



## **Understanding Domestic Violence Patterns:**

### **A Problem Analysis Conducted for the Tulsa, Oklahoma Police Department**

**December 2019**

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This research was supported through a grant provided by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF) to the *International Association of Chief of Police (IACP) / University of Cincinnati (UC) Center for Police Research and Policy*. The findings and recommendations presented within this report are from the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official positions or opinions of the LJAF, IACP, or Tulsa Police Department (TPD). The authors wish to thank Chief Chuck Jordan, Assistant Chief Jonathan Brooks, Charles Wulff, Tracey Lyall, and all of the officers and staff from the TPD and the Tulsa Domestic Violence Intervention Services (DVIS) for their assistance in conducting this research. Please direct all correspondence regarding this report to Dr. Robin Engel, Director, IACP/UC Center for Police Research and Policy, University of Cincinnati, 600 Teachers-Dyer Complex, 2610 McMicken Circle, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0632; 513.556.5849; [robin.engel@uc.edu](mailto:robin.engel@uc.edu)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the details of a problem analysis conducted by the *International Association of Chiefs of Police/University of Cincinnati (IACP/UC) Center for Police Research and Policy (the “Center”)* on domestic violence patterns for the Tulsa Police Department (TPD). The TPD identified domestic violence as an area requiring further understanding given the seriousness of the crime, and frequency as measured by citizen-generated calls for service. For the TPD, domestic violence-related incidents represent their third most frequent call for service, consuming substantial police resources. Prior to recommending an appropriate intervention strategy to reduce domestic violence, it is critical to better understand details regarding the specific domestic violence problem in Tulsa.

For police agencies, a problem analysis includes the systematic examination of the underlying conditions of local problems they are tasked with solving. Problem analyses generally rely on information gathered from various sources, and should include examinations of both qualitative and quantitative data. The problem analysis process is critical for developing solutions that fit the problem in each community, because what works in one jurisdiction may not fit a similar problem in another setting (Boba, 2003).

The following study documents a problem analysis based on a series of statistical analyses conducted on five-years of domestic violence data reported to the TPD (2013-2017) and victimization data gathered by the Family Service Center in Tulsa. Domestic violence is defined as an incidence of assault and battery against individuals connected to the suspect by one of fifteen different categories of relationship (see Oklahoma Statute §21-644). These variations in relationships cover both common (e.g. husband-wife or child-parent) and seemingly more distant (e.g. spouse-former spouse of partner or former roommate) relationships between individuals. Unfortunately, the automated data used by the TPD does not include a field for the relationship between the victim and offender. TPD data included reports for incidents, arrests, victims, calls for service, and field interview reports. These analyses were supplemented with domestic victimization data provided from the Family Service Center. The main findings of this problem analysis are summarized below.

1. Domestic violence-related calls for service were the third most frequent call received by the TPD (n=109,623; preceded by traffic stops and alarms) between 2013 and 2017. These reports were relatively stable over the five-year period, with an average of 21,942 calls per year.
2. Citizen-generated indicators of domestic violence (i.e. calls for service and incident reports) remained relatively stable over the five-year period, while the TPD-generated responses (i.e. FIR and arrest) to these crimes decreased noticeably over the same period of time. Arrests for domestic violence declined by 40.9% from 2013 to 2017, and FIRS similarly declined by 46.8% from 2013 to 2017.

3. TPD-generated incident reports indicate that 84.5% (n=13,381) of identified suspects were suspected of only committing one domestic violence offense, whereas 15.5% (n=2,447) were suspected of committing two or more offenses.
4. TPD-generated victimization reports indicate 83.8% (n=15,564) individuals were victimized once, and 16.2% (n=3,008) were victimized two or more times.
5. These findings demonstrate that the “repeat phenomenon” of domestic violence victimization in Tulsa is similar between victims and suspects. That is, victims are just as likely to be victimized more than once (16.2%) compared to offenders involved in more than one offense (15.5%).
6. Victimization data provided by the Family Safety Center indicates large increases in the number of services provided (180.6% increase) and the number of individuals receiving services (118.1% increase), likely due to the expansion of victim-services provided in Tulsa during the five-year study time period. Note that the increase of use of victim services is inconsistent with the downward trend in TPD domestic violence arrests.
7. Data from the FSC also indicates that the percentage of Black victims receiving FSC services (19.3%) was lower than expected given the victimization data captured by the TPD (31.6% for single incidents and 40.6% for repeat incidents), suggesting that Black domestic violence victims may be less likely to request or to receive services.
8. Analyses also show that 15.5% (n= 2,447) of the individuals suspected of domestic violence offenses were repeat offenders, and they accounted for 23.2% of the domestic violence incidents reported during the study period.
9. When offenders did commit a subsequent domestic violence offense for which an arrest occurred, the time between arrests was extremely long (an average of over 500 days). However, as the number of repeat domestic violence offenses increase per an offender, the number of days between these arrests decreases. Nonetheless, the average time between offenses is substantially long, indicating that focused deterrence approaches to repeat domestic violence offenders may not be effective in Tulsa (Sechrist, Weil, and Shelton, 2016).
10. Police data demonstrate that while a person was a victim in one incident, the same person was also commonly reported as the suspect in another domestic violence incident. Approximately 3,205 unique victims (17.2% of all domestic victims) were also charged as a suspect in a different domestic violence case.
11. Approximately 15% (8 out of 53) of offenders in domestic violence homicide incidents had a previous arrest for domestic violence.

12. A review of the relationship between the victim and suspect identified in the field interview reports indicates that the most common relationship type is current spouse/cohabitant (43.3%), followed by former spouse/cohabitant (20.3%), and dating (18.0%). Very few cases involve other types of relationships.
13. Field interview reports (FIR) revealed a substantial number of cases (36.7%), which involve the suspect threatening a future action—these represent an avenue for follow-up by TPD officers.

The intent of this problem analysis was to provide the TPD with findings to inform the creation of a police intervention focused on domestic violence offenders. All of the findings are limited by the availability and use of official data sources. Important findings from this problem analysis—relatively low rates of repeat offenders (15%) and extremely long re-arrest periods (average of more than 500 days)—indicate that many of the well-known offender-based strategies to reduce domestic violence may not necessarily fit the domestic violence problem found in Tulsa. The results of this problem analysis demonstrate an important lesson for practitioners—it is vital to start with a problem and not with a solution. Evidence-based solutions that work elsewhere, such as the Chula Vista model (Chula Vista Police Department, 2017) and High Point model (Sechrist, Weil, and Shelton, 2016) may not fit the exact problem identified in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Interventions that focus on repeat offenders would potentially exclude the vast majority of offenders (approximately 85%) who are only arrested for domestic violence once. Despite the low levels of repeat offending, there exists a concentration of offenses amongst a smaller number of chronic offenders—these offenders represent an opportunity for future intervention by the TPD. Repeat offenders are likely to escalate in future incidents, becoming more dangerous with time (Strack, McClane, & Hawley, 2001). Therefore, it may be more effective to focus resources on the significant few that engage higher on an *offense-severity* metric as opposed to an *offense-frequency* scale.

These concerns have led the TPD to begin focusing on recording instances of non-fatal strangulation. In 2017, the TPD began training their officers to identify and record signs of victim strangulation during domestic disputes. Recent reports estimate that nearly 80% of women in Oklahoma who were victims of domestic violence between 2009 and 2013 had been strangled during that relationship (Messing et al., 2014). Indeed, non-fatal strangulation is a significant risk factor for intimate partner homicide and important for police to record when possible (Campbell, Glass, Sharps, Laughon, & Bloom, 2007). Though still in its infancy, the TPD is optimistic as to the potential benefits from its domestic strangulation initiative (Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, 2018).

A larger issue identified as part of this research is that much of the information used to guide domestic violence interventions is not gathered in the automated police records in Tulsa. The problem analysis provided in this report is based on the available information collected, but there

were several gaps in the information. For example, much of the automated data recorded by the Tulsa Police Department does not contain the victim-offender relationship. Rather, this information had to be hand-coded by Center researchers from TPD field interview reports. There is evidence to suggest that the patterns along with reasons for offending—which would impact the offender-based intervention selection—may differ according to the victim-offender relationship (see e.g., Johnson and Ferraro, 2000; Kelly and Johnson, 2008). We recommend that TPD automate information recorded on field interview reports. These reports contain valuable contextual details, such as the victim-offender relationship, suspect’s actions taken, weapons used, and threats made. The aggregation of this information would be extremely valuable to the domestic violence unit at the TPD and provide more specific details for offender-based interventions.

In conclusion, the results of this problem analyses are somewhat complex. The patterns related to domestic violence offending did not match what has been seen in previous research. However, this is an important reality in policing—what works in one area may not work in another due to inherent differences in the problem. Unfortunately, domestic violence is sometimes difficult to accurately capture in police data, as offenses are often coded as an assault, without considering the victim-offender relationship. The baseline for understanding domestic violence through a policing frame is somewhat limited. There is much less research in police-led interventions for domestic violence compared to other violent crime interventions.

It is evident that the City of Tulsa produces a large number of citizen-generated calls for service regarding domestic violence crimes that require police response. The most promising strategy at this point is the continuation and evaluation of the TPD strangulation initiative. Results from this exploratory analysis have provided some insight as to the specific patterns of domestic violence, but are also limited by the available data sources.

## I. INTRODUCTION

During the Spring of 2017, the *International Association of Chiefs of Police/University of Cincinnati (IACP/UC) Center for Police Research and Policy* entered into discussions with the Tulsa Police Department (TPD) to collaborate on a domestic violence reduction strategy. The TPD identified domestic violence as a primary area of concern because it is their third most frequent call for service, and responding to domestic violence incidents requires significant police resources. The City of Tulsa was ranked in the top quarter of U.S. Cities, with at least 250,000 residents, for violent crime (Corsaro et al., 2015). Many of these violent offenses were tied directly to domestic violence suspects. For instance, a third of the city's homicides, half of its rapes, and nearly two-thirds of the aggravated assaults involved known domestic violence suspects (Corsaro et al., 2015). Further, the State of Oklahoma is often ranked among states with the highest rates of women killed by their domestic partners (Slipke, 2018; Violence Policy Center, 2015).

Compared to other communities, the City of Tulsa has a robust and comprehensive network for providing and tracking domestic violence victim services. While there is a well-designed strategy focused on domestic violence *victims*, a specific strategy for police-intervention with domestic violence *offenders* is lacking. After a series of meetings and preliminary analyses, it was agreed that a more detailed problem analysis would benefit the TPD and allow for a better assessment of the future direction for interventions.

Problem analyses are helpful for providing a comprehensive assessment of a specific crime problem to gain a more detailed understanding of the extent of the problem. The goal of problem analysis is to acquire knowledge about the characteristics and causes of police problems to understand *why* they occur (Boba, 2003). In order to effectively respond to a problem, police executives must first understand why a problem occurs. Using problem analysis prior to implementing evidence-based strategies is vital because it identifies the underlying patterns and factors which lead to crime and disorder problems for a police agency.

Some experts have noted that while problem-oriented policing has grown in the field, problem analysis has been the slowest part of the process to develop (Boba, 2003). The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) has found that problem analysis was the weakest phase of the problem-oriented policing process (PERF, 2000). Historically, the primary focus of police has been to respond to problems by enforcing the law or otherwise “apprehend[ing] the bad guy” (Boba, 2003). Therefore, while conducting a problem analysis is the most critical component for any crime reduction strategy, this step is most often missed. The lack of problem analyses may be due to a variety of reasons, such as reliance on anecdotes and intuition, external influences (politics, stakeholders, media, etc.), the need for expediency, or the lack of resources to conduct in-depth analyses. Law enforcement leaders must balance these constraints with the importance of using resources to fully understand the scope and context of their crime and disorder problems.

Unfortunately, some law enforcement agencies fall into the trap of “finding solutions in search of problems”. This concept describes an individual or entity who may find a new and promising solution and assume it fits one or more of their problems. These new and promising evidence-

based strategy solutions may be discussed at gatherings of law enforcement officials, academic conferences, or read in academic or practitioner-based articles. Too often police executives or their political leadership presume that these solutions will work for their communities, without fully understanding the actual problem within their jurisdiction. It is often challenging for law enforcement leaders to convey to other stakeholders that even readily available, evidence-based solutions may not be an appropriate fit for the specific problems within their jurisdiction. In many cases, the crucial step that is missing is a problem analysis—or a systematic understanding of the problem, based on all available data.

In the case of the TPD's search for domestic violence offender-based interventions, while several evidence-based interventions appeared promising, detailed problem analyses demonstrated that these particular interventions would likely be ineffective if implemented in Tulsa. The factors associated with domestic violence in Tulsa were unique to the city relative to other settings that had implemented different strategies, and thus the foundation of the various crime prevention approaches that were conducted elsewhere were incongruent with Tulsa's domestic violence problems.

This report documents the importance of problem analysis by describing the research process conducted for the TPD examining domestic violence in their community. An enhanced description of domestic violence trends in Tulsa over the past five years was used to guide the development of a crime reduction strategy that combines specific findings from Tulsa and the most relevant evidence-based approaches from the field of criminal justice. The analyses of domestic violence patterns presented in this report are divided into three sections. Section 2 provides a brief literature review of domestic violence as a policing concern. Section 3 highlights the methodology and Section 4 includes findings from the problem analyses. These analyses demonstrate that the frequency of domestic violence related calls for service to the TPD are stable across the study time period, but field interview reports (FIR) and arrests for domestic offenses have decreased. Further, a review of the contextual details of domestic violence incidents indicates that most are characterized by low-lethality, and there are a considerably low number of repeat suspects and victims included in these reports. This report concludes in Section 5 with a discussion of the findings of the problem analysis, including suggestions for future work.



## II. ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is a specific form of violent crime where a closely defined relationship between the offender and victim is observed. Often labeled “intimate partner violence” when focused on violence between sexual partners, this concept describes physical and sexual violence, threat of physical or sexual violence, as well as psychological violence (National Institute of Justice, 2017). It should be noted that clinical definitions of domestic violence tend to be broader than legal definitions (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999). However, the state of Oklahoma defines domestic violence as an incidence of assault and battery against individuals connected to the suspect by one of fifteen different categories of relationship (see Oklahoma Statute §21-644). These types of relationships cover both common (e.g. husband-wife and child-parent) and seemingly more distant (e.g. spouse-former spouse of partner and former roommate) relationships between individuals. This legal definition will be used for the offenses analyzed in this report.

### A. *Domestic Violence in the United States*

Historically, domestic violence was not viewed as a police concern because cultural norms suggested most events occurred in private and therefore were not something to be handled by police. In fact, throughout the 1970s, many police and legal organizations recommended that arrest be used as a last resort in dealing with family situations, with some police agencies having explicit policies against arrest in domestic disputes (Sherman, 1992). Often, this was because many incidents did not reach a level that required police intervention, or the officer was not present when the violence occurred (Sherman, 1992). Furthermore, police officers viewed domestic violence-related cases as the riskiest for officer injury, or simply as a waste of time (Buzawa, Austin & Buzawa, 1995; Buzawa & Buzawa, 1993; Ferraro, 1989).

These sentiments have changed considerably over the past half century which have coincided with greater regulation of violence in the United States. A historical review of domestic violence policy provides a startling glimpse into why policy on this crime shifted. During the late 20<sup>th</sup> century:

“...half of all married women will be beaten at least once by their husband [1977]... The U.S. Surgeon General found that battering of women by husbands, ex-husbands or lovers ‘is the single largest cause of injury to women in the United States’ accounting for one-fifth of all hospital emergency room cases [1989]... Thirty-one percent of all women murdered in America are killed by their husbands, ex-husbands, or lovers [1989]” (Zorza, 1992, p. 46).

These findings, and the general punitive paradigm shift during the 1980s, drastically changed the United States’ approach towards domestic violence. Additionally, social movements, lawsuits against police agencies citing failure to protect (see *Scott v. Hart*, 1976, *Bruno v. Codd*, 1977, and *Thurman v. Torrington*, 1984), as well as research findings related to mandatory arrest (Sherman & Berk, 1984) helped give rise to this paradigm shift (Sherman, 1992). Whereas many state statutes moved to prescribe mandatory or preferred arrest of suspects of domestic disputes, Oklahoma state law currently prescribes that an officer should use their discretion in making an arrest during a domestic assault case (American Bar Association, 2014).

Domestic violence is not only a concern for the criminal justice system; it has been increasingly viewed as a public health crisis. Indeed, a substantial portion of research on the topic is conducted outside the discipline of criminal justice and in the domain of public health since both systems can provide first responses to these incidents. One Center for Disease Control (CDC) study estimates that in the United States, one in three women have been victims of some form of physical violence by an intimate partner within their lifetime (Breiding, Chen, & Black, 2014). Intimate partner violence is disproportionately experienced by females, racial minorities, individuals with lower incomes, and young adults (Breiding et al., 2014). A number of studies have shown that, beyond injury and death, victims of domestic violence are more likely to report a range of adverse mental and physical health conditions that may have short-term and/or long-term impact (Black, 2011; Crofford, 2007; Pico-Alfonso, Garcia-Linares, Celda-Navarro, Herbert, & Martinez, 2004). Importantly, research indicates that as the frequency of domestic violence incidents increases, the impact of the violence on the victims' health becomes more severe (Campbell, 2002; Cox, et al., 2006).

The physical and psychological toll of this crime on children in particular has several negative impacts. Research on domestic violence stresses that many of these incidents occur in homes with children (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999). One of the most important consequences of domestic violence is that it perpetuates the "cycle of violence". Research indicates that child victims of domestic violence are more likely to continue perpetuating these crimes as adults (Widom, 1989). Further, children exposed to domestic violence tend to exhibit increased displays of aggressive behavior, increased emotional problems, lower levels of social competence, and poorer academic functioning (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999). The impact of domestic violence is far-reaching and extends beyond the immediate trauma to the victims, even influencing the economy. The financial cost of domestic violence has been estimated to exceed \$8 billion per year, and in addition some estimates suggest over half the victims lose their job due to reasons associated with the incident (Rothman et al., 2007).

While previous research shows mixed evidence as to whether domestic violence victims are reluctant to call the police, a study by Felson and colleagues (2002) found that three factors inhibit victims from calling the police during or following a domestic assault: desire for privacy, desire to protect the offender, and fear of reprisal from the offender. Additional research suggests that the decision-making process of reporting domestic violence for victims was more complex than previously thought, and that victims of domestic violence appear to be just as likely as other victims to report a domestic assault to police (Felson, Messner, Hoskin, & Deane, 2002). However, other researchers continue to find evidence that this crime is underreported to police (Breiding et al., 2014). For example, a more recent national study found only 36 percent of females and 12 percent of males reported their intimate partner violence victimization to police (Breiding et al., 2014).

In summation, domestic violence is a difficult social problem for police to tackle due to a variety of reasons and complexities inherent in the nature of this crime. However, taking a problem-oriented approach, as proposed by Eck and Spelman (1987), necessitates an agency to critically understand any problem that they intend to tackle. The SARA process describes four stages: (1) Scanning or problem identification; (2) Analysis or investigation; (3) Response or solution

implementation; and (4) Assessment or evaluation (Eck & Spelman, 1987). The problem analysis used in the body of this report is an important step to devising a police-led strategy to intervene in the domestic violence problem observed in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

### *B. Police Responses to Domestic Violence*

During the late 20<sup>th</sup> century a series of influential studies and court cases resulted in the adoption of mandatory and preferred arrest policies for domestic violence incidents across the country (see Sherman & Berk, 1984; Sherman 1992; Sherman & Cohn, 1989). The use of mandatory arrest in a domestic violence setting involves limiting police discretion in decision-making and directs officers to make an arrest upon arriving at a domestic violence incident, pending the specific criteria set forth in the policy. For example, many states made arrest mandatory under certain circumstances, such as victim injury or the violation of a protection order; these state policies also eliminated the requirement that an officer witness a misdemeanor offense prior to making an arrest (Brachner, 1996; Miller, 1997). Mandatory arrest policies are based on research that determined that mandatory arrest, as opposed to attempted counseling of both parties or sending the suspect away from the residence for several hours, may deter future domestic violence (Sherman & Berk, 1984).

In Minneapolis, Dade County, and Colorado Springs, mandatory arrest led to fewer subsequent offenses, whereas in Omaha, Charlotte, and Milwaukee no differences in subsequent violence were observed (Garner et al., 1995). Attempts to replicate these findings in several other communities have left researchers with mixed findings about the influence of mandatory arrest on domestic violence. These replication studies also found that the deterrent effect for arrest was only significant for certain types of offenders, such as those that are employed (Sherman, 1992). Still, mandatory arrest policies were widely adopted in the 1990s (Miller, 1997). More importantly are the findings from recent research regarding mandatory arrest policies. Two studies point to significant associations between mandatory arrest and intimate partner homicides, indicating that mandatory arrest laws may have substantial unintended consequences for victims of domestic violence (Iyengar, 2009; Sherman and Harris, 2015).

Police agencies explored other organizational changes to improve their response to domestic violence. A new community-oriented policing approach suggested police departments develop specialized domestic violence units or liaison officers. These units or officers work in partnership with community advocates and resources to address domestic violence in the jurisdiction using community-tailored strategies (Clarke, 1993; Sadusky, 2004). Around 76 percent of agencies reported having a program that follows up with victims after an incident using advocates, detectives, or officers, commonly referred to as “second responder” programs (Clarke, 1993; Sadusky, 2004; PERF, 2015). Research suggests these programs may increase a victim’s confidence in police, but ultimately may have little impact on reducing subsequent victimization (Davis et al., 2008; Bird, Vigurs, & Gough, 2014).

Police departments can also enhance their organizational ability to identify cases and provide strong evidentiary support for the prosecution of domestic violence incidents. To aid in the identification of domestic violence cases, several agencies have turned to police training in the epidemiology of domestic violence (Chicago Police Department, 2016). While this training is

increasingly popular, there are no evaluations of the effectiveness of this training for identifying cases or furthering the prosecution of cases. Police agencies have also turned to enhanced technological capacity to aid in the prosecution of domestic violence cases. For example, bruise detecting LED cameras have been adopted by several agencies to capture bruising under the surface of the skin (Solis, 2014). This technology allows police to capture this information on the scene instead of having to wait for bruises to appear on a victim (Solis, 2014). Again, there is no robust empirical evidence that this tool has led to a reduction in violence or an increase in the prosecution of cases.

The use of victim-based strategies provides an approach to both reducing domestic violence in cities and focusing resources to helping alleviate the traumatic impact of these crimes. The use of protection orders and emergency protection orders allows police to provide victims with immediate protection from contact with an offender (Bird, Vigurs, & Gough, 2014). One survey reports that nearly 90 percent of agencies give victims information about obtaining an order, 44 percent report helping a victim apply for an order, and nearly 30 percent report officers attending court with victims to obtain an order (PERF, 2015). Police agencies in the UK have explored 28-day protection orders to separate victims and offenders. These agencies found protection orders were associated with reductions in subsequent victimization and showed the most significant effect with repeat victims (Kelly et al., 2013); similar results have also been found in other countries (Kothari et al., 2012).

Another approach to address domestic violence used in the UK and Australia involves the sharing of information about individuals who have a violent history of offending. The goal of this approach is to provide potential “high-risk” victims with information about individual offenders and services to protect themselves (Duggan, 2018). This police-led service, known generally as a “disclosure scheme,” stems from the 2009 murder of Clare Wood by her ex-partner, who had a history of domestic violence (Duggan, 2018). This scheme includes a “right to ask” component, which allows individuals to apply to the police to inquire about their partner, as well as a “right to know” aspect, which allows the proactive disclosure of this information by police or specific agencies to potential high-risk victims (Duggan, 2018; Home Office, 2016). Both disclosure approaches require case-by-case investigation to determine if disclosure is necessary, which can range from immediate disclosure to upwards of six weeks for a disclosure decision (Duggan, 2018). In the first year of the program in the UK, just over 40 percent of inquiries resulted in a disclosure (Home Office, 2016). Today there is no evidence that suggests this program is effective at reducing domestic violence but further research is underway (Fitz-Gibbon & Walklate, 2016).

Both victim and offender-based domestic violence strategies have increasingly relied upon risk assessment tools to refine understanding of the individuals and address where to focus police resources. To improve the identification of individuals as “high-risk” for future domestic violence victimization, approximately 42 percent of agencies have begun using actuarial techniques (PERF, 2015). Termed “lethality assessments,” these tools consist of a short series of questions and allow officers to evaluate risk for potential victims on the scene and connect these potential victims with community resources to help mitigate risk (Campbell, Webster, & Glass, 2009). The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence uses the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP), which involves a “lethality screen” consisting of an eleven item questionnaire to

determine a victim's level of risk of death or serious injury at the hands of their partner (Lethality Assessment Program, 2019). Additionally, the LAP uses a "protocol referral" to join high-risk individuals with local domestic violence services and advocates through police (Messing et al., 2016). Although there are several tools to evaluate risk and lethality<sup>1</sup>, empirical evidence suggests these tools are effective for linking high-risk individuals with services. Subsequently, those individuals take court protective actions following the intervention both immediately and for several months after (Messing et al., 2015a; Messing, Campbell, & Wilson, 2015b). Additionally, there is evidence that tools such as the LAP program reduce the frequency and severity of domestic violence (Messing et al., 2015a).

Similar to the risk/lethality assessments, one group of researchers in the UK have been exploring the use of a tool called the Priority Perpetrator Identification Tool (PPIT). The PPIT uses a short list of questions to identify individuals who may benefit from added attention from multiple agencies within a community (Economic and Social Research Council, 2017). As this tool only identifies the "priority offenders," an intervention or program is still required to attempt to dissuade these individuals from reoffending.

Recently, the use of offender-based strategies developed in the United States. These strategies considered new ways of focusing resources on offenders to reduce domestic violence. A focused deterrence model for domestic violence has stemmed from the use of focused deterrence principles to address other crime problems (Braga and Weisburd, 2012). Starting in High Point, North Carolina, this program developed a system that classifies offenders into four groups, each group receiving increasing levels of intervention based on their offending history. For example, those in the lowest group (those with no prior charges for domestic violence), are hand-delivered a letter by an officer notifying them they have been added to a "watch list" and that further violence will not be tolerated (PERF, 2015; Sumner, 2014). Those in the highest group (people with three or more prior domestic violence charges) are prosecuted immediately by any legal means possible to both provide justice for the victim, but also serve as an example to the lower group offenders about the consequences of future violence (PERF, 2015; Sumner, 2014).

Evidence from this intervention suggests this method was effective in reducing the reoffending rate to 9 percent, in contrast to other studies of domestic violence, which found reoffending rates of 20 to 34 percent (Sechrist, Weil, and Shelton, 2016; PERF, 2015; Sumner, 2014). In addition, calls for service declined, but more importantly homicide by domestic violence dropped to 6 percent compared to 33 percent prior to the intervention (PERF, 2015; Sumner, 2014).

Based on the successes in North Carolina, this model has been modified and expanded to several other jurisdictions across the US. For example, Lexington, North Carolina has used the exact same model as High Point, North Carolina finding a reduction in calls for service, injuries, and homicide (Sechrist, Weil, and Shelton, 2016). Additionally, Chula Vista Police Department in Chula Vista, California has modified the High Point model by adding a fifth level (for emergency intervention cases) and focusing on repeat suspects and victims (CVPD, 2017). They

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<sup>1</sup> For other tools see the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour-Based Violence Risk Identification, Assessment and Management Model (DASH) (Groves & Thomas, 2014); the Domestic Violence Risk Appraisal Guide (DVRAG) (Hilton, Harris, Rice, Houghton, & Eke, 2008); the HITS Scale (Sherin, Sinacore, Li, Zitter, & Shakil, 1998).

found a 24 percent reduction in subsequent offending among high-risk offenders and reduced domestic violence calls for service (CVPD, 2017).

Overall, various themes have emerged from police-led interventions to domestic violence. Earlier approaches used mandatory arrest, but studies on this technique have found mixed results and even unintended negative consequences. As of 2019, several jurisdictions have moved away from the use of mandatory arrest policies. Many agencies have developed specialized units and/or liaison officers for domestic violence, but empirical assessments find this approach has little effect on reducing re-victimization. One of the more robust approaches is the use of lethality assessments to evaluate the risk of domestic violence victims—this approach has empirical support for the reduction of domestic violence victimization. And finally, another empirically supported approach is the application of focused deterrence principles to domestic violence offenders, particularly those who are chronic offenders. Multiple empirical assessments have found this approach to be effective in reducing future domestic violence offending. Despite the evidence discussed thus far, there has been limited research devoted to reducing domestic violence in policing, compared to the research devoted to other forms of violence reduction. Domestic violence is also sometimes difficult to capture accurately in police data, as offenses are often coded as an assault without considering the victim-offender relationship. In conclusion, the baseline for understanding domestic violence through a policing frame is somewhat limited.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This report includes a problem analysis of domestic violence patterns in Tulsa. The first portion of the findings section examines multiple data sources to detect trends in city-wide domestic violence patterns over time. Each of these five official data sources – calls for service, incident reports, arrests, field interview reports, and victimization data – are measured from 2013 to 2017. First, domestic violence calls for police service are generated by residents of Tulsa to notify the TPD of a possible crime occurring. Second, incident reports for domestic violence are created by TPD Officers when a citizen wants to officially record that a crime has taken place, or an officer directly observes a crime. Third, arrest reports for domestic violence incidents are made by TPD Officers when either the victim presses charges or the officers decide a suspect should be charged with a crime. Fourth, field interview reports (FIR) are a supplementary source of information generated by the TPD in addition to incident reports. A sample of approximately 422 field interview reports from 2013 were coded by IACP/UC Center for Police Research and Policy researchers to provide an overview of the contextual factors related to domestic violence incidents. These FIR were coded to compile information that is neither captured nor automated in the incident or arrest reports, including information such as victim-offender relationship, action(s) taken, suspect demeanor, etc. Finally, victimization data are provided by two sources: (1) victim reports related to domestic violence created by the Tulsa Police Department between 2013 and 2017, and (2) the Family Safety Center (FSC) in order to provide an account of domestic violence patterns through victim-generated reports that are independent from TPD and can provide additional context to the scope of the problem in Tulsa (see Davis et al., 2003; Buzawa and Buzawa, 2003).

Given that domestic violence is a crime that often occurs in private spaces (i.e. households, cars, etc.), offenses are often underreported. Therefore, it is crucial for any problem analysis to consider patterns across all available data sources because assessing only one alone will not provide a comprehensive assessment of the prevalence of domestic violence in Tulsa. These data sources were provided to the IACP/UC research team as Excel workbooks and analyzed using multiple statistical software packages, including MS Excel, ArcGIS 10.3, and Stata 15.1. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the count of each measure for the five-year observation period.

The second portion of the findings section assesses characteristics of suspects and victims to describe the demographic composition of individuals involved in domestic violence. Domestic violence incident reports and victimization data were used to provide information on both individual-level patterns over time and demographic characteristics of these groups in Tulsa. Further, analyses considered and reported criminal history patterns for both suspects and victims.

## IV. PROBLEM ANALYSIS RESULTS

Due to challenges in measuring domestic violence both locally and nationally, there are only a few reliable measures to accurately provide context to Tulsa's patterns. Using 2016 data reported from the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), the State of Oklahoma experienced below-average rates compared to other states in the number of violent crimes and sex offenses. However, the City of Tulsa was ranked in the top quarter of U.S. Cities with at least 250,000 residents for violent crime—many of these violent offenses were committed by known domestic violence suspects (Corsaro et al., 2015). Further, the City of Tulsa ranks in the top 10% of cities with populations over 250,000 residents in reports of rape using Uniform Crime Report (UCR) data from 2004 – 2013. Tulsa also experienced an above average number of homicides committed by individuals known to the victim, compared to these same cities according to 2014 Supplementary Homicide Report data. The State of Oklahoma is often ranked among the top worst states for rates of domestic homicide (Slipke, 2018; Violence Policy Center, 2015). Overall, despite the limitations associated with measuring domestic violence, there is some evidence that the prevalence of domestic violence in Tulsa is greater than other comparable cities, demonstrating a substantial problem with domestic violence.

### A. City-Wide Domestic Violence Trends

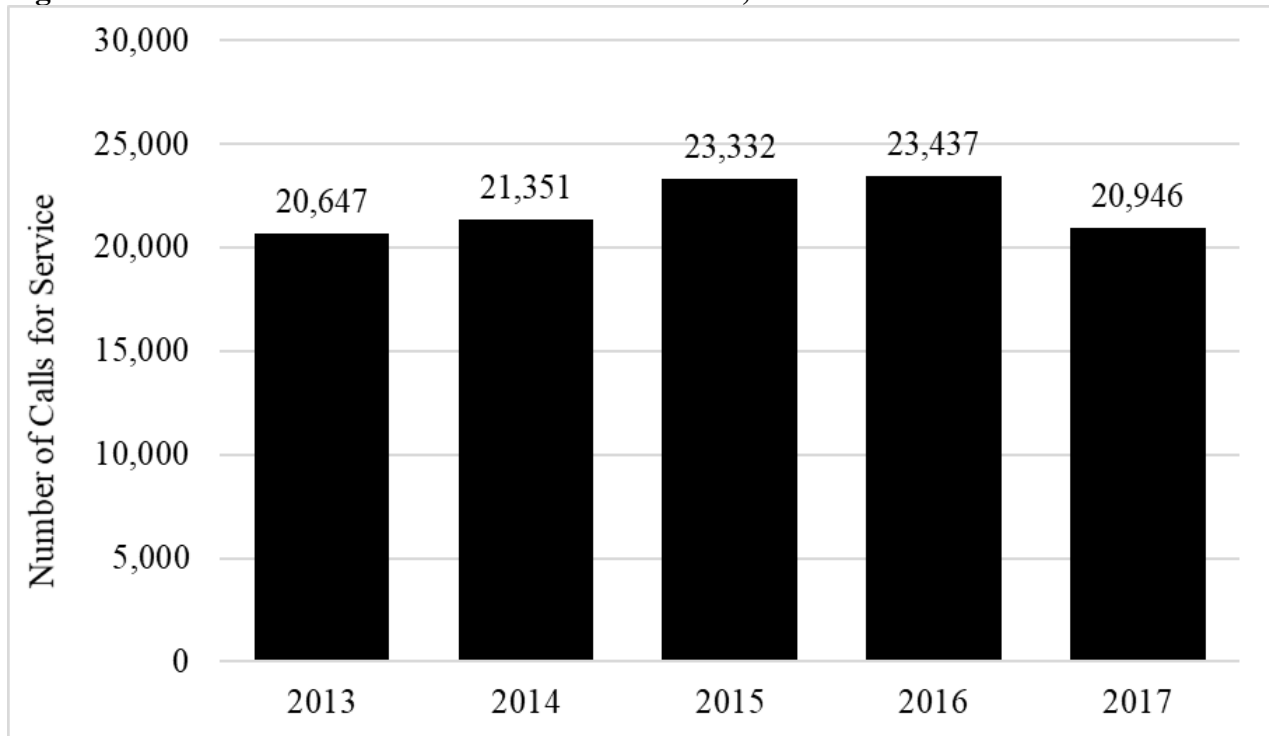
Domestic violence calls for service were the first source of TPD data analyzed. Police calls for service provide both a measure of the occurrence of crime events and the reporting practices within the area. During a five-year period spanning from 2013 to 2017, 109,623 domestic violence calls for service were reported to the TPD. These calls were divided into three categories: (1) 72.7% were domestic violence incidents in progress, (2) 20.9% of incidents reportedly had just occurred, and (3) 6.4% categorized as "other". While domestic violence calls for service accounted for only 7.2% of the total number of calls for service received by the TPD during the study period (109,623 of 1,503,326 calls for service), this frequency still represents the third most frequent call category to the TPD, with only calls for traffic stops and alarms going-off occurring more often. A low of 20,647 calls were reported in 2013 and a high of 23,437 in 2016.<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 displays the level of consistency in the number of calls for service for each of the five years studied – a roughly 15% difference between the high and low counts is observed.

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<sup>2</sup> TPD crime analysts raised concerns about the comparability of calls for service for 2013 to 2014-2017. TPD switched CAD systems in 2013 and 2014 represents the first complete year using the current system.



**Figure 1. Domestic Violence Calls for Service in Tulsa, 2013-2017**

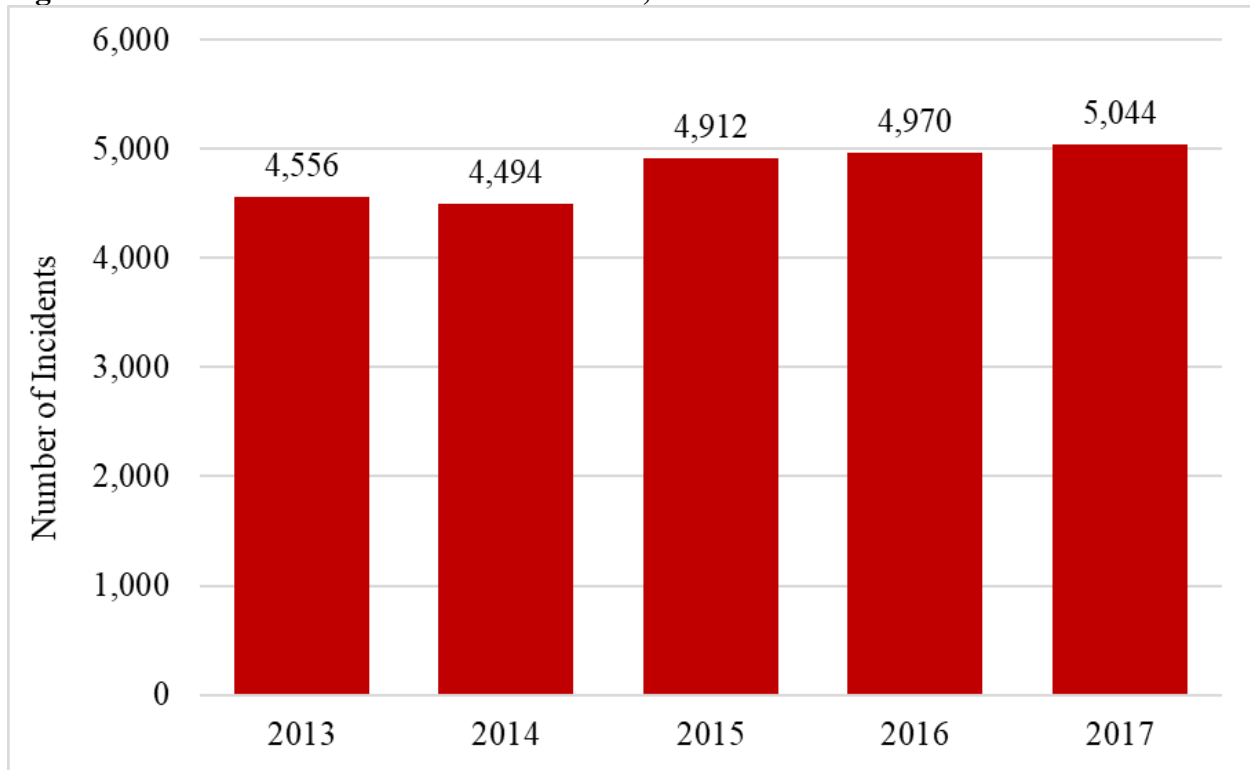


Domestic violence incidents reported to the TPD were the second source of TPD data analyzed. Similar to calls for service, incident reports represent both a key measure of the occurrence of crime events and the reporting practices of areas. Over the five-year study period, 23,976 incidents of domestic violence were reported to TPD. Domestic violence incidents captured only 6.9% of the total number of incidents reported for all crimes in Tulsa from 2013 – 2017 (23,976 of 349,552). Yet, domestic violence incidents still represented the 5<sup>th</sup> most frequently reported incident category to the TPD.<sup>3</sup> Figure 2 illustrates a 10.7% increase in domestic violence incidents from 2013 to 2017. A low of 4,494 incidents was reported in 2014, and a high of 5,044 in 2017. Over the five-year study period, the total number of domestic violence incident reports represented just 22% of the total number of domestic violence calls for service<sup>4</sup> (23,976 of 108,978 incidents). Compared to calls for service, the largest year-to-year increase occurred from 2014 to 2015 – which recorded an approximate 9.3% increase. While both measures of domestic violence recorded similar increases from 2015 to 2016, calls for service decreased from 2016 to 2017 while the number of incident reports did not. Each year the number of domestic violence incidents reported to the TPD represented approximately 20 – 25% of the total number of domestic violence calls for service.

<sup>3</sup> The “miscellaneous” category is the most reported and traffic incidents are third. Larceny (2<sup>nd</sup>) and burglary (4<sup>th</sup>) are the only two traditional crime categories that received more incidents reported to TPD than domestic violence.

<sup>4</sup> Not every call for service an officer attends will result in an official police incident report; officers have some discretion in filling out a report, classifying the crime that occurred and deciding that a particular complaint is unfounded (Kruttschnitt, Kaslbeek, & House, 2014). For instance, a report from the Albuquerque Police Department demonstrated that generally, less than 20% of calls for service resulted in a report (see page 16 of <http://isr.unm.edu/reports/2009/analyzing-calls-for-service-to-the-albuquerque-police-department..pdf>).

**Figure 2. Domestic Violence Incidents in Tulsa, 2013-2017**



Field interview reports (FIR) and arrests were the third and fourth sources of TPD data analyzed. These measures capture TPDs response to domestic violence calls for service and possible incidents. TPD generated 17,135 field interview reports for domestic violence from 2013 to 2017. Figure 3 displays a 46.8% decrease in FIRs over this time period. There was moderate year-to-year variability in the number of FIRs with a low of 1,945 in 2017 and a high of 4,201 in 2014. Domestic violence FIRs represented 61.4% of the total FIRs documented over this study period (17,135 of 27,917 FIRs). Between 2013 – 2017, the TPD made a total of 4,811 arrests for domestic violence. Of these 4,811 arrests, 4,054 were unique individuals – 3,489 of these individuals had only one arrest (86.1% of total) while 565 had two or more (13.9% of total).

**Figure 3. Domestic Violence FIRs in Tulsa, 2013-2017**

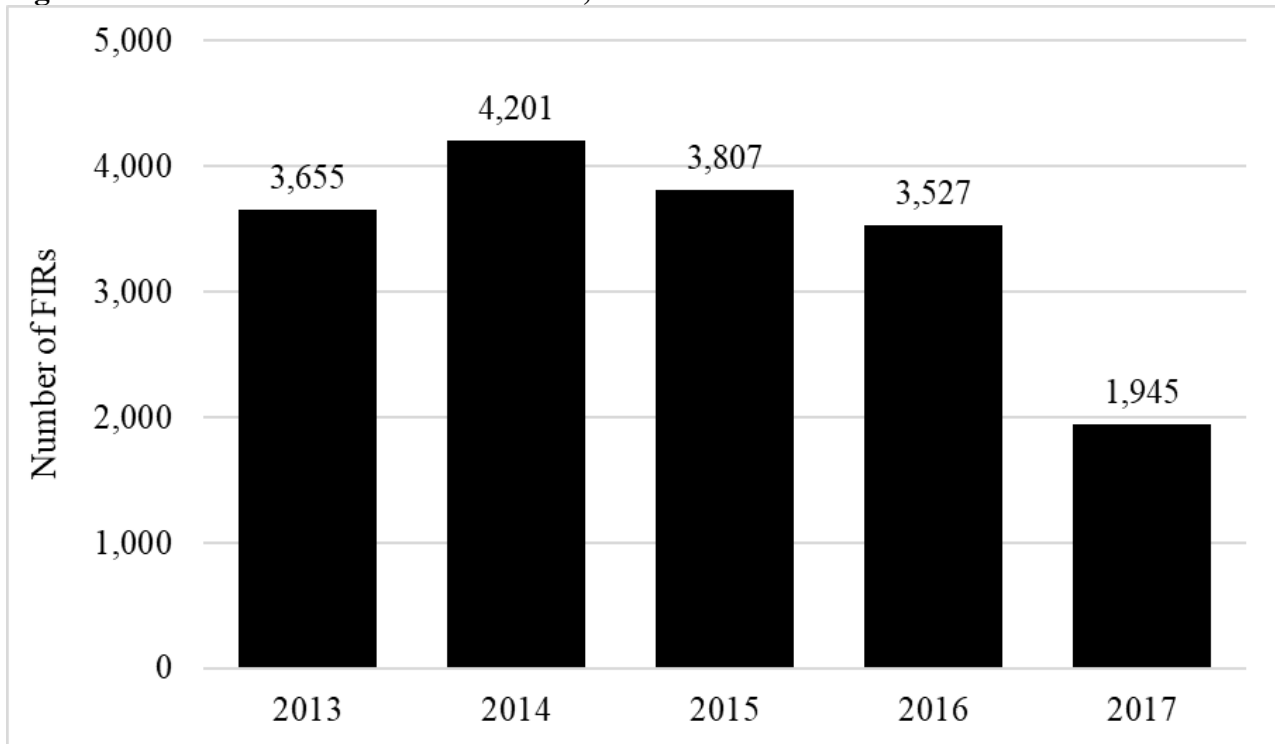
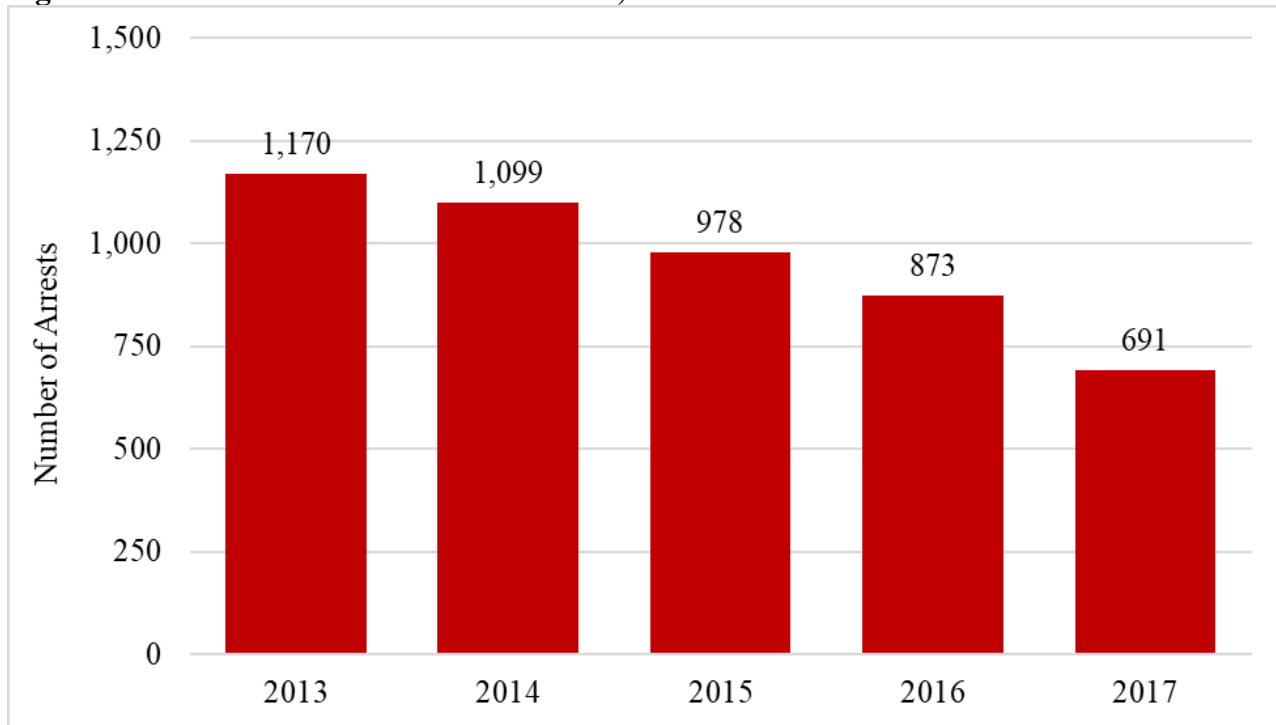


Figure 4 illustrates a 40.9% reduction in arrests from a high of 1,170 individuals in 2013 to a low of 691 in 2017. For each of the five years studied around only 4.0% of the total number of unique individuals arrested in Tulsa were arrested for domestic violence incidents. The percent of domestic violence arrests compared to domestic violence incidents decreased from 25.7% in 2013 (1,170 arrests compared to 4,556 incidents) to 13.7% in 2017 (691 arrests compared to 5,044 incidents).

**Figure 4. Domestic Violence Arrests in Tulsa, 2013-2017**



Overall, the administrative data sources provided by the TPD begin to shape the narrative of domestic violence patterns in Tulsa from 2013 to 2017. Both domestic violence calls for service and incidents reported to TPD demonstrated consistent trends from 2013 – 2016 with a departure in 2017 when calls for service decreased and incident reports increased. Both FIRs and arrests, indicators of TPDs response to domestic violence, followed similar patterns with over a 40% reduction from 2013 to 2017 with the exception of 2013 to 2014 , when FIRs increased while arrests decreased from 2013 to 2014.

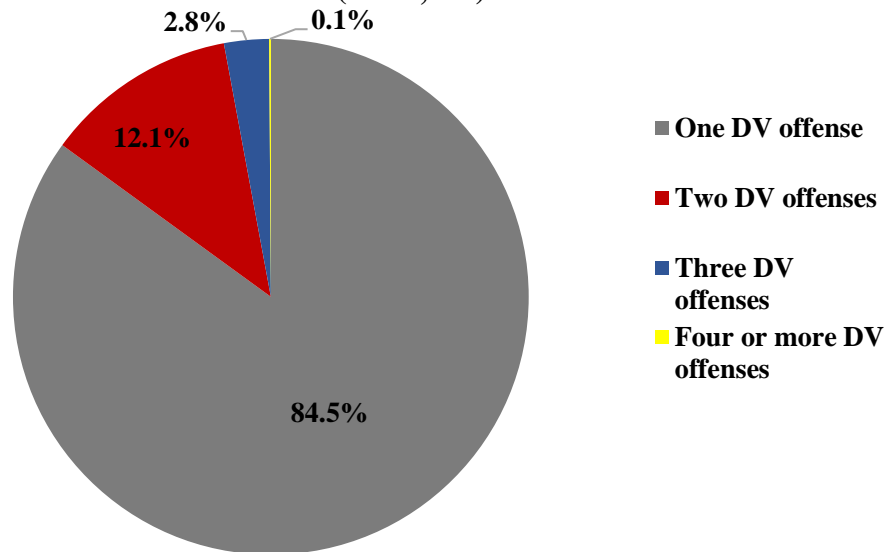
Importantly, these measures of domestic violence suggest that the primarily citizen-generated indicators of domestic violence (i.e. calls for service and incident reports) remained relatively stable over the five-year period, while the TPD-generated responses (i.e. FIR and arrest) to these crimes decreased noticeably over the same period of time.

#### *B. Domestic Violence Suspects*

While the previous section examined city-wide trends of domestic violence, this section focuses exclusively on the individuals involved in domestic violence incidents. From 2013 – 2017, there were 18,933 individuals suspected of committing domestic violence incidents; of these, 15,828 were unique (rather than repeat) suspects. These individuals were identified from the 23,976 incident reports collected over the study period. The majority of individuals (n=13,381; 84.5% of total) were suspected of only committing one incident, whereas 2,447 (15.5%) were suspected of committing two or more incidents. Of the 2,447 individuals suspected of two or more incidents, 1,906 (12.1% of total) were involved in two incidents, 440 (2.8% of total) were involved in three incidents, and 101 (0.1% of total) were involved with more than three domestic violence offenses. These findings, displayed in Figure 5 below, suggest only a small amount of

domestic violence incidents are committed by repeat suspects. Repeat suspects represent 15% of the total number of suspects, which accounts for 23.2% of the domestic violence incidents. However, 84.5% of the domestic violence offenses are completed by one-time offenders, responsible for 76.8% of all domestic violence incidents between 2013 and 2017.

**Figure 5. Repeat Domestic Violence Offending**  
(N=15,828)



The phenomenon of repeats is well-documented in the criminological literature. Crime repeatedly occurs at the same locations, with the same victims, and is committed repeatedly by the same offenders (Spelman & Eck, 1989). In comparing what types of victimizations have the highest levels of repeats, there is evidence that family members suffer a particularly high risk of being abused again (Reiss, 1980). Repeat domestic violence offending has been demonstrated in the research (Sechrist & Weil, 2018; Williams and Houghton, 2014) and others find that domestic violence offenders have previously committed several types of offenses (Bouffard & Zedaker, 2016; Klein, 1996). Interestingly, there are fewer repeat domestic violence suspects reported to the TPD that one might expect based on other violent crime patterns (e.g., gun and gang-related violence).

Examining these repeat offenders in greater detail, 1,906 committed two domestic violence offenses (77.9%), 440 individuals committed three offenses (18.0%) and 101 (4.1%) committed more than three domestic violence offenses between 2013 and 2017. The average time lapse between repeat domestic violence offenses was 582 days (median of 509 days) among those repeat domestic violence offenders that had only two domestic violence cases. The average re-offending time between the second and third domestic violence offense was 460 days (median of 407 days); between the third and fourth was 474 days (median of 414 days); and between fourth and fifth was 430 days (median of 412 days). In short, offenders with more repeat incidents have a shorter time lapse between reported incidents. Nevertheless, an average time lapse of 509 days between reported domestic violence offenses for repeat offenders is considerably longer than the

majority of previous research has suggested. For instance, a study of men (N=552) convicted for domestic violence, 64 percent were re-arrested for a new domestic violence offense within one-year (Klein et al., 2005). The implications of this finding for identifying an appropriate offender-based intervention program will further be considered in the discussion section.

Below we examine different data sources, including suspect arrest data, victim information from official domestic violence incident reports, as well as homicide incident data. While each of these data sources are unique, a clear and consistent pattern of offense frequency and severity emerges across the different incidents examined below. To consider an assessment of repeat offenders, Table 1 presents the differences in demographic characteristics between suspects involved in single domestic violence incidents as well as those involved in repeat (greater than one incident over a five-year period) domestic violence incidents. There are two noteworthy demographic differences between single-incident and multiple-incident suspects. Multiple-incident suspects are both more likely to be male, and less likely to be White compared to single-incident suspects where t-tests reveal statistically significant differences ( $p < .01$ ).

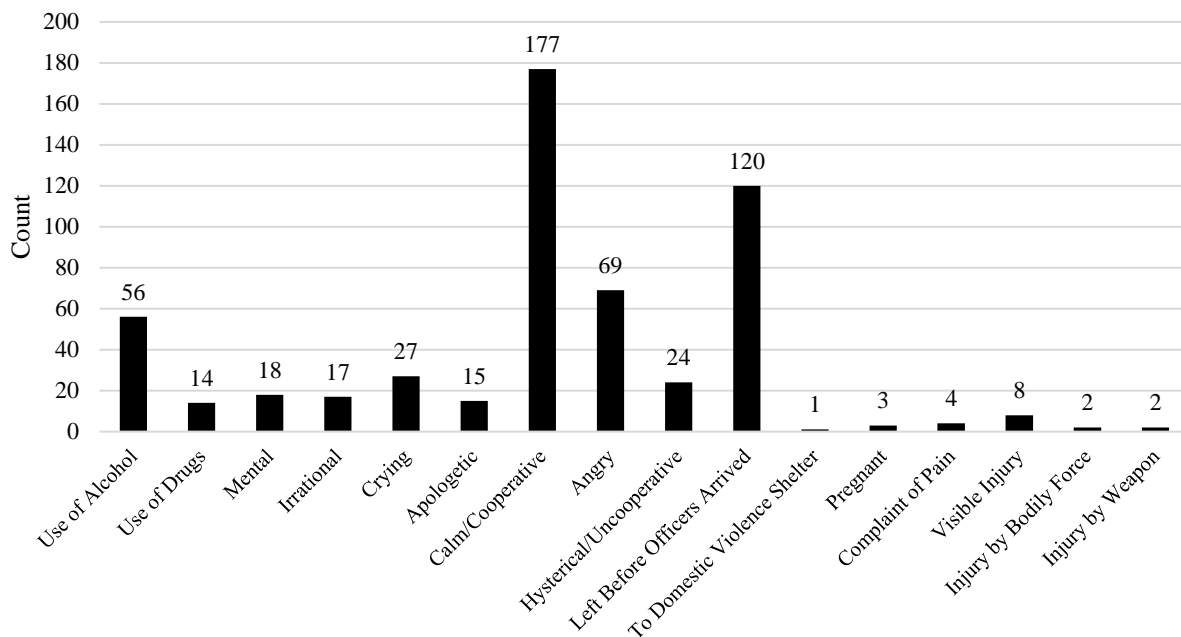
**Table 1. Demographics Characteristics of Individuals Suspected of Domestic Violence, 2013-2017**

	Suspects in Single Incidents	Suspects in Repeat Incidents
Count	13,381	2,447
Average Age	36.3	37.6
Male	72.9%	83.6%
White	56.7%	43.2%
Black	35.6%	51.5%
Other	7.7%	5.3%

When examining homicide incident data, of the 315 reported homicides during the five-year period from 2013 – 2017, 57 (18.1%) were domestic violence incidents, involving 53 unique known suspects. Of these 53 suspects identified in homicide incident data, 26.4% had a previous arrest for violence, and 49.1% had a previous arrest for a nonviolent offense in the five years prior to their arrest for homicide. Collectively, these 53 suspects averaged 1.94 total arrests in the five years prior to being arrested as a homicide suspect. Importantly, only eight of the 53 suspected individuals (15.1%) had a domestic violence arrest during the previous five years.

Finally, an analysis of the field interview report sample (N=422) identified trends related to the suspects involved in domestic violence incidents. It appears that a large majority of incidents indicate low lethality—the suspect is described as calm and cooperative in 177 of the 422 incidents (41.9%), the most common description as shown in Figure 6 below. While not shown in a graphic, approximately 155 of the 422 cases (36.7%) included some type of threat by the suspect. This indicates that these cases have the potential for the suspect to return and potentially escalate the situation in a future offense. Cases where a threat is made indicate a potential area for intervention for follow up (either to the victim and/or the suspect) by the TPD.

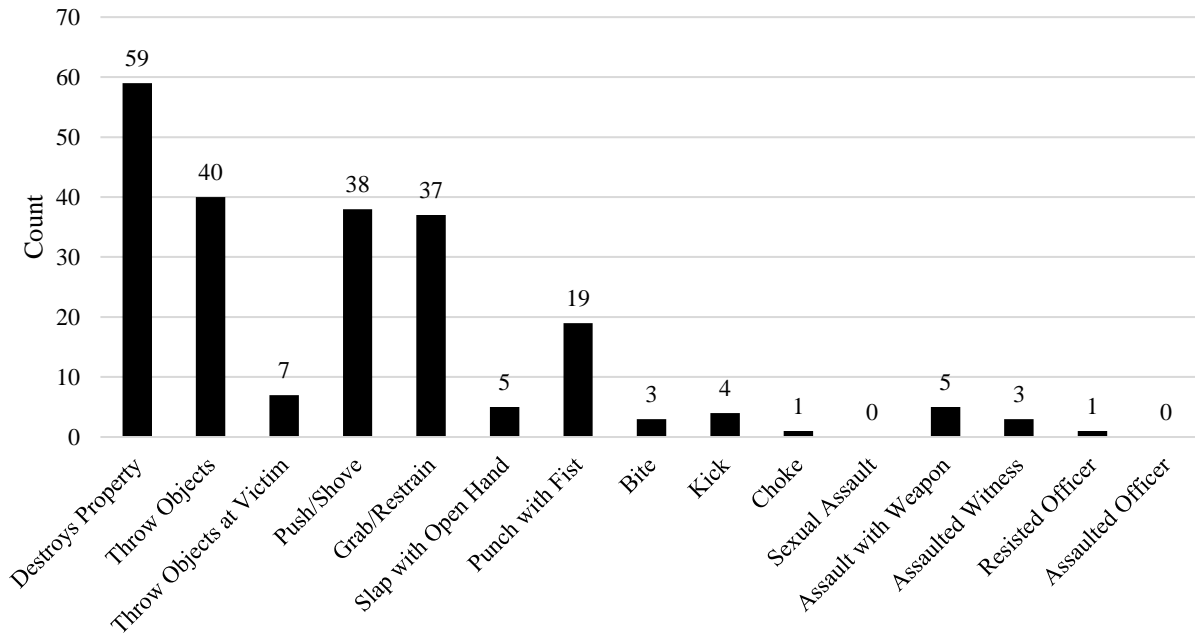
**Figure 6. Count of Suspect's Condition (N = 557)**



As shown in Figure 7 below, a review of the action taken by the suspect indicates that the most frequent actions are property-oriented. Of the 222 cases with a recorded action taken, the two most common actions included destroying property (n=59) and throwing objects (n=40), however 50.5% of the coded cases involved a variety of more physically violent actions<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> This includes actions of pushing/shoving (n=38), grabbing/restraining (n=37), punching (n=19), assaulting with a weapon (n=5), slapping (n=5), kicking (n=4), biting (n=3), and choking (n=1).

**Figure 7. Count of Suspect Actions (N = 222)**



### C. Domestic Violence Victims

Over the five-year study period, there were 18,572 individuals victimized during domestic violence incidents. Of these, 83.8% (n=15,564) individuals were victimized once, and 16.2% (n=3,008) were victimized two or more times. Of the 3,008 individuals repeatedly victimized, 2,186 (72.6%; 11.8% of the total) were victimized twice, 566 (18.8%; 3% of total) were victimized three times, 174 (5.8%; 0.09% of total) were victimized four times, and 82 (2.7%; 0.04% of total) were victimized five times or more.

These findings demonstrate that the “repeat phenomenon” of domestic violence victimization in Tulsa is similarly prevalent among victims and suspects. That is, the police data demonstrate that victims are just as likely to be victimized more than once (16.2%) compared to offenders involved in more than one offense (15.5%).

In terms of length of time between victimizations, on average there was 503 days (median=421 days) between first and second domestic violence victimizations. This figure substantially reduces to 364 days (median=317 days) for the second and third domestic violence victimizations. Finally, the average time lapse between incidents reduces to its shortest time period (mean=260 days and median=172 days) for the third and fourth domestic violence victimization. These results indicate that as the number of victimizations increases, the time lapse between re-victimization incidents becomes substantially shorter.

In terms of repeat victimization, Table 2 presents differences in demographic characteristics between single and repeat victims of domestic violence incidents. These analyses show that repeat victims are more likely to be female and less likely to be White compared to single-incident victims, where t-tests reveal statistically significant differences ( $p < .01$ ).

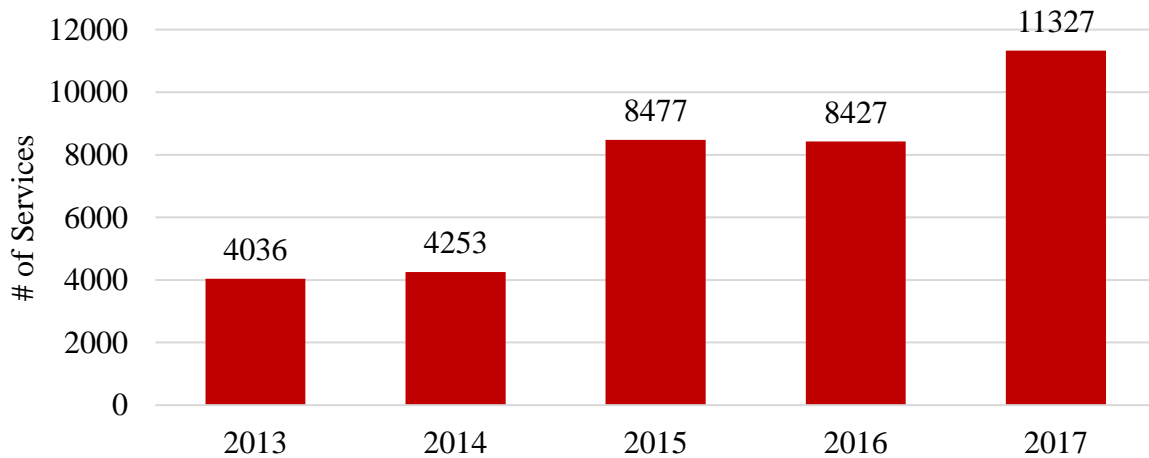


**Table 2. Demographics Characteristics of Individuals Victimized in Domestic Violence, 2013-2017**

	Victims in Single Incidents	Victims in Repeat Incidents
Count	15,564	3,008
Average Age	36.2	36.9
Female	68.8%	82.9%
White	60.5%	52.9%
Black	31.6%	40.6%
Other	7.9%	6.5%

In addition to the police data reported above, a second set of victimization data was provided through victim-generated reports to the Family Safety Center (FSC), which supplements the findings from the administrative data provided by the TPD. The Family Safety Center provides services to individuals victimized by domestic violence in Tulsa.<sup>6</sup> The FSC observed consistent growth in the number of services provided to individuals in Tulsa from 2013 to 2017, a low of 4,036 in 2013 to a high of 11,327 in 2017 – a 180.6% increase. This increase is demonstrated in Figure 8 below.

**Figure 8. Total Services Provided by the Family Safety Center, 2013 to 2017 (N=36,790)**



This increase was also found in the number of referrals from TPD and the number of emergency protective orders (EPO) filed. The number of referrals grew almost 1,500% from 179 in 2013 to

<sup>6</sup> A special thank you to Suzann Stewart and the Family Safety Center for providing data for this report.

2,806 in 2017 while the number of EPOs increased 134.9% from 1,352 in 2013 to 3,176 in 2017. These counts are displayed by year in Figure 9.

**Figure 9. Types of Services Provided by the Family Safety Center, 2013 to 2017 (N=36,790)**

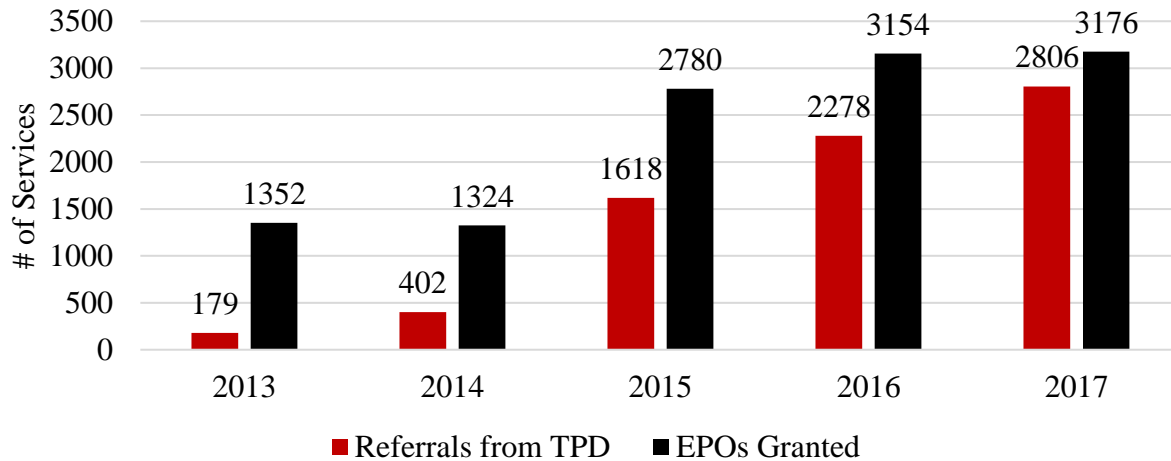
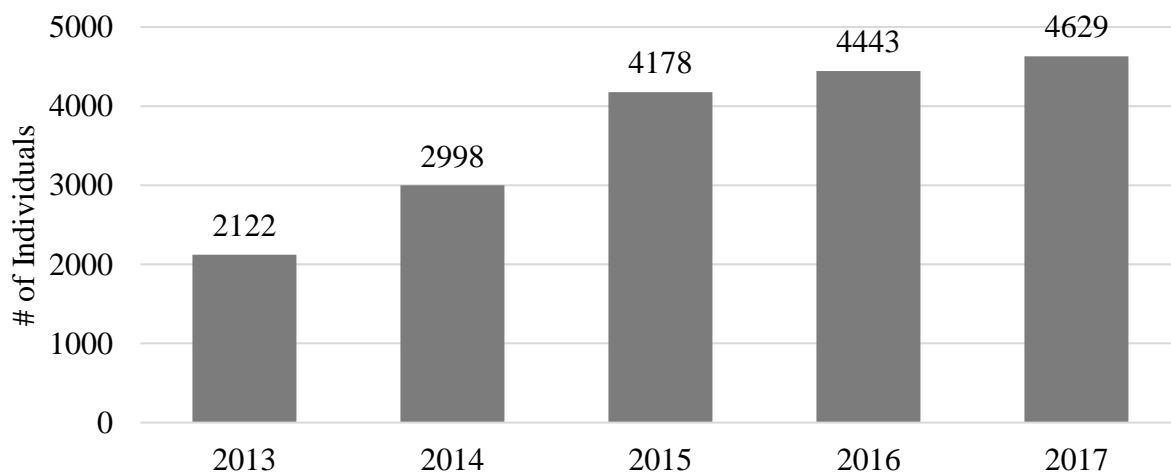


Figure 10 displays the counts of individuals who received assistance from the Family Safety Center. Increases in the total number of individuals receiving service from FSC doubled from 2,122 in 2013 to 4,629 in 2017 with the number of returning individuals accounting for 20% to 40% per year of these figures.

**Figure 10. Individuals Assisted by the Family Safety Center, 2013 to 2017 (N=17,950)**



The growth in services provided by FSC demonstrates an important contrast to the relative consistency in police calls for service and incident reports generated over the five-year study period. These divergent trends could be interpreted in several ways but they undoubtedly

confirm the inherent challenges in measuring and responding to domestic violence.<sup>7</sup> Table 3 presents demographic characteristics of the individuals receiving service from FSC. While some of these characteristics are either collected differently from the TPD or not collected at all, there were both similarities and differences to the TPD measures reported above. Although, the age variables could not be compared directly, the average age for the TPD-generated data did align with the fact that over 70% of the FSC victims’ reporting ages between twenty-five and forty-nine years old.

**Table 3. Demographics Characteristics of Individuals Victimized in Domestic Violence from the Family Safety Center, 2013-2017**

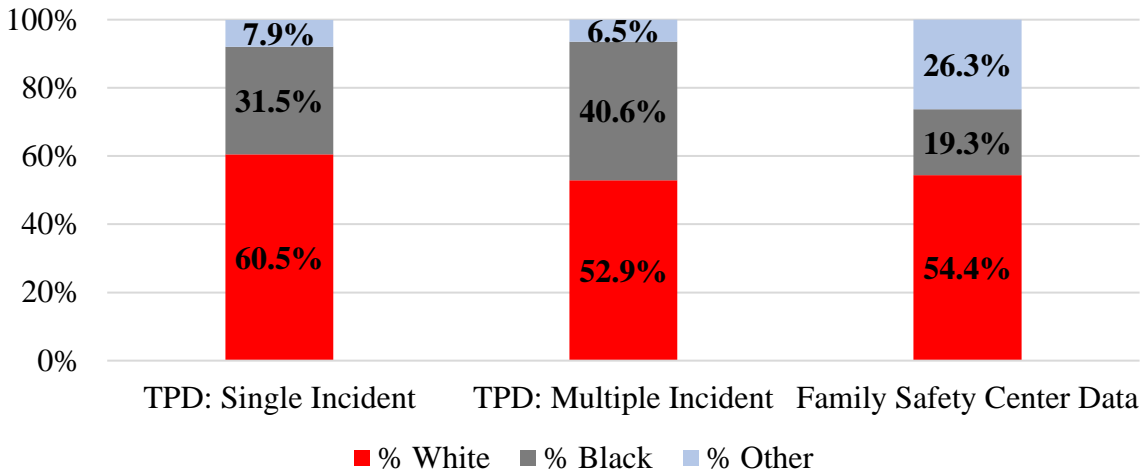
Age (Categorical) <sup>8</sup>	70.7%, (25 to 49 years)
Female	82.3%
White	54.4%
Black	19.3%
Other	26.3%
Current Partner	43.2%
Former Partner	30.2%
Other	26.7%

In terms of context, it appears that the sex of individuals receiving FSC services (82.3% female) was commensurate with multiple incident victims (79.8% female as displayed in Table 2) but not for single-incident victims (68.8% female as displayed in Table 2). For victim’s race, the FSC services data show a larger number of individuals identifying as “other” compared to the TPD-generated measures, as displayed in Figure 11. Finally, the percentage of Black victims receiving FSC services was lower than the victimization data reported by the TPD, suggesting that Black domestic violence victims are less likely to receive or to request services from the FSC.

<sup>7</sup> For example, TPD measures of homicide trends would most likely correspond closely with outside sources of fatalities, such as data collected from hospitals, since there is greater confidence in the reporting of this crime relative to domestic violence.

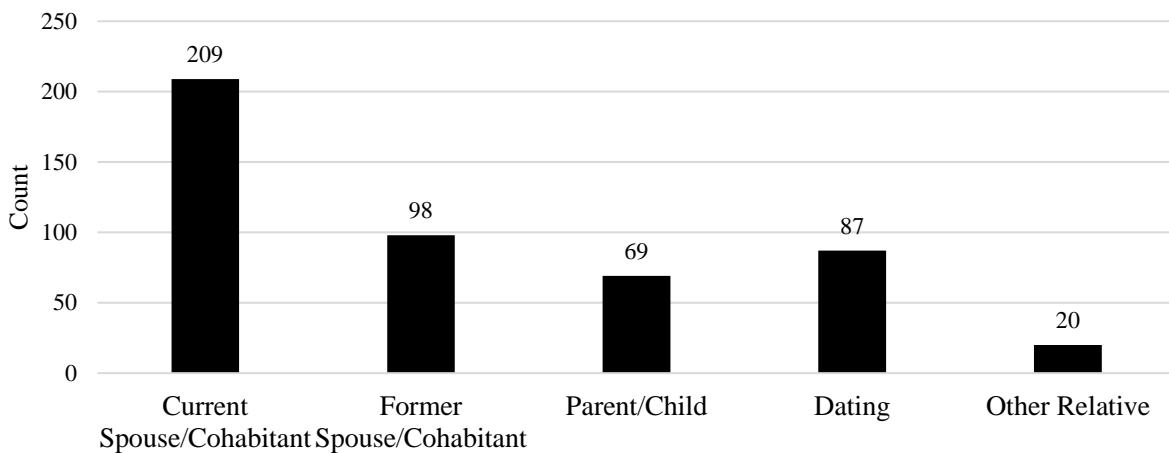
<sup>8</sup> Average age was unavailable from this data source.

**Figure 11. Comparisons of Domestic Violence Victims by Data Type, 2013-2017**



A review of the relationship between the victim and suspect identified in the FIR analyses is also shown in Figure 12 below. The results indicate that the most common relationship type is current spouse/cohabitant (43.3%) followed closely by former spouse/cohabitant (20.3%) and dating (18.0%)<sup>9</sup>. Very few cases involve a parent and child relationship or some other form of relative. Compared with the information contained in Table 3, Figure 12 corroborates that most violence occurs between current intimate partners (roughly 43%), and few cases involve violence between other types of family members. This indicates that interventions aimed at reducing domestic violence should focus on the patterns between intimate partners.

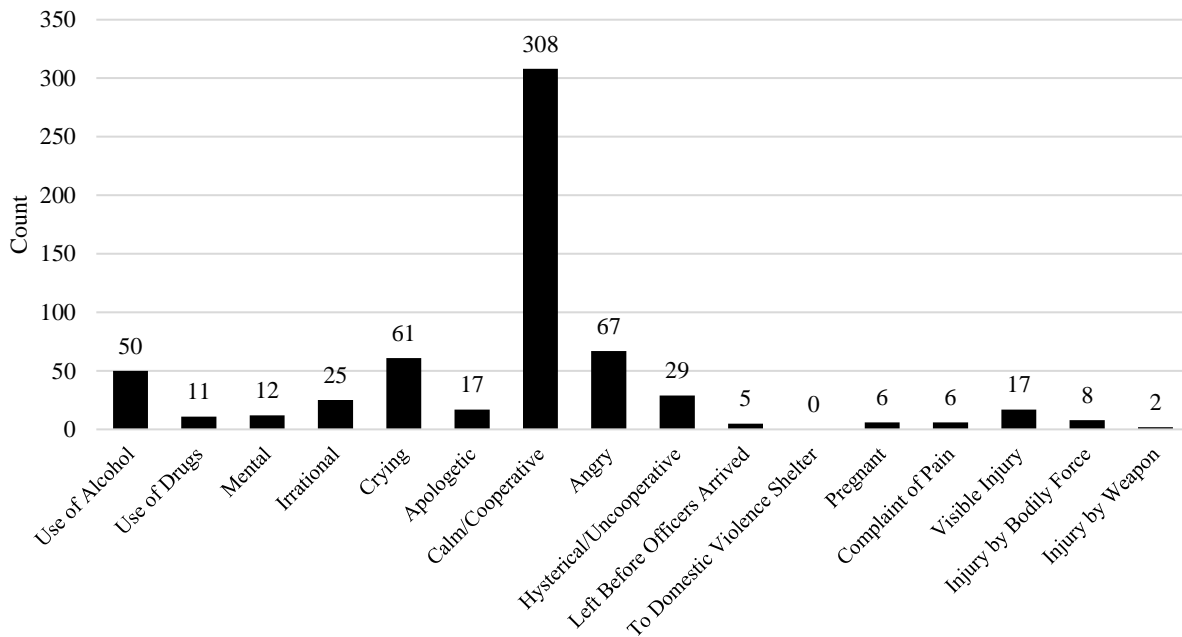
**Figure 12. Victim-Offender Relationship in Domestic Violence Field Interview Reports (N=483)**



<sup>9</sup> Note that while there are only 422 FIRs coded, officers may select multiple options for “relationship type”, and therefore there were 483 relationship types selected for this category.

Considering the state of the victim when officers respond to the scene, it appears that the majority of victims are calm and cooperative. As demonstrated in Figure 13, nearly 73 percent (308 of 422 total victims) are recorded as being calm and cooperative, with very few concentrations in other categories. Note that officers may select multiple conditions for a single victim, indicating why there are more condition counts than actual cases.

**Figure 13. Count of Victim Condition (N = 624)**



The criminal histories of domestic violence suspects and victims were also further explored in an effort to better understand the relationship between criminal history and domestic violence involvement. Retrospective studies show that past criminal history is a robust predictor of future deviant behaviors (Blumstein, Cohen, Roth, & Visher, 1986), and previous research has suggested that domestic violence crimes are no exception to this trend (Klein, 1996). Therefore, exploring domestic violence victims and suspects' criminal history can contribute to a better understanding of the issue of domestic violence in Tulsa.

As noted previously, of the 15,828 domestic violence suspects identified between 2013 and 2017, 1,586 (10.0%) had been arrested at least once previously for a Part I crime<sup>10</sup> -- and 806 (5.1%) had a Part 1 violent criminal history.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, 6,042 suspects (38.2%) had a Part II (misdemeanor) criminal history.

<sup>10</sup> Part 1 Crimes include Homicide, Rape, Robbery and Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Theft, Auto-theft and Arson.

<sup>11</sup> Part 1 Violent Crimes include Homicide, Rape, Robbery and Aggravated Assault.

Similar to suspects, an examination of the criminal histories of the domestic violence victims demonstrate similar patterns of involvement with the criminal justice system. Of the 18,572 domestic violence victims, 1,495 (8.0%) have a Part I criminal history, with 456 (2.5%) with at least one previous arrest for a Part I violent crime. Finally, 4,558 domestic violence victims (24.5%) have a Part II (misdemeanor) criminal history.

Separate analyses were conducted to identify whether domestic violence suspects and victims victimize each other in subsequent domestic violence cases. The findings show that 6,437 domestic violence incidents (26.8% of the total incidents) involve individuals who have been both victims and suspects in domestic violence offenses. In other words, while a person is a victim in one incident, the same person becomes the suspect for another domestic violence incident. Further analysis showed that 3,205 unique victims (17.2% of all domestic victims) were also charged as a suspect in a different domestic violence case.

In summation, analyses of offenders' criminal histories indicate that many domestic violence offenders have several previous charges for both non-violent and violent offenses. This is commensurate with previous findings that criminals are rarely specialists, including domestic violence offenders (Klein, 1996; Herman et al., 2013). This also suggests there may be several intervention "levers" that can be pulled for these repeat offenders (Sechrist, Weil, Shelton and Payne, 2012). Although the total number of repeat suspects is rather low—only 15.5% of the offending population—they represent a potential avenue for intervention. Better understanding of the types of warrants, the most common charge for both suspects and victims, is needed to enhance interventions.

## V. DISCUSSION

As detailed in this report, we conducted a problem analysis in Tulsa, Oklahoma to better understand the city's domestic violence problem between 2013 and 2017. The State of Oklahoma is often among states with the highest rate of women killed by their domestic partners (Slipke, 2018). Note that domestic violence as defined in the study includes one of fifteen different categories of relationship (Oklahoma Statute §21-644)—thus it is more broadly defined than intimate partner violence. Unfortunately, the automated data used by the Tulsa Police Department does not include a field for the relationship between victim and offender. Nonetheless, during the study time period, calls for service related to domestic violence disturbances were the third most frequent call type received by the TPD (preceded only by calls for traffic stops and alarms going off), requiring a substantial amount of police resources each year.

This problem analysis compared various types of reports recorded by the Tulsa Police Department to measure domestic violence, finding the citizen-generated indicators of domestic violence (i.e. calls for service and incident reports) remained relatively stable over the five-year period, while the TPD-generated responses (i.e. FIR and arrest) to these crimes decreased noticeably over the same period of time. In contrast, victimization data provided by the Family Safety Center (FSC) report large increases in number of services provided and individuals receiving service for domestic violence over time, likely attributed to the expansion of victim-services provided in Tulsa over the study period. Data from the FSC also indicates that the percentage of Black victims receiving FSC services was lower than the victimization data captured by the TPD, suggesting that Black domestic violence victims may be less likely to receive or to request services.

An interesting finding from this study is the identification of repeat domestic violence suspects reported to the TPD. Analyses show that 15.5% (n= 2,447) of the individuals suspected of domestic violence were repeat offenders, and they accounted for 23.2% of the domestic violence incidents reported during the study period. Curiously, when offenders did commit a subsequent domestic violence offense for which an arrest occurred, the time between arrests was extremely long (an average of over 500 days). However, offenders with more repeat incidents that result in arrest have a shorter time lapse between these arrests. Another important finding is that while a person is a victim in one incident, the same person was also commonly reported as the suspect for another domestic violence incident. Approximately 3,205 unique victims (17.2% of all domestic victims) were also charged as a suspect in a different domestic violence case.

Overall, it appears that the majority of domestic violence incidents reported to the TPD have low levels of repeat suspects and victims, and are largely characterized by low lethality. However, these findings demonstrate that the “repeat phenomenon” of domestic violence victimization in Tulsa is similarly prevalent among victims and suspects. That is, the police data demonstrate that victims are just as likely to be victimized more than once (16.2%) compared to offenders involved in more than one offense (15.5%). Despite these low levels, there exists a concentration of offenses among a smaller number of offenders who repeatedly perpetrate domestic violence incidents—these offenders represent an opportunity for future intervention by the TPD. For instance, a review of the field interview reports revealed a substantial number of

cases (36.7%) which involve the suspect threatening a future action—these represent an avenue for follow up by TPD officers.

In addition to the screening approach, there are two well-known offender-based interventions for domestic assaults: the High Point model and the Chula Vista model. Both models, and why they likely would not be effective in reducing domestic violence in Tulsa, are explained further below.

#### *High Point, North Carolina Model*

The High Point model utilizes the general problem-oriented approach of focused deterrence strategies to address domestic violence. Focused deterrence policing uses deterrence-based targeted police enforcement to reduce violence. A systematic review (Braga and Weisburd, 2012) of focused deterrence strategies in a variety of contexts showcase the positive crime prevention benefits of focused deterrence. The focused deterrence model has subsequently been adopted to target drug markets and now domestic violence. The High Point model is an offender-based strategy that groups offenders into distinct categories based on their individual risk of re-offending. Different prevention responses are provided to each group of offenders based upon these risk assessments, which heavily weigh the importance of the individual's previous criminal record.

While no rigorous experimental evaluation of the interventions effect in reducing domestic violence have been conducted, there is preliminary evidence to suggest the High Point model does reduce offending (see Sechrist, Weil, and Shelton, 2016). The High Point model was also successfully replicated in the neighboring town of Lexington, NC.

The TPD problem analysis results considering offenders arrested for domestic violence in Tulsa shows that most (84.5%) of these offenders are only arrested once—there appear to be few chronic offenders. There are 15.5% of repeat suspects which account for 23.2% of the domestic violence incidents. While there is some repeat offending, the repeat offenders do not account for majority of domestic violence incidents in the City of Tulsa. Therefore, the High Point model, would likely not have as large an impact on reducing domestic violence in Tulsa as it would in other jurisdictions where repeat offenders are more common.

#### *Chula Vista, California Model*

The Chula Vista Police Department (CVPD), in Chula Vista, CA, has adopted a domestic violence reduction strategy similar to the focused deterrence model implemented in High Point. The goals of the strategy include protecting and supporting victims through police-driven actions (rather than victim-driven actions), holding offenders accountable, and focusing limited resources on repeat suspects and victims. This model uses a five-level classification system for domestic violence offenses (in contrast to the four-level system used in the High Point model).

Early strategy evaluation results suggest that there was a 24% decline in recidivism among high-risk domestic violence offenders in Chula Vista (CVPD, 2017). More detailed analysis concerning reductions in the total numbers of domestic violence calls, changes in numbers of



chronic victims and offenders, time between repeat calls, and impact on offense severity is currently underway.

Results of Tulsa’s domestic violence problem analysis demonstrate that the average re-offending period for a domestic violence offender occurs over 500 days later. Therefore, following up on repeat offenders in the days immediately following a domestic violence arrest likely would not significantly reduce repeat offenders. As such, the Chula Vista model does not fit the domestic violence problem in Tulsa.

### *Repeat Offending and Lethality Assessments*

The vast majority of evidence-based violence reduction strategies implemented by police departments focus conclusively, if not extensively, on chronic, repeat places and offenders. Hot spot policing limits police saturation to specific locations with a chronic history of crime problems (Braga & Weisburd, 2010). Focused deterrence interventions focus on gangs and groups of chronic offenders to reduce firearm and overall lethal violence in high-risk contexts (Braga, Weisburd, & Turchan, 2018). Thus, diverting attention away from the ‘insignificant many’ and focusing more on the ‘significant few’ provides both an efficient and effective return on the necessary criminal justice resources to enact crime prevention change. In the case of domestic violence, Felson, Ackerman, and Gallagher (2005) found that roughly 17% of victims who reported their victimization to the National Crime Victimization Survey over the three-year study period were repeat victims of domestic violence. The findings were similar when examining domestic violence suspects from official Tulsa Police Department data over a five-year period, where roughly 15% of suspects were classified by the police department as repeat offenders. Interventions that focus on repeat offenders would potentially exclude the vast majority of offenders (approximately 85%) who are only arrested for domestic violence once. Therefore, it may be more effective to focus resources on the significant few that engage higher on an *offense-severity* metric as opposed to an *offense-frequency* scale.

Compared to other communities, the City of Tulsa has a robust and comprehensive network for providing and tracking domestic violence victim services. While there is a well-designed strategy focused on domestic violence victims, a specific strategy for police-intervention with repeat domestic violence offenders is lacking. Many evidence-based strategies focus on offenders who commit serious violence. For example, lethality assessments and other similar screening instruments have been developed to indicate the risk of domestic violence re-offense based on severity (see Williams, 2012). An important finding from this problem analysis was that only 15% of offenders in domestic violence homicides had a previous arrest for domestic violence, so a lethality assessment approach that focuses only on repeat offenders should be coupled with other strategies.

### **Data Collection**

A critical discovery during the process of completing this problem analysis was the unveiling of a coding problem in the offense reports. Offense reports could be coded as an arrest for domestic violence—however a large percentage were not coded correctly by the reporting officer. Instead,

the details of the incident were written out in the narrative section of the report. This required the Domestic Violence Unit of the TPD to re-code offense reports, to indicate that they were domestic violence-related. This problem required a simple fix—for officers to be retrained on the cues and correct coding for domestic violence incidents. To effectively understand the risk of domestic violence, it is critical that the problem is being measured accurately. As stated by Bynum, “responses based upon inadequate or incomplete analyses will not address the causes of the problem and are much less likely to produce the desired results” (2001, p.18).

Additional recommendations for data collection related to domestic offenses is for the automation of information recorded on field interview reports. These reports contain valuable contextual details, such as suspect’s actions taken during the incident, weapons used, and threats made. The aggregation of this information would be extremely valuable to the domestic violence unit at the Tulsa Police Department and provide more specific forms of offender-based interventions.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this problem analysis demonstrate an important lesson for practitioners—it is vital to start with a problem and not with a solution. Evidence-based solutions (i.e. lethality assessment models) that work elsewhere, such as the Chula Vista and High Point models may not fit the exact problem identified in Tulsa, Oklahoma. However, it was determined that there are a small group of chronic repeat offenders in domestic violence offenses—and is likely that these encounters may turn more severe in the future.

These concerns have led the Tulsa Police Department to begin focusing on capturing instances of non-fatal strangulation. In 2017, the TPD began training their officers to identify and record signs of victim strangulation during domestic disputes. Indeed, non-fatal strangulation is a significant risk factor for intimate partner homicide and important for police to record when possible (Campbell, Glass, Sharps, Laughon, & Bloom, 2007). Though still in its infancy, the Tulsa Police Department is optimistic as to the potential benefits from its domestic strangulation initiative (Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, 2018).

Future strategies that are designed to reduce domestic violence in Tulsa should consider the findings of this exploratory problem analysis in order to produce the desired results. Additional analyses, which include a better understanding the victim-offender relationship, incident context as well as criminal history charges (e.g. type of warrant) will provide better information for offender-based interventions.

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