

Question bank for violence

This question bank provides **example questions** to explore violence risk that will need to be tailored to the individual. **Note:** This is not an exhaustive list and is *not* intended to be used in a prescriptive manner or as a checklist.

General tips when starting a violence risk assessment interview

- Approach the interview process in a trauma informed and sensitive way.
- Explain the purpose of the interview, inform the person about confidentiality (including the limits to confidentiality) and gain informed consent to undertake the Violence Risk Assessment and Management (VRAM) tool assessment.
- Normalise the process as much as possible by letting people know that they are not the only ones asked these questions and who have this type of assessment.
- If at all possible, start with a discussion that is not related to violence or clinical pathology and allow the person space to share their story on their own terms.
- Start with broad, open ended questions and 'funnel' down into more targeted, violence related questions.
- You may need to meet with the person over several sessions.
- Questions should explore thoughts, feelings and behaviours associated with current and past violence. Explore with the person what was happening for them at the time (e.g. stressors, life changes) and what occurred after (e.g. how did they feel, any repercussions).
- Clarifying and summarising questions are a useful way to avoid misunderstandings.
- Use language the person uses/identifies with e.g. if they describe violence as 'getting aggro', use their words if their words are safe to use and do not contribute to self discrimination or self stigma.
- Try to differentiate between thoughts, feelings and behaviours.
- Try to capture a person's responses to critical information verbatim so you can use these quotes to illustrate your point when writing your VRAM.
- Remember to always check out the person's level of insight, judgement and capacity to make decisions (a current **Mental State Examination** (MSE) will need to accompany all violence risk screening and/or assessment).

Protective factors

- What do you enjoy doing? Do you have any hobbies?
- When you start to feel angry or upset, what do you notice (thoughts, feelings, behaviours). What do you think other people notice?
- When you want someone to talk to, or need some help, who do you reach out to?
- Are there things you do that help you not become violent? What are they?

General questions for physical violence and/or property damage

- When you've been upset or angry, how do you show that? Recall the worst argument you have had-tell me more about that?
- Have you every thrown objects? Damaged property? Punched or kicked property?
- Have you ever been hurt or injured in an argument? How did you respond to that?
- How close have you come to hurting someone? What happened?
- Have you ever hurt anyone? How come?
- What is the most physically aggressive thing you have ever done? Tell me more.
- Do you ever get into trouble at school? Suspended or excluded? What happened?
- Have the police ever been involved or attended for a fight/argument/conflict?
 - When was this? Why? Who else was involved?
 - What was going on for you at the time?
 - When else were the police involved?
- I noticed in your medical records that you were arrested in XXXX, can you tell me a little more about that?
- Timeline approach: I want to hear your story from the beginning. Tell me about the first fight you ever had.
 - Who was it with? Where? Why?
 - What was going on for you at the time?
 - When was your next fight?

Target victim(s)

- Do you feel you need to protect yourself at present? Against what/who? Why do you feel this way?
- Do you currently feel angry towards anybody or is there anybody you would like to 'teach a lesson' or 'get even' with? How come?
- Do you ever think about or picture hurting someone? Who? How come?
- How often do you have these thoughts?
- What do you think about or picture yourself doing?
- Do you think you will/have you ever acted on these thoughts?
- Do you think there's anyone who seems to be out to get you/hurt you or done you wrong? How are you protecting yourself from them? What would you do if you saw them?

Triggers for violence

- What or who triggers your anger and aggression? Why?
- Are there things trigger you more quickly or immediately? What are they?
- Are there things that you would say are more slowly triggering? So, they might be things that you spend a lot of time thinking around? Or things you get stuck on, or dwell on, in your mind?
- Tell me about the last time you felt really angry/you behaved aggressively? What was going on for you at the time?

Alcohol and drugs

- Have you ever been violent when using alcohol or drugs?
- What did you do?

Charges/legal orders

- Have you ever been in trouble with the police or had any charges?
- What were the outcomes e.g. diversion?
- Have you ever had a Domestic and Family Violence Order (DVO) against you?
- Have you gone to court because of violence?
- What were the outcomes/what happened when you went to court?

Weapons

May include everyday items (i.e. chair, kitchen knife) and legal/illegal weapons (i.e. crossbows, firearms, 3D printed guns, paintball guns, flick knives, martial arts equipment, bombs, explosives).

- Have you ever used an item or object, like a knife, tool, or gun, to hurt others or protect yourself?

Further prompts:

- What did you use?
- How did you access the [insert name of object/item]?
- When was this?
- What was the purpose?
- Who did you use the [item/weapon] on?
- Were they injured/were you injured? To what extent?
- Do you have access to a weapon/where is it now?
- Where do you store the weapon?
- Have you moved it closer recently (e.g. from the safe to the lounge room)?
- Do you keep the weapon loaded/ready to use?
- Have you ever wished you had access to a weapon like a gun when you were angry?
- Have you ever felt the need to carry a weapon for protection?

If there is an **immediate safety risk** or concern about a weapon, notify QPS by **calling 000** (Triple Zero). For less urgent matters, contact Policelink (131 444) or your local police station.

If health practitioners are of the opinion that a person is an unsuitable person to possess a firearm it is mandatory to make a QPS notification. For further information, including the

Notification to Weapons Licensing form, see: Mental and physical health | QPS

<https://www.police.qld.gov.au/weapon-licensing/mental-and-physical-health>

Threats

- Have you ever made threats to harm someone? How? (e.g. verbally, social media)

Further prompts:

- Who was the threat directed to? When?
- What did you say/write (e.g. type of threat such as suicidal, homicidal, of physical violence, mass violence, of sexual violence, property damage or veiled threats?)
- Did you act on the threat?
- Have you made any plans to act? Or accessed any means?
- Do you still want to harm the person now?

Domestic and family violence

Introductory

- Who do you live with at the moment?
- How do you get along with the people you live with?
- How many long term relationships have you had in your life?
 - Can you tell me a bit more about why the last ones ended?
- Are you in a current serious/romantic relationship?
- How are things at home/with your partner?
- Most couples argue sometimes, how do you and your partner handle disagreements or conflicts?

More targeted

- Do you think your partner (or children) are ever scared of you?
- Have you ever said or done anything that you later regretted?
- Do you ever feel jealous when your partner is with other people?
- What do you think about your partner working/studying outside the home?
- What do you think about your partner spending time with their family/friends?
- Do you expect your partner to do what you want them to? Do you shout at your partner or treat them differently if they don't do what they are told?
- Have you ever pushed or hit your partner?
- Have you ever threatened to hurt your partner? With a weapon?
- Have you ever hurt your partner?
- Have the police ever attended for an argument or fight?

If working with the **victims of DFV**, reach out to your local DFV coordinator [Contacts and referrals | Queensland Health Intranet](#), and there are tools you can use to support the assessment as well:

- [Domestic and family violence common risk and safety framework](#)
- [Domestic and family violence risk assessment tool - Level 2](#)

Fire setting

- Have you ever intentionally set a fire, other than in a fireplace or firepit?

Further prompts:

- When? How come you set the fire?
- Had you been thinking about setting the fire for a long time beforehand?
- What did you use to start the fire?
- What was the outcome/did anyone get hurt/property loss?
- How many fires have you set in your life? Tell me about each one, let's start at the beginning.

Grievances

- Do you ever feel you have been treated unfairly?
- Do you feel that someone/a group/an organisation has done the wrong thing by you?
- Do you still feel that way about them now?
- Have you ever taken action to address being treated unfairly/wronged?
- What did you do? What would you do? What has stopped you?

High risk psychotic symptoms (associated with increased risk of violence)

Command hallucinations

- Sometimes when people are stressed, they hear things that others can't hear such as footsteps, music, noises or voices. Does this ever happen to you?

Further prompts:

- Can you tell me a bit more about what you experience?
 - Do they ever tell/command you to do things? (if present, explore both harm to self and harm to others)
 - What do they ask you to do?
 - Do you follow their instructions?
 - How do these experiences make you feel? (e.g. distress, anger, fear).

Delusions

Sometimes people feel like others are watching them too closely or people might be trying to hurt them, harm them or make their lives difficult in some way. Has this been happening to you?

If yes, ask: Tell me a bit more about what you have noticed?

Delusional jealousy

- Is there anything in your current relationship that you find worrying/troubling/challenging?
- Do you ever worry that your partner might be unfaithful?

Further prompts if yes

- On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 not convinced/10 totally convinced), how convinced are you that your partner is unfaithful or this person is an imposter?
- What makes you believe this might be the case?
- How often do you worry about/think about this?
- Is there anything that might change your mind?
- Have you had similar worries of unfaithfulness or imposters with other partners/people in the past?
- Have you ever tried to harm the person you think they were unfaithful with before?
- Have you ever tried to harm your partner before?

Delusional misidentification

- Have you noticed anything unusual or a little different that you can't quite explain about anyone close to you recently?
- Do you feel like anyone close to you or around you is/are imposters?
- Who?

Note: Check in around the presence of any current or past controlling and/or monitoring behaviours, especially in relation to delusional jealousy.

Beliefs about a special purpose/mission

- Do you ever feel that you have a special role or mission that others don't have?

Further prompts:

- Tell me about the mission/special role (e.g. What is it? How long has it been going on? Who else is involved?)
- How do you know this is your role? What tells you that?
- Might you need to harm someone in order to fulfil your mission/role?

Sexual harm

- Have you had someone reject your sexual advances in the past? How did you feel? What did you do?
- How do you initiate having sex with someone?
- What does consent mean to you? What do you think this involves doing?
- Have you ever continued sexual activity after someone said no?
- Have you ever pressured someone into having sex?
- Have you ever been accused of or charged with a sexual offence? Towards whom? What happened? When?
- How do you feel about this now?

Sexual interest in children

- What age can people have sex? Or what is the age that you would say that a person would be too young to have sex?
- What do you think the dangers are of people under the age of consent becoming involved in sex?
- Have you ever thought about children in a sexual way?
- Have you ever viewed child pornography?
- Have you ever been sexually involved with children?

Stalking (repeated unwanted contacts)

- Have you ever tried to contact someone when they did not want to be contacted?

Further prompts:

- Who? How often were you contacting them? Why were you contacting them?
- How did you go about contacting them? (e.g. phone, social media, showing up to their home/workplace/places you knew they frequented)
- Why were you contacting them?

- Has anyone ever asked you to stop contacting them?

Further prompts:

- Who? Why? When?
- How did it make you feel when you were asked not to contact them?

- Have you ever thought about/pictured hurting/harming them?