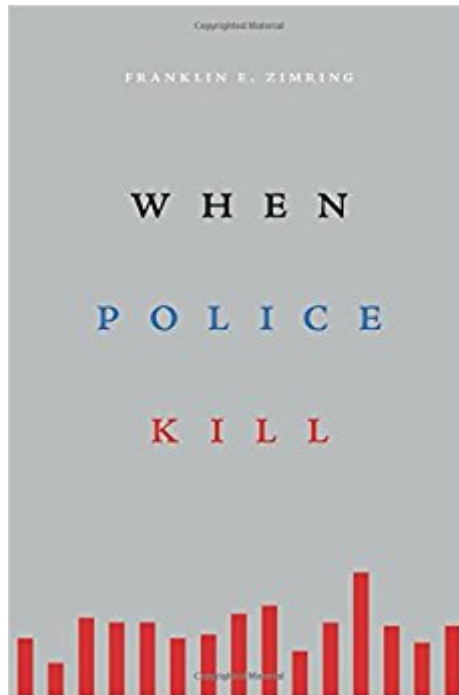




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# When Police Kill



## Synopsis

Deaths of civilians at the hands of on-duty police are in the national spotlight as never before. How many killings by police occur annually? What circumstances provoke police to shoot to kill? Who dies? The lack of answers to these basic questions points to a crisis in American government that urgently requires the attention of policy experts. *When Police Kill* is a groundbreaking analysis of the use of lethal force by police in the United States and how its death toll can be reduced. Franklin Zimring compiles data from federal records, crowdsourced research, and investigative journalism to provide a comprehensive, fact-based picture of how, when, where, and why police resort to deadly force. Of the 1,100 killings by police in the United States in 2015, he shows, 85 percent were fatal shootings and 95 percent of victims were male. The death rates for African Americans and Native Americans are twice their share of the population. Civilian deaths from shootings and other police actions are vastly higher in the United States than in other developed nations, but American police also confront an unusually high risk of fatal assault. Zimring offers policy prescriptions for how federal, state, and local governments can reduce killings by police without risking the lives of officers. Criminal prosecution of police officers involved in killings is rare and only necessary in extreme cases. But clear administrative rules could save hundreds of lives without endangering police officers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*When Police Kill* is the most comprehensive, data-driven study of the use of lethal force by police I

have read. Professor Zimring's objective examination provides valuable guideposts for a way forward for both police and communities. (Ray Kelly, former NYC Police Commissioner, and Vice Chairman of K2 Intelligence) This is a superb book, and an urgently needed one. Frank Zimring carefully demonstrates what is known and inexcusably unknown about fatal shooting by American police officers. Even better, he tells us how to fix the problem. This is a book full of sharp insight and wise counsel. It should be read by anyone concerned about the problem of police violence. (David Alan Sklansky, Stanford Law School) Rarely has a public policy book been as necessary as *When Police Kill*. There is virtually no current literature on the public policy issues of police shootings and this book will fill that void. (Philip Matthew Stinson, Bowling Green State University) Timely! Zimring's book, *When Police Kill*, is essentially a 300-page riff on a single statistic: Roughly 1,000 Americans die each year at the hands of the police! The civilian body count does not seem to be declining, even though violent crime generally and the on-duty deaths of police officers are down sharply! Police kill African-Americans at more than double their share of the population, a phenomenon Zimring painstakingly demonstrates is not explained by higher crime rates in black neighborhoods! The average number of those 1,000 deaths per year that result in felony convictions of a police officer: one. Zimring's most explosive assertion—which leaps out of a work that is mostly policy-wonk nuance—is that police leaders don't care! To paraphrase the French philosopher Joseph de Maistre, every country gets the police it deserves. (Bill Keller New York Times 2017-02-21) A remarkable piece of research! Zimring is no stranger to the field of gun violence research, having produced formative efforts in this field for more than forty years. And if you think for one second that the issue of cop killings doesn't go to the heart of the debate about gun violence, think again. Because what Zimring shows is that not only are most fatalities which occur at the hands of police the result of cops using guns, but the number of such deaths each year is undercounted by more than half! [A] valuable and important book! It needs to be read. (Mike Weisser Huffington Post 2017-03-02) Meticulously researched. (Richard Thompson Ford San Francisco Chronicle 2017-04-26)

Franklin E. Zimring is William G. Simon Professor of Law at the University of California, Berkeley.

A relevant volume for correcting pathetic policing!

Fortunately I have not been personally effected by deaths at the hands of police. Actually my limited experience with police officers has been positive. However, I have seen deaths at the hands of local

police lead to passionate but very unproductive public responses to the perceived problem. For that reason I have now read three books on the subject. I found Zimring's book immensely helpful. Zimring is very thorough. He explains his reasoning well. His conclusions and recommendations are extensive and helpful. As the risk of over simplifying I would say that his main messages are: (1) The problem needs and deserves a better surveillance system, and that system should be designed and run by the Federal Government. (2) Tinkering with the laws may help a bit, but the most important changes in practice will be made by motivated chiefs of police. (3) Both the high rates of death at the hands of police and the high risk of death of police in the US are largely driven by the extremely high prevalence of hand guns here. I found the book incomplete in a couple of senses. First, Zimring's appreciation of the police officer's perspective seems too limited. In particular, Zimring does not seem to recognize that a police officer must prevent at all costs an attacker from seizing the officer's gun. Also, Zimring does not consider that some unarmed but drug-crazed or manic attackers can become immensely powerful and violent. For an objective account of the police officer's dilemmas I found the book "In Context" (by Selby et al) very helpful. Second, I felt that Zimring did not recognize and weigh the societal cost of over correcting the problem of deaths at the hands of police. For the downside of "softer" policing I found Mac Donald's "The War on Cops" useful, (but less rigorous than Zimring.) Some readers may find Zimring's writing style a bit irritating. He very frequently resorts to complicated sentences that can be 4-6 lines long. Also, he very often starts a sentence with a conjunction such as "and" or "but". Just to prove that I read the book carefully, I point out that there is a decimal error in Table 7.5.

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