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**LAW ENFORCEMENT SHOOTINGS IN THE UNITED
STATES: THE FACTORS AND POTENTIAL
SOLUTIONS**

by

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September 2021

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**LAW ENFORCEMENT SHOOTINGS IN THE UNITED STATES:
THE FACTORS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS**

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ABSTRACT

The United States has more than 17,000 police agencies across the nation with more than 800,000 men and women serving in these agencies, according to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. These officers provide for the safety and security of the residents within their geographic areas of employment. While law enforcement's shooting of civilians is on the whole a rarity, the United States averages about 1,000 people killed annually by police departments across the country, based on research undertaken by *The Washington Post*, which compiles this annual data. This research sets out to first examine the factors that contribute to police-involved shootings across America in a general sense. Next, it examines case studies from across the country and their rates of police shootings to see how the contributing factors play a role in these localities. The research then analyzes police departments from decidedly Western nations through case studies to shed light on the practices of these departments and what, if anything, can be applied to the United States. This thesis concludes with generalized recommendations for possible changes in the United States and provides areas for future study based on the research.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ARV	armed response vehicle
CIT	crisis intervention team
DHEP	Degree Holder Entry Program
DOJ	Department of Justice
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
HPD	Houston Police Department
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
MET	Metropolitan Police Service
NAMI	National Alliance on Mental Illness
NYPD	New York City Police Department

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Modern-day policing in the United States is a task undertaken by various agencies across the country. From the federal level down to the local level, more than 800,000 men and women make up the country's sworn law enforcement agents.¹ When it comes to training these officers, there is no standardized training academy or manual, and the rules by which these officers operate differ across the country. In addition to the individualized rules set forth by the agencies that employ these men and women, the rules that dictate how officers may use force, especially regarding their firearms, also vary by agency. Civilian fatalities at the hands of law enforcement in the United States average 1,000 annually.² In most of these incidents, the civilians involved are armed. However, when compared to other Western nations, the United States far outpaces similar democracies.³

To that end, this thesis seeks to identify the factors that impact law enforcement's use of firearms in the United States. This research begins by examining the available literature for ways to change the statistics on annual police-involved fatalities. The three main avenues of thought on the subject involve enhancing police training, improving oversight bodies, and defunding or eliminating police departments. After a thorough examination of those avenues, this research explores the factors that this researcher identified as having an impact on the number of police shootings: firearm access within the United States, mental health issues, policing and race, and training and departmental policies.

Then, this thesis examines domestic police departments as case studies, in their entirety and through the lens of the identified factors. The aim of these case studies is to understand how these departments train, educate, and implement use-of-force policies with their officers. Following the analysis of domestic departments, foreign police departments

¹ "Law Enforcement Facts," National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, accessed October 1, 2020, <https://nleomf.org/facts-figures/law-enforcement-facts>.

² Rob Picheta and Henrik Pettersson, "The US Shoots, Kills and Imprisons More People than Other Developed Countries. Here's the Data," CNN, June 8, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/08/us/us-police-floyd-protests-country-comparisons-intl/index.html>.

³ Picheta and Pettersson.

from Western democracies are also examined to understand the similarities and differences between the United States and foreign nations.

After this examination, this thesis identifies what can be applied from foreign law enforcement agencies—namely training—that can be useful domestically. Due to the time constraints of basic training for American officers, sacrifices are often made relating to the content, so by extending the length of basic training across the country, departments and municipalities could augment the readiness of officers before they take to the streets.

This thesis concludes by solidifying all the lessons learned from domestic and foreign agencies into concrete steps that domestic law enforcement agencies can take to reduce the number of officer-involved shootings—while continuing to account for officer safety—including adjustments to training and preparing officers for mental health calls. Finally, the research identifies further studies that could be undertaken to examine whether the ideas presented have their desired effect and outlines what can be done in the future.

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To my dear daughters, Willow and Élodie, anything is possible if you want it hard enough. May you always know that, in the words of Edmond Mbiaka, the quest for knowledge never ends; it just leads to more curiosities that lead to a greater mind. I hope you learn from your mom and me to never stop learning, to never stop wondering, and to always strive to be better.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Law enforcement officers in the United States are involved in about 1,000 fatal shootings annually, with most of the civilians involved armed at the time of the incident. These incidents happen within departments of every size, with each having its own set of rules of engagement and codes of conduct. More than 800,000 sworn law enforcement officers serve in the United States, spanning more than 17,000 agencies across the country.¹ While most of the encounters between the public and police in the United States occur with no force, statistics indicate U.S. law enforcement is involved in more police-involved deaths than any other Western nation.² Recent events in the United States have led to conversations about law enforcement's use of firearms, and this thesis seeks to examine the factors surrounding this difference.

As vast and diverse as these police departments are, their number of firearm-involved incidents also vary greatly. The size of departments or the jurisdictions they serve do not necessarily correlate with the number of shootings per capita. For example, the city of St. Louis, Missouri, with a population of approximately 300,000 people, had 36.3 fatal police shootings per 100,000 residents between 2000 and 2018 whereas New York City, with a population of over eight million, registered 0.2 fatal shootings per 100,000 residents during the same timeframe.³ As no central repository exists at the federal level for departments to report every time firearms are used in the course of duty, important questions remain surrounding firearm use by police. What is known about the number of fatalities has been collected by news organizations like the *Washington Post*. However, the collected data do not fully reveal the circumstances surrounding the incidents, as most have

¹ "Law Enforcement Facts," National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, accessed October 1, 2020, <https://nleomf.org/facts-figures/law-enforcement-facts>.

² Rob Picheta and Henrik Pettersson, "The US Shoots, Kills and Imprisons More People than Other Developed Countries. Here's the Data," CNN, June 8, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/08/us/us-police-floyd-protests-country-comparisons-intl/index.html>.

³ Parker Waichman, "The Cities with the Most Fatal Shootings in the U.S.," Your Lawyer, accessed August 6, 2020, <https://www.yourlawyer.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/cities-most-fatal-police-shootings-6.png>.

been collected from open-source information. Furthermore, departments have no avenue for recording incidents when the use of firearms would have been justified but were not used. A repository at the federal level, for example, could provide more accurate data sourced directly from the agencies. These statistics would be helpful in gaining a better understanding of the data for further study.

The 24-hour news cycle represents another obstacle to gaining a factual understanding of the factors that go into every instance of police use of firearms. The constant news cycle sometimes leads to inaccurate reporting as media outlets rush to publish a story first—as shown in the 2014 Michael Brown case in Missouri. Several major news agencies published articles claiming Mr. Brown had been shot while his hands were up, which led to violent encounters in the aftermath of the shooting.⁴ The “hands up don’t shoot” narrative was later proven inaccurate.⁵ It took several months for the facts of the case to emerge, but by that time, the die was cast, and a critical examination of the Brown shooting was impossible. The rush to report incidents before investigations are completed leads to inaccurate representations of police use of force and clouds reporting of the factors surrounding it. This dynamic presents a barrier to an accurate study of the issue.

This thesis, therefore, seeks to explore the various factors that contribute to law enforcement’s use of firearms in the United States. This study is critical, as the discussion arises from every corner of the country, necessitating a re-examination of what leads to these incidents and what can be done to reduce fatal encounters. This thesis seeks to identify changes that will lead to a reduction in the number of police-involved shootings, in the hopes of reducing also the number of fatal shootings in the United States. In stark contrast with the United States, most other Western police departments use firearms far less frequently.⁶ These differences in numbers are worth examining as American society searches for solutions to its domestic statistics. While acknowledging no two countries are

⁴ Michelle Ye Hee Lee, “‘Hands Up, Don’t Shoot’ Did Not Happen in Ferguson,” *Washington Post*, March 19, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/03/19/hands-up-dont-shoot-did-not-happen-in-ferguson/>.

⁵ Shawn Morrow, “Social & News Media’s Effects on Law Enforcement,” *Global Journal of Forensic Science & Medicine* 1, no. 4 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.33552/AJGH.2019.01.000516>.

⁶ Picheta and Pettersson, “The US Shoots, Kills and Imprisons More People.”

the same, this thesis seeks to identify potential solutions that can be applied to a diverse country like the United States to improve police and community relationships.

B. RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What factors account for differences in annual shootings within U.S. police departments across the country?
2. What can police departments in the United States learn from one another and from other Western nations about best practices in critical police incidents to reduce annual fatal incidents in the United States?

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars differ on how to address the factors that contribute to the number of police-involved shootings within the United States in contrast with other Western nations. A wide range of stakeholders, beginning with the American public, has a vested interest in this issue. Thus, the associated literature emanates from law enforcement agencies, academia, and lawmakers. What has been published thus far falls into a few key categories of study: enhancing police training, improving police oversight bodies, reforming department policies, and reducing or eliminating police departments in some instances. This literature review addresses these categories to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments contained therein.

1. Enhancing Police Training

Researchers and lawmakers alike agree that in addition to departments finding the right type of individual for police work, police training could be improved across the country, but they differ on the specific types of additional training recommended. One of the main sources of literature on the issue of police training is from the Forum on Public Policy, a think tank specializing in research and policy issues at the state, local, and international levels. According to Monica Moll, a researcher from this organization, more training in the field of ethics should be given to police. This researcher posits, “Successful candidates should be those who view the opportunity to become a public servant as a privilege rather than those who are attracted to the power that comes with the position. They must understand . . . that they will be held to the higher standards that apply to all

public servants.”⁷ Moll also speculates that it may be difficult for departments to find candidates with their ethical and moral compass already ingrained, given the young age and limited life experience of the target candidate pool.⁸ Moll’s research argues for augmenting police training to include social contract theory and constitutional principles. According to the research, officers should be taught more broadly about the ethical purposes of government rather than about how not to get in trouble.⁹ In sum, Moll’s work focuses on the theoretical shortfalls of current police classroom curricula and argues for augmenting basic constitutional principles in policing.

Another vector in the literature on police training involves the length of training of police recruits. In a report on American police academy training, the Department of Justice (DOJ) argues for a longer period of police training by bringing examples from around the world. In the report, authors Robert Davis and Robert Taylor reference the North Rhine-Westphalia Police, a 50,000-person-strong department requiring that its recruits undergo three years of training to become certified officers.¹⁰ According to Davis and Taylor, something similar could be applied in the United States, so the country could have a better-educated, more-professional police force.¹¹ Thus, the literature advocates a police force akin to some foreign countries and argues that investing in training would improve the status of officers and local retention rates in the United States.

2. Improving Police Oversight Bodies

Regarding police oversight, the consensus among scholars and police departments is that civilian oversight of departments is an integral part of the police accountability equation. Ronnie A. Dunn, a professor of urban studies at Cleveland State University, suggests oversight bodies give the public a sense of governmental accountability via a

⁷ Monica Moll, “Improving American Police Ethics Training: Focusing on Social Contract Theory and Constitutional Principles,” *Forum on Public Policy* (2007): 14, <https://forumonpublicpolicy.com/archive/sum07/moll.pdf>.

⁸ Moll, 14.

⁹ Moll, 14.

¹⁰ Robert C. Davis and Robert W. Taylor, *New Ideas in Policing: Learning from Other Countries* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013), 23, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=738173>.

¹¹ Davis and Taylor, 23.

transparent complaint process.¹² In addition to Dunn, criminology professors Brad Smith and Malcolm Holmes add to the literature, stating a system that prioritizes a citizen review of complaints would increase police accountability within that community.¹³ The literature on oversight is consistent on the need for some sort of independent oversight model with the realization that this model could differ based on the municipality and needs of that community.

The available literature on oversight, however, falls short in recognizing issues that are inherent in many oversight bodies around the nation, namely that their members should possess a fundamental understanding of state and local laws to adjudicate police proceedings. Policing by its very nature is a profession that sometimes necessitates the use of force, and the discussion surrounding reforms must not occur in a vacuum that overlooks this basic characteristic of the vocation. In his book *Common Sense about Police Review*, Douglas Perez argues that while oversight boards provide a necessary link between police and the community, they should acknowledge the hazards of police work, which sometimes means needing to use force.¹⁴ Adding to this discussion, Peter Finn in a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) bulletin acknowledges that oversight boards, sometimes unaware of the laws surrounding the right to due process afforded every individual, might interfere in police investigations while also leveling undue criticism on the police.¹⁵ Richard Jerome, a monitor for the New York City Police Department's reform processes, notes that a department must recognize the morale issues and internal perceptions that arise when an oversight body forms.¹⁶ This means that departments must take steps to explain the workings of the oversight bodies to membership, so officers understand the responsibilities and purview of these bodies to prevent confusion and maintain cohesion among the ranks.

¹² Ronnie Dunn, "Race and the Relevance of Citizen Complaints against the Police," *Administration Theory & Praxis* 32, no. 4 (2010): 565.

¹³ Antonio Sajor Jr., "Ideal Police Oversight and Review: The Next Piece of the Community Policing Puzzle" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2015), 6, <https://www.hSDL.org/?view&did=790377>.

¹⁴ Douglas Perez, *Common Sense about Police Review* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 68.

¹⁵ Peter Finn, "Getting Along with Citizen Oversight," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 69, no. 8 (August 2000): 24–26.

¹⁶ Sajor, "Ideal Police Oversight and Review," 9.

While this body of work makes clear the necessity of oversight boards, it also suggests that board members ought to possess certain qualifications to discharge their duties.

3. Defunding or Disbanding the Police

The literature on defunding or disbanding the police is a novel addition to the discussion, and scholars have recently begun to explore the idea of divesting or defunding police departments. Tracie Lowe from the University of Texas Institute for Urban Policy explains that the process is to decrease significantly the amount of money being spent on police departments and use that funding for other municipal services or community groups. The idea is to reallocate funding from police to other agencies that can take some of the burden of policing away from law enforcement.

Conversely, literature implying that funding cuts would be detrimental to the overall safety of communities is also worth examining. Stephen Rushin and Roger Michalski of the Loyola School of Law and University of Oklahoma College of Law, respectively, argue that considerations should be made when broaching the topic of reducing police department funding. Taking away funding translates to less money available for departments to train their officers properly. According to the researchers, after the DOJ performed a review of the Chicago Police Department in 2016, it realized the city needed to invest heavily in better training for its officers to curb bad behavior in the police force.¹⁷ More importantly, they found that defunding police departments might impair the departments' ability to control crime.¹⁸ In addition, Rushin and Michalski argue that funding cuts lead to departments' using alternative methods like civil asset forfeiture to make up for lost funding, which is harmful to the public.¹⁹ In sum, according to the research, some experts believe police departments should cede funding from their operating budgets to other social agencies that can assist police with radio calls for which they are unsuited. However, not all researchers agree that funding cuts are the answer;

¹⁷ Stephen Rushin and Roger Michalski, "Police Funding," *Florida Law Review* 72 (2020): 2, <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3542418>.

¹⁸ Rushin and Michalski, 3.

¹⁹ Rushin and Michalski, 4.

instead, some argue that more research is needed to prevent unintended consequences of funding cuts such as being unable to control crime or delivering insufficient training to police.

Research on the defund/disband proposition is in its infancy as it is a relatively new scholastic argument. While some research points to making municipal funding available to other social services, not enough research exists to examine the unintended consequences of divesting from police departments as it relates to their overall effectiveness. For this reason, this thesis seeks to examine the main factors, such as training and oversight, further to gain a better understanding of the literature available and its implications on the subject matter.

D. RESEARCH DESIGN

The aim of this thesis is to examine departments across the United States, compare them to departments from other Western countries, and reveal whether factors such as additional academy training or departmental policies might account for the differences in how often firearms are used by these police departments. This thesis examines annual department firearm use data per 100,000 people to understand trends in police shootings adjusted for the populations of these jurisdictions. The data were culled from statistics compiled by these departments, information gathered by the DOJ, and reputable news sources that have compiled police-shooting data from various sources. The goal of compiling these data is to allow for a comparative study of departments to identify differences between them that might identify policy and/or training changes to reduce firearm discharges.

To address this topic, this thesis focuses on local law enforcement departments across the country, chiefly the New York City Police Department; the Wichita, Kansas, Police Department; the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department; and the Houston Police Department. These four departments represent opposite sides of the country and are of different sizes with differing standard operating procedures. These departments are also in states with vastly different laws relating to firearm ownership. This research analyzed the academy curriculum of the departments, the topics covered during training, the length of

training for each academy, and the field training component of each department upon academy graduation. Using information provided publicly by each department's training bureau on its curriculum, this thesis illustrates how these departments differ in the officers they turn out of the academy. Each department's policies, laws, training, and oversight models—among other factors—were examined to see whether they contribute to firearm use numbers.

In addition to local departments, the research examined the Latvian State Police, the German Federal Police, the Metropolitan Police Service, and the Swiss Police, which is divided among 26 cantonal forces, to understand how these departments compare with American departments. These departments were chosen because they not only represent departments from a wide geographical area of Europe but also operate in nations with vastly different cultures and laws pertaining to the regulation and ownership of firearms. By comparing the policies, training, and local laws—among other factors—of Western nations with their American counterparts, this author determined which factors in American society and police training may contribute to greater numbers of shootings per capita.

After these factors are presented, this thesis suggests modifications to domestic policing that can address the disparities. It concludes by identifying policy recommendations that can be applied across the country on a wide scale to improve local statistics while acknowledging there is no perfect percentage for firearm use.

II. CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO POLICE FIREARM USE IN THE UNITED STATES

While no single factor affects the rate of police shootings in the United States, preeminent theories surrounding the phenomenon highlight the proliferation of firearms in American society and law enforcement training. This chapter builds on some of the literature discussed in Chapter I, examining additional factors—using data and research—that when combined contribute to police shootings across the United States. This chapter first examines whether the public’s access to firearms, obtained both legally and illegally, is a factor in police shootings. Next, it explores whether the level of violent crime in a community correlates with police shootings there. It then discusses the impact of mental health on police shootings, followed by the nexus between these incidents and race. This chapter concludes with a look at departmental training for officers and the rules that guide officer conduct regarding the use of firearms in executing their duties. This examination establishes the measurable effect of these factors on police shootings in various communities across the United States

A. FIREARMS ACCESS

The public’s access to firearms is a possible factor in the number of police shootings in the United States. The U.S. population makes up just 4 percent of the world’s population but owns about 40 percent of all guns in the world.²⁰ While gun-ownership rates vary across U.S. states, on sheer volume alone, America stands in a class of its own given its gun per capita ratio. This section, therefore, seeks to examine the possible link between areas of America that have a high reported gun-ownership rate and the number of police shootings. A review of the number of fatal police shootings between 2017 and 2021 so far shows that in the vast majority of police-involved fatal shootings across America, the individuals shot to death were in possession of a firearm at the time of the shooting—suggesting that the more guns in circulation in an area, the higher the rates of police shootings.

²⁰ Lisa Dunn, “How Many People in the U.S. Own Guns?,” American University Radio, September 18, 2020, <https://wamu.org/story/20/09/18/how-many-people-in-the-u-s-own-guns/>.

Table 1. Weapons Carried by People Shot to Death by the Police, 2017–2021²¹

Weapon	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*
Gun	579	549	589	622	76
Knife	156	177	171	165	24
Unknown	26	57	49	56	10
Vehicle	85	34	62	47	8
Unarmed	68	41	41	41	6
Toy weapon	26	33	26	25	3
Other	73	105	66	43	5

Table 1 illustrates that the vast majority of individuals shot and killed by police officers across America had firearms at the time of the shooting. On the surface, this shows that most fatal police shootings occur when officers are faced with individuals carrying firearms. As shown in Table 1, 579 people who carried firearms were shot to death by American police in 2017.²² This statistic spurred further research into whether states and municipalities with higher reported rates of firearm ownership experience higher rates of reported police shootings.

Moreover, it is worth noting that since 2015, more than 3,000 people shot by police in the United States were armed with a gun at the time of the incident.²³ Thus, a proliferation of firearms in American society seems to correlate to this increase in the number of police-involved shootings. While research on this connection is scarce, the most comprehensive study on the matter was conducted by Northeastern University and the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health. In studying police shootings between 2015

²¹ Source: “Number of People Shot to Death by the Police in the United States from 2017 to 2021, by Weapon Carried,” Statista, accessed March 29, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/585140/people-shot-to-death-by-us-police-by-weapon-carried-2016/>.

²² Statista, “Number of People Shot to Death by the Police.”

²³ Mark Berman et al., “Protests Spread over Police Shootings. Police Promised Reforms. Every Year, They Still Shoot and Kill Nearly 1,000 People,” *Washington Post*, June 8, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/protests-spread-over-police-shootings-police-promised-reforms-every-year-they-still-shoot-nearly-1000-people/2020/06/08/5c204f0c-a67c-11ea-b473-04905b1af82b_story.html.

and 2017, the researchers found that in states of higher firearm ownership, police shootings were 40 percent more likely to occur.²⁴ According to one of the study's co-authors, Matt Miller, the data were compelling: "When people live in places where guns are more prevalent, the police officers are more likely to shoot and kill them."²⁵ The evidence on the matter is clear according to the researchers in the study. The research shows that people who live in the 10 highest gun-ownership states are 3.6 times more likely to be involved in police shootings.²⁶ The researchers contend that in states with lower firearm ownership, there are fewer police shootings. This study is unique because it is the first of its kind to examine police shootings through the lens of reported firearm-ownership rates. The study, published in the *Journal of Urban Health*, adjusted for violent crime rates in the states studied.²⁷ While the study did not investigate the complicated issue of whether police knowledge of the number of firearms within their municipalities affected decision-making, it makes clear that the more firearms within a state, the greater the chance of a fatal police shooting.

B. VIOLENT CRIME RATES

Another factor that could play a role in the rates of police shootings in the United States is the rate of violent crime in a particular municipality. Could higher crime rates correlate with an elevated rate of police shootings? The previous section established the relationship between firearms and police shootings, but this section aims to move the goalpost a little further, to ascertain whether violent crime rates impact the levels of police shootings. The first thing to examine is the relationship between the quantity of guns—which as mentioned previously leads to more police shootings—and violent crimes in a community. A 2001 study from the University of Chicago conducted by Mark Duggan found that gun homicide rates are strongly positively related to increases in gun ownership,

²⁴ Ian Thomsen, "Do More Guns Lead to More Fatal Police Shootings?," Northeastern University, October 26, 2018, <https://news.northeastern.edu/2018/10/26/do-more-guns-lead-to-more-fatal-police-shootings/>.

²⁵ Thomsen.

²⁶ Thomsen.

²⁷ Thomsen.

but this finding applies only to homicides, and all other violent crime rates show no corresponding relationships with an increase in gun ownership.²⁸ Therefore, this relationship, based on this study, applies only to gun homicides and not to other crimes that fall under the umbrella of violent crime, as designated by the FBI.

According to the Council on Criminal Justice, homicide rates increased by 42 percent during the summer and 34 percent in the fall across 21 U.S. cities in 2020 compared to 2019 numbers.²⁹ Figure 1 illustrates this homicide rate jump between January 2017 and October 2020. This section identifies possible links to the number of reported violent crimes in a city to see whether the higher the violent crime rate, the greater the reported police shootings within that area.

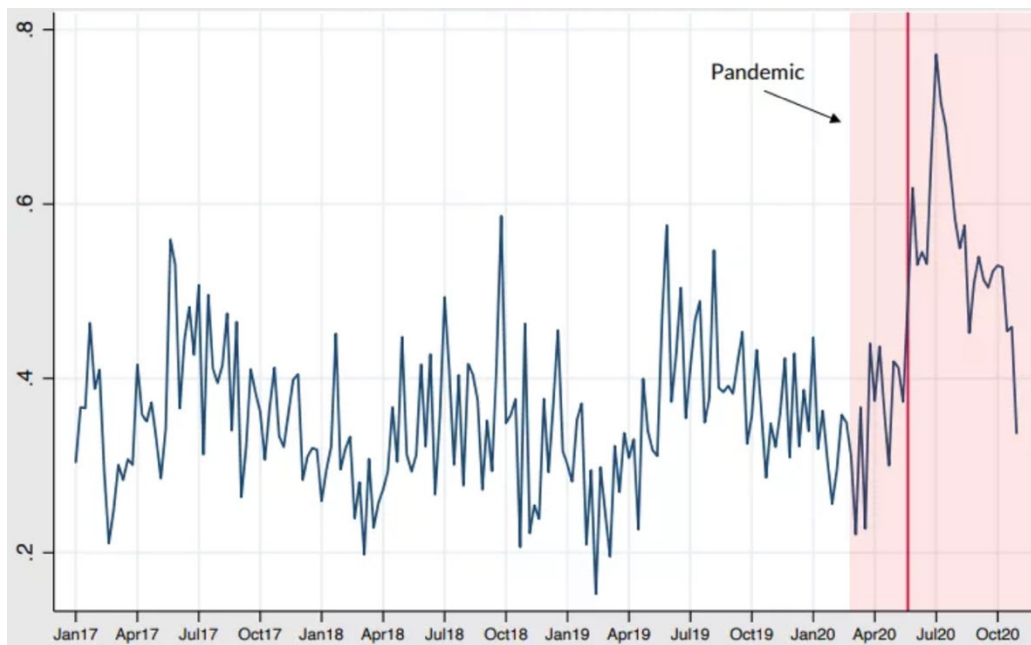


Figure 1. Weekly Homicides per 100,000 City Population, January 2017–October 2020³⁰

²⁸ Mark Duggan, “More Guns, More Crime,” *Journal of Political Economy* 109, no. 5 (2001), <https://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/faculty/dranove/htm/dranove/coursepages/Mgmt%20469/guns.pdf>.

²⁹ German Lopez, “The Rise in Murders in the US, Explained,” Vox, August 3, 2020, <https://www.vox.com/2020/8/3/21334149/murders-crime-shootings-protests-riots-trump-biden>.

³⁰ Source: Lopez, “The Rise in Murders in the US.”

Due to the strange year that was 2020, it could be argued that stay-at-home orders during the COVID-19 pandemic prevented crimes from being reported as rigorously as they would have been in years past. While violent crime has actually been on a decline, there was a noticeable spike in murders across many U.S. cities in the last year. According to crime analyst Jeff Asher, “Violent crime and murder almost always move in the same direction and they are never this far apart nationally.”³¹

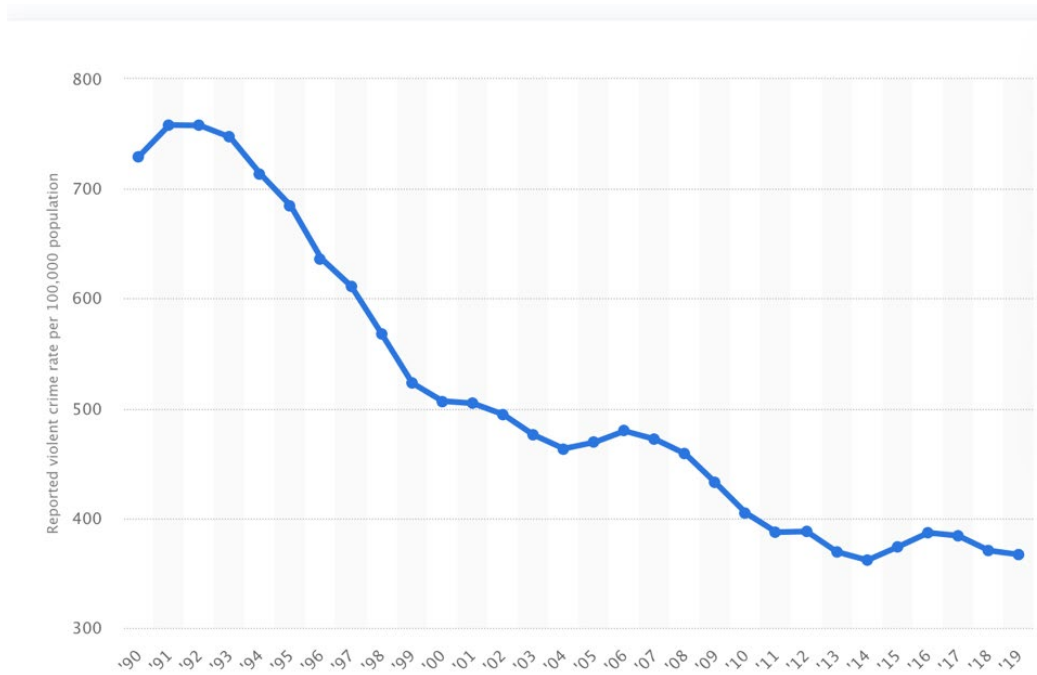


Figure 2. Violent Crime Rate, FBI Uniform Crime Reporting³²

While murder is something that cannot be ignored, or generally cannot go unreported, other violent crimes have been on the decline in the last few years across the United States. Violent crimes are defined in the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting program

³¹ Lopez, “The Rise in Murders in the US.”

³² Source: “Reported Violent Crime Rate in the United States from 1990 to 2019,” Statista, accessed March 27, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/191219/reported-violent-crime-rate-in-the-usa-since-1990/>.

as murder, non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.³³ According to the data compiled, apart from murder, as discussed previously, other violent crimes capture in the Uniform Crime Reporting have been on a decline. With a rising murder rate and other violent crimes staying fairly the same or dropping, it warrants an examination into whether the localities that show a high occurrence of violent crime also have a high occurrence of police shootings, which would reveal a new data point for understanding the frequency of police shootings in certain areas.

The major research on this topic comprises two studies, one by Sherman and Langworthy in 1979 and the other by criminologist James Fyfe in 1980. In the former, Sherman and Langworthy explored the possible relationship between criminal homicide in New York City between 1971 and 1975 and occurrences of police shootings in that same period.³⁴ The study found no temporal relationship between the two, instead concluding a correlation between the two factors in New York City was spurious.³⁵ Therefore, while some might have said there was an obvious correlation, the two occurrences were not necessarily related to one another, or were being erroneously attributed to each other. The second study on violent crime and police shootings was conducted by James Fyfe in 1980, who also studied New York City data between January 1971 and December of 1975 to observe any links between violent crime and police shootings. During that time, Fyfe's research did make observations about the two factors (see Figure 3).

³³ Statista, "Reported Violent Crime Rate in the United States."

³⁴ Robert H. Langworthy, "Police Shooting and Criminal Homicide: The Temporal Relationship," *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 2, no. 4 (1986): 377–88, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23365669>.

³⁵ Langworthy.

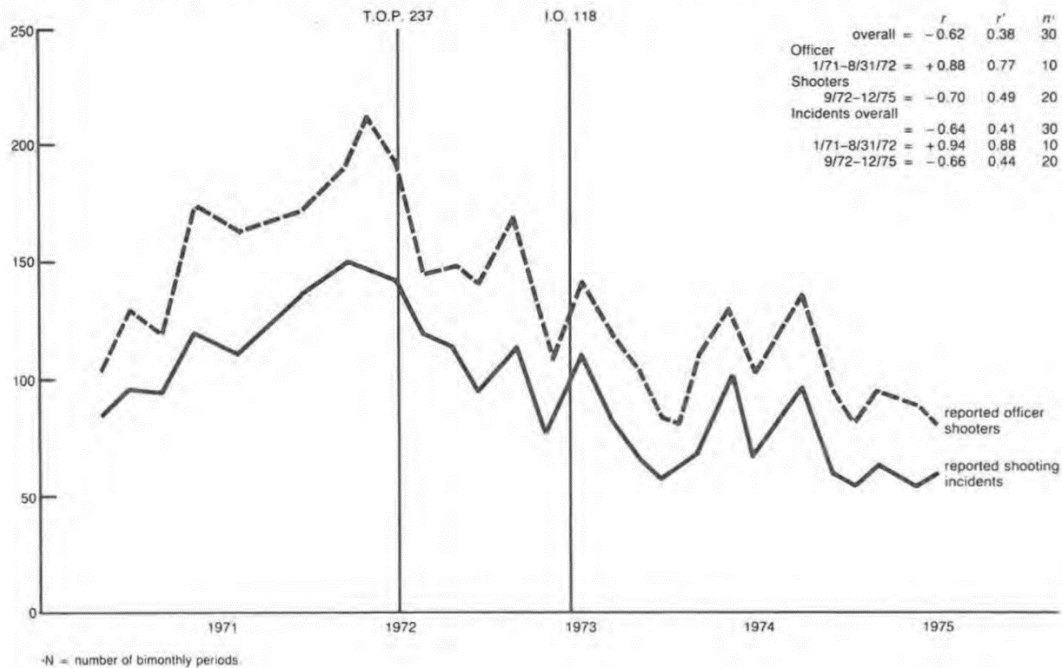


Figure 3. Police Firearm Discharges vs. Reported Community Shootings³⁶

Fyfe's research seems to show an obvious correlation between shootings and violent crime, but unlike Sherman and Langworthy's 1979 study, he makes no determination of the findings being causal or spurious. Fyfe also conceived of the community violence hypothesis, which suggests the use of force by police in a community is in direct response to the amount of violence in that community.³⁷ This hypothesis posits that deadly force is a response to violence aimed at police or as a result of the combination of violent crime rates and cognitive processes of officers working in these areas.³⁸ This theory suggests that since the level of violence is higher in these areas, the amount of force used by the police is, therefore, necessary and acceptable.

³⁶ Source: James Fyfe, ed., *Readings on Police Use of Deadly Force* (Washington, DC: Police Foundation, 1982), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/87616.pdf>.

³⁷ Brad W. Smith, "Structural and Organizational Predictors of Homicide by Police," *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* 27, no. 4 (December 2004): 539-57, <https://doi.org/10.1108/13639510410566262>.

³⁸ Smith.

Table 2. Most and Least Police Shootings per 100,000 People, 2000–2018³⁹

Most			Least		
Rank	City	Death Rate	Rank	City	Death Rate
1	St. Louis, MO	36.3	1	New York, NY	0.2
2	Orlando, FL	28.1	2	Plano, TX	1.2
3	Las Vegas, NV	25.5	3	Gilbert, AZ	1.4

Table 3. More Police Shootings Than Expected Based on Murder Rates⁴⁰

Rank	City	Expected Police Shooting	Actual	More than predicted
1	Orlando, FL	10.6	28.1	17.5
2	Las Vegas, NV	9.4	25.5	16.1
3	Miami, FL	12.2	24.8	12.6
4	Bakersfield, CA	8.8	20.1	11.4
5	St. Louis, MO	25.0	36.3	11.3
6	Tucson, AZ	8.8	19.2	10.4
7	Albuquerque, NM	9.3	18.1	8.8
8	Tulsa, OK	11.1	19.9	8.8
9	Fresno, CA	9.3	18.0	8.7
10	Oklahoma City, OK	10.5	16.9	6.4

A study of fatal police shootings between 2000 and 2018, conducted to observe any correlations between violent crime and police shootings, shows a link in some cities. St. Louis, for example, ranks first in police shootings as well as first in murders per 100,000 people.⁴¹ The data suggest that while there is a correlation between violent crime and police shootings, clusters of cities around the United States experience higher levels of violent crime but do not have corresponding fatal police shooting rates. Cities such as Detroit, Buffalo, and New York City all have lower fatal police-shooting rates when weighed against their respective murder rates. The data, therefore, appear to indicate that the correlation exists in some cities but not in others. Therefore, it can be concluded that while some research has identified violent crime as a driver in some instances of police shootings, other factors must be in play.

³⁹ Source: “The Places in America with the Most (and Least) Police Shootings,” Federal Charges, accessed March 27, 2021, <https://www.federalcharges.com/police-shootings-in-america/>.

⁴⁰ Source: Federal Charges, “The Most (and Least) Police Shootings.”

⁴¹ Federal Charges, “The Most (and Least) Police Shootings.”

Table 4. Fewer Police Shootings Than Expected per 100,000 Residents, 2000–2018⁴²

Rank	City	Expected Police Shootings Rate	Actual	Versus predicted
1	Detroit, MI	20.1	11.2	-8.9
2	Buffalo, NY	11.8	3.8	-8.0
3	New York, NY	8.0	0.2	-7.9
4	Baltimore, MD	24.4	16.6	-7.8
5	Boston, MA	8.7	2.3	-6.5
6	Plano, TX	7.4	1.2	-6.3
7	Greensboro, NC	9.7	4.1	-5.7
8	Raleigh, NC	7.8	2.2	-5.6
9	Lexington, KY	8.5	3.0	-5.4
10	Nashville, TN	10.3	5.0	-5.3

It is impossible to discuss violent crime and its relationship to police shootings without a brief examination of the impact that poverty has on violent crime rates around the country. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) finds that while violent crime across the United States has declined in the past two decades, low-income communities and people of color are still disproportionately affected by violent crime.⁴³ HUD finds that violent crime is concentrated in particular neighborhood hotspots and that low-income people are far more likely to be victims of violent crime.⁴⁴ This body of research on police shootings and the factor of violent crime would be incomplete without acknowledging the role of poverty and rates of violent crime in communities, but a deeper exploration into poverty and police shootings is beyond the scope of this research.

C. MENTAL HEALTH

A conversation about police shootings in the United States necessitates examining the role that mental illness plays in police encounters across the United States. According to a database compiled by the *Washington Post*, one in five people shot and killed by police in the United States have a mental illness, 1,200 people shot and killed by police since 2015

⁴² Source: Federal Charges, “The Most (and Least) Police Shootings.”

⁴³ “Neighborhoods and Violent Crime,” HUD User, accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/summer16/highlight2.html>.

⁴⁴ HUD User.

have a mental illness, and of the more than 700 people fatally shot by police as of July 2020, 100 had a mental disorder.⁴⁵ These statistics show that there is a statistically significant number of encounters that police officers are having that result in the demise of others. While these encounters overall have been deemed within the bounds of local laws and departmental regulations, gleaned lessons from these incidents may help reduce the number of police-involved incidents that result in injury or death via police gunfire.

Figure 4 gives clearly illustrates the impact of mental health calls on police officers in New York City. The number of calls for individuals experiencing mental health issues climbed from 97,132 in 2009 to a staggering 179,569 calls for service in 2018. This rise represents a significant challenge for law enforcement as these types of calls tend to have a greater chance of ending in police shootings.

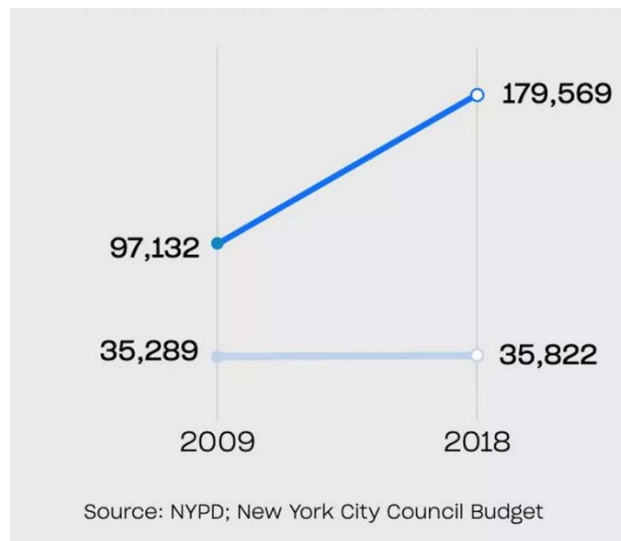


Figure 4. NYPD Mental Health Calls versus Number of Officers, 2009–2018⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Grace Hauck, “Police Have Shot People Experiencing a Mental Health Crisis. Who Should You Call Instead?,” *USA Today*, September 18, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/09/18/police-shooting-mental-health-solutions-training-defund/5763145002/>.

⁴⁶ Source: Greg B. Smith, “No More EDPs: NYPD’s Emergency Plan to Deal with Mentally Ill New Yorkers,” *City*, October 21, 2019, <https://www.thecity.nyc/health/2019/10/21/21210751/no-more-edps-nypd-s-emergency-plan-to-deal-with-mentally-ill-new-yorkers>.

1. The Cycle of Mental Illness Treatment in America

Mental illness, homelessness, and police shootings have often become intertwined in American society. For too long, police officers across the country have been called upon as the main response for individuals experiencing psychological problems. The rise in the number of mental crisis calls can be traced to a policy of deinstitutionalization, which sought to reduce the number of in-patient psychiatric beds across the country while opting for more community-based treatment centers and options for psychiatric patients.⁴⁷ While noble, this policy has largely been a failure as individuals needing care have been unable to access the outpatient care necessary, as these community-based treatment centers have been woefully underfunded. An analysis of 9-1-1 calls in the DC metro area shows calls from family and friends disproportionately involve issues involving mental illness.⁴⁸ This disparity is further augmented by the fact that individuals living in underserved communities tend to be minorities and, thus, less likely to be properly diagnosed as having a mental illness or to receive access to adequate treatment.⁴⁹ Thus, as it currently stands, they are more likely to have interactions with their local police, who tend to be the first responders to these calls.

Another important conversation involves mental health and homelessness. Over the course of a single year, 2.5–3.5 million individuals are estimated to be homeless in America, and mental illness is a risk factor for homelessness.⁵⁰ Being homeless, therefore, means that these individuals cannot access care for their ailments, thus leading to a 60 percent increase in the mortality rate for homeless individuals compared to the general public.⁵¹ Without proper care, some of these individuals cannot get the care they need, and

⁴⁷ Stuart M. Butler and Nehath Sheriff, “Innovative Solutions to Address the Mental Health Crisis: Shifting Away from Police as First Responders,” Brookings, November 23, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/innovative-solutions-to-address-the-mental-health-crisis-shifting-away-from-police-as-first-responders/>.

⁴⁸ Butler and Sheriff.

⁴⁹ Butler and Sheriff.

⁵⁰ Lilanthi Balasuriya, Eliza Buelt, and Jack Tsai, “The Never-Ending Loop: Homelessness, Psychiatric Disorder, and Mortality,” *Psychiatric Times* 37, no. 5 (2020), <https://www.psychiatristimes.com/view/never-ending-loop-homelessness-psychiatric-disorder-and-mortality>.

⁵¹ Balasuriya, Buelt, and Tsai.

an escalation of their illnesses may lead to confrontations with police officers, who are often first to respond to these incidents. In 2015, the Treatment Advocacy Center estimated that civilians with untreated mental illnesses are 16 times more likely to be killed during police encounters than the general population.⁵² Furthermore, an *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* study, using 2009–2012 data, found that one in five legal intervention deaths was directly related to the individual’s mental health.⁵³ Therefore, examining the nexus between mental health, homelessness, and police encounters is a subject worth pursuing. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly one in five U.S. adults—51.5 million people—lived with a mental illness in 2019.⁵⁴ Therefore, given these numbers, a concerted effort must be made to address the current police response model in relation to the mental health crisis.

2. Police Training to Deal with Mental Illness

Due to the varying lengths and areas of emphasis departments place on training for recruits, it is difficult to get an accurate representation for something as crucial as mental health training. With the decline in the number of in-patient psych beds across the nation, police all over the country have generally become the de facto responders for individuals undergoing psychological crises. According to Peter Scharf, criminologist from Louisiana State University’s School of Public Health and Justice, “Increasingly the police and correctional system become the last option.”⁵⁵ Interestingly enough, police officers are likely the least-qualified individuals to handle these types of emergency calls. According to Scharf, officers receive inconsistent mental health training, ranging from four to twelve hours. According to a 2015 survey conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum, officers receive about eight hours of crisis intervention training yet spend 58 hours in firearms trainings (see Figure 5).⁵⁶ Given the multitude of afflictions with varying

⁵² Butler and Sheriff, “Innovative Solutions to Address the Mental Health Crisis.”

⁵³ Butler and Sheriff.

⁵⁴ “Mental Illness,” National Institute of Mental Health, accessed March 24, 2021, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness.shtml>.

⁵⁵ Hauck, “Police Have Shot People Experiencing a Mental Health Crisis.”

⁵⁶ Hauck.

symptoms that encompass mental illness and the amount of training delivered to officers, solutions must be found to better equip these first responders with knowledge toward peacefully resolving complex mental health calls.

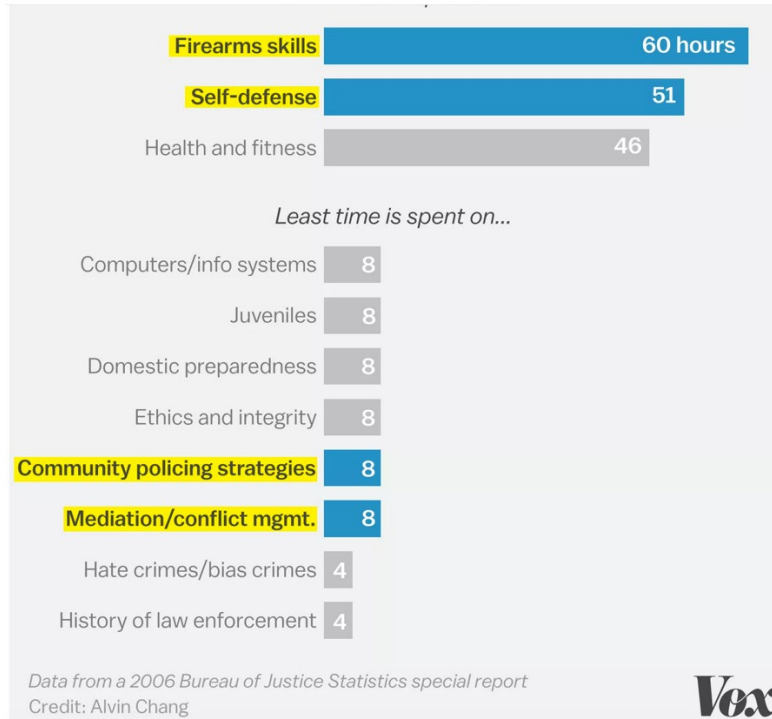


Figure 5. Average Police Training in Hours⁵⁷

D. POLICING AND RACE

There has been a sustained national discourse surrounding police use of force within the United States, specifically relating to force against black, indigenous, and other people of color. While all unwarranted use of force against individuals from across the spectrum is an abomination, historical instances of overt law enforcement abuses against minority groups necessitate examining the relationship between use of force and minority communities. For this research, investigating the role of race in police-involved shooting

⁵⁷ Source: Alvin Chang, “Police Academies Spend 60 Hours on Firearms—and Just 8 Hours on Conflict Management,” Vox, July 7, 2016, <https://www.vox.com/2016/7/7/12118906/police-training-mediation>.

incidents is an important data point for understanding the different factors that contribute to rates of police-involved shootings in the United States.

In the past few years, there has been a renewed focus on police shootings and race in the United States. Before examining what role race as a factor may play in fatal shootings, especially shootings of black Americans, it is worthwhile to examine the statistics. According to a database compiled by the *Washington Post*, 13 unarmed black Americans were shot and killed by police in 2019.⁵⁸ While this statistic makes no assumptions about the subjects' behavior precipitating the law enforcement action, understanding the raw data is vital in identifying and implementing changes. This figure takes on even greater salience in light of a recent survey that delineates exactly how misinformed the average American is about annual police-shooting statistics. In a survey commissioned by the Skeptic Research Center, individuals from across the political spectrum were asked to estimate how many unarmed black Americans were killed by police in 2019. The researchers broke down the responses based on political leanings, and the results were very telling (see Figure 6).

⁵⁸ Molly Stellino, "Fact Check: Police Killed More Unarmed Black Men in 2019 Than Conservative Activist Claimed," *USA Today*, June 23, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2020/06/23/fact-check-how-many-unarmed-black-men-did-police-kill-2019/5322455002/>.

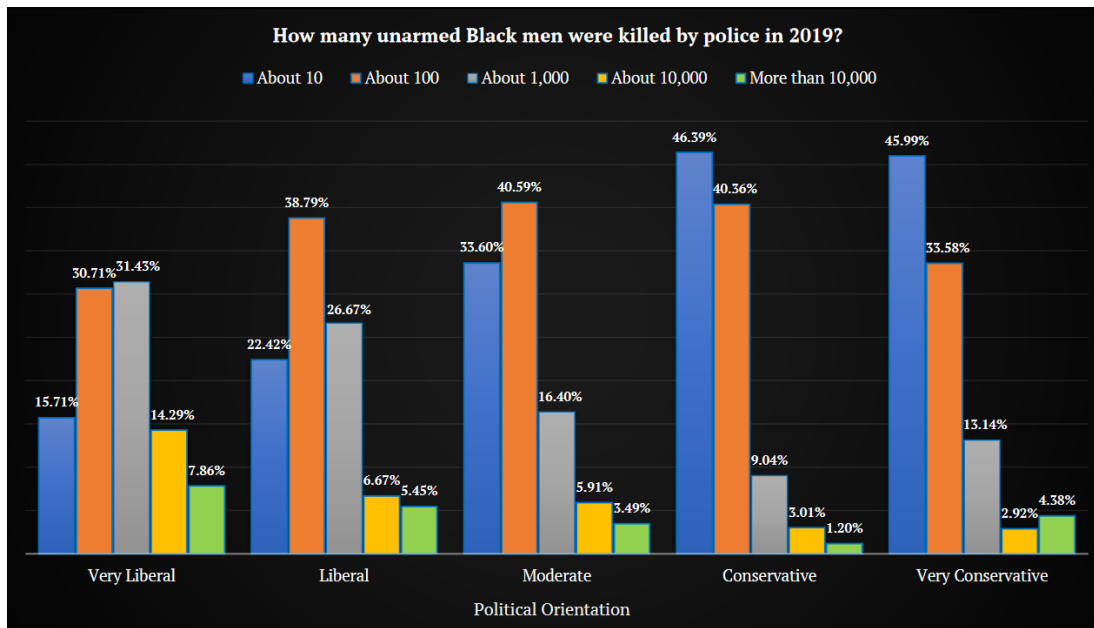


Figure 6. Respondents’ Estimates of Unarmed Black Men Killed by Police in 2019⁵⁹

The startling results of this study show a clear disconnect between concrete facts of the phenomenon and the public’s perception of the issue. For example, a third of respondents who self-identified as liberal believed approximately 1,000–10,000 unarmed black men were killed by American police in 2019 while 12 percent of respondents who self-identified as conservative thought the same.⁶⁰ This finding reinforces the argument that while there is always more to be done to improve policing in the United States, it is important to acknowledge current statistics as a starting point for change.

Police officers in the United States have approximately 375 million interactions with citizens annually, with the vast majority of these incidents being rather mundane in their outcomes.⁶¹ Nevertheless, while a vast majority of these encounters are not out of the

⁵⁹ Source: Kevin McCaffree and Anondah Saide, *How Informed Are Americans about Race and Policing?*, Research Report No. CUPES-007 (Atlatena, CA: Skeptic Research Center, 2021), 2, <https://www.skeptic.com/research-center/reports/Research-Report-CUPES-007.pdf>.

⁶⁰ McCaffree and Saide, 2.

⁶¹ Heather Mac Donald, “The Myth of Systemic Police Racism,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 2, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-myth-of-systemic-police-racism-11591119883>.

ordinary, it is crucial to examine whether the incidents that do end in civilian loss of life occur based on race alone.

For a Western nation, the United States tallies a much higher rate of police-involved shootings than the next closest Western nation. In 2018, the *Washington Post* put the tally of fatal U.S. police shootings at about 1,000 that year.⁶² According to data compiled by the *Post*, as illustrated in Figure 7, the trajectories of police shootings for the years studied indicate the annual tallies are similar, without significant deviation.

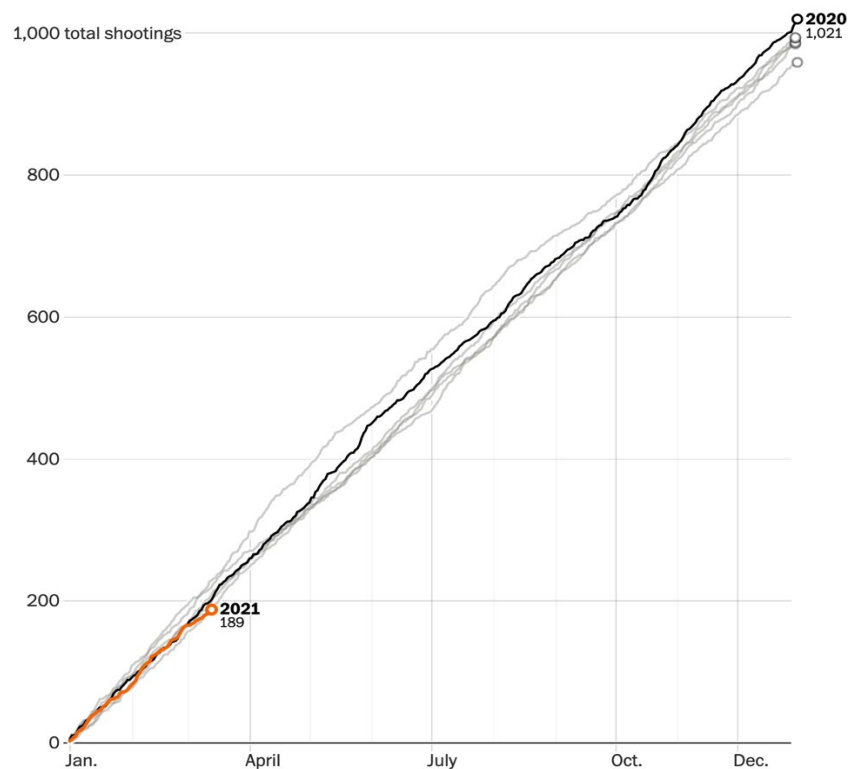


Figure 7. Fatal Police Shootings, 2015–2021⁶³

⁶² Picheta and Pettersson, “The US Shoots, Kills and Imprisons More People.”

⁶³ Source: “Fatal Force: 2019 Police Shootings Database,” *Washington Post*, accessed August 6, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/national/police-shootings-2019/>.

The U.S. data break down to about 31 fatal police shootings per 10 million people while Germany is next with 11 fatal police shootings, equivalent to one person per 10 million people.⁶⁴ The higher rate in the United States should not be observed in a vacuum as, clearly, several factors surround each instance of force used, and the research into this phenomenon reveals that the raw data often fail to give a full accounting of individual circumstances. A major aspect of the conversation on reforming the police is ensuring that the historical abuse of minority communities by law enforcement is not repeated in modern-day America. A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found the NYPD treated people of color differently in the use of non-lethal force—for instance, putting hands on individuals or pushing individuals to a wall.⁶⁵ The source data for this research was garnered using the New York City Police Department (NYPD)’s records from the now-terminated stop-and-frisk initiative. Research from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that black and Hispanic New Yorkers had a greater than 50 percent chance of encountering force in a police encounter.⁶⁶ This research, as it related to non-lethal force, appears to show a clear difference broken down by race.

However, as it related to the use of firearms by police delineated by race, the researchers found no racial differences in officer-involved shootings.⁶⁷ Using the Houston Police Department as an example, the research found black individuals were 27.4 percent less likely to be shot at by police relative to non-black and Hispanic individuals.⁶⁸ This finding is the first real empirical study of its kind and appears to show that at least when it comes to the use of lethal force, race does not appear to be a motivating factor. A compilation of data in police shootings also shows that the number of unarmed individuals shot and killed by police has dropped 63 percent between 2015 and 2019, when 13 unarmed

⁶⁴ Picheta and Pettersson, “The US Shoots, Kills and Imprisons More People.”

⁶⁵ Roland G. Fryer Jr., “An Empirical Analysis of Racial Differences in Police Use of Force” (working paper, National Bureau of Economic Research, July 2016), 3, <https://doi.org/10.3386/w22399>.

⁶⁶ Fryer, 9.

⁶⁷ Fryer.

⁶⁸ Fryer, 26.

black individuals, not to mention 25 more who were white, were shot and killed.⁶⁹ A combination of gradual accountability and much-needed reforms could explain this precipitous drop, and steps could be taken to ensure a continuation of this downward trend.

A debate across the country continues concerning racial disparities and officer-involved shootings. Frequently, the argument revolves around apparent discrimination on the part of white officers against people of color. In 2019, research was conducted by the National Academy of Sciences to uncover a possible relationship between officer characteristics and racial disparities in fatal police shootings. The researchers acknowledged that fatal officer-involved shooting databases often lack details about the officers involved—meaning it is difficult to test disparities based on the characteristics of the officers. Moreover, the researchers admit there exist conflicting viewpoints on how to assess racial disparities when “the outcome is the rate at which members from racial groups are fatally shot.”⁷⁰ The initial study identified no anti-black or anti-Hispanic disparities across shootings but instead found that race-specific crime in the community being studied strongly predicted the race of the civilian that would likely be fatally shot by police.⁷¹

It is worth noting that in the aftermath of this study’s publication, it was used to support the assertion that racial bias does not play a role in fatal shootings. The authors followed up with a correction, clarifying that “while [their] data and statistical approach were appropriate for investigating whether officer characteristics are related to the race of civilians fatally shot by police, they are inadequate to address racial disparities in the probability of being shot.”⁷² According to the researchers, their work was being used to suggest racial bias does not exist in police shootings whereas their research sought only to

⁶⁹ Heather Mac Donald, “There Is No Epidemic of Fatal Police Shootings against Unarmed Black Americans,” *USA Today*, July 3, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/07/03/police-black-killings-homicide-rates-race-injustice-column/3235072001/>.

⁷⁰ David J. Johnson et al., “Officer Characteristics and Racial Disparities in Fatal Officer-Involved Shootings,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116, no. 32 (2019): 15877, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1903856116>.

⁷¹ Johnson et al.

⁷² National Academy of Sciences, “Retraction for Johnson et al., Officer Characteristics and Racial Disparities in Fatal Officer-Involved Shootings,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117, no. 30 (2020): 18130, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2014148117>.

test for racial disparities in fatal officer-involved shootings—a fact they made clear in the initial research but had to retract in its entirety when these finer points were conflated.

While the jury is still out on this complex subject, examining available research is worthwhile. In 2015, the DOJ under President Obama conducted an analysis of the Philadelphia Police Department. It conducted interviews, focus groups, and met with community members and sworn and civilian members of the Philadelphia Police Department. It found that white officers were less likely than black or Hispanic officers to shoot unarmed black subjects.⁷³

The methodologies used by researchers in the studies illustrate the difficulty of answering the questions surrounding race and policing. A more detailed examination of the myriad issues surrounding race and policing is beyond the scope of the research contained in this thesis but is certainly worthy of further research.

E. TRAINING AND DEPARTMENTAL POLICY DIFFERENCES

“We don’t rise to the level of our expectations; we fall to the level of our training.”

—Greek Poet Archilochos⁷⁴

The training of police officers in the United States is a factor that could possibly play a role in police-involved shootings across the country. With thousands of police departments across the nation, in different jurisdictions, there are vast differences in how officers are trained and how curricula are designed for training programs. The Institute for Criminal Justice Training Reform found that on average, new police recruits undergo 672 hours of basic training, and 36 states allow officers to start working within departments

⁷³ George Fachner and Steven Carter, *Collaborative Reform Initiative: An Assessment of Deadly Force in the Philadelphia Police Department* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2015), <https://www.phillypolice.com/assets/directives/cops-w0753-pub.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Richard Feloni, “Tim Ferriss Lives His Life According to an Ancient Greek Quote That Helps Him Prepare for the Worst,” *Business Insider*, December 1, 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com/tim-ferriss-favorite-quote-greek-philosopher-archilochus-2017-12>.

before attending basic training.⁷⁵ With the limited hours afforded them, agencies and academies must prioritize what will be covered during these training sessions.

1. Training Curriculum

With the vast differences in training hours between departments, the only constant is the need to make hard choices when academies set out their curricula for academy classes. The DOJ's Bureau of Justice Statistics conducted an in-depth study on more than 600 state and local law enforcement academies. The data collected were from agencies that performed basic law enforcement training from 2011 and 2013, and some of the findings appear in Figures 8–9 and Table 5. They noted that excluding field training programs, the average training period was about 840 hours, or 21 weeks for basic training.⁷⁶ During this training, most of the time was spent on police operations, which included about 71 hours for firearm proficiency, ground fighting, speed cuffing, and neck/carotid restraints, among other self-defense training, while about 40 hours was spent on community policy and 10 hours on mental illness training.⁷⁷ With the limited time currently allocated to academies, priorities are set by departments, and given the average of 10 hours on mental health training for police, according to this DOJ survey, officers are not adequately prepared for the complexities of mental health emergency calls. About a quarter of fatal police shootings between 2013 and 2019, or 1,324 deaths, were of individuals undergoing some sort of mental health crisis.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Kelly McLaughlin, "The Average US Police Department Requires Fewer Hours of Training Than What It Takes to Become a Barber or a Plumber," *Insider*, June 12, 2020, <https://www.insider.com/some-police-academies-require-fewer-hours-of-training-plumbing-2020-6>.

⁷⁶ Reaves, *State and Local Law Enforcement Training*.

⁷⁷ Reaves.

⁷⁸ Kimberly Kindy et al., "Fatal Police Shootings of Mentally Ill People Are 39 Percent More Likely to Take Place in Small and Midsized Areas," *Washington Post*, October 17, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/police-mentally-ill-deaths/2020/10/17/8dd5bcf6-0245-11eb-b7ed-141dd88560ea_story.html.



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Census of Law Enforcement Training Academies, 2006 and 2013.

Figure 8. Police Academy Training Curriculum, 2006 vs. 2013⁷⁹

Table 5. Academy Training Focus Areas⁸⁰

Training area	Percent of academies with training	Average number of hours of instruction required per recruit*
Operations		
Report writing	99%	25 hrs.
Patrol procedures	98	52
Investigations	98	42
Traffic accident investigations	98	23
Emergency vehicle operations	97	38
Basic first aid/CPR	97	24
Computers/information systems	61	9
Weapons/defensive tactics/use of force		
Defensive tactics	99%	60 hrs.
Firearms skills	98	71
Use of force	98	21
Nonlethal weapons	88	16
Self-improvement		
Ethics and integrity	98%	8 hrs.
Health and fitness	96	49
Communications	91	15
Professionalism	85	11
Stress prevention/management	81	6
Legal education		
Criminal/constitutional law	98%	53 hrs.
Traffic law	97	23
Juvenile justice law/procedures	97	10

*Excludes academies that did not provide this type of instruction.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Census of Law Enforcement Training Academies, 2013.

⁷⁹ Source: Brian A. Reaves, *State and Local Law Enforcement Training Academies, 2013*, NCJ 249784 (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2021), 9, <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=5684>.

⁸⁰ Source: Reaves, *State and Local Law Enforcement Training*, 5.



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Census of Law Enforcement Training Academies, 2013.

Figure 9. Community Policing Training in State and Local Academies, 2013⁸¹

2. Training Focus Points

Figures 8–9 and Table 5 show a focus by academies on ensuring officers are prepared for the physical and emotional demands of policing. One additional argument brought to the forefront of the curriculum discussion is that training officers ought to be guardians of the public rather than mere warriors executing their duties. Critics argue that in training officers, the warrior mentality has usurped every other aspect of policing. According to Seth Stoughton, an associate professor at the University of South Carolina and former police officer,

The idea of a warrior mentality or the warrior mindset is to remind officers in life-threatening situations to have the mental tenacity and grit they need to survive. It’s become a much broader metaphor for all aspects of policing and contributed to a very adversarial approach to policing, where officers are told they are superheroes doing battle with the forces of evil, that they’re soldiers on the front line in a war against anarchy.⁸²

⁸¹ Source: Reaves, *State and Local Law Enforcement Training*, 8.

⁸² Kelly McLaughlin, “One of America’s Most Popular Police Trainers Is Teaching Officers How to Kill,” *Insider*, June 2, 2020, <https://www.insider.com/bulletproof-dave-grossman-police-trainer-teaching-officers-how-to-kill-2020-6>.

The alternative to this training, some argue, involves officers becoming more guardian than warrior. According to the Harvard Kennedy School’s Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management, officers have moved away from building close community ties and instead are relying on equipment and technology to get information about local crime trends.⁸³ By removing themselves from the community, officers are not making themselves part of the community, which arguably leads to more adversarial encounters with the public.

3. Organizational Differences

The rules that govern how officers use force can also contribute to police-shooting statistics within departments. With varying rules on the implementation of force—including differences in shoot/don’t shoot scenarios—departments in the United States run the gamut on the question of permissibility. If a department for example requires the hiring of highly educated officers and provides them with extensive training and supervision, police agencies can minimize circumstances that lead to police use of deadly force.⁸⁴ This argument—the professionalism hypothesis, made popular by criminologist James Fyfe—posits that highly educated officers manage violent confrontations better, and officers who are provided with regular, frequent in-service trainings make better decisions in violent situations, thus resulting in fewer civilian deaths.⁸⁵

Another argument—the organizational hypothesis—involves organizational culture and policy. Fyfe argues that when organizational policies set stricter boundaries on an officer’s use of force, fatal police shootings decrease.⁸⁶ Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that greater bureaucratic controls through a greater number of written rules and regulations result in fewer instances of police killings within departments.⁸⁷ Fyfe’s

⁸³ Sue Rahr and Stephen K. Rice, “From Warriors to Guardians: Recommitting American Police Culture to Democratic Ideals,” *New Perspectives in Policing* (April 2015), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/248654.pdf>.

⁸⁴ Smith, “Predictors of Homicide by Police,” 541.

⁸⁵ Smith, 541.

⁸⁶ Smith, 541.

⁸⁷ Smith, 542.

hypothesis appears to be corroborated by a 2017 study conducted across three American police agencies. In examining 3,000 less-than-lethal police incidents, the study found that in agencies that deployed very restrictive force policies, officers were less likely to use force.⁸⁸ Therefore, an augmentation of training hours combined with restrictions on the use of force could make an impact on police shootings across the United States.

F. CONCLUSION

Upon review of the factors that affect police-involved shootings in the United States, the research makes clear that understanding the phenomenon involves looking at myriad factors that play a role in annual police-involved shooting statistics. The available research on the matter points to compounding factors in police shootings across the country. The abundance of firearms in American society plays a role in police shootings, according to the research, but the training and levels of restrictions placed on officers in their departments also appear to have an impact on shootings. Furthermore, on the issue of race and police shootings, further research is needed to prove a definitive link between these incidents and racial bias. At present, the dominant research suspects that bias on the part of police officers plays a role, based on raw numbers alone. Without incontrovertible evidence to the contrary, no other explanation for police shootings of individuals from minority communities arises from the statistics. Finally, a major lesson learned from the research is that a sizeable percentage of fatal police shootings involve police responding to mental health crises, so this is an area that warrants further study to mitigate police shootings.

⁸⁸ William Terrill and Eugene A. Paoline III, “Police Use of Less Lethal Force: Does Administrative Policy Matter?,” *Justice Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2017): 193–216, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2016.1147593>.

III. CASE STUDIES OF LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

When examining the factors that affect law enforcement's use of firearms in the United States, it is vital to begin with case studies of municipal police departments across the country. These departments were chosen because of their varying numbers of sworn officers, differences in the size of populations they serve, and array of state laws regarding legal firearm possession. Another consideration in these case studies is the proliferation of firearms within the respective states. The goal of this chapter is to gain a better understanding of officers' training in these cities, the rules about firearm use imposed by law enforcement organizations, and recorded statistics of police-involved shootings to glean possible factors in the recorded levels of these incidents. Shedding light on these factors may help identify possible solutions for agencies across the country.

This chapter examines four police departments from across the United States. These departments operate within states that highlight the factors discussed in Chapter II. For example, some of these departments operate in states with rather stringent laws on firearm ownership while others operate with more relaxed rules—which translate into differing public firearm proliferation rates. The departments chosen also represent municipalities with differing violent crime rates, so their police-shooting statistics can be examined to see whether relationships exist between the aforementioned factors and police shootings. Moreover, this chapter scrutinizes the training curriculum of each agency as well as organizational restrictions on officer firearm use, thereby gauging the role these two factors possibly play in police-involved shootings.

Another crucial consideration is whether a seminal study by the *American Journal of Public Health* that links proliferation of firearms to an increase in police shootings applies within the context of these case studies. The researchers evaluated the effect of state-level firearm legislation on police-shooting rates between January 1, 2015, and October 31, 2016. They found that state-level firearm legislation—e.g., requiring background checks, promoting safe storage, and reducing gun trafficking—correlated with

fewer fatal police shootings in those states.⁸⁹ This could be an important study vis-à-vis these case studies as law enforcement embarks on changing police-shooting statistics. Thus, another goal of this chapter is to test these case studies against the results of this public health study. For instance, if the proliferation of firearms in the community being studied is high, then the expectation is that the police departments in that community experience higher rates of police shootings.

Obtaining a complete picture of police shootings through statistics is not a novel challenge. Between 2011 and 2015, fewer than 3 percent of state and local police agencies reported their shooting data to the FBI, and it was not until 2018 that the FBI began a pilot program to compile national police use-of-force statistics.⁹⁰ It is, therefore, hard to accurately assess the data without having the full picture of police shootings.

At the end of this chapter, among the varied factors that affect police-shooting rates emerges one factor that can be inferred from the research: for departments that exercise strong organizational control over officers, police shootings appear to be far less frequent than for other departments. Another lesson learned from the research is that all police departments within the United States should report all instances of police shootings to the FBI. It is impossible to understand a condition when there is not a full and proper accounting of it.

A. NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

The NYPD is the largest municipal department in the United States with approximately 36,000 uniformed members and about 19,000 civilian employees.⁹¹ The department is responsible for various law enforcement functions in New York City, with more than 8.5 million inhabitants spread across five boroughs. The department has 77

⁸⁹ Aaron J. Kivisto, Bradley Ray, and Peter L. Phalen, “Firearm Legislation and Fatal Police Shootings in the United States,” *American Journal of Public Health* 107, no. 7 (July 2017): 1068–75, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2017.303770>.

⁹⁰ Roxana Hegeman, “Wichita Hoax Call Case Notes History of Police Shootings,” AP News, December 9, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/us-news-shootings-police-kansas-wichita-14ea84399edc9d8481fb241a7c0f246c>.

⁹¹ “About NYPD,” New York City Police Department, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/about/about-nypd/about-nypd-landing.page>.

patrol precincts, 12 transit districts to police the city’s subway system and riders, and nine police service areas to patrol the city’s public housing developments.⁹² Based on published statistics from the department, the demographics of its members and the population it serves are as follows:

Table 6. NYPD Membership vs. New York City Population Demographics⁹³

	Population	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native American	White
NYC Residents	8,336,817	13.9%	24.3%	29.1%	0.4%	32.1%
Uniform Members	34,583	9.1%	15.2%	29.3%	0.1%	46.4%

1. NYPD Training

The NYPD trains its recruits at a 32-acre campus in College Point, Queens. The new academy opened its doors in 2014 and, according to the department, performs “recruit and in-service training focuses on effective community policing, de-escalation, communication skills, safe tactics, and the privilege of serving the nation’s most diverse population.”⁹⁴ The NYPD holds the training of its recruits at this facility and familiarizes all recruits with its Patrol Guide, which sets expectations for how officers conduct themselves. The NYPD academy is six months long and followed by an 18-month probationary period, making the entire probationary period 24 months.⁹⁵ This document describes in detail the duties and responsibilities of every rank within the department and includes information on the NYPD’s use-of-force policies. The department has established

⁹² New York City Police Department.

⁹³ Source: “New York City Police Department,” Microsoft Power BI, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoizTI4OTRjZTYtNTYwOC00NzcxLThhYThOTU5NGNkMzIzYjVlIiwidCI6IjIOWY1N2ViLTc4ZDEtNDZmYi1iZTgzLWEyYWZkZDdjNjA0MyJ9&pageName=ReportSection>.

⁹⁴ “Police Academy,” New York City Police Department, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/about/police-academy/police-academy-landing.page>.

⁹⁵ New York City, “Notice of Exam: Police Officer Exam No. 2072” (New York: New York City, 2003), 4, http://www.nypd2.org/pdf/noe_2072_with_fee.pdf.

guidelines—Patrol Guide Section 221-01—for using force and, in the first few sentences, reminds officers that the application or use of force must be reasonable under the circumstances and they ought to employ less-lethal alternatives and prioritize de-escalation whenever possible.⁹⁶

A few aspects of the NYPD’s use-of-force model stand out as they relate to officers’ training. One example is the policy regarding moving vehicles. According to the NYPD’s Patrol Guide, “Members shall not . . . discharge their firearms at or from a moving vehicle unless deadly physical force is being used against the member of service or another person present, by means other than a moving vehicle.”⁹⁷ In addition to this restriction concerning vehicles, the department also prohibits officers from “discharg[ing] firearms to subdue a fleeing felon who presents no threat of imminent death or serious physical injury to the [officer] or another person present.”⁹⁸ Coupled with a ban on chokeholds or any sort of pressure on the diaphragm of a subject, the NYPD has very restrictive organizational controls regarding the use of force among its employees.

2. New York City Gun Laws

In examining the factors that may influence police-involved firearm use, it is worth examining the laws surrounding firearm ownership in New York City. With its more than eight million inhabitants, it is one of the largest cities in the United States with very stringent rules on the ownership of firearms. The state has no specific laws requiring a permit for long guns, which include rifles and shotguns, but it does require a permit for handguns statewide.⁹⁹ As a may-issue state, the State of New York empowers local police departments to issue concealed carry permits as they see fit.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, while the state

⁹⁶ New York City Police Department, *Force Guidelines*, Patrol Guide Procedure No. 221-01 (New York: New York City Police Department, 2021), 617–18, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nypd/downloads/pdf/public_information/public-pguide3.pdf.

⁹⁷ New York City Police Department, 617.

⁹⁸ New York City Police Department, 617.

⁹⁹ “New York Gun Laws,” National Rifle Association Institute for Legislative Action, April 11, 2017, <https://www.nraila.org/gun-laws/state-gun-laws/new-york/>.

¹⁰⁰ “New York City Concealed Carry Reciprocity Map & Gun Laws,” U.S. Concealed Carry Association, accessed February 24, 2021, https://www.usconcealedcarry.com/resources/ccw_reciprocity_map/nyc-gun-laws/.

permits its residents to own rifles and shotguns without a license, New York City requires a permit for them within the city limits. According to the NYPD, which is the entity responsible for granting pistol permits, as of 2018, New York City had approximately 41,000 permits issued, with more than a third of them going to retired law enforcement officers.¹⁰¹ It is also worth noting that among other restrictions, in order to purchase a firearm from an individual, the buyer must obtain a permit to purchase, submit to a background check, and register the firearm with the city.¹⁰² Furthermore, the carrying of a handgun anywhere in the state requires the individual to obtain a pistol license, and the minimum age to obtain one is 21.¹⁰³

In addition to these restrictions, anyone from outside of New York City must seek permission from local authorities—in this case, the NYPD—to carry a handgun within city limits. In other words, New York City has no reciprocity with any U.S. state or even a variance for residents of New York state outside the city when it comes to carrying firearms.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, mere possession of a handgun, concealed or otherwise, even while holding a firearm permit from another U.S. state or jurisdiction is grounds for arrest within the confines of New York City.

In the case of New York City, the police department has managed to achieve a low ratio of police shootings for a city of its size. Understanding the low rate of police shootings based on available data would suggest that organizational control, by means of firearm and use-of-force restrictions placed on officers within the NYPD, plays a big role in the use of firearms by its employees. In addition, while the city does in fact have a high number of shootings, it could be argued that more firearms would be circulation if not for the restrictions placed on their ownership. However, given the movement of illegal firearms across state lines into New York City, it is ultimately difficult to state with any degree of certainty that the laws limiting firearm ownership play a statistically significant part in the

¹⁰¹ Josh Robin, “Packing Heat: New York City Gun Owners Express Their Point of View,” Spectrum News, March 16, 2018, <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/politics/2018/03/17/packing-heat--new-york-city-gun-owners-express-their-point-of-view>.

¹⁰² U.S. Concealed Carry Association, “New York City Concealed Carry Reciprocity Map.”

¹⁰³ U.S. Concealed Carry Association.

¹⁰⁴ U.S. Concealed Carry Association.

resulting police-involved shootings. Nevertheless, since New York state does not register as one of the top firearm-ownership states in the nation, based on the research linking high state firearm ownership to police shootings, this factor does play a role in the number of police-involved shootings in New York City.

3. NYPD Police Shootings

In addition to the restrictions, for any level of force used, an NYPD officer is required to render “immediate medical attention and provide first aid, if appropriate and properly trained.”¹⁰⁵ The NYPD documents all use-of-force instances, from physical force used to restrain subjects to every instance a firearm is discharged, whether or not the discharge causes injury. As mentioned earlier, the federal government does not have a repository for this type of information, so if individual departments do not have a method for keeping accurate records, it becomes harder to understand the statistics of force incidents and instances of firearm use by these departments. In the case of the NYPD, the department recorded the following numbers for police-involved shooting incidents over the last decade:

Table 7. NYPD Police-Involved Shooting Incidents, 2010–2019¹⁰⁶

Year recorded	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Officers firing during incidents of intentional police discharge during adversarial conflict	52	62	60	55	58	55	37	32	26	54
Incidents of intentional police discharge during adversarial conflict	33	36	45	40	35	33	42	23	17	25
Subjects shot and injured	16	19	14	17	14	15	33	19	15	24
Subjects shot and killed	8	9	16	8	8	8	9	10	5	11

¹⁰⁵ New York City Police Department, *Force Guidelines*, 621.

¹⁰⁶ Source: “Annual Use of Force/Firearms Discharge Report Data Tables,” New York City Police Department, accessed August 6, 2020, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/reports-analysis/firearms-discharge.page>.

According to the data in Table 7, for the last decade, the NYPD has averaged about 18 shooting subjects, of whom nine are fatally shot, annually. This number accounts for the more than eight million inhabitants of the city and an average of six million calls for service annually.¹⁰⁷ The NYPD has sought to be at the forefront of firearm discharge policies. The rules guiding officers' use of firearms are even more restrictive than the laws of the State of New York and the City of New York. For example, New York State allows people to discharge firearms in protection of their property, but this practice is expressly forbidden for NYPD officers.¹⁰⁸ Holding NYPD officers to an even higher standard than is permitted by state law may have contributed to New York City's reporting just 0.2 fatal shootings per 100,000 residents between 2000 and 2018.¹⁰⁹ This figure is considerably lower than many other major American cities.

4. New York City Gun Crimes

The 2017 study by the *American Journal of Public Health* on the relationship between the proliferation of guns and instances of police shootings also raises another question. If a metropolitan city in the United States experiences a higher crime rate of shootings or homicides by firearm, does that higher presence of gun crime correlate with higher police use of firearms? In the case of New York City, there are a few numbers to consider regarding gun-related crimes.

¹⁰⁷ New York City Police Department, "Annual Use of Force/Firearms Discharge Report Data Tables."

¹⁰⁸ New York City Police Department.

¹⁰⁹ Waichman, "The Cities with the Most Fatal Shootings in the U.S."

Table 8. NYC Murders, Shootings, and Gun Arrests, 2018–2020¹¹⁰

Year	2018	2019	2020
NYC Murders	295	319	468
NYC Shootings	749	772	1,531
Gun Arrests	2,952	3,299	4,280

The crime and arrest data in Table 8 show that while murders, as well as shootings and gun arrests, have slowly experienced an uptick in the past three years, the number of police-involved shootings in New York City has stayed relatively the same, as shown in Table 7. Therefore, at least in New York City, there does not appear to be a correlation between firearm-related incidents and police use of firearms.

B. WICHITA POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Wichita Police Department is the largest police department in the largest city in the state of Kansas. The department has an active force of 598 sworn officers serving a population of 389,824 and a city of 163.6 square miles.¹¹¹ The demographic breakdown of the Wichita’s residents versus its police department is as follows:

¹¹⁰ Adapted from Rocco Parascandola, Thomas Tracy, and Leonard Greene, “‘What the Hell Is Going on with the Firearms in NYC?’: NYPD Has Made 417 Gun Arrests Already This Year,” *New York Daily News*, January 27, 2021, <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/ny-cops-make-more-than-400-gun-arrests-this-year-20210127-vy5qsjmsyjeizpxc4ckcs27mna-story.html>; Walter B. Levis, “Police Shootings in Perspective: Bullets Rarely Are Fired by NYPD,” *New York Daily News*, August 28, 2020, <https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-keep-police-shootings-in-perspective-20200828-fjofpkpw7zb35kqerroyfaa6m-story.html>; Ben Chapman, “New York City Homicides and Shootings Rose Dramatically in 2020,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 7, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-homicides-and-shootings-rose-dramatically-in-2020-11610055243>.

¹¹¹ “Wichita, Kansas Police,” Police Data Initiative, accessed February 26, 2021, <https://www.policedatainitiative.org/participating-agencies/wichita-kansas-police/>.

Table 9. Wichita Police Membership vs. Population Demographics¹¹²

	Population	White	African-American/Black	Hispanic
Wichita, KS, Residents	389,824	62%	11%	11%
Police Membership	900	89%	9%	5%

1. Wichita Police Training

The Wichita Police Department’s training consists of a 24-week program in conjunction with the Sedgewick County Sheriff’s Office at the Wichita Sedgewick County Law Enforcement Training Center located on the campus of Wichita State University.¹¹³ The department has a clearly outlined training manual and rules of conduct for its members. In examining the rules of engagement of the department, it is worth noting that according to Regulation 4.105, section B, officers are not justified in discharging their firearms at fleeing individuals who have “committed misdemeanors only.”¹¹⁴ This regulation as written suggests that an officer may fire on an individual fleeing an officer after committing a felony. In addition, officers of the Wichita Police Department are advised to use caution if they make the decision to fire from or at a moving vehicle.¹¹⁵ The Wichita Police Department mandates reporting of any use of force by officers outside the regular placement of handcuffs on an arrestee.

On the subject of techniques and methods not specifically learned at the Wichita police training facility, the department acknowledges in Regulation 4.102—in sum and substance—that in rapidly evolving confrontations, officers may use weapons or

¹¹² Adapted from “Home Page,” Bureau of Justice Statistics, accessed February 26, 2021, <https://www.bjs.gov/>; “Wichita, KS,” Data USA, accessed February 26, 2021, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/wichita-ks/#demographics>.

¹¹³ Sara Ornelas, “LETC, University Benefit from Partnership,” Wichita State University, May 18, 2020, https://www.wichita.edu/about/wsunews/news/2020/05-may/LETC_9.php.

¹¹⁴ Wichita Police Department, *Weapons/Use of Force Requirements*, Regulation 4 (Wichita: Wichita Police Department, 2020), 2, <https://www.wichita.gov/WPD/WPDPolicyAndProcedureManual/Regulation%204%20-%20Weapons%20and%20Use%20of%20Force%20Requirements.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ Wichita Police Department.

techniques not specifically taught by the department. Moreover, if an officer's actions are deemed reasonable in retrospect, they are deemed to be within policy and regulation, even if the specific actions are not articulated in the department's manual.¹¹⁶ This policy enacted by the department is in place to account for those unpredictable situations in police work and, thus, seeks to protect employees who take actions they did not learn in the Wichita training academy.

2. Kansas Gun Laws

“People are really quick to pull out a gun. I think years past we would have seen people pull out a stick or a bat or something but now everyone pulls out guns. Our gun laws are not restrictive.”

—Gordon Ramsay, Wichita Police Chief

Examining whether the proliferation of firearms in Kansas relates to the difference in police-involved shootings there requires an analysis of its gun laws. The State of Kansas permits its residents to carry firearms, both open and concealed, without a license.¹¹⁷ Moreover, neither permits nor any sort of registration of firearms is required within the state.¹¹⁸ A 2020 survey by the RAND Corporation revealed that an estimated 48.9 percent of Kansas residents have firearms in their homes.¹¹⁹ Kansas can be defined as a 2A state, meaning the law that governs the carrying of firearms is the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The Pew Research Center puts the number of registered firearms in the state at 52,634.¹²⁰ There are few restrictions on the ability to bear arms in Kansas, but those that exist are limited to public spaces with signage that designate the areas, including government buildings, bars and schools, gun-free zones.¹²¹ Apart from public spaces with

¹¹⁶ Wichita Police Department.

¹¹⁷ “Basic Concealed Carry Laws: Kansas,” *U.S. Concealed Carry Association* (blog), January 31, 2021, <https://www.usconcealedcarry.com/blog/basic-concealed-carry-laws-kansas/>.

¹¹⁸ “Basic Concealed Carry Laws: Kansas.”

¹¹⁹ Terry L. Schell et al., *State-Level Estimates of Household Firearm Ownership*, Document No. TL-354-LJAF (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.7249/TL354>.

¹²⁰ “Gun Ownership by State 2021,” *World Population Review*, accessed March 3, 2021, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/gun-ownership-by-state>.

¹²¹ “Basic Concealed Carry Laws: Kansas.”

the “no firearms” signage, Kansas sets no real restrictions on the ability to carry arms in the state, which is a reason for the state’s ranking in gun ownership by state.

3. Wichita Police Shootings

In Wichita, measuring the rate of police shootings must account for the city’s population. As a city of over 300,000, Wichita ranked sixth in the number of people killed by police between 2013 and 2018, with a number of 10.¹²² Furthermore, between 2011 and 2017, Wichita police shot at 21 citizens.¹²³ Once the FBI began compiling data on the Wichita Police Department, the records indicated that the department has one shooting death for every 120 officers, a number 11 times greater than the national average.¹²⁴ Thus, a closer examination of the conditions in Wichita could provide some answers as to the numbers in the city.

4. Wichita Gun Crimes

This section examines Wichita, Kansas—the state’s largest city—through the lens of the 2017 *Journal of Public Health* study, which linked proliferation of guns to police shootings. Table 10 presents the city’s murder statistics from 2018 to 2020.

Table 10. Murders in Wichita, 2018–2020¹²⁵

Year	2018	2019	2020
Wichita Murders	44	44	59

¹²² Katherine Burgess, “Do Wichita Police Shoot and Kill at a Disproportionate Rate?,” *Wichita Eagle*, February 9, 2018, <https://www.kansas.com/news/local/crime/article199391864.html>.

¹²³ Hegeman, “Wichita Hoax.”

¹²⁴ Hegeman.

¹²⁵ Source: “Crime Stats,” Wichita Police Department, accessed February 27, 2021, <https://www.wichita.gov:443/WPD/SupportServices/Pages/CrimeStats.aspx>.

To put it in context, in 2018, Wichita had 9.7 murders per 100,000 people while New York City, with a population of more than eight million, registered 3.31 murders.¹²⁶ According to the statistics, Wichita is undergoing a massive rise in homicides, most of which are related to firearms. As of December 16, 2020, 42 of Wichita's homicides for the year were a result of firearms, according to Wichita Police Chief Gordon Ramsay.¹²⁷ Furthermore, the city experienced an uptick in drive-by shootings in 2020, and this upward trend was further bolstered by Wichita gun dealers, who noticed a sharp uptick in demand for guns and ammunition the same year.¹²⁸ While the reason for this explosion in the demand for firearms warrants further study, it is clear that a consequence of the availability of firearms has been an increase in overall homicides.

C. HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Houston Police Department is the fifth-largest department in the United States.¹²⁹ The department serves the city of Houston and its more than two million residents, with a working force of 5,400 officers and 892 civilian support staff in the largest city in Texas.¹³⁰ With over 45 divisions, the Houston Police Department is responsible for all law enforcement activities in Houston. The demographics of the Houston Police Department as of 2020 are as follows:

¹²⁶ Zolan Kanno-Youngs, "New York City's Murder Rate Hit New Low in 2018," *Wall Street Journal*, January 3, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-citys-murder-rate-hit-new-low-in-2018-11546559793>.

¹²⁷ Michael Stavola, "Wichita Nearly Ties Homicide Record. Here's What Chief Ramsay Suspects Could Be the Cause," *Wichita Eagle*, December 16, 2020, <https://www.kansas.com/news/local/crime/article247865140.html>.

¹²⁸ Stavola.

¹²⁹ "Home Page," Houston Police Department Recruiting Division, accessed March 3, 2021, <http://www.hpdcareer.com/index.html>.

¹³⁰ Houston Police Department Recruiting Division.

Table 11. Demographics of Houston Police Department’s Sworn Officers¹³¹

White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
2,459	1,527	1,851	471

1. Houston Police Training

The Houston Police Department’s officer demographics reflect a sizeable minority workforce, with more than half of sworn officers being people of color. Prospective Houston Police Department officers undergo a six-month academy followed by a six-month probationary period as patrol officers.¹³² While in the academy, the department’s general orders are imparted to officers as the regulations that will guide them throughout their careers. Regarding firearms regulations, the first that stands out, General Order 600-17, is that officers must not “intentionally [place] themselves in imminent danger” in order to justify the use of deadly force.¹³³ Furthermore, officers are prohibited from using deadly force to subdue fleeing felons unless they pose an immediate threat to the officer or anyone else present.¹³⁴ Nor may officers use deadly force on persons who pose no threat except to themselves. For example, if someone is suicidal, officers may not use their firearms.

As it relates to firing at or from vehicles—which has historically led to police shootings across the United States—the Houston Police Department prohibits firing at a vehicle unless a person within a vehicle is threatening the officer or someone else outside the vehicle with serious physical injury or death.¹³⁵ It is worth noting that this policy is similar to one employed by the NYPD to minimize the risk of unintended injuries to

¹³¹ Source: Tom Kennedy, “Editorial: HPD Reflects Houston’s Racially Diverse Population,” Houston Police Officers’ Union, April 2020, <https://hpou.org/editorial-hpd-reflects-houstons-racially-diverse-population/>.

¹³² “Academy,” Houston Police Department Recruiting Division, accessed March 3, 2021, <https://www.hpdcareer.com/academy.html>.

¹³³ Houston Police Department, *Response to Resistance*, General Order 600-17 (Houston: Houston Police Department, 2020), 3, https://www.houstontx.gov/police/general_orders/index.htm.

¹³⁴ Houston Police Department.

¹³⁵ Houston Police Department.

uninvolved parties. These changes to Houston’s policies on firing from or at vehicles took place in mid-2020 after calls to amend such use-of-force guidelines.¹³⁶

2. Houston Gun Laws

As a “shall-issue” state, Texas dictates Houston’s gun laws. In other words, if an applicant meets the basic requirements set forth by state law, the issuing authority is compelled to issue a permit for that individual to purchase firearms.¹³⁷ In the case of Texas, the law enforcement authority in one’s respective city or town is the issuing authority. While Texas is a shall-issue state, all private gun sales require no permit, background check, or registration with authorities.¹³⁸ Concealed carry is legal in the state for individuals 21 years or older who apply for a Texas “license to carry” permit and undergo a four- to six-hour course on firearm proficiency and a written exam.¹³⁹ A 2020 RAND Corporation survey revealed that 45.7 percent of Texas adults live in a home with a firearm.¹⁴⁰ Notably, many of these homes have multiple firearms in them.

¹³⁶ Nicole Hensley, “Houston Police Release New Use of Force Policy, without Redactions,” *Houston Chronicle*, June 24, 2020, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Houston-police-release-new-use-of-force-policy-15364655.php>.

¹³⁷ “Shall Issue,” U.S. Concealed Carry Association, accessed March 4, 2021, <https://www.usconcealedcarry.com/resources/terminology/types-of-concealed-carry-licensurepermitting-policies/shall-issue/>.

¹³⁸ “Texas Concealed Carry Reciprocity Map & Gun Laws,” U.S. Concealed Carry Association, accessed March 4, 2021, https://www.usconcealedcarry.com/resources/ccw_reciprocity_map/tx-gun-laws/.

¹³⁹ U.S. Concealed Carry Association.

¹⁴⁰ Schell et al., *State-Level Estimates of Household Firearm Ownership*.

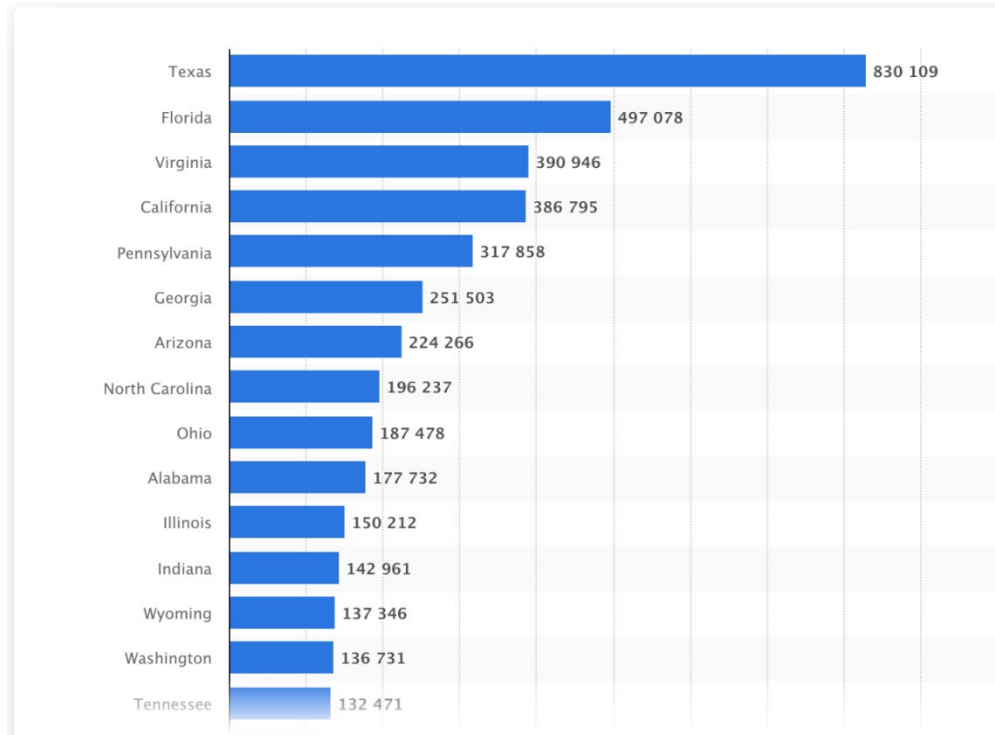


Figure 10. U.S. Gun Ownership by State, 2019¹⁴¹

Compared to other states in the United States, Texas has double the number of firearms as the next state on the list—Florida. Thus, in examining police shootings through the lens of firearm ownership in Texas, one might expect that officers in Texas are involved in more shootings based on the availability of firearms in the state. Such a finding would align with 2017 research from the *American Journal of Public Health*, which indicates the availability of firearms is a determinant in police shootings.

3. Houston Police Shootings

It is worth examining statistics of police-involved shootings in the Houston Police Department, the department representing the largest city in Texas. The department maintains and publishes statistics for all officer-involved shootings on the City of Houston’s main website.

¹⁴¹ Source: “Number of Registered Weapons in the U.S. in 2019, by State,” Statista, October 20, 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/215655/number-of-registered-weapons-in-the-us-by-state/>.

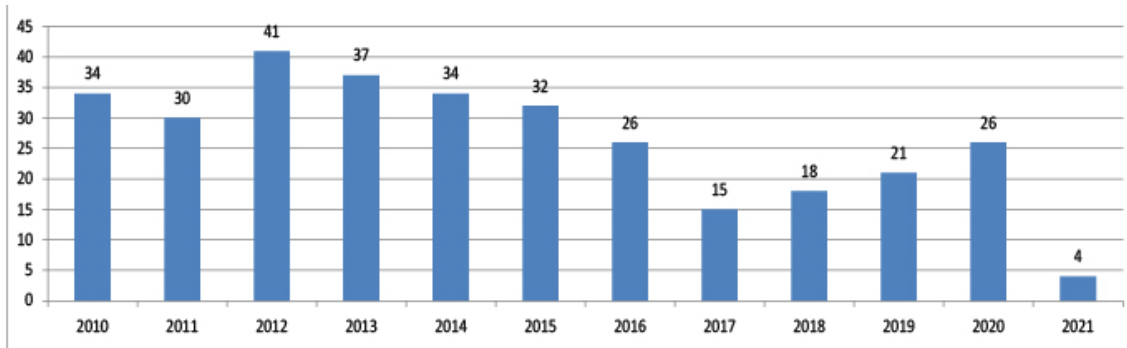


Figure 11. Houston’s Police-Involved Shootings, 2010–2021¹⁴²

In the last decade, the published data show that the department had the most shootings (41) in 2012 and the fewest (15) in 2017. In addition to this graphic, the department has published further details about each incident.

Table 12. Houston’s Officer-Involved Shootings, Detailed Statistics¹⁴³

	Total HPD shooting statistics	Suspects killed	Suspects wounded	Suspects not injured or injury status unknown	Total suspects involved in HPD shooting
2010	34	8	19	9	36
2011	30	7	13	14	34
2012	41	11	15	20	46
2013	37	9	16	38	63
2014	34	11	18	22	51
2015	32	12	17	18	47
2016	26	7	14	16	37
2017	15	5	11	7	23
2018	18	7	4	9	20
2019	21	8	10	5	23
2020	26	9	11	7	27
2021	4	1	1	1	3
Total	318	95	149	166	410

¹⁴² Source: “Officer Involved Shootings,” Houston Police Department, accessed March 4, 2021, <https://www.houstontx.gov/police/ois/>. The Houston Police Department’s original table did not include 2021 shootings in its total.

¹⁴³ Source: Houston Police Department, “Officer Involved Shootings.”

Excluding 2021, with one fatality thus far, the data show Houston police shootings result in approximately seven fatalities annually. Furthermore, the city averages 31 police shootings every year, excluding 2021. On average, Houston police were involved in 13.7 fatal shootings each year per 100,000 people over the past decade.¹⁴⁴ This number puts Houston at about 23 on the list of cities with the most fatal shootings in the United States.

4. Gun Crime in Houston

To determine a possible correlation between gun crimes in Houston and police shootings, it is worth examining the pace of gun-related crimes in the city. As is the case in many cities in 2021, Houston is experiencing an uptick in such offenses. While 2010 saw 594 gun deaths, by 2017, that number had increased to 758.¹⁴⁵ According to the research, rates of firearm-related deaths are on a steady rise. Houston's firearm fatalities are higher than the national average at 12.7 deaths per 100,000 people.¹⁴⁶

These numbers seem to be rising continuously, and 2020 was no exception. Houston ended 2020 with 409 homicides, and as of February 11, 2021, 50 murders had been recorded in the first 42 days of the year, with a clear majority firearm-related.¹⁴⁷ This dramatic rise in firearm deaths seems to suggest that as the firearm homicide rate increases in Houston, police shootings increase, too. Based on published statistics from the department, Houston has indeed seen a steady increase in the number of police-involved shootings, from 15 in 2017 to 26 in 2020 (see Table 12).

¹⁴⁴ Waichman, "The Cities with the Most Fatal Shootings in the U.S."

¹⁴⁵ "Public Safety in Houston," Understanding Houston, accessed March 4, 2021, https://www.understandinghouston.org/topic/community-context/public-safety#gun_related_deaths.

¹⁴⁶ Understanding Houston.

¹⁴⁷ Vincent Crivelli, "Houston Is Averaging More than 1 Homicide a Day So Far in 2021," Graham Media Group, February 11, 2021, <https://www.click2houston.com/news/local/2021/02/12/man-found-dead-after-shooting-in-northwest-houston-police-sat/>.

D. ST. LOUIS METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

St. Louis is the second-largest city in Missouri with a population of 300,576.¹⁴⁸ The Metro Police Department employs 1,300 sworn officers and 400 civilian employees.¹⁴⁹ According to the U.S. Census Bureau and the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, the following demographics can be gleaned:

Table 13. St. Louis Residents vs. St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department Demographics¹⁵⁰

	Population	Male	Female	White	Black	Other
St. Louis Residents	300,576	49.4%	51.6%	46.5%	46.4%	—
Police Membership	1,300	84%	16%	66%	30%	4%

1. St. Louis Police Training

The St. Louis, Missouri, Metropolitan Police Department has an academy dedicated solely to its recruits. The recruits spend 28 weeks at the city’s academy—gaining an education in everything from constitutional law to human behavior—and are required to return for various in-service trainings on racial profiling and refresher courses.¹⁵¹ During their academy training, officers must familiarize themselves with the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department’s use-of-force policies. Regarding departmental policies, a few things stand out. In Special Order 1-01, the department mandates that if an officer causes injury via lethal force, he or she must render first aid to the injured party and

¹⁴⁸ “QuickFacts: St. Louis City, Missouri (County),” U.S. Census Bureau, accessed February 27, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/stlouiscitymissouricounty>.

¹⁴⁹ “Home Page,” St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, accessed February 27, 2021, <https://www.slmpr.org/index.shtml>.

¹⁵⁰ Adapted from U.S. Census Bureau, “St. Louis City”; St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, “Home Page.”

¹⁵¹ “St. Louis Police Academy,” St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, accessed February 28, 2021, <https://www.slmpr.org/academy.shtml>.

summon emergency medical services, once the imminent threat ceases.¹⁵² As it relates to the use of a firearm when dealing with a fleeing suspect, the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department outlines its procedure as follows:

1. The officer has probable cause to believe the person committed a felony involving the infliction or attempted infliction of serious physical harm, AND
2. The officer reasonably believes the individual is armed with a firearm or other item that can cause death, AND
3. The officer has probable cause to believe the person poses a significant threat to human life should escape occur.¹⁵³

The regulation is written in such a way as to ensure all three conditions are met before an officer uses deadly force during an encounter. Furthermore, given the wording of the fleeing-suspect protocol, it is safe to say that mere possession of a firearm while fleeing St. Louis officers is not grounds on its own for the officers to use firearms to prevent escape. Officers are also not allowed to fire from or at moving vehicles.¹⁵⁴ In the aftermath of an officer's use of force, the department utilizes a system it calls I/LEADS, which tracks all instances of force in the department.¹⁵⁵ This system allows the department and the public to obtain accurate statistics on shootings in St. Louis.

2. St. Louis Gun Laws

Missouri is a state that permits individuals 19 years or older to carry firearms, either open or concealed.¹⁵⁶ Thus, Missouri is another state in which the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution is the governing law for the possession of firearms. The state also has no waiting period to obtain firearms, and handguns need not be registered with any state

¹⁵² St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, *Philosophy of Use of Force and Periodic Review of Policy*, Special Order 1-01 (St. Louis: St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, 2013), I-2, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56996151cbced68b170389f4/t/569ac4c9d82d5e0d876a06d5/1452983576668/St.+Louis+Metro+PD+use+of+force.pdf>.

¹⁵³ St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, II-2.

¹⁵⁴ St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department.

¹⁵⁵ St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department.

¹⁵⁶ "Basic Concealed Carry Laws: Missouri," *U.S. Concealed Carry Association* (blog), October 11, 2020, <https://www.usconcealedcarry.com/blog/basic-carry-laws-missouri/>.

or federal entity.¹⁵⁷ Since Missouri is a permitless carry state, individuals with firearms from other states may carry them while in Missouri. As it relates to the private sales of firearms, background checks are not required although federal and state prohibitions such as age restrictions still apply.¹⁵⁸ The RAND Corporation’s 2020 research on gun ownership across the United States revealed that 48.8 percent of adults in Missouri live in homes with at least one firearm.¹⁵⁹ Before 2007, Missouri had a permit-to-purchase law, which required that persons trying to purchase a handgun present a permit showing they had passed a background check; however, this law was repealed in 2007, which researchers at the *American Journal of Public Health* say accounted for an additional 49–68 murders per year statewide between 2008 and 2012.¹⁶⁰ It is worth mentioning that the permit-to-purchase law applied only to sellers who were not federally licensed to sell firearms.

3. St. Louis Metropolitan Police Shootings

An in-depth study was conducted by VICE News into 50 of the nation’s largest police departments, illuminating the rate of police shootings nationwide. The study investigated not only fatal shootings but also non-fatal shooting rates per 100,000 people. Figure 12 illustrates the rates between 2010 and 2016.

¹⁵⁷ “Missouri.”

¹⁵⁸ “Missouri.”

¹⁵⁹ Schell et al., *State-Level Estimates of Household Firearm Ownership*.

¹⁶⁰ “Repeal of Missouri’s Background Check Law Associated with Increase in State’s Murders,” Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, February 17, 2014, <https://www.jhsph.edu/news/news-releases/2014/repeal-of-missouris-background-law-associated-with-increase-in-states-murders.html>.

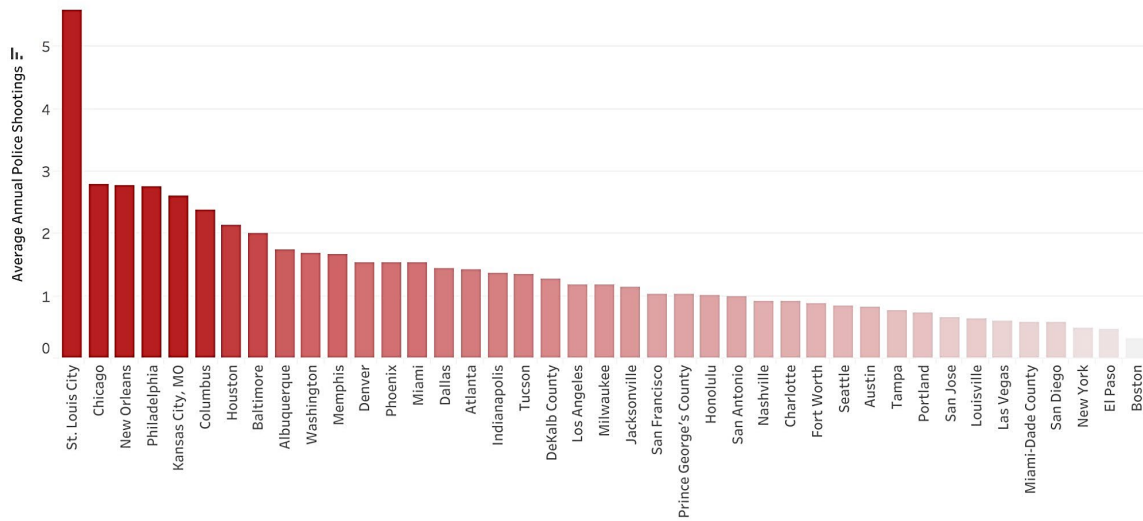


Figure 12. American Police-Shooting Rates per 100,000¹⁶¹

The research revealed that St. Louis police officers were involved in double the number of shootings of the next closest city—Chicago. On the topic of fatal encounters between police and citizens in St. Louis, the number of fatalities is about 18 people per million residents, which puts St. Louis at far more killings per capita than 100 other departments in the nation between 2009 and 2019.¹⁶² As is the case with many departments around the country, although the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department records use-of-force incidents, the data must be requested by news agencies or the public for release. According to some researchers who have tried to get a complete picture of the department’s use of force, the department makes only a small fraction of its use-of-force information public and excludes demographic data and injuries sustained by the civilians in each case.¹⁶³ Without a complete year-by-year release of the data, the information

¹⁶¹ Source: “Police Shoot Far More People Than Anyone Realized, a VICE News Investigation Reveals,” VICE News, December 11, 2017, https://news.vice.com/en_us/article/xwvv3a/shot-by-cops.

¹⁶² “Report Shows St. Louis Police Led the Nation in Killings,” St. Louis Public Radio, January 19, 2021, <https://news.stlpublicradio.org/law-order/2021-01-18/report-shows-st-louis-police-led-the-nation-in-killings>.

¹⁶³ “‘Like Pulling Teeth’: St. Louis Police Claim They Can’t Release All Use-of-Force Data,” St. Louis Public Radio, July 30, 2020, <https://news.stlpublicradio.org/law-order/2020-07-30/st-louis-police-use-of-force-data>.

gathered is limited and left to news agencies to compile the numbers, absent a voluntary release of the information by the St. Louis Metro Police Department.

4. St. Louis Gun Crime

As it relates to the supposed impact that gun violence has on police shootings in a municipality, examining the case of St. Louis is of particular interest. Gun crimes in St. Louis have increased as more guns have become available, according to Professor Lauritsen of the University of Missouri–St. Louis.¹⁶⁴ Along with a colleague, Lauritsen found that between 2015 and 2016, 94 percent of St. Louis homicides were the result of gunfire, compared to 78 percent in 2014. When examining the city’s murder rate per 100,000 people for the last five years, the following statistics are evident:

Table 14. St. Louis Homicide Rate per 100,000¹⁶⁵

Year	Population	Homicides	Rate per 100K
2020	297,733	262	87.9
2019	300,576	194	64.5
2018	302,838	186	61.4
2017	308,636	205	66.4
2016	314,507	188	59.8

In a prime example of the question of correlation and causality—when viewed through the lens of the 2017 *American Journal of Public Health* study that links proliferation of firearms to police shootings—it might stand to reason that if the rates of both firearm homicides and homicides per 100,000 people increase, then the number of police shootings will also experience an uptick. Based on the published number of shootings attributed to the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, there is a correlation

¹⁶⁴ “Police Data: Violent Crime Getting Deadlier in St. Louis,” AP News, July 7, 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/281f4f35c74b43d0aa11c2d898c3bf8>.

¹⁶⁵ Adapted from “50 Years of St. Louis Homicides,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 22, 2021, https://www.stltoday.com/online/50-years-of-st-louis-homicides/table_5e4f1d5c-0808-57be-b4cf-1ad8fa7acc62.html; “St. Louis City, Missouri Population 2021,” World Population Review, accessed August 12, 2021, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/mo/st-louis-city-population>. Note that data published in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* originally estimated the per capita homicide rate for 2020, but Table 14 reflects a per capita rate based on population projections by World Population Review.

between the number of firearms and the large number of police-involved shootings in St. Louis.

E. CONCLUSION

The case studies in this chapter seem to point to myriad factors that affect the rates of police shootings in the various departments examined. Based on the research, the proliferation of firearms could be a factor in some police-shooting cases while departmental rules on how firearms may be used can make a difference in the statistics that are available. This factor in how officers are trained is further echoed in a 2017 study that examined more than 3,000 less-lethal-force incidents from across three U.S. agencies, and the research consistently found that departments with officers who operated under restrictive administrative policies applied less force than officers in departments with more permissible departmental policies.¹⁶⁶ While this research analyzed less-than-lethal cases, further research is needed to examine whether the same would hold true in the use of deadly force within departments. Therefore, departments should conduct long-term studies on these factors to ascertain the relationship between restrictive departmental rules and firearm usage. Departments could use their departmental regulations as a sort of control variable in examining how officers deploy force, particularly firearms, in the performance of their duties.

¹⁶⁶ Terrill and Paoline, “Police Use of Less Lethal Force.”

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IV. ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN POLICE DEPARTMENTS

To gain a better understanding of the factors in U.S. law enforcement's use of firearms, this chapter examines Western police departments abroad to understand similarities and differences vis-à-vis their American counterparts. While these foreign agencies operate under different circumstances and laws, they are all stable Western democracies encompassing the European continent. The laws surrounding civilian firearm ownership in these nations vary greatly and so do the police training curricula in each nation. The aim of these case studies is to uncover lessons to be learned from these departments.

Western Europe as a society is similar to the United States. Nevertheless, police-shooting rates across the European continent are significantly lower than that of American police departments, and the rates also vary among the selected departments. Figure 13 illustrates police-involved deaths across different nations around the world, including Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Germany. These countries have different standards of training and use-of-force protocols that govern officer behavior. However, it is worth mentioning that among the nations in this figure, no European citizens have the constitutional right to bear arms as citizens do in the United States. Only Haiti, Mexico, and Guatemala have laws to bear arms enshrined in their constitutions.¹⁶⁷ These countries grant varying amounts of firearm ownership.

¹⁶⁷ Brian Palmer, "Do Other Countries Have a Constitutional Right to Bear Arms?," Slate, December 14, 2010, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2010/12/do-other-countries-have-a-constitutional-right-to-bear-arms.html>.

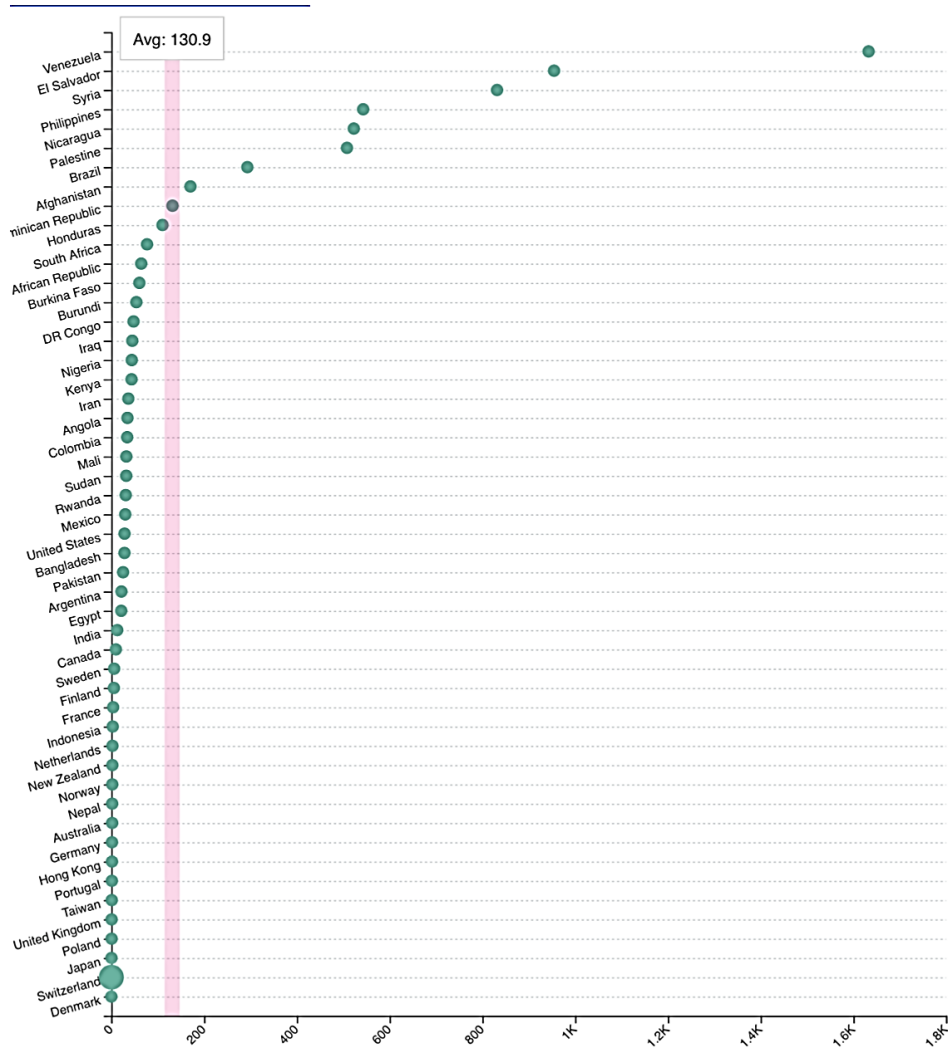


Figure 13. Police-Involved Deaths per 10 Million People, 2021¹⁶⁸

The permissibility ranges from Switzerland, which is arguably the most permissive Western European nation when it comes to owning firearms, to the United Kingdom, which is among the most restrictive. By using these case studies, this research aims to examine the laws that surround firearm ownership, firearm crime, and training protocols of the selected departments within these countries. The following case studies were chosen

¹⁶⁸ Source: “Police Killings by Country 2021,” World Population Review, accessed March 18, 2021, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/police-killings-by-country>.

because they represent a diverse set of European nations from all four corners of the continent, with diverse populations and methods of governance—the United Kingdom representing a constitutional monarchy; Switzerland, a confederation of states; Latvia, a parliamentary republic; and Germany, a federal republic. The goal is to reach a deeper level of understanding of what fuels the rates of police shootings in these countries compared to the U.S. case studies, to identify lessons that may be applied domestically in the United States.

A. LATVIAN STATE POLICE

Latvia is a country in the Baltic region of Northern Europe. The country was formerly a part of the Soviet Union, regained independence after its fall, and joined the European Union in 2004.¹⁶⁹ Policing in Latvia is shared among the Latvian State Police, Security Police, and the Border Guard.¹⁷⁰ The Latvian State Police is the primary body responsible for the sort of policing that would be comparable to an American metropolitan police department. The Latvian State Police is tasked with guaranteeing the safety of Latvian society and preventing criminal offenses, akin to domestic U.S. police departments. In contrast to departments in the United States, the Latvian State Police handles overall policing countrywide, instead of having independent police departments for each region of the country. A quick overview of police shootings across the small Eastern European nation reveals police-involved shootings are rare when measured against other European nations and certainly compared to the United States. As a former Soviet Bloc country, it differs from many other Western European nations with its laws and firearms regulations; thus, studying it as a case study is of importance. The officers of the Latvian State Police are divided around the country based on the population of each region of Latvia. Table 15 details the police strength and population per region.

¹⁶⁹ “Latvia Country Profile,” BBC News, March 29, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17522134>.

¹⁷⁰ “Latvia,” Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, accessed March 5, 2021, <https://polis.osce.org/country-profiles/latvia>.

Table 15. Latvian Population and Police Strength per Division¹⁷¹

Region	POP per Division	Police Strength	Police per 1,000 POP
Riga city	739,232	3,249	4.39
Jurmala city	55,156	220	3.98
Aizkraukle*	41,523	136	3.27
Aluksne	25,880	87	3.35
Balvi	29,485	96	3.25
Bauska	52,476	148	2.81
Cesis	59,599	144	2.41
Daugavpils	154,256	474	3.07
Dobele	39,633	1,145	2.89
Gulbene	27,728	90	3.24
Jelgava	103,007	279	2.70
Jekabpils	54,687	153	2.79
Kraslava	35,875	116	3.23
Kuldiga	37,446	127	3.38
Liepaja	132,764	383	2.88
Limbazi	39,584	123	3.11
Ludza	33,975	128	3.76
Madona	45,495	129	2.83
Ogre	62,968	132	2.09
Preili	40,684	133	3.26
Rezekne	80,542	211	2.62
Riga	145,962	495	3.39
Saldus	38,176	1,185	3.10
Talsi	48,688	106	2.17
Tukums	55,215	108	1.95
Valka	33,358	101	3.02
Valmiera	59,605	152	2.55
Ventspils	58,481	1,735	2.96
Total	2,331,480	79,265	3.39

¹⁷¹ Source: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, "Latvia."

As the largest city and the capital of Latvia, Riga has the largest concentration of officers—at nearly 3,300 officers—compared to other regions in the country.

1. Latvian State Police Training

As the State Police is the policing agency for the entire country, Latvia has generally standardized police training within its borders. State Police officers in Latvia have two tracks in their training process to become officers. The State Police College “provides vocational training to junior officers and the Police Academy of Latvia which delivers professional tertiary level education to specialists and senior level officers.”¹⁷² The State Police College is the first step for all potential new State Police recruits. There are different time and educational requirements for service in the Latvian State Police. Attaining a first-level vocational qualification to become an entry-level officer with the State Police takes 2.5 years of schooling.¹⁷³ After this schooling, if entry-level officers wish to advance in the agency, additional training is required. Officers seeking to specialize in investigative work, for example, require an additional year of study at the State Police College to specialize in the various fields available.¹⁷⁴

The second institution that provides training to potential officers is the Latvian Police Academy. Opened in 1991, the academy offers programs to acquire academic knowledge and professional qualifications in legal sciences, civil defense, security, and public administration.¹⁷⁵ The academy provides a higher-level education for those who graduated from the State Police College or those new to police work. The background of the applicants determines which study programs they will partake in at the academy. Since State Police College graduates possess certifications from completing their initial training, they are placed in a different program in the academy from individuals with no police college experience. The duration of studies at the academy is two years, with 30 courses

¹⁷² Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, “Latvia.”

¹⁷³ “To the Applicants,” Latvian State Police College, accessed March 5, 2021, http://www.policijas.koledza.gov.lv/en/to_the_applicants.

¹⁷⁴ “Izglitiba” [Education], Latvian State Police, accessed March 5, 2021, <https://www.vp.gov.lv/lv/izglitiba>.

¹⁷⁵ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, “Latvia.”

over that time, and a requirement for each student to receive instruction in Latvian as well as have a command of Russian and one more foreign language—English, German, or French.¹⁷⁶

As it relates to the use of firearms by the Latvian State Police, the department is guided by a 1992 law that dictates the circumstances of an officer’s firearm use. According to this law, Latvian police officers are permitted to use firearms to defend themselves and other persons from attacks that actually endanger lives.¹⁷⁷ The law also allows Latvian police to use their firearms against individuals who have escaped from detention and stop a means of transport if the driver refuses the officer’s orders and there is no other way to effect an arrest.¹⁷⁸ Interestingly, Latvian State Police officers are not permitted “to use firearms against women or minors except in cases when they are executing an armed attack, show armed resistance, or by means of a group attack endanger the lives of other persons or police officers.”¹⁷⁹ Latvian officers are also permitted to use their firearms if an arrested person makes any sudden movements or dangerous action that could be interpreted as attempted violence.¹⁸⁰

2. Latvian Gun Laws

Latvia’s president has codified laws on the handling of weapons and the means by which citizens can acquire firearms in the country. According to the Weapons Authorization Act, the Latvian State Police is responsible for providing weapons permits for the sake of hunting, sport, and self-defense. Latvian law breaks down firearms into four categories:

- Category A: military weapons, automatic firearms

¹⁷⁶ “Home Page,” Latvian Police Academy, accessed January 6, 2021, http://www.aic.lv/rec/HE_2002/HE_LV/Progr/STATE/pol_a.htm.

¹⁷⁷ “Latvia,” Law on Police Use of Force, accessed March 5, 2021, <https://www.policinglaw.info/country/latvia>.

¹⁷⁸ Law on Police Use of Force.

¹⁷⁹ Law on Police Use of Force.

¹⁸⁰ “Latvijas Republikas likums: Par policiju” [Law of the Republic of Latvia: About Police], Latvijas Vestnesis, accessed March 5, 2021, <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=67957>.

- Category B: semi-automatic weapons, single shot guns
- Category C: Non-automatic long firearms
- Category D: Single shot long firearms¹⁸¹

A look at Latvian law makes it clear that military weapons and automatic firearms are not allowed among the general public for any reason; nevertheless, the law does not clearly define military weapons, so this portion of the country’s regulations is vague. However, Chapter 4, section 11(2), empowers the Latvian State Police to grant the citizenry permits to possess Category B, C, and D firearms for sport, hunting, and self-defense.¹⁸² Possession of any firearm is restricted to individuals 18 years and older, and according to section 11(4), the permit granted to citizens to bear arms for self-defense expires in 10 years while permits for sports and hunting are good for five.¹⁸³ Furthermore, citizens must pay permit fees to the State Police. Regarding overall firearm-ownership rates for Latvia, with a 2021 population of approximately 1.8 million individuals, Latvia has a gun-to-population ratio of 10.5 firearms for every 100 people in the country.¹⁸⁴ As late as 2019, Latvia as a nation did not register among Europe’s top 15 gun-ownership rates per 100 people.¹⁸⁵

3. Crime in Latvia

As it relates to violent crime in Latvia, Figure 14 details murder trends in this tiny Baltic nation over the past several decades.

¹⁸¹ “Ieroču un speciālo līdzekļu aprites likums” [Law on the circulation of weapons and special means], Latvijas Vestnesis, accessed March 5, 2021, <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=221384>.

¹⁸² Latvijas Vestnesis.

¹⁸³ Latvijas Vestnesis.

¹⁸⁴ “Gun Ownership by Country 2021,” World Population Review, accessed March 6, 2021, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/gun-ownership-by-country>.

¹⁸⁵ Sallyann Nicholls, Alice Tidey, and Emma Beswick, “How Does Europe Compare with the US on Gun Ownership?,” EuroNews, June 8, 2019, <https://www.euronews.com/2019/08/05/which-european-country-boasts-the-most-guns->.

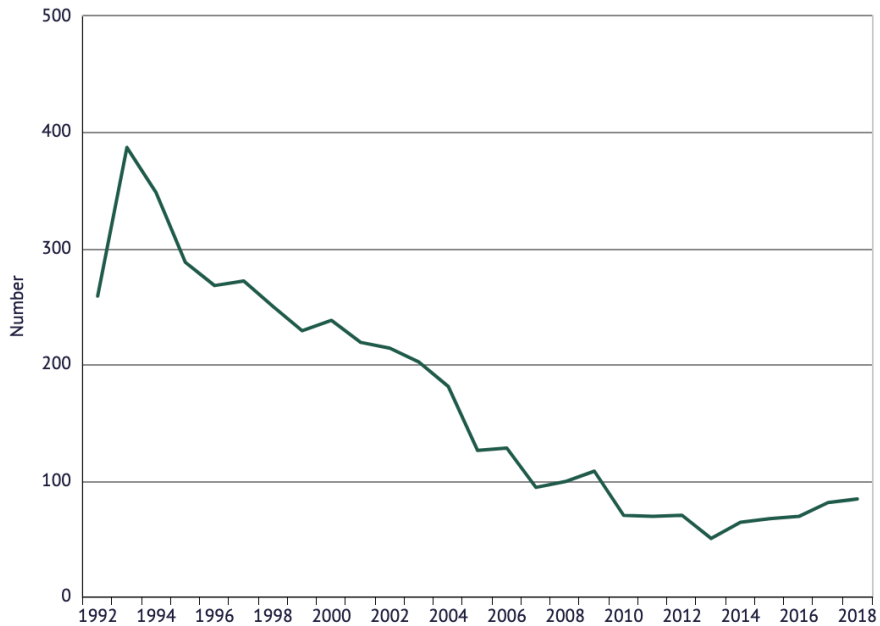


Figure 14. Murder Trends in Latvia, 1992–2018¹⁸⁶

2018 in Latvia saw 84 people murdered across the nation.¹⁸⁷ Out of 100,000 people, the gun murder rate was 0.3 percent, making gun murders a relatively small portion of all murders in Latvia.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, based on the rate of murders with firearms in Latvia, guns are not as important in society as in some other locations around the world. Maybe as a result of the lack of civilian-owned firearms in society, among other factors, statistics on police shootings in Latvia were hard to come by. The Latvian Centers for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies form the major body in Latvia tasked with researching instances of police use of force—justified or otherwise—and while they have identified instances of physical and non-lethal force used by the Latvian State Police, records of police shootings were so scarce that this researcher concludes the numbers are low among this police force.¹⁸⁹ Given the records collected by the Latvian Centers for Human Rights and Ethnic

¹⁸⁶ Source: “Latvia—Number of Homicides,” Knoema, accessed March 5, 2021, <https://knoema.com/atlas/Latvia/Number-of-homicides>.

¹⁸⁷ Knoema.

¹⁸⁸ Knoema.

¹⁸⁹ “Latvia,” U.S. Department of State, March 8, 2006, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61658.htm>.

Studies on the Latvian State Police’s use of force, the evidence suggests a low occurrence of police shootings by its primary police force.

B. GERMAN STATE POLICE

The German federation has various police departments with different responsibilities in the country. While policing at the federal level lives with the *Bundespolizei* (Federal Police) and the *Bundeskriminalamt* (Federal Criminal Police Office), day-to-day law enforcement akin to metropolitan American policing is handled by the *Landeskriminalamt* (German State Police).¹⁹⁰ Among the 16 federal states, also known as *Länder*, each has its own state police force organized to reflect the needs of the individual state.¹⁹¹ Compared to Latvia and many parts of Europe, Germany experiences a higher number of overall police shootings. In contrast to the United States, however, Germany enjoys considerably lower police-shooting rates.

Training to become a police officer for the German State Police typically lasts about three years.¹⁹² Due to the individual needs of each German state, while the curricula may differ, the states adhere to the same approximate period of training. In the Berlin region, for example, applicants accepted to the Berlin State Police are given the title of police master-candidate and acquire 2.5 years of education divided into theoretical and practical learning, ranging from criminal law to behavioral training.¹⁹³ High-performing police-master candidates have an opportunity after two semesters to transfer to the higher-service police, which is a 180-credit program that aims to identify future leaders of the Berlin State Police and enable applicants to become highly specialized in a field of

¹⁹⁰ “Germany,” Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://polis.osce.org/country-profiles/germany#state-police-10219>.

¹⁹¹ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

¹⁹² “When Are German Police Allowed to Use Guns?,” Deutsche Welle, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/when-are-german-police-allowed-to-use-guns/a-53826205>.

¹⁹³ “Ausbildung—mittlerer Dienst” [Education—Middle service], Berlin Police, accessed August 3, 2021, <https://www.berlin.de/polizei/beruf/polizist-polizistin-werden/ausbildung-studium/mittlerer-dienst-schutzpolizei/>.

policing, from human rights to gun laws.¹⁹⁴ These applicants for the higher-service police undergo studies at the Berlin School of Economics and Law, where they are immersed in bachelor's and master's level studies.¹⁹⁵ While each state in the German federation provides similar opportunities for officers to obtain advanced degrees, entry-level training usually lasts two years. The two-year training program is reserved for those applying for police jobs between the ages of 30 and 39.¹⁹⁶

1. German Gun Laws

German gun laws have evolved as conditions within the country have changed. In 2009, Germany restricted its gun laws after a 17-year-old in Southwestern Germany stole his father's gun and killed nine teachers, three students, and three others before killing himself.¹⁹⁷ As a result of this disaster, German authorities instituted a weapons authority in all 16 states that oversees the firearm acquisition process across the nation.¹⁹⁸ The process of obtaining a firearm can be characterized as time-consuming, to say the least. To obtain a firearm, applicants must prove over the course of several months that they are proficient in the handling and safe storage of the firearm and that no one else has access to it.¹⁹⁹ They must also be at least 18 years old to obtain a firearm, and anyone under 25 must pass a psychological exam before obtaining a permit from the weapons authority.²⁰⁰ Germany has some of the most stringent gun laws in Europe. Individuals petitioning the weapons authority for a firearm permit must prove their need for it, and they are restricted

¹⁹⁴ "Studium—Gehobener Dienst Schutzpolizei/Kriminalpolizei" [Studies—Higher service police/criminal police], Berlin Police, accessed August 3, 2021, <https://www.berlin.de/polizei/beruf/polizist-polizistin-werden/ausbildung-studium/gehobener-dienst-schutzpolizei-kriminalpolizei/>.

¹⁹⁵ "Department 5: Police and Security Management," Berlin School of Economics and Law, accessed March 9, 2021, <https://www.hwr-berlin.de/en/hwr-berlin/departments-and-central-institutes/departments-5-police-and-security-management/>.

¹⁹⁶ Berlin Police, "Ausbildung."

¹⁹⁷ Alison Smale, "Germany Faces Few Mass Shootings amid Tough Gun Laws," *New York Times*, October 7, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/08/world/europe/germany-faces-few-mass-shootings-amid-tough-gun-laws.html>.

¹⁹⁸ Smale.

¹⁹⁹ Smale.

²⁰⁰ Smale.

in the kind of arms they may acquire.²⁰¹ Germany has a national gun registry for its citizens' firearms and requires its gun permit holders to carry liability insurance. Moreover, a condition for obtaining a firearm permit anywhere in Germany involves granting the authorities the right to enter one's home without notice to ensure the safe storage of the firearms.²⁰² In other words, the German government can at any time visit the home of any firearm licensee to ensure all firearms are stored appropriately.

Even with Germany's strict laws, the nation still ranks high in per capita firearm ownership. The country was home to the "fourth-highest number of legal guns per capita in 2013, just behind the United States, Switzerland and Finland."²⁰³ Two million people owned more than 5.5 million legal firearms in the country during that timeframe.²⁰⁴ That number has continued to rise, as the German weapons registry reported a 10 percent increase to 6.1 million firearms in 2017.²⁰⁵ Although the number of firearms in the country is high per capita, Germany does not experience a matching rate of gun deaths.

2. German Gun Crime

According to the German Federal Criminal Police Office, between 1995 and 2015, gun deaths have dropped from 783 to 130, with 57 of the deaths in 2015 classified as intentional murders.²⁰⁶ Since 2015, it is worth noting that the trend seems to be changing as it relates to incidents involving firearms. While 2015 was seen as a low point for gun deaths in Germany, since that time, there has been an uptick in firearm offenses as legal gun-ownership rates continue to rise in the country (see Figure 15).

²⁰¹ Edith Palmer, "Switzerland: Firearms Control Legislation and Policy," in *Firearms-Control Legislation & Policy* (Washington, DC: Law Library of Congress, February 2013), <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/l1/lglrd/2013417226/2013417226.pdf>.

²⁰² Edith Palmer, "Germany: Firearms-Control Legislation and Policy," in *Firearms-Control Legislation & Policy* (Washington, DC: Law Library of Congress, February 2013), <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/l1/lglrd/2013417226/2013417226.pdf>.

²⁰³ Emma Anderson, "Five Things to Know about Guns in Germany," Local, June 16, 2016, <https://www.thelocal.de/20160616/five-things-to-know-about-guns-in-germany-us-gun-control-laws/>.

²⁰⁴ Anderson.

²⁰⁵ Valentina Pop, "Gun Use Surges in Europe, Where Firearms Are Rare," *Wall Street Journal*, January 7, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/gun-use-surges-in-europe-where-firearms-are-rare-11546857000>.

²⁰⁶ Anderson, "Five Things to Know about Guns in Germany."

Change in Germany since 2013:

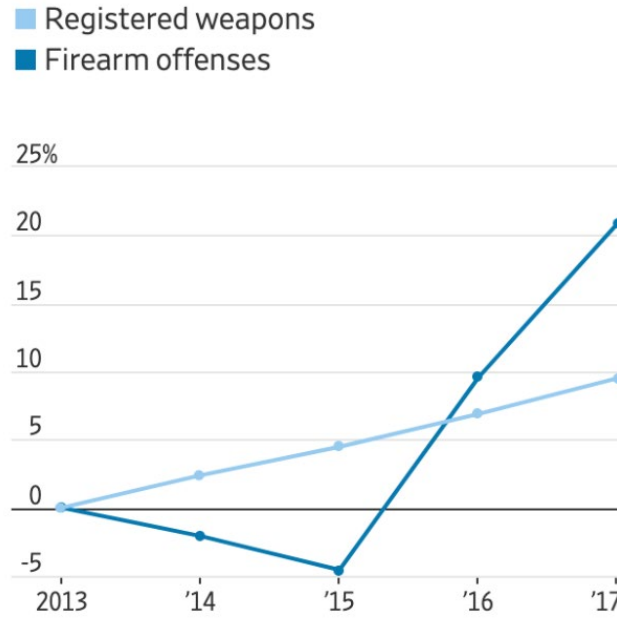


Figure 15. German Firearm Offenses and Registered Weapons, 2013–2017²⁰⁷

Furthermore, the German federation has experienced downward trends in violent crime across the states (see Figure 16).

²⁰⁷ Source: Pop, “Gun Use Surges in Europe.”

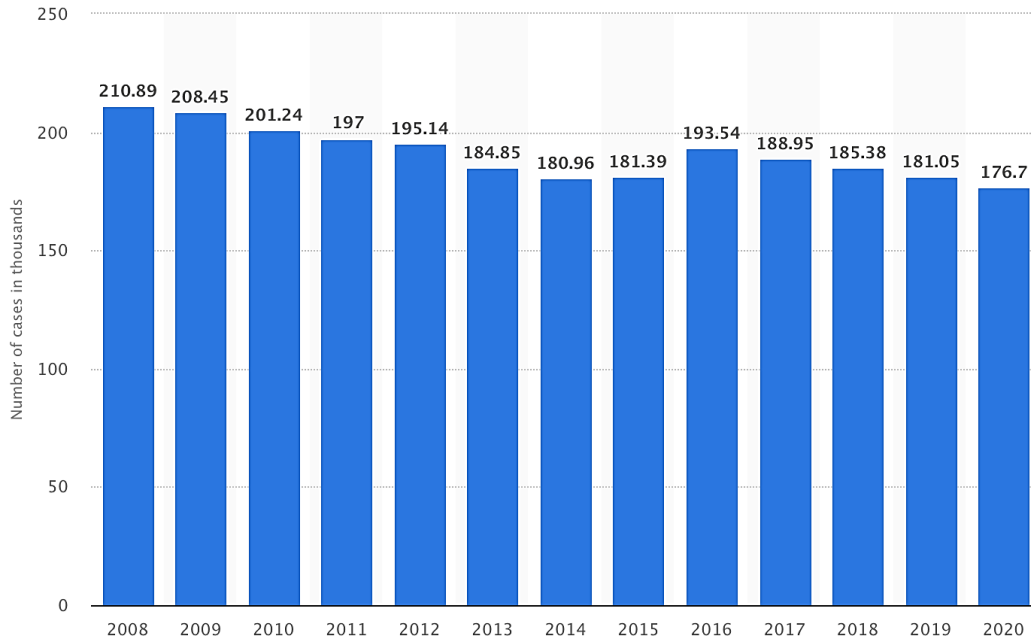


Figure 16. German Violent Crime Rates, 2008–2020²⁰⁸

From a high of 210,890 cases in 2008, Germany has experienced steady declines in annual violent crime rates since 2016, to 176,700 cases in 2020.

3. German Police Shootings

At the federal level, the use of firearms is governed by the 1994 Federal Police Law, which is enforced by the State Police forces.²⁰⁹ While they all adhere to the 1994 law, each State Police force has its own rules for its officers on the use of firearms. They are all similarly restrictive.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Source: “Violent Crime Case Numbers Recorded by Police Germany 2008–2020,” Statista, accessed May 19, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1101220/violent-crime-cases-numbers-police-record-germany/>.

²⁰⁹ “Germany,” Law on Police Use of Force, accessed March 9, 2021, <https://www.policinglaw.info/country/germany/>.

²¹⁰ Deutsche Welle, “When Are German Police Allowed to Use Guns?”

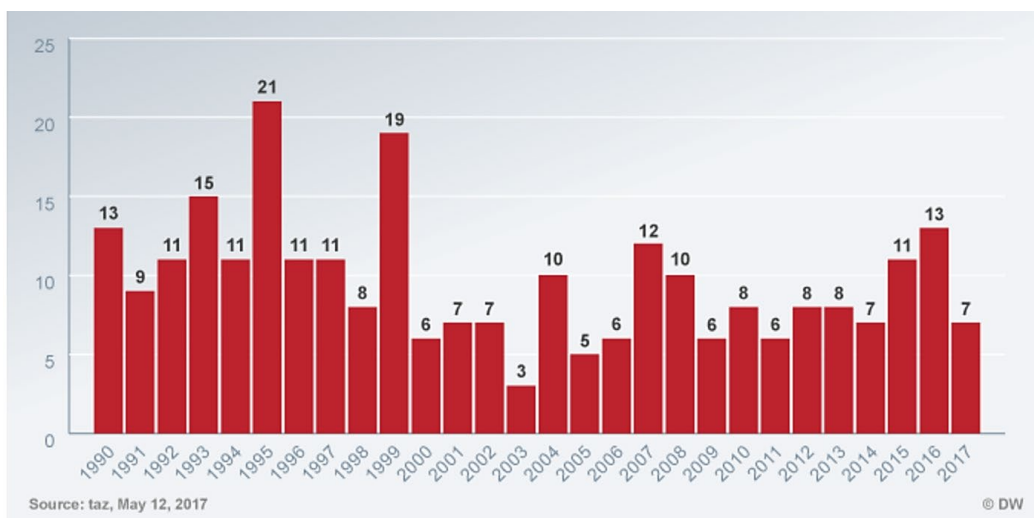


Figure 17. German Police-Shooting Deaths Nationwide, 1990–2017²¹¹

In 2019, 14 people died and 29 were injured by police bullets in Germany.²¹² There was a rise in police-involved incidents in the country in 2019, which saw 67 cases, up from 56 in 2018.²¹³ Notably, the laws governing the use of firearms among the State Police vary by state. While all 16 states are overall very restrictive, each state enacts regulations for its officers. In the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, as well as Bavaria, the laws state that firearms may be used only to render a person unable to attack or to escape.²¹⁴ Furthermore, some states in the German federation require officers to fire warning shots before using lethal force.²¹⁵ Therefore, examining the rates of shootings requires identifying which state is being studied. When viewed overall, the statistics paint the picture of low rates of fatal shootings nationwide.

The takeaway from studying Germany is that, when compared to the United States, the entire nation experiences fewer instances of police-involved shootings. Another lesson

²¹¹ Source: “Police in Germany Kill More Than You Think,” Deutsche Welle, accessed March 9, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/police-in-germany-kill-more-than-you-think/a-38822484>.

²¹² Deutsche Welle, “When Are German Police Allowed to Use Guns?”

²¹³ Deutsche Welle.

²¹⁴ Deutsche Welle.

²¹⁵ Deutsche Welle.

is the value and time taken to train all members of its police forces. With an average training duration of 2.5–3 years, officers are imbued with ample opportunities to learn a variety of fields as they prepare to take on the role of police officers. In addition, Germany does have many registered firearms compared to other European nations studied in this research. What seems to set Germany apart is that even though the country has a considerable volume of firearms circulating, gun owners face incredibly stringent legal requirements. The requirement to maintain insurance on the part of gun owners is a major factor in ensuring the proper handling and storage of these arms. In addition to insurance, a firearm registry plays a big role in monitoring the nation’s guns. A psychological exam for permit-seekers under 25 and a requirement that firearm owners allow police access to their homes to ensure proper storage also ensure that accidental injuries, deaths, and the improper use of these firearms are greatly reduced. With these firearms not being used as often in the commission of violent crimes in the country, the chances of police encounters with individuals possessing firearms are greatly reduced, which could play a role in the number of police-shooting occurrences.

C. LONDON METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

London’s Metropolitan Police Service, founded in 1829, is considered the oldest “modern police force.”²¹⁶ It is the police service for the greater London area, encompassing 620 square miles and serving more than seven million residents.²¹⁷ Understanding the Metropolitan Police Service requires some knowledge of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom has a sovereign parliament and is an amalgamation of four different countries—England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland—each of which has different levels of autonomy.²¹⁸ Policing in the United Kingdom is organized at the administrative district level, with law enforcement in England and Wales under Home Office police forces.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ “United Kingdom,” Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, accessed March 10, 2021, <https://polis.osce.org/country-profiles/united-kingdom#overview>.

²¹⁷ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

²¹⁸ Erin Blakemore, “What’s the Difference between England, Britain and the U.K.?” *Smithsonian Magazine*, June 24, 2016, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/whats-difference-between-england-britain-and-uk-180959558/>.

²¹⁹ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, “United Kingdom.”

The United Kingdom has fifty-two police forces across the land: forty-three in England and Wales, eight in Scotland, and one in Northern Ireland.²²⁰ The Metropolitan Police Service (MET) is one of these police forces, which are also called constabularies.

As the United Kingdom's largest police service, the staffing level of the agency corresponds with the population it serves. As of 2020, the MET counted 32,475 police officers, 9,813 police staff, 1,259 community support officers, and 1,857 special officers.²²¹

1. Metropolitan Police Service Training

Since the inception of the MET, training for its recruits has occurred in London. In 1934, the MET Police College was established on the grounds of the Hendon Country Club, which was rebuilt after World War II. Since 1974, it has been called the Hendon Police College and is known among recruits as the Peel Centre.²²² This is the current home for all MET recruit training. The entry-level rank of police constable within the department begins with a 12-week foundational training program followed by patrols alongside experienced officers, with a chance for further career development.²²³ In realizing the changing world of policing, the MET has further altered the path to becoming a police officer. One of the new entry routes is through the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship, which allows potential constables to earn a degree at one of several London colleges while gaining on-the-job experience working side by side with senior MET officers.²²⁴ This path to becoming an officer was put in place to recognize the evolving nature of modern-day policing. The other novel entry route to becoming a MET officer is the Degree Holder

²²⁰ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

²²¹ "Structure," Metropolitan Police (UK), accessed March 10, 2021, <https://www.met.police.uk/police-forces/metropolitan-police/areas/about-us/about-the-met/structure/>.

²²² "Policeman as a Worker: Training," International Centre for the History of Crime, Policing and Justice, accessed March 10, 2021, <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/history-from-police-archives/Met6Kt/PoliceWorker/pwTrain.html>.

²²³ "Police Constable," Metropolitan Police (UK), accessed March 11, 2021, <https://policecareers.tal.net/vx/mobile-0/appcentre-External/brand-3/candidate/so/pm/6/pl/1/opp/290-Police-Constable/en-GB>.

²²⁴ Becky Freeth, "Three MET Officers Reveal How They Found Their Perfect Career in Policing," Metro, February 7, 2020, <https://metro.co.uk/2020/02/07/three-met-officers-reveal-found-perfect-career-policing-really-like-londons-streets-today-12077259/>.

Entry Program (DHEP), a two-year program similar to the apprenticeship program whereby DHEP candidates earn a graduate degree at a London-area college while receiving hands-on operational experience.²²⁵ With the standard training at the Peel Centre and these two new ways to become MET officers, the department aims to provide multiple paths to the profession of policing. The College of Policing set off to diversify the methods for becoming MET officers to ensure future officers have a standard of education and training that reflects the changing roles of the profession.²²⁶

During police training, the MET adheres to a policy called the National Decision Model (see Figure 18).

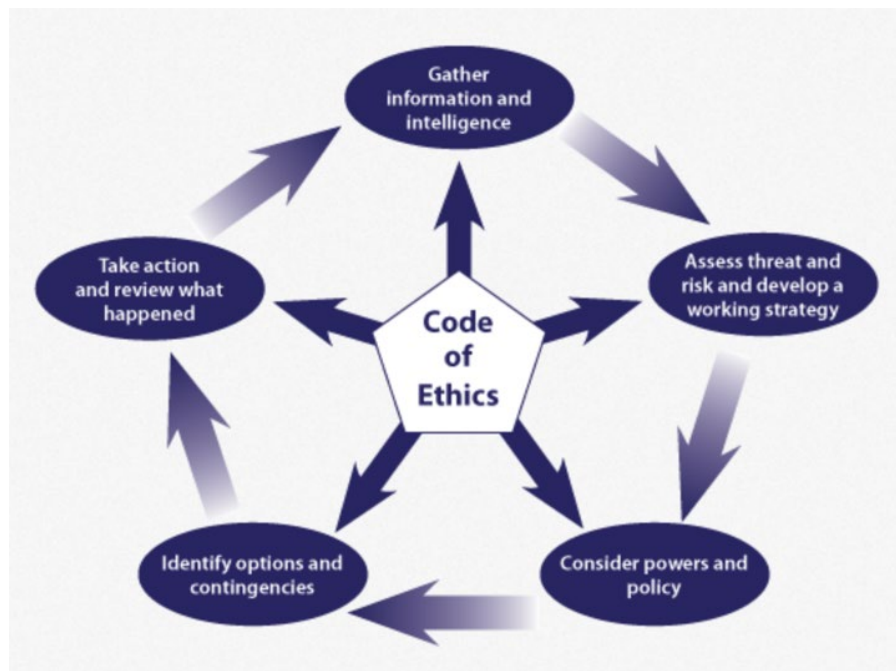


Figure 18. National Decision Model²²⁷

²²⁵ Freeth.

²²⁶ Freeth.

²²⁷ Source: “National Decision Model,” College of Policing, accessed March 11, 2021, <https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/national-decision-model/the-national-decision-model/>.

This model illustrates the standard for policing in the United Kingdom. It is meant for use during spontaneous and planned events, and by individuals or groups in making decisions.²²⁸ Given its firearms training, the MET is a unique model to study because 90 percent of its officers perform their duty unarmed in a city of more than 8.5 million.²²⁹ This detail stands in sharp contrast to all other case studies in this research. Regarding the use of firearms, “police must only resort to the use of force or firearms if other means remain ineffective or there is no realistic prospect of achieving the lawful objective without exposing police officers, or anyone whom it is their duty to protect, to a real risk of harm or injury.”²³⁰ In the case of the MET, since few of its officers are armed, it is easier to examine police-shooting incidents within the agency.

2. MET Police Shootings

MET officers who are permitted to carry firearms are concentrated within specialized units in the department. As authorized firearm officers patrolling the streets in armed response vehicles (ARVs), they carry sidearms and have access to other long guns.²³¹ These units are called to the scene of incidents that require their expertise. In order to respond to incidents, an officer on the scene must request an ARV if he or she “believes that officers may have to protect themselves from a person possessing a firearm or a lethal weapon, or the person is so dangerous that the deployment of armed officers is an appropriate response.”²³² Once the authorized firearm officers arrive, they may not simply use their weapons: “Firearms may be discharged only in circumstances after the officer has identified him- or herself as armed, given clear directions to the suspect, and allowed the

²²⁸ College of Policing, “National Decision Model.”

²²⁹ “Cops without Guns Dominate as London Awaits ‘Likely’ Attack,” NBC News, August 22, 2016, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/europes-terror-battle/cops-without-guns-dominate-london-awaits-likely-attack-n631721>.

²³⁰ Clare Feikert-Ahalt, “United Kingdom,” in *Police Weapons in Selected Jurisdictions* (Washington, DC: Law Library of Congress, September 2014), <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=758225>.

²³¹ “UK Police Armed Response Units,” Elite UK Forces, accessed March 11, 2021, <https://www.eliteukforces.info/police/uk-armed-police/>.

²³² Feikert-Ahalt, “United Kingdom.”

suspect sufficient time to follow the directions, unless doing so would place any person at risk or be inappropriate or pointless.”²³³

With these restrictions in place for armed officers, it is important to examine the statistics concerning how often authorized firearm officers in ARVs are deployed in London and any associated shooting data. Between March 2018 and March 2019, for example, the MET accounted for 4,652 firearm team operations.²³⁴ Furthermore, for the same period, there was a total of 13 incidents in which police discharged their firearms, according to the United Kingdom’s latest official statistics.²³⁵

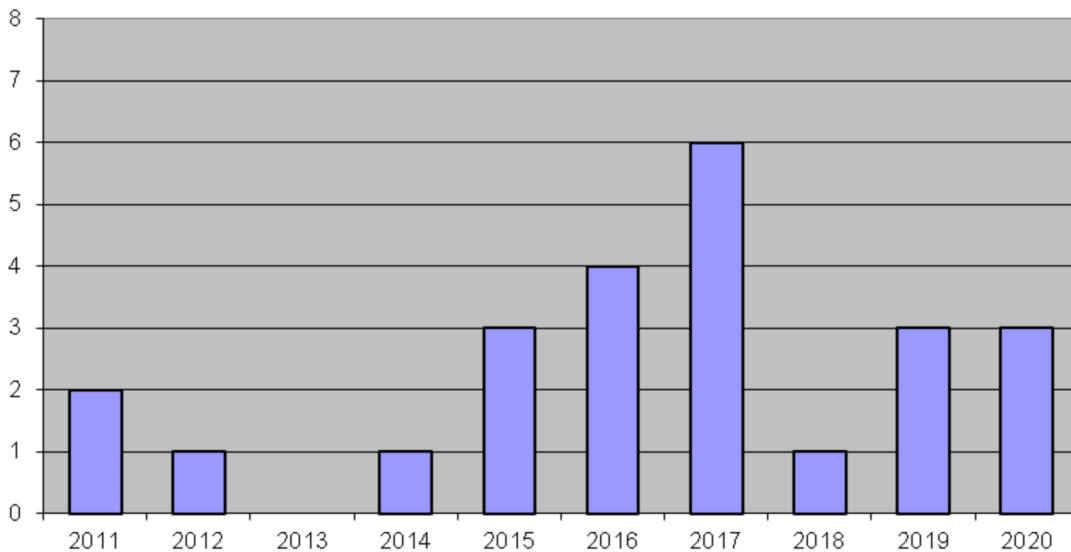


Figure 19. Fatal Police Shootings in England and Wales, 2011–2020²³⁶

²³³ Feikert-Ahalt.

²³⁴ Home Office, “Police Use of Firearms Statistics, England and Wales: April 2018 to March 2019,” Her Majesty’s Government, July 25, 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-use-of-firearms-statistics-england-and-wales-april-2018-to-march-2019>.

²³⁵ Home Office.

²³⁶ Source: “Fatal Police Shootings,” Inquest, accessed March 11, 2021, <https://www.inquest.org.uk/fatal-police-shootings>.

Between 2018 and 2020, the MET shot and killed one person each year—a relatively low number for a Western nation—according to published statistics.²³⁷

3. London Gun Crime

Compared to the United States, London experiences a much lower rate of gun crimes. According to statistics compiled by the House of Commons, between March 2018 and March 31, 2019, England and Wales experienced 6,759 firearm offenses.²³⁸ This report indicates that the MET experienced more firearm offenses than any other police force during this period, accounting for 30 percent of all firearm offenses in England and Wales and experiencing the highest firearm offense rate per 100,000 people at 23.0.²³⁹ As shown in Figure 20, the 2018 and 2019 numbers, while low comparatively speaking, are still an increase from the numbers seen in London in the middle of the decade.

²³⁷ Inquest, “Fatal Police Shootings.”

²³⁸ Grahame Allen, Lukas Audickas, and Philip Loft, *Firearm Crime Statistics: England & Wales*, Number CBP 7654 (London: House of Commons Library, 2020), <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7654/>.

²³⁹ Allen, Audickas, and Loft.

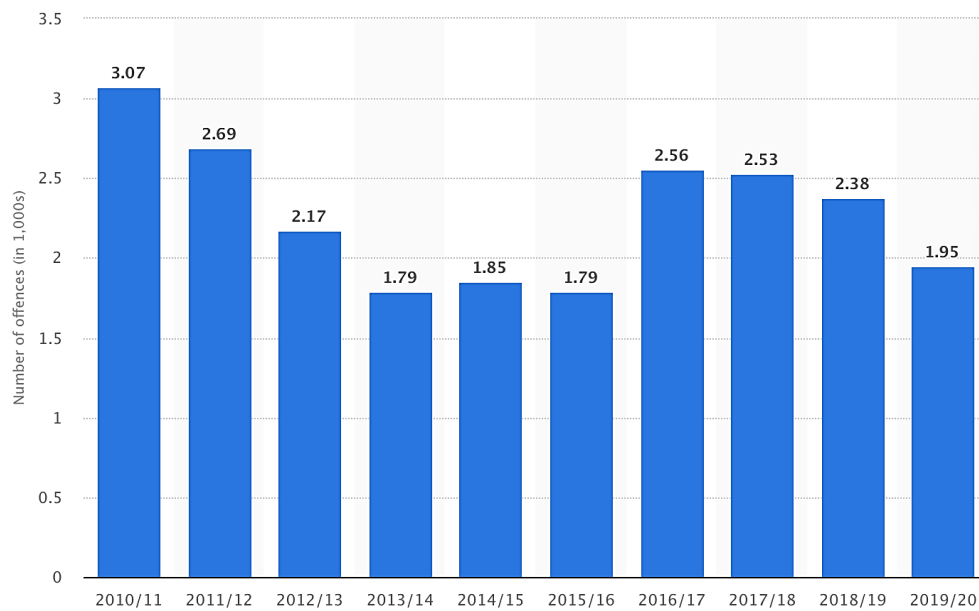


Figure 20. London Firearm Offenses in the 1,000s, 2010–2020²⁴⁰

The year ending in March 2020 shows there was a decrease in the number of firearm offenses in London from 2018 and 2019. London, in contrast to the United States, experiences more knife crimes than gun offenses, with 179 crimes per 100,000 people in 2019, according to published data.²⁴¹ The statistics seem to indicate a proliferation of edged objects as opposed to firearms, and raise the question of whether firearms are widely available in the United Kingdom.

4. London Gun Laws

The United Kingdom is renowned for its very stringent gun laws. For starters, handguns are considered prohibited weapons all across the country, as only members of the military, the police, or individuals with written permission from the home secretary are

²⁴⁰ Source: “Number of Gun Crimes Recorded in London from 2010/11 to 2019/20,” Statista, accessed March 12, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/865565/gun-crime-in-london/>.

²⁴¹ Grahame Allen and Esme Kirk-Wade, *Knife Crime in England and Wales*, Number SN4304 (London: House of Commons Library, 2020), <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn04304/>.

allowed to possess them.²⁴² These stringent prohibitions on handguns, shotguns, and the like are partially the reason that between 2008 and 2009, 0.3 percent of crimes involved the use of a firearm.²⁴³ There are numerous reasons the United Kingdom overall has strong views on the proliferation of firearms in society. Within the United Kingdom, military-style rifles are banned, as well as any self-loading or pump-action rifled guns other than ones that chamber .22 rim-fire cartridges.²⁴⁴ This essentially means the nation has an assault-weapons ban as well as a ban on pump-action shotguns, to name a few. The Firearms Act of 1968 is the piece of legislation that governs the ability of an individual to possess, purchase, or acquire a firearm—and to acquire a firearm permitted by law requires a certificate to possess.²⁴⁵ Notably, self-defense is not in itself an adequate reason to obtain a firearms certificate. The chief officer of the local police where the applicants reside is responsible for processing all applications for permits, and is responsible for making inquiries to determine the reason for the request, including performing home visits.²⁴⁶

Applicants must meet certain requirements to obtain a permit for a handgun or shotgun that is not on the restricted list. For the shotgun, a signed statement from a designated “referee” must accompany the application.²⁴⁷ These referees must be residents of Great Britain, must have known the applicant for more than two years, and must be a member of parliament, doctor, or civil servant, among other established professions.²⁴⁸ These individuals acting as referees effectively vouch for the firearm applicant by attaching their reputations to the application. With an application for a handgun, applicants require must have two referees.²⁴⁹ Beyond supplying character references with an application, applicants grant the government permission to access all medical records before obtaining

²⁴² Clare Feikert-Ahalt, “Great Britain: Firearms-Control Legislation and Policy,” in *Firearms-Control Legislation & Policy* (Washington, DC: Law Library of Congress, February 2013), <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/l1/lglrd/2013417226/2013417226.pdf>.

²⁴³ Feikert-Ahalt.

²⁴⁴ Feikert-Ahalt.

²⁴⁵ Feikert-Ahalt.

²⁴⁶ Feikert-Ahalt.

²⁴⁷ Feikert-Ahalt.

²⁴⁸ Feikert-Ahalt.

²⁴⁹ Feikert-Ahalt.

a permit and perpetual access for the duration of the permit, if granted.²⁵⁰ If granted, the permit lasts for five years.²⁵¹

5. Gun Crimes

As indicated in Figure 21, the rate of gun crimes in the United Kingdom pales in comparison to that of the United States.

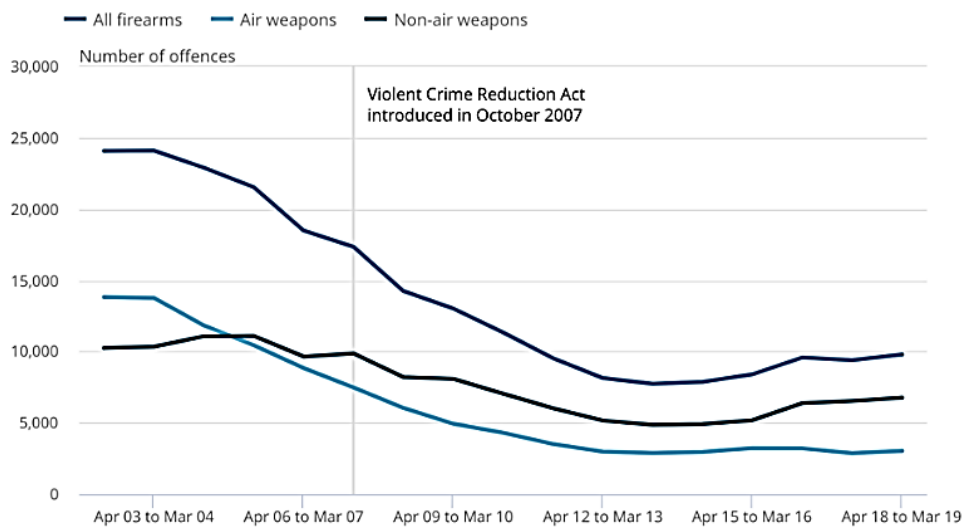


Figure 21. Police-Recorded Crime in England and Wales, March 2003 to March 2019²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Feikert-Ahalt.

²⁵¹ Feikert-Ahalt.

²⁵² Source: “Offences Involving the Use of Firearms: Year Ending March 2019,” Office for National Statistics, accessed March 14, 2021, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/offencesinvolvingtheuseoffirearms/yearendingmarch2019>.

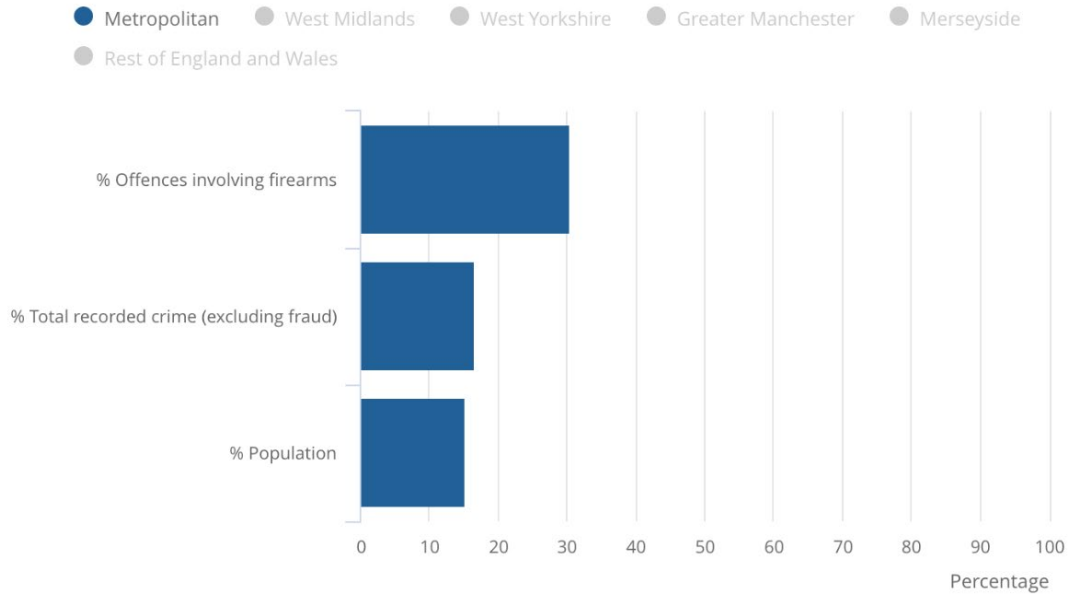


Figure 22. MET Police Firearm Statistics, Year Ending 2019²⁵³

The London area where the MET operates has experienced some of the highest rates of firearm use in the United Kingdom. While for the year ending in March 2019 the average rate of firearm offenses in the United Kingdom was 11 per 100,000, the MET had rates of 23 offenses per 100,000.²⁵⁴ The rate of firearm use in offenses is on the rise in the MET’s area of operations. Given the stringent rules for firearm ownership across the United Kingdom, parsing what has led to this steady rise in firearm crimes is of interest to lawmakers and researchers alike. While most the nation’s illegal firearms still come through Europe, the number of firearms being smuggled from the United States appears to be on the rise.²⁵⁵ For a nation more accustomed to knife offenses, the rise of firearm use is troubling. The coronavirus pandemic has also contributed to the proliferation of guns in London. As of October 2020, the MET recovered nearly 300 guns and investigated 12 gun

²⁵³ Source: Office for National Statistics, “Offences Involving the Use of Firearms.”

²⁵⁴ Office for National Statistics, “Offences Involving the Use of Firearms.”

²⁵⁵ Jane Bradley, “How American Guns Are Fueling U.K. Crime,” *New York Times*, August 12, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/12/world/europe/handguns-smuggling-murder-us-uk.html>.

murders and more than 40 shooting incidents.²⁵⁶ These statistics mark a noticeable rise from years past.

This examination of the London MET and the United Kingdom paints a picture of a nation that has some very stringent laws regarding the possession of firearms. While legal firearms are extremely rare across the Kingdom, evidence shows that smuggled firearms from the United States and Europe have led to a stark increase in numbers of firearm offenses. In London, the capital of England, the MET experiences the highest rates of firearm offenses, as well as the most police-involved shootings, in the United Kingdom. The research shows that firearm teams have been deployed for incidents much more frequently in London, but the average number of police-shooting fatalities remain very low. Knife crimes are a fact of life in London, but they have not resulted in a corresponding rise in police-involved shootings. The research, therefore, seems to imply that a mixture of MET training and a population that possesses significantly fewer firearms than in the United States, is a major determinant in lower rates of police-involved shootings in the United Kingdom.

D. SWISS CANTONAL POLICE CORPS

Switzerland is a nation in Western-Central Europe. It is a confederation of about 8.4 million people, composed of 26 cantons, each with its own government, legislature, constitution, and judicial system.²⁵⁷ Cantons in a sense can be viewed like states here in the United States. As a result of the autonomy that each canton possesses, they also field their own police departments, known as the Cantonal Police Corps, responsible for police duties within their respective cantons.²⁵⁸ Due to the nature of the confederation, even among the cantons, differences exist. In the German-speaking cantons, the Cantonal Police Corps distinguishes between criminal, security, and traffic police—with the security police

²⁵⁶ Jon Austin, “Crime Fears as Gun Killings Soar after Coronavirus Lockdown,” *Express*, October 18, 2020, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1349233/crime-coronavirus-lockdown-police-warning>.

²⁵⁷ “The Cantons of Switzerland,” *WorldAtlas*, accessed March 16, 2021, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-cantons-of-switzerland.html>.

²⁵⁸ “Switzerland,” *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, accessed March 16, 2021, <https://polis.osce.org/index.php/country-profiles/switzerland>.

charged with maintaining law and order and the criminal police charged with investigating crimes.²⁵⁹ The French-speaking cantons make a distinction between the gendarmerie and the police de sûreté—with gendarmes in charge of traffic and maintaining law and order and the police de sûreté investigating crimes in the cantons.²⁶⁰ Switzerland represents an interesting case study within the context of this research because of the availability and permissibility of firearms within the federation, especially compared to the rest of Europe. This proliferation of firearms, however, does not translate into a relatively high number of police-involved shootings, even considering the number of firearms in Switzerland.

1. Cantonal Police Training

Because of the autonomy of the individual cantons, it should be of no surprise that training and education happens at the cantonal level. However, some cantons have banded together to form alliances that allow their respective police trainees to conduct training together in centers managed jointly by participating cantons.²⁶¹ One of the largest of these training centers is the Police School of Eastern Switzerland, which provides basic training for police recruits from six cantons, two cities, and the tiny principality of Liechtenstein.²⁶²

The autonomous nature of these cantons means training lengths and content can differ depending on the training center used by a particular canton. In the case of the Police School of Eastern Switzerland, training is a two-year process, with a mix of training at the school and some in the field.²⁶³ The Eastern Switzerland school is not the only one of its kind in the nation. Another one of these training centers is the Intercantonal Police Academy, which lays claim to being the largest training center in all of Switzerland, responsible for the police training of prospective officers from 11 cantons.²⁶⁴ The mission

²⁵⁹ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

²⁶⁰ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

²⁶¹ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

²⁶² Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

²⁶³ “Die Schule” [The school], Police School of Eastern Switzerland, accessed March 17, 2021, <https://www.polizeischule-ostschweiz.ch/schule.html>.

²⁶⁴ “Mit Sicherheit gut ausgebildet” [Well educated for sure], Intercantonal Police School Hitzkirch, accessed March 17, 2021, <https://www.iph-hitzkirch.ch/%C3%BCber-uns>.

statement of this center is to move toward standardized police training across Switzerland and incorporate Swiss police training into general Swiss education.²⁶⁵ All of the training centers across Switzerland maintain the two-year training mix of theoretical and field training.

While the Swiss Police operate according to their respective cantons, a 2008 federal law on the use of force guides police across the country. Chapter 11 of the 2008 law outlines when officers may use firearms. According to the law, weapons must only be used as a last resort to prevent escape or arrest persons who have committed a serious offense or are strongly suspected of committing a serious offense.²⁶⁶ Officers are also allowed to fire warning shots and are required to report firearm discharges to superiors.²⁶⁷ This 2008 federal law seems to suggest that officers are permitted, for example, to fire on escaping suspects who are unarmed. Across all cantons of Switzerland, the Swiss Cantonal Police has experienced no fatalities in police incidents across the country thus far in 2021.

2. Swiss Gun Laws

Switzerland is the European model of a country with a more permissive gun culture akin to the U.S. model. However, Switzerland and the United States differ greatly in the number of gun deaths per capita, with the former experiencing far fewer incidents. The Swiss have taken a more comprehensive approach to ensuring their citizens can remain armed while also doing more than the United States does to keep firearms out of the hands of those who should not have them. First, the Swiss require that “private firearm sellers verify the age and identity of those purchasing their firearms and the seller must have no reason to believe that the buyer has been or should be disqualified from firearm ownership.”²⁶⁸ This rule contrasts U.S. laws, which have no such requirement of private

²⁶⁵ Intercantonal Police School Hitzkirch.

²⁶⁶ “Switzerland,” Law on Police Use of Force, accessed March 17, 2021, <https://www.policinglaw.info/country/switzerland>.

²⁶⁷ Law on Police Use of Force.

²⁶⁸ German Lopez, “How Gun Control Works in America, Compared with 4 Other Rich Countries,” Vox, December 4, 2015, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2015/12/4/9850572/gun-control-us-japan-switzerland-uk-canada>.

firearm sellers. Requirements such as these ensure that a nation like Switzerland can uphold the laws that allow private citizens to own firearms while keeping weapons out of the wrong hands.

Over the centuries, this tiny federation—bordered by Italy, Slovenia, France, Germany, and Austria—was the constant target of various enemies, so a cultural shift saw the Swiss encourage gun ownership as part of a national defense mechanism. Mandatory military service for men between 18 and 34 serves as a contributing factor to this culture of gun ownership, as men in this range are expected to protect the federation from conquering armies.²⁶⁹ The Swiss fear of invasion can be traced as far back as the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, during which Switzerland was at risk of being invaded by the French and the Prussian armies.²⁷⁰ After the near invasion in 1871, Switzerland grew to believe strongly in having its citizens properly trained and armed. This belief was once again strengthened during the World War II as conflict raged throughout Europe. In fact, Germany did not invade Switzerland, according to historians, because every man was armed and trained to shoot.²⁷¹ This mindset of keeping a firearm close—even storing one under every pillow—was transmitted from generation to generation. As a result of this historic gun culture, modern-day Switzerland ranks fourth behind the United States, Yemen, and Serbia in the number of guns per capita; 2.3–4.5 million military and private weapons are in circulation in the country, which boasts a population of about eight million inhabitants.²⁷²

Switzerland has a deeply engrained tradition with firearms that starts at a very young age. Children as young as 12 belong to gun clubs and are instructed on proper handling and care of firearms and how to sharp-shoot.²⁷³ In addition, the federation has come to a consensus nationwide about necessary steps to keep firearms away from

²⁶⁹ Krishnadev Calamur, “The Swiss Have Liberal Gun Laws, Too,” *Atlantic*, February 16, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/02/swiss-guns/553448/>.

²⁷⁰ Calamur.

²⁷¹ Helena Bachmann, “The Swiss Difference: A Gun Culture That Works,” *Time*, December 20, 2012, <https://world.time.com/2012/12/20/the-swiss-difference-a-gun-culture-that-works/>.

²⁷² Bachmann.

²⁷³ Bachmann.

individuals who should not access them. It all begins with the duty to obtain a license to possess a firearm in Switzerland. In Switzerland, the buyer of the firearm is responsible for ensuring that he or she has authorization from the government to purchase it, unlike the United States, which puts the burden on the firearm seller.²⁷⁴ Swiss gun buyers are tasked with obtaining a permit from their local cantonal police department. Then, local cantonal police have direct access to records, including national criminal records, debilitating psychiatric histories, and information about past problems with addiction, which is a more-thorough, less-burdensome process than in the United States.²⁷⁵

According to Swiss law, the permit obtained by a firearm buyer allows the individual to purchase a pistol, rifle, or semi-automatic weapon—while weapons used for hunting must be reported to the local canton.²⁷⁶ The background check, performed by the cantonal police and required to obtain the permit for the weapon, is a process that may last a few weeks.²⁷⁷ In addition to requiring licensure, the government is proactive in its monitoring of those who should not have weapons. Swiss authorities have a “list of approximately 2,000 people who they believe are willing to commit shootings; these individuals are approached frequently by authorities and psychologists and forced to hand over weapons, or further prevented from being able to purchase firearms anywhere within the federation.”²⁷⁸ Thus, based on the history of firearms in Switzerland, Swiss firearm culture can be traced to a sense of patriotic duty and an important aspect of national security.²⁷⁹ According to published statistics by the government, in 2018, 22 people were

²⁷⁴ Erin Zimmerman, “What Can the Swiss Teach the US about Guns?,” SwissInfo, February 23, 2018, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/florida-school-shooting_what-can-the-swiss-teach-the-us-about-guns-/43923350.

²⁷⁵ Zimmerman.

²⁷⁶ Calamur, “The Swiss Have Liberal Gun Laws, Too.”

²⁷⁷ Rick Noack, “Europeans Had School Shootings, Too. Then They Did Something about It,” *Washington Post*, May 18, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/02/15/europe-had-school-shootings-too-then-they-did-something-about-it/>.

²⁷⁸ Noack.

²⁷⁹ Zimmerman, “What Can the Swiss Teach the US about Guns?”

murdered with a firearm in Switzerland, a number that pales in comparison to murders per capita in the United States.²⁸⁰

3. Swiss Cantonal Crime

Overall, crime is on a downward trend in Switzerland. At the end of 2018, the federation had tallied 50 murders across all cantons, about half of which were domestic violence cases.²⁸¹ Moreover, of the 199 murder and attempted murder cases in the country that year, over half involved knives while 11.1 percent, or 22 cases, involved firearms.²⁸² The Swiss Federal Statistical Office compiled all records for 2019, which it openly published. According to the statistics, the homicide rate was 0.54 per 100,000 people, with 46 completed homicides and 161 attempts.²⁸³ Of those numbers, 20 were committed with firearms—in a country with some of the highest rates of gun ownership in the world.²⁸⁴ It is worth noting that these official statistics only accounted for homicides in 2019. If accidental deaths and suicides are included, the rate of gun deaths in 2019 rises to 2.84 per 100,000 people in Switzerland.²⁸⁵ While a high number for a Western nation, it is much lower than the United States, which reported 4.5 gun homicides per 100,000 individuals in 2019.²⁸⁶ These numbers show that while Switzerland has a dense concentration of firearms on the European continent, deaths as a result of firearms there do not correlate to other countries with similar levels of firearm ownership or even fewer instances of police-involved shootings, given their concentration of firearms. Comparing the Swiss model to the United States reveals a cultural difference in how firearms in the hands of society are

²⁸⁰ “The Key Numbers That Tell the Story of Guns in Switzerland,” Local, May 15, 2019, <https://www.thelocal.ch/20190515/eight-stats-that-help-tell-the-story-of-guns-in-switzerland>.

²⁸¹ “Crime in Switzerland: What the Latest Figures Reveal,” Local, March 26, 2019, <https://www.thelocal.ch/20190326/what-a-new-report-tells-us-about-crime-in-switzerland/>.

²⁸² Local.

²⁸³ Swiss Federal Statistical Office, *Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik: Jahresbericht 2016* [Police crime statistics: Annual report 2016], (Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2017), <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home.assetdetail.2160352.html>.

²⁸⁴ Swiss Federal Statistical Office.

²⁸⁵ “Do Tightened Gun Laws Lead to Greater Security?,” SwissInfo, May 8, 2019, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/fact-check_do-tightened-gun-laws-lead-to-greater-security-/44944278.

²⁸⁶ SwissInfo.

considered. While the federation encourages a strong gun culture, there is also a robust mechanism in place for monitoring those who apply for firearms and those who already possess them, to keep these tools out of the hands of those who should not have them. This aspect of Swiss society appears to be a key factor in why the cantonal police departments experience fewer police shootings than their counterparts in the United States.

E. CONCLUSION

These European cases offered a glimpse into the ways some Western nations handle the complex issue of policing in the 21st century and were revealing for several reasons. First, the rules governing the use of firearms vary considerably from many American departments. Compared to the United States—where there is no national consensus on obtaining, maintaining, and storing guns—these European case studies illustrate uniformity in each country on the subject of firearms. Second, while each of these countries is governed differently, its laws on firearms and use-of-force policies among police forces are universally agreed upon.

A third takeaway from examining these foreign case studies is that police departments should not have to sacrifice any part of the learning experience for their officers but instead provide recruits with the extensive time and training needed to produce well-rounded law enforcement professionals. As the domestic case studies in Chapter III showed, the limited time domestic agencies spend in training suggests certain aspects of training must be prioritized over others. Thus, U.S. agencies must take steps to lengthen the average time officers spend in training so that new officers and those already doing the work may refine their skills. Finally, although Europe and the United States differ vastly in terms of laws, customs, and culture, the research shows it is possible to adapt European lessons, stateside.

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V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

As the research has illustrated, police shootings are still rare in everyday policing, but several factors affect the shootings that do occur in the United States. The research shows that a proliferation of firearms in a municipality is a factor in police shootings domestically. Furthermore, violent crime within a community can influence police shootings in a municipality as an increase in violent crime correlates with an uptick in police shootings. Moreover, the research shows that police departments that exert greater organizational control over officers tend to reduce police-involved shooting rates locally. Mental illness and the responsibility placed on police in dealing with individuals experiencing mental conditions are also a factor necessitating an urgent re-examination by communities all over the United States. Finally, an analysis of foreign police departments showed that the departments dedicate more training hours on average to preparing officers for policing. While not every lesson gleaned from domestic and foreign departments is applicable to every community, this chapter offers recommendations, based on the research, that can be implemented to varying degrees to mitigate police shootings domestically.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS

While no one solution is the silver bullet for reducing police shootings in the United States, a combination of approaches can be put in place to mitigate the annual statistics across the country. These recommendations are not a one-size-fits-all solution for every municipality across the United States, but with each recommendation, adjustments can be made to fit the needs of a particular community.

1. Hybrid Mental Health Response Model

With the statistics surrounding mental health conditions and police shootings showing that many fatal police encounters occur because police officers are dispatched to individuals in crisis, efforts are being made by municipalities to change the way police deal with these calls for service. As a result of the deinstitutionalization movement and inadequate community resources available for the mentally ill, many individuals suffering

from mental illness end up having local police departments as first responders in their moments of crisis. In the aftermath of encounters with police officers that have gone awry, different municipalities are striving to change how these mental health crises are handled. Therefore, departments around the country should consider deploying mental health professionals to those incidents where their expertise would be most beneficial to ensure a safer outcome for all involved.

2. Crisis Intervention Teams

Along with the hybrid mental health response model, the deployment of crisis intervention teams (CITs) is yet another recommendation to address those instances when civilians are in some form of mental distress and a subsequent police response results in a shooting. The CIT model was conceived in 1988 after the fatal police shooting of a man undergoing a mental crisis by a Memphis, Tennessee, police officer.²⁸⁷ This model sought to create a community task force comprising law enforcement and mental health/addiction professionals to promote the safety of everyone in the course of a mental health call and redirect some of these individuals to mental health treatment, instead of the justice system, when appropriate.²⁸⁸ This model has seen wide acceptance from police departments all over the world. Before the CIT model, officers cited the need for more training in how to deal with mental health crisis calls. The CIT model enables police volunteers to gain 40 hours of specialized training in mental illness identification, legal issues, and de-escalation techniques, as well as site visits to mental health agencies in their communities.²⁸⁹ Adopting the CIT model is not simply about the additional training undertaken by the volunteers of that police department. By adopting the CIT model in an agency, the municipality not only enlists healthcare facilities that agree always to provide treatment for

²⁸⁷ Amy C. Watson and Anjali J. Fulambarker, “The Crisis Intervention Team Model of Police Response to Mental Health Crises: A Primer for Mental Health Practitioners,” *Best Practices in Mental Health* 8, no. 2 (December 2012), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3769782/>.

²⁸⁸ Watson and Fulambarker.

²⁸⁹ Watson and Fulambarker.

mental health patients but also trains dispatchers to recognize mental health calls and direct those calls to the CIT teams on duty to respond.²⁹⁰

Another benefit of the CIT program is its adaptability in different jurisdictions. The creators of the program realized the need for flexible implementation of this response model. The full CIT model consists of law enforcement, mental health/addiction experts, trained dispatchers, and mental health facilities that agree to be drop-off locations for patients. In the case of Memphis, it has a central psychiatric drop-off facility, but in Chicago, the police department has designated facilities across the city via memoranda of understanding. Yet in other cities, care facilities do not partner with law enforcement on implementation.²⁹¹ Differences notwithstanding, implementation of at least part of the model is a beneficial tool in the arsenal of police officers on the beat.

In the case of the largest metropolitan department in the United States, a version of this program is in place. CIT training was deployed in 2015, and so far, more than 16,862 NYPD officers have been trained to better recognize mental illness. Officers participating in the program are being armed with tools to improve the way officers recognize and respond to behavioral health problems experienced by people they encounter.²⁹² In a sign of the model's adaptability, between 2015 and 2020, NYPD officers received the training, but because the department could not partner with mental/addiction health specialists or utilize designated drop-off locations for individuals in crisis, its model differs from the original Memphis version.

The benefits of implementing the CIT model in one way or another should be considered by police departments of every size across the United States. A study by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) examined the program and the real-world results showed that

- CIT reduces the arrests of people with serious mental illness by 58 percent

²⁹⁰ Watson and Fulambarker.

²⁹¹ Watson and Fulambarker.

²⁹² "New York City Announces New Mental Health Teams to Respond to Mental Health Crises," New York City, November 10, 2020, <http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/773-20/new-york-city-new-mental-health-teams-respond-mental-health-crises>.

- Individuals diverted through CIT receive more counseling, medications, and other treatment than individuals who are not diverted
- CIT training reduces officer stigma/prejudice toward people with mental illness
- Officer injuries during mental disturbance calls in Memphis after CIT introduction was reduced by 80 percent
- SWAT team involvement in mental health calls declined by 58 percent after CIT introduction
- In Albuquerque, police shootings declined after CIT introduction²⁹³

Studies continue to be commissioned to improve the CIT model and encourage its use in departments across the country. According to NAMI, the CIT program is active in over 2,700 communities nationwide.²⁹⁴ Given the broadly positive results of this police–community program, encouraging its furtherance across the United States would be a worthwhile effort.

3. Increased Academy and In-Service Trainings

Research on police training indicates new officers spend 672 hours on average in entry-level training across the United States.²⁹⁵ With this finite average time, departments are forced to institute training priorities for entry-level officers before they graduate and are sent off to patrol the streets. Based on the case studies from around the world where officers spend considerably more time in entry-level training, extending the training periods for recruits would serve to better equip officers. A National Institutes of Health manuscript addresses the importance of infusing academy training with the cognitive, emotional, social, and moral skills that promote wellness as well as relationships between police officers and the community.²⁹⁶ The researchers discuss the importance of incorporating adult-learning theory, which prepares the officer to develop critical-thinking

²⁹³ National Alliance of Mental Illness, “Crisis Intervention Team Toolkit: CIT Facts” (Arlington, VA: National Alliance of Mental Illness, 2013), <https://nisonger.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/NAMI-CIT-FACT-Sheet.pdf>.

²⁹⁴ New York City, “New Mental Health Teams.”

²⁹⁵ McLaughlin, “Fewer Hours of Training.”

²⁹⁶ Daniel M. Blumberg et al., “New Directions in Police Academy Training: A Call to Action,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 24 (December 2019), <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16244941>.

skills, effective communication, and emotional intelligence.²⁹⁷ The recommendations relating to training that would make an impact in police shootings are obvious. Due to the relatively similar length of training in the United States for police officers, it would be worth testing a version of the European model of training domestically to see whether an increase in training hours for recruits results in lower levels of officer-involved shootings. By increasing training hours, departments could devote a greater amount of time to those areas of police training that tend to get sacrificed due to time constraints. As mentioned previously, researchers have identified the importance of developing critical-thinking skills, and this can only happen if police recruits are given a wide berth during their formative training in the academy. Increasing cognitive training for officers, according to the National Institutes of Health, would improve officers' decision-making skills, regulate impulse control, and encourage adaptability and flexibility.²⁹⁸ The research also recommends augmenting the emotional skills training delivered to new hires. Experts argue that preparing officers to regulate their emotions and stress will allow them to maintain composure during stressful situations.²⁹⁹ Officers' emotions affect job effectiveness, and research from the National Institutes of Health shows that "when anxious, officers had a stronger expectation of threat, which caused them to shoot earlier and make more mistakes."³⁰⁰

Thus, educating recruits and veteran officers on these tools would be beneficial for police across the United States. The important factor to keep at the forefront of this recommendation is that sacrifices need not be made by reducing training in one area of importance in the academy to account for necessary emotional and social training. This is, therefore, the genesis of the idea to extend police trainings to account for educating officers in these other fields, which would prove beneficial to the public at large. The authors of the research acknowledge the perishability of skills as officers grow within their departments. In the same way that officers have requalification requirements with firearms

²⁹⁷ Blumberg et al.

²⁹⁸ Blumberg et al.

²⁹⁹ Blumberg et al.

³⁰⁰ Blumberg et al., 5.

on a regular basis, they suggest police executives recognize the perishability of psychological skills and, thus, place a premium on ensuring ongoing psychological training to keep officers in top physical and mental condition for the stresses of the profession.³⁰¹ Ensuring this occurs is impossible within the current time restrictions placed on many academies across the country. By understanding the importance of harnessing these skills, departments can produce well-adjusted officers who make the right decisions in the most difficult of circumstances. Investing in a more professional police force would be a benefit for all. Turning police training into a more time-intensive endeavor that permits officers to prepare for the complexities of policing would serve to reduce police-involved shootings.

4. Restrict Department Force Policies

Police departments around the country differ when it comes to the rules that govern the actions of officers within their employ. When policymakers seek factors that affect the rates of police shootings in the United States, they should examine departmental policies for their effectiveness in reasonably restricting officers' use of force. The bureaucratic control argument suggests that when officers are subject to more explicit rules, shootings of citizens decrease.³⁰² According to longitudinal data collected from American cities, including Atlanta, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and Philadelphia, restrictive policies on deadly force resulted in decreases in elective police shootings.³⁰³ Therefore, police departments, by examining the rules and regulations of other departments of similar size, can design policies that more clearly outline departmental procedures as a method for mitigating police shootings within their jurisdictions.

³⁰¹ Blumberg et al.

³⁰² Smith, "Predictors of Homicide by Police," 539–57.

³⁰³ Smith.

5. Re-examination of Gun Laws among States

Research from the Harvard School of Public Health into police shootings indicates that states with the most guns have the most police shootings.³⁰⁴ This thesis further muddies the conversation on police shootings, as states around the nation are a patchwork of laws relating to the right to keep and bear arms. These differences in the implementation of the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution have some real consequences in society. Among some of the cities with the most violent crime rates reported, the proliferation of firearms had a real impact. A 2017 report on Chicago traced more than 20 percent of firearms in all the city's crimes to the neighboring state of Indiana, and more than 60 percent of firearms originated from other states.³⁰⁵ This problem is not a uniquely Chicago one.

In Baltimore, nearly two-thirds of the firearms used in crimes came from outside the state of Maryland.³⁰⁶ This out-of-state black-market is driving the crime rates in Baltimore. Data from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives show “many of the guns are coming from states up and down the I-95 corridor. In 2019, more than 1000 guns were traced back to Virginia, nearly 400 were traced to Pennsylvania, and more than 250 were traced to North Carolina.”³⁰⁷ Therefore, with the out-of-state black-market trade fueling the gun crime rate in Baltimore and other cities, it stands to reason that in such cities, the community violence hypothesis applies—suggesting that violent crime rates and police killings of felons are positively related.³⁰⁸ Thus, efforts should be

³⁰⁴ Tambetta Ojong, “Fatal Police Shootings 40% More Likely in States with Higher Gun Ownership,” ABC News, October 13, 2018, <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/US/fatal-police-shootings-40-states-higher-gun-ownership/story?id=58477634>.

³⁰⁵ Shelby Bremer, “Majority of Guns Used in Chicago Crimes Come from Outside Illinois: Report,” NBC Chicago, October 29, 2017, <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/national-international/chicago-gun-trace-report-2017/27140/>.

³⁰⁶ Dan Lampariello, “Tracking the Guns That Drive Baltimore’s Crime Crisis,” Fox News Baltimore, January 27, 2021, <https://foxbaltimore.com/amp/features/operation-crime-justice/tracking-the-guns-driving-baltimores-crime-crisis>.

³⁰⁷ Lampariello.

³⁰⁸ Zahal Kohistani, Jamie Dougherty, and John Klofas, “Correlates with Use of Force by Police Officers in America,” Working Paper #2015-02 (Rochester Institute of Technology, Center for Public Safety Initiatives, 2015), <https://www.rit.edu/liberalarts/sites/rit.edu.liberalarts/files/documents/our-work/2015-02%20-%20Correlates%20with%20Use%20of%20Force%20by%20Police%20Officers.pdf>.

explored to unify communities around the United States to streamline the rules that govern the acquisition of firearms. Since most people killed by police in the United States are carrying firearms, it is of importance to minimize these encounters to reduce these shootings.

It is critical to point out that this research does not call for any specific legislation regarding firearm use across the United States but merely for some sort of uniformity in the exercise of a constitutional right. As long as states around the country independently determine rules for the acquisition and possession of arms, legal loopholes will foster this burgeoning market, which tends to put down roots in different states and place firearms in the hands of individuals who wind up in armed confrontations with American police officers.

B. FUTURE RESEARCH

In light of the recommendations set forth in this thesis, it stands to reason that these ideas should be tested in the field to determine their efficacy. One of the areas of research requiring further study is how organizational policies impact police shootings. As of the date of this publication, one study has tried to understand the link between policies and police shootings.³⁰⁹ Therefore, further studies are needed to get a better picture of the relationship between the two, while considering other political and social variables that might affect the findings.³¹⁰

Future research is also recommended into the effect that increasing training hours for the average police recruit would have on police shootings. As it stands, academies all over the country must make time allocations for the different blocks of study required for their recruits to gain certification as police officers. Departments and municipalities across the country should invest the time and necessary funding to elevate the hours spent on developing specific skills for police officers, such as more training in dealing with mental illness and building officers' cognitive, emotional, and social skills. By investing in these

³⁰⁹ Smith, "Predictors of Homicide by Police."

³¹⁰ Smith.

skills, a department acknowledges their importance is comparable to that of the skills currently enjoying the lion's share of training time in academies, including firearm proficiency and self-defense. Officers should continue to hone these skills over the course of their careers via in-service trainings. Studies can be commissioned to determine the efficacy of this investment as a way of proving one way or another that they work. A positive relationship between departments that undertake increases in these targeted trainings and shooting rates would serve to inform lawmakers and other departments on the benefits of implementing similar upgrades to their curricula. Finally, legislatures at both the state and federal level should consider having those difficult conversations about guns in their communities with their respective electorate. A 2019 Pew research survey found that while people from both sides of the political aisle may disagree on gun policy, Americans do share some common ground. One point of convergence involves preventing the sale of firearms to individuals with mental illness.³¹¹ While there will always be differences across communities about what, if anything, can be done to ensure firearms stay out of the hands of those who should not have them, it would appear, based on the Pew survey, there are things we can broadly agree on as they relate to firearms.

C. CONCLUSION

The question of police shootings within the United States is one that continues to dominate the national consciousness. From a purely scientific perspective, the statistics make clear that compared to other Western nations, shootings by police happen at greater frequency in the United States. However, research on the question of why this is the case reveals a multitude of reasons. This research sought to examine the reasons behind police-shooting trends in the United States as well as ways to mitigate the numbers and provide premiere law enforcement services to the community while maintaining police officers' safety. This research examined departments across the United States and how they conduct operations to identify similarities and differences between them and used that body of information to then contrast with police departments from other Western nations. The

³¹¹ Rachel Treisman, "Poll: Number of Americans Who Favor Stricter Gun Laws Continues to Grow," NPR, October 20, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/10/20/771278167/poll-number-of-americans-who-favor-stricter-gun-laws-continues-to-grow>.

research shows there are lessons that can be gleaned from our overseas partners, while acknowledging distinct differences between nations. The recommendations made to spur changes in police shootings recognize the complexities of 21st century policing but also come from a desire to improve policing into the future using data, science, and research to tackle the difficult questions of society.

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