

# Media Coverage of 'The Counted'

*Interactive visualization that enables the user to view 2015 average news article tone, and number of news articles identified for each person who died while in police custody in 2015, as reported by The Counted project. Selecting each data point brings back the individual's demographic information and list of source articles. Individuals may be grouped by demographic information and ordered and characterized by their race, avg tone of articles and number of articles identified. The grouping and characterizations allow the user to locate for further review apparent patterns in media coverage, defined as tone and volume of articles, among individuals in the dataset.*

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[GitHub Project Page<sup>1</sup>](#)

[Video<sup>2</sup>](#)

[Working demo<sup>3</sup>](#)

## Problem Statement

Recent events have been marked by numerous racially-charged events. Many see these events, - organized protest movements, such as #blacklivesmatter, political gridlock, and cultural discussions - as both a cause and symptom of escalating racial tensions, particularly over the racial disparity in the criminal justice system.

Among the various examples of racially charged topics related to criminal justice, deaths while in police custody and the perceived lack of justice thereafter have been a hot topic. One of the many complaints, and our problem statement, is that these cases receive little to no recognition in the media. Indeed, one of the challenges in addressing this issue<sup>4</sup> is the lack of data on how frequently interactions with the police and people of color result in a death.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://github.com/NYU-CS6313-SPRING2016/Group-10-INET-DOJ-Civil-Rights>

<sup>2</sup> <https://youtu.be/KtAKCRr-8lg>

<sup>3</sup> <http://nyu-cs6313-spring2016.github.io/Group-10-INET-DOJ-Civil-Rights/src/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> The uncounted: why the US can't keep track of people killed by police; The Guardian 2015  
<http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/mar/18/police-killings-government-data-count>



The Guardian<sup>4</sup> has taken on the issue of missing data by developing a wikipedia `named “The Counted”- a compilation of multiple sources for deaths while in police custody. Building on the Guardian compilation, our visualization will address the problem of recognition by investigating the volume and tone of articles on each of The Counted in 2015. The visualization will address the question of how news coverage - defined in terms of volume and tone and time, varies among individuals, characterized by manner of death, race, and location, who have died while in police custody. The user may group, sort, and display these elements to uncover apparent patterns in news coverage that may warrant further study or review.

## Driving Analytical Question

*How does news coverage (volume and tone over time) vary among the population of individuals who have died while in police custody?*

By pulling together demographic information from The Counted dataset with news article information from the GDELT Global Knowledge Graph dataset we matched each individual who has been identified as having died while in police custody with the number of news articles covering their death and the average tone of those articles. The visualization will allow users to see the increase or decrease over time as well as the relative number and average among subgroups of the number of news articles and the tone of the articles.

The demographic information available on the Counted dataset allows users to combine individuals into groups of place, race, manner of death, month of death, according to the order of the volume, tone, or month of the death, depicted by size or color: race, manner of death, average tone of articles.

*Are there any patterns by race on volume of news coverage and one of articles?*

Our specific investigation focuses on grouping and visualizing race against the other features to identify patterns in volume of news articles and tone of articles. Focusing on this grouping and sorting in particular will directly speak to our problem statement: lack of recognition by the media when minority individuals die while in police custody.

## Data Overview

We are using two datasets to drive the visualization. The GDELT GKG database and the Counted dataset. The GDELT GKG database is a list of articles with GDELT derived

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2015/jun/01/the-counted-police-killings-us-database>



metadata, namely persons, locations, and Tone. The Counted dataset is a list of individuals with demographic information on the individual and the manner of their death. Table I below shows the fields we pulled from each dataset, corresponding value ranges and our method for deriving the two calculated fields we use in the visualization.

Table I: Attributes used in the visualization

Attribute Name	Attribute Type	Description	Value Range
Name	Text	Name of individual who died while in police custody  Source: The Counted	
Age	Number	Age of individual who died while in police custody  Source: The Counted	6 to 87 Unknown
Gender	Categorical	Gender of individual died who while in police custody  Source: The Counted	Male Female Non-conforming
Race / Ethnicity	Categorical	Race or Ethnicity of individual who died while in police custody  Source: The Counted	Arab-American Asian/Pacific Islander Black Hispanic/Latino Native American Other Unknown White
Month	Number	Month individual died while in police custody  Source: The Counted	1 to 12
Day	Number	Day individual died while in police custody  Source: The Counted	1 to 31
Year	Number	Year individual died while in police custody  Source: The Counted	2015
Manner of Death	Categorical	Classification of how individual died while in police custody  Source: The Counted	Death in custody Gunshot Other Struck by vehicle Taser
Law Enforcement Agency	Text	Agency of officer who killed individual that died while in police custody  Source: The Counted	



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