

## ECONOMIC COSTS OF GUN VIOLENCE

**Medical costs of gun violence put a terrible burden on health service providers and governments.** When indirect costs of gun violence - loss of productivity, mental health treatment and rehabilitation, legal and judicial costs - are figured in, **gun violence costs the US at least \$100 billion annually.**[1]

### Medical Costs

In a recent study, the average costs for treating gunshot wounds were:

- \$22,400 each for unintentional shootings
- \$18,400 each for gun-assault injuries
- \$ 5,400 each for suicides.[2]

**Over the course of the lives of gunshot victims in the United States in 1997, medical treatment alone will amount to \$1.9 billion.**[3]

### Other Indirect Costs

Along with direct medical costs, gun violence involves loss of productivity, mental health care, emergency transport, and insurance administration. A 1997 study estimated direct and indirect medical costs at:

- \$2.8 million per firearms fatality
- \$249,000 per hospitalization for gunshot wounds
- \$ 73,000 per emergency room visit and release for gunshot wounds.[4]

With the cost of health skyrocketing, these costs are far higher today.

The *Los Angeles Times* found in a 1994 shooting of a teenage victim who survived as a paraplegic that medical care, disability payments, rehabilitation, police and trial costs amounted to \$1,091,768.[5] The *Washington Post* [6] and *U.S. News and World Report* [7] have both found total costs in similar cases to exceed \$1 million.

The Annual Bill To The Nation Annual costs of gun violence in the US have been estimated at **between \$100 billion [8] and \$126 billion.**[9]

Costs only for young people under the age of 24 have reached \$41 billion.[10]

### Who Pays?

Most victims of gun violence are uninsured and the public pays!

- Of \$4 billion in medical costs in 1995, the public paid about 85 percent.[11]
- Of victims hospitalized for gunshot wounds in California in 1996, 81 percent were uninsured.[12]

### What Can Be Done?

Gun violence is aided and abetted by a gun industry that refuses to manufacture safer weapons, markets its product irresponsibly, and knowingly distributes and sells its products to illegal traffickers and potential criminals. In response, **33 cities and counties have brought suits** against the industry to compel gun industry reform and reduce the costs to taxpayers of gun violence.[13] Many victims are also turning to courts of law to recover damages for gun industry negligence in marketing, distribution and product design.

Surveys show that the public is even willing to pay more in taxes to reduce gun violence. When asked whether they would pay \$200 more a year in taxes for programs to reduce gun violence, **64 percent of the respondents said they would.**[14]

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**Endnotes:**

1. Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig, *Gun Violence: The Real Costs*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, 11.
2. Ibid, 65.
3. Ibid.
4. Ted R. Miller and Mark A. Cohen, "Costs of Gunshot and Cut/Stab Wounds in the United States, With Some Canadian Comparisons", 29, *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 329 (1997), 329-41.
5. Bob Sipchen, "Putting a Price Tag on Violence", *Los Angeles Times*, June 5, 1994, A22.
6. Allan Lengel, "The Price of Urban Violence: Bullet Shatters a Teen; Taxpayers Get the Bill", *Washington Post*, December 28, 1997, B1.
7. Susan Headden, "Guns, Money & Medicine", *U.S. News & World Report*, July 1, 1996, 30.
8. Cook and Ludwig, passim.
9. Miller and Cohen, passim.
10. Miller and Cohen.
11. Linda Gunderson, "The Financial Costs of Gun Violence", 131, *Annals of Internal Medicine* 483 (1999).
12. Mary J. Vasser, et. al., "Hospitalizations for Firearm-Related Injuries", 275 *JAMA* 1734 (1996).
13. Brian J. Siebel, "City Lawsuits Against the Gun Industry: A Roadmap for Reforming Gun Industry Misconduct", *St. Louis University Public Law Review*, Vol. 18, no. 1 (1999).
14. Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig, "Quantifying the Costs of Gun Violence", *The Costs of Gun Violence against Children*.  
[http://www.futureofchildren.org/information2827/information\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=154472](http://www.futureofchildren.org/information2827/information_show.htm?doc_id=154472)