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# Fatal shootings of police officers have become less common

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**Authorities investigated the shooting scene in downtown Dallas.**

**By Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF JULY 08, 2016

**Fatal shootings of police officers nationwide have declined significantly over the past several decades,**

data shows.

Between 2010 and 2015, the number of law enforcement officers shot to death in the US each year averaged 53, according to data tracked by the [National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund](#).

That's down from an annual averages of 57 such killings during the 2000s, 68 during the 1990s, 87 during the 1980s and 127 during the 1970s, when fatal shootings of officers peaked, according to the organization.

Ellen's Goodbye SHOCKS Her Fans. ✕



Her fans were outraged when they found out her secret ! [>> READ THE STORY](#)

Created with Highcharts 4.0.4 **Average annual fatal shootings of police**

**officers** 71 127 87 68 57 53 1960s 1970s 1980s 1990s 2000s 2010s National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund

By comparison, the number of people shot and killed by police officers nationwide in 2015 was more than 20 times greater than the number of officers shot to death that year.

Police shot 990 people to death in 2015, according to data tracked by the [Washington Post](#). Meanwhile, 42 officers were shot to death last year, according to the law enforcement memorial organization.

But per capita, the risk of being shot to death was higher for officers.

The 990 people shot to death last year represented about 0.3 deaths per 100,000 people in the US. The 42 officers shot to death represented about 6.7 deaths per 100,000 officers in the US, based on police employee data tracked by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

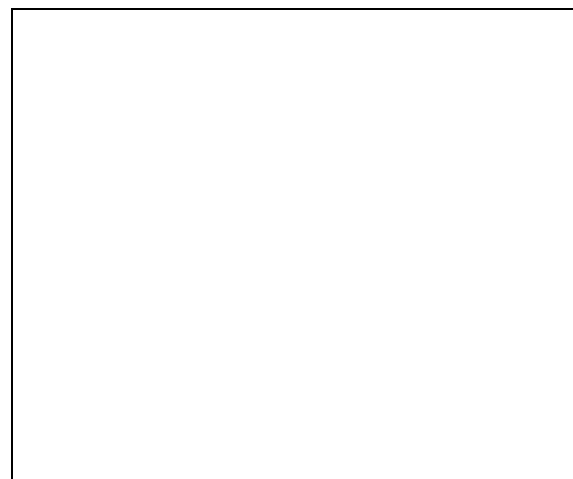
Thursday night's shooting in Dallas killed five officers making it the [deadliest day for law enforcement since 72 officers were killed in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001](#).

The shooting began while hundreds of people were gathered to protest the deaths of black men killed by police this week in Louisiana and Minnesota, [the Associated Press reported](#). Dallas Police Chief David Brown told reporters that "snipers" fired "ambush-style" on the officers, though it remained unclear Friday afternoon how many shooters were involved in the attack.

A decade worth of FBI data on murders of police officers shows that it is rare for officers to be killed in such a manner. Of 505 officers murdered nationwide between 2005 and 2014, just six — or 3 percent of them — were killed in attacks described as an ambush in which a rifle was used.

The FBI data also shows that between 2005 and 2014:

- Texas saw more officers murdered — 46 — than any other state in the country. (Massachusetts had one of the lower totals with four officers murdered.) And, many more officers were killed in the south than in any other region of the country.



- The vast majority of murdered officers, about 92 percent, were shot to death, and handguns were by far the most common type of firearm used. Three quarters of officers who were shot to death were killed by use of a handgun.
- The most common scenario in which officers were shot and killed was when they were involved in making or attempting to make an arrest. That circumstance accounted for 20 percent of the 466 officer shooting fatalities. The next most common circumstances were: during traffic pursuits and stops (15 percent); investigating a suspicious person or circumstance (14 percent); responding to a disturbance call (12 percent); and unprovoked attacks (12 percent);
- Males accounted for about 97 percent of people who allegedly killed officers, whether by shooting or other means.
- About 83 percent of the offenders had been arrested before.
- Whites made up 55 percent of offenders, and blacks made up about 40 percent. By comparison, whites account for about 73 percent of the country's total population, and blacks account for about 13 percent. (The FBI's racial breakdown did not include Hispanic, which is considered an ethnicity, as a category.)

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