

The short answer is **no, it's not true that .380 ACP is ineffective**. But it is **generally less effective than 9mm**. [\[thegunzone.com\]](http://thegunzone.com), [\[activeresp...aining.net\]](http://activeresp...aining.net)

A more accurate statement would be:

.380 ACP is capable of stopping a violent attacker, but it gives you less performance margin than 9mm. [\[thegunzone.com\]](http://thegunzone.com), [\[activeresp...aining.net\]](http://activeresp...aining.net)

Why .380 Gets Criticized

Many experts focus on penetration and expansion. Some .380 defensive loads struggle to consistently reach common ballistic testing standards, especially from very small pistols.

[\[gundigest.com\]](http://gundigest.com), [\[derringerdan.com\]](http://derringerdan.com), [\[activeresp...aining.net\]](http://activeresp...aining.net)

Compared to 9mm, .380 typically has:

- Lower velocity.
- Less energy.
- Less penetration potential.
- Less reliable expansion across different ammunition types. [\[thegunzone.com\]](http://thegunzone.com), [\[activeresp...aining.net\]](http://activeresp...aining.net)

Why People Still Carry .380

The biggest advantage is the gun, not the cartridge.

A .380 pistol can be:

- Smaller.
- Lighter.
- Easier to conceal.
- Easier for some shooters to manage because of recoil. [\[derringerdan.com\]](http://derringerdan.com), [\[thegunzone.com\]](http://thegunzone.com)

That's why pistols such as the Ruger LCP Max, Glock 42, and Bodyguard series remain popular. [\[derringerdan.com\]](http://derringerdan.com)

Real-World View

Modern defensive ammunition has improved .380's performance significantly, and quality loads can be viable for personal defense. [\[derringerdan.com\]](http://derringerdan.com), [\[gun-tests.com\]](http://gun-tests.com), [\[anthonyarms.com\]](http://anthonyarms.com)

If you can comfortably carry and shoot a 9mm, most instructors would still recommend the 9mm because it generally offers better terminal performance and a larger safety margin.

[\[thegunzone.com\]](http://thegunzone.com), [\[anthonyarms.com\]](http://anthonyarms.com)

For many armed citizens, the choice comes down to:

- **9mm = better fighting cartridge.**
- **.380 = easier-to-carry cartridge.**

And a .380 in your pocket is far more useful than a 9mm left at home. That's one reason .380 remains a common defensive caliber despite its limitations. [\[derringerdan.com\]](http://derringerdan.com), [\[gun-tests.com\]](http://gun-tests.com)