



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on December 30, 2014

More Proof That as Gun Ownership Increases, Violent Crime Decreases

Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe raised the ire of conservatives on Monday by proposing a [package of gun control measures](#) for the upcoming General Assembly. What irritated them most was that the governor claimed that these measures are designed to “keep people safe” from criminals. McAuliffe might better spend his time perusing the latest update from John Lott, showing that people are keeping themselves safe from criminals by obtaining their concealed carry permits.



Lott, the author of *More Guns, Less Crime*, noted in a July 9 [report for Crime Prevention Research Center](#) that the number of citizens now permitted to carry concealed exceeds 11 million, up from eight million just three years ago. And even that number may be far too conservative:

The number of concealed carry permit holders is likely much higher than 11.1 million because numbers are not available for all states that issue permits, such as New York. Additionally, four states and the majority of Montana do not require that residents have a concealed handgun permit to carry within the state so [that] number ... is not recorded.

That translates into nearly one in every 20 Americans licensed to carry. It also translates, according to Lott, into a continuing fall in the rates of murder and violent crime: a 22-percent decline just since 2007, a period of time, according to Lott, that the percentage of people licensed to carry has increased by an astonishing 130 percent.

One conclusion based on this data is that the more people who are allowed to carry, the lower the rate of violent crime.

Lott’s Crime Prevention Research Center also noted that states that don’t require a permit have much lower crime rates than those states that have the lowest permit rates. It noted too that “the murder and violent crime rates are also lower in the 25 states with the highest permit rates compared to the rest of the US.”

The statistics are impressive regarding violent criminals, according to the report:

When you allow people to carry concealed handguns, you see changes in the behavior of criminals. Some criminals stop committing crimes, others move on to crimes in which they don’t come into contact with victims.... Others actually move to areas where they have less fear of being confronted by armed victims.

Lott, a statistician, also concluded that “each one percentage point increase in the adult population holding permits is roughly associated with a 1.4 percent drop in the murder rate.”

A search of public records reveals the numbers behind Lott’s study. For instance, the total crime rate per 100,000 people in the United States in the year 2001 was 4,162, the high-water mark of the 21st



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century. It has steadily declined every year since, and now stands at 3,098 per 100,000, a drop of 25 percent in a little over a decade.

The results of a recent Pew Research study reveal the sea change in attitude toward guns that underlies the rise in permits and the consequent fall in violent crime. In every demographic except one (liberal Democrats), Pew reported the support for gun rights is higher than it's been in decades, with 52 percent of Americans favoring the Second Amendment compared to 46 percent who favor more restrictions on the right to keep and bear arms.

Gallup also measured the same attitude shift in its study, reporting that "53 percent of Americans now believe that having guns at home makes them safer, nearly double the percentage reporting the same belief 14 years ago."

This shift had a starting point: Florida, in 1987, passed the first "shall issue" concealed carry law, requiring local sheriffs to issue permits to honest and sane Floridians. Today there are 41 states that have enacted similar laws, while Arizona, Vermont, Wyoming, and Alaska do not even require them.

Unmentioned in the Crime Prevention Research Center's report is the growth of a cottage industry that provides legal services to those unfortunate enough to have to use a firearm to defend themselves. One of the most prominent is the Armed Citizens Legal Defense Network that began in 2008 with a single member and now boasts more than 8,000. Twenty-five percent of every member's dues goes into its legal defense fund which, according to founder Marty Hayes,

We reserve exclusively for the legal defense of Network members....

It all starts with a phone call, telling us that you have been involved in an incident and need immediate assistance. Since we do not at that time know the particulars of the incident, on your word alone and upon request from you or your attorney we will forward up to \$10,000 to the attorney of your choice to start your legal representation.

If you don't yet have an attorney, we will get to work immediately to help you find one.

Also mentioned in the report is that once armed, a citizen is even less likely to be involved in one of those "incidents." In Florida, for example, between October 1, 1987 and May 31, 2014, more than 2.6 million permits have been issued, while just 168 of them have been revoked for any type of firearms violation (most of them for accidentally carrying concealed into a "gun free" zone). In the last 77 months, reports Lott, just four permits have been revoked there.

This is likely because once an individual decides to obtain his permit and then makes the additional decision to carry, he becomes a more responsible citizen. As Marty Hayes explains, "A Network member is probably the least likely gun owner to be involved in a shooting or otherwise use deadly force."

This reflects the higher degree of responsibility involved in carrying concealed, which is encouraged and reinforced by Hayes' Network: "A 235-page book plus an informative series of eight educational DVDs is given to each new member ... [which] ensure that your understanding of [the] use of force in self-defense is first class."

Not only are more and more states supporting the issue of concealed carry permits, and not only are more and more citizens taking advantage of the opportunity to exercise their rights guaranteed by the Second Amendment, but more and more of those who now carry daily are taking that new responsibility seriously.

It's no wonder criminals are finding other work.



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