

THE ECONOMIC COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN PENNSYLVANIA

In recent years, Pennsylvania has experienced an average of 506 gun homicides, 869 gun suicides, and thousands of nonfatal shootings per year.¹ Pennsylvania has the 31st highest gun death rate among the states, and **gun violence exacts a high physical, emotional, and financial toll on families and communities in the state.** We often hear about the heartbreak and physical pain these shootings cause, but there is another aspect of the gun violence epidemic that doesn't receive as much attention: the overwhelming financial cost.

TALLYING THE NUMBERS

The thousands of shootings that occur each year in Pennsylvania are a serious drain on the state's economy. Based on the expenses we can directly measure, including **healthcare costs** (\$161 million per year), **law enforcement and criminal justice expenses** (\$240 million per year), **costs to employers** (\$18 million per year), and **lost income** (\$2.6 billion per year), the initial price tag of gun violence in Pennsylvania is over **\$3 billion per year.** Much of this tab is picked up by the public. Up to 85% of gunshot victims, for example, are either uninsured or on some form of publicly funded insurance. Additionally, law enforcement efforts are funded entirely by taxpayer dollars. **As a result, the direct annual cost of gun violence to Pennsylvania taxpayers is over \$590 million.**²

GUN VIOLENCE'S DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT

Interpersonal gun violence in Pennsylvania disproportionately affects underserved communities in urban areas, with young men of color being particularly vulnerable. For example, in 2016, nearly 80% of total gun homicide victims in the state were black or Hispanic. **In fact, black men are more than 25 times as likely as white men to be the victim of a gun homicide in Pennsylvania.**

Moreover, in recent years, Pennsylvania has seen a sustained increase in interpersonal gun violence, with cities suffering particularly increased gun homicide rates. **From 2014 to 2016, gun homicides increased by nearly 15% across the state.**

Interpersonal gun violence, as well as the staggering number of suicides and unintentional shootings, imposes massive human, moral, and fiscal toll. More can and must be done to prevent these costly tragedies.

\$3+
BILLION
TOTAL DIRECTLY
MEASURABLE
COSTS

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When the reduced quality of life attributable to pain and suffering (\$5.5 billion) is considered, the overall estimate of the economic cost of gun violence rises to **\$8.5 billion per year**. While this number is staggering, it actually understates the true cost of gun violence in Pennsylvania because it doesn't include significant, yet difficult-to-measure costs, including lost business opportunities, lowered property values, and reductions in the tax base.

**\$8.5+
BILLION**
GRAND TOTAL

ANNUAL COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN PENNSYLVANIA

REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE

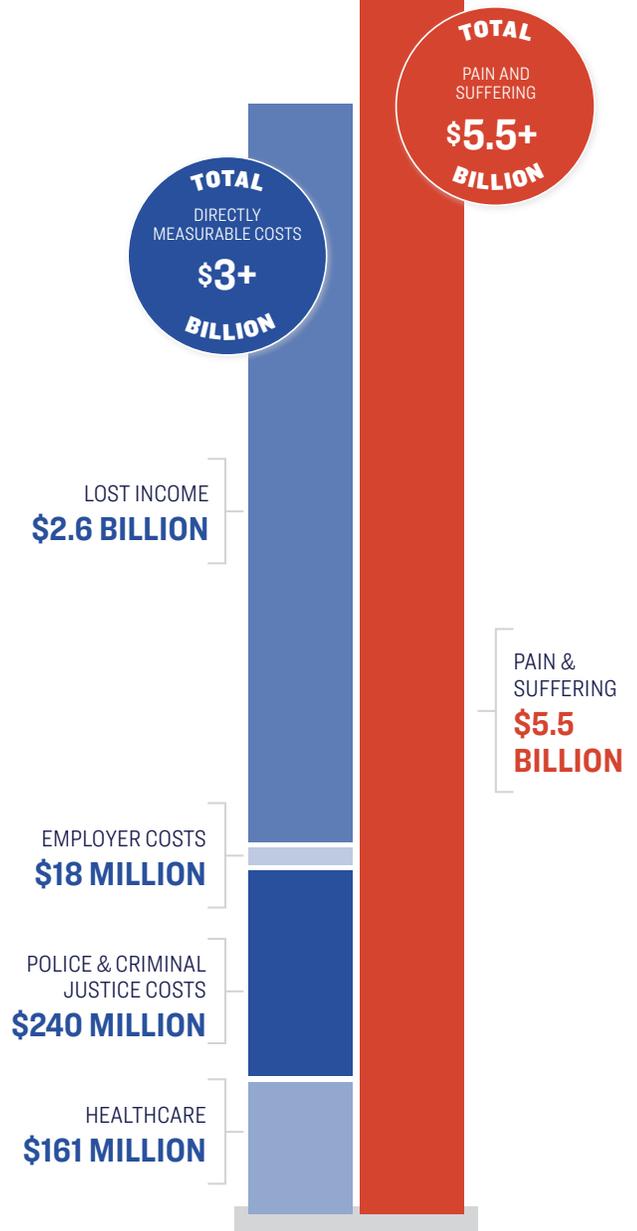
There is much work to be done. Fortunately, a number of proven solutions exist to reduce gun violence in Pennsylvania, including requiring a background check for all gun purchases, extreme risk protection order laws, and urban violence reduction programs. The investment required to implement these lifesaving solutions is minuscule compared to the yearly cost of gun violence.

1. Fatal firearm injury data came from the CDC's WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports (www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html). Nonfatal firearm injuries came from the PA Department of Public Health (www.health.pa.gov/topics/HealthStatistics/BehavioralStatistics/InjuryStatistics/Documents/Combined_Injury_Report_2010-2014.pdf) and an estimation tool that creates a ratio of the national incidence of nonfatal shootings, sourced from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System's Firearm Injury Surveillance Study (NEISS-FISS), and the number of fatal shootings that PA experienced in a given year, sourced from WISQARS. NEISS-FISS data is available at www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/series/198#studies.
2. Estimates of the cost of gun violence were created using a model published in 2012 by economists at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE). PIRE is a nonprofit research organization that focuses on using scientific research to inform public policy. This model can be found at www.pire.org/documents/gswcost2010.pdf. All cost estimates were adjusted to 2016 dollars.

WE'RE ON A MISSION TO SAVE LIVES

For 25 years, the legal experts at Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence have been fighting for a safer America by researching, drafting, and defending the laws, policies, and programs proven to save lives from gun violence. Founded in the wake of a 1993 mass shooting in San Francisco, in 2016 the Law Center joined with former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords to form a courageous new force for gun safety that stretches coast to coast.

CONTACT US
media@giffords.org



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