## **Killed, wounded, and missing**

The casualties suffered by the participants in World War I dwarfed those of previous wars: some 8,500,000 soldiers died as a result of wounds and/or disease. The greatest number of casualties and wounds were inflicted by [artillery](https://www.britannica.com/technology/artillery), followed by small arms, and then by poison gas. The [bayonet](https://www.britannica.com/technology/bayonet), which was relied on by the prewar French Army as the decisive weapon, actually produced few casualties. War was increasingly mechanized from 1914 and produced casualties even when nothing important was happening. On even a quiet day on the Western Front, many hundreds of Allied and German soldiers died. The heaviest loss of life for a single day occurred on July 1, 1916, during the [Battle of the Somme](https://www.britannica.com/event/First-Battle-of-the-Somme), when the [British Army](https://www.britannica.com/topic/British-Army) suffered 57,470 casualties.

Sir [Winston Churchill](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Winston-Churchill) once described the battles of the Somme and [Verdun](https://www.britannica.com/place/Verdun-France), which were typical of [trench warfare](https://www.britannica.com/topic/trench-warfare) in their [futile](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/futile) and [indiscriminate](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indiscriminate) slaughter, as being waged between double or triple walls of cannons fed by mountains of shells. In an open space surrounded by masses of these guns [large numbers](https://www.britannica.com/topic/large-numbers-1765137) of infantry divisions collided. They fought in this dangerous position until battered into a state of uselessness. Then they were replaced by other divisions. So many men were lost in the process and shattered beyond recognition that there is a French monument at Verdun to the 150,000 unlocated dead who are assumed to be buried in the vicinity.

This kind of [war](https://www.britannica.com/topic/war) made it difficult to prepare accurate casualty lists. There were revolutions in four of the warring countries in 1918, and the attention of the new governments was shifted away from the grim problem of war losses. A completely accurate table of losses may never be compiled. The best available estimates of World War I military casualties are assembled in Table 4.

**Armed forces mobilized and casualties in World War I\***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| \*As reported by the U.S. War Department in February 1924. U.S. casualties as amended by the Statistical Services Center, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Nov. 7, 1957. | | | | | | |
| **country** | **total mobilized forces** | **killed and died** | **wounded** | **prisoners and missing** | **total casualties** | **percentage of mobilized forces in casualties** |
| **Allied and Associated Powers** | | | | | | |
| **Russia** | 12,000,000 | 1,700,000 | 4,950,000 | 2,500,000 | 9,150,000 | 76.3 |
| **British Empire** | 8,904,467 | 908,371 | 2,090,212 | 191,652 | 3,190,235 | 35.8 |
| **France** | 8,410,000 | 1,357,800 | 4,266,000 | 537,000 | 6,160,800 | 73.3 |
| **Italy** | 5,615,000 | 650,000 | 947,000 | 600,000 | 2,197,000 | 39.1 |
| **United States** | 4,355,000 | 116,516 | 204,002 | 4,500 | 323,018 | 8.1 |
| **Japan** | 800,000 | 300 | 907 | 3 | 1,210 | 0.2 |
| **Romania** | 750,000 | 335,706 | 120,000 | 80,000 | 535,706 | 71.4 |
| **Serbia** | 707,343 | 45,000 | 133,148 | 152,958 | 331,106 | 46.8 |
| **Belgium** | 267,000 | 13,716 | 44,686 | 34,659 | 93,061 | 34.9 |
| **Greece** | 230,000 | 5,000 | 21,000 | 1,000 | 27,000 | 11.7 |
| **Portugal** | 100,000 | 7,222 | 13,751 | 12,318 | 33,291 | 33.3 |
| **Montenegro** | 50,000 | 3,000 | 10,000 | 7,000 | 20,000 | 40.0 |
| **total** | 42,188,810 | 5,142,631 | 12,800,706 | 4,121,090 | 22,064,427 | 52.3 |
| **Central Powers** | | | | | | |
| **Germany** | 11,000,000 | 1,773,700 | 4,216,058 | 1,152,800 | 7,142,558 | 64.9 |
| **Austria-Hungary** | 7,800,000 | 1,200,000 | 3,620,000 | 2,200,000 | 7,020,000 | 90.0 |
| **Turkey** | 2,850,000 | 325,000 | 400,000 | 250,000 | 975,000 | 34.2 |
| **Bulgaria** | 1,200,000 | 87,500 | 152,390 | 27,029 | 266,919 | 22.2 |
| **total** | 22,850,000 | 3,386,200 | 8,388,448 | 3,629,829 | 15,404,477 | 67.4 |
| **Grand total** | **65,038,810** | **8,528,831** | **21,189,154** | **7,750,919** | **37,468,904** | **57.5** |

Similar uncertainties exist about the number of civilian deaths attributable to the war. There were no agencies established to keep records of these fatalities, but it is clear that the displacement of peoples through the movement of the war in Europe and in [Asia Minor](https://www.britannica.com/place/Anatolia), accompanied as it was in 1918 by the most destructive outbreak of [influenza](https://www.britannica.com/science/influenza) in history, led to the deaths of large numbers. It has been estimated that the number of civilian deaths attributable to the war was higher than the military casualties, or around 13,000,000. These civilian deaths were largely caused by [starvation](https://www.britannica.com/science/starvation), exposure, disease, military encounters, and massacres.