

Frequently Asked Questions

Data Source and Methods

What is the source of the data in this dashboard?

The source of this data is the California Integrated Vital Records System, made available by the California Department of Public Health's Center for Health Statistics and Informatics.

Why does the dashboard focus on Alameda County residents rather than where the incident occurred?

Focusing on residents allows us to understand how violence affects the people and communities who live in Alameda County, regardless of where an incident happens. Data reflect deaths based on residence at the time of death, which aligns with how public health agencies report injury and disease data and allows us to calculate population-based rates. This approach also helps inform prevention strategies to reduce violence in the communities most affected.

How often is the data updated?

The data is currently updated annually. The latest update was in January 2026. We plan to move to quarterly updates in the future to provide more timely information.

How does the dashboard determine suicides, homicides, and firearm deaths?

The dashboard determines suicides, homicides, and firearm-related deaths based on information listed in death certificates. The Coroner's Bureau investigates each death and records the underlying cause, which is reported to state and federal public health agencies.

Why are small values not shown?

To protect individual privacy, the dashboard does not display specific values when the number of deaths is 10 or fewer (marked with <11). Showing very small counts could make it possible to identify individuals, especially within specific demographic groups or geographic areas.

Rates based on small counts may be unstable and have wide confidence intervals. For this reason, rates calculated from counts between 10 and 20 are shown with a single asterisk (*) to indicate caution when interpreting rates or making comparisons across groups. Counts of 10 or fewer are suppressed, and rates are not shown (marked with **).

Understanding the Data

What do counts and rates mean?

Counts are the total number of deaths.

For example, counts can tell you how many firearm homicides occurred in a given year, or how many people in a specific demographic group died by suicide. However, counts do not account for differences in population size across demographic groups or geographic areas. This means that it is difficult to make comparisons using counts alone.

Rates take population size into account.

Rates allow for comparisons across groups or places with different numbers of residents. Rates help show which groups or areas are most impacted by violence. Rates in this dashboard are shown per 100,000 residents and are age-adjusted. They account for differences in age structure across demographic groups, time periods, or geographic areas.

Why do counts and rates sometimes show different patterns?

Counts and rates can show different patterns because population size varies across demographic groups and Alameda County communities.

Counts reflect the total number of deaths, which may be higher in places or groups with larger populations. Rates reflect how common violence is within a population, which can be higher in smaller groups or areas even when the total number of deaths is lower.

Both are included in the dashboard to help users understand the overall scope of violence and how it affects different communities across Alameda County.

How Geographic Areas are Defined

Which cities and unincorporated places are included in the dashboard?

The dashboard includes all cities and unincorporated communities in Alameda County. This includes census-designated places and the remainder of Alameda County.

Geographic data reflect where Alameda County residents lived at the time of death, not where the incident occurred.

How are Oakland regions defined in the dashboard?

Oakland regions are defined according to the boundaries used by Alameda County Public Health Department for reporting and analysis. While these regions may not capture every neighborhood nuance, they provide a consistent way to display and compare data across the city.

Data Limitations

Gender Identity

Gender identity data has only been collected on California death certificates since 2022. Current data does not accurately reflect an individual's gender identity. Alameda County Public Health Department strives toward gathering inclusive data that reflects the lived experiences of our community members.

Race and Ethnicity

Data for American Indian/Alaska Native and Pacific Islander populations are often insufficient to display due to small populations in Alameda County. Statewide data does indicate elevated suicide and homicide rates, which is important to monitor.

Geographic Limitations

The dashboard focuses on Alameda County, with more detailed data available for Oakland where violence is most concentrated. Smaller numbers in other cities limit our ability to provide in-depth, city-level analysis. Future updates will explore incident-level data across Alameda County, including maps to show where violence is most concentrated.

Cautions in Interpretation

This dashboard shows patterns over time and differences across demographic groups and places. These can suggest differences and emerging trends, but they do not necessarily represent statistically significant or meaningful differences in risk. Estimates are subject to random chance, especially for smaller populations or over short time periods.

These visualizations are intended to inform prevention strategies and do not capture all factors that influence risk across different populations. Users should interpret observed differences with caution and consider the broader context behind the data.

Confidence intervals (CI) are included to show uncertainty surrounding rates. You can view them by hovering over a chart or by downloading the data. All confidence intervals are calculated at a 95% level, meaning that the true rates are likely within the shown range. Wider confidence intervals indicate less precise estimates and should be interpreted with caution. Rates with especially high confidence intervals are marked with an asterisk (*) in the data label.