



Violent Deaths Involving Multiple Victims in California, 2020

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 data abstracted from coroner and medical examiner reports, toxicology reports, and law enforcement reports. Circumstances that contributed to the deaths that were documented in these reports were included in the surveillance system. This additional data can address the **who, what, where, when, and how** of the deaths to help us try to understand **why** they occurred and prevent similar deaths from occurring in the future.

Within CaIVDRS, violent death events involving more than one victim are defined as two (or more) related deaths that result from injuries occurring within 24 hours of each other. Information on the circumstances surrounding each of the deaths is linked for these events. 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 violent deaths involving multiple victims for participating CaIVDRS counties in 2020.

Multiple Victim Incidents in California, 2020

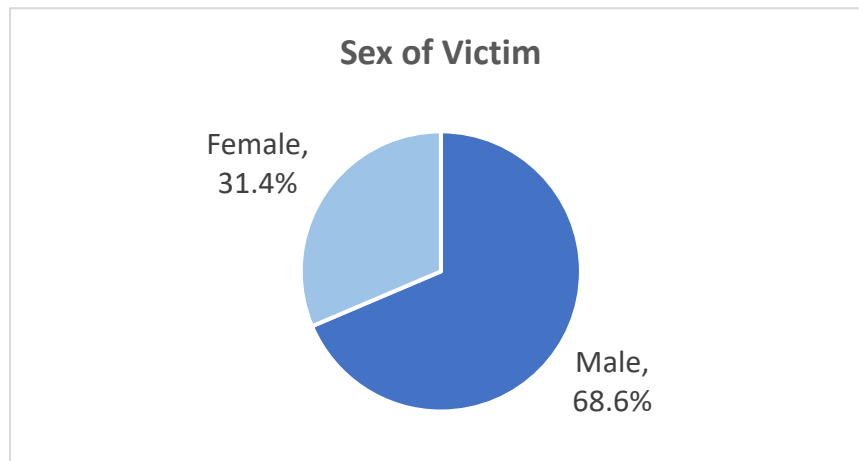
In 2020, there were 6,902 violent deaths reported across California. Among the 34 counties that participated in CaIVDRS in 2020 (see Notes), multi-source data was collected and abstracted for 4,129 violent deaths with the majority being single suicide (63.0%) and single homicide (27.4%). A total of 185 violent deaths were identified as being involved in a multiple victim incident, representing 4.5% of surveilled cases. These 185 deaths were the result of 88 incidents. The majority of incidents involved two deaths, with three deaths being the maximum number in a single incident. Of these incidents involving multiple deaths, most were characterized as deaths in a multiple homicide (44.3%) or single homicide followed by suicide (38.9%).

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 [includes Homicide followed by legal intervention (n=4) and Mutual homicide/shootout (n=2)]	82	44.3%
Single homicide followed by suicide	72	38.9%
Multiple homicides followed by suicide	21	11.4%
Other [Homicide followed by undetermined death (n=2), and Multiple suicide (n=8)]	10	5.4%
Total	185	100%

Among All Multiple Victim Violent Death Incidents



79%
involved
firearms

13%
of deaths were
gang related

15%
involved more
than two deaths

29%
of victims were
also a homicide suspect
in the incident

35%
of homicide victims had a suspect
who attempted/completed
suicide in the incident

10%
of victims were perpetrators of
interpersonal violence in the
previous month (*includes
homicide of current or former
partner followed by suicide*)

Definitions

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

Multiple Homicide Incidents (n=82) – Includes: Multiple homicide (n=76), Multiple homicide followed by legal intervention (n=4), and Mutual homicide/shootout (n=2)

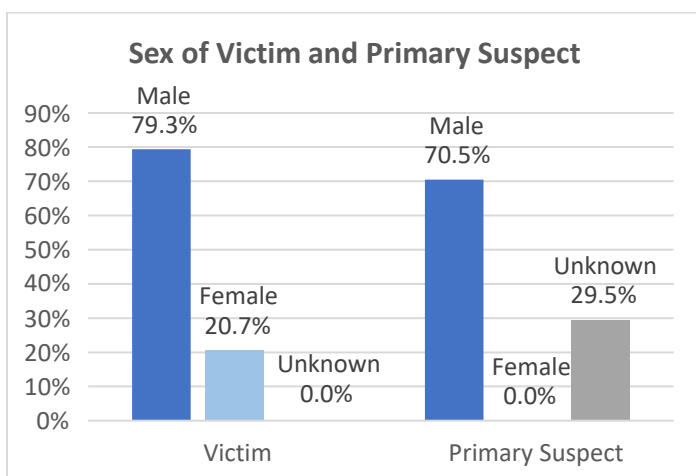
Homicide(s) followed by Suicide Incidents (n=93) – Includes: Single homicide followed by suicide (n=72) and Multiple homicide followed by suicide (n=21)

	Multiple Homicide (n=82)	Homicide(s) Followed by Suicide (n=93)
Median Age of Victim (Years)	33	42
Male Victim	79.3%	61.3%
Fatal Weapon was Firearm	85.4%	77.4%
Diagnosed Mental Health Problem	0%	15.1%
Argument before Incident	22.0%	19.4%

Characteristics of Multiple Homicides

Nearly a third of multiple homicides were gang-related and nearly half of the suspects were not identified.

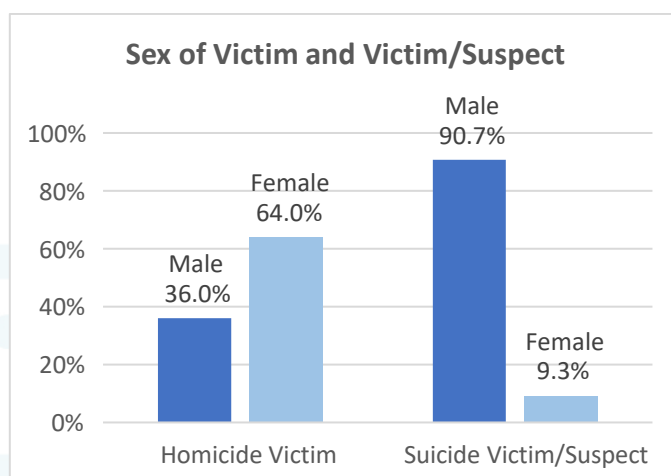
- **79.3%** of multiple homicide victims were male
- **70.5%** of the primary suspects were male and **29.5%** were unknown
- **47.5%** of multiple homicide victims were reported as having an unknown type of relationship with the suspect or the information was missing
- **7.3%** of multiple homicide victims died as a result of intimate partner violence
- **29.3%** of incidents were gang-related
- **14.6%** of multiple homicide victims used a weapon in the incident



Characteristics of Homicide(s) Followed by Suicide

Most homicides followed by suicides involved interpersonal violence and/or the suspect was known and close to the victim. The suicide victim was also the suspect in all of these incidents.

- **64.0%** of homicide victims were female
- **90.7%** of suspects/suicide victims were male
- **60.0%** of homicide victims died as a result of intimate partner violence (IPV)
- **86.0%** of homicide victims were either an intimate partner, ex intimate partner, or family member of the homicide suspect/suicide victim
- **36.0%** of homicide victims were a *current* spouse/intimate partner of the homicide suspect/suicide victim



Opportunities for Prevention of Multiple Victim Incidents

- **Focus on Firearms:** The fatal weapon for most victims (79%) of multiple victim incidents across incident types was a firearm. Strategies to facilitate a culture of firearm safety (e.g., safe and secure gun storage, training and licensing for owners, engagement with responsible gun dealers and owners in identifying solutions to violence) or those that may limit access to firearms in certain cases (e.g., youth, individuals at risk of harming themselves or others) may help to prevent these deaths in the future.
- **Focus on Shared 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. In multiple homicides, most victims and primary suspects were male (79% and 71%, respectively). No reported suspects in multiple victim incidents were female, but females were more likely to be a victim in homicide(s) followed by suicide and many as a result of IPV. These could be target populations for prevention strategies. Examples include:
 - **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, often male, 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.

Resources

[Firearm Violence Prevention](#)

[Domestic Violence Hotline](#)

[Gang Involvement Prevention](#)

[988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:](#)
[Call or text 988](#)

[Intimate Partner Violence](#)
[Prevention](#)

[National Gang Center](#)

[Crisis Text Line:](#)

[Office on Women's Health:](#)
[Relationships and Safety](#)

[Parent's Quick Reference Card:](#)
[Recognizing and Preventing](#)
[Gang Involvement](#)

[Text HOME to 741741](#)

Notes:

2020 CalVDRS County Participation: CalVDRS data collection began in 2017 with three pilot counties (Los Angeles, Shasta, and Siskiyou) and expanded to include 34 counties in 2020 (Amador, Butte, Colusa, Contra Costa, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Kern, Kings, Lake, Lassen, Los Angeles, Marin, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Mono, Orange, Placer, Sacramento, San Benito, San Diego, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Siskiyou, Sonoma, Stanislaus, Tehama, Trinity, 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 1 NU17CE010129).

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For more information contact
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