

## Q&A

Q: What exactly is holistic self-defense?

A: To answer this question, we have to go back a few steps and look at violent crime. If someone told you that they were a victim of violent crime, many people would assume they were injured in that victimization. My book gives various reasons why we have this perception. Still, when we look at violent crime statistics, we see that for 89 percent of violent crimes (aggravated assault and robbery), around 67 percent of the time, the victim is not injured. Furthermore, non-injurious violent crime generally has different circumstances than injurious violent crime. For example, offenders who are strangers, locations that are public places, predominately male victims, and weapons are common. However, for most injurious violent crimes, the statistics show that you will be facing offenders that you know, the crime will happen at a place you feel comfortable, and your offender will rarely use a firearm. Additionally, victims tend to be more female than male in injurious violent crimes. For example, if you are watching a movie with your friend or lover in the comfort of your home, and your friend/lover decides to victimize you criminally, you are at an incredible disadvantage. Keeping this situation from ever happening is the correct self-defense strategy, which means you need to go beyond discussing weapons and start talking about things such as lifestyle choices. That is what I refer to as holistic self-defense.

Q: Do you talk about non-injurious violent crime?

A: Yes. I try to focus on the circumstances as much as possible for violent crime to formulate self-defense strategies properly. With non-injurious aggravated assault, for example, you have a portion of them where the circumstances are “people you know” and “places you feel comfortable.” For example, you end up arguing with a neighbor about a tree on the property line, and he blows a gasket and starts swinging a shovel at your head. However, there is a large portion of aggravated assault where the offender is a stranger, and the location is a public place. Since these are non-injurious, the victim is likely dealing with another civilian, and the situation escalates. For example, a road rage incident, and a weapon is flashed. This situation would likely be charged as an aggravated assault.

Q: Why wouldn't that be a defensive gun use situation?

A: It could be. It is essential to understand that if defensive gun use is one side of a coin, the other side is aggravated assault. What you are saying when you say you were involved in a defensive gun use situation is that you committed an aggravated assault, but it was justified. In my book, I give an example of a man who has to get medicine for his sick kid late at night. He pulls up to a 24/7 corner store, and as he gets out of his car, he is rushed by two men. He puts a hand on his weapon and says, “I'm armed,” and the men flee. By definition, the man committed an aggravated assault – putting these men in fear for their lives by showing a weapon. If law enforcement and the courts get involved, the question will be whether or not the aggravated assault was justified. You can picture the prosecutor saying: “Did the accused say they were going to rob you? Did they throw a punch? Did they have a weapon?” If the man answers truthfully, he will respond “no” to all those questions. What made the man fearful was them rushing towards him late at night. While criminals aren't typically very smart, they know how to game the system. If these individuals were apprehended, they might say they were going to ask for directions. The man said a derogatory slur about them and then said he would kill them, so they ran for their lives. If the store has video cameras, the video supports either side of the story since these cameras typically do not record audio. What happens next is anyone's guess.

Q: You mean the men weren't armed?

## Q&A

A: Yes. When you look at robbery statistics, offenders using “no weapon” is quite common. With rape, “no weapon” is almost the norm.

Q: Firearms are pretty common in murder, though, correct?

A: Yes, but looking at violent crime as a whole is essential. Aggravated assault and robbery make up about 89 percent of violent crime in the period studied (2015-2019). Rape was about ten percent, and murder was a bit over one percent. For murder, around 40 percent of the time, law enforcement determined that the victim knew the offender. However, about 60 percent of the time, the victim-offender relationship was “unknown.” Even if we assume that all of the “unknowns” were offenders who were strangers to the victim, we are talking about 60 percent of one percent. That is a tiny slice of overall violent crime, but it makes a massive impression in the minds of most Americans.

Q: That seems different from how the CDC describes firearms and violence.

A: Yes, it is. The CDC gathers all firearms statistics and lumps them into firearm violence. So, justified homicides, suicides, accidents, murders by family members, drug dealers killing each other, and so forth get lumped into this category. I find it to be misleading at best.

Q: Do you feel a person has a right to carry a firearm for defense?

A: I try to differentiate rights from effectiveness. I don't believe that governments have the right to take away your ability to defend yourself and your loved ones. Anything a criminal may use against you should be available to a law-abiding citizen. That said, a jury of your peers can strip you of some of your freedoms should you be criminally irresponsible. For instance, if you were an armed robber and were apprehended, a jury of your peers can strip you of your legal right to own a weapon. Unfortunately, things like plea deals (in the name of efficiency), mandatory prison sentences (in the name of being tough on crime), and preventing juries from understanding jury nullification undermine our rights. Our founders believed the right to a jury trial was fundamental to our republic. In my book, I assume that my readers can choose to carry a firearm to defend themselves or their loved ones. My question that I go through in the book is whether the benefits outweigh the harms of using a firearm for self-defense.

Q: So, what was your conclusion?

A: It depends. I'm sure that is an answer no one likes hearing. We all prefer monocausal explanations. The pro-gun crowd believes if everyone were armed, crime would be non-existent, while the anti-gun crowd believes if guns were eliminated, violent crime would go away. I hoped to show in my book that neither view is correct. It is fortunate that in America, an ordinary civilian can get the best combat training available – both physical and weapon. In some cases, a former judge or bodyguard may have a threat level that requires that type of training. However, it is misleading to assume that a software engineer living in a cul-de-sac has the same threats as a SWAT team member. It simply is not the case. If you are not in the business of buying, selling, and distributing illegal drugs, you aren't going to be home invaded by armed violent criminals. A good test is to ask yourself: “Will I be interacting with law enforcement officers more often due to a traffic stop than I will be a violent criminal?” If the answer is Yes, you probably should consider evaluating other defensive options than focusing solely on lethal weapons.

## Q&A

Q: Why would that be the case? If you need a weapon, you have it. If you don't need it, there is no problem.

A: I can certainly see how people would feel that way. However, there are problems that I cover in my book. Every self-defense option has benefits and harms. My book attempts to answer the question of what self-defense method is the most beneficial and the least harmful. The overwhelming focus on carrying concealed firearms is problematic for most civilians. Suppose you are preparing for something that has a one percent chance of happening and end up being completely clueless about something that has 20 percent chance of happening. In that case, you are being naïve about self-defense. Furthermore, if your preparations for that one percent increase your chances of being killed by a law enforcement officer or going to prison, you have made the wrong decisions.

Q: That doesn't sound like a very pro-firearm stance.

A: I feel an excellent case can be made to safely and securely store firearms in your home. Also, a decent case can be made to safely and securely store them in your vehicle, with an unloaded firearm in one case and ammunition in another. Where I feel much debate can happen is whether carrying a concealed firearm on your person has more benefits than harms. Many states have increased penalties for firearm use in a crime. If you thought you were in a defensive gun situation but were instead charged with an aggravated assault, you could easily see prison time in these states. On the other hand, some minor lifestyle changes combined with a less-than-lethal weapon strategy may result in far more benefits than harms compared to carrying a concealed firearm. The point of my book is to start having this discussion.