

# THE ECONOMIC COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN SOUTH CAROLINA

In recent years, South Carolina has experienced an average of 309 gun-related homicides, 495 gun-related suicides, and thousands of nonfatal shootings per year.<sup>1</sup> South Carolina has the 12th 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 South Carolina are a serious drain on the state's economy. Based on the expenses we can directly measure, including **healthcare costs** (\$74 million per year), **law enforcement and criminal justice expenses** (\$120 million per year), **costs to employers** (\$9 million per year), and **lost income** (\$1.3 billion per year), the initial price tag of gun violence in South Carolina is over **\$1.5 billion per year.** Much of this tab is picked up by the public. Up to 85% of gunshot victims 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 South Carolina taxpayers is over \$293 million.**<sup>2</sup>

## GUN VIOLENCE'S DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT

Interpersonal gun violence in South Carolina disproportionately impacts underserved communities in urban areas, with young men of color being particularly vulnerable. As of 2017, black men made up just 27% of the state's population, but account for nearly two-thirds of gun homicide victims. Additionally, black men are five times as likely as white men to be the victim of a gun homicide in South Carolina.

Moreover, in recent years, South Carolina has seen a sustained increase in interpersonal gun violence, with cities suffering particularly increased gun homicide rates. From 2014 to 2017, gun homicides increased by more than 25% across the state.

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

**\$1.5+**  
**BILLION**

TOTAL DIRECTLY  
MEASURABLE  
COSTS

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When the reduced quality of life attributable to pain and suffering (\$2.8 billion) is considered, the overall estimate of the economic cost of gun violence rises to **\$4.3 billion** per year. While this number is staggering, it actually understates the true cost of gun violence in South Carolina 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 South Carolina, 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.

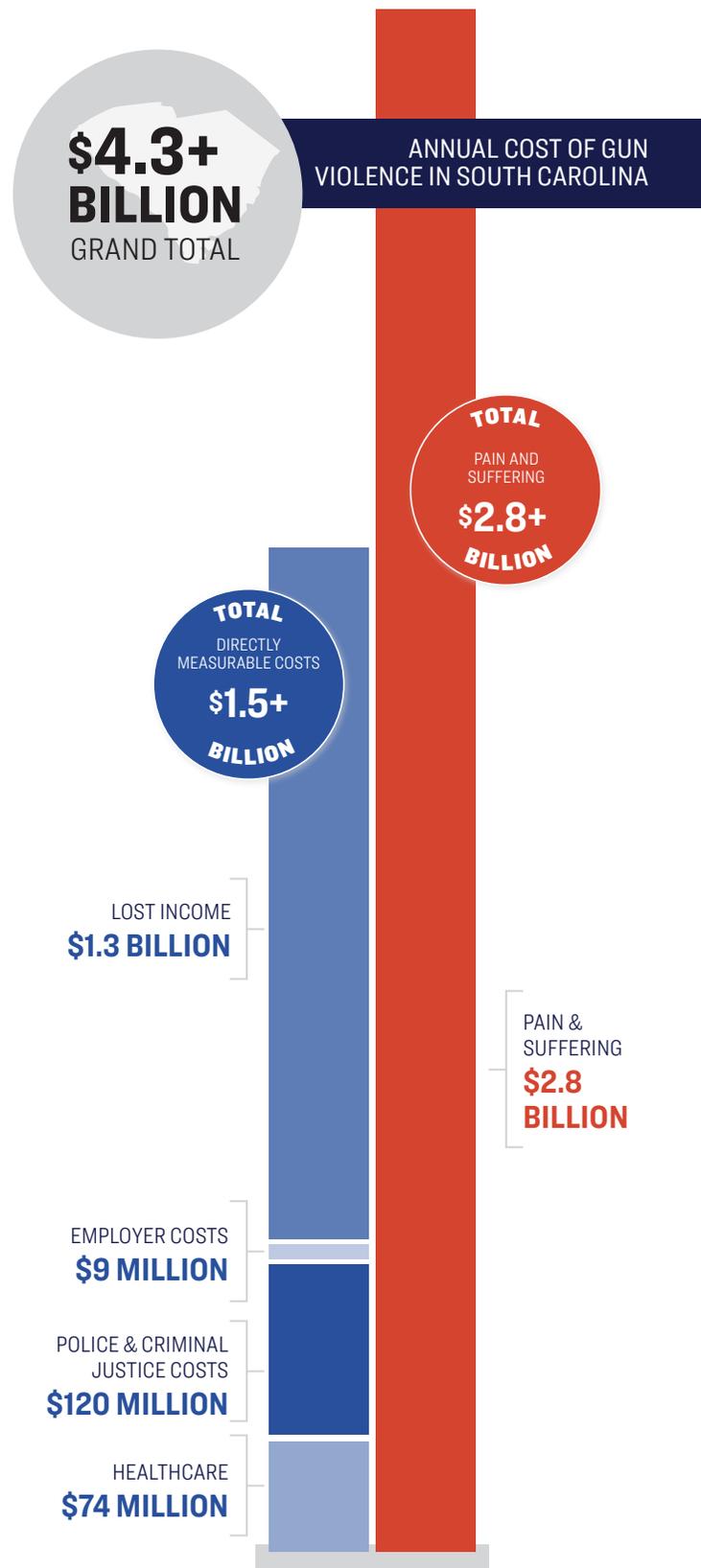
1. Fatal firearm injury data came from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports ([www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html](http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html)). Nonfatal firearm injuries came from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's HCUPnet Query System (<https://hcupnet.ahrq.gov/#setup>).
2. Estimates of the cost of gun violence in South Carolina 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

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