

Christchurch Women's Refuge

25 July 2011

MEDIA RELEASE

New Zealand Still Failing to Address Family Violence

International evidence released yesterday reinforces that New Zealand women are far more likely to experience family violence than women in other developed countries.

The Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD) report released yesterday rated family violence against women in New Zealand as the highest of the 14 OECD countries surveyed. One-third of women had experienced such abuse between 2000 and 2010, while New Zealand's rate of sexual abuse against women rated similarly.

"This report confirms what we in refuge have been saying for years, though it may not be a message people want to hear – violence within Kiwi families is not diminishing and women and children are almost always the ones who suffer" says Christchurch Women's Refuge CEO Nicola Woodward. "Kiwi society as a whole doesn't seem to attach a great deal of value to the safety of its women and children because by letting children be part of a violent family environment, even if they are not physically harmed, they will always be hurt - possibly for life."

This latest report follows earlier United Nations research released in February which noted "staggering" rates of child abuse, poverty and infant and child mortality in New Zealand. A Ministry of Social Development study, released in June, found more than a quarter of our country's children had witnessed family violence.

"It's truly shocking that, as a nation, we continue to rate so poorly in study after study of abuse and neglect of women and children" Woodward says. "New Zealand was the second country in the world to establish a women's refuge (in 1973), and Christchurch Women's Refuge was that refuge. Yet here we are, almost 40 years on, with some of the worst rates of family violence in the world".

"We know that in Canterbury the earthquakes have triggered increased and escalated incidents of family violence, but we can't blame nature. This study just re-emphasises that family violence will be a part of our society for as long as we choose to tolerate it. Family violence is not inevitable, it's always a choice, and right now, more than ever before, we have the choice, personally and as a society, to stand up and say "It's not OK".

For any concerns related to family violence, please call our 24-hour free-phone 0800 1 REFUGE (0800 1 733 843) or visit womensrefuge.co.nz

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