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## Identifying the differences between generalist and specialist family violence perpetrators: Risk factors and perpetrator characteristics

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Some previous approaches to family violence offenders have assumed that these offenders exclusively commit violent offences against partners or family members and do not commit other types of crime. This is known as 'specialisation' in offending. A substantial amount of research has been conducted examining specialisation in criminal offending, but fewer studies have focused on specialisation in family violence, particularly in the Australian context. This study examines the recorded family violence incidents and non-family violence offences for a cohort of family violence perpetrators over a five year period from 2012 to 2016. Forty percent of the cohort were classified as generalist perpetrators who were recorded for non-family violence offences in addition to family violence incidents, while 60% were specialists who were only recorded for family violence incidents and related offences. A logistic regression model was constructed to examine the differences between generalist and specialist perpetrators in terms of perpetrator and incident characteristics. Similar to the findings of previous studies, female perpetrators were less likely to be generalists than males, and perpetrators who were younger at the time of their first family incident during the study period were more likely to be generalists those who were older at the time of their first family incident. The current study also reports the relationship between generalisation amongst FV perpetrators and a number of other factors that have not been examined in previous research studies.

*Keywords: family violence (FV), recorded crime, generalist, versatile, specialist, risk factors*

### Introduction

The number of family incidents recorded by Victoria Police has increased substantially over the past five years, from 53,633 in the year ending September 2012 to 78,819 in the year ending September 2016 (Crime Statistics Agency, 2016). Family violence has also been an area of major focus for the Victorian government. The government's concern about this issue was reflected in the establishment of the Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV), which reported its findings and recommendations in March 2016 (State of Victoria, 2016).

A number of recommendations from the RCFV focused on interventions to address the offending behaviour of perpetrators of FV. In particular, recommendations 85 to 92 highlighted the need to review the perpetrator programs currently available in Victoria and evaluate the effectiveness of programs in changing perpetrator behaviour (State of Victoria, 2016). In order to design and implement effective perpetrator interventions, a strong understanding of perpetrators, their characteristics, patterns of behaviour and criminogenic needs is important.

Some previous approaches to FV offenders (including partner and domestic violence) have assumed that these offenders exclusively commit violent offending against partners or family members and do not commit other types of crime, and that FV offender behaviour requires specific theoretical explanations and criminal justice responses

(Bouffard, Wright, Muftić and Bouffard, 2008; Bouffard and Zedaker, 2016; Piquero, Brame, Fagan and Moffitt, 2006). Indeed, the lack of recognition of FV as a crime in the past meant that researchers in this area often considered FV as a separate subject from general criminality (Buzawa and Hirschel, 2008). In current study perpetrators who exclusively perpetrate FV incidents and offences are referred to as 'specialists' and those who are recorded for other offence types are referred to as 'generalists'. Recent studies examining whether FV offenders are specialists or generalists, and research into typologies of FV offending, have challenged the notion that FV offenders specialise and do not commit non-FV offences.

### **Specialisation in criminal offending**

Specialisation in offending has been defined by Paternoster and colleagues (1998, p.133) as 'the extent to which an offender tends to repeat the same specific offense or offense type on successive criminal events.' The majority of empirical research into specialisation has identified a greater degree of generalisation rather than specialisation in offending, but results have varied by the type of offence being examined (Armstrong and Britt, 2004; Deane, Armstrong and Felson, 2005, DeLisi et al., 2011, Farrington, Snyder and Finnegan, 1988; Horney, Osgood and Marshall, 1995; Kempf, 1987; Simon, 1997). For example, Brennan and colleagues (1989), in their examination of a Danish birth cohort's offending up to the age of 30 years, found that offenders with a larger number of arrests (more than three) were more likely to specialise in violent offending while those with a smaller number of arrests (three or less) were more likely to specialise in property offending. Lynam, Piquero and Moffitt (2004) also found some evidence of specialisation in violent offending based on analysis of self-report data, but no evidence of specialisation from analysis of official recorded crime data. Piquero (2000), on the other hand, found little evidence of specialisation in violent offending overall and instead identified that the advent of violent offending during a criminal career was a function of increasing offence frequency. Some research also suggests that specialisation is evident in the short term (i.e. an offender is likely to commit a particular type of offence soon after committing another offence of the same type, but may commit other offence types later in their criminal career) and that the use of different research methodologies, such as the examination of specific offender subgroups, may also provide more evidence of specialisation (see McGloin et al., 2007; Sullivan et al., 2006).

Despite some studies finding evidence of specialisation in violent offending, a review of the research on criminal careers of violent offenders conducted by Piquero, Jennings and Barnes (2012) identified that throughout most criminal careers only a small proportion of offences are violent and that those who do commit violence tend to be frequent offenders. They also found that the majority of individuals with a violent offence in their criminal career only had one such offence and that, although recidivism in general among offenders is high, the probability of recidivism is lower for violent compared with non-violent offences (Piquero, Jennings and Barnes, 2012). In addition, they found that violent offending tends to have a later onset age and occur later in a criminal career, compared with non-violent offending (Piquero, Jennings and Barnes, 2012). Further, many studies have been unable to differentiate between violent and non-violent offenders, or those who specialise in violent offending or demonstrate versatility in offending, based on demographic variables such as gender or race (see Mazerolle et al., 2000; Piquero, 2000).

### **Specialisation in family violence**

Relatively few studies have examined specialisation in FV or intimate partner violence (IPV), and those that have been conducted have demonstrated mixed results. Some have found little evidence of specialisation and others have found that some offenders are specialists and some are generalists. It should also be noted that the majority of research in this area has focused on physical violence between current or former intimate partners (often labelled domestic or intimate partner violence) rather than using the broader definition of FV used in Victoria and in this report.

The *Family Violence Protection Act (2008)* defines family violence as:

'behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour–

(i) is physically or sexually abusive; or

(ii) is emotionally or psychologically abusive; or

(iii) is economically abusive; or

(iv) is threatening; or

(v) is coercive; or

(vi) in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to fear for the safety and wellbeing of that family member or another person.'

In their examination of domestic violence offenders from a cohort of participants in the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study in New Zealand, Moffitt and colleagues (2000) found statistically significant associations between violent behaviour against intimate partners and other types of offending, for both men and women. They also noted similarities in personality-related risk factors associated with both IPV and other types of offending. Similarly, Piquero and colleagues (2006) found that very few FV offenders in the Spouse Assault Replication Program (SARP) in the United States specialised in violence and that many offenders had both violent and non-violent offences in their recorded criminal histories. Richards and colleagues (2013) found that, amongst a cohort of 317 offenders in a Massachusetts domestic violence court, specialization in domestic violence was rare, and there were significant overlaps in the arrest trajectories for domestic and non-domestic offending.

On the other hand, a number of studies have identified that the level of specialisation in FV offending varies amongst different FV offenders. Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) undertook a review of previous typologies of male batterers and proposed three main subtypes of FV offenders whose level of specialisation varied. Under this model, those who are 'family-only batterers' restrict their violence to family members, tend to commit the least severe FV and are the least likely to engage in violence outside the home, indicating that they are specialists. Those who are 'dysphoric/borderline batterers' perpetrate moderate to severe domestic violence, with most of their violence confined to the family and the perpetration of some non-family violence and other crime. The final group, 'generally violent/antisocial batterers', are engaged in moderate to severe domestic violence but also perpetrate the most non-family violence offending and have the most extensive history of other offending.

Differences in the extent to which FV offenders can be considered specialists or generalists have also been identified based on gender. While Bouffard and colleagues' (2008) study of 189 domestic violence arrestees in a medium-sized city in the United States found broad versatility in offending among domestic violence offenders, they also found that female domestic violence offenders demonstrated a greater degree of specialisation than male domestic violence offenders. Other factors, such as age, race and the relationship between the perpetrator and victim (currently married/dating or formerly married/dating), were not found to significantly impact on specialization in domestic violence. A similar finding in relation to gender was reported in Bouffard and Zedaker's (2016) study of 730 individuals processed through a misdemeanour court in a medium-sized county in the United States, but this study also found some association with age (i.e. being older at first arrest increasing the likelihood of being a domestic violence specialist rather than generalist), race (i.e. being non-White increased the likelihood of being a violent offender rather than a generalist).

Babcock, Miller and Siard (2003) also focused on female domestic violence offenders, building on Hotzworth-Munroe and Stuart's (1994) study to develop typologies of female domestic violence offenders based on an examination of 52 women referred to a treatment agency for abusive behaviour in Houston, Texas. In their study, half the women were classified as 'Generally Violent' (GV) women as they reported violence towards non-partners and the other half were classified as 'Partner-Only' (PO) violent women as they reported no violence towards non-partners (Babcock et al., 2003). They found that GV women were more violent towards their partners than PO women, were motivated by the desire to control their partner, used violence more broadly and had more varied reasons for using violence, and were more likely to report using psychological abuse than PO women. In addition, they found that GV and PO women were equally likely to report self-defence as a motive for their use of violence (Babcock et al., 2003). Babcock and colleagues (2003) found there were no demographic differences between women classified as PO or GV. Specifically, there was no difference between the groups in terms of their age, racial and ethnic background, and income.

As outlined above, the majority of research into FV specialisation examined offenders in the United States (and one study examined offenders in New Zealand). In the Australian context, a study examining six years of prior offending by FV perpetrators in Tasmania undertaken by Boxall, Payne and Rosevear (2015) found that a larger proportion were recorded by police for non-FV than FV offences, with the most common offence types being traffic, other violence and disorder offences. In a further analysis of four groups of FV perpetrators based on the frequency of their FV offending (first-time offenders, low-frequency offenders, medium-frequency offenders and high-frequency offenders), Boxall and colleagues (2015) found that high-frequency offenders were statistically more likely than the other perpetrator groups to have been recorded by police for other offending on 10 or more occasions in the six year period. They concluded that their findings supported prior research indicating that FV perpetrators are not a homogeneous group of perpetrators, and offer support for the broad categorisation of FV perpetrators as 'partner-only violent' and 'generally violent/antisocial' (Boxall et al., 2015). Although Boxall and colleagues (2015) explored the frequency of offending amongst FV perpetrators over the six year period examined in their study, they did not examine any differences in perpetrators in terms of their demographic or FV incident characteristics.

The above studies in relation to the level of specialisation in FV offending have implications for the type of programs and policies that are implemented to address this type of offending. As Bouffard and Zedaker (2016) have stated, arguments have tended towards specialised treatment for domestic violence offenders, but the versatile patterns of offending identified above suggest that more general approaches could be appropriate.

### **The current study**

No research has been published on the extent to which Victorian FV perpetrators exhibit specialisation or generalisation in their offending behaviour. Given the current focus on improving perpetrator programs and their evaluation, improving our understanding of perpetrator offending behaviour is timely.

The current study therefore aims to investigate whether the majority of Victorian FV offenders are specialists or generalists, and to understand how specialist and generalist FV offenders differ. It will do this through an examination of recorded crime data about the offending over the last five years of a cohort of FV offenders, with a focus on answering the following research questions:

1. What proportion of FV offenders are specialists (i.e. offenders who only perpetrate FV-related offences) and what proportion are generalists (i.e. offenders who perpetrate other types of offences in addition to FV)?
2. What other types of offences do generalist FV offenders perpetrate?
3. Are there identifiable differences between specialists and generalists in terms of their demographic characteristics, the frequency and nature of their FV offending and the risk factors involved with their FV offending?

## Method

### The data

This study utilised data extracted from Victoria Police's Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) database on 18 October 2016. The data was based on a cohort of alleged family violence perpetrators and their recorded offending behaviour over a five year period from 1 October 2011 to 30 September 2016. The perpetrator cohort included any individual who had been recorded as an 'other party' on at least one Victoria Police Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Report (known as the L17 form) between 1 October 2011 and 30 September 2012. The L17 form must be completed by police officers in relation to any alleged family incident reported to them (Victoria Police, 2014). Selection of this cohort of individuals enabled examination of their other offending and family violence behaviour over a five year period.

The cohort was classified into two groups: 'specialist' and 'generalist' alleged perpetrators, based on whether they had non-FV offences recorded against them over the five year period from 1 October 2011 to 30 September 2016. Specifically, specialist perpetrators were classified as those who were only recorded for family violence incidents, or offences associated with those family violence incidents over the period. Generalist perpetrators were classified as those who, in addition to being recorded for at least one family violence incident, were recorded for other offences during the period. These included offences that were not linked to a family violence incident (indicated by an L17 form being completed in relation to the offence). Offences that were not linked to a family violence incident, but where the victim was recorded as a family member, were excluded from the analysis, as were breach of family order offences that were not linked to a family violence incident.

In this report, the overall cohort is referred to as 'FV perpetrators'. However it should be noted that perpetrators and offences referred to in the paper are alleged rather than proven perpetrators and offences, because the CSA does not hold court outcome data indicating whether family violence incidents and other offences recorded by police went on to be proven in court. It should also be noted that an L17 form is completed by police for any family incident that is reported to them, regardless of whether an associated offence is recorded. The same approach to defining family violence perpetrators and those who are also recorded for other offending, and to identifying a base study sample population, was taken in the only other study that could be located that examined this topic in the Australian context, which analysed family violence incidents reported to Tasmania Police and other types of criminal offences recorded by them (Boxall et al., 2015).

It should be noted that throughout the report, 2012 refers to the year ending 30 September 2012, 2013 refers to the year ending 30 September 2013, and so on. It should also be noted that Indigenous status was measured using the CSA's 'most frequent' counting rule, which classifies Indigenous status based on the most frequent status recorded by police for that offender within CSA data holdings.

Additional data items that were included in the dataset for this project included demographic characteristics of perpetrators, and risk factors identified and recorded by police on the L17 form for alleged family violence incidents (such as whether the perpetrator is unemployed or has a mental health issue) recorded over the five-year period. These variables were included to enable analysis of any differences in the characteristics between specialist and generalist perpetrators.

### Statistical analyses

Chi-square analyses (indicated by the symbol:  $\chi^2$ ) were used to statistically compare the characteristics of specialised FV perpetrators and generalist offenders. Where the significance level (indicated by the symbol  $p$ ) is less than .05, this indicates that there was a statistically significant relationship between the relevant characteristic and whether the perpetrator was a specialist or generalist. The closer the significance level is to zero, the less likely it is that the results

of the statistical test presented could have occurred by chance, or conversely, the more likely it is that the results represent true relationships between factors tested and specialisation/generalisation in the population, as opposed to random variation in the data.

Following these initial chi-square analyses, potential predictors that had a statistically significant bivariate relationship with specialisation/generalisation (at the  $p < .05$  level) were included in a binomial logistic regression model. This overall model was used to determine which combination of explanatory factors is most useful in determining whether the perpetrator is a specialist or generalist

## Results

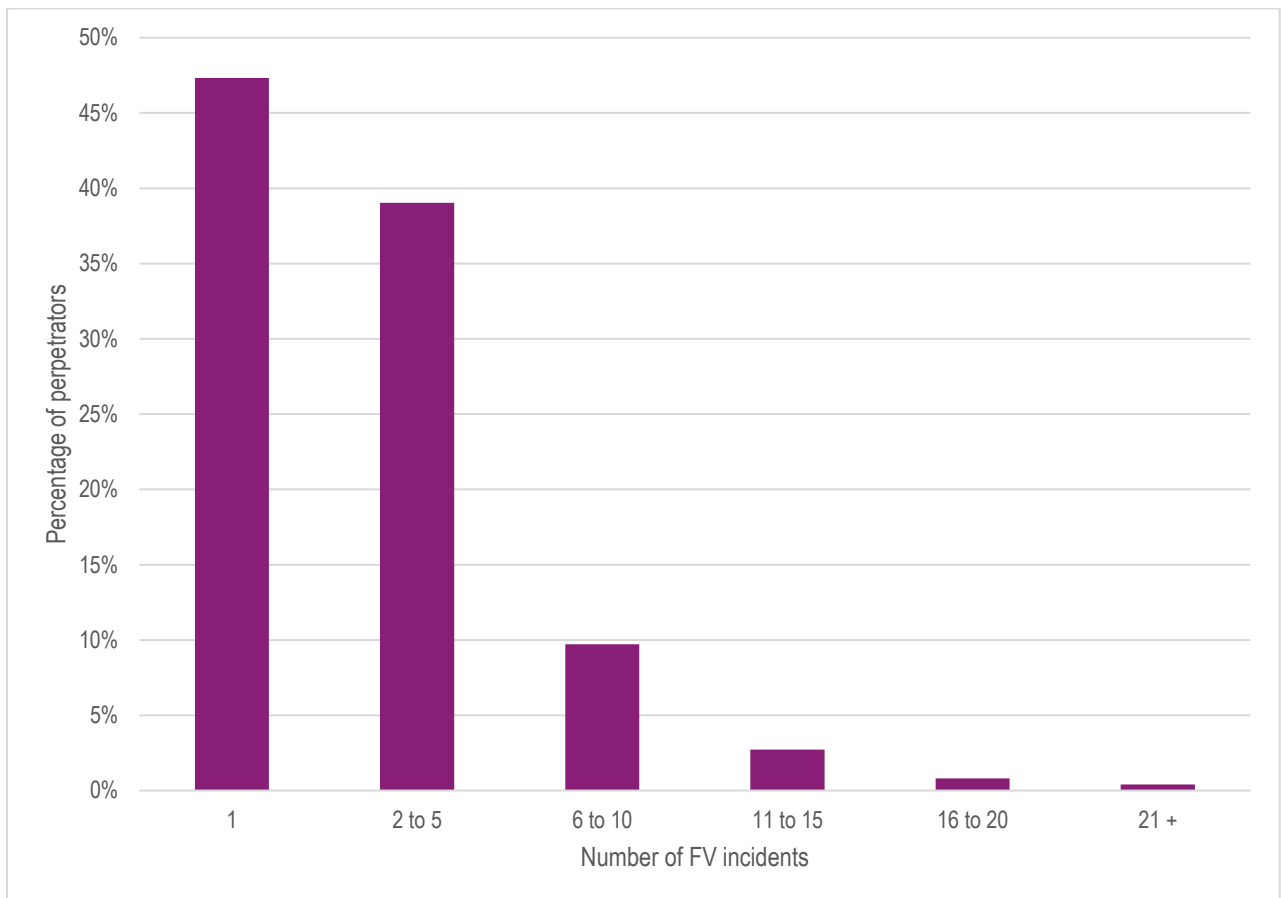
The cohort that was examined comprised 38,107 perpetrators recorded for at least one family violence (FV) incident between October 2011 and September 2012. Of these perpetrators:

- 90.9% (n=34,639) were aged 18 years or over, 7.6% (n=2,899) were aged under 18 years and 1.5% (n=569) did not have a date of birth recorded
- 75.6% (n=28,811) were male, 23.9% (n=9,111) were female and 0.5% (n=185) had their gender recorded as unknown
- 79.0% (n=30,086) were recorded as non-Indigenous, 4.2% (n=1,594) were recorded as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, 16.0% (n=6,088) had their Indigenous status recorded as unknown and 0.9% (n=339) did not have an Indigenous status recorded.

### **FV incidents and offences recorded**

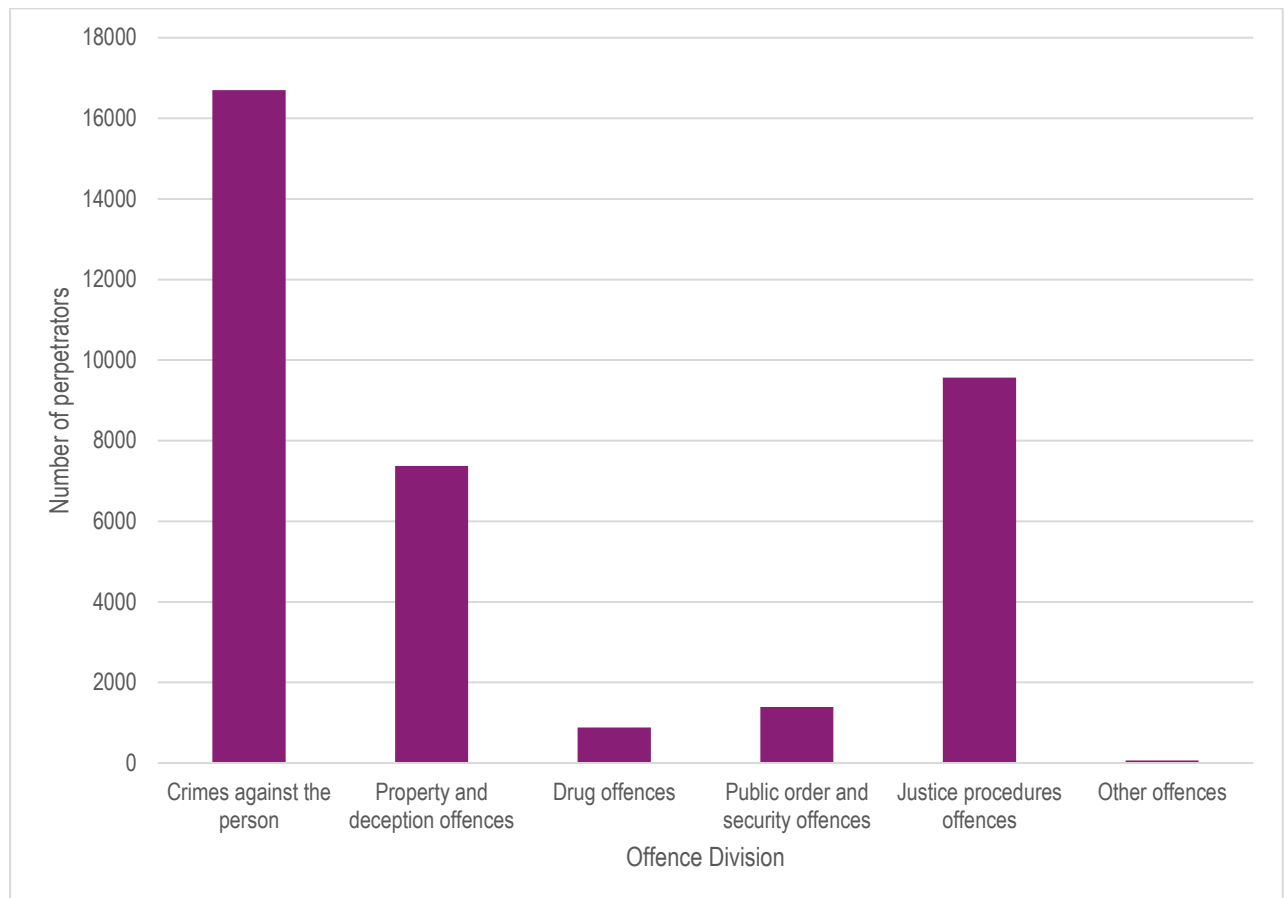
Of the 38,107 alleged FV perpetrators analysed, 47.3% (n=18,034) had only one FV incident recorded between October 2011 and September 2016, while 52.7% (n=20,073) had more than one incident recorded over that period. Over the five year period, 156 perpetrators were recorded for more than 20 FV incidents. Figure 1 shows a break-down of the number of incidents recorded for perpetrators in the cohort between 2011 and 2016.

Figure 1. Number of FV incidents recorded for perpetrators, October 2011 to September 2016



Over the five years examined, 51.6% (n=19,645) of perpetrators had a criminal offence recorded as a result of at least one of the FV incidents for which they were recorded, while 48.5% (n=18,462) did not have any offences recorded as a result of their FV incidents. In terms of the broad types of offences recorded as a result of FV incidents, 85.0% (n=16,699) of those who had an offence recorded were recorded for at least one crime against the person (e.g. assault, sexual offence), 48.7% (n=9,568) were recorded for at least one justice procedures offence (e.g. breach of family violence order) and 37.5% (n=7,374) were recorded for at least one property and deception offence (e.g. property damage, theft, deception). Figure 2 shows the types of offences that were recorded as a result of FV incidents during this period.

Figure 2. Recorded offences arising from FV incidents, October 2011 to September 2016\*



\* Shows the number of perpetrators who have had *at least* one offence recorded per offence division. Perpetrators may be counted within more than one offence division.

### Non-family violence related offences

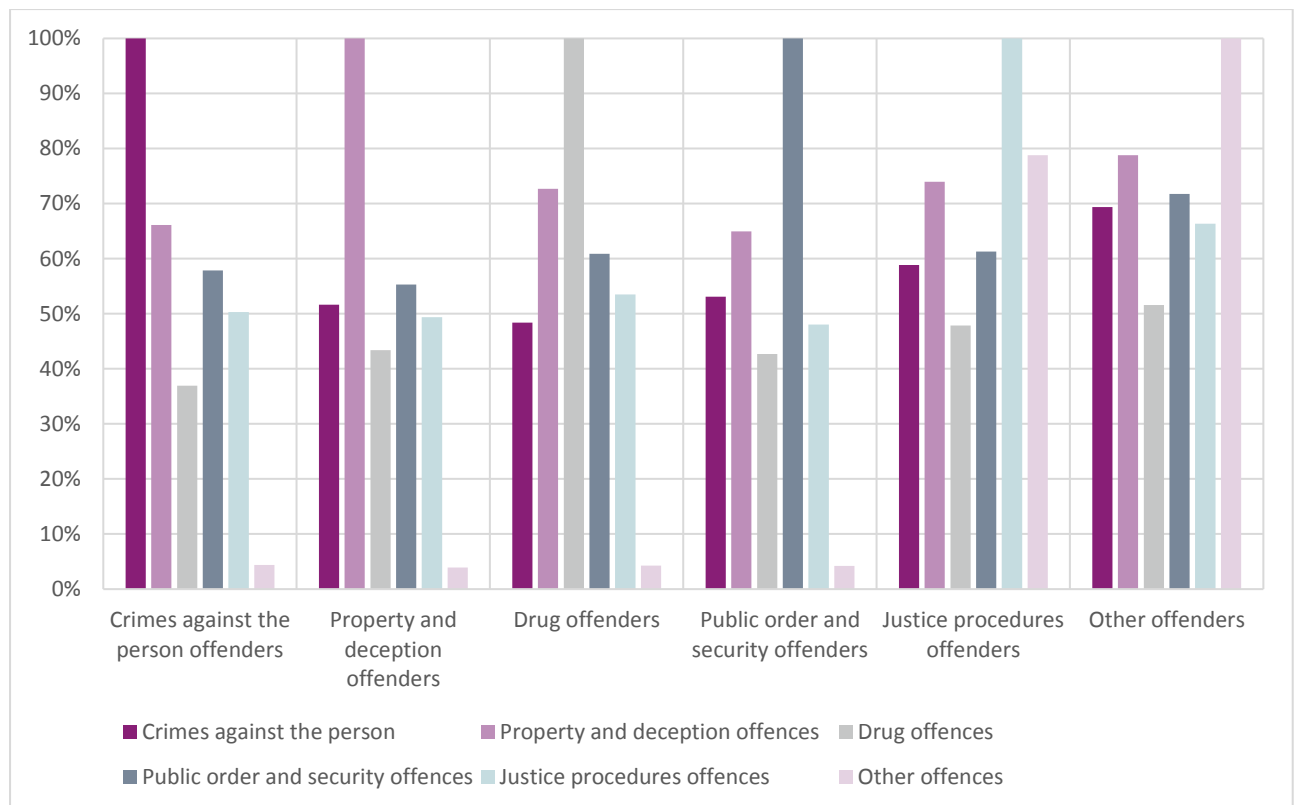
From October 2011 to September 2016, 40.2% (n=15,314) of FV perpetrators were recorded for at least one non-FV offence—and were therefore classified as generalist perpetrators for the purpose of this study. On the other hand 59.8% (n=22,793) were not recorded for offences unrelated to their FV incidents, and were classified as specialist perpetrators. Of the 22,793 specialist perpetrators, 61.1% (n=13,919) were recorded for only one FV incident during the five year period. Of the 15,314 generalist perpetrators:

- 61.3% (n=9,392) were recorded for at least one property and deception offence
- 52.2% (n=7,998) were recorded for at least one public order and security offence
- 47.9% (n=7,337) were recorded for at least one crime against the person
- 40.9% (n=6,270) were recorded for at least one justice procedures offence
- 36.6% (n=5,607) were recorded for at least one drug offence
- 3.1% (n=467) were recorded for at least one other offence.

Figure 3 shows the combinations of offence types recorded for generalist perpetrators. It displays the proportion of generalist perpetrators with at least one offence in a particular division who also had offences recorded in other divisions. For example, the crimes against the person perpetrators include any perpetrators who had at least one crimes against the person offence over the five years, and the graph shows the proportion of them who also had other types of non-FV related offences recorded. As shown, 66.1% of those with a crime against the person also had a property and deception offence recorded.



Figure 3. Proportion of perpetrators in one offence division who also have an offence in another division, October 2011 to September 2016



Of the 15,314 generalist perpetrators, 36.5% (n=5,592) were only recorded for one type of non-FV offence (although they could have been recorded for multiple offences in that category). Of the 5,592 generalist perpetrators who were only recorded for one type of non-family violence offence:

- 28.7% (n=1,603) were recorded for property and deception offences
- 25.6% (n=1,433) were recorded for public order and security offences
- 21.5% (n=1,201) were recorded for crimes against the person
- 12.9% (n=719) were recorded for drug offences
- 10.9% (n=607) were recorded for justice procedures offences (excluding breaches of family violence orders)
- 0.5% (n=29) were recorded for other offences.

### Differences between generalist and specialist perpetrators

In order to examine the differences between generalist and specialist perpetrators, the bivariate relationships between a large number of perpetrator and incident characteristics and whether a perpetrator was classified as a generalist or specialist were explored using chi-square analyses. These analyses identified which variables, when considered independently from other characteristics, were statistically associated with a perpetrator being a generalist or specialist.

Tables 1 to 6 show these statistical associations when other potential predictors are *not* controlled for. Some of the key findings of these analyses are:

- FV perpetrators aged 29 and under at the time of their first recorded FV incident in 2011–12 were more likely to be generalists and those aged 40 or older at the time of their first recorded FV incident in 2011–12 were more likely to be specialists.
- Male FV perpetrators were more likely to be generalists than female FV perpetrators.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander FV perpetrators were more likely to be generalists than non-Indigenous FV perpetrators.
- FV perpetrators with two or more recorded FV incidents were more likely to be generalists than FV perpetrators with one recorded FV incident.
- FV perpetrators who had a criminal offence recorded as a result of an FV incident more likely to be generalists than those with no FV-related offences recorded. This was the case across all six offence divisions (crimes against the person, property and deception offences, drug offences, public order and security offences, justice procedures offences and other offences).
- Generalist perpetrators were more likely than specialist perpetrators to have FV incidents recorded various types of family members recorded as the affected family member (current or former partner, parent-child, and other family members), which may be related to their increased frequency of recorded FV incidents.
- Across all perpetrator and relationship risk factors, and incident characteristics recorded by police on the L17 form, if an FV perpetrator had at least one FV incident with the risk factor or characteristic flagged they were more likely to be a generalist perpetrator.
- FV perpetrators with at least one FV incident at which a child or children were present were more likely to be generalists than FV perpetrators with no FV incidents at which a child or children were present.

Table 1. Perpetrator characteristics of generalist and specialist perpetrators, October 2011 to September 2016

	Generalist Perpetrator		Specialist Perpetrator		p
	n	%	n	%	
<b>Age group<sup>1,2</sup></b>					
Under 20	2,627	55.9	2,073	44.1	<.0001
20-29	5,315	53.0	4,706	47.0	
30-39	4,259	40.6	6,235	59.4	
40 or older	3,029	24.6	9,294	75.4	
<b>Sex<sup>2</sup></b>					
Male	12,410	43.1	16,401	56.9	<.0001
Female	2,890	31.7	6,221	68.3	
<b>Indigenous Status<sup>2</sup></b>					
Non-Indigenous	12,760	42.4	17,326	57.6	<.0001
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	1,107	69.4	487	30.6	
<b>Number of FV incidents, 2012 to 2016</b>					
1	4,115	22.8	13,919	77.2	<.0001
2-5	7,146	48.1	7,727	51.9	
6 or more	4,053	77.9	1,147	22.1	

	Generalist Perpetrator		Specialist Perpetrator		p
	n	%	n	%	
<b>Recorded offence/s associated with FV incident/s</b>					
At least one	10,427	53.1	9,218	46.9	<.0001
None	4,887	26.5	13,575	73.5	
<b>Crimes against the person offence/s associated with FV incident/s</b>					
At least one	8,906	53.3	7,793	46.7	<.0001
None	6,408	29.9	15,000	70.1	
<b>Property and deception offence/s associated with FV incident/s</b>					
At least one	5,164	70.0	2,210	30.0	<.0001
None	10,150	33.0	20,583	67.0	
<b>Drug offence/s associated with FV incident/s</b>					
At least one	749	85.0	132	15.0	<.0001
None	14,565	39.1	22,661	60.9	
<b>Public order and security offence/s associated with FV incident/s</b>					
At least one	1,089	78.1	305	21.9	<.0001
None	14,225	38.8	22,488	61.2	
<b>Justice procedures offence/s associated with FV incident/s</b>					
At least one	6,322	66.1	3,246	33.9	<.0001
None	8,992	31.5	19,547	68.5	
<b>Other offence/s associated with FV incident/s</b>					
At least one	49	77.8	14	22.2	<.0001
None	15,265	40.1	22,779	59.9	

<sup>1</sup> At time of first incident in 2011–12

<sup>2</sup> Excludes missing and unknown values

Table 2. Relationship status of family incidents involving generalist and specialist perpetrators, October 2011 to September 2016

	Generalist Perpetrator		Specialist Perpetrator		p
	n	%	n	%	
<b>Current partner</b>					
At least one incident	9,588	45.0	11,734	55.0	<.0001
No incidents	5,726	34.1	11,059	65.9	
<b>Former partner</b>					
At least one incident	6,036	53.5	5,243	46.5	<.0001
No incidents	9,278	34.6	17,550	65.4	
<b>Parent/child</b>					
At least one incident	5,962	49.4	6,114	50.6	<.0001
No incidents	9,352	35.9	16,679	64.1	
<b>Other family member</b>					
At least one incident	4,650	56.0	3,659	44.0	<.0001
No incidents	10,664	35.8	19,134	64.2	

Table 3. Perpetrator risk factors (current) recorded at family incidents involving generalist and specialist perpetrators, October 2011 to September 2016

	Generalist Perpetrator		Specialist Perpetrator		p
	n	%	n	%	
<b>Harmed or threatened to harm AFM</b>					
At least one incident	7,288	58.7	5,122	41.3	<.0001
No incidents	8,026	31.2	17,671	68.8	
<b>Harmed or threatened harm/kill children</b>					
At least one incident	865	60.3	569	39.7	<.0001
No incidents	14,449	39.4	22,224	60.6	
<b>Harmed or threatened harm/kill family</b>					
At least one incident	1,531	71.2	619	28.8	<.0001
No incidents	13,783	38.3	22,174	61.7	
<b>Harmed or threatened harm/kill pets</b>					
At least one incident	339	69.3	150	30.1	<.0001
No incidents	14,975	39.8	22,643	60.1	
<b>Threatened to kill AFM</b>					
At least one incident	2,994	66.5	1,510	33.5	<.0001
No incidents	12,320	36.7	21,283	63.3	
<b>Choked AFM</b>					
At least one incident	1,818	62.0	1,115	38.0	<.0001
No incidents	13,496	38.4	21,678	61.6	

	Generalist Perpetrator		Specialist Perpetrator		p
	n	%	n	%	
<b>Suicidal ideas/attempted suicide</b>					
At least one incident	1,965	63.3	1,140	36.7	<.0001
No incidents	13,349	38.1	21,653	61.9	
<b>Stalked AFM</b>					
At least one incident	1,312	64.5	721	35.5	<.0001
No incidents	14,002	38.8	22,072	61.2	
<b>Sexual assault of AFM</b>					
At least one incident	608	47.7	666	52.3	<.0001
No incidents	14,706	39.9	22,127	60.1	
<b>Controlling behaviours</b>					
At least one incident	6,358	53.2	5,584	46.8	<.0001
No incidents	8,956	34.2	17,209	65.8	
<b>Depression/mental health issues</b>					
At least one incident	6,546	57.9	4,754	42.1	<.0001
No incidents	8,768	32.7	18,039	67.3	
<b>Unemployment</b>					
At least one incident	6,318	67.5	3,047	32.5	<.0001
No incidents	8,996	31.3	19,746	68.7	
<b>Alcohol use possible</b>					
At least one incident	7,732	60.2	5,122	39.8	<.0001
No incidents	7,582	30.0	17,671	70.0	
<b>Alcohol use definite</b>					
At least one incident	6,636	54.2	5,611	45.8	<.0001
No incidents	8,678	33.6	17,182	66.4	
<b>Drug use possible</b>					
At least one incident	8,949	68.3	4,155	31.7	<.0001
No incidents	6,365	25.5	18,638	74.5	
<b>Drug use definite</b>					
At least one incident	4,972	80.0	1,242	20.0	<.0001
No incidents	10,342	32.4	21,551	67.6	

Table 4. Perpetrator risk factors (historical) recorded at family incidents involving generalist and specialist perpetrators, October 2011 to September 2016

	Generalist Perpetrator		Specialist Perpetrator		p
	n	%	n	%	
<b>History of any violent behaviour</b>					
At least one incident	5,305	72.9	1,976	27.1	<.0001
No incidents	10,009	32.5	20,817	67.5	
<b>History of choking AFM</b>					
At least one incident	976	75.7	313	24.3	<.0001
No incidents	14,338	38.9	22,480	61.1	
<b>History of sexually assaulting AFM</b>					
At least one incident	320	59.9	214	40.1	<.0001
No incidents	14,994	39.9	22,579	60.1	
<b>History of controlling behaviour</b>					
At least one incident	4,827	66.0	2,490	34.0	<.0001
No incidents	10,487	34.1	20,303	65.9	
<b>History of stalking AFM</b>					
At least one incident	920	75.0	307	25.0	<.0001
No incidents	14,394	39.0	22,486	61.0	
<b>History of threatening/using firearms</b>					
At least one incident	173	83.6	34	16.4	<.0001
No incidents	15,141	40.0	22,759	60.0	
<b>History of threatening to kill AFM</b>					
At least one incident	1,692	78.9	453	21.1	<.0001
No incidents	13,622	37.9	22,340	62.1	
<b>History of threatening to harm AFM</b>					
At least one incident	3,677	73.5	1,329	26.5	<.0001
No incidents	11,637	35.2	21,464	64.8	
<b>History of threatening to harm children</b>					
At least one incident	517	66.8	257	33.2	<.0001
No incidents	14,797	39.6	22,536	60.4	
<b>History of threatening to harm other family members</b>					
At least one incident	1,256	80.3	309	19.7	<.0001
No incidents	14,058	38.5	22,484	61.5	
<b>History of threatening to harm pets</b>					
At least one incident	190	78.5	52	21.5	<.0001
No incidents	15,124	39.9	22,741	60.1	
<b>Previous FV incident as a perpetrator</b>					
At least one incident	12,698	52.2	11,613	47.8	<.0001
No incidents	2,616	19.0	11,180	81.0	

Table 5. Relationship risk factors recorded at family incidents involving generalist and specialist perpetrators, October 2011 to September 2016

	Generalist Perpetrator		Specialist Perpetrator		p
	n	%	n	%	
<b>Recent separation</b>					
At least one incident	6,953	47.9	7,562	52.1	<.0001
No incidents	8,361	35.4	15,231	64.6	
<b>Escalation – increase in severity and/or frequency</b>					
At least one incident	5,539	59.8	3,725	40.2	<.0001
No incidents	9,775	33.9	19,068	66.1	
<b>Presence of a disability</b>					
At least one incident	1,112	52.7	999	47.3	<.0001
No incidents	14,202	39.5	21,794	60.5	
<b>Financial difficulties</b>					
At least one incident	4,466	55.6	3,571	44.4	<.0001
No incidents	10,848	36.1	19,222	63.9	
<b>Pregnancy/new birth</b>					
At least one incident	2,447	58.6	1,726	41.4	<.0001
No incidents	12,867	37.9	21,067	62.1	
<b>AFM not fearful</b>					
At least one incident	12,060	42.9	16,045	57.1	<.0001
No incidents	3,254	32.5	6,748	67.5	
<b>AFM fearful</b>					
At least one incident	9,723	52.4	8,840	47.6	<.0001
No incidents	5,591	28.6	13,953	71.4	
<b>AFM very fearful</b>					
At least one incident	4,740	60.4	3,107	39.6	<.0001
No incidents	10,574	34.9	19,686	65.1	

Table 6. Incident characteristics recorded at family incidents involving generalist and specialist perpetrators, October 2011 to September 2016

	Generalist Perpetrator		Specialist Perpetrator		p
	n	%	n	%	
<b>Children present</b>					
At least one incident	8,527	44.6	10,605	55.4	<.0001
No incidents	6,787	35.8	12,188	64.2	
<b>Physical abuse (indictable)</b>					
At least one incident	2,954	72.3	1,133	27.7	<.0001
No incidents	12,360	36.3	21,660	63.7	
<b>Physical abuse (summary)</b>					
At least one incident	4,186	65.8	2,175	34.2	<.0001
No incidents	11,128	35.1	20,618	64.9	
<b>Sexual abuse</b>					
At least one incident	422	58.6	298	41.4	<.0001
No incidents	14,892	39.8	22,495	60.2	
<b>Threats</b>					
At least one incident	2,925	76.3	908	23.7	<.0001
No incidents	12,389	36.2	21,885	63.9	
<b>Pet abuse</b>					
At least one incident	78	85.7	13	14.3	<.0001
No incidents	15,236	40.1	22,780	59.9	
<b>Other criminal abuse</b>					
At least one incident	623	73.2	228	26.8	<.0001
No incidents	14,691	39.4	22,565	60.6	
<b>Damage (indictable)</b>					
At least one incident	2,484	78.6	677	21.4	<.0001
No incidents	12,830	36.7	22,116	63.3	
<b>Damage (summary)</b>					
At least one incident	802	76.4	248	23.6	<.0001
No incidents	14,512	39.2	22,545	60.1	
<b>Theft</b>					
At least one incident	392	85.4	67	14.6	<.0001
No incidents	14,922	39.6	22,726	60.4	
<b>Stalking</b>					
At least one incident	522	72.9	194	27.1	<.0001
No incidents	14,792	39.6	22,599	60.4	
<b>Breach only</b>					
At least one incident	3,103	71.3	1,249	28.7	<.0001
No incidents	12,211	36.2	21,544	63.8	
<b>Breach and other criminal abuse</b>					
At least one incident	2,483	78.0	702	22.0	<.0001
No incidents	12,831	36.7	22,091	63.3	



	Generalist Perpetrator		Specialist Perpetrator		p
	n	%	n	%	
<b>Emotional abuse</b>					
At least one incident	5,345	64.1	2,992	35.9	<.0001
No incidents	9,969	33.5	19,801	66.5	
<b>Verbal abuse</b>					
At least one incident	8,051	62.3	4,864	37.7	<.0001
No incidents	7,263	28.8	17,929	71.2	
<b>Social abuse</b>					
At least one incident	998	68.7	454	31.3	<.0001
No incidents	14,316	39.1	22,339	60.9	
<b>Economic abuse</b>					
At least one incident	1,101	66.1	566	33.9	<.0001
No incidents	14,213	39.0	22,227	61.0	
<b>Spiritual abuse</b>					
At least one incident	133	65.2	71	34.8	<.0001
No incidents	15,181	40.1	22,722	59.9	
<b>Non-violent, non-abusive</b>					
At least one incident	3,584	63.8	2,035	36.2	<.0001
No incidents	11,730	36.1	20,758	63.9	
<b>Police assessment of future risk of violence - likely</b>					
At least one incident	11,096	52.7	9,962	47.3	<.0001
No incidents	4,218	24.7	12,831	75.3	
<b>Police assessment of future risk of violence - unlikely</b>					
At least one incident	9,643	44.4	12,095	55.6	<.0001
No incidents	5,671	34.6	10,698	65.4	

All of the factors that were identified as having statistically significant bivariate relationships with specialisation/generalisation were included in a logistic regression model to explore which combination of explanatory variables is best able to predict whether a perpetrator is a generalist or specialist. The final model excludes any variables that were not found to have a relationship with specialisation/generalisation, when the effects of all other possible predictor variables are taken into account and controlled for.

The overall adequacy of the model was assessed according to its ability to discriminate between generalist and specialist perpetrators using the ROC Area Under the Curve statistic (AUC). This statistic can be interpreted as the likelihood that the model will produce a higher predicted probability of being a generalist perpetrator for those who actually are generalist perpetrators, compared with the predicted probabilities for specialist perpetrators. The better the model's overall ability to discriminate between generalist and specialist FV perpetrators, the more accuracy the model has in predicting who will be a generalist/specialist. An AUC of 0.5 indicates the model has no ability to discriminate, an AUC between 0.7 and 0.8 indicates acceptable ability to discriminate, an AUC between 0.8 and 0.9 is considered to have excellent ability to discriminate, and an AUC greater than 0.9 is considered to have outstanding discrimination (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 2000). The AUC for the final model presented here was 0.814 (95% Confidence Interval: 0.809, 0.819), indicating that there is an 81% chance that the final regression model will produce a higher

probability of versatility in offending for generalist FV perpetrators in the 2011–12 cohort, and the model has acceptable to excellent ability to discriminate between those who are generalist and those who are specialist FV perpetrators.

The final predictor variables included in the model are presented in Table 7. These are the factors that contribute significantly to predicting generalisation of offending, taking into account the effects of all other variables included in the model. The odds ratio column can be interpreted as the likelihood that a FV perpetrator with that characteristic is a generalist rather than specialist perpetrator.

In summary, the odds ratios presented in Table 7 indicate that, when all other variables are controlled for:

- As age at which a perpetrator was recorded for their first FV incident in 2011–12 increased, the likelihood that they were classified as a generalist decreased.
- Female were less likely to be generalists than males.
- Perpetrators recorded as Non-Indigenous were less likely to be generalist perpetrators than those recorded as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- Perpetrators who had between two and five FV incidents recorded over the five year period were less likely to be generalist perpetrators than those with just one incident recorded.
- Those with at least one recorded property and deception offence resulting from a FV incident were 1.43 times more likely to be generalist perpetrators than those with none of these offences recorded. This was also the case for those recorded for at least one public order and security offences (1.5 times more likely) and/or at least one justice procedures offences (1.41 times)
- All perpetrator-victim relationship statuses were positively associated with being a generalist, with the magnitude of the statistical association being slightly different for each.
- FV perpetrators with at least one FV incident where they were assessed to have demonstrated controlling behaviours were less likely to be generalists than those with no such FV incidents.
- FV perpetrators with at least one FV incident during which they were unemployed were more likely to be generalists than those with no such FV incidents.
- All perpetrator alcohol and drug use factors showed a positive association with an FV perpetrator being a generalist rather than a specialist perpetrator, with the magnitude of the association being higher for drug use rather than alcohol use. Those with at least one FV incident for which their alcohol or drug use was flagged were more likely to be generalist perpetrators than those who did not have alcohol or drug use flagged as a risk factor:
  - Alcohol use possible: 1.21 times more likely
  - Alcohol use definite: 1.25 times more likely
  - Drug use possible: 2.33 times more likely
  - Drug use definite: 2.73 times more likely
- A number of risk factors and incident and perpetrator characteristics flagged by police on the L17 form were associated with an increased likelihood of being a generalist, including: previous FV incident recorded; history of violent behaviour; victim fear level assessed as 'very fearful'; threats involved; theft involved; and verbal abuse involved.
- On the other hand, where these incident characteristics were flagged for at least one FV incident, perpetrators were less likely to be classified as generalists: physical abuse (indictable) involved; emotional abuse involved, recent escalation in frequency and/or severity of violence; presence of a disability; children present; and police assessment of future violence is 'unlikely'.

Table 7. Logistic regression model predicting odds of a FV perpetrator being a generalist rather than specialist perpetrator

Predictor	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval of the Odds Ratio	Significance level ( <i>p</i> )
Perpetrator age group*			
<i>Under 20</i>			<.001
<i>20-29</i>	0.73	0.66, 0.80	<.001
<i>30-39</i>	0.45	0.40, 0.49	<.001
<i>40 or older</i>	0.28	0.25, 0.30	<.001
Perpetrator sex (female compared to male)	0.73	0.68, 0.78	<.001
Perpetrator Indigenous status (Non-Indigenous compared to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander)	0.58	0.51, 0.66	<.001
Perpetrator number of family incidents, 2012 to 2016			
<i>1</i>			0.002
<i>2-5</i>	0.85	0.77, 0.94	0.001
<i>6 or more</i>	0.89	0.76, 1.05	ns
Property and deception offence/s associated with FV incident/s	1.39	1.28, 1.50	<.001
Public order and security offence/s associated with FV incident/s	1.50	1.28, 1.77	<.001
Justice procedures offence/s associated with FV incident/s	1.41	1.31, 1.52	<.001
Perpetrator-victim relationship status			
<i>Current partner</i>	1.11	1.04, 1.19	0.004
<i>Former partner</i>	1.21	1.13, 1.30	<.001
<i>Parent-child</i>	1.23	1.14, 1.32	<.001
<i>Other family</i>	1.47	1.37, 1.59	<.001
Perpetrator controlling behaviours	0.81	0.76, 0.87	<.001
Perpetrator unemployed	1.38	1.28, 1.48	<.001
Perpetrator alcohol use possible	1.21	1.13, 1.29	<.001
Perpetrator alcohol use definite	1.25	1.17, 1.32	<.001
Perpetrator drug use possible	2.33	2.18, 2.49	<.001
Perpetrator drug use definite	2.73	2.51, 2.97	<.001
Perpetrator previous FV incident flag	1.96	1.80, 2.13	<.001
Perpetrator history of violent behaviour	1.22	1.11, 1.34	<.001
Escalation – increase in severity and/or frequency	0.90	0.83, 0.97	0.004
Presence of a disability	0.84	0.74, 0.95	0.004
Victim fear level 'very fearful'	1.11	1.03, 1.20	0.005
Children present	0.80	0.75, 0.84	<.001
Physical abuse (indictable) involved	0.83	0.76, 0.91	<.001
Threats involved	1.25	1.12, 1.40	<.001
Theft involved	1.56	1.11, 2.16	0.009
Emotional abuse involved	0.82	0.75, 0.90	<.001
Verbal abuse involved	1.21	1.11, 1.32	<.001
Police assessment of future risk of violence – unlikely	0.88	0.83, 0.94	<.001

Note: Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.38$ , Model  $\chi^2 (46) = 10,497.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$

## Discussion

Of the 38,107 FV perpetrators examined in this study, just over 40% were classified as generalist perpetrators who were recorded for at least one non-FV related offence in addition to at least one FV incident. Just under 60% were identified as specialist perpetrators who were only recorded for FV incidents and/or FV related offences. The generalist perpetrators had a wide range of non-FV offences recorded during this time, including property and deception offences (61% of generalist offenders), public order and security offences (52%), crimes against the person (48%), justice procedures offences (41%) and drug offences (37%).

The evidence of specialisation in FV offending from previous research has been mixed, with some studies finding little evidence of specialisation and others finding some evidence of specialisation. The current study offers some support for specialisation in FV offending as a majority of the FV perpetrators examined were categorised as specialists. However, as generalist perpetrators still made up a substantial group, this study also provides support for prior studies that propose there is more than one type of FV perpetrator (see Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, 1994).

The current study found that a number of perpetrator and incident characteristics were associated with generalisation in offending amongst FV perpetrators. A limited amount of previous research has been conducted into the differences between generalist and specialist FV perpetrators in terms of their characteristics, with studies focused primarily on differences in terms of gender, age and race. The finding from this study that female perpetrators were less likely to be generalists than male perpetrators concurs with some previous research (Bouffard et al., 2008; Bouffard and Zedaker, 2016).

No previous studies were located that examined a broad range of perpetrator and incident characteristics and risk factors and their association with specialisation/generalisation. This study found that a range of characteristics and risk factors were associated with the likelihood generalisation in offending. Of particular interest is the finding that where alcohol use, and particularly drug use is involved in a perpetrator's FV incidents, they are significantly more likely to have a range of non-FV offences recorded. Where police identified that perpetrator drug use was definitely involved in a FV incident, perpetrators were almost three times as likely to be classified as generalists.

Key limitations identified with the study include that:

- As mentioned in the method, the use of police recorded crime data means that the offences and perpetrators examined in this study are alleged rather than proven offences and perpetrators, and we do not know whether the findings would also apply to proven offenders.
- Recorded crime data also tends to be associated with under-reporting. Prior research has also found different results in relation to specialisation in violent offending when analysing self-report data compared with recorded crime data (see Lynam et al., 2004).
- The quality of police assessment and recording of risk factors on the L17 form is somewhat unknown. These risk factors are selected via checkboxes and the absence of a check for a particular risk factor may indicate that factor was not assessed and/or recorded, or that it was not present. It is possible that police are more likely to invest time in the risk assessment process and record criminal offences where they perceive the situation to be serious or are particularly concerned about the safety of the victim.
- It should also be noted that incidents and offences recorded for the cohort outside of the five-year period examined were not considered in the generalist/specialist categorisation applied in this study. The choice of a cohort from the first year of the period allowed time for those who were young at the start of the period to

be recorded for further incidents and offences, but may have excluded some of the prior offending (family and non-family related) for those who were older at the start of the period.

- The inclusion of perpetrators who did not have any criminal offences recorded in association with their FV incident (or incidents) may have biased the overall finding toward specialisation. If these perpetrators were excluded from the analysis, however, the bias would instead be towards a finding of generalist offending from FV perpetrators—73.5% would be classified as generalists and 26.5% as specialists. This finding also concurs with previous suggestions that the use of different research methodologies, such as the examination of specific offender subgroups, may provide more evidence of specialisation (see McGloin et al., 2007; Sullivan et al., 2006).

Further research in the Victorian context could explore whether more than two distinct groups of FV perpetrators can be identified, such as the three groups identified by Bouffard and Zedaker (2016) or the typologies proposed by Holtzworth and Stuart (1994) and Holtzworth-Munroe and colleagues (2000). Additional research would also be useful in identifying offending trajectories over a longer period of time in order to obtain additional detail about the progression of family and non-family related offending during an offender's criminal career.

This study begins to unravel distinct cohorts of FV perpetrators, with potentially different criminogenic and programmatic needs. Despite the limitations identified, the findings of this study have some important implications for policy and practice. Future evaluations of programs for FV perpetrators could consider program effectiveness for perpetrators with a range of offending patterns.

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