

BAIL VIOLATIONS ARE FREQUENTLY A PRECURSOR TO A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CHARGE

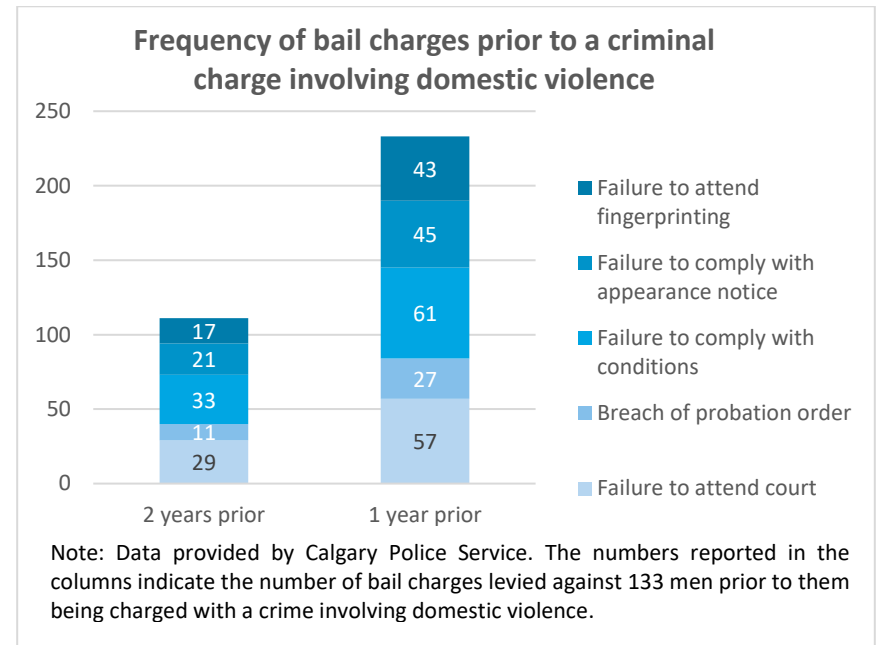
Understanding what precedes a crime involving domestic violence is key for understanding how to prevent violence from happening.

A recent report examining the prior police encounters and criminal histories of male perpetrators of domestic violence in Calgary, Alberta suggests there are options for improving our response to these destructive behaviours. Specifically, the report's approach holds the potential to identify patterns early and intervene before violence escalates, curbing violence against women and children, and improving the efficiency of criminal justice operations.

A criminal charge can be placed into one of 4 very broad categories: crimes against people; crimes against property; drug and traffic crimes; and, finally, "other criminal code violations." Included in the latter are *bail charges* defined as offences occurring after a suspect has been arrested. These include charges for failing to attend court, failure to comply with conditions of probation, failure to attend court as required by a judge, and failure to attend for fingerprinting.

Bail charges are offences committed after an arrest. The number of bail charges levied against men increase in the two years prior to them being charged with a crime involving domestic violence.

The chart reports the number and type of bail charges laid against 934 male perpetrators one year and two years prior to them being charged with a crime involving domestic violence in 2019. Bail charges were levied against 14% (133/934) of the men in our sample. There were 111 bail charges levied against these men two years prior to the criminal charge involving domestic violence, and 233 bail charges levied against them one year prior to the criminal charge. For these 133 men, a growing number of bail charges seemingly indicates a heightened risk of committing a crime involving



domestic violence in the near future.

This evidence is consistent with earlier findings that for many men, a charge involving domestic violence is preceded by an upward trajectory of criminal behaviour and other interactions with police. The evidence presented here suggests that the violation of bail conditions signals the potential for future charges involving domestic violence. Our research on the strength of this signal is on-going.

The issuance of bail conditions must walk a fine line between respecting the rights of an accused who has not yet been proven guilty of a crime and protecting the public from future harm. As courts balance these considerations, the potential for the violation of bail conditions to be a predictor of future domestic violence may warrant mandated counseling or other supports and interventions for male suspects.