

THE COSTS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN LOUISIANA

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The Costs of Intimate Partner Violence in Louisiana

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Please cite as: Klugman J, Li L, Raj A. The Costs of Intimate Partner
Violence in Louisiana. Newcomb Institute at Tulane University.

April 2024. <https://newcomb.tulane.edu/content/costs-ipv-louisiana>.



April 2024

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1. Introduction and Motivation

As highlighted in a recent Newcomb Institute report,¹ violence remains at epidemic proportions in the U.S. and in Louisiana. This includes gender-based violence, community violence and policing, and gun violence.

The focus of this report is on intimate partner violence (IPV) experienced by women – and the costs of this violence. By contributing to the evidence needed to inform policy debates in Louisiana, the aim is to build support across the political spectrum to address violence against women.

Women’s freedom from violence is first and foremost a basic human right. This is recognized internationally and in U.S. national and Louisiana state legislation.

At the same time, it is by now well accepted that empowering women is not only the “right thing” to do to honor the world’s commitments to human rights, it is also the “smart thing” to do for economic expansion and development.

As documented in the 2019 Justice for Women report,² the case for investing in violence prevention and response arises from avoiding the major costs associated with such violence. While only a few studies have precisely quantified the costs per IPV survivor, it is widely accepted that survivors of violence encounter health costs, and often suffer lost productivity and experience financial hardship.³ There are also intergenerational repercussions for children who witness violence. All these costs add up to negative repercussions for economic growth.⁴

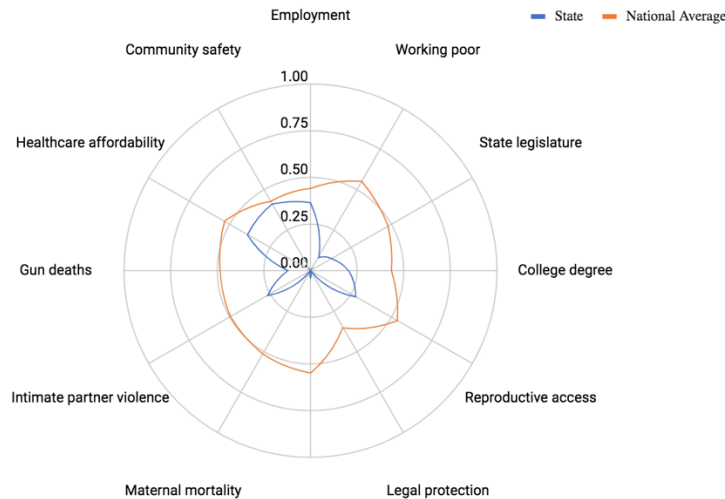
This report draws on unique new data, combined with the best available methods and estimates from the U.S. and around the world, to generate the first-ever quantification of the costs of IPV in Louisiana. The Louisiana Violence Experiences Survey (LaVEX) is the only survey providing these recent data at the state level by drawing on past-year experiences of intimate partner violence among Louisiana women in mid-2023.

The structure of this report is as follows: The next section briefly highlights the prevalence and nature of intimate partner violence against women in Louisiana, in the context of larger constraints on their opportunities and security, as captured in the U.S. Women Peace and Security Index. Section 3 outlines the methods and assumptions used and presents the major results. The section concludes by reminding the reader of the limitations of the study. Section 4 draws out key comparisons and highlights the implications for policy.

2. The Louisiana State Context for Women

Well-being is multidimensional: Incomes are important, but so are political voice, education, access to sexual and reproductive rights, and security at home and in the community. A recent comprehensive measure of women’s well-being, rights, and opportunities across 50 states and Washington, D.C., recently ranked Louisiana at the bottom of all the states, scoring .167 on a 0-1 scale.⁵

Figure 1: How Louisiana scores on key elements of women's inclusion, justice and security



Source: Klugman (2020).

Louisiana performed below average for all 12 indicators included in the U.S. Women Peace and Security Index and ranked worst overall on the justice dimension. Discriminatory norms limit women’s progress, as nearly half of men in Louisiana (as well as Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma) believe it’s best for men to be the breadwinner while women stay home. Maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the country at 39 deaths per 100,000 live births.⁶

Racial disparities in health indicators are stark, with maternal mortality rates rising to 112 deaths per 100,000 live births among Black women while more than 20 percent of Latina and Native American women report not seeing a doctor recently due to cost. An associated YouGov/Perry Udem survey found that half of women of color in the state do not have enough money to pay for bills and basic needs, and 45 percent of Black women have less than \$200 in savings, compared to 30 percent of women in the top-ranking states.⁷

Louisiana is one of six states that scored zero on key legal protections for women, highlighting extensive formal barriers to equality. For example, the state does not require domestic abusers subject to protective orders to relinquish their firearms and has not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment.

Among women in the state, there is widespread recognition of the need to advance women’s rights, although there are stark gender gaps in perceptions. The YouGov/Perry Udem survey found that nearly four in five women in Louisiana believe there is still work to be done in terms of achieving gender equality, compared to 35 percent of men. Over 80 percent of Black women say that men have more opportunities than women in terms of access to good jobs, while only a third of white men think the same, highlighting different perceptions about equality across both gender and racial lines.

Poverty rates for women in Louisiana soar above national averages. Nearly one in five women live in poverty, compared to 12 percent nationally. This rate rises to 45 percent among female-headed households.⁸ Louisiana does not have a state minimum wage, meaning only the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 hourly, or roughly \$15,000 annually assuming full-time work, applies to workers in the state.

3. Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence

In 2023, about one in 25 Louisiana women (4 percent) had experienced physical and/or sexual IPV in the past year from a current or former romantic or sexual partner. This amounts to more than 70,000 Louisiana women. While past-year prevalence is similar for men and women, women are more likely than men to report a history of physical and/or sexual IPV (42 vs. 29 percent). Women were also more likely than men to report that the violence involved a gun (0.7 vs. 0.3 percent).

Behind this state average, there are large differences in current rates of IPV across different population groups:

- The rate is double the state average among young adult Louisianans aged 18-24 years (8 percent);
- Louisianans identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other self-described sexual identity were twice as likely to report past-year IPV (8 percent) relative to heterosexual respondents (4 percent).

At the same time, IPV rates were similar across location (metropolitan vs. non-metropolitan), household income, racial group, and education level (although lower – 2 percent – among those with a graduate degree).

Key risk factors include disability, homelessness, and history of incarceration, specifically:

- Louisianans with a disability were three times more likely than those without to report past-year IPV (7 percent vs. 2 percent)
- Louisianans with a history of homelessness were six times more likely compared to those without this history to report a history of past-year IPV (13 percent vs. 2 percent)
- Louisianans with a history of incarceration were more than three times more likely than those without this history to report past-year IPV (10 percent vs. 3 percent)

This picture shows that socially and economically vulnerable Louisianans – including LGBTQ+ communities, people with a history of homelessness or incarceration, and people living with a disability – face disproportionate levels of IPV.

Multiple publicly funded entities in Louisiana are involved in addressing domestic violence. The police respond to calls and are often the first point of contact in domestic violence cases, while the judicial system prosecutes cases and issues protective orders.

In terms of support for survivors, the Department of Children and Family Services and the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement administer federal grants to service providers. The Domestic Violence Prevention Commission, established in 2014, has several responsibilities, including conducting a continuing comprehensive review of domestic violence programs to identify gaps in services and developing a statewide needs assessment.⁹

4. The Costs of Intimate Partner Violence

Freedom from violence is a basic human right, and some people argue that the whole exercise of costing violence is unethical. However, the costing of human lives and injury is done every day, explicitly by insurance companies and the courts, and implicitly in the ways in which public and private resources are allocated. It is increasingly well recognized that firearm-related injuries are an important and preventable public health problem in the United States, which has the highest rate of firearm homicides among developed countries, 25 times higher than that of comparable countries.¹⁰

Governments spend large amounts of public money to deal with the consequences of violence, including gun-related violence, and the costs to individuals and families, in terms of health care and loss of income as well as pain and suffering, are large.¹¹ Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund is among the groups that have contributed significant knowledge about the costs of gun violence in the U.S. for survivors, families and taxpayers, and in 2022 estimated that the monetary costs of gun violence amount to \$557 billion annually, or about 2.6 percent of national GDP.¹²

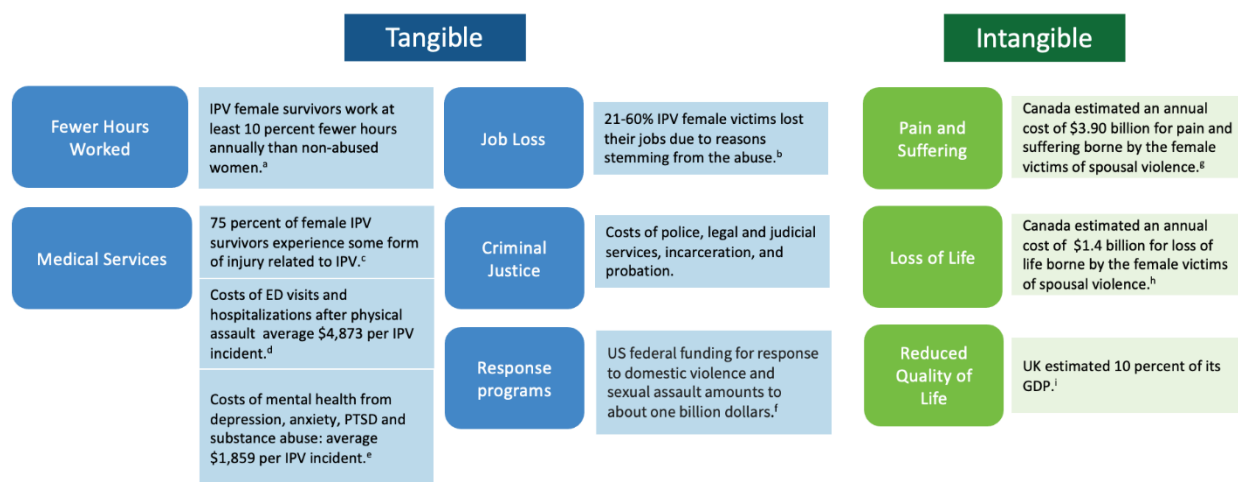
A solid business case, which establishes a better understanding of the costs of societal “bads” – in this case, intimate partner violence – can attract public interest, garner the attention of policymakers, and inform the prioritization of budgets. This has been done in the case of gun violence in the U.S. – by leading voices at Everytown, The Trace, and elsewhere – and has served to attract media and policy interest in the challenge, without denying the massive human tragedy inherent in these numbers.

Investigations into the economic costs of intimate partner violence have been undertaken by the IMF,¹³ the World Bank,¹⁴ the United Nations, national governments, and academic researchers. The World Bank has estimated the tangible costs of IPV at around 1.5 percent of GDP, which is equivalent to what many countries spend on primary education, with estimates for Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Uganda ranging between one and two percent of GDP.¹⁵ UN Women’s 2013 study of Viet Nam illustrates how survey data can be used to establish the number of workdays typically lost from the

type of violence, to which medical treatment, police costs, legal support, counseling, and judicial services were added.¹⁶ Estimates by the UK Home Office – limited to tangible costs – were that the cost for a single victim of domestic abuse is £34,015, totaling £66 billion pounds or about 3 percent of GDP in 2017.¹⁷

Figure 2 outlines the major costs of intimate partner violence, distinguishing between tangible and intangible costs. On the tangible side, the key factors are the reductions in hours worked and in productivity per hour worked, lower longer-term labor supply, and lowered investments in physical capital due to higher current costs of health and judicial services. In terms of medical costs, the time frame for cost estimation needs to be determined. One year of requiring medical services is appropriate for many types of injury; however, there are risks associated with ignoring the costs of long-term physical and mental health consequences, which can be substantial.¹⁸

Figure 2: What we know about the costs of IPV: a snapshot of U.S. and global evidence



Sources and notes: Authors' estimates based on ^aTolman and Wang (2005); ^bRothman et. al. (2007); ^cCDC (2022); ^{d,e}National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (2003) and US Inflation Calculator. Costs are adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation rates; ^fFVPSA American Rescue Plan Program (2021); ^{g,h}Zhang et. al. (2009) and Bank of Canada Inflation Calculator. Costs are adjusted to 2022 dollars; ⁱSantos (2013).

In conceptualizing and measuring the costs of violence, an important basic distinction is between tangible and intangible costs. Tangible costs include loss of income, medical costs arising from injuries, and the costs of policing and the criminal justice system.

Spending for health services associated with IPV can include emergency department visits, hospitalizations and outpatient visits, services of physicians, dentists, physical therapists, and mental health professionals, ambulance transport, and paramedic assistance.

In the absence of detailed facility level data, health-related costs can be assumed based on expected costs per incident. For example, a careful and comprehensive study estimated 2015 costs for the U.S.

from the individual perspective based on two publicly available data sources – Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project hospital discharge databases and MarketScan medical claims databases, which enabled very large sample sizes (e.g. 818,053 non-fatal injuries, and a much larger control group).¹⁹ The time horizon for fatal costs was the emergency department visit or hospitalization which ended in death, and the time horizon for non-fatal costs was one year. The mean cost of fatal injuries was \$40,650. Table 1 presents the most recent CDC estimates of medical costs of violent-related injuries, showing that much higher costs are incurred in the event of hospitalization, especially in the cases of non-fatal injury.

Table 1: Average medical cost of fatal and non-fatal injuries in the U.S., 2022

Fatal injury due to homicide	
All medical costs	\$10,960
Non-fatal injury due to assault	
Emergency department	\$8,082
Hospitalization	\$91,278

Source: CDC (2021) and U.S. Inflation Calculator. Fatal injury medical cost and non-fatal injury medical cost are adjusted by the authors to 2022 dollars using health care inflation rates.

Lost income or productivity can be quantified using data on the number of days of work missed. The workdays missed are the number of days when survivors were unable to perform paid work and/or household chores (including household chores and childcare for women not employed outside the home) because of illness, injury, or disability related to violence. It is estimated that in the U.S., survivors of IPV lose a total of eight million days of paid work each year, and between 21-60 percent of survivors of intimate partner violence lose their jobs due to reasons stemming from the abuse.²⁰

Intangible costs of IPV include pain and suffering and reduced quality of life. Estimates of intangible costs per violent incident are much larger than tangible costs. The UK estimates inclusive of loss of life satisfaction amount to about 10 percent of GDP.²¹

Total tangible and intangible costs of IPV have been estimated in various settings. A report commissioned by the Canadian government estimated the total economic impact of spousal violence at \$7.4 billion, amounting to \$220 annually per every Canadian, of which about 7.3 percent (\$545.2 million) were costs incurred by the judicial and criminal justice system, including policing services, courts, and legal aid. The bulk – \$6 billion – was borne by the primary victims, for which the intangible costs of pain and suffering and loss of life accounted for over 91 percent. Tangible costs – due to medical care, hospitalizations, lost wages, missed school days, and stolen/damaged property – amounted to \$525 million.²²

5. The Tangible Costs in Louisiana

We start this section with an overview of the headline findings on the costs of IPV in Louisiana in 2022, and then document the underlying data, methods, and assumptions. We use the prevalence data generated by the recent LaVEX, and for the purposes of calculating costs, we assume that survivors who reported experiencing violence in the past 12 months experienced only one incident, which may be an underestimate. Domestic abuse doesn't tend to be an isolated incident, and 10-18 percent of perpetrators are arrested again within six months for a repeat offence.²³

The time frame adopted for the estimation of costs is one year. This is appropriate for many types of injury and allows for comparisons with annual GDP and budget spending, but it risks ignoring the long-term physical and mental health consequences, which could be large.²⁴

The total costs, in dollars, approached \$10.1 billion in 2022, as shown in Table 2. This annual total cost for 2022 is calculated for female victims and survivors of IPV, and their associated offenders, based on prevalence rates provided by LaVEX. This calculation encompasses costs incurred within the year 2022, including best estimates of medical costs, police expenses, legal fees, and expenditures on related response programs. For costs extending beyond the current year, such as lost earnings for deceased victims and offenders sentenced to lifelong imprisonment, or correction expenses for the same group of offenders, we employ the concept of net present value (NPV) to determine their current cost. It is important to note that the total IPV cost will vary over time with changes in the prevalence rate, as well as in the associated health spending and other costs.

Table 2: The tangible costs of IPV in Louisiana, 2022

	Medical Costs	Lost Earnings	Criminal Justice	Response Programs*	Total Cost
Fatal Injury	0.23 m	102.07 m	37.12 m		139.45 m
Non-fatal Injury	8,770.56 m	702.17 m	448.39 m	15.30 m	9,936.42 m
Sexual Assaults	1,806.37 m				
Physical Assaults, excluding gun violence	5,183.60 m				
Gun violence	1,599.80 m				
Emotional violence	180.78 m				
Total	8,770.79 m	804.25 m	485.51 m	15.30 m	10,075.85 m

Note: * We use state domestic violence funding for fiscal year 2020.

Source: Authors' estimates based on sources in Table 4.

Table 3 presents the same dollar figures as equivalent shares of the 2022 state budget, state GDP, and for each survivor. This picture underlines the enormity of the costs – almost 25 percent of the budget – that is, close to what is being spent on education.²⁵ The majority of the costs come from non-fatal injuries caused by IPV. As a share of state GDP, the figure is comparable to what the World Bank

estimated were the costs of IPV in Vietnam, for example. The per survivor monetary costs are also huge – approaching \$105,602 annually – which is about 2.5 times the average wage earned by women in the state.

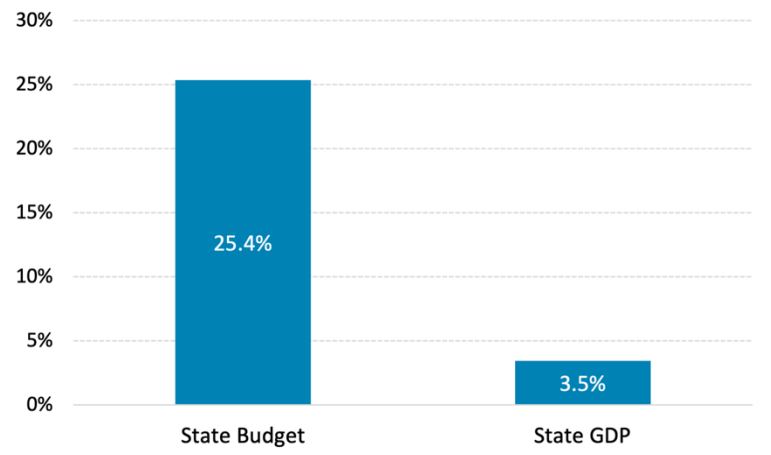
Table 3: The tangible costs of IPV as a share of state budget and state GDP in Louisiana, 2022

	Percent State Budget	Percent State GDP	Per Survivor (\$)
Fatal	0.35%	0.05%	1,461
Non-fatal	25.03%	3.40%	104,141
Total	25.38%	3.45%	105,602

Source: Authors’ estimates based on sources in Table 4.

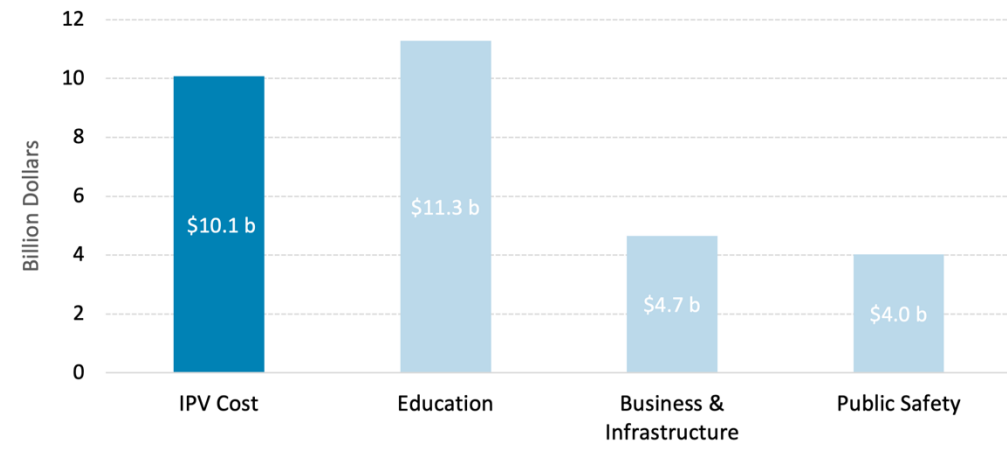
Figure 3 shows the same results graphically, while Figure 4 compares the dollar costs to the amounts being allocated in the Louisiana state budget. This shows the large absolute costs, and that these are comparable to the budgets allocated by the state to education and more than double the amount spent on public safety.

Figure 3: Estimated costs of IPV in Louisiana as a share of state GDP and the state budget, 2022



Source: Authors’ estimates based on sources in Table 4.

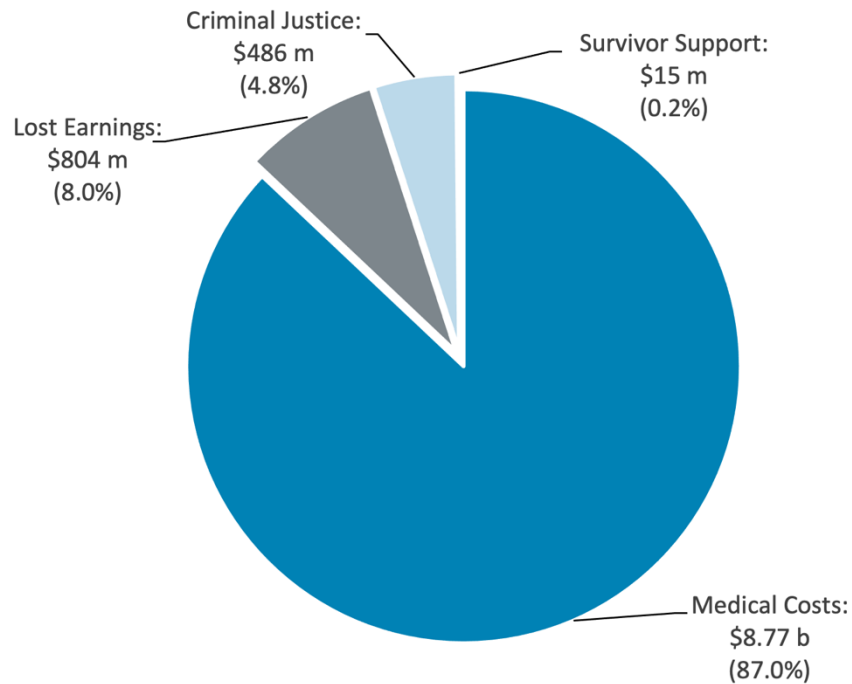
Figure 4: Estimated costs of IPV in Louisiana relative to selected state budget expenditures, 2022



Source: Authors’ estimates based on sources in Table 4.

Figure 5 provides a bird’s-eye view of where these costs arise – showing that the vast bulk of the total tangible costs of IPV in Louisiana can be traced to health costs (about 87 percent), followed by lost productivity (8 percent), and then the criminal justice system (4.8 percent of total). Relatively little is spent on support for survivors.

Figure 5: Breakdown of total tangible costs of IPV in Louisiana, 2022



Source: Authors’ estimates based on sources in Table 4.

We now turn to the approach, data, and methods used to arrive at these estimates, beginning with the costs associated with fatal IPV, or femicide, and then explaining non-fatal costs.

Fatal Costs

The total tangible fatal costs arise from our best estimates for medical costs, the loss of income for both the victims and the perpetrators, and the criminal justice costs of incarceration of the perpetrators, their legal fees as well as policing expenses in 2022. Medical costs and criminal justice costs are considered as direct costs, while the loss of income is counted as indirect costs.

To estimate the medical costs associated with fatal injuries resulting from IPV for women, we first distinguish between fatal violence caused by firearm and other means. There were 27 women killed by an intimate partner in 2022, with 20 of these fatalities attributed to gun violence.²⁶ According to CDC, the average medical costs for firearm-related homicides amount to \$8,350 per injury, whereas general homicides incur an average cost of \$9,598 (see Table A.1).²⁷ As a result, the total medical costs for fatal injuries reach nearly \$233,878 (see Table 2).

To calculate the loss of productivity of female IPV victims who were killed, we assess their discounted lifetime earnings, of both those who were part of the paid labor force and who were not. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics, female labor force in Louisiana is 54 percent,²⁸ so we assume that 14.6 percent of the female victims were full-time employees, while 12.4 percent were not engaged in paid employment (see Table A.2).

Data from American Community Survey (ACS) reveals that in 2022, the median annual earnings for full-time female employees in Louisiana were \$42,044.²⁹ For those not participating in the labor force, engaged in unpaid work at home, we apply the state minimum hourly wage of \$7.25 per hour,³⁰ equating to an annual income of \$15,080.

To account for the time lost, we subtract the life expectancy of women in Louisiana (79 years old)³¹ from the median age at the time of death (35.5 years old),³² which approximates to 43.5 years. A long-term inflation rate of 2 percent is applied each year to account for income increases. We then calculate the NPVs of the lost earnings. As a result, the total costs attributed to the lifetime loss of earnings amount to nearly \$34.5 million (see Table A.2).

To quantify the loss of productivity that results for perpetrators, we employ a methodology similar to that used for the victims. We compute the NPVs of the loss of earnings for individuals who were officially convicted and served prison sentences, assuming total loss of income during their incarceration.

According to FBI's Crime Data Explorer for 2022, Louisiana recorded 25 female homicide victims killed by intimate partners.³³ We assume that 25 males were convicted of these crimes. Under Louisiana state law, if found guilty of first-degree murder or second-degree murder in the state, they

may face punishment in the form of life imprisonment.³⁴ This is likely an overestimate, since not all perpetrators would be convicted and/or receive the maximum sentence.

The median annual earnings for full-time male employees in Louisiana were reported as \$56,245 in 2022.³⁵ To factor in the time lost due to incarceration, we subtract the life expectancy of men in Louisiana (73 years)³⁶ from the median age at the time of crime (24.5 years old),³⁷ which approximates to 48.5 years, leading to an estimated NPV of lost incomes of all the perpetrators convicted of fatal violence at \$67.5 million (see Table A.2).

The estimated costs of incarceration for these 25 prisoners follow a similar methodology. According to Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Department of Corrections in Louisiana spent an average of \$26,810 per prisoner in 2020 (equivalent to \$30,551 in 2022).³⁸ As a result, for prisoners responsible for fatal IPV with life sentences, the NPV of the accumulated criminal justice costs approach \$36.7 million (see Table A.3).

Legal fees arise for perpetrators and survivors in the criminal justice system. We used published estimated for the cost of experienced domestic violence attorneys, which range from \$3,500-\$15,000 in 2020 (equivalent to \$3,988 and \$17,093 in 2022).³⁹ Using the high end of this range for the 25 perpetrators accused of murder, the total attorney costs amount to over \$427,000 (see Table A.3).

In sum, the costs arising from fatal IPV for women in Louisiana amount to \$139.4 million annually, which is equivalent to 0.05 percent of the state GDP (see Table 2 and Table 3). We underline that this estimate is limited to tangible medical costs and the costs associated with the loss of productivity and criminal justice. It excludes pain and suffering associated with femicide.

Non-fatal Costs

Aggregate non-fatal costs comprise medical costs, loss of income, criminal justice costs, and spending on programs responding to violence.

Data from LaVEX (2023) shows that IPV events from mid-2022 to mid-2023 were as follows: 25,203 cases of sexual violence, 57,608 cases of physical violence excluding firearm-related assaults, 12,602 cases of firearm-related violence, and 46,752 cases of women showing moderate to severe depression/anxiety symptoms⁴⁰ (see Table A.1).

First, for medical costs on injuries for women due to physical and sexual violence, we used CDC data, which provides detailed medical cost breakdowns for these types of injuries, distinguishing between emergency department (ED) visits and inpatient stays. In 2022, the average inpatient medical cost per injured female is \$64,627 for sexual assaults, and \$82,403 for physical assaults. The average ED visit medical cost per injured female is \$7,045 for injuries for sexual assaults, and \$7,577 for physical assaults.⁴¹ For firearm-related injuries, estimated per person for ED visits and inpatient charges, the cost averaged \$5,254 and \$95,887, respectively, in 2015.⁴² These figures have been adjusted for

healthcare inflation rates to bring them to 2022 values, resulting in \$6,595 and \$120,356, respectively. Table A.1 shows the sum of ED visit cost and hospitalization cost for each assault category.

For medical costs on mental health, KFF provides information on average cost of mental health in Louisiana in 2021, which approximates to \$3,718 per patient.⁴³ This figure is adjusted to 2022 dollars using published healthcare inflation rates, resulting in \$3,867 (see Table A.1).⁴⁴

By multiplying the number of incidents by their respective associated medical costs of sexual and physical assaults as well as the treatment of associated mental health symptoms, the costs amount to \$8.8 billion (see Table 2), or about 3 percent of the state's GDP.

Second, to estimate tangible costs arising from lost earnings, we categorize female IPV survivors into two groups: those in full-time employment and those in unpaid positions. According to LaVEX (2023), the prevalence rate of IPV among women who have experienced any of the 22 forms of violence was 5.3 percent between 2022 to 2023,⁴⁵ equivalent to 95,413 female survivors in Louisiana. After applying the state's female labor force participation rate of 54 percent, we can conclude that approximately 51,523 women were full-time employees, while 43,890 were in unpaid roles. Utilizing the same earning sources as in the non-fatal loss of income calculation, the median weekly wage is \$809 for full-time female workers and \$290 for unpaid female labor.⁴⁶ Under Louisiana's Family and Medical Leave law, the maximum allowed paid medical leave is 12 weeks in a 12-month period.⁴⁷ Assuming 12 weeks of lost work for IPV women survivors amounts to a loss of productivity of \$652.6 million (see Table A.2).

There is also a loss of earnings from perpetrators convicted of non-fatal IPV. Unfortunately, we were unable to identify state level or large-scale national data on the share of domestic violent events that are reported to the police and result in conviction. However, available evidence suggests that the conviction rates are very low. For the U.S., among 517 cases of domestic violence in a nationally representative survey, only 2 percent of cases resulted in imprisonment of the perpetrators.⁴⁸ This happens for a series of reason, beginning with non-reporting to the police, because police do not investigate or arrest, or because criminal charges are never filed. We chose to use the 2 percent rate as the estimated share of cases resulting in jail time, which means that 1,908 men would be incarcerated for IPV-related crimes.⁴⁹

Under state law,⁵⁰ Louisiana defines domestic abuse battery as one household or family member intentionally using force or violence against another household or family member, which carries misdemeanor penalties of up to six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine. Battery of a dating partner is the intentional use of force or violence committed by one dating partner to another. This offense subjects a guilty defendant to 30 days to six months in jail and a fine of \$300 to \$1,000. Repeat batterers face increased penalties, including felony penalties for third and subsequent convictions. If the unlawful conduct involves strangulation or a pregnant victim, the penalty is up to three years in prison with hard labor. Felony penalties also apply if an offender causes serious bodily injuries to a victim,

uses a dangerous weapon, or burns the victim – with sentences ranging from eight to 50 years in prison, depending on the circumstances.

The basic sentence of six months of imprisonment is applied to represent lost productivity.⁵¹ We assume that these convicted males were employed full-time before their incarceration. To estimate their earnings, we apply the annual median earning figure of \$56,245 reported by the ACS for 2022.⁵² We calculate the loss of earnings for perpetrators at \$49.5 million (see Table A.2).

The total loss of earnings incurred from both the victims and the perpetrators is estimated to be \$702.2 million, or 0.2 percent of the state’s GDP (see Table 2 and Table A.2).

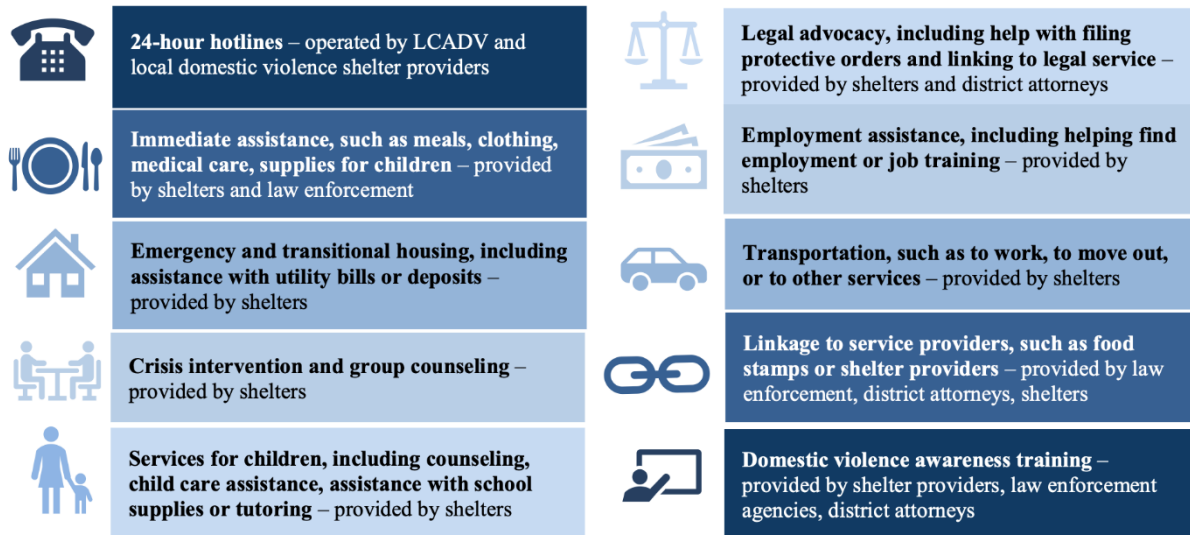
To estimate criminal justice costs for incarcerated individuals who committed IPV-related crimes, we use the average spending on corrections per prisoner of \$30,511⁵³ in 2022 dollars. On the assumption that they remain in prison for six months, the total criminal costs amount to \$29.1 million (see Table A.3).

There are also legal and police costs surrounding the reporting and prosecution of IPV. To estimate legal fees, we employ the same methodology for fatal and non-fatal injuries. For the women who reported experiencing any form of IPV, the spectrum of criminal offences varies from minor threats to more severe, with many going unreported to the police. As a conservative estimate, we assume that 20 percent of these cases result in charges, which is approximately 19,083 cases. Both victims and perpetrators require legal representation in these cases. Using the median attorney fees for 2022 published by Lewis & Dickstein, P.L.L.C of \$9,851,⁵⁴ this leads to total legal costs of approximately \$376 million.

The estimated police costs rely on the estimated share of time that police officers spend responding to “domestic violence calls that do not involve violent crimes.” (We were unable to locate data on the share of time spent by police on IPV cases.) According to estimates generated in 2020,⁵⁵ police officers in New Orleans dedicated approximately 7.3 percent of their work hours to responding to non-violent domestic violence calls. Given Bureau of Labor Statistics estimate that there were about 13,080 police officers in Louisiana in 2022, and an annual mean wage of \$45,310,⁵⁶ total police costs amount to around \$43.3 million (see Table A.3). This figure is likely to be underestimated as we only have information on domestic violence related calls that are non-violent, and we only include police take-home earnings, not benefits.

Lastly, we include the costs of programs providing support to survivors. Figure 5 depicts the services available to victims in Louisiana, as outlined by the state auditor⁵⁷ – we have not fully costed all these services but have used the total figure of \$15.3 million in the audit report. The legislative audit report states that \$15.3 million was allocated to domestic violence funding administered by the state in 2020, of which most (\$13.8 million or over 90 percent) came from federal grants.⁵⁸

Figure 6: Examples of domestic violence victim services in Louisiana



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor’s staff using information provided by DCFS and other stakeholders.

The data sources and assumptions underlying these estimates are shown in Table 4, and the detailed data is presented in Annex 1.

Table 4: Data sources and assumptions of underlying estimates

Variable Name	Region	Year	Source	Key Assumption
IPV fatality	Louisiana	2022	LCADV: Fatality Tracking	
IPV fatality due to shooting	Louisiana	2022	LCADV: Fatality Tracking	Applied agent of injury share of domestic violence to IPV
Median age at death for IPV victims	Louisiana	2022	LCADV: Fatality Tracking	
IPV prevalence rate, sexual	Louisiana	2022-2023	LaVEX 2023	
IPV prevalence rate, physical excl. gun violence	Louisiana	2022-2023	LaVEX 2023	
IPV prevalence rate, physical: used a gun on you	Louisiana	2022-2023	LaVEX 2023	
IPV prevalence rate, emotional	Louisiana	2022-2023	LaVEX 2023	
IPV offenders responsible for homicide crimes, count	Louisiana	2022	CDE, FBI	Assumed that an equal number of males were responsible for IPV-related female homicides
Median age at time of crime for IPV offenders responsible for homicide crimes	Louisiana	2022	CDE, FBI	Applied the median age of all offenders accused of homicide in Louisiana
Average medical costs for fatal injured persons, homicide by firearm, female	USA	2021	CDC	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation
Average medical costs for fatal injured persons, homicide, female	USA	2021	CDC	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation
Average VSL for fatal injured persons, firearm, female	USA	2021	CDC	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation
Average VSL for fatal injured persons, homicide, female	USA	2021	CDC	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation
Average medical costs for non-fatal injured persons, sexual assault, female	USA	2021	CDC	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation
Average medical costs for non-fatal injured persons, other assault, female	USA	2021	CDC	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation
Average work loss costs for non-fatal injured persons, sexual assault, female	USA	2021	CDC	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation
Average work loss costs for non-fatal injured persons, other assault, female	USA	2021	CDC	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation
Average quality of life loss costs for non-fatal injured persons, sexual assault, female	USA	2021	CDC	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation
Average quality of life loss costs for non-fatal injured persons, other assault, female	USA	2021	CDC	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation
Average medical costs on ED and inpatient non-fatal firearm-related injuries	USA	2006-2014	Gani, Sakran, and Canner (2017)	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation
Average mental health costs	Louisiana	2021	KFF	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation
Female labor force participation	Louisiana	2022	U.S. BLS	

Median earnings by sex in the past 12 months for the full-time, year-round civilian employed population 16+	Louisiana	2022	ACS, U.S. Census Bureau	
Minimum hourly wage	Louisiana	2022	U.S. Department of Labor	Minimum wage, \$7.25/hour
Maximum weeks leave from work due to injury	Louisiana		Family and Medical Leave	12-week leave is applied
Department of Corrections spending per prisoner	Louisiana	2020	BJS	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using CPI inflation rate
Basic sentence on domestic abuse battery	Louisiana	2023	Louisiana State Legislature, RS 14:35.3, Item C	Max sentence is applied
Basic sentence on first- degree murder and second-degree murder	Louisiana	2023	Louisiana State Legislature, RS 14:30, Item C; RS 14:30.1, Item B	Assumed that IPV homicides were convicted either first-degree murder or second-degree murder
State domestic violence response program funding	Louisiana	2020	Louisiana Legislative Auditor, December 2021	Assumed similar funding estimates in 2022
Share of domestic violence offenders who went to jail	USA	2014	Sherry Hamby. Psychology Today. 2014.	Applied the rate on IPV offenders in Louisiana
Health care inflation	USA	2015-2022	BLS	Adjusted to 2022 dollars using healthcare inflation
Domestic violence attorney cost	USA	2020	Lewis & Dickstein P.L.L.C	Applied the higher bound for fatal injuries and mid-point for non-fatal injuries
Share of time spent on responding domestic violence calls that are not violent crimes	New Orleans	2020	Asher and Horwitz (2020)	Applied the share to Louisiana
Police and sheriff's patrol officers' employment	Louisiana	2022	BLS	
Annual mean wage for police and sheriff's patrol officers	Louisiana	2022	BLS	
State GDP	Louisiana	2022	U.S. BEA	
State population, women 18+	Louisiana	2022	Census Bureau	
State budget	Louisiana	FY 2022-2023	Urban Institute	
Life expectancy, women	Louisiana	2019	National Vital Statistics Reports, 2022	

The foregoing attempts to provide a comprehensive picture of tangible costs of IPV in the immediate term – on an annual basis. Evidence suggests that the long-term costs of IPV are substantial. Several studies have estimated the lifetime health costs of IPV by multiplying an aggregate “top-down” estimate of short-term annual costs with an estimated duration for which the cost applies.

This methodology was applied to measure the lifetime excess economic cost of IPV for U.S. women.⁵⁹ It found estimated lifetime costs of IPV at \$103,767 per survivor, totaling nearly \$3.6 trillion (2014 US\$) over victims’ lifetimes, based on 43 million U.S. adults with victimization history. The estimate

included \$2.1 trillion (59 percent of total) in medical costs, \$1.3 trillion (37 percent) in lost productivity among victims and perpetrators, \$73 billion (2 percent) in criminal justice activities, and \$62 billion (2 percent) in other costs, including victim property loss or damage. The same study estimated that government sources cover an estimated \$1.3 trillion (37 percent) of the lifetime economic burden.

A recent Australian investigation of the health effects of IPV documented long-term costs, with some costs developing years after the IPV began and persisting after it had ceased. The study quantified the excess lifetime out-of-hospital and pharmaceutical health costs of women who experience IPV, using the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health and applying a novel combination of econometric and actuarial techniques to a large and unique dataset, and found that women with a history of IPV had 42 percent higher lifetime health costs per person than women who do not experience IPV.⁶⁰

6. The Intangible Costs of IPV in Louisiana

The foregoing sought to estimate the direct financial costs, which may be regarded as “out of pocket” for individual survivors, families, and governments. We now turn to intangible costs to account for pain and suffering not included in the tangible estimates.

For fatal injuries, we adopt the approach used by economist Anke Hoeffler⁶¹ and others, where the VSL is based on the premium paid to workers carrying out risky jobs, as estimated for the U.S.⁶² Although the level of distress arising from violence may be considerably higher than the distress expected from a risky work environment, such a calculation arguably captures the lower bound of estimates for the risks to life and health associated with violent crime. In this way, labor market data allows statisticians to calculate the cost of a life – or more precisely, a livelihood.⁶³ It also provides a way to represent intangible costs that are otherwise difficult to quantify. However, it does not explicitly capture the tangible, more direct economic costs incurred by violence on the healthcare, police, and judicial systems.

To estimate the intangible costs associated with IPV affecting women, we utilize the VSL for fatal injuries and quality of life loss costs for non-fatal injuries. These costs are available from CDC. After adjusting for 2022 dollars, the average VSL per injured female is \$12.2 million for fatal injuries related to firearm-related homicide and \$12.2 million for fatal injuries related to general homicide (see Table A.4).⁶⁴ As noted above, there were 20 IPV-related fatal injuries due to gun violence and seven due to other means of violence. When multiplied, the total VSL for these lost lives amounts to \$329.6 million (see Table 5).

To estimate non-fatal intangible costs, we use the IPV prevalence rate for any sexual and/or physical violence, which stands at 4.1 percent, or approximately 73,810 female victims⁶⁵ (see Table A.4). We adopted the average quality of life loss costs for ED visits and inpatient stays from CDC, indicating an average cost of \$95,034 for ED visits and \$142,131 for hospitalizations, all in 2022 dollars (see

Table A.4).⁶⁶ By multiplying the number of female IPV victims with the average costs of ED visits and hospitalization, the total non-fatal intangible costs amount to \$17.5 billion, equivalent to 6 percent of the state’s GDP (see Table 5).

Table 5: Aggregate intangible costs of IPV in Louisiana, 2022

	Total Cost (\$)	Percent Budget	Percent GDP	Per Survivor (\$)
Fatal	329.59 m	0.83%	0.11%	3,454
Non-fatal	17,505.2 m	44.09%	6.00%	183,467
Total	17,834.7 m	44.92%	6.11%	186,921

Source: Authors’ estimates based on sources in Table 4.

7. Study Limitations

This study is the first-ever attempt to cost, in dollars, the repercussions of intimate partner violence in the state of Louisiana. We followed methods and assumptions that have been established and adopted by academic researchers and development agencies in national and global studies.

While excellent data was available for the prevalence of IPV in Louisiana, there were some gaps both on the prevalence and costs side. This likely leads to some under- as well as overestimates of specific costs. These are outlined here.

We use the prevalence data generated by the recent LaVEX and assume, for the purposes of calculating costs, that survivors who reported experiencing violence in the past 12 months experienced only one incident, which is likely an underestimate given that IPV is typically not an isolated event.

The data on criminal justice costs due to IPV was very scarce in Louisiana. As noted above, we assumed that all homicide cases resulted in maximum prison time, this is likely an overestimate, although the number of offenders is relatively small.

Our estimates of legal costs are based on a web search of average costs of representation. The police costs are likely underestimated because they are limited to the share of time spent on non-violent cases and monetary earnings excluding benefits.

We also assumed, in the absence of state-wide data, that 2 percent of cases were associated with convictions based on a national study. This figure may be low. Case analysis undertaken by the Health Department of New Orleans found that 349 people were charged with domestic abuse battery involving strangulation or relative to battery of a dating partner (strangulation), but very few individuals – only 3.3 percent – were ultimately convicted of committing strangulation.⁶⁷

Finally, we use a one-year time frame to generate costs for 2022. This is arguably appropriate, but risks ignoring the long-term physical and mental health consequences, which could be large.⁶⁸

8. Conclusions

The estimated magnitude of the tangible costs of IPV in Louisiana – around 3.5 percent of the state’s gross domestic product – is comparable to the figures that have been generated for other countries around the world. This comes at a cost of \$10 billion annually as a direct result of healthcare costs, costs of criminal justice and response programs, and loss of income. These costs are being borne by individual survivors and victims and their families, by employers, and by taxpayers more broadly.

Alongside the tangible costs, the intangible costs of pain and suffering are much larger, about 1.8 times the direct financial costs.

The major costs – equivalent to almost one fourth of the state budget – highlight that the issue of IPV deserves more attention from policy makers. In addition, while there is an appropriate policy focus on femicide, there are far fewer cases of femicide than the tens of thousands of IPV more generally.

Aligning with recommendations from the LaVEX 2023 study, which provided the IPV prevalence estimates upon which this study was based, we advise prioritization of the following:

First, more attention and funding need to be directed toward prevention and response. This has already been recognized by a recent official state-wide audit which found that “Louisiana faces multiple challenges in its efforts to address domestic violence. These challenges include gaps in services for victims, insufficient and inflexible funding, strategies to protect victims not being consistently implemented, lack of oversight for intervention programs for perpetrators, and lack of training for certain entities involved in addressing domestic violence.”⁶⁹

This recent legislative audit report notes that funding is a major challenge in providing services to survivors of domestic violence, partly because it is inadequate, and partly because of major fluctuations in committed funding over time. Federal grants, particularly the Victims of Crime Act Program (VOCA), fluctuate from year to year, making it difficult for providers to maintain budgets and plan for future years.”⁷⁰ For example, VOCA funding for domestic violence increased by almost 80 percent between fiscal years 2017 and 2018, from \$7.6 million to \$13.6 million, but then fell by 38 percent, to \$8.4 million, the following year.

Following the Louisiana Commission report, we recommend that funding be boosted and that greater stability in funding be assured from year to year.

Second, there are major problems in reporting of IPV and conviction in non-fatal cases. Few women report their experiences to the authorities in Louisiana, which is a problem across the country and around the world. For some, there may be fear of consequences from reporting, and for others, they may not feel that the criminal justice system will effectively prosecute their abusers. We sought to assess IPV prosecution and conviction rates for domestic violence. However, we were unable to locate statewide data on these (within the larger category of aggravated assault), and thus, we were unable to directly compare against reported prevalence from surveys.

A review by the New Orleans Health Department sampled 50 cases out of 293 last year where someone was charged with more than one domestic offense within a year. Only three defendants – 6 percent – were convicted within the year, all receiving six-month jail terms. In response, the District Attorney’s office noted that nearly half of all domestic strangulation referrals had to be refused due to survivor/witness unavailability or refusal to testify in court, and that nationally, conviction rates in domestic violence cases are notoriously low.⁷¹

While we were unable to locate statewide prosecution and conviction rates for domestic violence, there are some reports of increased prosecution rates over time: For example, in St. Tammany Parish, the DA reported that the domestic violence arrest to conviction rate rose from 49 percent in 2014, to 79 percent in 2019, while the percentage of cases dismissed fell from 49 to 21 percent over the same period.⁷²

Third, there is a need to improve data to understand the scope of the problem, to track changes over time, and to determine factors affecting progress in IPV reductions for the state. Maintaining a survey such as LaVEX to ensure data to track IPV in the state is vitally important given how pervasive this concern is, and its resultant costs. We also need data on mental health and counselling costs, crime data on convicted individuals with detailed offense categories and relationship to victims, as well as on the IPV related criminal justice costs to get a clearer and more robust IPV costing estimate. Current estimates are likely conservative as we were not able to include all costs.

In sum, IPV is a pervasive concern in Louisiana and is costing the state, conservatively, \$10B per year, largely in health costs. Relatively modest investments in IPV prevention, consistently maintained, can reduce IPV rates and reduce economic and labor losses attributable to IPV in Louisiana.

About the authors

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Li Li's research interests focus on healthcare policy, development, and women's economic empowerment. She holds a master's in public administration in international development from Harvard University and a master's in economics from Boston University. She was a Cultural Bridge Fellow at Women & Public Policy Program at Harvard University and received a Carr Center Human Rights Award in 2016. Li also participated in the UN Young Professional Program as a statistician. Currently, she serves as a statistical and policy researcher at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center, where she focuses on enhancing healthcare across Washington State with an emphasis on equitable access and prevention. Her research extends to addressing violence against women and advocating for an inclusive and accessible healthcare system.

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Acknowledgements: We would like to thank our LaVEX survey participants and our community partners – Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV), United Way of Southeast Louisiana, the Violence Prevention Institute of Tulane University, the Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault (LaFASA), and the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. We would also like to recognize additional members of the LaVEX team: Nicole Johns, Jennifer Yore, Gennifer Kully, Kalysha Closson, Jakana Thomas, Becky Gipson, and Namratha Rao.

Annex 1

Table A.1: Medical costs, 2022

By Injury Outcome	Intent	Injured Persons	Avg per Person (\$)	Total Cost (\$)	Share of State GDP
Fatal violence	Gun-related	20	8,350	169,091	0.00006%
	Other	7	9,598	64,788	0.00002%
Non-fatal violence	Sexual assault	25,203	71,672	1,806.4 m	0.84%
	Gun-related physical assault	12,602	126,951	1,599.80 m	0.55%
	Other physical assault	57,608	89,981	5,183.60 m	1.78%
	Emotional	46,752	3,867	180.8 m	0.06%

Note: Average cost per person for non-fatal violence is the sum of costs of ED visit and hospitalization.

Source: Authors' estimates based on sources in Table 4.

Table A.2: Loss of earnings, 2022

Injury Outcome	Category	Victim/Offender Count	Median Wage (\$)	Total Cost (\$)	Share of State GDP
Fatal violence	Victims: women, full-time	14.6	\$42,044/year	26,443.2 m	0.01%
	Victims: women, non-paid	12.4	\$15,080/year	8,079.3 m	0.00%
	Perpetrators: men, full-time	25.0	\$56,245/year	67,549.1 m	0.02%
Non-fatal violence	Victims: women, full-time	51,523	\$809/week	499.9 m	0.17%
	Victims: women, non-paid	43,890	\$290/week	152.7 m	0.05%
	Perpetrators: men, full-time	1,908	\$1,082/week	49.5 m	0.02%

Source: Authors' estimates based on sources in Table 4.

Table A.3: Criminal justice costs, 2022

Services Type	Category	Total Cost (\$)	Share of State GDP
Incarceration, perpetrators	Fatal violence	36.7 m	0.01%
	Non-fatal violence	29.1 m	0.01%
Legal	Fatal violence, perpetrators	427,331	0.00%
	Non-fatal violence, perpetrators, and victims	376.0 m	0.13%
Police	Time spent on non-violent domestic violence calls	43.3 m	0.01%

Source: Authors' estimates based on sources in Table 4.

Table A.4: Intangible costs, 2022

Injury Outcome	Category	Injured Persons	Average cost per Person (\$)	Total Cost (\$)	Share of State GDP
Fatal violence	Gun-related	20	12.2 m	247.5 m	0.08%
	Other	7	12.2 m	82.1 m	0.03%
Non-fatal violence	ED & hospitalizations	73,810	237,165	17,505.2 m	6.00%

Source: Authors' estimates based on sources in Table 4.

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