wisconsin in 2014.

The homicide rate among black victims in Wisconsin was 24.04 per 100,000 in 2014.

Ranked 8th in the United States

Age	Six homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old. The average age was 30 years old.
Gender	Out of 91 homicide victims, 76 were male and 15 were female.
Most Common Weapons	For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 87 percent of victims (79 out of 91) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 75 percent (59 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 16 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 8 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 3 victims killed by bodily force, and 1 victim killed by a blunt object.
Victim/Offender Relationship	For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 48 percent of victims (27 out of 56) were killed by someone they knew. Twenty-nine victims were killed by strangers.
Circumstance	For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 68 percent (30 out of 44) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 53 percent (16 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Nevada

There were 58 black homicide victims in Nevada in 2014.

The homicide rate among black victims in Nevada was 22.44 per 100,000 in 2014.

Ranked 9th in the United States

Age	Four homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 1 victim (2 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 31 years old.
Gender	Out of 58 homicide victims, 53 were male and 5 were female.
Most Common Weapons	For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 72 percent of victims (41 out of 57) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 10 percent (4 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 35 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 9 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 1 victim killed by bodily force, and 5 victims killed by a blunt object.
Victim/Offender Relationship	For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 65 percent of victims (17 out of 26) were killed by someone they knew. Nine victims were killed by strangers.
Circumstance	For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 89 percent (40 out of 45) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 70 percent (28 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Louisiana

There were 332 black homicide victims in Louisiana in 2014.

The homicide rate among black victims in Louisiana was 21.98 per 100,000 in 2014.

Ranked 10th in the United States

Age	Thirty-six homicide victims (11 percent) were less than 18 years old and 7 victims (2 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 31 years old.
Gender	Out of 332 homicide victims, 281 were male and 51 were female.
Most Common Weapons	For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 87 percent of victims (282 out of 326) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 61 percent (173 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 89 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 26 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 8 victims killed by bodily force, and 4 victims killed by a blunt object.
Victim/Offender Relationship	For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 80 percent of victims (126 out of 158) were killed by someone they knew. Thirty-two victims were killed by strangers.
Circumstance	For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 59 percent (114 out of 193) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 52 percent (59 homicides) involved an argument between the victim and the offender.

United States

There were 6,095 black homicide victims in the United States in 2014.

The homicide rate among black victims in the United States was 16.38 per 100,000 in 2014.

Age	Four hundred eighty homicide victims (8 percent) were less than 18 years old and 140 victims (2 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 31 years old.
Gender	Out of 6,095 homicide victims, 5,263 were male and 829 were female.
Most Common Weapons	For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 83 percent of victims (4,800 out of 5,773) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 73 percent (3,506 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 1,058 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 573 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 214 victims killed by bodily force, and 124 victims killed by a blunt object.
Victim/Offender Relationship	For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 72 percent of victims (1,966 out of 2,746) were killed by someone they knew. Seven hundred eighty victims were killed by strangers.
Circumstance	For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 71 percent (2,581 out of 3,645) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 50 percent (1,291 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Appendix Two: Number of Black Homicide Victims and Rates by State in 2014

State Ranking by Rate	State	Number of Homicides	Homicide Rate per 100,000
	Alabama	N/A	N/A
7	Alaska	7	24.29
24	Arizona	47	14.77
22	Arkansas	71	15.32
13	California	524	20.62
39	Colorado	25	10.47
41	Connecticut	41	9.91
14	Delaware	42	20.18
	Florida	N/A	N/A
29	Georgia	439	13.79
46 (tie)	Hawaii	0	0.00
43	Idaho	1	7.40
17 (tie)	Illinois	331	17.49
2	Indiana	186	29.49
26	Iowa	15	14.14
16	Kansas	32	17.63
21	Kentucky	57	15.69
10	Louisiana	332	21.98
40	Maine	2	10.44
27	Maryland	254	14.04
33	Massachusetts	67	12.01
6	Michigan	360	25.52
31	Minnesota	40	12.48
35	Mississippi	129	11.49
1	Missouri	250	34.98
20	Montana	1	16.37
4	Nebraska	26	28.17
9	Nevada	58	22.44
46 (tie)	New Hampshire	0	0.00
19	New Jersey	217	16.43
3	New Mexico	15	28.48
37	New York	374	10.75
32	North Carolina	271	12.34

State Ranking by Rate	State	Number of Homicides	Homicide Rate per 100,000
15	North Dakota	3	19.29
17 (tie)	Ohio	256	17.49
12	Oklahoma	63	21.03
42	Oregon	6	7.41
5	Pennsylvania	387	26.07
23	Rhode Island	12	14.79
25	South Carolina	191	14.23
44	South Dakota	1	6.26
11	Tennessee	243	21.71
34	Texas	403	11.98
30	Utah	5	12.61
46 (tie)	Vermont	0	0.00
38	Virginia	175	10.68
28	Washington	40	13.95
45	West Virginia	4	5.96
8	Wisconsin	91	24.04
36	Wyoming	1	10.97
U.S. Total		6,095	16.38



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