

## ACLU of Maryland 2015 Update Regarding Deaths in Police Custody

Last year, the ACLU of Maryland released a briefing paper compiling information about people who died in police custody statewide between 2010-2014. This document reflects our count for 2015. The methodology we used is unchanged and can be found in the original report here: [https://www.aclu-md.org/sites/default/files/md\\_deaths\\_in\\_police\\_encounters.pdf](https://www.aclu-md.org/sites/default/files/md_deaths_in_police_encounters.pdf).<sup>1</sup>

Obviously, after Freddie Gray's death, there was far more public attention to incidents in which a person died in police custody. Much attention has been devoted to whether officers will be subject to criminal charges or discipline.

But we have seen little evidence that Maryland police departments are engaging with the issue on a systemic level—by making an unequivocal, unapologetic commitment to valuing the sanctity of all human life, regardless of race or class, and doing what it takes to infuse that into the culture, policies and practices of the Department. Rather, Marylanders, and particularly communities of color who have long lived with the reality of unchecked police abuse, are being forced to fight police agencies for even basic transparency and police accountability measures.

### Summary of Findings for 2015

- 1. At least 21 people died in encounters with police in Maryland in 2015.**
- 2. These deaths occurred all over our state—no region is immune.**
- 3. About 81% of those who died in police encounters were Black, nearly half of them unarmed. Maryland's population is about 30% Black.**<sup>2</sup>
- 4. Every single unarmed person who died in Maryland in 2015 was Black.**
- 5. About 38% of the people who died were unarmed.**
- 6. Nearly half of those who died presented in a way that suggested a disability, substance use, or mental health issue of some kind.**<sup>3</sup> **Nearly all of these individuals (about 90%) were Black.**
- 7. Although the leading cause of death was gunshot wounds, there were at least three instances in which someone died almost immediately after being tased.**
- 8. In 20 out of 21 cases, no criminal charges were filed. In several cases, the reviewing State's Attorney stated publicly that the killing was justified.**

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<sup>1</sup> One clarification: when police allege a weapon was used, including a car, we treat that person as armed. There were five instances involving a car that police regarded a weapon.

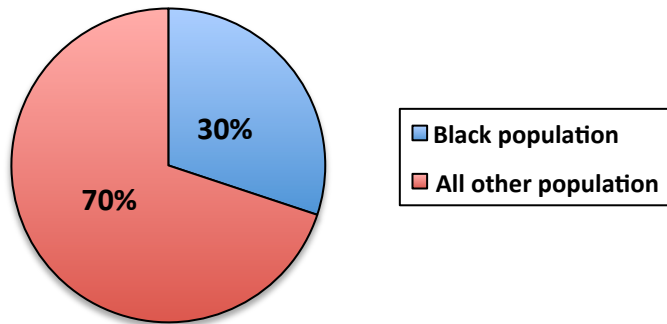
<sup>2</sup> Based on coverage, did not identify any other race or ethnic identity. There was one person who was identified in the press as a Black transgender woman; the remainder of those killed were men.

<sup>3</sup> In the absence of any uniform reporting and in-depth coverage, we grouped together these individuals while recognizing that such an approach is itself fraught. See [http://www.rudermanfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/MediaStudy-PoliceDisability\\_final-final1.pdf](http://www.rudermanfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/MediaStudy-PoliceDisability_final-final1.pdf)

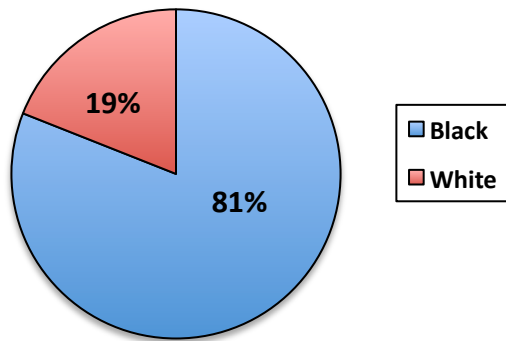
9. It was impossible to determine whether any officers were disciplined for misconduct in these cases due to the uniform practice of police departments in refusing to release such information.
10. In most cases, there was little or no follow up evident in the mainstream press after the initial reporting. Typically, there was very little information about the person who died other than a run-down of prior criminal charges.

<b>County of Incident</b>	<b>Number of People</b>
Anne Arundel	2
Baltimore City	4
Baltimore County	5
Cecil County	2
Charles County	1
Frederick County	1
Howard County	1
Montgomery County	1
Prince George's County	2
Washington County	1
Wicomico	1
Total	21

### Maryland Population



### Deaths in Police Encounters by Race



### Deaths Unarmed Individuals by Race

