

# Drive-By America



**Second Edition**

July 2010

**The Violence Policy Center** (VPC) is a national non-profit educational organization that conducts research and public education on violence in America and provides information and analysis to policymakers, journalists, advocates, and the general public. This study was funded with the support of The California Wellness Foundation. Past studies released by the VPC include:

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- *The U.S. Gun Industry and Others Unknown—Evidence Debunking the Gun Industry’s Claim that Osama bin Laden Got His 50 Caliber Sniper Rifles from the U.S. Afghan-Aid Program* (February 2002)
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- *Unintended Consequences: Pro-Handgun Experts Prove That Handguns Are a Dangerous Choice For Self-Defense* (November 2001)
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- *Guns For Felons: How the NRA Works to Rearm Criminals* (March 2000)
- *One Shot, One Kill: Civilian Sales of Military Sniper Rifles* (May 1999)
- *Cease Fire: A Comprehensive Strategy to Reduce Firearms Violence* (Revised, October 1997)

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## Section One: Introduction

Drive-by shootings are commonly defined as an incident in which the shooter fires a firearm from a motor vehicle at another person, vehicle, building, or another stationary object.<sup>1</sup>

This study is a follow-up to the July 2007 Violence Policy Center (VPC) report *Drive-By America*, which, using a limited sample of information, offered for the first time a nationwide overview of drive-by shootings.<sup>2</sup>

Three years after the publication of the original VPC study, there remains no national data on the prevalence of drive-by shootings, those who commit them, those who are killed and injured as a result of them, the firearms used, where they take place, or at what times they most often occur.

The goal of this new edition of *Drive-By America* is to continue the VPC's efforts to fill the information gap surrounding drive-by shootings while illustrating the need for improved data collection regarding this specific category of firearms violence.

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<sup>1</sup> Dedel, Kelly, "Drive-By Shootings," *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police, Problem-Specific Guides Series, No. 47*, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, March 2007. The publication notes, "Many drive-by shootings involve multiple suspects and multiple victims. Using a vehicle allows the shooter to approach the intended target without being noticed and then to speed away before anyone reacts. The vehicle also offers some protection in the case of return fire. In some situations, drive-by shootings are gang-related; in others, they are the result of road rage or personal disputes between neighbors, acquaintances, or strangers and are not related to gang membership."

<sup>2</sup> National homicide data, including age, race, circumstance, weapon type, and relationship based on initial police reporting is compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation through the Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) of the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). National SHR data does not include drive-by shootings in its circumstances (although such information is tallied by the California Department of Justice for its statewide UCR report as detailed in Section Three of this report). The National Center for Health Statistics compiles data from death certificates on the "cause or mechanism" of the following injuries: unintentional, violence-related, homicide, legal intervention, suicide, undetermined intent. Neither of these data collection tools segregates drive-by shootings from their homicide totals. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) compiles and combines data from medical examiners, coroners, police, crime labs, and death certificate registrars in 17 states and often includes such information. NVDRS data has been collected in Alaska, California, Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin. (For more information on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Violent Death Reporting System and states where the program is currently federally funded, please see <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/NVDRS/index.html>.) Unlike other federal violence surveillance systems, NVDRS does code for drive-by shooting where it can be ascertained from the data set (for example, whereas police reports would be more likely to report such information, death certificates would not).

From July 1, 2008, through December 31, 2008, the Violence Policy Center used the Google news search engine to collect every reported news article that contained the term “drive by.”<sup>3</sup> From these results, the VPC removed all results not related to a drive-by shooting incident (for example, extraneous results included news reports of football games detailing a “drive by” one team against another, etc.). Recognizing the limitations of the survey tools used, and taking into account prior studies looking at the number of drive-by shootings in specific jurisdictions, it is likely that the number of shootings is dramatically underreported.<sup>4</sup> The number of reported instances may also be influenced by local media focus.

During the six-month period covered in this report, 733 drive-by shooting incidents were reported in the news media as identified by Google, claiming 154 lives and injuring 631 individuals.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Google press office, Google News includes articles from more than 25,000 news sources in approximately 30 languages and more than 70 editions. Of these, more than 5,000 are English-language news sources.

<sup>4</sup> Prior studies have primarily used police reports to tally the number of drive-by shootings in a given locality. Such reports would include not only incidents in which victims or potential victims were present, but property damage reported to law enforcement as the result of drive-by attacks. News coverage of drive-by shootings is far more likely when victims or potential victims are present, but far less likely when only property damage occurs from the incident. As a result, news reports would most likely dramatically underreport the total number of drive-by shootings.

**Son: "She Was Covered in Blood," East Austin, TX, November 19, 2008**

Nearly a dozen bullets penetrated a house injuring an elderly woman taking a shower. Ella Gonzales, 84, was inside the house when the shots were fired. One of the bullets hit her neck. The family did not know why the house or Ella Gonzales was targeted. "I could not believe, I didn't want to believe that something like that could happen to my mother..." said the woman's son. (*KVUE.com*)

**Four Nabbed in Drive-By Slaying of 7-year-old Girl, Salt Lake City, UT, July 6, 2008**

Seven-year-old Maria Del Carmen Menchaca was playing outside her home on the sidewalk around 6:30 PM when she became the unintended victim of a fatal shot fired from a black SUV. Police said the shooting was gang-related and may have stemmed from threats reported in the neighborhood earlier that day. Said one neighbor, "You don't want to let your kids play outside. Bullets don't have eyes." (*The Salt Lake Tribune*)

**Bullet from Drive-By Shooting Injures 5-Month-Old Minneapolis Girl, Minneapolis, MN, August 7, 2008**

A five-month-old girl, sitting in her grandmother's lap, was shot in the thigh by a stray bullet from a drive-by shooting between two cars near Powderhorn Park in Minneapolis around 8:00 PM. "This was a family enjoying the balmy evening in the park, and obviously their night was ruined," said police. (*Star Tribune*)

**Pregnant Teen Killed in Drive-By Shooting, St. Louis, MO, September 19, 2008**

Rosheena Frenchie, a pregnant 18-year-old, was killed, and her boyfriend was wounded, in a drive-by shooting as they walked down a sidewalk around 11:00 PM. Frenchie, who was four months pregnant, was shot in the chest and fatally wounded. Doctors were unsuccessful in saving the unborn child. Frenchie's boyfriend was wounded in the hand. The shooters were believed to have fired because of an earlier altercation with Frenchie's boyfriend. (*STLtoday.com*)

**Teen Takes Stand in Hearing for Fatal Drive-By Shooting, Tulsa, OK, September 7, 2008**

Five teenagers traveling in a red Chevrolet Caprice were fired on by a gunman in second car who mistakenly believed the teens were members of a rival gang. One 16-year-old passenger, Donovan Crutcher, died, and his brother was paralyzed from his injuries. Another victim lost an eye and the use of an arm. The shooter used an SKS assault rifle with a high-capacity ammunition magazine. (*Tulsa World*)

**Drive-By Shooting Hits Elderly Man Outside Grocery Store, College Park, GA, October 17, 2008**

A 74-year-old man was rushed to the hospital after being shot outside a grocery store in Fulton County. Authorities said that the victim was hit by gunfire coming from a green SUV outside the store. One witness said he heard five rapid-fire gunshots and saw the man lying on the ground, shot in the shoulder. (*Myfoxatlanta.com*)

**Madison Drive-By Victim was Wounded Twice, Madison, IL, October 7, 2008**

Twelve-year-old Delarrian Davis was struck twice by bullets and died while doing school work in his home. The alleged shooter, Marcus T. "Butterhead" Powell, was arrested and charged with first-degree murder. Police believe that Davis' stepfather was Powell's intended target. (*suburbanjournals.stltoday.com*)

**Girl Shopping for Birthday Present Shot in Drive-By, Jacksonville, FL, August, 27, 2008**

Fourteen-year-old Mary Hampton was on her way home from buying a birthday present with her friend, 17-year-old Jaquelle Erica Stinson, when the two girls were shot in a random drive-by shooting. They were treated and released for gunshot wounds to their legs. "I was getting a birthday present, I was about to go home," said Mary. (*firstcoastnews.com*)

**Flint Woman Shot in Drive-By was Protecting her Children, Mother Says, Flint, MI, December 27, 2008**

Shanicka Martin was shot once while trying to protect her two young children after a drive-by shooter fired 15 rounds from an assault rifle into her home. When the shooting started, Martin ran into the bedroom where her two daughters, ages one and two, were sleeping. Martin told her mother that she saw the bullet heading her way as she opened the bedroom door: "She said, 'Mama, I looked at the bullet and just wanted to get to my kids.'" (*The Flint Journal*)

**18-Year-Old Killed in Minneapolis Alley Drive-By was Shot in Heart, Minneapolis, MN, October 11, 2008**

High school student Jesse Mickelson was killed in the alley behind his home while retrieving a football for a group of kids playing at his cousin's birthday party. Mickelson's guardian, Heidi Crandell, ran through a group of terrified children to reach the teen, who was lying in the alley, shot in the chest. Crandell said that she suspected the gunshots were meant for the residents of a nearby house. (*The Star Tribune*)

## Section Two: State-by-State Comparisons of Drive-By Shootings

During the study period, California led the nation in the number of reported drive-by shootings with 148 drive-by shootings, killing 40 and injuring 129. Following California were: Texas, 60 drive-by shootings, killing six and injuring 52; Florida, 48 drive-by shootings, killing 10 and injuring 42; Illinois, 38 drive-by shootings, killing 18 and injuring 53; and, Washington, 38 drive-by shootings, killing three and injuring 21. For a listing of the top 10 states ranked by the number of drive-by shootings, please see Chart One below.

During the study period, there were only four states where no drive-by shootings were reported: Maine, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Wyoming. For a chart of all 50 states listed alphabetically with the number of drive-by shootings, and number of those killed and injured, please see the Appendix.

**Chart One: Top 10 States Ranked by Number of Drive-By Shootings During Study Period**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Drive-Bys</b>	<b>Dead</b>	<b>Injured</b>
1	California	148	40	129
2	Texas	60	6	52
3	Florida	48	10	42
4 (tie)	Illinois	38	18	53
4 (tie)	Washington	38	3	21
6	Oklahoma	25	5	21
7	North Carolina	24	2	16
8	Georgia	23	5	18
9	New York	22	4	27
10	Louisiana	20	4	15

## **Victims, Location, and Time of Day**

During the study period, information was gathered on the number of victims who were under the age of 18, location of the drive-by shooting, and the time of day that the shooting occurred.

### **Age**

More than three quarters of those killed or injured were 18 years of age or older. Of the total of 785 victims dead or injured, 145 (18 percent) were identified as being under the age of 18.

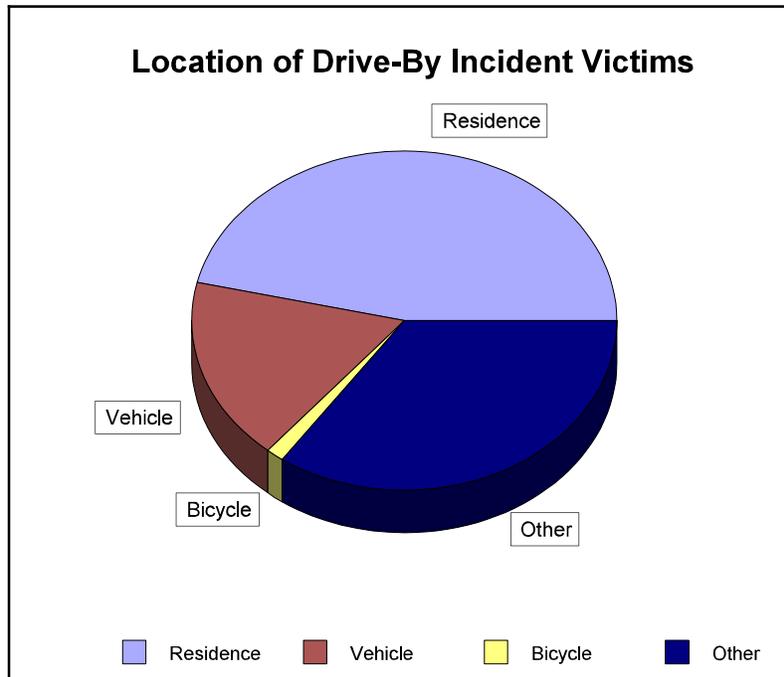
### **Location**

Nearly half of all drive-by shootings occurred at a residence. The location of the shooting victims could be identified in 676 of the 733 instances.

- In nearly half of the incidents (314 out of 676, or 46 percent), the victims were at a residence (either indoors or outdoors).
- Seventeen percent of the incidents (118 of 676) involved shooting at another vehicle.<sup>5</sup>
- In one percent of the incidents, (10 out of 676) the victim was on a bicycle.
- In more than a third (234 out of 676, or 35 percent) of the incidents, the victims were in other locations that included: street corner, parking lot, basketball court, bus stop, vacant lot, fast food restaurant, or other business.

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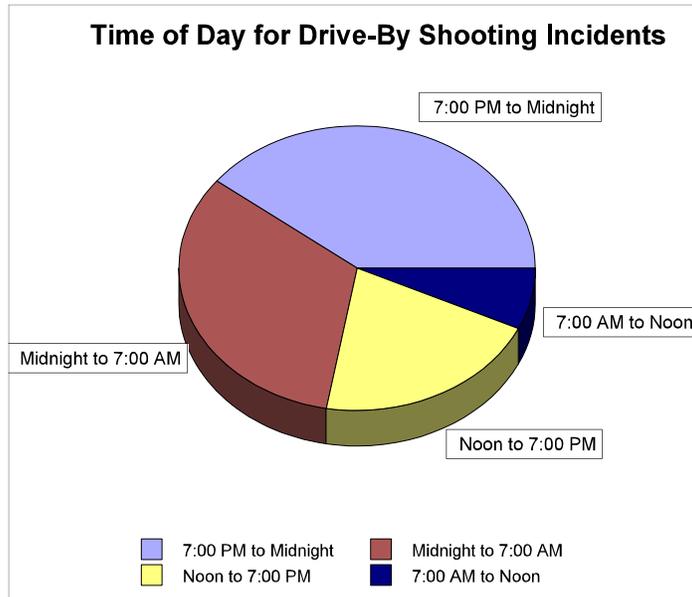
<sup>5</sup> The study *Aggressive Driving: A Report by Louis Mizell, Inc. for the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety*, (See *Aggressive Driving: Three Studies*, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 1997, <http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/agdr3study.pdf>) reviewed 30 major newspapers, reports from 16 police departments, and insurance company claim reports for aggressive driving incidents for the period January 1990 to September 1, 1996, and found that of these 10,037 known aggressive driving incidents, firearms were the most popular weapon used by aggressive drivers. Guns were used in 37 percent of the cases. During the period reviewed "at least 322 incidents of domestic violence were played out on roads and Interstates throughout the country," leading the study to note, "Domestic violence plays a surprisingly large role in aggressive driving."



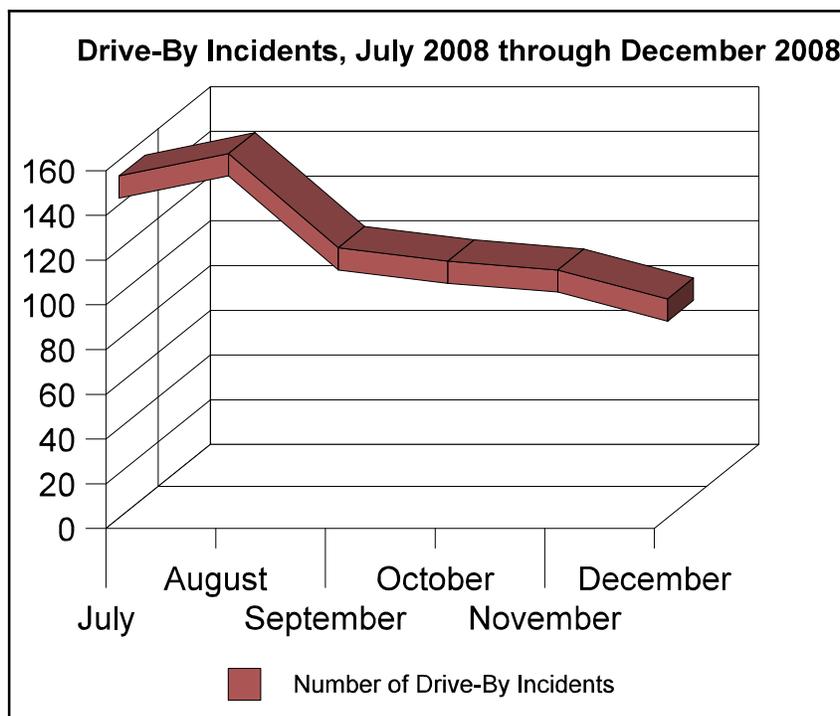
### Time of Day

The most common time for drive-by shootings was between the hours of 7:00 PM. and midnight. The time of day could be identified in 655 out of 733 instances.

- Forty percent (259 out of 655) were between the hours of 7:00 PM and midnight.
- Thirty-three percent (213 out of 655) were between midnight and 7:00 AM.
- Twenty-one percent (138 out of 655) were between noon and 7:00 PM.
- Seven percent (45 out of 655) were between the hours of 7:00 AM and noon.



Drive-by shootings peaked in the month of August and then declined as the months turned colder.



## **Possible Gang Involvement**

News reports mentioned potential gang involvement (either through quotes of law enforcement officials, witnesses, victims, or non-cited reporting by the journalist) in 128 of the 733 drive-by shootings (17 percent).



## **Section Three: California Drive-By Shootings**

During the study period, California led the nation in the number of reported drive-by shootings with 148 drive-by shootings, killing 40 and injuring 129. This section of the study offers more detailed information on drive-by shootings that occurred in the state during the study period.

### **Victims, Location, and Time of Day**

During the study period, information was gathered on the number of victims who were under the age of 18, location of the drive-by shooting, and the time that the shooting occurred.

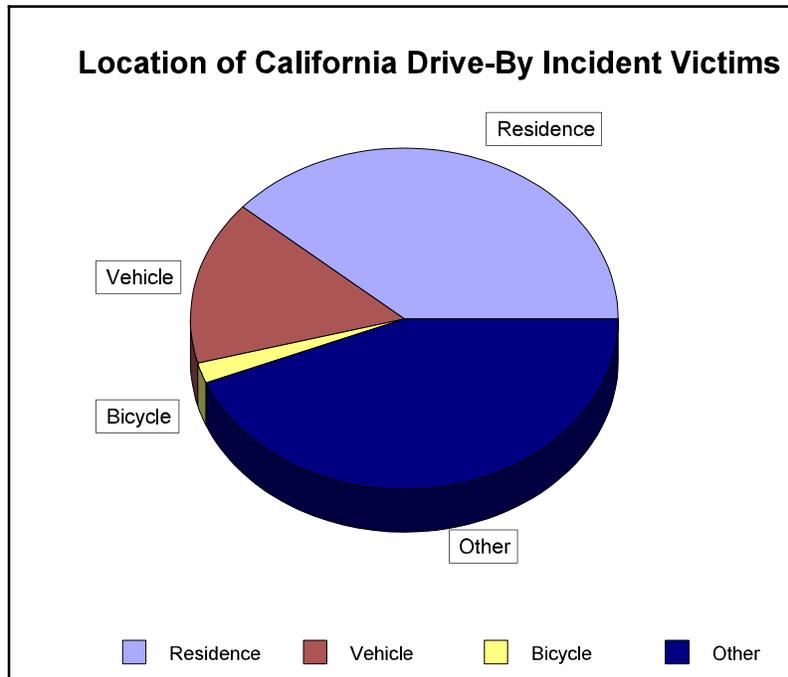
#### **Age**

More than four out of five of those killed or injured were 18 years of age or older. Of the total of 169 victims dead or injured, 28 (17 percent) were identified as being under the age of 18.

#### **Location**

More than one third of all drive-by shootings occurred at a residence. The location of the shooting victims could be identified in 142 of the 148 instances.

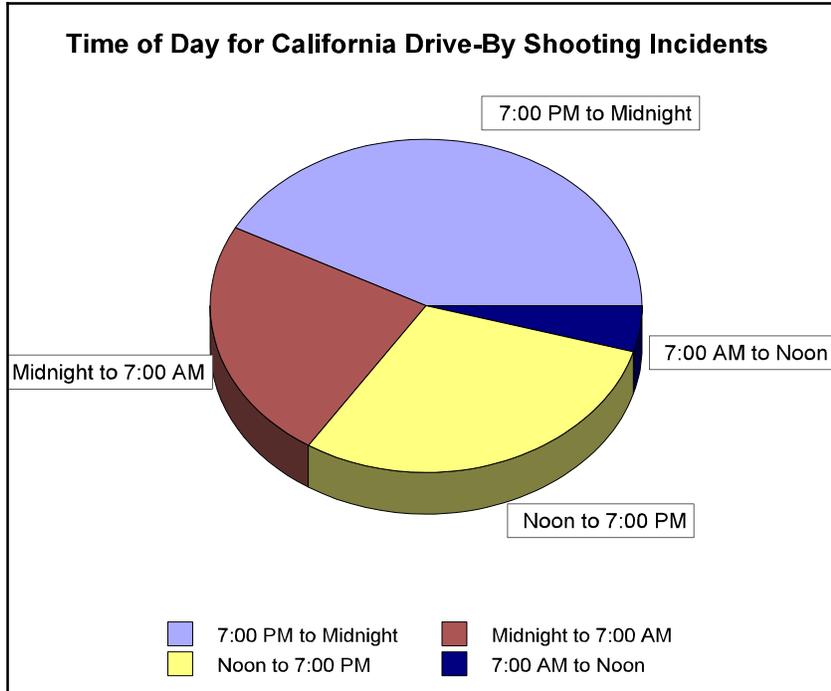
- In 39 percent of the incidents (55 out of 142) the victims were at a residence (either indoors or outdoors).
- Fifteen percent of the incidents (22 of 142) involved shooting at another vehicle.
- In two percent of the incidents (3 out of 142) the victim was on a bicycle.
- In 44 percent (62 out of 142) of the incidents the victims were in other locations that included: street corner, parking lot, vacant lot, fast food restaurant, or other business.



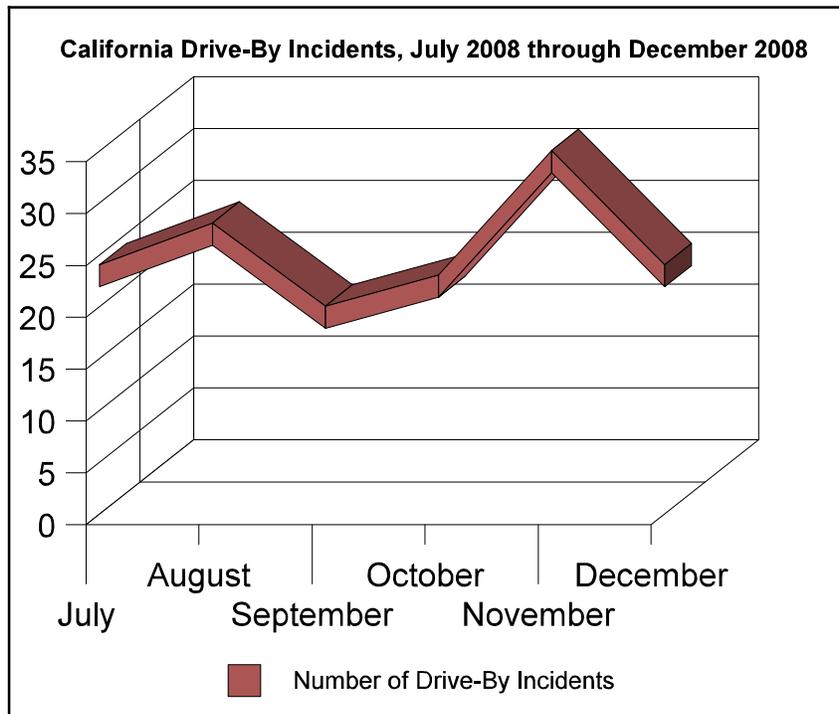
### Time of Day

The most common time for drive-by shootings in California was between the hours of 7:00 PM and midnight. The time of day could be identified in 135 out of 148 instances.

- Forty-two percent (57 out of 135) were between the hours of 7:00 PM and midnight.
- Thirty percent (40 out of 135) were between noon and 7:00 PM.
- Twenty-four percent (32 out of 135) were between midnight and 7:00 AM.
- Four percent (six out of 135) were between the hours of 7:00 AM and noon.



Drive-by shootings peaked in the month of November.



## Possible Gang Involvement

News reports mentioned potential gang involvement (either through quotes of law enforcement officials, witnesses, victims, or non-cited reporting by the journalist) in 47 of the 148 drive-by shootings (32 percent).

## Conclusion

Little is known about the scope and prevalence of drive-by shootings. This analysis explores the relative frequency of such events on a state-by-state basis<sup>6</sup> while identifying national trends regarding time, location, the age of those victimized, and suspected gang involvement. The overarching conclusion from this analysis is that additional research on the national level collecting and analyzing data on drive-by shootings is necessary to identify effective prevention strategies. Recommendations developed as the result of this analysis are—

- The feasibility of adding drive-by shooting as a category to the Uniform Crime Reports should be explored.
- Communities that experience a significant number of drive-by shootings should consider establishing their own data collection mechanism.
- Drive-by shootings are just one symptom of the increasing lethality of firearms available to the general public. State and federal policies should focus on limiting the caliber and capacity of firearms marketed to the general public.

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<sup>6</sup> Recognizing the limitations of the reporting process used for this analysis, and the relatively higher tallies of drive-by shootings reported in prior, local studies, we believe that the totals reported for this study are a dramatic underreporting of the frequency of such incidents.

## Appendix: Drive-By Shooting Incidents by State

State	Number of Drive-Bys	Number killed	Number injured
Alabama	8	1	8
Alaska	4	0	0
Arizona	18	1	17
Arkansas	4	0	3
California	148	40	129
Colorado	15	5	14
Connecticut	7	3	8
Delaware	7	0	4
DC	0	0	0
Florida	48	10	42
Georgia	23	5	18
Hawaii	2	0	2
Idaho	3	0	0
Illinois	38	18	53
Iowa	1	0	1
Indiana	12	3	7
Kansas	11	1	6
Kentucky	3	3	1
Louisiana	20	4	15
Maine	0	0	0
Maryland	6	7	9
Massachusetts	13	1	14
Michigan	18	4	18
Minnesota	7	3	5
Mississippi	10	2	6
Missouri	15	9	18

State	Number of Drive-Bys	Number killed	Number injured
Montana	1	0	1
Nebraska	8	0	13
Nevada	5	1	4
New Hampshire	0	0	0
New Jersey	8	4	6
New Mexico	4	1	1
New York	22	4	27
North Carolina	24	2	16
North Dakota	2	0	0
Ohio	15	2	12
Oklahoma	25	5	21
Oregon	6	1	4
Pennsylvania	13	1	11
Rhode Island	1	0	1
South Carolina	17	0	10
South Dakota	0	0	0
Tennessee	10	2	8
Texas	60	6	52
Utah	10	1	9
Vermont	3	0	0
Virginia	16	0	14
Washington	38	3	21
West Virginia	1	0	0
Wisconsin	3	1	2
Wyoming	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>631</b>