

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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First, the city should conduct more in-depth analyses of domestic violence assaults during the study period.

While these analyses provide a basic foundation on trends of domestic violence assaults in the city, more data is needed in order to truly understand the rise in these crimes. Analyses should examine the characteristics of victims and perpetrators, and whether there was a history of domestic violence prior to the reported incidents. It would be useful to examine which incidents involve repeat victimization and offending. Analyses of the nature of the assaults – modus, weapon, motive – would also elucidate the drivers of the increases identified in this report.

Given the prevalence of domestic violence incidents involving current and former non-married couples, these data should be further explored. Information on the context of the offenses (e.g., was the victim trying to end the relationship), the nature of the relationship (e.g., are the victim and offender cohabitating), and whether there are children involved can help to better design prevention strategies for this population.

Spatially, future analyses should also examine the characteristics of neighborhoods where these types of incidents concentrate. For example, District 6 has experienced increases in all types of domestic violence assaults, but it is unclear why. Analyses should examine the services offered to domestic violence survivors as well as the availability of general violence, and domestic violence specific, prevention programming in the most affected neighborhoods. Analyses should also examine the police response in these neighborhoods and whether the response varies by type of assault. Answers to these questions would help develop best practices for the prevention of domestic violence in these neighborhoods.



Second, there should be a clear focus on identifying domestic violence cases that are at high risk for severe re-assault and homicide.

To do this, the police department should use an evidence-based domestic violence risk assessment that is combined with a protocol for providing additional intervention to high-risk cases. This would identify victims that are at risk for the escalation of violence, and suggest appropriate interventions. The Lethality Assessment Program, for example, uses a domestic violence risk assessment based on Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell's foundational research and was shown by Dr. Jill Messing to reduce future violence and increase domestic violence victim help-seeking. The researchers would like to partner with St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department to update the risk factors on this domestic violence risk assessment specifically for Missouri to ensure that the police department is using the most up-to-date evidence and accounting for local context in their interventions.

The data indicate that it is important to use domestic violence risk assessment across all domestic violence cases. The high prevalence of domestic violence incidents among current and former non-married couples indicates the importance of using risk assessment in these situations. Because cases of minor domestic violence assault (3rd and 4th degree) are on the rise, it is particularly important to use domestic violence risk assessment to identify those cases that may repeat or escalate. This would help funnel victims and perpetrators to services. Despite the relative diminished gravity of any one incident when compared to 1st degree assaults, identifying cases that are likely to escalate early and referring victims/offenders for additional services may reduce repeat calls for service and stop domestic violence before it escalates into 1st and 2nd degree domestic violence assault.

Although assaults in the 1st degree have been relatively stable, the numbers are steadily and slightly increasing every year. Using a domestic violence risk assessment calibrated for lethality is particularly important in these cases in order to prevent intimate partner homicide. Additional analyses should also be undertaken in order to assess if these incidents escalated from less severe prior assaults (3rd and 4th degree) and if there were prior law enforcement contacts. An examination of homicide cases in St. Louis would provide information about the risk factors present in these cases, the scope of prior police contact, and potential intervention points for homicide prevention. The research team would be pleased to partner on this effort and is willing to provide SLMPD-specific analyses, reports, and trainings based on the data gathered.



Third, in depth analyses of services and prevention strategies available within, or near, neighborhoods where domestic violence assaults concentrate should be conducted.

These specific areas of the city are characterized by high poverty rates, which is not surprising since prior research has documented an association between poverty and high prevalence of domestic violence. If necessary, targeted services and interventions should be put in place in these neighborhoods. For example, crisis response teams and victim advocacy agencies that serve these areas should be contacted to see how the mayor's office can support their efforts, like connecting them with other first responders. Having service providers ride along with police officers when they respond to domestic violence calls is also a viable response option. Interventions that do not directly address domestic violence, like programs that increase access to education, a living wage, and child care may also lessen the burden of domestic violence in these neighborhoods.

Programs that center on the interruption of violence in these neighborhoods, such as programs that enhance risk assessment – such as the Washington DC Metropolitan Police Department's combination of the Lethality Assessment Program and advocate ride alongs or the use of a high risk team model – may be effective. Similarly, the city could consider modifying and adopting general violence interventions, such as those used in Chicago to prevent gang violence, to disrupt the escalating pattern of domestic violence. Specifically, when responding to calls in these neighborhoods, police should engage advocates who can connect the survivor to resources that can help disrupt the violence pattern. Focused deterrence tactics, such as Ceasefire, modified to target domestic violence perpetrators may also be useful. Specifically, this would include using evidence based domestic violence risk assessments to identify high-risk domestic violence perpetrators and delivering a focused deterrence message to them (e.g., domestic violence will not be tolerated and if they continue engaging these acts, every legal "lever" available will be pulled to incarcerate them for a prolonged period) while simultaneously offering services and other types of assistance to help them desist from domestic violence.