

# Economic burden of poor maternal perinatal mental health: a systematic review

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## Background

Approximately one in five individuals experience poor perinatal mental health, defined as a mental health problem occurring between conception and up to one year after birth<sup>1,2</sup>. What is unclear is the economic burden of poor maternal perinatal mental health.

## Aim and objectives

The aim was to synthesise evidence on economic burden of common and severe maternal mental health problems in the perinatal period to support healthcare service planning.

Objectives were to identify and systematically review evidence on the economic consequences of poor maternal perinatal mental health for:

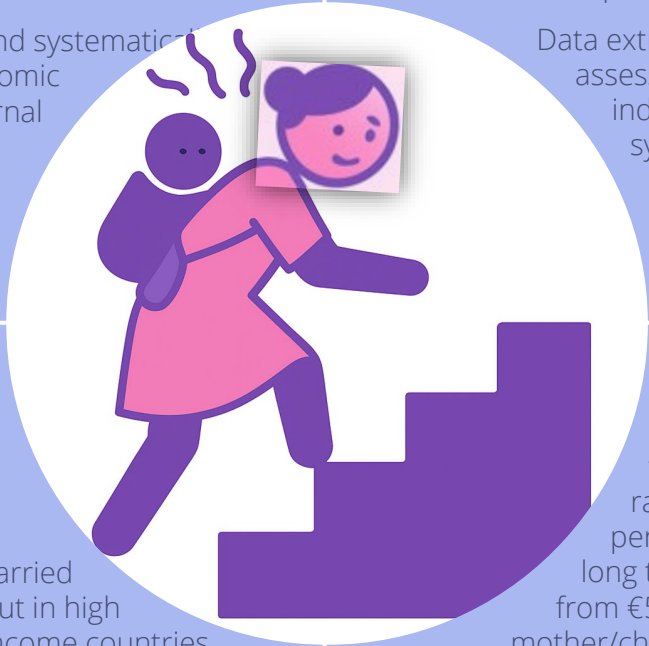
- ❑ health care services
- ❑ wider public services
- ❑ families
- ❑ society

## Methods

The systematic review followed PRISMA guidelines<sup>3</sup>. A systematic search was conducted in January 2025 across health and economic-related bibliographic databases. Eligibility criteria for inclusion were:

- ❑ cost-of-illness studies or cost analyses from a provider, payer or societal perspective
- ❑ cost estimates in the short (perinatal period), medium (1-15 yrs), and/or long term (≥15 yrs)
- ❑ exposure to common or severe perinatal mental health problems

Data extraction and quality assessment<sup>4</sup> were conducted independently. A narrative synthesis was carried out using SWiM guidance<sup>5</sup>. The review was registered on PROSPERO (CRD# 420250644806).



## Results

The systematic search identified 38 studies for inclusion in the systematic review of economic evidence (Figure 1). Most studies were

carried out in high income countries (n=28) and assessed the economic burden of common mental health disorders (n=38). Studies reported costs to health care services (n=16), wider public services (n=9), and/or out-of-pocket costs (n=9) for mother/ child dyads in the short (n=27), medium (n=5) or long term (n=6).

Preliminary findings indicate a high economic burden. Estimates for short term health care costs ranged from €6703 to €6956 per mother/child dyad; while long term societal costs ranged from €53,588 to €116,576 per mother/child dyad, at 2024 EU prices.

Further review will consider inconsistencies between cost estimates, with impact of including methodologically weak studies explored.

## Conclusions

This review raises awareness of the economic burden of poor maternal perinatal mental health. The burden represents the upper limit of savings with investment in preventive interventions.

## References

1. Shorey et al. J Psychiatr Res 2018;104:235-48
2. Dennis et al. Br J Psychiatry 2017; 210:315-23
3. Page et al. BMJ 2021;372:n71
4. Schnitzler et al. Int J Technol Assess Health Care 2023;39:e34
5. Campbell et al. BMJ 2020;368:l6890

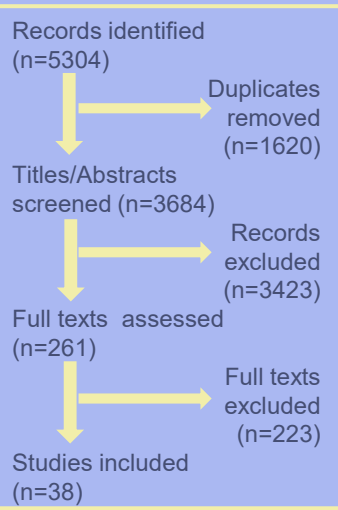


Fig. 1 Search Flow Diagram