



# Law Enforcement Officers Shot in the Line of Duty

2020 Year-End Summary



**COPS**  
Community Oriented Policing Services  
U.S. Department of Justice



**NATIONAL FRATERNAL  
ORDER OF POLICE**

May 2021



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This report is compiled from publicly available information using media monitoring software and general research. It contains data on law enforcement officers shot in the line of duty, both fatally and non-fatally, for the express purpose of better understanding the nature and frequency of incidents that could give rise to the issuance of a Blue Alert. Care should be taken when comparing these results to those of other entities that collect similar data. The opinions contained herein are those of the author(s) or contributor(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice. The COPS Office acknowledges the contributions of the National Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) staff, including National President Patrick Yoes, Executive Director Jim Pasco, Senior Legislative Liaison Tim Richardson and Legislative Liaison Mark McDonald, to this report.

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## NATIONAL BLUE ALERT NETWORK

In 2015, Congress passed the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act, named in honor of two New York City police officers killed in an ambush attack on December 20, 2014. The Act directs the Department of Justice to establish a voluntary nationwide system to promote the use of early warnings of threats against law enforcement officers and to aid in the apprehension of suspects who have killed or seriously injured an officer. In 2016, the COPS Office was given the honor of implementing the Act and established the National Blue Alert Network.

The National Blue Alert Network seeks to encourage, enhance, and integrate Blue Alert plans throughout the United States. Blue Alerts provide for rapid dissemination of information to law enforcement agencies, media, and the public to aid in the apprehension of offenders who have killed, seriously injured, or pose an imminent and credible threat to law enforcement. Blue Alerts can be transmitted via wireless devices and through the Emergency Alert System (EAS) in the same manner as AMBER Alerts.

## TRACKING OFFICER SHOOTINGS

This report was compiled by the **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** in partnership with the **National Fraternal Order of Police** using media monitoring software and general research to analyze publicly available information. It contains data on law enforcement officers shot in the line of duty, both fatally and non-fatally, for the express purpose of better understanding the nature and frequency of incidents that could give rise to the issuance of a Blue Alert.

## 2020 SUMMARY DATA

- **312** law enforcement officers were shot in the line of duty during calendar year 2020 in **246** separate shooting incidents, including **54** incidents where multiple officers were shot.
- **47** law enforcement officers died from their injuries in 2020, and **268** officers survived. Of the 47 officers who died, **three** officers were shot during an incident that took place prior to 2020; however, they succumbed to their gunshot wounds in 2020.<sup>1</sup>
- City or municipal law enforcement officers accounted for over two-thirds (**69 percent**) of all shooting incidents in 2020.
- Disturbance calls (**67**) and traffic stops (**51**) accounted for nearly half (**48 percent**) of all shooting incidents and resulted in **145** officers shot.
- **60** law enforcement officers were shot in **48** separate ambushes and **12** died as a result of being ambushed.
- Another **158** officers were shot in **121** separate incidents where an offender acted without warning in a premeditated and calculated manner, taking an officer by surprise. **33** officers died in these types of situation.
- **20 percent** of officers ambushed died of their injuries, compared to **13 percent** of officers attacked by other means; making ambush-style attacks more lethal for victim officers than any other shooting circumstance.
- At least **51** officers were protected from gunshots that struck a protective ballistic vest.
- Shootings occurred in **43** states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Texas had the highest number of officers shot at **34**, followed by California at **24**.
- The month with the largest number of officers shot was July, with **37** and the day of the week with the largest number was Tuesday, with **53**.

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<sup>1</sup> To avoid skewing data for 2020, the three officers were only included in the data points regarding officers killed. These incidents are marked in the data by an asterisk (\*).

## 2020 - LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SHOT IN THE LINE OF DUTY

### 2020 INCIDENT DATA

There were **246** incidents in 2020 where law enforcement officers were shot in the line of duty, a **9.8 percent** increase over the total number of incidents in 2019. The number of officers shot increased by **14.3 percent** over 2019. The number of officers who died as a result of being shot increased by **6.8 percent** from 2019.

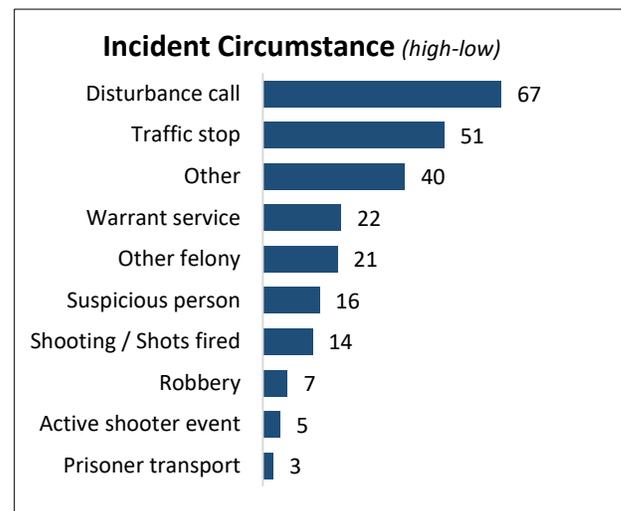
	2020 Totals	2019 Totals	% Change
Total number of shooting incidents	246	224	+ 9.8%
Total number of officers shot	312	273	+ 14.3%
Number of officers shot and survived	268	229	+ 17%
Number of officers shot and killed	47***	44	+ 6.8%

**NOTE:** Each asterisk (\*) represents one officer who was shot prior to 2020 but succumbed to a gunshot wound in 2020.

### INCIDENT DATA BY CIRCUMSTANCE

Disturbance calls and traffic stops together accounted for nearly half (**48 percent**) of all shooting incidents. The third most common circumstance involved the serving of warrants, typically performed by tactical teams.

Circumstance at Time of Incident				
<i>Each asterisk (*) represents one officer who was shot prior to 2020 but succumbed to a gunshot wound in 2020.</i>				
Circumstance	Shooting incidents	Officers shot	Number survived	Number killed
Active shooter	5	8	7	1
Disturbance call	67	89	76	14*
Prisoner transport	3	5	4	1
Robbery	7	8	8	0
Shooting / Shots fired	14	15	14	2*
Other felony	21	27	22	5
Suspicious person	16	22	18	4
Traffic stop	51	56	47	10*
Warrant service	22	28	25	3
Other	40	54	47	7
	<b>246</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>47***</b>



### NATURE OF ATTACKS

Every felonious attack on law enforcement officers, especially by gunfire, is disturbing regardless of the circumstances. Officers are always susceptible to life-threatening attacks and therefore must always be vigilant and maintain the highest level of situational awareness. In most cases, officers are able to quickly assess situations, recognize threats, and take adequate defensive actions. Tragically, not every threat can be seen or mitigated. Perhaps most troubling and worrisome are ambush-style and other calculated attacks on law enforcement.

Premeditated ambush-style attacks are particularly disturbing and pernicious. These types of attacks are carried out with an element of surprise and intended to deprive officers of the ability to defend against the attack. Premeditated attacks contribute to a worrisome desensitization to evil acts that were once largely considered taboo except by the most depraved. In 2020, **49 percent** of shooting incidents involved a discernable element of premeditation, which is a 7 percent (**42 percent**) increase over 2019.

## 2020 - LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SHOT IN THE LINE OF DUTY

### AMBUSH-STYLE ATTACKS

There were **48** ambush-style incidents where officers were shot without any warning or opportunity to defend themselves, including several pre-planned assassinations. In many cases, officers were shot before they could exit their vehicles after an initial traffic stop or upon arrival at the scene of an incident. In all, **60** law enforcement officers were shot in ambush-style attacks, of whom **12** died. Of the total number of officers who were ambushed, **20 percent** died of their injuries, compared to **18 percent** of officers shot under other circumstances, making ambush-style attacks more lethal for victim officers.

Examples of ambush-style attacks include the following:

- A trooper stopped to assist a motorist whose vehicle had become stuck on a swale. While the trooper and the motorist were waiting for a tow truck driver, the man became upset with the cost of having the vehicle towed. The motorist calmly walked back to the trooper's vehicle and, without warning, drew a handgun and fatally shot the trooper in the head.
- Detectives were sitting in a vehicle after conducting an investigation when another vehicle drove up and the suspect fired at the detectives, striking one of them.
- Two deputies were sitting in their patrol vehicle when the suspect approached them from behind, walked along the passenger side of the vehicle and shot the deputies multiple times.

### CALCULATED ATTACKS

In addition to ambush-style attacks, there were **121** incidents where offenders acted in a calculated and premeditated manner to shoot officers in the performance of their duties. These attacks differ only slightly from the more brazen ambush-style attacks in that officers may have had some reason to anticipate a threat. In all, **158** officers were shot in calculated attacks, of whom **33** died.

Examples of calculated attacks include the following:

- When officers attempted to pull over a vehicle with no plates, the vehicle sped off and the officers gave chase. During the pursuit, the suspects inside the vehicle began shooting at the officers. One officer was wounded.
- Officers were investigating a burglar alarm that was triggered and began checking the home for signs of entry. When one of the officers knocked on the door to check on the residents, shots were fired from inside the home and the officer sustained a gunshot wound to his bicep.
- Officers were trying to serve a warrant against a suspect wanted for attempted murder. Upon arrival at the location, the wanted suspect opened fire, striking one of the officers.

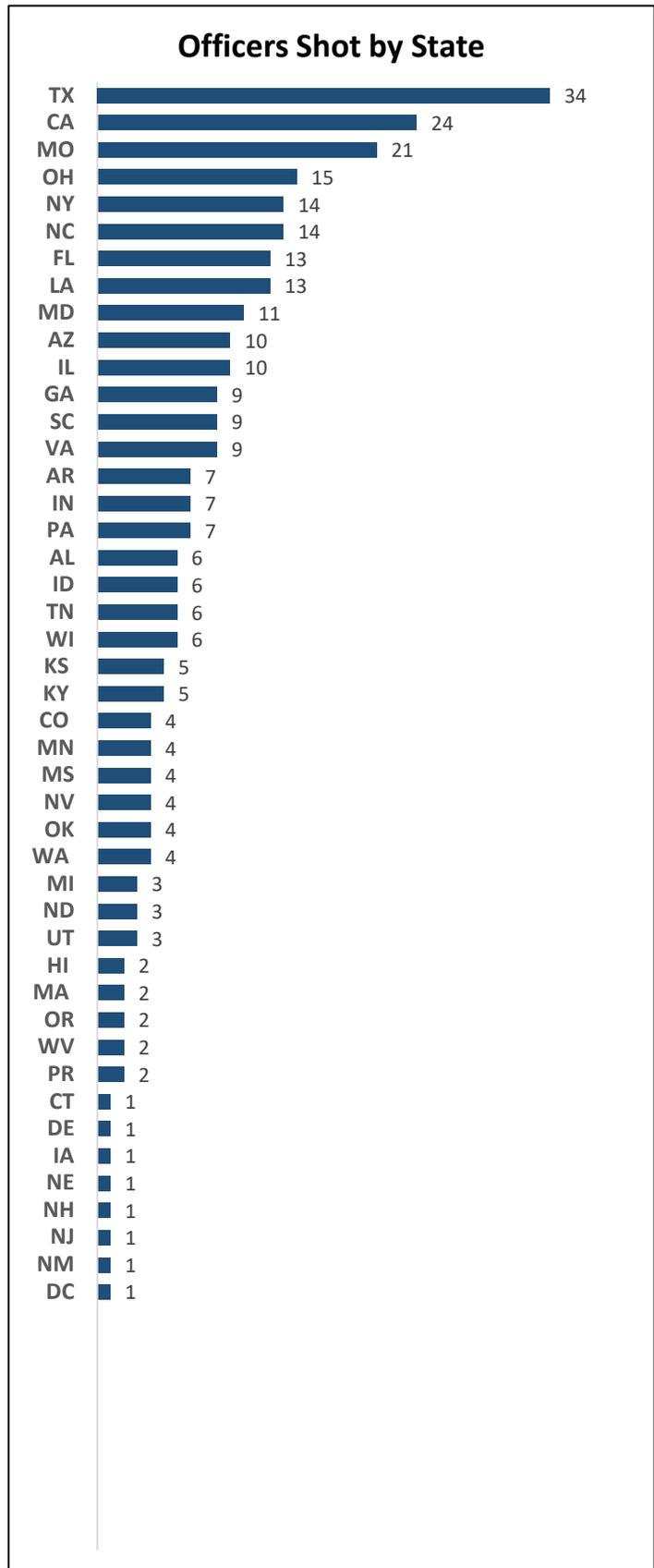
### BULLET-RESISTANT VESTS

At least **51** officers were protected from gunshots that struck a protective ballistic vest. The actual number may be higher, but this element is not consistently apparent from news reporting.

## 2020 - LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SHOT IN THE LINE OF DUTY

### INCIDENT DATA BY STATE

State	Shooting incidents	Officers shot	Number survived	Number killed
<i>Each asterisk (*) represents one officer who was shot prior to 2020 but succumbed to a gunshot wound in 2020.</i>				
AL	6	6	4	2
AZ	6	10	8	2
AR	5	7	4	3
CA	16	24	23	2*
CO	3	4	4	0
CT	1	1	1	0
DE	1	1	1	0
DC	1	1	1	0
FL	13	13	11	2
GA	8	9	9	0
HI	1	2	0	2
ID	5	6	6	0
IL	7	10	10	0
IN	6	7	6	1
IA	1	1	1	0
KS	5	5	4	1
KY	4	5	5	0
LA	10	13	11	2
MD	7	11	11	0
MA	2	2	2	0
MI	3	3	3	1*
MN	4	4	4	0
MS	4	4	3	1
MO	14	21	19	2
NE	1	1	0	1
NV	4	4	3	1
NH	1	1	1	0
NJ	1	1	1	0
NM	1	1	1	0
NY	10	14	14	0
NC	10	14	11	3
ND	2	3	2	1
OH	13	15	13	2
OK	3	4	3	1
OR	2	2	2	0
PA	7	7	6	1
PR	2	2	0	2
SC	9	9	6	3
TN	6	6	6	0
TX	34	34	27	8*
UT	3	3	2	1
VA	9	9	9	0
WA	4	4	3	1
WV	2	2	1	1
WI	6	6	6	0
	<b>263</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>47***</b>



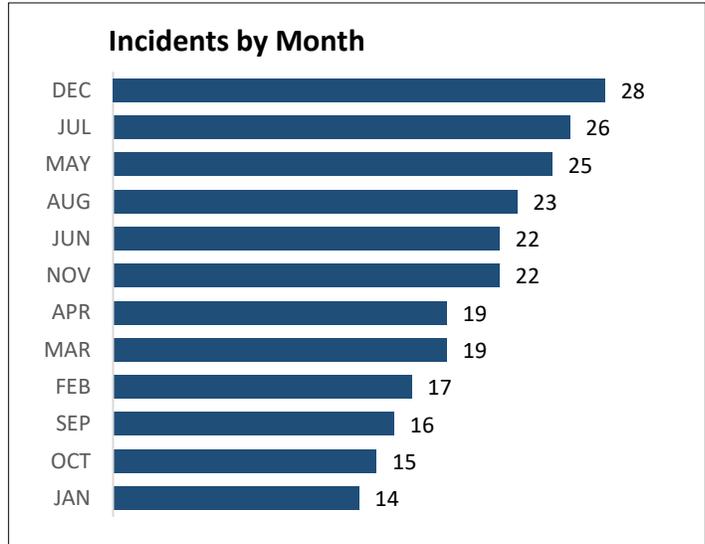


## 2020 - LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SHOT IN THE LINE OF DUTY

### INCIDENT DATA BY MONTH

The month with the highest number of incidents was December (**28**). The month that saw the highest number of officers shot was July (**37**).

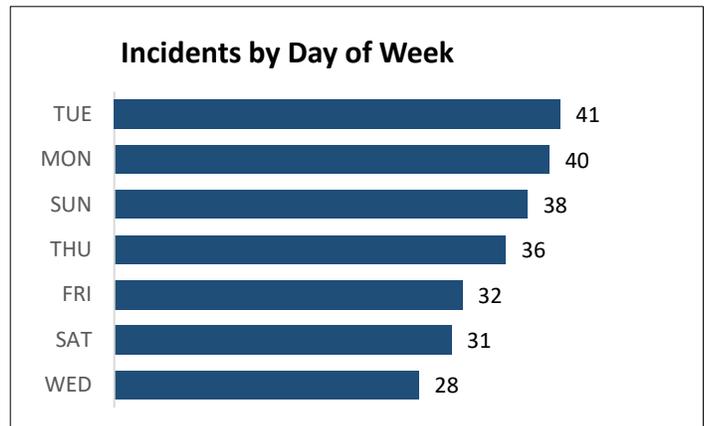
Incident Data by Month				
<i>Each asterisk (*) represents one officer who was shot prior to 2020 but succumbed to a gunshot wound in 2020.</i>				
Month	Shooting incidents	Officers shot	Number survived	Number killed
JAN	14	16	13	3
FEB	17	22	18	5*
MAR	19	24	19	5
APR	19	27	23	5*
MAY	25	29	25	5*
JUN	22	32	27	5
JUL	26	37	33	4
AUG	23	31	29	2
SEP	16	19	16	3
OCT	15	19	14	5
NOV	22	25	23	2
DEC	28	31	28	3
	<b>246</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>47***</b>



### INCIDENT DATA BY DAY OF WEEK

The day of the week with the highest number of officers shot was Tuesday (**53**), followed by Monday (**51**) and Sunday (**50**). **NOTE:** The officers (**3**) who were shot prior to 2020 but succumbed to a gunshot wound in 2020 were not included in the data below.

Incident Data by Day of Week				
Day	Shooting incidents	Officers shot	Number survived	Number killed
SUN	38	50	42	8
MON	40	51	45	6
TUE	41	53	47	6
WED	28	34	29	5
THU	36	45	40	5
FRI	32	37	30	7
SAT	31	42	35	7
	<b>246</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>44</b>





# NATIONAL BLUE ALERT NETWORK

## 2020 LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SHOT IN THE LINE OF DUTY



	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	2020	2019	% Change
<b>Total Number of Shooting Incidents</b>	14	17	19	19	25	22	26	23	16	15	22	28	<b>246</b>	224	<b>+ 9.8%</b>
<b>Total Number of Officers Shot</b>	16	22	24	27	29	32	37	31	19	19	25	31	<b>312</b>	273	<b>+ 14.3%</b>
<i>Number of Officers Survived</i>	13	18	19	23	25	27	33	29	16	14	23	28	<b>268</b>	229	<b>+ 17%</b>
<i>Number of Officers Killed</i>	3	5*	5	5*	5*	5	4	2	3	5	2	3	<b>47***</b>	44	<b>+ 6.8%</b>

*Each asterisk (\*) represents one officer who was shot prior to 2020 but succumbed to a gunshot wound in 2020.*

246 Shooting Incidents / 312 Officers Shot



Officer Shot and Wounded (268)



Officer Shot and Killed (44)



*\* Assaults on law enforcement occurring on-duty during calendar year 2020 with firearms resulting in an officer being wounded or killed. Does not include assaults by means other than firearms due to inconsistent availability of data. Markers represent approximate geographic location.*