

What Can the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) be used for?

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Relationship Types

Men who assault women

There have been 22 validation studies since the ODARA development research with men who assaulted their marital, cohabiting, or dating partner. Most studies are by researchers not associated with the ODARA authors. The ODARA interpretation table can be used to identify men's risk of recidivism based on the ODARA score. The table also shows how a man's risk of IPV recidivism compares with other men. Men with higher ODARA scores are more likely to reoffend than men with lower scores, and they reoffend sooner, commit more serious offenses, and cause more injury.

Women who assault men

There have been 8 validation studies with women who assaulted their intimate partner. Also, a not-yet peer-reviewed study of the ODARA in Maine with 90 women found the ODARA predicted IPV recidivism well for women. However, studies of women tend to be small, often include ineligible cases (women who did not physically assault their partner) and have inconsistent results. Therefore, it has not yet been possible to create an ODARA interpretation table for women. The existing ODARA interpretation table likely overestimates women's recidivism because women reoffend less than men. The ODARA can be used for comparing women to other women: women with higher ODARA scores are more likely to reoffend than women with lower scores.

Marital and cohabiting partners

The ODARA was developed in research with individuals who were married to or living with their partners, either at the time of the index assault or previously. Most ODARA validation studies clearly include marital and cohabiting partners in their samples.

Dating partners

Several ODARA validation studies included individuals who were dating their partners, ranging from 9% to over 70% of the sample. Some studies also included IPV against dating partners when scoring the ODARA items such as pre-index domestic assault.

Types of Abuse

Physical and Sexual IPV

The ODARA is used for assessing the risk that an individual who has physically assaulted their intimate partner will assault an intimate partner again in the future. This includes physical contact with the partner, and also includes throwing something that makes physical contact with the partner.

The use of force to coerce the partner into having sexual contact is also included.

Threats of death with weapon in hand in the victim's presence

The ODARA is also used for assessing the risk of future intimate partner violence by an individual who has made a threat of death towards their partner, while holding a weapon and being in their physical presence. This behavior meets the criteria for an index assault.

What the ODARA should NOT be used for

Due to insufficient data, the ODARA is not yet recommended for assessing risk in:

- Individuals who identify as trans gender
- Individuals who are or were in a same-sex relationship with their partner

Research in these circumstances is currently underway

Due to evidence of lack of validity, the ODARA is not recommended for:

- Assessing risk in cases without physical violence

A study of individuals who did not commit physical or sexual IPV or make an eligible threat of death found that the ODARA did not predict new domestic incidents. However, if the most recent incident does not meet these criteria but a prior incident does, the prior incident should be used to score the ODARA.

Information current as of May 2024. For more information see Hilton (2021) Domestic Violence Risk Assessment, 2nd ed.