

## Is American criminal justice color-blind? The statistics say no

Written by John Roman  
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Noting that there are racial disparities in the American criminal justice system is hardly newsworthy. From stop-and-frisk to motor vehicle searches at traffic stops to sentencing, racial disparities abound in modern America. However, until the George Zimmerman trial for Trayvon Martin's death, one gaping disparity had received little attention.

Black Americans are far less likely to be adjudicated as justified in using deadly force in a firearm-related death. The difference between rates of justifiable rulings in cases with a white shooter and a black victim and cases with a black shooter and a white victim are astonishing.

In fact, they dwarf every other racial disparity in an already racially unbalanced criminal justice system. The differences are so great that any notion that justice in America is color-blind is at risk.

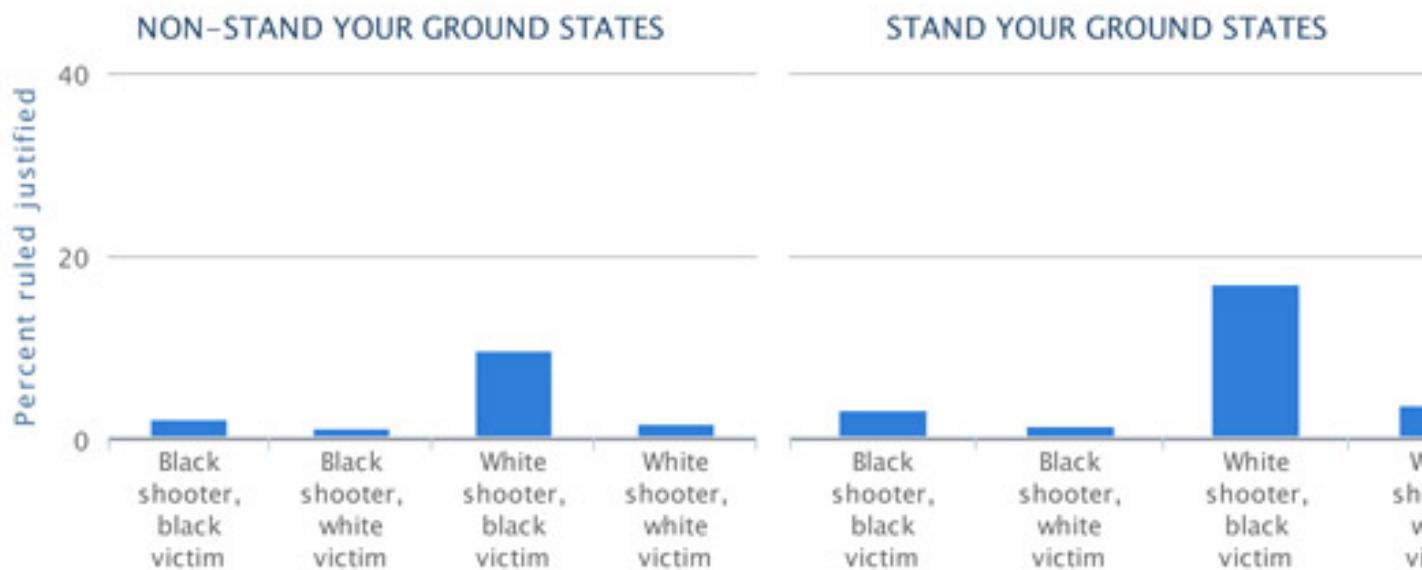
The numbers below require little explanation. Drawing from Supplemental Homicide Reports (SHR) submitted by local law enforcement to the FBI between 2005 and 2010, we see that in cases with a white shooter and a white victim, the shooting is ruled to be justified less than 2 percent of the time. If the shooter is black and the victim is white, the rate of justifiable homicide rulings drops to almost 1 percent. However, if the shooter is white and the victim is black, it is ruled justified in 9.5 percent of cases in non-Stand Your Ground (SYG) states. In SYG states, the rate is even higher—almost 17 percent.

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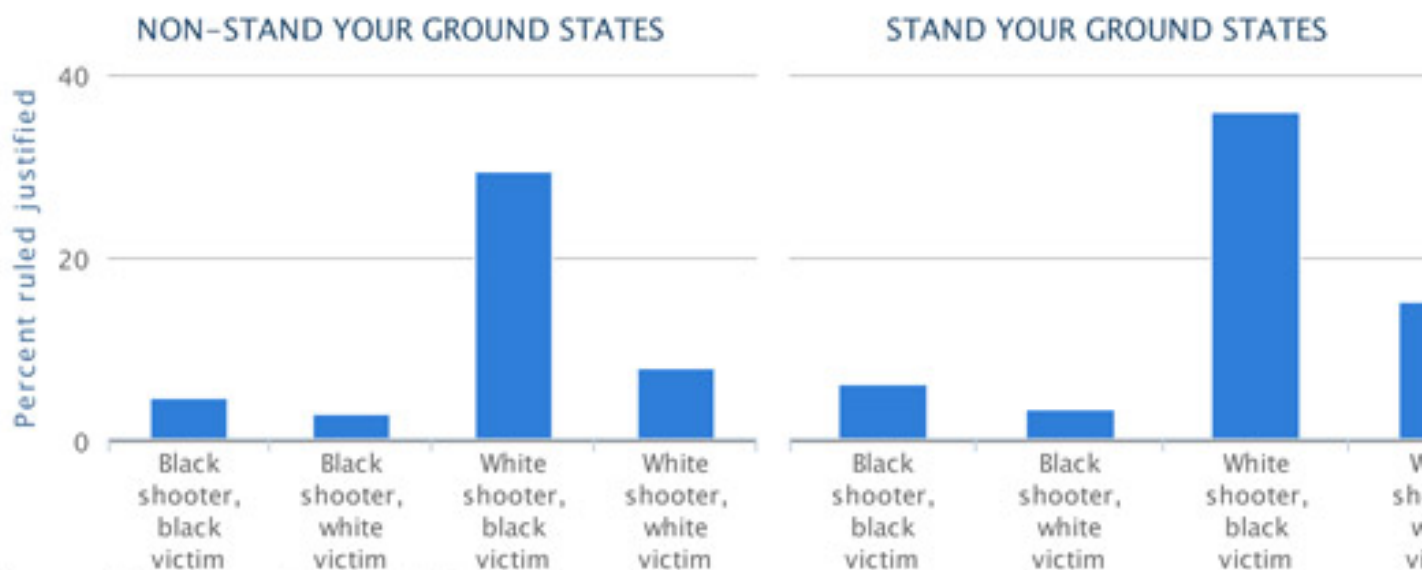
## Gun homicides ruled justified 2005-2010

All cases



## Gun homicides ruled justified 2005-2010

Two strangers who are not law enforcement



Source: FBI Supplemental Homicide Report

<http://www.thanet.com/wordpress/?ID=JohnRoman>