THE DATAFIED OFFENDER:

EXAMINING THE USE OF ALGORITHMIC ANALYTICS WITHIN A CANADIAN POLICE SERVICE'S INTEGRATED OFFENDER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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Background

- Integrated Offender Management (IOM) emerged in the UK in the early 2000s as a multi-agency approach to persistent, prolific, and high-harm offending (Cram, 2020; 2023; 2024).
- IOM combines traditional police enforcement with rehabilitative case management to address criminogenic needs, such as substance use, housing instability, and pro-criminal networks (Annison et al., 2015).
- Evidence of its effectiveness remains limited and mixed: some evaluations report modest reductions in offending, reoffending, and police demand (Hadfield et al., 2021; Williams, 2025).
- Program outcomes appear context-dependent, shaped by local implementation, inter-agency coordination, organizational resources/support and police occupational culture (Sleath & Brown, 2019).

Methods

- **Study Site:** Large municipal police service in Western Canada, serving 1.2+ million residents.
- **Service Composition:** ~2,000 sworn officers, 900 civilian members
- **IOM Model:** Three-way partnership between sworn police officers, civilian social navigators, and a contracted healthcare provider
- **Client Selection:** Individuals ranked through a Data Matrix system based on offending histories, risk acuity and harm (qualitative and quantitative data). Routine case management is then applied for those eligible and selected into the program (see Figure 1)

Data Collection and Analysis: Semi-structured interviews were conducted between August and October 2024, ranging from 45 minutes to two hours. Transcripts were analyzed by three researchers using Braun and Clarke's (2019) reflexive thematic analysis. Figures 2 and 3 show participant breakdown by IOM program involvement and gender (N=32).

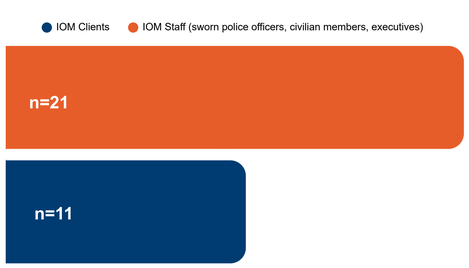


Figure 2: Total Sample based on IOM Program Involvement

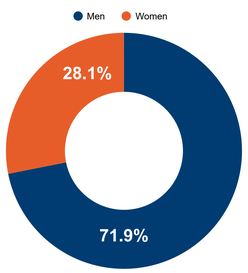


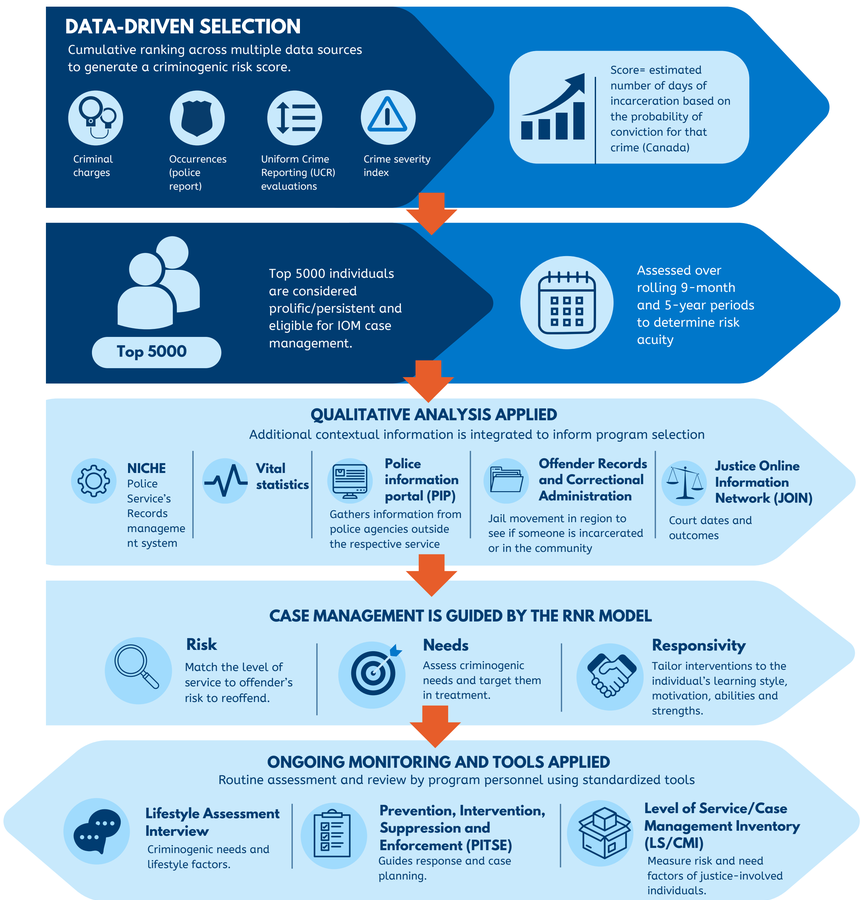
Figure 3: Gender Distribution for Total Sample

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Research Questions

1. How do IOM staff (police and civilian) and clients understand the use of algorithmic data to identify prolific or persistent offenders?
2. How does being designated a prolific or persistent offender shape clients' experiences of privacy, consent, and surveillance?
3. How do staff and clients weigh public safety against individual privacy, and do they see the process as fair and legitimate?

Figure 1: IOM Selection and Service Model



Results

Perceptions of Data-driven Policing

"My point of view? .. now I can't go do s---. [But] having someone like him [IOM staff], it's just, there's more in it now. It's like, I don't want to disappoint my family. I also don't want to disappoint him because of the s--- he's done for me." ***(Client)***

"If you're able to kind of back it up with "okay well this particular person has done this many crimes" and all that kind of stuff and "this is causing a lot of crime within this area," we should probably go and spend some time in that area. It just makes sense as opposed to just driving around aimlessly and not having any direction." ***(Senior Officer)***

Awareness of Algorithmic Selection Process

"And the way that she [IOM officer] explained the program makes it very easy for you to understand that, like, listen, "we're here for you to help you with these things that you shouldn't even get." They don't say it, but you shouldn't even get it. But we're going to give it to you because we're trying to lower the crime rate. That's the reality." ***(Client)***

"I think I can explain to them [IOM Clients] well enough why they've been chosen to the point where I've never had any sort of pushback or even like their lawyers, for example, never say 'you need to justify even further why my client has been identified.' I kind of just say you've been identified, these are the numbers. I guess I blindly trust that side of the house is taking care of business." ***(IOM Officer)***

"So sad, too bad" : Implications of Surveillance

"I did get pulled over a couple times and the street cops told me, like, we know you're in this program and we can pull it if you want... She [IOM officer] knows every step I make anyway, like it's crazy. I don't mind [being watched]. It keeps me on my toes. Plus, it looks good for me in court too." ***(Client)***

"I don't think it would infringe on someone's privacy rights in my opinion because I think the protection of the community and the protection of the vulnerable people should trump any other type of privacy claim in terms of somebody feeling violated, if they are the violator." ***(IOM Officer)***

Discussion & Conclusion

IOM highlights a central tension between using data to advance public safety and ensuring that risk classifications do not come to define individuals or compromise privacy rights, autonomy and informed consent in surveillance. Findings revealed limited understanding among both IOM staff (police and civilian) and clients of how data-driven selection operated, with few questioning how or why individuals were selected into the program. Notably, similarities between client and staff accounts raise questions about whether clients' acceptance of these practices may be shaped by their receipt of program supports. Given the limitations of our single-unit study, future research should examine whether more compassionate policing models help to foster legitimacy and acceptance of data-driven practices across policing contexts.