Violence prevention resources must be a priority for individuals, groups and communities.
Someone who experiences intimate partner violence, most often women, should be able to receive assistance from community and criminal justice resources, such as shelters, legal advocacy, and counseling. These resources all contribute to a common goal – that is, violence reduction. Increasing the accessibility and number of resources available to victims and perpetrators is a step in the right direction.

That imperative is driving the research of University of Guelph Prof. Myrna Dawson, a Canada Research Chair in Public Policy in Criminal Justice. She's creating a dataset to document the distribution of domestic violence resources available across Ontario, and hopes that ultimately her efforts will lead to more information for those experiencing violence and those concerned with violence prevention.

She's also planning to compare the number of resources to the number of crimes identified as intimate partner violence across jurisdictions. Her theory is that a community with a high number of resources available will have less violence.

Identifying resources (or the lack of them) in specific jurisdictions to assist those who've experienced violence is just the first step. Further research in this area will seek to explain why those resources are not available. Then, Dawson and her team will be able to develop solutions that will meet the community's needs and reduce violence.

"My ultimate goal is prevention, but prevention can't occur until we communicate, cooperate and collaborate with community agencies and the public," says Dawson. "It's about increasing collaboration so prevention can actually move forward."

Some current and past sponsors of her research include the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Canada Research Chairs program, Department of Justice Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

By Karen Ball