

Defensive Gun Use Fact Sheet

It is a common myth that a good guy with a gun will keep us safe from a bad guy with a gun. Surveys show that 60% of people believe that a firearm makes them safer. The idea that guns make us safer is simply false and can have a deadly impact. In fact, there are only about 2,000 verified cases annually, which are vastly outnumbered by the more than 39,000 firearm deaths, tens of thousands more injuries, hundreds of thousands more abusive uses, and more than 200,000 annual firearm thefts.



The risk of having guns in the community:

- “Stand your ground” laws have been shown to increase homicides. ([Hughes 2019](#))
- Ten years after the adoption of right-to-carry (RTC) laws, violent crime is estimated to be 13-15% higher than it would have been without the RTC law. ([Donohue 2017](#))
- FBI reports of active shooter incidents find that unarmed civilians stop more active shooters than armed civilians. [FBI](#)

GUNS ARE NOT THE “GREAT EQUALIZER” FOR WOMEN Myriad studies show that the NRA and its allies grossly misrepresent the actual dangers women face. It is people women know, not strangers, who pose the greatest threat. Domestic abuse is five [times more likely](#) to turn deadly if firearms are present in a home. A [case-control study](#) comparing women killed by an intimate partner to women who had been battered but not killed revealed that more than half of the homicide victims lived with a firearm in the home, while that was true for only 16 percent of women who were abused but survived. [Evan DeFilippis, Devin Hughes 2016](#)

Estimates of Frequency of Yearly Defensive Gun Use (DGU):

Organization	Estimated DGU	Method and Comments
Gun Violence Archive (GVA)	2,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relies on empirical data from police and media reports and is, therefore, the most reliable data.
Gary Kleck's Survey Conducted in 1993 by Dr. Gary Kleck and Marc Gertz	2.5 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys of rare events such as DGUs exaggerate the frequency due to false positives. Crime predictions are mathematically impossible. Kleck's research indicates 207,000 criminals are shot every year by law-abiding citizens, yet this number is higher than the total number of people shot annually, including suicides and unintentional shootings.
National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) Bureau of Justice Statistics	50,000 - 100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NCVS estimate also suffers from false positives and is likely to be an overestimate.

According to Kleck's estimates, guns were used defensively in 845,000 burglaries, yet we know from reliable victimization surveys there were fewer than 1.3 million burglaries in the U.S. at the time of the survey, and 33% had occupants in the home were sleeping. Of those households, only 42% owned firearms. Even if burglars only targeted households that owned firearms, and those gun owners used guns in self-defense every time they were awake, at most, only 117,000 defensive uses in response to burglaries would be even possible. Kleck's analysis also implies 207,000 criminals are shot every year by law-abiding citizens, yet there are no medical records to support this claim. While Kleck has claimed the majority of criminals simply never seek medical attention, data indicates more than 90% of criminals who have been wounded prior to incarceration seek medical attention.

A counterargument heard from gun advocates is from a "Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Study" commissioned in 2013 at the direction of the Obama White House.

- 1) The "CDC Study" is neither a study nor from the CDC. Rather, it is a review of the literature published by the [Institute of Medicine and National Research Council](#). Its purpose was to highlight aspects of gun violence that need further study.
- 2) One of the authors is Gary Kleck who cites his own flawed survey and fails to mention his bias.
- 3) The defensive gun use section is not new research, but is merely citing existing flawed research.
- 4) The Report was written in 2013, a year before the Gun Violence Archive began compiling data. The GVA's empirical data is more reliable than survey data in question (Kleck and NCVS) which has glaring flaws.

Conclusion: Strong evidence shows that right-to-carry, permitless carry, stand-your-ground-laws and guns in homes and communities are far more likely to cause death and injury to gun owners, their families, and the community at large rather than prevent or stop a crime. Guns are not making us safer.

Recommended reading:

- [The Myth Behind Defensive Gun Ownership](#)
- [Defensive Gun Use: Gary Kleck Misfires Again](#)
- [Gunfight or Flight: New Study Finds No Advantages to Using a Firearm in Self-Defense Situations](#)



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