Presentation title:

Developing a tool for predicting harm to police

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In 2022 New Zealand Police implemented the Tactical Response Model, a multifaceted initiative aiming to improve staff safety. This initiative included new Tactical Intelligence analysts to identify and prioritise persons of interest who pose a high risk of seriously harming police—through use of firearms or serious assault—to inform proactive preventive policing activities to reduce that risk. Principled and equitable prioritisation and prevention activities need to be informed by predictions that are as accurate and fair as possible. New Zealand Police's Evidence Based Policing Centre thus collaborated with the National Intelligence Centre to develop an automated risk assessment tool that predicts people's risk of using firearms against or seriously assaulting police. The purpose of the tool is to support the identification and prioritisation of persons of interest by using police data to improve efficiency and consistency and avoid bias while leveraging the best of existing analytic practice. This presentation describes the development of the tool, with a view to exemplifying the many considerations involved in developing predictive algorithms that enable principled and equitable law enforcement activity. We cover the current state of the (sparse) published literature on predictors of violence against police, the approach taken to research design, variable construction, model building and model assessment, and the process governing such emerging technologies in New Zealand. We also discuss the opportunities and challenges presented by police data in this context, the issues inherent in predicting such (thankfully) rare events, and the results of the research to date.