Concealed Carry: Unchallenged Assumptions & Overlooked Questions

Clay E. Olsen
Clayeolsen.com
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Who Am I?

- My name is Clay E. Olsen, and I run the website clayeolsen.com. I wrote a book in 2023 titled "Beyond Weapons – A Guide to Holistic Self-Defense."
- Holistic Self-Defense simply means putting yourself in a position to be successful against violence. In the book, I chose to emphasize other considerations than firearms.
- I do conceal carry firearms occasionally, depending on the situation. I have extensive experience with firearms. I also reload my own ammunition.
- I do not own investments in any gun companies. I'm not a member of any think tanks. I spend my own money to provide reviews and statistics. I'm not dependent to anyone or any corporation.
- I try my very best to provide quality information to civilians about self-defense. Like anyone, I do everything I can to avoid mistakes, but I'm human and I can make mistakes. However, I will take responsibility for them.

What this presentation is about

- This presentation is about the unchallenged assumptions and questions every civilian should ask themselves or ask of others before carrying a firearm concealed.
- It isn't designed to *discourage* anyone from carrying concealed. It is designed to *encourage* individuals to consider all the issues surrounding the concealed carry of a firearm.
- The goal is to provide solid information for people to make informed decisions about self-defense.
- Some acronyms you may see in this presentation
  - NCVS: National Crime Victimization Survey
  - NIBRS: National Incident-Based Reporting System
  - UCR: Uniform Crime Reporting
  - DGU: Defensive Gun Use

Unchallenged Assumption 1

Criminals commonly murder civilians.

Unchallenged Assumption 1

On my website, I offer several quizzes on violent crime that visitors can take. One of the questions is: “Violent crime consists of aggravated assault, robbery, rape, and murder. Out of these violent crimes, what percentage is murder?” I offer several answers in a multiple-choice format.

Almost all of the quiz takers get the murder percentage incredibly wrong. Typical guesses are upwards of 70% or higher. What does the data show?

Unchallenged Assumption 1

I'll use 2021 data to avoid complications from COVID government restrictions (2023 NIBRS estimate data was not available at the time of this writing). Here are the counts from the 2021 NIBRS estimates

Counts:

Aggravated assault: 713,175; Robbery: 192,648; Rape: 124,131

Murder: 19,658 ; Total: 1,049,612

Percentages:

Aggravated Assault: 68%; Robbery: 18.4%; Rape: 11.7%

Murder: 1.9%; Total 100%

The 2021 US population was around 332 million people.

Unchallenged Assumption 2

Violent crime victims are always injured.

Unchallenged Assumption 2

For aggravated assault and robbery (which represent 85-90% of violent crime), we can see the following statistics from the NCVS and NIBRS:

Aggravated Assault: NCVS & NIBRS: 67% of the victims were not injured or suffered a minor injury.

Robbery: NCVS: 67%; NIBRS 93% of the victims were not injured or suffered a minor injury.

Rape is more complicated. In the NCVS, a completed rape is considered injurious, so it can't really be compared to aggravated assault and robbery. NIBRS, which doesn't count a completed rape as injurious, 90% of the victims were not injured or suffered a minor injury.

Unchallenged Assumption 3

Violent crime mostly occurs at night.

Unchallenged Assumption 3

Again, let's look at the 2021 NIBRS estimates for violent crimes that occurred between 8 pm and 4 am, which I believe is a reasonable "night" estimation for summer and winter.

Aggravated Assault: 54.5%

Robbery: 41.2%

Rape: 42.1%

Murder: 47%

If by 'most' someone means around 75% or more, these statistics reveal something entirely different.

Unchallenged Assumption 4

Law enforcement interactions with criminals are representative of what a civilian will face.

Unchallenged Assumption 4

Let's look at civilian Defensive Gun Use (DGU) statistics from the National Firearms Survey by William English.

- Less than 10% of civilian DGUs happened in a public place.
- Around 80% of civilian DGUs happened at home or on the property of the home.
- Around 83% of civilian DGUs did not discharge their firearm.

Unchallenged Assumption 4

Claude Werner's analysis of almost 500 Armed Citizen columns shows the statistics when a civilian discharges their firearm:

- Speed was not a factor.
- The average number of rounds fired is two,
- The average distance was arm's length.

The National Firearm Survey and Werner's statistics are quite contrary to Law Enforcement Officers Killed or Assaulted (LEOKA) reports. Furthermore, they demonstrate that simpler weapons, which are easier to train with and become proficient in, are not at a disadvantage in actual civilian DGUs.

Unchallenged Assumption 5

Carrying a concealed firearm is the best defense women have against rape.

Unchallenged Assumption 5

Women who are raped typically:

- Know the offender
- Are raped at a place they feel comfortable (e.g,. their home, a friend's home, or a relative's home)

Revised rape statistics focus on consent to account for things like date-rape drugs. Unfortunately, statistics do not keep track of things like voluntary intoxication (knowingly consuming alcohol and/or taking recreational drugs) or involuntary intoxication (e.g., date-rape drugs, unknowingly laced recreational drugs).

Intoxication, being around people you know, and being at places you feel comfortable are not concealed carry situations.

Unchallenged Assumption 6

When a victim is injured in a violent crime, the offender is usually a stranger, and a firearm is used.

Unchallenged Assumption 6

For aggravated assault, robbery, and rape (98% of all violent crime), when the victim is injured, it is far more likely that the victim knows the offender. Similarly, firearm use declines in these cases. When the victim is not injured, the offenders tend to be strangers, and firearms are used much more often.

Strangers committing violent crimes, using firearms, and injuring their victims are simply not very common. Robbery (around 20% of all violent crime) is where a civilian will most likely face a criminal in a public place. Hence, in my book, I focus on avoiding locations where robberies typically occur, such as streets, sidewalks, and parking places.

Remember, if you are attending a concert, a kids' event, a sports event, or a nightclub, you won't be able to carry a concealed weapon because not only are they not allowed at those places, but those places will likely have detection equipment.

Overlooked Questions

How Can Violent Crime Statistics Mislead Us?

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There are three different types of scenarios in violent crime statistics:

- Ordinary civilians against ordinary civilians
- Criminals against ordinary civilians
- Criminals against criminals.

Unfortunately, we have to use clues to try to figure out which ones are in play and which ones are not.

How Can Violent Crime Statistics Mislead Us?

Who You Know

- For our first clue, we'll assume that most ordinary civilians don't knowingly hang out with violent criminals. Hence, if a victim knows the offender, it is likely to be a civilian versus civilian incident.
- When a victim is injured in an aggravated assault, the predominant issue is domestic violence. Domestic violence is extremely common. The offender and victim know each other, and female victims are around 50% of the total.
- When a woman is raped, the vast majority of the victims know their offender.
- For around 40 percent of murders, the victim knows the offender. If you have ever watched Forensic Files on television, you'll soon realize that the majority of murder victims knew their offender.

How Can Violent Crime Statistics Mislead Us?

Non-injurious violent crime is predominant in the statistics.

In injurious violent crime, the victim typically knows the offender.

- If you go looking at violent crime statistics, thinking that everything you see is criminal vs. civilian, you'll be very confused.
- The large influx of civilian vs. civilian violent crime confuses the data. To a much smaller extent, the criminal vs. criminal violent crimes also cause problems.
- A veteran law enforcement officer's observation about violent crime happening at night could still be true in a way. They are human beings. They may remember those cases of criminals vs. civilians where the civilian was gravely injured or killed. Perhaps these are more likely to happen at night. As NIBRS becomes more sophisticated in its data gathering, we will hopefully be able to classify these situations more effectively.

Where are you getting your violent crime information?

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Why are people so wrong about violent crime statistics?

Most civilians obtain their information about violent crimes from the television news, social media, and websites. The content on these sites is subject to the “engagement bias.”

The engagement bias refers to how content is skewed to generate clicks, likes, subscribes, and comments. With the decline of subscription services and the rise of click-based advertising services, the engagement bias is a significant factor in distorting reality.

As an example, if there are 100 robberies in Phoenix, Arizona, and one murder, the evening news will likely detail the murder. The reason is that stories about murder tend to keep people from changing the channel. The engagement bias (i.e., ratings) impacts television just as much as it does social media.

How information is structured to promote engagement doesn’t necessarily have to present a clear picture of reality.

Where are you getting your violent crime information?

Once the engagement bias has primed you, the next bias that follows is the availability bias. What is the availability bias?

After hearing about murders for a year on the evening news, it is quite likely that such a person would think murder was quite common. The reason? It is what readily comes to mind when the topic of violent crime is mentioned (the “availability” of information). The more top of mind it is, the more probable it will seem to be.

When civilians learn good, solid information about the realities of violent crime, the availability bias is beneficial. Hence, everyone should do what they can to verify the accuracy of any information about violent crime.

What Other Skills Should I Learn?

What other skills should I learn?

- A consequence of thinking that you are always up against an armed, violent criminal is that the only skill you need is firearm handling.
- There are a large number of civilian versus civilian encounters in violent crime statistics. Civilian versus civilian situations *escalate* into violence, and not necessarily to the use of firearms immediately.
- Hence, situations can be de-escalated before violence erupts.
- If violence does become necessary, less-than-lethal weapons are an important option simply because, in cases of aggravated assault, robbery, and rape, which represent 98% of all violent crime, firearms are not commonly used when the victim is injured.

What other skills should I learn?

Here are some skills and training that are often overlooked, which could help prevent a situation from escalating into violence.

- Anger Management. If you tend to fly off the handle, being able *to de-escalate yourself* becomes vital.
- Police De-escalation Training. Sadly, it isn't easy to find this training, but if you can find it, take it. Stopping a situation from escalating to violence should be a skill everyone knows well.
- Pepper Spray Training. I've tested numerous less-than-lethal products, and I recommend the JPX6 product (as mentioned in my book). Again, it is challenging to find this specific training, and you may have to settle for standard pepper spray training, but take whatever you can get.
- Physical Defense Training. Too often, people who conceal carry skip physical defense training, perhaps due to being overweight or simply assuming it is better to bring a gun to a knuckle fight. That is a mistake.

What other skills should I learn?

Be aware that UFC training can also mislead you. UFC fighters will instinctively remember the rules and refrain from violating them during a fight because they don't want to be disqualified. Furthermore, they instinctively assume the floor is soft. These instincts can easily carry over to a street fight.

In street fights, nothing is off limits, and you'll be fighting on pavement or concrete. Taking an offender to the ground, common in UFC fighting, will cause problems in a street fight. When you are on the ground, the offender's friends can step in and do some damage they may have refrained from doing while you were on two feet.

What other skills should I learn?

If the only skill you have to deal with life's complexity and conflicts is gun handling, you are unprepared for what life will throw at you. It is like showing up to a fine cabinetry job interview and having only a sledgehammer as your tool.

Shouldn’t the best concealed carry training be provided by law enforcement instructors, with a curriculum based on law enforcement standards?

Law Enforcement Influence

Law enforcement officers represent a valuable information resource for civilians and violent crime. However, there are three areas where civilians must remain cautious when faced with law enforcement influence.

1. Criminals attacking law enforcement officers do not necessarily reflect the situations in which criminals attack civilians.
2. Law enforcement tactical teams' equipment and tactics do not necessarily reflect civilian self-defense needs.
3. Law enforcement legal protections are extensive, while civilians are limited in comparison.

I've covered the first two already, so let's look at the last one.

Law Enforcement Influence

Legal Protection Differences

Law enforcement officers and civilians have different rules to operate by. If you are taking concealed carry training derived from law enforcement training, it may mislead you.

Here is the tragic example of John Hurley, summed up by AI:

> "John Hurley, a man from Colorado, became involved in a shooting incident where he confronted and shot a suspect who had killed a police officer. Hurley was later fatally shot by a responding officer.
>
> The incident occurred when Officer Gordon Beesley was ambushed and murdered by Ronald Troyke, who then armed himself with an AR-15. Hurley, 40, shot Troyke, stopping him from causing further harm, but was himself killed by an Arvada police officer, Kraig Brownlow, who deemed the situation a threat.
>
> The officer was not charged for the shooting, as the investigation concluded that his use of deadly force was legally justified."

Law Enforcement Influence

Ask yourself, if Kraig Brownlow were not a police officer, but instead a civilian with a concealed firearm, and John Hurley were an off-duty police officer, what would have happened if Brownlow killed Hurley? I will tell you: Brownlow would have gone to prison.

What is legally justified for a civilian is not even in the same zip code as what is legally justified for a police officer. Things like your bullets overpenetrating and hurting innocent people or negligent discharges could also be a rude awakening about the differences between you and law enforcement officers.

Law Enforcement Influence

Practical Differences

Hurley did what a police officer would do – he picked up the offender's firearm to secure the scene. He didn't realize that law enforcement would be arriving and that he would be perceived as the dangerous suspect.

Performing duties like a police officer when you are a civilian, which in many ways can be intellectually justified (e.g., securing the scene), can also get you killed simply because you are not a police officer. A responding police officer may perceive your actions as a threat to public safety and take the appropriate measures.

Any time you've used your firearm to defend yourself, you should assume that responding police officers will consider you a threat. As the Hurley case shows, they don't have to ask questions first.

What Makes Someone Want To Conceal Carry a Firearm?

Concealed Carry Drivers

- Today, a growing portion of the civilian population is carrying a firearm concealed. In many cases, they are carrying a round in the chamber, as well as high-capacity backup magazines.
- Interestingly, even adjusting for the government restrictions during the COVID years, violent crime is drastically lower than in the 1990s. Typical violent crime, in and of itself, doesn't appear to be the driver.
- One "new" type of violent crime is the mass murderer or active shooter, as it is sometimes called. Definitions vary, but I think what scares many civilians is a murderer who is targeting innocent people in a common public place. Furthermore, the murderer doesn't know the victims, and the victims are random.
- Mass murderers get considerable media attention, television time, website articles, viral social media, and so forth.
- This points to what has changed primarily since the 1990s (besides violent crime dropping drastically): The Rise of Social Media

Concealed Carry Drivers

- Dramatic videos can easily influence human beings.
- A video showing a law enforcement officer shooting several rounds at a criminal, civilians getting jumped and beaten up, carjackings, and so forth can create a lot of engagement and influence many people.
- What gets lost in the shuffle is probability.
- To see what I mean, consider what would happen if the evening news led each evening with a story of someone somewhere in the world being struck by lightning. They continued to do this for an entire year.
- At the end of the year, there would be some people who would never leave their house if there was a cloud in the sky. Other people would drastically overestimate the probability of being struck by lightning and take the “necessary” precautions.
- At the end of the day, the probability of being struck by lightning never changed. Only the engagement of the stories did.
- This is the principal reason why people overestimate murder, firearms use, and violent crime.

Concealed Carry Drivers

Generally, social media lacks nuance, well-reasoned arguments, any appreciation of probability, and good statistics. It sells engagement. If that engagement is improbable, it doesn't matter.

Sadly, slogans like these can prevail over more well-balanced arguments.

- Always carry no matter what.
- You won't have time to rack the slide.
- If you want to live, carry where it is restricted.
- You will be facing an armed, violent criminal.
- It is better to be judged by 12 than carried by 6.
- Less-than-lethal weapons will get you killed.
- No one ever complained about having too much ammunition.
- If you kill an intruder outside your home, drag them inside to avoid being prosecuted.
- If you shoot someone, shoot them several times as if in the 'heat of the moment.' Dead people can't tell stories that conflict with yours.

What is your mission?

What is your mission?

Varg Freeborn, in his wonderful book Violence of Mind, has this to say about missions:

“The very first step in any [self-defense] training is to identify the mission you will train for. “What is your mission?” I always ask this question first thing in the morning for every level 1 course I teach. It is amazing how often people cannot clearly answer it. If you are not clear what your mission is, you have very little guidance on how to properly equip, train and prepare. I know this sounds simple, but in the hundreds of courses that I have taught, when I ask this question most people either cannot answer or get it completely wrong.” (continued on next slide)

Freeborn, Varg. Violence of Mind: Training and Preparation for Extreme Violence . One Life Defense LLC, Varg Freeborn. Kindle Edition.

What is your mission?

“What is a wrong answer? It is wrong when it contradicts your OWN goals. For example, someone who trains to protect themselves and their family, but intends to run head first into a fight for a stranger when neither that person or his or her family is endangered. Noble or not, if your mission is to protect yourself and make it home with your family every night, running into any random deadly situation you see is not in line with that mission. […] For most civilians, the mission is something like this, “To make it home, every night, with my family, for the rest of my life.” At the root of it, military, law enforcement and civilians probably all have that in common, we all want to go home.”

Freeborn, Varg. Violence of Mind: Training and Preparation for Extreme Violence . One Life Defense LLC, Varg Freeborn. Kindle Edition.

What is your mission?

Assuming that your mission is to protect your family and make it home every night, you can get additional clarity by hypothetically asking what violence you want your wife and the mother of your children to get involved in. Here are some situations to consider:

- She is alone at a convenience store when someone decides to rob the cashier. Should she intervene?
- She is alone at home and hears a noise outside. Should she go outside to investigate?
- She is alone and in a grocery store parking lot. She sees a domestic violence incident between a man and a woman. Should she intervene?

In short, you (and your partner) should be extremely clear about what you will do when you are not protecting your loved ones and violence erupts.

How can you fail to accomplish your mission?

Most assume that you fail your mission because you let a criminal harm yourself or your family. That is one way to fail. There are others. Here are some ways you can fail legally:

- Excessive use of force (e.g., shooting someone running away from you).
- What you thought was self-defense was charged as an aggravated assault with you as the offender (I detail many of these scenarios in my book).
- You accidentally shot an innocent person due to bad aim or overpenetration.
- You were under the influence of drugs or alcohol during a shooting.
- You left a lethal weapon where children could access it – leaving it in the bathroom of a restaurant, for example.
- You were caught carrying a firearm in a place where it was restricted, such as the post office, Social Security, or a school.

How can you fail to accomplish your mission?

Note that if your state has mandatory prison sentencing for gun crimes, you, as a concealed carrier of a firearm, have additional risk if you happen to be charged with a crime (i.e., you did not engage in self-defense, but instead, you committed an aggravated assault or murder).

Furthermore, if your state has unlawful firearm discharge laws, you could be prosecuted for a felony if you have a negligent discharge.

These mandatory conditions can make you wary of having a jury trial and may lead you to be more accepting of a plea deal.

A plea deal could strip your ability to own a firearm or vote, so you can avoid prison time. Although avoiding prison time is a plus, the restrictions will make it much harder to be successful at your mission

Conclusion

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In this presentation, I've attempted to highlight how inaccurate or improbable information influences concealed carry decisions. In addition, I've also tried to highlight the significant responsibility that falls on the shoulders of a concealed carrier. Should you use your firearm to defend yourself, you will have to deal with law enforcement and our legal system. They may not be on your side.