



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Criminology

Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice

ISSN 1836-2206 (Online) | ISBN 978 1 925304 20 6 (Online)

No. 591 February 2020

Abstract | The ability of first responder agencies to target resources at the highest risk domestic and family violence offenders and victims is limited by a lack of information about the timing of recidivism. This is particularly true for young people, who have typically been excluded from the risk literature.

This study analysed Victoria Police reported incident data on almost 4,000 young people (aged 12–18) involved in domestic and/or family violence. Approximately one in four young people were involved in repeat violence within six months, with the highest risk occurring at around three to four weeks. The likelihood of repeat incidents of violence increased significantly with every new event. A prior history of violence (including breaches) was associated with repeat violence in the short term.

The findings highlight the need for timely, targeted and graduated responses to domestic and family violence among young people.

Repeat domestic and family violence among young people

Hayley Boxall and Anthony Morgan

Over the past 15 years, there has been a surge of interest in methods of identifying and responding to high-risk domestic violence (or intimate partner violence) and family violence offenders and victims, particularly among first responder agencies such as police. Correspondingly, many Australian state and territory police agencies now require officers responding to domestic and family violence (DFV) incidents to use risk assessment tools to estimate the likelihood of future offending (Dowling & Morgan 2019) and have implemented high-risk domestic violence (DV) offender teams which target repeat offenders (Fentiman 2017; NSW Government 2016). A number of short-term strategies have also been implemented to protect women at high risk of further abuse, particularly during the immediate period following an incident, and the lead-up to court proceedings. This includes GPS tracking of offenders (Bevin 2018) and the provision of panic alarms to victims (eg 3G Safety Watches and SafeTCards; ABC News 2012; Olding 2015).

One dimension of DFV risk which has received relatively little attention is the timing of repeat events. Considering the practical applications of this information—not to mention the growing evidence that risk of reoffending is highest in the first few months following a violent event—this is a notable gap in the risk literature (Klein & Crowe 2008; Morgan, Boxall & Brown 2018; Petersson & Strand 2017; Richards et al. 2014; Stansfield & Williams 2014). Certainly, the support needs of a victim who is at risk of repeat violence in the weeks following an incident are different from those of a survivor who may be revictimised in the next year, as are the treatment and response options for offenders.

Further, a small number of studies have found that the timing of DFV reoffending is related to both the escalation of harm (Kerr, Whyte & Strang 2017) and the frequency of reoffending (Barnham, Barnes & Sherman 2017; Bland & Ariel 2015; Kerr, Whyte & Strang 2017). For example, Morgan, Boxall and Brown's (2018) analysis of short-term reoffending patterns within a sample of DV perpetrators in Tasmania found that the risk of reoffending was cumulative, increasing significantly with every subsequent reoffence occurring within a 60-day period. The same study also found that the time taken to the first reoffence was much shorter for offenders who reoffended multiple times during the six-month follow-up period (34 vs 59 days; Morgan, Boxall & Brown 2018). In interpreting these findings, the authors pointed to the possibility that preventing or delaying reoffending during the first few weeks and months following an incident could disrupt emerging (or established) longer-term patterns of violence. The findings from this study, and others like it, highlight the importance of preventing repeat offending in the short term, and of identifying offenders and victims who are at heightened risk after an incident.

An important limitation of the literature on DFV risk is its primary focus on adult offenders—adolescent family violence (AFV) has been excluded from mainstream DFV research for decades (Daff, McEwan & Luebbers 2018; Moulds et al. 2016; Routt & Anderson 2011; Simmons et al. 2018). There is a clear rationale for focusing on the risk profiles and violence patterns of young people involved in DFV. First, Australian statistics indicate that young people comprise a significant minority of the overall DFV offender population. Freeman (2018) reported that, of the 14,611 individuals proceeded against by the NSW Police Force in 2014 for DFV-related incidents, seven percent were under the age of 18. Similarly, Victoria Police statistics show that between April 2018 and March 2019, people aged 10–19 years comprised 10 percent of all individuals who were reported for incidents of family violence (Crime Statistics Agency 2019). Meanwhile, Australian research indicates that domestic violence is a common experience for young people. A recent survey of over 400 high school students in Melbourne (14–18 years old) found that 25 to 28 percent of respondents had experienced physical violence in their 'most difficult relationship', while 19 to 25 percent admitted to being physically violent (Daff, McEwan & Luebbers 2018). Estimates of victimisation and perpetration increased to three in four when emotional violence was examined (Daff, McEwan & Luebbers 2018).

Second, there is clear evidence that young people's DFV behaviours are harmful and can have short- and long-term impacts on intimate partners and family members. For example, Freeman's (2018) analysis of 200 police narratives for DFV incidents involving juveniles found that victims sustained a minor or serious injury in half of the incidents (54%), while a number of other studies have noted the impact of violence on the mental health and wellbeing of victims (Ackard, Eisenberg & Neumark-Sztainer 2007; Day & Bazemore 2011; Edenborough et al. 2008; Fitz-Gibbon, Elliott & Maher 2018; Glass et al. 2003).

Family violence (FV) has obvious implications for the relationships between the young person and their family members and the functioning of the family (Brezina 1999; Edenborough et al. 2008; Fitz-Gibbon, Elliott & Maher 2018). These harms may be compounded by societal beliefs that these behaviours are less serious than violence used by adults (Simmons et al. 2018), meaning victims may not seek support due to concerns about being dismissed or not believed by others, or even blamed (Miles & Condry 2016). Adolescent family violence is particularly likely to be subsumed under the banner of 'problem behaviour', with parents being held responsible for their children's violence (Edenborough et al. 2008).

Finally, some research has indicated that juvenile DFV behaviours, particularly AFV, may be the 'missing link' in understanding the intergenerational transmission of intrafamilial violence—particularly the link between experiencing child abuse or witnessing DV between parents and perpetrating violence against intimate partners or other family members as an adult (Fitz-Gibbon, Elliott & Maher 2018; Foshee et al. 2005; Noland et al. 2004; Simmons et al. 2018; Ulman & Straus 2003; Vagi et al. 2013). Preventing the occurrence (and recurrence) of juvenile DFV behaviours may help break the cycle of intergenerational abuse. While this obviously requires an understanding of why some young people engage in these behaviours, and what treatment options and responses are appropriate when they occur, we also need to know when these responses should be deployed and who they should be targeted at in the short term.

Aim and method

This study aimed to describe the short-term reoffending patterns (hereafter referred to as repeat violence) of young people who use DFV across the following domains:

- the prevalence of repeat violence at particular intervals (14, 30, 60, 90 and 180 days);
- the timing of the first repeat violence incident;
- the peak period for repeat violence; and
- cumulative rates of repeat violence.

The study also aimed to identify predictors of short-term repeat violence, particularly those relating to prior histories of DFV or breaches of DFV orders, given that this information is readily available to frontline responders.

This involved analysing police data extracted for a sample of young people reported to and recorded by Victoria Police for DFV-related behaviours (hereafter referred to as reported incidents). Young people were included in the initial sample if they were reported to Victoria Police for at least one DFV incident during the 2014 calendar year, and were between the ages of 12 and 18 at time of the reference incident (first DFV incident in 2014, $n=3,891$). The dataset included information taken from L17 forms, which are completed by Victoria Police officers when responding to any DFV incident. The form records detailed information about the victim (affected family member), the young person reported (referred to as the other party), the violence, broader situational factors (eg intoxication) and any history of violence between the victim and the young person. The dataset also included all DFV incidents involving the sample that were reported to police prior to 2014, and until 30 June 2015. This means that all young people in the sample could be observed for a minimum of six months (the follow-up period). Importantly, the young people did not have to be charged or convicted of a DFV offence to be included in the sample. As such, the dataset comprised *alleged* offenders and incidents of DFV. The inclusion of all reported incidents, regardless of outcome, is not only consistent with other studies that have used police data to describe large samples of young people who use violence (Evans & Warren-Sohlberg 1988; Freeman 2018; Simmons et al. 2018; Walsh & Krienert 2007) but also necessary, considering the numerous barriers to police laying charges and securing convictions for DFV-related incidents (Strom et al. 2014; Westera & Powell 2017).

Under the Victorian *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*, DFV is broadly defined to include reported incidents of violence and abuse between current or former intimate partners (DV) and violence between biological (eg mothers) or non-biological (foster carers) family members (FV). Violence can be physical or non-physical and includes physical and sexual abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, economic abuse, stalking and intimidation, property damage and threatening or coercive behaviour. It also includes any breaches of family violence intervention orders.

The sample of young people was divided into two groups: a DV group and an FV group. A young person was included in the DV group ($n=753$) if they were reported to Victoria Police for a DV incident during 2014. Consistent with the Victorian legislation, both current and former intimate relationships were included in this group, and there was no requirement that the young person and victim had lived together. Young people were included in the FV group ($n=3,278$) if they were reported for an FV incident during the same period. Those in the FV group were reported for violence against a range of family members, including parents, siblings, grandparents, step-parents and foster carers. Some young people were reported to Victoria Police for both types of violence during 2014, and so were included in both groups ($n=140$, 4% of total sample). Key characteristics of both groups are provided in Table 1.

Analysis of patterns of repeat violence for these cohorts was restricted to the same violence type as the reference incident. In other words, involvement in repeat domestic violence was only examined for young people in the DV group, and involvement in repeat family violence was only examined for young people in the FV group. The intersection between these two types of violence was not examined, primarily because the group of young people involved in both types of behaviours was so small. However, this group of young people may present unique challenges, and further research is needed to explore the relationship between DV and FV behaviours within this cohort, and implications for responses.

Table 1: Sample characteristics by group (n=3,891)

	DV group (n=753)		FV group (n=3,278)	
	n	%	n	%
Gender^a				
Male	512	68	2,207	68
Female	240	32	1,061	32
Age (reference incident)				
12–14 years	24	3	936	29
15–16 years	162	22	1,191	36
17–18 years	567	75	1,151	35
Relationship with victim (reference incident)^b				
Current partner	501	67	–	–
Former partner	246	33	–	–
Child/mother	–	–	1,836	56
Child/father	–	–	520	16
Child/other family member or carer	–	–	916	28
Prior reported incidents (DV only)	142	19	–	–
Prior reported incidents (FV only)	–	–	1,070	33
Prior reported incidents (breach)	66	9	169	5

a: Data missing for 1 DV group member and 10 FV group members

b: Data missing for 6 DV group members and 6 FV group members

Source: Victoria Police 2014–2015 [Computer file]

Findings

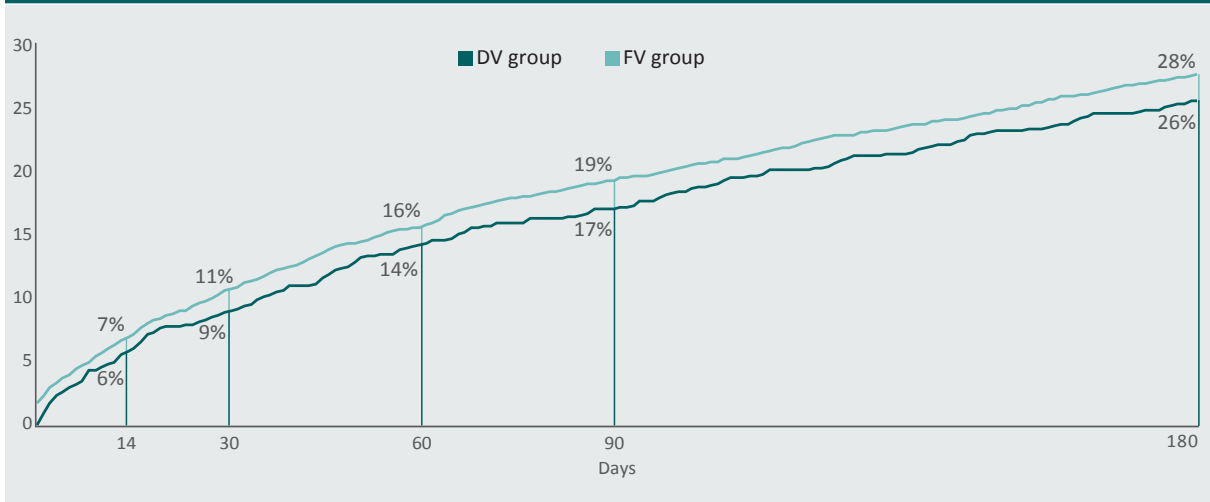
Prevalence and timing of short-term repeat violence

To estimate the cumulative rate of repeat violence at each interval following the reference incident, Kaplan–Meier survival curves for the DV group and FV group were generated (Figure 1). Overall, one in four DV (26%, $n=193$) and FV group members (28%, $n=904$) were involved in at least one more incident in the six months following the reference incident. The prevalence of repeat violence among the DV and FV groups were also similar at other intervals:

- within 14 days—six percent of DV ($n=46$) and seven percent of FV ($n=227$) group members were involved in a second violent incident;
- within 30 days—nine percent of DV ($n=69$) and 11 percent of FV ($n=352$) group members were involved in a second violent incident;
- within 60 days—14 percent of DV ($n=109$) and 16 percent of FV ($n=516$) group members were involved in a second violent incident; and
- within 90 days—17 percent of DV ($n=129$) and 19 percent of FV ($n=636$) group members were involved in a second violent incident.

This shows that while the majority of young people will not be involved in another reported incident during a six-month follow-up, a significant proportion will come into contact with police again in a matter of months, if not weeks. Rates of repeat violence were similar when breach incidents (as identified by Victoria Police in the L17 form) were excluded from the analysis. However, even when a breach does not involve an obviously aggressive or violent act (eg texting a family member or going to their house) it can be experienced as harmful or threatening by victims. For this reason, breaches were included in estimated rates of repeat violence.

Figure 1: Repeat violence rates following the reference incident, by group (%)

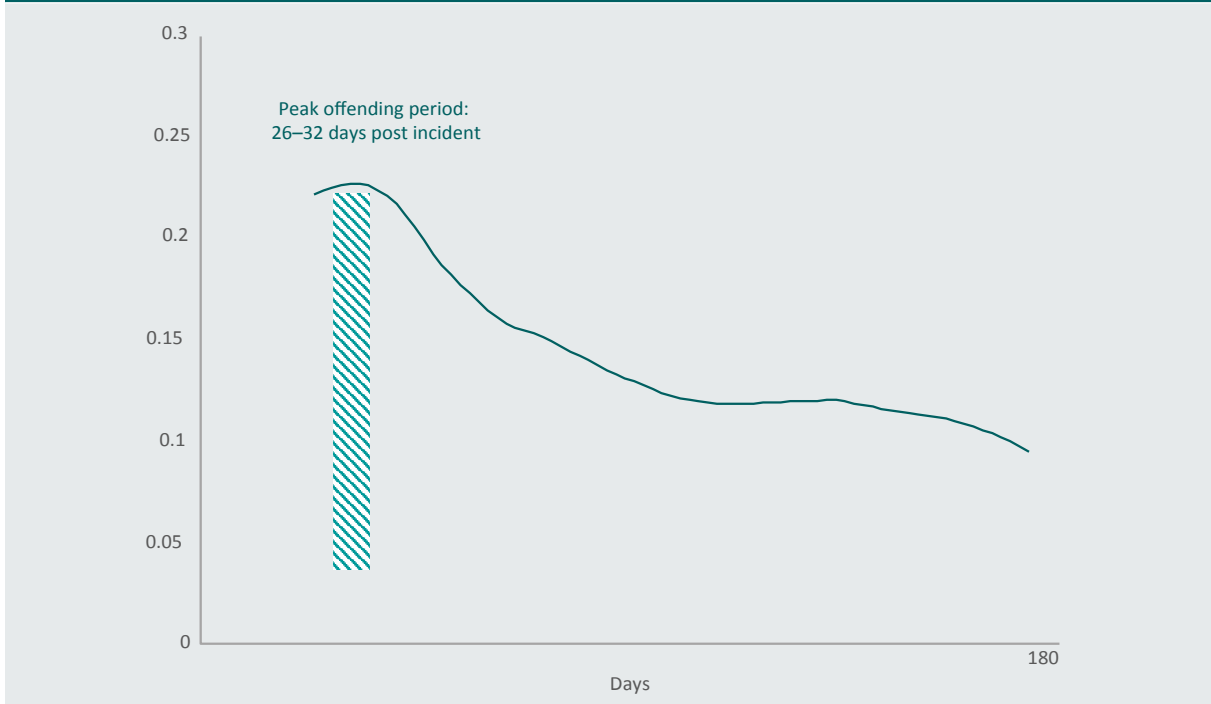


Note: Time to second incident of violence calculated based on date of first reported incident plus one day. This is to account for repeat violence occurring on the same day

Source: Victoria Police 2014–2015 [Computer file]

The hazard function was calculated to estimate the probability that an individual who has not yet been involved in a repeat incident of violence will reoffend at any given time following the reference incident. This analysis revealed that the risk of repeat violence was highest at around the 30-day mark for DV group members (26–32 days after the reference incident; Figure 2), and around three to four weeks for FV group members (19–31 days post-incident; Figure 3). The probability of repeat violence declines sharply after about a month before stabilising at around 90 days and then falling again towards the six-month mark.

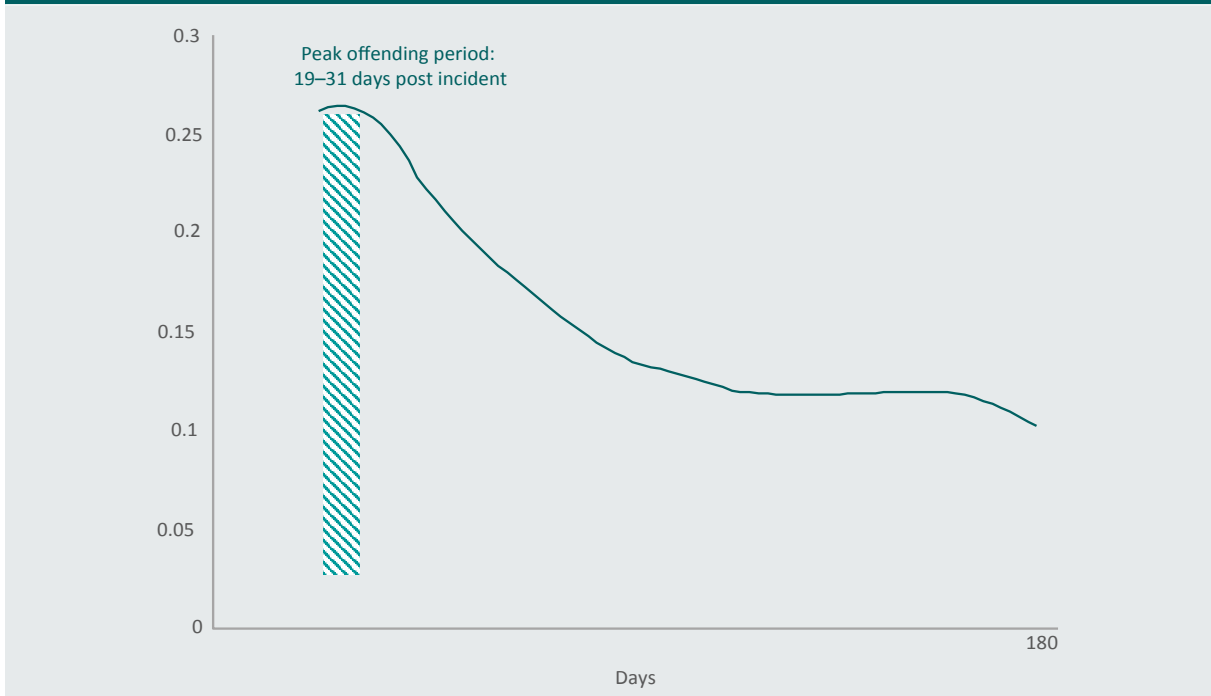
Figure 2: Probability of repeat violence following the reference incident, DV group only (%)



Note: Estimates are truncated (ie do not start at day 0 and end at day 180) due to kernel smoothing, which calculates a weighted average of nearby observations, and because a minimum number of events is needed to calculate the hazard function

Source: Victoria Police 2014–2015 [Computer file]

Figure 3: Probability of repeat violence following the reference incident, FV group only (%)



Note: Estimates are truncated (ie do not start at day 0 and end at day 180) due to kernel smoothing, which calculates a weighted average of nearby observations, and because a minimum number of events is needed to calculate the hazard function

Source: Victoria Police 2014–2015 [Computer file]

Around one in 10 young people reported for DV (9%) or FV (12%) were involved in multiple incidents of violence in the six months following the reference incident (Table 2). Importantly, young people who were reported again more quickly were more likely to be involved in three or more incidents. The median number of days to the second incident of violence was significantly lower for individuals who were involved in three or more incidents than it was for those young people involved in only two (DV group=47 days vs 75 days; $z=9.769$, $p<0.05$; FV group=49 days vs 72 days; $z=30.560$, $p<0.05$). Similarly, young people who were involved in a second incident of violence within 30 days of the reference incident were significantly more likely to commit a third or subsequent act of violence than those who took longer to be involved in a repeat incident of violence. This finding was the same for DV (46% vs 31%; $\chi^2(1)=4.25$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.15$) and FV group members (48% vs 31%, $\chi^2(1)=27.18$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.17$). Taken together, these findings suggest preventing or even delaying repeat violence during the high-risk weeks and months following an incident could significantly reduce the number of victims who might be affected.

One important difference was found in the short-term repeat violence patterns of FV and DV group members—the prevalence of 'new' victims (ie different victims identified in the reference incident and the repeat violence incident). Looking again at the second incident within the six-month follow-up period, only a small proportion (7%) of DV group members were reported for violence towards someone other than the victim identified in the reference incident—either a new partner or another ex-partner. Meanwhile, over a third of FV group members (37%) were reported for violence against a different family member. This difference is probably due to opportunity—most young people live with multiple family members (eg parents, siblings, cousins, grandparents) who may all be targets for abuse. This is consistent with research showing an overlap between different types of AFV (eg child-to-parent abuse and sibling violence; Boxall et al. forthcoming; Desir & Karatekin 2018). Meanwhile, DV requires the young person to form a romantic attachment to someone. Even during adolescence, when fleeting and spontaneous dating relationships are common, forming these relationships takes time.

The varying rates at which 'new victims' are identified also highlight some important differences in the dynamics of domestic and family violence among young people, particularly the young person's living situation. Because of their age, it is unlikely that young couples are living together when the violence occurs, which can make it easier to limit opportunities for abuse to occur and also potentially increase the effectiveness of certain responses like protection orders (Dowling et al. 2018). In situations of family violence, the young person is often living with the victim and may even be dependent on them. The young person's ongoing reliance on their family to provide them with support and shelter, even while they are being violent towards them, limits the strategies that these families can use to avoid the abuse (and their effectiveness) which in turn may contribute to its recurrence.

	DV group (n=753)		FV group (n=3,278)	
	n	%	n	%
Total number of repeat incidents				
None	560	74	2,305	70
One	122	16	583	18
Two	43	6	225	7
Three or more	28	4	165	5
Victim (second incident)				
Same victim	180	93	567	63
Different victim	13	7	337	37
Total victims				
One	182	94	665	74
Two	10	5	195	22
Three or more	1	1	44	5

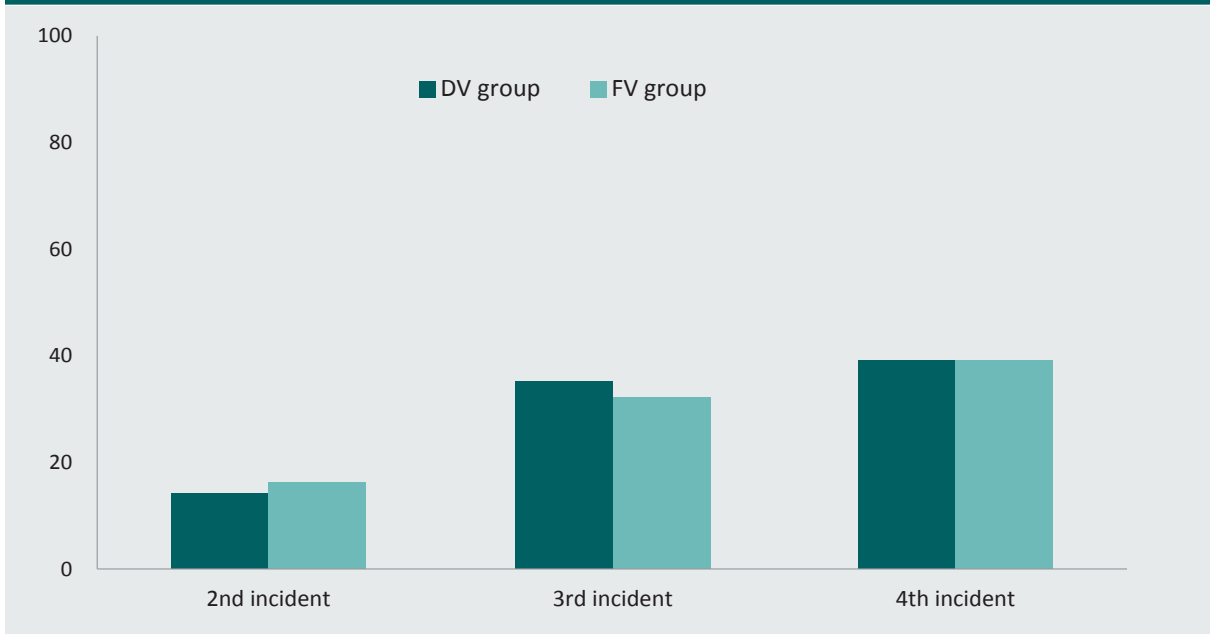
Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

Source: Victoria Police 2014–2015 [Computer file]

The final dimension of short-term repeat violence examined in this study was cumulative risk—changes in the likelihood of further violence every time a young person is violent towards their intimate partner or a family member. As shown in Figure 4, the risk of repeat violence is cumulative. That is, each incident of repeat violence increases the likelihood of a further incident occurring. Among the DV group, only 14 percent were involved in a second incident of violence within 60 days of the reference incident, but 35 percent of those who were ($n=38$) went on to commit a third act of violence within another 60 days. Thirty-nine percent of this cohort ($n=15$) went on to commit a fourth act of violence in the next 60 days.

These findings were also observed in the FV group. Sixteen percent of young people were involved in a second incident of violence against a family member within 60 days of the reference incident, of which 32 percent ($n=165$) went on to commit a third act of violence in the next 60 days. Of these 165 young people, 39 percent ($n=64$) went on to be involved in a fourth incident of violence within 60 days of the third incident. Importantly from a targeting perspective, young people who were involved in four incidents of violence within three consecutive 60-day periods represent only two percent of the original sample of young people.

Figure 4: Repeat violence rates at each reported incident, 60-day intervals, by group (%)



Source Victoria Police 2014–2015 [Computer file]

Predicting short-term repeat violence

Prior involvement in DFV behaviours is an important predictor of short-term repeat violence, even among young people, for whom the prevalence of prior involvement is much lower than for adult DV offenders (Morgan, Boxall & Brown 2018). DV group members who had been reported for at least one DV incident prior to the reference incident (during their lifetime) were significantly more likely to be involved in a second incident of violence within 30 days (17% vs 7%), 60 days (21% vs 13%) and 180 days (38% vs 23%) of the reference incident. The odds of a young person with a history of DV being involved in repeat violence within 30, 60 and 180 days were 2.6, 1.8 and 2.1 times the odds for a young person without this history, respectively (Figure 5). Similarly, reported protection order breaches were associated with an increased likelihood of repeat DV within 30 days (18% vs 8%; unadjusted odds ratio (UOR)=2.5), 60 days (23% vs 14%; UOR=1.9) and 180 days (41% vs 24%; UOR=2.2).

Figure 5: Unadjusted odds ratios for repeat violence at 30, 60 and 180 days, domestic violence and breach incidents, vs young people with no history of violence (DV group only)



a: Any prior DV incident $\chi^2(1)=14.11$, $p<0.001$, Cramér's $V=0.14$; 95% confidence interval (CI)=1.50–4.36; 2 or more prior DV incidents, $\chi^2(2)=23.80$, $p<0.001$, Cramér's $V=0.15$; 95% CI=2.04–7.56

b: Any prior DV incident, $\chi^2(1)=6.25$, $p<0.01$, Cramér's $V=0.09$, 95% CI=1.13–2.88; 2 or more prior DV incidents $\chi^2(2)=9.39$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.11$, 95% CI=1.36–4.55

c: Any prior DV incident, $\chi^2(1)=12.59$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.13$, 95% CI=1.41–3.07; 2 or more prior DV incidents, $\chi^2(2)=19.08$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.16$, 95% CI=1.82–5.24

d: Any prior breach, $\chi^2(1)=8.86$, $p<0.001$, Cramér's $V=0.11$, 95% CI=1.24–4.86; 2 or more prior breaches, $\chi^2(2)=9.10$, $p<0.001$, Cramér's $V=0.11$, 95% CI=1.44–8.59

e: Any prior breach, $\chi^2(1)=3.98$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.07$, 95% CI=1.00–3.43; 2 or more prior breaches, $\chi^2(2)=4.97$, $p=0.084$, Cramér's $V=0.08$, 95% CI=1.03–5.58

f: Any prior breach, $\chi^2(1)=7.07$, $p<0.01$, Cramér's $V=0.10$, 95% CI=1.29–3.66; 2 or more prior breaches, $\chi^2(2)=9.27$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.11$, 95% CI=0.89–4.14

Source: Victoria Police 2014–2015 [Computer file]

There was also a significant relationship between the number of prior DV incidents and short-term repeat violence. DV group members with two or more incidents prior to the reference incident (during their lifetime) were significantly more likely to be involved in repeat violence at 30, 60 and 180 days compared to those with no histories or those who had been reported on only one occasion. The odds of a young person with two or more prior incidents being involved in repeat violence within 30, 60 and 180 days were 3.9, 2.5 and 3.1 times the odds of a young person with no prior incidents, respectively.

A similar pattern emerged for the number of prior breach incidents, even though these were comparatively rare. DV group members with two or more prior breaches were significantly more likely to be involved in repeat violence at 30 and 180 days. The odds of a young person with two or more prior breach incidents being involved in repeat violence within 30 and 180 days were, respectively, 3.5 and 1.9 times the odds of a young person with no prior incidents. The relationship between prior breaches and repeat violence at 60 days was not statistically significant. Nevertheless, taken together these findings suggest that the *number* of prior incidents is a better indicator of short-term repeat violence than the *prevalence* of prior incidents, although both pieces of information may be useful when assessing risk (see Figure 5).

As shown in Figure 6, these findings were similar for FV group members. While a young person who had been reported previously for FV or a breach incident had significantly higher odds of being involved in repeat violence at 30, 60 and 180 days than a young person with no history of FV, there was a stronger relationship with the number of prior incidents (based on the effect size measured using Cramér's V). For example, the odds of an FV group member with at least one prior FV incident being involved in repeat violence at 30 days were 1.9 the odds of a young person with no history of family violence, or 2.5 times the odds of a young person with two or more prior incidents.

Figure 6: Unadjusted odds ratios for repeat violence at 30, 60 and 180 days, family violence and breach incidents, vs young people with no prior history of violence (FV group only)



a: Any prior FV incident, $\chi^2(1)=106.67$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.18$, 95% confidence interval (CI)=1.52–2.37; 2 or more prior FV incidents, $\chi^2(2)=127.25$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.20$, 95% CI=1.94–3.23

b: Any prior FV incident, $\chi^2(1)=46.36$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.12$, 95% CI=1.59–2.34; 2 or more prior FV incidents, $\chi^2(2)=65.94$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.14$, 95% CI=1.98–3.09

c: Any prior FV incident, $\chi^2(1)=32.11$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.10$, 95% CI=1.95–2.68; 2 or more prior FV incidents, $\chi^2(2)=65.94$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.14$, 95% CI=2.39–3.51

d: Any prior breach, $\chi^2(1)=56.14$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.13$, 95% CI=1.49–3.28; 2 or more prior breaches, $\chi^2(2)=57.57$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.13$, 95% CI=1.88–5.86

e: Any prior breach, $\chi^2(1)=46.36$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.12$, 95% CI=1.80–3.56; 2 or more prior breaches, $\chi^2(2)=65.94$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.14$, 95% CI=1.85–5.32

f: Any prior breach, $\chi^2(1)=16.36$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.07$, 95% CI=2.29–4.28; 2 or more prior breaches, $\chi^2(2)=21.80$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.08$, 95% CI=2.34–6.49

Source: Victoria Police 2014–2015 [Computer file]

Looking beyond the prevalence of repeat violence, young people's prior histories of DFV were associated with *multiple* repeat violence incidents during the six-month follow-up period. DV group members (15% vs 8%; $\chi^2(2)=14.30$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.14$) and FV group members (16% vs 8%; $\chi^2(2)=110.81$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.18$) who had been reported for at least one prior incident were more likely to be involved in multiple repeat violence incidents (2 or more) during the follow-up period. Young people reported for at least one breach were also more likely to be involved in repeat violence on two or more occasions (DV: 20% vs 8%, $\chi^2(2)=11.48$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.12$; FV: 27% vs 9%, $\chi^2(2)=69.18$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.15$).

Young people with more than one prior breach were more likely to be involved in repeat violence on two or more occasions during the follow-up period (DV= 27%, FV=19%) compared with young people who had no histories of breach incidents (DV=8%, FV=8%), and those who had only one prior breach (DV=5%, $\chi^2(4)=34.03$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.15$; FV=12%, $\chi^2(4)=134.56$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.14$). Similarly, FV group members with two or more prior breaches were more likely to be involved in repeat violence on multiple occasions (FV=31%) compared with young people with no histories (9%) or one prior breach (24%; $\chi^2(4)=71.22$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.10$). DV group members with two or more prior breaches were more likely to be involved in two or more repeat incidents of violence compared to young people with no histories (17% vs 8%; $\chi^2(4)=11.88$, $p<0.05$, Cramér's $V=0.09$), but not when compared with young people with one prior breach (17% vs 22%).

Discussion

The violence histories of young people can be helpful for identifying who will be involved in repeat violence in the short term, and who will be involved in multiple violent incidents. Frequency of prior incidents of violence is a better predictor of future short-term reoffending than prevalence of prior violence, but they are both useful indicators of future risk. Simple, readily available indicators of elevated risk for short-term repeat incidents of violence are important, particularly given the challenges associated with using more complex risk assessment tools in the field (Dowling & Morgan 2019).

Taken together, the findings of this study provide a clear picture of the short-term repeat patterns of DFV among young people. Approximately one in four young people were involved in repeat violence in the six months following an incident, with the risk peaking at around 30 days following an incident for DV group members, and at around three to four weeks for FV group members. The timing of the second incident of violence is associated with subsequent patterns of violence. Specifically, young people who are reported for repeat violence sooner after the initial incident are more likely to reoffend on multiple occasions in the short term. Risk of repeat violence in the short term was also cumulative, increasing significantly with each violent incident. Although 39 percent of the young people who were involved in three violent incidents went on to reoffend a fourth time, they accounted for only two percent of the total sample.

Young people who had previously been apprehended by police for DFV and/or breach incidents were significantly more likely to be involved in repeat incidents of violence at 30, 60 and 180 days. However, the odds of repeat violence were much higher for young people who had been apprehended for at least two prior breaches and/or DFV incidents compared with those who had been reported only once or never before. Similarly, young people who had been reported for two or more prior violent incidents were more likely to be involved in multiple repeat incidents of violence during the six-month follow-up period. There is a small cohort of young people whose violent behaviours persist despite having contact with the police, and who go on to commit further violence against their partners or family members. Their repeated use of violence observed in this study could be the continuation of pre-existing patterns of abuse.

But for young people, as with adult offenders, the context in which these patterns of frequent, repeat incidents of DFV occur cannot be ignored. These periods of repeat violence may have coincided with a series of specific stressors that increased the likelihood of abuse. This could be a breakdown in their intimate and family relationships, a period of ill health, pregnancy, contact with the police, school performance problems or broader familial issues such as parental unemployment, separation or divorce (Contreras & Cano 2014; Edenborough et al. 2008; Glass et al. 2003; Noland et al. 2004; Vagi et al. 2013). When these issues are present, coupled with individual-level factors, the risk of repeat violence is elevated (Moulds et al. 2016; Simmons et al. 2018). This is particularly true when there are multiple potential targets of violence present, as is often the case with FV, as reflected in the high proportion of young people in the FV group whose violence was targeted at multiple victims.

Understanding of the situational factors that contribute to the occurrence and recurrence of AFV is currently very limited. A recent review of child-to-parent abuse literature conducted by Simmons and colleagues (2018: 39) identified a lack of research in this area, with the authors noting their surprise 'given the evidence that aggression generally is contingent upon how factors interact with situational antecedents'. There is an obvious need to understand the situations in which young people engage in DFV, particularly in situations where repeat offending occurs within a short period of time. This information is essential for responding to high-risk young people, victims and families and for preventing further harm.

Although the purpose of this paper was not to compare the patterns of DFV among young people and adults, the findings from this study are remarkably consistent with those reported by Morgan, Boxall and Brown (2018) in their analysis of short-term reoffending patterns of a sample of adult DV perpetrators in Tasmania. The findings are also consistent with those of other studies examining the reoffending patterns of adult DV offenders (Klein & Crowe 2008; Richards et al. 2014; Stansfield & Williams 2014). The prevalence of repeat DFV among the young people in this study was nearly identical to that of adult DV offenders in Morgan, Boxall and Brown's (2018) study at 14 days, 30 days, 60 days and 180 days—within a few percentage points at each interval. For example, at 60 days following the reference incident, the repeat violence rate was 14 percent for adult DV offenders and young DV offenders, and 16 percent for young FV offenders (Morgan, Boxall & Brown 2018). In both studies, those young people and adults who reoffended more quickly were more likely to be involved in repeat violence on multiple occasions. Both studies also observed an increase in the risk of repeat violence each time a person reoffended; by the third incident, the likelihood of a fourth incident occurring within 60 days was 39 percent for young people and 43 percent for adult offenders (Morgan, Boxall & Brown 2018). Both studies identified the frequency of prior violent incidents as an important predictor of future violence, although prior violence is obviously much less common among young people.

The repeat violence patterns of young people who engage in DFV and adult DV offenders are similar—and therefore the implications for the targeting, timing and graduation of responses are also similar. As with Morgan, Boxall and Brown (2018) and others (Stansfield & Williams 2014), this study emphasises the need for a more nuanced understanding of risk that considers the timing of repeat violent incidents, and recognises that the risk of repeat violence is not constant. It also highlights both the need for graduated responses to AFV, and the potential of these responses to prevent future harm to victims and break the cycle of abuse and violence that may be present within the relationships and families of young people who use violence.

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ISSN 1836-2206 (Online)

ISBN 978 1 925304 20 6 (Online)

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