

The Myths of Modern Bullet Diameter By Daniel Cahill

In today's firearm industry there is much debate over what caliber is best for self defense in a carry handgun. People argue and stand behind their choice as if it's their religion, and unfortunately many of them may have been misinformed. Before we get into too much detail, let's look at the reasons behind the heated debates, and keep in mind this is a basic overview of the logic behind ballistics. In years past, projectiles were much more simple than they are now, meaning full metal jacket was really the only viable choice. Full metal jacket bullets are designed for penetration, not expansion, so much of the projectile's energy was not transferred to the intended target. To counter this, the diameter of the bullets themselves were increased to allow more drag and more energy transfer into the target. So in summary, before hollow points or frangible ammunition was available, bullet diameter was king.

Fast forward to today's modern age of rapid expansion and frangible ammo, this is no longer the case. People would truly be astounded if they knew the amount of science and research that went into the design of the modern self defense projectile, something they did not have the luxury of back in the day. Modern bullets are designed to transfer as much energy into the target as possible, because any energy that doesn't transfer is wasted. With this in mind, there is a miniature arms race among industry leaders to create the most potent, deadly projectile possible. While this may sound morbid, you must understand that this enables the user to stop the threat as soon as possible. As our understanding of physics and ballistics grows, the gap between 9mm, 40 S&W, and 45 ACP shrinks considerably. The important question now has changed from how big the bullet is, to other factors such as ammunition capacity and felt recoil. This is important stuff to be aware of in the midst of feuding caliber zealots.

As we can see from the pictures, the difference between the three main calibers (9mm, 40s&w, 45acp) is negligible at best. So the next time someone tells you 9mm is too weak for carry, or 40 S&W is the best compromise, remember that the crook won't critique you either way.

