

THE COST

OF GUN VIOLENCE

THE DIRECT COST TO TAXPAYERS

The City of Oakland is known for its history of activism, long list of notable entertainers, and former successful professional sports teams. The birthplace of the Black Panther Party and home of Pointer Sisters, Tony! Toni! Toné!, MC Hammer, Too Short, Tom Hanks, Bill Russell, Ricky Henderson, Ryan Coogler, and so many more—Oakland is a leader in culture, advocacy, and innovation.

Oakland also has a historic reputation for high rates of crime and violence. For many years, Oakland held the dubious distinction of being the most violent city in California and regularly made the “top 10 most dangerous US cities” list. However, toward the end of 2012 (a particularly violent year), the City implemented the Oakland Ceasefire gun violence reduction strategy with great success. Following implementation, Oakland experienced six consecutive years of decline in fatal and non-fatal shootings, culminating in a 50% reduction in shootings and murders and a seventh year that maintained those reductions.

The Ceasefire strategy is bolstered by a unique aspect of Oakland’s violence prevention landscape: a voter-approved fund that provides more than \$20 million in violence intervention funding each year. This funding is split between the Oakland Police Department and the City’s Department of Violence Prevention, which supports a variety of community violence intervention services.

Unfortunately, Covid temporarily unraveled the successful Ceasefire strategy and, similar to cities across the country, violence escalated. The City is actively working to reclaim the progress made from 2012 to 2020.

When someone is shot in Oakland, 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 Oakland Police Department (OPD) units descend on the scene. Investigators from the Alameda 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 OPD and the Alameda County District Attorney’s Office, who are sometimes joined by the US Attorney. 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 Oakland.

The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) has conducted this detailed analysis that documents the government expenses accompanying every fatal and non-fatal shooting in Oakland.¹ 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 \$3,191,722 for a fatal shooting in Oakland is a conservative estimate; the real cost is likely even higher.

In the past three years, Oakland has averaged approximately 635 combined fatal and non-fatal shootings annually, which cost taxpayers almost \$1,014,518,750 per year. If Oakland could reduce its gun violence rate by just 20%, that could result in government savings of about \$202,903,750 every year.

Over the last decade, Oakland has invested in effective gun violence reduction strategies, which resulted in a 50% reduction in shootings and murders. Although the pandemic has challenged this progress, these outcomes demonstrate that a relatively small investment in effective gun violence intervention strategies can yield significant reductions in shootings, save lives, and produce massive savings.

1. 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. Businesses, community events, and other vital resources often flee from violent neighborhoods. Communities impacted by violence also often experience decreases in property values. For example, 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)."²

Residents of 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 violence is a contagion, like disease, 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 "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."³

Experiencing violence, witnessing violence, and having close friends or family members victimized by violence produces trauma and vicarious trauma—particularly among children. 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.⁴

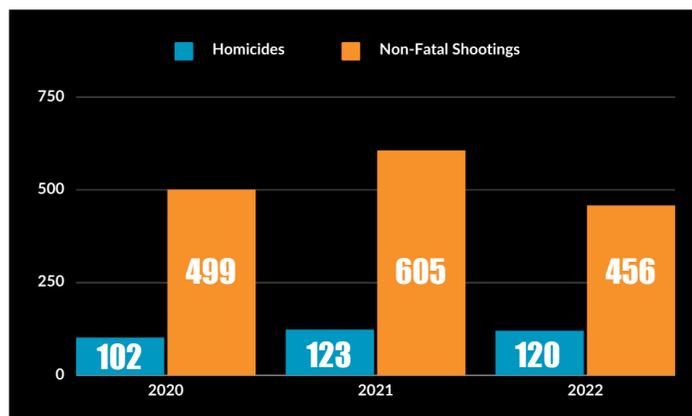
Population

430,553



697
Police Force

Homicides and Non-Fatal Shootings



Homicide Clearance Rates

2020	45.5%
2021	41.1%
2022	38.0%

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](#)

Oakland, California

COST BREAKDOWN



CRIME SCENE RESPONSE

The crime scene response to a fatal or non-fatal shooting typically includes a heavy police presence, fire/EMT staff, and medical transport staff. According to former Oakland Police Department officials, up to 17 officers, including patrol, homicide unit, and forensic personnel, 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 Oakland's hospital network.



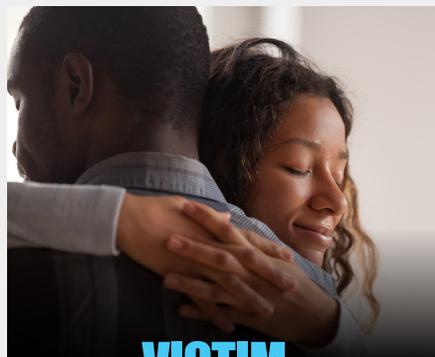
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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 non-fatal or 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 Alameda County jail system costs an average of \$205,470 for the pretrial incarceration period. Following a trial, an inmate is incarcerated within the California prison system at a cost of \$742,917 for those convicted of attempted murder and \$2,441,013 for those convicted of homicide.



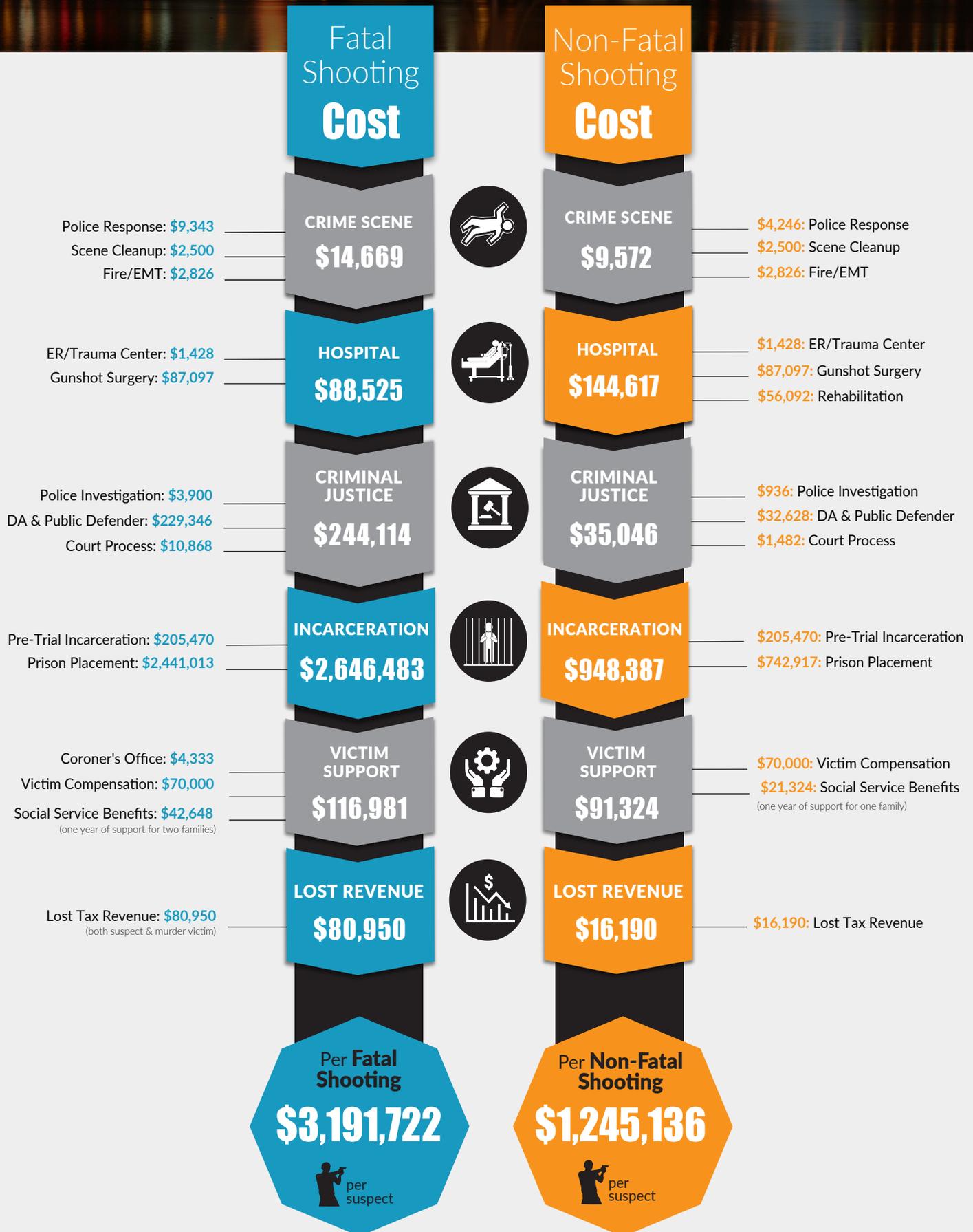
VICTIM SUPPORT

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, on average, \$70,000 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 anywhere from \$91,000 to over \$117,000.



LOST TAX REVENUE

California has a sales and use tax of 6%. Alameda County has a county general tax of 3.25%. When a fatal or non-fatal or 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 9 to 25 years.





CRIME SCENE	Subject: Police Response	Fire/EMT Transport	Scene Clean Up
	Source <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oakland Police Department Interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Oakland Adopted Policy Budget, Fiscal Year 2019-2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Cost of Gun Violence: The Price Tag for Taxpayers
	Notes <p>Initial OPD response to a homicide scene typically includes 12 Patrol, 1 Lieutenant, 2 Sergeants, and 2 Detectives. They remain on the scene for 5-6 hours. Initial OPD response to an injury shooting scene typically includes 6 Patrol, 1 Sergeant, and 2 Detectives. They remain on scene for 2-3 hours.</p>	<p>Fire & EMT Budget: \$169,585,818 Total Responses: 60,000 average Cost per response = \$2,826</p>	<p>\$2,500 is the national average cost for cleanup of crime scenes involving blood, based on NICJR analysis of actual costs from multiple cities.</p>
HOSPITAL	Subject: Emergency Room / Surgery for Gun-Shot Victim		
	Source <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020 National Trends and Cost Burden of Surgically Treated Gunshot Wounds in the US • 2021 Firearm Injuries: Health Care Service Needs and Costs 		
	Notes <p>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)</p>		
CRIMINAL JUSTICE	Subject: Police Investigation	District Attorney & Public Defender	Court Process
	Source <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police FY 2021-23 Proposed Policy Budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary Reports - Alameda County Human Resource Services • Alameda County Public Defenders Jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary Reports - Alameda County Human Resource Services • Survey of Judicial Salaries, SALARY SCHEDULE
	Notes <p>The cost of the police investigation is calculated by multiplying the average salary and benefits for officers assigned to the Homicide Division in Oakland by the average amount of time spent investigating homicides and injury shootings.</p> <p>Homicide: \$104/hr x 37.5 (combined total for both primary and secondary detectives) = \$3,900 Injury shooting: \$104/hr x 9 (combined total for both primary and secondary detectives) = \$936</p>	<p>The cost of prosecution and defense is calculated by multiplying the average amount of time spent by attorneys and support staff by hourly salaries.</p> <p>DA: \$103/hour x 1087 hours for a homicide = \$111,961 plus support staff costs of \$5,973 = \$117,934 Public Defender: \$97/hour x 1087 hours for a homicide = \$105,439 plus support staff costs of \$5,973 = \$111,412 DA: \$103 /hour x 155 hours for a injury shooting = \$15,965 plus support staff costs of \$814 = \$16,779 Public Defender: \$97/hour x 155 hours for a injury shooting = \$15,035 plus support staff costs of \$814 = \$15,849</p>	<p>The cost to the court system is calculated by multiplying the average amount of time spent by judges and court staff by hourly salaries.</p> <p>Judge: \$111/hour x 44 hours for a homicide = \$4,884 Court staff (combined hourly rate): \$136/hour x 44 hours for a homicide = \$5,984 Judge: \$111/hour x 6 hours for a non-fatal shooting = \$666 Court staff (combined hourly rate): \$136/hour x 6 hours for a non-fatal shooting = \$816</p>
INCARCERATION	Subject: Pre-Trial Incarceration	State Prison: Attempted Murder Case	State Prison: Murder Case
	Source <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Thinking in Community Corrections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2020-21 Spending Plan: Judiciary and Criminal Justice • How much does it cost to incarcerate an inmate? • Corrections and Rehabilitation Budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2020-21 Spending Plan: Judiciary and Criminal Justice • How much does it cost to incarcerate an inmate? • Corrections and Rehabilitation Budget
	Notes <p>Alameda County Department of Corrections budget: \$205,470,000</p> <p>Average daily population: 2,000 Average daily cost per inmate: \$281 Average period of pretrial incarceration: 2 years \$281/day x 2 years = \$205,470</p>	<p>California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation annual cost to incarcerate an adult: \$106,131</p> <p>Injury shooting conviction sentence: 9 years, subtracting pretrial time served \$106,131 x (9 years - 2 years) = \$742,917</p>	<p>California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation annual cost to incarcerate an adult: \$106,131</p> <p>Murder conviction sentence: 25 years, subtracting pretrial time served \$106,131 x (25 years - 2 years) = \$2,441,013</p>
VICTIM SUPPORT	Subject: Victim Compensation	Social Service Benefits	Coroner's Office
	Source <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Covered - CA Victim Compensation Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program • Increases in TANF Cash Benefit Levels Are Critical to Help Families Meet Rising Costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEMO TO ADOPT FEE SCHEDULE FOR CORONER'S BUREAU
	Notes <p>The California Victim Compensation Board covers a number of expenses, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funeral and burial • Medical, dental treatment, and mental health treatment or counseling • Round trip mileage costs to medical, dental, or mental health appointments • Mental health counseling for minors who witness a violent crime • Home security installation or improvement • Relocation <p>In Alameda County, the average award for victims of injury shootings and for families of homicide victims is \$70,000</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>CA SNAP = \$658 for family of 3 California TANF = \$1,119 for family of 3 This study estimates 1 year of assistance. \$1,777/mo x 12 months x 2 families = \$42,648</p>	<p>Alameda County body storage fee: \$333 Alameda County autopsy fee: \$4,000 Total cost = \$4,333</p>
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"> • CA Franchise Tax Board Personal Income Tax Booklet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California City & County Sales & Use Tax Rates 	
	Notes <p>State income tax: 1.6% for the first \$20,803; 4% for the next \$9,197 Total annual income tax at \$30,000/year: \$694 Sales and use tax (county and state): 9.25% Total annual sales tax for person earning \$30,000/year and spending 1/3 of income: \$925 Total annual combined tax: \$1,619 Lost tax revenue for a 9-year sentence for attempted murder (\$1,619 x 9 years): \$14,571 If the shooting victim does not work for one year, an additional \$1,619 of revenue is lost. Total Lost Tax Revenue = \$16,190</p>	<p>State income tax: 1.6% for the first \$20,000; 4% for the next \$9,197 Total annual income tax at \$30,000/year: \$694 Sales and use tax: 9.25% Total annual sales tax for person earning \$30,000/year and spending 1/3 of income: \$925 Total annual combined tax: \$1,619 Lost tax revenue for a 25-year sentence for murder (\$1,619 x 25 years): \$40,475 Average murder sentence is 25 years; combined revenue loss for victim and perpetrator is at least \$80,950 (\$1,619 x 25 years x 2 people)</p>	