

THE COST

OF GUN VIOLENCE

THE DIRECT COST TO TAXPAYERS

The City of Jackson is the capital of Mississippi and home to 153,701 residents. Known as “the City with Soul,” Jackson served as a hub for the early growth of blues music. The city’s population is predominantly Black (78.55%), with White (16.54%), Latino (2.09%), and Asian (0.49%) residents making up the bulk of the remaining population.

Jackson played an important role in the Civil Rights Movement, born from a brutal local history of racial violence that includes the lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till, the assassination of civil rights activist Medgar Evers, and the arrest and imprisonment of Freedom Riders, among many other incidents. After decades of White flight and disinvestment, Jackson’s more recent history has been marked by significant poverty and violence.

Like many US cities, Jackson saw a dramatic increase in homicides amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, with a record high of 130 homicides in 2020 that surpassed the previous record of 92 homicides set in 1995.¹ Notably, this increase occurred despite a decrease in Jackson’s population since the mid-90s.² In 2021, the US saw 20,958 firearm homicides,³ or 6.31 for every 100,000 individuals. That same year, Mississippi saw 33.9 fatal shootings for every 100,000 individuals,⁴ and Jackson’s homicide rate reached 99.5 per 100,000—both the highest in the nation.⁵

When someone is shot in Jackson, 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 Jackson Police Department (JPD) units descend on the scene. Investigators from the Hinds 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 JPD and the District Attorney’s Office, who are sometimes joined by the US Attorney. With the JPD homicide⁶ clearance rate at 52.73% in 2020, 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 Jackson.

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 non-fatal or fatal shooting in Jackson. 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. Additionally, death penalty cases in Mississippi include a substantial increase in costs for incarceration, pre-conviction investigation and court process, and post-conviction reviews and^{7,8}

appeals. This means that the calculated cost of \$1,406,249.33 for a fatal shooting in Jackson is a conservative estimate; the real cost is likely even higher.

In the past three years, Jackson has averaged approximately 213 combined fatal and non-fatal shootings annually. At this rate, each year of shootings will ultimately cost taxpayers more than \$219.25 million, with both immediate costs such as crime scene response and longer-term costs such as lost tax revenue and long-term incarceration. If Jackson could reduce its gun violence rate by just 20%, that could result in government savings of more than \$43.85 million for every year of shootings.

The City of Jackson is already taking important steps in this direction. In 2019, the City established a Public Safety Taskforce that developed a policy for officer-involved shootings and amended the use-of-force policy. In 2022, Jackson partnered with Harvard University’s William Monroe Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice to develop recommendations for reimagining public safety in Jackson.⁹ That same year, the City received \$700,000 from the National League of Cities and Wells Fargo Foundation to provide subgrants to community-based organizations working on gun violence initiatives and to establish a Mayor’s Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery. More recently, in May 2023, the City gathered community leaders, law enforcement, advocates, and service providers to discuss strategies for reducing gun violence ahead of the launch of the new office.

While these activities are key steps in beginning to confront gun violence in Jackson, it is also important to recognize that gun violence reduction requires sustained commitment. Even a relatively small investment in effective gun violence reduction strategies, when sustained over time, can yield significant reductions in shootings, save lives, and produce massive savings.

1. “We’ve Seen Lifelong Friends Kill Each Other.” How a State Capital Became One of the Deadliest US Cities

2. Data Commons Place Explorer Jackson

3. What the Data Says About Gun Deaths in the U.S.

4. CDC Firearm Mortality by State

5. Jackson’s Murder Rate per Capita Ranks Highest in the U.S.

6. 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.

7. Death Penalty Cost

8. Not all fatal shootings qualify for a death penalty sentence, and not all fatal shootings that would qualify under Mississippi law ultimately result in a death sentence. For this reason, additional costs associated with death penalty cases and convictions are not included in NICJR’s calculations.

9. Re-imagining Public Safety in Jackson, MS



THE GREATER COMMUNITY COST OF GUN VIOLENCE

Gun violence comes with significant community costs beyond the direct costs included in NICJR's calculations. Loss of community resources and decreases in property values are common in areas with high rates of gun violence. Businesses, community events, and other vital resources often flee from violent neighborhoods. Further, a study by the Controller for the City of Philadelphia examining the economic impact of gun violence on property values found that "a single fatal shooting lowers sale prices by 2.3 percent in the immediate neighborhood (within 0.75 miles of the fatal shooting)."¹⁰

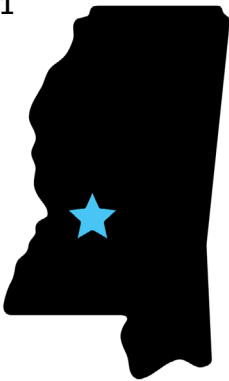
Community members in neighborhoods where rates of violence are highest also bear the burden of community tension and trauma. The normalization of violence can lead to high rates of gun possession and the resolving of minor disputes with gun violence. The public health approach to violence shows that, like disease, violence is a contagion that can breed in areas of social dysfunction. 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.... Likewise, there are geographic hot spots for violent crime on specific streets and in specific neighborhoods."¹¹

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 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente found 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.¹²

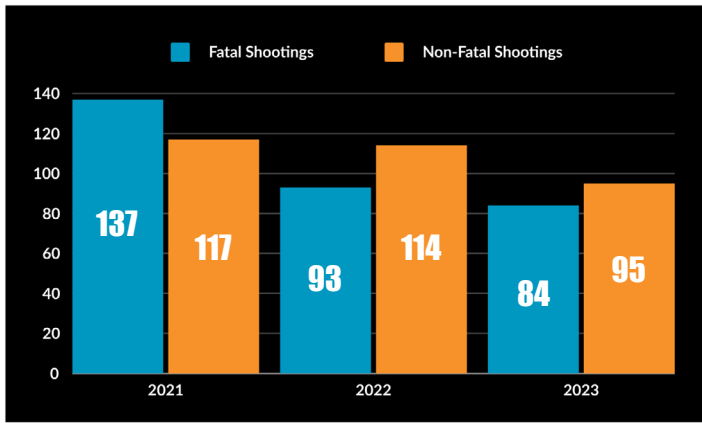
Population

153,701



231
Police Force

Fatal and Non-Fatal Shootings




Homicide Clearance

2018	53.83%
2019	52.63%
2020	52.73%

10. [Report on the Economic Impact of Homicides: Philadelphia Controller](#)
 11. [The Contagious Spread of Violence Among US Adolescents Through Social Networks](#)
 12. [Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults](#)

Jackson, Mississippi

COST BREAKDOWN




CRIME SCENE RESPONSE

The crime scene response to a fatal shooting or severe non-fatal shooting typically includes a heavy police presence, fire/EMT staff, and medical transport staff. The Jackson Police Department typically deploys 7 officers, including patrol, homicide unit personnel, and other supervisory-level officers, as well as 5 crime scene technicians to respond to a fatal shooting.




HOSPITAL & REHABILITATION

Once a victim has been transported to the hospital, the costs of treatment in an emergency room (ER) trauma unit, surgery, inpatient stay, and rehabilitation are exorbitant. Average costs can range from \$88,000.00 to \$144,000.00 per incident. With a little more than 40% of gunshot victims either uninsured or on Medicaid, these costs represent a tremendous strain on Jackson'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 Jackson Detention Center costs an average of \$46,093.56 for the pretrial incarceration period. Following a trial, an inmate is incarcerated within the Mississippi prison system at a cost of \$357,174.00 for those convicted of attempted murder and \$754,034.00 for those convicted of homicide.



VICTIM SUPPORT

Many victim support costs are covered by the Mississippi Attorney General's Office Crime Victim Compensation Division. Surviving victims of non-fatal shootings and families of fatal shooting victims receive, on average, \$2,500.00 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 \$140,603.47.



LOST TAX REVENUE

Mississippi has a state income tax rate of 5%, and the combined state and local sales and use tax is 8%. When a fatal or non-fatal shooting occurs, both income and sales tax cannot be collected from the incarcerated individual(s) and fatal shooting victim(s). Each incident can represent lost tax revenue from a minimum of two individuals for 20 to 40 years.

Fatal Shooting Cost

Non-Fatal Shooting Cost

CRIME SCENE \$4,957.10

Police Response: **\$2,451.04**
Scene Cleanup: **\$2,500.00**
Fire/EMT: **\$6.06**



CRIME SCENE \$3,776.52

\$1,270.46: Police Response
\$2,500.00: Scene Cleanup
\$6.06: Fire/EMT

HOSPITAL \$88,525

ER/Trauma Center: **\$1,428.00**
Gunshot Surgery: **\$87,097.00**



HOSPITAL \$144,617.00

\$1,428.00: ER/Trauma Center
\$87,097.00: Gunshot Surgery
\$56,092.00: Rehabilitation

CRIMINAL JUSTICE \$188,036.20

Police Investigation: **\$50,390.28**
DA & Public Defender: **\$126,831.16**
Court Process: **\$10,814.76**



CRIMINAL JUSTICE \$26,901.17

\$7,341.03: Police Investigation
\$18,085.40: DA & Public Defender
\$1,474.74: Court Process

INCARCERATION \$800,127.56

Pre-Trial Incarceration: **\$46,093.56**
Prison Placement: **\$754,034.00**



INCARCERATION \$403,267.56

\$46,093.56: Pre-Trial Incarceration
\$357,174.00: Prison Placement

VICTIM SUPPORT \$140,603.47

Medical Examiner's Office: **\$2,743.47**
Victim Compensation: **\$2,500.00**
Social Service Assistance: **\$135,360.00**
(40 years of support for two families)



VICTIM SUPPORT \$36,340.00

\$2,500.00: Victim Compensation
\$33,840.00: Social Service Assistance
(20 years of support for one family)

LOST REVENUE \$184,000.00

Lost Tax Revenue: **\$184,000.00**
(both suspect & murder victim)



LOST REVENUE \$48,300.00

\$48,300.00: Lost Tax Revenue

Per Fatal Shooting
\$1,406,249.33



Assuming one suspect

Per Non-Fatal Shooting
\$663,202.25



Assuming one suspect

CRIME SCENE

Subject:	Police Response	Fire/EMT Transport	Scene Cleanup
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jackson Police Department Internal Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hinds County 2020 Annual Budget AMR in the Central Mississippi/Hinds/Smith Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Cost of Violence: The Price Tag for Taxpayers
Notes	Initial police response to a homicide scene typically includes 7 Detectives and 5 Crime Scene Investigators. The time spent on scene varies greatly, but national averages show officers spend approximately 8 hours investigating a fatal shooting. National averages suggest non-fatal shooting scenes typically include a response from half as many personnel who remain on scene for approximately 8 hours.	Jackson uses American Medical Response (AMR), a private ambulance service, for emergency medical services. The city subsidizes this service, with remaining costs being billed to insurance. Although WLBTV reported in 2023 that the city subsidized ambulance rides at \$0.15 per individual, NICJR is unable to confirm this number and has calculated the subsidy based on the sources noted here. EMS budget (FY20): \$311,962.00, Total responses: 51,495, Estimated cost per response = \$6.06	As jurisdiction-specific data were unavailable, analysis includes the national average cost based upon previous NICJR analysis. Average cost among competitive vendors to clean up crime scenes involving blood: \$2,500

HOSPITAL

Subject:	Emergency Room / Surgery for Gunshot Victim
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Trends and Cost Burden of Surgically Treated Gunshot Wounds in the US Firearm 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:	Police Investigation	District Attorney (DA) & Public Defender (PD)	Court Process
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jackson Police Department Internal Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2020 Mississippi Code Title 25 Chapter 3 Hinds County Office of the Public Defender Internal Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hinds County Job Announcement: Justice Court Deputy Clerk Salary Statistics
Notes	The cost of the police investigation is calculated by multiplying the average salary and benefits for officers in Jackson by the average amount of time spent investigating homicides and non-fatal shootings. NICJR has found through previous analyses that the number of officers involved in a police investigation is typically about half as many officers as the number which responded to the crime scene. Fatal shooting \$30.21/hour x 278 hours x 6 officers = \$50,390.28 Non-fatal shooting \$30.21/hour x 81 hours x 3 officers = \$7,341.03	The cost of prosecution and defense is calculated by multiplying the average amount of time spent by attorneys. Fatal shooting DA: \$68.43/hour x 1,087 hours = \$74,383.41 PD: \$48.25/hour x 1,087 hours = \$52,447.75 Non-fatal shooting DA: \$68.43/hour x 155 hours = \$10,606.65 PD: \$48.25/hour x 155 hours = \$7,478.75	The cost to the court system is calculated by multiplying the average amount of time spent by judges and court staff by hourly salaries (court staff rates have been combined). Fatal shooting Judge: \$101.03/hour x 44 hours = \$4,445.32 Court staff: \$144.76/hour x 44 hours = \$6,369.44 Non-fatal shooting Judge: \$101.03/hour x 6 hours = \$606.18 Court staff: \$144.76/hour x 6 hours = \$868.56

INCARCERATION

Subject:	Pre-Trial Incarceration	State Prison: Attempted Murder Case	State Prison: Murder Case
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hinds County 2020 Annual Budget Incarceration Trends: Hinds County, MS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mississippi Department of Corrections Annual Report 2021 2020 Mississippi Code Title 97 Chapter 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mississippi Department of Corrections Annual Report 2021 Mississippi Code 97-3-21
Notes	Jackson Detention Center budget (FY20): \$10,048,398.00 Average daily population: 436 Average annual cost per inmate: \$23,046.78 Average period of pretrial incarceration: 2 years \$23,046.78 x 2 years = \$46,093.56	Mississippi law requires a life sentence if a jury recommends such a sentence in the sentencing phase of trial. If the jury does not recommend life imprisonment, the sentence must be at least 20 years of imprisonment. Mississippi Department of Corrections annual cost to house an adult (FY20): \$19,843.00 Non-fatal shooting conviction sentence (20 years, subtracting pretrial time served): \$19,843.00 x 18 years = \$357,174.00	Penalty for murder charges vary by degree. First-degree murder mandates life imprisonment; second-degree murder requires a jury to assign a life imprisonment sentence or a term of imprisonment of 20 to 40 years if the jury does not recommend life imprisonment; and capital murder requires a sentence of death, life without parole, or life with eligibility for parole. Mississippi Department of Corrections annual cost to house an adult (FY20): \$19,843.00 Murder conviction sentence (40 years, subtracting pretrial time served): \$19,843.00 x 38 years = \$754,034.00

VICTIM SUPPORT

Subject:	Victim Compensation	Social Service Assistance	Medical Examiner's Office
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Request for FY Ending June 30, 2021 Crime Victim Compensation: Easing the Aftermath of Crime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNAP Eligibility Mississippi Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mississippi Legislative Budget Report, FY 20-21 Office of the Medical Examiner Internal Data
Notes	Maximum award is \$20,000.00 for expenses including burial costs, lost wages, and crime scene cleanup. The average award for victims of crime in Jackson, MS in 2020 was \$2,500.00.	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. Mississippi families with an annual income up to 130% of the poverty threshold may qualify for SNAP. The maximum monthly benefit of \$766 for a family of three is reduced by 30% of the family's monthly income. SNAP monthly benefit (family of 3) with \$25,000.00 annual income: \$25,000.00 / 12 months = \$2,083.33 x 0.30 = \$625.00 \$766.00 - \$625.00 = \$141.00 monthly benefit Fatal shooting: \$141.00 monthly benefit x 12 months x 40 years x 2 families (victim & suspect) = \$135,360.00 Non-fatal shooting: \$141.00 monthly benefit x 12 months x 20 years = \$33,840.00	Hinds County Coroner's budget (FY20): \$3,519,867.00 Autopsies conducted (FY20): 1,283 Cost per autopsy = \$2,743.47

LOST REVENUE

Subject:	Lost Tax Revenue: One Person Incarcerated	Lost Tax Revenue: Murder (Loss of Revenue for Two People)
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxes in Mississippi Jackson, Mississippi Sales Tax Rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxes in Mississippi Jackson, Mississippi Sales Tax Rate
Notes	State income tax: 5% flat tax rate Total annual income tax at \$30,000.00/year: \$1,500.00 Sales and use tax (city and state): 8% Total annual sales tax for person earning \$30,000/year and spending 1/3 of income: \$800.00 Total annual combined tax: \$2,300.00 Lost tax revenue for a 20-year sentence for attempted murder (\$2,300.00 x 20 years): \$46,000.00 If the shooting victim does not work for one year, an additional \$2,300.00 of revenue is lost. Total Lost Tax Revenue = \$48,300.00	State income tax: 5% flat tax rate Total annual income tax at \$30,000.00/year: \$1,500.00 Sales and use tax: 8% Total annual sales tax for person earning \$30,000/year and spending 1/3 of income: \$800.00 Total annual combined tax: \$2,300.00 Lost tax revenue for a 40-year sentence for murder (\$2,300 x 40 years): \$92,000.00 If the shooting victim loses their life, an additional \$92,000.00 of revenue is lost. Total Lost Tax Revenue = \$184,000.00