

Faith Communities Workshops on Family Violence

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Children's Commissioner
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Family Violence

- Child abuse
- Intimate partner abuse
- Elder abuse

Intimate partner abuse

- 11 deaths and 400 hospital admissions a year due to violence against women in NZ.
- 50% of all homicides of NZ women committed by current or ex-partner.
- Lifetime incidence: 15-35% of women hit or forced to have sex vs 7% of men.
- Previous 12 months: 15-21% physical or sexual abuse and up to 53% psychological abuse.
- Ever admitted or treated at hospital for injuries inflicted by current partner: 1%, further 1% treated by GP, 3% afraid current partner might kill them.
- Economic cost at least NZ\$1.2bn (up to \$5.3bn).

Impact of DV on child witnesses

- Co-occurrence of DV and child physical abuse 30-60%, increases with frequency and severity of violence. Both parents may physically abuse the child
- Mothers ill or injured, pre-occupied with survival, PTSD, depressed, alcohol use, decreased empathy and sensitivity to child's needs, multiple moves,
 - > children emotionally and physically deprived
- Children nearly always aware of parents' violence, usually present in same room for at least one episode.

Impact of DV on child witnesses

- Infants: PTSD, esp if younger, DV frequent and in close proximity, distressed, irritable, hiding, shaking, stuttering, developmental regression
- School age: Low self-esteem, self-blame, poor concentration, anxious, depressed, psychosomatic illnesses, grades < ability, unable to participate in normal school and social activities, poor attendance, lonely, shy, isolated, bully, aggressive to peers

Impact of DV on child witnesses

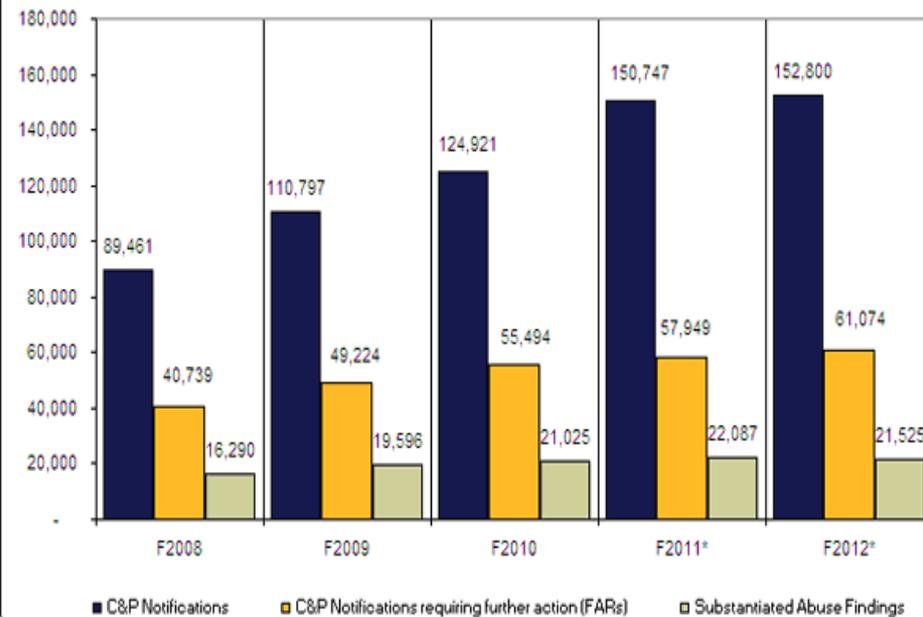
- Adolescents: early dropout, drug & alcohol use, delinquency, run away
- Adult: perpetrator or victim of DV, poor psychological adjustment, poor adult relationships.

Child Abuse

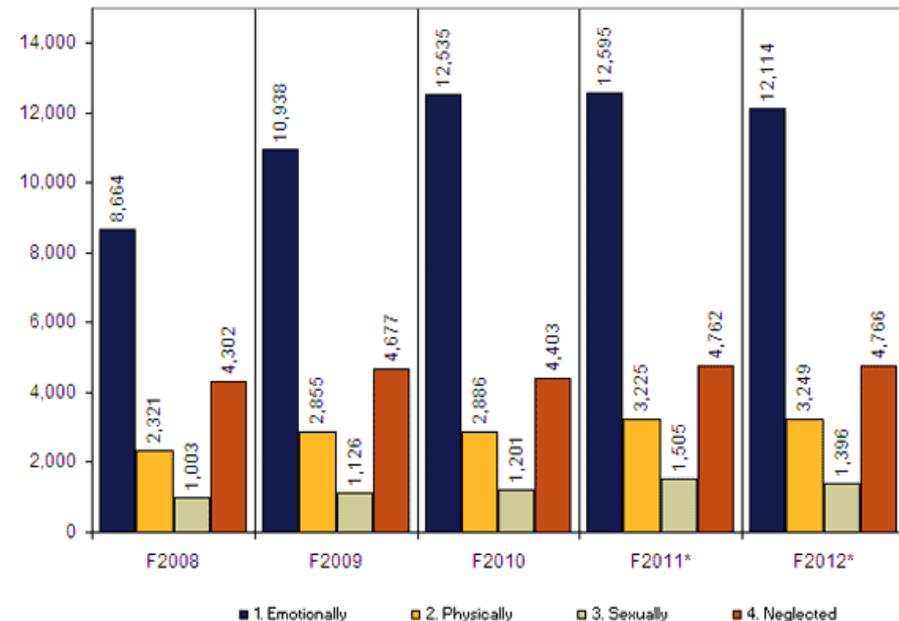
CYF data

- 152,800 notifications
- 21,500 substantiated
- Growth in child witnesses to DV
-> emotional abuse
- Christchurch study (*Fergusson et al*)
 - 8% Physical punishment used regularly
 - 4% Severe or harsh and abusive treatment
- 65% punched around the head and body
- 57% beaten with a cane, strap or other object
- 52% kicked
- 80% suffered injury as a result of this treatment
- 37% were also sexually abused
- Other (*e.g. Maxwell, Carroll-Lind 1996*)
 - 10% punched, kicked or beaten by adult in 12 months
 - 50% punched, kicked or beaten by other children in 12 months.

Care and Protection Notifications, FARs, and Substantiated Abuse Findings



Total Substantiated Abuse Findings



I wished I was born into a different family, but then if I was, I would miss my family. (8yr old girl)

It feels like you've been adopted or something and you're not part of their family. (11yr old girl).

You feel sort of as though you want to run away because they're sort of being mean to you and it hurts a lot. (7yr old girl)



THEY SEE AND HEAR EVERYTHING

IT IS
OK TO ASK
FOR
HELP

It hurts and it's painful inside – it's like breaking your bones. (7yr old girl)

When I was 4 yrs old I would try to stop dad from hitting mum by standing between her and dad. Then he would take it out on me. (9yr old boy)

I get my little sister and baby brother and put them in bed with me so they don't cry. We get so scared. (9yr old girl)

I put my head under a pillow and try not to hear what's going on (teenager)

It felt like nobody cared. (9yr old girl).

You have to be careful around him all the time (teenager)

I'm so angry at my mum, she stayed so we had to put up with his (dad's) sh...t! (15yr old boy)



“I cover up my eyes and ears when she starts yelling - I pretend I'm building a wall.”

eight year old boy

I wanted to run away but when I told my mum this she got angry. (9yr old girl)

I must have deserved it, but I don't know what I did wrong. (teenager)

Sometimes they just hit you and you don't have a clue why. (12yr old boy)



Sexual abuse in New Zealand

Christchurch study

- Non-contact child sexual abuse
 - Girls 4.2%
 - Boys 1.8%
- Contact child sexual abuse
 - Without intercourse
 - Girls 7.5%
 - Boys 2.8%
 - With intercourse
 - Girls 5.6%
 - Boys 1.4%

Risk of repeated abuse

- 13-60% risk of re-abuse
- Highest risk in the first twelve months after first notification
- Risk increases with severity of injury
- Other factors may also contribute to increased risk

Why intervene?

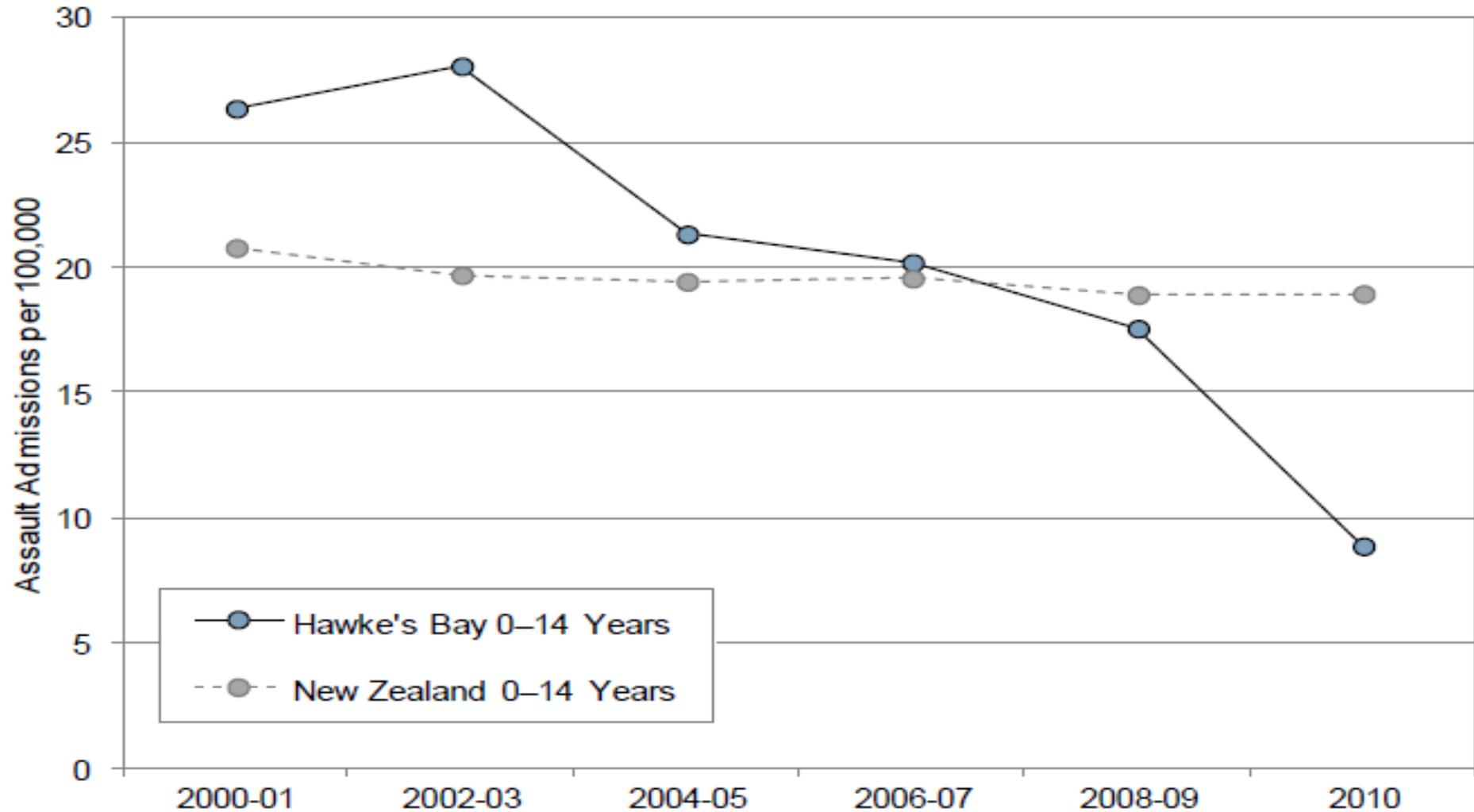
- Rights of the child
 - Child's safety is the immediate concern
- Consequences to the child
- Vulnerability of the child
 - Especially young children
 - If you don't intervene, no-one else will
- Access to the situation

Strengths of faith communities

- Belonging and community
- Social justice
- Compassion and protection of the vulnerable
- Treasure family
- Lead by example
- Diverse skills and talents
- Want our communities to be safe and nurturing for children, families & the elderly

Even complex problems have solutions

Figure 177. Hospital Admissions for Injuries Arising from the Assault, Neglect or Maltreatment of Children, Hawke's Bay vs. New Zealand 2000–2010



Source: Numerator: National Minimum Dataset; Denominator: Statistics NZ Estimated Resident Population

Summary

- Abuse of women and children is common
- Effects on victims are profound and long-lasting
- Prevention starts with attitudinal change
- Safe intervention is a skill we can all learn.