The City of Detroit has long been known as the heart of the American automotive industry. Early in the twentieth century, the promise of manufacturing jobs and freedom from the Jim Crow South led to massive population growth in Detroit as part of the Great Migration, with the city swelling from 265,000 residents at the turn of the century to 1.5 million by 1930. However, in the latter half of the century, Detroit saw a mass exodus of White residents along with a significant increase in violent crime. In 1950, White residents made up 84% of the city’s population; today, Detroit’s population of 620,000 is 78% Black and 10% White, making it the city with the highest rate of Black residents among larger US cities.

In 2018, Detroit achieved its lowest number of homicides in 50 years, but like much of the US, the city saw sharp increases in violence as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. From 2019 to 2020, murders in Detroit increased by 19%, and non-fatal shootings increased a staggering 53%. While these numbers have since decreased, they are still well above pre-pandemic levels.

When someone is shot in Detroit, there is an immediate, multifaceted, and very expensive response from an array of government agencies. The Fire Department dispatches Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), government-contracted ambulances respond, and several Detroit Police Department (DPD) units descend on the scene. Investigators from the Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office also often arrive, and if the victim is declared dead on the scene, the Coroner is called. All of this is only for the shooting scene itself. For a surviving victim, there is also typically a hospitalization, which is frequently paid for by tax dollars. Rehabilitation follows in the case of serious injury, and victim compensation is generally provided. There is also often a lengthy investigation by the Detroit Police Department and the Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office, who are sometimes joined by the US Attorney. With the city’s homicide clearance rate at 50% in 2021, a trial and a long incarceration period frequently follow. When there are multiple victims and/or suspects, these efforts and costs multiply for a single shooting incident. These are just some of the costs of each non-fatal shooting in Detroit.

The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) was commissioned by the Public Welfare Foundation to conduct this detailed analysis that documents the government expenses accompanying every fatal or non-fatal shooting in Detroit. In tracking the direct costs per shooting incident, NICJR has deliberately used the low end of the range for each expense. This study does not include the loss-of-production costs when the victim or suspect were working at the time of the incident. Nationally, those costs have been estimated at an additional $1–2 million for each shooting incident. This means that the calculated cost of $1,719,087 for a fatal shooting in Detroit is a conservative estimate; the real cost is likely even higher.

Detroit has recently invested in community-based gun violence intervention efforts. In July 2023, Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan announced that six community-based organizations had been selected to conduct community violence intervention through a $10 million ShotStoppers pilot program funded by the American Rescue Plan Act. The City plans to evaluate the program’s impacts, and if the results are promising, will seek to extend the program further.

As the City has experienced, a relatively small investment in effective gun violence intervention strategies can yield significant reductions in shootings, save lives, and produce massive savings. In the past three years, Detroit has averaged approximately 1,303 combined fatal and non-fatal shootings annually, which cost taxpayers almost $1,865,501,266 per year. If Detroit could reduce its gun violence rate by just 20%, that could result in government savings of about $373,100,253 every year.
There are significant community costs of gun violence beyond the direct costs included in NICJR’s calculations. In addition to the direct financial burden borne by taxpayers, areas with high rates of gun violence experience the loss of community resources and decreases in property values. Businesses, community events, and other vital resources often flee from violent neighborhoods. Further, a recent study by the Controller for the City of Philadelphia examining the economic impact of gun violence on property values found that “a single homicide lowers sale prices by 2.3 percent in the immediate neighborhood (within 0.75 miles of the homicide).”

In neighborhoods where rates of violence are highest, community members also bear the burden of tension and trauma. The normalization of violence can lead to high rates of gun possession and the resolving of minor disputes with gun violence. The public health approach to violence shows that, like disease, violence is a contagion that can breed in areas of social dysfunction. The National Institutes of Health explains that “Contagious diseases and violence tend to cluster in similar ways…. 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.”

Even more significant is the impact of violence on children. Experiencing violence, witnessing violence, and having close friends or family members victimized by violence produces trauma and vicarious trauma. In the 1990s, the groundbreaking Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study by the Centers for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente revealed that children who have traumatic experiences when they are young have significantly higher rates of poor health outcomes as they age. Additional studies have proven that the experience of trauma negatively impacts the brain function of young people and can cause depression, behavioral challenges, academic disruption, and delinquency.
Many victim support costs are covered by the Michigan Division of Victim Services. Surviving victims of non-fatal shootings and families of fatal shooting victims receive, on average, $45,000 in compensation to cover costs such as burial expenses, medical expenses, and counseling. Including costs such as autopsies and Social Security benefits increases the total cost for victim support to as much as $75,004.

Incarceration accounts for a large portion of the costs once a suspect is arrested. A stay in the Wayne County jail system costs an average of $164,250 for the pretrial incarceration period. Following a trial, an inmate is incarcerated within the Michigan prison system at a cost of $905,418 for those convicted of attempted murder and $1,156,923 for those convicted of murder.

Justice system costs include police investigation, prosecution and defense attorneys, court personnel and judges, and the use of court facilities. Due to the consequences of a fatal shooting conviction, these cases go to trial more often than other types of cases. Sometimes these cases involve multiple suspects with multiple court dates and separate trials. From the time of arrest, court proceedings in a non-fatal or fatal shooting case average about two years.
THE COST Per Shooting
The governmental cost of gun violence to the City, County, and State

Detroit
Michigan

**HOSPITAL**

$88,525

**VICTIM SUPPORT**

$75,004

**INCARCERATION**

$1,321,202

**LOST REVENUE**

$129,750

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**CRIME SCENE**

$5,992

**HOSPITAL**

$144,617

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

$15,280

**INCARCERATION**

$1,069,668

**LOST REVENUE**

$51,900

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**Per Fatal Shooting**

$1,719,087

**Per Non-Fatal Shooting**

$1,344,992
## Crime Scene

### Subject: Police Response
- Source: Initial police response to a fatal shooting scene typically includes 9 Patrol, 1 Lieutenant, 1 Sergeant, and 3 Detectives. They remain on the scene for 3–6 hours. Initial police response to a non-fatal shooting scene typically includes 4 Patrol, 1 Sergeant, and 1 Detective. They remain on scene for 1–4 hours.

### Notes
- The cost of the police investigation is calculated by multiplying the average amount of time spent by the police investigation.
- Cost per response = $1,141

### Subject: Fire/EMT Transport
- Source: Initial police response to a fatal shooting scene typically includes 9 Patrol, 1 Lieutenant, 1 Sergeant, and 3 Detectives. They remain on the scene for 3–6 hours. Initial police response to a non-fatal shooting scene typically includes 4 Patrol, 1 Sergeant, and 1 Detective. They remain on scene for 1–4 hours.

### Notes
- Fire & EMT Budget: $136,894,832
- Total Responses: 120,000 average
- Cost per response = $1,141

### Subject: Scene Clean Up
- Source: Tenting up the scene to respond to the shooting is typically includes 4 Patrol, 1 Sergeant, and 1 Detective. They remain on the scene for 3–6 hours.

### Notes
- Average cost of gunshot victims requiring surgery and hospital stay: $87,097 (surgery cost) + $56,092 (hospital stay and care)
- Average cost of gunshot victims requiring surgery, hospital stay, and release to outpatient care: $144,617 (ER, surgery, rehabilitation)

## Hospital

### Subject: Emergency Room / Surgery for Gun-Shot Victim
- Source: 2020 National Trends and Cost Burden of Surgically Treated Gunshot Wounds in the US
- Source: 2021 Firearms Injuries: Health Care Service Needs and Costs

### Notes
- Average cost of gunshot victims treated and released the same day: $1,428 (ER base cost)
- Average cost of gunshot victims requiring surgery and hospital stay: $87,097 (surgery cost) + $56,092 (hospital stay and care)
- Average cost of gunshot victims requiring surgery, hospital stay, and release to outpatient care: $144,617 (ER, surgery, rehabilitation)

## Criminal Justice

### Subject: Pre-Trial Incarceration
- Source: Wayne County FY21–22 Budget

### Notes
- Average daily population: 1,410
- Average daily cost per inmate: $225
- Average period of pretrial incarceration: 2 years
- $225/day x 2 years = $164,250

## Incarceration

### Subject: State Prison
- Source: Wayne County FY21–22 Budget

### Notes
- Cost per response = $1,141

## Victim Support

### Subject: Victim Compensation
- Source: Michigan Crime Victim Compensation Reference Guide
- Source: What Costs May Be Covered?

### Notes
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Division of Victim Services covers costs that include but are not limited to:
  - Medical expenses
  - Lost of wages
  - Burial support
  - Rehabilitation
  - Crime scene cleanup
  - Grief counseling

## Lost Revenue

### Subject: Lost Tax Revenue: One Person Incarcerated
- Source: Sales and Use Tax Information
- Source: Income tax calculator 2023 - Michigan
- Source: Michigan Tax Rates & Rankings

### Notes
- 4.25% state income tax + 2.4% city tax for the first $30,000
- Total annual income tax at $30,000/year: $1,995
- Sales and use tax (county and state): 6%
- Total annual sales tax for person earning $30,000/year and spending 1/3 of income: $600
- Total annual combined tax: $2,595
- Lost tax revenue for a 20-year sentence for attempted murder ($2,595 x 20 years): $51,900
- If the shooting victim does not work for one year, an additional $2,595 of revenue is lost.
- Total Lost Tax Revenue = $54,495

### Subject: Lost Tax Revenue: Murder (Loss of Revenue for Two People)
- Source: Sales and Use Tax Information
- Source: Income tax calculator 2023 - Michigan
- Source: Michigan Tax Rates & Rankings

### Notes
- 4.25% state income tax + 2.4% city tax for the first $30,000
- Total annual income tax at $30,000/year: $1,995
- Sales and use tax: 6%
- Total annual sales tax for person earning $30,000/year and spending 1/3 of income: $600
- Total annual combined tax: $2,595
- Lost tax revenue for a 25-year sentence for murder ($2,595 x 25 years): $64,875
- If the shooting victim loses their life, an additional $64,875 of revenue is lost.
- Total Lost Tax Revenue = $129,750