

Assessing Police Brutality Toward Black Americans

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Introduction

- The United States has a massive problem with police brutality towards Black Americans which is rooted and grounded in systemic racism.
- The evolution of systemic racism encapsulates the synchronization of Blackness with criminality and has remained a long-standing part of American society (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016).
- According to the United States Census Bureau (2019), Black or African American persons only represent 13.4% of the United States' population.
- However, Black Americans experience disproportionately greater fatalities at a rate of 32% when encountered by law enforcement officers which is 2.8 times more deaths among Blacks versus Whites (DeGue et al., 2016).
- Likewise, Statista Research Department (2020) confirmed a rate of 31 per million deaths of Black Americans as substantially higher than any other race.

Discussion

- **There are three primary components when evaluating police brutality among Black Americans which include:**
 1. an understanding of systemic racism
 2. assessing police leadership and staff through education and training
 3. accountability with empirically sound testing and treatments
- United States history incorporates Blacks forced into slavery and systematic criminalization, murder, rape, and mutilation (Menakem, 2017; Smiley & Fakunle, 2016).
- Over the years numerous theorists including Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. DuBois, Kwame Ture, and others have provided historical accounts of the myths, stereotypes, misconceptions, and prejudices leading to discriminatory policies against Black Americans (Feagin & Ellis, 2013; Smiley & Fakunle, 2016).
- Gilbert and Ray (2015) found that aggressive policing practices disproportionately impact Black community members, particularly Black males.
- Plant and Peruche (2005) noted that Black males are often caricatured and stereotyped as aggressive criminals causing police to mostly view them as a threat and viable recipients of deadly force.
- Eberhardt et al. (2006) noted Blacks with more Afrocentric, African American features, have a greater likelihood of a deviant or sinister portrayal, and are more apt to encounter fatalities from police brutality.
- Research involving simulated situations showed that law enforcement were more likely to shoot an unarmed Black suspect that a White suspect holding a weapon in split-decision-making scenarios (Plant & Peruche, 2005).



(Picture of George Floyd, New York Times, 2020)

Discussion (cont.)

- Effective education, training, psychological assessments and interventions are necessary. However, not all law enforcement agents receive adequate, proactive training or treatment to defuse excessive energy after exposure to traumatic events in their high-risk careers (Menakem, 2017).
- Also, not every police department's infrastructure is equipped to support police officers' self-care and healing.
- Inevitably, law enforcement become susceptible to disassociation and isolation often perpetuated by denial, drinking, illegal drug use, and an array of physical and emotional health issues (Chaney & Robertson, 2013).

Conclusion / Recommendations

- The United States has a significant problem with police brutality toward Black Americans.
- This deficiency requires empirically sound steps continually needed to assess, evaluate, and progressively eradicate systemic racism within the milieu of law enforcement nationwide.
- Tools such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, Second Edition (MMPI-2), created by Butcher Dahlstrom, Graham, Tellegen, and Kramer in 1989 is the most widely used, empirically sound psychometric test measuring adult psychopathology (Pearson, 2020).
- Alternatively, the recently released Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, Third Edition (MMPI-3), created by Ben-Porath and Tellegen, incorporates norms updated with today's population test protocol with the same projected reliability.
- By administering the MMPI-2 or MMPI-3, employing diversity training, and offering empirically sound treatments such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to all actively sworn law enforcement officers, our society has a better chance to alleviate and control potentially violent tendencies.

Yes, Black Lives Matter (2020) – hence, America's police departments must acknowledge and respect the same.

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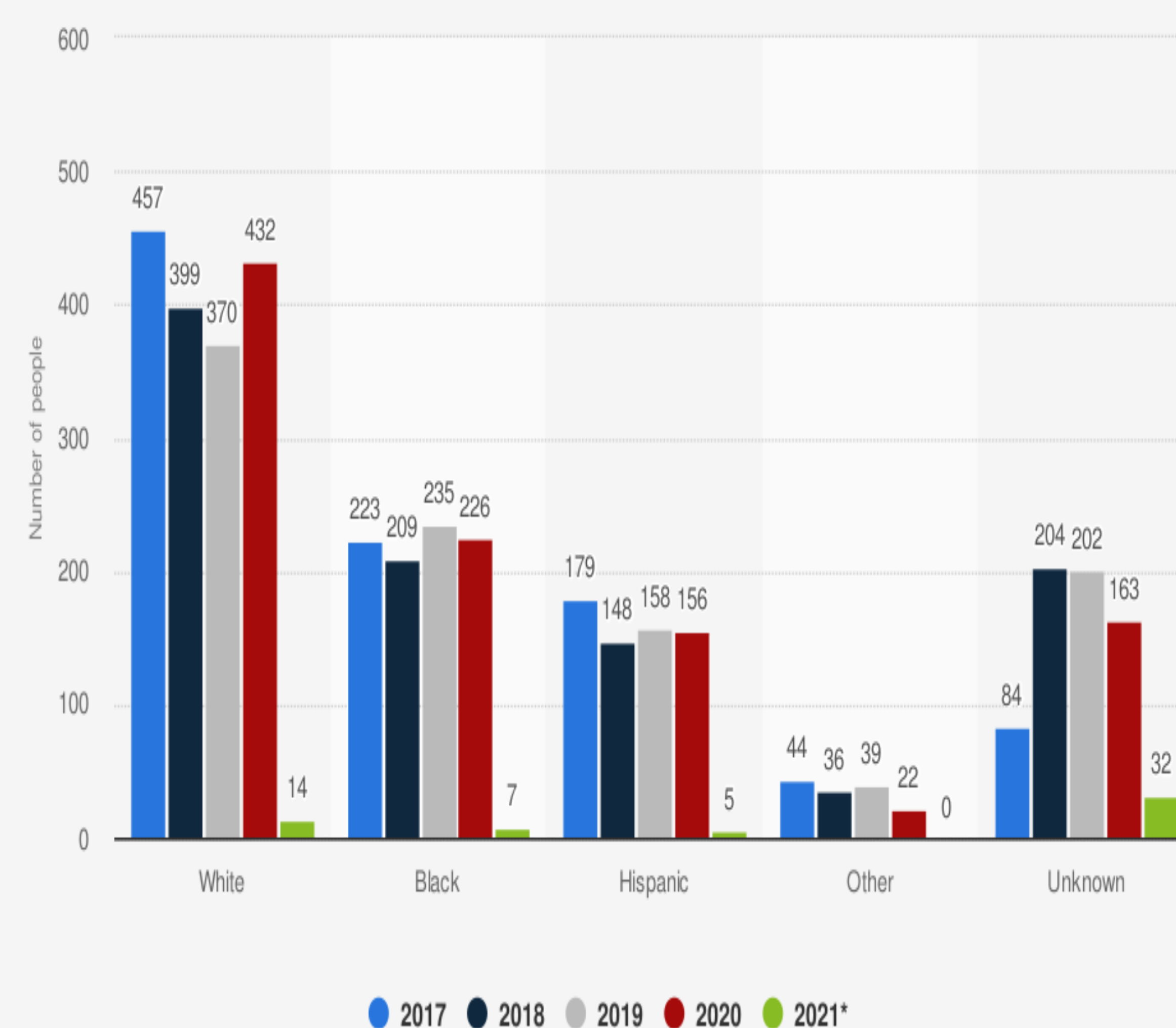
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Number of people shot to death by the police in the United States from 2017 to 2021, by race



Source
Washington Post
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Additional Information:
United States; Washington Post; 2017 to 2021

BLACK
LIVES
MATTER

(Picture taken from Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, 2020)