



WEST ATHENS-WESTMONT CALIFORNIA

# THE COST OF GUN VIOLENCE

THE DIRECT COST TO TAXPAYERS







# WEST ATHENS-WESTMONT CALIFORNIA THE COST OF GUN VIOLENCE

**S**outh Los Angeles has historically experienced very high rates of gun violence, but had seen a steep decline in shootings in the years prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Like most urban jurisdictions around the country, South Los Angeles had a sharp spike in homicides in 2020.

Glamorized and exploited by countless movies and television shows, the portrayal of South Los Angeles has been one of gangs, drugs, guns, and police corruption, and violence. While exaggerated on all fronts, these challenges certainly exist.

Within South Los Angeles is the community of West Athens-Westmont, an unincorporated area in Los Angeles County, adjacent to Inglewood.

West Athens-Westmont's nearly 45,000 residents are about half Black, half Latino. As an unincorporated area that is not the responsibility of the City of Los Angeles and seemingly forgotten by the County,

West Athens-Westmont has suffered from decades of underinvestment. West Athens-Westmont residents have experienced chronic [violence, injustice, and economic disenfranchisement](#).

West Athens-Westmont is policed by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The Department has come under fire in the last few years, with the

launch of a California Department of Justice investigation as well as members of the County Board of Supervisors calling for the elected Sheriff to resign. Some of that controversy is due to two deadly shootings of young men in West Athens-Westmont.

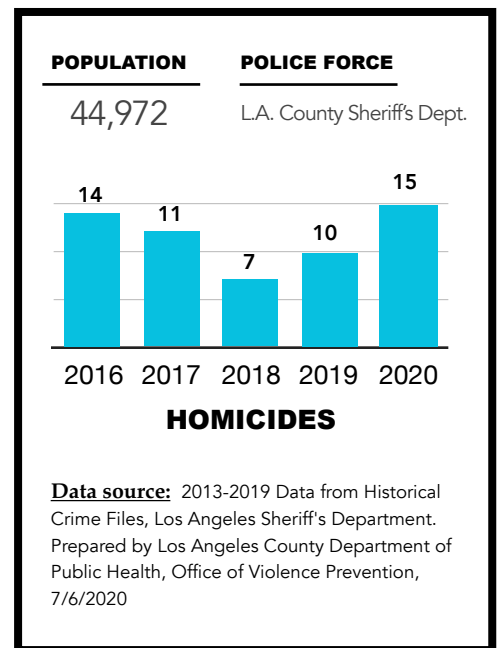
In May 2020, Sheriff deputies shot and killed 18-year-old Robert Avitia, firing 19 rounds at him. Then in September, 29-year-old [Dijon Kizzee](#) was stopped for an alleged code violation while riding his bicycle. According to witnesses, Sheriff deputies shot Kizzee 15 times, even after he fell to the ground. The killing of Kizzee sparked nightly protests in West Athens-Westmont. In addition to the police shootings, West Athens-

**When someone is shot in West Athens-Westmont, there is an immediate, multifaceted, and very expensive responses from an array of government agencies.**

Westmont experienced a major increase in gun violence in 2020, harkening back to the 1990's when violence was rampant.

When someone is shot in West Athens-Westmont, as in jurisdictions throughout the country, there is an immediate, multifaceted, and very expensive response from an array of government agencies. The Los Angeles

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## CALIFORNIA COST OF VIOLENCE EACH YEAR

# \$1.4 BILLION

"The 9,980 shootings that occur each year in California are a serious drain on the state's economy. Based on the expenses we can directly measure, including **healthcare costs** (\$348 million per year), **law enforcement and criminal justice expenses** (\$625 million per year), **costs to employers** (\$39 million per year), and **lost income** (\$5.5 billion per year), the initial price tag of gun violence in California is over **\$6.5 billion per year**. Much of this tab is picked up by the public, in part because 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 annual cost of gun violence to California taxpayers is approximately \$1.4 billion.**"

THE ECONOMIC COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN CALIFORNIA, The Giffords Law Center



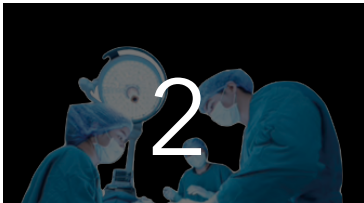
## WEST ATHENS-WESTMONT COST BREAKDOWN



# 1

### CRIME SCENE RESPONSES

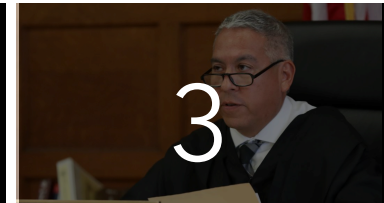
The response to a severe injury shooting or homicide scene usually includes a heavy police presence, Fire/EMT response, along with medical transport. According to officials with the LA County Sheriff's Department, up to 16 officers, including Patrol, Homicide Unit, and CSI investigators, respond to a typical homicide shooting.



# 2

### HOSPITAL & REHABILITATION

Once a victim has been transported to the hospital, the cost of the Trauma Unit, surgery, and rehabilitation, are exorbitant. Costs can range from \$88k to \$144k per incident. With more than 2/3 of gunshot victims either uninsured or on Medi-Cal, the Cost of Violence includes a tremendous strain on the County's hospital network.



# 3

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Police investigation, a trial or court process that includes prosecution and defense costs, and court staff, make up the many costs of the court process in injury shooting and homicide cases. Due to the consequences of a homicide conviction, these cases often go to trial. Sometimes these cases involve multiple suspects with multiple court dates and separate trials. From the time of arrest, court proceedings in an injury shooting or homicide case can take two years.

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County Fire Department dispatches EMTs, government contracted ambulances respond, the Sheriff and neighboring policing agencies descend on the scene, investigators from the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office often arrive, and if the victim/s are declared dead on the scene, the coroner is called. And all of this stems from just the shooting scene itself. In non-fatal shootings, immediately following is a hospitalization often paid for by tax dollars, and in the case of serious injury, rehabilitation. Victim compensation is often provided. There is protracted investigation by the Sheriff and the District Attorney, who are sometimes joined by the US Attorney's



# 4

### INCARCERATION

Incarceration accounts for a large portion of the costs once a suspect is arrested. A stay in the LA County Jail system costs on average \$143 per day. Suspects can remain in the County system for two years until trial, sentencing, and placement into the State prison system. The California State prison system costs \$290 per day per day; incarceration costs of individuals convicted of attempted murder or homicide range from \$742k to over \$2.4 million.



# 5

### VICTIM SUPPORT

The majority of these costs are covered by California's Victim Compensation program. Costs can range from \$85k to \$113k per victim, and include burial expenses, lost wages for a year, medical expenses, and counseling. Other costs in this category include County services, including social services and autopsy costs, and the long-term cost of families losing a financial contributor.



# 6

### LOST TAX REVENUE

California has a State Income Tax of \$400 + 4% of any income above \$22,107 along with a combined State/Local Sales tax of 9.5%. When an injury shooting or homicide occurs, the State and county/cities of residence loses the ability to collect taxes (both income and sales tax) from the incarcerated suspects and homicide victims. Each incident can represent lost tax revenue of a minimum of two individuals, from 9 to 25 years.

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# WEST ATHENS-WESTMONT CALIFORNIA THE COST OF GUN VIOLENCE



**Each shooting  
– homicide in  
West Athens-  
Westmont  
costs tax  
payers \$3.1  
million**

Office. Most often there is a trial and a long incarceration period. When there are multiple victims and/or multiple suspects, these efforts multiply for a single shooting incident.

These are just some of costs of each injury shooting and homicide in West Athens-Westmont. The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR), in partnership with the Los Angeles County Office of Violence Prevention (OVP), was commissioned by the California Wellness Foundation to conduct a detailed analysis of the Cost of Gun Violence in West Athens-Westmont. NICJR and the OVP tracked the direct costs of each shooting and have deliberately used low-end estimates for each expense. Additionally, not included in this assessment are productivity losses relating to victim(s) or suspect(s) who were working at the time of the shooting. Nationally, those costs have been estimated at an additional \$1-2 million for each shooting incident. Therefore, the calculated per homicide shooting cost of \$3.1 million in West Athens-Westmont is a conservative estimate; the real cost is likely even higher.

In the past five years, West Athens-Westmont has had an approximate average of eight homicides per year, which result in an annual expense to taxpayers of more than \$20 million.

**If West Athens-Westmont could reduce its gun violence rate by just 20%, that could result in a combined government savings of \$4.9 million every year.**

OVP began investing in violence prevention and intervention in West Athens-Westmont in 2017 via the Trauma Prevention Initiative, including Street Outreach and Community Violence Intervention, and the Community Action for Peace Network of community leaders, as part of a comprehensive public health approach.





# GREATER COMMUNITY COST OF GUN VIOLENCE

The normalization or even expectation of violence can lead to high rates of gun possession, tension, and the resolving of minor disputes with guns

...children who have traumatic experiences when they are young have significantly higher rates of poor health outcomes as they grow older.

**I**n addition to the direct financial costs that taxpayers bear the burden of, community members in neighborhoods where rates of violence are highest, suffer from social impacts of trauma, toxic-stress, disinvestment, and community tension.

Increased levels of violence and the trauma it produces also leads to community members being desensitized. The normalization or even expectation of violence can lead to high rates of gun possession, tension, and the resolving of minor disputes with gun violence.

The public health approach to violence also proves that like disease, violence is a contagion and can breed in areas of social dysfunction. This is where we get the axioms hurt people, hurt people and that violence begets violence. They are not just clever clichés but based in science.

The National Institutes of Health, in its paper, “The Contagious Spread of Violence Among US Adolescents Through Social Networks” found that, “Contagious diseases and violence tend to cluster in similar ways. A cluster is an ‘aggregation of cases of a disease that are closely grouped in time and place.’ There are geographic “hot spots” for contagious diseases, such as the 2015 measles outbreak linked to Disneyland in California involving clusters of unvaccinated children. Likewise, there are geographic hot spots for violent crime on specific streets and in specific neighborhoods.” (Bond and Bushman, 2017).

Children are especially affected by the impact of violence around them. Groundbreaking research known as the ACEs study – Adverse Childhood Experiences – revealed that children who have traumatic experiences when they are young have significantly higher rates of poor health outcomes as they grow older. Experiencing violence, witnessing violence, and having close friends or family members victimized by violence produces trauma and vicarious or second-hand trauma. Studies have proven that the brain function of young people who experience trauma can be negatively affected, and that trauma can cause depression, behavioral challenges, academic disruption, and delinquency.

The direct financial burden of gun violence documented in this report also does not include the loss of resources in communities with high violence rates. Businesses, recreational centers, community events and festivals, access to fresh produce, and other resources usually flee from neighborhoods with high rates of violence.

A 2019 study conducted by the Controller for the City of Philadelphia examined the impact of gun violence on property values and corresponding tax assessments. “Our results indicate that a single homicide lowers sale prices by 2.3 percent in the immediate neighborhood (within 0.75 miles of the homicide);” states the “Report on the Economic Impact of Homicides” (Rhyhart, 2019).





WEST ATHENS-WESTMONT  
CALIFORNIA

# The Cost Per Shooting

The true governmental cost of gun violence to the County and State.

NICJR  
National Institute for  
Criminal Justice Reform

THE CALIFORNIA  
Wellness  
FOUNDATION

## Homicide Cost

## Injury Shooting Cost

### CRIME SCENE

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- \$6,444 Police Response
- \$2,500 Scene Cleanup
- \$2,927 Fire/EMT
- \$1,407 Ambulance

- \$1,683 Police Response
- \$2,500 Scene Cleanup
- \$2,927 Fire/EMT
- \$1,407 Ambulance

\$13,278

\$8,517

### HOSPITAL

### HOSPITAL

- \$1,428 EMR/Trauma Center
- \$87,097 Gunshot Surgery

- \$1,428 EMR/Trauma Center
- \$87,097 Gunshot Surgery
- \$56,092 Rehabilitation

\$88,525

\$144,617

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- \$16,400 Police Investigation
- \$219,139 DA & Public Defender
- \$22,836 Court Process

- \$820 Police Investigation
- \$31,306 DA & Public Defender
- \$3,114 Court Process

\$258,375

\$35,240

### INCARCERATION

### INCARCERATION

- \$104,390 Pre-Trial Incarceration
- \$2,441,013 Prison Placement

- \$104,390 Pre-Trial Incarceration
- \$742,917 Prison Placement

\$2,545,403

\$847,307

### VICTIM SUPPORT

### VICTIM SUPPORT

- \$12,815 Corner's Office
- \$70,000 Victim of Crimes
- \$34,416 Receiving Social Service Benefits  
*(one year support for two families)*

- \$70,000 Victim of Crimes
- \$17,208 Receiving Social Service Benefits  
*(one year support for one family)*

\$117,231

\$87,208

### LOST REVENUE

### LOST REVENUE

- \$80,200 Income & Sales Tax Revenue  
*(both suspect & murder victim)*

- \$14,436 Income & Sales Tax Revenue

\$80,200

\$14,436



total cost based on two suspects

\$6.2M

per homicide shooting

\$3.1M

Per Homicide Shooting

per one suspect

\$1.1M

Per Injury Shooting

per one suspect



total cost based on two suspects

\$2.2M

per injury shooting



# Data Sources



WEST ATHENS-WESTMONT  
CALIFORNIA

## CRIME SCENE

Subject:	Police Response	Fire/EMT Transport	Scene Clean Up
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with top officials of the LA County Sheriff's Department</li> <li>LA County government salaries <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L.A. Fire Department <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> <li>LA County EMS contract <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Aftermath</a></li> <li><a href="#">Steri-Clean</a></li> </ul>
Notes	<p>Initial police response to a homicide scene typically includes 4-5 Patrol, 1 Sergeant, 3 Gang Unit, 2 Detectives, 2 CSI, and 1 Forensic tech. They remain on the scene up to 8 hours.</p> <p>Initial police response to an injury shooting scene typically includes 3 patrol, 2 Detectives, 1 Sergeant and 1 CSI Tech. They remain on the scene from 2-4 hours.</p>	<p>Fire &amp; EMT Budget = \$1.15 Billion Total Responses = 392,872 Average cost per response = <b>\$2,927</b></p> <p>Ambulance cost per response = <b>\$1,407</b></p>	<p>Average cost among competitive vendors to clean up crime scenes involving blood = <b>\$2,500</b></p>

## HOSPITAL

Subject:	ER/ Surgery for Gun-Shot Victim
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2020 National Trends and Cost Burden of Surgically Treated Gunshot Wounds in the US <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> <li>2021 Firearm Injuries: Health Care Service Needs and Costs <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> </ul>
Notes	<p>Average cost of gun-shot victims treated and released the same day = \$1,428 (ER base cost) Average cost of gun-shot victims requiring surgery and hospital stay = \$87,097 (surgery cost) + \$56,092 (hospital stay &amp; rehabilitation center) Average cost of gun-shot victims who required surgery, a hospital stay, and were released to rehabilitation centers = \$144,667(ER cost, surgery &amp; rehabilitation cost) Formula for this study: (Base cost + surgery cost - 1/5 (20%) of surgery cost) = \$70,820 per shooting victim requiring surgery and rehabilitation.</p>

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Subject:	Police Investigation	DA & Public Defender	Court Process
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparative interviews with police departments across the nation.</li> <li>Interviews with top officials of the LA County Sheriff's Department</li> <li>LA County government salaries <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimates of Time Spent in Capital and Non-Capital Murder Cases <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> <li>Interview with Public Defenders Office</li> <li>Deputy District Attorney III: <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> <li>Deputy Public Defender III: <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey of Judicial Salaries <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> <li>Judicial Weighted Caseload Measurement <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> <li>Schedule 7A County Courts: <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> </ul>
Notes	<p>Investigations typically can extend over a two year period. An average of <b>20</b> hours is spent on attempted murder cases and <b>400 hours</b> for homicides cases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>\$41/hr</b> (2 Detective) x 10 hours = <b>\$820</b></li> <li><b>\$41/hr</b> (2 Detective) x 200 hours = <b>\$16,400</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>1087</b> hours to defend &amp; prosecute a murder case x <b>\$144</b> (DA <b>\$72/hr</b> + PD <b>\$72/hr</b>) = \$156,528 + 40% overhead = <b>\$219,139</b>. To defend an attempted-murder case requires 1/7 of the time = <b>\$31,306</b></p>	<p>Combined hourly rates of the following staff: Judge, Bailiff, Research Attorney, Court Reporter, Clerk = <b>\$519 per hour</b>. \$519 x 44 hours (murder case) = <b>\$22,836</b> \$519 x 6 hours (A felony) = <b>\$3,114</b></p>

## INCARCERATION

Subject:	Pre-Trial Incarceration	State Prison (Attempted Murder)	State Prison (Murder Case)
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total Sheriff budget <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> <li>County Jail budget <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legislative Analyst Office <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> <li>Injury shooting (9 years) <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legislative Analyst Office <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> <li>Murder (25 years) <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> </ul>
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total Sheriff budget = \$3.3 billion</li> <li>County jail budget (27% of total) = \$890 million</li> <li>Average daily population of County jail = 17,070</li> <li>Average Daily Cost Per Inmate: <b>\$143/day</b></li> </ul> <p>Average 2 year period of pre-trial incarceration in the county upon sentencing and placement into State Prison. \$143/day x 2 years = <b>\$104,390</b></p>	<p>Annual cost of <b>\$106,131</b> to incarcerate an adult in the California state prison system.</p> <p>Convictions involving injury shootings serve an average of 9 years in state prison, subtracting pre-trial 'time-served' in the County jail. (\$106,131 x 9 years) - 2 years = <b>\$742,917</b></p>	<p>Annual cost of <b>\$106,131</b> to incarcerate an adult in the California state prison system.</p> <p>Average inmate serves 25 years for murder, minus time served. (\$106,131 x 25 years) - 2 years = <b>\$2,441,013</b></p>

## VICTIM SUPPORT

Subject:	Victim of Crimes	Social Service Assistance	Medical Examiner's Office
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crime Victims Compensation Program <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eligibility and Benefit Amounts in State Cash Assistance Programs: TANF <a href="#">(Link)</a>, SNAP <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LA County Medical Examiner FY18 Annual Report <a href="#">(Link)</a></li> </ul>
Notes	<p>Maximum Compensation Homicide and Non-fatal shooting = <b>\$70,000</b></p> <p>Eligible Expenses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Medical</li> <li>* Outpatient mental health</li> <li>* Funeral and burial</li> <li>* Income loss</li> <li>* Relocation</li> <li>* Crime Scene Cleanup</li> </ul>	<p>When victim is severely shot, many can't return to work immediately. Since the victim and perpetrator may be a major financial contributor to the household, many families may need to apply for social services support. The estimate for this study is for 1 year of Social Service assistance. (\$1,434/mo x 12 months) x 2 families = <b>\$34,416</b></p>	<p>Cost per autopsy = <b>\$12,815</b></p> <p>LA County Medical Examiner <a href="#">Total autopsies FY18</a> = <b>3,428</b></p> <p>LA County Medical Examiner <a href="#">Total Budget FY18</a> = <b>\$43,932,890</b></p>

## LOST REVENUE

Subject:	Lost Tax Revenue (One person going to jail)	Lost Tax Revenue (Murder: Revenue Lost for 2 people)
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2021 <a href="#">(Income Tax)</a>, <a href="#">(State Sales Tax)</a> <a href="#">(City/County Sales/Use Tax)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2021 <a href="#">(Income Tax)</a>, <a href="#">(State Sales Tax)</a> <a href="#">(City/County Sales/Use Tax)</a></li> </ul>
Notes	<p>State income tax= <b>\$348.89 + 4% over \$22,107 (\$315)</b> Los Angeles City/County combined sales/use tax = <b>9.5%</b>.</p> <p>If person earns 30k/year, then <b>total income tax = \$664</b> If person spends 1/3 of income, then <b>total sales tax = \$940. Total combined tax = \$1,604/yr</b></p> <p>But if person has to serve a 9 years sentence for attempted murder, then (\$1,604 x 9 years) = <b>\$14,436 of missed combined tax revenue.</b></p> <p>If shooting victim doesn't work for one year, then an additional <b>\$1,604 of lost revenue</b> is added. <b>Total Lost Sales Tax Revenue = \$14,436</b></p>	<p>State income tax= <b>\$348.89 + 4% over \$22,107 (\$315) = \$664</b> Los Angeles City/County combined sales/use tax = <b>9.5%</b>.</p> <p>If person earns 30k/year, then <b>total income tax = \$1,604.</b> If person spends 1/3 of income, then <b>total sales tax = \$940.</b> <b>Total combined tax = \$1,604/yr</b></p> <p>Average murder sentence is 25 years; combined revenue loss for victim and perpetrator is at least <b>\$80,200</b> (\$1,604 x 25 years x 2 people)</p>