

Dutch children bereaved by domestic homicides 'more burdened than expected'

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The majority of Dutch children who lost a parent to intimate partner homicide had already experienced violence, often without professional support, according to a study published October 4, 2017 in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* by Eva Alisic from Monash University, Australia, and colleagues.

Over 55,000 [children](#) worldwide are thought to lose a parent to domestic homicide each year, and there is a need to establish a better understanding of the circumstances, needs and perspectives of affected children.

The authors of the present study gathered information from around 256 children in the Netherlands who lost a parent to intimate partner homicide between 2003 and 2012, cross-examining eight types of data including legal verdicts, child protection information and newspaper reports.

They found that two thirds of the children were known to have experienced [violence](#) at home before the homicide incident, but of these children over 40% were not previously known to mental health and social services. The potential impact on the children was heightened by the finding that a majority were in the same building as their parent at the time of the killing.

Relevant data about the cases was frequently missing, and the researchers hope that future studies could capture more complete

datasets, tracking these children's [mental health](#) over time and also initiating data collection in other countries.

The authors state these results may suggest that children who lose a parent in this way not only need support to cope with the bereavement, but also with unaddressed histories of domestic violence and exposure to graphic [homicide](#) scenes.

Dr Alisic noted: "The life of these children is literally turned upside down. At once they lose both [parents](#) and often their home and school environment too, because they have to move. Our data suggest that these children are even more burdened than we already expected."

More information: Alisic E, Groot A, Snetselaar H, Stroeken T, van de Putte E (2017) Children bereaved by fatal intimate partner violence: A population-based study into demographics, family characteristics and homicide exposure. *PLoS ONE* 12(10): e0183466.
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