

**A 10-year follow-up analysis of criminal recidivism reveals that about half of male domestic violence offenders are rearrested for another domestic violence crime.**

*Over a 10-year follow-up, male domestic violence (DV) offenders were equally likely to be arrested for other crimes (55.6% re-arrest rate) as for DV crimes (51.5% re-arrest rate). More youthful and unmarried participants and those with previous DV arrests had shorter time to new arrests for both categories of crime. Those with restraining orders had shorter time to DV re-arrest. Non-white participants and those with a history of drug or alcohol offenses had shorter time to new arrests for other crimes. The authors conclude that risk assessment with domestic violence offenders should consider both specialized and generalized patterns of re-offense.*

Richards, Tara N., Jennings, Wesley G., Tomsich, Elizabeth & Gover, Angela. (2014). A 10-year analysis of rearrests among a cohort of domestic violence offenders. *Violence and Victims*, 29, (6), 887-906.

### **Summary and Commentary by Jessica Maharaj and Christopher Murphy, University of Maryland, Baltimore County**

#### **Introduction:**

- Past research has shown that re-arrest is common among DV offenders, and that it often occurs shortly after the initial offense.
- An important debate among criminologists is whether offenders are more like to specialize in specific types of crime, or engage in a variety of criminal activities.
- The same question applies to DV offenders, specifically whether DV they tend to be “specialists” or “generalists” in their criminal activity.
- This study used data from two prior investigations of DV offenders arraigned in district court in Quincy, Massachusetts between 1994 and 1996 to investigate patterns of recidivism among DV offenders.
  
- Hypotheses
  - The researchers hypothesized that DV offenders would be equally likely to be re-arrested for a DV offense as for other crimes.
  - They also explored shared and unique predictors of time to re-offense for DV versus other crimes, including demographics (age, race, and marital status), criminal history (prior arrests for DV, alcohol or drugs, stalking, and restraining orders), and participation in a batterer intervention program.

#### **Method:**

- Participants

- Participants included 286 men who were arraigned for DV charges in Quincy, Massachusetts between 1994 and 1996 with criminal follow-up data through 2004.
- 83% of the participants were white; their average age was 34.5 years; 30% were married to their victims.
- 29% of participants had a history of DV arrests prior to the study arrest; 57% had a history of arrest for drugs or alcohol; 10.6 % had stalked their victim; 30% had a restraining order from the victim.
- 12% attended a batterer intervention program as a result of their arrest.
- Measures
  - Dependent variables were the number of days until re-arrest for DV offenses and for other offenses.
  - Independent (predictor) variables included offender race, age, relationship to the victim, prior arrest for DV, for drug or alcohol offenses, and stalking, presence of a restraining order against the offender prior to the study and participation in batterer intervention as a result of the arrest.
- Procedures
  - The researchers obtained data from the study by Buzawa, Hotaling, Klein, & Byrne (2001) and matched participants to data from a follow up study of that offender cohort conducted by Wilson and Klein (2006).
  - Data on recidivism, criminal history, and predictor variables were obtained through police reports and civil records.
  - The researchers analyzed time to re-arrest and factors that predict more rapid re-arrest for DV and non-DV crimes.

### Results:

- During the 10-year follow-up period, 51.5% of participants were rearrested for a new DV offense and 55.6% were rearrested for a non-DV criminal offense.
- For the entire sample, the average time to re-arrest for DV offenses was 5.6 years, and the average for non-DV offenses was 5.3 years.
- For those who were re-arrested, for both DV and non-DV types of crimes, about half were re-arrested within one year after the initial arrest.
- Participants who were older were 3.4% less likely to be rearrested for DV and 4.9% less likely to be rearrested for a non-DV crime.
- Participants who were married to their victims were 28.5% less likely to be rearrested for DV and 23.5% less likely to be arrested for non-DV crime.
- Participants with a prior history of DV arrest were 85.8% more likely to be rearrested for DV and 58.4% more likely to be rearrested for a non-DV crime.
- Participants whose victims placed a restraining order against them were 36% more likely to be rearrested for DV.
- Non-White participants were 40.6% more likely to be rearrested for a non-DV crime than White participants.
- Participants with a history of drug and alcohol crimes were 161.5% more likely to be rearrested for a non-DV crime.
- Time to re-arrest for DV offenses was moderately and positively correlated with time to arrest for non-DV offenses.
- Participation in a batterer intervention program was not significantly associated with time to arrest for DV, or non-DV, crimes.

### **Discussion:**

- This study provides the longest follow-up to date for partner violent men, and most accurately portrays the pattern of recidivism.
- Although the majority of rearrests occurred soon after the initial arrest; there was a wide range, with some individuals not having another arrest until 8-9 years later.
- Those with previous arrests for drug and alcohol offenses were not more likely to be re-arrested for domestic violence.
- Risk assessment and models of DV should consider both specialist (i.e., domestic violence only) and generalist patterns of criminal activity.

### **Applications and Comments by Reviewer**

- The use of a 10 year follow up time frame reveals high rates of re-offense for both DV and non-DV crimes.
- The findings indicate that many DV offenders have “generalist” criminal profiles, and may require additional strategies beyond traditional abuser intervention to reduce re-offending.
- Additional descriptive data would help to further inform the analysis of specialist versus generalist offending, including the proportion of cases re-arrested for both types of crimes and the proportion not re-arrested for either type of crime. In addition, more details on the nature and severity of non-DV crimes may be important for determining whether to consider offenders as generalists.
- This study only evaluated male offenders; it is possible that women arrested for DV will display different patterns of re-offense.
- Analyzing race/ethnicity in two categories - White and non-White - provides limited information. Given that 83% of the participants were White, further analysis of race / ethnic group differences was not feasible.

### **Practitioner Implications: Tony Gibart, Public Policy Director, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin**

As an advocate for criminal justice policies that prioritize domestic violence victims' safety, the degree to which domestic violence offenders are “generalists” or “specialists” is an important and reoccurring question in my practice. In my role, I am often asked to evaluate criminal justice policies that are designed for a general criminal population, rather than specifically grounded in research or knowledge about domestic violence. Therefore, research like this study, which helps define the relationship between domestic violence offenders and the general criminal population, is useful.

However, from my perspective, there are limitations to applying this type of research. My goal is to advocate for changes that will improve victims' and the general public's safety and wellbeing. Rarely does quantitative research about criminal justice outcomes directly measure safety. Therefore, when examining quantitative research, I attempt to understand the context in which the data was

collected and understand how that context and the data may reveal something significant about improving safety.

This study, which presents an analysis of data from one jurisdiction, leaves me wondering about important contextual information that may influence the meaning and significance of the re-arrest rates. For example, the reviewers point out that knowing the nature and severity of the non-DV offenses may be a key to understanding the degree to which DV offenders' propensity to be re-arrested for non-DV offenses is a salient characteristic of their criminological makeup. In addition, this information, coupled with a description of the law enforcement practices and interventions used in this jurisdiction, might shed light on the re-arrest rates for both types of offenses. Were many offenders subject to some degree of monitoring post-arrest that made their re-arrest for DV-offenses and/or non-DV offenses significantly more likely than other similar offenders in the community who were not subject to these types of interventions? Are arrests for violations of pre- or post-conviction release conditions included in the non-DV offense category? If so, DV-offenders' re-arrest rate for "non-DV offenses" may be more a beneficial result of a rigorous response to DV offenders, and less an effect of the DV-offenders being "generalists." Conversely, information that suggests minimal intervention and surveillance post-arrest for a DV crime would support opposite conclusions. Related to these questions, information about the re-arrest rates of non-DV-offenders from the same time period and jurisdiction as the sample group would be useful in better understanding the significance of the DV-offenders' re-arrest rates.

#### Work Cited

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