

A report from the Center on Extremism

FEB
2021

Murder and Extremism

in the United States in 2020



ADL®

CENTER ON
EXTREMISM

Our Mission:

**To stop the defamation of the Jewish people
and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.**

ABOUT THE CENTER ON EXTREMISM

The ADL Center on Extremism (COE) is one of the world's foremost authorities on extremism, terrorism, antisemitism and all forms of hate. For decades, COE's staff of seasoned investigators, analysts and researchers have tracked extremist activity and hate in the U.S. and abroad — online and on the ground. The staff, which represent a combined total of substantially more than 100 years of experience in this arena, routinely assist law enforcement with extremist-related investigations, provide tech companies with critical data and expertise and respond to wide-ranging media requests.

As ADL's research and investigative arm, COE is a clearinghouse of real-time information about extremism and hate of all types. COE staff regularly serve as expert witnesses, provide congressional testimony and speak to national and international conference audiences about the threats posed by extremism and antisemitism. You can find the full complement of COE's research and publications at [ADL.org](https://www.adl.org).

ADL is a leading anti-hate organization that was founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of antisemitism and bigotry. Today, ADL is still the first call when acts of antisemitism occur and continues to fight all forms of hate. A global leader in exposing extremism, delivering anti-bias education and fighting hate online, ADL's ultimate goal is a world in which no group or individual suffers from bias, discrimination or hate.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2020

KEY FINDINGS:

- Every year people with ties to a variety of extremist movements and causes kill people in the United States; ADL's Center on Extremism tracks these murders. Extremists regularly commit murders in the service of their ideology, in the service of a group or gang they may belong to, or while engaging in traditional, non-ideological criminal activities.
- In 2020, domestic extremists killed at least 17 people in the United States, in 15 separate incidents. This represents a significant decrease from the 45 extremist-related murders documented in 2019 and the 54 murders of 2018; in fact, it is the lowest yearly total in ADL statistics since 2004, which saw only 14 extremist-related murders.
- The main reason the number of extremist-related murders in 2020 is so low compared to most recent years is because of an absence of mass shooting sprees or other mass casualty attacks like the 2019 El Paso Walmart shooting or the 2018 synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh.
- The low number of killings does not mean that extremists were less active overall in 2020. For example, ADL statistics record 16 right-wing extremist-related terrorist plots/attacks in 2020 (through November), an increase from the 13 documented in 2019. Similarly, ADL has documented more than 4,500 incidents of white supremacist propaganda distribution in the U.S. in 2020, compared to only 2,724 in 2019.
- As has been the case for most of the past 30 years, the extremist-related murders of 2020 were overwhelmingly associated with right-wing extremists. All but one of the incidents documented (including 16 of the 17 murders) were tied to right-wing extremism; over half were linked to white supremacists. The remaining death was at the hands of a left-wing extremist. This past year was the second year in a row that no killings linked to domestic Islamist extremism occurred.
- Five of the deaths of 2020 were at the hands of anti-government extremists, including two people killed by adherents of the new boogaloo movement.
- At least four of the killings in 2020 were committed by members or associates of white supremacist prison gangs. COE has documented at least 79 murders connected to white supremacist prison gangs over the past 10 years, while the true number is probably even higher.
- All but two of the victims in these killings were killed with firearms. Guns have been the murder weapon for the majority of extremist-related killings in every year since 2014.

Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2020

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In a Year of Crisis, Fewer Extremist Murders

Every year, people with ties to extreme movements and causes kill people in the United States. Some are high profile murders, shocking a nation; others go largely unnoticed except by the family and friends of victims. ADL's Center on Extremism identifies and tracks these extremist-related murders.

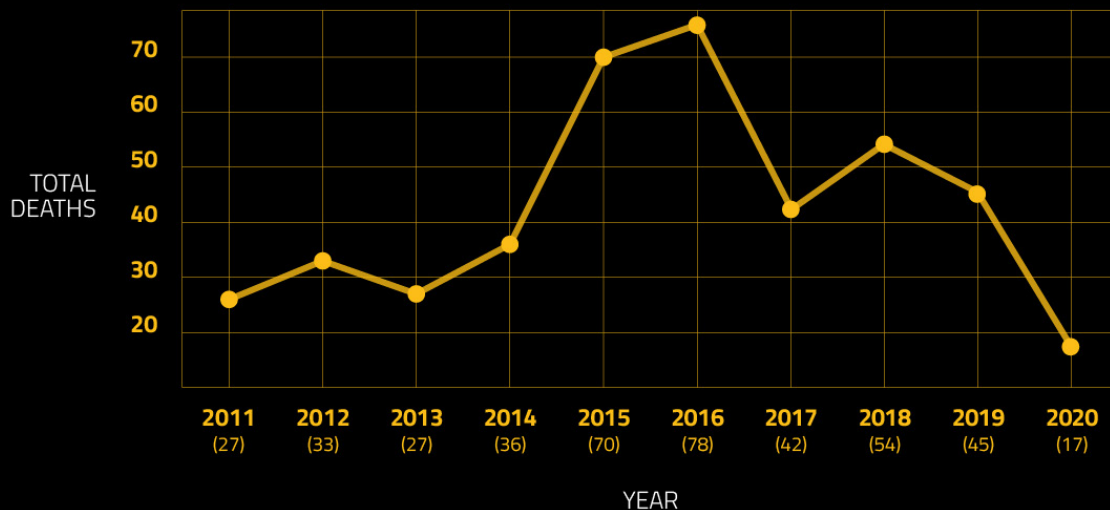
Extremists regularly commit murders in the service of their ideology, in the service of a group or gang they may belong to, or while engaging in traditional, non-ideological criminal activities. We include both ideological and non-ideological murders in this report. Murders can be committed by right-wing extremists such as white supremacists, by left-wing extremists, by domestic Islamist extremists, or by people associated with other, more obscure causes.

The year 2020 was a tumultuous year for the United States, which experienced the ravages of a global pandemic, saw coast-to-coast mass racial justice protests against police brutality, and held a controversial and hotly contested presidential election. Accompanying these developments, violence, especially street-level violence, erupted in many different places during the course of the past year—and extremists on both the left and the right played roles in such violence.

Extremist-related murders were down significantly in 2020 from previous years. The preliminary tally of the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism (COE) reveals that domestic extremists—American citizens or long-term residents with connections to some sort of extreme movement or cause—killed at least 17 people in the United States in 2020. This represents a significant decrease from the 45 extremist-related murders the COE has documented for 2019 and the 54 killings identified for 2018.¹

In fact, 2020 produced fewer extremist-related murders than any year dating back to 2004, which saw only 14 such deaths—a welcome respite after five years with at least 40 extremist-related killings each.

Domestic Extremist-Related Killings in the U.S. by Year (2011-2020)



A number of deaths occurred during or near protests in 2020. It's not possible to arrive at a universally agreed-upon total for those fatalities, because there is no set criteria for inclusion. A couple of these deaths were identifiably extremist-related and are included in this report. Most, however, are not (although some are still under investigation by law enforcement). In some cases, killings were committed by people who were involved in protests, or in countering or responding to them, but who had no known ties to any extremist movements. In other cases, murders occurred that were committed during protests by people merely using the protests as an opportunity for crime, such as robbery. For some killings, there is no clear motive, and for others there is no known perpetrator (some people appear to have died from stray gunfire). In a few cases, law enforcement officers shot protesters or bystanders who brandished or appeared to have weapons.²

It is important to note that while extremist-related killings dropped substantially in 2020, right-wing extremist activity in general did not. For example, ADL's Hate, Extremism, Antisemitism and Terrorism (HEAT) tracking map records 16 right-wing extremist-related terrorist attacks or plots in 2020 (through November), an increase from the 13 recorded through all of 2019. Similarly, the HEAT map documents more than 4,500 incidents of white supremacist propaganda distribution in the U.S. in 2020, compared to only 2,724 in 2019.³

There is one main reason for lower death totals in 2020: the absence of high casualty shooting sprees or other mass killings. Most extremist-related killing incidents have just one victim; occasionally two or three are killed in a single event. This past year, for example, 17 people were killed by extremists in 15 incidents. However, a single mass-killing event can bump up a year's total from four to 40 (or more) deaths—and recent years have seen all too many extremist-related mass killings, including the 23 people killed in El Paso in 2019, the 11 killed in Pittsburgh in 2018, the eight in New York City in 2017, or the 28 people killed in 2015 in Charleston, Chattanooga, and San Bernardino.⁴

Six Most Deadly Years for Domestic Extremist Killings (1971-2020)

Year	Number of Deaths	Significant Incidents (5+ Deaths)
1995	184	Oklahoma City bombing (168 deaths)
2016	78	Orlando nightclub shooting (49 deaths)
2015	70	San Bernardino, Chattanooga, Charleston shootings (28 deaths total)
2018	54	Pittsburgh synagogue, Parkland High School shootings (28 deaths total)
2009	46	Ft. Hood shooting (13 deaths)
2019	45	El Paso Walmart shooting (23 deaths)

Note: Data for years before 2001 is more likely to be incomplete and may undercount extremist-related killings in those years.

Source: [ADL](#)

Firearms Use in Domestic Extremist-Related Killings in the U.S., 2011-2020

Years	Total Killed	Killed by Firearms (%)
2011	27	18 (67%)
2012	33	25 (76%)
2013	27	14 (52%)
2014	36	17 (47%)
2015	70	55 (79%)
2016	78	67 (86%)
2017	42	25 (60%)
2018	54	44 (81%)
2019	45	37 (82%)
2020	17	15 (88%)
TOTAL	429	317 (74%)

Source: ADL

Americans were spared from extremist-related mass killings in 2020—and this made all the difference in the extremist murder numbers. Another attack like the 2019 white supremacist shooting spree in El Paso would by itself have more than doubled the 2020 totals. While law enforcement stopped a number of terrorist plots in 2020, luck also played a role.

Adding to that danger is the continuing reliance of extremists on firearms as a weapon of choice. Though no extremist-related mass shooting occurred in 2020, firearms were still the weapon of choice for 88% of the extremist murders that occurred in 2020. Guns have been the murder weapon for the majority of extremist-related killings in every year since 2014.

Firearms are easy to use and are readily available and lawfully accessible to most extremists. In the absence of meaningful gun control measures, extremist gun violence will continue to take a toll each year.

Extremist-related killings are rare compared to the total homicides in the U.S. each year. However, extremist killings can have a disproportionate effect on communities, especially when they take the form of a hate crime or a terrorist attack. Such attacks are often intended to strike fear more widely throughout vulnerable communities and, indeed, have that effect.⁵

It is important, too, to remember that extremist murders represent merely the tip of a pyramid of extremist violence in the United States. For every person killed by an extremist, many more are wounded or injured in attempted murders and assaults. Extremists engage in a wide variety of violent and criminal acts related to their causes, including terrorist plots and conspiracies, hate crime assaults, terroristic threats, campaigns of intimidation and harassment and other offenses.

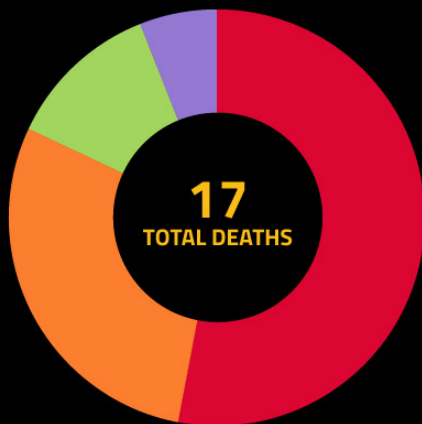
Exploring the Numbers

The COE tracks domestic extremist-related murders connected to all types of extremism, including right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism and domestic Islamist extremism, as well as less common forms.

When, as sometimes happens, extremists adhere to or are influenced by more than one extremist movement, they are categorized here by their apparent “primary” ideology, i.e., the ideology that seems to be most important to them, is the most recently followed or, if applicable, that seems most directly related to the murders they committed.

As in most years, lethal extremist violence in 2020 was dominated by right-wing extremism. All but one of the 17 murders (94%) documented in this report had ties to forms of right-wing extremism, including white supremacy, anti-government extremism of several types, and extreme misogynists.

Domestic Extremist-Related Killings in the U.S. by Perpetrator Affiliation, 2020



Almost all the 2020 extremist-related murders were committed by right-wing extremists.

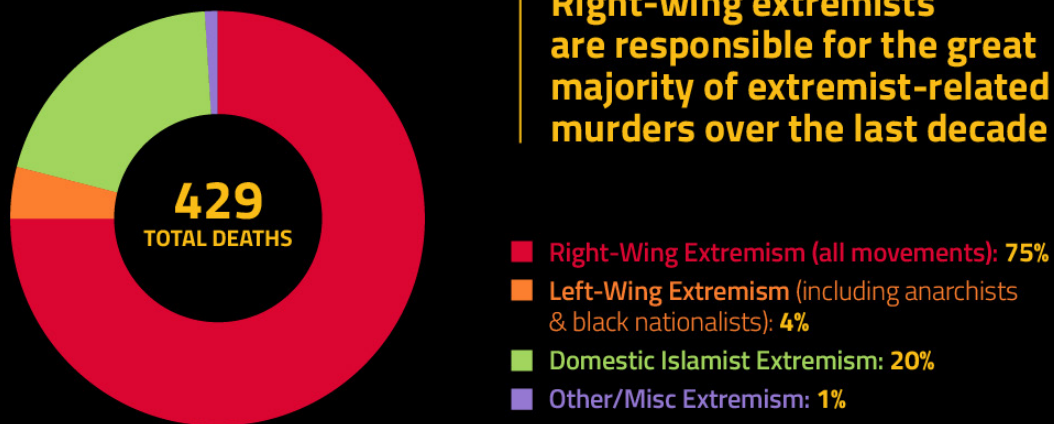
- White Supremacy: 53%
- Anti-Government Extremism: 29%
- Other Right-Wing Extremism: 12%
- Left-Wing Extremism: 6%

Note: Total deaths include both ideologically and non-ideologically motivated killings.

Source: [ADL](#)

Over the past 10 years, right-wing extremists have perpetrated the majority of extremist-related killings in all years but one—2016, the year of the shooting spree at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, by a person motivated by Islamist extremism. Of the 429 people killed at the hands of extremists over that 10-year period, 323 (or 75%) were killed by right-wing extremists.⁶

Domestic Extremist-Related Killings in the U.S. by Perpetrator Affiliation, 2011-2020



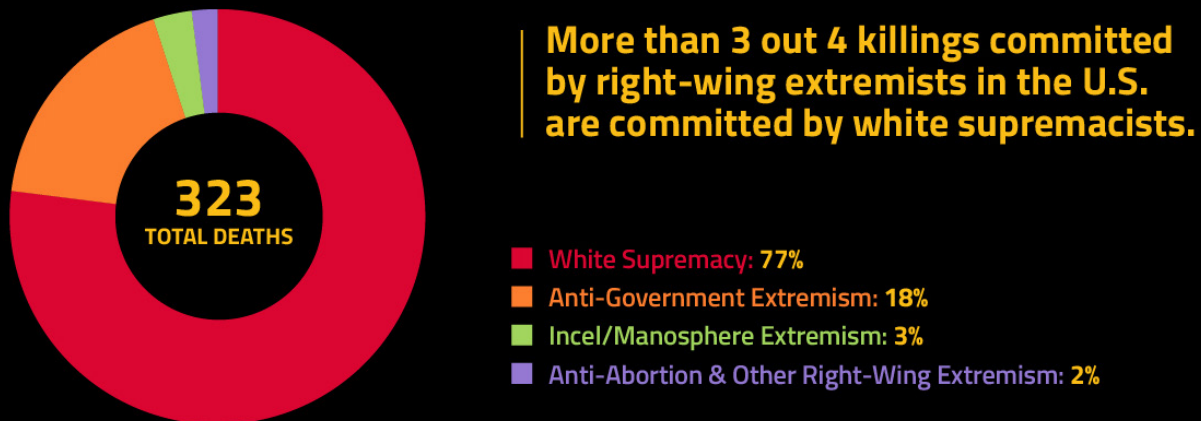
Note: Total deaths include both ideologically and non-ideologically motivated killings.

Source: ADL

White supremacists are typically responsible for the majority of right-wing extremist killings each year and in many years actually commit the majority of all extremist-related murders. In 2020, white supremacists committed nine of the 17 documented killings (53%). Over the past 10 years, white supremacists have been responsible for 248 of the 429 extremist-related murders (58%).

Right-wing extremists in the U.S. commit such a large proportion of murders for a range of reasons. The far right in this country is large, comprising many movements, including multiple white supremacist and anti-government extremist movements, as well as a variety of single-issue extremist movements. Most of these movements have some degree of association with violence, with many even engaging in terrorist plots and attacks. Even the newest right-wing movements to emerge in recent years—movements that include incel/manosphere extremists, alt right white supremacists, and anti-government boogaloos—have all quickly developed violent track records.⁷

Right-Wing Extremist-Related Killings in the U.S. by Perpetrator Affiliation, 2011-2020



Notes: 1. Anti-government extremism includes militia, sovereign citizens, tax protesters, "Patriot" movement adherents, boogalooers, and other right-wing anti-government extremists.
2. Total deaths include both ideologically and non-ideologically motivated killings.

Source: [ADL](#)

Moreover, adherents of some far-right extremist movements engage in considerable non-ideological violence as well as ideological violence. Over the past 10 years, the number of ideological-related killings and non-ideological (and unknown motive) killings by extremists has been virtually equal (218 versus 211), with the majority of non-ideological killings coming from right-wing extremists, especially white supremacists. These killings include murders of informants, murders during factional disputes, domestic violence murders, drug- and gang-related murders, and other murders connected to traditional crime.

White supremacist gang members, for example, have committed hate crime murders, but have killed even more people as part of organized crime activities. They also not infrequently target their own members and associates for death, most commonly as suspected informants or for breaking gang rules. Moreover, some people with violent dispositions appear to be attracted to extremist causes, perhaps because it gives them a way to act on violent impulses.

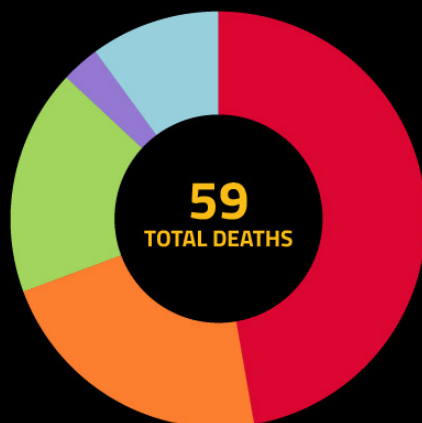
In 2020, seven of the extremist murders appear to have been committed in whole or in part for ideological reasons, while 10 were committed for non-ideological reasons (or for which a motive is not clear). At least four of the non-ideological killings in 2020 were committed by members or associates of white supremacist prison gangs. Despite efforts by state and federal corrections officials, law enforcement officers and prosecutors to combat them, violent prison gangs of all types remain a serious problem, both behind bars and on the streets. The COE has documented at least 79 murders (ideological and non-ideological, in or out of corrections facilities) connected to white supremacist prison gangs over the past 10 years, while the true number is probably substantially higher.

Of the 17 extremist-related killings in 2020, slightly over half (nine) were committed by white supremacists. Four of these murders were committed by people tied to white supremacist prison gangs, while the others appear to have been carried out by non-affiliated white supremacists rather than members of specific groups. White supremacists were also responsible for the only extremist-related single-incident multiple murder in 2020, in September, when Thomas Curry, a white supremacist and outlaw biker, shot three members of a biker gang in Detroit for unknown reasons (Curry committed suicide during a subsequent standoff, so his motive will probably never be known). Curry used the online alias of “Michael Heiliger,” which was a fake name originally created by the Nazis during World War II for bank accounts used to hold money and valuables seized from persecuted Jews.⁸

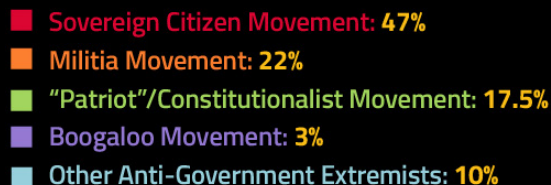
Five of the 17 extremist-related killings of 2020 (29%) were committed by anti-government extremists. Right-wing anti-government extremists make up a number of different movements linked by ideology, history, conspiracy theories, and shared animus towards the government, especially the federal government. Most belong to a loose array of movements collectively known as the “Patriot” movement; the largest sub-movements within the “Patriot” movement are the militia and sovereign citizen movements.⁹

Two of the 2020 killings by anti-government extremists were committed by sovereign citizens, who have been responsible for nearly half of the 59 anti-government extremist-related killings over the past 10 years. In part, this is because the sovereign citizen movement appears to be larger than any of the other anti-government extremist movements, but it is also because sovereign citizens engage in non-ideological killings as well as ideological killings. When sovereigns do engage in ideological killings, their targets are often police officers or government officials. One of the 2020 sovereign-related murders involved a woman who actually shot the leader of her own group, allegedly because she had become convinced he was colluding with the government and law enforcement.¹⁰

Anti-Government Extremist-Related Killings in the U.S. by Perpetrator Affiliation, 2011-2020



Sovereign citizens kill more people than other right-wing anti-government extremists

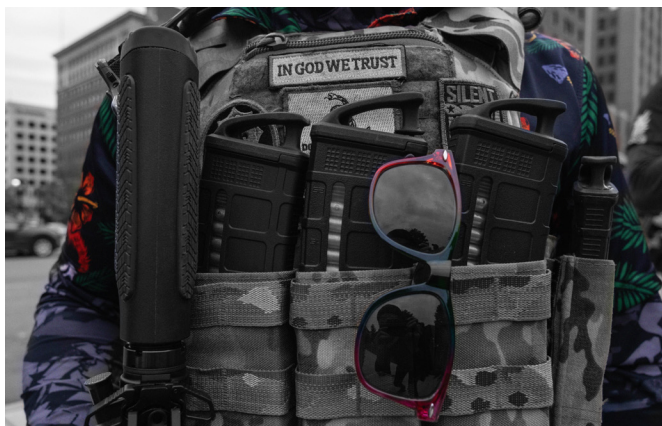


Notes: 1. Sovereign citizen includes both traditional and “Moorish” sovereign citizens. 2. Militia includes Three Percenters and Oath Keepers. 3. “Other” anti-government extremists include right-wing tax protesters, anti-government conspiracy theorists, and anti-government survivalists. 3. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Source: [ADL](#)

The sovereign citizen movement is a half-century old, but two anti-government extremist-related killings in 2020 came from a movement that originated only in 2019: the boogaloo movement (sometimes referred to as “boogaloo bois”). This movement fuses a fascination with guns and tactical gear with anti-government notions borrowed from a myriad of sources, including the militia movement, libertarianism, and anarcho-capitalism, among others. It is hostile to law enforcement and to what it perceives as a tyrannical government, which it sees as the primary enforcer of tyranny. The nascent movement is loose and unstructured enough to include some adherents who are also white supremacists, as well as others who consider themselves left-libertarians or left-anarchists. However, primarily it is a right-wing anti-government extremist movement that in its year and a half of existence has already produced a troubling number of criminal incidents, including terrorist plots and attacks.¹¹

One such terrorist incident also produced the two boogaloo-related murders of 2020. On the evening of May 29, 2020, Robert Justus allegedly drove a van past a federal building in Oakland, California, while a passenger, Air Force Sergeant Steven Carrillo, reportedly opened fire with a homemade machine gun at federal security guards standing guard outside the building (because of nearby protests), injuring one and killing the other, David Patrick Underwood. Investigators uncovered the identity of the shooters and on June 6, 2020, deputies with the Santa Cruz County Sheriff’s Department came to Carrillo’s residence to arrest him. However, Carrillo allegedly ambushed the officers, injuring several of them in a shootout and killing Sergeant Damon Gutzwiler. Carrillo also allegedly used improvised explosive devices during the confrontation. Carrillo fled the scene but was eventually captured. Justus turned himself several days after Carrillo’s arrest. Considerable evidence—including messages Carrillo allegedly made on a car with his own blood—linked the killings to the boogaloo movement. According to law enforcement, Carrillo had intended to kill police and hoped that doing so would convince people taking part in anti-police protests to engage in similar violence. Both Carrillo and Justice have been charged on multiple counts related to the shootings.¹²



Sergeant Gutzwiler was not the only police officer to die at the hands of extremists in 2020. Almost every year, one or more police officers are killed by extremists. In some cases, they are specifically targeted by extremist movements, many of which have an animus against law enforcement; in other cases, they are killed while trying to protect their communities from extremist violence. Right-wing extremists, left-wing extremists, and domestic Islamist extremists have all killed police officers in the United States. In 2020, three police officers were killed by extremists—all of them associated with far-right causes.

Gutzwiler was killed in an ambush at an extremist’s home; the other two officers murdered in 2020 were killed on the highways. In February 2020, Preston Cheyenne Johnson—a self-declared “Free State Aryan”—allegedly fled from a routine traffic stop in Alabama, opening fire from his vehicle on pursuing officers. One of the shots hit and killed Nick O’Rear, an officer with the Kimberly, Alabama, police department.¹³

A month later in Nevada, Nevada Highway Patrol Sergeant Ben Jenkins stopped to help a stranded driver with engine trouble. The driver of the vehicle, John Dabritz, allegedly opened fire on Jenkins, killing him. According to police, Dabritz set fire to Jenkins’ body and stole his police vehicle but was eventually apprehended some distance away. Police have described Dabritz as an anti-government extremist and believe he may have been responsible for several shootings and explosive detonations in the area in previous months. He awaits trial on multiple charges.¹⁴

Police Officers Killed in the United States by Domestic Extremists (1971-2020)

Years	By Left-Wing Extremists*	By Right-Wing Extremists	By Domestic Islamist Extremists	By Other Extremists	Total
1971-1980	21	1	2	0	24
1981-1990	5	6	0	0	11
1991-2000	1	15	0	0	16
2001-2010	2	25	0	0	27
2011-2020	10	14	1	1	26
Total	39	61	3	1	104

*Includes anarchists, black nationalists.

Source: [ADL](#)

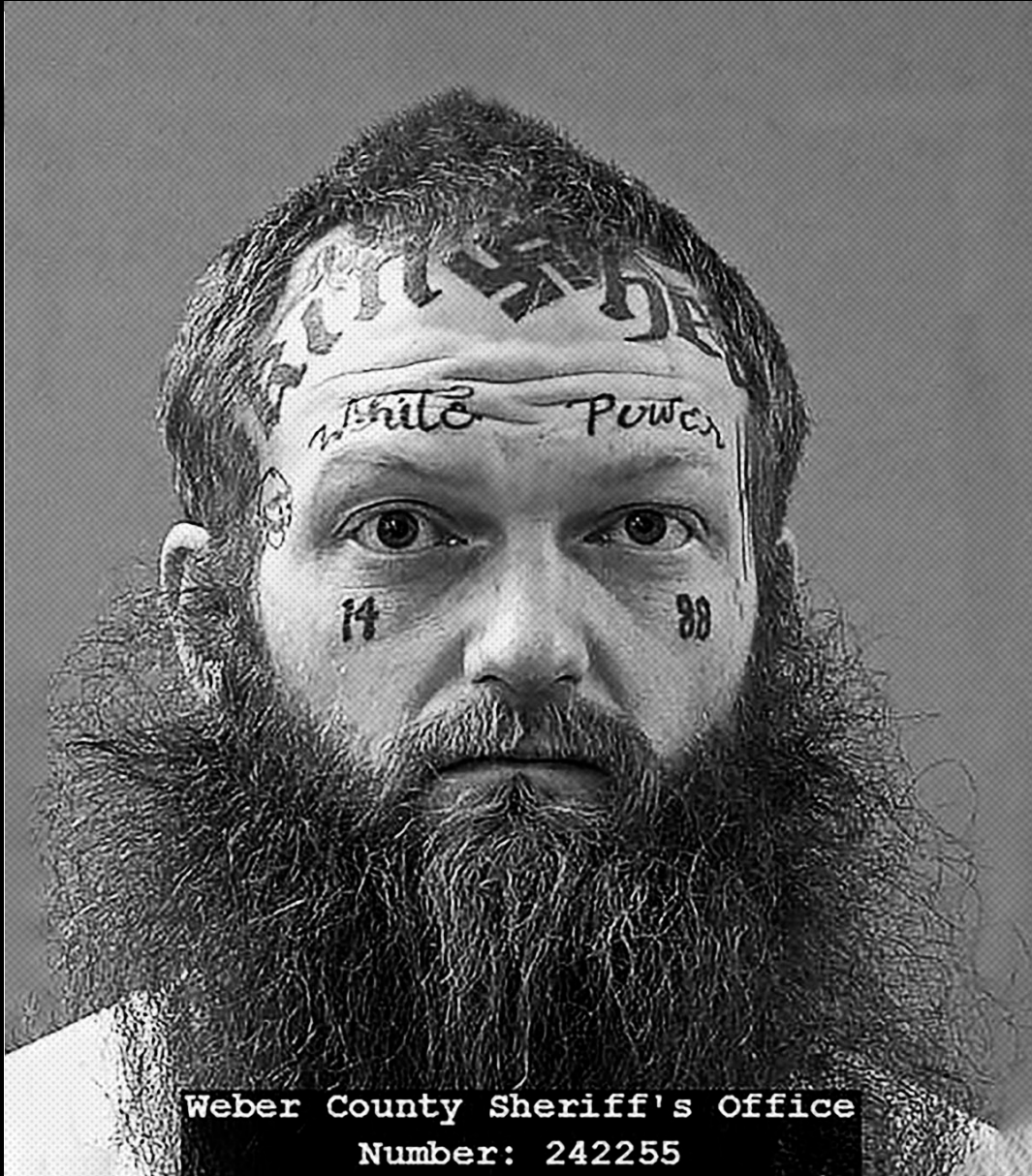
Though white supremacists and anti-government extremists committed most of the murders of 2020, they were not responsible for all of them. Two of the murders were committed by Roy Den Hollander, an attorney and extreme misogynist. Dying of cancer, Hollander apparently decided to violently settle scores before his death. He traveled from New York to California and on July 11 showed up at the house of a rival men's rights activist while posing as a delivery driver and shot him at the doorstep. Eight days later, Hollander—again posing as a deliveryman—appeared at the New Jersey home of U.S. District Court Judge Esther Salas, who was presiding over a case he had filed, and shot her husband Mark and her 20-year-old son Daniel, the latter fatally. Judge Salas, down in the basement at the time of the attack, escaped injury. The following day, Hollander killed himself alongside a road in upstate New York. In his nearby vehicle was a list of even more targets. Extremists associated with the so-called manosphere—a toxic mélange of incels, extreme men's rights activists and other extremists motivated by misogyny—have killed 10 people in the United States since 2014.¹⁵

The one 2020 murder not committed by a right-wing extremist was the fatal shooting of Aaron Danielson, a member of the far-right Patriot Prayer, by antifa activist Michael Reinoehl during a protest in Portland, Oregon, on August 29, 2020. Antifa is the name used by a loose network of anti-racist activists who focus on physically confronting white supremacists and some other right-wing groups on the streets, as well as on doxing their identities online. In recent years, right-wing media have demonized antifa, exaggerating the amount of antifa-related violence and frequently labeling them as “terrorists.” However, the killing of Danielson was the first murder linked to antifa since 1993, when Eric Banks, a racist skinhead and singer in a white power band, was shot to death by John Bair, an anti-racist skinhead.¹⁶

The Incidents

- Marion Oaks, Florida, November 15, 2020:** Neely Petrie-Blanchard was arrested for allegedly fatally shooting a man, Christopher Hallett, in his home. Hallett was one of the founders of a sovereign citizen group, E-Clause, that focused on combating child protective services; Petrie-Blanchard had been a member of the group. Witnesses claimed that Petrie-Blanchard shot Hallett because she had come to believe he was colluding with the government to keep her from her children. At the time of the murder, Petrie-Blanchard was free on bail after having been arrested in March for allegedly abducting her two daughters from their grandmother's home in Kentucky.¹⁷
- Portland, Oregon, August 29, 2020:** Michael Reinoehl, an antifa activist, shot Aaron Danielson to death during a protest in downtown Portland. Danielson was a member of the far-right group Patriot Prayer. Reinoehl was charged with second-degree murder and unlawful use of a weapon but refused to turn himself in after the fatal shooting and became a fugitive. Federal and local law enforcement officers located Reinoehl near Olympia, Washington, a few days later, killing him while attempting to apprehend him. That shooting is still under investigation.¹⁸
- Hartford, Connecticut, July 26, 2020:** Jerry David Thompson, a sovereign citizen, allegedly attacked and killed his landlord with a samurai sword following a dispute over rent. The victim was allegedly decapitated.¹⁹
- North Brunswick, New Jersey, July 19, 2020:** Roy Den Hollander, a men's rights activist, shot and killed the son of a judge who had been presiding over a case Hollander had filed. He also severely wounded her husband; the judge herself escaped injury. Hollander, who had previously killed a rival activist (see below), killed himself not long after.²⁰
- Cedarpines Park, California, July 11, 2020:** Roy Den Hollander, a men's rights activist, shot and killed Marc Angelucci, a rival activist. A week later, Hollander traveled across the country to New Jersey and committed another murder (see above), then killed himself not long after.²¹
- Detroit, Michigan, June 11, 2020:** Thomas "Krazy" Curry, a white supremacist who was also part of the outlaw biker subculture, shot and killed three people associated with an outlaw biker gang. On September 16, Curry killed himself during an armed standoff and hostage situation in Detroit that began after Curry fired at a police officer following a traffic stop and chase. In conversations with police and others during the standoff, Curry admitted to the killings. Curry had white supremacist tattoos, a Nazi flag, and used the online alias of "Michael Heiliger," which was a fake name used by Nazis during World War II for bank accounts used to hold money and valuables seized from persecuted Jews.²²
- Ben Lomond, California, June 6, 2020:** On June 6, Santa Cruz County sheriff's deputies attempted to arrest Steven Carrillo at his home for the May 29 murder of a security guard at a federal courthouse (see below). Carrillo allegedly ambushed the officers with gunfire and improvised explosives, killing Sergeant Damon Gutzwiller and seriously wounding two others. Carrillo was eventually arrested and charged with multiple felonies, including murder, multiple counts of attempted murder, and explosives charges. Carrillo is allegedly associated with the anti-government boogaloo movement.²³





Ryan Joseph Dash | Weber County Jail

- Oakland, California, May 29, 2020:** Two men attacked security personnel outside a federal courthouse in Oakland in a drive-by shooting that killed a Federal Protective Services officer, David Patrick Underwood, and wounded another. Subsequently arrested for the attack were Steven Carrillo and Robert Justus, Jr., who were allegedly associated with the anti-government boogaloo movement. Carrillo faces federal murder charges for the attack, while Justus faces charges of attempted murder and aiding and abetting murder. During the attempt to arrest Carrillo, Carrillo allegedly shot and killed one of the officers (see above).²⁴
- Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 12, 2020:** Mitchell Folsom, an alleged member of the Universal Aryan Brotherhood, a large and active white supremacist prison gang based in Oklahoma, was arrested on April 22 after a brief standoff for allegedly stabbing another man, Jimmy Johnson, to death on April 12, over past bad blood between them.²⁵
- Trotwood, Ohio, March 28, 2020:** Following a lengthy car chase in early April, police in Ohio arrested two men—Dustin Allen Hatfield, Sr., and William Denny II—who were suspects in the March 28 shooting death of David Bentley Robinson. Hatfield has since been charged with murder, but Denny does not appear to have been. ADL evaluation of tattoos and social media indicators suggest the men are members or associates of the Ohio Aryan Brotherhood.²⁶
- Ely, Nevada, March 27, 2020:** John Dabritz, described by law enforcement as an anti-government extremist, allegedly shot and killed a Nevada Highway Patrol trooper who stopped to check on Dabritz while the latter was parked along a highway. Prosecutors believe Dabritz killed the trooper to avoid arrest for a series of recent shootings that targeted propane tanks and other infrastructure.²⁷
- Coweta County, Georgia, February 11, 2020:** Five people—four men and one woman—were charged in connection with the February 11 murder of a 14-year-old girl. All five are allegedly members of the Ghost Face Gangsters, a large Georgia-based white supremacist prison gang. The girl was allegedly shot as she ran away from the gang members while they were conducting a home invasion, looking for the homeowner.²⁸
- North Ogden, Utah, February 8, 2020:** Ryan Joseph Dash and Brian Christopher Jenson were arrested for the shooting death of Dalton Wood during a confrontation that followed previous incidents of violence and threats between Dash and Wood. Dash's face is covered in white supremacist tattoos; both are said by authorities to belong to white supremacist prison gangs. Dash and Jenson were charged with multiple offenses related to the murder, as well as for stealing a safe containing firearms subsequently used in the murder.²⁹
- Kimberly, Alabama, February 4, 2020:** Preston Cheyenne Johnson, a white supremacist and convicted felon, was charged with capital murder for the shooting death of Kimberly, Alabama, police officer Nick O'Rear. The incident began after Johnson refused to stop for police in Warrior, Alabama. During the ensuing car chase, the officers called for backup and O'Rear responded, joining the pursuit. Johnson fired shots at officers from his vehicle, one of which struck O'Rear in the head and caused him to crash his vehicle. An ADL investigation revealed that Johnson had numerous white supremacist tattoos and also expressed white supremacist views on social media. Johnson, a convicted felon not allowed to possess firearms, may have fled the initial encounter with police for fear of arrest on weapons charges.³⁰
- Moreno Valley, California, February 1, 2020:** Two men, Darren Peter Zesk and Jared Lee Zesk, were arrested for the hate crime murder of an 18-year-old Black man. The victim was shot multiple times. According to police, Darren Zesk's cell phone contents included racist slurs and phrases like "white power" and "Hail Hitler," as well as a song with racist lyrics. Zesk allegedly also posted a YouTube video that included the phrases "white power" and "kill them all."³¹

Every year, some murders attract speculation or allegations of extremist connections. The COE examines all such incidents for evidence of extremism. Some such cases are confirmed as being extremist-connected, but in other cases, investigation either reveals no extremist ties or uncovers insufficient evidence on which to make a determination of an extremist connection. Such incidents are therefore not included in the year's extremist murder statistics. If additional evidence is subsequently uncovered for a specific murder that does confirm an extremist tie, such a murder would at that time be added to the statistics.

The following incidents are among the killings for which COE has either found no substantive evidence of extremism or uncovered insufficient evidence to make a clear determination at present:

- **Brunswick, Georgia, February 23, 2020:** Ahmaud Marquez Arbery, a Black man, was chased and shot to death while out jogging near Brunswick, Georgia. Three men—Gregory McMichael, Travis McMichael, and William Bryan—were arrested for the killing more than two months later, charged with malice murder, felony murder, and other counts. During pre-trial legal proceedings, prosecutors provided evidence of the use of racial slurs by William Bryan and Travis McMichael—including while McMichael allegedly stood over Arbery's body. They also alluded to (but did not make public) apparently racist social media posts, including a "racial highway video Facebook post" and a racist text message by Travis McMichael and an "Identity Dixie Facebook post" by Greg McMichael, plus "Racial Johnny Rebel Facebook Posts" from both. Identity Dixie is a white supremacist group; Johnny Rebel was a white supremacist singer. This evidence, if accurate, is a strong indication that the defendants have racist beliefs and certainly suggestive that one or more may have full-fledged white supremacist beliefs. However, with only access to short characterizations of this content, rather than the content itself, COE is temporarily withholding a final judgment until there is more detailed information. Consequently, this murder does not appear in the statistics in this report, although it is quite possible it may be added in the future.³²
- **Omaha, Nebraska, May 30, 2020:** During protests in Omaha over the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers, a local bar owner, Jacob Gardner, shot and killed James Scurlock, a 22-year-old Black man, following an altercation. Although initially no charges were filed against Gardner, who had claimed to have acted in self-defense, subsequently manslaughter and other charges were brought against him. Gardner committed suicide before his case could be resolved. Following the shooting, allegations were made on the internet that Gardner and his father were racists or white supremacists. However, neither media, law enforcement, or ADL COE investigation could confirm allegations of white supremacy.³³
- **Kenosha, Wisconsin, August 25, 2020:** Kyle Rittenhouse, a teenager from Illinois, allegedly shot three people—two of them fatally—during confrontations at a protest over a recent police shooting in Kenosha. Rittenhouse has been arrested on numerous charges related to the shootings, including murder. Rittenhouse was one of a number of people who reportedly showed up for the protest in order to protect buildings or to confront protesters. Some of them showed up because of a call to arms by a just-formed vigilante group calling itself the "Kenosha Guard." This subsequently led to claims that Rittenhouse was a member of the Guard or was otherwise involved in the militia movement or even the white supremacist movement. However, there is to date no evidence that Rittenhouse was involved with the Kenosha Guard or showed up as a result of their call to action. Nor is there evidence of ties to other extremist groups, either militia groups or white supremacist groups. Rittenhouse's social media accounts provided no evidence of ties to extremism prior to the killings. However, it should be noted that in January 2021, months after the shootings, Rittenhouse was alleged to have posed for photos in a bar with possible members of the Proud Boys, a right-wing extremist group. This is not, however, evidence of any such connections before the killings that made Rittenhouse such a cause célèbre for many right-wing groups.³⁴



- **Henderson, Nevada, November 26, 2020:** Three people from Tyler, Texas—Shawn McDonnell, Christopher McDonnell, and Kayleigh Lewis—were arrested on numerous charges related to a Thanksgiving shooting spree in Arizona and Nevada during which the suspects allegedly shot at 10 different people, wounding four and killing one before crashing their vehicle and being apprehended. The victim who died was Kevin Mendiola, Jr.; he and most of the others wounded were shot in front of a convenience store. Authorities have suggested they are considering possible hate crime or terrorism charges against the three. According to Christopher McDonnell, Shawn at one point allegedly told him to “shoot the black guy” and alluded to an “upcoming war” of some sort. However, the shooting victims were of multiple races. An investigation of two of the suspects’ social media profiles reveals conservative leanings but no clear ties to extremism. As of now, there is insufficient evidence of extremist connections, though more information is likely to emerge in the future.³⁵

Notes on Methodology and Sources

The COE has compiled a list of more than 1,000 known murders/killings perpetrated since 1970—essentially the post-Civil Rights era—by people associated with a variety of domestic extremist movements. These are primarily murders committed by American extremists on U.S. soil, though a few cases involving American extremists murdering other Americans abroad (such as at Jonestown in Guyana) are also included. Fatalities in foreign terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, such as the December 2019 shootings at Naval Air Station Pensacola by a radicalized Saudi aviation student, are not included.

Because extremist connections to some murders can take months or years to be revealed, statistics for the most recent years will inevitably be revised upward in future years. For example, COE's report on extremist-related murders in 2019 counted 42 murders, but within a year, COE had uncovered three more extremist-related 2019 murders and revised its numbers accordingly. Similar upward revision is likely to occur in the future for the 2020 statistics.

The incidents are derived primarily from public sources, leading to some limitations regarding cross-era or cross-movement comparisons. Regarding cross-era comparisons, it is generally more difficult to find information on extremist-related killings from the 1970s and 1980s, so it may not be meaningful to compare figures from earlier eras to figures from more recent decades, as figures for the earlier eras are likely to undercount deaths.

The main limitation of cross-movement comparisons is that extremist connections to killings are easier to determine for some movements than for others. For example, white supremacists, who often display many racist and white supremacist tattoos, or who may be documented as white supremacists by gang investigators or corrections officials, are often easily identifiable. In contrast, it may be more difficult for police or media to identify a suspect's anti-government extremist associations. This issue comes up more often with non-ideological killings. It is likely that non-ideological murders committed by extremists other than white supremacists are underrepresented in ADL's data.

In addition, because murders behind bars often attract little or no media attention and are typically not publicized by prison officials, incidents of prison-based deadly violence committed by adherents of all extremist movements are under-represented.

Jails and prisons pose another problem specifically with regard to sovereign citizens because those locations have become such a significant source of recruitment into the sovereign citizen movement. Inmates behind bars for a variety of crimes—including murder—can be recruited into the sovereign citizen movement by fellow inmates, who often promise prospective recruits that the movement's pseudo-legal tactics can get them off the hook. Someone currently being tried for murder who attempts sovereign citizen arguments or tactics during legal proceedings may possibly have only been exposed to such beliefs after their arrest and may not have been a sovereign citizen at the time of the murder. Consequently, ADL does not assume that someone making sovereign citizen arguments during legal proceeding was a sovereign citizen before their arrest unless there is evidence to suggest as much, or unless their sovereign arguments were made very soon after their arrest.

As with any such list, the inclusion or exclusion of certain borderline cases may be judgment calls based on the best evidence available, judgments with which others may reasonably disagree. ADL makes the best determinations it can based on the evidence available at the time.

Policy Recommendations:

THE PROTECT PLAN

<https://www.adl.org/protectplan>



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