# Police Violence in the US

## Problem statement

In the United States, our federal, state, and local governments possess a limited "state monopoly on violence". Through the democratic process, citizens authorize the government's sworn officers to exercise this monopoly by applying reasonable coercive force to enforce the law. This use of force is in turn restricted by the law, which authorizes only a minimum amount of force under specific circumstances (self-defense, for example).

Yet the lived experiences of many Americans - including Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Rodney King among, tragically, many others - speak to an epidemic of excessive and unjustified use of force by law enforcement officers whose sworn duty is to protect the communities they serve. Instances of police violence range from unreasonable search and seizure to the excessive application of physical force. Severe abuses of the police's monopoly on violence, like extrajudicial killings, occur despite a constitutional presumption of innocence. This project will investigate the correlates, causes, and mediating factors of police violence in the U.S.

**Project goal**: To model some aspect of police violence in the US, at some geographic level (city, county, etc.), in order to investigate trends over time and associations with demographic, health, economic indicators, etc. Questions you could try to answer: Is there evidence of discrimination in police officers' application of unreasonable force, or in the prosecution of the officers involved? Are there longitudinal or geographic differences in these injustices? Do patterns of departmental misconduct and activity predict future violence? What biases exist in the available data that prevent us from being able tell the full and honest story of these incidents?

## Data Recources

1. **Fatal Police Shootings Data**
   Washington Post's Police Shootings Repository on Git

2. **Police Use of Force Data**
   Bureau of Justice Statistics, Police-Public Contact Survey

3. **Other Data Sources**
   500 Cities Project
   Police Data Initiative
   US Census Bureau for Demographic Data
   Princeton's guide to resources about Black Lives Matter
   Data for Black Lives

# High-level project goals

1. Compile and combine various sources of publicly available data on police violence along with data on demographics, geography, economics, etc.

2. Explore and visualize the data to illustrate time trends and geographic differences across the US.

3. Model the rate of some type of police violence (like fatal police shootings) in order to measure the associations with various different demographic and other indicators.

4. Discuss your methods and findings in the relevant human context along with potential biases and limitations of the data.

# References

1. "What the data say about police brutality and racial bias..."

2. Washington Post's Fatal Force - 2019

3. Black Lives Matter

4. Bureau of Justice Statistics: National Data Collection on Police Use of Force

5. Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code

6. The FBI's National Use-of-Force Data Collection