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# Otago Daily Times

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## Children most often killed by mothers

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New Zealand mothers kill more children than any other group in society and men are victims of domestic violence as often as women, a police investigation has found.

The Family Violence Death Review, released today by police, found mothers were responsible for 45 per cent of children killed by domestic violence.

The review of 95 family violence deaths involving 101 victims between 2004 and 2011 revealed some "inconvenient truths", Family First national director Bob McCoskrie said.

He said the statistics debunked the misleading popular perception "that women and children need to be protected from men".

"This gender focus is misleading," Mr McCoskrie said.

"If we're really serious about reducing family violence, we need to talk about ... our violent culture and the role alcohol and drugs play in fuelling this environment."

The police report - which only involved deaths that were subject to a Family Violence Death Review - found:

- Victims were spread almost equally between men, women and children
- Mothers killed 15 of the 33 child victims
- 81 per cent of female victims and 29 per cent of male victims were killed by a former or current spouse or partner
- 64 per cent of all deaths were in families where police had prior involvement
- In 55 per cent of child deaths police had prior involvement with the family
- Most suspects or offenders were aged in their 20s.

University of Otago Professor David Fergusson, an expert on domestic violence, said the public perception that men were the perpetrators of most domestic violence was the result of biased publicity.

"The proper message is that both gender groups have a capacity for domestic violence [and] women probably perpetrate more assaults on children than men do," Mr Fergusson said.

The ramifications are a public health system that tends to overlook male victims of domestic violence.

One example was White Ribbon Day, which he had been critical of because it focused on female survivors of domestic violence and

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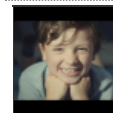
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there was "no comparable day for male victims".

"It is those biases which have been built into our system right the way through it, largely from feminist rhetoric that implies that males are always to blame.

"The bottom line is the importance of public policy being based on evidence."

Mr Fergusson said dealing with child abuse "certainly needs to be a lot more of a priority than it's given".

Education should be the cornerstone for parents, particularly to learn how to cope with the stresses associated with a newborn.

"I think that by a series of programs targeted at teaching parents better skills, giving them support, we can minimise the risk of child abuse."

Labour's women's affairs spokeswoman Sue Moroney said the report showed "police must resume reporting full family violence statistics so we can get the full picture".

National crime manager Detective Superintendent Rod Drew said police had introduced ways to deal with domestic violence since 2004, including a risk analysis tool.

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### History of abuse

2012: An Auckland mother, 31, jailed for seven-and-a-half years for "sustained abuse, amounting to torture" including tearing off her nine-year-old daughter's toenail and pouring salt on the wound

2010: A 29-year-old mother found guilty in the High Court at Auckland for leaving her 13-month-old son in a deep bath where he toppled over and drowned

2010: A mother, 29, sentenced in the High Court at Christchurch for killing her newborn daughter and hiding her body in a wardrobe

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### It's about time

Submitted by ColinE on Wed, 26/09/2012 - 3:36pm.

It's about time someone brought these sort of figures to light. I suspect that domestic violence is even more evenly distributed than this suggests - I know from personal experience that if a man is attacked by his partner, support is rarely forthcoming. It is seen as a joke by the same authorities who are only too ready to step in if the woman is the victim. There are a lot of assumptions made that are quite often very incorrect.

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### Domestic violence reporting

Submitted by David77 on Tue, 25/09/2012 - 10:56pm.

This study echoes the Dunedin Multi-disciplinary study findings that women initiated domestic violence at least as often as men. Professor Fergusson rightly blames biased publicity - in the media perhaps - for this lack of balance. Men who commit violence tend to receive tougher sentences than women for similar offences. It's about time equality was applied right across society rather than just the issues where women are disadvantaged; men get a raw deal in many areas and just have to 'suck it up' most of the time.

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