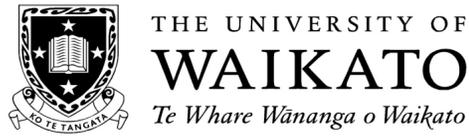


# Coercive Control in Intimate Partner Violence in New Zealand

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## Background

- In New Zealand, approximately **55% of women** report experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV; defined as sexual, physical, or psychological violence perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner), in their lifetime (Family Violence Act 2018, s. 9).
- Controlling behaviour is often overlooked, but more than **one in four** New Zealand women report experiencing this form of harm (Fanslow & Robinson, 2011).
- Coercive control refers to the systematic and repetitive use of psychological violence toward a partner in order to **establish or maintain control over them, or to dominate and restrict their lives**. Control can occur through behaviours such as isolation, intimidation, or threats.
- In the United Kingdom, coercive control is now a criminal offence (Serious Crime Act 2015, s. 76). Although there is not yet a specific offence for coercive control in New Zealand, it is included in 2018 Family Violence Act (Family Violence Act 2018, s. 9).
- Coercive control may become a criminal offence in New Zealand in the future, so it is important to determine whether it is detected by police.

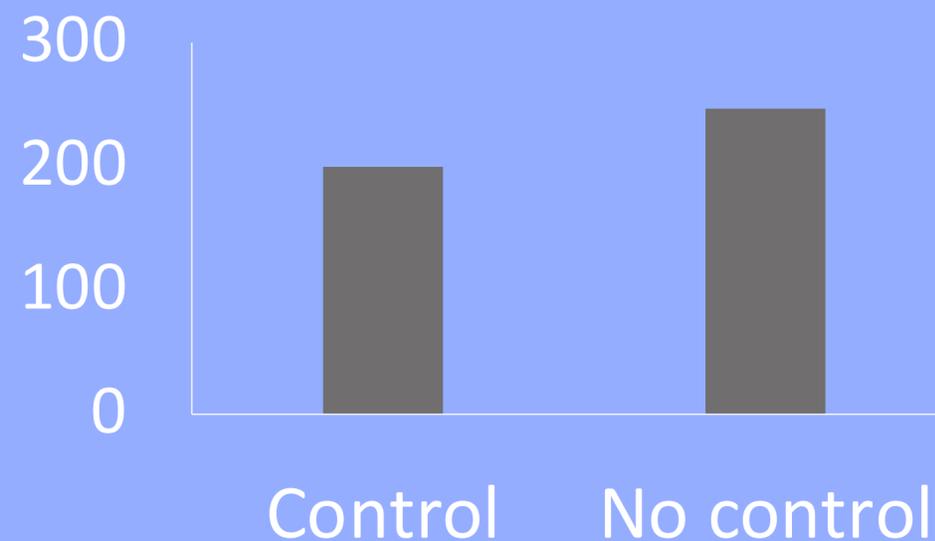
## Research question

How much evidence is there of coercive control in reports recorded by police for IPV episodes in New Zealand?

## Method

- Collected **446 police reports** for IPV episodes in Waikato and Canterbury from November 2018.
- Coded the presence of 5 types of controlling behaviours: economic, threatening, intimidating, isolating, and emotional control.
- Conducted descriptive statistics.

We found evidence of coercive controlling behaviours in **45%** of episodes in a sample of police reports of IPV



## Results

- Almost **half** of episodes included evidence of at least one form of controlling behaviour (n=200, 45%).
- The most common form of controlling behaviour recorded by police was **isolating** control (n=127, 28.5%), followed by **threatening** (n=53, 11.9%), **intimidating** (n=41, 9.2%), **emotional** (n=39, 8.7%), and **economic** control (n=16, 3.6%).
- Three quarters of reports that included evidence of controlling behaviours only included one type of control (n=148, 75%).

## Conclusions and future research

- This research suggests **police do record** evidence of coercive controlling behaviours in their reports, which supports the idea police could **prosecute perpetrators** if coercive control becomes a criminal offence in the future.
- We found a **higher prevalence** of controlling behaviours in our sample of IPV police reports than Fanslow & Robinson (2011) in a random sample of women in New Zealand. Therefore, it is possible that people in police reports for IPV experience more coercive control than the general population.
- Future research should investigate what kinds of control police are more likely to detect and record, and develop training programs to help police identify less obvious forms of coercive control.

## References

- Fanslow, J. L., & Robinson, E. M. (2011). Sticks, stones, or words? Counting the prevalence of different types of intimate partner violence reported by New Zealand women. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, 20, 741-759. doi: 10.1080/10926771.2011.608221
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