

William Levinson at [American Thinker](#) smartly posed the question, "Do you believe that all human beings have a natural and inherent right to defend themselves from violent attack?"

All of us would agree that in a civilized society, people have a right to self-defense. The next logical progression is that the right to self-defense implies a right to the necessary means to effectively defend oneself.

Jeffrey Snyder at the [Cato Institute](#) points out that victims don't choose where and when they will be attacked. It is the criminal who decides. The criminal will wait until the victim is most vulnerable, until he is alone, or when the police are gone. He will try to have every advantage over the victim, whether it be an armed advantage, strength, or outnumbering his prey. Mr. Snyder states, "The encounter will not be on equal terms; the fight will not be 'fair.'"

In order for a victim to stop a violent attack, he or she will need to successfully balance the playing field. The victim must have the means necessary to effectively save his or her life; otherwise the right to self-defense is worthless.

Currently, national politicians have determined that a ten-round (bullet) limit per magazine is sufficient for civilian self-defense. The politicians have come to this conclusion without any evidence or research to substantiate their claim. Shouldn't we be concerned with how many rounds it takes to stop an attacker? And why?

First we should address some common fallacies about bullet stopping power. The only gunshot wound that can reliably cause immediate incapacitation is a hit to the [brain](#) or upper spinal cord. Even after being shot through the heart, a suspect still has enough oxygen in his blood to shoot back for [15 seconds](#). Additionally, bullets do not have the energy to knock down humans. If that were the case, then the energy traveling in the opposite direction (the recoil) would knock down the shooter as well.

An FBI report on handgun wounds provides an interesting [example](#):

A ten pound weight equals the impact of a 9mm bullet when dropped from a height of 0.72 inches ... and equals the impact of a .45 when dropped from 1.37 inches[.]

The FBI report mentions a number of reasons why suspects are able to take multiple bullet hits and fight on. Some examples include adrenalin, extreme anger, painkillers, and stimulants (cocaine, crack, meth, etc.). All of these examples can keep a suspect from feeling pain or even realizing he's been shot. The following is a real-life example of the realities of a gunfight:

In 1986, in Miami, [FBI agents](#) were involved in a shootout. Despite being shot six times, Suspect Michael Platt was still able to gun down two FBI agents and injure three others. Platt was hit by four more gunshots, but he continued to be a threat by pointing a gun at responding officers. It wasn't until bullet number twelve struck Platt in the chest that he was incapacitated. Similar examples of suspects being shot five to six times without being incapacitated occurred in [Philadelphia](#) and [Georgia](#). In a self-defense situation, you may have to inflict half a dozen or more gunshot wounds on your attacker in order to neutralize the threat. That's assuming that you are able to land half-a-dozen hits on your target.

Bullet stopping power is one issue, but the other side of the coin is accuracy.

Shooting a moving target is not easy. Shooting a moving target that's shooting back at you is even harder.

According to an [NYPD](#) report, there were 16 officer-involved shootings in 2005 where the suspect shot at police officers. The NYPD officers hit their targets 8% of the time. The officers fired an average 17.3 rounds to stop the threat. One factor that certainly contributed to the low percentage of hits is that in 70% of the gunfights, the suspect shot first. Other [studies](#) have officer-involved shootings at a 51% hit rate, but they don't include officer-involved shootings that have no hits, and they don't isolate gunfights, where the suspect is shooting at the officer.

Another consideration is a situation involving multiple attackers. Florida State University criminologist Gary Kleck conducted a detailed [survey](#) on incidents of firearms being used for self-defense (defensive gun uses). Kleck found that in 53% of annual defensive gun uses in the United States, the victims faced multiple attackers.

All of the concerns regarding stopping power and accuracy are now magnified when multiple attackers are involved. However many rounds were needed to stop one attacker will have to be doubled for two attackers.

Most states already allow citizens to own high-capacity magazines. Economist [John Lott](#) found in an eighteen-year period that only 23 handgun murders in the U.S. were committed by citizens who had a permit to carry a concealed firearm (conceal carry permit holders). That's a little over one per year. He also found that in one month from December 14, 2008 to January 11, 2009, ten conceal carry permit holders stopped violent crimes. Gary Kleck's [survey](#) (which encompasses all defensive gun uses -- not just those with conceal carry permits) produced a national estimate close to 400,000 lives saved by defensive gun use per year. Kleck notes:

As a point of comparison, the largest number of deaths involving guns, including homicides, suicides, and accidental deaths in any one year in U.S. history was 38,323 in 1991.

Not only are there benefits to the community in lives saved, but Kleck's survey showed that women accounted for 46% of all defensive gun uses. High-capacity magazines are a benefit to women because they help equalize self-defense situations for women. Females already face physical limitations against male attackers. Limiting their magazine capacity only helps the criminal.

We've seen that it's not uncommon for suspects to still be a threat after being shot half a dozen times. Factor in that trained police officers operating under the stress of gunfire are landing roughly only one in ten shots. Statistically, low-light shootings at night or indoors with poor lighting bring down the hit percentages. Compound that with the possibility of multiple attackers and any reasonable person would conclude that limiting a civilian to ten rounds is not nearly enough for self-protection. The NYPD, LAPD, and the LASD don't limit their officers to ten-round magazines. They all issue 15-round magazines, except for the LASD, which now issues 17-round magazines.

If a law-abiding citizen, who's cleared a background check and received firearms training, can be trusted with one bullet, why can't he or she be trusted with a hundred bullets? Is the first bullet any less deadly than the 99th?

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