

Using Police Recorded Data to Investigate the Repetition of Domestic Violence

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Project aim

PhD research investigating the police response to domestic violence to consider the question:

Can the police do anything to contribute to the reduction of domestic violence that is recorded by police?

The analysis was approached with two sub-questions:

- *What factors are associated with the repetition of domestic violence that is recorded by police?*
- *Does anything that the police do influence the repetition of domestic violence that is recorded by police?*

Identifying domestic violence in police data

- Until 2015 when the Home Office started to collect data from police forces on crimes relating to domestic violence, it was not possible to separate the number of police recorded crimes that related to domestic violence (ONS, 2018)
- Crimes that are identified by police as domestic related are now ‘flagged’ so that they can be distinguished and measured
- Offence data on domestic violence relies on the police accurately recording offences, identifying domestic violence, and attaching a flag
- These data do not include the majority of domestic violence which does not come to police attention

Using 'flagged' offence data

Extracted all offences recorded with a domestic violence flag between April 2015 – April 2018 by one police force.

Summary of the data:

- 33, 948 offences recorded with a DV flag over three years
- Most common offences were Assault with Injury (32%), Assault without Injury (30%), and Harassment (15%)
- 74% of victims were female
- 88% of offenders were male
- 22% of victims had two or more offences recorded against them
- 20% of offenders had two or more offences relating to them

A problem with using these data is that the information given in the quantitative data does not always correspond to the notes that are written in the free-text by responding officers.

Case study 1: High frequency victim

ID	Age	Gender	Ethnicity self-classification	Date input by	Police person address *	Place of offence address	Victim ID	Offender ID	Offender gender	Offender relationship	Ship grade	Crime type	DASH risk	State	Crime outcome
849	23	S	White British	09/05/2015	837	1224	-	-	-	-	-	Assault with injury	-	NFA	Evidential difficulties victim based – named suspect identified
849	23	F	White British	16/05/2015	837	1347	-	-	-	-	-	Assault with injury	-	Crime under active investigation	-
849	23	F	White British	29/10/2015	4126	4636	-	-	-	-	-	Assault with injury	-	NFA	Evidential difficulties named suspect identified
849	23	F	White British	02/11/2015	4126	4697	-	-	-	-	-	Assault without injury	H	NFA	Evidential difficulties victim based – named suspect identified
849	23	F	White British	26/11/2015	4126	5160	-	-	-	-	-	Threats to murder	S	NFA	Evidential difficulties victim based – named suspect identified
849	24	F	White British	22/12/2015	4126	5670	-	-	-	-	-	Assault with injury	H	Closed	Case closed: no line of enquiry
849	24	S	White British	22/01/2016	4126	5160	-	-	-	-	-	Assault without injury	H	NFA	Evidential difficulties victim based – named suspect identified
849	24	F	White British	13/02/2016	4126	5160	-	-	-	-	-	Assault without injury	M	NFA	Evidential difficulties victim based – named suspect identified
849	24	F	White British	13/02/2016	4126	5160	-	-	-	-	2	Threats to murder	H	NFA	Evidential difficulties victim based – named suspect identified
849	24	F	White British	10/04/2016	4126	5160	-	-	-	-	-	Assault without injury	S	NFA	Evidential difficulties named suspect identified
849	24	F	White British	19/05/2016	4126	5160	-	-	-	-	2	Threat or Possession with Intent to Commit Criminal Damage	H	NFA	Evidential difficulties victim based – named suspect identified
849	24	S	White British	19/08/2016	4126	5160	-	-	-	-	2	Assault without injury	S	NFA	Evidential difficulties victim based – named suspect identified
849	24	S	White British	13/09/2016	10348	11317	-	-	-	-	-	Assault without injury	-	Closed	Case closed: no line of enquiry
849	24	F	White British	01/11/2016	10348	12357	-	-	-	-	-	Assault without injury	-	NFA	Evidential difficulties named suspect identified
849	24	F	White British	15/11/2016	10348	12357	-	-	-	-	2	Robbery of Personal Property	-	NFA	Evidential difficulties victim based – named suspect identified
849	25	S	White British	28/12/2016	10348	12357	-	563	M	Partner	1	Assault without injury	H	Court disposal	Charge/Summonsed
849	25	F	White British	05/05/2017	19248	20939	-	-	-	-	2	Assault with injury	-	NFA	Evidential difficulties victim based – named suspect identified
849	25	F	White British	08/07/2017	10348	21504	-	-	-	-	-	Assault with injury	H	NFA	Evidential difficulties named suspect identified

Using vulnerability referral data

- Flagged data are an undercount of the repetition of DV that has come to police attention. The free-text notes provide more details but the information within these is limited.
- Vulnerability referrals provide another source of qualitative data that better captures repetition and provides much more information on the events and the persons.
- The same persons can be traced through the vulnerability referrals system to find every referral relating to that person ever to be recorded by that particular force.
- Additional information from the referrals includes: a qualitative summary of the incident, risk classification, number of referrals relating to that dyad within the last 12 months, number and type of referrals relating to the individual persons in the force's system, details of any witnesses or children involved, additional information provided by other agencies e.g. health, education, YOT etc., and the decision made/action taken e.g. arrest, information shared, referral to other agency.

Case study 2: Homicide

Victim referral history

Referral number	Referral reason	Role	Age	Risk level
1	DA	Lead referral/Victim	50	Standard
2	DA	Suspect	50	Medium
3	DA	Suspect	51	Medium
4	DA	Lead referral/Victim	51	Standard
5	DA	Lead referral/Victim	51	High

Using one homicide as a case study:

- Both victim and offender appear in the flagged offence data only once
- Referral data show that the victim is linked to five DA referrals in the same dyad, three within the same time period as the flagged offence data
- Referral data show that the homicide offender has an extensive history of domestic violence as both victim and suspect to ex-partners and family members

Next steps: Creating a new dataset

- Flagged offence data can tell us something about the police response to domestic violence, and repeat victims and offenders can be identified, but the free-text notes written by responding officers show that these data undercount the amount of repetition in the domestic violence that comes to police attention
- Flagged offence data are useful and provide a means of identifying domestic violence within police data, though drawing conclusions on the nature of domestic violence that comes to police attention from these data should be done with caution
- Referrals and the free-text notes written by police officers and staff provide much more information about the nature of domestic violence that comes to police attention, the police response to domestic violence, and involvement from other agencies
- These qualitative data may be better suited to addressing questions on any relationship between police response and the repetition of domestic violence
- The main drawback to using these data is that they require coding: this is time-consuming requires decisions on what information within the free-text is useful and necessary for analysis

Summary

- Crimes that are identified as domestic violence are now 'flagged' so that they can be distinguished and measured in police recorded data
- The flagged offence data require the accurate recording of offences, the identification of domestic violence, and the manual attachment of the domestic violence flag
- Free-text notes attached to the cases suggest that the flagged offence data undercount the amount of repetition
- Qualitative data recorded by police in the form of free-text notes made by officers and referrals provide much more information on the crime, the persons involved, the police action taken, and the amount of repetition
- Next steps of the project are to produce a coding scheme and to start manually building a dataset using the qualitative data and a much smaller sample

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