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Policing domestic violence: A review of the evidence

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Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
AVO	apprehended violence order
CMC	Crime and Misconduct Commission (Queensland)
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
GPS	global positioning system
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
PO	protection order
SES	socio-economic status

Abstract

This review examines what is known about the policing of domestic violence. It covers six domains of police involvement in domestic violence—workforce development, reporting to police, first response, prevention of further domestic violence, investigative responses and charging of perpetrators. A systematic search of 10 literature databases, with targeted follow-up searches, identified 346 eligible studies.

Findings indicate that police can influence the likelihood of further violence, victim satisfaction and wellbeing, and criminal justice outcomes. Improvements to the policing of domestic violence should focus on optimising the implementation and effectiveness of police responses—specifically, targeting responses at the incidents, victims and perpetrators where they are likely to have the greatest impact; developing the workforce; embracing new technologies and innovative approaches; minimising bureaucratic or administrative barriers to effective police responses; and working closely with victims.

Executive summary

Police perform a vital role in addressing domestic violence (violence between intimate partners). As gatekeepers to the criminal justice system and first responders to domestic violence incidents, there is growing recognition of the important role that police have in reducing repeat offending and victimisation, and improving outcomes for victims.

In support of the growing emphasis on evidence-based policing, and evidence-based responses to domestic violence more broadly, a review was undertaken to identify what is known about the implementation and effectiveness of policing responses to domestic violence, with a particular (but not exclusive) focus on violence perpetrated by men against their female partners.

Method

The focus of the current review was on police-led responses, and covered six domains across the continuum of police activity—workforce development, reporting to police, first response, prevention of further domestic violence, investigative responses and charging of perpetrators. Working with the AIC’s JV Barry Library, a systematic search of 10 databases was conducted, followed by title and abstract and then full-text screening. This was supplemented by a secondary search of the reference lists of articles published between 2015 and 2016, and articles within contemporary policing journals.

The search identified 346 eligible studies, employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Eligible studies were analysed using narrative synthesis techniques, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative research findings to be included.

Workforce development

Research into workforce development—training programs designed to change police officer attitudes towards domestic violence or the way in which they respond—has repeatedly shown that police support domestic violence training and education. There is, however, a preference for practice-oriented training focused on response strategies over theoretical training on the causes and dynamics of domestic violence. This is consistent with the broader evidence base on workforce development in policing.

Training (particularly practice-oriented training) can influence police responses to domestic violence and increase recognition among officers of the importance of police intervention. The benefits of training appear to decay over time without adequate reinforcement. Efforts have been made to formalise and enhance on-the-job training so that it is practice-oriented, does not significantly interfere with operational duties, and gives junior officers the chance to learn from and observe more senior colleagues. Online or computer-based training has also emerged as an innovative means of training delivery that can overcome many of the logistical obstacles to traditional modes of training, although its effectiveness remains largely untested. It may be better suited to refresher training, given the limited opportunities for practice and discussion.

Reporting to police

Victims may not report domestic violence incidents to the police because they perceive the events to be private or trivial, feel embarrassed, or fear reprisal from the perpetrator. Victims are less likely to report when they are male, white, young, living with the perpetrator, and from a higher socio-economic background. Reporting is also less likely when perpetrators are younger, white or a different ethnicity to the victim, and more educated. Incidents are more likely to be reported when they are witnessed by children, involve a weapon, occur in the family home, involve an intoxicated perpetrator and sober victim, involve physical or sexual abuse, result in physical injury, involve severe and frequent abuse, or cause a strong emotional reaction in the victim. Importantly, victim reporting to police has been linked to reduced reoffending and increased future reporting, and does not appear to be associated with perpetrator retaliation.

Several interventions appear to increase reporting rates. Strategic policy interventions such as police codes of practice for domestic violence and legislation that encourages prosecution of protection order violations appear to increase reporting. Specialised police teams and interagency second responder programs have also been linked to increasing reporting among repeat victims. Mandatory medical reporting and measures in which health professionals make routine enquiries of patients appear effective at identifying domestic violence cases. In contrast, mandatory arrest may have the effect of discouraging victim reporting.

First response

Incident characteristics such as their perceived severity, signs of visible injury, use of a weapon and presence of witnesses have each been found to increase the likelihood of arrest. Behaviour by victims or perpetrators that is perceived to be antagonistic has also been found to have an impact. Mixed results have been found for the influence of officer characteristics (ie rank, age and experience). Similarly, victim and perpetrator gender, ethnicity, relationship type and age also show mixed results.

There is mixed support for pro-arrest and mandatory arrest policies among police officers. In Australia (where pro-arrest policies have been introduced), the volume of domestic violence cases, resource implications, probability of successful prosecution and officer safety have all been cited as influencing officer decision making.

Overall, arresting the perpetrator is moderately effective in reducing repeat domestic violence. It has the strongest deterrent effect on perpetrators with a stronger stake in conformity and more to lose from involvement with the criminal justice system. However, police attendance—irrespective of the outcome—can reduce the risk of repeat victimisation. The additional benefit derived from arresting the perpetrator is not clear. Mandated arrest policies have been shown to significantly increase arrest rates, but do not necessarily reduce domestic violence.

Risk assessment tools used by the police during a first response episode have been shown to estimate the risk of further domestic violence occurring at a rate that is better than chance, but these tools are only moderately effective at predicting who will reoffend and who will not. Research into the administration of these instruments has highlighted practical barriers, some of which may undermine the accuracy of risk assessment scores, reinforcing the need for simplified tools that are easy for officers to use immediately after an incident.

Preventing repeat domestic violence

Second responder programs involving police following up with households recently attended for domestic violence, often alongside victim advocates or social workers, focus on ensuring the immediate safety of victims. They also provide information on legal, social and health services. While these programs increase the chances of further domestic violence incidents being reported to the police, individual studies and systematic reviews have shown they do not prevent further domestic violence occurring.

Protection orders, which have become an integral part of the criminal justice response to domestic violence, impose conditions on perpetrators, such as requiring them to refrain from contacting victims. Compliance with the conditions of these orders is enforced by police. Protection orders can moderately reduce the likelihood of serious domestic violence recurrence. Breaches of order conditions are most likely in the period immediately after the order is granted (up to three months, based on Australian research).

Protection orders are more effective where victims have fewer enduring ties to perpetrators and the ability to be independent. They are less effective where perpetrators have a history of violence, general crime, stalking or mental health issues. Complicated, drawn-out application processes have been identified by police and victims as significant obstacles undermining the effectiveness of orders, further reinforcing the importance of recent efforts to streamline these processes. Police may be reluctant to enforce breaches where they believe the victim has failed (or is unable) to comply with order conditions and where it proves difficult to investigate low-level breaches. Enforcement is more likely for severe, repeated breaches, or where there is perceived to be a high risk of revictimisation.

Preliminary research findings on surveillance and rapid alert technologies—such as global positioning system (GPS) and mobile alert devices—hint at their preventative impact, while also pointing to increased feelings of victim safety and satisfaction with police.

Investigative responses

Although investigations have not received as much research attention as measures designed to prevent further domestic violence incidents, police expend considerable resources investigating and prosecuting domestic violence cases. Unsurprisingly, police are more likely to lay charges in cases they have invested more effort into investigating, although findings are mixed on whether effort alone translates into an increased likelihood of prosecution and conviction. Investigative effort is often directed to more serious cases and more vulnerable victims. There are obvious time and resource constraints associated with mandated agency-wide increases in investigative effort. Instead, enhancing the investigative skills of first responders and specialist investigators, and better targeting investigative effort, may be a more effective approach.

While not always translating into positive longer-term criminal justice outcomes, greater investigative effort can build victims' confidence in the police and encourage them to report further instances of domestic violence.

Current findings suggest that the availability of victim statements is associated with an increased likelihood of cases being accepted for prosecution and conviction, while witness statements appear to have little impact. Victim statements are more common following incidents in which children are present, and among victims who are employed, while victims of more serious violence appear more likely to subsequently retract their statements. Fear of the perpetrator, concerns about the welfare of children, embarrassment (especially in smaller communities) and attitudes towards the justice system are the most common reasons that victims retract statements to police. Police training, particularly training on interview techniques, can decrease the likelihood that victims will retract their statements.

Photographic evidence and body-worn cameras have shown promise. The few studies that have examined them suggest they increase the likelihood of prosecution and conviction. However, research does not support the effectiveness of other forms of evidence such as forensic or medical evidence, or emergency call recordings. There is some suggestion that non-investigative police responses—rapid alert technologies and risk assessment tools—might also have investigative value, but they remain largely untested.

Police decisions to charge

Outside of investigative and evidentiary factors, few studies have examined the influences on police decisions to charge. Consistent with the other domains, charges are more likely in more severe (ie violent and harmful) cases of domestic violence, where perpetrators have a prior history of domestic violence, and where they are uncooperative with first response officers. Charges are also more likely when there is an ongoing relationship between victim and perpetrator.

Police are under increasing pressure to lay evidence-driven as opposed to victim-driven charges, meaning that factors beyond the desires of the victim are prioritised in the decision to charge (or not). However, the heavy reliance on victim statements as evidence, and the difficulty of obtaining these where victims do not support prosecution, can hamper evidence-driven charging. Policies that mandate or encourage charging can lower victim satisfaction with police by reducing their sense of control over the criminal justice processing of their cases.

Victims have put forward a range of reasons for not wanting police to lay charges. Primary among these are fear of or ongoing commitment to the perpetrator, not wanting the perpetrator punished or preferring they receive help, financial dependence on the perpetrator, not wanting children to be without their father, a desire to shield children from the traumas of criminal justice system involvement, negative experience of criminal justice processes and a perception that prosecution will be unsuccessful. Victims are less likely to support charges where they are unemployed, do not have children with the perpetrator, were intoxicated at the time of the incident, and in cases of less severe domestic violence.

While police attitudes and behaviour appear to have a limited effect on whether or not victims support charges being laid, officers can take steps to minimise resistance to charges. Family and friends are the strongest influence on decisions to support charging, so enlisting the support of these other parties may be the best way for police to bolster support for charging among victims.

Conclusion

This review has identified a large body of evidence on the implementation and outcomes of police responses to domestic violence across the continuum from workforce development through to the decision to charge perpetrators. There is, however, a paucity of empirical research—particularly rigorous research—on the policing of domestic violence in Australia. More Australian research is needed on the implementation and outcomes of police responses to domestic violence.

Nevertheless, the available research demonstrates that the police response to domestic violence can have a significant impact on the likelihood of further violence, victim satisfaction and wellbeing, and criminal justice system outcomes. But, most importantly, this review has shown that simply doing more of what works is unlikely to lead to significantly better outcomes. Efforts to improve the policing of domestic violence should focus on optimising the implementation and effectiveness of police responses—specifically, targeting responses at the incidents, victims and perpetrators where they are likely to have the greatest impact; developing the workforce; embracing new technologies and innovative approaches; minimising bureaucratic or administrative barriers to effective police responses; and working closely with victims. By drawing on this well-established and rapidly growing evidence base, much of which has been incorporated into contemporary policing, the effectiveness of police responses to domestic violence can be enhanced.

Introduction

Domestic violence has been high on the agenda of both Commonwealth and state and territory governments in Australia in recent years. The high rates of self-reported victimisation, particularly among women (ABS 2017; Cox 2016), the impact on victims and their families (Ayre et al. 2016) and the significant human, social and economic costs associated with domestic violence (KPMG 2016; PricewaterhouseCoopers 2015) have led governments to invest heavily in a wide range of responses both in and out of the criminal justice system (eg Andrews & Richardson 2016). Critically, while there has been a push for evidence-based responses, and significant investment in research and evaluation (Breckenridge & Hamer 2014), gaps remain in our knowledge of how the criminal justice system, and in particular police, can best support victims and reduce repeat offending.

Police perform a vital role in addressing domestic violence. As gatekeepers to the criminal justice system, and first responders to many domestic violence incidents, police comprise a skilled workforce with specialist training, knowledge and experience. Consequently, there is growing recognition of the important role that police have in addressing domestic violence (Morgan 2011). There are more than 180,000 self-reported victims of domestic violence each year (ABS 2017). While not all of these victims report to police, it is estimated that police respond to more than 260,000 domestic violence incidents annually, equivalent to more than 700 incidents per day (Blumer 2016). Additionally, the number of incidents reported to police continues to rise (ABS 2017). The average amount of time police spend responding to domestic violence incidents is also much greater than for non-domestic violence related offences (CMC 2005). This means there is both significant opportunity to intervene and potential benefit to police (as well as to victims) in reducing the impact on police resources.

Recognising the importance of an agency-wide response to domestic violence, policing agencies across Australia have developed and published policies and operating procedures pertaining to domestic violence incidents (eg NSW Police Force 2013; Victoria Police 2014), while various guiding strategies and plans have also been put forward advocating for nationally consistent police responses (eg COAG 2016, 2011). Police in Australia have implemented a range of responses, including pro-arrest policies, the enforcement of protection orders (and breaches), coordinated community responses, risk assessment practices, specialist domestic violence units and liaison officers, proactive investigation and charging, education programs to encourage victims to report to police and participation in interagency cross-sector programs. These strategies typically aim to improve the safety of victims, reduce repeat victimisation and repeat offending, increase victim satisfaction with police and the justice process, encourage victims to report incidents to police, improve access to support services, and bring about criminal justice outcomes, or some combination of these goals.

Several recent large-scale reviews, including the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence (State of Victoria 2016) and the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence (2015) in Queensland, as well as earlier reviews of policing by the NSW Ombudsman (2006), Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC 2005), Victorian Auditor-General (2009) and WA Ombudsman (2003), have examined the role and effectiveness of police in responding to domestic violence incidents. While noting significant developments in recent decades, they identified areas for improvement. For example, the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence (State of Victoria 2016) highlights the need for cultural reform and a rethinking of the approach to workforce development, emphasising the importance of alternative training models and a focus on quality assurance. It also acknowledges the importance of police leadership, making recommendations to reform both strategic policies and administrative processes, promoting and fostering specialisation and career development, and embracing new technologies.

Similarly, the NSW Ombudsman (2006) highlighted the need for minimum standards, providing appropriate training and tools for frontline police, maintaining specialist domestic violence officers, supporting effective prosecutions, supporting vulnerable groups and encouraging effective interagency work with local courts and other partners (among other recommendations). These reviews have resulted in significant reform in the criminal justice response to domestic violence, particularly in recent years, including changes to the way that police prepare for, respond to and aim to prevent domestic violence incidents.

The scale of these reforms, coupled with the broader shift towards evidence-based policing (Sherman 2013), highlights the importance of a robust body of evidence to help inform police practices. Indeed, empirical evidence has clear and direct implications for police practice (Klein 2009). Systematic reviews and meta-analysis of existing research into several policing responses to domestic violence have been undertaken, including arrest (Berk, Campbell, Klap & Western 1992b; Maxwell, Garner & Fagan 2002; Vigurs et al. 2016), risk assessment tools (Brown 2011; Dutton & Kropp 2000; Messing & Thaller 2013; Wheller & Wire 2014), protection orders (Benitez, McNiel & Binder 2010; Taylor et al. 2015) and second responder programs (Davis, Weisburd & Taylor 2008). These reviews, while valuable, have largely been limited to the impact of these specific response types on repeat offending and revictimisation. A broader review of both the implementation and effectiveness of a wider range of responses can help to support police practice and contribute to an adequate evidence base to help inform decision making and future investment in violence prevention strategies.

Research aim and questions

The overall aim of the current study was to help inform the development and implementation of policing responses to domestic violence, focusing specifically on responses to violence between intimate partners, by reviewing, collating and summarising the available empirical evidence about these responses. While their effectiveness was one area of focus, the current study draws on the principles of realist evaluation and evidence synthesis (Pawson 2002a, 2002b; Pawson & Tilley 1997) in its concurrent examination of the mechanisms and moderators of their effectiveness, along with issues surrounding their implementation and cost-effectiveness. More specifically, this research addressed the following research questions:

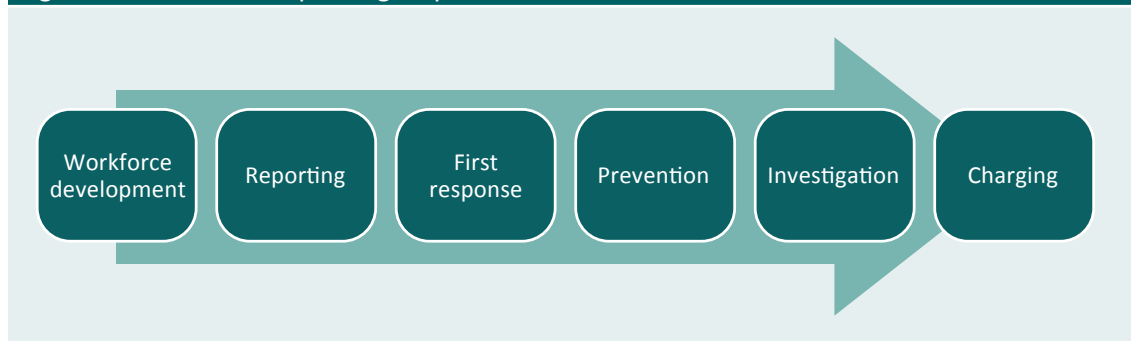
- What range and type of policing responses to domestic violence have been implemented in Australia and overseas?
- What research has been conducted into the implementation and effectiveness of these responses?
- What conclusions can be drawn about the methodological quality of this research?
- What lessons are there for the effective implementation of policing responses to domestic violence?
- What impact have the different responses to domestic violence implemented by police had on victim safety, repeat offending, victim reporting to police, satisfaction with police and the justice process and other important outcomes?

Scope of the review

Recognising the breadth of strategies implemented by police to address domestic violence, this review examined research into responses across the continuum of police involvement in these incidents. The continuum of police involvement was divided into six domains (Figure 1):

- Workforce development: training and education for police on the causes and dynamics of domestic violence, attitudinal change, and how to respond.
- Reporting: the factors influencing demand for police attendance at domestic violence incidents, and measures to encourage domestic violence reporting.
- First response: the actions taken by first response police officers to intervene at the scene of domestic violence incidents.
- Prevention: the actions taken by police shortly after a domestic violence incident to minimise the likelihood of further domestic violence.
- Investigation: the effort and techniques police employ to collect evidence in domestic violence cases, along with the types of evidence collected.
- Charging: police decisions to pursue charges against domestic violence perpetrators.

Figure 1: Continuum of policing responses to domestic violence



The focus was on police responses—that is, responses determined and implemented by police. There are other interventions outside of these domains that aim to address domestic violence both in and out of the criminal justice system that involve police in some capacity. This involvement can range from relatively minor and short term, such as providing data to help inform project planning, to being a major partner in project delivery. Examples of the latter are the interagency and integrated responses to violence against women that have been implemented in most jurisdictions (eg Multi-Agency Case Management in WA, Risk Assessment and Management Panels in Victoria), as well as ‘safe at home’ programs designed to prevent homelessness and improve the safety of victims. Both have been the subject of recent reviews and meta-evaluations (Breckenridge, Chung, Spinney & Zufferey 2016; Breckenridge, Rees, Valentine & Murray 2016; Stanley & Humphreys 2014). These types of responses have therefore not been included in the current review, but are recognised as an important feature of the overall response by police, in partnership with other agencies, to domestic violence.

Systematic reviews tend to prioritise experimental and quasi-experimental research because of the focus on understanding what works and the emphasis on internal validity. However, given the wide range of methods used in the study of policing and domestic violence, and the interest in both processes and outcomes, broader parameters were applied to the literature search and inclusion processes for the current review. Specifically, this review aimed to identify those studies that involved some degree of hypothesis testing using quantitative and/or qualitative data, and which were focused on police-led measures targeted at domestic violence. The exception to this was reporting to police, where the focus was on factors that influence demand for police services, as well as efforts by police to increase reporting.

The different definitions of ‘family violence’ and ‘domestic violence’ adopted by police agencies have been well documented (ABS 2017). The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 (COAG 2011) distinguishes between domestic violence and family violence. According to the National Plan:

“

Domestic violence refers to acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship...Domestic violence includes physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse. (COAG 2011: 2)

Family violence is a broader term that includes violence between family members. This review focuses on violence between current or former intimate partners, and therefore adopts the definition of domestic violence given in the National Plan (COAG 2011).

Method

The literature search and inclusion processes used in the current review are best described as drawing on the ‘systematic search and review’ and ‘realist synthesis’ approaches outlined by Booth, Sutton and Papaioannou (2016) in their typology of review methods. The search strategy was designed to be as exhaustive as possible (given time and resource constraints), capturing the maximum range of publicly released empirical research. An attempt was also made to summarise the methods of included studies, and use this information to qualify the findings presented and conclusions drawn. However, given the intended inclusion of studies employing a wide variety of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and the privileging of relevance over methodological rigour in the inclusion criteria, this summary stops short of methodological appraisal or study ranking on the basis of methods. The search strategy was developed and executed by the research team in collaboration with the AIC’s JV Barry Library.

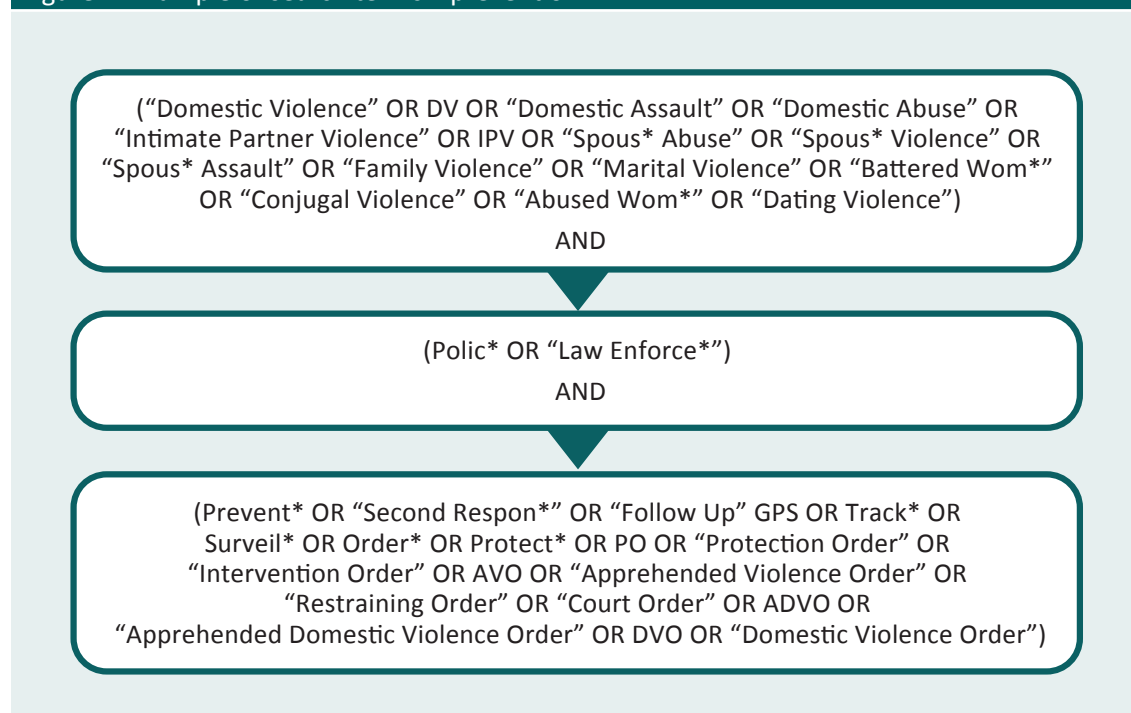
Search process

An initial scoping literature search was used to refine search terms and determine which literature databases to use in the primary search. Separate search terms were developed for studies in each policing domain. Each domain-specific search term adhered to the same basic structure, encompassing a domestic violence term, a policing term, and a domain-specific term, with Boolean operators (see Figure 2 for an example of search terms used to find research on prevention; see *Appendix A* for a full list of search terms). Ten academic and grey literature databases were searched:

- SocIndex;
- Australian Criminology Database (CINCH);
- JV Barry Library Catalogue;
- ProQuest;
- Criminal Justice Abstracts;
- US National Criminal Justice Reference Service;
- UK Home Office (current and archived publications);
- Canadian Policing Research Catalogue;
- Center for Problem-Oriented Policing; and
- Google Scholar.

Importantly, the search term structure and search strategy were modified to suit the unique options and functions of each database. For example, search terms were entered as is in databases that recognised Boolean operators, but were modified as required where this was not the case, or where character limits on searches prevented the entry of full search terms. Additionally, where it was possible to do so, searches were restricted by time and geographic parameters, in accordance with the inclusion criteria, and search results were sorted by relevance prior to perusal. Where more search results were returned, only the first 200 were assessed due to the time constraints on the research project.

Figure 2: Example of search terms—prevention



The literature search was carried out in two sweeps. The first sweep, carried out by the research team, involved using the standard search terms to locate studies that met the inclusion criteria in the targeted databases. The second sweep, carried out independently by research librarians after the first sweep, involved searching four individual policing journals (*Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management*, *Police Practice and Research*, *Policing and Society*, and *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*), and reference list searches of all peer-reviewed studies identified in the first sweep published between 2015 and 2016. The search was started in October and completed in November 2016.

Determining the eligibility of studies for full-text screening was based on a preliminary screening of study titles and abstracts/executive summaries. Studies were deemed eligible for full-text screening if they met the following criteria:

- they were published in English;
- they were published in or after 1980;
- they examined one or more police-led responses to domestic violence, or reporting of domestic violence to police;
- they contained quantitative and/or qualitative results. (Meta-analyses and other systematic reviews were eligible for inclusion in the review. Eligible studies contained in a review/meta-analysis are treated individually in methodological appraisals); and
- they used samples of victims, perpetrators, police, stakeholders, incidents, policies and/or legislation in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, the United Kingdom and/or Canada.

The initial scoping literature search identified evidence of an increase in both the research and policy focus on domestic violence across English-speaking countries in the 1980s. Additionally, in the interests of maximising the generalisability of this review's conclusions to Australian policing, the decision was made to limit its international focus to English-speaking countries with similar legal systems.

The full-text screening of studies was conducted to determine their inclusion in the final review. Studies were included if they met the following criteria:

- they contained sufficient information on research methods (research design, sampling methods, data collection strategies);
- they included quantitative and/or qualitative findings on the implementation and/or outcomes of a police response to domestic violence; and
- they were not duplicated (where peer-reviewed and grey versions of the same study were identified, only the peer-reviewed version was retained for inclusion in the final review).

Information extraction and synthesis

Methodological summary tools were developed for the purposes of coding the methodological features of studies included in the review (see Tables B1–B3 in Appendix B). Separate summary tools were used for quantitative and qualitative studies. The development of these tools drew on a number of more extensive methodological rating tools (eg Long & Godfrey 2004; Maryland Scientific Methods Scale, see Farrington et al. 2002; the Effective Public Health Practice Project’s Quality Assessment Tool for Quantitative Studies, see Thomas et al. 2004), incorporating items focused on methodological summary as opposed to appraisal and evaluation. The extent of agreement between researchers in their methodological summaries (ie inter-rater reliability) was examined using 15 randomly selected quantitative and qualitative studies included in the review. These studies were independently coded by each member of the research team using the relevant methodological summary tools, and ratings for each item were compared between researchers using Fleiss’ kappa (1=perfect agreement in the rating of an item by all researchers; 0=no agreement in the rating of an item). Fleiss’ kappa indicated perfect agreement ($\kappa=1.0$) across the three researchers for all but the following items on the quantitative study tool: ‘Research design’ ($\kappa=0.83$), ‘Sampling method’ ($\kappa=0.85$), and ‘Questionnaire/structured interview’ ($\kappa=0.92$). Further analysis of the ‘Research design’ item indicated that the major source of disagreement between researchers was in relation to the second (‘Evaluation—natural intervention’; $\kappa=0.28$) and third (‘Examination of relationships’; $\kappa=0.80$) options. Researchers were in perfect agreement in relation to options one (‘Evaluation—researcher-manipulated intervention’) and four (‘Descriptive’). Methodological summary results are presented in tabular and graphic formats.

Notes on the methods and findings of each study were taken using a series of domain-specific annotated bibliographies. Researchers were instructed to include critical details on data type and collection strategies, sampling method and sample composition, and relevant data analyses and findings in these notes. Findings were analysed in the current review through a series of narrative syntheses. Narrative synthesis is a less restrictive analytic approach to research reviews that allows for broader descriptions and critiques of a body of research (Booth, Sutton & Papaioannou 2016). Importantly, it accommodates variation in study focus, methods and types of data, as opposed to more restrictive analytic approaches that require methodological consistency (eg meta-analysis). It also allows for a summary and critique of the methodological quality of research in a given area. Given the breadth of the current review, and its focus on the methods as well as the findings of included studies, narrative synthesis was considered preferable to an analytic approach mandating a more specific focus. Importantly, information from the methodological summaries is also incorporated into these narrative syntheses where relevant to qualify research findings.

Limitations

The literature search and inclusion processes used in this review have several limitations. Time and resource constraints limited the research team's ability to undertake an exhaustive search of all possible literature sources, and certain measures adopted in response to these constraints (eg only screening the first 200 results of each search, limiting searches to electronic and publicly released studies) may mean that not all relevant studies were identified. Importantly, the second sweep search process helped to identify major studies that were missed. Given the review's broad focus, it was also necessary to define relatively prescriptive search terms and, as such, it is possible that some sources were overlooked. For example, articles that referenced broader criminal justice terms in the title or abstract, as opposed to policing terms, may have been either missed or excluded, even though some may have been relevant to the review.

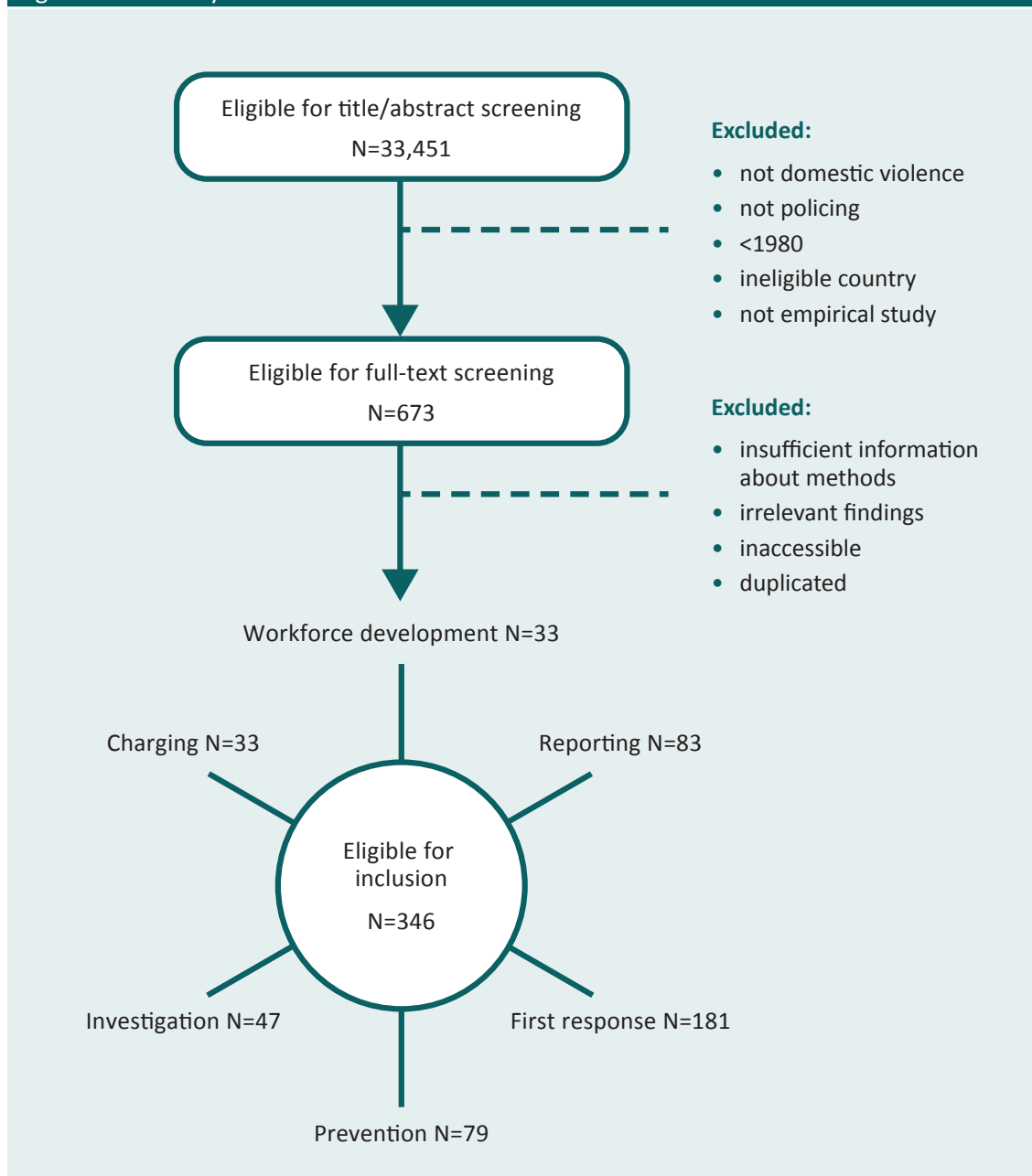
While the research located as part of this review generally distinguishes clearly between domestic and family violence, some studies do not. Studies that also focused on other forms of family violence were considered acceptable for inclusion in the review where findings in relation to domestic violence could be extracted, or where a mixed sample was composed overwhelmingly of domestic violence perpetrators, victims or incidents. Similarly, while this review is particularly interested in police responses to male-on-female domestic violence, it is acknowledged that a number of the studies may not distinguish between male-on-female and other, less commonly reported forms of domestic violence (ie female-on-male violence or violence in non-heterosexual relationships). Findings from the review may therefore not be generalisable to other forms of domestic violence.

Finally, it is noted that there is currently considerable research interest in domestic violence, and a consequent acceleration in research activity surrounding it. As a result, there is undoubtedly research published since the search was completed (November 2016) that could not be included in this study. Nevertheless, this review provides a valuable snapshot of the existing knowledge base, drawing on a large number of studies in each domain.

Search results

A total of 33,451 sources were identified during the first and second sweeps and subjected to title and abstract/executive summary screening (Figure 3). This resulted in 673 sources eligible for full-text screening. Following full-text screening, 346 studies were retained for inclusion in the review. Many studies covered more than one domain. More than half of the studies related to first response (n=181; 52%)—substantially more than any other domain. This was followed by reporting (n=83; 23%), prevention (n=79; 22%) and investigation (n=47; 13%) studies. Comparatively few studies examined workforce development and police decisions to charge (for each n=33; 9%). Most studies were from overseas (n=305; 88%), while two-thirds (n=221; 64%) had been peer reviewed. Detailed methodological summaries for each domain are included in *Appendix C*.

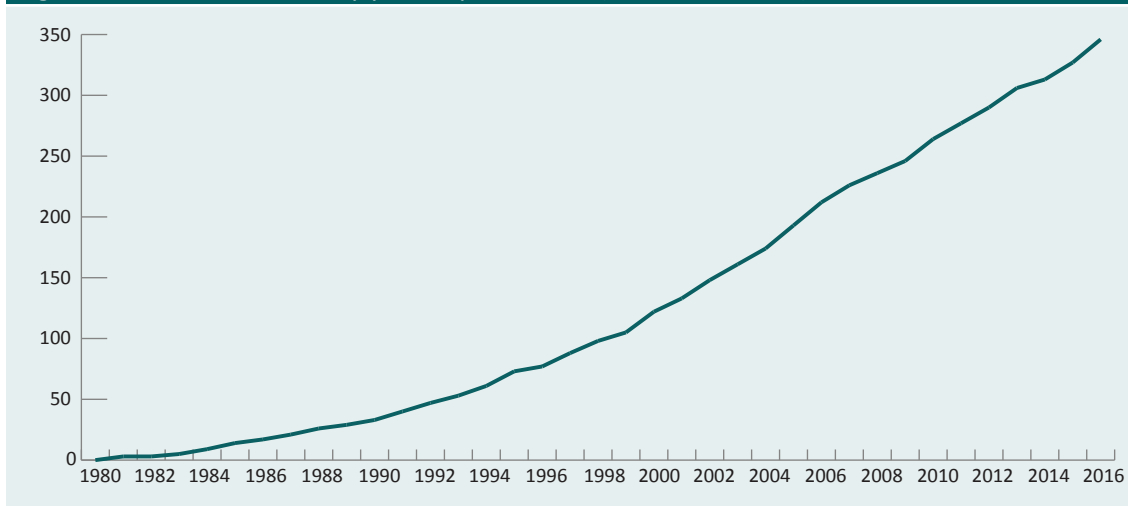
Figure 3: Summary of search results



Note: Some studies were classified into more than one policing domain

In terms of overall trends in the number of studies, there was a gradual increase in the number of studies published in the 1980s and 1990s, before a sharp increase in the number of studies published since 2000 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Included studies, by year of publication (cumulative total)



Workforce development

A major focus of reviews that examined the police response to domestic violence was on officer attitudes towards domestic violence incidents, victims and perpetrators; the behaviour of frontline responders; and the role of workforce training and development in addressing any perceived shortcomings in these (State of Victoria 2016). It is unsurprising, then, that efforts to change police officer attitudes and behaviour in dealing with domestic violence incidents have intensified in recent years, while specialist police domestic violence units with advanced training have also emerged and, in some cases, grown in size. Adopting a variety of methods and philosophies, training programs have focused on influencing both the attitudes and behaviour of police officers in dealing with domestic violence incidents, victims and perpetrators. The optimisation and formalisation of on-the-job training has also been explored, as have new online training methods.

There were 33 studies included in the review of workforce development; 57 percent of these studies employed quantitative research methods and 51 percent involved the analysis of qualitative data. This research tended to focus on police attitudes towards domestic violence training, the different modes of training delivery, and the impact of training on police officer attitudes and behaviour regarding domestic violence.

Review findings

Delivery of police training

Police generally understand the necessity and utility of domestic violence training, and support for training or further training in both Australia (Cunneen 2010; Horwitz et al. 2011; Sutton & Hatty 1988; State of Victoria 2016) and overseas (Moore, Rosales & Akins 1991; Stalnaker, Shields & Bell 1993) is high. More experienced officers have tended to exhibit higher levels of support for training than their junior counterparts (Gover, Paul & Dodge 2011; Toon et al. 2005), as have those who have already had more training (Breci 1989). Furthermore, there appears to be a general police preference for on-the-job training (Cromack 1995) and for the delivery of formal training programs by senior officers (Blaney 2010; Luna-Firebaugh et al. 2002). Huisman, Martinez and Wilson's (2005) case study of a domestic violence training program notes that the non-police trainers were to some extent perceived by police as lacking credibility, potentially decreasing the officers' receptivity to the lessons. However, while senior officers with experience handling domestic violence incidents can contribute unique perspectives and insights to training that junior officers find useful, there is the risk that they also harbour outdated attitudes or practices (Wareham 1993). As such, the importance of continuously updated training to inhibit the intergenerational transfer of ineffective and harmful attitudes and practices has been highlighted. Efforts have been made to combine on-the-job training measures with the temporary placement of junior officers with specialist police domestic violence units (State of Victoria 2016). Further, while police have generally indicated a preference for training by other officers, they also support some involvement of court personnel, victim advocates and prosecutors to clarify victim referral services, court processes, and investigative standards and procedures (Blaney 2010; HMIC 2015; Luna-Firebaugh et al. 2002; O'Sullivan, Roberts & Skoog 1994).

In terms of training format, police have expressed a preference for practical programs that cover police procedures and powers, and include examples and role-playing scenarios that afford opportunities to test problem-solving skills (Knowles 1996; O'Sullivan, Roberts & Skoog 1994; Poerio 1991; Sutton & Hatty 1988; Toon et al. 2005). There has been noticeably less support for training focused on understanding the nature, dynamics and causes of domestic violence (NSW Ombudsman 2006; Poerio 1991), and on changing attitudes and fostering cultural or ethnic sensitivity (Blaney 2010). However, it is important to note that these findings have emerged from predominately older studies with relatively small and selective samples. It is possible that, with growing acknowledgement of the prevalence and severity of domestic violence, these preferences have changed.

Despite some evidence for police support of additional refresher training (Blaney 2010; Moore, Rosales & Akins 1991; Sutton & Hatty 1988), practical limitations make this difficult. To receive training, officers must be removed from operational duties, and this has been identified as an obstacle to (NSW Ombudsman 2006; WA Ombudsman 2003). Similarly, the often limited time available to trainers means that they must be selective in the material they teach (Blaney 2010). O'Sullivan, Roberts and Skoog (1994) also note that the high staff turnover and internal movements within police agencies means a constant influx of new, inexperienced police in need of training.

Aside from on-the-job training, senior police have suggested the decentralised delivery of formal training at a local rather than regional level, in order to minimise time and travel costs (NSW Ombudsman 2006). Additionally, online training has been put forward as a cost-effective alternative to face-to-face training (O'Sullivan, Roberts & Skoog 1994), although police have noted the absence of practical exercises and opportunities to interact with trainers in these programs (HMIC 2015). As such, they may be useful primarily as refreshers or follow-ups to face-to-face training programs.

Impact of training on police officer attitudes and behaviour

In examining the impact of police domestic violence training, particularly on police attitudes, it is important to consider the competing influences of on-the-job experience and police organisational culture. In their interviews with Victorian officers, Segrave, Wilson and Fitz-Gibbon (2016) note a common attitude of pessimism and hopelessness towards domestic violence incidents, stemming largely from officers' experiences with victims they perceived to be uncooperative, inconsistent and unreliable. This may help to explain why a variety of studies, many adopting experimental and quasi-experimental designs (Blaney 2010; Loeb 1983; Newmark, Harrell & Adams 1995; Smithey, Green & Giacomazzi 2004, 2002) have found that domestic violence training in general has little impact on officers' broader attitudes regarding gender roles, sexuality, and the causes and dynamics of domestic violence.

Furthermore, while training has been shown to significantly improve officers' empathy with victims, understanding of the severity of domestic violence, and recognition of the necessity of police intervention to ensure victims' safety (Breci 1989; Buchanan & Chasnoff 1986; Buchanan & Perry 1985; Luna-Firebaugh et al. 2002; Stalans & Finn 1995; Toon et al. 2005), Luna-Firebaugh et al. (2002) found evidence of a gradual reversion to pre-training attitudes over time in post-training interviews with officers. This suggests that the influence of training wears off over time without reinforcement, and officer attitudes gradually succumb to the influences of colleagues and on-the-job experience. However, Toon et al.'s (2005) findings emerged after controlling for the number of years' experience, suggesting that training can have an impact on an officer's attitudes at any stage of their career, and further highlighting the importance of refresher training.

It should be noted that these studies examined a number of different training programs that varied in length and format, so it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the effectiveness of specific training components or practices. Further, while Smithey, Green and Giacomazzi's (2002) evaluation found no evidence that training changed officers' attitudes towards domestic violence, their attitudes were quite positive to begin with (ie liberal attitudes towards gender roles and beliefs that police should intervene in domestic violence). It is therefore important to consider officers' pre-training attitudes when interpreting the findings of this research.

Existing research, again including experimental and quasi-experimental studies (Breci & Simons 1987; Newmark, Harrell & Adams 1995; Ruff 2012; Scott 2005), has found that training programs, particularly those with substantial practical (Buchanan & Hankins 1983; but see Smithey, Green & Giacomazzi 2002) and on-the-job (State of Victoria 2016) components, have desirable impacts on a variety of police behaviours and responses. These include improved arrest practices, response times, investigative/bureaucratic practices and service responses for victims, along with decreases in the probability of officer injury and assault while dealing with domestic violence incidents. Again, these findings have emerged across training programs with a variety of different formats and lengths. Oehme, Prost and Saunders' (2016) evaluation of an online training program also found significant increases in the police-rated probability of desirable responses to hypothetical domestic violence scenarios post-training (eg referring victims to shelters, asking specific questions about victimisation history during interviews, arresting and making referrals for perpetrators). However, the impact of online training on actual police behaviour has yet to be thoroughly examined.

Critically, while police attitudes regarding domestic violence have been shown to influence their responses to it (eg Gracia, Garcia & Lila 2014), there has been little examination of the possible attitudinal mechanisms through which training affects responses. Using a structural equation model, Breci (1989) found that the amount of training officers had received indirectly influenced their responses to domestic violence incidents through attitudinal changes. Given the investment in training, and focus on police attitudes towards domestic violence, this is an important gap in understanding how training actually works.

Summary of key findings

- Existing research on police training and education in domestic violence consists primarily of specific training program evaluations, and grey literature canvassing police opinions regarding the training they receive. There has been little research examining the relative effectiveness of specific types of training or different training practices.
- Police are supportive of domestic violence training and education, although there appears to be a preference for practice-oriented training focused on response strategies over theoretical training on the causes and dynamics of domestic violence and desirable attitudes to it.
- Evaluations suggest that training (particularly practice-oriented training) can effectively influence police in their responses to domestic violence, and build appreciation for the importance of police intervention.
- Efforts are being made to formalise and enhance on-the-job training in domestic violence responses. This training is heavily practice-oriented, does not significantly interfere with operational duties, and gives junior officers the chance to learn from and observe more senior colleagues.
- Online and computer-based training has also emerged as an innovative means of training delivery that overcomes many of the logistical obstacles to traditional training delivery, although police have noted the absence of practice-based components and lack of face-to-face discussion in this training.

Reporting to police

The reporting of domestic violence victimisation to police is an important first step in triggering a criminal justice response, including the arrest of the perpetrator, prosecution and imposition of sanctions such as protection orders to deter future offending. Reporting may also provide a mechanism through which the victim and others affected by the violence can receive valuable support and assistance. Further, and of particular relevance to this review, the reporting of domestic violence to police is the point at which an incident, victim and perpetrator enter the police and criminal justice datasets analysed in much of the research on policing responses.

The reporting of domestic violence to police has increased substantially across Australia in recent years (eg BOCSAR 2017; State of Victoria 2016). However, despite this increase, certain victims remain unwilling or unable to contact law enforcement, and many domestic violence incidents remain unknown to the police. The 2016 Personal Safety Survey found that less than one in five female victims who had experienced violence from their current partner had ever contacted police (ABS 2017).

Eighty-three studies on reporting were included in the review. Almost 90 percent of these studies involved the analysis of quantitative data, particularly victimisation survey data, while around one-third of studies employed qualitative research methods. Research on the reporting of domestic violence has examined the predictors of reporting to police by victims and third parties, the efficacy of interventions designed to increase reporting rates, and the outcomes associated with reporting domestic violence. This research provides a valuable understanding of the factors that influence demand for police involvement in domestic violence, and has important implications for police practice and resource allocation.

Review findings

Factors that influence reporting to police

Motivations for reporting

There are many reasons domestic violence victims choose to seek police intervention. Victim motivations for calling police are often not straightforward, with most victims calling for a mixture of reasons (Hutchison 2003; Lewis et al. 2000). Nevertheless, victims commonly indicate they called the police to obtain immediate or short-term protection for themselves and, where present, their children (Apsler, Cummins & Carl 2002; CMC 2005; Felson et al. 2002; Hartley & Frohmann 2003; Hirschel & Hutchison 2003; Hoyle & Sanders 2000; Hutchison 2003; Langan & Innes 1986; Leisenring 2012; Mirrlees-Black 1999; Stewart, Langan & Hannem 2013; Young, Byles & Dobson 2000). Victims may also report out of a sense of duty (Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt 2011; Felson et al. 2002), or a desire to obtain help or counselling for the perpetrator (Lewis et al. 2000). Punitive reasons are less commonly cited (Coorey 1988; Felson et al. 2002; Hutchison 2003; Langan & Innes 1986).

Reasons for not calling the police in response to domestic violence typically include perceptions that the abuse is private or trivial (Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Felson et al. 2002; Gover et al. 2013; Langan & Innes 1986; Mouzos & Makkai 2004; Stavrou, Poynton & Weatherburn 2016), feelings of shame and embarrassment about the abuse (Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Coorey 1988; Luna-Firebaugh et al. 2002) or fear of perpetrator retribution (Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Coorey 1988; Langan & Innes 1986; Luna-Firebaugh et al. 2002; Stavrou, Poynton & Weatherburn 2016). Less commonly cited reasons given by victims for non-reporting include ongoing love for the perpetrator or a desire to protect them (Felson et al. 2002). Victims may also anticipate adverse consequences, including retribution from the perpetrator's family or friends; being stigmatised or blamed for the abuse; loss of the perpetrator's income; loss of housing, citizenship/residency or public benefits; the involvement of child protection services; damaging children's relationships with the perpetrator; and being punished for conduct unrelated to domestic violence such as drug use or prostitution (American Civil Liberties Union 2015; Cunneen 2010; Gover et al. 2013; Lewis et al. 2000; Lichtenstein & Johnson 2009; Luna-Firebaugh et al. 2002; Shim & Hwang 2005; Tam et al. 2016; Wachholz & Miedema 2000; Wolf et al. 2003).

Victim characteristics

Extensive research has explored the victim, perpetrator and relationship characteristics associated with an increased or decreased likelihood of reporting. Table 1 summarises the findings of 31 studies which examined each of these characteristics. The percentages displayed in Table 1 represent the findings in relation to each individual measure used in a study. This is necessary as several studies used multiple measures or levels of the same predictor variable, sometimes with mixed findings (see Table D1 in Appendix D for further detail on the direction of findings for specific studies).

Table 1: Predictors of reporting to police^a: Victim, perpetrator and relationship characteristics (%)

Independent variables ^b	Number of predictor variables (number of studies ^c)	Study finding (%) ^d		
		Increased reporting	Decreased reporting	Non-significant ^e
Victim characteristics				
Male	7 (7)	—	86	14
Younger ^f	24 (21)	8	25	67
White	17 (16)	—	53	47
Aboriginal/Indigenous	4 (4)	50	—	50
Immigrant/Non-English speaking background	3 (2)	33	33	33
English-speaking ability	2 (2)	—	—	100
High SES (combined) ^g	31 (30)	10	26	65
• High-level occupation	2 (2)	—	50	50
• Employed	12 (12)	—	8	91
• More highly educated	18 (17)	6	17	78
• Higher income	10 (9)	20	10	70
• Financial stability	3 (3)	—	67	33
• High SES	4 (4)	—	50	50
Pregnancy	5 (5)	20	—	80
Substance use	3 (2)	33	—	67
Living in rural location	6 (6)	33	—	67
Length of time in country (immigrant victims)	2 (2)	—	—	100
Physical disability and/or mental illness	4 (4)	75	-	25
Social support	3 (3)	—	—	100
Perpetrator characteristics				
Younger	3 (3)	—	33	67
Black	4 (3)	25	—	75
Same ethnicity as victim	2 (2)	100	—	—
Employed	3 (3)	—	—	100
More highly educated	2 (2)	—	50	50
Gang member	2 (2)	—	50	50
Alcohol use ^h	4 (3)	50	—	50
Drug use ^h	3 (2)	33	—	67
Substance abuse problem ⁱ	3 (2)	33	—	67

Table 1: Predictors of reporting to police^a: Victim, perpetrator and relationship characteristics (%)

Independent variables ^b	Number of predictor variables (number of studies ^c)	Study finding (%) ^d		
		Increased reporting	Decreased reporting	Non-significant ^e
Relationship and family characteristics				
Victim and perpetrator currently married	17 (16)	–	18	82
Former relationship	5 (5)	20	20	60
Victim and perpetrator living together	7 (7)	14	29	57
Children in family	8 (8)	38	–	63
Children living in home	4 (3)	50	–	50
Children witness abuse	7 (7)	100	–	–

a: Two studies examined both the likelihood of any police contact and frequency of police contact, in which case the results of both dependent variables are represented. All other studies examined the likelihood of any police contact only. Five studies referred to family and domestic violence perpetrated by family members as well as intimate partners. Three studies referred broadly to the likelihood of seeking legal help including calls to police

b: Only variables that were examined in more than one study are included in this table. Where papers included multiple multivariate models, only the findings of full (final/combined/pooled) models are included. Where studies show separate statistics for bystanders and victims, only victims are reported here

c: This table only includes quantitative studies involving statistical analysis of predictors of reporting to police. Six studies are excluded because statistical significance could not be established or did not specifically relate to reporting rates or frequency

d: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

e: Significance is determined at the $p < 0.05$ level

f: Non-significant includes one study by Barrett & St. Pierre (2011) where age was identified as significant but with an odds ratio of 1.00 (confidence interval 1.00, 1.00) indicating that the likelihood of reporting to police is equal across all ages

g: Socio-economic status of victims as indicated by the 6 subsequent variables combined

h: Alcohol use refers to whether the offender uses alcohol or not (Ackerman & Love 2014), and ratings of the perpetrator's frequency of drinking and drunkenness (Hutchison 2003). Drug use refers to whether the offender uses drugs or not—type or frequency not specified (Ackerman & Love 2014)—and whether the offender has used cocaine or cannabis (Hutchison 2003).

i: Substance abuse problem refers to whether the offender has a current drug and/or alcohol problem as reported by the victim

Source: AIC Policing domestic violence review, reporting, 2016–17 [computer file]

Gender

Domestic violence involving female victims is more likely to be reported to police both by the victims themselves (Dugan 2003; Felson et al. 2002; Kang & Lynch 2010; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh 2004; MacQueen & Norris 2016; Mirrlees-Black 1999) and by third-parties (Felson & Paré 2005) than domestic violence involving male victims. Male victims may feel embarrassment or discomfort discussing abuse by a female partner, believe that they should be able to manage the situation without police intervention, or simply not recognise that they are victims of abuse. Felson et al. (2002) also found that male victims of female perpetrators frequently consider their abuse to be trivial.

Ethnicity

North American research examining probability samples of the general population has found that white victims are significantly and consistently less likely to report domestic violence than other victims (Ackerman & Love 2014; Akers & Kaukinen 2009; Bachman & Coker 1995; Barrett & St. Pierre 2011; Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt 2011; Bonomi et al. 2006; Dugan 2003; Felson & Paré 2005; Felson et al. 2002; Hutchison 2003; Hutchison, Hirschel & Pesackis 1994). A small number of qualitative international studies have examined ethnic variation in reporting to police, focusing on how victim perceptions of police bias and stereotyping deter reporting (American Civil Liberties Union 2015; Wolf et al. 2003). Interestingly, little research has examined reporting among indigenous victims. An increased likelihood of reporting has been found among indigenous Canadians (Akers & Kaukinen 2009; Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt 2011; Barrett & St. Pierre 2011) but not Indigenous Australians (Birdsey & Snowball 2013). However, recent government reports (Cunneen 2010; State of Victoria 2016) have emphasised the unique barriers faced by Indigenous Australia victims in reporting domestic violence, including discriminatory practices and a lack of cultural competency by police. Apart from these studies with Indigenous samples, Australian research has not specifically investigated reporting among particular ethnic groups in Australia. However, two studies of large Australian samples (Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Meyer 2010) found no difference in reporting between victims who were from English-speaking and non-English-speaking backgrounds.

International research shows that immigrant victims may have lower reporting rates than non-immigrant victims, although immigrant victims are more likely to have a third party report on their behalf (Barrett & St. Pierre 2011; Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt 2011).

Conceptualising immigration differently, Barrett and St. Pierre's (2011) Canadian study found that speaking a language other than English at home was associated with increased reporting. In qualitative interviews and focus groups, females who had migrated to Canada and the United States from a range of countries identified several concerns associated with contacting police, including fear of deportation, insufficient legal information and linguistic barriers (Gillis et al. 2006; Shim & Hwang 2005; Wachholz & Miedema 2000).

Age

While many studies have found that older victims are more likely than younger victims to report domestic violence (Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt 2011; Dugan 2003; Felson et al. 2002; MacQueen & Norris 2016; Wiist & McFarlane 1998), a larger number have found no significant association (Ackerman & Love 2014; Akers & Kaukinen 2009; Bachman & Coker 1995; Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Bonomi et al. 2006; Hutchison 2003; Hutchison & Hirschel 1998; Johnson 1990; Kang & Lynch 2010; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh 2004; Lee, Park & Lightfoot 2010; Mirrlees-Black 1999; Novisky & Peralta 2015; Pitts 2014; Rhodes et al. 2011). Additionally, the only Australian study to examine this also found no association between age and reporting (Birdsey & Snowball 2013). Qualitative research in North America has found that cultural upbringing and a lack of income, transport, health and independence can act as barriers to older victims reporting (Lichtenstein & Johnson 2009). Quantitative research examining trends in reporting across the life course has also shown a general decline in reporting with age (Barrett & St. Pierre 2011; Bonomi et al. 2006; Lee, Park & Lightfoot 2010), although a spike in reporting rates has also been noted among victims in their mid to late forties (Akers & Kaukinen 2009; MacQueen & Norris 2016). This may account for the mixed findings that have emerged in studies comparing reporting rates across different age groups.

Socio-economic status

Inconsistent findings have emerged regarding the association of victim reporting and socio-economic status (SES). There is evidence that higher levels of reporting are associated with lower SES, as indicated by victims' occupation, unemployment, education level, income, financial security and use of public housing (Ackerman & Love 2014; Bachman & Coker 1995; Barrett & St. Pierre 2011; Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt 2011; Kang & Lynch 2010; MacQueen & Norris 2016; Mirrlees-Black 1999; Stavrou, Poynton & Weatherburn 2016). For example, recent Australian research has found that reporting physical or sexual assault to police was more likely among women who stated that they would not be able to raise \$2,000 in an emergency (Stavrou, Poynton & Weatherburn 2016). Research from the United States also suggests that ethnic differences in police notification are largely due to the SES differences between these groups (Ackerman & Love 2014). Nonetheless, a slightly larger number of studies indicate no relationship between reporting to police and various indicators of victim SES (Abel & Suh 1987; Akers & Kaukinen 2009; Bachman & Coker 1995; Berk et al. 1984; Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Bonomi et al. 2006; Dugan 2003; Felson et al. 2002; Hutchison 2003; Hutchison & Hirschel 1998; Johnson 1990; Kang & Lynch 2010; Lee, Park & Lightfoot 2010; Meyer 2010; Mirrlees-Black 1999; Novisky & Peralta 2015; Pitts 2014; Rhodes et al. 2011; Wiist & McFarlane 1998; Young, Byles & Dobson 2000).

While no qualitative research in Australia or internationally has specifically examined SES variation in reporting to police, qualitative studies in North America describe how victims' willingness to call police can be negatively influenced by fears of police SES bias (American Civil Liberties Union 2015; Wolf et al. 2003) and the potential financial consequences of losing a sole provider (American Civil Liberties Union 2015; Wachholz & Miedema 2000). There is an apparent contradiction between the findings of quantitative studies, where reporting is more likely among lower SES victims, and qualitative studies, which emphasise that lower SES groups are reluctant to engage police. Several explanations have been put forward for why higher SES victims may be less likely to want to involve the police. People living in areas with lower SES may be less sensitive to the possible reputational damage of revealing family problems, or a lack of social and financial resources may force them to call the police rather than seeking help from alternative sources (Ackerman & Love 2014).

Disability

Limited research has examined other victim demographic factors. A small number of international studies indicate that victims are more likely to seek help from the police if they have mental or physical disabilities (Barrett & St. Pierre 2011; Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt 2011; Lee, Park & Lightfoot 2010), although Australian research indicates no significant association between disability or long-term health conditions and reporting (Stavrou, Poynton & Weatherburn 2016). While these findings are encouraging, the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence (2016) heard that under-reporting by people with a disability remains a problem in Australia, with police sometimes not recognising domestic violence where disability is present. Additionally, victims with disability can experience unique difficulties in reporting, such as hearing-impaired victims requiring interpreters to call the police (State of Victoria 2016).

Location

Qualitative Australian research has also noted several unique barriers to reporting that domestic violence victims face in rural communities, which are often characterised by strong personal ties and geographic isolation (Coorey 1988; Ragusa 2012). These barriers include poor availability of victim services, victim fears of damage to their reputation in the community, retribution by the perpetrator's family or others in the community, close personal ties between local police and perpetrators, police confidentiality issues, and a tendency of police in these communities to rely on their own discretion rather than applying the law uniformly (Coorey 1988; Ragusa 2012). Interestingly, Australian and international quantitative research suggests that victims in rural communities are actually more likely than urban victims (Barrett & St. Pierre 2011; Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt 2011) or as likely to report domestic violence as victims in urban areas (Akers & Kaukinen 2009; Bachman & Coker 1995; NSW Task Force on Domestic Violence 1981; Stavrou, Poynton & Weatherburn 2016; Young, Byles & Dobson 2000). Similar to lower SES domestic violence victims, victims in rural communities may report to police out of desperation, due to the poor availability of alternative options for assistance in these communities.

Pregnancy

Research examining the impact of pregnancy on victim reporting has been limited and has generated mixed findings, likely due to methodological and sampling differences. Based on interviews with 300 Australian victims attending domestic violence services who had experienced a range of abuse types, Birdsey and Snowball (2013) found that eight percent of victims were pregnant at the time of the latest incident, although pregnancy had no statistically significant impact on the likelihood of reporting. Also using an Australian population, Meyer (2010) examined a victim and non-victim sub-sample of over 6,600 women from the International Violence Against Women Survey. There was no significant difference in reporting between women who were pregnant and those who were not pregnant at the time of the most recent incident. However, this survey only examined physical and sexual abuse. Research from the United States indicates that pregnancy increases reporting to police, but the generalisability of this finding is limited as it is based on 646 Latin American victims of intimate partner violence who were referred to specialised women's services (Pitts 2014).

Perpetrator characteristics

A limited amount of research has examined the influence of perpetrator characteristics on reporting domestic violence to police. Perpetrator age does not appear to have any influence on reporting (Ackerman & Love 2014; Kang & Lynch 2010). While the specific ethnicity of a perpetrator has no association with police reporting (Bonomi et al. 2006; Dugan 2003), victims appear to be significantly more likely to call police if the perpetrator is the same ethnicity or nationality as themselves (Dugan 2003; Pitts 2014). Research by Felson et al. (2002) suggests that when perpetrators are older and white, non-reporting victims are more likely to cite a desire to protect the perpetrator. While there is a lack of contemporary research looking at perpetrator SES, some studies suggest that higher perpetrator education is associated with reduced reporting to police (Berk et al. 1984; NSW Task Force on Domestic Violence 1981). There is no association between perpetrator employment or income and victims' decision to report to police (Abel & Suh 1987; Berk et al. 1984; Johnson 1990), although Belknap and Sullivan (2002) found that victims' future intention to involve police was predicted by perpetrators' contribution to household income. These findings are consistent with qualitative research that emphasises victims' economic dependence on their abusers and fears of damage to their family reputation (Wolf et al. 2003). These concerns are likely to be exacerbated for victims whose partners are highly educated and the primary source of income.

Relationship characteristics

A number of studies have examined the association between victim reporting and the characteristics of victim–perpetrator relationships. Some studies have found that married victims are less likely to report abuse, or report abuse less frequently, than victims who are de facto, separated or divorced from the perpetrator (Akers & Kaukinen 2009; Bonomi et al. 2006; Young, Byles & Dobson 2000), although the majority have found no association (Ammar et al. 2005; Bachman & Coker 1995; Berk et al. 1984; Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Bonomi et al. 2006; Dugan 2003; Hickman & Simpson 2003; Hutchison 2003; Johnson 1990; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh 2004; Meyer 2010; Mirrlees-Black 1999; Pitts 2014; Rhodes et al. 2011). Australian research by Mouzos and Makkai (2004) and Stavrou, Poynton and Weatherburn (2016) found that victims who had experienced abuse by former partners were more likely to call the police than those who had been abused by their current partners, while North American research by Coulter et al. (1999) found the opposite, and three studies have found no difference between current and former partners (Ammar et al. 2005; Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Dugan 2003).

Cohabitation

What appears to be more important than the victim–perpetrator relationship is their living arrangement. Victims who live with the perpetrator are consistently less likely to notify the police than those living apart (Ackerman & Love 2014; MacQueen & Norris 2016) and less likely to intend to use the criminal justice system in future (Belknap & Sullivan 2002). Some research suggests that this effect even extends to bystanders, who are less likely to report violence among couples who live together (Berk et al. 1984). These findings are consistent with qualitative research, which indicates that perpetrators may have increased opportunity for intimidation and control over cohabitating victims (CMC 2005; Coorey 1988; Fleury et al. 1998; Wolf et al. 2003). However, four other studies have found no relationship between victim–perpetrator living arrangements and reporting to police (Berk et al. 1984; Mirrlees-Black 1999; Rhodes et al. 2011; Wiist & McFarlane 1998).

Children

Many quantitative and qualitative studies have attempted to understand how the presence of children within a relationship influences reporting of domestic violence. While many quantitative studies have found that children increase the likelihood of reporting (Ackerman & Love 2014; Dugan 2003; Johnson 1990; Young, Byles & Dobson 2000), a similar number also indicate that there is no relationship (Abel & Suh 1987; Akers & Kaukinen 2009; Johnson 1990; Rhodes et al. 2011; Wiist & McFarlane 1998). Similarly, some quantitative studies show that having children living in the family home at the time of the incident increases reporting (Bonomi et al. 2006), while others show no effect (MacQueen & Norris 2016; Novisky & Peralta 2015). What appears to be most important, but is not accounted for in these studies, is whether the children actually witness or know about the abuse, in which case police reporting increases significantly (Akers & Kaukinen 2009; Ammar et al. 2005; Berk et al. 1984; Dugan 2003; Mirrlees-Black 1999; Pitts 2014). This is supported by the findings of one quantitative Australian study which examined the presence of children (Meyer 2010).

Incident characteristics and historical factors

There is also considerable research examining the effect of incident-level characteristics and historical factors on reporting behaviour. The findings of 31 studies which examined each of these characteristics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Predictors of reporting to police^a: Incident-specific and historical factors (%)

Independent variables ^b	Number of predictor variables (number of studies ^c)	Study finding (%) ^d		
		Increased reporting	Decreased reporting	Non-significant ^e
Incident-specific situational factors				
Witnesses other than children	4 (3)	75	–	25
Occurred in family home	3 (3)	67	–	33
Perpetrator intoxicated	7 (6)	57	–	43
Victim intoxicated	2 (2)	–	50	50
Perpetrator injured	2 (2)	–	50	50
Incident-specific abuse variables				
Physical injury/medical attention received	18 (18)	72	11	17
Weapon present/used	8 (7)	75	–	25
Property damage	6 (5)	50	–	50
Emotional reaction to incident	5 (5)	80	–	20
Victim perceived the abuse as a crime/not their fault	2 (2)	100	–	–
Type of abuse/assault ^f				
Physical	5 (5)	100	–	–
Sexual	1 (1)	–	100	–
Psychological	2 (2)	–	100	–
Severe abuse	8 (5)	75	13	13
Victim history of abuse				
History of abuse	3 (3)	33	–	67
Psychological damage	2 (2)	–	50	50
Past physical injuries from violence	4 (3)	50	–	50
Past victimisations by same perpetrator (frequent/multiple)	13 (13)	46	31	23
Long duration of violence/long-term abusive relationship	6 (6)	17	33	50
Criminal justice variables				
Victim has reported to police previously	2 (2)	100	–	–
Victim has positive perceptions of police/criminal justice system	3 (2)	33	33	33
PO/AVO in place at time of incident	2 (2)	100	–	–
Perpetrator has arrest record/prior police contact	7 (6)	43	–	57

a: Two studies examined both the likelihood of any police contact and frequency of police contact, in which case the results of both dependent variables are represented. All other studies examined the likelihood of any police contact only. Five studies referred to family and domestic violence perpetrated by family members as well as intimate partners. Three studies referred broadly to the likelihood of seeking legal help including calls to police

b: Only variables that were examined in more than one study are included in this table. Where papers included multiple multivariate models, only the findings of full (final/combined/pooled) models are included. Where studies show separate statistics for bystanders and victims, only victims are reported here

c: This table only includes quantitative studies involving statistical analysis of predictors of reporting to police. Six studies are excluded because statistical significance could not be established or did not specifically relate to reporting rates or frequency

d: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. Where studies found mixed results for two measures or levels of the same variable (eg alcohol use/drug use; physical/sexual/emotional abuse), both findings are represented here

e: Significance is determined at the $p < 0.05$ level

f: Six studies compared reporting rates by the type of abuse, the results of which are subsequently divided into physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Only one study examined sexual abuse, which is compared to physical abuse only

Source: AIC Policing domestic violence review, reporting, 2016–17 [computer file]

Quantitative international research has consistently shown that reporting of domestic violence to police is more likely when the perpetrator uses a weapon (Ackerman & Love 2014; Akers & Kaukinen 2009; Bonomi et al. 2006; Dugan 2003; Felson et al. 2002), when other adults witness the incident (Berk et al. 1984; Dugan 2003; Pitts 2014), when the perpetrator damages property (Akers & Kaukinen 2009; Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Hutchison 2003) or when the perpetrator is intoxicated at the time of the incident (Ackerman & Love 2014; Akers & Kaukinen 2009; Dugan 2003; Novisky & Peralta 2015). Conversely, victim substance use at the time of the incident is associated with a lower likelihood of reporting by victims and third parties (Kingsnorth & MacIntosh 2004). Qualitative research in Australia (CMC 2005; Coorey 1988) and internationally (Fleury et al. 1998; Wolf et al. 2003) has also identified a number of immediate situational barriers to reporting, including the perpetrator physically restraining victims from leaving the house, removing or destroying phones or other communication devices, and disabling transport.

Type of abuse

There is a relationship between victims' decision to call the police and the characteristics of the abuse they have experienced. Physical injury is the most consistent predictor of reporting domestic violence to police in both Australian research (Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Stavrou, Poynton & Weatherburn 2016; Young, Byles & Dobson 2000) and international research (Ackerman & Love 2014; Akers & Kaukinen 2009; Bachman & Coker 1995; Barrett & St. Pierre 2011; Dugan 2003; Felson et al. 2002; Lee, Park & Lightfoot 2010; MacQueen & Norris 2016; Mirrlees-Black 1999; Pitts 2014). Physical injury is also linked to increases in both victim and third-party reporting (Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt 2011; Berk et al. 1984). There is also evidence of a stronger correlation between victim self-reports and police records for frequency of physical violence than for frequency of verbal abuse and menacing behaviour (Harris et al 2001). Previous experiences of physical injury also increase the likelihood of abuse being reported (Akers & Kaukinen 2009; Bonomi et al. 2006).

Physical abuse is more likely to be reported than sexual abuse (Stavrou, Poynton & Weatherburn 2016), and physical and/or sexual abuse is more likely to be reported than verbal abuse (Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Coulter et al. 1999), emotional abuse (Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Coulter et al. 1999), psychological or mental abuse (Birdsey & Snowball 2013), controlling behaviour or social isolation (Birdsey & Snowball 2013) and harassment, stalking or intimidation (Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Coulter et al. 1999).

Using validated scales to assess victims' exposure to abusive behaviours, quantitative research in Australia (Young, Byles & Dobson 2000) and overseas (Bonomi et al. 2006; Johnson 1990; Wiist & McFarlane 1998) has shown that victims of severe physical and/or psychological abuse are more likely to report to police or seek other forms of legal protection than those who have experienced less injurious forms of physical and/or psychological abuse. This is not the case for sexual coercion and abuse, in which case the severity does not increase the likelihood that a victim will report (Bonomi et al. 2006). Abel and Suh (1987) also found that victims who reported feelings of anger, surprise, shame, fear, powerlessness and manipulation were twice as likely to call the police as those who did not express these feelings.

Frequency and duration of abuse

Quantitative findings are mixed with regard to how the frequency of abuse influences reporting to police. Most research shows that victims who endure more frequent abuse are more likely to come to the attention of the police (Barrett & St. Pierre 2011; Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt 2011; Berk et al. 1984; Johnson 1990; Kang & Lynch 2010; MacQueen & Norris 2016), although some studies have found the opposite effect (Ackerman & Love 2014; Ammar et al. 2005; Bachman & Coker 1995; Birdsey & Snowball 2013). Qualitative victim interviews and surveys support the finding that police reports are more common for more frequent and severe abuse. Victims indicate that decisions to contact the police were usually made when they 'couldn't take it anymore' or the violence escalated to serious physical trauma (Gillis et al. 2006).

Reporting to police appears less likely both at the start of an abusive relationship and after it has continued for many years. Some international research shows that longer relationships are associated with increased reporting (Lee, Park & Lightfoot 2010), with victims who have experienced abuse for longer than a year being more likely to report than those who have experienced abuse for less time (Abel & Suh 1987). At the same time, Johnson's (1990) study shows that victims are more likely to report when an abusive relationship has lasted less than 10 years compared with a decade or more. It may be that incidents are most likely to be reported when they occur in abusive relationships that are established but not considerably longstanding. The reduced likelihood of reporting among victims of long-term abuse is consistent with victims' accounts from qualitative research. Women describe the damaging cumulative effect of domestic violence (Wolf et al. 2003) where they are so invested or dependent in the abusive relationship that they 'don't know how to live without it' (Lee, Park & Lightfoot 2010).

Perceptions of the criminal justice system

Australian (CMC 2005; Coorey 1988; Ragusa 2012; State of Victoria 2016) and international (American Civil Liberties Union 2015; Gover et al. 2013; Montgomery 1991; Wolf et al. 2003) qualitative research has established that some victims are reluctant to seek police assistance due to negative impressions of and experiences with the criminal justice system. While this qualitative research indicates that police responses can have an impact on future victim reporting, quantitative victim surveys suggest that under-reporting in Australia is seldom the result of previous negative experiences with police (Birdsey & Snowball 2013; CMC 2005). Furthermore, quantitative studies have found no link between reporting to police and victim arrest records (Abel & Suh 1987), perceptions of the criminal justice system or the local police (MacQueen & Norris 2016), or perceptions of procedural justice (Hickman & Simpson 2003). As victims are most likely to contact police for immediate self-protection, MacQueen and Norris (2016) suggest that judgements of the police and the criminal justice system may not be as relevant to domestic violence victims' decisions as it is for victims of other criminal behaviour.

Interventions to increase reporting to police

Policy and legislation

A number of interventions have been implemented to increase the reporting of domestic violence. Australian and North American research has demonstrated that police policies and domestic violence laws can influence the rates at which victims and third parties report to police. When Victoria Police introduced a Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence, specifying a mandatory police response with new investigative guidelines, an audit of the code's implementation found that the number of family violence incident reports rose by over 14 percent in four years (Victorian Auditor-General 2009).

Dugan (2003) examined the effect of US state laws on the reporting of domestic violence. This included legislation that:

- allowed victims who do not live with the perpetrator to petition for a protection order;
- authorised the court to award temporary custody of children to the victim once a protection order is issued;
- increased judicial discretion over the sanctions available in cases of protection order violation, including the ability to apply misdemeanours, civil or criminal contempt, or a combination of sanctions;
- classified protection order violation as a felony;
- mandated arrest for protection order violations; and
- involved confiscating the perpetrators' firearms once a protection order is served.

Interestingly, only two of these six laws produced significant results, which yielded mixed effects on reporting. In states classifying the violation of protection orders as a felony, incidents were 60 percent more likely to be reported to police. This appears to be driven by higher rates of third-party reporting, rather than a significant increase in reporting by victims. Conversely, police were 13 percent less likely to receive reports in states that mandated arrest for protection order violations. This suggests the public is less inclined to seek police assistance for domestic violence when more punitive police responses are guaranteed.

Reporting by medical professionals

Research has also examined the overlap between healthcare protocols and the reporting of domestic violence to police. In particular, there is growing interest in mandatory reporting laws whereby medical professionals are required to report suspected domestic violence to police (Cunneen 2010). Mandatory reporting requirements are currently legislated in Tasmania and the Northern Territory and are being considered in Queensland (Cunneen 2010). While there is no empirical evidence on the outcomes associated with mandatory reporting in Australia, international research suggests that the laws may be having a positive impact on early detection of domestic violence (Bledsoe et al. 2004), and that the reports are supported by the victims for whom they are made (Antle et al. 2010). For example, Bledsoe et al. (2004) reviewed a random sample of domestic violence reports stored in a mandatory reporting database, and found that one-third of cases were the first reports received about that victim and two-thirds of reports received some level of substantiation. Qualitative interviews conducted with victims identified through mandatory reports revealed that victims were generally happy the reports had been made on their behalf and could not think of any negative aspects to the law (Antle et al. 2010).

However, research has also found that mandatory reporting may discourage some women from using health services after domestic violence incidents (Cunneen 2010). Smith (2000) found that one in five women reported that they would be less willing to seek medical attention if they knew medical professionals were mandated to report. As such, a recent evaluation of criminal justice responses to domestic violence in Queensland (Cunneen 2010) recommended that mandatory reporting by Queensland health workers not be introduced without further investigation of its specific impacts on Indigenous women.

Research has identified several characteristics which influence the likelihood of victims seeking future medical attention once mandatory reporting laws are in place. Women who report that they would be more likely to seek medical attention tend to be non-white, to have children, to have called the police previously and to have experienced a higher frequency of physical abuse over the course of their relationship (Smith 2000; Smith & Winokur 2004). In contrast, women who report that they would be less likely to seek medical attention tend to be single and to have a history of domestic violence aside from their current situation (Smith & Winokur 2004). These findings highlight the distinction between prior history and extent of abuse, where women who have been the victim of frequent abuse are more likely to desire outside intervention than those who have experienced an episodic incident of domestic violence in the past (Smith & Winokur 2004).

Routine enquiry is another domestic violence initiative in the health profession. It involves asking all people within certain parameters about their experience of domestic violence, regardless of visible signs of abuse. A two-year trial of routine enquiry in health and social care services in Britain (Hester & Westmarland 2005) found that the proportion of domestic violence cases that were identified tripled from the first to second year.

Specialist teams

There is promising Australian evidence regarding the effect of specialised police teams on the reporting of domestic violence. An evaluation of the Australian Capital Territory's Woden Patrol Pilot Project, which introduced specialised domestic violence officers, found a spike in the reporting of domestic violence incidents that carried over into other areas as the program was expanded (Holder & Caruana 2006). Cunneen (2010) noted that Indigenous Police Liaison Officers directly influence the likelihood of domestic violence being reported through community education and local awareness raising.

Several studies have investigated the effect of second responder programs on victim reporting behaviour (Casey et al. 2007; Davis & Taylor 1997; Davis, Weisburd & Hamilton 2007; Hovell, Seid & Liles 2006; Pate, Hamilton & Annan 1992; see Box 1 for Davis, Weisburd & Taylor's meta-analysis of these studies). Second responder programs refer to interagency teams which follow up with domestic violence victims who have come into contact with law enforcement (eg Hartley & Frohmann 2003; Sutton & Hatty 1988; Vallely et al. 2005). These teams attempt to educate and empower victims (Davis, Weisburd & Hamilton 2007), and can include police, lawyers, court administrators, victim advocates and counsellors (Pate, Hamilton & Annan 1992; Vallely et al. 2005).

Three studies have employed true experimental designs that analyse both victim self-reports and official police reports for households randomly assigned to second responder and control conditions (Davis & Taylor 1997; Davis, Weisburd & Hamilton 2007; Pate, Hamilton & Annan 1992). Davis and Taylor (1997) found that, while victims in the second responder condition reported no change in domestic violence incidents in self-report surveys, police records indicate that they called the police significantly more frequently and promptly in response to subsequent incidents. Pate, Hamilton and Annan (1992), however, found the second responder program had no effect on police reports, arrest records or victim follow-up interviews, implying that the intervention did not increase subsequent victim reporting to police. Similarly, Davis, Weisburd and Hamilton (2007) found no difference between the second responder and control conditions for reports of new abuse in either victim surveys or police reports.

Technology

Lastly, new technologies have been developed to increase the speed and convenience of victim reporting. A recent British study (Natarajan 2016) examined how Technical SOS (TecSOS) mobile phones were used by victims of domestic violence in reporting to police. TecSOS handsets enable users to push a central button which makes immediate contact with emergency services, sends authorities the victim's approximate GPS location, and starts recording audible evidence (Natarajan 2016). The study found that TecSOS interventions improved the speed and convenience of reporting to police, improved police response times, increased victims' feelings of safety, and potentially reduced reoffending through deterrence.

Box 1: Davis, Weisburd and Taylor's (2008) meta-analysis of second responder programs

Davis, Weisburd and Taylor (2008) examined 10 randomised control trials and quasi-experimental evaluations of second responder programs. Second responder programs target victims of domestic violence. They involve a team, usually consisting of a police officer and a victim advocate, who follow up on the initial police response to a domestic violence incident and provide the victim with information on services and legal options and may also advise perpetrators (where present) of the legal consequences of further violence.

These programs attempt to encourage victims to report incidents of domestic violence to police and to prevent repeat victimisation. The evidence about the impact of these programs is mixed. Results from the meta-analysis showed that second responder programs increased the willingness of victims to report incidents of domestic violence to police. Across the eight experimental and quasi-experimental studies that included outcome measures based on police reports, the average odds of reporting new abuse to the police were 23 percent higher for households assigned to a second responder condition. However, results also suggest that second responder programs do not reduce the likelihood of domestic violence revictimisation (see Box 4).

Impact on victims of reporting to police

International literature on the outcomes associated with reporting domestic violence has predominately focused on reoffending and future reporting to police. North American research suggests that reporting is associated with reduced chances of domestic violence recurrence (Felson, Ackerman & Gallagher 2005; Langan & Innes 1986; Rhodes et al. 2011). Felson, Ackerman and Gallagher (2005) analysed 10 years of longitudinal data where each victim was interviewed six times over three years and found that perpetrators were 89 percent less likely to reoffend when an incident was reported to the police. As there was no significant effect of arrest on repeat victimisation, it was argued that reporting deters perpetrators from committing another assault, regardless of whether the police make an arrest (Felson, Ackerman & Gallagher 2005). While perpetrator retaliation is a commonly cited fear of victims, deterring them from reporting domestic violence, research shows that domestic violence incidents rarely become more serious (Langan & Innes 1986) or frequent (Felson, Ackerman & Gallagher 2005) following a police report.

Research has also shown that victims who have reported are more likely to do so again in the future (Apsler, Cummins & Carl 2003; Miller & Krull 1997; Rhodes et al. 2011). Rhodes et al. (2011) found that, of victims who had reported a domestic violence incident only to experience subsequent violence, nearly 70 percent also reported this subsequent violence. Apsler, Cummins and Carl (2003) also found that 81 percent of domestic violence victims in police stations stated that they 'definitely would' call the police in the future for a similar incident. Similarly, Boivin and Leclerc (2016) compared cases in which victims reported to police and wanted to press charges and cases where third parties reported to police and the victim did not want to press charges. They found that victims in the first group were significantly more likely to have reported experiences of domestic violence to police previously.

This body of evidence demonstrates clear positive outcomes associated with the reporting of domestic violence to law enforcement. However, no Australian studies have attempted to replicate these findings. With the exception of the mandatory reporting study by Antle et al. (2010), no research has specifically addressed whether reporting to police increases victim feelings of safety. This is another clear gap in the literature, particularly as victims are most likely to cite self-protection as a motive for calling police. One study by Langille (2010) found that the nature and frequency of police contact was not associated with rates of depression or post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms above and beyond abuse severity and other risk factors. While further research—particularly Australian research—may be necessary, the existing evidence base supports efforts to encourage victims to report to police and increase generally low reporting rates.

Summary of key findings

- Reporting research has predominately focused on identifying the factors that impact on the likelihood of domestic violence victims reporting to the police. Less research attention has been paid to interventions designed to increase domestic violence reporting and the outcomes associated with these reports. This research has typically relied on quantitative data using victim questionnaires and structured interviews. While this has produced some consistent findings, the evidence base is largely inconsistent in terms of research questions, the way variables have been measured, and the samples used.
- Australian research is comprised predominately of government reports evaluating police responses to domestic violence, yet also encompasses a range of research methods such as large-scale quantitative victim surveys and small qualitative studies of rural towns. More rigorous Australian empirical research is needed.
- Victim non-reporting is often due to a perception that the abuse is private or trivial, feelings of embarrassment or shame, and fear of the perpetrator or potential adverse consequences. Reporting is less likely when victims are male, white, young, living with the perpetrator, and of a high SES. It is also less likely when perpetrators are younger, white or of a different nationality to the victim, and more highly educated. Incidents are more likely to be reported when they are witnessed or known about by children, involve a weapon, occur in the family home, involve an intoxicated perpetrator and sober victim, involve physical or sexual abuse, result in physical injury, involve severe and frequent abuse, and cause a strong emotional reaction in the victim.
- Several interventions appear to increase reporting rates, although more empirical research is needed. Strategic policy interventions such as police codes of practice for domestic violence and legislation that encourages prosecution of protection order breaches appear to increase reporting. In contrast, mandatory arrest may have the effect of reducing victim reporting. Specialised police teams and interagency second responder programs have also been linked to increased reporting among repeat victims. Mandatory reporting and routine enquiries by medical professionals are effective at identifying domestic violence cases, although routine enquiry protocols may be preferable for certain types of victims.
- Victim reporting is linked to reduced reoffending and increased future reporting, and is not associated with perpetrator retaliation.

First response

Frontline police officers are the first responders to tens of thousands of domestic violence incidents every year. How they respond to these incidents is vitally important. The arrest of domestic violence perpetrators constitutes perhaps the most immediate and direct police response to domestic violence. Since Sherman and Berk's (1984) seminal Minneapolis spousal abuse arrest experiment, which found that arrest reduced the risk of domestic violence revictimisation, arrest has been the focus of a substantial amount of research—perhaps more so than any other dimension of the police response to domestic violence. Further, policies that mandate or encourage the arrest of perpetrators have proliferated across most of the jurisdictions covered in this review. This includes Australia, despite the current paucity of Australian research on arrest.

As concern about the prevalence and impact of domestic violence has grown, so too has the need for police to use risk assessment tools when responding to these incidents. These tools, designed to estimate the risk of domestic violence recurrence for a perpetrator, victim or couple, are intended to guide not just police decision making but also further criminal justice actions, such as applications for protection orders. While they are designed to inform other police responses, these tools can also have clear and direct outcomes at the scene of a domestic violence incident (affecting victim satisfaction with police response) and following the immediate response as an investigative tool. Research on these risk assessment tools has focused on their predictive validity, while also examining issues associated with their use.

Overall, 181 studies on police first response to domestic violence were included in this review, including a number of other systematic reviews. Most of these studies used quantitative research methods, while around one-quarter used either qualitative research methods or a combination of the two. Australian studies, particularly those using quantitative research methods, account for a relatively small proportion of all studies on police first response.

Review findings

Understanding the decision to arrest

Situational factors

Unsurprisingly, quantitative research has found that the perceived severity of domestic violence incidents plays a crucial role in police decisions to arrest (Bachman & Coker 1995; CMC 2005; Durfee & Fetzer 2016; Finn & Stalans 2002; Hilton, Harris & Rice 2007; Hirschel & Buzawa 2013; Hirschel & Hutchison 1991; Hirschel, Hutchison & Shaw 2010; Ho 2003, 2000; Holder 2007; Markowitz & Watson 2015; McLaughry et al. 2013). The odds of an arrest being made where victims have suffered visible injuries are around two to four times higher than where no injuries are apparent (Phillips & Sobol 2010). Further, dual arrest of both the perpetrator and the victim is more likely where physical injuries are exhibited by both parties (Finn & Bettis 2006; Finn et al. 2004; Moore, Rosales & Akins 1991; Morris 2009).

Perpetrator weapon use also appears to significantly increase the likelihood of arrest (Capaldi et al. 2009; CMC 2005; Eigenberg, Scarborough & Kappeler 1996; Eitle 2005; Hirschel & Buzawa 2013; Hirschel & Hutchison 1991; Ho 2003; Holmes 1993; Holmes, Mignon & Headley 1993; Kane 1999; Lally & DeMaris 2012; Mouzos & Smith 2007), although this varies by weapon type, with more deadly weapons appearing to exert a stronger influence (Durfee & Fetzer 2016). The influence of weapons may also depend on the severity of the injuries they were used to cause, although this has not been examined.

Conversely, incidents involving stalking are significantly associated with a reduced likelihood of perpetrator arrest (Frye, Haviland & Rajah 2007). In addition to incident severity, the presence of witnesses during the incident also appears to significantly increase the chances of arrest (Eigenberg, Scarborough & Kappeler 1996; Felson & Ackerman 2001; Holmes 1993).

The behaviour of both perpetrators and victims at the scene of domestic violence incidents has also been found to have a significant effect on police decision making. Studies examining antagonism by victims (Waaland & Keeley 1985) and uncooperative or hostile perpetrators (Phillips 2008; Phillips & Sobol 2010) have reported that these factors significantly increase the likelihood of arrest. Perpetrator intoxication has also been found to significantly increase the likelihood of arrest (Berk & Loseke 1981; Durfee & Fetzer 2016; Eitle 2005; Federa 1999; Holder 2007; Holmes, Mignon & Headley 1993; Lally & DeMaris 2012), while victim intoxication has been found to significantly reduce the chances of arrest (Hirschel & Hutchison 2011; Lally & DeMaris 2012) and increase the chances of both perpetrators and victims being arrested (Hirschel & Hutchison 2011). Qualitative research has noted that intoxication of victims can reduce their perceived credibility to officers (Coorey 1988; Stalans & Finn 1995; Waaland & Keeley 1985; Walter 1981).

Police officer characteristics

Research into the association of officer characteristics with arrest decisions has largely focused on gender, although some limited research has examined the role of officers' individual and familial influences. Female officers have been found to be more likely to encourage victims to seek out extra-legal services such as shelters and social services (Homant & Kennedy 1985; Sun 2007) and to ask citizens to call the police again if the problem recurs (Sun 2007). However, the variation detected between male and female officers in how domestic violence is perceived does not appear to translate into differences in the use of arrest (Stalans & Finn 2000).

Additionally, findings are mixed in relation to officer experience. Some studies report no significant variation in the likelihood of arrest based on officer experience (Phillips & Sobol 2010; Saunders 1995; Stalans & Finn 2006), and others find a reduced probability of arrest among more experienced officers (Johnson & Dai 2016; Thornton & McGlynn 1998). Officers with more experience have also been found to less often dually arrest perpetrators and victims (Morris 2009). Conversely, there is some evidence of increased arrests and referral responses among higher ranked officers (Belknap & McCall 1994) and members of specialist first response crisis teams (Corcoran & Allen 2005), although this evidence is limited.

Finally, in an older study by Stith (1990) police officers were asked to indicate how they would respond in a series of hypothetical domestic violence scenarios. It was found that those whose approval of domestic violence was higher were significantly more likely to favour an 'antivictim' response (ie warning victims against the arrest of perpetrators, discouraging their arrest, or arresting victims). However, the level of stress or violence in their own marriages, and traditional views on gender roles, were not significantly related to whether officers indicated that they would favour arrest of the perpetrator or a mediative response.

Victim characteristics

There have been mixed results for the influence of victim gender (American Civil Liberties Union 2015; Buzawa & Hotaling 2006; Dichter et al. 2011; Feder 1998; Hamilton & Worthen 2011; Hirschel et al. 2007; Ho 2003; Pattavina et al. 2007), ethnicity (Avakame & Fyfe 2001; Bourg & Stock 1994; Eitle 2005; Hirschel et al. 2007; Holmes & Bibel 1988; Houry, Reddy, & Parramore 2006; Tatum & Pence 2014), relationship with the perpetrator (Bell 1985; Bourg & Stock 1994; Buzawa & Hotaling 2006; Dichter et al. 2011; Dunford, Huizinga & Elliot 1990; Durfee & Fetzer 2016; Feder & Henning 2005; Klinger 1995; Pattavina et al. 2007; Wright 1998), age (Dichter et al. 2011; Eitle 2005; Houry, Reddy & Parramore 2006; Robinson & Chandek 2000a) on arrest. However, research from the United States indicates mandatory arrest policies disproportionately affect non-white perpetrators (Simpson et al. 2006).

Perpetrator characteristics

Research into the association of perpetrator characteristics with arrest decisions has largely concentrated on perpetrator actions and incident characteristics, although the impact of gender, ethnicity and age has also received some limited attention. There is some evidence that male perpetrators have an increased chance of arrest (Felson & Ackerman 2001; Hirschel & Hutchison 2011; but see Ho 2003), although findings are mixed regarding age (Avakame & Fyfe 2001; Wilson & Klein 2006) and ethnicity (Robinson & Chandek 2000c; Simpson et al. 2006).

Legislation and policy

Legal factors have received some attention in US research, with a strong focus on victim preferences for arrest and prosecution as well as the impact of protection orders. Police have largely been found to be responsive to victim preferences for arrest (CMC 2005; Eigenberg, Scarborough & Kappeler 1996; Feder 1996; Federa 1999; Ho 2003; Phillips 2008; Phillips & Sobol 2010) and prosecution (Dolon, Hendricks & Meagher 1986; Robinson 2000; Worden & Pollitz 1984). However, the size of this effect appears to have reduced over time, most likely as a result of the implementation of pro-arrest and mandatory arrest policies. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the violation of a protection order has been consistently found to significantly increase the likelihood of perpetrator arrest (Holmes 1993; Phillips & Sobol 2010).

Numerous studies have also examined pro-arrest and mandatory arrest policies. Support for these policies is generally mixed, with some international studies showing extensive police support and a general belief that they increase police powers (Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System 1991; Cross & Newbold 2010; Feder 1997; Federa 1999; Friday, Metzgar & Walters 1991), and others reporting greater uncertainty (Breci 1989; Moore, Rosales & Akins 1991; Rowe 2007; Toon et al. 2005). However, research has consistently shown that officers in mandatory arrest jurisdictions are more likely to arrest perpetrators at domestic violence scenes (Durfee & Fetzer 2016; Eitle 2005; Hirschel 2008; Hirschel & Buzawa 2013; Hirschel et al. 2007; Hirschel & Hutchison 2011; Johnson 2010; Lawrenz, Lembo & Schade 1988; Mignon & Holmes 1995; Muir & LeClaire 1984; Pattavina et al. 2007; Scott 2005; Simpson et al. 2006), although limited research has found that officers operating under mandatory arrest policies frequently use exception provisions to bypass relevant laws and clear less serious cases (Hirschel & Faggiani 2012). There is less evidence to suggest that arrests increase in response to the implementation of pro-arrest policies (Lanza-Kaduce, Greenleaf & Donahue 1995), although evidence tentatively suggests that these policies increase the chances of dual arrests (Durfee 2012; Feder & Henning 2005; Hirschel 2008; Hirschel & Hutchison 2011; Jones & Belknap 1999; Muftic & Bouffard 2007; Reed & O'Hagan 1998; Roark 2016). In spite of this, mandatory arrest policies have generally not been shown to significantly impact the occurrence of domestic violence (Xie, Lauritsen & Heimer 2012; Zeoli, Norris & Brenner 2011; but see Dugan 2003). Limited research has been conducted on the relationship between mandated arrest and prosecutorial outcomes, although Martin (1994) found that, among more than 400 cases of domestic violence in a US state employing mandatory arrest policies, only 14 percent of perpetrators arrested were subsequently prosecuted and convicted.

Police resources

Importantly, police in Australia and New Zealand have noted that time and resource considerations regularly factor into their decisions to arrest. Arrest frequently involves completing a substantial amount of paperwork, and navigating various other administrative processes such as informing and obtaining approvals from superiors (Cross & Newbold 2010; State of Victoria 2016; see also Townsend et al. 2006). Many officers indicate weighing these factors, along with the large volume of cases, against the probability of positive criminal justice outcomes in deciding whether or not to arrest (Myhill & Johnson 2015), even where there is a policy requirement to arrest in all *prima facie* cases of domestic violence. Similarly, police perceptions of the utility of dual arrest are also mixed. Cross and Newbold (2010) found that police in New Zealand were hesitant to dually arrest because of the difficulty of finding care for children after hours or securing premises where property damage had occurred. Dual arrest was often regarded as an impractical solution—instead, frontline officers reported considering who was most affected by the violence in assessing who was the primary aggressor.

Police officer safety

Safety concerns have emerged as another key factor in police decisions to arrest. Almost all jurisdictions have examined this issue, although most quantitative research has been undertaken in the United States. Australian, Canadian and US research has found that officers often fear for their safety at domestic violence incidents, more so than at other kinds of incidents, and regularly report difficulty inserting themselves into the dysfunctional relationships of emotionally volatile perpetrators and victims (Knowles 1996; NSW Ombudsman 2006; Sharma 2012; Sutton & Hatty 1988; Toon et al. 2005; Wareham 1993). Any form of immediate police intervention, including arrest, can exacerbate these incidents and further upset the parties involved (Booth et al. 2010; Meyer & Carroll 2011). Uncertainty over the amount of care and attention to show children at the scene has also been highlighted by officers, either because of a lack of resourcing to deal with children or because they felt they lacked the skill or confidence to engage with children (Richardson-Foster et al. 2012).

Other factors

Numerous studies have examined the impact on police responses of perpetrators fleeing the scene at domestic violence incidents. Unsurprisingly, arrests are significantly less likely to occur in incidents where the perpetrator has fled (Buzawa, Austin & Buzawa 1995; Feder 1996; Hirschel, Hutchison & Shaw 2010; Ho 2003; Storer & Flores 1994). Additionally, searches for perpetrators who flee are not common and appear to be dependent on the seriousness of the offence (Benson 2009), although finding and arresting perpetrators who have fled has been found to be associated with an increased likelihood of successful prosecution (Nelson 2012).

Finally, research on police first responses in culturally and linguistically diverse communities has largely focused on a single ethnic minority. Studies are commonly conducted using qualitative research methods including victim interviews or focus groups, police interviews or examination of police records. Officers' perceptions of the role of violence in culturally diverse communities have been found in some studies to have a significant impact on police action, including the decision to arrest (Ammar et al. 2014; Shim & Hwang 2005; Yim 2011). Language barriers and difficulties finding a translator have also been identified as an issue for both victims and police in relation to linguistically diverse groups. Victims have indicated that police became impatient and insensitive when they were unable to confidently communicate in English (Belur 2008). Victims have also reported fearing ridicule or scepticism from police (Wachholz & Miedema 2000). Access to interpreters was identified as poor by both victims and police (Ammar et al. 2014; Belur 2008). Consequently, some research has linked poor English proficiency among victims to a reduced chance of arrest and other criminal justice outcomes (Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt 2011).

Impact of arrest

Sherman and Berk's (1984) arrest experiment found that domestic violence perpetrators who were arrested were significantly less likely to reoffend in the subsequent six months than those who were subjected to mediation and temporary removal. That this difference held regardless of the length of time it took for perpetrators to be reunited with their victims led the authors to conclude that arrest deters perpetrators from reoffending, rather than incapacitating them and keeping them from doing so. However, many later studies, including a number of replication experiments, have found that arrest has a relatively modest overall impact on repeat offending against the same victim, and offer the more cautious conclusion that its effectiveness depends on the strength of perpetrators' stake in conformity (Berk et al. 1992a; Dunford, Huizinga & Elliot 1990; Hirschel & Hutchison 1992; Pate & Hamilton 1992; Paternoster et al. 1997; Sherman et al. 1992; Tolman & Weisz 1995; see Box 2 for further details of systematic reviews of this research: Berk et al. 1992b; Maxwell, Garner & Fagan 2002; and Vigurs et al. 2016).

Box 2: Systematic reviews of arrest studies

Three studies were located that systematically review empirical research on the impact of arrest on domestic violence recurrence. Berk, Campbell, Klap and Western's (1992b) study examines the pooled data of four of the Minneapolis replication evaluations, namely the Milwaukee, Dade, Omaha and Colorado Springs sites. This study concludes that the impact of arrest on the likelihood of domestic violence recurrence was dependent on perpetrator ethnicity, employment and relationship with the victim. In other words, arrest had the greatest deterrent impact on non-black employed perpetrators who were not married to their victim.

Maxwell, Garner and Fagan's (2002) study re-examines the pooled data of the Minneapolis replication evaluations examined by Berk et al. (1992b) with an additional study site (Charlotte) added to the data pool. It also applies consistent criteria for the inclusion of cases in the analysis, common independent and outcome measures, and new statistical procedures. Results demonstrate that arrest modestly reduces the likelihood of revictimisation, independent of other criminal justice sanctions and perpetrator characteristics, and across self-report (but not official) measures of revictimisation. Being arrested for domestic violence had less impact on perpetrators with a prior history of arrest.

Finally, Vigurs, Wire, Myhill and Gough's (2016) systematic review assesses the effectiveness of police first response interventions for domestic violence using both criminal justice related outcomes and victim related outcomes. The review found a significant body of high-quality research on arrest and a paucity of methodologically rigorous research examining other police responses (eg investigative methods). Additionally, much of this research was undertaken in the United States. Rigorous studies examining the impact of arrest consist primarily of the older randomised control trials and analyses of national survey data. Interestingly, while it was noted that arrest modestly reduces the likelihood of revictimisation (dependent on perpetrator employment and prior arrest record), the analysis indicated that police attendance at domestic violence scenes was an effective intervention in and of itself.

Specifically, arrest seems to be most effective in reducing the prevalence and frequency of repeat offending where perpetrators have stronger social connections (ie they are married and employed), while those with weaker connections may actually be slightly more likely to reoffend if arrested, particularly in the long term (Sherman et al. 1991). Relatedly, more recent research suggests that arrest may be less effective with perpetrators who already have a history of prior involvement with the criminal justice system, although these findings are somewhat mixed (Felson, Ackerman & Gallagher 2005; Hirschel, Hutchison & Shaw 2010; Maxwell, Garner & Fagan 2002; Wilson & Klein 2006). Furthermore, in an interesting reversal of Sherman and Berk's (1984) original findings, Yates, Pillai and Berry (2008) found that mediation was more effective than arrest in preventing repeat offending among unemployed and under-educated perpetrators. As such, while arrest may deter those with stronger social connections, mediation and other similar measures may be more effective with perpetrators who have weaker social connections.

Aside from perpetrators' stake in conformity, the effectiveness of arrest has also been found to depend on the manner in which it is carried out. Paternoster et al. (1997) found that, regardless of the characteristics of perpetrators, arrest was more effective when police were perceived by perpetrators to have acted in a procedurally fair manner, such as by asking all parties for their side of the story instead of just the victim. Hilton, Harris & Rice (2007) also report that arrest slightly extended the average time it took for perpetrators assessed as low risk to reoffend, although it had no effect either way on perpetrators assessed as high risk. Importantly, it should be noted that research reviewed thus far focuses on the effectiveness of arrest in reducing repeat offending. Far less research has used revictimisation as an outcome measure. The few studies that have, drawing on National Crime Victimization Survey data in the United States, found that perpetrator arrest does not reduce the likelihood of revictimisation over and above the mere reporting of domestic violence incidents to the police (Cho & Wilke 2010; Felson, Ackerman & Gallagher 2005). As such, the preventative effects of arrest may be achieved with the simple attendance of police at domestic violence incidents. However, further research is needed to disentangle the effects of arrest from those of reporting and, importantly, control for the potentially confounding influence of police more often arresting perpetrators who engage in more serious violence and who are more likely to revictimise their partners (Hilton, Harris & Rice 2007).

Interestingly, follow-up analyses of Sherman and Berk's (1984) Minneapolis sample revealed that death rates among both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence incidents assigned to the arrest condition in their original trial were significantly higher than for those assigned to control conditions (Sherman & Harris 2015). Victim risk of death for the arrest group was especially pronounced within the first five years after arrest. However, the effect of arrest appeared to be dependent on victim ethnicity and employment, with death rates being substantially lower among white and employed victims. Additionally, perpetrators in the arrest condition were also significantly more likely to experience subsequent homicide victimisation, although perpetrator employment again appeared to moderate this relationship (Sherman & Harris 2013).

Victim satisfaction with arrest has also received considerable research attention, with studies consistently showing that arrest significantly increases victim satisfaction with police and willingness to engage with the criminal justice system (Ford & Marsh 1987; NSW Task Force on Domestic Violence 1981; Robinson & Chandek 2000b; Stephens & Sinden 2000; Wilson & Jasinski 2004). However, this association is moderated somewhat by victim preferences, with those who do not want perpetrators arrested unsurprisingly indicating less satisfaction with police when arrest does occur (Breci & Murphy 1992; Hirschel & Hutchison 2003; Keys Young 2001; Kolar 1995; Smith 2000).

Furthermore, victim dissatisfaction with the initial responses of police can negatively influence their satisfaction with subsequent criminal justice responses such as prosecution and conviction, and vice versa (Belknap & Sullivan 2002). Tension between victim expectations and the actions of first responder officers is reflected throughout the literature. Victim perceptions of safety (Dichter & Gelles 2012; Erez & Belknap 1998; Hartley & Frohmann 2003; Martin 1997), agreement between victim self-report and police reports (Harris et al. 2001), victim preference for arrest (Breci & Murphy 1992; Cromack 1995; Hirschel & Hutchison 2003; Keys Young 2001; Kolar 1995; Leisenring 2012; Lewis et al. 2000; Lyon 2002; Smith 2000; WA Ombudsman 2003; Websdale & Johnson 1997; Wiist & McFarlane 1998; Yegidis & Renzy 1994), dual arrest (Leisenring 2012; Li et al. 2015; Rajah, Frye & Haviland 2006) and willingness to call police for future incidents (Apsler, Cummins & Carl 2003) have all been linked to satisfaction levels (Robinson & Stroshine 2005).

Predicting reoffending through risk assessment

The pressure on police to more accurately estimate the likelihood of further violence, and to tailor their initial responses accordingly, has led to the proliferation of domestic violence risk assessment tools. These tools incorporate a range of items relating to the incident, perpetrator, victim and relationship history that have been shown to be associated with a higher likelihood of further domestic violence (eg Capaldi et al. 2012). It is now common for these tools to take a structured professional judgement approach to estimating risk, which combines actuarial methods of risk assessment (ie using the presence or absence of risk factors that have an empirically established relationship with domestic violence to calculate and categorise an individual's probability of reoffending) with personal assessments that draw on officers' prior experience and knowledge to qualify actuarial risk ratings (Messing & Thaller 2013; State of Victoria 2016). Several risk assessment tools have been developed for use by police in Australia, including the Risk Assessment Screening Tool (RAST) in Tasmania, the Domestic Violence Safety Action Tool in New South Wales, and the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework (the L17 form) in Victoria. Similar tools have been developed overseas.

Police in Australia and overseas have noted the practical difficulties of completing risk assessment tools at the scene of domestic violence incidents. It has been noted that, contrary to requirements, Australian (State of Victoria 2016) and New Zealand (Grant 2009) studies have found that police regularly complete risk assessment instruments hours after they have left a domestic violence incident rather than at the scene. Furthermore, while most officers do not dispute the utility of these risk assessment tools, there is some diversity of opinion as to when they should be used, and when their own judgement is sufficient. A proportion of police have indicated that they would prefer to use their own discretion when responding to less serious domestic violence incidents (Grant & Rowe 2011), and at incidents where an arrest did not occur (Grant 2009). However, many officers recognise that risk assessment tools can assist them in justifying their actions at the scenes of domestic violence incidents to supervisors (Grant 2009).

Some respondents to the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence (State of Victoria 2016) expressed concern with police proficiency in conducting risk assessments, and the effect on quality and consistency of responses. These concerns were somewhat confirmed by the royal commission, which noted that some police were poor at incorporating into their assessments previous history and other recognised risk factors such as disability, pregnancy or a new child, or harm to pets (State of Victoria 2016). Similar concerns have emerged recently in the UK and in cross-jurisdictional studies which reported low levels of agreement among officers on assessed levels of risk (Robinson, Pinchevsky & Guthrie 2016a; Sebire & Barling 2016), although weapon use or the threat of it (96%), strangulation (96%), sexual assault (93%), physical assault resulting in injury (92%) and escalation of abuse (91%) were commonly considered to be the most important indicators of risk (Robinson, Pinchevsky & Guthrie 2016b).

A number of studies have examined the predictive validity of risk assessment tools, most notably the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA), the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment, the Danger Assessment, the Domestic Violence Screening Inventory, the Kingston Screening Instrument for Domestic Violence (K-SID) and the RAST across North America, the UK and Australia. The approach taken to validate these instruments typically involves the use of statistical methods that assess the likelihood that the tool will produce a higher predicted probability of recidivism for those perpetrators who actually go on to commit a further offence, compared with perpetrators who do not. Studies have routinely shown that these tools meet commonly used thresholds for validity, systematically estimating risk at a rate better than chance (Bennett, Goodman & Dutton 2000; Brown 2011; Campbell, Webster & Glass 2009; Hilton et al. 2008 2004; Messing et al. 2015; Roehl et al. 2005; Trujillo & Ross 2008; see Box 3 for further details of Messing and Thaller's (2013) meta-analysis, Brown's (2011) systematic review, and a rapid evidence assessment by Wheller and Wire (2014)). Australian research has proven somewhat more promising, with both Mason and Julian (2009) and Millstead and Coghlan (2016) showing statistical models limited to those items (in the RAST and L17 forms, respectively) most strongly associated with recidivism could predict reoffending with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

Box 3: Systematic reviews of police risk assessment tools

Three systematic reviews of police risk assessment tools for domestic violence were found. Brown (2011) conducted an international systematic search of published and unpublished literature, using online sources, the Royal New Zealand Police College Library and personal contacts within police headquarters. Brown (2011) reported that, in conflict with the interests of New Zealand police, few risk assessment tools had been designed to assess lethality, and studies examining risk factors associated with lethality were rare. A review of the current risk assessment tools used by police revealed that no single tool was appropriate or accurate in all situations, regardless of statistical validation. It was argued that the choice of instruments should take into consideration the context and purpose of assessment, the target population, as well as the capacity of the intended user.

Messing and Thaller's (2013) meta-analysis examined 10 studies measuring the predictive validity of five specific risk assessment tools—the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA), the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment, the Danger Assessment, the Domestic Violence Screening Inventory and the Kingston Screening Instrument for Domestic Violence (K-SID). The analysis revealed that, while the predictive power of all tools was better than chance, there was significant variation across tools, with the ODARA demonstrating the highest predictive accuracy and K-SID demonstrating the lowest. Critically, the ODARA was also the only tool in this sample designed specifically for use by police.

Finally, Wheller and Wire's (2014) rapid evidence assessment examined a variety of domestic violence risk assessment tools ranging from actuarial assessments to those incorporating structured professional judgements and victim appraisals. These tools are generally found to perform better than chance in predicting domestic violence recurrence. However, the review also noted that more than half of these tools had been examined only once, while those examined more than once had typically not been administered consistently across studies.

Victim satisfaction with risk assessment has not received significant attention, though some limited questioning of victims has been undertaken in UK research (HMIC 2015). It was found that some victims expressed frustration with risk assessment tools, which they perceived as consisting of largely irrelevant questions, and the impersonal, repetitive manner in which they were questioned by police, especially when they were contacting police frequently (HMIC 2015). However, researchers note that victims' frustration with these tools may stem from a lack of understanding as to why they were important to ensuring their safety (HMIC 2015). Given the significant role that risk assessment and risk management play in the police response to domestic violence (and the broader response by other criminal justice and service providers), there needs to be an emphasis on ensuring victims understand and support the process.

Summary of key findings

- Research on first response has been dominated by quantitative US studies assessing the decision to and impact of arrest. Australian literature is extremely limited and consists principally of large-scale government reviews and qualitative studies using semi-structured or unstructured interviews with victims, police or other stakeholders.
- Incident characteristics such as the perceived severity of the abuse, presence of victim injury, use of a weapon and presence of a witness have been found to increase the likelihood of arrest, as have antagonistic behaviours by victims or perpetrators towards police. There is also limited evidence to suggest that male perpetrators are more likely to be arrested, while no conclusive results have emerged regarding officer characteristics or victim and perpetrator gender, ethnicity, relationship type or age.
- Existing research suggests that arrest tends to be most effective in reducing the prevalence and frequency of domestic violence with perpetrators who have more to lose from involvement in the criminal justice system because of their attachment to conventional social institutions, and ineffective or even counter-productive with perpetrators who have weaker social connections. Relatedly, the preventative effects of arrest appear to be greater with first-time perpetrators, and perpetrators who are assessed to be at lower risk of reoffending.
- Research drawing on victimisation survey data has failed to isolate an effect of arrest over and above the attendance of police at domestic violence incidents. As such, the deterrent effect arrest has on some perpetrators may be achievable with police simply turning up at the scene.
- Mandatory arrest policies have been shown to significantly increase rates of arrest in the jurisdictions in which they are implemented, although they do not have any discernible impact on the prevalence of domestic violence. The impact of pro-arrest policies on arrest outcomes is less clear.
- Studies of the predictive validity of risk assessment tools have consistently shown these tools to systematically estimate the risk of reoffending at a rate better than chance. However, police have noted the at times cumbersome and impractical nature of these tools (particularly when they are required to use them at the scene of domestic violence incidents), while victims have noted that police using these tools can be rigid, inflexible and dismissive in their handling of domestic violence incidents.

Preventing repeat domestic violence

Increased pressures on police to effectively respond to domestic violence have led to an expansion of their role beyond first response and criminal justice processing, and into the prevention of further domestic violence. Various measures have been adopted to achieve this objective. The current review focuses on two of these—second responder programs and protection orders. Police participate in many other responses led by other organisations, but these fall outside the scope of this review.

Second responder programs involving police following up with households recently attended for domestic violence have received extensive attention in experimental and quasi-experimental research. Initial contact is typically made by police officers and victim advocates or social workers within one day to one week of a domestic violence call-out, and focuses on ensuring victims' immediate safety and providing information on legal, social and health services. Follow-up contact may also be made with perpetrators to emphasise the legal consequences of domestic violence and provide information on counselling services. The goal of these contacts is to prevent the recurrence of domestic violence by deterring perpetrators and helping victims to access services that can assist them in avoiding revictimisation.

Protection orders have also become an integral preventative component of the overall criminal justice response to domestic violence. Comparative analyses of state and territory legislation have revealed variation in the potential scope and coverage of protection orders across Australia (Jeffries, Bond & Field 2013; Taylor et al. 2015; Wilcox 2010). Nevertheless, all focus to varying degrees on the immediate and long-term prevention of domestic violence recurrence by imposing a series of conditions on perpetrators requiring them to refrain from contact or certain activities with victims, and sometimes their children and other family members. Although granted under civil court proceedings, police are responsible for their enforcement, and it is expected that breaches will be investigated and charged as criminal offences. Police may also apply to courts to have these orders granted, although victims are also free to do so of their own accord.

Finally, various proactive surveillance measures are increasingly being trialled by police agencies to prevent the recurrence of domestic violence. Many of these measures use technologies such as GPS and panic button/mobile alert systems.

Overall, 79 studies on police-led interventions to prevent repeat domestic violence were included in this review, including a comparatively large number of studies focused on the impact of protection orders and second responder programs on repeat offending. Importantly, this excludes research on interagency responses in which police are not the lead agency. This research has been the subject of other recent Australian reviews.

Research findings

Second responder programs

Implementation and victim engagement

A small number of studies have examined victim engagement in second responder programs, with many noting general difficulties making contact with victims subsequent to domestic violence call-outs. Stover, Rainey, Berkman and Marans' (2008) evaluation found that engagement in the second responder program under evaluation was significantly more likely when the victim and victim advocate shared similar ethnic backgrounds, where the domestic violence charges were more severe, and where the victim had a higher number of children. Relationship status, limited English proficiency, victim age, the use of weapons, victim injury and substance use during the domestic violence incident were not significantly associated with program engagement. Stover (2012) also found that the most common criticism victims had of the program under evaluation was the second responder team's inability to assist with housing.

Effectiveness of second responder programs

Early descriptive research analysing the impact of a second responder-style program using regional crime data found that repeat police call-outs to households for domestic violence decreased by two-thirds in the two years following its implementation (Fremont Police Department 1997). However, later experimental and quasi-experimental studies did not support the preventative efficacy of these programs (Davis, Maxwell & Taylor 2006; Davis & Taylor 1997; Davis, Weisburd & Hamilton 2010; Davis, Weisburd & Hamilton 2007; Greenspan et al. 2005; Pate, Hamilton & Annan 1992; Stover et al. 2010; Stover, Poole & Marans 2009; see Box 4 for further details of Davis, Weisburd & Taylor's 2008 meta-analysis of this research).

Research has also examined the impact of second responder programs on victims' wellbeing, support, feelings of safety and satisfaction with the police. Findings vary with regards to the latter, with Greenspan et al. (2005) reporting that satisfaction with the police was significantly higher among victims in the intervention group than those in the control group, and Davis et al. (2007) finding no significant differences in victim satisfaction with the police or feelings of safety. Additionally, Stover et al. (2010) found that victims in the intervention group rated their interaction with police as significantly more positive, and felt significantly more respected, although there were no significant differences in ratings of safety or police helpfulness. Stover et al. (2010) also examined the impact of their second responder program on psychological health and wellbeing, reporting no significant differences between intervention and control groups regarding victim psychiatric symptoms, victim and child post-traumatic stress disorder, or child behavioural difficulties. Finally, Stover (2012) notes that this second responder program significantly increased victim engagement in court-based advocacy and legal services, and treatment for children, although it had no impact on victims' engagement with mental health services for themselves.

Box 4: Davis, Weisburd and Taylor's (2008) meta-analysis of second responder programs

Second responder programs reviewed by Davis, Weisburd and Taylor (2008) sought to reduce the likelihood of revictimisation in a variety of ways, including helping victims better understand the cyclical nature of domestic violence, developing a safety plan, obtaining a restraining order and increasing their knowledge of legal rights and options. Other second responder programs helped victims to access emergency accommodation. Some also attempted to assist victims to leave a violent relationship by helping them to establish greater independence through counselling, job training and other referrals.

The meta-analysis of 10 randomised control trials and quasi-experimental evaluations of second responder programs examined their impact on self-reported revictimisation. These programs were found to have no overall effect on the odds of revictimisation. Further, none of the studies included that used a self-report measure of revictimisation found a significant impact.

Protection orders

Applying for protection orders

Police in Australia (CMC 2005; NSW Ombudsman 2006) and overseas (Home Office 2013; HMIC 2015) have noted the difficulties in applying for protection orders, although recent efforts have been made to streamline application processes across Australia (Taylor et al. 2015). Indeed, the complexity and administratively burdensome nature of these processes (eg paperwork, seeking approvals) has emerged as a primary reason for police not applying for protection orders, and a significant occupier of police time and resources. Research with victims and stakeholders (Douglas & Stark 2010; Kinports & Fischer 1993; Moore 2002; NSW Ombudsman 2006) further reveals that victims often withdraw from or do not contribute to application processes because of confusion surrounding certain requirements (eg court attendance) or similar difficulties regarding the amount and complexity of paperwork. As an example of the ongoing difficulty of the application process, a Victorian Government report noted that in 2011–12 around one-third of applications in that state did not result in an order being made (Sentencing Advisory Council 2013).

However, studies have also found that courts are more likely to grant orders when police officers apply for them (on their own or jointly with victims) than when victims apply for them alone (Bulbeck et al. 1997; Douglas & Fitzgerald 2013). Interestingly, recent data from Victoria show that police lodge over two-thirds of applications for domestic violence protection orders (Sentencing Advisory Council 2015). This is noticeably higher than the 41 percent of protection order applications lodged by police in Queensland two decades earlier (Stewart 2000), and the increase is likely a partial consequence of recent moves across Australia to encourage police to apply for orders whenever they think it necessary to ensure the safety of victims (eg Victoria Police 2014).

Efforts are also being made to simplify application processes, because simpler processes have been shown to increase protection order applications in Australia (Sentencing Advisory Council 2015; Victorian Auditor-General 2009) and overseas (Rigakos 2002). This reinforces the necessity of keeping application processes simple, and the importance of police assistance and support for victims while going through the process. Additionally, while the short-term costs of protection orders to police and the criminal justice system have been demonstrated (Home Office 2013), research has also shown that they can lead to longer-term savings for both criminal justice agencies and victims (Logan, Walker & Hoyt 2012). The potential savings to victims are particularly important, given that the substantial costs victims incur from domestic violence can often obstruct their efforts to escape it (eg Kelly, Sharp & Klein 2014).

Aside from the complexity of application processes, studies have also examined victim characteristics that are associated with an increased likelihood of applying for protection orders, along with their reasons for withdrawing or refusing to contribute to applications. In the United States, Kaci (1992) found that victims who were married were less likely to apply for protection orders. However, Wolf, Holt, Kernic and Rivara (2000) found that victims were significantly more likely to apply for a protection order if they were married, employed, older or pregnant, if they or their families had been threatened with violence, if their family members or friends were abused during the index domestic violence incident (in addition to their own victimisation), if they suffered severe depressive symptoms, or if they had experienced forced sex in the year prior. The same study found that living with the abuser and being injured during the index incident were significantly associated with a decreased likelihood of applying for a protection order (Wolf et al. 2000).

Stewart (2000) also found that, among her sample, one-fifth of perpetrators against whom protection order applications had been made had also lodged protection order applications against their partners. In Australia, many of the victims interviewed in Moore's (2002) study refused to contribute to protection order applications out of fear of reprisal from perpetrators, concern that the perpetrators would be charged with a breach and end up in prison, and doubts as to their effectiveness. A number also identified fatigue with constant adjournments and delays, as well as generally feeling intimidated by the court process. Conversely, victims who used specialist accommodation or support services while going through the application process were found to be more likely to see order applications through.

Understanding the factors that influence victim willingness to contribute to protection order applications is important, with the CMC's (2005) report into the policing of domestic violence in Queensland noting that victim cooperation with these processes is a key factor in officers' decisions to apply for protection orders. Another important factor identified by Poerio (1991) is officers' attitudes towards domestic violence. It was found that officers reporting adaptive beliefs (ie policing responses must be tailored to each domestic violence incident) and optimistic beliefs (ie police intervention can be effective) regarding domestic violence applied for a significantly higher number of protection orders than those reporting conservative beliefs (ie domestic violence incidents must be dealt with uniformly) and pessimistic beliefs (ie police intervention will do nothing to stop domestic violence). However, it should be noted that these findings emerged when protection orders were a relatively recent development. As such, they may no longer be relevant now that protection orders are an ingrained component of domestic violence policing.

The importance of police assessing risk in deciding whether to apply for protection orders has also been highlighted (Home Office 2016). Encouragingly, the CMC's (2005) report found that the perceived risk of domestic violence recurrence was the most common reason given by police in Queensland for submitting a protection order application (over 50%). Finally, research has identified policies encouraging or mandating the use of protection orders as an important influence on police decisions to apply for them (Victorian Auditor-General 2009). While this can be positive, the CMC's (2005) report notes that around 40 percent of officers surveyed indicated simply applying for protection orders indiscriminately in response to auditing and monitoring processes. Additional Australian research has found that increases in applications for protection orders linked to policy changes typically occur alongside increases in the number of protection order breaches (CMC 2005; Rigakos 2002; Victorian Auditor-General 2009).

Enforcement of protection orders

Importantly, the deterrent effect of protection orders is contingent on their enforcement by police (see Box 5 for further details of a systematic review of this research). While international research has found that police are more likely to arrest (Holmes 1993; Phillips & Sobol 2010; Weisz, Tolman & Bennett 1998) and charge or charge more seriously (Phillips & Gillham 2010; Phillips & Varano 2008) perpetrators for domestic violence when there is a pre-existing protection order against them, Australian studies (NSW Ombudsman 2006; Trimboli & Bonney 1997) have found that a notable proportion of protection order breaches do not result in arrest or prosecution.

Several police-identified predictors and barriers to the enforcement of protection orders have emerged from this research. Among the most important of these is the severity of the breach, with incidents involving victim injury, physical violence or forced entry to residences significantly more likely to result in the arrest of perpetrators (Kane 2000; Rigakos 1997), while breaches perceived as minor or non-violent are regularly left unenforced (CMC 2005; State of Victoria 2016; Trimboli & Bonney 1997; WA Ombudsman 2003). Police may perceive the perpetrators of more severe breaches as being more likely to engage in future and more serious domestic violence, and thus feel a greater need to enforce these breaches to minimise the risk. Indeed, Rigakos (1997) found that perpetrators' history of violence was significantly associated with police decisions to arrest for protection order breaches. Additionally, more severe breaches likely offer police a larger amount of tangible evidence, simplifying the investigative process and increasing the probability of a successful prosecution. Surveys and discussions with police have identified a lack of evidence as one of the primary obstacles to enforcing breaches (CMC 2005; NSW Ombudsman 2006; State of Victoria 2016; Trimboli & Bonney 1997).

Box 5: Taylor, Ibrahim, Wakefield and Finn's (2015) systematic review of research on the enforcement of protection orders

Taylor, Ibrahim, Wakefield and Finn's (2015) broad systematic review examined the enforcement of protection orders in Australia, particularly across state and territory borders. A number of issues with the cross-border enforcement of protection orders were identified. These include inconsistency among state and territory legislative standards for the enforcement of orders and information sharing across jurisdictions, a lack of collaboration and information sharing between police and other agencies within jurisdictions, an absence of technical infrastructure to facilitate information sharing and coordination of police enforcement across jurisdictions, and geographical difficulties. Several barriers were also noted in the enforcement of protection orders generally, notably the typical lack of evidence available in cases of low-level order breaches, and uncertainty regarding who is at fault for a breach. Additionally, they concluded that more violent breaches were more likely to be enforced.

Victim compliance with protection orders and the reporting of breaches have also been identified as important influences on their enforcement. Rigakos (1997) found that police were significantly less likely to arrest perpetrators in cases where the victim was believed to have invited contact with the perpetrator. Similarly, Kinports and Fischer's (1993) survey of domestic violence advocates in the United States found that almost 90 percent believed that police would not arrest for breaches where they believed the victim invited contact. Indeed, police themselves have also noted that they will commonly refrain from arresting or charging perpetrators for breaches where the victim requests that they do not or where they believe the victim allowed an order to be breached (CMC 2005; Logan, Shannon & Walker 2005; NSW Ombudsman 2006; Taylor et al. 2015; Trimboli & Bonney 1997; Wareham 1993). Police have also expressed frustration at the perceived frequency with which victims facilitate breaches (Segrave, Wilson & Fitz-Gibbon 2016).

A low rate of victim reporting has also been identified (Logan, Shannon & Walker 2005; Taylor et al. 2015). Interviews with female domestic violence victims of minority ethnic backgrounds reported in Tam, Tutty, Zhuang and Paz (2016) note several barriers to the reporting of breaches. Aside from the common barriers to reporting in general (eg language barriers), it was found that many of these victims lacked an understanding of the criminal justice processes surrounding protection order breaches and how to properly recognise and document them. Finally, research has uncovered a degree of police pessimism towards the deterrent efficacy of protection orders, along with various bureaucratic barriers to enforcing breaches (Segrave, Wilson & Fitz-Gibbon 2016). Police interviews in Australia (CMC 2005; NSW Ombudsman 2006) and overseas (Rigakos 1995) reveal frustration with the perceived weakness of sentences imposed by courts for protection order breaches. Limitations in time and resources, and uncertainty surrounding the rules of evidence in cases involving technology-enabled breaches (eg social media messaging) have been identified as prominent bureaucratic barriers.

Effectiveness of protection orders

While roughly half of victims who apply successfully for a protection order experience some form of revictimisation (eg Horton, Simonidis & Simonidis 1987; Kanuha & Ross 2004), there is substantial variation across studies, with those examining victim self-report measures of revictimisation and revictimisation not involving physical violence reporting higher rates of revictimisation. Critically, a large number of studies (Carlson, Harris & Holden 1999; Logan & Walker 2010; Migliore, Ziersch & Marshall 2014; Trimboli & Bonney 1997; Young, Byles & Dobson 2000) including quasi-experimental studies with controlled/matched group comparisons (Holt et al. 2003; Holt et al. 2002; Kothari et al. 2012; McFarlane et al. 2004) have found that protection orders significantly reduce the prevalence of more severe and physical forms of domestic violence incidents while they are in effect. However, in-depth interviews with victims who had been granted protection orders in the studies by Ragusa (2012) and Tam et al. (2016) revealed that a large proportion found these orders ineffective; both studies uncovered a high frequency of low-level breaches involving phone or internet contact and stalking. Additionally, there is some uncertainty as to the impact of protection orders on the frequency of domestic violence revictimisation. Some studies conclude that the orders are effective at preventing revictimisation (Home Office 2013; Logan & Walker 2010; Trimboli & Bonney 1997; Young, Byles & Dobson 2000), while others report no impact (Carlson, Harris & Holden 1999; Kernsmith & Craun 2008; Meloy et al. 1997).

Interestingly, while breaches are most likely in the period immediately following the granting of a protection order (1–3 months; Holt et al. 2003; Isaac et al. 1994; Meloy et al. 1997; Poynton et al. 2016), the overall effectiveness of protection orders tends to remain stable over time (Holt et al. 2003, 2002; McFarlane et al. 2004; Trimboli & Bonney 1997). This tentatively suggests that protection orders are primarily useful in mitigating the short-term risk of revictimisation, while longer-term risk mitigation measures (eg victim/perpetrator treatment, victim services) take time to have an effect, although further research is needed to support this conclusion.

Despite the apparent positive impact of protection orders on domestic violence overall, research suggests that their effectiveness varies (see Box 6 for a systematic review of US research on the contextual correlates of protection order outcomes). Specifically, the orders appear to have a significantly greater impact where victims are employed and of a higher SES (Burgess-Proctor 2003; Carlson, Harris & Holden 1999; but see Logan & Walker 2009), and no longer in a relationship with their perpetrator (Carlson, Harris & Holden 1999; Logan & Walker 2009). They are significantly less effective or have no impact where perpetrators have a history of contact with the criminal justice system for domestic or general violence offending (Bulbeck et al. 1997; Jordan et al. 2010; Keilitz, Hannaford & Efkenman 1996; Logan, Shannon & Cole 2007; Logan & Walker 2010, 2009; Meloy et al. 1997; but see Burgess-Proctor 2003) or a history of mental health issues (Meloy et al. 1997). Protection orders involving perpetrators and victims who are not white also appear to be less effective (Carlson, Harris & Holden 1999; Meloy et al. 1997; Poynton et al. 2016), although variation in the ethnic groups examined make drawing any general conclusions about this finding difficult. Furthermore, protection orders may be somewhat less effective in cases involving perpetrators and victims who have children together (Carlson, Harris & Holden 1999; but see Logan & Walker 2010), although the number of children does not appear to have any influence (Burgess-Proctor 2003; Logan & Walker 2009). Additional factors that do not appear to have any impact on the effectiveness of protection orders include the arrest of perpetrators alongside the issuing of orders against them (Mears et al. 2001), victim education (Burgess-Proctor 2003; Logan & Walker 2009) and perpetrator/victim age (Burgess-Proctor 2003; Logan & Walker 2010, 2009), although Poynton et al. (2016) found that younger perpetrators breached significantly sooner than older perpetrators.

Box 6: Benitez, McNiel and Binder's (2010) systematic review of US protection order research

Benitez, McNiel and Binder's (2010) systematic review examined the impact of protection orders on domestic violence recurrence, along with the contextual factors that moderate this impact. Drawing on 26 US studies published in books and peer-review journals, they concluded that protection orders reduce the likelihood of revictimisation, although they note that breach rates vary widely across the studies examined. Their review also found that the chances of a breach are highest in the three months following the granting of an order, while a lower victim SES, shared biological children with the perpetrator, and a perpetrator history of violence/crime, stalking, and substance use are all associated with an increased likelihood of breaches.

In addition to reducing domestic violence recurrence, protection orders appear to have a number of other positive impacts for victims. As mentioned, police are more likely to arrest (Holmes 1993; Phillips and Sobol 2010; Weisz, Tolman & Bennett 1998) and charge or charge more seriously (Phillips & Gillham 2010; Phillips & Varano 2008) perpetrators of domestic violence if there is a protection order against them.

Descriptive and qualitative research also indicates that between half and three-quarters of victims feel safer and experience increased levels of wellbeing as a result of having a protection order granted, although this depends quite heavily on whether these orders are seen to be enforced and how often or severely they are breached (Home Office 2013; Keilitz, Hannaford & Efkenman 1996; Lewis et al. 2000; Trimboli & Bonney 1997). Keilitz, Hannaford & Efkenman (1996) also noted a small increase in the proportion of victims feeling safer as a result of being granted a protection order between initial and six-month follow-up interviews, from 73.7 percent to 80.5 percent. Victims have also expressed increased levels of satisfaction with police when breaches are enforced (HMIC 2015; Home Office 2013). Finally, a number of victims indicate feeling empowered by protection orders, and specifically by the control they have to determine when and to what extent to have these orders enforced by calling the police (Fischer & Rose 1995; Lewis et al. 2000; Taylor et al. 2015). This stands in contrast to the feelings of powerlessness many victims experience while having their cases investigated and proceed to court as part of a standard police response.

Innovative preventative responses

A small number of studies have examined the implementation and efficacy of proactive police surveillance measures designed to prevent further domestic violence. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (2002) examined a police-led response that consisted of systematic police checks of perpetrators' residences, workplaces, friends and neighbours, regular traffic stops of perpetrators, crime prevention assessments of places frequented by victims, and frequent notification of perpetrators that they were under surveillance. Police call-outs to households exposed to the response decreased by almost 100 percent. Additionally, domestic assault incidents remained stable in the region of implementation despite a 29 percent increase in the wider metropolitan area, while 14.8 percent of domestic violence victims were revictimised in the same year compared to 35 percent in the United States at large. In contrast, Brame et al.'s (2015) randomised trial found that a proactive protection order enforcement measure (eg police conducting regular checks on victims and perpetrators) did not significantly decrease the prevalence of domestic violence revictimisation compared to a group of cases receiving routine reactive enforcement.

The use of GPS in monitoring and enforcing compliance with protection order conditions has also been examined (Carter & Grommon 2016). Qualitative interviews with victims and victim advocates found that police responses to violations discovered using GPS monitoring demonstrated a level of attentiveness that victims appreciated, improving their perceptions of the criminal justice system. However, it is noted that victim expectations of what police can do in response to a breach need to be more realistic, as police typically do not have the time or resources to monitor a perpetrator's position in real time and respond immediately to violations.

Aside from GPS, technologies that are increasingly being applied to the problem of domestic violence are panic buttons and other mobile alert devices, which facilitate easy and immediate contact with police in domestic violence emergencies. A trial of these devices reported in Hester and Westmarland (2005) found a 30 to 60 percent reduction in the frequency of domestic violence incidents among victims who were variously administered a panic button, a pre-programmed mobile phone, or both. Taylor and Mackay (2011) also found that 75 percent of the victims in their sample who received a mobile alarm reported a reduction in protection order breaches as a result, and 44 percent reported that breaches ceased entirely. In surveys and interviews, victims who receive these devices regularly note increased feelings of safety for themselves and their children, along with other advantages such as being allowed to stay in their own homes and maintain connections with family and friends (Hester & Westmarland 2005; Lloyd, Farrell & Pease 1994; Natarajan 2016; Taylor & Mackay 2011). Victims also overwhelmingly report that these devices are quick and easy to use (Lloyd, Farrell & Pease 1994; Natarajan 2016).

In terms of implementation, proper police training and oversight of installation, monitoring and response processes are identified as critical (Taylor & Mackay 2011). Accidental activations have also been identified as a problem, potentially occupying substantial amounts of police time and resources (Natarajan 2016). The growth of technology-based solutions to domestic violence therefore needs to be supported by further research but also an emphasis on ensuring safeguards are in place and implementation is carefully managed.

Summary of key findings

- A large body of rigorous research, including a notable number of experimental and quasi-experimental studies, has examined the efficacy of police preventative responses to domestic violence. Problems with and barriers to the implementation of these measures have also been thoroughly canvassed.
- While second responder programs improve victim perceptions of police and increase their chances of reporting further domestic violence incidents, they do not prevent revictimisation.
- Protection orders generate a small but significant reduction in the likelihood of domestic violence revictimisation, although this effect appears to be limited to more severe and violent forms of revictimisation. Orders also tend to be more effective where victims have fewer enduring ties to perpetrators and a capacity to live independently, and less effective where perpetrators have histories of violence, general crime, stalking and/or mental health issues. Where breaches do occur, they are most likely in the period immediately following the granting of an order.
- Where protection orders fail to prevent revictimisation, they can intensify police efforts to address persistent domestic violence by prompting more severe responses to breaches. They can also help victims to feel safer because they perceive they are being taken seriously by police.
- Complicated, drawn-out application processes have been identified by police and victims as significant obstacles to protection orders being sought and granted, while police reluctance to enforce breaches stems primarily from perceptions of victim noncompliance with order conditions and the investigative difficulties inherent in many low-level breaches.
- Preliminary research findings about surveillance and rapid alert technologies hint at their preventative efficacy, while also pointing to increased feelings of victim safety and satisfaction with police.

Investigative responses

With increased recognition of the criminality of domestic violence, the last few decades have seen greater emphasis placed on the investigation and criminal justice processing of perpetrators. Police in Australia are advised to use their discretion in judging the strength of prima facie evidence for domestic violence incidents, and in deciding whether to conduct an investigation. Investigative effort has typically been measured in terms of police decisions to investigate, the time spent at the scene of domestic violence incidents by first response officers, the time spent investigating a case prior to laying charges, or the variety of different types of evidence collected. A number of studies have also examined the impact of specialist police units and criminal justice initiatives intended to increase investigative effort.

With regards to different evidence types, it is perhaps unsurprising that victim and witness statements have received the most research attention, given that they are the most commonly collected and used in domestic violence cases. Indeed, it has been noted that domestic violence cases have not historically drawn on a wide range of evidence outside of victim or witness testimony. Critically, this has meant that the refusal to provide statements, or the retraction of statements, can often lead to the dropping of domestic violence cases on the basis of a lack of evidence. Understanding the factors that impact on the collection of this evidence, along with its efficacy in the pursuit of charges for domestic violence, is therefore important.

Aside from victim and witness testimony, various other types of evidence are also collected during domestic violence investigations, including photographic evidence, medical or forensic evidence, and emergency call recordings. As political and public pressure on police to address the issues of domestic violence has intensified, so too have efforts to obtain these other types of evidence during investigations to strengthen cases against perpetrators.

Overall, 47 studies on police investigative practices were included in the review, most of which were conducted overseas. Half of these studies involved qualitative research methods, and four in five used quantitative data, primarily police administrative data. There has been a significant increase in published research since the year 2000.

Research findings

Investigative effort

Predictors and barriers

Violence severity appears to be the strongest and most consistent predictor of investigative effort in domestic violence cases. Quantitative US and Canadian research has found that indicators of physical violence, namely physical injury to the victim and victim fear, significantly predict police decisions to further investigate (Bachman & Coker 1995; Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt 2011). Inconsistent findings have emerged regarding suspects' history of physical violence. Bachman and Coker (1995) found that whether or not suspects had a history of violence offences had no significant impact on police decisions to investigate. However, using a somewhat more precise measure indicating the frequency of prior domestic violence incidents, Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt (2011) found that suspects' history of violence significantly predicted police decisions to investigate. Holder's (2007) analysis of domestic violence incidents in the ACT also found that cases where police took some form of criminal action were over three times more likely to include both verbal and physical violence (61%) and over four times more likely to involve clear physical injuries to the victim (48.5%) than those where no action was taken (14.0% and 6.5%, respectively).

US and Canadian research has found that certain demographic characteristics indicative of victim disadvantage and vulnerability are predictive of greater police investigative effort. Police are significantly more likely to investigate domestic violence incidents involving victims of indigenous, minority or immigrant status or victims with physical or mental limitations (Bachman & Coker 1995; Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt 2011). Critically, these results emerged in Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt's (2011) study even after the level of violence in index incidents was controlled for, suggesting that the association between these characteristics and investigative effort is not simply due to their influence on violence severity.

However, inconsistent findings have emerged regarding SES. Bachman and Coker (1995) reported that family income had no impact on investigative decisions, while Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt (2011) found that police were significantly more likely to investigate domestic violence incidents involving victims of higher SES. Victim age also appears to be significantly and positively associated with police decisions to investigate domestic violence, while victim–suspect relationship status and characteristics of the incident location (ie private vs public location, inner vs outer city location) do not (Bachman & Coker 1995).

Mixed findings have emerged regarding the more distal influence of police training and policy. An audit of Victoria Police's Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence, which introduced new investigative procedures for domestic violence cases, found that the average time spent by police first responders at domestic violence scenes tripled, increasing from 35.5 minutes pre-policy to 107.3 minutes post-policy (Victorian Auditor-General 2009). In Ruff's (2012) examination of a two-day police domestic violence investigation training program in Canada, it was found that police spent 18 minutes longer at the scene of domestic violence incidents post-training, and were significantly more likely to collect evidence (34% compared with 23%). However, in an arguably more rigorous US study of police training involving pre–post comparisons of randomised trained and non-trained groups of officers, Smithey, Green and Giacomazzi (2004) found no differences post-training between these groups in time spent at the scene.

Research examining the barriers to police investigation of domestic violence has predominately been qualitative, relying primarily on focus groups and in-depth interviews with police officers, victims and service providers. This research has consistently noted that the absence of tangible evidence of physical violence (eg visible injury or property damage) can discourage police in Australia and overseas from conducting further investigation (HMIC 2015; Moore 2002; NSW Ombudsman 2006). Indeed, focus groups with NSW police noted the evidentiary difficulties posed by cases with no obvious signs of physical violence, particularly where victims and witnesses are unwilling or unavailable to provide statements that would potentially allow them to overcome these difficulties (NSW Ombudsman 2006). Even in cases where there are visible injuries, victim noncooperation and witness unavailability can discourage police from investigating further, because the injuries alone are insufficient to lay charges and corroborating statements are needed (NSW Ombudsman 2006; Toon et al. 2005). For their part, victim focus groups have noted that police do not always question them separately from suspects at domestic violence scenes, resulting in a refusal to speak against suspects out of fear and, potentially, consequent police reluctance to further investigate (HMIC 2015). Finally, it is important to remember the practical constraints on police investigative effort. The audit of Victoria Police's Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence calculated that the cost of attending domestic violence incidents had more than quadrupled due to the increased time spent at these incidents (Victorian Auditor-General 2009).

Impact of investigative effort

Police are more likely to lay charges for cases in which they have spent more investigative effort. This is unsurprising, given that more time spent investigating a domestic violence case can increase the amount and quality of evidence collected, the willingness of victims and witnesses to testify, and the chances of locating offenders who have absconded, all of which can be used to support the laying of charges. Additionally, officers may have more of a vested personal interest in laying charges for cases they have investigated more thoroughly. Research in Western Australia found that decisions to charge in domestic violence cases were significantly and positively predicted by the time police spent investigating them, and the number of contacts police had with perpetrators (WA Department of Justice and WA Police Service 2002).

Keys Young's (2000) evaluation of the Australian Capital Territory's Family Violence Intervention Program, which encouraged police to actively investigate and pursue charges for domestic and family violence, noted a 24 percent increase in the number of defendants charged following the program's implementation. However, it also reported that this occurred against the backdrop of a decrease in the number of both overall and family and domestic violence charges coming before ACT courts.

Internationally, evaluations of specialist police units and criminal justice programs similarly report that these measures significantly increase the likelihood of charges being laid (Harrell et al. 2006; Jolin et al. 1998). Additionally, a report by the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System (1991) in Canada found that officers identified the availability of corroborating evidence as the most important factor influencing their decision to lay charges.

US research examining the impact of investigative effort on the acceptance of charges by prosecutors has generated mixed findings. Evaluations by Jolin et al. (1998) and Whetstone (2001) found that cases assigned to specialist units carrying out more thorough investigations of domestic violence were significantly more likely to be accepted for prosecution. Additionally, Nelson (2013) found that the domestic violence charges laid by police officers who routinely put little effort into investigating these cases (eg not obtaining photographs or contacting additional witnesses) had a significantly higher rate of rejection compared to charges laid by officers who routinely put more effort into their investigations. However, the evaluation by Harrell et al. (2006) of the Milwaukee Judicial Oversight Demonstration Initiative, which included a dedicated police unit for investigating domestic violence incidents, reported that, despite increases in the number of charges laid, the proportion of charges accepted for prosecution remained stable at around 50 percent, while the proportion of felony charges accepted increased only slightly from 35 percent to 41 percent. Pennell and Burke's (2002) evaluation of a specialist police investigative unit similarly found no change in the proportion of cases accepted for prosecution.

Friday, Lord, Exum and Hartman (2006) also found that cases assigned to a similar specialist unit were no more likely to result in a guilty verdict if they proceeded to court than cases that went to court after being assigned to standard police investigations. The specialist unit's cases were also twice as likely to be declined by prosecutors (Friday et al. 2006). Additionally, while cases assigned to this specialist unit were far less likely to be declined by prosecutors for an absence of evidence (38.2%) compared to those subject to standard investigations (87.5%), they were far more likely to be declined for insufficient evidence (61.8% compared to 12.5%). The authors note, however, that the specialist unit typically investigated far more serious and complicated cases (eg incidents involving a greater amount of violence or perpetrators who fled the scene), demanding a higher standard of evidence in order to proceed to prosecution and support a guilty verdict. Critically, this study also found that over half of the domestic violence cases investigated by the specialist unit had some form of evidence collected, compared with only 12.5 percent of those investigated by patrol officers.

US research has also generated mixed findings regarding the impact of investigative effort on the likelihood of conviction and guilty verdicts. Smithey, Green and Giacomazzi (2004), who directly examined the impact of time spent at the scene, found no significant association between this and the likelihood of conviction. Variation exists across other studies evaluating the impact of specialist units and criminal justice measures intended to increase investigative effort, with some reporting a significant positive impact on the likelihood of a conviction or guilty verdict (Hartley & Frohmann 2003; Whetstone 2001), and others reporting no impact (Friday et al. 2006; Harrell et al. 2006; Pennell & Burke 2002). Keys Young's (2000) evaluation of the Family Violence Intervention Program in the Australian Capital Territory, however, found that the proportion of finalised family and domestic violence charges resulting in conviction increased from 25 percent to 41 percent in the year following its implementation.

Jolin et al.'s (1998) evaluation compared the revictimisation rates of victims whose cases were assigned to either a specialist unit or standard investigation. Victims whose cases were assigned to the specialist unit were significantly less likely to self-report revictimisation in the six months following a perpetrator's arrest, but where revictimisation did occur during this period they were significantly more likely to have reported it to police. Similarly, White, Goldkamp and Campbell's (2005) evaluation of a specialist police investigative unit found a decrease in domestic violence incidents with the establishment of the unit, although they noted that this corresponded with a general crime drop in the region of focus. Greater investigative effort may therefore not only deter perpetrators from future offending by increasing the chances of criminal justice sanctions but also build victims' confidence in the police to address any further incidents that do occur.

Building on Jolin et al.'s (1998) findings, qualitative studies have found that victims' perceptions of the effort police put into investigations—as indicated by the amount of contact they have with investigators prior to court and whether first response officers interviewed them, took photographs and collected physical evidence—play an important role in their evaluations of how well the case is dealt with (Hartley & Frohmann 2003; Keys Young 2000). Robinson and Stroshine (2005) also found that police taking the time to question witnesses in addition to the victim and suspect, and searching for or asking for evidence, significantly predicted greater victim satisfaction with the police.

Victim and witness statements

Collection of statements

Mixed findings have emerged from US research regarding the impact of domestic violence severity on the collection of victim statements. For example, Robinson and Chandek (2000b) found that indicators of incident severity (ie weapon use and victim injury) did not significantly predict victim participation (which included the provision of statements), while Bechtel, Alarid, Holsinger and Holsinger (2012) noted that mild to moderate victim injuries and severe victim beatings were predictive of victim cooperation with police (although life-threatening injuries and suspect weapon use were not). While Robinson and Chandek (2000b) also noted that the frequency of prior domestic violence experienced by victims was not predictive of their cooperation with police, Bechtel et al. (2012) found that the suspect having prior arrests for domestic violence was actually predictive of victim refusal to cooperate.

Individual studies have found that the presence of children at the scene of a domestic violence incident (Robinson & Chandek 2000b), victim employment and the additional collection of photographic evidence (Hester & Westmarland 2005) significantly increase the likelihood of victims providing statements to the police. Ruff's (2012) evaluation of a police training program also reported that police were significantly more likely to collect written statements from victims (20%) and witnesses (13%) post-training compared to pre-training (13% and 10%, respectively). Various other demographic characteristics (victim–perpetrator relationship, ethnicity, age and education) have not emerged as predictive (Bechtel et al. 2012; Robinson & Chandek 2000b).

Retraction of statements

Victims of domestic violence are significantly more likely than victims of other forms of violence to retract previously provided statements (Felson & Ackerman 2001). Victim-focused qualitative research has revealed a large number of reasons for retraction, the most common being a fear of reprisal, still wanting a relationship with the perpetrator, wanting the perpetrator to receive help instead of punishment, not wanting their children to be without a father, not wanting to subject their children to the court process, fatigue with or pessimism regarding the court process, and financial reliance on the perpetrator (Belknap & Graham 2000; Coorey 1988; Erez & Belknap 1998; Lewis et al. 2000; Moore 2002; WA Department of Justice and WA Police Service 2002). Embarrassment has also been identified in Australian research as a reason for retraction among victims of domestic violence in small towns, where there is a real possibility of being recognised while attending court (Coorey 1988). Corroborating these findings are those from quantitative research in the United States by Cook, Burton, Robinson and Vally (2004), who found that retraction was significantly more common in cases where the victim and perpetrator were living together at the time of a domestic violence incident. Cook et al. (2004) also found that retraction was significantly more common in cases of more severe violence (ie victim injury and a history of domestic violence), where victims may arguably have a greater fear of reprisal.

Focus group discussions with Australian and New Zealand prosecutors indicate that many believe collecting video/audio recorded victim statements will overcome or minimise the likelihood of victim retraction and noncooperation (Westera & Powell 2015). However, in similar discussions with senior US police reported by Miller, Toliver and Police Executive Research Forum (2014), many expressed reluctance to use cameras in the collection of victim statements due to the additional need to train frontline officers in video interviewing techniques, along with resource limitations on their force-wide implementation.

Mixed findings have emerged regarding the influence of additional forms of evidence, such as photographic evidence and witness statements, with some studies noting that these significantly reduce or have no impact on the likelihood of victim retraction (Hester & Westmarland 2005; Robinson & Cook 2006), and others indicating that they significantly increase the likelihood of victim retraction (Cook et al. 2004). However, none of these studies accounts for the direction of this association. Victims of incidents for which there is a large amount of additional evidence may feel safer and more confident in providing statements, while victim retraction may prompt police to collect additional forms of evidence to overcome this difficulty.

Usefulness of statements

Scant Australian research has examined the criminal justice outcomes of victim and witness statement use. Research in Western Australia found that in around half of domestic violence cases where no charges were laid, the decision not to press charges was due to a lack of victim assistance with the investigation (WA Department of Justice & WA Police Service 2002). Internationally, Dawson and Dinovitzer (2001) and Kingsnorth et al. (2001) found that the availability of videotaped victim testimony and victim cooperation with investigators, respectively, significantly predicted the acceptance of cases by prosecutors. Victim cooperation has also been found to significantly predict convictions (Bechtel et al. 2012), while older studies have found that victim retraction significantly predicts case dismissal or charges being dropped (Cook et al. 2004; Konarski 2002; Sanders 1988; WA Ombudsman 2003).

There is more variability in the evidence surrounding witness statements. Most international studies have found that the availability of witness statements does not influence whether charges are accepted for prosecution (Dawson & Dinovitzer 2001; Schmidt & Steury 1989). Nelson (2012) found that the number of witnesses from whom statements were collected significantly predicted the acceptance of misdemeanour charges for prosecution, but not felony charges, misdemeanour and felony charges, or restraining order violations. Only Kingsnorth et al. (2001) found that the availability of witness statements significantly predicted prosecutors filing a case with the court. While research examining the impact of witness statements on the likelihood of conviction is minimal, the findings are somewhat more consistent, indicating that neither the presence (Kingsnorth et al. 2001) nor number (Nelson 2012) of witnesses significantly predicts conviction.

Other types of evidence

Collection of other evidence types

Outside of victim and witness statements, most empirical research on the collection of evidence in domestic violence cases examines photographic evidence. In focus groups with NSW police, several practical difficulties were noted with the collection of photographic evidence, particularly in police commands where investigation kits including audiovisual recording equipment were not routinely kept in patrol cars (NSW Ombudsman 2006). Many officers reported that they were forced to either purchase and use their own equipment, transport victims to police stations, or take photographic evidence at a later time—all of which could potentially reduce the quality of the evidence collected.

International research highlights similar issues. Interviews with senior US police reported by Miller, Toliver and Police Executive Research Forum (2014) highlighted the importance of training police to properly use this equipment in order to maximise evidence quality, along with the resource constraints on its implementation. Relatedly, Ruff's (2012) evaluation of a domestic violence investigative training program found that it resulted in a small but statistically significant increase in the number of cases where photographic evidence of the crime scene was collected, from one percent to two percent. However, as Hester and Westmarland (2005) point out, the collection of photographic evidence is contingent on the presence of something to photograph, such as visible injuries or property damage.

Beyond photographic evidence, Isaac and Enos (2000) examined the potential barriers to police and criminal justice professionals using medical records as evidence in domestic violence cases. These barriers include problems obtaining the medical records, along with the ambiguity and inaccuracy of the information they contain. The researchers ultimately highlighted the importance of standardised assessment and recording methods for domestic violence-related hospital visits that clearly capture all information relevant to police investigators (eg injuries plotted on body maps, detailed notes on patient statements) and maximise its evidentiary value.

Usefulness of other evidence types

In Australia, prosecutors have highlighted the importance of collecting as much additional evidence as possible in order to strengthen cases (Westera & Powell 2015). However, international research has found that medical reports or forensic evidence, photographic evidence of crime scenes and victim injuries, and emergency call recordings and transcripts do not significantly increase the chances of a case being accepted for prosecution (Cook et al. 2004; Dawson & Dinovitzer 2001; Kingsnorth et al. 2001; Nelson 2012; Schmidt & Steury 1989). However, Kingsnorth et al. (2001) did find that photographic evidence significantly increased the likelihood of domestic violence cases being prosecuted and convicted as felonies compared to misdemeanours in the United States. Garcia (2003) also found that cases where photographic evidence was collected were significantly more likely to result in guilty pleas and convictions, and received significantly more severe sentences. It is noted, however, that cases were not randomly assigned to photographic and no photographic evidence conditions, with decisions regarding its collection being made on the basis of investigative considerations.

New investigative techniques

The last two decades have seen accelerated advances in law enforcement technologies. One development increasingly used in the investigation of domestic violence is the body-worn camera. Worn by police first responders to domestic violence incidents, these cameras can record both victim and witness statements and critical crime scene images, increasing the amount and quality of evidence for prosecutors. Recent quasi-experimental evaluations in the United States (Morrow, Katz & Choate 2016) and United Kingdom (Owens, Mann & Mckenna 2014) have found that incidents responded to by officers with body-worn cameras are significantly more likely to result in charges being laid, the acceptance of charges by prosecutors, and guilty pleas/verdicts, and may also increase the likelihood of perpetrator arrest. The impact of these cameras on the laying of charges also remained after officer and incident characteristics were taken into account.

Overseas, police and public attitudes towards body-worn cameras are also very positive, with many indicating a belief that these cameras increase the amount and quality of evidence collected about domestic violence incidents, overcome the difficulty of victim retraction, and reduce complaints against the police (Ellis, Jenkins & Smith 2015; Miller, Toliver & Police Executive Research Forum 2014). However, interviews and informal surveys of police reported in Miller et al. (2014) revealed a number of potential issues with the implementation of body-worn cameras. These include the problem of recording children and the interior of private residences without permission, and the potential for police to feel increased scrutiny and pressure to handle domestic violence incidents perfectly. Senior police also note the considerable costs of implementing these cameras, particularly in larger agencies, with camera prices ranging from \$120 to almost \$2,000 each, along with associated costs for data storage.

While panic buttons and other mobile alert technologies have been used in a primarily preventative capacity, many incorporate audio recording functions that can generate additional evidence for police investigators, particularly in cases of minor protection order violations. Natarajan's (2016) examination of a mobile phone alert system highlighted several examples of this, including one case where a mobile alert system recorded a victim's ex-partner trying to coax her into his car on the street, and another where a perpetrator was recorded entering a victim's residence.

Finally, while risk assessments are intended principally to guide the initial actions of police first responders to domestic violence incidents, along with subsequent preventative and criminal justice responses, they can also have investigative value. Observations and interviews with key criminal justice stakeholders reported in Cook et al. (2004) revealed that the mandated completion of risk assessment instruments can prompt more thorough investigations by requiring officers to ask questions and collect evidence they would not otherwise collect.

Summary of key findings

- Experimental and quasi-experimental studies have examined the criminal justice outcomes of investigative training and specialist police investigative units, while other quantitative studies have focused on the outcomes of different investigative practices and evidence types.
- Police are more likely to lay charges in cases they have put more effort into investigating, although findings are mixed regarding whether effort alone translates into an increased likelihood of acceptance for prosecution and conviction. Time and resource constraints on mandated agency-wide increases in investigative effort have also been noted.
- While not always translating into positive longer-term criminal justice outcomes, greater investigative effort can build victims' confidence in the police and encourage them to report further instances of domestic violence.
- Current findings suggest that the availability of victim statements is associated with an increased likelihood of acceptance for prosecution and conviction, while witness statements appear to have little impact. However, in focus groups and in-depth interviews police officers have noted various difficulties regarding the collection and retraction of these statements.
- Photographic evidence and body-worn cameras have generally shown promise, increasing the likelihood of acceptance for prosecution and conviction in the few studies that have examined them. However, research does not support the usefulness of other forms of evidence (forensic/medical evidence, emergency call recordings) in either of these regards.
- Non-investigative police responses—rapid alert technologies and risk assessment tools—may also have investigative value.

Decision to charge

The final stage in the continuum of the police response to domestic violence (outside of the court process) is the laying of charges against the perpetrator. Research into the investigation of domestic violence indicates that charges are more likely in cases in which police have spent more investigative effort, and for which there is more evidence available (particularly certain types of evidence). Further, a number of Australian and overseas police agencies now operate under pro-charge policies that recommend the laying of charges in all cases for which there is judged to be sufficient evidence, with or without the support of the victim (ie evidence-driven charging). However, several other factors also influence police decisions to charge, as well as whether victims support the decision to lay charges.

Thirty-three studies examining police decisions to lay charges in domestic violence cases were identified for inclusion in the review. Three-quarters of these studies employed quantitative research methods, most of which examined the relationship between certain factors and police decision making, while around one-third analysed qualitative data. A small body of research has explored the relationship between charge policies and practices and prosecution outcomes.

Research findings

Decision to charge

The severity of domestic violence incidents has emerged as an important influence on police decisions to charge. Police in Australia and overseas are significantly more likely to lay charges, to lay a larger number of charges, and to lay more serious charges in more severe cases, as indicated by physical or sexual violence, victim injury, the victim needing medical attention, the presence of multiple victims or property damage (Dawson & Hotton 2014; Phillips & Gillham 2010; Phillips & Varano 2008; WA Department of Justice & WA Police Service 2002; Wright 1998). Surveys of police (Muir & LeClaire 1984) and in-depth interviews with victims (Coorey 1988) have also identified incident severity as a primary influence on police decision making in relation to charging.

Further, police are more likely to lay charges where the perpetrator does not cooperate with first response officers (Phillips & Varano 2008) and where the domestic violence occurs in the context of an ongoing intimate partner relationship (Dawson & Hotton 2014; Wright 1998). Outside of incident characteristics, police and victims have identified a history of domestic violence as another important influence on police decisions to charge (Coorey 1988; Muir & LeClaire 1984). This is corroborated by quantitative research, which has found that police are more likely to lay charges where there is evidence of a history of domestic violence, as indicated by prior police call-outs (WA Department of Justice & WA Police Service 2002) and pre-existing protection orders (Phillips & Varano 2008).

Critically, the discretion police have in deciding to lay charges is now limited to some extent by policy and systemic factors. As mentioned, many police agencies now operate under pro-charge policies that encourage evidence-driven as opposed to victim-driven charging. These policies have led to notable increases in the proportion of domestic violence incidents reported to police that result in charges, and the average number of charges laid for these incidents, in Australia and overseas (Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System 1991; Muir & LeClaire 1984; Rodwell & Smith 2008; Sentencing Advisory Council 2015). However, in-depth interviews and discussions with police have revealed that decisions to charge are hampered by time pressures and practical or bureaucratic barriers. It is noted that charging, like many other police-led responses, can be a time-consuming process involving large amounts of paperwork and evidence collection and collation (Knowles 1996; NSW Ombudsman 2006). Police often weigh this workload against the perceived risk of domestic violence recurrence and the likelihood of prosecution when deciding whether or not to charge (Knowles 1996). Some police have expressed frustration with prosecutors and judges not seeing through cases they have invested substantial time and effort in and, in some instances, the criticism they receive from magistrates for laying charges in the absence of certain types of evidence such as victim statements (NSW Ombudsman 2006; Sinden & Stephens 1999).

Victim support for and cooperation with charging emerged in older studies as an important influence on police decisions to charge (Knowles 1996; Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System 1991; NSW Ombudsman 2006; Wareham 1993), while more recent Australian research has found that a substantial proportion of victims continue to try to have charges dropped (Cussen & Lyneham 2012). As previously highlighted, studies examining the investigation of domestic violence have found that victim noncooperation can frustrate police efforts to investigate these incidents in the lead-up to laying charges (Kingsnorth et al. 2001; WA Department of Justice & WA Police Service 2002).

Research tentatively suggests that victims of more violent incidents are typically more likely to support charges (Bechtel et al. 2012; Bui 2001; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh 2004; but see Hare 2006; Rhodes et al. 2011), while those who were victimised while intoxicated are less likely to support charges (Bechtel et al. 2012; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh 2004; Rhodes et al. 2011; but see Boivin & Leclerc 2016). Mixed findings have emerged regarding domestic violence persistence. Some studies suggest that a more extensive history of victimisation is associated with increased support for charging (Hare 2006; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh 2004), while others find no association (Boivin & Leclerc 2016; Rhodes et al. 2011) or lower levels of support among those with more extensive victimisation histories (Bechtel et al. 2012).

Findings are also mixed regarding victim–perpetrator relationship, with some studies noting that the existence of an ongoing intimate relationship increases victim support for charging (Boivin & Leclerc 2016; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh 2004), and others finding no association (Rhodes et al. 2011) or a negative association (Bui 2001). Hare (2006) found that being married to the perpetrator reduced victim support for charges compared with dating, although no associations with the nature, length or seriousness of relationships have emerged in other studies (Bechtel et al. 2012; Boivin & Leclerc 2016; Rhodes et al. 2011). Having children with the perpetrator appears to increase victim support for charges (Bui 2001; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh 2004), although no associations have been found with the number of children (Hare 2006) or whether they witnessed the domestic violence incident (Boivin & Leclerc 2016).

Individual studies have found increased levels of support for charging among victims who are non-white (Kingsnorth & MacIntosh 2004) and employed (Bechtel et al. 2012), and in cases where less serious charges are laid (Kingsnorth & MacIntosh 2004). Little to no evidence exists for associations between support for charging and victim education (Bechtel et al. 2012; Hare 2006), SES (Rhodes et al. 2011), or age (Bechtel et al. 2012; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh 2004; Rhodes et al. 2011; but see Hare 2006), and cases of bilateral violence (Boivin & Leclerc 2016; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh 2004; but see Bui 2001).

In-depth interviews, focus groups and surveys with victims have shed light on the reasons victims do not support charges for domestic violence. Unsurprisingly, these reasons are similar to those victims have put forward for retracting or refusing to provide statements against perpetrators, and include fear of or ongoing commitment to the perpetrator, not wanting the perpetrator punished or preferring they receive help, financial dependence on the perpetrator, not wanting children to be without their father, wanting to shield children from the traumas of criminal justice system involvement, and fatigue or pessimism with criminal justice processes (Cussen & Lyneham 2012; Erez & Belknap 1998; Gillis et al. 2006; Hare 2006; Hartley & Frohmann 2003; Lewis et al. 2000; Moore 2002; Rhodes et al. 2011; WA Department of Justice & WA Police Service 2002; Weisz, Black & Nahan 2005). Indeed, many victims indicate calling the police simply to have the perpetrator temporarily removed to ensure their short-term safety, rather than for the longer-term goal of prosecution and conviction (Gillis et al. 2006; Weisz, Black & Nahan 2005).

The most common reasons victims give for supporting charges include wanting to prevent further violence by punishing, deterring or incapacitating perpetrators, protecting children, and encouragement or pressure from family and social networks (Erez & Belknap 1998; Hare 2006; Hartley & Frohmann 2003; Lewis et al. 2000; Rhodes et al. 2011). Interestingly, Erez and Belknap (1998) found that victims rated family, friends and even other criminal justice system agents as more important influences on their decisions to support charges than police. However, police were identified as the most important influence on decisions not to support charges.

Charge outcomes

Critically, while pro-charge policies have resulted in increases in the number of domestic violence incidents charged, research has found that these increases are not typically accompanied by increases in convictions. In New South Wales, Rodwell and Smith (2008) found that the proportion of cases resulting in conviction actually decreased with the onset of a pro-charge policy. Similarly, an older Canadian study by Muir and LeClaire (1984) found no significant difference in the proportion of charges resulting in conviction before and after the implementation of a pro-charge policy, and some evidence for a decrease in the proportion of matters finalised by guilty plea. Jaffe, Wolfe, Telford and Austin's (1986) evaluation of a pro-charge policy in Canada found that victims were no less likely to report domestic violence to police as a result of the policy.

Conversely, a more recent study by Fleury-Steiner, Bybee, Sullivan, Belknap and Melton (2006) found that victims' future use of the criminal justice system for domestic violence was significantly predicted by the interaction of their desired outcome and the actual outcome of charges. Specifically, future use of the criminal justice system for domestic violence was predicted by alignment of victim preferences with actual police responses. Similarly, Belknap and Sullivan (2002) found that victims who were satisfied with the criminal justice system's response to their domestic violence incident felt that they had significantly more control over the prosecution process than those who were less satisfied. In other words, victims are more satisfied when their expectations regarding the police response to the offender are met.

The number of charges laid by police does appear to influence prosecution outcomes. A handful of studies have also found that the number of charges filed significantly improves the chances that the case will be accepted for prosecution and result in conviction (Nelson 2014, 2012). Whether charges actually influence offender behaviour (separate to arrest) has been the subject of little research. An older study found that charging perpetrators (regardless of whether they are found guilty or convicted) did not reduce the likelihood of reoffending over and above arrest (Steinman 1988). Further research is warranted.

Summary of key findings

- Few studies have examined the influences on police decisions to charge, other than investigative and evidentiary factors.
- Charges are more likely in more severe (ie more violent and harmful) cases of domestic violence, where perpetrators have a history of domestic violence, and where they are uncooperative with first response officers.
- Police are under increased pressure to lay evidence-driven as opposed to victim-driven charges, which de-prioritise victims' attitudes to prosecution. However, the heavy reliance on victim statements as evidence, and the difficulty of obtaining statements where victims do not support prosecution, can hamper evidence-driven charging.
- Victims have indicated a range of reasons for not wanting police to lay charges. Primary among these are fear of or ongoing commitment to the perpetrator, not wanting the perpetrator punished or preferring they receive help, financial dependence on the perpetrator, not wanting children to be without their father, wanting to shield children from the traumas of criminal justice system involvement, and fatigue or pessimism with criminal justice processes. Quantitative research also indicates that victims are less likely to support charges where they are unemployed, they do not have children with perpetrators and they were intoxicated at the time of the incident, and in cases of less severe domestic violence.
- While police attitudes and behaviours factor heavily into victim decisions to not support charging, family and friends are the strongest influence on decisions to support charging.
- Policies mandating agency-wide increases in charging for domestic violence on their own are not typically accompanied by increases in conviction, while evidence-driven charging can discourage victims from reporting further domestic violence incidents where they do not wish to prosecute. Importantly, victims are most satisfied when their expectations regarding the police response to the offender are met.

Conclusion

This review identified a significant body of evidence on the implementation and outcomes of police responses to domestic violence across the continuum from workforce development through to the decision to charge perpetrators. The last two decades have seen a sharp increase in the amount of empirical research conducted. In summarising the findings from over 300 studies, this review has revealed the benefits of an effective police response for victims of domestic violence, the circumstances in which these responses are most effective, and the factors critical to their successful implementation.

The findings summarised in this report have important implications for the policing of domestic violence in Australia. However, before these implications are considered, it is necessary to understand the methodological limits of the existing research into domestic violence policing. Most importantly, there is a paucity of empirical research, particularly rigorous quantitative peer-reviewed research, on the policing of domestic violence in an Australian context. Interestingly, while police-led first responses to domestic violence have received the most attention in international research—by a wide margin—they have received the least attention in Australian research. While the reasons for this are unclear, it highlights a general need for more Australian research on the implementation and outcomes of police-led responses to domestic violence.

Further, there is a general lack of rigorous experimental and quasi-experimental outcomes-focused research on most police responses. While this is understandable given the practical and ethical challenges associated with these studies, the shortage of quality research limits the certainty with which conclusions regarding the effectiveness of most police responses to domestic violence can be stated. This issue is further compounded by the fact that studies are typically only able to evaluate the implementation and impact of police responses in relation to reported cases of domestic violence. As demonstrated in the current review, there are important differences between the domestic violence cases that are more and less likely to come to the attention of police, and the conclusions of this review regarding the implementation and effectiveness of police responses may be less applicable to the latter (eg less physically violent and harmful domestic violence cases, or cases of sexual assault). Finally, there is a lack of quantitative research in general examining the implementation of police responses. While in-depth qualitative studies have been critical in unveiling a number of potential issues with the implementation of these responses, further rigorous process evaluations, including cost-effectiveness studies, are needed.

Findings across the policing domains examined in this review highlight the limits of recommendations that police should simply ‘do more’ to address domestic violence. Such recommendations ignore the realities of police work and the time and bureaucratic constraints that officers operate within. While outcomes-focused research may indicate that additional responses and processes have desirable impacts, the added workload their implementation places on police must also be considered. Relatedly, it is wrong to assume that mandating an increase in the use of a particular police response (eg pro-arrest and pro-charge policies) will inevitably have desirable flow-on effects on subsequent police and criminal justice activities. Increasing the time and effort police spend implementing a response can just as easily lead to criminal justice systems becoming overloaded with a sudden influx in domestic violence cases, a larger proportion of cases being dismissed by prosecutors or courts, and no better outcomes for victims.

Efforts to improve the policing of domestic violence should focus on optimising the implementation and effectiveness of police responses, as opposed to simply mandating increases in their use or in the time and effort devoted to them. This can be achieved through specialised police units, officer training and the adoption of new technologies with the potential to simplify and enhance certain responses (eg panic buttons and mobile alert systems, GPS technologies, body-worn cameras, and computer-based or online training programs). Existing research can also be used to inform the targeting of different responses at incidents where they are likely to have the most impact. Research suggests that responses such as arrest and protection orders can be more or less effective, or even counterproductive, in different types of cases. Finally, increased emphasis should be given to simplifying bureaucratic processes surrounding current police responses (eg applications for protection orders), rather than focusing entirely on the development of new responses.

Findings across multiple policing domains also point to the importance of victim satisfaction and support for police responses to domestic violence. Victim support is especially crucial to police investigative and charging processes, given their heavy reliance on victim statements as evidence. Critically, a number of discrepancies have emerged in existing research between the criminal justice objectives of many police responses and victims’ reasons for involving police. Specifically, while police prioritise apprehension, prosecution and conviction of domestic violence perpetrators and the prevention of domestic violence recurrence, a notable proportion of victims express more immediate safety concerns and oppose extended criminal justice system involvement. This potentially creates problems for police agencies across Australia, given that they are now assessed, to varying degrees, against key performance indicators reflecting both victim satisfaction and criminal justice outcomes (eg NSW Police Force 2016; Queensland Police Service 2016). Further, victims’ satisfaction with prior police responses has been identified in this review as a potentially important predictor of whether they choose to contact the police for further instances of domestic violence.

The absence of victim support for investigation and charging can pose challenges for police in responding to domestic violence. These difficulties may be exacerbated by pro-arrest and pro-charge policies, which encourage police to take action whether there is support from victims or not. As such, striking a balance between achieving criminal justice outcomes centred on preventing domestic violence recurrence and ensuring victim satisfaction poses a significant challenge for police in Australia. Systematic efforts should be made to communicate the details and benefits of certain police responses to victims, and to keep them involved in the processes surrounding their implementation. At the same time, police may need to respect that some victims choose to use other responses such as arrest or protection orders in order to ensure their own short-term safety, and their prioritising of immediate over long-term safety concerns. Indeed, existing research suggests that, under certain circumstances, short-term police responses such as arrest or even the mere attendance at a domestic violence incident can reduce the longer-term likelihood of domestic violence recurrence.

The severity and persistence of domestic violence have emerged as important predictors of most of the police responses covered in this review. Police are likely to perceive the risk of domestic violence recurrence as much higher in severe and persistent cases, and thus take measures to mitigate this risk (eg by arresting perpetrators). Additionally, incidents involving a greater amount of physical violence typically yield more evidence and easily collectible items of evidence, simplifying the investigative process and increasing the chances of successful prosecution and conviction. However, while the need to prioritise these incidents is understandable, it is possible that non-physical forms of domestic violence (eg emotional and financial abuse) and less physically violent protection order breaches will be dismissed as less important or too difficult to investigate. Again, innovative investigative practices and technologies have demonstrated the potential to simplify evidence collection in cases of low-level protection order breaches. Furthermore, the mere act of taking these incidents seriously and putting what effort they can into investigating them may have longer-term investigative benefits for police by encouraging victims to use their services again, giving police further opportunities to have perpetrators prosecuted.

The increasing volume and complexity of domestic violence cases confronting police has meant that police agencies dedicate significant resources to their response, while also looking for opportunities to become more efficient and improve outcomes for victims and the criminal justice system. Rising numbers of reported incidents, the findings of recent large-scale reviews, and the importance that has been placed nationally on reducing domestic violence, particularly violence against women and children, means that this trend is likely to continue. While much is already known about policing responses to domestic violence, there remain significant gaps in the knowledge base. Now more than ever there is a need for a contemporary body of rigorous Australian empirical research on policing, particularly the policing of domestic violence, to help shape the law enforcement response to victims and perpetrators.

References

a: Workforce development

b: Reporting

c: First response

d: Prevention

e: Investigation

f: Charging

1–31: Studies included in Appendix D

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Appendix A: Search terms

Domestic violence and policing search terms

“Domestic Violence” OR DV OR “Domestic Assault” OR “Domestic Abuse” OR “Intimate Partner Violence” OR IPV OR “Spous* Abuse” OR “Spous* Violence” OR “Spous* Assault” OR “Family Violence” OR “Marital Violence” OR “Battered Wom*” OR “Conjugal Violence” OR “Abused Wom*” OR “Dating Violence”

AND

Polic* OR “Law Enforce*”

Workforce development search terms

Train* OR Course OR Develop* OR “Workforce Development” OR Educat* OR Program OR Class OR Seminar OR Academy

Reporting search terms

Report* OR Call* OR Attend*

First response search terms

Respons* OR Incident OR Scene OR Arrest* OR “Pro-Arrest” OR “Mandatory Arrest” OR “Primary Aggressor” OR “Risk Assessment” OR “Danger Assessment” OR “Lethality Assessment” OR Test* OR Predict* OR Screen*

Prevention search terms

Prevent* OR “Second Respon*” OR “Follow Up” OR GPS OR Track* OR Surveil* OR Order* OR Protect* OR PO OR “Protection Order” OR “Intervention Order” OR AVO OR “Apprehended Violence Order” OR “Restraining Order” OR “Court Order” OR ADVO OR “Apprehended Domestic Violence Order” OR DVO OR “Domestic Violence Order”

Investigation search terms

Investigat* OR Detect* OR Eviden* OR Collect* OR Special* OR Team* OR Unit* OR Camera*
OR Photo* OR "Body Worn Camera*" OR "Body-Mounted Camera*" OR Testimony OR
Witness* OR "Evidence-in-Chief" OR Forensic OR Medical OR "Emergency Call" OR Record* OR
Digital OR Transcript

Charging search terms

Charg* OR Prosecut* OR Convict* OR Guilty OR "Guilty Plea" OR Court OR Justice OR "Pro-
charge" OR "No-Drop"

Appendix B: Methodological summary tools

Table B1: Methodological summary tool: Pre-coding	
Item	Coding
Study ID ^{ab}	WD## = Workforce development RE## = Reporting FR## = First response PR## = Prevention IN## = Investigation CH## = Charging
Year of publication	YYYY
Study location	1 = Australia 2 = New Zealand 3 = US 4 = UK 5 = Canada
Peer-reviewed source?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Data type ^a	1 = Quantitative only 2 = Qualitative only 3 = Both quantitative and qualitative

a: Where studies were classified into more than one policing domain, or included both quantitative and qualitative data, multiple tools were used to summarise methods and results pertaining to each domain and data type

b: Where studies were classified into more than one policing domain, studies were ascribed a separate ID for each domain

Table B2: Methodological summary tool: Quantitative studies	
Item	Coding
Study design	1 = Evaluation with researcher-manipulated intervention 2 = Evaluation with natural intervention 3 = Inferential analysis of associations/relationships 4 = Descriptive
Systematic review	0 = No 1 = Yes – systematic review 2 = Yes – systematic review with meta-analysis
Sampling method	1 = Probability sampling 2 = Non-probability sampling 3 = Both probability and non-probability sampling
Data collection method	
Questionnaire/structured interview used?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Semi-/unstructured interview used?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Observations used?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Official/administrative data used?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Other data collection methods used?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Specify other data collection methods	0 = No 1 = Yes

Table B3: Methodological summary tool: Qualitative studies

Item	Coding
Data collection method	
Questionnaire/structured interview used?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Semi-/unstructured interview/focus group used?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Document analysis used?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Ethnographic/observational methods used?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Other data collection method used?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Specify other data collection methods	Free text

Appendix C: Methodological summaries

Workforce development

Thirty-three studies were identified for inclusion in the review of workforce development. Over half of these studies involved the analysis of quantitative data (57%; see Table C1). Of these, approximately half were peer reviewed (57%). Since many of the quantitative studies in this domain constitute evaluations of individual police training programs, experimental and quasi-experimental studies account for a significant proportion (researcher-manipulated interventions=26%; natural interventions=21%), all of which were from overseas. Descriptive studies (26%) and those encompassing the inferential analysis of relationships between variables (26%) typically examined the association of prior police training with attitudinal and behavioural variables. The assessment of training outcomes often relied on self-reported attitudinal and behavioural changes obtained through questionnaires and structured interviews (84%), as opposed to officially recorded changes in police domestic violence responses (26%). Only two of the quantitative studies on police domestic violence training were from Australia. Both were descriptive.

Half of the studies examining workforce development involved the analysis of qualitative data (51%). Around one-quarter of these were peer reviewed (29%; see Table C2). While there is a relatively even split between Australian and international research, a much larger proportion of the international research (44%) was peer reviewed than Australian research (12%). Further, most relied on data collected through semi-structured or unstructured interviews and/or focus groups (82%). This was consistent across Australian (87%) and international (77%) studies.

Table C1: Summary of methods used in quantitative studies of workforce development			
	Overall % (n) (n=19)	Australian % (n) (n=2)	Overseas % (n) (n=17)
Peer review	57 (11)	0 (0)	64 (11)
Research design			
Evaluation (manipulated)	26 (5)	0 (0)	29 (5)
Evaluation (natural)	21 (4)	0 (0)	23 (4)
Analysis of relationships	26 (5)	0 (0)	29 (5)
Descriptive	26 (5)	100 (2)	17 (3)
Sampling			
Representative sample	4 (1)	50 (1)	0 (0)
Data collection methods^a			
Questionnaire/structured interview	84 (16)	100 (2)	82 (14)
Semi-/unstructured interview/focus group	5 (1)	50 (1)	0 (0)
Official data	26 (5)	50 (1)	23 (4)

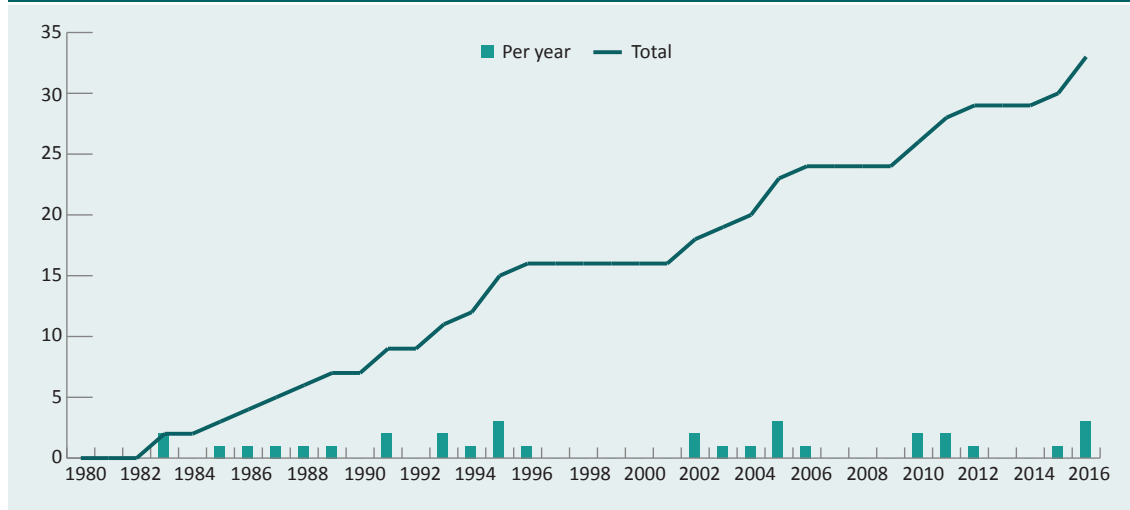
a: Data collection methods are not mutually exclusive

Table C2: Summary of methods used in qualitative studies of workforce development			
	Overall % (n) (n=17)	Australian % (n) (n=8)	Overseas % (n) (n=9)
Peer review	29 (5)	12 (1)	44 (4)
Data collection methods^a			
Questionnaire/structured interview	29 (5)	25 (2)	33 (3)
Semi-/unstructured interview/focus group	82 (14)	87 (7)	77 (7)
Document analysis	11 (2)	25 (2)	0 (0)
Ethnographic/observation	11 (2)	12 (1)	11 (1)
Other data collection method	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

a: Data collection methods are not mutually exclusive

Overall, since the mid-1980s, the number of empirical studies on police domestic violence training has steadily increased (see Figure C1).

Figure C1: Number of studies on workforce development by year of publication (n=33)



Reporting to police

Eighty-three studies on reporting domestic violence to police were included in the review. Nearly 90 percent of these studies (n=72) involved the analysis of quantitative data, and 61 percent of these studies were peer reviewed (see Table C3). International studies (68%) were more likely to have been peer reviewed than Australian studies (33%). As much of the research in this domain examined predictors of reporting that cannot be manipulated, experimental and quasi-experimental studies—predominantly evaluations of criminal justice measures designed to increase reporting, be it as a primary or secondary goal—accounted for around one in 10 studies. Most studies examined the relationships between various factors and reporting to police (68%), although this was more common among international studies than Australian studies (73% and 46%, respectively). Conversely, a larger proportion of Australian studies were descriptive in nature (40% vs 12%). Around two-thirds of these studies involved the analysis of data collected with questionnaires and structured interviews (69%), with just over one-third analysing official data (36%). These data collection methods constituted the bulk of both Australian and international studies. Research in this domain predominantly involved victim samples, reflecting the longstanding argument that official records, such as police reports, can be an unreliable measure relative to self-reported rates of victimisation (David, Weisburd & Taylor 2008; Holder 2007).

Table C3: Summary of methods used in quantitative studies of reporting to police			
	Overall % (n) (n=72)	Australian % (n) (n=15)	Overseas % (n) (n=57)
Peer review	61 (44)	33 (5)	68 (39)
Research design			
Evaluation (manipulated)	6 (5)	0 (0)	8 (5)
Evaluation (natural)	6 (5)	13 (2)	5 (3)
Analysis of relationships	68 (49)	46 (7)	73 (42)
Descriptive	18 (13)	40 (6)	12 (7)
Systematic review	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Sampling			
Representative sample	27 (20)	20 (3)	29 (17)
Data collection methods^a			
Questionnaire/structured interview	69 (50)	60 (9)	71 (41)
Semi-/unstructured interview/focus group	9 (7)	13 (2)	8 (5)
Observation	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Official data	36 (26)	46 (7)	33 (19)
Other data collection method	5 (4)	0 (0)	7 (4)

a: Data collection methods are not mutually exclusive

One in two qualitative studies on domestic violence reporting were peer reviewed (50%; see Table C4). International studies were more likely than Australian studies to have been peer reviewed (60% vs 25%). A variety of data collection methods were employed, although semi-structured or unstructured interviews and/or focus groups were most common (68%), both among Australian (62%) and international (70%) studies.

Table C4: Summary of methods used in qualitative studies of reporting to police			
	Overall % (n) (n=28)	Australian % (n) (n=8)	Overseas % (n) (n=20)
Peer review	50 (14)	25 (2)	60 (12)
Data collection methods^a			
Questionnaire/structured interview	37 (10)	37 (3)	36 (7)
Semi-/unstructured interview/focus group	68 (19)	62 (5)	70 (14)
Document analysis	22 (6)	50 (4)	10 (2)
Ethnographic/observation	11 (3)	12 (1)	10 (2)
Other data collection method	14 (4)	25 (2)	10 (2)

a: Data collection methods are not mutually exclusive

Figure C2: Number of studies on reporting to police by year of publication (n=83)



The number of studies exploring issues related to domestic violence reporting to police remained relatively low until the late 1990s (see Figure C2). However, since then there has been a substantial increase in the number of studies.

First response

One hundred and eighty-one studies on police first response to domestic violence were identified for inclusion in this review. Most of the research on police first responses to domestic violence involved quantitative research methods (83%; see Table C5). Australian studies accounted for only six percent of all quantitative studies of first response. Around one in six studies (14%) involved experimental or quasi-experimental research methods, largely focusing on the impact of arrest. The most common research design was the inferential analysis of relationships between variables (61%), overall and for arrest (62%), and risk assessment (53%) studies, while Australian studies were mostly descriptive (60%). A substantial proportion of studies drew upon official data (59%), namely police arrest records, followed by questionnaires and structured interviews (45%).

Table C5: Summary of methods used in quantitative studies of first response					
	Overall % (n) (n=152)	Australian % (n) (n=10)	Overseas % (n) (n=142)	Arrest % (n) (n=137)	Risk assessment % (n) (n=15)
Peer review	81 (123)	20 (2)	85 (121)	82 (113)	66 (10)
Research design					
Evaluation (manipulated)	9 (14)	0 (0)	9 (14)	8 (12)	13 (2)
Evaluation (natural)	5 (8)	0 (0)	5 (8)	5 (7)	6 (1)
Analysis of relationships	61 (94)	40 (4)	63 (90)	62 (86)	53 (8)
Descriptive	19 (30)	60 (6)	16 (24)	21 (29)	6 (1)
Systematic review	3 (6)	0 (0)	4 (6)	2 (3)	20 (3)
Sampling					
Representative sample	38 (58)	40 (4)	38 (54)	38 (53)	33 (5)
Data collection methods^a					
Questionnaire/structured interview	45 (69)	40 (4)	45 (65)	44 (61)	53 (8)
Semi-/unstructured interview/ focus group	7 (11)	20 (2)	6 (9)	7 (10)	1 (6)
Observation	1 (3)	0 (0)	2 (3)	2 (3)	0 (0)
Official data	59 (90)	80 (8)	57 (82)	58 (80)	66 (10)
Other data collection method	6 (10)	0 (0)	7 (10)	7 (10)	0 (0)

a: Data collection methods are not mutually exclusive

More than one-quarter (28%) of the studies on first response involved qualitative research methods (see Table C6). Australian studies accounted for a larger proportion of qualitative research on police first responses (21%) than of quantitative research on these responses. Fifty-seven percent of studies involving qualitative methods were peer reviewed. Around three-quarters of qualitative studies involved semi-structured or unstructured interviews and/or focus groups (73%)—by far the most common data collection method used.

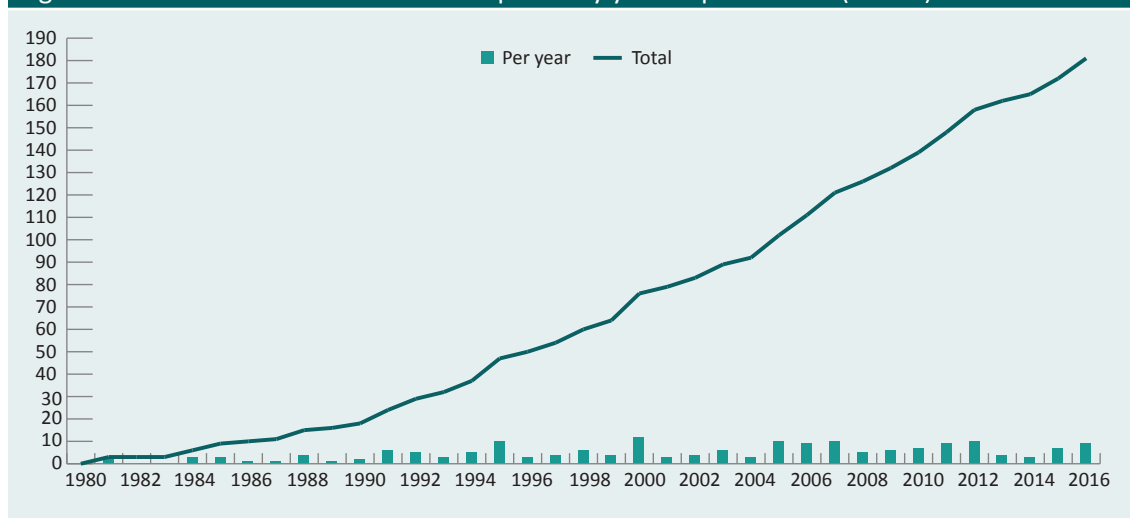
Table C6: Summary of methods used in qualitative studies of first response

	Overall % (n) (n=52)	Australian % (n) (n=11)	Overseas % (n) (n=41)	Arrest % (n) (n=48)	Risk assessment % (n) (n=5)
Peer review	57 (30)	0 (0)	73 (30)	56 (27)	60 (3)
Data collection methods^a					
Questionnaire/structured interview	23 (12)	27 (3)	21 (9)	18 (9)	60 (3)
Semi-/unstructured interview/ focus group	73 (38)	72 (8)	73 (30)	75 (36)	60 (3)
Document analysis	19 (10)	36 (4)	14 (6)	20 (10)	20 (1)
Ethnographic/observation	11 (6)	18 (2)	9 (4)	12 (6)	0 (0)
Other data collection method	1 (1)	0 (0)	2 (1)	2 (1)	0 (0)

a: Data collection methods are not mutually exclusive

Early experimental studies on the impact of arrest on domestic violence recurrence in the mid-1980s precipitated a gradual increase in research attention on police first responses to domestic violence (see Figure C3). With the addition of more recent research on the development and validation of risk assessment tools, the number of studies examining first responses to domestic violence has grown significantly over the last two decades.

Figure C3: Number of studies on first response by year of publication (n=181)



Preventing repeat domestic violence

Seventy-nine studies on police-led prevention of domestic violence were identified for inclusion in this review. Three-quarters of these studies involved the analysis of quantitative data (78%; see Table C7). Around a quarter of these were Australian studies (24%), and two-thirds were peer reviewed (66%). Over a quarter involved experimental or quasi-experimental designs (researcher-manipulated intervention=11%; natural intervention=16%). Collectively, these were relatively evenly split between evaluations of second responder programs and evaluations of protection orders, with one evaluating a proactive perpetrator surveillance measure. Most peer-reviewed and experimental/quasi-experimental studies were from overseas. Three systematic reviews were also located, including a meta-analysis of second responder program evaluations. The largest proportion of studies in this domain analysed data collected using official sources (70%) and/or questionnaires or structured interviews (50%). This is relatively consistent across Australian and international studies, and across studies examining different police-led measures.

	Overall % (n) (n=62)	Australian % (n) (n=15)	Overseas % (n) (n=47)	Second responder % (n) (n=11)	Protection orders % (n) (n=46)	New measures % (n) (n=5)
Peer review	66 (41)	26 (4)	78 (37)	54 (6)	71 (33)	40 (2)
Research design						
Evaluation (manipulated)	11 (7)	0 (0)	14 (7)	45 (5)	2 (1)	20 (1)
Evaluation (natural)	16 (10)	6 (1)	19 (9)	9 (1)	19 (9)	0 (0)
Analysis of relationships	38 (24)	40 (6)	38 (18)	27 (3)	45 (21)	0 (0)
Descriptive	29 (18)	46 (7)	23 (11)	9 (1)	28 (13)	80 (4)
Systematic review	4 (3)	6 (1)	4 (2)	9 (1)	4 (2)	0 (0)
Sampling						
Representative sample	43 (27)	53 (8)	40 (19)	72 (8)	34 (16)	60 (3)
Data collection methods^a						
Questionnaire/structured interview	50 (31)	40 (6)	53 (25)	54 (6)	45 (21)	80 (4)
Semi-/unstructured interview/focus group	8 (5)	6 (1)	8 (4)	18 (2)	6 (3)	0 (0)
Observation	4 (3)	6 (1)	4 (2)	9 (1)	4 (2)	0 (0)
Official data	70 (44)	80 (12)	68 (32)	81 (9)	69 (32)	60 (3)
Other data collection method	3 (2)	0 (0)	4 (2)	0 (0)	4 (2)	0 (0)

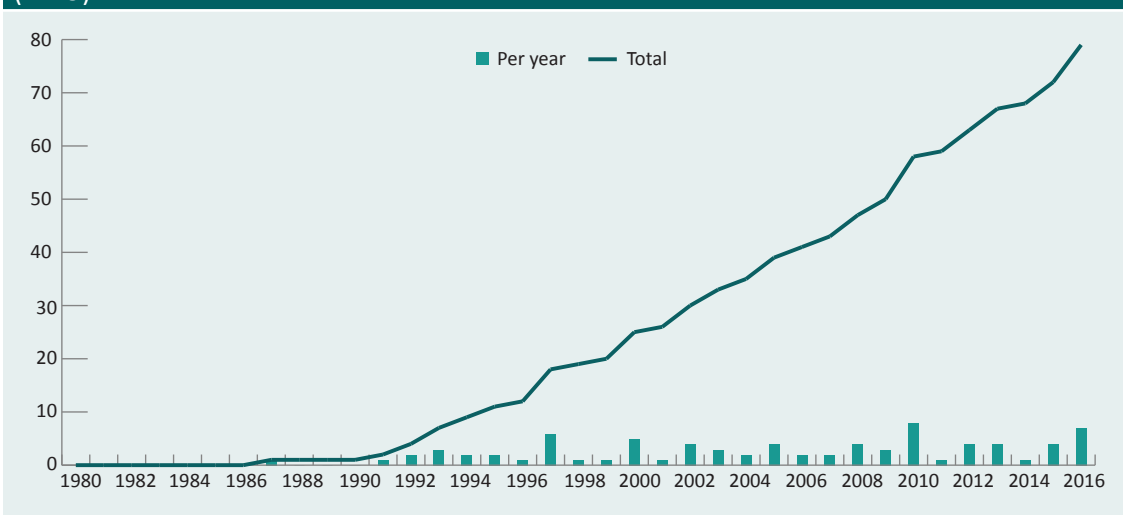
a: Data collection methods are not mutually exclusive

Thirty-two percent of studies examining police-led preventative responses analysed qualitative data (32%; see Table C8). Similar numbers of Australian and international studies on police-led preventative measures employed qualitative research methods, although a much larger proportion of international studies (57%) than Australian studies (16%) were peer reviewed. Most involved the analysis of data collected through semi-structured or unstructured interviews or focus groups (84%). This was consistent across Australian and international studies, and studies on different police-led measures.

Table C8: Summary of methods used in qualitative studies of prevention responses						
	Overall % (n) (n=26)	Australian % (n) (n=12)	Overseas % (n) (n=14)	Second responder % (n) (n=1)	Protection orders % (n) (n=21)	New measures % (n) (n=4)
Peer review	38 (10)	16 (2)	57 (8)	100 (1)	38 (8)	25 (1)
Data collection methods^a						
Questionnaire/ structured interview	19 (5)	16 (2)	21 (3)	0 (0)	23 (5)	0 (0)
Semi-/unstructured interview/focus group	84 (22)	83 (10)	83 (10)	100 (1)	80 (17)	100 (4)
Document analysis	7 (2)	16 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (2)	0 (0)
Ethnographic/observation	7 (2)	8 (1)	7 (1)	0 (0)	9 (2)	0 (0)
Other data collection method	3 (1)	8 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (1)	0 (0)

a: Data collection methods are not mutually exclusive

Figure C4: Number of studies on preventing repeat domestic violence by year of publication (n=79)



Police-led preventative responses to domestic violence are a comparatively recent development, and a response to growing recognition of the importance of proactive policing approaches (both in relation to domestic violence and more broadly). Unsurprisingly, empirical research on these responses was almost non-existent until the early 1990s, with a steady growth in the number of published studies over the past 25 years (see Figure C4).

Investigative responses

Forty-seven studies on police domestic violence investigative practices were identified for inclusion in the review. Over three-quarters of these studies involved the analysis of quantitative data (81%), and around half of these quantitative studies were peer reviewed (55%; see Table C9). Most quantitative studies, and all quantitative peer-reviewed studies, were from overseas. Around one-third adopted an experimental or quasi-experimental design—either a researcher-manipulated intervention (21%) or natural intervention (16%). These were typically evaluations of specialist police investigative units or training programs, with a small number also examining police body-worn cameras. Given the focus of many of these studies on criminal justice outcomes, data were predominately collected from official sources (82%), with one-third using questionnaires or structured interviews (32%). This is relatively consistent across Australian and international studies, and across studies focusing on different investigative responses.

Table C9: Summary of methods used in quantitative studies of investigative responses

	Overall % (n) (n=38)	Australian % (n) (n=4)	Overseas % (n) (n=34)	Effort % (n) (n=20)	Victim/ witness % (n) (n=16)	Other Evidence % (n) (n=8)	New measures % (n) (n=5)
Peer review	55 (21)	0 (0)	62 (21)	45 (9)	69 (11)	75 (6)	40 (2)
Research design							
Evaluation (manipulated)	21 (8)	0 (0)	23 (8)	25 (5)	6 (1)	12 (1)	60 (3)
Evaluation (natural)	16 (6)	0 (0)	17 (6)	20 (4)	6 (1)	12 (1)	0 (0)
Analysis of relationships	37 (14)	25 (1)	38 (13)	30 (6)	63 (10)	62 (5)	20 (1)
Descriptive	26 (10)	75 (3)	21 (7)	25 (5)	25 (4)	12 (1)	20 (1)
Sampling							
Representative sample	37 (14)	75 (3)	35 (12)	40 (8)	31 (5)	37 (3)	20 (1)
Data collection methods^a							
Questionnaire/ structured interview	32 (12)	0 (0)	35 (12)	40 (8)	19 (3)	0 (0)	40 (2)
Official data	82 (31)	100 (4)	79 (27)	80 (16)	81 (13)	100 (8)	80 (4)

a: Data collection methods are not mutually exclusive

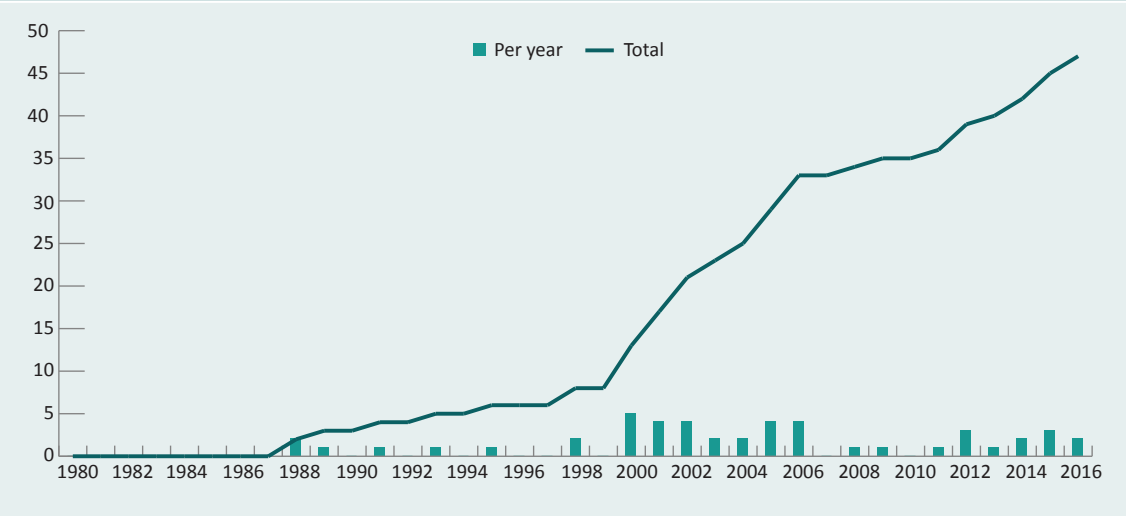
Half of the studies examining police investigative responses to domestic violence analysed qualitative data (50%). Most were international (73%), and one-third were peer reviewed (33%; see Table C10). Notably, around half of these international studies were peer reviewed (46%), compared to none of the Australian studies. Around three-quarters of these studies analysed data collected through semi-structured or unstructured interviews and/or focus groups, predominately with police (78%), with relatively equal proportions relying on questionnaires/structured interviews (21%), document analysis (21%) and ethnographic/observational methods (10%; see Table C10).

Table C10: Summary of methods used in qualitative studies of investigative responses							
	Overall % (n) (n=19)	Australian % (n) (n=5)	Overseas % (n) (n=14)	Effort % (n) (n=8)	Victim/ witness % (n) (n=10)	Other Evidence % (n) (n=4)	New measures % (n) (n=4)
Peer review	33 (6)	0 (0)	42 (6)	25 (2)	40 (4)	25 (1)	25 (1)
Data collection method^a							
Questionnaire/ structured interview	21 (4)	0 (0)	28 (4)	25 (2)	10 (1)	0 (0)	25 (1)
Semi-/unstructured interview/focus group	78 (15)	100 (5)	71 (10)	100 (8)	80 (8)	75 (3)	75 (3)
Document analysis	21 (4)	40 (2)	14 (2)	0 (0)	30 (3)	25 (1)	0 (0)
Ethnographic/ observation	10 (2)	0 (0)	14 (2)	12 (1)	10 (1)	25 (1)	25 (1)
Other data collection method	5 (1)	0 (0)	7 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	25 (1)

a: Data collection methods are not mutually exclusive

As with preventative police-led responses to domestic violence, police investigative practices received very little research attention throughout the 1980s and early 1990s (see Figure C5). Again, this likely reflects a police emphasis on reactive and immediate first response strategies such as arrest over protracted criminal justice system involvement. However, with a growing recognition of the severity and criminality of domestic violence, and intensified police efforts to prosecute perpetrators, the late 1990s and early 2000s saw a sudden and sustained increase in empirical research on these responses.

Figure C5: Number of studies on investigative responses by year of publication (n=47)



Police decisions to charge

Thirty-three studies examining police decisions to lay charges in domestic violence cases were identified for inclusion. Three-quarters of these studies involved quantitative research methods (75%) and, of these, three-quarters were peer reviewed (76%; see Table C11). International studies account for the majority of quantitative studies (76%) and all peer-reviewed quantitative studies in this domain, although evaluations with researcher-manipulated interventions in this domain were evenly split between Australian and international studies. Aside from this, the majority of studies in this area examined relationships between variables (60%), although this research accounts for a much larger proportion of international studies (66%) than Australian studies (25%). These studies also rely on official sources (68%) and questionnaires or structured interviews (48%), with equal proportions of Australian and international studies employing these data collection methods.

Table C11: Summary of methods used in quantitative studies of police decisions to charge			
	Overall % (n) (n=25)	Australian % (n) (n=4)	Overseas % (n) (n=19)
Peer review	64 (16)	0 (0)	73 (14)
Research design			
Evaluation (manipulated)	8 (2)	25 (1)	4 (1)
Evaluation (natural)	16 (4)	0 (0)	19 (4)
Analysis of relationships	60 (15)	25 (1)	66 (14)
Descriptive	16 (4)	50 (2)	9 (2)
Sampling			
Representative sample	20 (5)	25 (1)	19 (4)
Data collection methods^a			
Questionnaire/structured interview	48 (12)	50 (2)	47 (10)
Official data	68 (17)	75 (3)	66 (14)

a: Data collection methods are not mutually exclusive

Table C12: Summary of methods used in qualitative studies of police decisions to charge			
	Overall % (n) (n=12)	Australian % (n) (n=5)	Overseas % (n) (n=7)
Peer review	50 (6)	0 (0)	86 (6)
Data collection methods^a			
Questionnaire/structured interview	25 (3)	0 (0)	43 (3)
Semi-/unstructured interview/focus group	67 (8)	80 (4)	57 (4)
Document analysis	17 (2)	20 (1)	0 (0)
Ethnographic/observation	8 (1)	20 (1)	0 (0)

a: Data collection methods are not mutually exclusive

Around a third of studies in this domain involved the analysis of qualitative data (36%). There is a relatively even split between Australian and international qualitative research in this domain (see Table C12). Peer-reviewed studies account for half of this research overall (50%), and 86 percent of international studies. All of the peer-reviewed studies were from overseas. Semi-structured or unstructured interviews and/or focus groups were used in two-thirds of these studies (67%), and most Australian studies (80%). Nearly half the international studies relied on questionnaires or structured interviews (43%), while a fifth of the Australian studies employed document analysis (20%) and ethnographic/observational methods (20%).

Unsurprisingly, the release of empirical studies on police decisions to charge follow a similar trend to those focused on investigation, with consistently low numbers of studies before the late 1990s, followed by a sustained increase (see Figure C6).

Figure C6: Number of studies on police decisions to charge by year of publication (n=33)



Appendix D: Predictors of reporting

Table D1: Predictors of reporting domestic violence to police^a

	Study finding		
	Increased reporting	Decreased reporting	Non-significant ^b
Victim characteristics			
Male		13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 23	9
Younger	11b, 23 ^c	7, 13, 14, 23 ^c , 30a, 30b	2, 3, 5, 6 ^d , 9, 11a, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28
White		2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11b, 13, 14, 17	11a, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 26, 28
Aboriginal/Indigenous	6, 7		3, 9
Immigrant/language other than English ^e	6	6	24
English-speaking ability			9, 27
High SES (combined) ^f	6, 27, 30b	2, 5, 6, 7, 20, 23, 25, 29	1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11b, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30a, 31
1. High-level occupation		23	19
2. Employed		5	1, 3, 8, 9, 13, 18, 19, 20, 25, 27, 31
3. More highly educated	27	6, 7, 20	1, 3, 11a, 11b, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 22, 24, 26, 30, 31
4. Higher income	6, 30b	2	3, 5, 17a, 17b, 19, 20, 24, 30a
5. Financial stability ^g		25 ^h , 29	16
6. High SES		2, 23	18, 28
Pregnancy	27		9, 19, 24, 28
Victim substance use ⁱ	11b		11a, 17
Living in rural location	6, 7		3, 5, 29, 31
Length of time in country ^j			4, 27
Physical/mental disability	6, 7, 22		29
Social support			4, 19, 29

Table D1: Predictors of reporting domestic violence to police (continued)

	Study finding		
	Increased reporting	Decreased reporting	Non-significant ^b
Offender characteristics			
Younger		14	2, 20
Black	5 ^k		11a, 11b, 14
Same ethnicity as victim	13, 27		
Employed			1, 8, 19
More highly educated		8	19
Higher income			19
Gang member		13	2
Alcohol use	17 ^l , 19		2, 17 ^l
Drug use	17 ^m		2, 17 ^m
Substance abuse problem	11b		11a, 17
Relationship and family characteristics			
Currently married		3, 11b, 31	4, 5, 8, 9, 11a, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21, 24, 25, 27, 28
Former relationship	29	12	4, 9, 13
Living together	31	2, 23	8, 25, 28, 30
Children in family ⁿ	2, 13, 31		1, 3, 19, 28, 30
Children living in home	11a, 11b		23, 26
Children witness abuse	3, 4, 8, 23, 24, 25 ^o , 27		
Incident-specific situational factors			
Witnesses other than children	8 ^p , 13, 27		8 ^p
Occurred in family home ^q	10, 14		5
Perpetrator intoxicated	2 ^r , 3, 13, 26		2 ^r , 19, 28
Victim intoxicated		21	28
Perpetrator injured		21	8
Incident-specific abuse variables			
Physical injury/medical attention received	2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31	7, 21	4, 8, 16
Weapon present/used	2, 3, 11a, 11b, 13, 14		19, 22
Property damage (threatened or actual)	3, 9, 17 ^s		8, 16, 17 ^s
Strong emotional reaction to incident ^t	1, 6, 7, 25		9
Victim perceived the abuse as a crime ^u and not their fault	25, 29		

Table D1: Predictors of reporting domestic violence to police (continued)			
	Study finding		
	Increased reporting	Decreased reporting	Non-significant ^b
Type of abuse/assault^v:			
Physical	12, 16, 17, 20, 29		
Sexual		29	
Psychological		9, 12	
Severe abuse	11a ^w , 11b ^w , 19, 30a, 30b, 31	11b ^w	21
Victim history of abuse			
History of abuse ^x	23		4, 19
Psychological damage ^y		23	19
Past physical injuries from violence	3, 11a		4, 11b
Past victimisations by same perpetrator (frequent/multiple)	6, 7, 8, 19, 20, 23	2, 4, 5, 9	22, 28, 14
Long duration of violence/long-term abusive relationship	1	19, 22	9, 11a, 17
Criminal justice variables			
Victim has reported to police previously	8, 9		
PO/AVO in place at time of incident	21, 9		
Perpetrator has an arrest record/prior police contact	11b, 13, 31		1, 11a, 21, 28
Positive perceptions/past experiences of police and the justice system ^z	16 ^{aa}	16 ^{aa}	23

a: Each study is represented by a number corresponding to the number indicated in Table D2. All studies refer to the likelihood of any police contact, except for Bonomi et al. (2006; study 11), Wiist & McFarlane (1998; study 30) and Hutchison (2003; study 17). Studies 11 and 30 examined both the likelihood of any police contact and the frequency of police contact, while study 17 examined frequency of police contact. Therefore, 11a and 30a indicate findings related to the likelihood of any police contact while 17, 11b and 30b specify findings related to the frequency of police contact. Studies 17 and 30 both used separate regression models to examine likelihood of any police contact and the frequency of police contact, which had different predictor variables, meaning that some variables only have findings related to either likelihood or frequency of police contact. The following variables were not included because they were only examined by one study: victim lives in public housing, frequency of victim seeing the perpetrator (if not living together), age of children, child abuse occurring, type of injuries to the victim, victim arrest record, victim support for mandatory arrest, victim history of involvement with social service agencies, and court statutes concerning protection order violations. Where studies show separate statistics for bystanders and victims, only victim statistics are reported here. Where papers included multiple multivariate models, only the findings of full (final/combined/pooled) models are included. For Hutchison (2003; study 17), both linear regressions of 6-month and total relationship frequency are included. Tables 1 and 2 exclude CMC (2005), Mouzos & Makkai (2004), NSW Task force on Domestic Violence (1981) and Hutchison, Hirschel & Pesackis (1994) because statistical significance could not be established. Harris et al. (2001) is also excluded because it is based on the correlations between police records and victim reports of violence in protective order applications. Belknap & Sullivan (2002) is excluded because the study concerns intentions to call police in the future rather than actual reporting rates. Felson and Paré's (2005, study 15) study related to abuse by partners, other family members, other known offenders and strangers; the only variable where the effect could be isolated to intimate partners was whether the intimate partner was male or female (a statistically significant interaction), and therefore no other variables from the study

are included here because they relate to various victim–offender relationships. Mirrlees-Black (1999; study 25) is excluded from the gender variable because statistical significance could not be established. Barrett & St. Pierre (2011; study 6); Dugan (2003; study 13); Felson et al. (2002; study 14); Kang & Lynch (2010; study 20); Meyer (2010; study 24) refer to family and domestic violence perpetrated by family members as well as intimate partners. Hutchison & Hirschel (1998; study 18), Wiist & McFarlane (1998; study 30) and Young, Byles & Dobson (2000; study 31) refer broadly to seeking legal help including calls to police.

b: Significance is determined at the $p < 0.05$ level

c: In MacQueen & Norris (2016; study 23) reporting was positively correlated with age but decreased slightly after a certain point

d: Barrett & St. Pierre's (2011) study (no. 6) identified age as a significant variable but with an odds ratio of 1.00 (confidence interval 1.00, 1.00), indicating that the likelihood of reporting to police is equal across all ages

e: This includes victims from a non-English-speaking background. Barrett & St. Pierre's (2011) study (no. 6) found that being an immigrant was associated with reduced reporting while speaking a language other than English at home was associated with increased reporting

f: Socio-economic status of victims as indicated by the 6 subsequent variables combined

g: Indicators of financial stability include: victim not managing well financially, victim could raise \$2,000 in emergency and victim not financially dependent on perpetrator

h: Financial stability only significant for females, not males (Mirrlees-Black 1999; study 25)

i: This refers to regular substance use (including alcohol and other drugs), not substance use at the time of the domestic violence incident

j: For immigrant victims in the United States

k: Bachman & Coker (1995; study 5) found that black victims of black perpetrators were more likely to report than white victims of white perpetrators

l: Hutchison (2003; study 17) found that perpetrators' alcohol use as measured by a drinking index was non-significant, while the perpetrators' frequency of drunkenness was significant

m: Hutchison (2003; study 17) found that perpetrators' cocaine use was non-significant, while the perpetrators' marijuana use was significant

n: Includes having any children and the number of children

o: Only significant for females, not males

p: Berk et al. (1984; study 8) found that family members witnessing the incident significantly predicted reporting while friends witnessing was non-significant

q: As opposed to the incident occurring in a public place

r: Ackerman & Love (2014; study 2) found that perpetrator alcohol use during the incident predicted reporting, while perpetrator drug use during the incident was not a significant predictor

s: Hutchison (2003; study 17) found that threatened property damage, but not actual property damage, predicted frequency of reporting across a 6-month period. Reporting frequency across the whole relationship was not predicted by threatened property damage

t: Includes being very upset, fearing for one's life, or having strong feelings of shame

u: Compared to those who report that the incident was 'wrong but not a crime' or 'something that just happens' (Stavrou, Poynton & Weatherburn 2016; study 29)

v: Six studies compared reporting rates by the type of abuse, the results of which are subsequently divided up into physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Physical abuse is compared to all other types of abuse. Psychological abuse is compared to physical and sexual abuse. Only Stavrou, Poynton & Weatherburn (2016; study 29) examined sexual abuse, which is compared to physical abuse only.

w: Bonomi et al. (2006; study 11) found that severe abuse significantly increases the likelihood of calling police for emotional and physical abuse only, while sexual coercion severity is not predictive of the likelihood of calling police. The same study also found that the severity of physical and sexual abuse significantly increases call frequency, while psychological abuse severity significantly decreases call frequency

x: This variable broadly includes previous abuse by different perpetrators and a greater variety of abuse types

y: This variable includes psychological effects of the most recent incident, lower perception of self and lower ratings of one's own physical appearance

z: Includes victims receiving their preference regarding the arrest of the perpetrator, their perceptions of procedural justice in police encounters and their ratings of confidence in local police

aa: Hickman & Simpson (2003; study 16) found that victims receiving their preference regarding the arrest of the perpetrator increased future reporting, while higher perceptions of procedural justice in police encounters reduced future reporting

Table D2: Reporting studies denoted in Table D1	
Number	Study
1	Abel EM & Suh EK 1987. Use of police services by battered women. <i>Social Work</i> 32(6): 526–528
2	Ackerman J & Love TP 2014. Ethnic group differences in police notification about intimate partner violence. <i>Violence Against Women</i> 20(2): 162–185
3	Akers C & Kaukinen C 2009. The police reporting behaviour of intimate partner violence victims. <i>Journal of Family Violence</i> 24(3): 159–171
4	Ammar N, Orloff LE, Dutton MA & Aguilar-Hass G 2005. Calls to police and police response: A case study of Latina immigrant women in the USA. <i>International Journal of Police Science and Management</i> 7(4): 230–244
5	Bachman R & Coker AL 1995. Police involvement in domestic violence: The interactive effects of victim injury, offender's history of violence, and race. <i>Violence & Victims</i> 10(2): 91–106
6	Barrett BJ & St. Pierre M 2011. Variations in women's help seeking in response to intimate partner violence: Findings from a Canadian population-based study. <i>Violence Against Women</i> 17(1): 47–70
7	Barrett BJ, St. Pierre M & Vaillancourt N 2011. Police response to intimate partner violence in Canada: Do victim characteristics matter? <i>Women & Criminal Justice</i> 21(1): 38–62
8	Berk RA, Berk SF, Newton PJ & Loseke DR 1984. Cops on call: Summoning the police to the scene of spousal violence. <i>Law & Society Review</i> 18(3): 479–498
9	Birdsey E & Snowball L 2013. <i>Reporting violence to police: A survey of victims attending domestic violence services</i> . Crime and Justice Statistics no. 91. Sydney: NSW Attorney-General's Department
10	Boivin R & Leclerc C 2016. Domestic violence reported to the police: Correlates of victims' reporting behaviour and support to legal proceedings. <i>Violence & Victims</i> 31(3): 402–415
11	Bonomi AE, Holt VL, Martin DP & Thompson RS 2006. Severity of intimate partner violence and occurrence and frequency of police calls. <i>Journal of Interpersonal Violence</i> 21(10): 1354–1364
12	Coulter ML, Kuehnle K, Byers R & Alfonso M 1999. Police-reporting behaviour and victim–police interactions as described by women in a domestic violence shelter. <i>Journal of Interpersonal Violence</i> 14(12): 1290–1298
13	Dugan L 2003. Domestic violence legislation: Exploring its impact on the likelihood of domestic violence, police involvement, and arrest. <i>Criminology & Public Policy</i> 2(2): 283–312
14	Felson RB, Messner SF, Hoskin AW & Deane G 2002. Reasons for reporting and not reporting domestic violence to the police. <i>Criminology</i> 40(3): 617–647
15	Felson RB & Paré P-P 2005. The reporting of domestic violence and sexual assault by nonstrangers to the police. <i>Journal of Marriage & Family</i> 67(3): 597–610
16	Hickman LJ & Simpson SS 2003. Fair treatment or preferred outcome? The impact of police behaviour on victim reports of domestic violence incidents. <i>Law & Society Review</i> 37(3): 607–634

Table D2: Reporting studies denoted in Table D1 (continued)

Number	Study
17	Hutchison IW 2003. Substance use and abused women's utilization of the police. <i>Journal of Family Violence</i> 18(2): 93–106
18	Hutchison IW & Hirschel JD 1998. Abused women: Help-seeking strategies and police utilization. <i>Violence Against Women</i> 4(4): 436–456
19	Johnson IM 1990. A loglinear analysis of abused wives' decisions to call the police in domestic-violence disputes. <i>Journal of Criminal Justice</i> 18: 147–159
20	Kang JH & Lynch JP 2010. Calling the police in instances of family violence: Effects of victim–offender relationship and stages. <i>Crime & Delinquency</i> 60(1): 34–59
21	Kingsnorth RF & MacIntosh RC 2004. Domestic violence: predictors of victim support for official action. <i>Justice Quarterly</i> 21(2): 302–328
22	Lee HY, Park E & Lightfoot E 2010. When does a battered woman seek help from the police? The role of battered women's functionality. <i>Journal of Family Violence</i> 25: 195–204
23	MacQueen S & Norris PA 2016. Police awareness and involvement in cases of domestic and partner abuse. <i>Policing and Society</i> 26(1), 55–76
24	Meyer S 2010. Seeking help to protect the children? The influence of children on women's decisions to seek help when experiencing intimate partner violence. <i>Journal of Family Violence</i> 25: 713–725
25	Mirrlees-Black C 1999. <i>Domestic violence: Findings from a new British crime survey self-completion questionnaire</i> . London: Home Office
26	Novisky MA & Peralta RL 2015. When women tell: Intimate partner violence and the factors related to police notification. <i>Violence Against Women</i> 21(1): 65–86
27	Pitts KM 2014. Latina immigrants, interpersonal violence, and the decision to report to police. <i>Journal of Interpersonal Violence</i> 29(9): 1661–1678
28	Rhodes KV, Cerulli C, Kothari CL, Dichter ME & Marcus S 2011. <i>Victim participation in intimate partner violence prosecution: Implications for safety</i> . US National Institute of Justice Grant no. 2006-WG-BX-0007
29	Stavrou E, Poynton S & Weatherburn D 2016. <i>Intimate partner violence against women in Australia: Related factors and help-seeking behaviours</i> . Crime and Justice Bulletin no. 200. Sydney: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
30	Wiist WH & McFarlane J 1998. Utilization of police services by abused pregnant Hispanic women. <i>Violence Against Women</i> 4(6): 677–693
31	Young M, Byles J & Dobson A 2000. The effectiveness of legal protection in the prevention of domestic violence in the lives of young Australian women. <i>Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice</i> no. 148. Canberra: AIC. https://aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi148

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