

# THE COST

## OF GUN VIOLENCE

### THE DIRECT COST TO TAXPAYERS

The City of Bakersfield's 400,000 residents make it California's fifth most populated city. Located in the Central Valley, Bakersfield is well known for its deep ties to agriculture and its contributions to American country music. Bakersfield is highly diverse, with a population that is 52% Latino, 30% White, 7% Asian, and 7% Black.

Bakersfield is also a city that has long been known for violence, with a 2020 crime rate that was 1.5 times the national average, and, as of 2023, the highest rate of home burglaries in the US. Kern County, where Bakersfield is located, also had the highest homicide rate in California in 2021.

When someone is shot in Bakersfield, 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 Bakersfield Police Department (BPD) units descend on the scene. Investigators from the Kern County District Attorney'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 Bakersfield Police Department and the Kern County District Attorney's Office, who are sometimes joined by the US Attorney. With the BPD homicide clearance rate averaging 62% between 2020 and 2022, 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 shooting in Bakersfield.

The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) was commissioned by the City of Bakersfield to conduct this detailed analysis that documents the government expenses accompanying every fatal or non-fatal shooting in Bakersfield.<sup>1</sup> In tracking the direct costs per shooting incident, NICJR has deliberately used the low end of the range for each expense. This study also 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 \$4,009,313 for a

fatal shooting in Bakersfield is a conservative estimate; the real cost is likely even higher.

In the past three years, Bakersfield has averaged approximately 140 combined fatal and non-fatal shootings annually, which cost taxpayers \$326,844,441 per year. If Bakersfield could reduce its gun violence rate by just 20%, that could result in government savings of about \$65,368,888 every year.

Fortunately, the City has recently taken positive steps in this direction by developing and beginning to implement a Gun Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) with support from the California Violence Intervention and Prevention (CalVIP) grant program. After a sharp increase in homicides from 2020 to 2021, Bakersfield saw a 31% decrease in combined fatal and nonfatal shootings between 2021 and 2022, following GVRS implementation. While this progress is promising, there is still much work to be done. As the City of Bakersfield experienced, a relatively small investment in effective violence reduction strategies can yield significant reductions in shootings, save lives, and produce massive savings.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the report, "fatal shootings" and "homicides" are not used synonymously. "Fatal shootings" refers to shooting incidents resulting in the death of the victim; "homicides" refers to all homicides in general.



# GREATER COMMUNITY COST OF GUN VIOLENCE

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 as 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)."<sup>2</sup>

Community members in neighborhoods where rates of violence are highest also bear the burden of community tension and trauma. 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 shows that, like disease, violence is a contagion that can breed in areas of social dysfunction. In "The Contagious Spread of Violence Among US Adolescents Through Social Networks," the National Institutes of

Health found 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."<sup>3</sup>

Finally, children are especially impacted by violence around them. 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.<sup>4</sup>

## Population

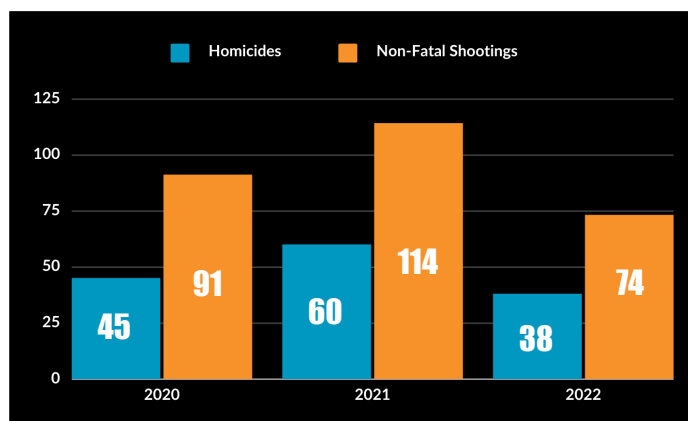
407,615



739

Police Force

## Homicides and Non-Fatal Shootings<sup>5</sup>



## Cleared Homicides Rates<sup>6</sup>

2020	51%
2021	57%
2022	81%

2. Report on the Economic Impact of Homicides: Philadelphia Controller

3. The Contagious Spread of Violence Among US Adolescents Through Social Networks

4. While the CDC-Kaiser ACEs study is not available to the public, information about the study may be found [here](#)

5. Direct correspondence between NICJR and Bakersfield Police Department

6. Ibid.

# COST BREAKDOWN



## CRIME SCENE RESPONSE

The crime scene response to a severe non-fatal or fatal shooting typically includes a heavy police presence, fire/ EMT staff, and medical transport staff. Based on Bakersfield data, the Bakersfield Police Department deploys an average of 18 sworn units, including patrol officers, detectives, and other supervisory-level officers, to respond to a typical fatal shooting.



## HOSPITAL & REHABILITATION

Once a victim has been transported to the hospital, the costs of treatment in a trauma unit, surgery, inpatient stay, and rehabilitation are exorbitant. Average costs can range from \$88,000 to \$144,000 per incident. With a little more than 40% of gunshot victims either uninsured or on Medicaid, these costs represent a tremendous strain on Bakersfield's hospital network.



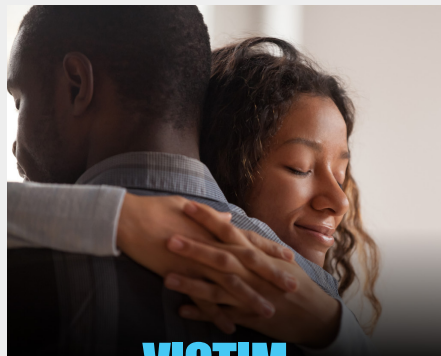
## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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 homicide 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 fatal or non-fatal shooting case average about two years.



## INCARCERATION

Incarceration accounts for a large portion of the costs once a suspect is arrested. A stay in the Kern County jail system costs an average of \$156,722 for the pretrial incarceration period. Following a trial, an inmate is incarcerated within the California prison system at a cost of \$1,025,591 for those convicted of attempted murder and \$3,369,799 for those convicted of homicide.



## VICTIM SUPPORT

Many victim support costs are covered by the California Victim Compensation Board. Surviving victims of non-fatal shootings and families of fatal shooting victims get a maximum of \$70,000 in compensation to cover costs such as burial expenses, medical expenses, and counseling. Including costs such as autopsies and social service benefits increases the total cost for victim support to \$118,628.



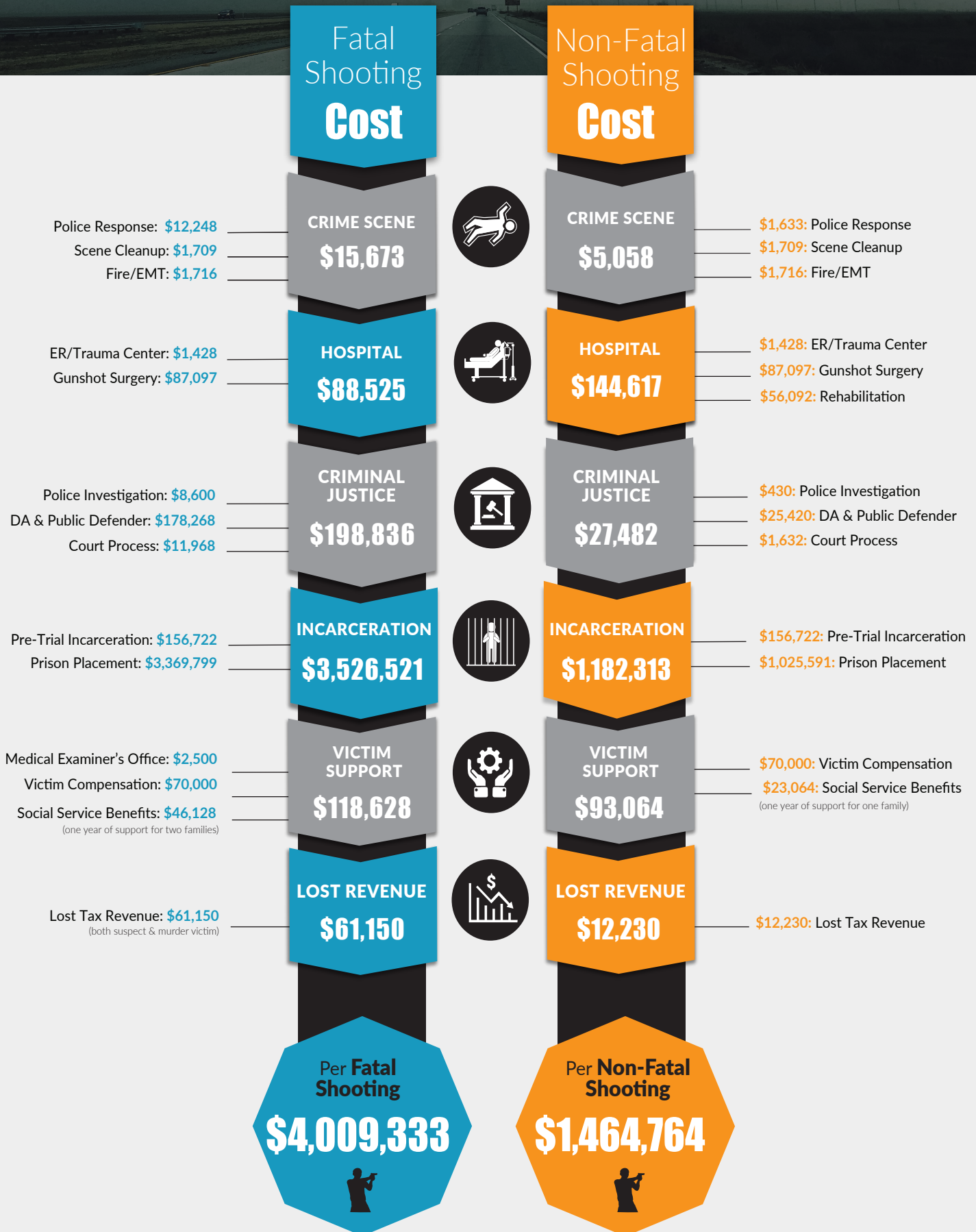
## LOST TAX REVENUE

California collects \$398 of income tax for an income of \$30,000. Kern County has a combined general tax of 8.25% (including a 6% state sales and use tax). When a fatal or non-fatal shooting occurs, the City loses the ability to collect both income and sales tax from the incarcerated individual(s) and fatal shooting victim(s). Each incident can represent lost tax revenue from a minimum of two individuals for nine to 25 years.



# THE COST Per Shooting

The governmental cost of gun violence to the City, County, and State



<b>CRIME SCENE</b>	<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Police Response</b>	<b>Fire/EMT Transport</b>	<b>Scene Clean Up</b>
	<b>Source</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bakersfield Police Department Internal Data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Kern County Fire 2021 Annual Report</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Victim Compensation Board</a></li> </ul>
	<b>Notes</b>	Internal data indicates that in 2022, initial police responses to fatal shooting scenes included an average of 13 Patrol officers, .03 Lieutenants, 3 Sergeants, and 3 Detectives, along with 1 Crime Lab staff, less than 1 K9 Officer units, and multiple other staff. They typically remain on the scene for 14 hours. Initial police response to a non-fatal shooting scene included, on average, 7 Patrol, less than 1 Sergeant, and less than 1 Detective. They remain on scene for 4 hours.	Fire & EMT budget: \$163,400,000 Total responses: 95,218 average Cost per response = \$1,716	Average cost among competitive vendors to clean up crime scenes involving blood: \$1,709
<b>HOSPITAL</b>	<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Emergency Room / Surgery for Gun-Shot Victim</b>		
	<b>Source</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">2020 National Trends and Cost Burden of Surgically Treated Gunshot Wounds in the US</a></li> <li><a href="#">2021 Firearm Injuries: Health Care Service Needs and Costs</a></li> </ul>		
	<b>Notes</b>	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)		
<b>CRIMINAL JUSTICE</b>	<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Police Investigation</b>	<b>District Attorney (DA) &amp; Public Defender (PD)</b>	<b>Court Process</b>
	<b>Source</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bakersfield Police Department Internal Data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Kern County Salary Schedule</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Kern County Salary Schedule</a></li> <li><a href="#">Kern County Deputy Sheriff</a></li> <li><a href="#">Kern County Superior Court Detail</a></li> </ul>
	<b>Notes</b>	The cost of the police investigation is calculated by multiplying the average salary and benefits for Investigation Detectives in Bakersfield by the average amount of time spent investigating fatal and non-fatal shootings.  \$43/hour x 200 hours = \$8,600 for a fatal shooting \$43/hour x 10 hours = \$430 for a non-fatal shooting	The cost of prosecution and defense is calculated by multiplying the average amount of time spent by attorneys and support staff by hourly salaries.  DA: \$82/hour x 1,087 hours for a fatal shooting = \$89,134 PD: \$82/hour x 1,087 hours for fatal shooting = \$89,134 DA: \$82/hour x 155 hours for a non-fatal shooting = \$12,710 PD: \$82/hour x 155 hours for a non-fatal shooting = \$12,710	The cost to the court system is calculated by multiplying the average amount of time spent by judges and court staff by hourly salaries.  Judge: \$106/hour x 44 hours for a fatal shooting = \$4,664 Court staff (combined hourly rate): \$166/hour x 44 hours for a fatal shooting = \$7,304 Judge: \$106/hour x 6 hours for a non-fatal shooting = \$636 Court staff (combined hourly rate): \$166/hour x 6 hours for a non-fatal shooting = \$996
<b>INCARCERATION</b>	<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Pre-Trial Incarceration</b>	<b>State Prison: Attempted Murder Case</b>	<b>State Prison: Murder Case</b>
	<b>Source</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Kern County Budget 2023-24</a></li> <li><a href="#">Kern County Sheriff's Office</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">California State Budget 2022-23</a></li> <li><a href="#">California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Spring 2022 Population Projections</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">California State Budget 2022-23</a></li> <li><a href="#">California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Spring 2022 Population Projections</a></li> </ul>
	<b>Notes</b>	Kern County Sheriff's Office Detentions Bureau budget: \$133,213,738  Average daily population: 1,700 Average Annual Cost per Inmate: \$78,361 Average period of pretrial incarceration: 2 years \$78,361 x 2 years = \$156,722	California Department of Corrections annual cost to house an adult: \$146,513  Non-fatal shooting conviction sentence: 9 years, subtracting pretrial time served  \$146,513 x (9 years - 2 years) = \$1,025,591	California Department of Corrections annual cost to house an adult: \$146,513  Murder conviction sentence: 25 years, subtracting pretrial time served  \$146,513 x (25 years - 2 years) = \$3,369,799
<b>VICTIM SUPPORT</b>	<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Victim Compensation</b>	<b>Social Service Benefits</b>	<b>Medical Examiner's Office</b>
	<b>Source</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Compensation Benefit Reference Guide</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">CalWORKS Fact Sheet</a></li> <li><a href="#">CalFresh</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">NICJR National Cost of Gun Violence Report</a></li> </ul>
	<b>Notes</b>	The California Victim Compensation Board covers a number of expenses, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medical and dental treatment</li> <li>Mental health treatment or counseling</li> <li>Funeral and burial</li> <li>Round-trip mileage costs to medical, dental, or mental health appointments</li> <li>Mental health counseling for minors who witness a violent crime</li> <li>Home security installation or improvement</li> <li>Relocation</li> </ul> Maximum amount allotted for a victim of a crime is \$70,000.	A severely injured shooting victim often cannot return to work immediately. Since the victim and perpetrator may be major financial contributors to their households, many families may need to apply for social services support.  CalFresh = \$658 for family of 3 CalWORKS TANF = \$1,264 for family of 3 This study estimates 1 year of assistance. \$1,922/month x 12 months x 2 families = \$46,128	According to NICJR's research, the average national cost for a post-homicide autopsy is \$2,500.
<b>LOST REVENUE</b>	<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Lost Tax Revenue: One Person Incarcerated</b>		<b>Lost Tax Revenue: Murder (Loss of Revenue for Two People)</b>
	<b>Source</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">California Franchise Tax Board 2022 Tax Calculator</a></li> <li><a href="#">California City &amp; County Sales &amp; Use Tax Rates</a></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">California Franchise Tax Board 2022 Tax Calculator</a></li> <li><a href="#">California City &amp; County Sales &amp; Use Tax Rates</a></li> </ul>
	<b>Notes</b>	State income tax: \$202 + 2% of any amount over \$20,212 \$202 + .02(\$30,000 - \$20,212) = \$397.76 Total annual income tax at \$30,000/year: \$398 Sales and use tax (county and state): 8.25% Total annual sales tax for person earning \$30,000/year and spending 1/3 of income: \$825 Total annual combined tax: \$1,223 Lost tax revenue for a 9-year sentence for attempted murder (\$1,223 x 9 years): \$11,007 If the shooting victim does not work for one year, an additional \$1,223 of revenue is lost. Total Lost Tax Revenue = \$12,230		State income tax: \$202 + 2% of any amount over \$20,212 \$202 + .02(\$30,000 - \$20,212) = \$397.76 Total annual income tax at \$30,000/year: \$398 Sales and use tax (county and state): 8.25% Total annual sales tax for person earning \$30,000/year and spending 1/3 of income: \$825 Total annual combined tax: \$1,223 Lost tax revenue for a 25-year sentence for murder (\$1,223 x 25 years): \$30,575 If the shooting victim loses their life, an additional \$30,575 of revenue is lost. Total Lost Tax Revenue = \$61,150