

# THE COST

## OF GUN VIOLENCE THE DIRECT COST TO TAXPAYERS



Milwaukee, the most populous city in Wisconsin, sits on the western shore of Lake Michigan and has long been known for its large brewing industry. Although Milwaukee is a highly diverse city, with a population that is 39% Black, 33% White, and 20% Latino,<sup>1</sup> it is also often recognized as one of the most segregated cities in America. The legacy of redlining holds strong in Milwaukee – to the extent that present-day neighborhood demographics still closely align to redlining maps from more than 80 years ago.<sup>2</sup>

Like many US cities, Milwaukee saw a surge in violence that coincided with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, breaking its all-time homicide record three years in row with 190 homicides in 2020, 193 in 2021, and 214 in 2022.<sup>3,4</sup> This surge built on a longer pattern, however. From 2010 to 2016, the city saw a 76% increase in firearm-related homicide victims and a 38% increase in nonfatal shooting victims.<sup>5</sup> But in 2023, Milwaukee achieved a significant 21% decline in homicides.

When someone is shot in Milwaukee, 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 Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) units descend on the scene. Investigators from the Milwaukee 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 Milwaukee Police Department and the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, who are sometimes joined by the US Attorney. With the MPD homicide clearance rate at 47% in 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 injury shooting in Milwaukee.

The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) was commissioned to conduct this detailed analysis that documents the government expenses accompanying every injury or fatal shooting or fatal shooting in Milwaukee. 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 \$2,053,536.54 for a fatal shooting in Milwaukee is a conservative estimate; the real cost is likely even higher.

In the past three years, Milwaukee has averaged approximately 193 homicides and 862 injury shootings annually. At this rate, each year of shootings will ultimately cost taxpayers \$951,883,828.70, with both immediate costs such as crime scene response and longer-term costs such as lost tax revenue and long-term incarceration. If Milwaukee could reduce its gun violence rate by just 20%, that could result in government savings of about \$190,376,765.74 for every year of shootings.

The City has taken positive steps toward reducing violence in recent years, first by establishing an Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) in 2008. In 2016, spurred by the spike in violence described above, the OVP facilitated a 10-month planning process that led to the creation of the Milwaukee Blueprint for Peace. Rooted in a public health approach to violence, the Blueprint is a community-driven agenda for addressing the complex factors that drive violence in Milwaukee. The Blueprint was designed to inform action for approximately 10 years, with periodic updates to ensure its continued relevance. As a part of the Blueprint, the Milwaukee 414 Life Community Violence Intervention program provides Street Outreach services and the Milwaukee County juvenile justice system is launching an innovative new approach to bring in the renowned Advance Peace program to focus intervention on youth at high risk of being involved in gun violence. Taken together, these promising initiatives should reduce violence and decrease the burden on taxpayers for the cost of violence.

1. US Census Bureau: QuickFacts - Milwaukee

2. How Redlining Continues To Shape Racial Segregation In Milwaukee

3. Reevaluating Blueprint for Peace is part of 2023 plan to address rise in homicides, violence

4. 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.

5. Blueprint for Peace



# THE 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 and decreases in property values. 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 homicide lowers sale prices by 2.3 percent in the immediate neighborhood (within 0.75 miles of the homicide)."<sup>6</sup>

Community members in neighborhoods where rates of violence are highest also bear the burden of community tension and trauma. The normalization or expectation 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 violence is a contagion that can breed in areas of social dysfunction. The National Institutes of

Health notes 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>7</sup>

Finally, experiencing violence, witnessing violence, and having close friends or family members victimized by violence produces trauma and vicarious trauma among children. 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.<sup>8,9</sup> 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.

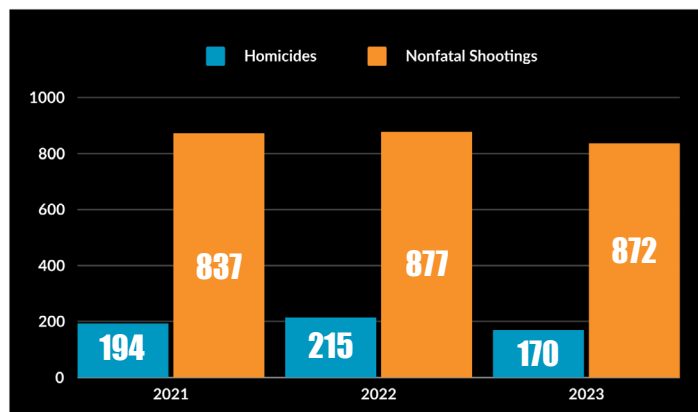
## Population

563,305



Police Force 2,096

## Homicides and Nonfatal Shootings 2021-2023



## Homicide Clearance Rates

2023	56% <sup>10</sup>
2022	47%
2021	43%

6. [Report on the Economic Impact of Homicides: Philadelphia Controller](#)

7. [The Contagious Spread of Violence Among US Adolescents Through Social Networks](#)


8. [Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults](#)

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

10. As of 10/24/2023, "[Police investigate record number of homicides in Milwaukee; lower percentage of cases cleared](#)," WISN AB

# Milwaukee, Wisconsin

## COST BREAKDOWN




### CRIME SCENE RESPONSE

The crime scene response to a severe injury shooting or fatal shooting typically includes a heavy police presence, fire/ EMT staff, and medical transport staff. Based on national averages, the Milwaukee Police Department could deploy up to 15 officers, including patrol, homicide unit personnel, 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 \$88,525.00 to \$144,617.00 per incident. With a little more than 40% of gunshot victims either uninsured or on Medicaid, these costs represent a tremendous strain on Milwaukee'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 nonfatal 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 Milwaukee County jail system costs an average of \$139,004.48 for the pretrial incarceration period. Following a trial, an inmate is incarcerated within the Wisconsin prison system at a cost of \$277,984.12 for those convicted of attempted murder and \$1,598,408.69 for those convicted of homicide.



### VICTIM SUPPORT

Many victim support costs are covered by the Wisconsin Crime Victim Compensation Program. Surviving victims of nonfatal shootings and families of fatal shooting victims receive a maximum of \$40,000 in compensation to cover out-of-pocket expenses related to the crime 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 \$75,329.32 for a fatal shooting.



### LOST TAX REVENUE

Wisconsin calculates income tax for a \$30,000 annual income with the formula  $\$1,091.43 + 5.3\%$  of anything over \$27,630. The state also has a sales and use tax of .5%, and Milwaukee County has a sales tax of 5%. When a nonfatal or fatal shooting occurs, both income and sales tax often 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 6 to 25 years.

# THE COST Per Shooting

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

## Fatal Shooting Cost

## Nonfatal Shooting Cost

### CRIME SCENE \$7,954.85

Police Response: **\$3,724.26**  
Scene Cleanup: **\$2,500.00**  
Fire/EMT: **\$1,730.59**



### CRIME SCENE \$4,918.51

**\$687.92:** Police Response  
**\$2,500.00:** Scene Cleanup  
**\$1,730.59:** Fire/EMT

### HOSPITAL \$88,525.00

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 \$55,962.20

Police Investigation: **\$11,773.30**  
DA & Public Defender: **\$36,167.70**  
Court Process: **\$8,021.20**



### CRIMINAL JUSTICE \$8,569.65

**\$3,430.35:** Police Investigation  
**\$4,045.50:** DA & Public Defender  
**\$1,093.80:** Court Process

### INCARCERATION \$1,737,413.17

Pretrial Incarceration: **\$139,004.48**  
Prison Placement: **\$1,598,408.69**



### INCARCERATION \$416,988.60

**\$139,004.48:** Pretrial Incarceration  
**\$277,984.12:** Prison Placement

### VICTIM SUPPORT \$75,329.32

Coroner's Office: **\$1,273.32**  
Victim Compensation: **\$40,000.00**  
Social Service Assistance: **\$34,056.00**  
(one year of support for two families)



### VICTIM SUPPORT \$57,028.00

**\$40,000.00:** Victim Compensation  
**\$17,028.00:** Social Service Assistance  
(one year of support for one family)

### LOST REVENUE \$88,352.00

Lost Tax Revenue: **\$88,352.00**  
(both suspect & murder victim)



### LOST REVENUE \$12,369.28

**\$12,369.28:** Lost Tax Revenue

Per **Fatal** Shooting  
**\$2,053,536.54**



Per **Nonfatal** Shooting  
**\$644,491.04**





<b>CRIME SCENE</b>	<b>Subject:</b> Police Response	<b>Fire / EMT Transport</b>	<b>Scene Cleanup</b>
	<b>Source</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Milwaukee Salary Ordinance 2021</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Milwaukee Fire Department 2022 Annual Report</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">The National Cost of Violence: The Price Tag for Taxpayers</a></li> </ul>
	<b>Notes</b> Initial police response to a fatal shooting scene typically includes 6 Patrol, 1 Lieutenant, 2 Sergeants, and 6 Detectives. They remain on the scene for 6 hours. Initial police response to a nonfatal shooting scene typically includes 6 Patrol, 1 Sergeant, and 2 Detectives. They remain on scene for 2 hours.	Fire & EMT budget: \$122,572,251.00 Total responses: 70,827 Cost per response = \$1,730.59	Average cost among competitive vendors to clean up crime scenes involving blood: \$2,500.00
<b>HOSPITAL</b>	<b>Subject:</b> Emergency Room / Surgery for Gunshot Victim		
	<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> Police Investigation	<b>District Attorney (DA) &amp; Public Defender (PD)</b>	<b>Court Process</b>
	<b>Source</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Milwaukee Salary Ordinance 2021</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">State of Wisconsin Compensation Plan</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Milwaukee Salary Ordinance 2021</a></li> <li><a href="#">Wisconsin Court Reporter Salaries 2022</a></li> <li><a href="#">2020 Milwaukee County Budget Position Detail</a></li> </ul>
	<b>Notes</b> The cost of the police investigation is calculated by multiplying the average salary and benefits for detectives in Milwaukee by the average amount of time spent investigating fatal and nonfatal shootings.  \$42.35/hour x 278 hours = \$11,773.30 for a fatal shooting \$42.35/hour x 81 hours = \$3,430.35 for a nonfatal shooting	The cost of prosecution and defense is calculated by multiplying the average amount of time spent by attorneys working on a fatal or nonfatal shooting case by hourly rates.  Fatal shooting DA: \$46.50/hour x 418.4 hours = \$19,455.60 PD: \$46.50/hour x 359.4 hours = \$16,712.10  Nonfatal shooting DA: \$46.50/hour x 20.5 hours = \$953.25 PD: \$46.50/hour x 66.5 hours = \$3,092.25	The cost to the court system is calculated by multiplying the average amount of time spent by judges and court staff by hourly rates (court staff rates have been combined).  Fatal shooting Judge: \$65.28/hour x 44 hours = \$2,872.32 Court staff: \$117.02/hour x 44 hours = \$5,148.88  Nonfatal shooting Judge: \$65.28/hour x 6 hours = \$391.68 Court staff: \$117.02/hour x 6 hours = \$702.12
<b>INCARCERATION</b>	<b>Subject:</b> Pretrial Incarceration	<b>State Prison:</b> Attempted Murder Case	<b>State Prison:</b> Murder Case
	<b>Source</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Milwaukee County House of Correction Budget 2022</a></li> <li><a href="#">Milwaukee Women's Correctional Center Fact Sheet</a></li> <li><a href="#">Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility Fact Sheet</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Wisconsin State Corrections Budget 2024</a></li> <li><a href="#">Wisconsin Legislature 940.19</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Wisconsin State Corrections Budget 2024</a></li> <li><a href="#">Wisconsin Legislature 940.19</a></li> </ul>
	<b>Notes</b> Milwaukee County Department of Corrections budget: \$49,833,104.00  Average daily population: 717 Average annual cost per inmate: \$69,502.24 Average period of pretrial incarceration: 2 years \$69,502.24 x 2 years = \$139,004.48	Wisconsin Department of Corrections annual budget: \$1,472,134,400.00  Average daily population: 21,183 Average annual cost per inmate: \$69,496.03 Injury shooting conviction sentence: 6 years, subtracting pretrial time served \$69,496.03 x (6 years - 2 years) = \$277,984.12	Wisconsin Department of Corrections annual budget: \$1,472,134,400.00  Average daily population: 21,183 Average annual cost per inmate: \$69,496.03 Murder conviction sentence: 25 years, subtracting pretrial time served \$69,496.03 x (25 years - 2 years) = \$1,598,408.69
<b>VICTIM SUPPORT</b>	<b>Subject:</b> Victim Compensation	<b>Social Service Assistance</b>	<b>Medical Examiner's Office</b>
	<b>Source</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Wisconsin Crime Victim Compensation Program</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Wisconsin Works (W-2) Overview</a></li> <li><a href="#">US Department of Agriculture FY 2024 COLA</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Milwaukee County Medical Examiner Budget 2021</a></li> <li><a href="#">Milwaukee Medical Examiner Annual Report 2021</a></li> </ul>
	<b>Notes</b> The average award for victims of crime in Milwaukee is \$40,000.00 for up to 4 years of out-of-pocket expenses including medical costs, burial costs, lost wages, and crime scene cleanup.	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.  USDA SNAP = \$766.00 for family of 3 Wisconsin TANF = \$653.00 for family of 3 This study estimates 1 year of assistance. \$1,419.00/mo x 12 months x 2 families = \$34,056.00	Milwaukee County Coroner's budget: \$4,375,123.00  FY21 number of cases accepted: 3,436 Cost per autopsy = \$1,273.32
<b>LOST REVENUE</b>	<b>Subject:</b> Lost Tax Revenue: One Person Incarcerated	<b>Lost Tax Revenue: Murder (Loss of Revenue for Two People)</b>	
	<b>Source</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Wisconsin Department of Revenue</a></li> <li><a href="#">Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Wisconsin Department of Revenue</a></li> <li><a href="#">Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</a></li> </ul>	
	<b>Notes</b> State income tax: \$1,091.43 + 5.3% of anything over \$27,630.00 Total annual income tax at \$30,000/year = \$1,217.04 Sales and use tax (county and state): 5.5% Total annual sales tax for person earning \$30,000.00/year and spending 1/3 of income = \$550.00 Total annual combined tax: \$1,767.04 Lost tax revenue for a 6-year sentence for attempted murder (\$1,767.04 x 6 years) = \$10,602.24 If the shooting victim does not work for one year, an additional \$1,767.04 of revenue is lost. Total Lost Tax Revenue = \$12,369.28	State income tax: \$1,091.43 + 5.3% of anything over \$27,630.00 Total annual income tax at \$30,000.00/year = \$1,217.04 Sales and use tax (county and state): 5.5% Total annual sales tax for person earning \$30,000.00/year and spending 1/3 of income = \$550.00 Total annual combined tax = \$1,767.04 Lost tax revenue for a 25-year sentence for murder (\$1,767.04 x 25 years) = \$44,176.00 If the shooting victim loses their life, an additional \$44,176.00 of revenue is lost. Total Lost Tax Revenue = \$88,352.00	