Hundreds of police killings go unreported

Our reporter
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According to a *Wall Street Journal* report, national statistics provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation do not report 25 percent or more of police killings in the US.

The newspaper analyzed data from 105 of the largest police agencies in the country and compared the figures to the official statistics of the FBI. More than 550 killings between 2007 and 2012 were not part of the FBI totals.

Specifically, in these jurisdictions the *Journal* tallied at least 1,800 police killings, compared to only 1,242 reported to the FBI.

One of the major causes of the discrepancy is the failure of many local police agencies to report homicides that are considered justifiable. As the Fairfax County, Virginia Police Department said, such killings are not an “actual offense,” and they are not reported to the FBI.

The *Journal* gave the example of 24-year-old Albert Jermaine Payton in Washington, DC, who was shot and killed in 2012. His mother, who witnessed the killing, said the police were well acquainted with her son, who apparently suffered from mental illness. As he approached the cops that day holding a small utility knife, they fired dozens of times, and he died soon after.

This homicide was not reported to the FBI. The officers involved are back on the job, and there was no further investigation.

The consequences of the underreporting include the obvious underestimation of the reign of violence that exists in poor working class communities around the country. It is one more avenue through which the police, and the authorities to whom they are ultimately responsible, attempt to minimize the anger and political fallout that has been visible on the streets of Ferguson, Staten Island and elsewhere in recent months.

Only some of the most egregious cases of police violence become widely known. The reality is even worse than indicated in the latest grand jury exonerations of the police in Missouri and New York.

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