

THE ECONOMIC COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN RHODE ISLAND

In recent years, Rhode Island has experienced an average of 15 gun-related homicides, 26 gun-related suicides, and dozens of nonfatal shootings per year.¹ Rhode Island has the second lowest gun death rate among the states, yet **gun violence still exacts a high physical, emotional, and financial toll on families and communities in the state.** We often hear about the heartbreak and physical pain these shootings cause, but there is another aspect of the gun violence epidemic that doesn't receive as much attention: the overwhelming financial cost.

TALLYING THE NUMBERS

The dozens of shootings that occur each year in Rhode Island are a serious drain on the state's economy. Based on the expenses we can directly measure, including **healthcare costs** (\$7 million per year), **law enforcement and criminal justice expenses** (\$7 million per year), **costs to employers** (\$1 million per year), and **lost income** (\$80 million per year), the initial price tag of gun violence in Rhode Island is over **\$95 million per year.** Much of this tab is picked up by the public. Up to 85% of gunshot victims, for example, are either uninsured or on some form of publicly funded insurance. Additionally, law enforcement efforts are funded entirely by taxpayer dollars. **As a result, the direct annual cost of gun violence to Rhode Island taxpayers is over \$19 million.**²

GUN VIOLENCE IS BAD FOR BUSINESS

Rhode Island's business community is severely impacted by the negative economic consequences of gun violence. **Shootings engender fear in affected neighborhoods,** which keeps potential customers away, forces businesses to relocate or limit hours of operation, and decreases foreign and local tourism.

A 2018 shooting in a Rhode Island shopping mall caused chaos and forced the mall and neighboring businesses to be completely evacuated and temporarily closed—keeping customers away and causing losses in sales. With dozens of shootings occurring each year throughout the state, it's easy to see how the economy is directly impacted by gun violence.

Conversely, reducing shootings improves local economies. A report from the Urban Institute found that in Minneapolis **just one fewer gun homicide was associated with the creation of 80 jobs and an additional \$9.4 million in sales** across all businesses the following year.

\$95+
MILLION
TOTAL DIRECTLY
MEASURABLE
COSTS

When the reduced quality of life attributable to pain and suffering (\$173 million) is considered, the overall estimate of the economic cost of gun violence rises to **\$268 million per year**. While this number is staggering, it actually understates the true cost of gun violence in Rhode Island because it doesn't include significant, yet difficult-to-measure costs, including lost business opportunities, lowered property values, and reductions in the tax base.

REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE

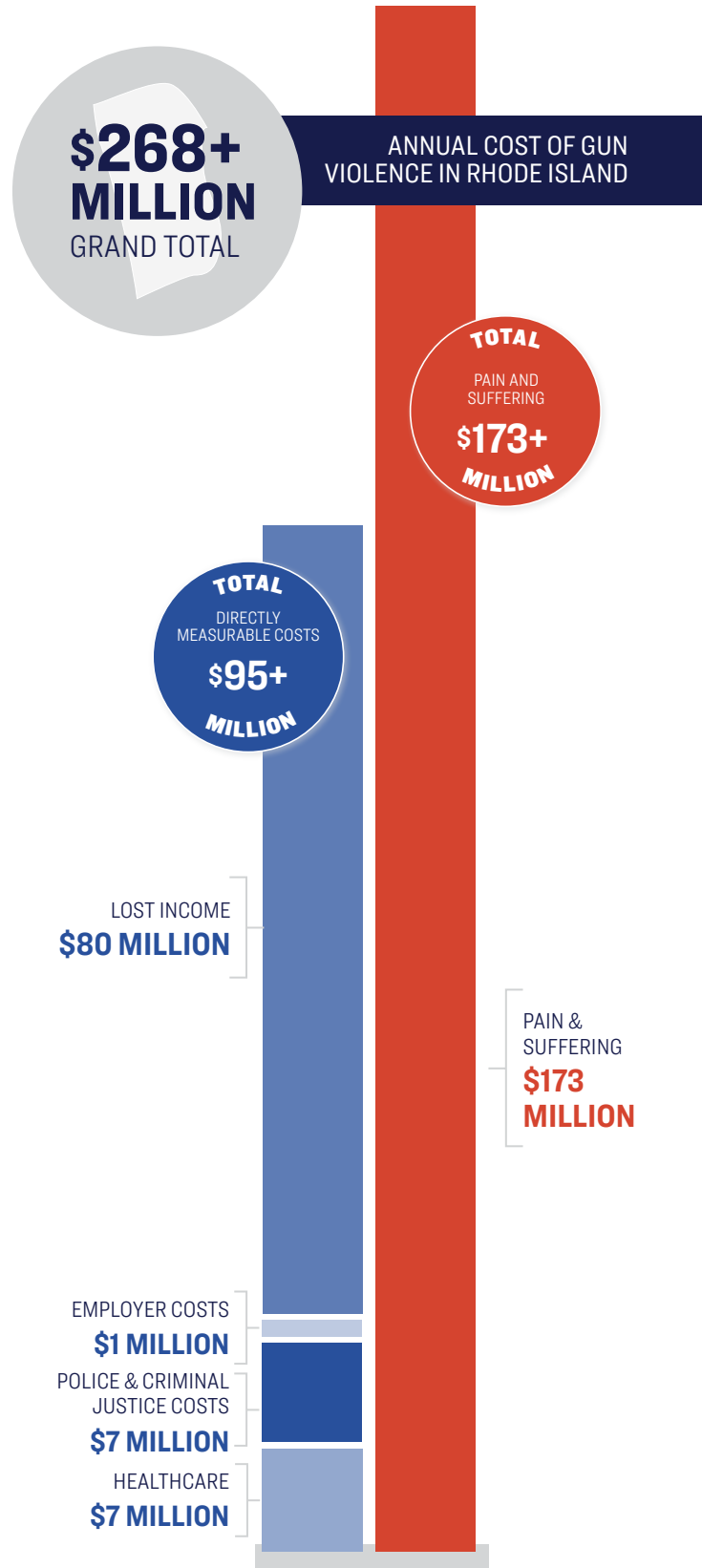
There is much work to be done. Fortunately, a number of proven solutions exist that would reduce gun violence in Rhode Island, including limiting access to military-style weapons and large-capacity ammunition magazines, regulating unsafe handguns, and implementing evidence-based violence intervention strategies that interrupt the cycle of street violence. The investment required to implement these lifesaving solutions is minuscule compared to the yearly cost of gun violence in the state.

1. Fatal firearm injury data came from the CDC's WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports (www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html). Nonfatal firearm injuries came from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's HCUPnet Query System (<https://hcupnet.ahrq.gov/#setup>) and an estimation tool which creates a ratio of the national incidence of nonfatal shootings, sourced from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System's Firearm Injury Surveillance Study (NEISS-FISS), and the number of fatal shootings that Rhode Island experienced in a given year, sourced from WISQARS. NEISS-FISS data is available at www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/series/198#studies.
2. Estimates of the cost of gun violence in Rhode Island were created using a model of the cost of gun violence published in 2012 by economists at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE). This model can be found at www.pire.org/documents/gswcost2010.pdf. All cost estimates were adjusted to 2016 dollars.

WE'RE ON A MISSION TO SAVE LIVES

For 25 years, the legal experts at Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence have been fighting for a safer America by researching, drafting, and defending the laws, policies, and programs proven to save lives from gun violence. Founded in the wake of a 1993 mass shooting in San Francisco, in 2016 the Law Center joined with former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords to form a courageous new force for gun safety that stretches coast to coast.

CONTACT US
media@giffords.org



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