

DATA INSIGHTS\_

# VIOLENCE AND VULNERABILITY

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## SUMMARY

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Emergency services in Scotland deal with a high volume of incidents involving violence. An increasing number of these incidents also involve some aspect of underlying vulnerability, and people in crisis. Policy makers are keen to understand more about how aspects of vulnerability impact on violent crime, particularly as it is a primary driver for policies like the 'public health approach to reducing violence' and 'adverse childhood experiences' informed approaches to policing.

Despite this interest, there is very little evidence about the ways in which violent crime in Scotland is related to underlying vulnerability caused by drugs, alcohol or mental health issues. Little is known about the pattern of calls for service from people who experience violence or how these calls relate to other health-related referrals relating to wellbeing. In addition, little is known about the longer term outcomes of those who experience violence, such as their risk of premature death. Our research will address these questions and support the development of policies aimed at preventing and reducing violence.

## WHAT WE INTEND TO DO

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The overarching aim of the study is to examine the relationship between violence and vulnerability, focusing specifically on drug use, alcohol dependence and mental health conditions. We aim to link Scottish Ambulance call-out and hospital admissions data, which identify violence-related incidents, with data on drug misuse, alcohol dependence and mental health conditions, and death records.

## WHAT WE AIM TO FIND

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We aim to:

1. Examine temporal and spatial patterns of demand for ambulance call-outs to violence-related incidents (both single and repeat incidents);
2. Determine the extent to which ambulance call-outs involving violence lead to hospital admissions;
3. Understand how underlying aspects of vulnerability (drug use, alcohol dependence and mental health conditions) are related to violence-related incidents, and how this varies across different socio-demographic groups; and
4. Explore the longer term outcome of violence-related incidents, including further examples of vulnerability and risk of death.

## WHY IT MATTERS

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Levels of violence in Scotland have declined substantially in recent years, particularly in relation to incidents involving young men with weapons in public places. However, this decline is not reflected in relation to repeat violence (which is often experienced by a small proportion of society). In addition, the emergency services report dealing with an increasing number of incidents that involve some element of vulnerability or personal wellbeing. Practitioners and policy makers are very keen to understand how aspects of vulnerability impact on and perpetuate violent crime.

This study will make a valuable contribution to the academic literature and policy debates about the relationship between patterns of violence and underlying vulnerabilities, including drug use, alcohol dependence and mental health problems. It will also contribute to strategic planning by emergency service organisations in terms of how they can work more effectively and efficiently in partnership, especially in further developing the 'public health' approach to tackling violence.

The Scottish Centre for Administrative Data Research works with partners to analyse de-identified public sector data, seeing what linking them in new ways can reveal. We ensure the evidence and trends we spot are highlighted, so the public, civil society and decision-makers in government and beyond have access to the information they need.

Our centre directors, researchers, staff and affiliates are from a range of well-respected academic institutions, and together we:

- \_ Deliver cutting-edge applied research with real-world impact
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## WHAT NEXT?

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This project has been approved and data linkage will be starting in early 2020.

We are continuing to work with policy stakeholders to ensure the research addresses as many policy relevant questions as possible.

We are also working with data controllers to facilitate further data linkage, such as police data.

We anticipate that the initial findings from the study will be available from mid-2020.

