

United States: Police killings rose in 2022 and Black people are the main targets

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Black people make up 13% of the population in the United States but represent 24% of those murdered by police.

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More than 1176 people were killed by police in 2022, up from the previous year, making it “the deadliest year on record for police violence since experts first started tracking the killings,” wrote *The Guardian’s* Sam Levin. Yet it is rare that any cop is disciplined or prosecuted.

The ruling class sees the police (Federal, state, county and municipal) as central to its national oppression of African Americans, and its super exploitation of the working class.

“Police across the country killed an average of more than three people a day, or nearly 100 people every month last year,” wrote Levin. The figures come from non-profit research group, [Mapping Police Violence](#) (MPV), which maintains a database of reported deaths at the hands of police, including fatal shootings, beatings, the use of tasers and physical restraints.



The government does not collect such data because of opposition from the pro-gun lobby. The FBI only set up its database on police violence in 2019, and cooperates with about 18,000 local and state police agencies. Congress has opposed mandating data collection.

“The data release comes two years after the murder of George Floyd [sparked national uprisings](#) calling for racial justice, police accountability and [reductions](#) in the funding and size of police forces,” wrote Levin.

“Despite the international attention and some local efforts to curb police brutality, there has been an intensifying backlash to criminal justice reform, and the overall number of killings has remained alarmingly high.”

In fact, even the modest police reforms achieved have been reversed or stopped, as Congress and

President Joe Biden's administration have pushed for more funding to police departments and opposed efforts by the independent popular movement seeking more radical changes.

Levin spoke to Bianca Austin, the aunt of [Breonna Taylor](#), whose March 2020 killing in Kentucky sparked mass protests. "It just never stops," said Austin. "There was a movement and uproar across the globe, and we're still having more killings? What are we doing wrong? It's so disheartening."

There are consistent circumstances that precede police killings and cops are protected from prosecution by declaring they feared for their lives at the time.

Samuel Sinyangwe, a data scientist and policy analyst who founded MPV told Levin: "These are routine police encounters that escalate to a killing ... What's clear is that it's continuing to get worse, and that it's deeply systemic."

Sinyangwe said that in 32% of cases collected by the MPV last year, "the person was [fleeing before they were killed](#), generally running or driving off" when experts say "lethal force is unwarranted" and "endangers the public".

"In June, Ohio police officers fired [dozens of rounds at Jayland Walker](#), who was unarmed and fleeing; a month later, an officer in California exited an unmarked car and immediately fired at Robert Adams as he [ran in the opposite direction](#)," said Sinyangwe.

Racism at the root of policing

"Between 2013 and 2022, Black residents were three times more likely to be killed by US police than white people," said Sinyangwe.

MPV reported that in some cities, including Minneapolis (where George Floyd was murdered), police have killed Black residents at a rate 28 times higher than white residents. In Chicago, the rate was 25 times higher.

"Police's ability to be judge, jury and executioner has been taken to another level. No matter how much we insist that it's wrong, society allows it to take place," said Jacob Blake snr, whose son was shot and paralysed by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in 2020.

Sinyangwe said that contributing to the rise in police violence was the growing partnerships between sheriffs and other agencies, where deputies execute search warrants or conduct chases that can result in death. Sheriffs' offices are also particularly politicised during elections, he said, with competition to be more "tough on crime", resulting in more violent sheriff's departments.

Dr Elizabeth Jordie Davies, a Johns Hopkins University postdoctoral fellow and expert on social movements told Levin that the consistently high numbers of police killings year after year make clear that broad systemic change is necessary to prevent them.

"There's a continual commitment to using violence to control people and manage problems in this country," she said. "And as we keep giving police more money and power, we'll continue to see more police violence."

The MPV report only covers last year. This year, new killings occur daily. Videos recorded by bystanders and released to the public continue to spark broad and immediate protests and demands for justice.

Murder of Black school teacher

For example, Los Angeles police murdered Keenan Anderson, 31, during a traffic stop, on January 3. After the Black high school teacher's fatal interaction with the cops, an outcry by activists and his family erupted.

Rolling Stone reported on the case on January 13: "Earlier this week, the LAPD released body cam footage from the scene as part of a video briefing on the incident. Footage showed Anderson begging for help as multiple officers held him down while trying to restrain him. At one point, Anderson shouted, 'They're trying to George Floyd me.' As Anderson lay on the pavement, one officer appeared to hold his elbow against Anderson's neck. Another officer then tased him multiple times, sometimes for several seconds at a time."

Rolling Stone reported that Black Lives Matter co-founder Patrisse Cullors (who is Anderson's cousin), told the *Guardian* that Anderson's death could have been avoided. "It was a traffic accident. Instead of treating him like a potential criminal, police should have called the ambulance," Cullors said.

"If there was a policy in which traffic stops were met with unarmed professionals who come to the scene to help with whatever situation has happened, that would have prevented my cousin's death. And that would have prevented so many other deaths."

Martin Luther King jnr, one of the greatest African American leaders of all time — and the only Black man to have a Federal holiday on his birthday, January 15 — opposed police violence in the segregated South and in the North.

In a lesser-known part of his famous 1963 March on Washington "I Have A Dream" speech, King said: "We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality."

As long as the police cartel exists and is supported by both major parties, police killing will continue. It took a mass civil rights movement to end legal segregation. The same must happen to abolish policing and the corrupt criminal "justice" system.

Malik Miah, California

P.S.

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<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/united-states-police-killings-rose-2022-and-black-people-are-main-targets>