



# **GALMUN 2026**

*SAINT JOSEPH SEMINARY AND HIGH SCHOOL  
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## **UNHRC** *RESEARCH REPORT*

Systemic Racism in Law Enforcement: Addressing Police Brutality and  
Institutional Discrimination within Policing Systems.

## Definitions:

**Systemic racism:** is a form of racism that is built into the laws, policies, rules and institutions of a society created by a government or authority, and it occurs when they give an ethnic group in a society certain rights and privileges while denying these same rights to other groups. These unequal systems occur because of long-established cultural prejudices, religious prejudices, fear, myth, and xenophobias held by entitled groups.<sup>1</sup>

**Institutional discrimination:** refers to the unfair and unequal treatment of individuals or groups that comes from policies, practices, and procedures of institutions. This creates a barrier for certain groups often based on people of different races, genders or identities this leads to global social consequences.<sup>2</sup>

**Police brutality:** is unwarranted or excessive, often illegal, force against civilians by police officers that includes physical violence, harassment, intimidation and verbal abuse.<sup>3</sup>

**Racial profiling:** refers to the discriminatory practice by law enforcement officials that uses race, ethnicity, colour, religion or national origins, etc as grounds for suspecting someone of having committed a crime.<sup>4</sup>

**Marginalised groups:** refers to people and groups who are pushed away from opportunity and overall visibility. Leading them to be less important, less powerful, or less worthy in different aspects of life.<sup>5</sup>

**Xenophobia:** an extreme fear, dislike or prejudice against strangers, foreigners or people from different countries<sup>6</sup>. It can be based on a person's race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, or characteristics. It also can be similar to racism since both have roots in discrimination; however, xenophobia refers to people's nationality instead of exclusively to their race or ethnicity.<sup>7</sup>

**Jim Crow rules:** in USA's history, there were laws that enforced racial segregation and discrimination especially in southern states of the U.S. between the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Racism/WGEAPD/Session27/submissions-statements/mdshahid-systemicracism.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://fiveable.me/key-terms/social-psychology/institutional-discrimination>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/police-brutality-in-the-United-States-2064580>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aclu.org/documents/racial-profiling-definition>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cultureally.com/blog/what-does-marginalized-mean-and-why-does-it-matter>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/xenophobia#medicalDictionary>

<sup>7</sup> <https://reportandsupport.ed.ac.uk/pages/what-is-xenophobia>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/event/Jim-Crow-law>

## Background information:

Systemic racism in law enforcement refers to the deeply rooted procedures, practices, beliefs, written or unwritten policies, and organizational culture that consistently lead to unequal, biased, discriminatory and systemically violent outcomes against specific societal groups. As a result, these structures create widespread unfair treatment, where racism can be recognized through biased decision-making, manifesting racial profiling, stop and search practises<sup>9</sup>, over-policing in certain neighbourhoods (especially poor black communities<sup>10</sup>), inappropriate use of force, and the oppression of marginalised communities including immigrants, religious minorities, ethnic minorities, refugees, etc.<sup>11</sup>

This problem did not appear out of thin air; rather, it devolved over many years of historical injustice, social and economic disparities, and shifting policing responsibilities. While the main duties of the police include maintaining order and preventing crimes, their systemic and individual behavior seems to indicate that racism and bigotry against marginalized groups is rampant within the ranks of police personnel.

One of the clearest outcomes of systemic racism is police brutality, which can inflict direct social, emotional, mental and psychological harms or consequences to individuals and communities.<sup>12</sup> One of the most primary paths in which police violence damages health is through direct physical harm or injuries that can contribute to long-term health problems sometimes leading to the risk of premature death.<sup>13</sup> For instance, in 2019 in the US, a young man named Soheil Mojarad was shot 11 rounds after an officer claimed Mojarad had a knife.<sup>14</sup>

However, police violence can also cause harm without immediate physical injury. The mental health outcomes of police brutality contain symptoms of trauma that leads to a range of mental health difficulties such as anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts and post traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), almost every individual who experienced police violence can suffer from long-term psychological effects.

Beyond personal health impacts, police brutality deeply undermines community safety by creating an environment where people feel unsafe and fearful. When police violence is prevalent fear and mistrust grow, discouraging individuals from reporting crimes or collaborating with the law.<sup>15</sup> This will weaken public trust in law enforcement, generating hostility, tension and breakdowns in communities, worsening community relations. Law enforcement must find ways to efficiently assist and protect marginalised groups<sup>16</sup>.

Systemic racism in law enforcement throughout history has occurred in several nations, often rooted in colonial rule, racial hierarchy, and colonial control. In some regions, police forces were created not to protect individuals, but to enforce the power of certain groups or ethics.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-61167875>

<sup>10</sup> <https://nlihc.org/resource/housing-neighborhood-change-overpolicing>

<sup>11</sup> <https://fiveable.me/key-terms/criminology/systemic-racism/> / <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2021.01394>

<sup>12</sup> <https://racismharmhealth.berkeley.edu/policing/police-violence-harms-the-health-of-individuals-and-their-communities/> / <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5388955/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://racismharmhealth.berkeley.edu/policing/police-violence-harms-the-health-of-individuals-and-their-communities/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.edwardskirby.com/news/edwards-kirby-files-lawsuit-against-raleigh-police-officer-involved-in-fatal-shooting-of-soheil-mojarrad/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.galipolaw.com/what-are-the-effects-of-police-brutality-on-society/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.lawyersftp.com/how-does-police-brutality-affect-society/>

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For instance, British colonial policing in the British empire had systemic racism, which impacted its colonies in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Australia, and the Middle East, especially in India, Kenya, Malaya and Cyprus.<sup>17</sup> In these colonies, police forces were mostly used to protect European control instead of communities or public safety. The entire empire was largely based on the use of violence, discrimination, intimidation and racial harassment. Some native people were subjected to these acts of violence and humiliation while advocating for their basic rights.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, other empires also engaged in these practices, such as the French Empire, Dutch Colonial Empire and others.

In Europe, police forces have repeatedly been criticised for racially discriminatory practices, especially with immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities. In France, police authorities were found to have constantly targeted people from migrant and refugee communities, reporting that they face disproportionate stop and search practices, police harassment, and extreme use of force against them.<sup>19</sup> For example, the violence dismantling of immigrant camps at night in 2016.<sup>20</sup> In the UK, persons of BAME (Black, Asian and Middle East) background are nine times more likely to face stop and search operations than persons of British background.<sup>21</sup> In Greece, police forces are violently and illegally detaining groups of refugees and migrants, according to civilian observers “It is clear that multiple arms of the Greek authorities are closely coordinating to brutally apprehend and detain people who are seeking safety in Greece, subjecting many to violence, then transferring them to the banks of the Evros river before summarily returning them to Turkey”.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Brazil is considered having one of the highest police killing rates in the world, revealing racial inequalities within law enforcement.<sup>23</sup>

## CASE STUDY: THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

“Historically, discriminatory situations within law enforcement and modern-day policing were shaped by policing origins in systemic control, because “this system has deep roots in slavery,” such as slave patrols and the enforcement of discriminatory laws like Black Codes and Jim Crow laws.<sup>24</sup>

In the US, early police institutions evolved partly from slave patrols in the 18th and 19th centuries. These patrols were created to establish a system of terror and suppression of slave uprisings, having the authority of tracking down, arresting, and returning fugitive slaves to their masters. Their methods relied on excessive force to control and condition enslaving behaviors.

After the American Civil War (1861-1865) that led to the emancipation of slaves in the United States, slave patrols units continued their operation, functioning as paramilitary groups that were granted the power to control formerly enslaved people and deny their equal rights. These

<sup>17</sup> <https://schoolshistory.org.uk/topics/british-empire/questions-about-the-british-empire/what-countries-were-in-the-british-empire/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.britishempire.me.uk/was-the-british-empire-racist-.html>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/06/france-police-harassing-intimidating-and-even-using-violence-against-people-helping-refugees/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55055914>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/oct/27/black-people-nine-times-more-likely-to-face-stop-and-search-than-white-people>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/06/greece-pushbacks-and-violence-against-refugees-and-migrants-are-de-facto-border-policy/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/police-violence-against-black-people-is-on-the-rise-in-brazil>

<sup>24</sup> <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/origins-modern-day-policing>

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groups relentlessly enforced the Black Codes, which restricted employment, voting rights, and civil liberties for African Americans.

In 1868, Black Codes were effectively repealed, but later replaced by Jim Crow laws in southern states that enforced racial segregation and persisted until the late 1960s. During this period, local police relied on enforcing these laws, leading to excessive brutality against African Americans. The policing crisis reflected broader failures in education, social services, and justice<sup>25</sup>. Even though Jim Crow laws were repealed, issues still persisted. Equal treatment is affected by the policing bias and the systems rely on racial disparities. Nowadays, the black community is still a target of the practices and is treated with brutal violence just because of their skin colour.

One of the most resounding cases which caused shockwaves throughout the world was the case of George Floyd in 2020, a 46 year old black man who died while being apprehended by the Minneapolis Police Department. Four police officers surrounded him while his face was forced down on the ground with three of the officers applying pressure to his neck, torso and legs. Floyd was then heard to have said “I can’t breathe” about 16 times before losing consciousness.<sup>26</sup> After 8 minutes and 46 seconds the police finally lifted his knee off Floyd’s neck, but after a while he was pronounced dead.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/origins-modern-day-policing>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000007159353/george-floyd-arrest-death-video.html?smid=url-share>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html>

## Treaties and organisations:

### **International convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination**

**(ICERD):** on 21 December 1965,, a resolution was adopted to establish the ICERD, this convention essentially commits its nations to take strong and effective action to eliminate racial discrimination each time it appears in any form. It also works on preventing and combating racist doctrines and actions in order to promote achieving racial unity and creating a world where racial segregation, discrimination and hatred no longer exist.<sup>28</sup>

### **Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (UNCAT):**

On 10 December 1984, the UNCAT was adopted. The convention brings nations to unite and prevent torture and ensure that the practices do not become prevalent again. The convention requires to recognize torture as a crime in law enforcement and to take actions to investigate and prosecute complains, train officials, and support victims. The UNCAT created an international body to monitor how states implement and uphold their commitment to the convention.<sup>29</sup>

**International covenant on civil and political rights (ICCPR):** was adopted by the general assembly resolution on 16 December 1966 and enforced in 1976, this convention aims to assure protection of individuals and political right including: freedom from discrimination, torture and slavery, the right to life, equality before law, etc.<sup>30</sup>

**Committee on the elimination of racial discrimination (CERD committee):** is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination by its state parties.<sup>31</sup> It aims to end the injustice of racial discrimination and guarantee an equal treatment for everyone<sup>32</sup>.

**International independent experts mechanism to advance racial justice and equality in law enforcement (EMLER):** is a UN body established by The Human Rights Council in 2021 in order to advance racial justice and equality in law enforcement worldwide which presents a four-point plan to end systemic racism and human rights violation by law enforcement globally.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cerd/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial-discrimination-50-years-fighting-racism>

<sup>29</sup> <https://cti2024.org/un-convention-against-torture/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/ccpr/background-international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights-and-optional-protocols>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cerd/introduction>

<sup>32</sup> <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k11/k119d24vpy>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrc-subsiidiaries/expert-mechanism-racial-justice-law-enforcement>

## Current situation:

Systemic racism in law enforcement continues to be a crucial ongoing issue around the world, for more than 400 years systemic racism including unequal laws, redlining and mass imprisonment has caused generations to be deprived of enjoying their human rights.<sup>34</sup> When it comes to human rights, racial justice goes beyond the mere prevention of acts of discrimination and combating structural operation. It requires moving towards systemic change and finding solutions by targeting the main causes of racial injustice as it is connected to patriarchy, colonialism, prejudice and economic disparities. This work revolves around the people who have experienced racial injustice and their experience of violation caused by systemic racism. Most people who are affected by these practices are black people and particularly marginalised communities including immigrants, religious minorities, ethnic minorities, and refugees. They are being targeted based on racial profiling, unlawful arrests, and excessive use of force and sometimes, as a result of police brutality, it could lead to death. They also face high rates of identity checks, arrests, prosecutions, etc.

One alarming recent development is the 2025 extension of the precedent and powers of United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), allowing forces belonging to this police force to detain and deport illegal migrants in the US. Their actions, since President Trump increased their funding and deployed them in major US cities, have led to many cases of racial profiling, police brutality, family separation and much more. Many civil organisations and politicians have condemned the actions of ICE agents as ones that cause untold damage on local communities and ones that are inspired by inherent racism. However, supporters of the policy insist that it is necessary to curtail the flow of illegal immigration to the country.<sup>35</sup>

This is not limited to the US. In several countries, including Brazil, Tunisia, Qatar and across Europe, migrants and refugees encounter extensive racial discrimination, including violence, exploitation, and denial of protection. This issue is global and not restricted to a particular country. Such systemic patterns continue to obstruct racial justice and that is why fundamental reforms are needed in order to guarantee accountability and equality.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.amnestyusa.org/issues/racial-justice/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/videos/c6299nrj76yo>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/discrimination/racial-justice/>



## Critical events and timeline:

**Slave patrols:** They are organized patrol groups, usually a group of people of the white race. Their job was to make sure that enslaved black people did not escape and catch runaways, prevent them from meeting in groups and enforce the rules of slavery.<sup>37</sup>

**The Black Codes (after slavery ended, around 1865–1866):** They are laws that many southern countries enforced after the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery. The laws were made to restrict the freedom of black people. These laws included: the limitations on where they can work and when they are allowed to leave the workplace, their ability to own property, and testify in court.

These laws were made to restrict and control black people<sup>38</sup>.

**Vagrancy laws:** These laws made it illegal for citizens to be unemployed, homeless, or to prove that they are legally employed. If a citizen is found guilty, they can be imprisoned or forced to work for free<sup>39</sup>.

**Bloody Sunday (1965):** on March 7, 1965 in Selma, Alabama, 600 individuals were violently attacked on the Edmund Pettus bridge by law enforcement and dozens troopers<sup>40</sup>.

**Black Lives Matter (2013):** this movement was established after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the killing of Trayvon Martin<sup>41</sup>. However, this movement is devoted to preventing racism and anti-black violence, particularly in the forms of police brutality. The name “BLACK LIVES MATTER” was created in order to show how much racism, injustice, and brutality the black people were facing from the police<sup>42</sup>.

**The murder of George Floyd (2020):** a 46 year old black man who died in police custody, when four police officers surrounded him while his face was down on the ground with three of the officers applying pressure to his neck, torso and legs. That’s when his voice is heard saying “I CAN’T BREATHE” about 16 times<sup>43</sup> before losing consciousness. After 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the policeman finally lifted his knee off Floyd’s neck, after which he was pronounced dead<sup>44</sup>.

**ICE Raids increase frequency (2025):** Following President Trump’s expansion of ICE powers, allowing their agents to arrest numerous illegal immigrants.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>37</sup> <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/origins-modern-day-policing>  
[https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Ethnic\\_Studies/Introduction\\_to\\_Ethnic\\_Studies\\_%28Fischer\\_et\\_al.%29/10%3A\\_The\\_State\\_of\\_Human\\_Caging-\\_Incarceration\\_Policing\\_and\\_State-Sanctioned\\_Violence/10.04%3A\\_Policing\\_Colonialism\\_and\\_Slavery](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Ethnic_Studies/Introduction_to_Ethnic_Studies_%28Fischer_et_al.%29/10%3A_The_State_of_Human_Caging-_Incarceration_Policing_and_State-Sanctioned_Violence/10.04%3A_Policing_Colonialism_and_Slavery)

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.history.com/articles/black-codes>  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Codes>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Codes>  
<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/history-slave-patrols-black-codes-vagrancy-laws/>  
[https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Ethnic\\_Studies/Introduction\\_to\\_Ethnic\\_Studies\\_%28Fischer\\_et\\_al.%29/10%3A\\_The\\_State\\_of\\_Human\\_Caging-\\_Incarceration\\_Policing\\_and\\_State-Sanctioned\\_Violence/10.04%3A\\_Policing\\_Colonialism\\_and\\_Slavery](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Ethnic_Studies/Introduction_to_Ethnic_Studies_%28Fischer_et_al.%29/10%3A_The_State_of_Human_Caging-_Incarceration_Policing_and_State-Sanctioned_Violence/10.04%3A_Policing_Colonialism_and_Slavery)

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Edmund-Pettus-Bridge>

<sup>41</sup> <https://library.law.howard.edu/civilrightshistory/BLM>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Lives-Matter>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000007159353/george-floyd-arrest-death-video.html?smid=url-share>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.axios.com/2025/12/04/trump-ice-immigration-arrests-deportations>



**Question to consider :**

- What is your country's policy on systemic racism in law enforcement?
- Who are the most affected and exposed communities to police violence, racial profiling, extreme use of force and institutional discrimination in your country?
- What's your country's position on racial profiling and stop and search practices?
- How does the government in your country deal with cases where police brutality or an extreme use of force happen?
- Which international treaties or conventions has your country signed that relate to the issue?
- What solutions can be applied to tackle this issue?
- What steps will your country take to make its people feel safer and protected by law enforcement despite religion, colour, nationality, disabilities, or gender?
- What historical events your country went through in the past that led to discrimination of marginalized groups nowadays?
- How does your country address and deal with the psychological and mental health effects that police violence causes to individuals?
- Does your country have specific laws on how police should use the power they have? Is it implemented to all communities regarding their religion, colour, nationality, disabilities or gender? If they misused it, do they face consequences?

**Relevant media:**

# Is Police Brutality New?

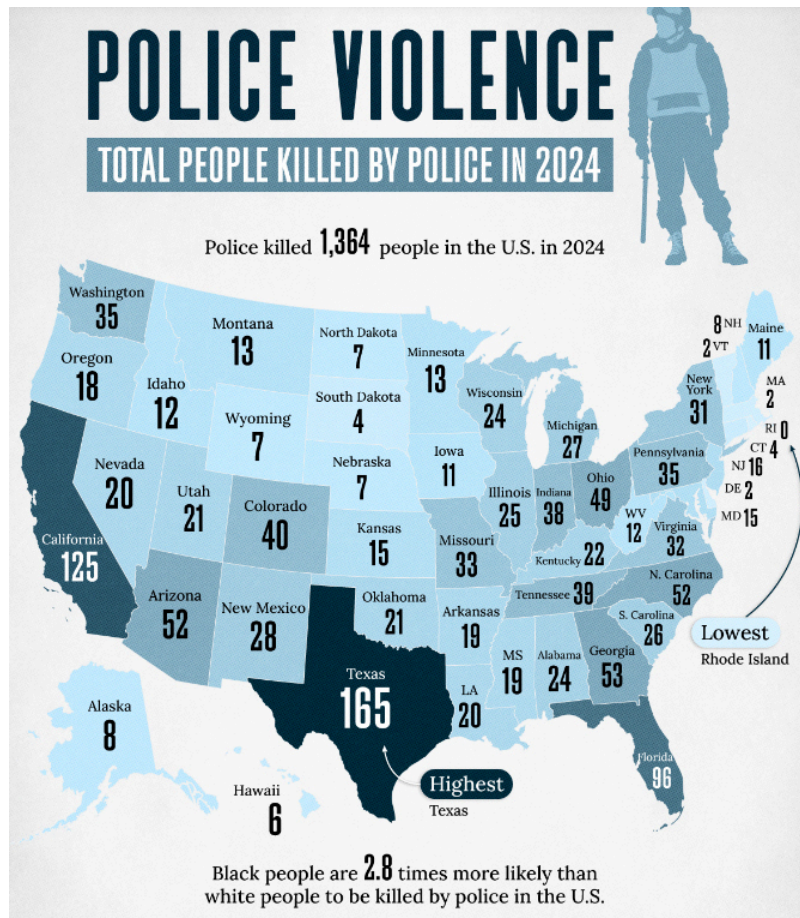
THE HISTORY OF POLICE BRUTALITY REVEALED

- Police forces were formed in the 1830s and 40s in response to the growing population of cities
- Victims of police brutality were often European immigrants, African Americans, and those of low socioeconomic classes
- Historically, there was a lack of consequences for police officers who perpetrated police brutality
- The Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s brought police brutality to light with news stories
- Today, police brutality is taken seriously, and perpetrators can be prosecuted

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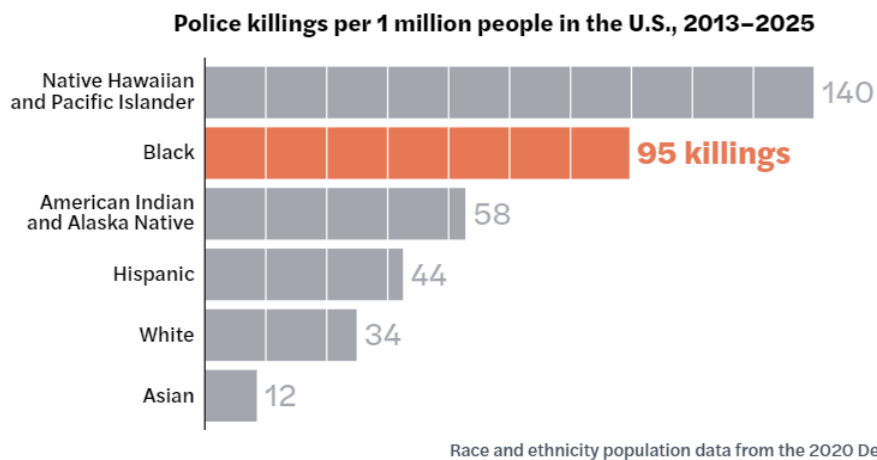
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47

Black people are **2.8x** more likely to be killed by police than white people in the U.S. √.



48

47 <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/mapped-police-violence-by-state-in-2024/>

48 <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>

## Helpful resources:

- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/police-brutality-in-the-United-States-2064580>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/09/systemic-racism-pervades-us-police-and-justice-systems-un-mechanism-racial>
- <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/origins-modern-day-policing>
- <https://vinedixonportfolio.com/app/police-brutality/>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c02znxvzlqdt>
- <https://abramsondenenberg.com/2024/03/what-is-the-main-cause-of-police-brutality/>
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- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/police-brutality-in-the-United-States-2064580>
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- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Edmund-Pettus-Bridge>
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Codes>
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- [https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Ethnic\\_Studies/Introduction\\_to\\_Ethnic\\_Studies\\_%28Fischer\\_et\\_al.%29/10%3A\\_The\\_State\\_of\\_Human\\_Caging-Incarceration\\_Policing\\_and\\_State-Sanctioned\\_Violence](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Ethnic_Studies/Introduction_to_Ethnic_Studies_%28Fischer_et_al.%29/10%3A_The_State_of_Human_Caging-Incarceration_Policing_and_State-Sanctioned_Violence)
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