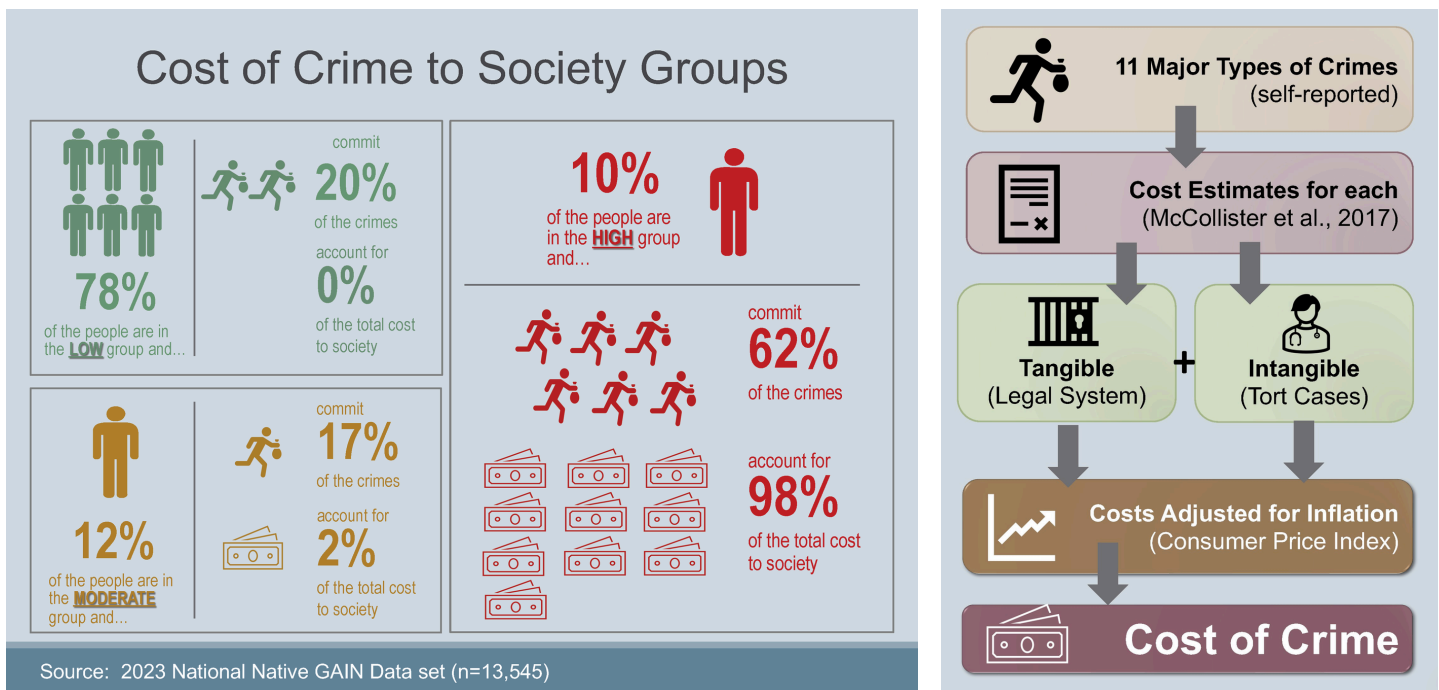


Measuring Cost of Crime

The GAIN provides a range of crucial cost indicators that are valuable for informing policy decisions, program management, treatment planning, conducting research, and more!

Calculating the Cost of Crime

As part of the GAIN interview, participants were asked about the frequency of committing each of 11 major types of crimes, designed to mirror the Uniform Crime Report. The tangible costs for each type of crime were estimated by economists (McCollister et al., 2017) using the likelihood of being arrested, tried, convicted, and incarcerated. For property and violent crime, the estimate also includes intangible costs based on the average damages awarded from tort cases, including pain and suffering. Changes in the consumer price index (CPI) are then used to adjust for inflation.



Source: 2023 National Native GAIN Data set (n=13,545)

Cost Severity Groups

Once the full, capped scales are calculated, group cut points are made to indicate high, moderate, and low cost severity groups. Cut points for these groups are all determined in the same fashion. Data were grouped by cost severity into 3 groups, based on the following criteria:

- **Low cost** Cases with \$0 costs
- **High cost** Cases in the top 10%
- **Moderate cost** Everyone in the middle

Using the GAIN's Cost Measures

Cost measures can be used to gain valuable insights into your site's treatment services. Such insights can also be demonstrated at the national level using the 2023 National GAIN Data Set. This data set is composed of in-person interviews conducted across a variety of institutional settings (e.g., treatment and justice agencies) and substance use treatment levels of care.²

In the data, we found that 10% of people committed 63% of the crimes reported and accounted for 98% of the total cost of crime to society. These findings highlight just how important effective screening options are to the field. Any attempts at reducing re-arrest or costs must focus on identifying and focusing on the subset that costs the most. These cost measures can also be used to examine the cost of doing nothing, failing to intervene, or failing to offer appropriate services for those in need.

Note that while crimes like substance use and prostitution have personal and health care costs, they have such low probabilities of legal system involvement, that economists view their effective costs to society as **approximately \$0**. The intangible costs of violent crimes (assault, rape, murder) to victims exceed the cost to the legal system by several orders of magnitude.

Estimating Highlights

- 11 Major Types of Crimes (self-reported)
- Cost Estimates for each (McCollister et al., 2017)
- Tangible (Legal System) and Intangible (Tort Cases)
- Costs Adjusted for Inflation (Consumer Price Index)

Calculating the Cost

Each spring, after the Bureau of Labor Statistics releases their CPI calculations for the previous year, the GAIN Coordinating Center (GCC) updates all cost scales to adjust for inflation. Since costs are heavily skewed, with a hard stop of \$0 costs at one end of the distribution of scores and extreme outliers at the other end, the total dollars are capped at 99.9% to mitigate the impact of these extremes on averages reported.

References

¹ McCollister, K., Yang, X., Sayed, B., French, M.T., Leff, J.A., Schackman, B.R. (2017). Monetary conversion factors for economic evaluations of substance use disorders. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 81, 25-34.

² Modisette, K. C. (2025). National GAIN Data Sets: Methods and Access. Lighthouse Institute, Chestnut Health Systems. chestnut.box.com/v/MethodsAccessMemo

Calculating the Cost of Crime in 2023 Dollars

Self-Reported Offenses	Units	Unit Cost	Units x Cost	% of Total
Murder/Manslaughter	4,824	\$ 12,655,769	\$ 61,051,431,893	59%
Aggravated Assault	99,114	\$ 150,778	\$ 14,944,166,209	14%
Stolen Property	932,474	\$ 11,234	\$ 10,475,153,517	10%
Robbery	69,697	\$ 59,609	\$ 4,154,576,611	4%
Armed Robbery	48,650	\$ 59,609	\$ 2,899,983,530	3%
Vandalism	347,712	\$ 6,847	\$ 2,380,831,794	2%
Larceny/Theft	556,368	\$ 4,976	\$ 2,768,661,960	3%
Motor Vehicle Theft	111,592	\$ 15,176	\$ 1,693,534,368	2%
Household Burglary	162,503	\$ 9,104	\$ 1,479,495,804	1%
Arson	18,930	\$ 29,731	\$ 562,810,781	1%
Forgery/counterfeit, embezzlement, or fraud	87,044	\$ 7,720	\$ 672,017,892	1%
Rape/Sexual assault	1,650	\$ 339,223	\$ 559,717,147	1%
Yearly Total			\$ 103,642,381,505	100%
Yearly Total Capped at 99.9%			\$ 77,122,290,431	

Source: 2023 National GAIN Data set (n=754,484) & McCollister et al 2017

Calculating Cost of Corrections in 2023 Dollars

Days of Corrections	Units	Unit Cost	Units x Unit Cost	% of Total \$
Jail/Prison	23,677,636	\$ 109	\$ 2,584,715,059	77%
Detention	4,323,888	\$ 109	\$ 472,007,359	14%
Probation	51,615,292	\$ 4	\$ 248,693,648	7%
Parole	6,608,800	\$ 10	\$ 69,572,827	2%
Yearly Total			\$ 3,374,988,893	100%
Yearly Total Capped at 99.9%			\$ 3,366,258,704	

Source: 2023 National GAIN Data set (n=754,484) & McCollister et al 2017

Cost Scales

This procedure is used to create all cost measures offered in the GAIN, including the Cost of Crime, Cost of Corrections, and Cost of Health Care Utilization Scales. While the Cost of Crime looks at the cost to society as a whole for the crime committed, the Cost of Corrections Scale includes only the tangible costs to the legal system for the cost of correctional services, using self-reported days in corrections.

What is the GAIN?

The Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (GAIN) is a family of evidence-based, biopsychosocial instruments providing agencies a variety of options, from screening to comprehensive assessment, supporting early detection of major clinical problems, co-occurring disorders, risk of re-offending and more. Used across a wide range of institutional settings, GAIN supports decisions on diagnosis, placement, and treatment planning, and provides data for program evaluation and research.