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Detroit police chief says armed citizens are curbing crime

By [Jessica Chasmar](#) - *The Washington Times* - Wednesday, July 16, 2014

Detroit has experienced 37 percent fewer robberies than it did last year, and Police Chief James Craig is crediting armed citizens for the drop.

"Criminals are getting the message that good Detroiters are armed and will use that weapon," Chief Craig, who has been an open advocate for private gun ownership, told *The Detroit News* in an interview. "I don't want to take away from the good work our investigators are doing, but I think part of the drop in crime, and robberies in particular, is because criminals are thinking twice that citizens could be armed.

"I can't say what specific percentage is caused by this, but there's no question in my mind it has had an effect," he added.

In addition to the drop in robberies, Detroit has seen 22 percent fewer break-ins of businesses and homes and 30 percent fewer carjackings in 2014 than during the same period last year.

Chief Craig said, however, that he doesn't think gun ownership deters criminals from attacking other criminals.

"They automatically assume another criminal is carrying," he said. "I'm talking about criminals who are thinking of robbing a citizen; they're less likely to do so if they think they might be armed."

Chief Craig's statements are unusual for urban police chiefs, who typically advocate for stricter gun control. For example, Kansas City Police Chief Darryl Forte wrote an op ed column in March with Mayor Sly James supporting a Missouri bill that would have made background checks mandatory before all gun purchases and required that all gun thefts and missing weapons be reported.

Chicago Police Superintendent Garry McCarthy has been very vocal about his support for stricter gun-control laws, despite his city having some of the toughest laws in the country and the most homicides of any city in the U.S. in 2012.

Detroit resident Al Woods, a self-described former criminal who is now an anti-violence activist, told *The News* that he agrees that criminals are thinking twice about targeting innocents.

"If I was out there now robbing people these days, knowing there are a lot more people with guns, I know I'd have to rethink my game plan," the 60-year-old told the paper.

Josh Horwitz, director of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, in Washington, D.C., disagreed, arguing that "more guns equals more crime."

"These are complicated issues, but the empirical evidence shows the states with the lowest gun ownership and the tightest restrictions have the fewest instances of gun violence," he said.

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