

Mind the Gap: What those in the field say about male victims of family violence

September 22, 2016

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Forward

This report is founded on initial research completed with financial support under the Department of Internal Affairs Community Internship Programme. The project was completed in a partnership between the Canterbury Men's Centre (CMC) and the now defunct Alcohol and Drug Administration of New Zealand (ADANZ). Thanks to them for their help with this project. The interview and results from this research form the backbone of this more comprehensive report.

This report is a summary of what professionals in the field of family violence think about the issues and needs of male victims of family violence. We've chosen to let the respondents speak for themselves and to leave the interpretation of the literature around this issue to others. Appendix 3 does supply a starting point for those that want to pursue this further.

Doing research in the area of domestic violence especially when it regards male victims can be controversial. Many people working with men and in the area of domestic violence shared their reflections with us despite this and we hope that they feel like the information they shared has been treated respectfully in this report.

To the reader we hope that any quotes you see be taken with generosity in your interpretation. While this research is focused on male victims and their stories and we didn't include "the other side" in the representation our respondents did in various ways. They all genuinely cared about what they had seen happening to the women and families they work with and they extended that care to the men they spoke about.

Executive Summary

Men in New Zealand are experiencing a wide range of domestic violence and it is harmful to them as well as to those that are close to them. A significant body of that domestic violence is in mutual form.

There is some confusion and/or disagreement about how large the problem of male victimization is.

There is general agreement about what should be done about the issues to improve them but a recognition that resourcing is not currently allocated to specifically male victim issues or to inclusion of male victims in other ways (media campaigns).

Men are generally denied specialized support services but some services are offered in some cases to them. They rarely receive care when they come to the attention of the police despite coming to their attention in significant numbers.

Men are more reluctant than women to seek care when they are victims of domestic violence for various reasons.

Methodology

As mentioned in the forward the bulk of the information contained in this report came as a result of information gathered due to a Department of Internal Affairs grant. In the project the following was done:

1. A literary review of male victims drawing in international and New Zealand data was performed and a summary document was created (Appendix 2).
2. A list of those professionals that may be able to comment was created and they were asked to participate. They were also asked to suggest others. These were then sent the summary document for comment. A list of those to be interviewed was created at this point.
3. An interview questionnaire was sent out and replies were received to be included in the report. The interviewer/researcher, Shelley Johnson, then spoke to those that agreed to participate at this level.
4. At this point a brief report was written.
5. The CMC then directed its Manager Donald Pettitt to compile this more robust summary based on the available data. The respondents were approached about quotes we wished to include in the report and they agreed to do so.

Respondents

The original interviews were given to:

- “Domestic Violence Worker” A range of community workers with direct experience in the domestic violence field. Those working in the field largely have contracts focused on male perpetrators and the quotes should take this into account.
- “Community Worker” A range of community workers who have experience with male victims of domestic violence
- Community workers informed about gay/Maori/and youth situations
- General Practitioners with some experience in domestic violence
- Police with significant experience in domestic violence interventions

A special thanks to those who shared their knowledge.

How large is the issue of male victims of family violence in NZ?

There was some confusion and/or disagreement about how large the problem of male victimization is. All respondents agree that men are experiencing domestic and intimate partner violence to some degree and are harmed by it.

Deaths

One thing that few in the New Zealand context appreciate is that men are approximately 43% of the adult family violence deaths (see image below). Men are also a high proportion of elder family violence deaths at 72%. They are a low proportion of intimate partner violence deaths, 24% (areyouok.org.nz/family-violence/statistics/).

The screenshot shows the 'areyouok.org.nz' website. At the top left is the logo 'FAMILY VIOLENCE IT'S NOT OK' and 'IT IS OK TO ASK FOR HELP'. To the right is the phone number '0800 45'. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links: 'FAMILY VIOLENCE', 'I NEED HELP', 'I WANT TO HELP', 'I WANT CHANGE', 'PERSONAL STORIES', and 'RESC'. Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail: 'Home > Family violence > Statistics'. On the left is a sidebar titled 'IN THIS SECTION' with links: 'It's not just physical', 'Partners', 'Young People', 'Children', 'Migrant families', 'Older people', and 'Disabled people'. The main content area is titled 'Statistics' and contains the following text: 'About half of all homicides in New Zealand are committed by an offender who is identified as family. (1)', 'NZ Police recorded a family violence investigation on average every five and a half minutes in 2014. (2a) 76% of family violence incidents are NOT reported to Police. (2b)', '101,981 family violence investigations were recorded by NZ Police in 2014, up 7% from 95,101 in 2013. (3)', and a highlighted red box: 'In the four years from 2009 to 2012, an average of 13 women, 10 men, and 9 children were killed each year as a result of family violence'. (4)

Police Reports

Men are a significant number of the total victims of family violence that come to police attention in New Zealand each year. Police statistics regarding adult victims of assault by family members for the 12 months to May 2016 find that 25% are male (see Appendix 1 for table). For children 14 years and under 54% of police reported victims were male (see Appendix 1 for table).

What are the causes of the abuse

The respondents suggested the following drivers.

Alcohol, when things get stressful, money or small/unsatisfactory accommodation. (Youth Worker)

A lot of people don't realise that this abuse can be caused by extreme anxiety. People do it because they are so fearful that they control that person. If women are facing these issues it is a risk factor for abuse. People don't look for it. (Youth Worker)

I think women are becoming more aggressive and assaultive. Women know how to push the psychological buttons of males to push them to and beyond their limits to make them snap. Males can also do this but there are certainly more and more aggressive behaviour by females not just in domestic related matters. (Police Officer)

In the Asian community. The husband has had a drug issue or an alcohol issue and it's very difficult in Asian's who want to separate because of the shame issues. They will not want to let their families back home know about what happens. (General Practitioner)

A couple of the girls that I met, they had a terrible relationship with their mother. So it was a jealousy. When they actually saw their partner having a good relationship with their mother, then the jealousy was well I don't have a mother, I don't have a good relationship, I'll take yours away from you. (Community Worker)

There'll be a large minority where it takes two to have the fight. The police will arrive and send the male off and later on you'll hear different, that there was more going on. There were certainly other instances where it's got nothing to do with drugs alcohol or any other issues but someone with a mental health issue, in this case the female, has gotten into the habit of assaulting the male. The ones that I can think of were quite ambivalent about what to do. (General Practitioner)

Why aren't male victims showing up in the systems?

Men are showing up in the systems though not to the same degree as women. As mentioned earlier 25% of adult victims noted by the police are male (Appendix 1)

The respondents mentioned a few reasons for men not being more highly represented in our systems with most of those reasons not being experienced by female victims to the same degree.

Rejection by the police

There were many claims by the respondents that they knew men that claimed to be rejected by police when they sought help or when the police became involved.

Men have reported that they've gone to the police with a perfectly legitimate issue around being assaulted or being the receiver of the violence and yet they are the ones who seem to be put on trial... And that story gets around and so men don't come forward. (Domestic Violence Worker)

(Interviewer) so if that guy (a mongrel mob member) went to the police and said my wife is beating me... They'd laugh. They'd say harden up, Get out of there. They say that when they ring the police, they say harden up. We had a guy chased with an axe. Chased with hammers fry pans beaten. And the police don't come out. But if the woman rings, they come out. So the police say, get out of there. I can't, she's stopping me. Just get out of there. And they'll lay a male assaults female charge on him. (Domestic Violence Worker)

There is risk in engaging with the police

I've had a couple of guys here who've been abused, they ring up the police and they describe it as if they were stupid to think that would work. They're the victim, the police come around, they get removed and yet it was them that made the phone call. It was them that made the complaint. Sometimes they hear that yeah, we get you were the one who phoned us up, and it takes two to tango and you're the guy. What was interesting for me was there was no anger in that guy. There was just an acceptance. I'm a guy. This is my life. (Community Worker)

Men are not screened for family violence issues in our health system

The Ministry of Health screens women for family violence and has issued instructions to do so to all District Health Boards. They choose not to screen men arguing that it isn't as significant a health issue for men as it is for women.

Why are men not screened for partner abuse?

The [Family Violence Intervention Guidelines: Child and Partner Abuse](#) (Ministry of Health 2002) recommends that men be assessed if there is a suspicion that they have been abused.

Partner violence for men does not meet the criteria for a health-screening programme due to lack of evidence of health impact. A New Zealand study demonstrates that males who have been hit by females partners report needing no first aid, medical or hospital treatment compared with 9 percent of women who were hit by their male partners (Langley et al 1997).

Kimmel (2002) acknowledges that prevalence rates of males reporting violence from partners may compare those reported by females. He also notes that perpetrators of systematic, persistent and serious violence are predominantly men.

<http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/preventative-health-wellness/family-violence/family-violence-questions-and-answers>

Many men don't seek support/don't have as many doorways

Men are commonly known to show less help seeking behavior overall than women. Victim disclosures happen in many different support venues but men being engaged by fewer of these for a range of health and social needs leads to less opportunities for engagement and education when they are victims. The following comments reflect this issue.

I think it's men not knowing that it's family violence when it is. And there's also the idea that men can fix their own stuff, and only going for help as a point of last resource. There's something to be said for shame. How can they go in when their partners are attacking them? Being seen as they should be able to handle it. "How come you let it get like this"? (Domestic Violence Worker)

I've never actually had a male come to me and say they're the victim of domestic violence. However I have a lot of young women that say they are physically abusing their partners. So obviously it's happening a lot more than people would realize but obviously men don't feel like seeking help. (Youth Worker)

I think why men don't report is that is that in the context of the norm of violence they don't see the push they get or the slap they get as being particularly violent. Violence for a lot of guys is being physically being beaten up to a pulp. (Domestic Violence Worker)

Very few people ask men about it. And even if men are asked you need to ask men three times before they admit it is happening. (Youth Worker)

The males knows very definitely that they're being beaten up and they don't know what to do. Some will say that I'm going to end the relationship. But I hear three months later that no, they're still in there. They say no I can cope. But I really do get worried about their sense of who they are because it seems that just like a woman there's erosion of their self-worth. They come in grieving for that. (General Practitioner)

We have very few men come to us and say I'm a victim of family violence. So it's hard to put a figure on that. And often if they are presenting to us as a victim of family violence the perpetrator is another man. The ex-husband or the new boyfriend. So one of the main dynamics of male victims of family violence is that very few of them report to us where they are the victims of women's family violence perpetrated by women. (We know it is happening) but they're not coming forward. (Police Officer)

What we do know is we're males. So we've got to live in a male patriarchal dominated society. We accept that women are victims. Males are not allowed to be victims in a patriarchal society. So therefore you're a victim here and you're living in a patriarchal society however you're also living in a society where you're automatically seen as a perpetrator as well regardless because you're a male. (Community Worker)

I think there are a number of blocks. The biggest one is just embarrassment or shame. What will my mates think of me? The socialisation of men is that men don't get abused. And if men get abused, therefore I must be unique, therefore I won't go and report it. I think that's the biggest block. I think organisations like women's refuge are seen as only dealing with women. And so men don't access those kinds of services. They don't see it as something they could access. (Domestic Violence Worker)

One of the reasons men don't engage is that they see the support that is out there for women and they don't see the media support that says they can be victims of violence. (Domestic Violence Worker)

And that's another reason the men don't take up support is they have had chance to you know settle back in, settle into a routine, and they've had an apology, and they don't want to rock the boat, trying to make things right. (Domestic Violence Worker)

What Are Men Experiencing as Victims?

Men in New Zealand are experiencing a wide range of domestic violence and it is harmful to them as well as to those that are close to them. A significant body of that domestic violence is in mutual form.

What behavior are the abusers showing?

We have a Wahine programme with regards to violence as well. This is not something that's funded by anybody but CYF and those women have a tendency to come out and say, yeah, I smashed him with a glass ashtray. And I threw something and it hit. Look, we do have violent women out there. Realllly violent women. (Domestic Violence Worker)

It may be in the related topic of men who don't get to see their children when they've been removed from custody or any access to their children. The woman has been aggressive or litigious and they are bereft of what to do. So it's more of a long term emotional abuse. (General Practitioner)

If you sat and observed a couple of cars of teenagers you'll find that the most vocal and the most aggressive will be the women. And it is a challenge for our society, sadly for our society that for some women the slow process of equality has meant that I can act as bad as the men do...in fact I can do a better job than the men do. (Police Officer)

Many of the women I've spoken to who abuse their male partners freely admit that it's not their boyfriend or partner's problem. It's something that I've done. (Youth Worker)

I've got a picture in my head of clients that have told me, they've already gone to an anger management course, and they've decided because they are fearful they're going to be violent they decided to leave the relationship and there's one she held a knife to his neck when he tried to walk out, and another had a knife thrown at his back, he tried to walk out the door and the knife hit the small of his back, but she was so furious that he was walking away to take care of his own emotions, his own behaviour and he copped this stuff. Clients have come in and talked about their CDs being smashed by their partner because they are angry about something. (Domestic Violence Worker)

We've had younger boys and what would really get them is when they were told they were mommy's boys. You're still tied to your mother's aprons and you run home when there's anything that doesn't work. Again that's not explained to men that that is verbal emotional abuse. Then they try to prove that they're not by cutting social ties with their family because the girlfriends say, if you look at it it's the same as men

separating women from their families, and doing the same thing. (Community Worker)

Plus her taking their cell phones and breaking them. That happens both ways or she's broken her phone because she's gotten violent and thrown it at the boy and then cried when she doesn't have a cell phone so he's been very gracious and given her his cell phone and he doesn't have one at all. (Community Worker)

Occasionally we hear that on the contact when they are doing changeovers, it might be the only contact they have with mother of the child anymore, they're getting hit at the changeover time. (Community Worker)

How is it affecting the victims?

I've found varying degrees of awareness of what abuse is. They have wives beating them, hitting them, throwing things at them, kick them frequently thru to verbal and emotional abuse, you could argue they are on a scale but actually often the impacts the same. It doesn't have to be physical for them to be really quite badly impacted by it. (Community Worker)

I hear the point of view that's put across is that the women feel more fear. And I can get my head around that. But the assumption is that men don't feel that fear. And I've worked with two clients, possibly more, that were terrified to go home at night. Would drive halfway up the drive and see their partner's car there. And they'd go away because they just couldn't stand the effect. They'd wait until she would go to work or go out and then they would go home. There's fear there. (Domestic Violence Worker)

All of these guys care about the abuse that they are receiving. That's one of the myths I don't understand. Every guy that I talk to who says their wife is abusing them cares about the fact that she is doing it. I don't get how we can think that it doesn't matter to a guy. (Community Worker)

"We may have been the king of the castle at one point in time but no more. How come my children are given to my ex, she drinks, she uses drugs, I don't, yes I hit her, however she goes out leaves the kids with a 15 year old kid. I'm the one looked at as the bad guy in CYFs eyes. I don't get to see my kids. I don't get it. I admit I hit her. I was frustrated. She needs to stop drinking. She needs to get her shit together. I know I stuffed up. It's ok for her to do what she did and I've got to sit on this line and make sure I balance." (Domestic Violence Worker)

I play golf, with a variety of people and I say I work in an organisation that supports men who experience family violence. It's amazing what I get told. "My friend is in a relationship...the stories that I get told are sometimes horrific. There's a guy who says the only time he feels safe is when he's out playing golf. Cause he's away from her. And yet they've got children, so he won't leave. (Domestic Violence Worker)

What harm happens to men in the reciprocal violence situations?

We see a lot of things around excess force. If males are going to get into trouble it'll be they clocked someone that they shouldn't have. You see we'll often see females giving them a clout and the males just go on seeing the red mist and then they'll go in way over the top in excess force. So then he ends up getting arrested and she doesn't. (Police Officer)

There's a lot complexities in family violence. Just because someone hits someone they're an offender for that incident but in fact technically they could be a victim of psychological violence for a long period of time. (Police Officer)

What is currently being done about male victims?

There are currently changes happening in the services relevant to victims in Canterbury. This author has not heard of any significant change in the care for male victims. The following describes the services that existed for men at the time the research was conducted.

Male victims that come to police attention are generally denied specialized support services for their victim issues and are reluctant to accept what is on offer. The majority of those male victims noted by the police are in mutually abusive relationships.

At the time of the research Victims Support was the one agency that responded to males that were victims and who are not a current or previous perpetrator. They are not a specialist in domestic violence services and are arguably not resourced to do so.

The domestic violence services that spoke to the researcher pointed out that they are contracted to work with male perpetrators and are not structured or resourced to work with male victims. One exception to this was Violence Service having a contract to support men that have initiated a protection order but they point out that this is rarely used.

A notable development that provides support for men using domestic violence (and who may have also experienced it) is the Aviva ReachOut Service. This service was initially piloted in North Canterbury and has been extended to Christchurch since 2014. The service is targeted at male perpetrators, but can support men who have experienced

violence by navigating them to appropriate support services, either within the extended Aviva team or via other agencies.

The Canterbury Men's Centre provides a generalist approach to services for males in Canterbury and their data shows them as having more men experiencing victim issues than perpetrator issues. This should be taken in the context that males that are clearly perpetrators have a number of alternative options for care. They do not have a referral process with the police in regards to male victims and point out that their clients are self-referred.

There is no concerted approach nationally or locally to make men (and the community) aware of their victim issues. The Canterbury Men's Centre has one page in a fairly well known resource (The Blokes Book) that points men toward available care services.

Despite the services and actions described above the respondents appeared to believe that there is generally a denial of care for men due to their gender.

What services have we got for males that are hurting? We've got prison. We've got very few services outside of a punishment place. Normally the moment a man's done something so now he'll get help. So how about services before he gets there. (Community Worker)

I think there's a gap there for males wanting assistance. I think there's a want there but where do they go to? (Police Officer)

There's nowhere to go for men if they need a safe space. Once they get the first no they aren't going to come back. (Domestic Violence Worker)

They're not going to tell their mates and a lot of the men we work with are not from Chch, they're not from the south island. In a way they displaced themselves they found women down here. A lot of them don't have anywhere to go. They are stuck. Where is the support for the men? There isn't any. (Domestic Violence Worker)

30 or 40% odd of our cases there is maternal mental health involved, post-natal depression as part of these stories. Probably most of the violent ones involve this... sometimes the guy is the only one that knows about the abuse and wants to be there for them but they end up being an unintended victim. (Community Worker)

The funding is for male perpetrators, not male victims. (Domestic Violence Worker)

Most (professionals) wouldn't know where to refer for specialist help around that area. I think in the court system there's some knowledge. I think in the court system they know, if in the odd case that a man will apply for a protection order then they will send him for support. There's some private people do that type of work but you have to be in that field

to know that. A social worker or a counsellor out in the community wouldn't know where to send them. (Domestic Violence Worker)

(On men seeking protection orders) They're not applying for them. They probably don't know, it's seen as a thing women get. We push protection orders a lot as a prevention tool for women obviously but I would like to think we wouldn't not recommend that to a man if we thought he needed it. The circumstances just don't seem to come up. (Police Officer)

Older Male Victims

Age Concern has a contract to care for those over 65 years old that are experiencing domestic violence. They work with male and female victims.

Men are the majority of elder abuse deaths at 77% of victims over the 2007-2013 calendar years (Appendix 2).

Certainly we deal with all kinds of abuse financial, physical neglect, property damage, men wouldn't readily come forward to tell us about abusive situation it's just that we're often in the house for another reason. We've had to do referrals by the police where there is domestic violence but that's usually the children or others like that not the spouse. (Elder Care Worker)

Fathers and sons. That's a tricky one. Mothers that won't put in boundaries on their behaviour and the partner ends up being abused by the son. In some ways it's actually the son who is the protagonist and the wife or partner, she's allowing it to happen by not putting in boundaries and the poor old guy is left to do the boundaries. In those cases the guy feels quite powerless as he either leaves and there's no relationship or he's like what does he do? (Domestic Violence Worker)

The men know that something's not right and they're not happy and they want something done about it. (Elder Care Worker)

A younger wife with an older person... men are a specific target. We do come across a lot of situations where there is a younger woman involved who suddenly wants to be involved with this man who he's buying gifts and paying bills and those sorts of things. We get a lot families coming in worried about that sort of situation. And a lot of these men are isolated and they just want companionship, lonely. That's a real risk factor for men, especially older men they become targets for younger women who can be very abusive in a domestic kind of setting. (Elder Care Worker)

We also have had a lot of cases in the last year of men engaging prostitutes as well and that's usually driven out of isolation and loneliness and then their vulnerability is noted and they got a lot of, not just financial abuse but a lot of psychological and um physical abuse as well. (Elder Care Worker)

Men having sex with men

The respondents in this section work with men having sex with men. They wished to point out that their reflections are drawn from a small number of clients and ask that their quotes be seen in this light.

Because there's so much stigma around HIV or fear around coming out as a gay man (if you are not out), there's an in for someone to have that over you in the way that manipulates you to do a certain thing or be a certain way.

I do wonder in the gay world one of the issues is the people are sometimes less committed to the relationship so they can be more short term and it could be that where this (DV) arises in the relationship ends more quickly than it might in heterosexual relationships. They're less bound together by children, and the social supports.

What Works

The benefit of couples counselling is that we can see that dynamic (power and control, etc.) and we can catch that moment and they can see it and how each party is contributing to the dynamic.

When you're talking about same sex relationship you can evade some of that social stereotyping of the genders and power imbalance and so on and maybe that's why the systems approach is more applicable. The way some of these things are conceptualised in heterosexual relationships is the woman is always seen as having less power. Whereas I think that's fairly clearly nonsense. In the gay scene it's very often the young person that's seen as having less power. Again I think that's nonsense.

Protection Orders

Protection orders issued to men were a significant theme in the respondents. All of the participants in this study valued protection orders to protect victims but pointed out some risks that a recipient of one carries as a result of them.

Men need support to understand the implications

They don't even read them. Three quarters of the men don't read their protection orders. So we have this DVD that is specifically around protection orders. It's got a lawyer speaking and someone from the family safety team and there's a cop who speaks on it as well. And it really opens their eyes. And the question goes out, why didn't you read it? When you were issued it you were told to read it. But they throw it away. (Domestic Violence Worker)

What I found working is young men were being sentenced, they wanted to see the children and go to the park or something hanging around the park and it's not allowed. We used to say to them too that when you come out you makes sure that when you get a phone call that says why don't you come around and have a coffee or something and we say "don't go, don't go, please don't go". And of course they would and it would lead to a few drinks and it would end up an argument and often it wasn't the guy who had done it but the partner would lose her temper and call the police and of course he was the one with the protection order and he was back inside. We just saw that again and again and again. (Community Worker)

Men suffer in missing their children

A number of respondents pointed out that when reciprocal violence occurs the man is generally issued the protection order and grieves for the loss of engagement with their children. Several claimed that they know of men where their partner had an order falsely issued with the aim of punishing them.

A lot of guys are frustrated that it totally prohibits their contact with their child. They feel that if there might have been some domestic violence, might have been an argument, might have been just a disagreement in a couple, and all of a sudden there's a PO and that puts a big delay in any contact with their kids. They might be on the back foot forever where it comes to their kids. (Community Worker)

We can often see it coming. We can see straightaway, there's a parenting order coming into place hence they're making a complaint. But you can get that occurring on the male side as well. But you do tend to see it more with women phoning up as a parenting order's about to come

into place or they're making an application and they start making complaints and, I think they get that advice from lawyers or something to build a case to support them getting access to the children. (Police Officer)

General Comments

I think one of the sad things is we provide, and we should, but we provide a huge amount of support for childhood sexual abuse. Go to ACC and you get funded. No funding for the guy who has been strung by his feet in a shed by his father and beaten with a 4 by 2. (Domestic Violence Worker)

I think the debate around who is more violent, men are more violent than women, women are more violent than men, are they the same, I don't think it deserves attention. I don't think it does us well. I think that it doesn't matter. That we just need to look at it and whoever needs attention we should offer assistance to whatever they might be experiencing. (Domestic Violence Worker)

I wonder if there's some expendability for males. Males can be expendable in society (Police Officer).

I'm also seeing and I agree with the other officer that males are becoming expendable and it's as if we don't matter anymore. (Police Officer)

It does a real disservice to have a perpetrator victim mentality. I mean we flick so easily between those roles, you know. From my heart I think that women are being disserved, it's a disservice where they're not being asked to look at their issues of violence and abuse. Because it's so freeing when you can have the courage to look at that and acknowledge their dark side. And make changes around that. It's so personally satisfying in the end, rewarding relationship wise. (Domestic Violence Worker)

What should be done about it

There is general agreement about what should be done about the issues to improve them but a recognition that resourcing is not currently allocated to specifically male victim issues.

What is working

Supporting men, for older men it's the social isolation. They are losing their networks, their losing their clubs, they've lost their spouse. All the family have gone so that leaves them a lot more vulnerable.... Men's sheds, they're brilliant. Bringing men together so they can set up new networks is an excellent concept. (Elder Care Worker)

(re the fathering group) what they always do is they come along to a meeting or two or three, they don't disclose until the third or fourth meeting, it's tear jerking because they are in tears while they are disclosing this and we are the first people they have told. It's a big load off their chest. (Community Worker in Auckland)

What we could be doing to fix the whole thing

I think there should be, when there's a protection order, a family assessment done. A full assessment of the relationship, of the relationship or the couple. Yeah, where they might need to do this, and they might need to do this. (Domestic Violence Worker)

The health system should also screen men for family violence. I don't understand how someone can argue that having an abusive family member or partner doesn't harm men. (Community Worker)

We often see those minor assaults females commit and look if it was on the other foot the male would be arrested. I'd like to see more females being arrested if you want to apply the law evenly and to some of the conscious bias that exists out there. And we do do it but it's mostly for the excessive force females use such as weapons, but I'd like to see it as more of a balanced approach where no matter who you are if you're committing offending then male or female you're arrested like anyone else. (Police Officer)

Bring in the clients and ask them "what do you need. What would help you?" (Community Worker)

There needs to be specialist centres where men can come. Even just for general services where men can come. The services around Christchurch are very female oriented. A lot of the counsellors in the places are women, they tend to see women. They aren't places that men would like to go like the men's centre. (Youth Worker)

I think that what we have to do is to go out into the communities where men meet. And advertise and put our name out there and meet them, the pubs, the clubs, the golf clubs all those types of places. (Domestic Violence Worker)

Taking out that clause of provocation is the most dangerous thing they could ever have done. If you do see a male that is of the mildest constitution, but anybody after constant barrage would pick up something and just throw it to make her quiet. And that rights been taken away... I think we need to be honest that we can all be pushed to that point. (Community Worker)

Good consistent parenting is the critical element for a good society. Good parents bring up good kids. Rich parents throwing money at their kids is poor parenting. Parents at the other end bashing their children or step children is poor parenting. Kids want TIME with their parents and parents need to make TIME. The evolution of NZ society in the last 30 years has created the proliferation of single parent families and multiple partners. Being from a single parent family is not bad, as circumstances can dictate this, but the chances of domestic violence increases with family members from dysfunctional broken homes. In my years of Policing I have very seldom seen a kid get into trouble where good parents give their children TIME in a loving environment. You don't have to be financially wealthy to have a loving family. Education is another big factor. The better educated you are (which doesn't have to mean going to university) the better chance you have of making the right choices in life, this in turn creates good citizens. Domestic violence would not be where it is if we focused more on social and economic policies that promote healthy families. (Police Officer)

I do think that men need more advocacy whether with judicial law or someone to say this is your rights, you are permitted to have access to your children and whatever restraining order is upon you because I think they can be unfair. (General Practitioner)

Public awareness campaigns should include male victims as well

Several respondents noted that men were less likely to recognize abuse as family violence and were less likely to seek help.

I think the focus is an intolerance across society to family violence in all its shapes and manifestations is the key and that will mean that just as with men's violence we'll say hey buddy you've got to stop treating your wife or girlfriend like that, that women will step in and say that hey sister, no that's not right you can't do that and so we develop that level of intolerance across society. (Police Officer)

Closing reflections

This report was written with the aim of exploring the needs and situation of men experiencing domestic violence/abuse victimization in Canterbury and New Zealand. The perspectives and experience shared by the participants pointed to a changing society and a number of those that participated expressed appreciation for having a chance to reflect on the situation for men.

There are a number of quotes in the report regarding a dull response by the police and we hope that this is seen in the light of healthy criticism. Their role and resources are limited and they catch the blame for what is actually the larger social issue much like other statutory roles.

Male victims and relevant services is at its core a human rights issue. We are discriminating as a society deciding that men are not offered relevant services wholly because of their gender. While this is a clear human rights issue there is no response that this author is aware of by the New Zealand Human Rights Commission despite numerous groups bringing this to their attention.

Despite the above there are a growing number of services that are more accessible to men with the Canterbury Men's Centre being only one of them. This is a result of a growing interest in men being cared for. While completing this research we came across three women that are currently developing research into male victims of domestic violence. That genuine interest founded in compassion is reflected in this statement by one of the study participants.

Men can be so unsupported in our society and are not given the tools to express how they feel and be validated. That lovely nurturing support that they so need, everybody needs, but it's too much of a show or they're not conditioned to give or receive it. They are often the leaders, the performers, even sexually, the anxiety to take control, to be the providers, I know it's really old fashioned but it sticks like hell. The pressures these men are under. I really feel for them.

Thanks to the many people that participated in this report. We hope that it is a useful part of creating a violence free New Zealand and celebrate the efforts made by the many people that share in this vision. We close the report with this message.

*The only campaign we should have is stop violence toward everybody regardless of gender. Get that and then we can slowly break things down but that could be 10-20 years away. I was hoping to see it in my lifetime. To me until we can accept that there are male victims of physical, sexual, emotional violence then nothing gonna change. That saddens me.
(Community Worker)*

Appendix 1: Table about male victims in NZ

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
		June '15											May '16		
1															
2	Male														
3	All Ages, Family Member, assaults	2,682	2,682	2,688	2,676	2,688	2,661	2,697	2,583	2,628	2,613	2,556		2,583	
4	0-4	141	147	147	147	156	162	153	147	150	153	135		135	
5	5-9	222	219	231	234	240	240	249	243	246	234	237		234	
6	10-14	384	384	387	372	375	375	384	357	360	342	339		327	
7	Total Over 14	1,935	1,932	1,923	1,923	1,917	1,884	1,911	1,836	1,872	1,884	1,845		1,887	22,749
8	Total 14 and under	747	750	765	753	771	777	786	747	756	729	711		696	8,988
9															
10	Female														
11	All Ages, Family Member, assaults	6,201	6,177	6,132	6,093	6,141	6,210	6,228	6,192	6,240	6,237	6,171		6,150	
12	0-4	126	135	129	135	141	141	150	138	138	135	123		117	
13	5-9	138	141	141	138	150	144	138	138	135	138	129		126	
14	10-14	396	381	372	366	363	369	369	363	363	357	354		333	
15	Total Over 14	5,541	5,520	5,490	5,454	5,487	5,556	5,571	5,553	5,604	5,607	5,565		5,574	66,522
16		660	657	642	639	654	654	657	639	636	630	606		576	7,650
17														89,271	
18	Source Data: http://nzdotstat.stats.govt.nz/wbos/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TABLECODE7409													Total Family Victims	
19														Percentage over 14 Male	25
20	SUMMARY													Percentage 14 and under Male	54
21															
22															
23															

Police records from the Statistics New Zealand website for the period from June 2015 to May 2016 for assault victimisation by family member shows that 25% are male (victim 14 and over) and 54% (victim 14 and under).

Appendix 2: Preliminary summary sent to interviewees

<Please note that this is a starting point to inform discussion and that this page will be altered as discussions progress and further relevant research is integrated. Please note any shortcomings in the draft you receive and offer suggestions of change to the researcher.>

Support for Male Victims of Domestic Violence

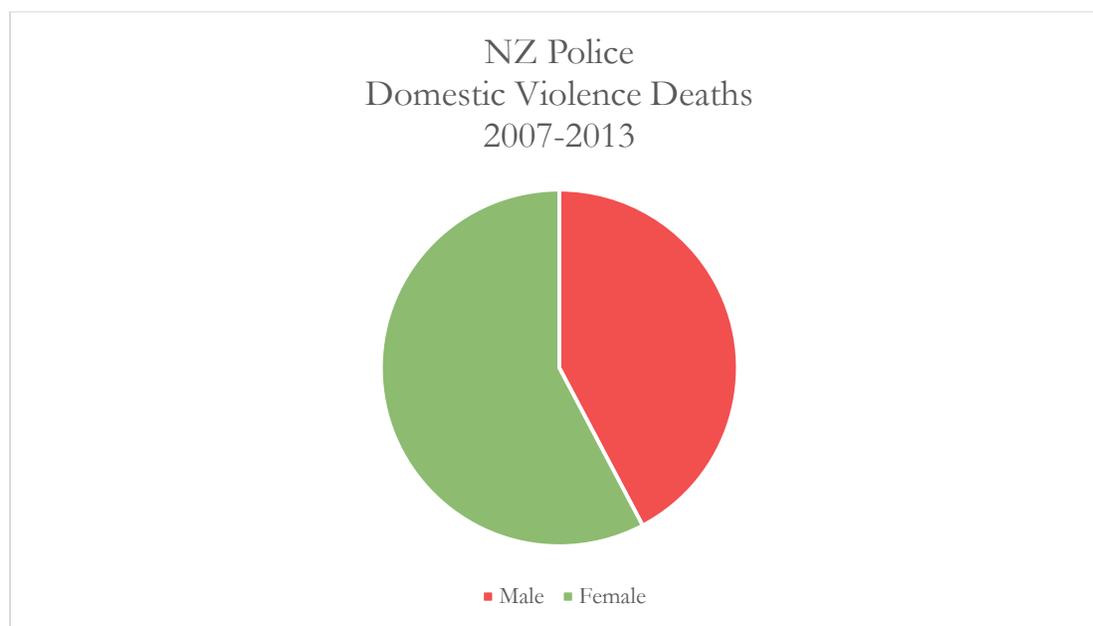
The Alcohol Drug Association of New Zealand and the Canterbury Men's Centre are partnering to do a review of the needs of men in relation to their experience of abuse/domestic violence. It is our hope that this project will lead to improved outcomes for male victims and their families.

Funding for this project has been provided by the Department of Internal Affairs.

Shelley Johnson who is on loan from the Alcohol Drug Helpline will be conducting the research on a part-time basis which commenced late January and will conclude mid-July. It is expected that the final report will be released in August 2015.

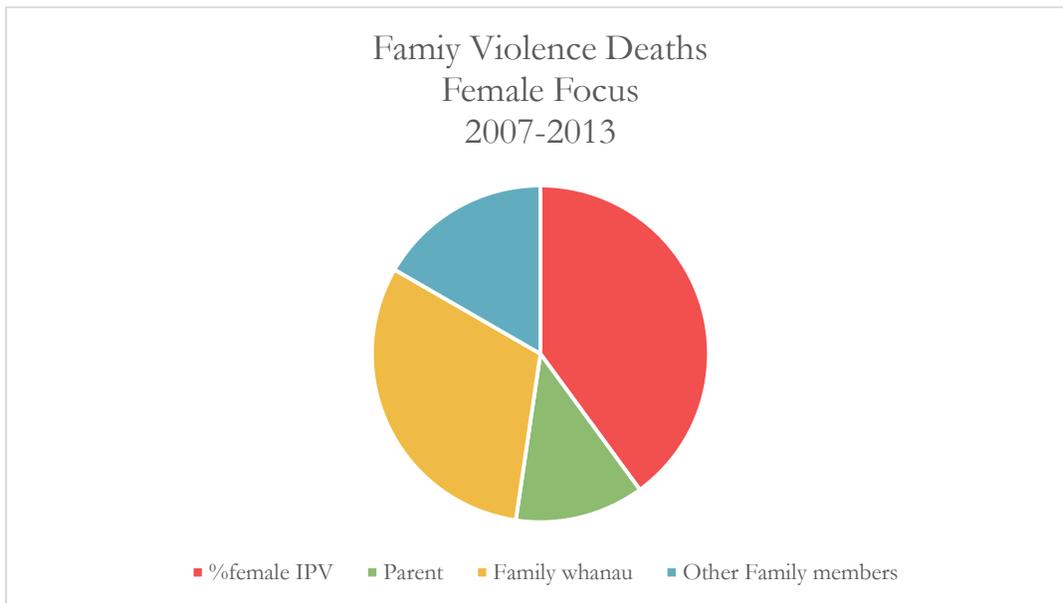
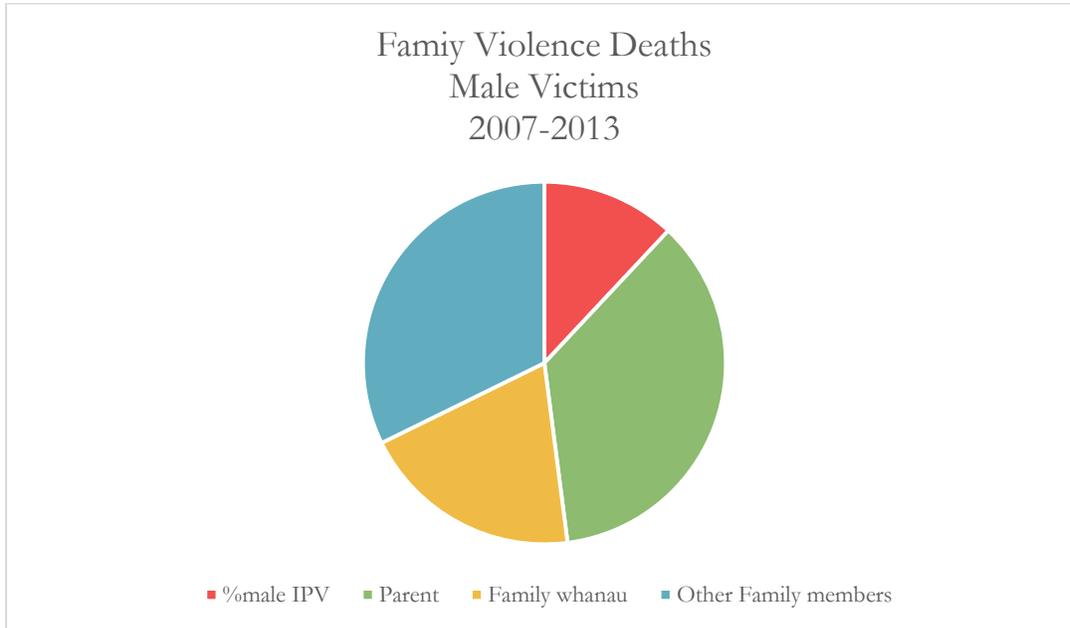
Definitions of Violence: We believe that any person experiencing abuse from family/whanau especially in their own home are worthy of care. For the purposes of this research a range of definitions of victimhood and abuse are used. These definitions are defined by the source of any statistics used, and by the respondents who are typically people that have a solid knowledge and experience of family violence.

Deaths:



At a New Zealand national police level 2007-2013(incl.)

1. 26% of IPV deaths were Male
2. 42% of family/whanau deaths were male.
3. 77% of parent deaths were male.



Source: <https://nzfvc.org.nz/.../files/data-summaries-snapshot-2014.pdf>

Police:

At a regional level, Jan 2015 data indicates 18 male victims of assault suffered at the hands of a family member, (compared with 51 female).

Population Studies:

There is attention on two broad views of IPV victimisation, one which argues in favour of gender symmetry and the other that points to the lack of detail in the collection of IPV data. There are a minority of reviews that state that the collection method is flawed and limits the integrity of the data and therefore overestimates the rates of female perpetration (White et al, 2000). In contrast, Kimmel (2002) states, "Women's violence toward male partners certainly does exist, but it tends to be very different from that of men toward their female partners: it is far less injurious and less likely to be motivated by attempts to dominate or terrorize their partners".

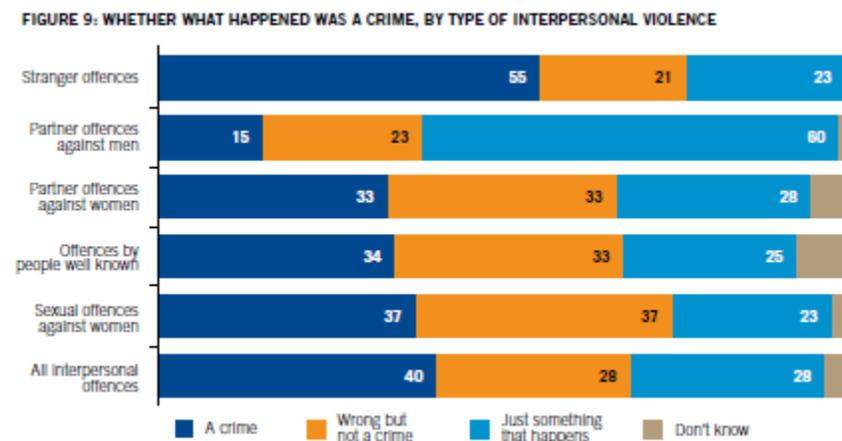
Ministry of Justice (NZ Crime and Safety Survey 2006)

2005 partner offences - overall risk prevalence

7% for men, 8% for women

In respect of psychological abuse, men reported abuse as often, or more often than women.

Female victims more often rated what had happened as 'most serious' category than men did.



Source: Families Commission. (2007). Family violence Statistics Report. Wellington: Families Commission.(p.171)

Response by Existing Systems:

(To be completed during interviews)

Health system 2011/2012

14% of recorded victims of partner assault were male

58% of hospitalised adult male assault victims had no perpetrator recorded, vs 20% of female assault victims. ¹

¹Data taken from personal correspondence Analytical Services, Ministry of Health

Specific groupings of men

Gay Men:

Results from studies conducted in United States indicate that 15 to 20% of gay men and lesbians have experienced violent IPV (Australian Domestic & Family Clearinghouse, 2005)

Maori/Pacific Men

In a study of 502 Maori, 20% of all traumatic events they experienced were due to domestic violence. The study also found that females were more likely to report domestic assault (23% of females; 11% of men)

Men or their family with Mental Health issues

Men and their Whanau with Alcohol and Drug Issues

(To be completed during interviews)

Men with Adult Children

(To be completed during interviews)

Younger Men

(To be completed during interviews)

Men in Smaller Centres/Rural

(To be completed during interviews)

General comments:

There is a variety of literature in what is a contentious field. All agree that men are experiencing domestic and IPV to some degree and are harmed by it. The area of most contention is question of gender symmetry and difference in intimate partner relationships.

At the same time there is a recognition that DV goes beyond intimate partners into broader whanau engagements and that men are experiencing this.

The “Other” Domestic Violence (To be completed during interviews)

There is a tendency to focus on intimate partner violence. The 89% male victim elder deaths are a particularly startling illustration of men in these other categories requiring a special focus.

- Elder Abuse
- Elders Abusing Young Men
- Adult Sibling Conflict
- Gay Partners (overlooked in most IPV research)
- New lover/previous partner conflict
- “Hits” where ex-partners are targeted by friends of the female partner at the instigation of the woman (gangs)

Research Base Pages:

It is well known that incidents of domestic violence come to the attention of relevant care systems in the minority of cases and this is true for both men and women. There is a strong case to be made that male victims are proportionately less likely to come to the attention of such authorities and if they do so they are less likely to be seen as victims. The literature supporting this comes to the following range of conclusions.

We don't expect males to be victims and so we tend not to interpret incidents in this context. In studies that have manipulated perpetrator sex category and attributions of blame, research shows that females are attributed less blame than males for similar violent acts (Lawrence PhD et al., 2012). It may be reasonable to extend this perception to other forms of family violence.

Both Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2012 and Desmarais PhD, 2012, recognise in the cases of criminal justice samples higher rates of perpetration by men toward women were recorded. Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2012 provides a possible explanation for the higher rates of these samples in comparison to population samples may be due to the way the data is interpreted.

“Police related data is skewed toward unidirectional male to female violence as a result of size, power, and potential to inflict injury differences between men and women.

There may be a reluctance to arrest women in situations of unidirectional female to male violence because of societal beliefs that minimize the impact or importance of women's violence. Women's violence needs to be understood as a part of the picture of domestic violence as it may be a key aspect of more effective prevention and intervention strategies for IPV.

A second finding to emerge was that the ratio of unidirectional female to male compared to male to female IPV differed significantly among samples with higher rates of female-perpetrated unidirectional violence found in four of five sample types considered. Higher ratios of male to female unidirectional violence were only found in criminal justice/legal studies that relied on police reports of IPV perpetration or in samples drawn from the U.S. military.”

Under Reporting

Men may significantly under-report the nature of frequency and impact their violence against female partners (Dobash & Dobash 2004). In the Dunedin cohort study participants were asked questions about IPV in two interviews, 37% of women and 22% of men reporting perpetration in the previous year (Magdol et al 1997). It may be reasonable to extend this behaviour to other forms of family violence as well as to that of gay relationships.

Many males do not label their victimization experiences as crime, and typically they are less fearful and are less injured than women (Desmarais PhD, 2012).

Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2012, points to other themes that could explain why male victims are not coming to the attention of authorities. Issues such as lack of advertisement and promotion of targeted health services for men, lack of family violence understanding between their friends and colleagues and the risk of being labelled the offender if they seek help.

Criminal Justice Responsiveness

Police Family violence data reports 18.9% of apprehended family violence offenders in 2006 were female and 19.2% of victims were male (Families Commission 2007, p. 69). The term “family violence” as used by the police, includes recorded offences that involve some degree of family violence. The categories which are recorded under the term of “family violence” include; sexual, drugs, anti-social, dishonesty, violence, administrative, property damage and property abuse.

When acknowledged, violence perpetrated by women against their male partners is viewed as occurring within the context of self-defence or in response to a pattern of abuse perpetrated by their partner (Langhinrichsen-Rohling PhD, 2012).

Alcohol Use

Alcohol abuse may be more closely associated with IPV perpetration by women than men as stated in a systematic review of risk factors of intimate partner violence (Capaldi et al., 2012).

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