

# THE ECONOMIC COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN COLORADO

In recent years, Colorado has experienced an average of 110 gun-related homicides, 495 gun-related suicides, and hundreds of nonfatal shootings per year.<sup>1</sup> Colorado has the 20th 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 more than 1,200 shootings that occur each year in Colorado 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** (\$52 million per year), **costs to employers** (\$7 million per year), and **lost income** (\$1.1 billion per year), the initial price tag of gun violence in Colorado is over **\$1.2 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 Colorado taxpayers is over \$191 million.**<sup>2</sup>

## GUN VIOLENCE IS BAD FOR BUSINESS

Colorado'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 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 2018, just before St. Patrick's Day in Aurora, Colorado, two young men entered a crowded local mall and engaged in a terrifying firefight. Fortunately, no one was hurt during the dangerous exchange of gunfire, but the mall was temporarily shut down during the incident and large portions remained closed for the duration of the investigation. With hundreds of shootings occurring every year in the state, it's easy to see how gun violence directly impacts Colorado's economy.

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

**\$1.2+**  
**BILLION**  
TOTAL  
DIRECTLY  
MEASURABLE  
COSTS

When the reduced quality of life attributable to pain and suffering (\$2.3 billion) is considered, the overall estimate of the economic cost of gun violence rises to **\$3.5 billion per year**. While this number is staggering, it actually understates the true cost of gun violence in Colorado 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 to reduce gun violence in Colorado, including extreme risk protection order laws, imposing waiting periods on gun sales, and urban violence reduction programs. 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 Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment ([www.chd.dphe.state.co.us/cohid/topics.aspx?q=Injury\\_Hospitalizations](http://www.chd.dphe.state.co.us/cohid/topics.aspx?q=Injury_Hospitalizations)) 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 Colorado experienced in a given year, sourced from WISQARS. NEISS-FISS data is available at [www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/series/198#studies](http://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](http://www.pire.org/documents/gswcost2010.pdf). All cost estimates were adjusted to 2016 dollars.

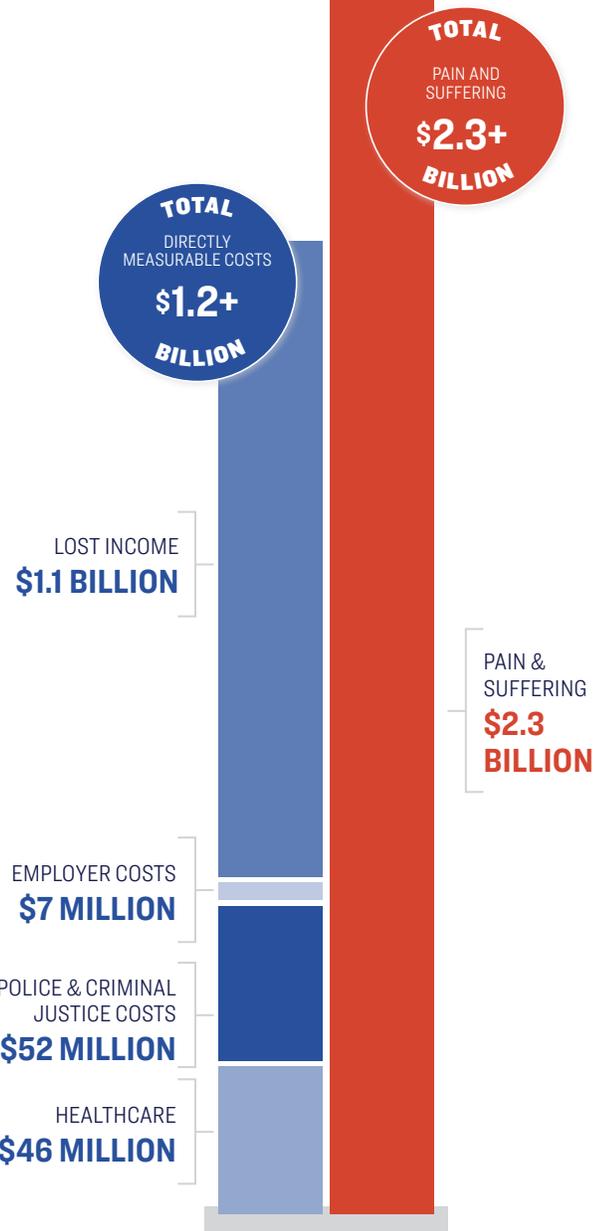
## WE'RE ON A MISSION TO SAVE LIVES

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.

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**\$3.5+ BILLION**  
 GRAND TOTAL

**ANNUAL COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN COLORADO**



LEARN ABOUT COLORADO'S GUN LAWS:

[lawcenter.giffords.org/CO](http://lawcenter.giffords.org/CO)