



Violent Deaths Involving Multiple Victims in California, 2017-2018

Vital statistics data are collected from death certificates for all violent deaths that occur in California. Enhanced surveillance through CaIVDRS is completed for a subset of participating counties by linking vital statistics data to supplemental data abstracted from coroner and medical examiner reports, toxicology reports, and law enforcement reports. Circumstances that contributed to the death that were documented in these reports were abstracted from this supplemental data and included in the surveillance system. This additional data can address the **who**, **where**, **when** and **how** of the deaths to help us try to understand **why** they occurred.

Violent death events involving more than one victim are linked into a single incident in CaIVDRS. In order to be considered a single incident, the two (or more) related deaths must result from injuries occurring within 24 hours of each other. This linkage allows for the ability to gain greater insight into incidents involving more than one related death. These multiple victim incidents (e.g., multiple homicides, homicide(s) followed by suicide, multiple suicides) are of particular concern due, in part, to the emotional and economic impact multiple deaths can have on families and communities. Identifying common factors involved in these particularly violent incidents can provide opportunities for prevention of such incidents in the future. This document summarizes selected demographic and circumstance data for participating CaIVDRS counties.

Multiple Victim Incidents in California, 2017-2018

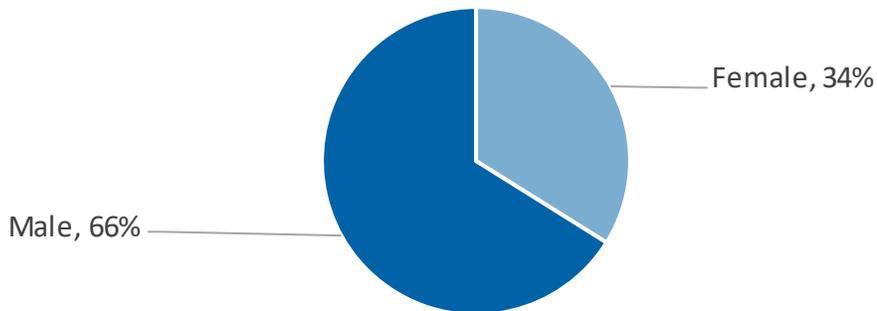
From 2017-2018, there were 13,547 violent deaths reported across California with the majority being single suicide and single homicide. Among CaIVDRS participating counties, 322 violent deaths were identified as being involved in a multiple victim incident (102 deaths in 2017 among three counties and 220 deaths in 2018 among 21 counties). These 322 deaths were the result of 145 incidents. The majority of incidents involved two deaths, with six deaths being the maximum number abstracted in a single incident. Of these incidents involving multiple deaths, most were characterized as deaths in a multiple homicide (47%) and single homicide followed by suicide (34%).

ABOUT CaIVDRS

The California Violent Death Reporting System (CaIVDRS) is housed in the Injury and Violence Prevention Branch in the California Department of Public Health. CaIVDRS is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to conduct statewide surveillance on violent deaths that occur in California. Violent deaths include homicide (including legal intervention deaths that result from law enforcement acting in the line of duty), suicide, unintentional firearm deaths, and deaths of undetermined intent that meet the CaIVDRS definition. CaIVDRS collects data from multiple sources (i.e., death certificates, medical examiner/coroner reports, and law enforcement reports) in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the circumstances surrounding these deaths. The goal of this system is to promote development of data-driven public health prevention strategies that aim to reduce the number of violent deaths that occur each year.

Incident Type	n	%
Multiple homicide	150	47%
Single homicide followed by suicide	110	34%
Multiple homicides followed by suicide	45	14%
Other [Multiple suicide (n=4), Multiple legal intervention (n=4), Multiple homicide followed by legal intervention (n=4), Multiple undetermined intent deaths (n=3), and Mutual homicide (n=2)]	17	5%
Total	322	100%

Among All Multiple Victim Violent Deaths Incidents (n=322)



85%
involved
firearms

25%
of deaths were
gang related

22%
involved more
than two deaths

22%
of victims were
also a homicide suspect
in the incident

42%
of homicide suspects
attempted/completed
suicide

15%
of victims were
perpetrators of interpersonal
violence in the previous month
(includes homicide of partner or
previous partner followed
by suicide)

Definitions

This document further defines and describes two distinct groupings of multiple victim incidents:

Multiple Homicide Incidents (n=160) – Includes: Multiple homicide (n=150), Multiple legal intervention (n=4), Multiple homicide followed by legal intervention (n=4), and Mutual homicide (n=2)

Homicide(s) followed by Suicide Incidents (n=155) – Includes: Single homicide followed by suicide (n=110), and Multiple homicide followed by suicide (n=45)

	Multiple Homicide (n=160)	Homicide(s) Followed by Suicide (n=155)
Median Age of Victim (Years)	32	49
Male Victim	80.6%	52.3%
Primary Weapon - Firearm	86.9%	85.2%
Diagnosed Mental Health Problem	1.9%	7.7%
Intimate Partner Violence	8.8%	40.6%
Argument before Incident	21.9%	23.9%
Gang-related	48.8%	1.9%

Characteristics of Homicide(s) Followed by Suicide

Most homicides followed by suicides involve interpersonal violence and/or the suspect is known and close to the victim. The suicide victim is also the suspect in the incident.

- 75.9% of homicide victims were female while 88.2% of suspects/suicide victims were male
- 70.1% of homicide victims experienced intimate partner violence
- 80.1% of homicide suspects/suicide victims were either an intimate partner, ex intimate partner, or family member of the homicide victim
- 29.0% of homicide suspect/suicide victims were a current spouse or intimate partner of the homicide victim

Characteristics of Multiple Homicides

About half of multiple homicides were gang-related and the relationship between victim and suspect was unknown or missing.

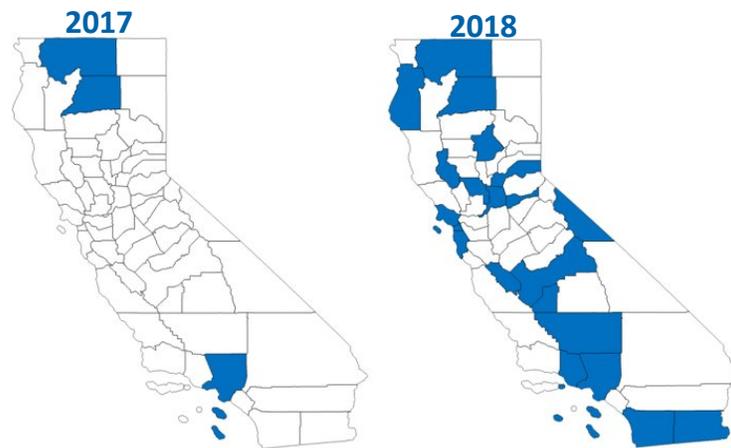
- 80.6% of multiple homicide victims were male and 61.3% of the suspects were male
- 67.5% of multiple homicide victims were reported as having an unknown type of relationship with the suspect or the information was missing
- 8.8% of multiple homicide victims experienced intimate partner violence
- 48.8% of incidents were gang-related
- 9.4% of multiple homicide victims used a weapon in the incident

Opportunities for Prevention of Multiple Victim Incidents

- **Focus on Firearms:** The fatal weapon for most victims (85%) of multiple victim incidents across incident types was a firearm. Strategies to facilitate safe firearm storage or those that may limit access to firearms may help to prevent these deaths in the future.
- **Focus on Risk Factors:** It may be beneficial to address risk factors that are relevant to the different types of incidents so that prevention efforts can be focused on individuals and groups who are most at risk of violent death. For example:
 - **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):** Implement strategies to prevent IPV and increase awareness for the need to promote healthy relationships. Increase awareness of and access to resources for victims of IPV.
 - **Gang-Related Violence:** Often associated with at-risk youth and younger victims, prevention strategies should identify various points of intervention in the life course of youth and young adults at risk of exposure to gang-related violence.

Notes:

2017-2018 CalVDRS County Participation



CalVDRS data collection began in 2017 with three pilot counties (Los Angeles, Shasta, and Siskiyou) and expanded to include 21 counties in 2018 (Amador, Butte, Fresno, Humboldt, Imperial, Kern, Kings, Lake, Los Angeles, Marin, Placer, Riverside, Sacramento, San Benito, San Diego, San Francisco, San Mateo, Shasta, Siskiyou, Ventura, and Yolo). CalVDRS is supported by a grant funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (Grant 5 NU17CE924854).

Resources

[Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)

[Domestic Violence Hotline](#)

[Firearm Violence Prevention](#)

[Intimate Partner Violence Prevention](#)

[National Gang Center](#)