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Black Homicide Victimization in the United States

An Analysis of 2010 Homicide Data

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The Violence Policy Center (VPC) is a national non-profit educational organization that conducts research and public education on violence in America and provides information and analysis to policymakers, journalists, advocates, and the general public. This study was funded with the support of the David Bohnett Foundation and The Joyce Foundation. A list highlighting select past VPC studies is listed below. For a complete list of VPC publications with document links, please visit <http://www.vpc.org/studyndx.htm>.

- *When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2010 Homicide Data* (September 2012, annual study)
- *Understanding the Smith & Wesson M&P15 Semiautomatic Assault Rifle Used in the Aurora, Colorado Mass Murder* (July 2012)
- *Gun Deaths Outpace Motor Vehicle Deaths in 10 States in 2009* (May 2012)
- *Bullet Buttons: The Gun Industry's Attack on California's Assault Weapons Ban* (May 2012)
- *American Roulette: Murder-Suicide in the United States* (May 2012)
- *"Never Walk Alone"—How Concealed Carry Laws Boost Gun Industry Sales* (April 2012)
- *Black Homicide Victimization in the United States: An Analysis of 2009 Homicide Data* (January 2012, annual study)
- *Lost Youth: A County-by-County Analysis of 2010 California Homicide Victims Ages 10 to 24* (January 2012, annual study)
- *More Guns, More Shootings* (January 2012)
- *States With Higher Gun Ownership and Weak Gun Laws Lead Nation in Gun Death* (October 2011, annual study)
- *The Militarization of the U.S. Civilian Firearms Market* (June 2011)
- *A Shrinking Minority: The Continuing Decline of Gun Ownership in America* (April 2011)
- *Blood Money: How the Gun Industry Bankrolls the NRA* (April 2011)
- *Lessons Unlearned—The Gun Lobby and the Siren Song of Anti-Government Rhetoric* (April 2010)
- *Target: Law Enforcement—Assault Weapons in the News* (February 2010)
- *Indicted: Types of Firearms and Methods of Gun Trafficking from the United States to Mexico as Revealed in U.S. Court Documents* (April 2009)
- *Iron River: Gun Violence and Illegal Firearms Trafficking on the U.S.-Mexico Border* (March 2009)
- *Youth Gang Violence and Guns: Data Collection in California* (February 2009)
- *"Big Boomers"—Rifle Power Designed Into Handguns* (December 2008)
- *Clear and Present Danger: National Security Experts Warn About the Danger of Unrestricted Sales of 50 Caliber Anti-Armor Sniper Rifles to Civilians* (July 2005)
- *The Threat Posed to Helicopters by 50 Caliber Anti-Armor Sniper Rifles* (August 2004)
- *United States of Assault Weapons: Gunmakers Evading the Federal Assault Weapons Ban* (July 2004)
- *Vest Buster: The .500 Smith & Wesson Magnum—The Gun Industry's Latest Challenge to Law Enforcement Body Armor* (June 2004)
- *Bullet Hoses—Semiautomatic Assault Weapons: What Are They? What's So Bad About Them?* (May 2003)
- *"Officer Down"—Assault Weapons and the War on Law Enforcement* (May 2003)
- *License to Kill IV: More Guns, More Crime* (June 2002)
- *"A .22 for Christmas"—How the Gun Industry Designs and Markets Firearms for Children and Youth* (December 2001)
- *Unintended Consequences: Pro-Handgun Experts Prove That Handguns Are a Dangerous Choice For Self-Defense* (November 2001)
- *Voting from the Rooftops: How the Gun Industry Armed Osama bin Laden, Other Foreign and Domestic Terrorists, and Common Criminals with 50 Caliber Sniper Rifles* (October 2001)
- *Hispanics and Firearms Violence* (May 2001)
- *Where'd They Get Their Guns?—An Analysis of the Firearms Used in High-Profile Shootings, 1963 to 2001* (April 2001)
- *A Deadly Myth: Women, Handguns, and Self-Defense* (January 2001)
- *Handgun Licensing and Registration: What it Can and Cannot Do* (September 2000)
- *Pocket Rockets: The Gun Industry's Sale of Increased Killing Power* (July 2000)
- *Guns For Felons: How the NRA Works to Rearm Criminals* (March 2000)
- *Cease Fire: A Comprehensive Strategy to Reduce Firearms Violence* (Revised, October 1997)

Introduction

America faces a continuing epidemic of homicide among young black males.

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

This study examines the problem of black homicide victimization at the state level by analyzing unpublished Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data for black homicide victimization submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).¹ The information used for this report is for the year 2010 and is the most recent data available. This is the first analysis of the 2010 data on black homicide victims to offer breakdowns of cases in the 10 states with the highest black homicide victimization rates and the first to rank the states by the rate of black homicides.

It is important to note that the SHR data used in this report comes from law enforcement reporting at the local level. While there are coding guidelines followed by the law enforcement agencies, the amount of information submitted to the SHR system, and the interpretation that results in the information submitted (for example, gang involvement) will vary from agency to agency. While this study utilizes the best and most recent data available, it is limited by the quantity and degree of detail in the information submitted.²

¹ The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program collects basic information on serious crimes from participating police agencies and records supplementary information about the circumstances of homicides in its unpublished Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR). Submitted monthly, supplementary data consists of: the age, sex, race, and ethnicity of both victims and offenders; the types of weapons used; the relationship of victims to offenders; and, the circumstances of the murders. According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program, supplementary data are provided on only a subset of homicide cases. Additionally, SHR data are updated throughout the year as homicide reports are forwarded by state UCR programs.

² In 2010 the state of Florida, as in prior years, did not submit any data to the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report. Data from Florida was not requested individually because the difference in collection techniques would create a bias in the study results. In addition, according to the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports*, limited SHR data was received from Illinois for 2010.

National Data

According to the FBI SHR data, in 2010 there were 6,469 black homicide victims in the United States. The homicide rate among black victims in the United States was 16.32 per 100,000. For that year, the overall national homicide rate was 4.42 per 100,000. For whites, the national homicide rate was 2.66 per 100,000. Additional information contained in the FBI SHR data on black homicide includes the following.

Gender

Of the 6,469 black homicide victims, 5,582 (86 percent) were male, and 887 (14 percent) were female. The homicide rate for black male victims was 29.50 per 100,000. In comparison, the overall rate for male homicide victims was 7.08 per 100,000. For white male homicide victims it was 3.85 per 100,000. The homicide rate for female black victims was 4.28 per 100,000. In comparison, the overall rate for female homicide victims was 1.84 per 100,000. For white female homicide victims it was 1.48 per 100,000.

Age

Five hundred forty-two black homicide victims (9 percent) were less than 18 years old and 105 black homicide victims (2 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 30 years old.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 83 percent of black victims (5,073 out of 6,149) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 72 percent (3,658 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 617 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 219 victims killed by bodily force, and 162 victims killed by a blunt object.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 70 percent of black victims (2,146 out of 3,058) were murdered by someone they knew. Nine hundred twelve victims were killed by strangers.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 71 percent (2,847 out of 4,029) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 54 percent (1,539 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Fifteen percent (420 homicides) were reported to be gang-related. Thirty-eight percent of gang-related homicides (160 homicides) were in California, which may be in part due to more comprehensive reporting. In California, 58 percent of non-felony related homicides were reported to be gang-related.

State Rankings

In 2010, the national black homicide victimization rate was 16.32 per 100,000. For that year, Missouri ranked first as the state with the highest black homicide victimization rate. Its rate of 33.86 per 100,000 was double the national average for black homicide victims. The remaining states that comprise the top 10 are listed in the chart below. Additional information for each of these 10 states can be found in Appendix One, including: age and gender of victims; most common weapons used; relationship of victim to offender; and, the circumstances of the murders. According to the SHR data, 18 states had a black homicide victimization rate higher than the national per capita rate of 16.32 per 100,000. For an alphabetical listing of all states that submitted data to the FBI, please see the chart on pages four and five.

Number of Black Homicide Victims and Rates by State in 2010, Ranked by Rate

Ranking	State	Number of Homicides	Homicide Rate per 100,000
1	Missouri	255	33.86
2	Pennsylvania	419	26.87
3	Michigan	404	26.61
4	Nebraska	26	25.58
5	Oklahoma	85	25.45
6	Indiana	159	23.89
7	Maine	5	22.62
8	Louisiana	338	22.61
9	Ohio	300	19.25
10	California	546	19.12

Number of Black Homicide Victims and Rates by State in 2010

State Ranking by Rate	State	Number of Homicide Victims	Homicide Rate per 100,000
36	Alabama	104	8.07
42	Alaska	1	2.93
25	Arizona	43	12.70
22	Arkansas	70	14.82
10	California	546	19.12
33	Colorado	27	10.33
24	Connecticut	58	13.37
19	Delaware	33	15.74
	Florida	NA	NA
26	Georgia	380	12.29
34	Hawaii	4	10.04
43 (tie)	Idaho	0	0.00
16	Illinois	343	17.09
6	Indiana	159	23.89
40	Iowa	5	4.33
11	Kansas	39	18.84
27	Kentucky	46	12.08
8	Louisiana	338	22.61
7	Maine	5	22.62
13	Maryland	338	18.65
20	Massachusetts	88	15.45
3	Michigan	404	26.61
29	Minnesota	39	11.68
32	Mississippi	120	10.71
1	Missouri	255	33.86
43 (tie)	Montana	0	0.00

Number of Black Homicide Victims and Rates by State in 2010

State Ranking by Rate	State	Number of Homicide Victims	Homicide Rate per 100,000
4	Nebraska	26	25.58
15	Nevada	46	17.30
43 (tie)	New Hampshire	0	0.00
14	New Jersey	243	17.71
31	New Mexico	7	11.20
21	New York	558	15.39
35	North Carolina	219	10.00
43 (tie)	North Dakota	0	0.00
9	Ohio	300	19.25
5	Oklahoma	85	25.45
37	Oregon	8	7.68
2	Pennsylvania	419	26.87
38	Rhode Island	6	6.64
28	South Carolina	161	11.99
43 (tie)	South Dakota	0	0.00
18	Tennessee	186	16.65
23	Texas	460	14.19
41	Utah	2	4.18
43 (tie)	Vermont	0	0.00
30	Virginia	190	11.32
39	Washington	18	5.34
17	West Virginia	13	16.76
12	Wisconsin	77	18.75
43 (tie)	Wyoming	0	0.00
	U.S. Total	6,469	16.32

Conclusion

Blacks in the United States are disproportionately affected by homicide. For the year 2010, blacks represented 13 percent of the nation's population, yet accounted for 49 percent of all homicide victims.³

As noted at the beginning of this study, the devastation homicide inflicts on black teens and adults is a national crisis, yet it is all too often ignored outside of affected communities.

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

³ FBI Supplementary Homicide Report 2010, U.S. Census Bureau population estimates.

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

Missouri

There were 255 black homicide victims in Missouri in 2010

*The homicide rate among black victims in Missouri was
33.86 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 1st in the United States

Age

Sixteen homicide victims (6 percent) were less than 18 years old and 4 victims (2 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 29 years old.

Gender

Out of 255 homicide victims, 231 were male and 24 were female.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 91 percent of victims (222 out of 244) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 58 percent (128 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 85 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 14 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 4 victims killed by bodily force, and 2 victims killed by a blunt object.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 71 percent of victims (56 out of 79) were murdered by someone they knew. Twenty-three victims were killed by strangers.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 53 percent (57 out of 107) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 72 percent (41 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Pennsylvania

There were 419 black homicide victims in Pennsylvania in 2010

*The homicide rate among black victims in Pennsylvania was
26.87 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 2nd in the United States

Age

Twenty-seven homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 6 victims (1 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 29 years old.

Gender

Out of 419 homicide victims, 377 were male and 42 were female.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 84 percent of victims (343 out of 406) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 83 percent (284 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 54 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 29 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 13 victims killed by bodily force, and 12 victims killed by a blunt object.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 86 percent of victims (178 out of 208) were murdered by someone they knew. Thirty victims were killed by strangers.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 57 percent (181 out of 317) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 83 percent (150 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Michigan

There were 404 black homicide victims in Michigan in 2010

*The homicide rate among black victims in Michigan was
26.61 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 3rd in the United States

Age

Thirty-one homicide victims (8 percent) were less than 18 years old and 6 victims (2 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 32 years old.

Gender

Out of 404 homicide victims, 357 were male and 47 were female.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 85 percent of victims (322 out of 381) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 61 percent (197 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 97 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 35 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 13 victims killed by bodily force, and 6 victims killed by a blunt object.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 72 percent of victims (109 out of 152) were murdered by someone they knew. Forty-three victims were killed by strangers.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 77 percent (147 out of 191) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 56 percent (83 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Nebraska

There were 26 black homicide victims in Nebraska in 2010

*The homicide rate among black victims in Nebraska was
25.58 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 4th in the United States

Age

Two homicide victims (8 percent) were less than 18 years old. The average age was 26 years old.

Gender

Out of 26 homicide victims, 23 were male and 3 were female.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 88 percent of victims (23 out of 26) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 91 percent (21 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 3 victims killed by bodily force.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 71 percent of victims (5 out of 7) were murdered by someone they knew. Two victims were killed by strangers.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 81 percent (13 out of 16) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 38 percent (5 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Oklahoma

There were 85 black homicide victims in Oklahoma in 2010

*The homicide rate among black victims in Oklahoma was
25.45 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 5th in the United States

Age

Nine homicide victims (11 percent) were less than 18 years old. The average age was 27 years old.

Gender

Out of 85 homicide victims, 75 were male and 10 were female.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 88 percent of victims (72 out of 82) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 83 percent (60 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 6 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 2 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 3 victims killed by bodily force, and 4 victims killed by a blunt object.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 67 percent of victims (42 out of 63) were murdered by someone they knew. Twenty-one victims were killed by strangers.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 69 percent (50 out of 72) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 44 percent (22 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Indiana

There were 159 black homicide victims in Indiana in 2010

*The homicide rate among black victims in Indiana was
23.89 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 6th in the United States

Age

Twelve homicide victims (8 percent) were less than 18 years old and 1 victim (1 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 30 years old.

Gender

Out of 159 homicide victims, 138 were male and 21 were female.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 89 percent of victims (136 out of 153) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 71 percent (97 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 29 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 7 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 6 victims killed by bodily force, and 3 victims killed by a blunt object.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 85 percent of victims (64 out of 75) were murdered by someone they knew. Eleven victims were killed by strangers.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 65 percent (69 out of 106) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 42 percent (29 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Maine

There were 5 black homicide victims in Maine in 2010

*The homicide rate among black victims in Maine was
22.62 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 7th in the United States

Age

The average age was 29 years old.

Gender

Out of 5 homicide victims, 4 were male and 1 was female.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 60 percent of victims (3 out of 5) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 1 victim (33 percent) was killed with a handgun. There were 2 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There was 1 victim killed with a knife or other cutting instrument, and 1 victim killed by bodily force.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 67 percent of victims (2 out of 3) were murdered by someone they knew. One victim was killed by a stranger.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 100 percent (1 out of 1) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 100 percent (1 homicide) involved an argument between the victim and the offender.

Louisiana

There were 338 black homicide victims in Louisiana in 2010

*The homicide rate among black victims in Louisiana was
22.61 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 8th in the United States

Age

Twenty-nine homicide victims (9 percent) were less than 18 years old and 4 victims (1 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 30 years old.

Gender

Out of 338 homicide victims, 305 were male and 33 were female.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 90 percent of victims (298 out of 331) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 77 percent (230 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 47 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 24 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 5 victims killed by bodily force, and 1 victim killed by a blunt object.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 76 percent of victims (100 out of 132) were murdered by someone they knew. Thirty-two victims were killed by strangers.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 61 percent (94 out of 153) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 65 percent (61 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Ohio

There were 300 black homicide victims in Ohio in 2010

*The homicide rate among black victims in Ohio was
19.25 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 9th in the United States

Age

Twenty-one homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 9 victims (3 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 31 years old.

Gender

Out of 300 homicide victims, 256 were male and 44 were female.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 86 percent of victims (220 out of 255) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 57 percent (126 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 86 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 21 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 6 victims killed by bodily force, and 7 victims killed by a blunt object.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 80 percent of victims (83 out of 104) were murdered by someone they knew. Twenty-one victims were killed by strangers.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 84 percent (118 out of 140) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 51 percent (60 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

California

There were 546 black homicide victims in California in 2010

*The homicide rate among black victims in California was
19.12 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 10th in the United States

Age

Fifty-four homicide victims (10 percent) were less than 18 years old and 5 victims (1 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 29 years old.

Gender

Out of 546 homicide victims, 469 were male and 77 were female.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 82 percent of victims (441 out of 535) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 81 percent (359 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 61 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 51 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 20 victims killed by bodily force, and 14 victims killed by a blunt object.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 50 percent of victims (132 out of 265) were murdered by someone they knew. One hundred thirty-three victims were killed by strangers.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 75 percent (275 out of 366) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 31 percent (86 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

United States

There were 6,469 black homicide victims in the United States in 2010

*The homicide rate among black victims in the United States was
16.32 per 100,000 in 2010*

Age

Five hundred forty-two homicide victims (9 percent) were less than 18 years old and 105 victims (2 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 30 years old.

Gender

Out of 6,469 homicide victims, 5,582 were male and 887 were female.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 83 percent of victims (5,073 out of 6,149) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 72 percent (3,658 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 1,111 victims killed with firearms, type not stated. There were 617 victims killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 219 victims killed by bodily force, and 162 victims killed by a blunt object.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 70 percent of victims (2,146 out of 3,058) were murdered by someone they knew. Nine hundred twelve victims were killed by strangers.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 71 percent (2,847 out of 4,029) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 54 percent (1,539 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.