

Report summary: The overlap between offending and victimisation in Queensland

Background

Research finds that offending and victimisation are strongly associated, and this relationship appears to be consistent across time, place, offence types, and for various sub-groups of the population. This relationship is often explored through examining the prevalence of victimisation among offenders and is commonly referred to as the 'victim-offender overlap'.

While theoretical explanations for the victim-offender overlap have been offered, the mechanisms between offending and victimisation – including whether one precedes the other – remain unclear. Common explanations focus on the daily routines or lifestyles of people that place them in situations conducive to both offending and victimisation, or explain how offending may be a response to exposure to violence or experiencing victimisation.

Despite research consistently demonstrating similarities between offenders and victims in terms of demographic characteristics (Barnes and Beaver 2012; Gottfredson 1984; Schreck, Stewart and Osgood 2008; Singer 1981), more recent research suggests that differences can be observed between groups of people based on whether they only offend, only experience victimisation, or are victim-offenders, with victim-offenders recording the highest scores on risk factors for offending and victimisation (TenEyck and Barnes 2018).

Research aims and approach

The research project described in this report aimed to explore the overlap between offending and victimisation in Queensland. In this project, offending relates to any type of charged offence while victimisation relates to personal crime only.¹

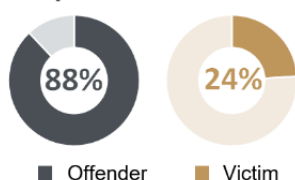
The project's key research questions were:

- To what extent are offenders also the victims of personal crime?
- To what extent are victims of personal crime also offenders?
- Are there differences in the amount of victim-offender overlap across different demographic groups?
- Do offender groups (offenders only versus victim-offenders) differ in demographic and offending profiles?
- Do victim groups (victims only and victim-offenders) differ in demographic and victimisation profiles?

The project used Queensland police administrative data and focused on individuals who had police contact as an offender and/or as a victim during an eligibility period between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2016 (the index event), including any other recorded police contact they had during a monitoring period of eight years (four years prior and after their index event).²

Key findings

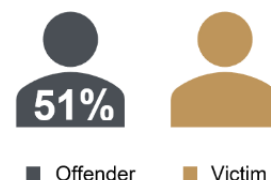
Most individuals have contact with police as an offender



1 in 7 offenders are victims



1 in 2 victims are offenders



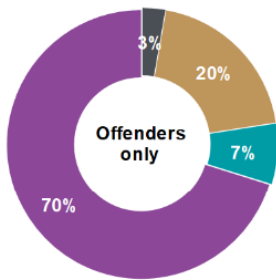
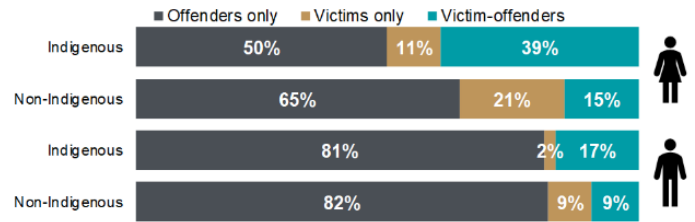
¹ Personal crime relates to offences against the person, which include homicide (murder), other homicide, sexual offences, robbery, assault and other offences against the person.

² Offending information was based on any type of offence where an individual had some form of police action taken against them (such as an arrest, notice to appear in court, formal police caution, etc.). Information related to both offending and victimisation was limited to offences which had been reported to or detected by police.

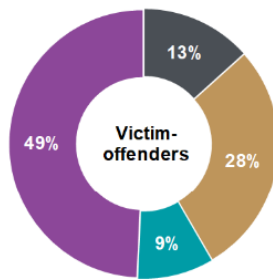
Most individuals have contact as offenders only



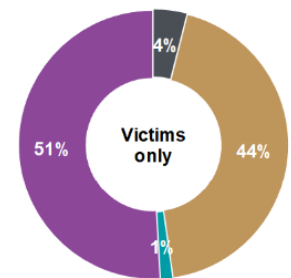
Victim-offender groups differ by demographics



Offenders only demographics



Victim-offenders demographics



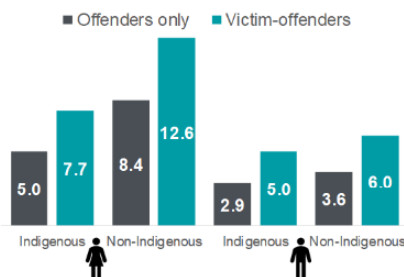
Victims only demographics

■ Indigenous female ■ Non-Indigenous female ■ Indigenous male ■ Non-Indigenous male

Being charged with a personal crime is more common for victim-offenders than offenders only



Victim-offenders average more offending events than offenders only



Slight variation between victims only and victim-offenders in average victimisation events



Implications

The results highlight the importance of responding to victimisation in Queensland, including victimisation experienced by offenders. They suggest that effective trauma-informed interventions for victims may address gendered harm, reduce criminal justice system demand and decrease Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. Targeted efforts with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females are likely to be of particular benefit.