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Violence Policy Center

Black Homicide Victimization in the United States

An Analysis of 2013 Homicide Data

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This study was authored by VPC Senior Policy Analyst Marty Langley and VPC Executive Director Josh Sugarmann.

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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This study examines the problem of black homicide victimization at the state level by analyzing unpublished Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data for black homicide victimization submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).¹ The information used for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 2013 and is the most recent data available. This is the first analysis of the 2013 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 submitted.²

NATIONAL DATA

According to the FBI SHR data, in 2013 there were 6,217 black homicide victims in the United States. The homicide rate among black victims in the United States was 16.91 per 100,000. For that year, the overall national homicide rate was 4.27 per 100,000. For whites, the national homicide rate was 2.54 per 100,000. Additional information contained in the FBI SHR data on black homicide victimization is below.

GENDER

Of the 6,217 black homicide victims, 5,381 (87 percent) were male, and 836 (13 percent) were female. The homicide rate for black male victims was 30.59 per 100,000. In comparison, the overall rate for male homicide victims was 6.87 per 100,000. For white male homicide victims it was 3.71 per 100,000. The homicide rate for female black victims was 4.36 per 100,000. In comparison, the overall rate for female homicide victims was 1.72 per 100,000. For white female homicide victims it was 1.39 per 100,000.

AGE

Four hundred thirty-five black homicide victims (seven percent) were less than 18 years old and 116 black homicide victims (two percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 31 years old.

- 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 2013, as in years past, the state of Florida did not submit any data to the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report. Also in 2013, 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 2013.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 84 percent of black victims (4,960 out of 5,891) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 73 percent (3,609 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 522 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 212 victims killed by bodily force, and 116 victims killed by a blunt object. In comparison, 65 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 (2,002 out of 2,766) were killed by someone they knew. Seven hundred sixty-four victims were killed by strangers.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 68 percent (2,534 out of 3,754) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 51 percent (1,284 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender, and 15 percent (387 homicides) were reported to be gang-related.

Of these gang-related homicides, 36 percent (139 homicides) were in California, which may be in part due to more comprehensive reporting. In California, 56 percent of non-felony related homicides were reported to be gang-related.

There were 140 incidents reported as justifiable homicides of black victims killed by law enforcement in 2013. The SHR does not specifically identify killings by police 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 will dramatically expand its data collection on violent police encounters by 2017.⁴

STATE RANKINGS

In 2013, the national black homicide victimization rate was 16.91 per 100,000. For that year, Indiana ranked first as the state with the highest black homicide victimization rate. Its rate of 34.15 per 100,000 was double the national average for black homicide victimization. The remaining states that comprise the top 10 are listed in the following chart. Additional information for each of these 10 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 16.91 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.

NUMBER OF BLACK HOMICIDE VICTIMS AND RATES BY STATE IN 2013, RANKED BY RATE

| Ranking | State | Number of Homicides | Homicide Rate per 100,000 |
|---------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Indiana | 213 | 34.15 |
| 2 | Missouri | 216 | 30.42 |
| 3 | Michigan | 428 | 30.34 |
| 4 | Nebraska | 25 | 27.65 |
| 5 | Oklahoma | 81 | 27.36 |
| 6 | Pennsylvania | 384 | 26.11 |
| 7 | Wisconsin | 93 | 24.74 |
| 8 | Louisiana | 350 | 23.33 |
| 9 | California | 549 | 21.79 |
| 10 | New Jersey | 268 | 20.49 |

CONCLUSION

Blacks in the United States are disproportionately affected by homicide. For the year 2013, blacks represented 13 percent of the nation's population, yet accounted for 50 percent of all homicide victims.⁵

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.

⁵ FBI Supplementary Homicide Report 2013, U.S. Census Bureau population estimates.

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

Indiana

There were 213 black homicide victims in Indiana in 2013.

The homicide rate among black victims in Indiana was 34.15 per 100,000 in 2013.

Ranked 1st in the United States

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Age | Thirteen homicide victims (6 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 213 homicide victims, 188 were male and 25 were female. |
| Most Common Weapons | For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 90 percent of victims (188 out of 210) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 59 percent (111 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 70 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 7 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 5 victims killed by bodily force, and 8 victims killed by a blunt object. |
| Victim/Offender Relationship | For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 76 percent of victims (69 out of 91) were killed by someone they knew. Twenty-two victims were killed by strangers. |
| Circumstance | For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 55 percent (73 out of 133) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 62 percent (45 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender. |

Missouri

There were 216 black homicide victims in Missouri in 2013.

The homicide rate among black victims in Missouri was 30.42 per 100,000 in 2013.

Ranked 2nd in the United States

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| Age | Sixteen homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 2 victims (1 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 30 years old. |
| Gender | Out of 216 homicide victims, 188 were male and 28 were female. |
| Most Common Weapons | For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 88 percent of victims (182 out of 207) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 45 percent (82 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 90 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 12 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 6 victims 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, 83 percent of victims (54 out of 65) were killed by someone they knew. Eleven victims were killed by strangers. |
| Circumstance | For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 62 percent (52 out of 84) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 81 percent (42 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender. |

Michigan

There were 428 black homicide victims in Michigan in 2013.

The homicide rate among black victims in Michigan was 30.34 per 100,000 in 2013.

Ranked 3rd in the United States

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| Age | Twenty-eight homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 10 victims (2 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 32 years old. |
| Gender | Out of 428 homicide victims, 362 were male and 66 were female. |
| Most Common Weapons | For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 88 percent of victims (351 out of 400) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 47 percent (164 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 157 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 21 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 14 victims killed by bodily force, and 6 victims killed by a blunt object. |
| Victim/Offender Relationship | For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 74 percent of victims (138 out of 187) were killed by someone they knew. Forty-nine victims were killed by strangers. |
| Circumstance | For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 85 percent (178 out of 210) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 53 percent (94 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender. |

Nebraska

There were 25 black homicide victims in Nebraska in 2013.

The homicide rate among black victims in Nebraska was 27.65 per 100,000 in 2013.

Ranked 4th in the United States

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| Age | One homicide victim (4 percent) was less than 18 years old. The average age was 29 years old. |
| Gender | Out of 25 homicide victims, 21 were male and 4 were female. |
| Most Common Weapons | For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 88 percent of victims (22 out of 25) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 23 percent (5 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 16 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 2 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, and 1 victim killed by a blunt object. |
| Victim/Offender Relationship | For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 50 percent of victims (5 out of 10) were killed by someone they knew. Five victims were killed by strangers. |
| Circumstance | For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 64 percent (7 out of 11) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 43 percent (3 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender. |

Oklahoma

There were 81 black homicide victims in Oklahoma in 2013.

The homicide rate among black victims in Oklahoma was 27.36 per 100,000 in 2013.

Ranked 5th in the United States

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| Age | Six homicide victims (8 percent) were less than 18 years old and 2 victims (3 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 32 years old. |
| Gender | Out of 81 homicide victims, 71 were male and 10 were female. |
| Most Common Weapons | For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 78 percent of victims (62 out of 79) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 94 percent (58 victims) were killed with handguns. There was 1 victim killed with a firearm, type not stated. There were 9 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 3 victims killed by bodily force, and 3 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 (41 out of 51) were killed by someone they knew. Ten victims were killed by strangers. |
| Circumstance | For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 51 percent (39 out of 77) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 36 percent (14 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender. |

Pennsylvania

There were 384 black homicide victims in Pennsylvania in 2013.

The homicide rate among black victims in Pennsylvania was 26.11 per 100,000 in 2013.

Ranked 6th in the United States

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Age | Twenty-eight homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 5 victims (1 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 30 years old. |
| Gender | Out of 384 homicide victims, 351 were male and 33 were female. |
| Most Common Weapons | For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 89 percent of victims (319 out of 359) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 81 percent (258 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 47 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 19 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 12 victims killed by bodily force, and 3 victims killed by a blunt object. |
| Victim/Offender Relationship | For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 85 percent of victims (123 out of 145) were killed by someone they knew. Twenty-two victims were killed by strangers. |
| Circumstance | For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 53 percent (156 out of 295) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 75 percent (117 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender. |

Wisconsin

There were 93 black homicide victims in Wisconsin in 2013.

The homicide rate among black victims in Wisconsin was 24.74 per 100,000 in 2013.

Ranked 7th in the United States

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| Age | Nine homicide victims (10 percent) were less than 18 years old and 1 victim (1 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 31 years old. |
| Gender | Out of 93 homicide victims, 79 were male and 14 were female. |
| Most Common Weapons | For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 80 percent of victims (70 out of 87) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 76 percent (53 victims) were killed with a handgun. There were 11 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 8 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 7 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, 56 percent of victims (24 out of 43) were killed by someone they knew. Nineteen victims were killed by strangers. |
| Circumstance | For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 65 percent (34 out of 52) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 79 percent (27 homicides) involved an argument between the victim and the offender. |

Louisiana

There were 350 black homicide victims in Louisiana in 2013.

The homicide rate among black victims in Louisiana was 23.33 per 100,000 in 2013.

Ranked 8th in the United States

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| Age | Thirty-three homicide victims (10 percent) were less than 18 years old and 7 victims (2 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 29 years old. |
| Gender | Out of 350 homicide victims, 301 were male and 49 were female. |
| Most Common Weapons | For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 87 percent of victims (288 out of 330) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 84 percent (242 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 23 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 24 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 14 victims killed by bodily force, and 3 victims killed by a blunt object. |
| Victim/Offender Relationship | For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 85 percent of victims (129 out of 152) were killed by someone they knew. Twenty-three victims were killed by strangers. |
| Circumstance | For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 57 percent (56 out of 98) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 68 percent (38 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender. |

California

There were 549 black homicide victims in California in 2013.

The homicide rate among black victims in California was 21.79 per 100,000 in 2013.

Ranked 9th in the United States

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| Age | Thirty-nine homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 13 victims (2 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 31 years old. |
| Gender | Out of 549 homicide victims, 488 were male and 61 were female. |
| Most Common Weapons | For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 84 percent of victims (451 out of 536) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 74 percent (334 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 102 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 40 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 17 victims killed by bodily force, and 20 victims killed by a blunt object. |
| Victim/Offender Relationship | For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 57 percent of victims (129 out of 228) were killed by someone they knew. Ninety-nine victims were killed by strangers. |
| Circumstance | For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 70 percent (247 out of 351) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 37 percent (91 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender. |

New Jersey

There were 268 black homicide victims in New Jersey in 2013.

The homicide rate among black victims in New Jersey was 20.49 per 100,000 in 2013.

Ranked 10th in the United States

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| Age | Sixteen homicide victims (6 percent) were less than 18 years old. The average age was 30 years old. |
| Gender | Out of 268 homicide victims, 240 were male and 28 were female. |
| Most Common Weapons | For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 83 percent of victims (220 out of 264) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 81 percent (179 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 40 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 28 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, 59 percent of victims (52 out of 88) were killed by someone they knew. Thirty-six victims were killed by strangers. |
| Circumstance | For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 59 percent (54 out of 92) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 59 percent (32 homicides) involved an argument between the victim and the offender. |

United States

There were 6,217 black homicide victims in the United States in 2013.

The homicide rate among black victims in the United States was 16.91 per 100,000 in 2013.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Age | Four hundred thirty-five homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 116 victims (2 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 31 years old. |
| Gender | Out of 6,217 homicide victims, 5,381 were male and 836 were female. |
| Most Common Weapons | For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 84 percent of victims (4,960 out of 5,891) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 73 percent (3,609 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 1,086 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 522 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 212 victims killed by bodily force, and 116 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 (2,002 out of 2,766) were killed by someone they knew. Seven hundred sixty-four victims were killed by strangers. |
| Circumstance | For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 68 percent (2,534 out of 3,754) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 51 percent (1,284 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender. |

Appendix Two: Number of Black Homicide Victims and Rates by State in 2013

| State Ranking by Rate | State | Number of Homicides | Homicide Rate per 100,000 |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| | Alabama | N/A | N/A |
| 37 | Alaska | 3 | 10.54 |
| 18 | Arizona | 53 | 17.27 |
| 14 | Arkansas | 86 | 18.64 |
| 9 | California | 549 | 21.79 |
| 25 | Colorado | 30 | 12.99 |
| 29 | Connecticut | 51 | 12.50 |
| 30 | Delaware | 25 | 12.19 |
| | Florida | N/A | N/A |
| 32 | Georgia | 367 | 11.71 |
| 42 | Hawaii | 1 | 3.07 |
| 41 | Idaho | 1 | 7.78 |
| 15 | Illinois | 343 | 18.10 |
| 1 | Indiana | 213 | 34.15 |
| 20 | Iowa | 16 | 15.78 |
| 13 | Kansas | 34 | 18.88 |
| 23 | Kentucky | 48 | 13.38 |
| 8 | Louisiana | 350 | 23.33 |
| 43 (tie) | Maine | 0 | 0.00 |
| 16 | Maryland | 319 | 17.85 |
| 35 | Massachusetts | 59 | 10.94 |
| 3 | Michigan | 428 | 30.34 |
| 22 | Minnesota | 46 | 14.92 |
| 38 | Mississippi | 105 | 9.38 |
| 2 | Missouri | 216 | 30.42 |
| 19 | Montana | 1 | 17.06 |
| 4 | Nebraska | 25 | 27.65 |
| 21 | Nevada | 38 | 15.18 |
| 43 (tie) | New Hampshire | 0 | 0.00 |
| 10 | New Jersey | 268 | 20.49 |
| 17 | New Mexico | 9 | 17.34 |
| 36 | New York | 375 | 10.89 |
| 31 | North Carolina | 257 | 11.84 |

| State Ranking by Rate | State | Number of Homicides | Homicide Rate per 100,000 |
|--------------------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 43 (tie) | North Dakota | 0 | 0.00 |
| 11 | Ohio | 284 | 19.59 |
| 5 | Oklahoma | 81 | 27.36 |
| 27 | Oregon | 10 | 12.70 |
| 6 | Pennsylvania | 384 | 26.11 |
| 33 | Rhode Island | 9 | 11.47 |
| 26 | South Carolina | 170 | 12.77 |
| 43 (tie) | South Dakota | 0 | 0.00 |
| 12 | Tennessee | 210 | 18.97 |
| 24 | Texas | 432 | 13.15 |
| 40 | Utah | 3 | 7.86 |
| 43 (tie) | Vermont | 0 | 0.00 |
| 34 | Virginia | 184 | 11.32 |
| 28 | Washington | 35 | 12.60 |
| 39 | West Virginia | 6 | 9.00 |
| 7 | Wisconsin | 93 | 24.74 |
| 43 (tie) | Wyoming | 0 | 0.00 |
| U.S. Total | | 6,217 | 16.91 |



Violence Policy Center

1730 Rhode Island Avenue, NW Suite 1014

Washington, DC 20036

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