

# THE ECONOMIC COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN UTAH

In recent years, Utah has experienced an average of 30 gun-related homicides, 280 gun-related suicides, and dozens of nonfatal shootings per year.<sup>1</sup> Utah has the 21st 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 hundreds of shootings that occur each year in Utah are a serious drain on the state's economy. Based on the expenses we can directly measure, including **healthcare costs** (\$21 million per year), **law enforcement and criminal justice expenses** (\$15 million per year), **costs to employers** (\$3 million per year), and **lost income** (\$572 million per year), the initial price tag of gun violence in Utah is over \$611 million 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 Utah taxpayers is over \$85 million.**<sup>2</sup>

## GUN VIOLENCE IS BAD FOR BUSINESS

Utah's business community is severely impacted by the negative economic consequences of gun violence. Shootings engender fear in affected neighborhoods, which keeps potential customers away, forces businesses to relocate or limit hours of operation, and decreases foreign and local tourism.

A 2016 report by the Urban Institute found that in Washington DC **each additional homicide was associated with the loss of two retail or service establishments in the following year.**

In January 2019, commerce at Utah's Fashion Place Mall ground to a halt when a gunman opened fire outside the shopping center. Not only did this shooting injure two people, it also resulted in the mall's immediate evacuation, losing business for dozens of merchants. With tragic shootings occurring every year in Utah, it's easy to see how the economy is directly impacted by gun violence.

**\$611  
MILLION**  
TOTAL DIRECTLY  
MEASURABLE  
COSTS

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When the reduced quality of life attributable to pain and suffering (\$1.2 billion) is considered, the overall estimate of the economic cost of gun violence rises to **\$1.8 billion per year**. While this number is staggering, it actually understates the true cost of gun violence in Utah 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

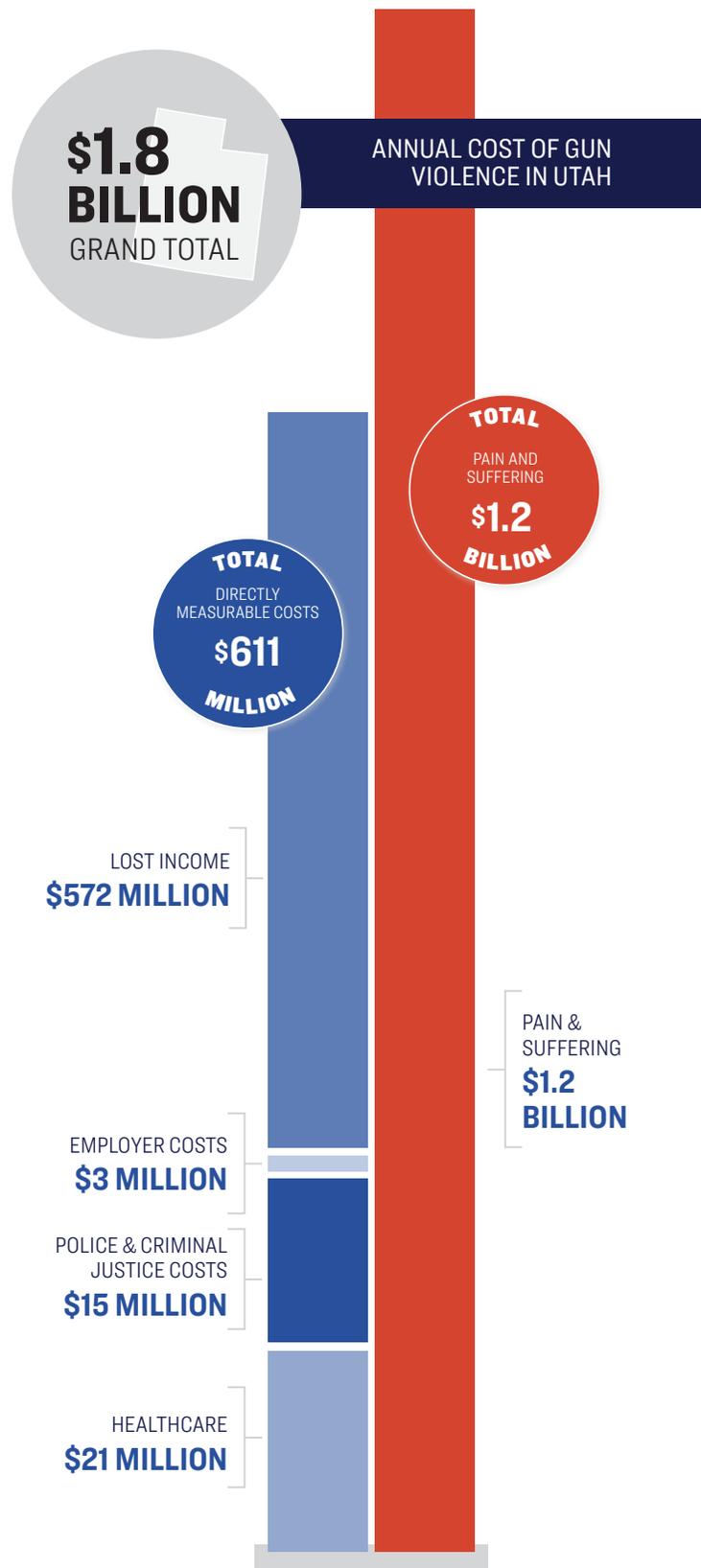
There is much work to be done. Fortunately, a number of proven solutions exist that would reduce gun violence in Utah, including requiring a background check for all firearm purchases, imposing a waiting period prior to the purchase of all firearms, and passing extreme risk protection order legislation. These laws can help protect all Utah residents, particularly those at risk for suicide.

1. Fatal firearm injury data came from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports ([www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html](http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html)). Non-fatal firearm injuries came from Utah's Public Health Indicator Based Information System (<https://ibis.health.utah.gov/query/Index.html>).
2. Estimates of the cost of gun violence in Utah 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 [www.pire.org/documents/gswcost2010.pdf](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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