

Covid-19 has killed more police officers this year than all other causes combined, data shows

By one estimate, coronavirus deaths among law enforcement are likely to surpass those of 9/11

By **Christopher Ingraham**

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In a speech this week in Pittsburgh, Joe Biden linked the Trump administration's mismanagement of the coronavirus to its handling of protests and riots with a surprising statistic: "More cops have died from covid this year than have been killed on patrol," he said.

The Democratic presidential nominee's claim is true, according to data compiled by the [Officer Down Memorial Page](#) and the [National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund](#), two nonprofits that have tracked law enforcement fatalities for decades.

As of Sept. 2, on-the-job [coronavirus](#) infections were responsible for a least 100 officer deaths, more than gun violence, car accidents and all other causes combined, [according to the Officer Down group](#). NLEOMF reported a nearly identical number of covid-related law enforcement deaths.

NLEOMF reported a [nearly identical number](#) of covid-related law enforcement deaths. It also noted that fatalities due to non-covid causes are actually [down year-over-year](#), undermining [President Trump's claims](#) that "law enforcement has become the target of a dangerous assault by the radical left."

Both organizations only count covid deaths "if it is determined that the officer died as a result of exposure to the virus while performing official duties," as the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund put it. "Substantive evidence will be required to show the death was more than likely due to the direct and proximate result of a duty-related incident."

In addition to the 100 confirmed coronavirus fatalities listed on the Officer Down website, the nonprofit said it is in the process of verifying an additional 150 officer deaths due to covid-19 and presumed to have been contracted in the line of duty, said Chris Cosgriff, executive director of ODMP, in an email.

"By the end of this pandemic, it is very likely that COVID will surpass 9/11 as the single largest incident cause of death for law enforcement officers," he wrote. [Seventy-one officers were killed in the attacks on the twin towers](#), one officer was killed on United Flight 93, and [more than 300](#) have passed away since then as a result of cancer contracted in the wake of the attacks, according to ODMP.

At the state level, Texas stands out for having the highest number of law enforcement covid fatalities with at least 21, according to NLEOMF. At least 16 of those represent officers with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, which manages the state's correctional facilities. Louisiana has 12 covid-related officer deaths. Florida, New Jersey and Illinois round out the top five with eight each.

According to both organizations, officers in correctional facilities account for a substantial number of covid-related law enforcement deaths, reflecting the dire epidemiological situation in many of the nation's prisons and jails.

“Corrections officers and Corrections Departments have been hit harder than regular police agencies,” Cosgriff said. According to the Marshall Project, a nonprofit criminal justice news site, more than 100,000 U.S. prison inmates have tested positive for coronavirus and at least 928 have died. There have been an additional 24,000 cases and 72 deaths among prison staff.

ODMP's tally includes police officers, sheriff's deputies, correctional officers, federal law enforcement officers and military police officers killed outside of military conflict. NLEOMF's inclusion criteria are similar.

This year, Trump signed the Safeguarding America's First Responders Act of 2020, which guarantees law enforcement officers and their survivors federal benefits if the officer is killed or disabled by covid. For legal purposes, the legislation presumes that covid cases among officers were contracted in the line of duty.

Updated February 21, 2021

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Coronavirus maps: Cases and deaths in the U.S. | Cases and deaths worldwide

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