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General offending by domestic violence offenders

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Aim: *To assess (a) the extent to which DV offenders specialise in DV offending (b) the type and frequency of involvement in non-DV offences by DV offenders and (c) the similarities and differences between DV assault offenders and non-DV assault offenders.*

Method: *To address the first two questions we examine non-DV offending by offenders convicted in New South Wales (NSW) of a DV offence between 2008 and 2017. To address the third we use classification techniques to determine how well DV assault offenders and non-DV assault offenders can be separated on the basis of demographic and criminal justice variables or (in a separate sub-analysis) how well they can be separated on the basis of the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R).*

Results: *A little over a third (35.25%) of the cohort had a DV conviction as their only conviction. The remainder (64.75%) had at least one general (non-DV) offence. DV offences accounted for only 38 per cent of all the offences committed by DV offenders between 2008 and 2017. DV offenders committed more than 2.5 times as many non-DV offences as DV offences. The 65,183 DV offenders who committed at least one non-DV offence, between them generated a total of 385,741 proven non-DV offences The most common non-DV offences committed by DV offenders in the cohort were traffic offences (27.99% of all non-DV offences), theft offences (14.67% of all non-DV offences) and drug offences (12.31% of all non-DV offences). DV assault offenders and non-DV assault offenders differ very little in terms of their demographic and criminal justice profile or in terms of their LSI-R profile.*

Conclusion: *Policing strategies aimed at deterring or incapacitating domestic violence offenders are likely to produce spill-over benefits in terms of other forms of crime. Further research is urgently needed to determine what works in reducing the risk of DV reoffending for those who specialise in DV and those whose offending involves both DV and non-DV offences.*

Keywords: *Domestic and family violence, assault, general offending, specialisation, versatility.*

INTRODUCTION

As Moffitt, Krueger, Caspi, and Fagan (2000) point out in their seminal contribution to the literature on general offending by domestic violence (DV) offenders, academic and policy discussions of domestic violence (DV) offenders often implicitly assume they are a distinct type of offender in terms of the factors responsible for their behaviour and the types of treatment programs and law enforcement strategies needed to change that behaviour. The Duluth Model is one obvious manifestation of this. The model explains domestic violence as 'a means for men to exhibit power and establish control over their female partners' (Bohall, Bautista & Musson, 2016). Although the model has received considerable criticism from clinical psychologists over the years and no longer features as prominently in Australian correctional programming as it once did (Martin, 2018; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Day, Chung, O'Leary, & Carson, 2009), the notion that DV offending requires a specific form of intervention remains influential—as evidenced by the large number of DV-specific treatment programs that have been developed to reduce the risk of DV re-offending (Feder, Wilson, & Austin, 2008; Davis, Weisburd & Taylor, 2008) and the high proportion of domestic violence programs in the United States retaining elements of the Duluth approach (Miller, Drake, & Nafziger, 2013).

The continuing investment in DV-specific correctional programs is somewhat surprising given the absence of convincing evidence that DV-specific programs reduce the risk of DV offending (on this

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point see Ramsey, 2016). In their Campbell review of the relevant literature, Feder et al. (2008, p. 2) concluded that 'the mean effect for official reports of domestic violence from experimental studies [of court-mandated interventions] showed modest benefit whereas the mean effect for victim reported outcomes was zero. Quasi-experimental studies using a no-treatment comparison had inconsistent findings indicating an overall small harmful effect.' In their review of second responder interventions Davis, Weisburd, and Taylor (2008, p. 3) concluded that "second response intervention does not affect the likelihood of new incidents of family violence." In a more recent review, Miller et al. (2013) examined 11 rigorous evaluations of DV-specific programs, six of which tested the Duluth model of treatment. They found no evidence that the Duluth model reduced DV re-offending and inconsistent evidence from studies of non-Duluth interventions. Negative results in relation to DV-specific correctional programs have also been reported in Australia by Rahman and Poynton (2018), Wan, Thorburn, Poynton, and Trimboli (2018) and Trimboli (2017).

These apparent failures of treatment for DV have prompted some to argue that DV offenders are not a homogenous class and that different types of DV treatment may be required for different types of DV offender (Gilchrist et al., 2003; Capaldi & Kim, 2007; Dempsey & Day, 2011). Another possibility is that DV offending is just one manifestation of a general pattern of antisocial behaviour and that treatment for DV offenders should proceed in much the same way as treatment for other (violent and non-violent) offenders, that is, through the identification of specific factors contributing to offending behaviour (e.g. antisocial attitudes, drug/alcohol use, financial stress) and the application of measures designed to address those factors (see Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006 for examples). A third possibility is that DV-specific treatment programs may be appropriate only for those who specialise in DV.

The question of whether to pursue DV-specific treatment programs or to adopt DV-specific law enforcement strategies depends partly on whether they are committed by the same people and partly on whether DV offending and general offending have common causes. So far as violent offending in general is concerned the evidence is fairly clear. Piquero, Jennings, and Barnes (2012) found that only a small proportion of offences committed throughout most criminal careers are violent, that violent offenders tend to be generalists rather than specialists and that the majority of persons convicted of a violent offence have only one such conviction in their criminal career. Similarly, in their longitudinal study of violent criminal careers, Wan and Weatherburn (2016) found that only 22 per cent of the sample of convicted violent offenders committed another violent offence during the follow-up period (median = 6.3 years; range = 21.3 years). They found that violent offenders commit a wide range of non-violent offences, including driving without a licence, offensive behaviour, break and enter and theft from retail premises. Most studies of DV offenders also find substantial overlap between offenders involved in DV offending and those involved in (non-DV) violent offending or offending in general (Fagan & Browne, 1994; Fagan, Stewart, & Hansen, 1983; Hotaling, Straus & Lincoln, 1990; Marvell & Moody, 1999). Australian studies reflect this pattern. Boxall, Payne, and Rosevear (2015) examined the criminal histories of a large sample of domestic violence offenders identified by Tasmanian police and found that more than half had been reported to police for non-family violence offences. Coghlan and Millsteed (2017) found similar results in a retrospective study of family violence offenders apprehended by Victorian Police.

Studies of the correlates of DV and general offending, however, sometimes find differences. Moffitt et al. (2000) examined the relationship between partner abuse and general crime using data drawn from the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study, a longitudinal investigation of the health, development, and behaviour of a cohort of 1,037 births between April 1, 1972 and March 31, 1973. Moffitt et al. (2000) were interested in whether those who engaged in partner abuse and those who engaged in general offending had similar personalities. Factor analyses of data drawn from the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire[1] revealed that partner abuse and general offending had both unique and overlapping characteristics, with only a modest correlation (+.39) between correlates of the two types of antisocial behaviour. Coghlan and Millsteed (2017) have also found that family violence offenders could be distinguished from general offenders on a number of measures (e.g. age, controlling behaviour, drug use).

From the perspective of DV prevention policy, existing research into general offending by DV offending has several limitations. The studies by Boxall et al. (2015) and Coghlan and Millsteed (2017) are retrospective and only examined prior criminal contacts over a limited period (one or five years). The short period may have caused them to underestimate the extent of involvement by DV offenders in general offending. The retrospective nature of the studies means that we cannot determine what proportion of DV offenders go on to become general offenders. Information on the similarities between DV and general offender personality profiles may shed some light on the causes of DV offending but differences in personality characteristics do not necessarily signal a need for differential treatment. It would be more useful to know whether and to what extent DV offenders differ from general offenders on dimensions relevant to an assessment of correctional treatment needs, such as those embodied within the Level of Service Inventory Revised (LSI-R)[2].

Past research on general offending by DV offenders is also limited from a law enforcement perspective. Much effort has been expended devising methods for measuring offence specialisation (or versatility) (Baker et al., 2013). Researchers working in this area typically look for ways of assessing whether the next offence committed by an offender is the same or different to the one just committed. The terms 'same' and 'different' in these studies are

often very broadly defined (e.g. property v. violent offence). From a law enforcement perspective this way of looking at the issue of versatility versus specialisation is somewhat limiting. Police are more likely to want to know whether the non-DV offending committed by DV offenders is serious and frequent or trivial and infrequent. In NSW, for example, much enforcement activity is guided by the Suspect Target Management Plan (STMP), which dictates a focus by each Local Area Command on those offenders known or suspected to be committing serious crime at a high rate. Information on the likelihood that the next offence by a DV offender will be DV offence or a general offence is of limited value in this context.

THE CURRENT STUDY

The purpose of this bulletin is to answer three questions:

1. To what extent do DV offenders 'specialise' in DV offending?
2. What are the main types of general (viz. non-DV) offences committed by DV offenders and how often do they commit these offences?
3. How similar are violent offenders who have only ever been convicted of a DV assault, to those who have only ever been convicted of other forms of violence?

METHOD

The data source for the study was the New South Wales (NSW) Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) re-offending database (ROD). ROD contains a record of all persons proceeded against by police in NSW since January 1994 (other than those given a police warning). It also contains information on each person's movement in and out of custody (see Hua & Fitzgerald, 2006 for further details). Separate law-part codes introduced in NSW in 2008 allow us to distinguish between offences that are DV-related and those that are not. DV offences in NSW include offences involving family members. More specifically, an offence is considered a DV offence if it is committed by a person against another person with whom the person who commits the offence has or has had a domestic relationship. A person is deemed to have a domestic relationship with another person if the (first mentioned) person:

1. Is or has been married to the other person; or
2. Is or has been a de facto partner of the other person; or
3. Has or has had an intimate personal relationship with the other person, whether or not the intimate relationship involves or has involved a relationship of a sexual nature; or
4. Is living or has lived in the same household as the other person; or
5. Is living or has lived as a long-term resident in the same residential facility as the other person and at the same time as the other person (excluding correctional and detention centres); or
6. Has or has had a relationship involving his or her dependence on the ongoing paid or unpaid care of the other person; or
7. Is or as been a relative of the other person; or
8. In the case of an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander, is or has been part of the extended family or kin of the other person according to the Indigenous kinship system of the person's culture.

The sample constructed for the purpose of answering question (1) consisted of all persons convicted of a DV offence between 2008 and 2017 (inclusive). This extraction rule yielded a sample of 100,668 offenders who between them committed 622,065 offences over the 10 year period. To answer question (1) we: (a) tabulate the percentage of DV offenders who commit various non-DV offences (b) calculate the average frequency of offending in each offence category and (c) tabulate the proportional contribution of offending in each category to the total number of offences committed by the entire cohort.

To address question (2) we construct two groups. Group 1 consists of persons convicted of one or more offences in 2017 where any concurrent or previous assault offences were all DV-related. Group 2 consists of persons convicted of one or more offences in 2017 where their concurrent or previous assault offences were all non DV-related. Having constructed these groups we then conduct a logistic regression and use the resulting 'confusion matrix'[3] to determine how well we can distinguish between the groups; firstly in terms of a standard set of demographic and criminal variables and, secondly, in terms of the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R). We focus on the LSI-R because it is a validated risk assessment instrument widely used to measure risk of re-offending and identify the factors that need to be addressed to reduce that risk. It consists of 54 items on 10 subscales and is designed for use on incarcerated offenders as well as those in community settings (Andrews & Bonta, 1995).

The demographic variables included in the first part of this analysis are:

- Age;
- Sex;
- Indigenous status; and
- Level of socioeconomic disadvantage (as measured by a reverse coded SEIFA[4]).

To measure offence profile we included a set of dummy variables capturing whether or not the offender at any court appearance in 2017 also had a conviction for any of the following ANZSOC offences[5]:

- An *act intended to cause injury;* or
- A *sexual assault and related offence*; or
- An offence involving a *dangerous or negligent act*; or
- An offence involving *abduction and/or harassment;* or
- A *break, enter and steal* offence; or
- A *theft* offence; or
- A *fraud* offence; or
- An *illicit drug* offence; or
- An offence involving *prohibited or regulated weapons*; or
- A *property damage* offence; or
- A *public order* offence; or
- A *traffic* offence; or
- A *justice procedure* offence (e.g. breaching an apprehended violence order)

We exclude homicide and related offences and robbery-related offences because the numbers charged with these offences are too small. However, in addition to the above mentioned variables we include two others:

- *Number of concurrent offences* (coded '0' if there were no concurrent convictions at the index court appearance or '1' if there was one or more concurrent convictions); and
- *Number of prior court appearances for any offence* (coded '0' if there were none and '1' if there was one or more).

Demographic and criminal justice variables are not the only dimensions along which DV assault offenders and non-DV assault offenders may differ. In fact decisions about treatment intensity and treatment type are not normally based on demographic and criminal justice variables. In NSW (and in many other jurisdictions) most such decisions are based on the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R). The 10 subscales of the LSI-R are:

1. Criminal History
2. Education/Employment
3. Financial
4. Family/Marital
5. Accommodation
6. Leisure/Recreation
7. Companions
8. Alcohol/Drug Problem
9. Emotional/Personal
10. Attitudes/Orientation

In NSW the LSI-R is only administered to offenders supervised by the correctional authority in NSW for more than eight weeks or sentenced to a term of imprisonment of over three months; this being deemed the minimum period over which meaningful efforts can be made to reduce the risk of further offending. Our approach was to see how well DV assault offenders can be distinguished from non-DV assault offenders in terms of the subscales of the LSI-R for those offenders who have had a prior LSI-R assessment. To isolate the effects of LSI-R in this part of the analysis we first matched the two groups in terms of differences in their demographic and criminal justice variables using nearest neighbour matching (Mahalanobis distance; for details see Appendix 1, Tables 1 to 3).[6] This ensures the groups were compared solely in terms of the LSI-R scales rather than by the demographic and criminal justice variables correlated with those scales.

RESULTS

DV OFFENDERS

Before examining the non-DV offences committed by DV offenders we provide information on the types of offences flagged as DV offences. Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of DV-flagged offences (hereafter DV offences) over offence type and individuals.

There are three points to note about the table. The first is that the vast majority (99%) of DV-related offences involve either an *act intended to cause injury* (52.43%) (e.g. assault); a *justice procedure offence* (31.77%) (e.g. breaching an apprehended violence order); or a *property damage offence* (14.82%). The second is that the 100,668 DV offenders accounted for a total of 236,324 proven DV offences. This is a large number of offences but the number of DV-related offences per person committed by the cohort between 2008 and 2017 is fairly low (2.35). The number of DV offences involving an *act intended to cause injury* per person was even lower (1.57). The third and most noteworthy feature of Table 1 is that the DV offences committed by the cohort accounted for only 38 per cent of all the offences proved against them. In other words, although classed as 'DV offenders', fewer than two in five of the offences they committed were DV-related.

NON-DV OFFENCES COMMITTED BY DV OFFENDERS

Table 2 shows the distribution of non-DV offences committed by our cohort of DV offenders. The columns correspond to those in Table 1. Notice the great variety of non-DV offences committed by the cohort. The most common non-DV offences were *traffic offences* (28% of all non-DV offences), *theft offences* (15% of all non-DV offences) and *drug offences* (12% of all non-DV offences) but DV offenders committed a wide range of other offences including *property damage*, *fraud*, *break and enter* and *public order* offences. In fact, the 65,183 DV offenders who committed at least one non-DV offence between them generated a total of 385,741 proven non-DV offences. Put simply, between 2008 and 2017, DV offenders who were convicted of at least one non-DV offence were convicted of non-DV offences 2.5 times more often than they were convicted of DV offences.

Table 1. Number of offences, number of offenders, number of offences per offender, per cent of all DV offences and per cent of all offences by offence type

Offence type	N (offences)	N (offenders)	Number of offences per offender	% of all DV offences	% of all offences
Dangerous and negligent acts	7	7	1.00	0.00	0.00
Public order offences	8	8	1.00	0.00	0.00
Homicide	40	39	1.03	0.02	0.01
Prohibited/regulated weapons offences	42	42	1.00	0.02	0.01
Abduction/harassment etc.	313	295	1.06	0.13	0.05
Sexual assault and related offences	1,910	897	2.13	0.81	0.31
Property damage and related offences	35,028	27,069	1.29	14.82	5.63
Justice procedure offences	75,079	37,536	2.00	31.77	12.07
Acts intended to cause injury	123,897	78,722	1.57	52.43	19.92
Total	236,324	100,668	2.35	100.00	37.99

Table 2. Number of non-DV offences, number of offenders, average non-DV offences per person, per cent of all non- DV offences and per cent of all offences by offence type

Offence type	N (non-DV offences)	N (offenders)	Number of non-DV offences per offender	% of all non-DV offences	Per cent of all offences
Dangerous and negligent acts	72	50	1.44	0.02	0.01
Homicide	85	83	1.02	0.02	0.01
Prohibited/regulated weapons offences	1,659	1,358	1.22	0.43	0.27
Sexual assault and related offences	2,159	1,063	2.03	0.56	0.35
Robbery and related offences	3,408	2,259	1.51	0.88	0.55
Public order offences	4,897	3,985	1.23	1.27	0.79
Abduction/harassment etc.	9,708	6,906	1.41	2.52	1.56
Break and enter	14,366	7,025	2.04	3.72	2.31
Fraud offences	17,880	5,257	3.40	4.64	2.87
Justice procedure offences	23,087	14,898	1.55	5.99	3.71
Property damage and related offences	34,076	19,426	1.75	8.83	5.48
Drug offences	47,470	22,222	2.14	12.31	7.63
Theft offences	56,593	18,032	3.14	14.67	9.10
Acts intended to cause injury	62,726	30,965	2.03	16.26	10.08
Traffic offences	107,555	36,219	2.97	27.88	17.29
Total	385,741	65,183	5.92	100.00	62.01

We can obtain a clearer picture of the extent to which DV offenders specialise in DV offending by examining the relative frequency distribution of DV and non-DV offences over the period between 2008 and 2017. Table 3 does this. The first column separates offenders into groups according to the percentage of their offending that is DV-related. The second and third columns, respectively, show the number and percentage of individuals falling into each group. Column 4 shows the average number of offences committed by individuals in each category. Columns 5 and 6 provide separate averages for DV and non-DV offences for each category. Column 7 shows the total number of offences committed by individuals in each category. Columns 8 and 9 split this total between DV and non-DV offences.

Looking at the third column, it can be seen that about 35 per cent of offenders had no convictions other than a conviction for a DV-related offence. DV offending for most offenders accounted for less than half of the offences in their career. The most criminally productive group were those for whom DV offences constituted

Table 3. DV conviction frequency, non-DV conviction frequency, total DV conviction count and total non-DV conviction count by percentage of DV offences in criminal career

Per cent of DV offences in career	Number of offenders	Per cent of all DV offenders	Average number of offences	Average number of DV offences	Average number of non-DV offences	Total offences	Total DV offences committed	Total non-DV offences
0-9%	4,562	4.53	21.35	1.28	20.07	97,399	5,849	91,550
10-29.9%	19,691	19.56	10.46	1.97	8.49	206,064	38,818	167,246
30-49.9%	27,146	26.97	5.91	2.42	3.49	160,327	65,667	94,660
50-69.9%	8,682	8.62	7.32	4.51	2.81	63,572	39,183	24,389
70-99.9%	5,102	5.07	7.51	5.96	1.55	38,320	30,424	7,896
100%	35,485	35.25	1.59	1.59	0.00	56,383	56,383	0

Table 4. Bi-variate correlates of group membership

Independent variable		Group 1: DV assault only (%)	Group 2: non-DV assault only	N	χ^2	*p*-value
Gender	Female	54.1	45.9	2058	7.7	.021
	Male	55.7	44.3	5036		
Age group	10-17	31.0	69.1	1,076	453.1	<.001
	18-29	49.8	50.2	2,112		
	30-39	67.3	32.7	1,488		
	40+	64.6	35.4	2,359		
Indigenous status	Indigenous	51.0	49.0	567	127.3	<.001
	Non-Indigenous	57.9	42.1	5860		
Sex offence	No	55.3	44.7	7064	6.2	.013
	Yes	34.3	65.7	35		
Dangerous/negligent act	No	55.3	44.7	7038	6.3	.012
	Yes	39.3	60.7	61		
Break and enter offence	No	55.4	44.6	7046	20.3	<.001
	Yes	24.5	75.5	53		
Theft related offence	No	56.0	44.1	6921	63.6	<.001
	Yes	25.8	74.2	178		
Property damage offence	No	53.2	46.8	6280	87.2	<.001
	Yes	70.5	29.6	819		
Prior court appearances	none	54.2	45.8	5909	12.9	<.001
	one or more	59.9	40.1	1190		

less than 10 per cent of their total convictions. This group of 4,562 offenders between them committed more than 97,000 offences over the period between 2008 and 2017; most of which (91,550) were non-DV related. Looking at column four, there also appears to be a relationship between the percentage of offences that are DV related and overall offending frequency. Offenders who specialise in DV have lower average conviction rates than those for whom DV offending accounts for only a small percentage of their total criminal career offending count.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DV ASSAULT AND NON-DV ASSAULT OFFENDERS

We now turn our attention to the question of whether and to what extent those whose assault conviction(s) as of 2017 involved only DV assaults (Group 1) differ from those whose assault convictions as of 2017 were all non-DV related (Group 2). We begin by examining the bi-variate relationships between group membership and the demographic and criminal justice variables listed in the method section. Table 4 shows these relationships, along with the results of the chi-squared tests. For reasons of space, variables

not significantly associated with DV group membership are not included in the table.

Results presented in Table 4 show that offenders were more likely to fall into Group 1 (i.e. be classified as a violent offender with DV only offences) if they were female, older, non-Indigenous, had a concurrent conviction for a *property damage offence* or had one or more prior convictions. Offenders were more likely to fall into Group 2 (i.e. be classified as a violent offender without a DV record) if they had a concurrent conviction for a *sex offence*, a *dangerous/negligent act*, a *break and enter offence* or a *theft offence*. We found no significant association between group membership and any of the following variables: disadvantage-level; whether the offender had a concurrent conviction for a *drug offence*; whether or not the offender had a concurrent conviction for a *traffic offence*; whether or not the offender at the index appearance had a concurrent conviction for a *justice procedure offence* and whether or not the offender had more than one concurrent offence.

Table 4 shows that there are significant differences between the two groups of assault offenders but provides no guidance on how useful the factors listed in Table 4 are in separating the two groups. To address this question we ran a logistic regression using the variables listed in Table 4 as covariates (see Appendix Table B1) and group as the outcome, then output the contingency table shown in Table 5. Table 5 compares the number of offenders classified as either a DV assault offender or a non-DV assault offender against the true number in each category. An offender is classified as a DV offender if the predicted probability of his/her being a DV offender is greater than 0.5.[7]

Looking first at the results for Group 1 it can be seen that 34.9 per cent were correctly classified as Group 1 (DV assault only) offenders. The remainder (65.1%) were incorrectly classified as Group 2 (non-DV assault) offenders. Similar error rates attend the results for Group 2. About a third (37.7%) were correctly classified as non-DV assault offenders, with the remainder (62.3%) being incorrectly classified as Group 1 offenders. The table illustrates the lack of any clear difference between DV assault offenders and non-DV assault offenders in terms of demographic factors or factors associated with their contact with the criminal justice system.

Table 6. Individual domain and overall LSI-R scores for DV assault offenders vs. non-DV assault offenders, matched samples

	Matched			
Domain	DV Assault only	Non-DV Assault only	t-statistic	*p*-value
Domain 1 - Criminal history (0-10)	5.0	5.1	-1.03	.302
Domain 2 - Education/ employment (0-10)	4.9	4.6	1.86	.063
Domain 3 - Financial (0-2)	1.2	1.0	3.08	.002
Domain 4 - Family/ marital (0-4)	1.8	1.5	3.44	.001
Domain 5 - Accommodation (0-3)	0.8	0.7	1.39	.164
Domain 6 - Leisure/ recreation (0-2)	1.4	1.3	2.49	.013
Domain 7 - Companions (0-4)	1.6	1.6	-0.73	.464
Domain 8 - Alcohol/ drugs (0-9)	4.7	4.4	1.96	.051
Domain 9 - Emotional/ personal (0-5)	2.2	2.1	1.09	.277
Domain 10 - Attitudes/ orientation (0-4)	1.5	1.5	0.42	.674
Overall score (0-54)	25.1	23.9	1.96	.050
N	349	349		

Table 6 shows the bi-variate relationship between each of the LSI-R subscales and Group membership, after matching on demographic and criminal justice variables.

We only observe significant differences in the average scores of DV assault offenders and non-DV assault offenders in three subscales (Domain 3 – Financial, Domain 4 – Family/marital and Domain 6 – Leisure/recreation), although the *p*-value associated with Domain 8 (alcohol/drugs) is of borderline significance. As would be expected, DV assault offenders score more highly on family/marital problems and financial stress problems than non-DV offenders and marginally higher on the alcohol/ drugs subscale. However when we included these in a logistic regression model alongside all other domain scores, these were non-significant predictors of group membership (see Appendix Table B2 for modelling results).

Table 7 shows the confusion matrix associated with the estimated LSI-R model.[8] Using the LSI-R subscales as predictors and classifying any offender with a probability of being a DV assault offender over 0.5 as a DV assault offender resulted in only 58.7 per cent being correctly classified as Group 1 offenders and only 56.2 per cent being correctly classified as Group 2 offenders. Taken together, Tables 6 and 7 indicate that the LSI-R is also a poor discriminator between offenders only ever convicted of domestic assault (Group 1) and those only ever convicted of non-domestic assault (Group 2).

Table 5. Confusion matrix for demographic and criminal justice model

	True State		
Classified State	DV assault only (%)	Non-DV assault only (%)	**Total (N)**
DV assault only	34.9	65.1	4584
Non-DV assault only	62.3	37.7	2452

Table 7. Confusion matrix for LSI-R model

	True State		
Classified State	DV assault only (%)	Non-DV assault only (%)	**Total (N)**
DV assault only	58.7	41.3	4584
Non-DV assault only	43.8	56.2	2452

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this bulletin was to answer three questions:

1. To what extent do DV offenders specialise in DV offending?
2. What are the main types of general offences committed by DV offenders and how often do they commit these offences?
3. How similar are violent offenders who have only ever been convicted of a DV assault, to those who have only ever been convicted of other forms of violence?

A little over a third (35.25%) of the cohort had a DV conviction as their only conviction. The remainder (64.75%) had at least one general (non-DV) offence. The most common non-DV offences were *traffic offences* (27.99% of all non-DV offences), *theft offences* (14.67% of all non-DV offences) and *drug offences* (12.31% of all non-DV offences). There are three points to note about the table. The first is that the vast majority (99%) of DV-related offences involve either an *act intended to cause injury* (52.43%) (e.g. assault); a *justice procedure offence* (31.77%) (e.g. breaching an apprehended violence order); or a *property damage offence* (14.82%). Similar results were obtained by Gilchrist et al. (2003). The DV offences committed by the DV cohort accounted for 38 per cent of all the offences proved against them between 2008 and 2017. The remaining offences were of a general nature. DV offenders who tended to specialise in DV offended less often than those whose offending was more versatile. The 35,485 offenders who committed no general offences accounted for 56,383 offences in total. The 65,183 DV offenders who committed at least one non-DV offence between them generated a total of 385,741 proven general offences. Looked at another way; DV only offenders committed an average of 1.59 (DV) offences over their career while those for whom DV constituted less than 10 per cent of their total output, committed an average of 21.35 offences. These results are broadly consistent with those obtained by Boxall et al. (2015) in Tasmania and Coghlan and Millsteed (2017) in Victoria.

The demographic, offence and criminal history profile of DV-only assault offenders does differ from that of non-DV-only assault offenders. As noted earlier, there are higher proportions convicted of DV assault only among those who are: older, non-Indigenous, more disadvantaged and/or who have a concurrent conviction for *malicious damage*. There are also higher proportions convicted of non-DV assault among those who do not have a concurrent conviction for a *sex offence*, a *dangerous/negligent act*, a *robbery offence*, a *break and enter offence*, a *theft-related offence* and/or a *justice procedure offence*. DV assault offenders also tend to have shorter criminal records. The LSI-R scores of DV assault offenders and non-DV assault offenders, on the other hand, differed significantly on only three of the ten LSI-R subscales. Not surprisingly, efforts to separate DV assault offenders from non-DV assault offenders on the basis of the LSI-R subscales resulted in a high level of misclassification.

The findings presented here suggest that most DV offenders do not 'specialise' in DV offending but a significant proportion of convicted DV offenders do. From the perspective of law enforcement agencies, the fact that most DV offenders are versatile is an advantage in that it suggests measures aimed at deterring or incapacitating them may produce spill-over benefits in relation to other kinds of crime. From the perspective of treatment providers, on the other hand, the fact that we observe both specialisation and versatility among DV offenders raises a number of questions. Are the causes of DV offending different among DV specialists compared with DV generalists? Are different treatment approaches required for DV specialists versus DV generalists? If those who specialise in DV assault differ little from those who specialise in non-DV assault in terms of their LSI-R scores, do they differ along other dimensions relevant to treatment? A good deal of work remains to be done on these issues. We know, for example, that women who report their current partners to be controlling and emotionally abusive are much more likely to report having experienced intimate partner violence than those who do not report such experiences (Johnson, Ollus & Nevala 2010). We do not know, however, whether and to what extent controlling and/abusive behaviour is characteristic of offenders who commit non-domestic violence related offences. Nor do we know whether changing this sort of behaviour will lessen the risk of future domestic violence.

The current study has only scratched the surface of an issue that deserves a great deal more research attention than it has received. The DV offenders examined in this study are a highly select group in that they have all been convicted of a DV offence. We do not know how representative our sample is of the general population of DV offenders (including those who have not been apprehended and convicted). It is unclear, therefore, whether and to what extent the observations made here apply to DV offenders in general. The LSI-R analyses conducted in the current study were based on those offenders who had a prior LSI-R assessment and may not be reflective of those who have been apprehended but not assessed using the LSI-R. It is also worth remembering that the definition of a DV offence in NSW law is very broad, encompassing violence between intimate partners as well as violence between parents and their children. Those whose violence is directed at intimate partners may differ from those who are violent toward their parents or their children. Correctional treatment decisions are often based on the LSI-R but a wide variety of other instruments are used as well, particularly for violent offenders (Fazel et al., 2012). It is possible that the DV assault and non-DV assault offenders differ along dimensions measured using these other instruments. The lack of any demonstrably effective treatment program for DV offenders should make an early resolution of these issues a key priority for Governments concerned to reduce the incidence of domestic violence.

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NOTES

1 The Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) is described by Moffitt et al. (2000 p. 203) as "a systematic method of gathering psychological clues as to why behaviours occur by considering the attitudes, values and beliefs that perpetrators have about themselves and others".

2 The LSI-R is a validated risk assessment instrument designed to measure risk of re-offending and identify the factors that need to be addressed to reduce that risk. It consists of 54 items on 10 subscales and is designed for use on incarcerated offenders as well as those in community settings (Andrews & Bonta, 1995).

3 The 'confusion matrix' is simply a table comparing the predicted number of items/people classified into a particular category with the actual number in that category. The predictions are normally derived from a logistic regression or discriminant analysis.

4 SEIFA is an ABS measure of disadvantage (see Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011a). For the purpose of this analysis we have broken the measure up into quartiles and reverse coded it so that higher quartiles represent higher levels of disadvantage.

5 'ANZSOC' stands for Australian and New Zealand Classification of Offences (see Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011b).

6 The year of LSI-R assessment was also included as the LSI-R to ensure that differences between groups were not based on the differences in scores caused by different assessment periods.

7 One limitation of this approach is that a threshold (in this case .5) must be selected to classify the observations based on their predicted probabilities. These results were also found to be robust to a linear discriminant model approach.

8 As with the previous confusion matrix, the accuracy of classification did not improve using a linear discriminant model approach.

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APPENDIX A

Table A1. Comparison of standardised bias before and after matching DV Assault offenders to Non-DV Assault offenders, demographic and criminal history variables

		Unmatched %		Matched %		Standardised bias	
Variable		DV Assault only	Non DV Assault only	DV Assault only	Non DV Assault only	Unmatched	Matched
Indigenous status	Non-Indigenous	35.9%	37.0%	34.5%	31.6%	-2.3	6.2
	Indigenous	64.1%	63.0%	65.5%	68.4%	2.3	-6.2
Age	18-24 years old	18.9%	19.1%	18.2%	14.8%	-0.3	8.6
	25-34 years old	39.8%	35.4%	39.3%	40.4%	9.0	-2.2
	35-44 years old	26.7%	28.8%	26.9%	30.0%	-4.7	-7.1
	45 years and above	14.6%	16.7%	15.6%	14.8%	-5.8	2.3
Gender	Female	9.3%	15.3%	10.1%	7.4%	-18.5	8.4
	Male	90.7%	84.7%	89.9%	92.6%	18.5	-8.4
Socio-economic disadvantage	Quartile 1 (Most disadvantaged)	36.6%	33.3%	36.6%	38.5%	7.0	-4.0
	Quartile 2	30.0%	32.2%	30.0%	31.3%	-4.6	-2.7
	Quartile 3	22.8%	23.6%	22.8%	20.3%	-1.9	6.0
	Quartile 4 (Least disadvantaged)	10.6%	11.0%	10.6%	9.9%	-1.2	2.0
Remoteness	Major cities	28.3%	28.4%	28.3%	27.3%	-0.1	2.3
	Inner regional	60.9%	59.3%	60.9%	62.4%	3.2	-3.0
	Outer regional	9.1%	10.0%	9.1%	8.7%	-3.2	1.4
	Remote	0.6%	1.3%	0.6%	0.6%	-6.9	0.0
	Very remote	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%	0.8	0.0
Offences committed since 2008 (yes or no)	Sexual assault and related offences	2.8%	2.2%	2.7%	2.7%	4.1	0.0
	Abduction, harassment and related offences	11.9%	12.8%	10.8%	9.3%	-2.7	4.5
	Robbery and related offences	4.7%	7.1%	4.2%	3.8%	-9.9	1.8
	Fraud	11.2%	10.1%	11.0%	9.5%	3.6	4.8
	Drug	38.8%	39.5%	38.1%	36.6%	-1.3	3.0
	Weapon	3.2%	2.8%	3.0%	4.0%	2.2	-6.2
	Traffic	54.5%	53.5%	54.1%	55.6%	2.1	-3.0
	None	68.8%	63.0%	71.7%	72.5%	12.2	-1.8
	1 to 2	19.1%	20.2%	17.3%	16.9%	-2.7	1.1
	3 to 5	7.6%	9.2%	6.3%	6.1%	-5.7	0.8
	5 or more	4.5%	7.6%	4.7%	4.4%	-12.9	0.9
Supervised orders in 5 years prior to appearance	None	42.8%	39.8%	46.3%	46.3%	6.1	0.0
	1 to 2	36.0%	37.9%	34.9%	35.5%	-4.1	-1.3
	3 to 5	17.6%	18.0%	15.4%	14.8%	-1.0	1.7
	5 or more	3.6%	4.2%	3.4%	3.4%	-3.3	0.0
Prison sentences in 5 years prior to appearance	None	68.9%	69.8%	74.2%	74.6%	-1.8	-0.9
	1	17.0%	14.8%	15.0%	14.6%	6.2	1.2
	2 or more	14.0%	15.4%	10.8%	10.8%	-4.0	0.0
Year of most recent LSI-R Assessment	2007	2.3%	1.7%	2.5%	2.5%	4.3	0.0
	2008	0.4%	2.2%	0.4%	0.4%	-16.2	0.0
	2009	2.3%	3.2%	2.5%	2.5%	-5.5	0.0
	2010	3.0%	3.1%	3.4%	3.4%	-0.4	0.0
	2011	4.2%	3.7%	4.0%	4.0%	2.4	0.0
	2012	2.8%	4.2%	3.0%	3.0%	-7.5	0.0
	2013	2.7%	5.1%	2.7%	2.7%	-12.7	0.0
	2014	5.9%	7.2%	5.9%	5.1%	-5.5	3.4
	2015	11.0%	10.7%	11.0%	9.9%	0.9	3.4
	2016	20.8%	21.4%	17.5%	17.5%	-1.3	0.0
	2017	44.7%	37.5%	46.9%	48.8%	14.6	-3.9
	N	528	4902				

Table A2. Distribution of DV and Non-DV Assault offenders within LSI-R categories, unmatched samples

LSI-R Risk categories	Unmatched DV (N)	Unmatched DV (%)	Unmatched non-DV (N)	Unmatched non-DV (%)	χ^2 *p*-value
High	20	3.8	243	5.0	
Medium-high	99	18.8	879	17.9	
Medium	205	38.8	1791	36.5	0.617
Medium-low	142	26.9	1392	28.4	
Low	62	11.7	597	12.2	
N	528		4902		

Table A3. Distribution of DV and Non-DV Assault offenders within LSI-R categories, matched samples

LSI-R Risk categories	Matched DV (N)	Matched DV (%)	Matched non-DV (N)	Matched non-DV (%)	χ^2 *p*-value
High	14	4.0	8	2.3	
Medium-high	56	16.0	63	18.1	
Medium	137	39.3	141	40.4	0.681
Medium-low	101	28.9	95	27.2	
Low	41	11.7	42	12.0	
N	349		349		

APPENDIX B

Table B1. Logistic regression model of whether offender is a DV or Non-DV assault offender

Variable	Odds Ratio	*p*-value
Sex	0.94	.23
Age group	1.64	.00
Aboriginal	0.66	.00
Sex offence	0.39	.01
Dangerous/negligent act	0.53	.02
Break and enter	0.33	.00
Theft offence	0.42	.00
Property damage	2.41	.00
Prior court app.	0.72	.00
Constant	1.37	.04

Table B2. Logistic regression model of whether offender is a DV or Non-DV assault offender, before and after matching on observed characteristics

	Model 1: Unmatched sample		Model 2: Matched sample	
LSI-R domain	Odds ratio	*p*-value	Odds ratio	*p*-value
Domain 1 - Criminal history (0-10)	0.96	.679	1.00	.998
Domain 2 - Education/ employment (0-10)	1.02	.829	1.14	.443
Domain 3 - Financial (0-2)	1.00	.986	1.18	.432
Domain 4 - Family/ marital (0-4)	1.13	.268	1.25	.224
Domain 5 - Accommodation (0-3)	0.92	.497	1.12	.557
Domain 6 - Leisure/ recreation (0-2)	1.10	.463	1.13	.552
Domain 7 - Companions (0-4)	0.83	.096	1.00	.997
Domain 8 - Alcohol/ drugs (0-9)	1.00	.966	1.12	.498
Domain 9 - Emotional/ personal (0-5)	0.97	.772	1.05	.757
Domain 10 - Attitudes/ orientation (0-4)	1.03	.761	1.08	.655
Overall score (0-54)	1.01	.954	0.91	.586
Constant	0.11	.000	1.02	.923

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