

Disability, Child, Youth and Family Services (South)

# **Family and domestic violence: a gendered crime?**

**Report on initial research**

**Karen Carlson & Liz Mulder**

**Family Violence Counselling and Support Service, Hobart**

**[liz.mulder@dhhs.tas.gov.au](mailto:liz.mulder@dhhs.tas.gov.au)**

# Family Violence Act 2004

## Safe at Home

- Pro-arrest
- Pro-charge
- Pro-prosecution
- Integrated criminal justice response
- Review of Safe at Home 2009:
  - 28% female offenders

# International literature

- Policies promoting arrest and prosecution
- Rise of dual and single arrests of women
- Reluctance to contact police

# “Women are as violent as men”

- Crime victimisation studies
  - Gender asymmetries
- Family conflict studies
  - Gender symmetries

# Conflict Tactics Scale

- Shortcomings:
  - Fails to contextualise the violence
  - No consideration of events leading up
  - No consideration of outcome
  - Assumes partners are equal
  - Poor differentiation

# National crime surveys

- Important differences:
  - Women experience greater amount, more severe, more persistent abuse
  - Physical, emotional, financial and social impacts
  - Men more likely to use coercion and control
  - Fear and intimidation of women
  - Post-separation violence and homicide

# Explanations

- Police have become more “real”
- Gender symmetry debate
- Men over reporting
- Men ring Police first
- Women freely admit
- Resistant and defensive violence

# Measuring family violence

- Ongoing pattern of fear and coercive control
- Not solely rely on snapshot, single incident stats or incidence recording tools
- Emotional and psychological abuse



# Types of violence

- Aggression vs abuse
  - Power
  - Control
  - Intimidation
  - Fear
  - Trauma

# Johnson (2006)

- Situational couple violence
- Violent resistance
- Intimate terrorism
- Mutual violent control

# Research questions

- History
- Context
- Motivations
- Meanings
- Consequences
- Use of control tactics

# Current research

- Police records
- FVCSS records

# Themes and concepts

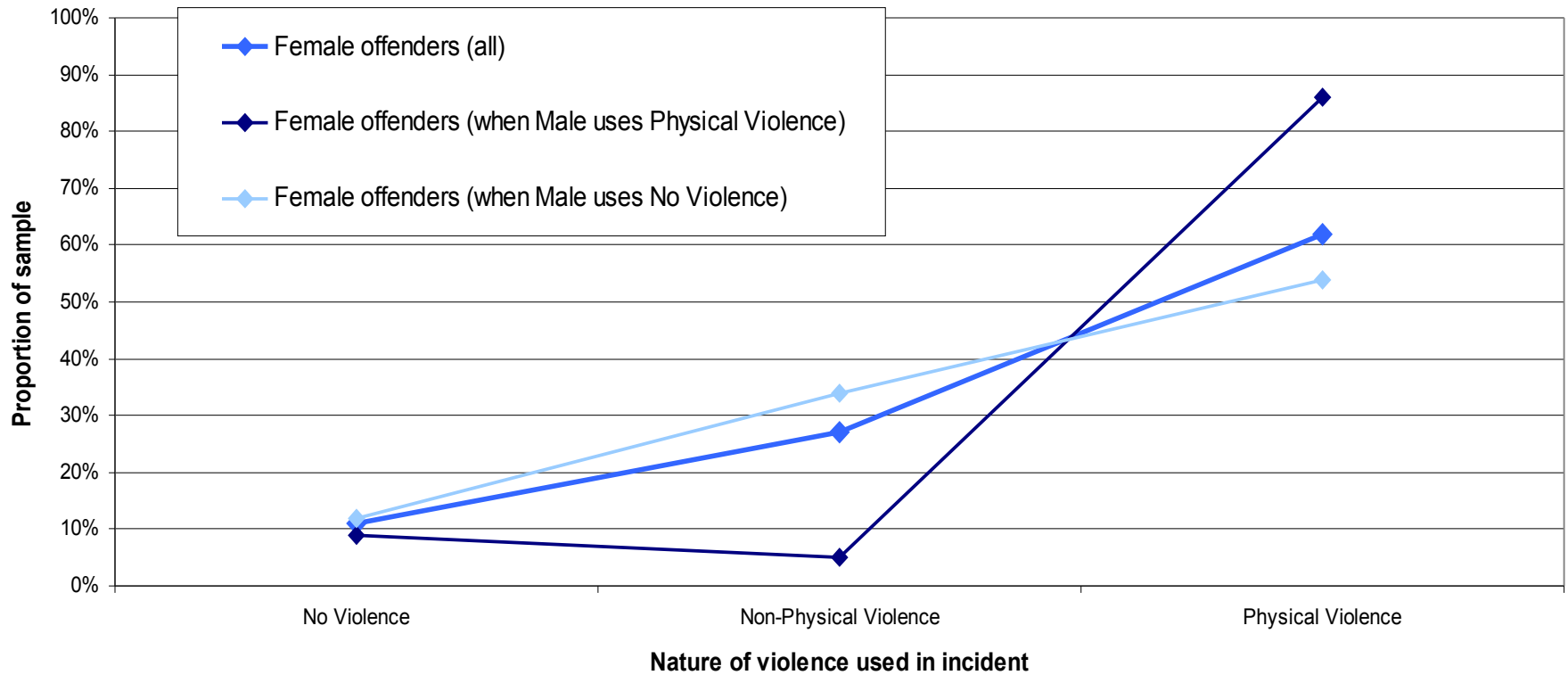
- History of offender and victim
- Type of violence used (offender and victim)
- Risk and safety
- Initiator of contact
- Context of violence

# Initial Findings

- 68% of female offenders were victims before and/or after
- 54% of female offenders had offended before and/or after
- 69% of male victims were offenders before and/or after
- Mainly with the same partner

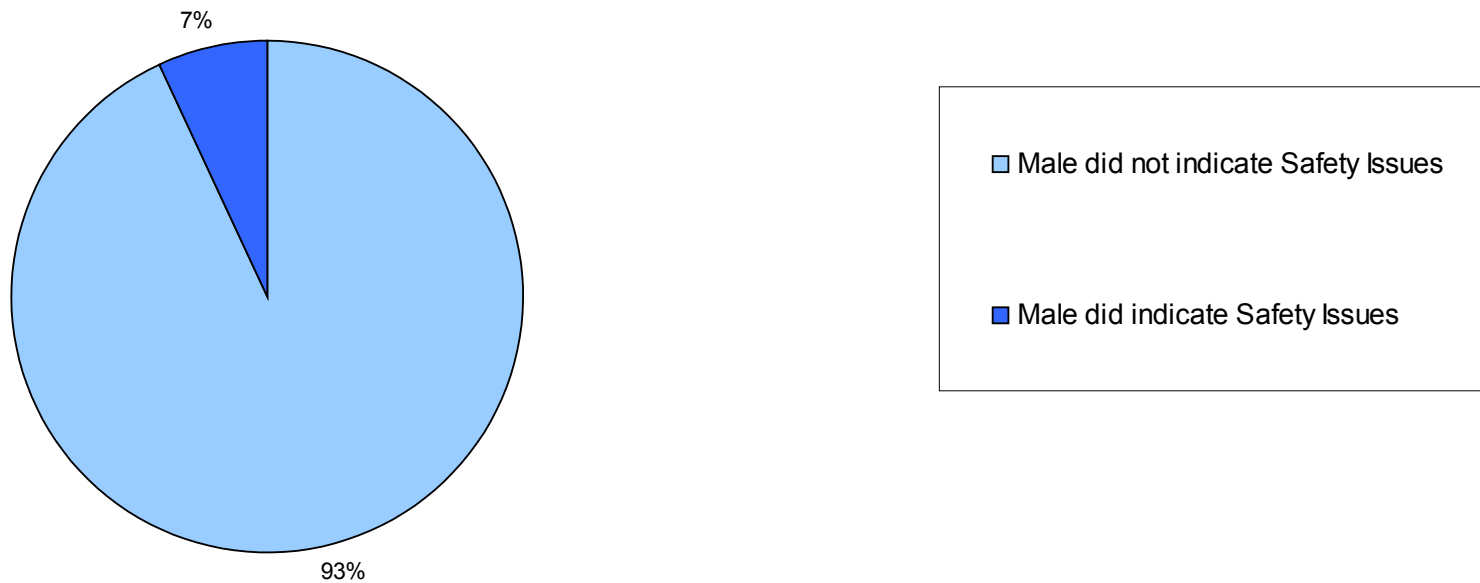
# Initial Findings - cont

Variation in use of violence by females, by male use of violence



# Initial Findings - cont

Proportion of Male Victims that indicated Safety Issues





# Initial Findings - cont

- 97% did not require counselling
- 65% did not suffer injury
- 10% required First Aid
- 2% required hospital/doctor

# Initial Findings - cont

- In 11% incidents female offender rang police

# Circumstances

- In half of incidents
  - Current FVO
  - Self defence
  - Resistance

# Initial conclusions

- Lack of fear on part of male victim
- Lack of controlling behaviour on part of female offender
- Situational couple violence rather than domestic violence

# Future research

- Women's voices