

# THE ECONOMIC COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN WISCONSIN

In recent years, Wisconsin has experienced an average of 122 gun-related homicides, 382 gun-related suicides, and hundreds of nonfatal shootings per year.<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin has the 16th-lowest gun death rate among the states, yet **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 hundreds of shootings that occur each year in Wisconsin are a serious drain on the state's economy. Based on the expenses we can directly measure, including **healthcare costs** (\$46 million per year), **law enforcement and criminal justice expenses** (\$58 million per year), **costs to employers** (\$6 million per year), and **lost income** (\$927 million per year), the initial price tag of gun violence in Wisconsin is over **\$1 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 Wisconsin taxpayers is over \$177 million.**<sup>2</sup>

## GUN VIOLENCE'S DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT

Interpersonal gun violence in Wisconsin disproportionately impacts underserved communities in urban areas, with young men of color being particularly vulnerable. For example, in 2016, black men made up less than 4% of the state's population, but nearly 61% of gun homicide victims. **Additionally, black men are nearly 42 times as likely as white men to be the victim of a gun homicide in Wisconsin.**

Moreover, in recent years, Wisconsin 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 more than 64% across the state.**

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



When the reduced quality of life attributable to pain and suffering (\$1.9 billion) is considered, the overall estimate of the economic cost of gun violence rises to **\$2.9 billion per year**. While this number is staggering, it actually understates the true cost of gun violence in Wisconsin because it doesn't include significant, yet difficult-to-measure costs, including lost business opportunities, lowered property values, and reductions in the tax base.

## REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE

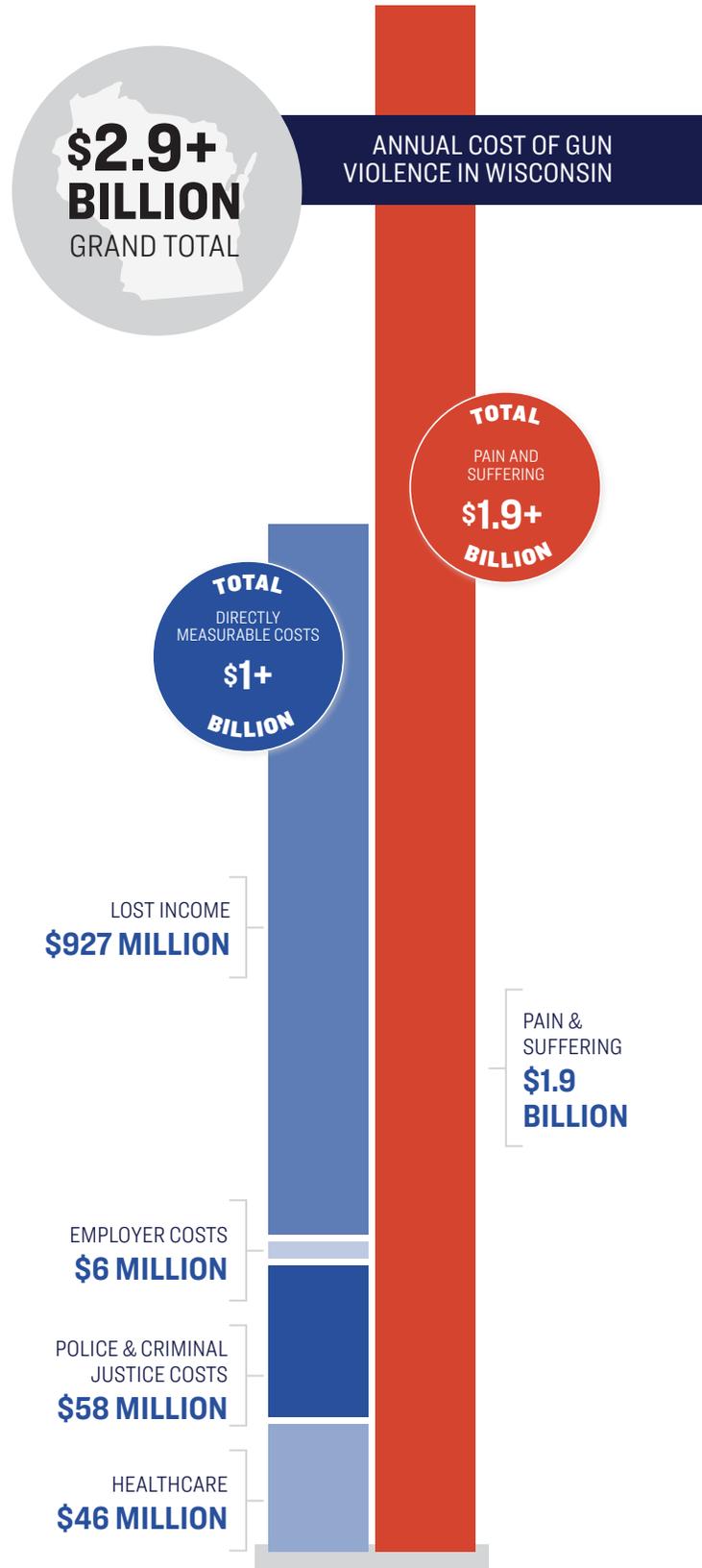
There is much work to be done. Fortunately, a number of proven solutions exist that would reduce gun violence in Wisconsin, including requiring background checks for all firearm purchases, passing extreme risk protection order legislation, and implementing evidence-based violence intervention strategies that interrupt the cycle of street violence. The investment required to implement these lifesaving solutions is minuscule compared to the yearly cost of gun violence in the state.

1. Fatal firearm injury data came from the CDC's WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports (<http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html>). Nonfatal firearm injuries came from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's HCUPnet Query System (<https://hcupnet.ahrq.gov/#setup>) 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 Wisconsin experienced in a given year, sourced from WISQARS. NEISS-FISS data is available at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/series/198#studies>.
2. Estimates were created using a model of the cost of gun violence 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 <http://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](mailto:media@giffords.org)



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