



UNDERSTANDING DUAL HARM: WHAT WE KNOW AND WHY DOES IT MATTER

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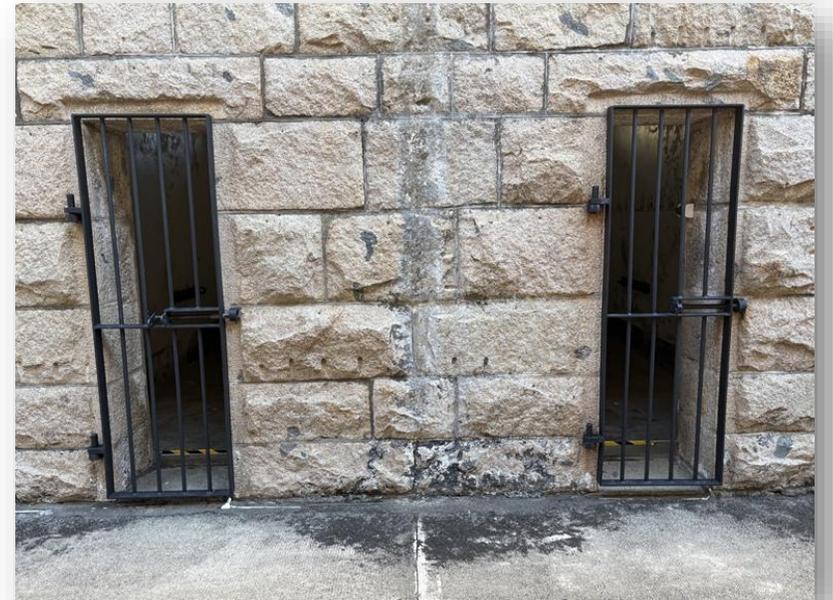
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Overview

- What is 'dual harm'
- How dual harm develops
- What we know about correctional dual harm and the outcomes
- What this means for policy and management practice

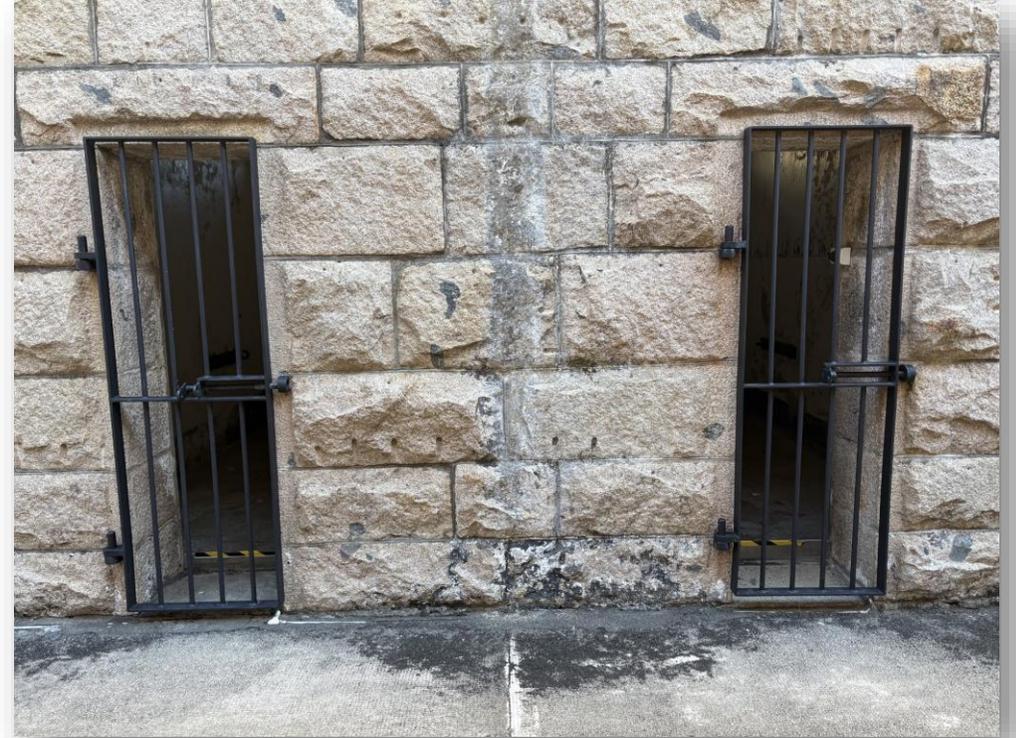


Defining Dual Harm

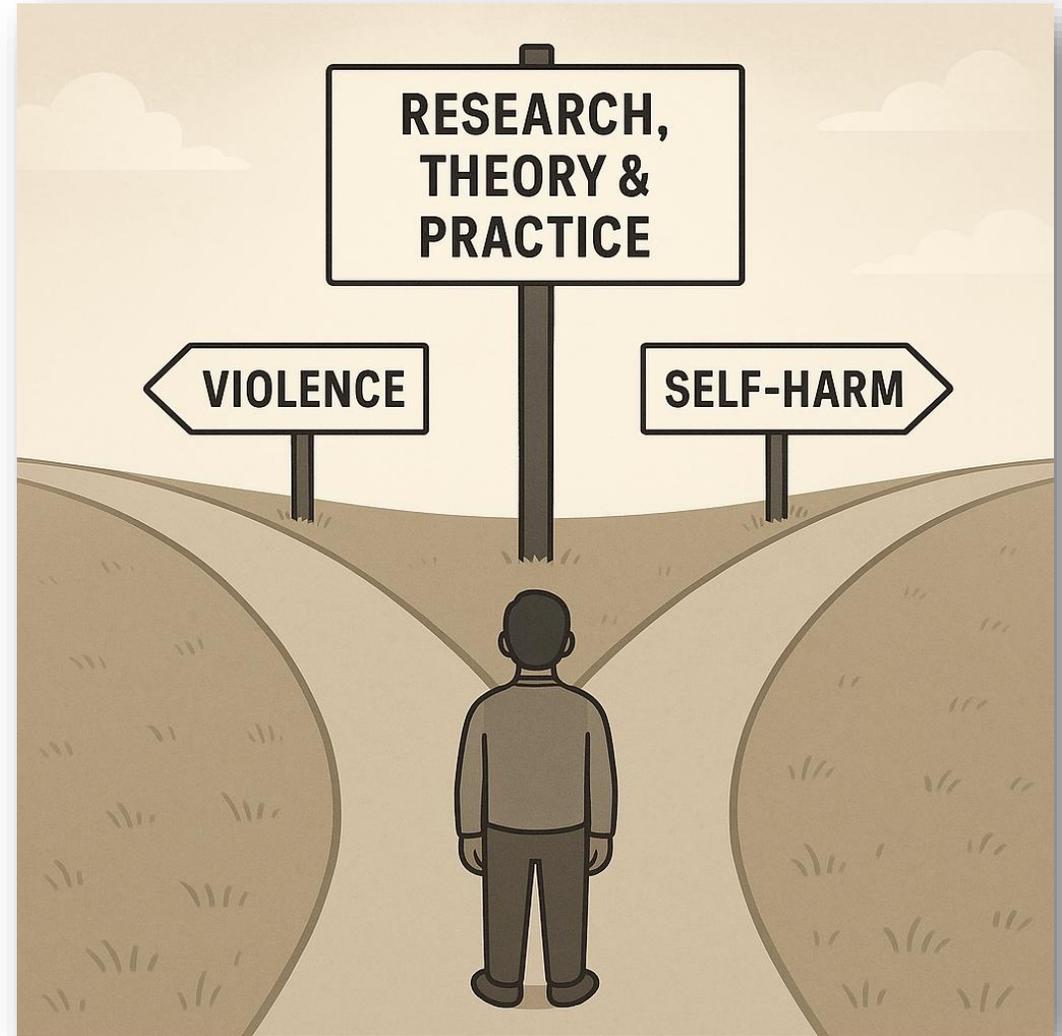
“Persons displaying both harm to self and harm to others”

(Slade, 2018)

Violence and Self-harm



Divided knowledge



Quiz 1



What percentage of people who have self-harmed are also physically violent?

General population

Around 50% of people who self-harm will engage in aggression

Around 20-30% of general population who engage in violence will also self-harm

Suicidal behaviour is highest in those who are repeatedly violent – much higher when compared with victims.

We know that there is a strong relationship between the behaviours.

They often co-occur

But why?



Where it begins



Where it begins



Extreme violence in home or by carers

Comparatively more extreme and chronic.

Exposure to violence increases the risk of self-harm and thoughts of suicide and a strong factor in development of later violent behaviour (e.g. Viermeren et al, 2002)

A lack of 'safe spaces'

Thwarted wish for connection

e.g. Webb et al (2019) Loss of a parent pre-school and unnatural death increases risk of both self-harm and violent criminality.



Where it begins – how it develops



behaviours emerge to **manage emotional, relational and trauma-based distress.**

adapting behaviour to meet environment

develop and continue to **protect themselves and/or others**

public/private identities

report **seeking out connection** with peers & behaviours may support

Deep anger, loyalty and/or sadness towards family, friends and/or partners.

Outcomes



PTSD, early substance dependence and personality disorders though lower depressive disorders

Far less access to mental health services



Five time more likely to be convicted of a violent offence if require medical treatment for self-harm even when controlled for psychiatric disorders and socio-economic factors



More likely to be expelled from school



Earlier contact with the Criminal Justice System





CORRECTIONAL DUAL HARM

Risks

Situation in the UK

News > UK > Crime

Prison self-harm at record high as deaths, assaults and staff attacks surge in overcrowding crisis

A prisoner self-harmed once every seven minutes and was assaulted once every 18 minutes in the last year, figures reveal

Amy-Clare Martin Crime Correspondent • Thursday 31 October 2024 12:12 GMT



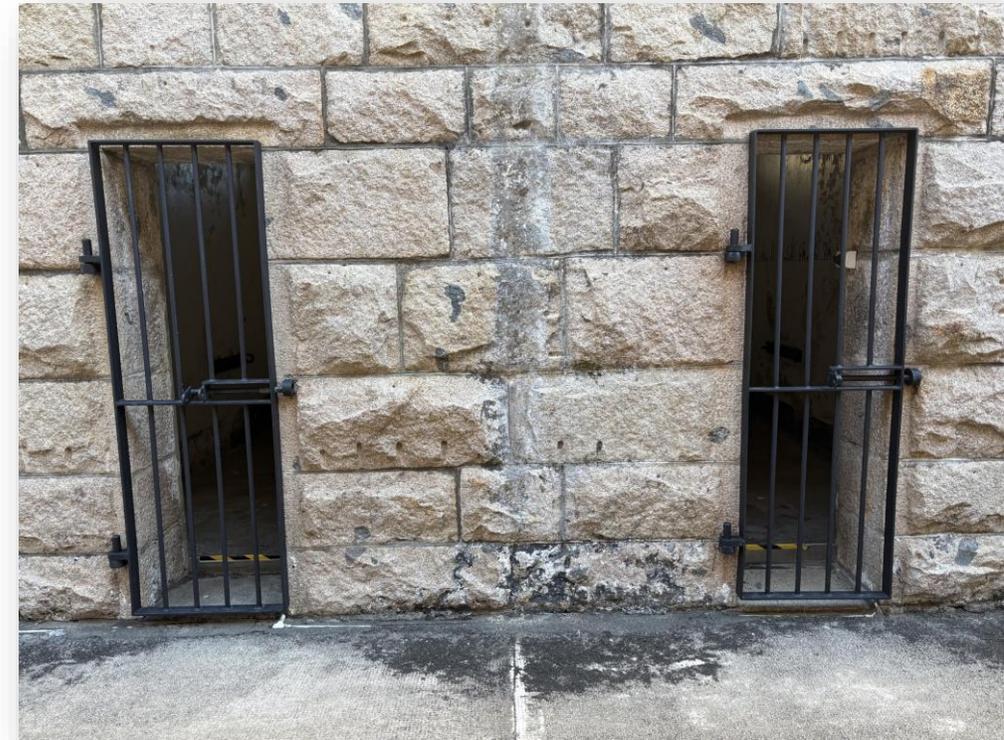
Defining Dual Harm in prison

“Persons displaying both harm to self and harm to others”

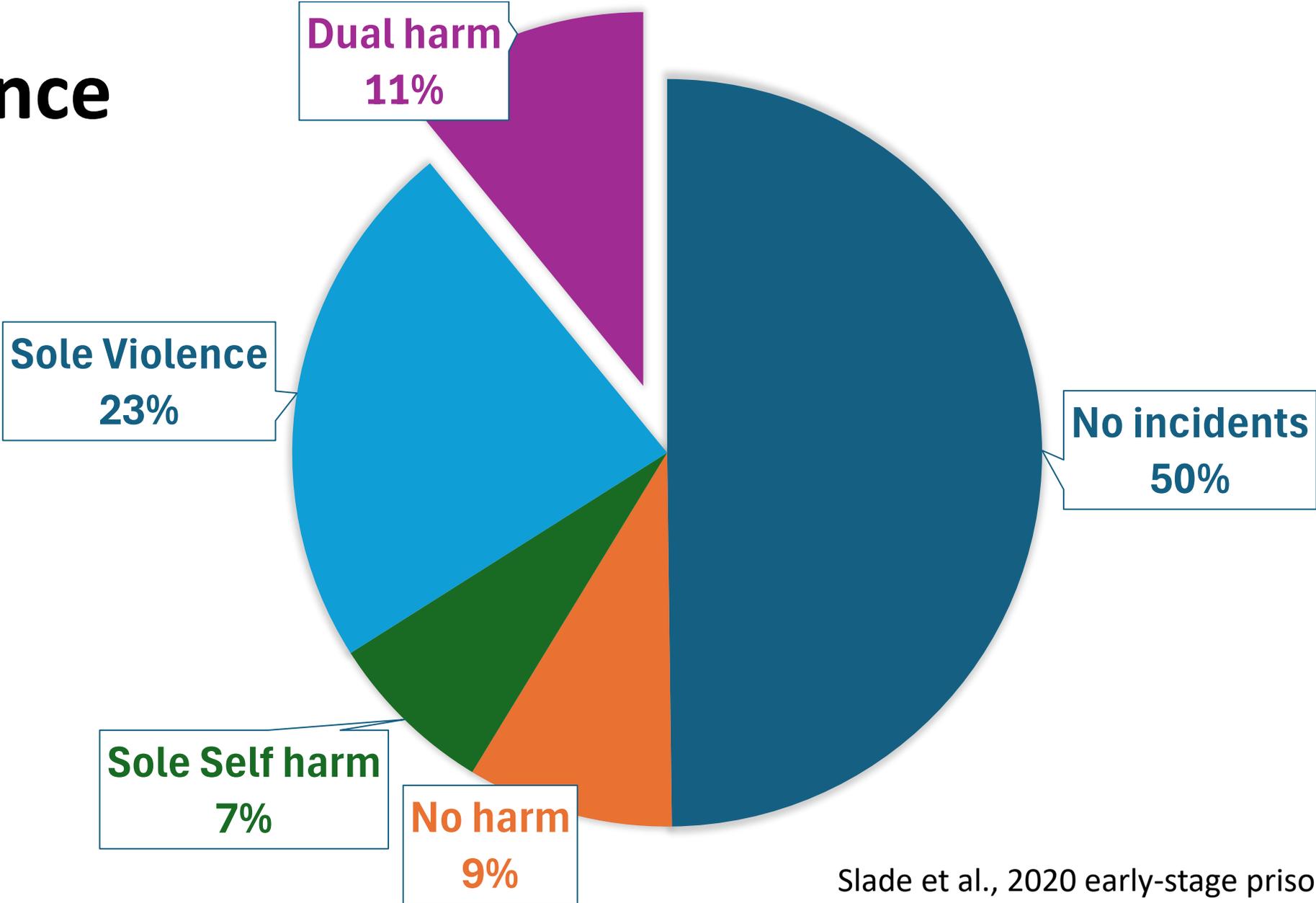
(Slade, 2018)

Violence = physical assault

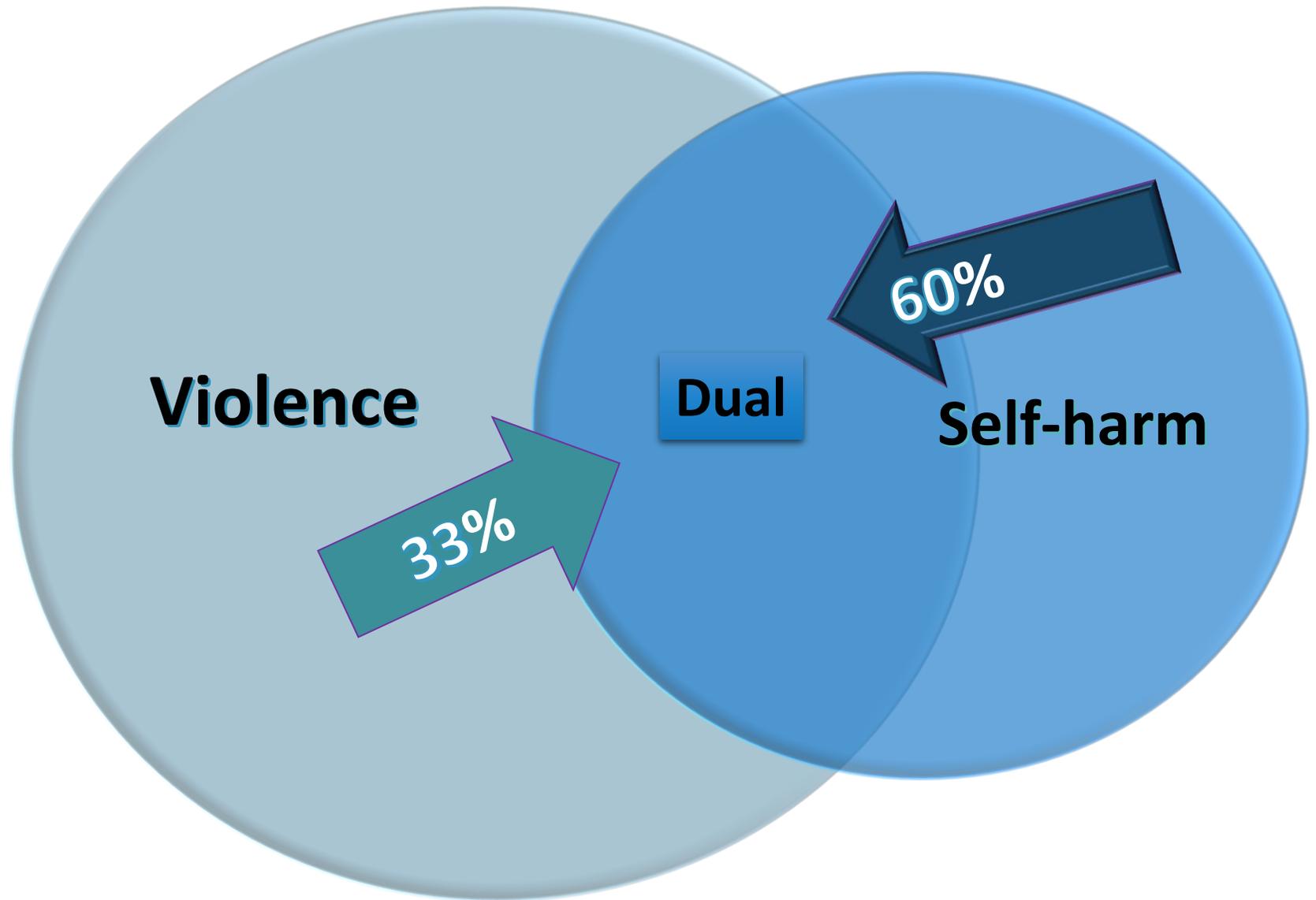
Self-harm = self-harm behaviour irrespective of intent



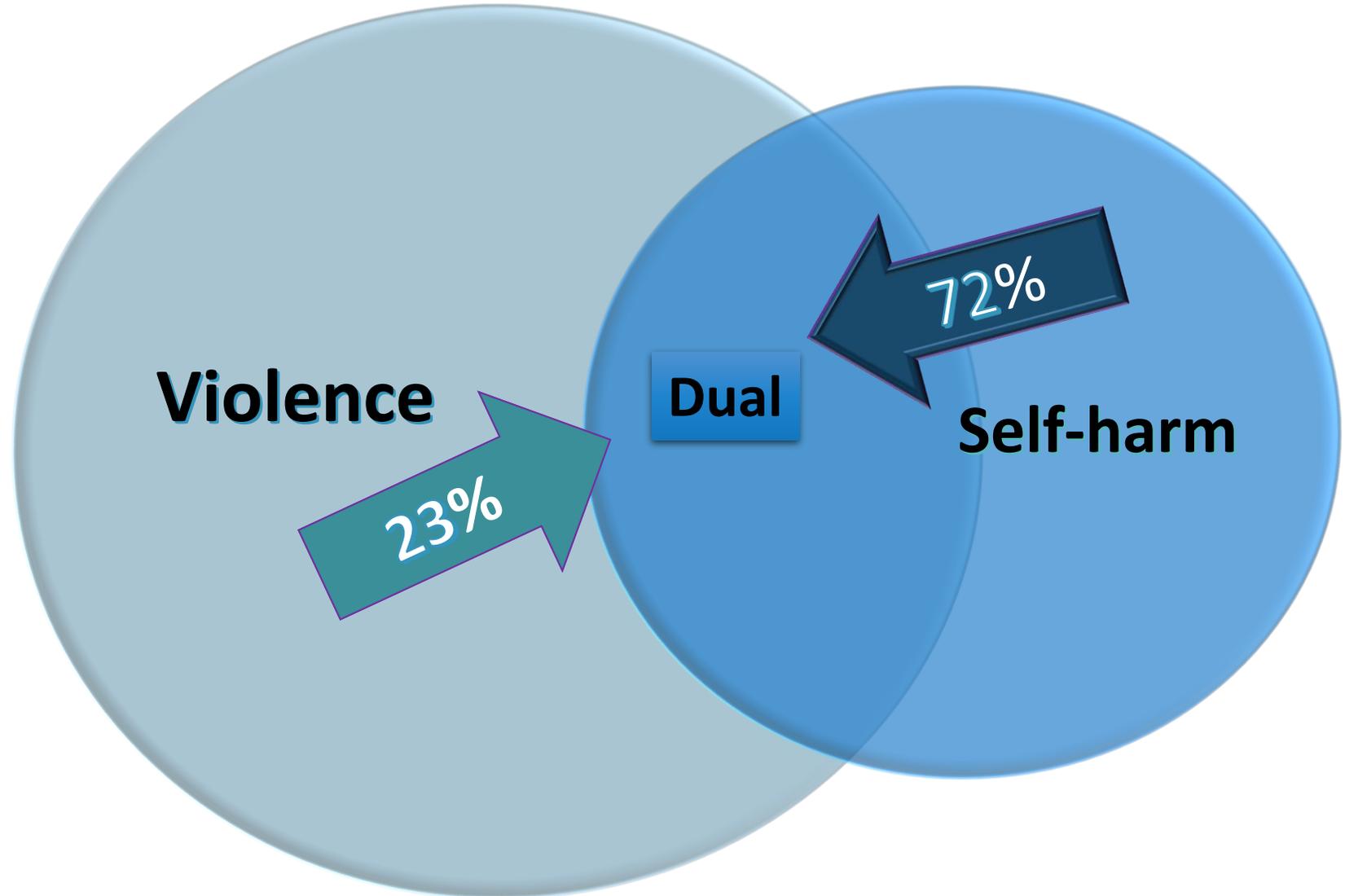
Prevalence



Adult Men (18+)



Young Adult Men (18-21)



Violence

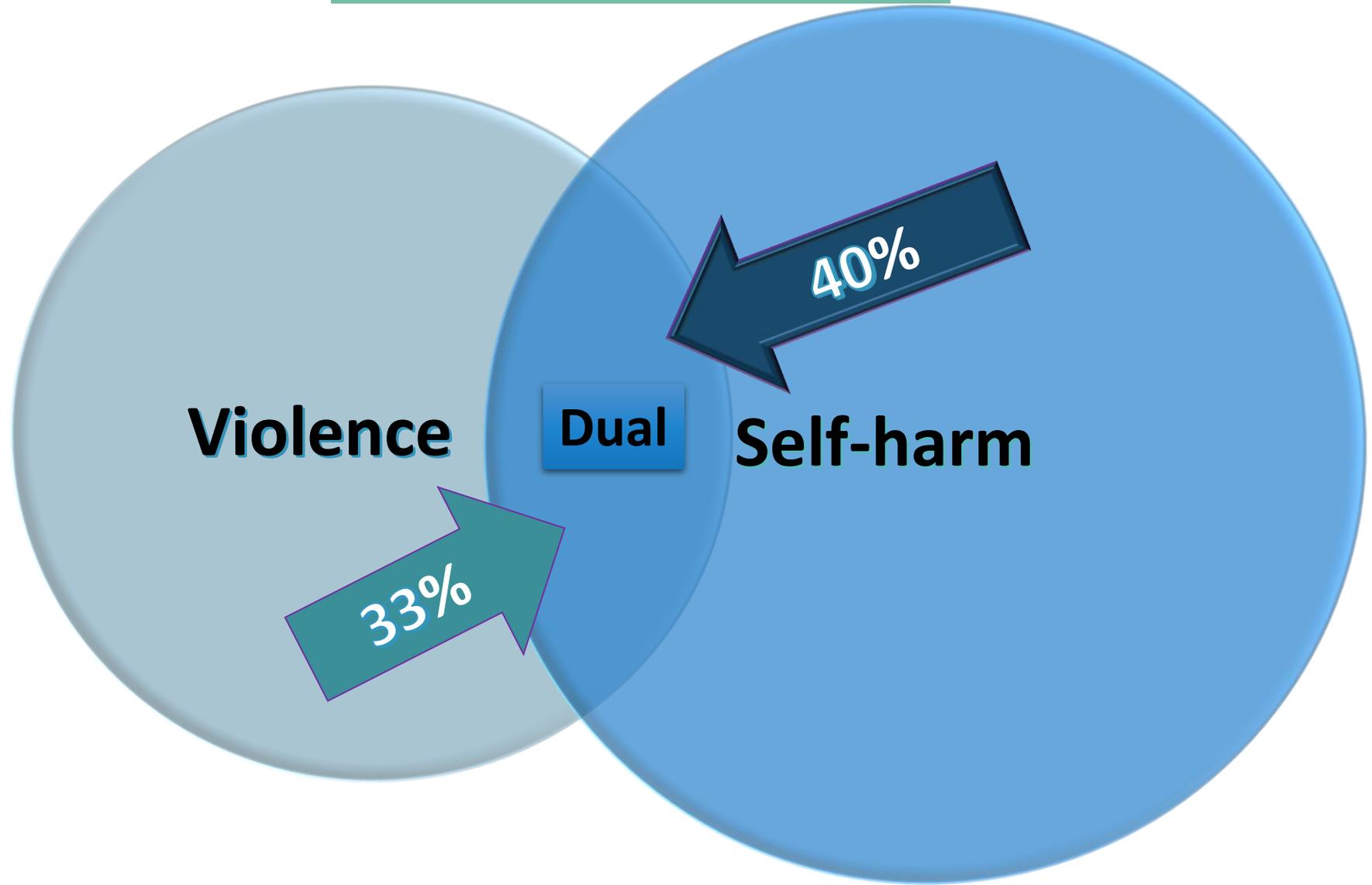
Dual

Self-harm

23%

72%

Adult Women (18+)



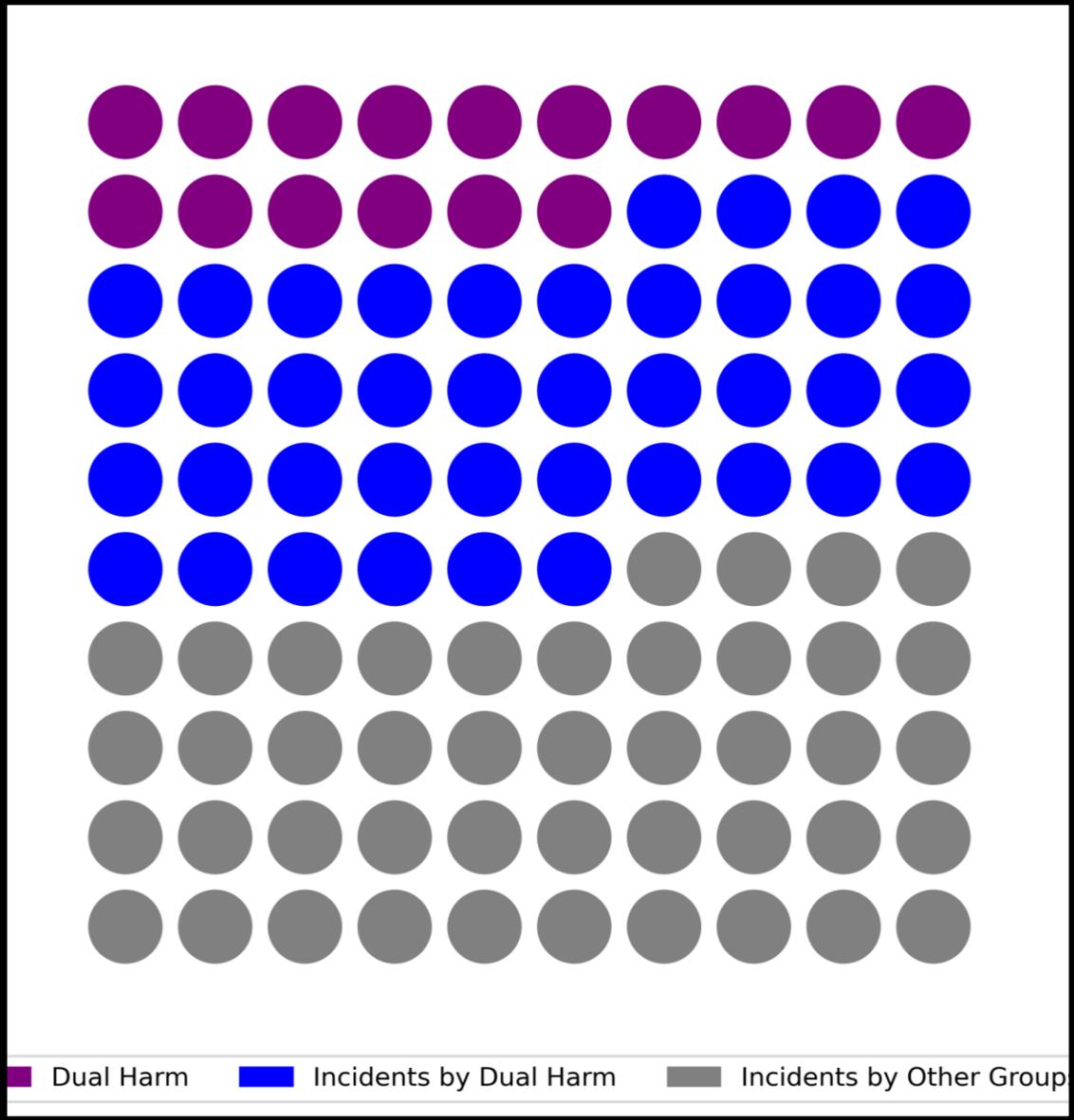
A group of people are shown from the chest up, clapping their hands. The image is dimly lit and has a dark, muted color palette. The text 'BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS' is overlaid in the center in a white, sans-serif font. The background shows several pairs of hands in various stages of clapping, creating a sense of collective activity and celebration.

BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS

Dual harm & prison incidents

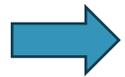
Disproportionate impact on misconduct in prison (Butler et al., 2023)

16% of men who dual-harmed accounted for 56% of reported prison incidents (Slade et al. 2018)

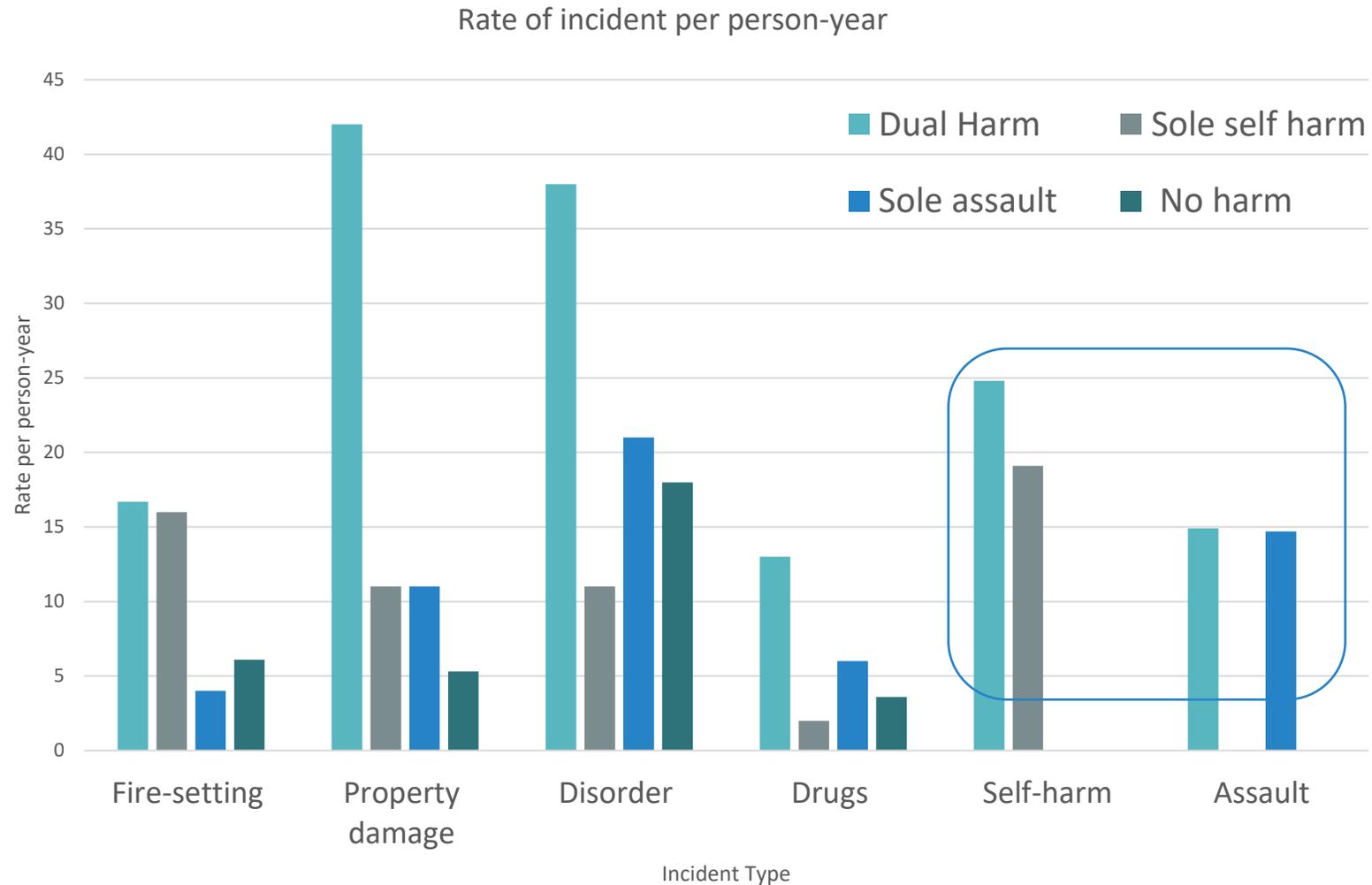


What is driving the higher rate?

All 6 studies completed in prisons in E&W, NI and USA found the same patterns.



Self-harm and assault happen at the same rate



What is driving the higher rate?

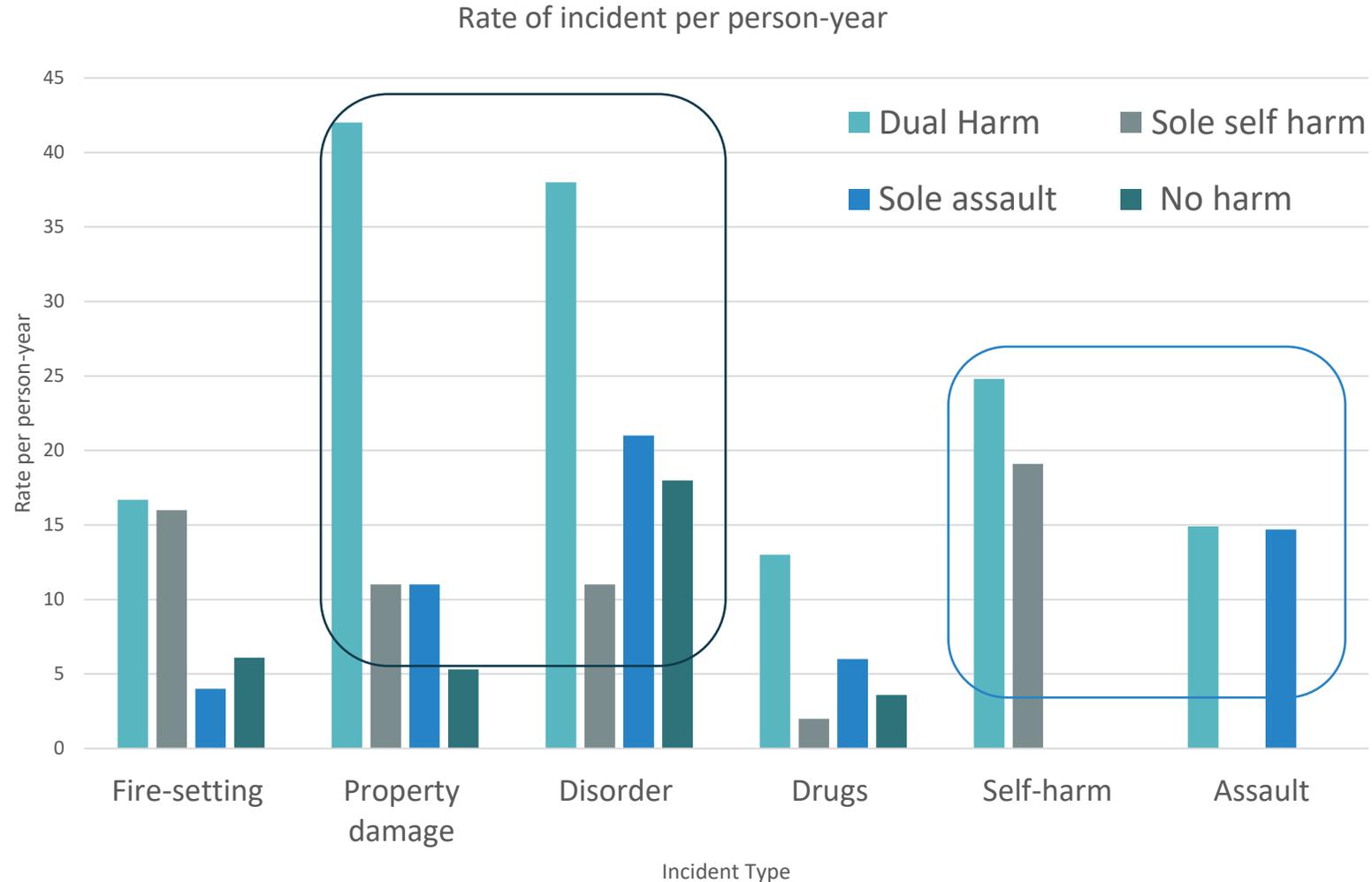
All 6 studies completed in prisons in E&W, NI and USA found the same patterns.

Self-harm and assault at the **same** rate

Property Damage & Disorder **far higher**

Drug-related incidents are mixed: some studies indicate higher, while others do not.

No difference in drug supply/phones unlikely to be driving the narratives about organised crime and violence.



A group of people in business attire, with their hands raised in a gesture of agreement or participation. The image is dimly lit and has a dark overlay. The text "MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES" is centered in white, bold, sans-serif font.

MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

The dual harm conundrum



Zero Tolerance
Control & Punishment



Vulnerable with
Supportive Care

Segregation



Segregation is when someone is removed from their normal location to an isolated one

Can be for punishment, protection of others or from others , 'good order' of the prison & suicide risk.

It often results in limited interaction, family contact, privacy, exercise, purposeful activity & access to coping.

Quiz II



In your service

If a decision is made to segregate someone...
would a risk of self-harm affect the approach taken?

“The use of segregation conditions for prisoners receiving support through.. [suicide & self-harm risk management system].. is only defensible in exceptional circumstances”

HMPPS Prison Safety Policy Framework (2024)



Outcomes of segregation

There is no credible evidence that it reduces prison misconduct or recidivism (Gendreau & Goggin, 2019; Olive, 2017).

Evidence suggests >15 days is more likely to cause profound physical and psychological harm (Hanry, 2018; Shalev, 2017)

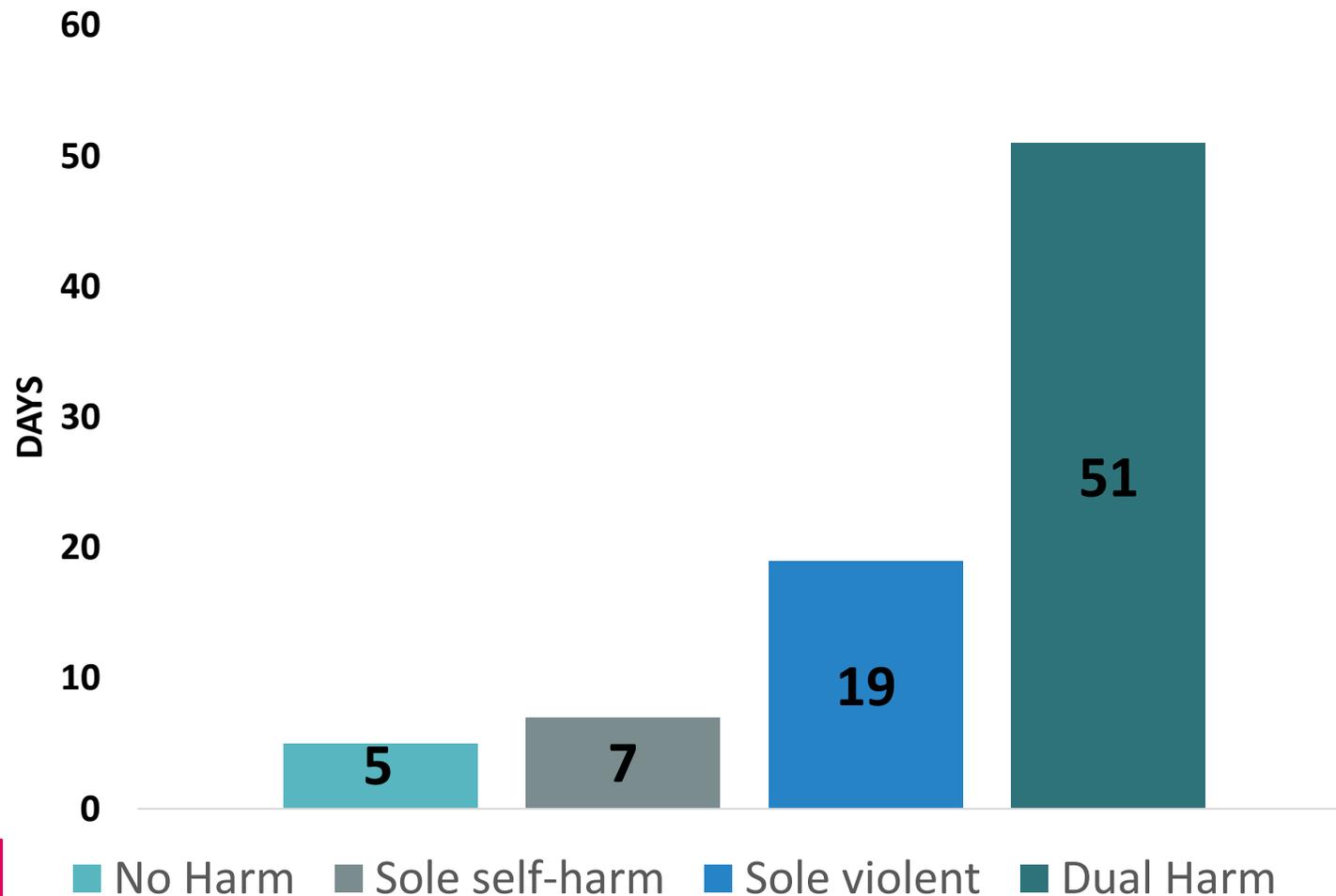
There is a 14 x higher risk of prison self-harm after experience (USA)
(Kaba et al., 2014)

20% of first in-prison self-harm occurs on restrictive regimes (UK)
(Slade, 2018)

Mortality is higher (Luigi et al., 2022)

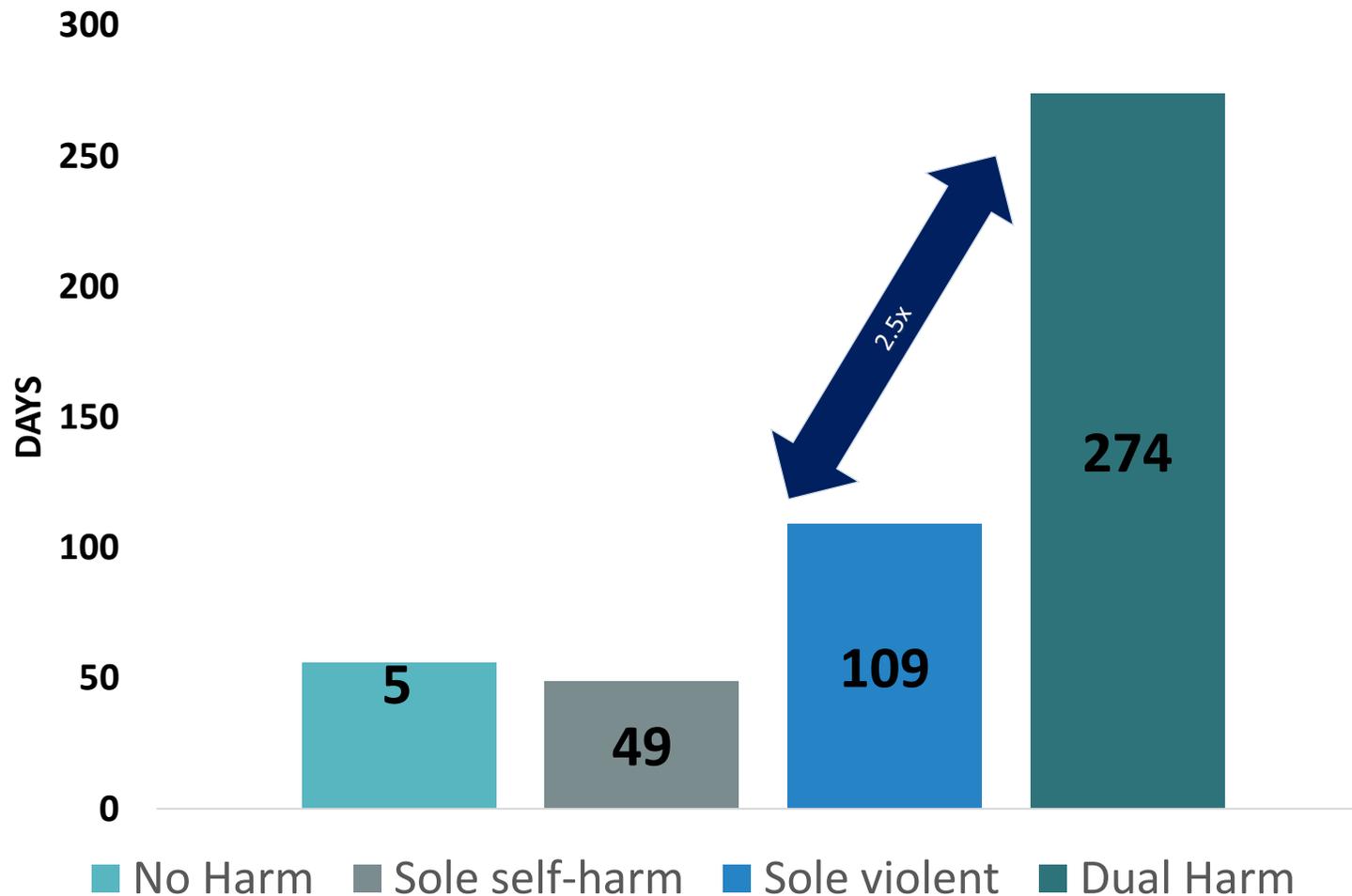


Time in segregation



US Male prisoners who self-harm were more likely to be violent and in segregation (Lanes, 2011)

Time on restriction

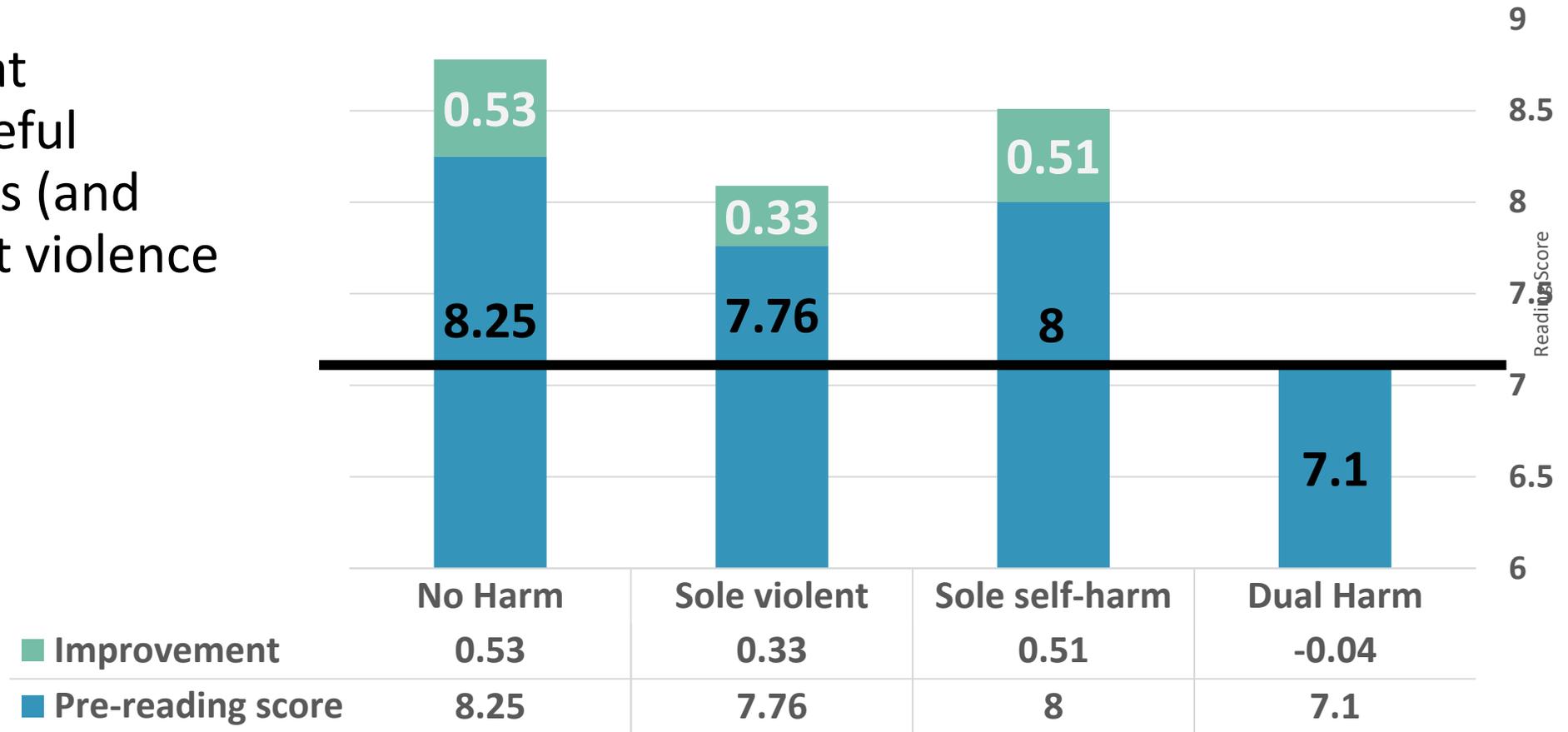


People who dual harmed spent an average of 9 months on restriction (not including constant supervision).

Education (USA study)

Reading Score - on entry and improvement during imprisonment

Good evidence that structured purposeful education activities (and paid work) prevent violence



Where it begins – how it develops



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More likely to be expelled from school



Earlier contact with the Criminal Justice System

A group of people, mostly men in business attire, have their hands raised in a gesture of support or agreement. The image is dimly lit and has a dark, moody atmosphere. The hands are the central focus, with some in the foreground and others in the background, creating a sense of depth and collective action.

RISK-TO-SELF OUTCOMES

Suicide, self-harm and substances

Mortality risk

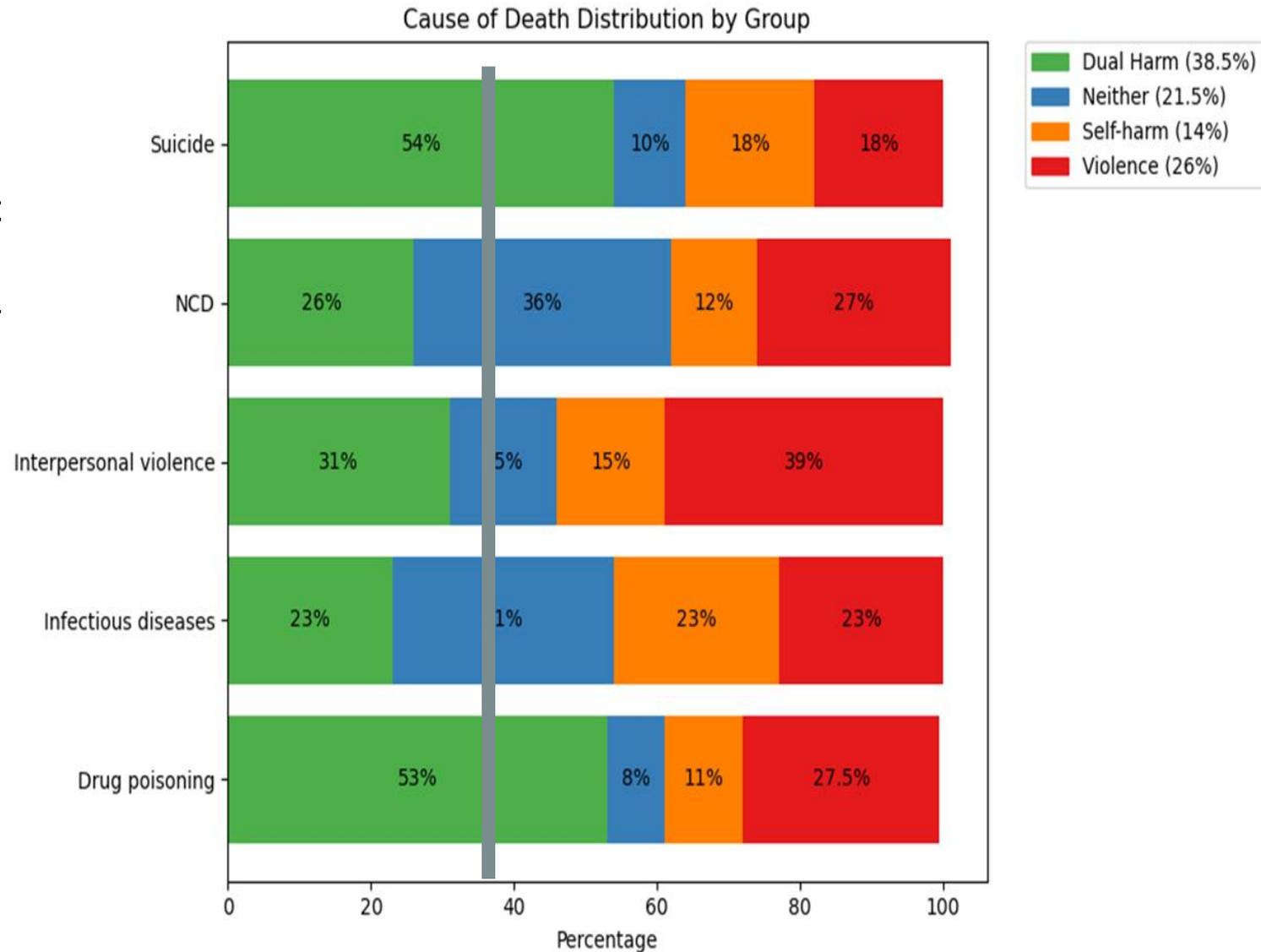
Steeg et al (2019) Danish population aged 19-35 found **highest risk of unnatural deaths (IRR 29), especially drug poisoning** for people with violent conviction **and** self-harm.

UK emerging findings using similar definitions for people who died on probation (Slade et al., in development)

Dual Harm are over-representative in deaths by **drug poisoning & suicide** (33% higher)

Sole self-harm also have slightly higher than prevalence in **suicide** (25% higher).

Sole violence are over-represented in deaths by **homicide** (40% higher)



Lethal self-harm methods

Vulnerable to serious harm to themselves

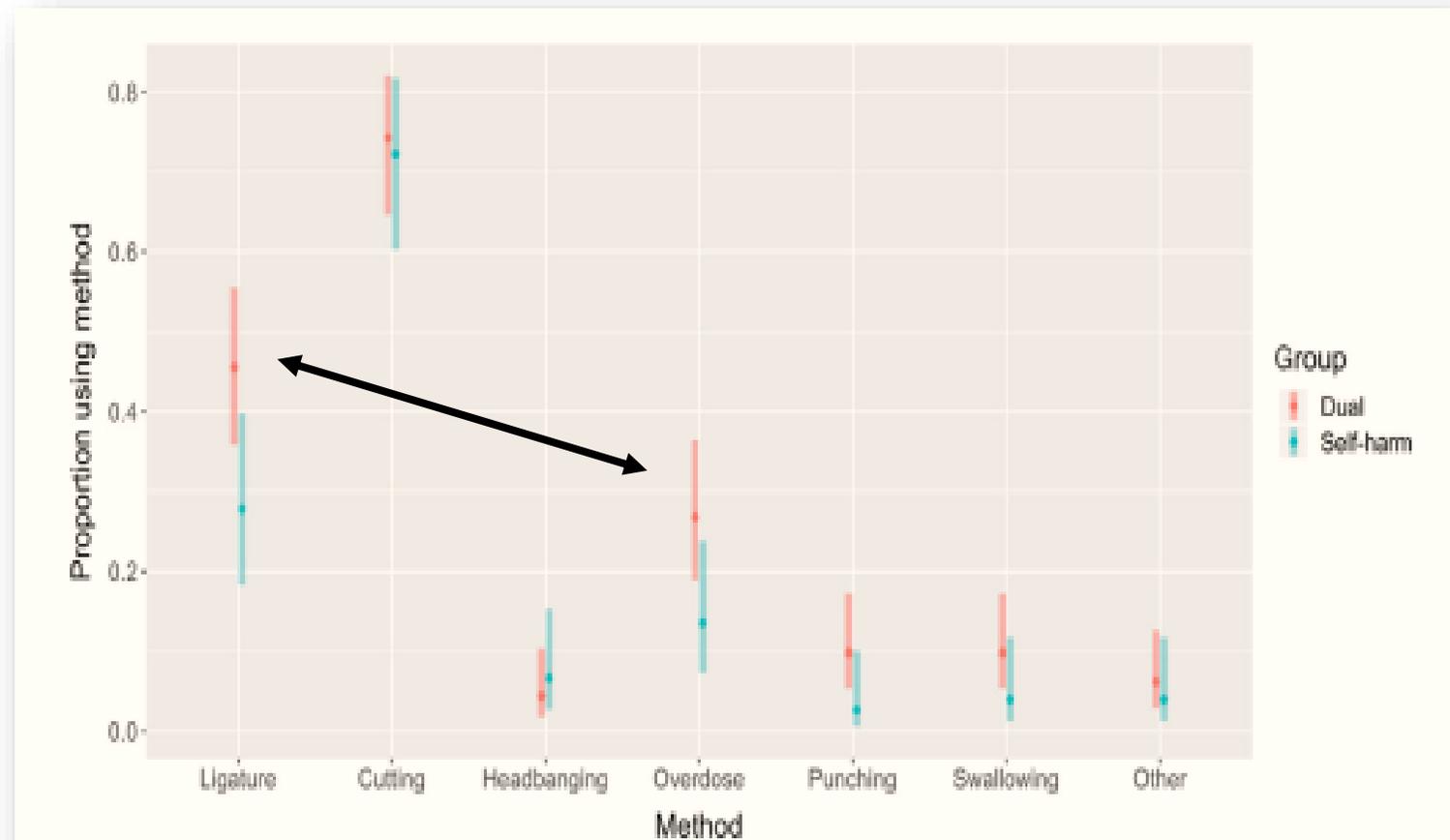


Figure 2. Proportion of individuals in the self-harm and dual groups using each type of method of self-harming with 95% confidence intervals for the proportion.

Why does dual harm occur in prison?



Why it occurs...reminder of adolescence



Extreme violence in home or by carers

A lack of 'safe spaces'

Thwarted wish for connection

behaviours emerge to **manage emotional, relational and trauma-based distress.**

report wanting **connection but struggle** & behaviours support

develop and continue to **protect themselves and/or others**

public/private identities

Deep anger, loyalty and/or sadness towards those around them

Why it occurs in prison...



- Experiencing difficult and unpredictable environments (and adapting to extreme scenarios)
- Emotional and psychological management
- Protection of self and others
- Identities and authentic self e.g. private and public self, the need for masks, and ‘looking glass self’
- Communication
- Connections to early adverse experiences

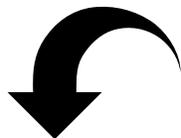
No single function although the environment and interactions are a key driver

Thurston et al 2024; Pickering et al., 2022; Shafti et al., 2025.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The dual harm conundrum



Zero Tolerance
Control & Punishment



Vulnerable with
Supportive Care

The dual harm conundrum



Culture



Evidence-based approach to quality environment

- Most effective environments support the development of trust and feeling ‘recognised’; developing connections; opportunities for personal growth & sense of safety, purpose and hope (Newey, unpublished thesis).

Prevention not only reaction

- Prevention requires a different approach – it actively prevents distress and promotes self-efficacy and recovery so that crisis is prevented.

Be curious and brave: review the purpose, evidence and outcomes

- Be open to questioning existing practices and assumptions about dual harm and intervention – make the changes needed.

Practical steps

Know who they
are

Combine case
management and
decision-making

Combine
assessments for
everyone

Safeguard
restriction use

Improve equality
of access to
positive
environment

Monitor and
respond to
disproportionate
outcomes





Disruptive and harmful behaviours more prevalent but not inherently more dangerous.

Prevention is more effective than reaction; with restriction proportionate.

Breaking the cycle of compounded negative outcomes in childhood and imprisonment means addressing root causes through emotional wellbeing, connection, protection & feeling safe, positive identity, and hope.

Being open to challenging our assumptions and procedures using evidence can improve outcomes.

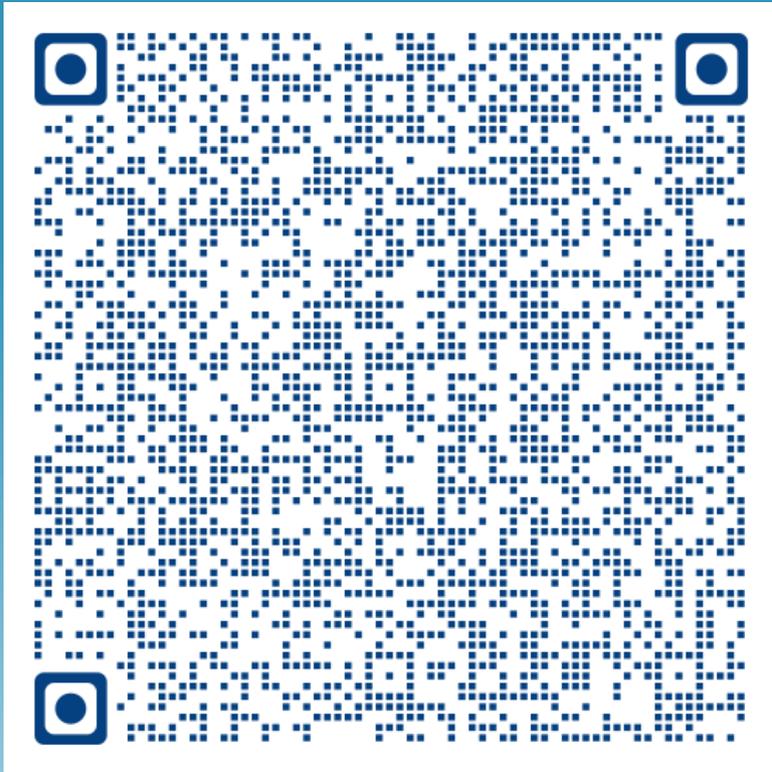


Free access to slides and resources

This QR code provides an email to ask for free access to all presentations, research and resources mentioned in this presentation.

If you'd like to collaborate or know more, then please contact me:
Karen.slade@ntu.ac.uk

<https://myntuac.sharepoint.com/sites/HarmPreventionResources>



in Slade: Harm Prevention Resources

← Back Desktop Mobile

Resource Bank



Slade, Karen
Professor

Welcome to the resource bank.

This repository provides easy access to all the resources which Prof Karen Slade has developed and can therefore share with you. To support your own work

Research publications for
List and copies of Prof S

Recovery | Nottingham
Short video on the impact
[2022]

Challenge Accepted: Kar
Short video around Prof

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