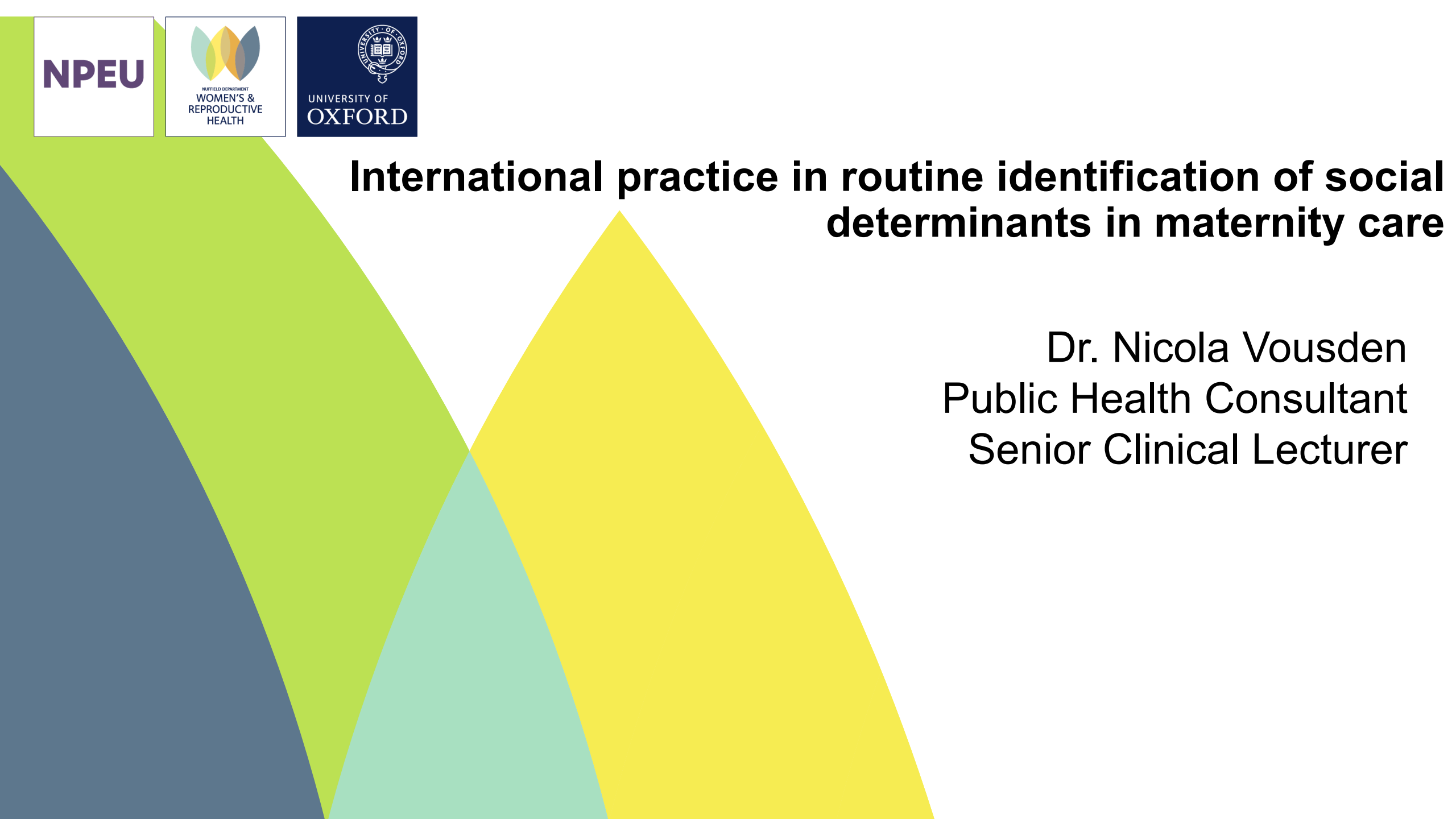




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International practice in routine identification of social determinants in maternity care

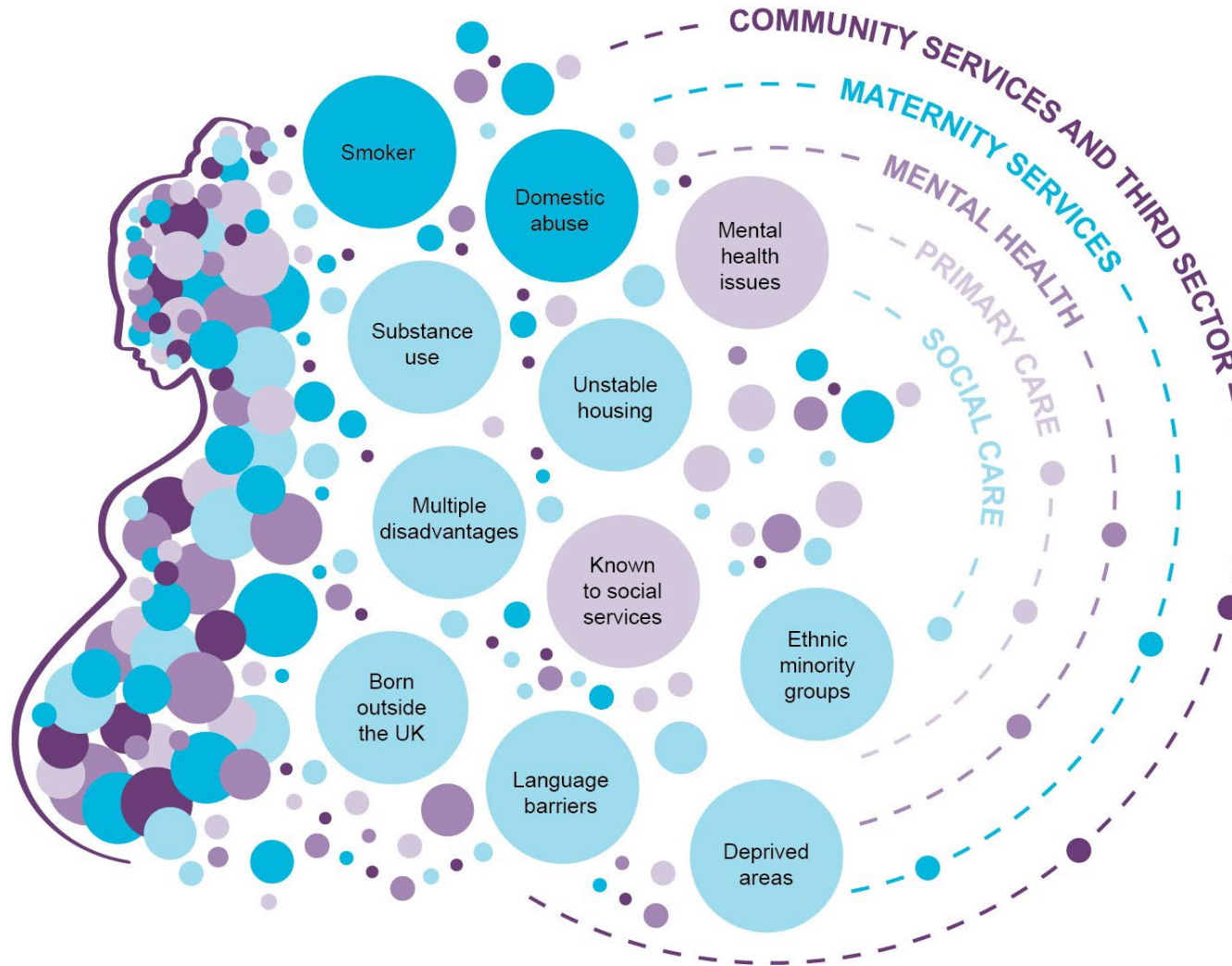
Dr. Nicola Vousden
Public Health Consultant
Senior Clinical Lecturer

1 in 9 women face complex social factors in pregnancy*

68,000 women



Premature birth



Needs not consistently identified or heard

*crude estimate based on binary indicator in Maternity Services Dataset

Why now?



MBRRACE 2025
recommendation



NHS Maternity Care
Bundle policy gap

NICE National Institute for
Health and Care Excellence

Outdated clinical
guidance



Variable practice

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The evidence gap



RESEARCH



Social determinants of health screening tool: systematic review and Delphi study

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Review Article

Identifying psychosocial vulnerabilities in pregnancy: A mixed-method systematic review of the knowledge base of antenatal conversational psychosocial assessment tools



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Systematic review

What structured assessment tools exist to identify multiple social and psychosocial factors for use in pregnancy?

Population

Pregnant women and 6 weeks postnatal in any healthcare setting

Intervention

Structured approach to identify multiple social +/- psychological factors

Comparator

Any – including no assessment/other tool

Outcome

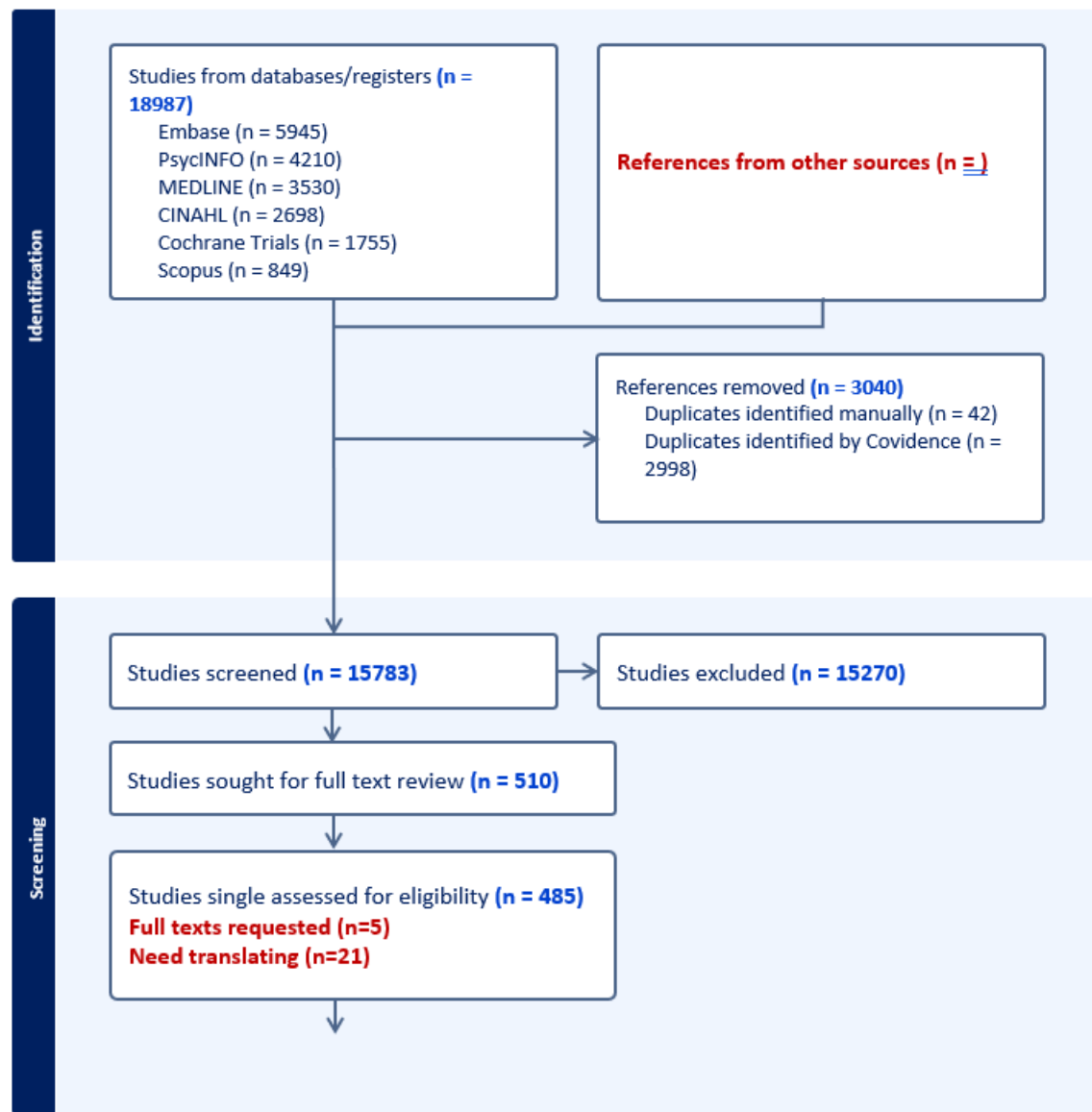
- Identification of social and psychological factors associated with inequalities
- Changes to healthcare / engagement
 - Acceptability and consequences

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Systematic review progress

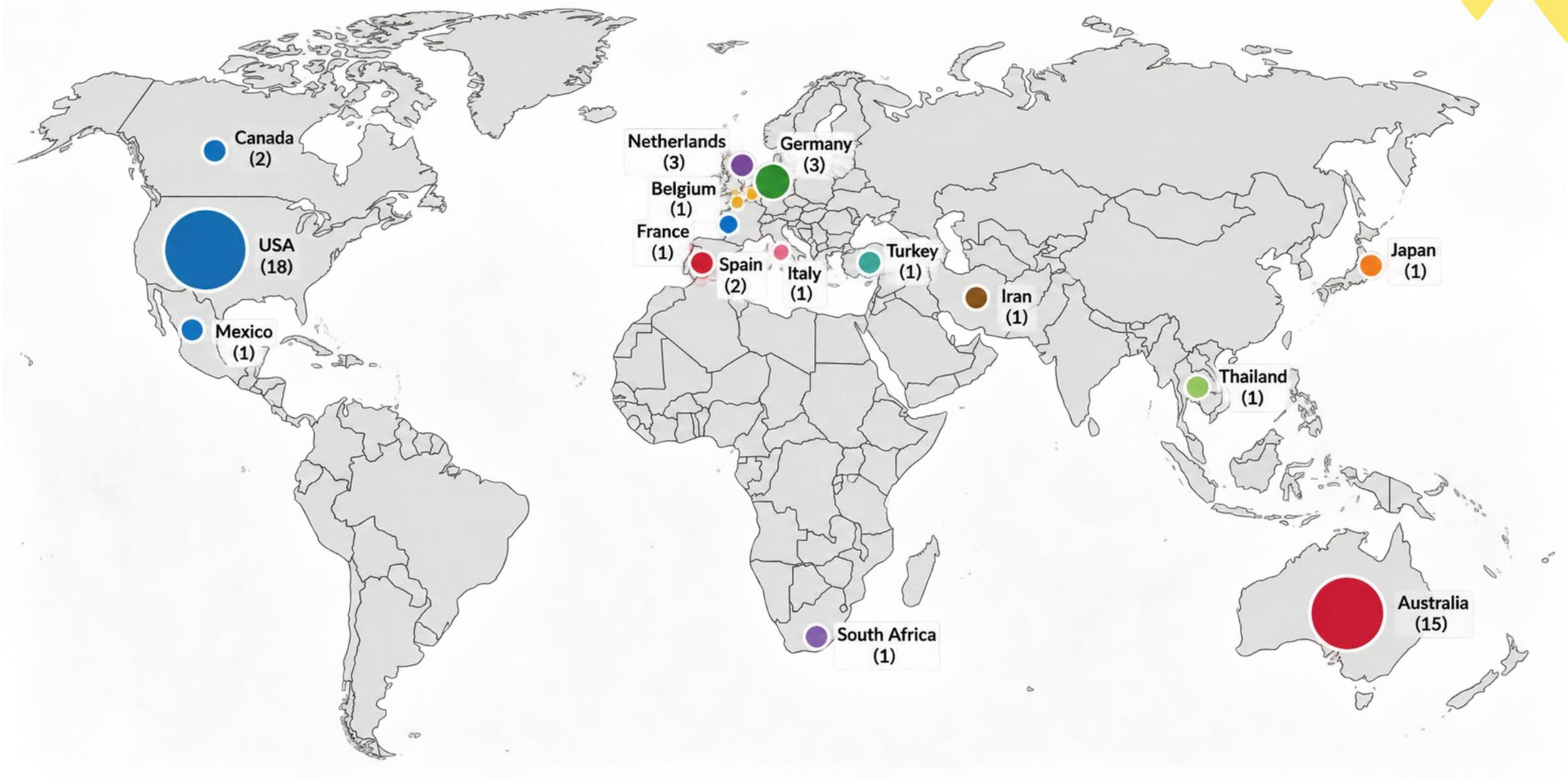


91 included studies (at least)



64 different multidomain structured tools

Early insight into findings



Early insight into findings



Early insight into findings

Antenatal (Psychosocial) Risk Questionnaire (ANRQ) – Client

V.2004 (Updated 2017) © M-P Austin



Q6. Do you feel you will have people you can depend on for support with your baby?	Very much ☐	Quite a lot ☐	Somewhat ☐	A little ☐	Not at all ☐	☐
Now you are having a baby, you may be starting to think about your own childhood and what it was like:						
Q7. Were you emotionally abused <i>when you were growing up</i> ?	No ☐	Yes ☐	☐			
Q8. Have you ever been sexually ☐ or physically ☐ abused?	No ☐	Yes ☐	☐			
Q9. <i>When you were growing up</i> , did you feel your mother was emotionally supportive of you?	Very much ☐	Quite a lot ☐	Somewhat ☐	A little ☐	Not at all ☐	No Mother ☐
Do you have any other concerns that you would like to talk about today? _____						

ANTENATAL PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT (ALPHA)

Antenatal psychosocial problems may be associated with unfavourable postpartum outcomes. The questions on this form are suggested ways of enquiring about psychosocial health.

Issues of high concern to the woman, her family or the caregiver usually indicate a need for additional supports or services. When other issues of some concern are identified, follow-up and/or referral should be considered. Additional information can be obtained from the ALPHA Guide.*

Please consider the sensitivity of this information before sharing it with other caregivers.

Addressograph

ANTENATAL FACTORS	COMMENTS/PLAN
FAMILY FACTORS Social support (CA, WA, PD) - How does your partner/family feel about your pregnancy? - Who will be helping you when you go home with your baby?	
Recent stressful life events (CA, WA, PD, PI) - What life changes have you experienced this year? - What changes are you planning during this pregnancy?	
Couple's relationship (CD, PD, WA, CA) - How would you describe your relationship with your partner? - What do you think your relationship will be like after the birth?	
MATERNAL FACTORS Prenatal care (late onset) (WA) First prenatal visit in third trimester? (check records)	
Prenatal education (refusal or quit) (CA) What are your plans for prenatal classes?	

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How does this translate into guidance?

	UK	France	Belgium	Slovenia	Denmark	Norway	Australia
 Mental health and mental wellbeing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
 Violence or abuse	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
 Substance use	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
 Social support	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	—	✓
 Material circumstances (housing, neighbourhood and local environment)	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	—	—
 Migration/language (including legal status)	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓

How does this translate into guidance?

Structured professional conversation

- Norway (2019): specifies topics and conversational guidance
- France (2024): detailed consideration of what to explore & approach, conversational prompts, choice of tools

Multiple standardised instruments

- Slovenia (2018): Whooley +- GAD-2/EPDS + NADO + WAST
- Australia (2024): EPDS + ANRQ + additional enquiry tailored to population

Standardised single multidomain questionnaire

- Denmark (2022): moving to national implementation
- Belgium (2021): policy support for “Born in Belgium”

Limited guidance

- UK (2010): Structured tools for mental health list of broader topics but no prompts/ tools

How does this translate into guidance?



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How does this translate into women's experience?

- “Every time I saw a midwife...I felt I was just being processed”

Trusting relationship with a known professional, continued supportive presence

- “I had built a relationship with her, I had confidence in who was providing my care”

Perception of professional as respectful, understanding and kind

- “It’s our choice, it’s our decision”

Professionals recognition of strengths and assets and respect for choices

- “I thought if you said something, how you’s exactly feeling..that they would use that against you”

Processes are in place to protect the woman from risk of harm

Rayment-Jones H et al. How do women with social risk factors experience United Kingdom maternity care? A realist synthesis. 2019. Birth.

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In summary

- Social inequalities are important
- In the UK there is a policy, evidence and practice gap
- Substantial international research and learning
- Not just what is asked, but how, when and by whom

What next?

Map current
practice

Complete
systematic review +
synthesise wider
evidence

Consensus and co-
design methods to
agree UK tool

Pilot in 3 NHS trusts

Build the evidence
base for models of
care and action

2026

2027-2028

2029-2033!

NIHR | National Institute for
Health and Care Research

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Birth Companions

