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From abuse to sanction

Statistics on domestic violence and offences against children in the criminal justice chain 2010-2017

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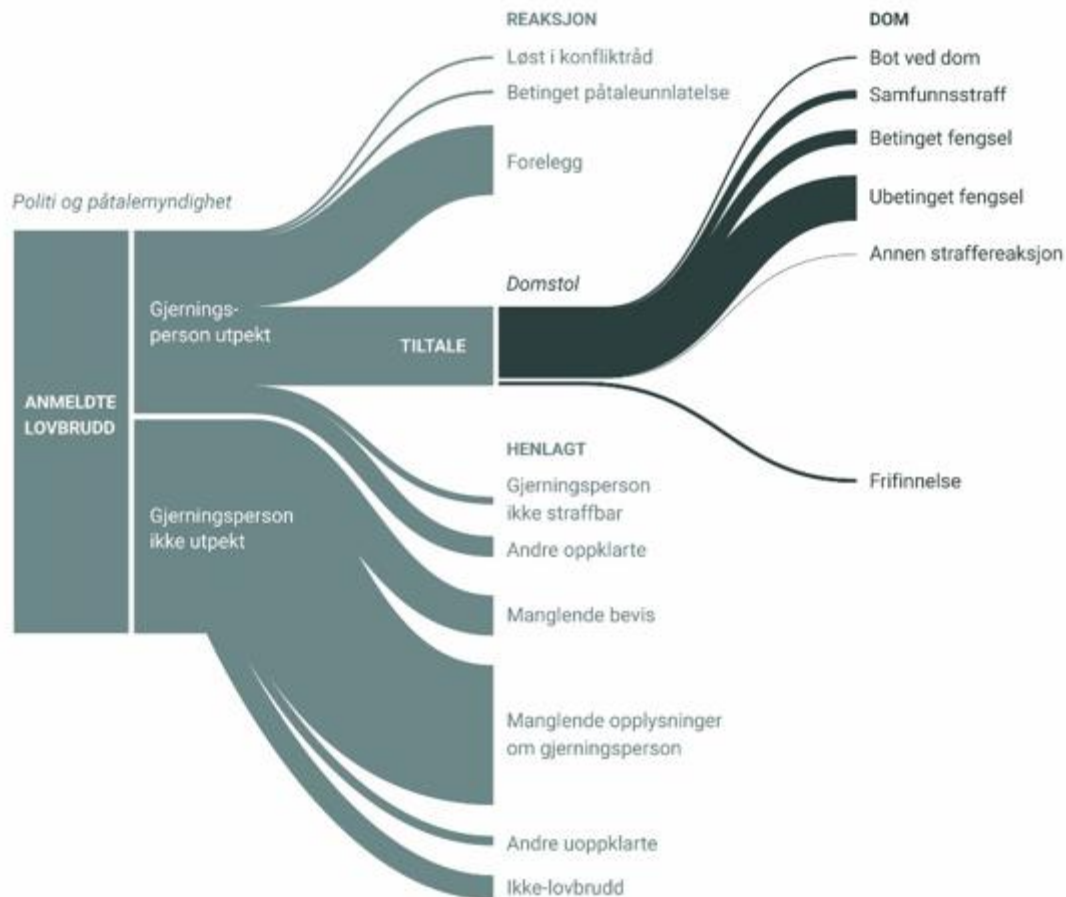
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Summary in English

Police-reported domestic violence and child abuse has led to major changes in registered violent crime in the last 15 years. But what happens in the judicial system once domestic violence or child abuse is reported to the police?

To answer this question, we have developed *statistics on the criminal justice chain* and defined two new types of offences: *domestic violent offences* and *offences against children under 16*. We describe the offences reported in 2010 and how the police, prosecuting authorities and courts have dealt with different types of domestic violence and offences against children in the period 2010–2017.



These statistics include 7 079 reported domestic violent offences, of which 2 447 relate to maltreatment in close relations, and 6 879 reported offences against children under the age of 16, of which 4 605 relate to violent or sexual offences. Our review shows considerable variations both within and between the different types of domestic violence and offences against children. Among other things, we found that:

Timing of crime, reporting and legal proceedings:

- The majority of police-reported domestic violence and violent or sexual offences against children relate to events that occurred on a particular day and that were reported relatively quickly after they occurred.
- A large percentage of reports concerning maltreatment in close relations, and an even greater percentage of reports concerning various types of child sexual abuse, relates to events that have occurred over an extended period and have been reported long after they occurred.
- The decision not to proceed with an allegation due to lack of evidence is often the result of a lengthy process, and the time between the offence being committed and reported does not have a bearing on this decision, either for domestic violence or offences against children under the age of 16.
- The length of criminal justice proceedings depends on whether a report ends up in the courts or not. This is especially true for reports of maltreatment in close relations and sexual offences.

Domestic violence in the judicial system:

- More than half (55.5 per cent) of all domestic violence allegations are concluded without the judicial system naming at least one perpetrator.

- No criminal offence is deemed to have taken place in 7 per cent of all domestic violence allegations.
- More than half (55 per cent) of maltreatment in close relations allegations and 38 per cent of other types of domestic violence allegations are dismissed due to lack of evidence.
- One-quarter of all domestic violence allegations are concluded with the prosecuting authority naming a perpetrator – more often without a penal sanction.
- 30 per cent of all reported domestic violent offences resulted in a penal sanction for one or more perpetrators, and one in five of these involved court-imposed sanctions – usually in the form of a prison sentence.

Offences against children under the age of 16 in the judicial system:

- Half of the reported violent and sexual offences against children under the age of 16 are concluded without the judicial system identifying at least one perpetrator – normally due to lack of evidence.
- One in ten reports of offences against children under the age of 16 are dismissed because no criminal offence is considered to have taken place.
- One-quarter of all offences against children under the age of 16 are resolved by the prosecuting authority with a perpetrator being named. This is the case for about half of all assaults and bodily harm towards children under the age of 16. Where the perpetrator is not sanctioned, this is often because they are under the age of 15.
- 35 per cent of all reported sexual offences against children under the age of 16 and 28 per cent of all reported violence and maltreatment against children under the age of 16 result in a penal sanction for one or more perpetrators. One in three reports of sexual offences against children under the age of 16 are concluded with a sanction being imposed by the courts – usually a prison sentence.

Domestic violence, child abuse and other offences in the judicial system:

- Many reports of domestic violence and child abuse have specific characteristics that reduce the possibility for direct comparisons with other types of offences.
- In the criminal justice chain report 2010–2017, however, it is clear that maltreatment in close relations and rape are the types of offences that are most often dismissed due to lack of evidence, and that other types of domestic violence are also dismissed for this reason more often than other violent offences.
- A large percentage of violent and sexual offences against children under the age of 16 are also dismissed due to lack of evidence, but this proportion is on a par with other reports of violent and sexual offences.
- Sexual offences against children under the age of 16 are more likely to end up in the courts and result in a prison sentence than other sexual offences.
- Reported violence against and maltreatment of children under the age of 16 rarely ends up in the courts or with a prison sentence, and the figure is also low when compared with other victims of violence.

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