



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

A Rapid Review of the International Literature and a National Estimate of the Prevalence of Women Who Use Substances and Experience Domestic Violence in Ireland.

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DAVINA Project Report Launch

On May 18th the School of Nursing and Midwifery and a team led by Prof Catherine Comiskey and Dr Sonam Banka-Cullen launched the report 'In Plain Sight: A Rapid Review of the International Literature and a National Estimate of the Prevalence of Women Who Use Substances and Experience Domestic Violence in Ireland.'

The work was commissioned by the SAOL Project who support women who use substances in Dublin. They received funding from Rethink Ireland Equality Fund to run a three-year pilot programme, DAVINA (Domestic Abuse/Violence Is Never Acceptable).

This is the first project of its kind, with the aim to address the dual issue of substance use and domestic violence



Introduction

- Violence against women is a major public health problem as well as a violation of women's human rights (WHO, 2021)
- In 2017, WHO & UN, established an inter-agency working group to monitor and measure violence against women on a global scale (WHO, 2021)
- Of the 3.9 billion women in the world, 755 million accounting for 20% of the female population, have experienced or been subjected to intimate partner violence at least once since the age of 15
- In Ireland, Women's Aid reported seeing a 43% increase in contacts made to their organisation in comparison with the previous year (Women's Aid, 2020)



Introduction

- **In Europe women make up 25% of individuals with a substance use issue (Arpa, 2017)**
- **Women with substance use issues are more likely to experience: stigma, have fewer social supports and domestic violence (Arpa, 2017)**
- **Reasons why women are less likely to enter treatment for their addiction include: domestic abuse alongside having a substance use issue (The Women's Health Council, 2007)**
- **Very limited support available for women experience substance use and domestic violence in Ireland**
- **Limited research on women who have a substance use issue alongside experiencing domestic violence**

Aims & Objectives

The aim of this study was to identify and describe the occurrence of domestic violence within the population of women who use substances and to estimate, for the first time, the hidden prevalence of this challenge in Ireland.

The key objectives were:

- To identify and describe the experience of domestic violence and substance use among women
- To explore women's access to services
- To provide the first estimate of the prevalence of women in Ireland who use substances and have experienced domestic violence
- To identify the gaps in the research and establish where there is greatest need for further research

Methodology

- **A rapid literature review was the approach used**
- **A rapid review utilises a systematic methodology and adheres to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews checklist (PRISMA)**
- **Indirect estimation techniques using benchmarks and multipliers, as recommended by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, were used for the prevalence estimation.**

Rapid Review: Findings

A total of 4,136 articles were originally retrieved from the database

Following further detailed screening 14 articles of sufficient quality and relevant content were eligible for inclusion.

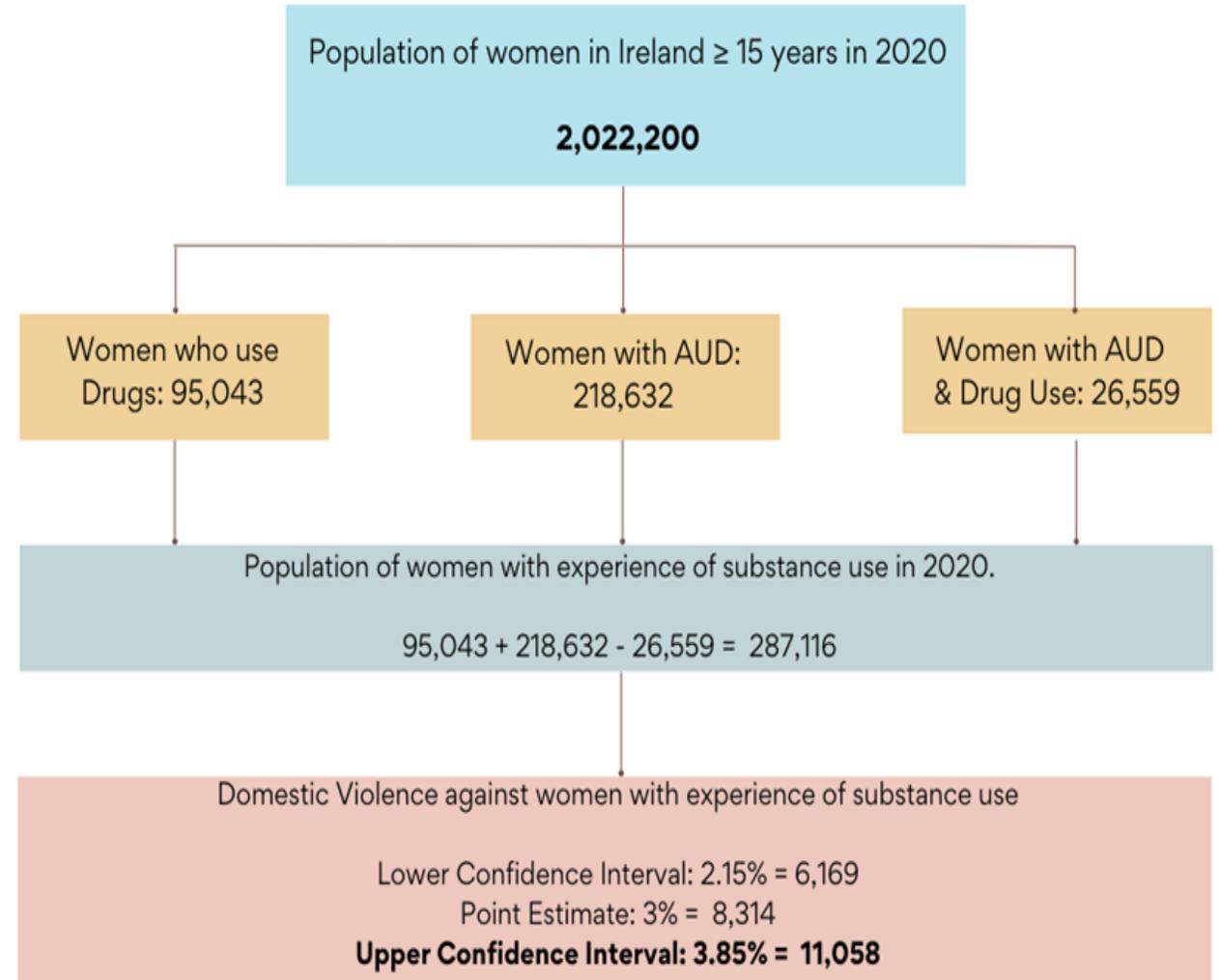
The review found that the women experience the following:

- *Mental health and trauma - Depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*
- *Infectious diseases, and reproductive health issues*
- *Motherhood and associated trauma*
- *Barriers of accessing services*
- *Integration of services*

Current Prevalence: Findings

The first estimates of the minimum scale of the hidden prevalence revealed that in Ireland, in 2020, at least **11,000 women** suffered the dual challenge of hidden domestic violence and personal substance use.

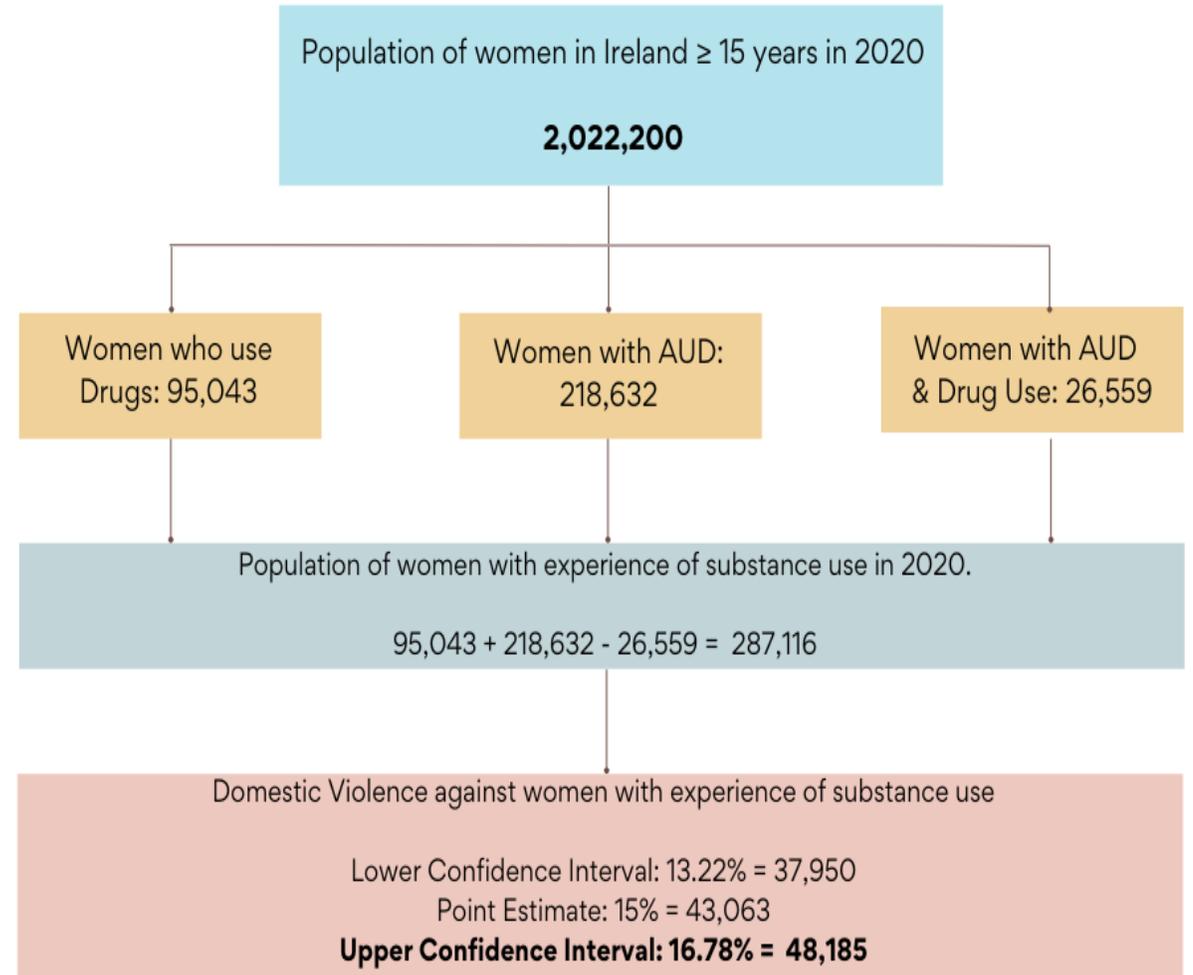
Prevalence of women in 2020 who experienced substance use and domestic violence in Ireland.



Lifetime Prevalence: Findings

The figure is based on lifetime prevalence of women in Ireland who experienced substance use in 2020 and domestic violence within their adult lifetimes. The benchmark multiplier estimation is based on a 15% point estimate, which was derived from Watson and Parsons (2005). The lower and upper confidence intervals **ranged from 37,950 to 48,185 women.**

Lifetime prevalence of women who experienced substance use and domestic violence in Ireland.



Recommendations for services

- **The need for additional, enhanced, and targeted trauma informed services cannot be underestimated. These will need to go above and beyond existing trauma informed approaches, and additional training and facilities may be required to achieve this**
- **Past adverse childhood or early sexual experiences plus current sexual health, be an ongoing facet of monitoring and evaluation of client wellbeing in addiction services. This includes the emphasis and training as required, in terms of ongoing treatment adherence for infectious diseases**
- **Ongoing professional development in the signs and symptoms of domestic violence, as well as in offering empathetic, non-stigmatising care, be provided to front line health and social services. Furthermore, informative, non-judgmental education should be provided in community settings including schools**
- **Increased transitional housing be specifically allocated for women, with children, who use substances and whose homes are unsafe as a result of domestic violence or the threat of it**
- **A review of evidence-based interventions targeting women be undertaken and a pilot intervention be evaluated for efficacy and fidelity of implementation in a range of settings**

Recommendations for monitoring

- **A policy review be undertaken to ensure that health, social, drug and other relevant policies, including strategies for children, are fit for purpose in terms of integrated services and the upholding of the human rights of women who use substances and endure violence in their homes**
- **An evidence review of appropriate screening instruments be completed and an evidence informed screening and assessment tool be chosen or developed and piloted in a range of practice settings to ensure it is fit for purpose**
- **The initial and subsequent National Drug Treatment Reporting System and the European wide Treatment Demand Indicator include summary questions on domestic violence**
- **A retrospective analysis or audit of national service data be conducted to improve on this initial estimate, and an immediate policy, co-created with women, children, and relevant services, be developed to address the comorbidity of substance use and domestic violence**

Conclusion

- **Women who endure violence in their homes and who use substances are unseen and their needs unknown**
- **They are forced to experience a duality of secrecy for the protection of themselves and their children**
- **This research provides the first minimum estimate of national prevalence and the review provided evidence on the need for accessible, targeted, and specific interventions**

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Thank you

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