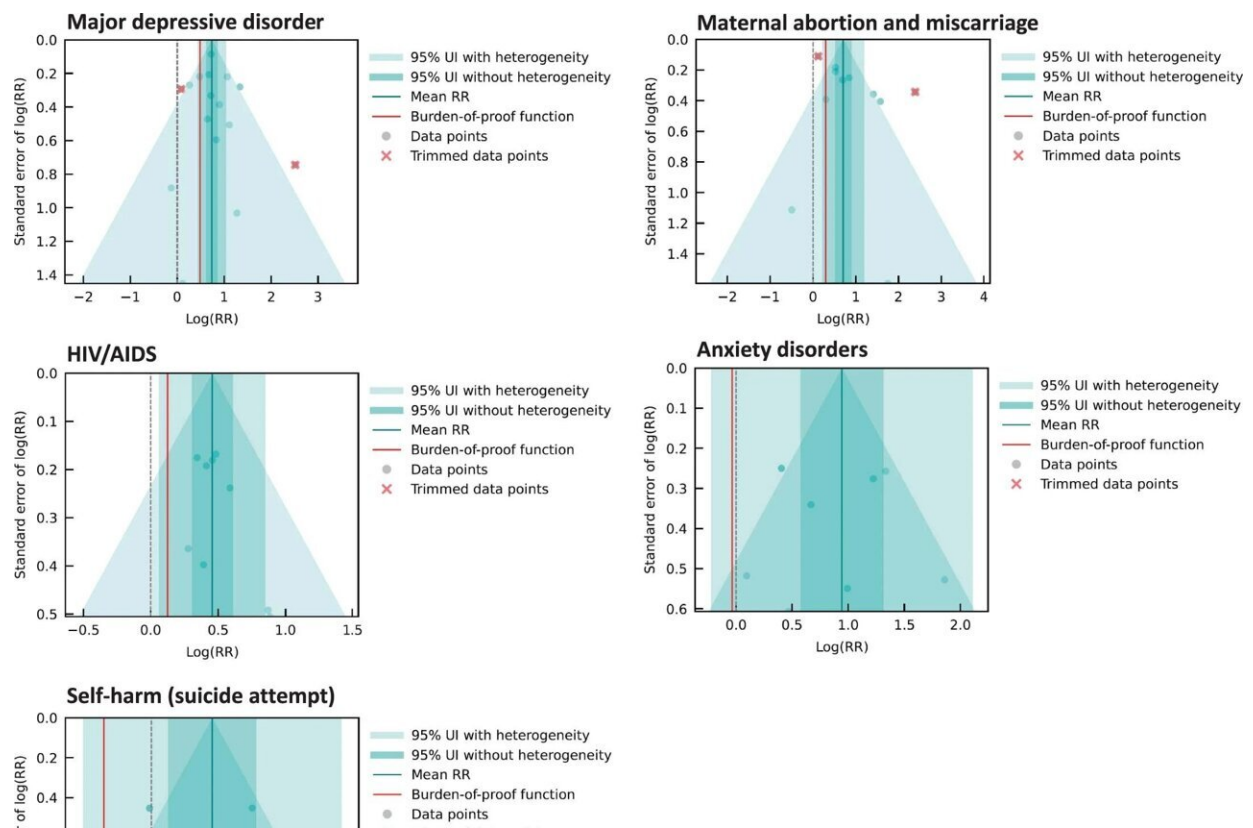


Health impacts of abuse more extensive than previously thought, research says

December 11 2023



Funnel plots for meta-analysis of the association between intimate partner violence against women and five health outcomes identified through the systematic review of the literature. These modified funnel plots show the residuals of the reported mean relative risk (RR) relative to 0, the null value on the x-axis, and the residuals of the standard error, as estimated from both the reported standard error and gamma, relative to 0 on the y-axis. The light blue vertical interval corresponds to the 95% uncertainty interval (UI) incorporating between-study heterogeneity; the dark blue vertical interval corresponds to the

95% UI without between-study heterogeneity; the dots are each included observation; the red Xs are outliers observations; the gray dotted line reflects the null $\log(\text{RR})$ of 0 (equivalent to a null RR of 1); the blue vertical line is the mean $\log(\text{RR})$ for intimate partner violence and the outcome of interest; the red vertical line is the burden of proof function at the 5th quantile for these harmful risk-outcome associations. Credit: *Nature Medicine* (2023). DOI: 10.1038/s41591-023-02629-5.

People who have been subject to abuse are more likely to experience physical and mental health effects than previously thought, according to a new study.

In a global review and meta-analysis of evidence [published](#) in *Nature Medicine* today, researchers have found that there are elevated risks between [intimate partner violence](#) or childhood sexual abuse and some [health conditions](#), including major depressive disorder, maternal miscarriage for partners, and alcohol misuse and self-harm among children.

Globally, one in three ever-partnered women have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime, and around 20% of [young women](#) and 10% of young men have experienced some form of childhood sexual abuse. However, research investigating health outcomes associated with intimate partner violence and childhood sexual abuse has been limited.

The authors found that exposure to intimate partner violence had a moderate association with an increased risk of major depressive disorders (63%) and an increased risk of maternal abortion and miscarriage (35%). Childhood sexual abuse was shown to be moderately associated with an increased risk of alcohol use and an increased risk of self-harm (45% and 35%, respectively). The authors indicate these findings are larger in magnitude and more extensive than previously

suggested.

Dr. Joht Singh Chandan, Clinical Associate Professor in Public Health at the University of Birmingham and senior co-lead author of the paper, said, "This comprehensive study marks a significant step in understanding the profound health impacts of intimate partner violence against women and childhood sexual abuse. Our findings reveal not only the alarming associations these forms of violence have with conditions like [major depressive disorder](#), miscarriage, alcohol use disorders, and [self-harm](#), but also underscore the urgent need for robust preventive measures and support systems."

Professor Emmanuela Gakidou from the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington and senior co-lead author of the paper, said, "While we've shed light on these critical health issues, our research also highlights the gaps in current knowledge and the necessity for continued investigation to fully grasp the extensive consequences of such violence. It's imperative that we use these insights to inform policy, health care, and community interventions, ensuring a safer and healthier future for individuals affected by these pervasive forms of violence."

Dr. Nicholas Metheny, Assistant Professor in the School of Nursing and Health Studies at the University of Miami, said, "Our research marks a pivotal shift in how we perceive the societal and health burdens of intimate partner violence (IPV). Previously, our evidence primarily highlighted IPV's contribution to HIV and depression, substantially underestimating its broader impact. This study expands our understanding, revealing IPV's extensive influence on a wider range of poor health outcomes.

"This new perspective is crucial in elevating IPV as a [public health](#) imperative in the global sphere, hopefully igniting both political and

scientific momentum towards effective prevention and intervention strategies."

4,000 studies reviewed—229 suitable for inclusion

Searching through papers published from seven databases, Emmanuella Gakidou, and colleagues identified the available literature on intimate partner violence and childhood sexual abuse and their associated health effects. They reviewed over 4,000 studies, of which 229 studies met the criteria for inclusion.

Using the burden of proof methodology (a meta-analytic approach for estimating a conservative measure of the elevated or reduced risk of a particular health outcome after exposure to a harmful or protective risk factor), they evaluated the strength of evidence connecting intimate partner violence and/or childhood sexual abuse to health outcomes, which were supported by at least three studies.

Additional potential [health outcomes](#) were also initially identified in the study, including an association of maternal hypertensive disorders with intimate partner violence and an association of smoking with childhood sexual [abuse](#). However, the research concludes that due to a scarcity of evidence, these could not be included in the meta-analysis.

The authors note that the studies are observational and cannot demonstrate causality and highlight that their findings are limited owing to the limited number of studies that explore these relationships. They suggest that their research demonstrates the wide-ranging health effects of intimate [partner violence](#) and childhood [sexual abuse](#) but emphasize the need for further research to strengthen the evidence base.

More information: Emmanuela Gakidou, Health effects associated with exposure to intimate partner violence against women and childhood

sexual abuse: a burden of proof study, *Nature Medicine* (2023). DOI: [10.1038/s41591-023-02629-5](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-023-02629-5).
www.nature.com/articles/s41591-023-02629-5

Provided by University of Birmingham

Citation: Health impacts of abuse more extensive than previously thought, research says (2023, December 11) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-12-health-impacts-abuse-extensive-previously.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.