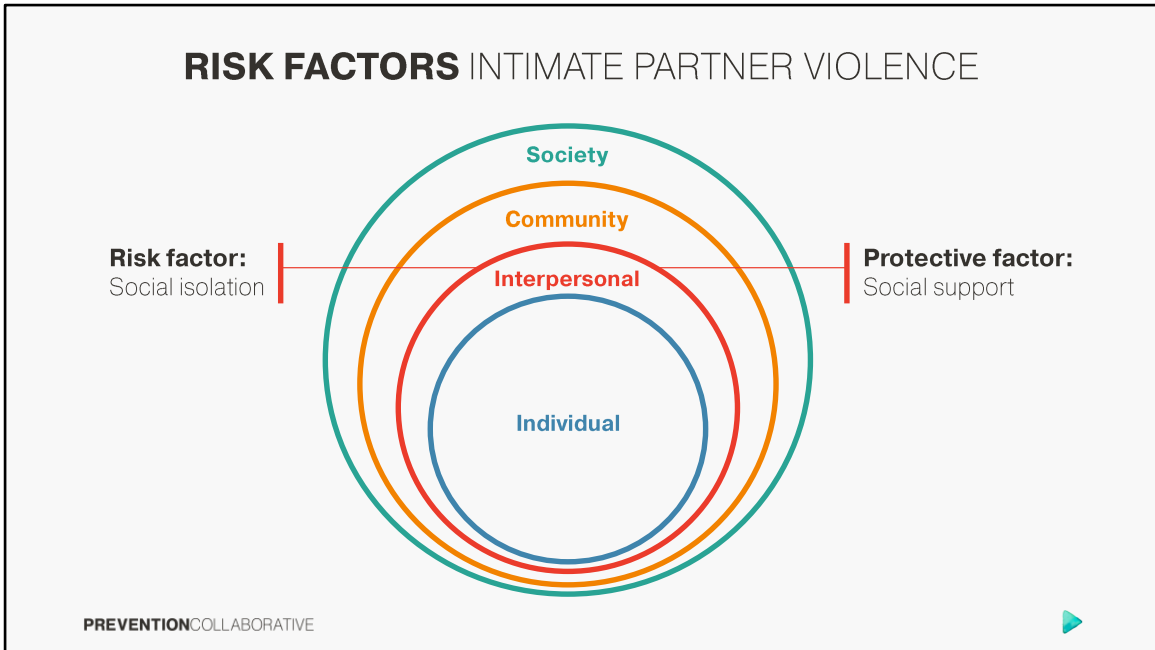In this topic, we will cover key risk factors and situational triggers of intimate partner violence across different levels of the socio-ecological model.

PREVENTION FOUNDATIONS—REFRESHER

Its important to note that many of the risk factors we will present here can also be reframed as protective factors. For example, social isolation (a risk factor) can increase the likelihood of women experiencing violence while social support (a protective factor) can decrease it.

With that in mind, let's look at risk factors that have been shown through research in multiple settings to increase the risks of men perpetrating and women experiencing intimate partner violence. The most salient risk and protective factors may vary in different settings, and there may be additional risk and protective factors in certain contexts.

PREVENTION FOUNDATIONS—REFRESHER
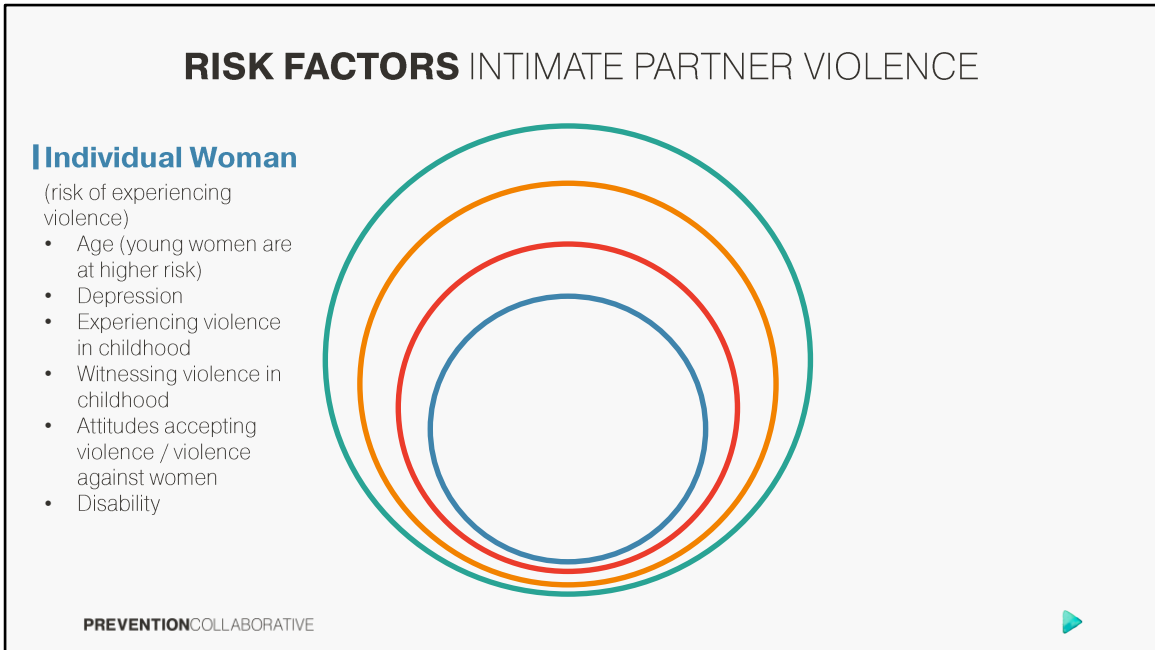
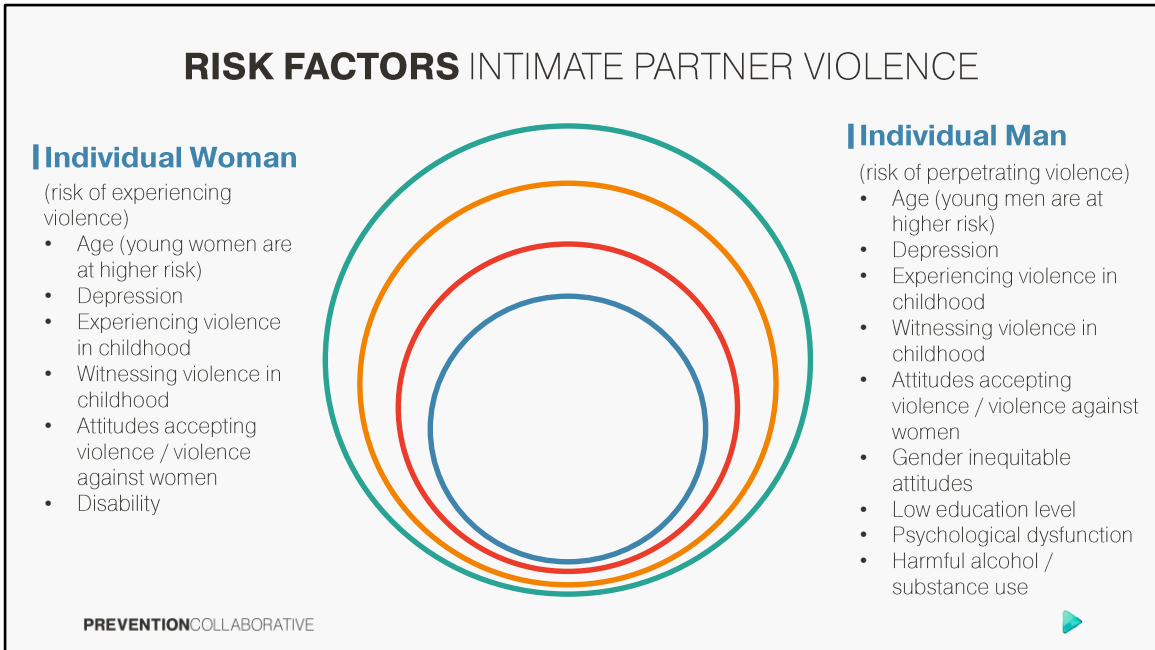For an **individual woman**, global evidence shows that the following factors can increase her risk of experiencing intimate partner violence:
- Age (young women are at higher risk)
- Depression
- Experiencing or witnessing violence in childhood
- The woman herself having attitudes that accept violence as a means of resolving conflict or expect it as part of her husband 'loving' her
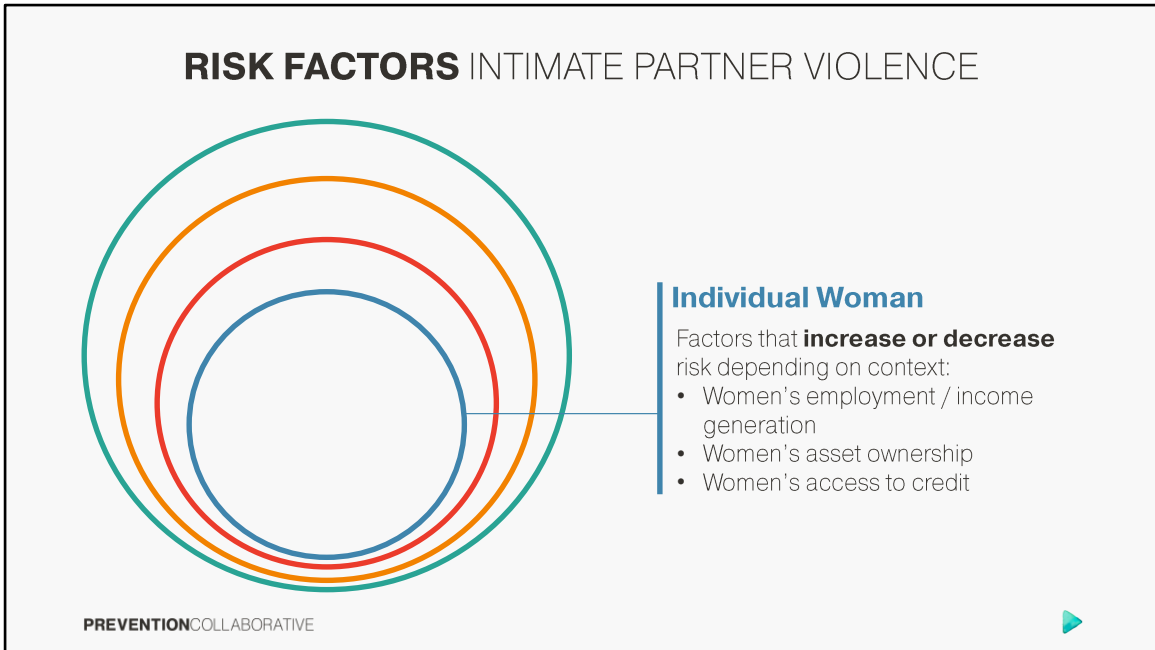- Disability

RISK FACTORS INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Individual Woman
(risk of experiencing violence)
- Age (young women are at higher risk)
- Depression
- Experiencing violence in childhood
- Witnessing violence in childhood
- Attitudes accepting violence / violence against women
- Disability

Individual Man
(risk of perpetrating violence)
- Age (young men are at higher risk)
- Depression
- Experiencing violence in childhood
- Witnessing violence in childhood
- Attitudes accepting violence / violence against women
- Gender inequitable attitudes
- Low education level
- Psychological dysfunction
- Harmful alcohol / substance use

PREVENTIONCOLLABORATIVE

For an **individual man**, the global evidence shows that the following factors can increase his risk of perpetrating intimate partner violence:
- Age (young men are at higher risk)
- Depression
- Experiencing or witnessing violence in childhood
- Attitudes accepting violence / violence against women
- Gender inequitable attitudes
- Low education level
- Psychological dysfunction
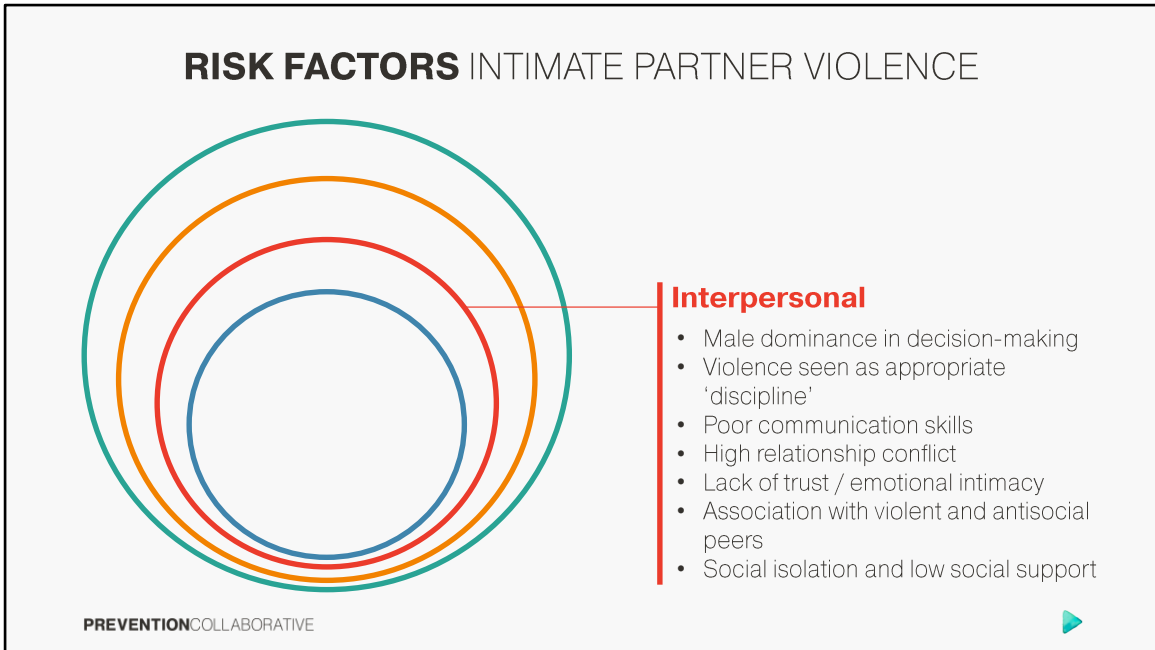- Harmful alcohol and substance use—especially excessive or binge drinking

PREVENTION FOUNDATIONS—REFRESHER

RISK FACTORS INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Individual Woman

Factors that **increase or decrease** risk depending on context:
- Women's employment / income generation
- Women's asset ownership
- Women's access to credit

PREVENTIONCOLLABORATIVE

There are a few factors where the evidence is mixed, and they can increase or decrease risk of violence depending on the context.

For example, depending on the prevalent norms about women working and how its perceived by men, women's employment and income generation can be a risk or protective factor for intimate partner violence. In particular, the evidence shows that in the shorter term, women working can increase the likelihood of experiencing violence in settings where it is not common for women to work. However, in the long term, women working can increase women's autonomy, their ability to negotiate in their relationships, and their ability leave an abusive partnership if they decide.

PREVENTION FOUNDATIONS—REFRESHER

RISK FACTORS INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Interpersonal

- Male dominance in decision-making
- Violence seen as appropriate 'discipline'
- Poor communication skills
- High relationship conflict
- Lack of trust / emotional intimacy
- Association with violent and antisocial peers
- Social isolation and low social support
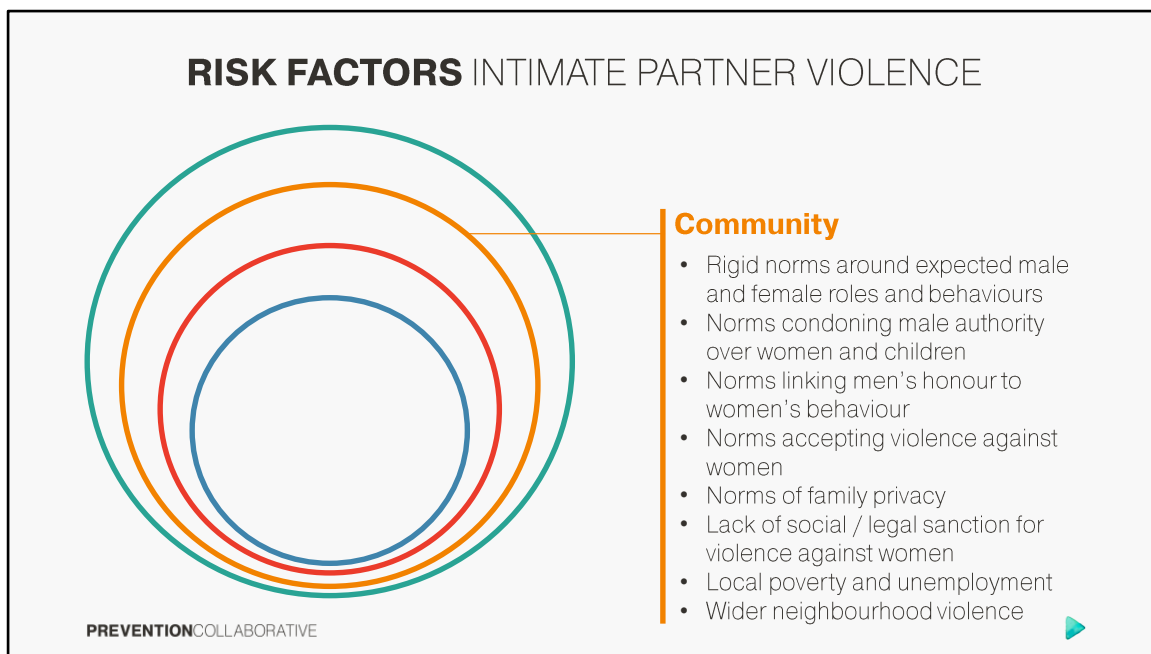
PREVENTIONCOLLABORATIVE

At the **interpersonal level**, there are a number of factors that increase the risk of disagreements and conflicts and of violence being used. These risk factors need to be understood alongside a set of specific situational triggers (that we talk about shortly) that can precipitate an incident of violence.

The risk factors at the interpersonal level include:
- Male dominance in decision-making in the household
- Violence seen as appropriate form of 'discipline' of women and children
- Poor communication skills
- High relationship conflict
- Lack of trust / emotional intimacy
- Association with violent and antisocial peers
- Social isolation and low social support–poor social capital, networks, and friends with other women, especially those with different perspectives

PREVENTION FOUNDATIONS—REFRESHER

RISK FACTORS INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Community

- Rigid norms around expected male and female roles and behaviours
- Norms condoning male authority over women and children
- Norms linking men's honour to women's behaviour
- Norms accepting violence against women
- Norms of family privacy
- Lack of social / legal sanction for violence against women
- Local poverty and unemployment
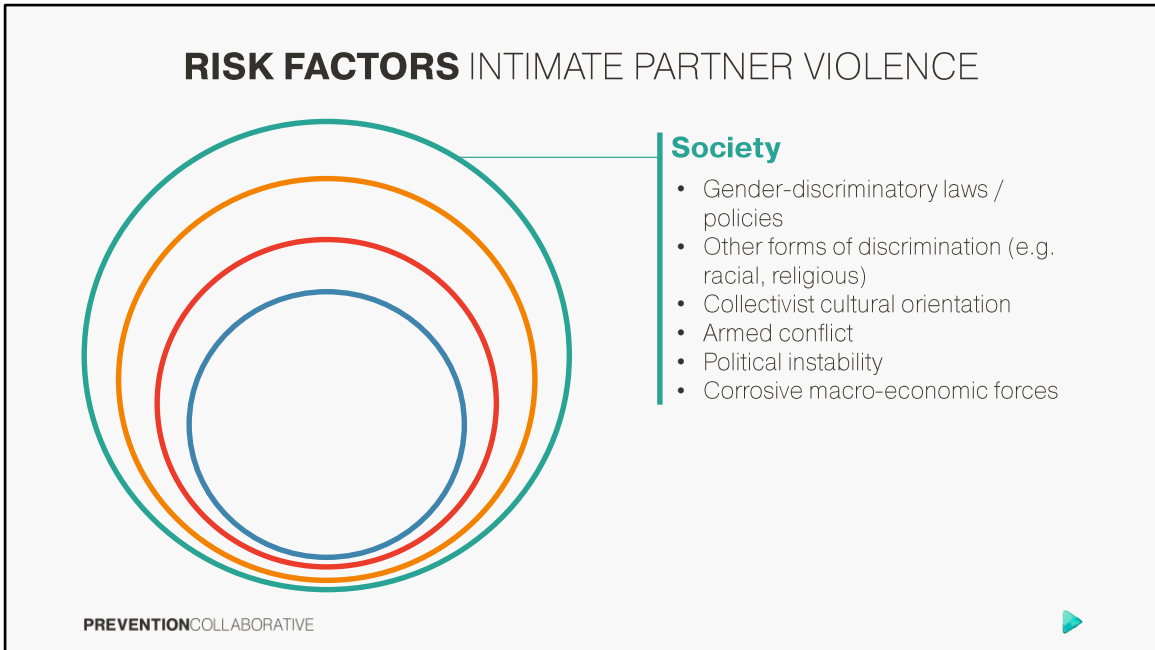- Wider neighbourhood violence

PREVENTIONCOLLABORATIVE

At the **community level**, many factors relate to predominant social norms around gender, marriage, and violence (expectations of how men and women should behave in marriage or intimate partnership). Norms that increase the risk of intimate partner violence include:

- Norms condoning male authority over women
- Norms linking men's honour to women's behaviour and 'purity' such that women who do not behave as expected are seen to insult the man and family
- Norms accepting violence against women—for example, norms that say it is acceptable for a man to beat his wife in certain circumstances. They may be about not fulfilling household tasks or going out without telling him.
- Norms of family privacy—for example, that what happens inside a home is a private matter, should not be spoken of in public, and is not a matter for the community or state to get involved in

Another risk factor is whether there are effective social or legal sanctions for violence. If there is no response from peers, community, or police when a man is known to be violent to his wife, this also becomes a risk factor for violence. Evidence also shows that the wider dynamics in the neighbourhood are also important. For example, the prevalence of violence is higher in communities where there are high levels of local poverty and unemployment. This is not to say that violence is higher in every neighbourhood where there's local poverty and unemployment just that overall we find higher rates of violence in neighbourhoods that have these characteristics.
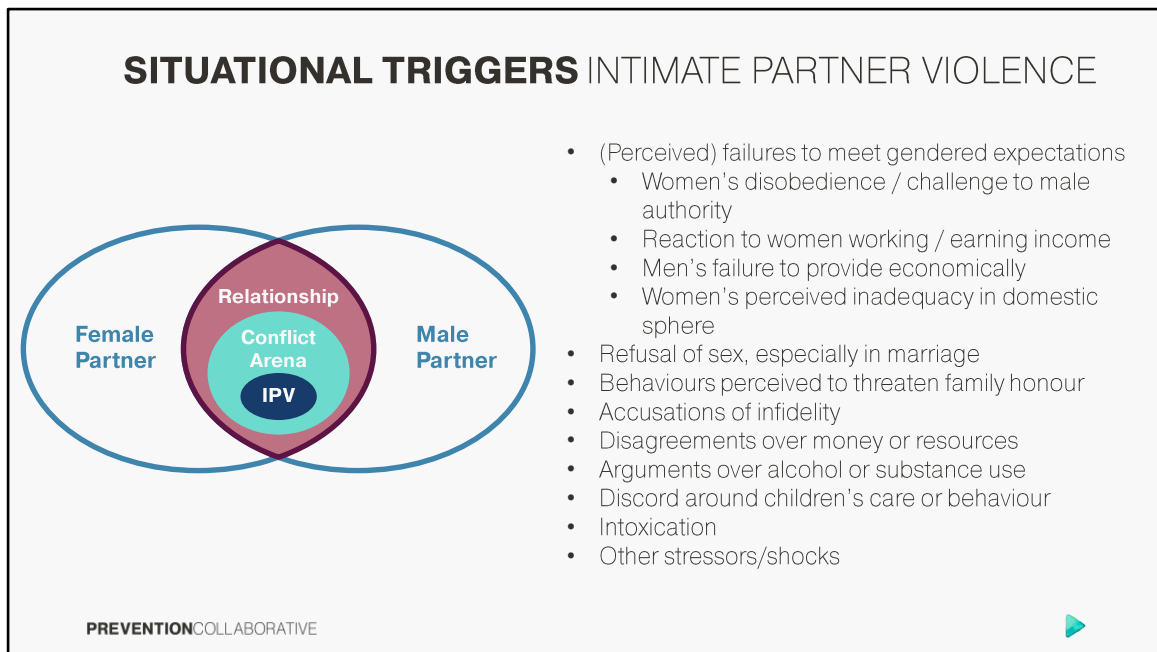
PREVENTION FOUNDATIONS—REFRESHER

RISK FACTORS INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Society
- Gender-discriminatory laws / policies
- Other forms of discrimination (e.g. racial, religious)
- Collectivist cultural orientation
- Armed conflict
- Political instability
- Corrosive macro-economic forces

PREVENTIONCOLLABORATIVE

At the wider **society level**, a few key risk factors include:
- Gender-discriminatory laws and policies (for example, inheritance rights for land and property) or discriminatory family law (for example, who gets custody of children in the case of divorce).
- Collectivist cultural orientation—for example, where the reputation of the family or community is valued above the rights of an individual woman.
- Corrosive macro-economic forces related to globalisation, climate change, etc.—which may undermine local livelihoods and put pressure on households and communities.

PREVENTION FOUNDATIONS—REFRESHER

SITUATIONAL TRIGGERS INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

- (Perceived) failures to meet gendered expectations
  - Women's disobedience / challenge to male authority
  - Reaction to women working / earning income
  - Men's failure to provide economically
  - Women's perceived inadequacy in domestic sphere
- Refusal of sex, especially in marriage
- Behaviours perceived to threaten family honour
- Accusations of infidelity
- Disagreements over money or resources
- Arguments over alcohol or substance use
- Discord around children's care or behaviour
- Intoxication
- Other stressors/shocks

Female Partner — Relationship — Conflict Arena — IPV — Male Partner

PREVENTIONCOLLABORATIVE

Recent research on intimate partner violence in heterosexual relationships has identified **situational triggers**—immediate events or circumstances that can cause conflict in a relationship and precipitate an episode of violence.
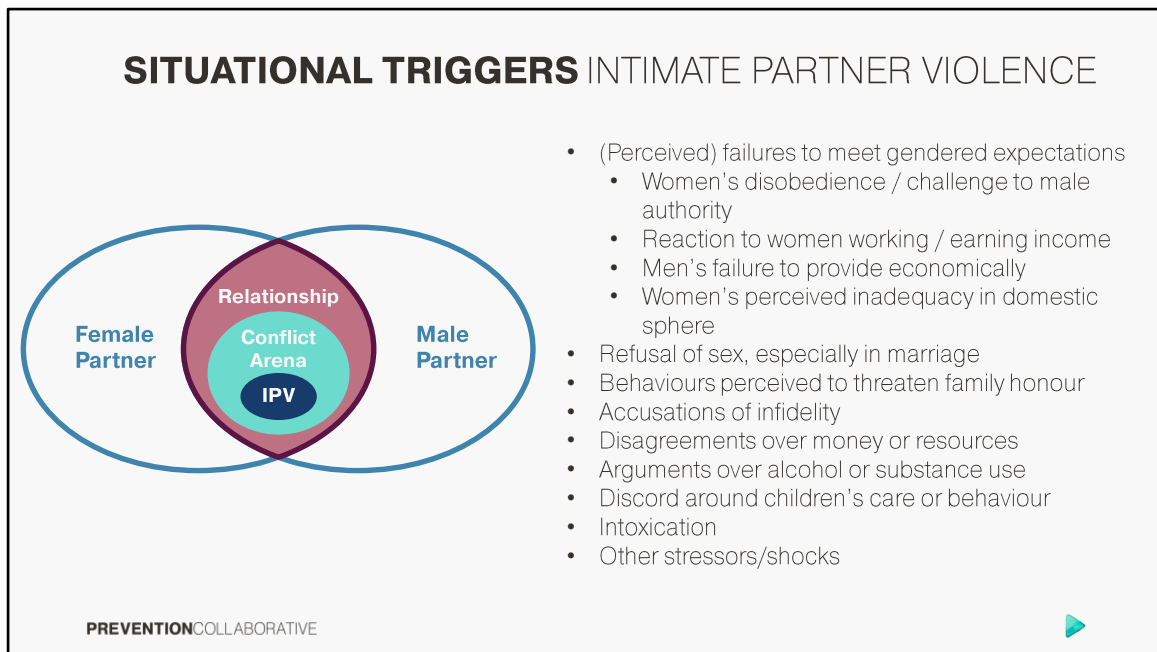
Some of these situational triggers relate to instances where a woman or man fails to meet certain gendered expectations. For example, a man may beat a woman as a form of 'discipline' for some perceived domestic infraction such as failure to prepare a meal or to care for the children 'properly'. Likewise, conflict can arise if a man does not bring home sufficient money for the household, thus failing to meet gendered expectations of men as providers. Feelings of shame, inadequacy, or anger can prompt men to respond violently, especially if they feel their authority or masculinity is somehow threatened.

Another key trigger for both physical and sexual intimate partner violence is a women's refusal of sexual intercourse, especially in a marriage.

Other sources of conflict that can trigger violence include:
- Behaviours perceived to threaten family honour
- Accusations of infidelity against the women or the man
- Disagreements of the use of money or resources or how to deal with children's behaviour

PREVENTION FOUNDATIONS—REFRESHER

SITUATIONAL TRIGGERS INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

- (Perceived) failures to meet gendered expectations
  - Women's disobedience / challenge to male authority
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- Intoxication
- Other stressors/shocks

Female Partner · **Relationship** · **Conflict Arena** · **IPV** · **Male Partner**

PREVENTIONCOLLABORATIVE

Another trigger is intoxication. For example, when the man drinks excessively this itself can be a cause of conflict, but also any tension is more likely to result in violence if the man is excessively intoxicated.

There are sometimes other external stressors or shocks that can increase tensions and make conflict and violence more likely—for example stresses due to sudden economic changes, a global pandemic, or a death in the wider family.

Finally, it's important to note that violence as an outcome is possible (what we call probabilistic) not definitive. Two people can have very similar factors at play, but experience different outcomes, especially if they live in different contexts or have different life histories.

PREVENTION FOUNDATIONS—REFRESHER