

THE ECONOMIC COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN ARIZONA

In recent years, Arizona has suffered an average of 244 gun-related homicides, 669 gun-related suicides, 582 non-fatal interpersonal shootings, and 553 accidental shootings per year.¹ **Arizona has the 18th highest number of gun deaths per capita among the states.** Gun violence in our state exacts a high physical, emotional, and financial toll on our family, friends, and neighbors. 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 2,215 shootings that occur each year in Arizona are a serious drain on our economy. Based on the expenses we can directly measure, including healthcare costs (\$86 million per year), law enforcement and criminal justice expenses (\$114 million per year), costs to employers (\$11 million per year), and lost income (\$1.7 billion per year), the initial price tag of gun violence in Arizona is \$1.9 billion per year.² 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. Law enforcement efforts are funded entirely by taxpayer dollars. As a result, the direct cost of gun violence to Arizona taxpayers is approximately \$334 million.

1: All non-fatal firearm injury data used was generously provided by the Arizona Department of Health Services. Arizona Hospital Discharge Public Use Files, Bureau of Public Health Statistics, Arizona Department of Health Services.

2: All cost estimates are derived from a model created by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE). PIRE is a nonprofit research organization which focuses on using scientific research to inform public policy.

When the reduced quality of life attributable to pain and suffering (\$3.5 billion) is considered, the overall estimate of the economic cost of gun violence in Arizona rises to \$5.4 billion per year. While this number is staggering, it actually understates the true cost of gun violence in the Grand Canyon State—it doesn't incorporate significant, yet difficult-to-measure costs, including lost business opportunities, lowered property values, and reductions in the tax base.

Conversely, reducing shootings improves local economies. A recent study by the Urban Institute found that just one fewer gun homicide in Minneapolis, MN was associated with the creation of 80 jobs and an additional \$9.4 million in sales across all businesses the following year.

There's much work to be done. Fortunately, a number of proven solutions exist to reduce gun violence without limiting responsible gun ownership. These include universal background checks for gun sales, neighborhood revitalization programs, and evidence-based violence intervention strategies. The investment required to implement these lifesaving solutions is minuscule compared to the yearly cost of gun violence in our state.

GUN VIOLENCE IS BAD FOR BUSINESS

The business community of Arizona is severely impacted by the negative economic consequences of gun violence. Shootings engender fear in the affected neighborhood that keeps potential customers away, forces businesses to relocate or limit their hours of operation, and decreases foreign and local tourism. Just last year, a serial shooter killed seven people and injured two others in the Maryvale area of Phoenix, terrifying local residents.

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