

2020

Law Enforcement Officers Fatalities Report

Law Enforcement Officer Fatalities

According to preliminary data compiled by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF), **as of December 31, 2020, 264 federal, state, military, tribal, and local law enforcement officers died in the line-of-duty in 2020**, an increase of 96% from the 135 officers killed during the same period. In 2020, officer fatalities ranged from automobile crashes to heart attacks and from gunshots to being beaten to death. Of these tragic deaths, Covid-19 related fatalities were the single highest cause of officer line-of-duty deaths in 2020.

Of the 264 officers who have died in the line of duty, there were 145 confirmed Covid-19 cases. It must be noted however, as the pandemic rages on, NLEOMF has already identified a significant number of additional Covid-19-related fatalities. Once these cases are confirmed, NLEOMF projects that the total number of Covid-19 fatalities and the total number of line-of-duty deaths will grow significantly. Unfortunately, even with the preliminary Covid-19 fatalities, 2020 had the highest number of law enforcement line-of-duty deaths since 1974.

Firearms-related fatalities were the second most common cause of officer deaths, with 48 officers killed in 2020. This represents a 6% decrease from the 51 officers killed in firearms-related incidents during the same period in 2019. The leading circumstance of firearms-related fatalities was officers investigating suspicious persons or activities, followed by attempting an arrest. Ambush attacks leading to officers' deaths remained constant compared to the same period the previous year.

Forty-four officers have been killed in traffic-related fatalities in 2020, a two percent increase, compared to 43 deaths during the same period the previous year. Automobiles were the single leading cause of death, with 18 of those incidents being a collision with another vehicle, and 8 single vehicle crashes. Throughout the year, there were also 15 struck-by fatalities and 3 motorcycle fatalities.

During 2020, 172 officers died of other causes. Of these deaths, 10 were physical-related, such as a heart attack or stroke suffered on duty, and 12 succumbed to injuries sustained in the 9/11 terrorists attacks. Additionally, three officers drowned, one perished in a helicopter crash, and one was beaten to death. The largest single cause of death in this category and in the entire report are the 145 Covid-19 deaths where officers were confirmed by their agency to have engaged in a line-of-duty action or activity and the officer was diagnosed or evidence indicated that the officer had Covid-19 or complications at the time of the officer's death.

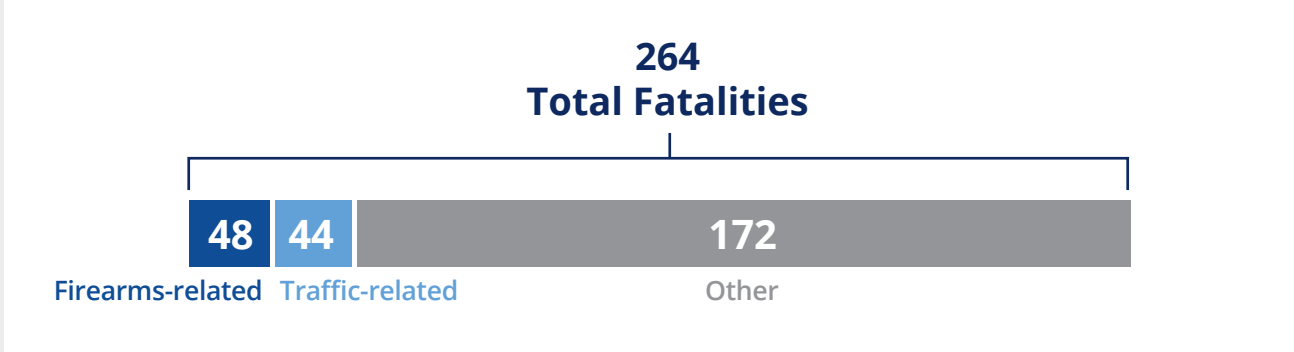
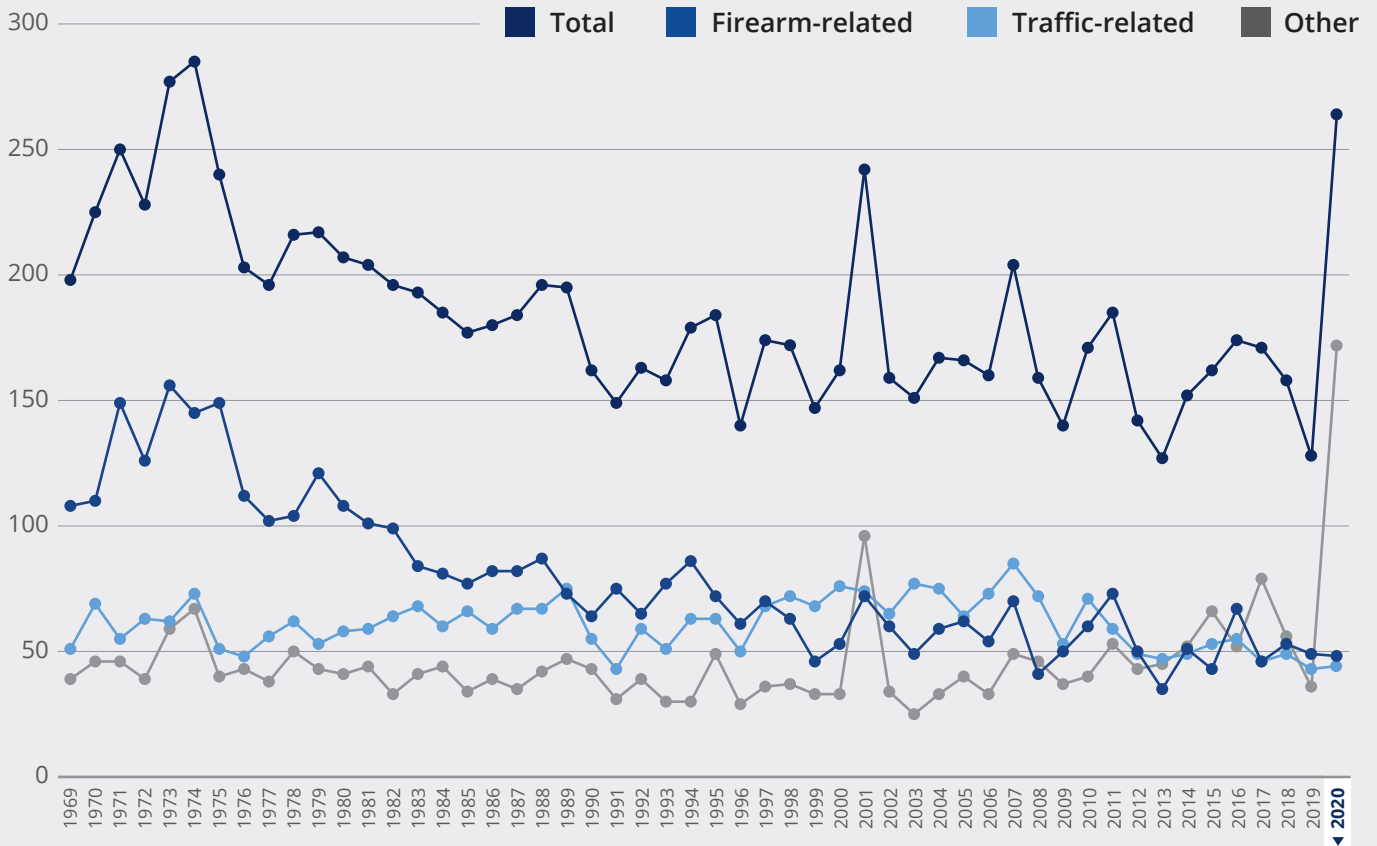


↑ 300%

increase in **Other line-of-duty deaths** due to Covid-19 pandemic

Law Enforcement Officer Fatalities 1969-2020

Through End of Year



Note: End of Year is from January 1 through December 31 of each year.

The data and statistics contained in this report do not represent a final or complete list of individual officers who will be added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in 2021.

48

Firearms-Related Fatalities

Of the 264 confirmed law enforcement line-of-duty deaths from January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020, firearms-related fatalities were the leading cause of non-Covid-19-related law enforcement deaths. **Forty-eight officers were shot and killed during the year** compared to 51 during the same period in 2019, resulting in a 6% decrease. Of the 48 firearms fatalities, eleven were investigating a suspicious person or activity, seven were killed responding to domestic disturbance calls, six deaths each were attempting an arrest and ambush attacks on officers, three were in tactical situations, and three others were responding to various disturbance calls.

Four officers died responding to a robbery or burglary in-progress call while three were feloniously killed during traffic stops. Two officers were killed during the year serving

warrants, two others were killed by inadvertent gunfire and one officer was killed by firearms responding to a mental health call.

Handguns were the leading type of firearm used in fatal shootings of law enforcement officers. Of the 48 officer fatalities, 30 were shot and killed with a handgun and 13 officers were killed by a rifle while 1 officer was killed with their own weapon. The type of firearm used in the remaining 4 fatalities is still under investigation or unknown at this time.

Of the 48 firearms-related fatalities in 2020, five occurred in each February, March, May, June, and July. Four officers were shot and killed in April, September and October, and three officers were killed in January, November and December. Two officers were killed by gunfire in August.



Officers Fallen: Firearms-Related



Police Officer Ismael Chavez

Police Officer Edelmiro Garza, Jr.

McAllen (TX)
Police Department

End of Watch:
July 11, 2020

Police Officers Ismael Chavez and Edelmiro Garza, Jr. were **shot and killed** as they responded to a domestic disturbance call. As the officers attempted to enter the home, the suspect opened fire, fatally wounding both officers. The suspect committed suicide after shooting the officers.



Police Officer Tyler Avery Herndon

Mount Holly (NC)
Police Department

End of Watch:
December 11, 2020

Police Officer Tyler Avery Herndon was **shot and killed** while he and other officers responded to a burglary call. Officer Herndon was transported to the hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.



Patrolman Cassie Johnson

Charleston (WV)
Police Department

End of Watch:
December 3, 2020

Patrolman Johnson **succumbed to a gunshot wound** she sustained on December 1, 2020, while responding to a parking complaint. Officer Johnson had a verbal and physical altercation with the suspect and the suspect brandished a handgun and shot Officer Johnson. She was transported to the hospital and placed on life support so that her organs could be donated. The suspect was apprehended.

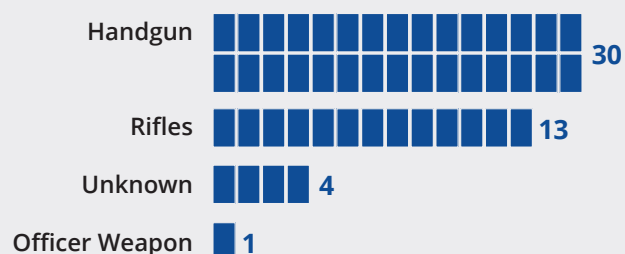
Firearms-Related Fatalities

Through End of Year

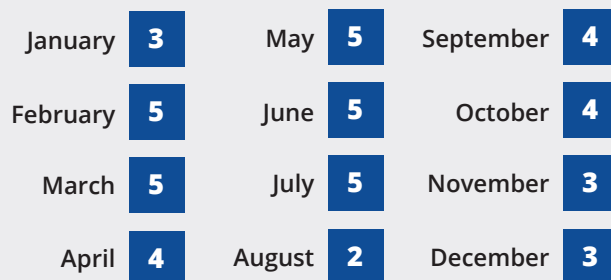
BY CIRCUMSTANCE (2020)



BY FIREARM TYPE (2020)



BY MONTH (2020)



BY DECADE (AVERAGE)



Note: End of Year is from January 1 through December 31 of each year.

44

Traffic-Related Fatalities

Forty-four officers were killed in traffic-related incidents during 2020, compared to 43 over the same period the previous year, resulting in a 2% increase. Of the forty-four traffic-related fatalities, 18 were automobile crashes involving a collision with another vehicle, eight were single vehicle crashes, 15 were struck while on the side of the road, and three involved a motorcycle crash.

In 2019, there were 19 struck-by crashes resulting in officer fatalities and in 2020 15 officers were killed in these incidents,

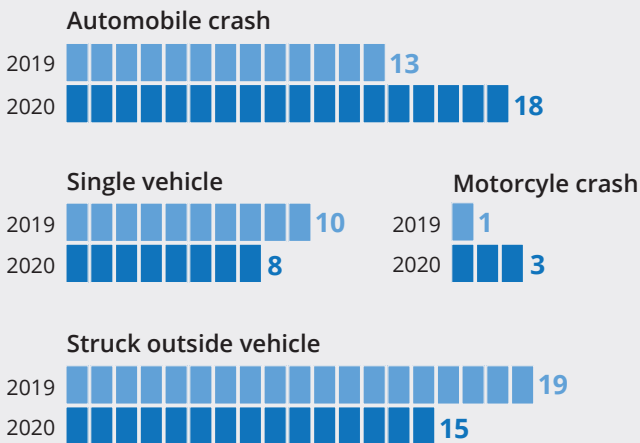
representing a 21% decrease. With greater citizen awareness, expanded officer traffic-safety messaging, proper vehicle positioning, and reflective traffic vests, it is hoped that this number continues to decrease in future years.

Compared to the average number of traffic-related fatalities per decade, 2020 with 44 fatalities is significantly lower than the past 10-year decade average (2010 – 2019). In the prior decade, 52 officers were killed on average in traffic-related incidences during the calendar year.

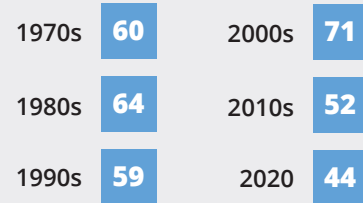
Traffic-Related Fatalities

Through End of Year

BY CIRCUMSTANCE



BY DECADE (AVERAGE)



Note: End of Year is from January 1 through December 31 of each year.

Officers Fallen: Traffic-Related



Police Officer Sheena Yarbrough-Powell

Beaumont (TX)
Police Department

End of Watch:
August 9, 2020

Police Officer Sheena Yarbrough-Powell was **killed in an automobile crash** when a wrong-way driver struck her patrol vehicle head-on and she was pronounced dead at the scene. Her partner was seriously injured in the crash and is in stable condition.



Officer Andy Ornelas

California
Highway Patrol

End of Watch:
December 2, 2020

Officer Andy Ornelas **succumbed to injuries sustained in a motorcycle crash** that occurred on November 23, 2020. Officer Ornelas was responding to a call when he was critically injured.



Sergeant William Conley Jumper Jr.

Greenville County (SC)
Sheriff's Office

End of Watch:
October 20, 2020

Sergeant William Conley Jumper Jr. was **killed during a traffic stop** when a suspect attempted to flee the scene. The suspect had a physical altercation with Sergeant Jumper and another deputy. At some point during the altercation, the suspect's vehicle accelerated and collided with a tractor-trailer causing injuries to two deputies and the suspects. However, Sergeant William Conley Jumper Jr. later succumbed to his injuries after being transported to the hospital.

172 Other Causes of Fatalities

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, **2020 was one of the deadliest years for law enforcement officers in decades with 172 other causes of death.** Excluding Covid-19 deaths, 27 officers died from other causes.

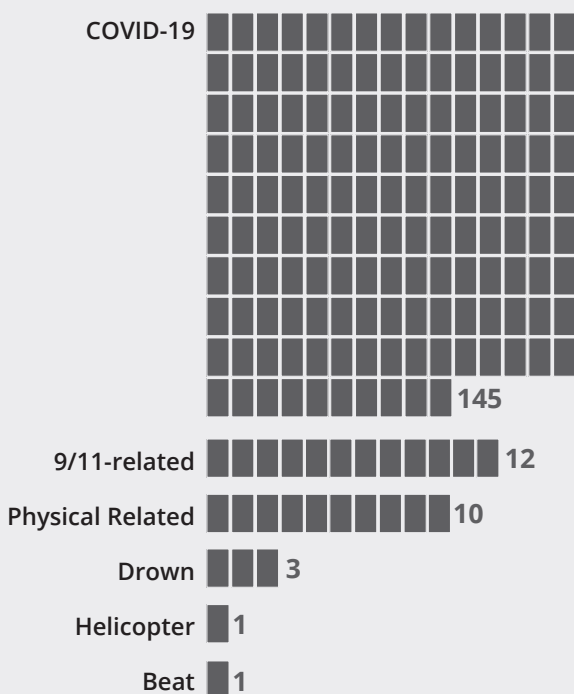
Of the 27 other causes, 22 were health-related incidents, including heart attacks

and injuries suffered during the 9/11 terrorists attacks, three officers drowned while executing their duties, one died in a helicopter crash, and one was beaten to death.

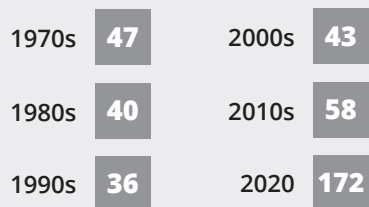
Covid-19 related fatalities are covered in the next section of this report.

Other Causes of Fatalities Through End of Year

BY CIRCUMSTANCE



BY DECADE (AVERAGE)



Note: End of Year is from January 1 through December 31 of each year.

Officers Fallen: Other Causes



Ranger Brendan Unitt

Larimer County (CO)
Department of
Natural Resources

End of Watch:
August 20, 2020

Ranger Unitt **drowned after being dispatched to assist with a missing boater during a strong wind event** at the Horsetooth Reservoir near Ft. Collins, Colorado. Radio contact was lost with Ranger Unitt and a large search using air, ground, and water resources was conducted. Ranger Unitt's body was recovered the following morning.



Corporal Bryant Searcy

Wayne County (MI)
Sheriff's Office

End of Watch:
September 2, 2020

Corporal Bryant Searcy was attacked by an inmate and **suffered severe injuries during the struggle**. Corporal Searcy was transported to the hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.



Trooper Jennifer M. Czarnecki

New York State Police

End of Watch:
December 5, 2020

Trooper Jennifer M. Czarnecki **succumbed to an illness** stemming from her assignment to aid in the recovery efforts as part of the New York State Police Detail following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.

Covid-19-Related Deaths

NLEOMF Covid-19 Task Force

During 2020 the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund formed a Covid-19 Task Force to address the surge in law enforcement fatalities due to the coronavirus.

The goal of the Task Force is to compile, acknowledge, and investigate every law enforcement fatality attributed to Covid-19 in the United States and to ensure that the officer is rightfully honored on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

All fallen officer cases formally submitted by each agency are reviewed by the Covid-19 Task Force to ensure that cases meet established criteria for inclusion. Then, each case is formally presented to the Memorial Names Committee which convenes regularly throughout the calendar year.

The Covid-19 Task Force reviews documentation provided by the law enforcement agency of the fallen officer including:

1. Information that details how the officer may have contracted the virus through direct exposure while conducting their official duties and a timeline of events prior to the officer becoming ill.
2. A copy of the death certificate, with the cause of death as Covid-19.
3. A copy of the autopsy, if performed, and any other medical documents related to the case.

Covid-19-Related Deaths

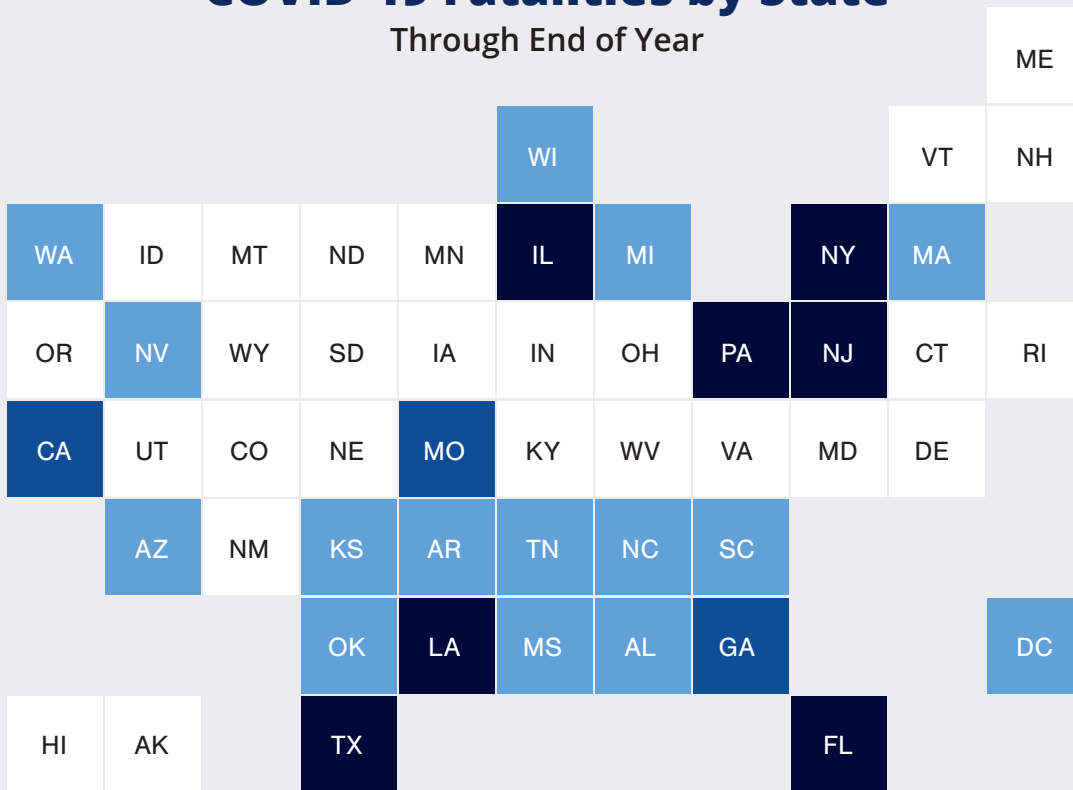
Preliminary reports from law enforcement agencies throughout the United States illustrate that the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has claimed more law enforcement lives than any single category in this report.

As of December 31, 2020, the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund has confirmed 145 Covid-19-related law enforcement line-of-duty fatalities; however, numerous other cases are still under review. NLEOMF anticipates that the total number of Covid-19 related fatalities will rise prior to the final year-end numbers being presented for inclusion on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.



COVID-19 Fatalities by State

Through End of Year



Number of Fatalities:



▶ 26 States had zero COVID-19-related fatalities

Demographics of Fatalities

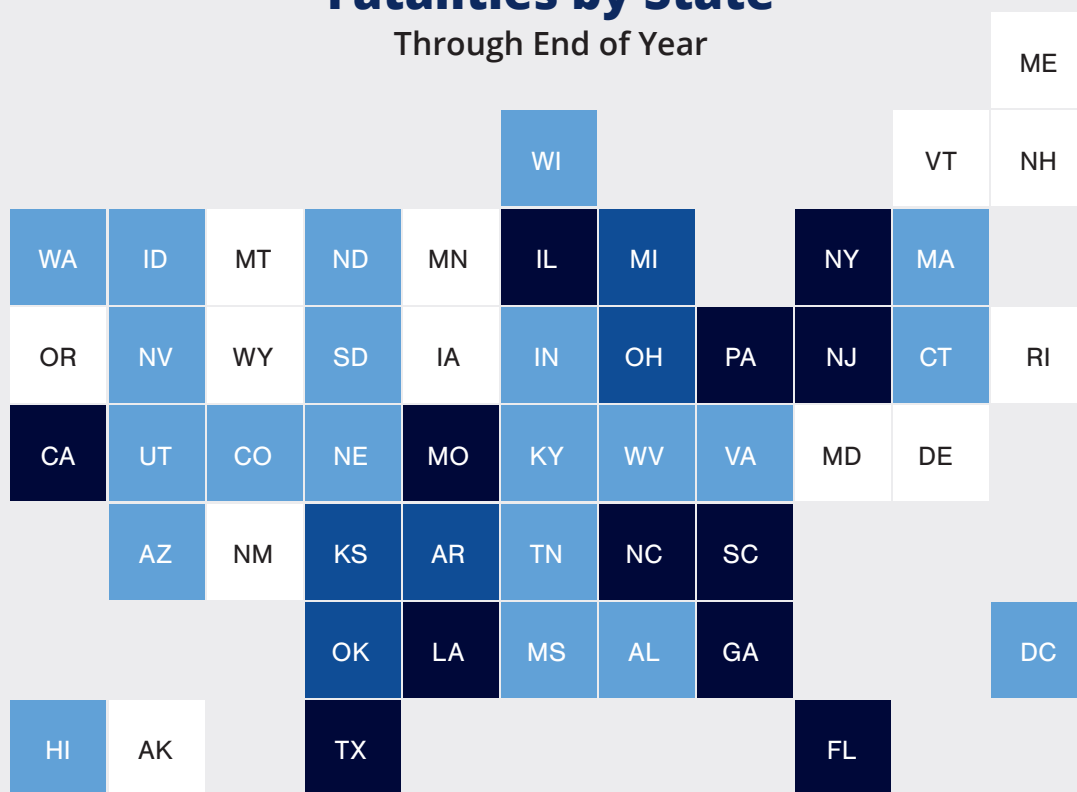
In 2020, 48 officers from the state of Texas and 19 officers from New York State were killed in the line-of-duty. Sixteen officers died in Florida and thirteen each in Georgia and Louisiana. Twelve lost their lives in Pennsylvania while eleven officers in both California and New Jersey made the ultimate sacrifice. Twenty-one federal officers, five territorial officers, three tribal

officers and one military officer also died in the line-of-duty during this calendar year. 13 states did not lose an officer this year.

246 fallen officers were male and 18 were female. The average age of the fallen officers was 47 years, with 17 years of service. On average, each officer left behind two children.

Fatalities by State

Through End of Year

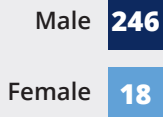


Number of Fatalities: **7+** **4-6** **1-3** **0** ▶ 13 States had zero fatalities

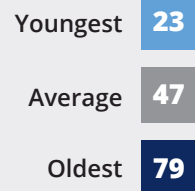
Fatalities by Demographic

Through End of Year

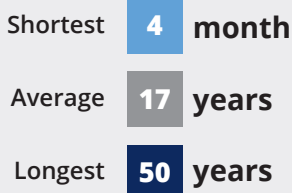
GENDER



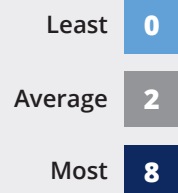
AGE



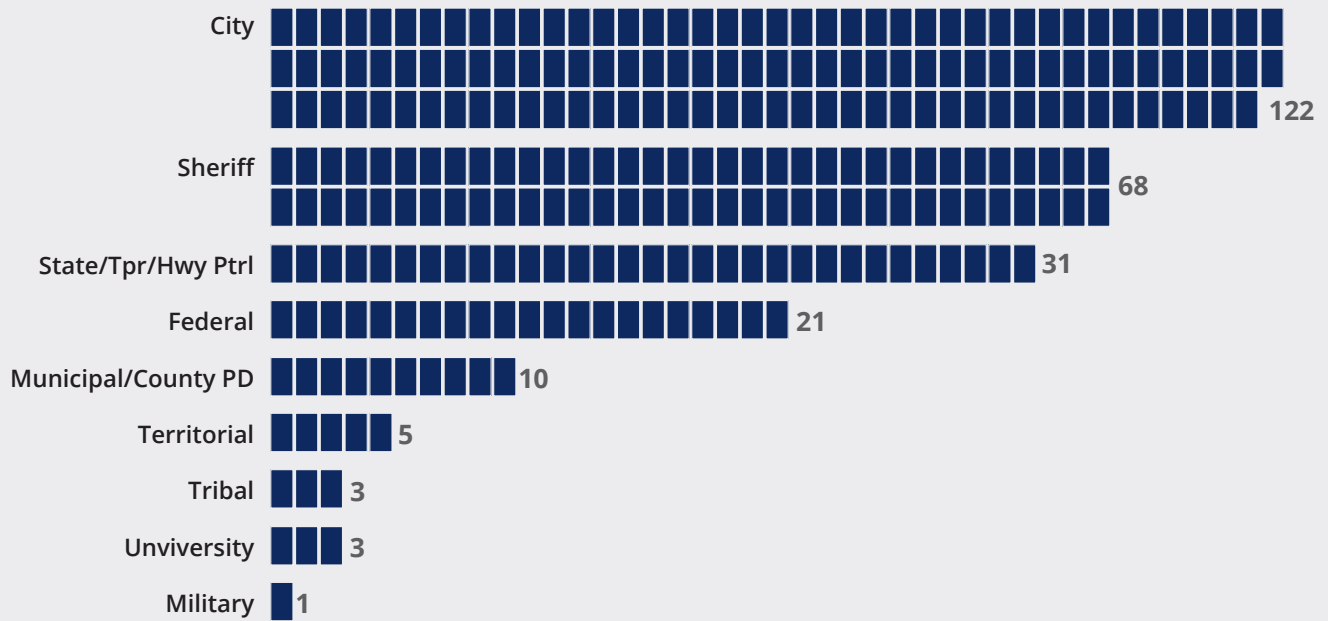
TOUR OF DUTY LENGTH



NUMBER OF CHILDREN



JURISDICTION



Note: End of Year is from January 1 through December 31 of each year.



 **National Law
Enforcement** 
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