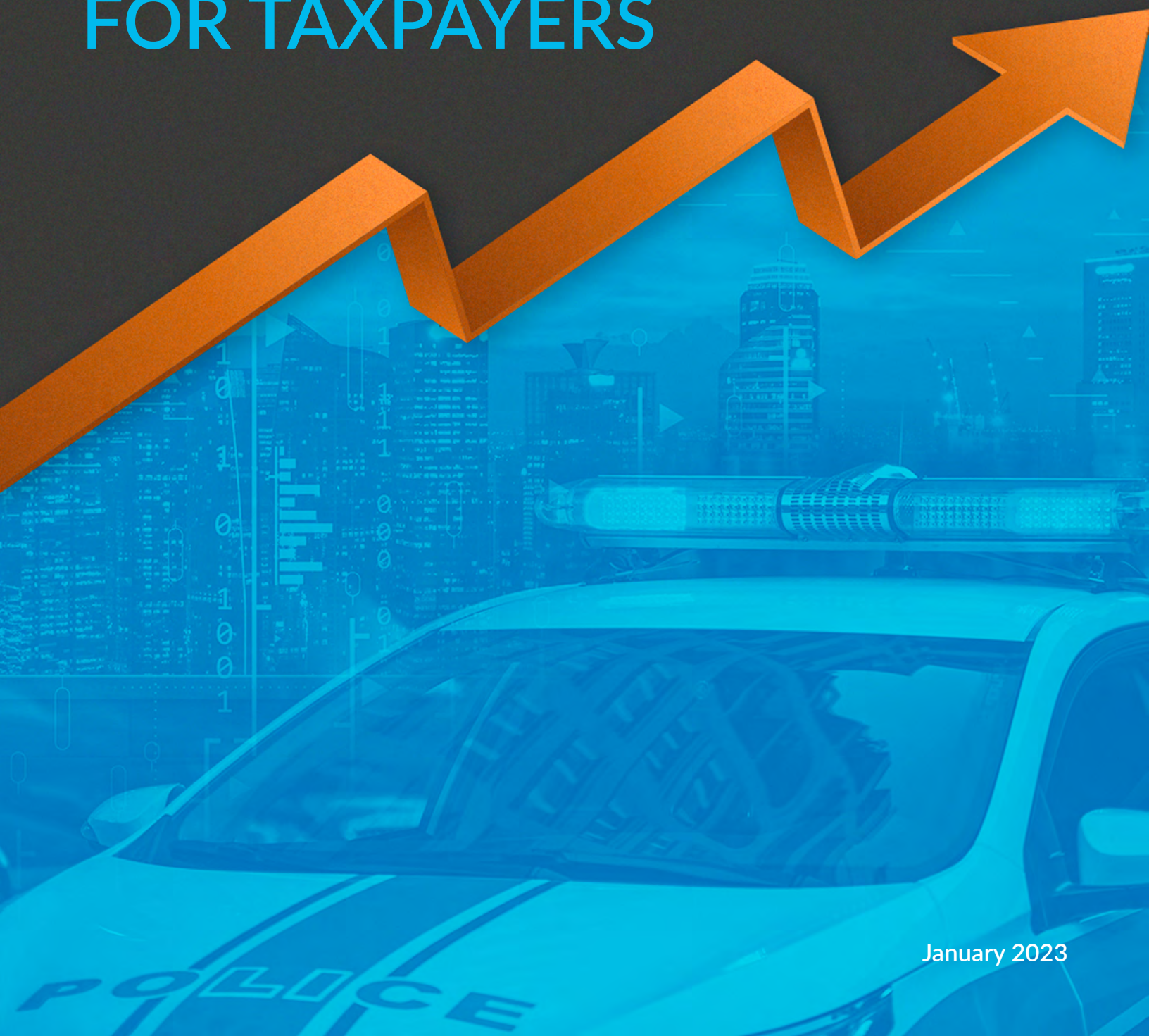


THE NATIONAL COST OF GUN VIOLENCE: THE PRICE TAG FOR TAXPAYERS

NICJR★
National Institute for
Criminal Justice Reform



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Introduction

In 2021, gun violence killed 20,984 people in the United States, more than any single year in the preceding two decades.¹ Daily shootings in communities across the country are the most common form of gun violence. On average, 14,062 people are murdered every year by someone using a gun.²

Gun violence is disproportionately concentrated in urban centers, usually in underserved communities of color. Of the more than 13,000 firearm-related homicide victims in the US in 2020, 55.8% were Black men.³ Although Black men and boys between the ages 15 and 34 make up just 2% of the nation's population, they accounted for 37% of gun homicide victims in 2019,⁴ making homicide the leading cause of death for Black males in this age range.⁵ According to the American Journal of Medicine, US residents are 25 times more likely to be killed from gun violence than the citizens of any other developed country.⁶

In addition to its human toll, gun violence imposes a substantial economic cost on society. Direct costs include law enforcement and the criminal justice system, hospital and rehabilitation, incarceration, and victim support. Indirect costs include lost tax revenue, lost business opportunities, reduced property values, and neighborhood population decline and destabilization.

When someone is shot, there is an immediate, multifaceted response from an array of government agencies. The fire department dispatches emergency medical technicians (EMTs), government-contracted ambulances respond, and several police department units as well as staff from a city's office of violence prevention or contracted outreach workers descend on the scene. Investigators from the district attorney's office also often arrive, and if the victim is declared dead on the scene, the coroner is called. And this is only the immediate aftermath of the shooting.

Costs accumulate for many months, even years following a shooting. For surviving victims this includes hospitalization and, in the case of serious injury, rehabilitation—both of which are often paid for by tax dollars. This also includes victim compensation and a protracted investigation by the police department and prosecutors. When there are multiple victims and/or multiple suspects, the cost of a single shooting incident will increase accordingly.

1 [The Gun Violence Archive](#). This figure is inclusive of all deaths caused by a gun except for gun-related suicide deaths.

2 [Gun Violence in the United States](#)

3 [FBI Crime Data Explorer Tool](#)

4 [A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making: A Review of 2019 CDC Gun Mortality Data](#). All of the figures cited are based on the most current available data.

5 [WISQARS Cost of Injury Reports](#)

6 [Hospital-based violence intervention: an emerging practice based on public health principles](#)

NICJR has calculated the costs of shootings in numerous cities across the country, deliberately using conservative estimates and only counting documentable direct costs.⁷ Using these studies as a starting point, this report aggregates the city-specific data and combines it with other data sources to model the direct unit costs and the direct average costs of gun violence nationwide.⁸

Unit costs reflect all of the potential costs of a single incident of gun violence, while average costs take into account the fact that certain costs are not incurred for every incident. For example, this report estimates the costs that gun violence imposes on the courts, district attorney, and public defender when a suspect is charged and goes to trial. However, because many incidents of gun violence do not result in prosecution or a trial, these estimates, or unit costs, are deflated to calculate the average cost per shooting.



The unit cost of a single gun-related homicide is **+\$1.2 million**

NICJR calculates that the unit cost of a single gun-related homicide is just over \$1.2 million, while the average cost, or the cost per homicide, is approximately \$625,000. This means that, on average, the total direct cost of gun-related homicides in the United States is more than \$8.7 billion each year. For non-fatal injury shootings, NICJR calculates the unit cost at almost \$700,000, with an average per-shooting cost of about \$337,000, for an annual total of \$11.7 billion.⁹ **Combined, the total cost of gun homicides and non-fatal shootings is over \$20 billion per year.** If indirect expenses were included, the total cost of shootings would be much higher.

Cost Calculations

The municipalities for NICJR's city-specific Cost of Violence reports include:

Municipality

✓ Birmingham, Alabama

✓ Mobile, Alabama

✓ Fresno, California

✓ Richmond, California

✓ Sacramento, California

✓ San Bernardino, California

✓ Stockton, California

✓ West Athens-Westmont (LA), California

✓ Washington, DC

✓ Miami Gardens, Florida

✓ Orlando, Florida

✓ Indianapolis, Indiana

✓ Louisville, Kentucky

✓ Detroit, Michigan

✓ St. Louis, Missouri

✓ Portland, Oregon

✓ Dallas, Texas

⁷ Cost of Violence

⁸ Given the higher cost of living in California, calculations of average costs *unweight* California by calculating the average cost of the California cities separately and using that cost only once.

⁹ Non-fatal shootings calculation is based on an average of 34,566 "intentional shootings" estimated by Brady in their report, [Gun Violence in the United States](#).

For this report, as with the city-level reports shown above, NICJR has quantified the cost of gun violence in six primary cost categories:

	<p>Crime Scene Response: The first system cost associated with a shooting is the crime scene response (CSR). CSR costs encompass various law enforcement agencies directly responding to the scene of the homicide or non-fatal injury shooting.</p>
	<p>Hospitalization and Rehabilitation: In addition to the costs of hospital transport, once a shooting victim arrives at the emergency department (ED) or trauma unit, costs for surgery, inpatient stays, and aftercare rehabilitation are incurred.</p>
	<p>Criminal Justice System: This cost category includes police investigation and, when a suspect is apprehended, the costs of attorneys who prosecute these cases, defense attorneys who are typically public defenders, court personnel, and judges.</p>
	<p>Incarceration: The cost of incarceration in local jails and state prisons has been well documented and includes housing, feeding, and providing medical care and other services for individuals both prior to trial and after conviction. This category is consistently the highest cost across all jurisdictions.</p>
	<p>Victim Support: Government-funded victim support services are typically provided by the office of the district attorney or crime victims' reparation commissions or compensation boards and may include case managers who act as advocates for victims and assist them in navigating the criminal justice process.</p>
	<p>Lost Revenue: Cities, counties, and states all lose revenue from income and sales tax when members of the community are killed or incarcerated. Communities with high rates of violence also experience declining property values, further contributing to the decline in government revenue.</p>

Table 1 shows the unit and average cost for each of these six categories. The methodology for each cost category calculation is explained in detail in the remainder of this report.

Table 1. Unit and Average Costs per Homicide and Non-Fatal Injury Shooting

	Homicide		Non-Fatal Injury Shooting	
	Unit Cost	Average Cost	Unit Cost	Average Cost
Crime Scene Response	\$10,056	\$10,056	\$6,472	\$6,472
Hospitalization and Rehabilitation	\$120,093	\$9,607	\$124,071	\$124,071
Criminal Justice System	\$49,215	\$33,039	\$8,647	\$6,329
Incarceration	\$978,483	\$481,270	\$522,249	\$184,088
Victim Support	\$26,993	\$15,345	\$25,111	\$6,067
Lost Revenue ¹⁰	\$75,543	\$75,543	\$10,518	\$10,518
Total	\$1,260,383	\$624,860	\$697,068	\$337,415

Cost Category Methodology



Crime Scene Response

NICJR calculates the unit cost of a crime scene response using salary data and estimates of the amount of time spent on scene as provided by local government officials in the jurisdictions noted above. These costs are typically an under-estimate, as there are several other costs not included here such as the use of equipment and services provided by community-based organizations.

Across jurisdictions nationwide, a crime scene response includes, at a minimum:

- Patrol officers to secure the scene;
- Investigative officers to conduct the investigation;
- Forensic personnel to document the crime scene by taking photographs and collecting evidence; and
- In the case of homicides, a medical examiner or coroner to conduct an autopsy.

In addition to the homicide unit, in some cases a police department's gang unit may also be deployed to the scene. Officials from the local prosecutor's office such as victim advocates and investigators may report to the crime scene as well.

EMTs from the local fire department and government-contracted ambulances respond to the scene of all violent crimes. For homicides, the coroner responds to remove the body for transport to the local medical examiner's office for an autopsy to determine the official cause of death.

¹⁰ Calculation of the unit cost of lost revenue is already deflated to account for the clearance and conviction rate for homicides and non-fatal injury shootings, making the unit cost and the average cost the same.

Table 2. Crime Scene Response Cost Calculation

	Data Source	Calculation
Police Officers and Civilian Personnel	Local police department interviews; department budget and payroll schedules ¹¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unit cost is calculated by multiplying the average hourly rate for each classification by the average number of hours required to secure and supervise the crime scene, collect forensic evidence, and interview witnesses. • The unit cost is then multiplied by the total number of homicides or non-fatal injury shootings. • \$3,099 per homicide • \$2,016 per non-fatal injury shooting
Fire/EMT Responders	City budgets, annual reports, and vendor contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unit cost is calculated by dividing the annual cost of fire and EMTs by the total number of annual medical responses. • The unit cost is then multiplied by the total number of homicides or non-fatal injury shootings. • \$1,956 per homicide and non-fatal injury shooting
Crime Scene Cleanup	Crime scene cleanup vendor contracts and interviews with crime scene cleanup administrative staff ¹²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unit cost to clean up a crime scene is multiplied by the total number of homicides or non-fatal injury shootings. • \$2,500 per homicide and non-fatal injury shooting
Medical Examiner/Coroner	Office of medical examiner (OME) websites, phone and email communication with several OMEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unit cost per autopsy is multiplied by the total number of homicides. • \$2,500 per homicide

¹¹ All calculations of personnel costs include salary and benefits. Where benefits data were not available, benefits were estimated using between 25% and 33% on top of salary depending on the cost category.

¹² Although jurisdiction-specific costs are available for most of the sample, the cost referenced in this analysis is based on the average cost of crime scene cleanup within 16 jurisdictions studied by NICJR.

Key Variances to Note:

Crime scene response costs differ substantially from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, more so than most other categories, because of variability in the number and composition of responding officers/personnel and their compensation, as well as variation in the duration of time spent at the crime scene. Further, there is considerable variability in the number of law enforcement personnel needed on site to block streets, direct traffic, and secure the perimeter to ensure evidence is not disturbed. When these activities are required, they are coordinated by a supervisory-level officer, usually at the rank of lieutenant.

The average total crime scene response costs are estimated at \$10,056 for homicides and \$6,472 for non-fatal injury shootings.¹³



Hospitalization and Rehabilitation

NICJR's calculation of the costs associated with hospitalization and rehabilitation draws upon numerous studies as well as its own interviews with trauma center employees and data from the National Emergency Department Database.¹⁴ Where different studies provided conflicting numbers, NICJR used the more conservative findings.

A 2017 study, "Emergency Department Visits for Firearm-Related Injuries in the United States, 2006-2014," looks at epidemiological trends to quantify the clinical and financial burden associated with ED visits for firearm-related injuries.¹⁵ The researchers calculate that during the period studied, gun violence cost the United States nearly \$3 billion in ED charges alone. This study finds that of the patients who were treated in the ED, 37% were admitted to inpatient care, while 8% died during their ED visit or inpatient admission. It also finds that when a person is admitted to inpatient care after treatment, costs increase substantially, with inpatient stays due to firearm-related injuries averaging \$96,000 per patient stay.

A 2020 study entitled "National Trends and Cost Burden of Surgically Treated Gunshot Wounds in the US" examines the costs associated with gun violence when victims required emergency department visits, surgical interventions, and inpatient stays with aftercare rehabilitation.¹⁶ The study analyzes a national inpatient survey of 359,851 gunshot wound hospitalizations to identify surgical and patient characteristics associated with gunshot wound hospitalizations, finding that the average cost of emergency room surgery is \$87,097. This study also indicates that nearly one in five people admitted to inpatient care for gun injuries is discharged to another care facility, leading to still more costs.

A 2021 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled "Firearm Injuries: Health Care Service Needs and Costs" describes the initial hospital costs of firearm injuries in the United States, including the costs to taxpayers, by analyzing 2016 and 2017 hospital discharge data from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project.¹⁷ This GAO report estimates the national prevalence and costs of initial hospital visits where all treatment was provided in the ED. The analysis includes fatal and non-fatal firearm injuries where hospital care occurred, but does not include injuries where individuals died before reaching the hospital. This study estimates the average cost of hospital admission for gun-shot injuries to be \$30,730, and it finds that the cost of initial ED and inpatient care for firearm injuries in the United States was just over \$1 billion each year in 2016 and 2017.

¹³ The estimated average cost per homicide in this category differs from the costs in the original Cost of Violence city studies due to the addition of coroner costs to this category. Note that the unit cost is equal to the average cost where the unit cost is applied to every shooting.

¹⁴ [National Emergency Department Database](#)

¹⁵ [Emergency Department Visits For Firearm-Related Injuries In The United States, 2006-2014](#). The final figure is \$700 million less than research cited in the Everytown Research and Policy report referenced earlier, likely due to the Everytown research including transportation costs and costs reflective of long-term medical care.

¹⁶ [National Trends and Cost Burden of Surgically Treated Gunshot Wounds in the US](#)

¹⁷ [Firearm Injuries: Health Care Service Needs and Costs](#)

A 2022 report entitled “Healthcare Cost Journey for Survivors of Firearm Injuries” from Milliman, an independent risk management, benefits, and technology firm, arrives at a similar average cost for initial ED and inpatient care for firearm injuries in the United States, at \$30,121.¹⁸ This report compares the healthcare expenditures of victims before and after a shooting and finds that post-shooting costs for medical treatment and rehabilitation increase by \$4,850 on average.



¹⁸ Healthcare Cost Journey for Survivors of Firearm Injuries

Table 3. Hospitalization and Rehabilitation Cost Calculation

	Data Source	Calculation
Emergency Department Admission and Discharge	National Emergency Department Database; interviews with trauma center employees; “National Trends and Cost Burden of Surgically Treated Gunshot Wounds in the US”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average cost for ED admission and discharge for homicides is multiplied by 8% to take into account the small percentage of gunshot victims who die after hospital admission. • The average cost per non-fatal injury shooting is multiplied by the total number of non-fatal injury shootings.¹⁹ • \$216 per homicide • \$1,394 per non-fatal injury shooting
Emergency Department Surgery	“National Trends and Cost Burden of Surgically Treated Gunshot Wounds in the US”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average cost for ED surgery is multiplied by 8% to take into account the small percentage of gunshot victims who die after hospital admission and surgical intervention. • The average cost per non-fatal injury shooting is multiplied by the total number of non-fatal injury shootings. • \$6,968 per homicide • \$87,097 per non-fatal injury shooting
Hospital Admission and Inpatient Rehabilitation	“Firearm Injuries: Health Care Service Needs and Costs;” “Healthcare Cost Journey for Survivors of Firearm Injuries”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average cost for hospital admission is multiplied by 8% to take into account the small percentage of gunshot victims who die after hospital admission. • The average cost per non-fatal injury shooting is multiplied by the total number of non-fatal injury shootings. • \$2,423 per homicide • \$30,730 per non-fatal injury shooting
Outpatient Treatment and Rehabilitation	“Healthcare Cost Journey for Survivors of Firearm Injuries”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost is applied only to non-fatal injury shootings, with the average applied to all non-fatal injury shootings. • \$4,850 per non-fatal injury shooting

Total average hospitalization and rehabilitation costs are estimated at \$9,607 for shootings that ultimately end in death, and \$124,071 for those that are non-fatal.

¹⁹ Note that the cost estimates in studies of healthcare costs associated with firearm injuries are averages, not unit costs. Thus, these figures are multiplied by all non-fatal shootings without any deflation.



Criminal Justice System

Criminal justice system costs resulting from gun violence represent a large expense for taxpayers. To calculate these costs, NICJR analyzed extensive local data gathered from each jurisdiction in the city-level Cost of Violence reports, including police department, district attorney, and public defender budgets and payroll schedules and personnel data from individual courts. NICJR also interviewed local police department staff and court executives to determine the amount of time and number and type of personnel generally assigned to a case.

The figures in this cost category are also based on workload studies that document the amount of time spent on homicide and felony cases by district attorneys and public defenders,^{20, 21} weighted caseload data for judges and court staff,²² and surveys of judicial salaries.²³

20 Workload studies of District Attorneys and Public Defenders in [Colorado](#), [Louisiana](#), [Nevada](#), [New Mexico](#), [North Carolina](#), and [Rhode Island](#)

21 [Estimates of Time Spent in Capital and Non-Capital Murder Cases: A Statistical Analysis of Survey Data from Clark County Defense Attorneys](#)

22 Workload studies of courts in [California](#), [Minnesota](#), [Missouri](#), and [New Mexico](#)

23 [The National Center for State Courts Judicial Salary Tracker](#)

Table 4. Criminal Justice System Cost Calculation

	Data Source	Calculation
Police Investigation	Local police department interviews; police department budgets and payroll schedules (personnel costs) ²⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unit cost is calculated by multiplying the average hourly rate for each classification by the average number of hours required to investigate the case. • The unit cost is multiplied by the total number of investigations of homicides or non-fatal injury shootings. • \$9,761 per homicide • \$3,378 per non-fatal injury shooting
Prosecution and Defense	Workload studies; district attorney and public defender budgets and payroll schedules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unit cost is calculated by multiplying the average hourly rate paid for attorneys on both the prosecution and defense sides by the average amount of time spent by prosecution and defense attorneys on homicide and felony cases. • The unit cost is multiplied by the percentage of cases for which charges are brought for homicides (59%) and non-fatal injury shootings (56%). • \$14,459 per homicide • \$2,468 per non-fatal injury shooting
Courts/Adjudication	Surveys of judicial salaries, weighted caseload data for judges and court staff, personnel data from individual courts and interviews with court executives ²⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unit cost to the court system is calculated by multiplying the average hourly rate for a judge and court staff by the average number of hours for a homicide case and non-fatal injury shooting case. • The unit cost is multiplied by the percentage of cases for which charges are brought for both homicides (59%) and non-fatal injury shootings (56%). • \$8,819 per homicide • \$483 per non-fatal injury shooting

²⁴ All calculations of personnel costs include salary and benefits but not costs of supplies, equipment, or facilities.

²⁵ Staff salaries are averages calculated from estimates provided in 17 jurisdictions covered in the city-level Cost of Violence reports.

Key Variances to Note:

Workload studies of district attorneys, public defenders, and court personnel provided the foundation for estimating the unit costs of prosecution, defense, and the court system. Taking into account all of the phases of case processing, prosecution and defense attorneys combined spend about 320 hours on homicides and 67 hours on non-fatal injury shootings. However, these studies frequently estimate only the workload associated with an aggregate category of “felony” cases, which means the additional workload associated with homicide cases is based on a smaller sample of studies. Another factor that may contribute to the under-estimation of the true costs to the criminal justice system is the fact that some cases have multiple suspects and victims, which may lead to more than one trial.

Unit costs for district attorneys, public defenders, and court personnel are already calculated as averages to take into account the fact that not all cases go to trial. For the purposes of this report, a further deflation is required to account for the fact that not all shootings result in criminal charges. Using data on crimes and clearances dating back to 1985 as provided by the California State Department of Justice Open Justice initiative,²⁶ NICJR uses the average clearance rate of homicides in California between 1985 and 2021 (approximately 59%) and the average clearance rate for aggravated assaults during the same period (56%) as proxies for the rate at which homicides and non-fatal injury shootings are charged.²⁷

NICJR’s cost estimates also likely understate the true costs of gun violence to the court system in that they exclude any calculation of post-conviction costs such as appeals, which are common in murder cases. Numerous studies at the state and federal level show that the cost of a homicide case increases substantially when the death penalty is sought. For example, in Kansas, trial costs for death cases were 16 times the cost of non-death cases, while in the federal courts, the average cost of defending a death case is eight times the cost of a murder case in which the death penalty is not sought.²⁸

Taking into account all of the different components of the criminal justice system, deflated by the percentage of cases for which charges are brought, the average total criminal justice system cost for a homicide is \$33,039, while the average cost of a non-fatal injury shooting is \$6,329.

Incarceration

By far the largest cost associated with a homicide or non-fatal injury shooting is incarceration. An individual arrested and prosecuted for homicide often spends several years in city or county detention centers awaiting trial and sentencing. An individual convicted of a firearm-related murder is likely to be sentenced to a lengthy term (often life) in state prison.

The cost of this imprisonment is staggering. One national estimate revealed that incarcerating a 20-year-old for 25 years—common for a first-degree murder conviction—will cost taxpayers roughly \$831,000.²⁹ In California, the annual state prison cost per inmate is \$106,000,³⁰ so a 25-year sentence will cost taxpayers \$2.65 million.

To calculate costs in this category, NICJR analyzed extensive local data gathered from each jurisdiction in the city-level Cost of Violence reports, including jail, sheriff, and state corrections departments’ general fund budgets and data on the average daily population (ADP) of jails and state prisons.

²⁶ [Open Justice Initiative](#)

²⁷ Note that the studies calculating the workload of district attorneys, public defenders, and court staff estimate the average amount of time per case taking into account the fact that only a small percentage of cases actually go to trial. As a result, it is not necessary to deflate these cost estimates further. The trial rate of the jurisdictions studied is already built into the time estimates.

²⁸ [Financial Facts about the Death Penalty](#)

²⁹ [Prison spending in 2015](#)

³⁰ [How Much Does it Cost to Incarcerate an Inmate?](#)

These calculations also draw upon the clearance rate data described above, as well as data from the individual city Cost of Violence reports showing the amount of time served before and during trial (two years), the average length of a sentence for a homicide (25 years) and a non-fatal injury shooting (10 years), and the average conviction rate for homicides (81%) and assaults at (54%).³¹

Table 5. Incarceration Cost Calculation	Data Source	Calculation
Pretrial Detention	Jail or sheriff general fund budgets; jails ADP data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unit cost is calculated by multiplying the average inmate cost per day by 730 days (two years) served before and during trial for homicides and non-fatal injury shootings. • The unit cost is multiplied by the clearance rate for both homicides (59%) and non-fatal injury shootings (56%). • \$62,206 per homicide • \$59,043 per non-fatal injury shooting
State Prison	Corrections department general fund budgets; state prisons ADP data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unit cost is calculated by multiplying the average inmate cost per day or year by the average length of a sentence for a homicide (25 years) and a non-fatal injury shooting (10 years). • The unit cost is deflated first by the clearance rate, and then further by the conviction rate (81% for homicides and 54% for assaults), resulting in a deflator of 48% for homicides and 30% for non-fatal injury shootings. • \$419,063 per homicide • \$125,044 per non-fatal injury shooting

When both pre-trial and post-conviction costs are taken into account, the average total cost of incarceration for a homicide is approximately \$481,270, while the average total cost of incarceration for a non-fatal injury shooting is just over \$184,000.

³¹ Felony Defendants in Large Urban Counties, 2006



Victim Support

NICJR calculated victim support costs by drawing upon Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) performance reports.³² The federal Office for Victims of Crimes makes annual VOCA grants to all 50 states, territories, and the District of Columbia to support the provision of direct services to victims of crime. VOCA administrators in the state and territorial governments then grant the funds to victim service providers in local government. Since 2015, the federal government has allocated an annual average of \$2.3 billion in VOCA victim assistance funds to states and territories.³³ In addition, some jurisdictions augment these federal funds. Expenses covered by crime victim compensation programs include funeral expenses, lost wages, and mental health counseling.

Social service assistance, particularly cash assistance programs, are also an important source of support for victims of gun violence and their families. NICJR calculated the average cost for this support using a report from the Congressional Research Service on the eligibility and benefits available under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.³⁴

Table 6. Victim Support Cost Calculation

	Data Source	Calculation
Victim of Crimes	VOCA performance reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports of the Victims of Crime Act administrators provide information on the unit cost paid per claim including the unit costs for homicides and assaults. • While the number of claims for homicides is roughly equal to the estimated number of homicides in a given year, the number of claims for assaults is only a fraction of the estimated number of assaults. • Thus, the average cost is calculated by multiplying the unit amount paid per claim by the total number of homicides, while the average cost of non-fatal injury shootings is calculated by multiplying the unit cost per claim for assaults, deflated by the estimated percentage of claims filed for assaults (13.4%). • \$3,697 per homicide • \$243 per non-fatal injury shooting
Social Service Assistance	TANF: Eligibility and Benefit Amounts in State TANF Cash Assistance Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average monthly payments for two claimants under TANF are calculated for 16 cities. • This number is multiplied by an estimate of the percentage of claims for assistance (50% of homicides and 25% of non-fatal injury shootings). • \$11,648 per homicide • \$5,824 per non-fatal injury shooting

³² [Victims of Crime Act Administrators Performance Reports, 2016-2020](#)

³³ [Formula Grant Allocations Archive | Office for Victims of Crime](#)

³⁴ [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\): Eligibility and Benefit Amounts in State TANF Cash Assistance Programs](#)

Key Variances to Note:

While there is a strong likelihood that homicides and non-fatal injury shootings result in increased utilization of TANF benefits, it is not clear exactly how much of an increase should be attributed to each of these types of gun violence. Consistent with the methodological approach of this report, NICJR takes a conservative estimate of 50% of homicides resulting in increased utilization for the victim's family and possibly the family of the shooter, while estimating that one out of four non-fatal injury shootings results in increased utilization of TANF.

Using these parameters, the resulting average cost per homicide for victim support is \$15,345, while the average cost of victim support for a non-fatal injury shooting is \$6,067.

Lost Revenue

A 2016 report by the Minnesota Coalition for Common Sense estimates the cost of lost tax revenue to the state due to firearm-related violence at \$72 million annually.³⁵ This amount is based on \$696 million in lost income and does not account for more difficult-to-measure costs such as lost business opportunities, lowered property values, or reductions in the tax base. The same report estimates the total annual cost to Minnesota due to firearm-related violence at \$2.2 billion. The 2021 Everytown for Gun Safety study estimates that nationally, gun violence imposes an annual cost in lost work of \$51.2 billion, noting that “Work loss occurs even for unpaid work—for example, household work or caregiving of an injured family member or friend.”³⁶

NICJR has estimated only lost tax revenue, focusing on the impact of shootings on local, district, and state taxes. The calculations of lost sales and income tax begin with an estimate of the value of individual income that would have been earned if victims and shooters had not been killed or forced to stop working because of a serious injury or incarceration. Everytown for Gun Safety estimates that nationwide, employers lose \$147.32 million each day as a result of work missed due to injury or death.³⁷

NICJR takes a conservative approach in estimating the value of lost income. Because gun violence is concentrated overwhelmingly in lower-income communities, NICJR estimates the average annual cost for each affected individual at \$30,000, just between the federal poverty guideline thresholds for a family of four and a family of five. Assuming approximately one third of income is spent on taxable goods and services, NICJR uses local tax rates for the jurisdictions in its city-specific Cost of Violence reports and calculates the average lost sales tax. The assumption of \$30,000 in annual earnings for each affected individual is also used to estimate the lost income tax revenue, again based on an average of city-specific data on state income tax rates.

³⁵ [The Economic Cost of Gun Violence in Minnesota](#)

³⁶ [Methodological Note for The Economic Cost of Gun Violence](#)

³⁷ [The Economic Cost of Gun Violence](#)

Table 7. Lost Revenue Cost Calculation

	Data Source	Calculation
<p>Lost Income and Tax Revenue</p>	<p>NICJR data on local, regional, and state tax rates in 17 cities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average annual sales tax is calculated using the estimated individual income of \$30,000. • The annual cost is multiplied by the number of years of the average sentence for homicides and assault cases in each jurisdiction, deflated by the conviction rate. • For homicides, the value of lost revenue for the victim, without any deflation, is added to the total cost for the duration of the average sentence. • For non-fatal injury shootings, a single year of lost revenue due to incapacitation or lost wages of the victim is added to the estimated lost revenue from the shooter. • \$75,543 per homicide • \$10,518 per non-fatal injury shooting

Calculated over the life of a criminal sentence and deflated to take into account the percentage of convictions, the average total amount of lost sales and income tax revenue is approximately \$75,500 for a homicide and \$10,500 for a non-fatal injury shooting.

Other Indirect Costs of Gun Violence

In focusing primarily on direct, documentable costs, NICJR has chosen to exclude some substantial indirect costs that are still worth noting.

In addition to lost tax revenue, communities enduring high rates of violence see decreased property values. A Center for American Progress (CAP) report examining the economic impact of reducing violent crime in eight cities estimates that a 10% reduction in homicides should increase the value of residential real estate by \$600 million in Jacksonville, Florida; \$800 million in the Milwaukee area; \$3.2 billion in Philadelphia and its surrounding suburbs; and \$4.4 billion in the Boston area. This report identifies property tax revenue from increased housing values caused by the reduction of homicides as the largest source of additional revenue for municipalities.³⁸

Building on CAP's report, the Philadelphia Office of the City Controller used 12 years of data (2006-2018) to determine how a single homicide impacts property values and estimated the potential increase in property tax revenue tied to reducing homicides by 10% annually over five years.³⁹ The analysis found that a single homicide lowers sale prices by 2.3% in the immediate neighborhood (within 0.75 miles of the homicide). The analysis also showed that decreasing the number of homicides would have the opposite impact on residential property values. Reducing homicides by 10% in a single year would result in a \$13 million increase in property tax revenue, or \$114 million over five years with a 10% reduction in homicides annually.

³⁸ [The Economic Benefits of Reducing Violent Crime](#)

³⁹ [Report on the Economic Impact of Homicides: Philadelphia City Controller](#)

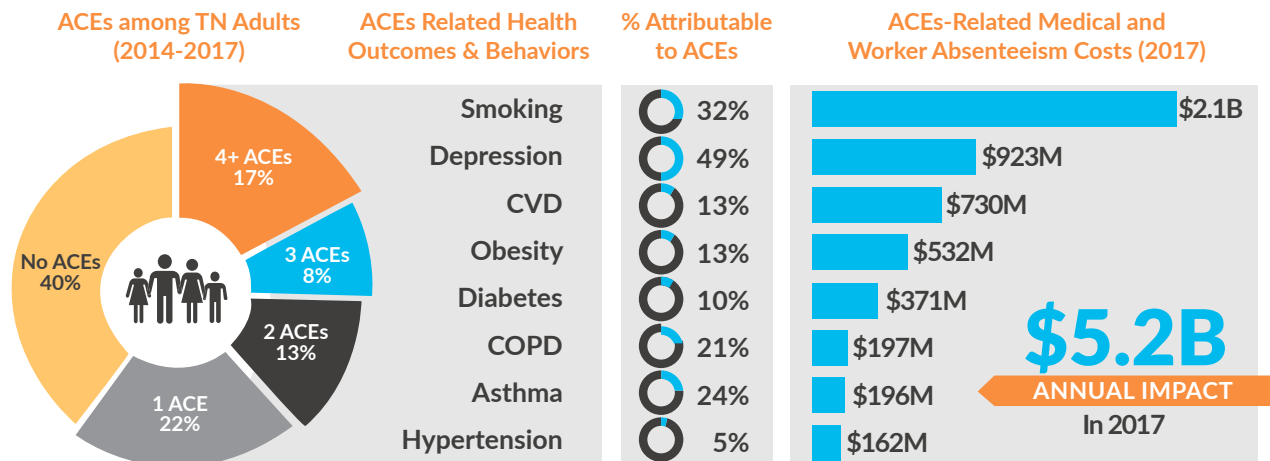
The Urban Institute released a study in 2017 that also detailed the economic impact of gun violence. The study found that each additional gun homicide in a census tract was associated with a \$22,000 decrease in the average home value in Minneapolis in 2014 and a \$24,621 decrease in Oakland in 2015.⁴⁰

Beyond decreases in property value, community members in neighborhoods where rates of violence are highest also bear the burden of community tension and trauma—social impacts that ultimately have an economic cost.

The normalization, or even expectation of violence can lead to high rates of gun possession, tension, and the resolving of minor disputes with gun violence. The public health approach to violence shows that, like disease, violence is a contagion that can breed in areas of social dysfunction. The National Institutes of Health notes that “Contagious diseases and violence tend to cluster in similar ways.... There are geographic ‘hot spots’ for contagious diseases, such as the 2015 measles outbreak linked to Disneyland in California involving clusters of unvaccinated children. Likewise, there are geographic hot spots for violent crime on specific streets and in specific neighborhoods.”⁴¹ Businesses, community events, and other vital resources often flee from neighborhoods with high rates of violence, contributing to disinvestment and limiting opportunity in a way that further perpetuates cycles of violence.

Finally, children are especially impacted by violence around them. Experiencing violence, witnessing violence, and having close friends or family members victimized by violence produces trauma and vicarious trauma. In the 1990s, the groundbreaking Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study by the Centers for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente revealed that children who have traumatic experiences when they are young have significantly worse outcomes on almost every measurable dimension as they grow older: they are less healthy, struggle more in school, are more likely to be impoverished, and are more likely to become involved with the criminal justice system.⁴²

The \$5 Billion Annual Economic Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Tennessee



Note: Obesity-related costs include only direct medical costs.

Source: The Sycamore Institute's analysis of data from the 2014-2017 CDC BRFSS provided by the TN Department of Health, the CDC Chronic Disease Calculator, Trogdon et al. 2012, CDC SAMMEC, and Ford et al. 2014

SycamoreInstituteTN.org

40 [A Neighborhood-Level Analysis of the Economic Impact of Gun Violence](#)

41 [The Contagious Spread of Violence Among US Adolescents Through Social Networks](#)

42 While the CDC-Kaiser ACEs study is not available to the public, information about the study may be found [here](#).



Conclusion

Gun violence exacts the ultimate price from its victims: the loss of life and serious injury. The ripple effects of gun violence are significant as well, with social costs extending beyond the victims to families and neighborhoods. As demonstrated in this report, there is also an enormous financial cost. And while gun violence disproportionately affects low income families and communities of color, everyone bears the financial burden. Billions of dollars are spent every year to cover the steep cost that shootings impose on government agencies, including the criminal justice system and medical and social services, all of which are funded by taxpayers.

The good news is that there are effective community-based violence reduction strategies that can be expanded and replicated.⁴³ Local, state, and federal government agencies should increase investments in violence prevention and intervention efforts as a means to reducing the staggering costs of gun violence. Recent modest increases in funding to community violence intervention programs, largely through the Biden Administration's American Rescue Plan, represent a step in the right direction. Yet these investments fall short of what is needed to truly achieve sustained reductions in gun violence. Investing even a fraction of the estimated \$20 billion in annual costs of gun violence into effective prevention and intervention strategies would result in a significant return on investment: saving thousands of lives and billions of dollars every year.

⁴³ [Effective Community-Based Violence Reduction Strategies](#)

THE NATIONAL COST OF GUN VIOLENCE: THE PRICE TAG FOR TAXPAYERS



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