

Data Informs the Prevention of Violent Death

Violent death is a major public health issue that is devastating for individuals, families, and communities in addition to being costly and preventable.

- Violent deaths take many forms, including homicides, suicides (a self-directed form of violence), and incidents that involve multiple victims, such as mass shootings and other multiple homicides, as well as homicide followed by suicide events.
- In 2021, more than 6,700 violent deaths occurred in California, which is more than 18 violent deaths each day.
- Violence affects individuals, families, and entire communities. Exposure to violence can lead to an array of negative health outcomes in individuals. Communities with high levels of violence, including mass shootings, can be traumatized by these experiences and show reductions in community wellbeing.
- The medical cost alone associated with violent deaths was estimated to be over \$46 million in 2020. When combined with the value of life lost, the economic impact to California exceeds \$70 billion per year¹.
- Preventing violent deaths can not only save lives, but also save money and prevent subsequent community trauma that may foster more violence.

CalVDRS helps prevent violence by highlighting the circumstances surrounding violent death.

- Having accurate and detailed information about violent death is the first step to prevention.
- CalVDRS combines information from vital records, law enforcement, and coroners/medical examiners into one confidential database for a more comprehensive understanding of violent death, including:
 - Life stressors that contributed to a suicide death (e.g., physical health, job or financial problems).
 - Circumstances surrounding a homicide (e.g., location, precipitated by another crime, argument).
 - Whether drugs and/or alcohol contributed to the death.
 - The relationship between a suspect and victim (e.g., intimate partner, family member, stranger).
 - Whether more than one victim was involved in the incident (e.g., multiple homicide, homicide followed by suicide).
- CalVDRS data is routinely shared with local health jurisdictions, county behavioral health departments, and county offices of education to help guide local decision-making and program planning regarding violence prevention.
- CalVDRS data has also been used to support wide-ranging statewide violence prevention efforts, including the prevention of gun violence, youth suicide, Veteran suicide, and violence against women.

CalVDRS data has been used in many ways to guide prevention program planning.

- ➔ To help organizations coordinate local firearm-violence prevention efforts and identify groups and areas most at risk.
- ➔ To educate on the need for awareness of pressing issues, such as suicide awareness in CA counties.
- ➔ To identify the need to improve data collection efforts regarding demographics, such as sexual orientation and gender identity, so that we have a stronger understanding of the victims of violence.

CalVDRS expansion could benefit additional counties with access to data-driven prevention.

- CalVDRS is funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as part of the [National Violent Death Reporting System \(NVDRS\)](#) and began collecting data in 2016 from 3 California counties. Since then, CalVDRS has grown, although it is not yet a statewide program; 35 of California's 58 counties now participate in CalVDRS and have access to data to help prevent violent deaths.
- Although these 35 CalVDRS counties represent 69% of the violent death in California, additional counties voluntarily joining these efforts will increase the information available on violent deaths and would enable all 58 counties to make data-driven decisions to stop violent death from occurring in their communities.

CalVDRS data resources

- CalVDRS data is used to create annual data resources housed on the [CalVDRS website](#), including:
 - [Homicide in California, 2020](#)
 - [Suicide in California, 2020](#)
 - [Infographic: Suicide in California, 2020](#)
 - [Firearm-Related Deaths in California, 2020](#)
 - [Violent Deaths Involving Multiple Victims in California, 2020](#)
 - [CalVDRS Deaths](#) (full CalVDRS profile as well as individual county-level profiles for all counties providing data)

References

1. WISQARS: Cost of Injury Data. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. Accessed January 20, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/cost/>

For more information on CalVDRS please contact CalVDRS@cdph.ca.gov or visit the [CalVDRS website](#).