

Los Angeles, California

THE COST

OF GUN VIOLENCE

THE DIRECT COST TO TAXPAYERS

Home to Hollywood, the birthplace of gangsta rap, and the scene of two historic riots (Watts 1965 and Rodney King 1992), the City of Los Angeles is the second most populous city in the United States and the largest city in California, with a total population of 3,898,767. LA is a diverse city composed primarily of Latinos (48%), Whites (28%), Asians (11%), and Blacks (8%).¹

The world's entertainment headquarters, popular sports franchises, and the notorious Bloods and Crips all epitomize the reputation of Los Angeles. The 1990's were marked by extremely high rates of violence in LA followed by chronic police abuses. But with little fanfare, LA would become one of the safest big cities in the country. Even after an increase in homicides after the onset of the COVID pandemic, LA has recently returned to low overall rates of violence. In 2023, Los Angeles achieved a low of 7.5 homicides per 100,000 people, far below its peak of 21.4 homicides per 100,000 residents in 1993.^{2,3}

When someone is shot in Los Angeles, 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 Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) units descend on the scene. Investigators from the Los Angeles

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 Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office, sometimes joined by the US Attorney. With the LAPD homicide clearance rate at 76% in 2023, a trial and a long incarceration period frequently follow.⁴ 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 Los Angeles.

The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) conducted this detailed analysis that documents the government expenses accompanying every fatal or nonfatal shooting in Los Angeles. 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 \$3,604,926.06 for a fatal shooting in Los Angeles is a conservative estimate; the real cost is likely even higher.

In the past three years, Los Angeles has averaged approximately 274 fatal shootings and 1,333 nonfatal shootings annually. At this rate, each year of shootings will ultimately cost taxpayers nearly \$4 billion! If Los Angeles could reduce its gun violence rate by just 20%, that could result in government savings of more than \$700 million every year.

The City of Los Angeles led the country when it created the Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) office in 2007. LA allocated more than \$41 million directly to GRYD to support the office and the nonprofits it contracts with.⁵ LA also authorized an additional \$6.4 million to the Department of Recreation and Parks to administer the Saturday Night Lights (SNL) program, run in partnership with GYRD.⁶ SNL, a seasonal program that aims to reduce violence by engaging youth and families in community activities during select summer evenings, is being expanded to run year-round. In 2019, LA County also established the Los Angeles County Office of Violence Prevention (OVP). The LA County OVP supports coordination, capacity building, and partnership among violence reduction stakeholders across the county.⁷ For example, the OVP led 30 county and community partners in the creation of a Gun Violence Prevention Platform. The continuation and expansion of these effective initiatives can contribute to further reductions in gun violence in LA.

1. US Census Bureau Quickfacts: Los Angeles City

2. LA Times, "Homicides in 1992 Set Record for LA County"

3. LA Almanac, Reported Crime Numbers & Crime Rates

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. A specific breakdown of money passed through to community providers is not yet available.

6. LA Motion 24-0239

7. LA County Office of Violence Prevention



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).”⁸

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.”⁹

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., 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.^{10,11}

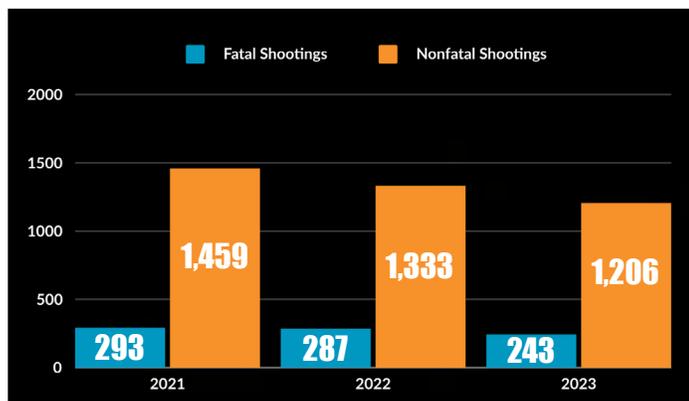
Population

3,898,767



8,947
Police Force¹²

Fatal and Nonfatal Shootings from 2021-2023¹³



Homicide Clearance Rates¹⁴

2023	76%
2022	75%
2021	66%

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

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

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

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

12. [LAPD Sworn & Civilian Personnel By Cclass, Sex, And Descent](#)

13. [LAPD 2023 Homicide Report](#); [LAPD 2022 Homicide Report](#); [Los Angeles records 397 murders in 2021](#); [LA officials tout double-digit drop in violent crime in 2023](#), [LAPD 2021 Crime & Initiatives Report](#)

14. [LAPD Releases End of Year Crime Statistics for the City of Los Angeles 2023](#); [LAPD 2022 Homicide Report](#); [LAPD 2022 Crime and Initiatives Report](#)

Los Angeles, California

COST BREAKDOWN



CRIME SCENE RESPONSE

The crime scene response to a fatal shooting or severe nonfatal shooting typically includes a heavy police presence, fire/EMT staff, and medical transport staff. According to the LAPD, the Los Angeles Police Department could deploy a minimum of 13 officers, including several patrol units, multiple detectives, and a Homicide Commanding Officer or 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 the Los Angeles hospital network.



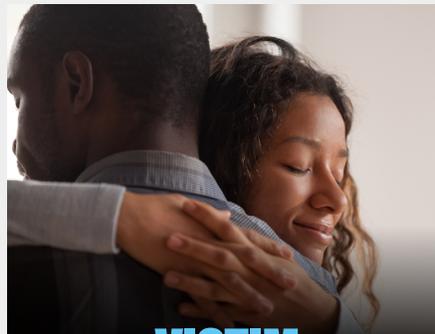
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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 fatal or nonfatal shooting cases average about two years.



INCARCERATION

Incarceration accounts for a large portion of the costs once a suspect is arrested. A stay in the Los Angeles jail system costs an average of \$158,785.44 for the pretrial incarceration period. Following a trial, an inmate is incarcerated within the California prison system at a cost of \$1,727,180.00 for those convicted of attempted murder and \$3,055,780.00 for those convicted of homicide.



VICTIM SUPPORT

Many victim support costs are covered by the California Victim Compensation Board. Surviving victims of nonfatal shootings and families of homicide victims receive a maximum of \$70,000.00 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 \$120,102.27 for a fatal shooting.

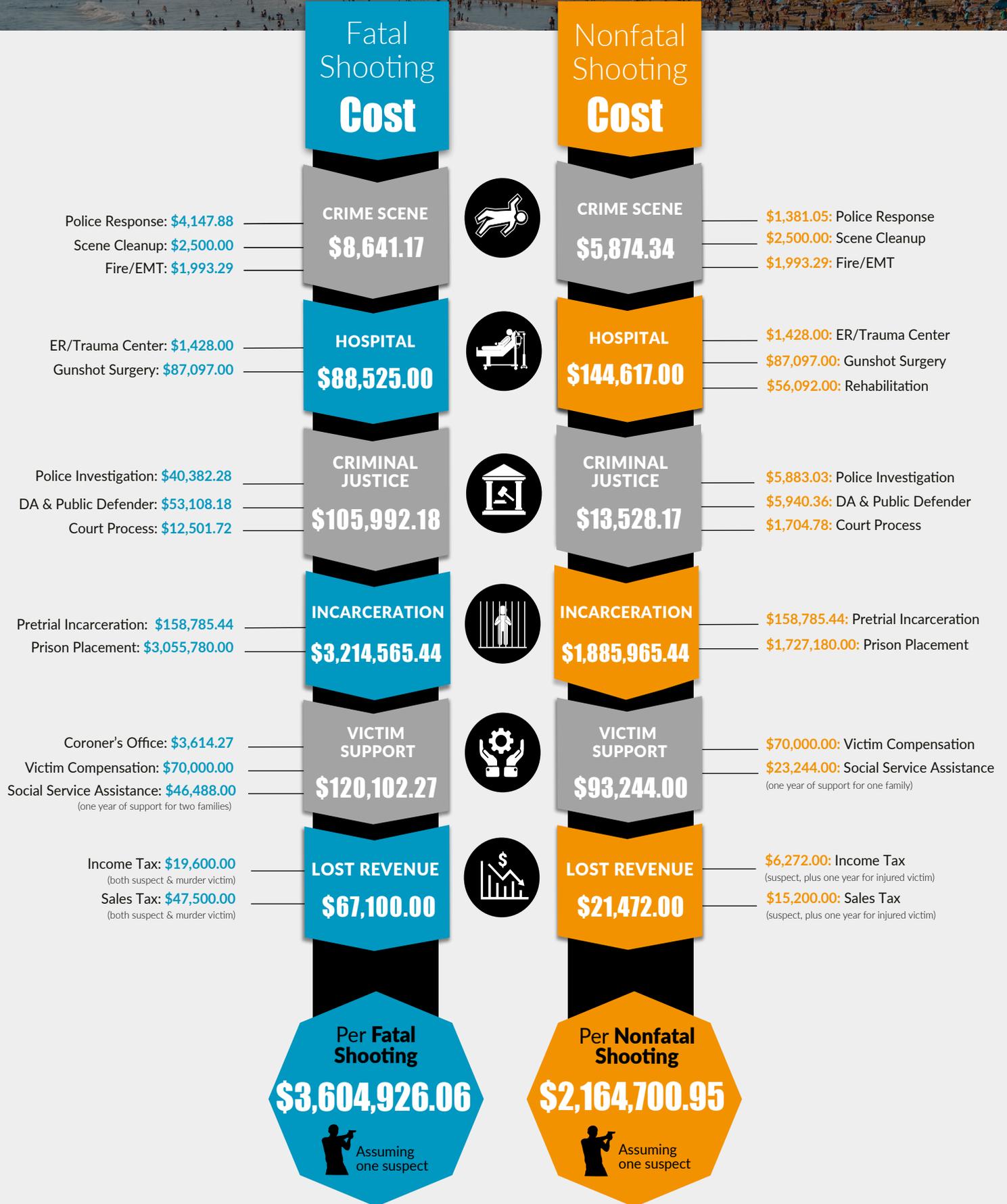


LOST TAX REVENUE

California collects \$392.00 of income tax for individuals who make \$30,000.00. Los Angeles has a county combined sales tax of 9.5%. When a fatal or nonfatal 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 15 to 25 years.

THE COST Per Shooting

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



CRIME SCENE

Subject:	Police Response	Fire / EMT Transport	Scene Cleanup
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Los Angeles Police Department Data obtained by NICJR LA City Controller 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LAFD FY 2022-2023 Budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Cost of Violence: The Price Tag for Taxpayers
Notes	Initial police response to a homicide scene includes, at minimum, 8 Patrol officers, 2 Lieutenants, 2 Detectives, and 1 Detective Supervisor. They remain on the scene for a minimum of 4 hours. Initial police response to a nonfatal shooting scene includes, at minimum, 2 Patrol officers, 1 Patrol Supervisor, and 1 Detective. It may also include 1 Area Commander. Based on information provided by LAPD, we estimate that they remain on scene for an average of 3 hours.	Fire & EMT budget: \$140,885,432.00 Total responses: 76,391 average \$140,885,432.00 / 76,391 responses = \$1,844.27 per response	Average cost among competitive vendors to clean up crime scenes involving blood: \$2,500.00

HOSPITAL

Subject:	Emergency Room / Surgery for Gunshot 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	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)

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Subject:	Police Investigation	District Attorney (DA) & Public Defender (PD)	Court Process
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Los Angeles Police Department Data obtained by NICJR The National Cost of Gun Violence: The Price For Taxpayers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA County Salary Schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Cost of Gun Violence: The Price Tag for Taxpayers Transparent California: Court Record System Clerk LA Sheriff's Department Salary and Benefits Government Jobs: Court Reporter
Notes	The cost of the police investigation is calculated by multiplying the average salary and benefits for Detectives in Los Angeles by the average amount of time spent investigating fatal and nonfatal shootings. Fatal shooting \$72.63/hour x 278 hours = \$40,382.28 Nonfatal shooting \$72.63/hour x 81 hours = \$5,883.03	The cost of prosecution and defense is calculated by multiplying their average salary and benefits by the average amount of time spent by attorneys working on a fatal or nonfatal shooting case. Fatal shooting DA: \$68.28/hour x 418.4 hours = \$28,568.35 PD: \$68.28/hour x 359.4 hours = \$24,539.83 Nonfatal shooting DA: \$68.28/hour x 20.5 hours = \$1,399.74 PD: \$68.28/hour x 66.5 hours = \$4,540.62	The cost to the court system is calculated by multiplying the national average amount of time spent by judges and court staff by local hourly rates. Court staff rates have been combined. Fatal shooting Judge: \$128.94/hour x 44 hours = \$5,673.36 Court staff: \$155.19/hour x 44 hours = \$6,828.36 Nonfatal shooting Judge: \$128.94/hour x 6 hours = \$773.64 Court staff: \$155.19/hour x 6 hours = \$931.14

INCARCERATION

Subject:	Pretrial Incarceration	State Prison: Attempted Murder Case	State Prison: Murder Case
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA County FY2024 Budget LA Sheriff's Department Custody Division Population Year End Review 2022 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As California closes prisons, the cost of locking someone up hits new record at \$132,860 CA Legislature Penal Code [25 - 680.4] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As California closes prisons, the cost of locking someone up hits new record at \$132,860
Notes	Los Angeles Department of Corrections budget: \$1,096,175,315.34 Average daily population: 13,807 Average annual cost per inmate \$79,392.72 Average period of pretrial incarceration: 2 years \$79,392.72 x 2 years = \$158,785.44	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation annual cost to house an adult: \$132,860.00 Injury shooting conviction sentence: 15 years, subtracting pretrial time served \$132,860.00 x (15 years - 2 years) = \$1,727,180.00	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation annual cost to house an adult: \$132,860.00 Murder conviction sentence: 25 years, subtracting pretrial time served \$132,860.00 x (25 years - 2 years) = \$3,055,780.00

VICTIM SUPPORT

Subject:	Victim Compensation	Social Service Assistance	Medical Examiner's Office
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CalVCB: What is Covered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CalWORKS Program Fact Sheet US Department of Agriculture Fiscal Year 2024 Cost-of-Living Adjustments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA County FY2021 Budget LA County FY2021 Budget, LA County Department of Medical Examiner Coroner 2021 Annual Report
Notes	Victims of serious crimes can receive up to \$70,000.00 for expenses including burial costs, lost wages, and other expenses incurred as a result of the shooting incident.	In a fatal shooting, both the victim and perpetrator, who may be major financial contributors to their households, are no longer able to provide for their families. Many families may need to apply for social services support. USDA SNAP = \$766.00 for family of 3 CalWorks (TANF) = \$1,171.00 for family of 3 This study estimates 1 year of assistance. \$1,937.00/mo x 12 months x 1 family = \$23,244.00 \$1,937.00/mo x 12 months x 2 families = \$46,488.00	Los Angeles FY21 Coroner's budget: \$45,894,000.00 FY21 total cases: 12,698 Cost per autopsy = \$3,614.27

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"> California Franchise Tax Board Calculator California Department of Tax and Fee Administration Effective Sales and Use Tax Rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> California Franchise Tax Board Calculator California Department of Tax and Fee Administration Effective Sales and Use Tax Rates
Notes	State annual income tax at \$30,000.00/year: \$392.00 Sales and use tax (county and state): 9.5% Total annual sales tax for a person earning \$30,000/year and spending 1/3 of income: \$950.00 Total annual combined tax: \$1,342.00 Lost tax revenue for a 15-year sentence for attempted murder (\$1,342.00 x 15 years): \$20,130.00 If the shooting victim does not work for one year, an additional \$1,342.00 of revenue is lost. Total Lost Tax Revenue = \$21,472.00	State annual income tax at \$30,000.00/year: \$392.00 Sales and use tax (county and state): 9.5% Total annual sales tax for a person earning \$30,000.00/year and spending 1/3 of income: \$950.00 Total annual combined tax: \$1,342.00 Lost tax revenue for a 25-year sentence for murder (\$1,342.00 x 25 years): \$33,550.00 If the shooting victim loses their life, an additional \$33,550.00 of revenue is lost. Total Lost Tax Revenue = \$67,100.00