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## Homicide Prevention: Reducing the Risk where the Risk is Greatest

Unfortunately, the complete elimination and prevention of homicide is unlikely in the foreseeable future. However, strategies exist that can be used to reduce the likelihood of homicide victimisation and offending where the risk is greatest.

While no one single factor determines whether a person will become a homicide victim or offender, gender has been shown to be a major one. Males outnumber females as both victims and offenders of homicide. However, the degree of risk changes when subtypes of homicide are examined. For example, females are more likely to be victims of intimate partner homicide, with males as the perpetrators. Males on the other hand, are more likely to be killed by another male friend or acquaintance and usually in response to some sort of conflict.

Pinpointing the so-called “high-risk” factors in homicide provides a number of possible prevention points. For instance, strategies focussed on the prevention of male-perpetrated homicide would target the following:

- The role of alcohol and the drinking environment;
- The role of effective anger management;
- The role of domestic violence and fostering the ‘cycle of abuse’; and
- The role of family breakdown.

Strategies for preventing females becoming homicide victims or offenders would target:

- Means for enabling women to escape domestic violence;
- The role of deteriorating mental health; and
- The role of limited support for young mothers.

Whilst each homicide is itself a tragic event, overseas research suggests that we can learn from past experiences by attempting to understand how each event could have been prevented. For example, in the United States there exist a number of Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams. These collaborative community-based “teams” seek to learn how to prevent domestic violence related murders and suicides by asking the question: What, as community service providers, could we have done differently to prevent this death? A number of police services in Australia (e.g. VIC, Qld and SA) have also adopted a similar strategy and are undertaking individual projects in order to reduce the incidence of intimate partner homicide through evidence based intervention strategies.

### *Further reading:*

*Mouzos, J. (forthcoming), Gender and Homicide: A Comparative Analysis of Male and Female Perpetrated Homicides in Australia, Research and Public Policy Series, AIC, Canberra.*

*Mouzos, J. 2001, Homicidal Encounters: A Study of Homicide in Australia, 1989-1999, Research and Public Policy Series, no. 28, AIC, Canberra.*

