



[www.LawMemorial.org/FatalitiesReport](http://www.LawMemorial.org/FatalitiesReport)

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## 135 Law Enforcement Officer Fatalities Nationwide in 2016

64 officers shot and killed—21 were ambushed

Law enforcement fatalities nationwide rose to their highest level in five years in 2016, with 135 officers killed in the line of duty, according to preliminary data compiled by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF).

The 135 officer fatalities in 2016 is a 10 percent increase over the 123 who died in the line of duty last year and is the highest total since 2011, when 177 officers made the ultimate sacrifice.

Firearms-related incidents were the number one cause of death in 2016, with 64 officers shot and killed across the country. This represents a significant spike—56 percent—over the 41 officers killed by gunfire in 2015. Of the 64 shooting deaths of officers this year, 21 were the result of ambush-style attacks—the highest total in more than two decades. Eight multiple-shooting death incidents claimed the lives of 20 officers in 2016, tied with 1971 for the highest total of any year since 1932. Those incidents included five officers killed in ambush attacks in Dallas (TX) and three in Baton Rouge (LA), spanning 10 days in July.

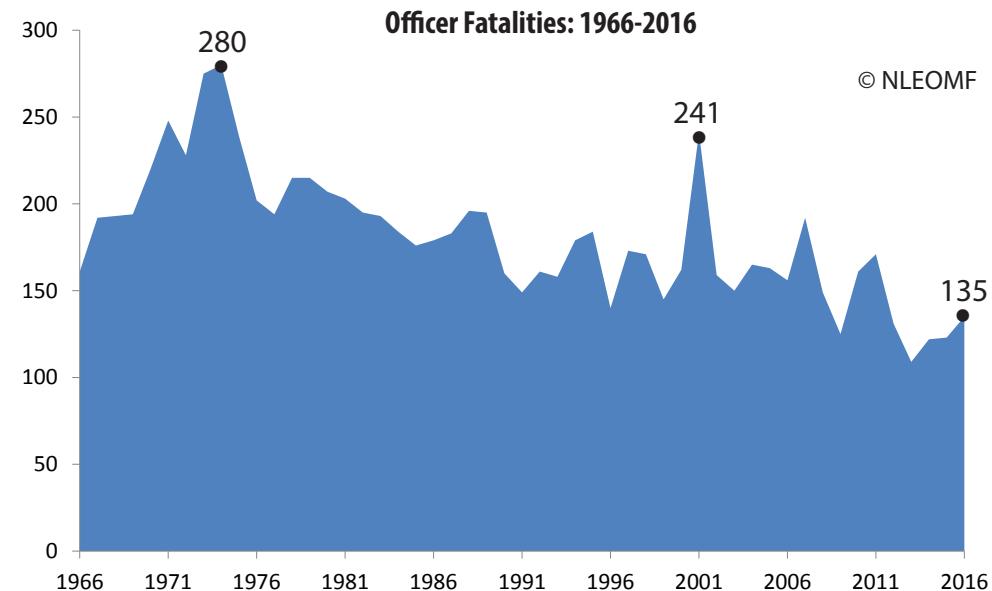
Fifty-three officers were killed in traffic-related incidents in 2016, which was 10 percent more than the 48 killed on roadways in 2015. Of the 53 traffic-related deaths, 28 died in automobile crashes, 15 were

**21 officer  
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struck and killed while outside of their vehicle, and 10 were killed in motorcycle crashes. Prior to 2016, traffic-related incidents have been the number one cause of officer fatalities in 15 of the last 20 years.

Eighteen officers died from other causes in 2016, including 11 who died from job-related illnesses—mostly heart attacks—while performing their duties. Other causes included beatings (3), a drowning, a fall, an aircraft crash and a stabbing.

Among the states, Texas had the highest number of officer fatalities, with 17, followed by California with 10, Louisiana with nine, Georgia with eight, and Michigan with six. Six federal law enforcement officers died in the line of duty in 2016, along with four from the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico and one tribal officer.



Six of the fallen officers in 2016 were female. Among the officers who died this year, the average age was 40 and the average length of service was 13 years.

There are currently 20,789 names of officers killed in the line of duty inscribed on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, DC, dating back to the first known death in 1791. Over the past decade (2006-2015) the average annual number of officer fatalities has been 151. The deadliest year on record for law enforcement was 1930 when 307 law enforcement officers were killed in the line of duty. The last time officer fatalities dipped below 100 for a single year was 1944.

## Firearms-related Fatalities

Firearms-related fatalities spiked in 2016, with 64 officers killed, up 56 percent from 41 in 2015.

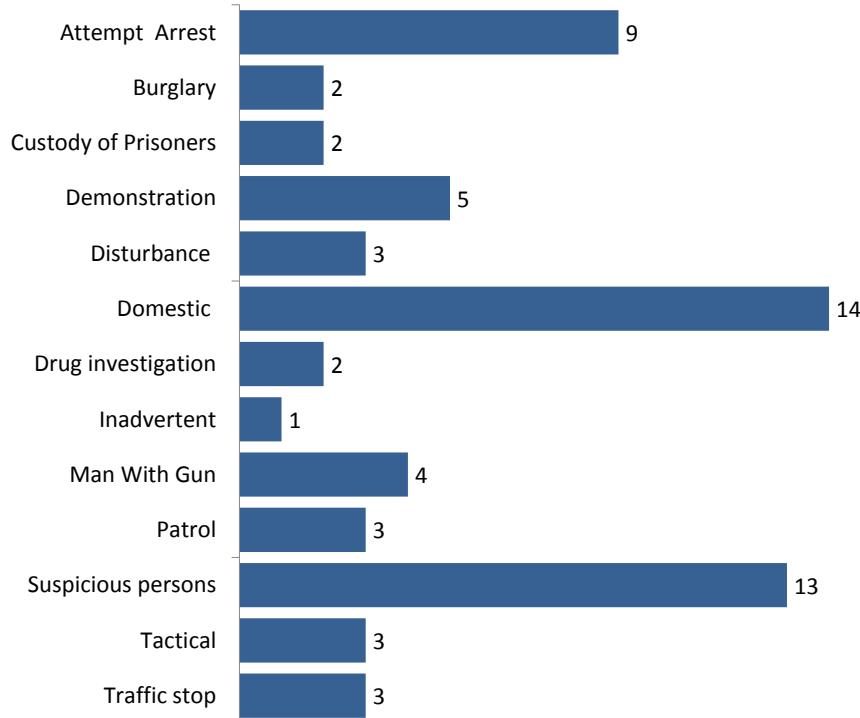
Handguns were the leading type of firearm used in fatal shootings of law enforcement officers this year. However, there was a marked increase in officers killed with rifles. Of the 64 firearms-related fatalities, 53 percent, or 34 officers, were shot and killed with a handgun. Twenty-five officers were killed with a rifle, compared to five in 2015. Two officers were killed with a shotgun, and the type of firearm used in three of the cases is currently unknown.

Of the 64 firearms-related fatalities in 2016, 21 officers were shot and killed without warning in ambush-style shootings. This number is 163 percent higher than 2015 when eight officers were shot and killed in ambush-style attacks.

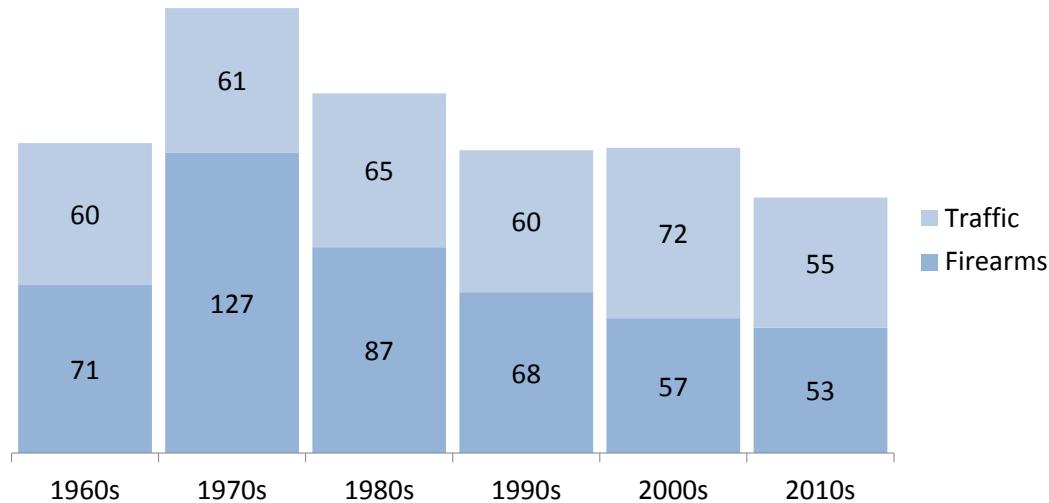
Multiple-shooting death incidents claimed the lives of 20 officers in 2016, the highest total of any year since 1932. Those incidents included five officers killed in ambush attacks in Dallas (TX) and three in Baton Rouge (LA), spanning 10 days in July.

Domestic Disturbance calls accounted for 14 officer fatalities and were the underlying circumstance in some of the ambushes of officers. Thirteen officers were killed while investigating suspicious persons or vehicles, and nine officers were killed while attempting to arrest a suspect.

### Leading Circumstances of Fatal Shootings © NLEOMF



### Average Officer Fatalities by Decade © NLEOMF



Firearms-related fatalities peaked in 1973 when 156 officers were shot and killed. Since then, the average number of officers killed by gunfire has decreased from 127 per year in the 1970s to 57 per year in the 2000s.

## Traffic-related Fatalities

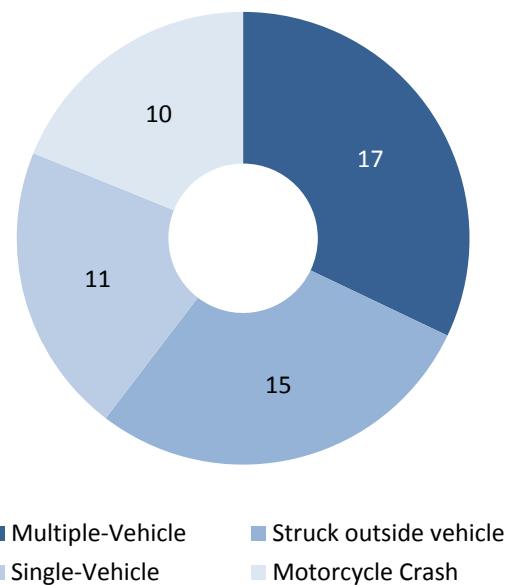
In 2016, fifty-three officers died as a result of traffic-related incidents, a 10 percent increase from the 48 traffic-related deaths last year.

Twenty-eight officers were killed in automobile crashes—an 18 percent decrease from the 34 killed in 2015. Fifteen officers were struck and killed outside their vehicles this year, a 50 percent increase from 2015 when 10 officers were struck and killed. This year, 10 officers were killed in motorcycle crashes, an increase of 150 percent from the four in 2015. Seven of the traffic-related deaths were the result of an impaired driver.

Of the 28 automobile crashes in 2016, seventeen were multiple-vehicle crashes and 11 were single-vehicle crashes. Traffic-related fatalities decreased during the previous decade (2000-2009), and since 2011 they have fallen to the lowest levels since the 1950s. However, prior to 2016, traffic-related fatalities have been the leading cause of death for officers in 15 of the last 20 years.

### Circumstances of Traffic-related Fatalities

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## Other Causes of Officer Deaths

Eighteen officers died from other causes in 2016, including 11 who died from job-related illnesses—mostly heart attacks—while performing their duties. Also included among that number are two officers who died of an illness contracted as a result of rescue and recovery work following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Also, three officers were beaten to death, one officer died from a fall, one officer drowned, one officer was stabbed, and one officer died in an aircraft crash.

## A Closer Look

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  <p><b>Police Officer Ashley Guindon</b><br/>Prince William County (VA)<br/>Police Department<br/>EOW: 2/27/2016</p> <p>Police Officer Ashley Guindon was shot and killed while approaching a home to investigate a domestic dispute call. Two other officers were also shot and wounded. The suspect, who had murdered his wife, was arrested at the scene. Officer Guindon had been sworn in the previous day.</p> |  <p><b>Police Officer Verdell Smith</b><br/>Memphis (TN) Police Department<br/>EOW: 5/9/2015</p> <p>Police Officer Verdell Smith was struck and killed by a vehicle driven by a suspect involved in a triple shooting. Officer Smith was killed when he pushed civilians out of the vehicle's way when it drove onto the sidewalk. The suspect was arrested a short time later.</p> |  <p><b>Police Officer Jose Chavez</b><br/>Hatch (NM) Police Department<br/>EOW: 8/12/2016</p> <p>Officer Chavez was shot and killed while conducting a traffic stop. As Officer Chavez approached the right side of the stopped vehicle, a passenger exited from the vehicle and fired shots. The suspect fled the scene and carjacked another vehicle before being taken into custody. The suspect was wanted for murder in Ohio.</p> |
|--|--|---|

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## Officer Fatality Data

The deadliest month in 2016 was November with 20 fatalities. April had the fewest fatalities with two deaths.

In 2016, six female officers and 129 male officers were killed in the line of duty. The average age of a fallen officer was 40 years old, with an average length of service of 13 years. On average, a fallen officer had two children.

Seventy-two municipal and county officers were killed in the line of duty in 2016, along with 33 who worked for sheriff's offices, 17 who worked at state law enforcement agencies, six federal officers, four territorial, two university officers and one tribal officer.

## Five Deadliest States

Among the states, Texas had the highest number of officer fatalities, with 17, followed by California with 10, Louisiana with nine, and Georgia with eight and Michigan with six.

### Gender



|                    | Low   | Average  | High     |
|--------------------|-------|----------|----------|
| Age of Officer     | 22    | 40       | 72       |
| Length of Service  | 1 day | 13 years | 40 years |
| Number of Children | 0     | 2        | 6        |

### Jurisdiction

|           |    |             |   |
|-----------|----|-------------|---|
| Municipal | 72 | Territorial | 4 |
| Sheriff   | 33 | University  | 2 |
| State     | 17 | Tribal      | 1 |
| Federal   | 6  |             |   |



**Texas**  
**17** Officers  
Killed



**California**  
**10** Officers  
Killed



**Louisiana**  
**9** Officers  
Killed



**Georgia**  
**8** Officers  
Killed



**Michigan**  
**6** Officers  
Killed