

Risks to Police from Firearms

Philip F. Lee, PhD¹, 1/10/04, rev. 1/31/10

"The pure and simple truth is rarely pure and never simple." -- Oscar Wilde

No police officer has been shot and killed with any rifle in Maryland during the 30-year period 1980 through 2009. Nationally, the rate of officers killed with firearms is near an 100 year low.

Risks to police officers within the whole US from 1980 through 2009

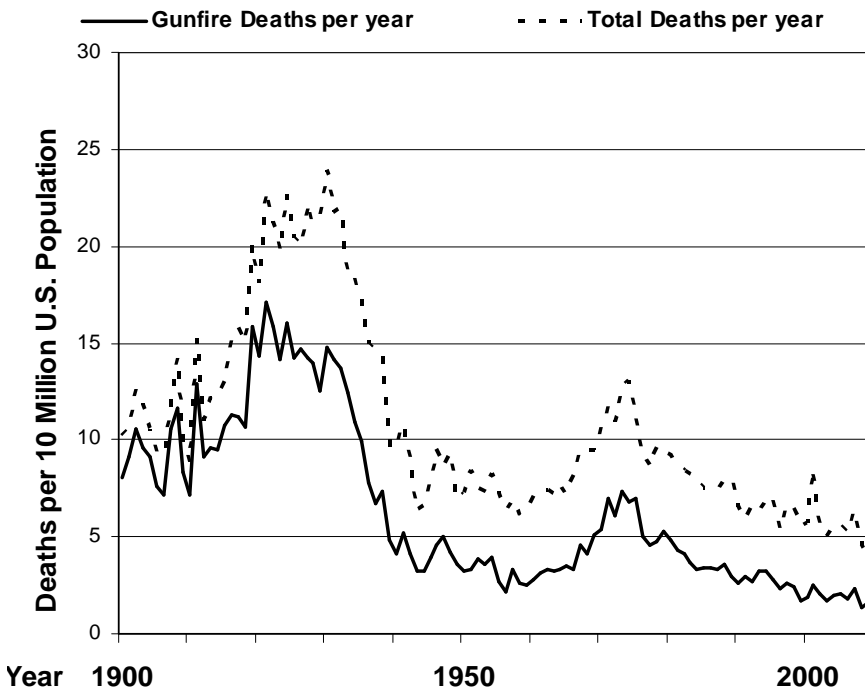
In 2008 forty-one law enforcement officers (LEOs) were killed by criminal and accidental use of firearms – the lowest recorded number since 1959 when the U.S. population was 174.9 million.

(ref. http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m2194/8_69/65241454/p1/article.jhtml & <http://www.odmp.org/>)

We use death rates (here the number of LEO deaths per 10 million people of the US population) to permit comparisons over time of LEO safety despite changing US population. In 2003, the rate of deaths from gunfire was 1.7 officers per 10 million people (49 officers and 290.9 million total US population so $49/29.09 = 1.68$). Figure 1 shows these rates from firearm injury (including accidents) as a solid line and from all line of duty causes using dashes. The data come from census bureau and deaths recorded at:

<http://www.odmp.org/>

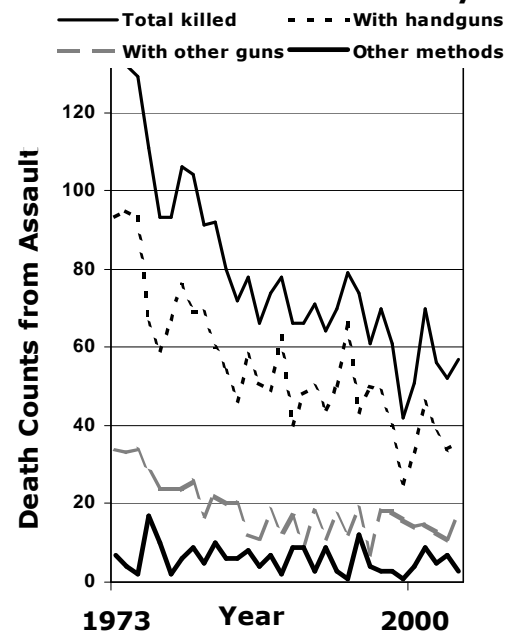
Figure 1. Police Line of Duty Deaths



Police death rates from intentional and accidental firearm injury generally have been decreasing since a peak of 7.3 in 1973 and the 2009 rate of 1.6 is near the all time 2008 low (1.35) for the past 109 years as you can see from Figure 1. Since 1940 more officers typically die in vehicle accidents or assaults than are killed with firearm accidents or assaults.

Figure 2 shows LEOs killed in the line of duty from felonious assaults from 1973 through 2004 reported to the FBI (but

Figure 2. Police Feloniously Killed in the Line of Duty



excludes the 9/11 attack deaths). The officer numbers in Figure 2 are slightly smaller than those for the same years in Figure 1 since Figure 2 does not contain accidents with firearms or a small number of officers who had heart attacks while on duty shown by Figure 1 and since reporting to the FBI is voluntary and isn't 100% from all departments (e.g., their report "Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted, 2000" addresses jurisdictions employing 441,311 officers protecting nearly 200 million out of 280+ million residents of the US). Still, FBI data and the Figure 1 data show that **LEO safety has improved significantly** since 1973. (ref:

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/tables/leokweaptab.htm>).

Averaging over the 32 years of FBI data (Fig. 2) shows assault with handguns produced 69.2% of the felonious assault deaths and other guns 23.3%. The five years 2000 through 2004 show typical small randomly varying deviations from these averages with handguns used to kill 64.7%, 65.7%, 67.9%,

¹Dr. Lee received a PhD in Mathematics from Georgia Institute of Technology in 1970.

65.4%, and 63.2% of officers. In the same five years other guns, including semi-automatic long guns, have been used in 27.5%, 21.4%, 23.2%, 21.2% and 31.6% of the deaths. By comparison, the five years 1973 through 1977 show handguns used for 69.4%, 72.0%, 72.1%, 59.5% and 63.4% and other guns used for 25.4%, 25.0%, 26.4%, 25.2% and 25.8% of LEO deaths from felonious assaults. This comparison between the use of handguns versus other guns shows there is no obvious shift in LEO killings from handguns to long guns between the beginning and end of the period.

From 1976 through 1998, 48% of the murderers of police officers had prior criminal convictions and 21% were on probation or parole. (ref: "Policing and Homicide, 1976-98: Justifiable Homicide by Police, Police Officers Murdered by Felons," Jodi M. Brown, Patrick A. Langan, Ph.D., **BJS**, March 2001, NCJ 180987 see <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/ph98.htm> , page 45). Evidently, a major risk to police officers is an overly liberal parole system and a revolving door justice system with sentences incommensurate with the severity of crimes committed.

Being a police officer is not in the top 10 of risky jobs in the U.S. It is true that police officers' jobs are more dangerous than many – 22.2 officers per 100,000 officers died on the job annually compared with the national average of 4.0 per 100,000 for all occupations in 2002. The following table shows job fatality rates (per 100,000 employed) for selected occupations compared to risks for policemen.

Table 1. Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 2002

Number of deaths per 100,000 employed, Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (ref. <http://money.cnn.com/2003/10/13/pf/dangerousjobs/>)

Timber cutting	117.8	Electrical Power Installers	32.5
Fishermen	71.1	Farmers	28.0
Airplane Pilots & Navigators	69.8	Construction laborers	27.7
Structural Metal Workers	58.2	Truck drivers	25.0
Drivers Sales Workers	37.9	Sworn Police Officers *	22.2
Roofers	37.0	National average:	4.0

* 2002 total deaths (data for Figure 1.) divided by 7.08 (708,000 employed officers in 2000 according to <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/sandlle.htm>)

LEO Deaths and other risks within Maryland from 1980 through 2008

The FBI says an average of 11.4 per 100 LEOs were assaulted nationally in the line of duty in 2007 (ref. <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/killed/2007/officersassaulted.html>) in the part of the US reporting to the FBI (i.e., 232 out of 300 million people). Maryland reported to the FBI 3,821 assaults on 13,987 officers employed for a rate of 27.3 per 100 officers, or 2.4 times the national rate (ref. "Law Enforcement Officers Killed And Assaulted, 2007", FBI Uniform Crime Reports). This high level of violence against police officers is typical of other Maryland violence (Maryland's 2005 robbery and murder rates were about 1.8 times the national rate).

From 1980 through 2009, 78 sworn Maryland police officers died from line-of-duty trauma injuries received in that period (see Table 2 for a listing by name) and one of them, Officer John Stem, died in 2000 from an assault occurring in 1977. **In Maryland, no officer died in the line of duty from assault with a firearm in 2008 or 2009. And none died from any assault in the line of duty in 2009.** Most frequently officer-trauma was vehicle related; 42 cases, with 8 from deliberate assaults with automobiles and the rest accidents. **We repeat that no Maryland officer deaths in 2008 or 2009 were from gunfire.**

Among the 36 non-vehicle homicides, three officers were stabbed to death, one officer, Ira N. Weiner, was stabbed until disabled then shot to death with his own firearm, and one officer was shot accidentally by other officers in a raid. Twenty-five officers were feloniously killed using handguns only, five officers were killed using shotguns, and one death in 2000, Officer Stem's, was from a rifle wound received in 1977. The officers' names and trauma injury sources are listed in Table 2. There were 34 vehicle accidental deaths and one accidental shooting for a total of 35 accidents and 43 intentional assaults.

Twenty-five (58.1%) of the 43 intentional assault deaths in Table 2 involved handguns – four (9.3%) of which used the officer's own handgun, five (11.6%) used shotguns, and one (2.3%) used a rifle. Eight Maryland officers (18.6%) were killed by assaults with cars. Firearms were used in 31 of the 43

intentional killings (72.1%). By comparison, the U.S. from 1991 through 2000 saw 70.2% of officers slain with handguns (in 7.9% of the cases the officer's own handgun was used), 17.7 percent by rifles, and 5.4 percent by shotguns. The U.S. and Maryland figures are very similar for officers killed with handguns and with the officer's own handgun. **Rifles are used far less often in Maryland than nationally.**

Table 2. Maryland Officers Line-of-Duty Assault Trauma Deaths 1980-2009

Officer's Name	Year of Death	Vehicle	Handgun	Shotgun	Rifle	Other	Remark
None	2009						No line of duty assault deaths
Courtney G. Brooks	2008	X					Vehicular assault
Sergeant Richard Findley	2008	X					Vehicular assault
Troy Lamont Chesley Sr.	2007		X				
Luke T. Hoffman	2007	X					
Scott Wheeler	2007	X					
Christopher Nicholson	2007			X			
Jeffery Alan Wroten	2006		X				Shot with own gun
Anthony A. Byrd	2006	X					
David McGuinn	2006					X	Stabbed in prison
Robert T. Krauss	2006	X					Vehicular assault
Steve Gaughan	2005		X				
Anthony Jones	2004	X					Vehicular assault
Brian D. Winder	2004		X				
Duke G. Aaron III	2004	X					Vehicular assault
Anthony M. Walker	2003	X					
Joseph A. Mattingly	2003	X					
Thomas G. Newman	2002		X				
James V. Arnaud	2002		X				
Elizabeth L. Magruder	2002		X				
Crystal D. Sheffield	2002	X					
Kristin M. Pataki	2002	X					
Mark F. Parry	2002	X					Vehicular assault
Michael J. Cowdery	2001		X				
Michael S. Nickerson	2001			X			
Jason C. Schwenz	2001			X			
Kilonzio M. Masembwa	2000	X					
Edward M. Toatley	2000		X				
John W. Stem*	2000				X		Shot in 1977
Kevin J. McCarthy	2000	X					
John D. Platt	2000	X					
Brian K. Heller	2000	X					
Kevon M. Gavin	2000	X					Vehicular assault
Jamie A. Roussey	2000	X					
Bruce A. Prothero	2000		X				
Barry W. Wood	1998	X					
Harold J. Carey	1998	X					
Raymond G. Armstead, Jr.	1998	X					
Owen E. Sweeney, Jr	1997			X			
Timothy C. Minor	1996	X					
Joseph T. Lanzi, Sr	1995	X					
Edward A. Plank, Jr	1995		X				
John J. Novabilski	1995		X				
John L. Bagileo	1994	X					
James E. Walch	1994	X					
Herman A. Jones, Sr	1993		X				
Mark M. Filer	1993	X					

* Officer Stem's shooting is described at <http://www.mcrkba.org/OfficerStem.html>

Table 2. (continued)

Officer's Name	Year of Death	Vehicle	Handgun	Shotgun	Rifle	Other	Remark
Roger P. Fleming	1992	X					
Mark P. Groner	1992	X					
Ira N. Weiner	1992		X			X	Stabbed & shot w own gun
Ryan C. Johnson	1992		X				
Thomas Crouch	1991	X					
Theodore D. Wolf	1990		X				
Harry L. Kinikin, Jr	1990					X	Stabbed
William J. Martin**	1989		X				
Mark K. Murphy	1988		X			X	Accident shot by other officers
Eric D. Monk	1988	X					
Larry Eugene Small	1987	X					
John Edward Sawa	1987	X					
Gregory A. May	1986	X					
Carey S. Poetzman	1986	X					
Richard T. Miller	1986	X					Veicular assault
Robert Alexander	1986	X					
Robert Franklin Pyles Sr.	1986		X				
Robert W. Zimmerman	1986	X					
Richard J. Lear	1985	X					
Vincent J. Adolfo	1985		X				
Marcellus Ward**	1984		X				
Herman Lester Toulson Jr.	1984					X	Stabbed with shank (knife)
Robert John King	1984	X					
Richard J. Beavers**	1983		X				
Samuel L. Snyder	1983		X				
Carlton X. Fletcher	1983			X			
Allan D. Johnson	1982	X					
Raymond Hubbard**	1982		X				
Gary L. Wade	1982	X					
Ronald L. Tracey	1981		X				Shot with own gun
Philip Carl Metz**	1981		X				
Antonio Martinez Kelsey	1980		X				Shot with own gun

** **Verified handgun from FBI supplemental homicide reports**

Officer Stem died from complications 23 years after being shot with an M-1 carbine (ref. "*Officer Critical After Shootout*," **Baltimore Evening Sun**, July 7, 1977, pages C1 and C3). The M-1 carbine rifle model used in his wounding does not appear in federal, Maryland or the stringent California lists of defined "assault weapons" (ref:

http://web.archive.org/web/20031218091652/http://www.atf.gov/pub/fire-explo_pub/complete.htm,

http://www.mdsp.org/downloads/assault_weapons.pdf,

<http://caag.state.ca.us/firearms/forms/pdf/awguide.pdf>).

Despite Maryland ranking high in violence throughout the 30-year period covered here, **not a single police officer has been shot and killed here with an "assault rifle" during the 30-year period 1980 through 2009.** In fact, not a single rifle of any kind has been used in Maryland to kill a police officer during this period and **in 2008 and 2009 no officer died from gun fire of any kind.** Criminals rarely use rifles in Maryland and other states. Since rifles make up about one-third of all firearms in US civilian hands, they are underrepresented in violent crimes and underrepresented in crimes against police officers.

Comment: Numbers of officers killed in the line of duty since 1900 come from the records kept by the **Officer Down Memorial Page** (<http://www.odmp.org/>) inasmuch there has been no official central record kept by a government source. That source identifies officers killed by name and cause of death

throughout the modern period of interest to gun prohibitionists. The numbers provided by that site are continually being revised as new deaths are discovered. The most significant change in Figure 1 from our prior reports is that being a police officer was far more dangerous in the early 1900's and being a police officer today is relatively much safer than we previously knew. The graphs in Figure 1 use the numbers obtained on January 27, 2010. These numbers are recorded in our Excel spreadsheet <http://www.mcrkba.org/LEOsKIAthru2009.xls> .