

## Bakersfield, California

# THE COST

## of Gun Violence

### THE DIRECT COST TO TAXPAYERS

**B**akersfield is one of the largest cities in California's Central Valley, with 413,381 residents. The diverse city includes a population of 53% Latino, 30% White, 8% Asian, and 7% Black.<sup>1</sup> Bakersfield has played an important role in trade, agriculture, and petroleum since its founding in 1869.

Bakersfield has also long been an area with higher rates of crime than state and national averages. Like many US cities, Bakersfield saw a significant increase in homicides and nonfatal shootings with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2019 to 2020, homicides increased by 32% and nonfatal shootings almost doubled, for a 97% increase.<sup>2,3</sup> However, shootings decreased significantly from 2021 to 2022. The downward trend continued through 2023, with 27 homicides (below pre-pandemic levels and a 40% decrease from 2020) and 73 nonfatal shootings (down 20% from 2020).

When someone is shot in Bakersfield, 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 Bakersfield Police Department

(BPD) officers descend on the scene. Investigators from the Kern County District Attorney's Office (DA) sometimes arrive too, 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 BPD and the DA, 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 shooting in Bakersfield.

The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) was commissioned by the Bakersfield Office of Violence Intervention and Prevention to conduct this detailed analysis that documents the government expenses accompanying every fatal or nonfatal shooting in Bakersfield. In tracking the direct and indirect costs per shooting incident, NICJR has used averaged or weighted figures for each expense and erred on the side of more conservative estimates. This means

that the calculated cost of \$2,514,062 for a fatal shooting in Bakersfield is a conservative estimate; the real cost is likely even higher.

In the past three years, Bakersfield has averaged approximately 127 combined fatal and nonfatal shootings annually. At this rate, each year of shootings will ultimately cost taxpayers more than \$142 million, with both immediate costs such as crime scene response and longer-term costs such as lost tax revenue and long-term incarceration. If Bakersfield could reduce its gun violence rate by an additional 20%, that could result in government savings of more than \$28 million for every year of shootings.

In 2022, Bakersfield implemented a Gun Violence Reduction Strategy with California Violence Intervention and Prevention (CalVIP) grant funding.<sup>4</sup> The program saw significant reductions in gun violence in 2022 and further reductions in homicides in 2023. As Bakersfield has seen, a relatively small investment in effective gun violence intervention strategies can yield significant reductions in shootings, save lives, and produce massive savings.

1. [US Census Bureau Quick Facts: Bakersfield, CA](#)

2. Bakersfield Police Department internal data

3. 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.

4. [Bakersfield's Gun Violence Reduction Strategy](#)

# 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>5</sup>

An increase in shootings, especially in a concentrated geographic area and timeframe, means greater trauma and more strained resources, which in turn makes each process that touches gun violence more expensive. Healthcare and other direct service workers in the field are subject to vicarious trauma in seeing and treating the aftermath of gun violence. These professionals experience physical and mental health impacts that result in additional healthcare costs and loss of productivity. Similarly, the stress and emotional toll of the work leads to high rates of turnover among criminal justice agencies such as prosecuting and public defense offices. Each time an attorney position turns over, all of the assigned cases must be reassigned, resulting in longer case times and more costs per case.

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. 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, 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>6</sup>

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 (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>7,8</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.

## Bakersfield: Gun Violence Data

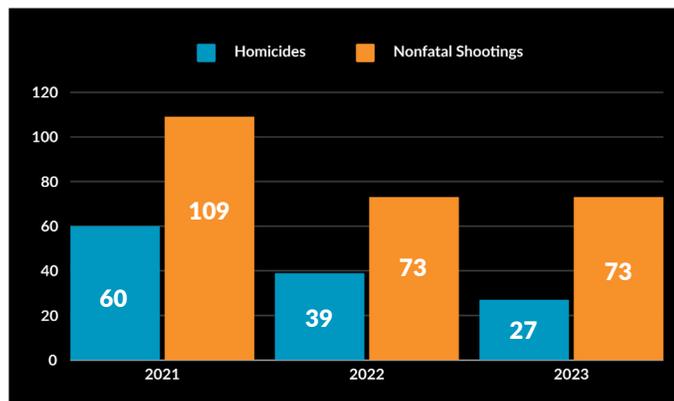
### Population

413,481



512  
Sworn Force<sup>9</sup>

### Homicides and Nonfatal Shootings (2021-2023)<sup>10</sup>



### Homicide Clearance Rates<sup>11</sup>

2021	53%
2022	67%
2023	52%

5. [Report on the Economic Impact of Homicides](#)

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

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

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

9. Provided by Bakersfield Office of Violence Intervention and Prevention

10. Bakersfield Police Department Internal Data

11. Ibid.

# COST BREAKDOWN

Bakersfield  
California



## CRIME SCENE RESPONSE

The crime scene response to a fatal shooting or severe nonfatal shooting typically includes a heavy police presence, EMT staff, and medical transport staff. BPD deploys 18 sworn units, including patrol, homicide unit personnel, and other supervisory-level officers, to respond to a typical fatal shooting.



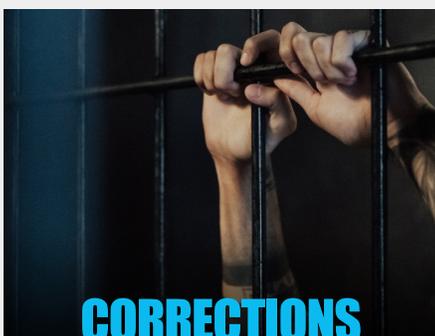
## MEDICAL

Once a victim has been transported to the hospital, the costs of treatment in an emergency department trauma unit, surgery, inpatient stay, and rehabilitation are exorbitant. With a little more than 40% of gunshot victims either uninsured or on Medicaid, these costs represent a tremendous strain on Bakersfield's hospital network.



## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Justice system costs include police investigation, prosecution and defense attorneys, forensic analysis, 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 fatal or nonfatal shooting cases average about two years.



## CORRECTIONS

Incarceration accounts for a large portion of the costs once a suspect is arrested. A stay in the Kern County jail system costs an average of \$16,981 for the pretrial incarceration period for a fatal shooting. Following a trial, an inmate is incarcerated within the California State prison system at an average cost of \$171,055 for those convicted of attempted murder or aggravated assault and \$1,035,365 for those convicted of homicide. A prison sentence may be followed by a period of parole, which may last for the rest of the individual's life following a fatal shooting, at a cost of \$451,294.



## VICTIM SUPPORT & SOCIAL SERVICES

Many victim support costs are covered by the California State Crime Victim Compensation Program. On average, families of homicide victims and surviving victims of nonfatal shootings receive \$8,414 and \$109 (respectively) in compensation to cover costs such as burial expenses, medical expenses, and counseling. Since the victim and suspect may be major financial contributors to their households, many families may need to apply for social services support after their family member is incarcerated, injured, or deceased. Including costs such as Social Security benefits and social services for the families of each victim and arrested suspect increases the total cost for victim support and social services to \$373,906 for a fatal shooting.



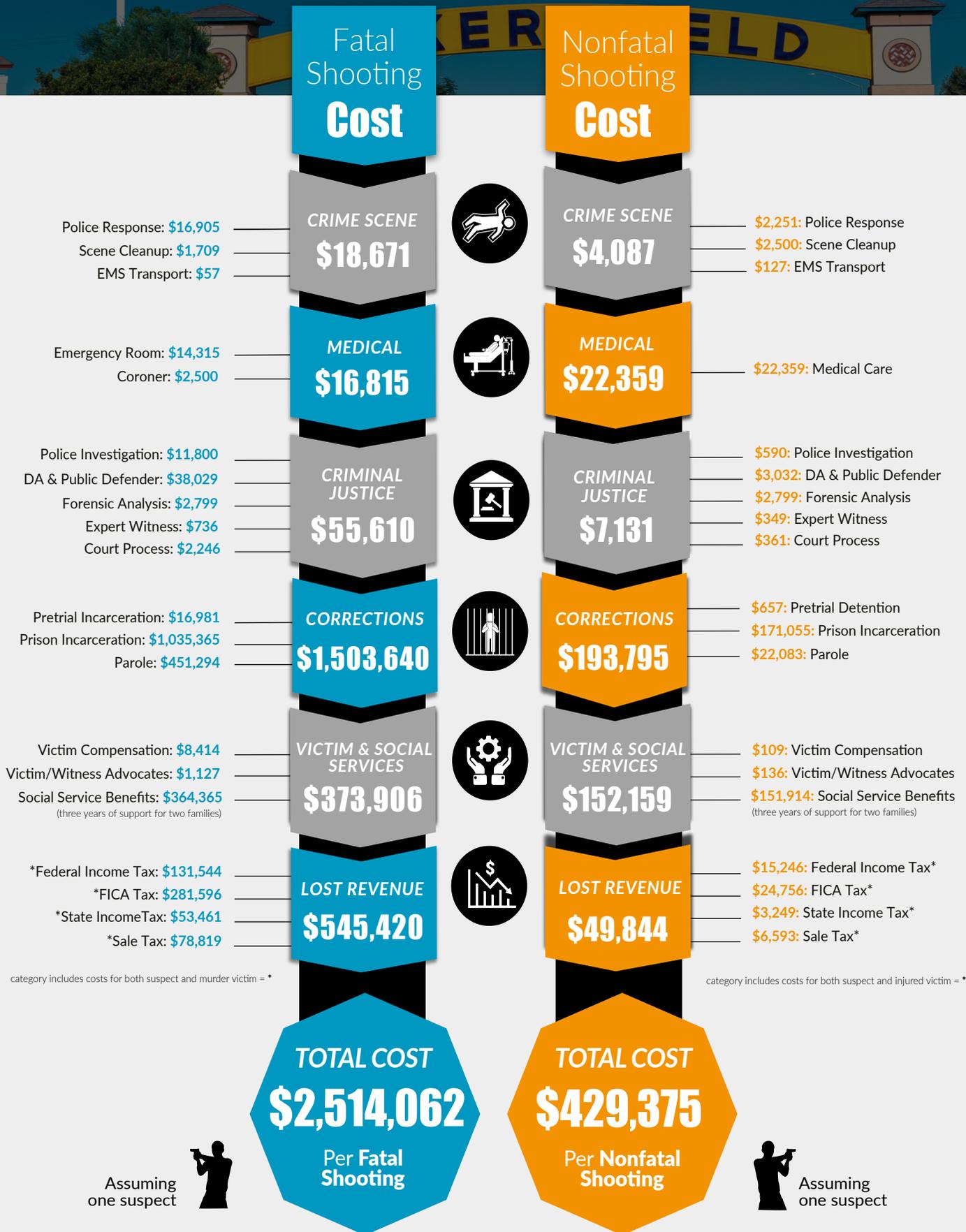
## LOST TAX REVENUE

Kern County and Bakersfield have a combined sales and use tax of 8.25%. Federal taxes use a marginal tax rate up to 12% for median income families, and FICA and Social Security taxes use a flat combined rate of 15.3%. When a fatal or nonfatal shooting occurs, both income and sales tax cannot be collected from the incarcerated individual(s) or fatal shooting victim(s), and taxes collected from nonfatal shooting victims may be reduced or stopped for a time. Each incident can often represent lost tax revenue from a minimum of two individuals for more than 30 years.

# Bakersfield, California

## THE COST PER SHOOTING

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



### Arrest, Charge, and Conviction Rates

**Sources:** Bakersfield Police Department, [2024 Court Statistics Report](#), [2023 Crime in California](#)

**Notes:** Arrest, charge, and conviction rates are used to determine the approximate likelihood of various costs occurring related to an incident, to approximate an “average” or weighted cost per expense (including incidents for which some costs are \$0). For example, while all shootings are assumed to involve an initial police response and investigation, only incidents in which a suspect is arrested and charged require prosecution, defense, and court costs.

Arrest rates for the last three years are provided by BPD. Arrest rates for homicides and aggravated assaults are averaged across the last three years and are reported separately. The charging rate is sourced from the state crime report and state Court Statistics Report. This rate is calculated by dividing the number of felony charges filed by the number of felony arrests in the same year. The conviction rate is sourced from the state Court Statistics Report using felony data.

### Police Response

**Sources:** Bakersfield Police Department, [Employer Costs for Employee Compensation—June 2024](#), [City of Bakersfield Salary Schedule by Title](#)

**Notes:** BPD provided computer-assisted dispatch data, which are used to calculate the number of personnel by rank who typically respond to a shooting crime scene and the average number of hours each individual spends on scene. Pay rates for BPD are sourced from the City of Bakersfield salary schedule. A percentage of income, based upon national average data for government employees, is added to each salary to account for benefits. To determine total cost, these averaged pay rates are multiplied by the average number of hours on scene. This results in a cost of **\$16,905** for fatal shootings and **\$2,251** for nonfatal shootings.

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### Scene Cleanup

**Sources:** [Compensation Benefit Reference Guide](#)

**Notes:** The cost for crime scene cleanup is estimated based on the California Victim Compensation Board benefit limit for restoration service. This cost is **\$1,709**.

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### EMS Transport

**Sources:** [Patterns in Location of Death From Firearm Injury in the US](#), [Medical Transportation - Ground: Billing Codes and Reimbursement Rates](#)

**Notes:** California State Medicaid (Medi-Cal) reimbursement rates are used to estimate the cost for medical transport following a shooting incident. Using a 2023 peer-reviewed study, the proportion of individuals not classified as deceased at the scene is used to weigh the cost of Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulance rides for fatal shootings. For nonfatal shootings, the cost of ALS, Basic Life Support Services, and EMS response with no transportation are averaged together. Mileage costs are calculated using an average distance between 2023 shooting incident locations and Kern Medical Center, calculated using Gun Violence Archive location data, and added to the base ambulance cost. For fatal shootings this was **\$57**; for nonfatal shootings this was **\$127**. The average cost is higher for nonfatal shootings because victims in nonfatal shootings are more likely to need ambulance services.

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### Hospital Care

**Sources:** [Calculate the Economic Cost of Gun Violence](#)

**Notes:** The cost for medical care, including mental health care, is estimated using the Everytown for Gun Safety economic costs calculator for California. This estimate is the government portion of the cost of medical and mental health care for one victim in a gun assault or homicide. For a victim of a fatal shooting this is **\$14,315** and for the victim of a nonfatal shooting this is **\$22,359**.

## Coroner's Office

**Sources:** National Cost of Gun Violence

**Notes:** The national average cost of a Coroner autopsy is **\$2,500**, based upon previous research by NICJR. This cost is only added to fatal shooting cases.

## Police Investigation

**Sources:** Bakersfield Police Department, [Employer Costs for Employee Compensation—June 2024](#), [City of Bakersfield Salary Schedule by Title](#)

**Notes:** The cost of police investigation is calculated by multiplying the average amount of time spent investigating a fatal or nonfatal shooting (according to BPD) by the average salary and benefits for BPD detectives. This was **\$11,800** for fatal shootings and **\$590** for nonfatal shootings.

## District Attorney's Office and Public Defender's Office

**Sources:** Bakersfield Police Department, Kern County Public Defender's Office, Kern County District Attorney's Office, [NCSC Workload Assessment Study: North Carolina](#), [NCSC Workload Assessment Study: New Mexico](#), [Kern County Salary Schedule](#), [Employer Costs for Employee Compensation—June 2024](#)

**Notes:** The cost of prosecution and defense is calculated by multiplying the average salary and benefits by the average amount of time spent by attorneys, investigators, and support staff working on a fatal or nonfatal shooting case. For each Kern County position—including prosecuting attorneys, public defense attorneys, paralegals, legal secretaries, office service specialists, officer services technicians, and investigators—salaries for each compensation step are averaged to estimate the average position hourly rate from publicly available salary data. For each position, hourly salary and benefits are combined and multiplied by the national average time spent per homicide and violent felony case. These costs are weighted by arrest and charging rates for homicides and aggravated assaults. This results in a total of **\$38,029** for fatal shooting cases and **\$3,032** for nonfatal shooting cases.

## Forensic Analysis

**Sources:** [Kern County Recommended Budget FY 2024-25](#)

**Notes:** The average cost per case is calculated by dividing the 2023 Kern County District Attorney Forensic Science budget by the number of requests processed. This cost is **\$2,799**.

## Expert Witness Consultation

**Sources:** [2021 Survey of Expert Witness Fees](#), Kern County Public Defender's Office, [2024 Court Statistics Report](#)

**Notes:** Expert witness costs are calculated by multiplying national average expert witness fees (for specific specialties and services) by the typical number and type of witnesses contracted for a case as specified by the Public Defender's Office. This most often includes a forensic pathologist and firearms and ballistics expert. For each of these experts, the cost of trial testimony is multiplied by the frequency with which felony cases go to trial according to the state Court Statistics Report. This weighted trial rate is then added to the cost of case review and depositions, for a total of **\$736** for fatal shooting cases and **\$349** for nonfatal shooting cases.

## Court Process

**Sources:** [NCSC Workload Assessment Study: Missouri Court Clerk](#), [NCSC Workload Assessment Study: Missouri Judicial](#), [NCSC Workload Assessment Study: Minnesota](#), [Judicial Council of California Workload Assessment Study](#), [Survey of Judicial Salaries](#), [Judicial Council of California Schedule 7A: Kern](#), [Kern County Salary Schedule](#), [Employer Costs for Employee Compensation—June 2024](#)

**Notes:** The cost to the court system is calculated by multiplying Kern County hourly salaries and benefits by the average time spent by judges and court staff working on a fatal or nonfatal shooting case, according to national judicial workload assessments. This is weighted by arrest and charging rate, for a total of **\$2,246** for fatal shooting cases and **\$361** for nonfatal shooting cases.

## Pretrial Incarceration

**Sources:** [Board of State and Community Corrections Jail Profile Survey-Online Querying](#), Kern County Sheriff's Office Public Records Request, [Timely Justice in Criminal Cases: What the Data Tells Us](#)

**Notes:** The cost of pretrial incarceration is calculated using the daily cost of incarceration in Kern County jails for fiscal year 2022–2023, according to the Kern County Sheriff's Office. This daily cost is multiplied by the estimated length of stay. For fatal cases, this is the national average time for a homicide case to be resolved. For nonfatal cases, this is the average length of stay in Kern County Jails according to the Jail Profile Survey. This cost is then weighted by the arrest rate for fatal and nonfatal shootings. This results in a total of **\$16,981** for fatal shooting cases and **\$657** for nonfatal shooting cases.

## Incarceration: State Prison

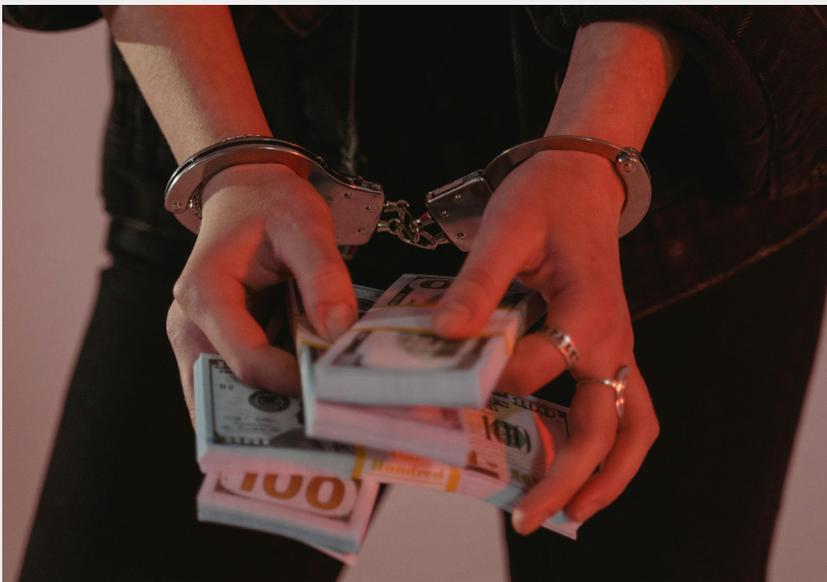
**Sources:** [CDCR Offender Data Points](#), [Corrections and Rehabilitation 2023-24 State Budget](#), [Monthly Total Population Report Archive: 2023 & 2024](#)

**Notes:** The cost of state incarceration is calculated using the daily cost of incarceration, which is found by dividing the California Department of Corrections facility budget by the average daily population. This is multiplied by the average length of stay for a fatal or nonfatal shooting according to Department of Corrections data. This cost is then weighted by the arrest rate, charging rate, and conviction rate for fatal and nonfatal shootings, respectively. This results in a total of **\$1,035,365** for fatal shooting cases and **\$171,055** for nonfatal shooting cases. These costs account for the total anticipated time the individual will remain incarcerated; they do not account for inflation or increased costs of incarceration.

## Parole Supervision

**Sources:** [US Health Map](#), [Corrections and Rehabilitation 2023-24 State Budget](#), [Monthly Total Population Report Archive: 2023 & 2024](#), [Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 15, § 2515 - Length of Parole](#)

**Notes:** Average daily costs are calculated by dividing the parole budget by the parole average daily population. For fatal shootings, which typically result in parole supervision for life following incarceration, the length of supervision is calculated using the national average age of arrest for shooting incidents (according to previous NICJR Gun Violence Assessment reports), average prison sentence, and average life expectancy. For nonfatal shootings, statutory mandates are used to estimate parole time. As with incarceration costs, parole costs are weighted by arrest, charge, and conviction rates. This results in a total of **\$451,294** for fatal shooting cases and **\$22,083** for nonfatal shooting cases.



## Victim Compensation

**Sources:** [North Carolina Assistant District Attorney/Victim Witness Legal Assistant Workload Assessment](#); [A Workload Assessment Study for the New Mexico Trial Court Judiciary, District Attorney's Offices and Public Defender Department](#); [Kern County Salary Schedule](#), [CalVCB Annual Report 2023-24](#), [Crime and Clearances \(including Arson\)](#)

**Notes:** Victim compensation costs are calculated by dividing the total amount of victim compensation paid out by the State for homicides by the total number of homicides in the state that same year. The same calculation is carried out for assaults. This produces an average payout amount for all incidents, including incidents that do not result in victim compensation payment due to ineligibilities unrelated to costs.

This is combined with costs associated with victim/witness assistance services housed within the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, which are calculated using salary and benefits multiplied by the average hours spent on a case by victim advocates. This results in a total of **\$9,541** for fatal shooting cases and **\$245** for nonfatal shooting cases.

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## Social Service Assistance

**Sources:** [US Department of Agriculture Fiscal Year 2024 Cost-of-Living Adjustments](#), [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, How Much in Disability Benefits Can You Get From Social Security?](#), [The Welfare Rules Database](#), [FY2024 Fair Market Rents Documentation System](#), [Fair Market Rents - HUD](#), [Income Limits - HUD](#), [Medicaid Spending per Enrollee](#), [US Census Bureau: Bakersfield Income](#), [CalFresh Income Limits](#), [Do You Qualify for Medi-Cal Benefits?](#), [Primary Insurance Amount](#), [What you could get from Survivor benefits](#), [Bakersfield's Gun Violence Reduction Strategy Implementation Report 2022](#)

**Notes:** Estimated household incomes prior to the shooting incident are based on median income for Latino families in Bakersfield using US Census Bureau data. The Latino household median income is used to reflect individuals most at risk for gun violence in Bakersfield according to Gun Violence Problem Analysis data. Estimated household incomes following the shooting incident are based on income limits for social services. We intentionally use an income estimate at the top end of these guidelines to remain consistent with our conservative estimate approach. Support services are calculated for a three-year period, consistent with the average time families receive support. Included social services are: CalFesh (SNAP), TANF, HUD, Medicaid, SSDI, and Social Security Survivor benefits. All program costs are calculated using mathematical formulas documented by each program, and using figures specific to California and Bakersfield whenever applicable. Support services for suspects' families are weighted by arrest rates. These calculations resulted in a total of **\$364,365** for fatal shooting cases and **\$151,914** for nonfatal shooting cases.

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## Lost Tax Revenue

**Sources:** [Federal income tax rates and brackets](#), [IRS provides tax inflation adjustments for tax year 2024](#), [What Happens When States Ditch Income Tax for Sales Tax?](#), [All about the FICA tax](#), [California City & County Sales & Use Tax Rates](#), [California State Income Tax: Rates and Brackets for 2024-2025](#), [Bakersfield's Gun Violence Reduction Strategy Implementation Report 2022](#)

**Notes:** When an individual is incarcerated, deceased, or disabled following a shooting, their family income often changes significantly. This means their family pays less in local sales, state and federal income, and FICA taxes. Estimated household incomes prior to the shooting incident are based on median income for Latino families using US Census Bureau data. The Latino household median income is used to reflect individuals most at risk for gun violence. Estimated household incomes following the shooting incident are based on income limits for social services. We intentionally use an income estimate at the top end of these guidelines to remain consistent with our conservative estimate approach. The percentage of income used to calculate contribution to local taxes is based on National Conference of State Legislatures data. This percentage is higher for lower-income families, which is reflected in this calculation. Federal and state income taxes are calculated using the standard deduction to determine taxable income and 2024 marginal tax brackets. The total tax revenue loss is **\$545,420** for fatal shootings; for nonfatal shootings it is **\$49,844**.