This report provides an overview of high risk, violent offenders in Canada, legislation that deals with offenders who pose a serious risk of reoffending in a violent manner and the criteria required to meet the dangerous offender designation. The legislation is based, in part, on the premise that violence can be reliably predicted. However, the legislation does not require the use of actuarial risk assessment.

For the purpose of this study, the files of designated dangerous offenders and detained offenders were reviewed to evaluate how well high risk, violent offenders were being identified. Furthermore, a follow-up of detained inmates who recidivated violently permitted creation of profiles of some very high risk, violent offenders. The results showed that both designated dangerous offenders and detention cases are indeed, high risk offenders.

The authors contend that while some empirically based instruments could be useful in assessing the potential for violence, further research is needed to improve the predictive accuracy of such instruments.