

# Domestic violence

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A priority for suicide prevention

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# Definitions

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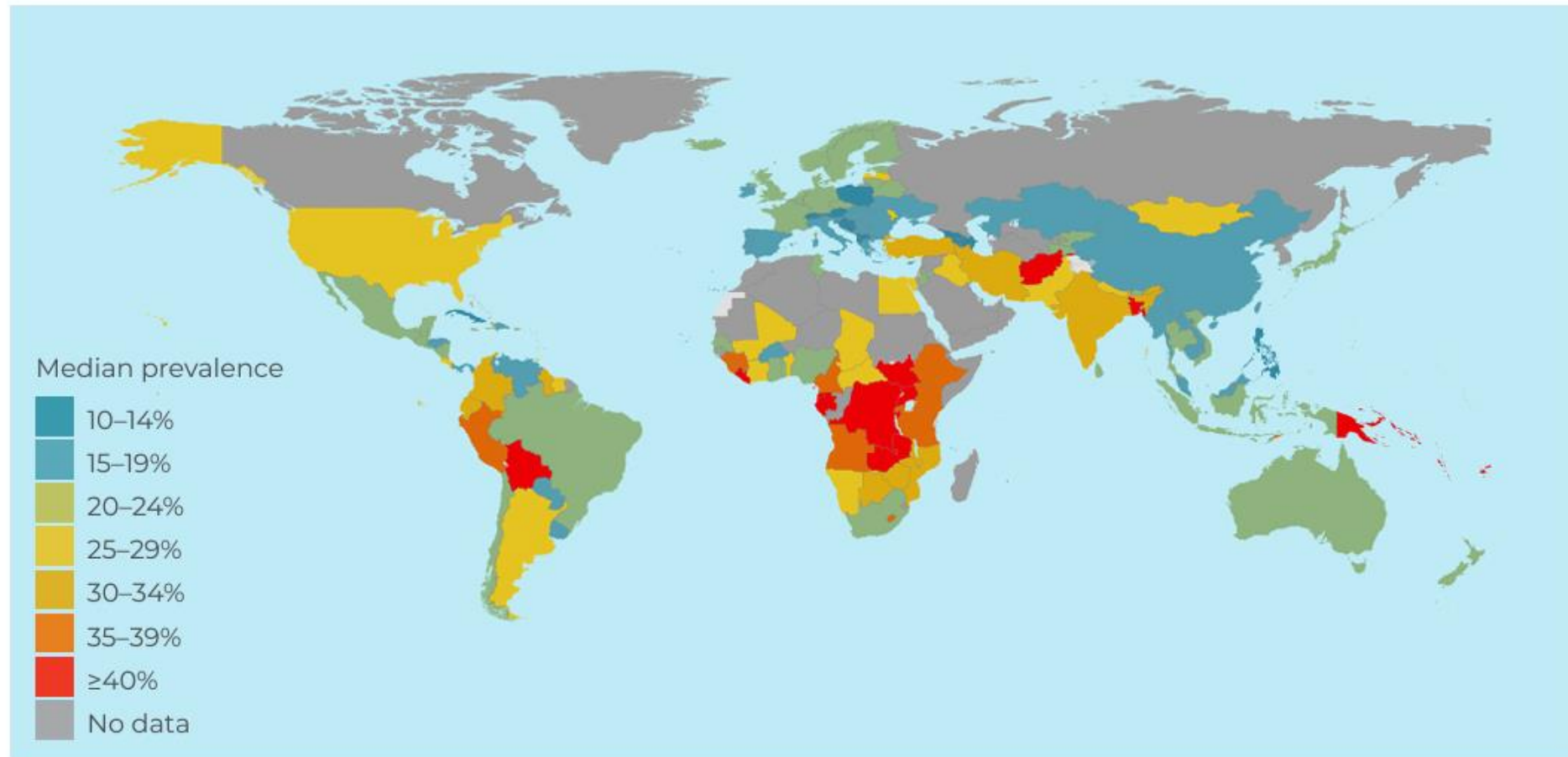
**Intimate partner violence (IPV):** behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours (WHO, 2014).

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**Domestic violence (DV):** any act of violence or abuse that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, perpetrated by any household/family member against an adult.

# Prevalence of intimate partner violence

**Figure 4.1.** Map of prevalence estimates of lifetime<sup>a</sup> physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) among ever-married/partnered women aged 15–49 years, 2018



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted and dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

<sup>a</sup> “Lifetime” refers to events since the age of 15 years.

# Domestic violence and suicidal behaviour

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- High proportion of suicides are impacted by domestic violence
  - United States (26%), Australia (28%), UK (25%), Bangladesh (30%), Nepal (56%), Sri Lanka (50%)
  - 50% of female suicides had experienced interpersonal violence
- High prevalence of domestic violence (~50%) among individuals across the world presenting to hospital for self-harm
- Strong, well-documented association (WHO, 2005; McLaughlin, 2012; Devries, 2013; Devries, 2011)
- Strong associations for all types of violence – physical, sexual, psychological/emotional (McLaughlin, 2012)
- Severity, both in terms of frequency of abuse and experience of multiple forms of abuse (physical, sexual and emotional) strongly associated
- Bi-directional relationship (Devries, 2013)

# Gaps?

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- Males
- Unmarried, divorced/separated
- Sub-populations and vulnerable populations – same-sex relationships, transgender population, ethnic minorities, homelessness
- Different types of abuse
- Scale of abuse
- Family violence
- Perpetrators









Researcher, Kasuni Silva in private interview room of outpatient department







Fieldwork in community





# Exposure to past-year domestic violence in Sri Lanka increased risk of self-harm by...

**4x** among women  
compared to women with no history of abuse

**2.5x** among men  
compared to men with no history of abuse

  
**1 in 2**  
women

  
**1 in 3**  
men

presenting to hospital for self-poisoning had experienced domestic violence in the previous 12-months

Women exposed to more than one form of abuse were

**8.5x** more likely to self-harm  
compared to women with no history of abuse

*Psychological Medicine*

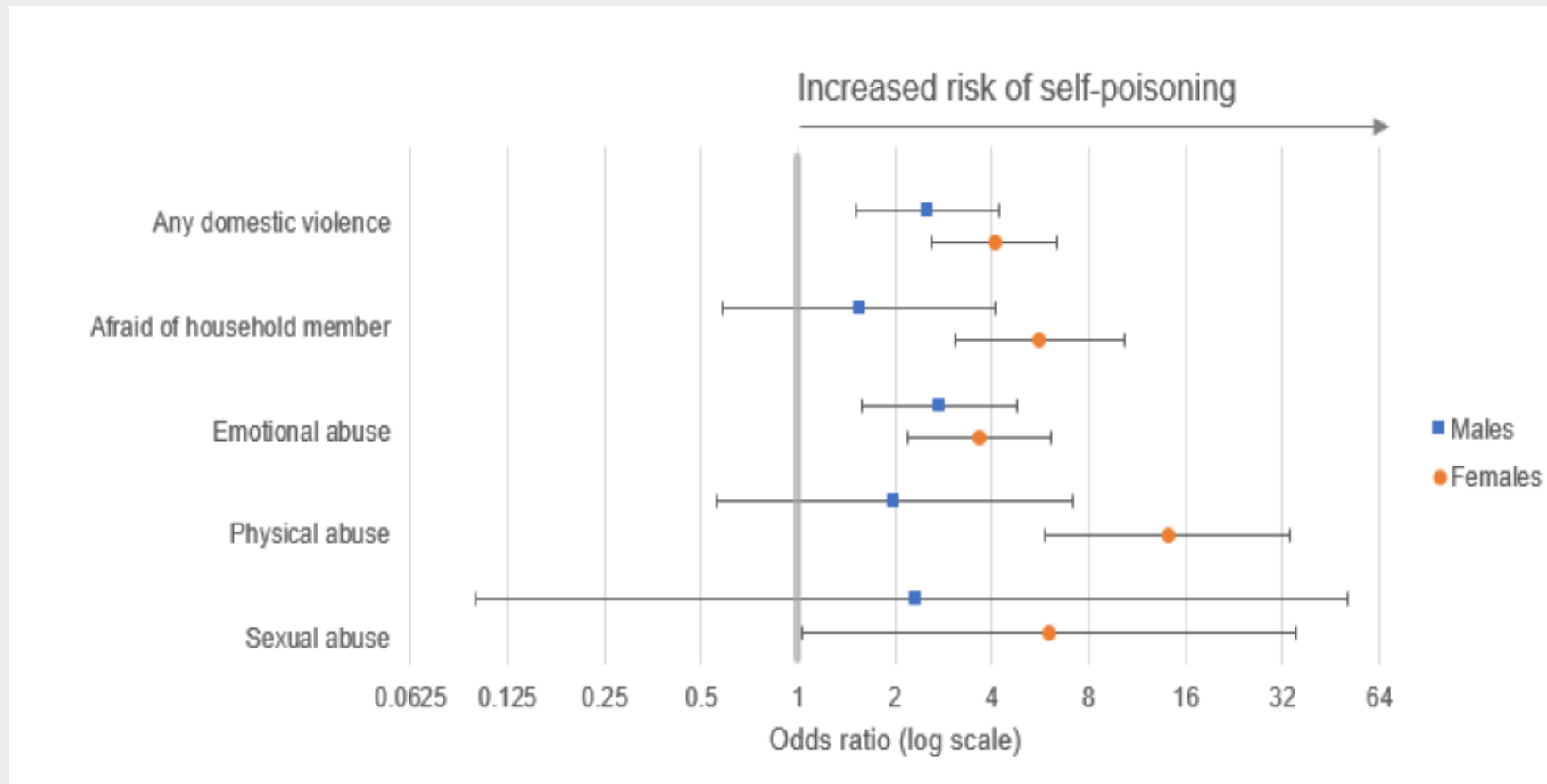
[cambridge.org/psm](https://www.cambridge.org/psm)

Original Article

Domestic violence and self-poisoning in Sri Lanka

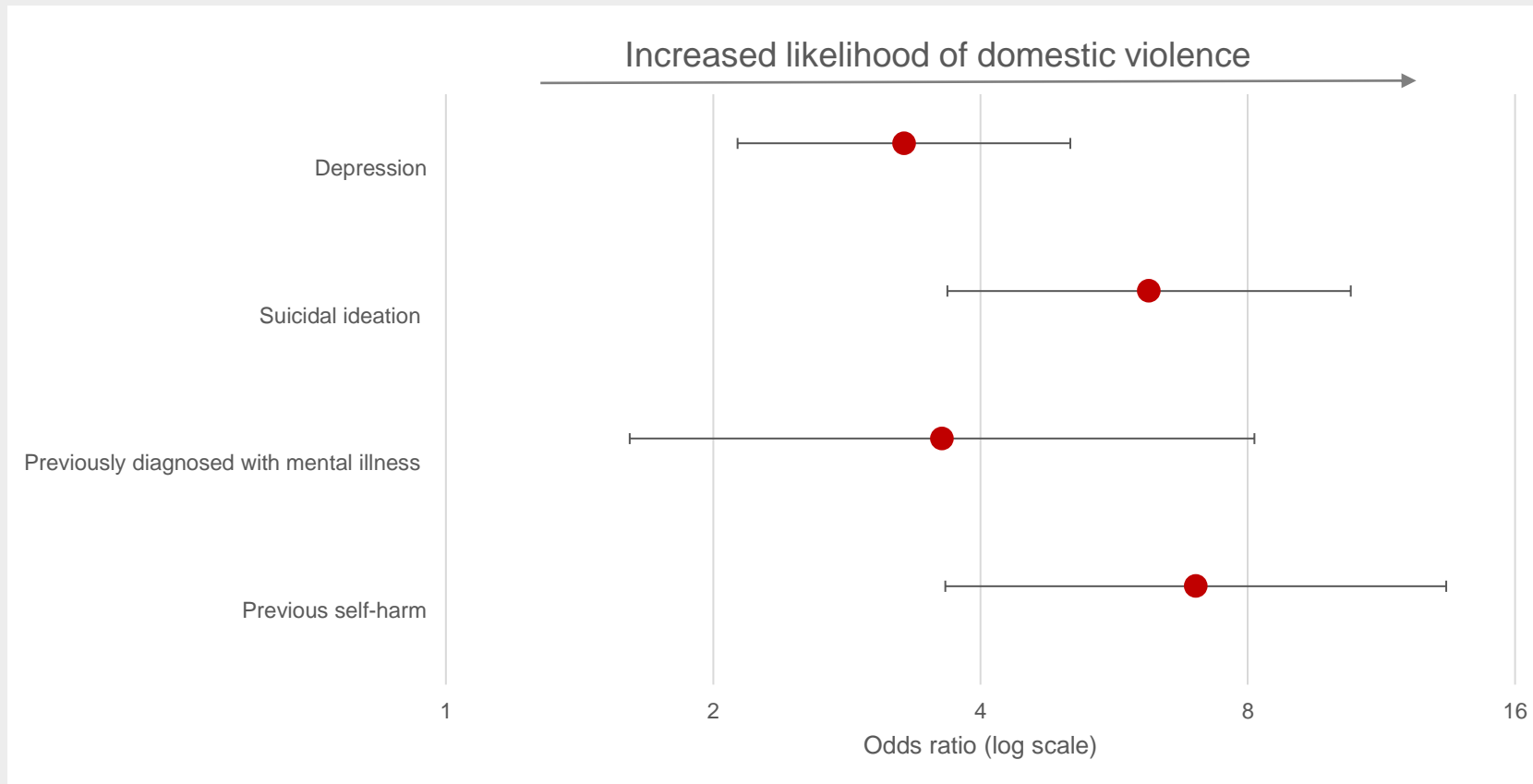
Piamee Bandara<sup>1,2</sup>, Andrew Page<sup>1</sup>, Lalith Senarathna<sup>2,3</sup>, Judi Kidger<sup>4</sup>, Gene Feder<sup>4,5</sup>, David Gunnell<sup>4,5</sup>, Thilini Rajapakse<sup>2,6,\*</sup> and Duleeka Knipe<sup>2,4,\*</sup>

# Domestic violence and self-poisoning associated among females and males





# Psychological factors strongly associated with domestic violence



Bandara, Piimee, et al. "Clinical and psychosocial factors associated with domestic violence among men and women in Kandy, Sri Lanka." *PLOS global public health* 2.4 (2022): e0000129.



# What can we do?

- **Identify domestic violence** (and its various forms and severity) among patients presenting to hospital for self-harm and follow-up with support as needed
- **Training health and mental health practitioners** to know how and have the confidence to respond appropriately
- **Training DV support practitioners** in mental health and suicide prevention
- **Strengthen integration and coordination** of domestic violence support, social services, and mental health support services





## Broader interventions to address domestic violence

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- School-based programs targeting socio-emotional skills and respectful relationships
- Community-based programs addressing harmful gender norms. Key features of these programs included community ambassadors, capacity building of frontline workers (e.g., police officers, health care workers, teachers), and dissemination of DV learning materials.
- Awareness-raising campaigns
- Multisectoral response – poverty, legislation

# Thank you

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