

Officers Under Fire: Police Killings on the Rise

Over the past decade, gun violence has skyrocketed in communities across the nation. In 2020 alone, there were a total of 19,384 firearm homicides, a level not seen since the early 1990s¹.

While the upwards trend in gun violence has affected law enforcement officers and civilians alike, the increasing rate at which officers have become the targets of violence is notable.

According to FBI statistics, an average of 48 officers were killed by violent crime annually from 2012 through 2020. In 2021, however, there was a significant increase to 73 officers in such incidents.

The rise in the killing of police officers is a trend that has affected departments, families, and citizens across the country. The murder of Officer Keona Holley of the Baltimore Police Department, who was ambushed and shot while sitting in her patrol car, was one of many acts that marked 2021 as the beginning of an intensifying pattern of violence against police officers².



In 2022, this disturbing trend continues. As of November 1st, 2022, with two months of statistical data remaining to be collected, there were already 54 officers killed in felonious attacks, 12 of these occurring in ambush type attacks³. The Bristol Police Department grieves the loss of 35-year-old Sgt. Dustin Demonte and 34-year-old Officer Alex Hamzy, who were lured to an ambush and shot to death after responding to a fictitious 911 call⁴.

Violence towards police has also recently reached the Newark Police Department, one of our longstanding partner agencies. After responding to a Tuesday, November 1st call made by a citizen believing to have identified a gunman from an October 28th shooting, two officers spotted their suspect. After a brief altercation with police, the suspect opened fire, striking two officers. Through the heroic efforts of good Samaritans and fellow officers alike, the wounded responders were quickly dragged to safety. A full recovery is expected for both, and the shooting suspect was promptly taken into custody⁵.

The Center on Policing remains committed to working with our diverse stakeholders to ensure the safety and security of our communities.

¹ <https://wonder.cdc.gov/controller/datarequest/D76;jsessionid=5E2176B178EB44DFAC165217911D>

² <https://www.cnn.com/2021/12/24/us/baltimore-police-officer-killed/index.html>

³ <https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/pages/le/leoka>

⁴ <https://abcnews.go.com/US/police-officers-killed-injured-overnight-shooting/story?id=91430674>

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<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/crime/newark-s-response-to-cop-shooting-defies-the-national-narrative-mayor/ar-AA13FMT0?rc=1&ocid=winp1taskbar&cvid=87c2398a19ae4c64acaa013eba043728>