

# FRAMING REMARKS

**The Role of Social Support  
in the Lives of Elder Abuse Victims**

# POLLING QUESTION

**Research on Elder Mistreatment  
and Social Support: The National  
elder mistreatment study (NEMS)  
wave I and II**

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**NAPSA/NCCD  
Webinar  
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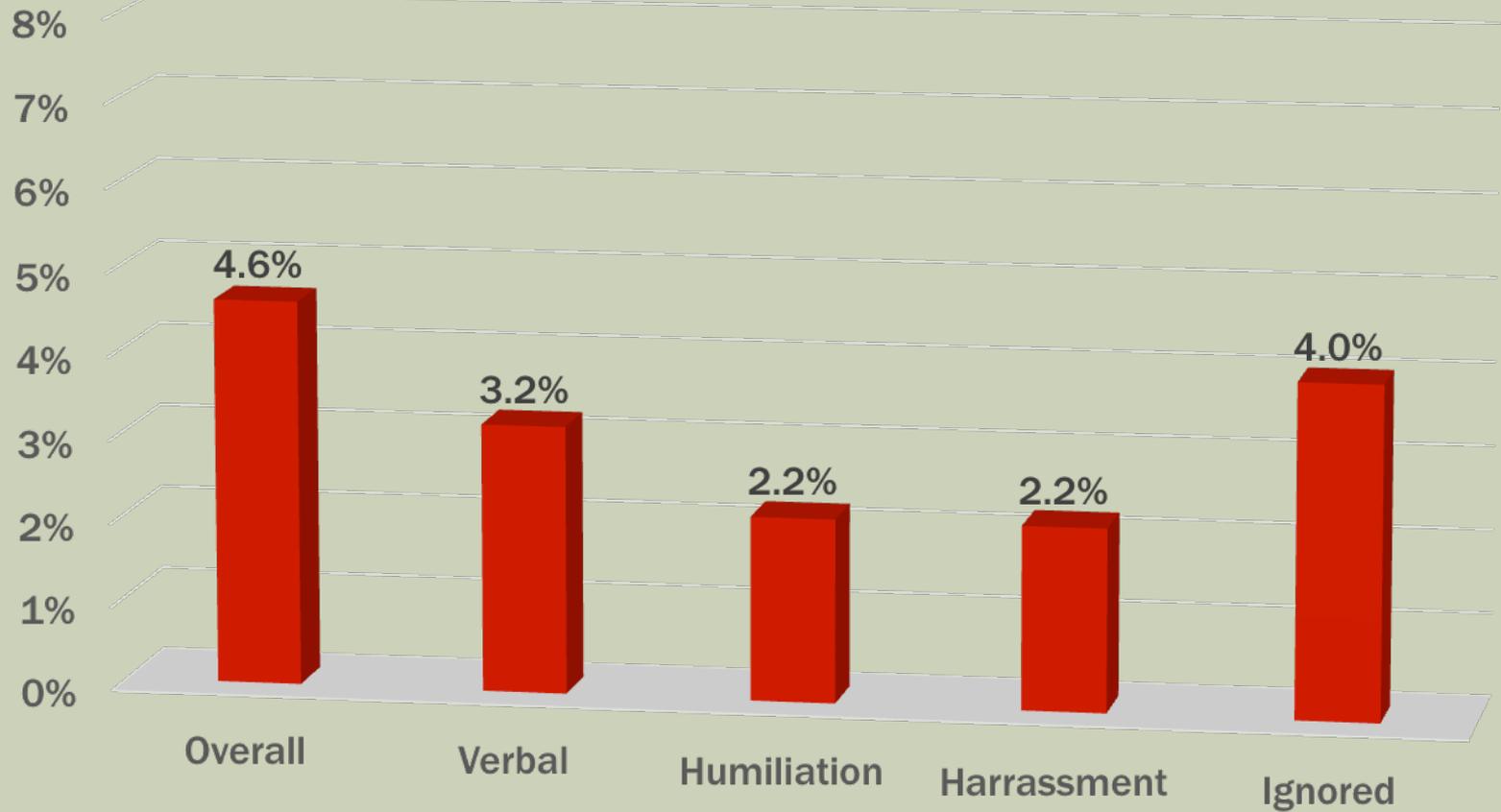
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Acierno, R., Hernandez, M., Amstadter, A., Resnick, H., Steve, K., Muzzy, W., & Kilpatrick, D. (2010). Prevalence and correlates of emotional, physical, sexual, and financial abuse and potential neglect in the United States: the National Elder Mistreatment Study. *American Journal of Public Health, 100*(2), 292-297.

Acierno, R., Hernandez-Tejada, M., Anetzberger, G., Loew, D., & Muzzy, W. (2017). The National Elder Mistreatment Study: An 8-year longitudinal study of outcomes. *Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect, 29*(4), 254-269.

# PAST YEAR EMOTIONAL ABUSE



# SIGNIFICANT RISK FACTORS & ODDS RATIOS (OR) FOR EMOTIONAL MISTREATMENT

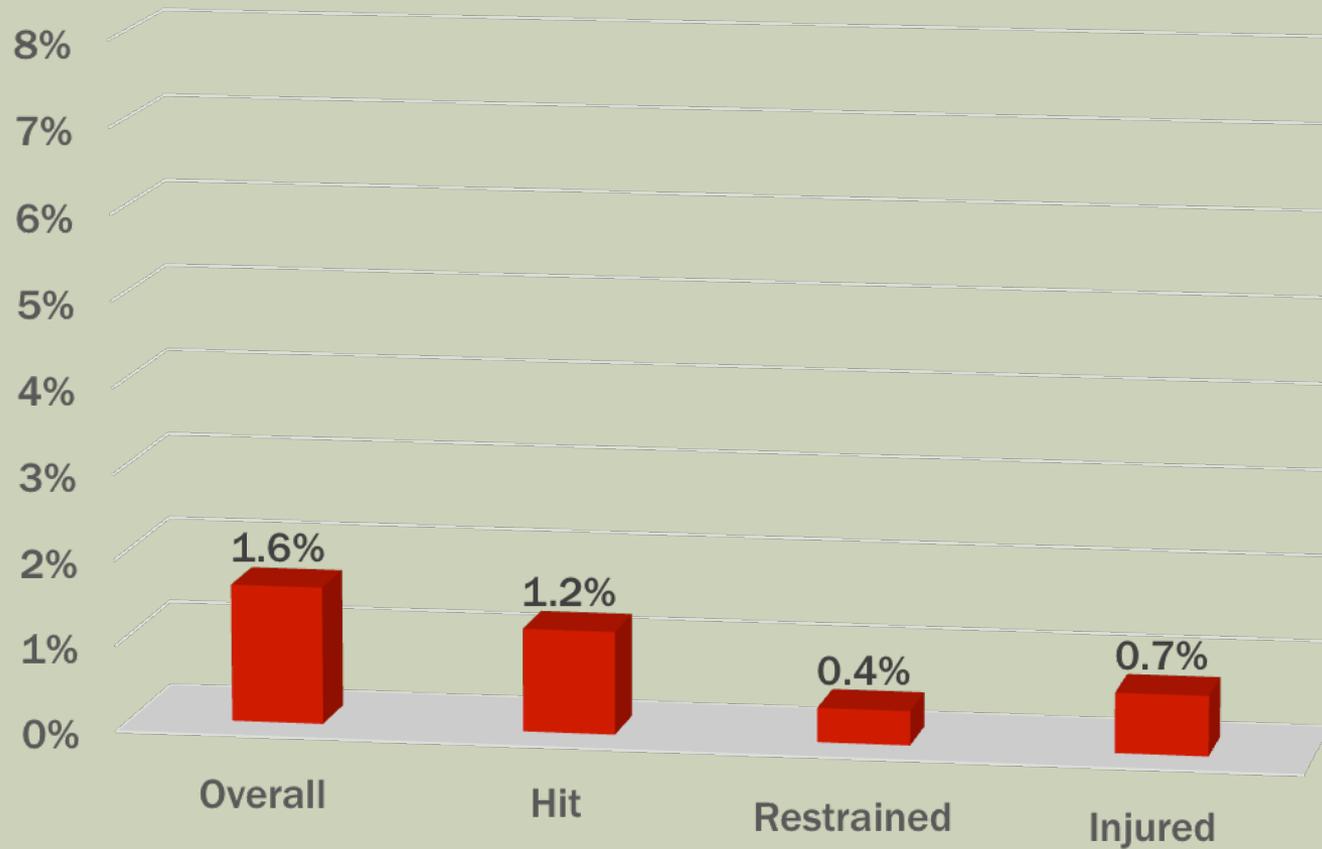
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- Lower Age (OR = 3.2)
- Being Employed (OR = 1.8)
- Poor Self-Rated Health (ns)
- Prior Traumatic Event (OR = 2.3)
- Needing ADL Assistance (OR = 1.8)
  
- Low Social Support (OR = 3.2)

# RATE OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE IN TERMS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT



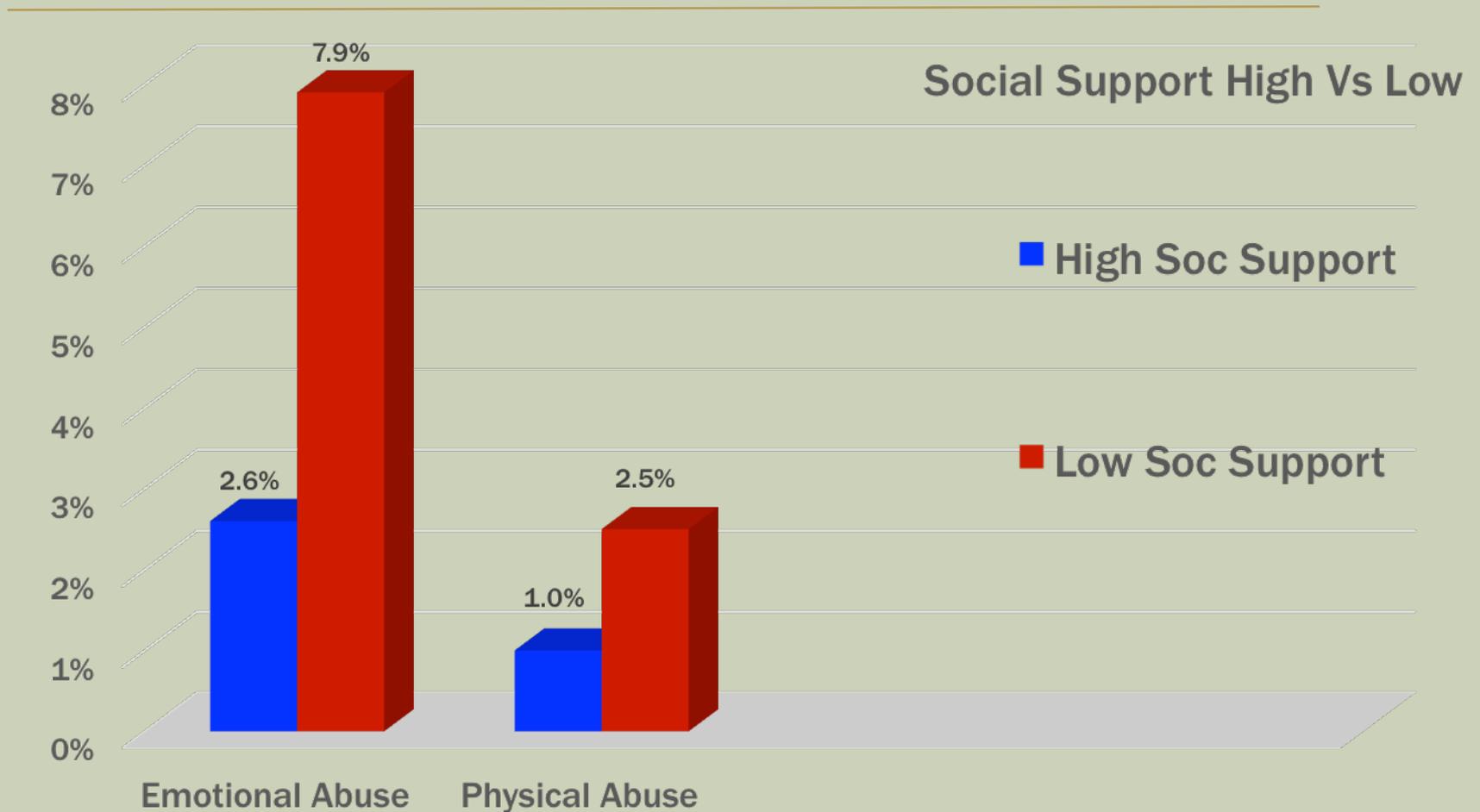
# PAST YEAR PHYSICAL ABUSE



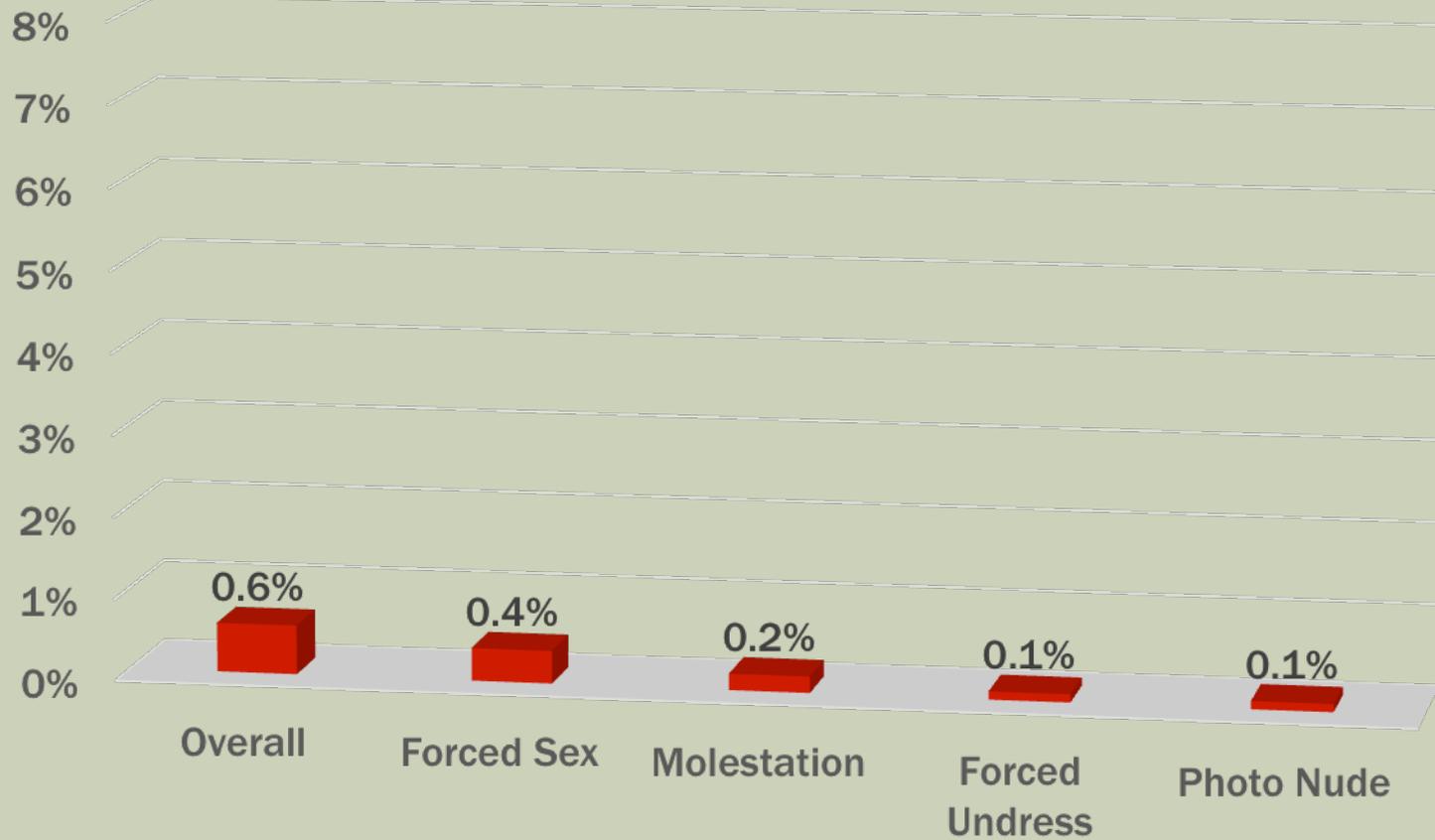
# SIGNIFICANT RISK FACTORS FOR PHYSICAL MISTREATMENT

- 
- **Lower Age (OR = 4.1)**
  - Non-White Racial Status
  - Lower Income
  - Poor Self-Rated Health
  - Prior Traumatic Event
  
  - **Low Social Support (OR = 3.0)**

# EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL ABUSE IN TERMS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT



# PAST YEAR SEXUAL ABUSE

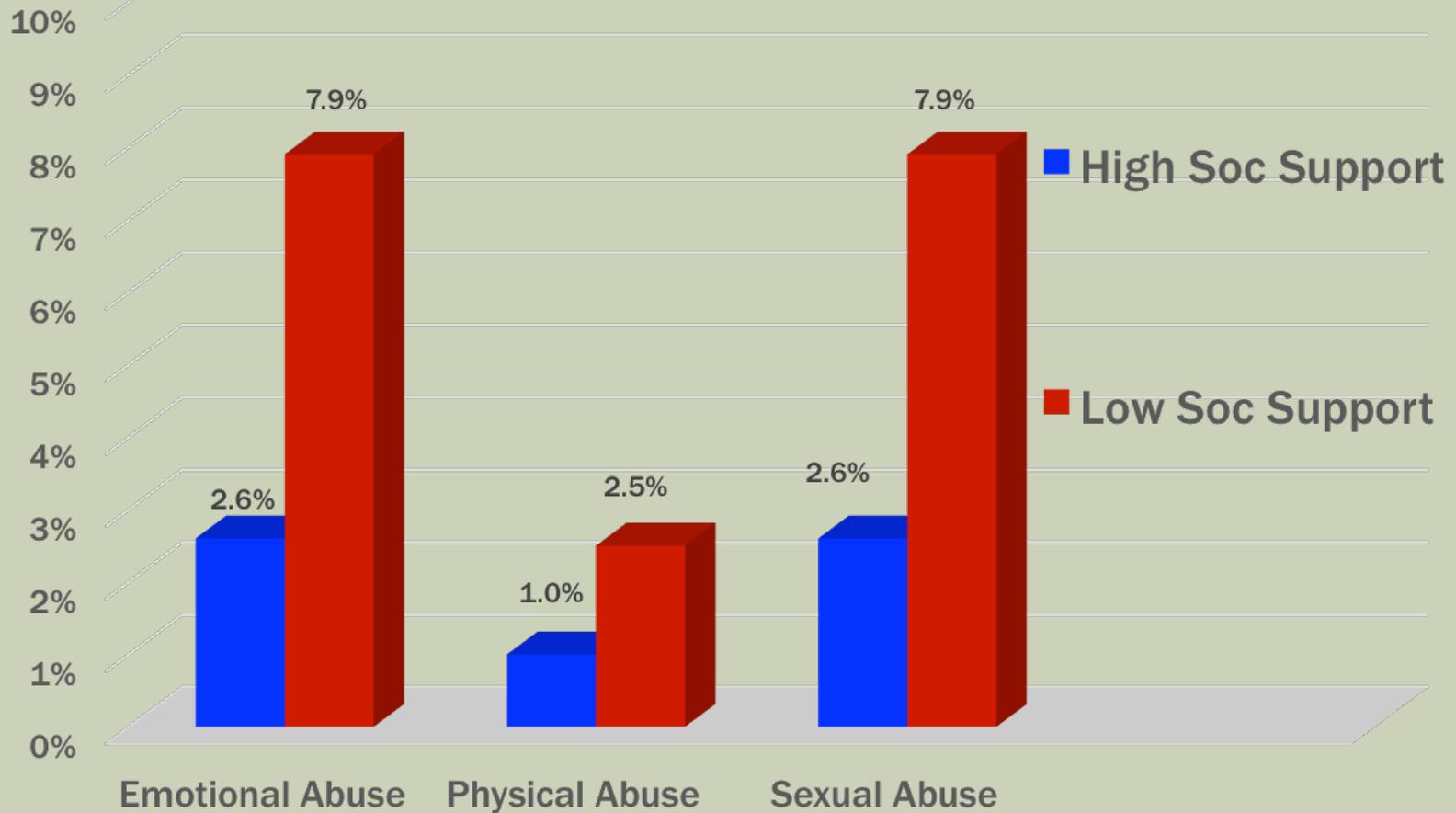


# SEXUAL MISTREATMENT: SIGNIFICANT RISK FACTORS

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- Female Gender
- Low Income
- Poor Self-Rated Health
- Prior Traumatic Event
- Needs ADL Assistance
  
- **Low Social Support**

# RATES OF ABUSE IN TERMS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT



# SUMMARY OF RISK FACTORS

<b>RISK FACTORS</b>	<b>EMOTIONAL</b>	<b>PHYSICAL</b>	<b>SEXUAL</b>
<b>Lower Age</b>	x	x	
<b>Non-White</b>			
<b>Low Income</b>			
<b>Being Employed</b>	x		
<b>Poor Self-Rated Health</b>			
<b>Prior Traumatic Event</b>	x		
<b><i>Low Social Support</i></b>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
<b>Use Social Services</b>			
<b>Needing ADL Assistance</b>	x		

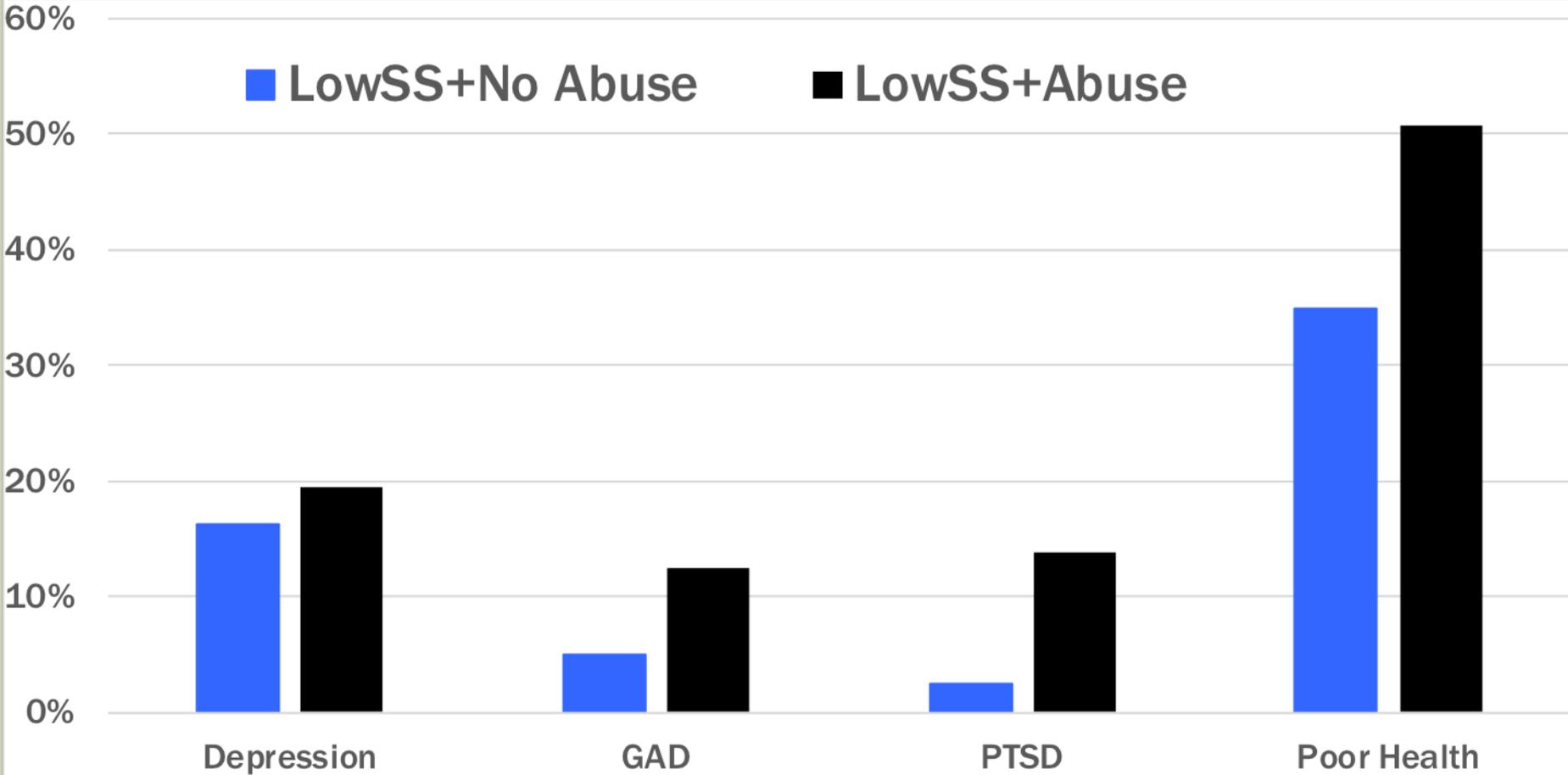
**SO, THAT WAS '*HOW OFTEN*' ABUSE HAPPENS. AND HOW SOCIAL SUPPORT CAN REDUCE THE RISK OF EVEN BEING ABUSED.**

**HOW ABOUT '*SO WHAT,*' AS IN: WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF ABUSE AND WHAT CAN MAKE IT BETTER OR WORSE**

# THE NATIONAL ELDER MISTREATMENT STUDY WAVE 2: A STUDY ON POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF ABUSE

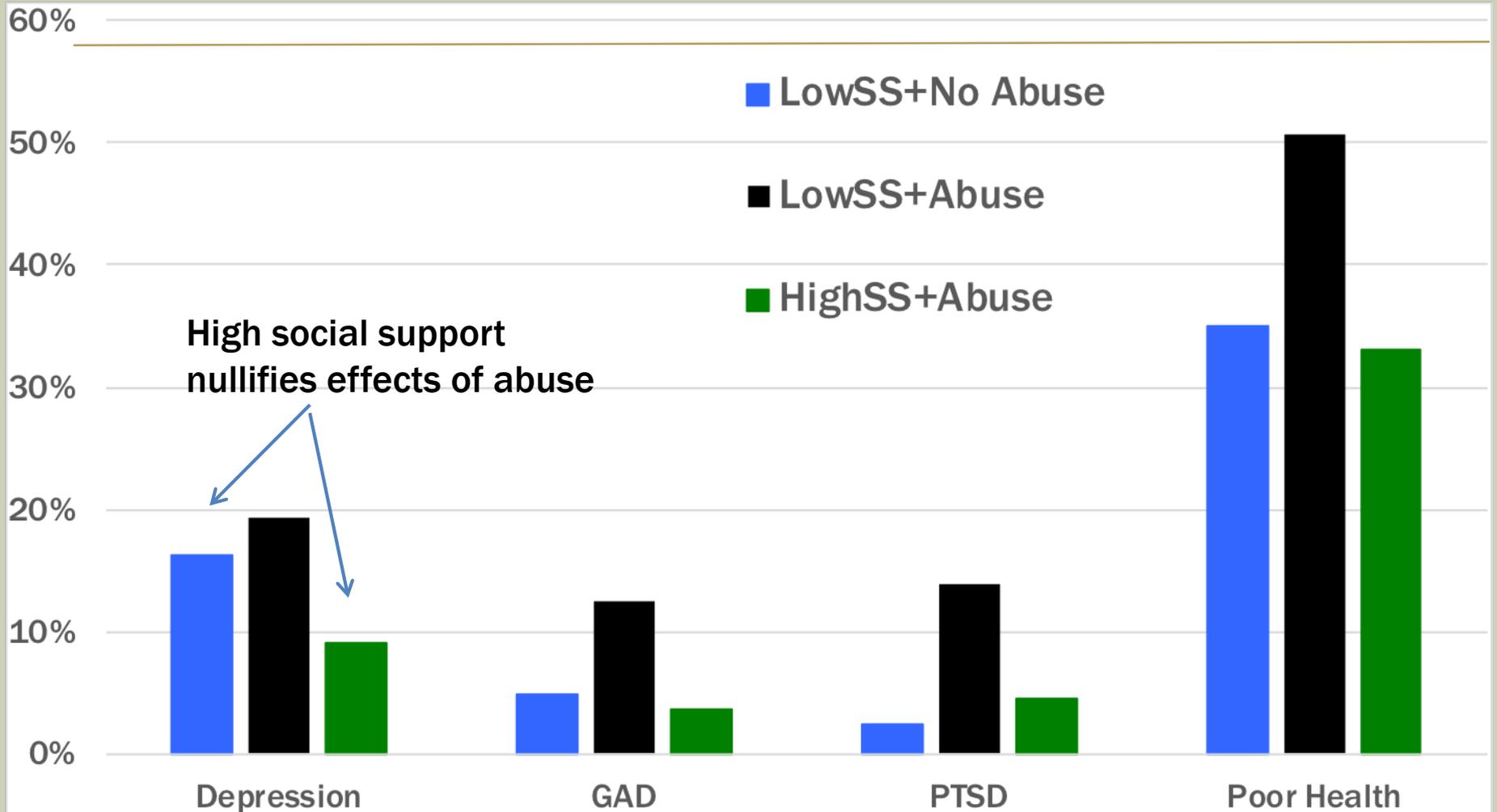
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# EFFECTS OF ABUSE ON OUTCOMES IN THOSE WITH *LOW* SS



WHAT HAPPENS IF WE CONSIDER  
*HIGH SOCIAL SUPPORT*, AS RATED  
BY THE OLDER ADULT BACK THEN, 8  
YEARS AGO WHEN THE ABUSE  
HAPPENED

# HIGH SOCIAL SUPPORT'S IMPACT ON EFFECTS OF ELDER ABUSE



# LOW SOCIAL SUPPORT IS RELATED TO EVERYTHING BAD THAT CAN HAPPEN

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.....and that means it is related to everything **GOOD** that can happen

- This is a **GOOD** finding because Social Support is a *Modifiable Construct*.
- Activities of a **social nature** might be helpful to prevent abuse, promote resilience, and improve quality of life, particularly after traumatic stressors.

# Implications for research, policy and services

- 
- **Research:** big gap in knowledge about which specific types of social support are protective under what type of circumstances for which type of older adult.  
  
(for instance, is instrumental support more important for non isolated older adults who are independent, vs. emotional support for isolated, independent older adults?)
  - **Services:** Addressing social isolation by connecting victims to services potentially available to them. There is a gap in knowledge between services and end user, and how to connect the two.
  - **Policy:** combating **ageism**. Create age friendly **meeting places** (shaded benches, tables, public café permits); Enhance public **Transportation** ..very likely the most effective, useful, and efficient **mental health** and socialization elder abuse interventions for older adults and their families.

**WHEN HELPING HURTS: NON-  
ABUSING FAMILY, FRIENDS,  
AND NEIGHBORS IN THE LIVES  
OF ELDER MISTREATMENT  
VICTIMS**

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# FUNDING

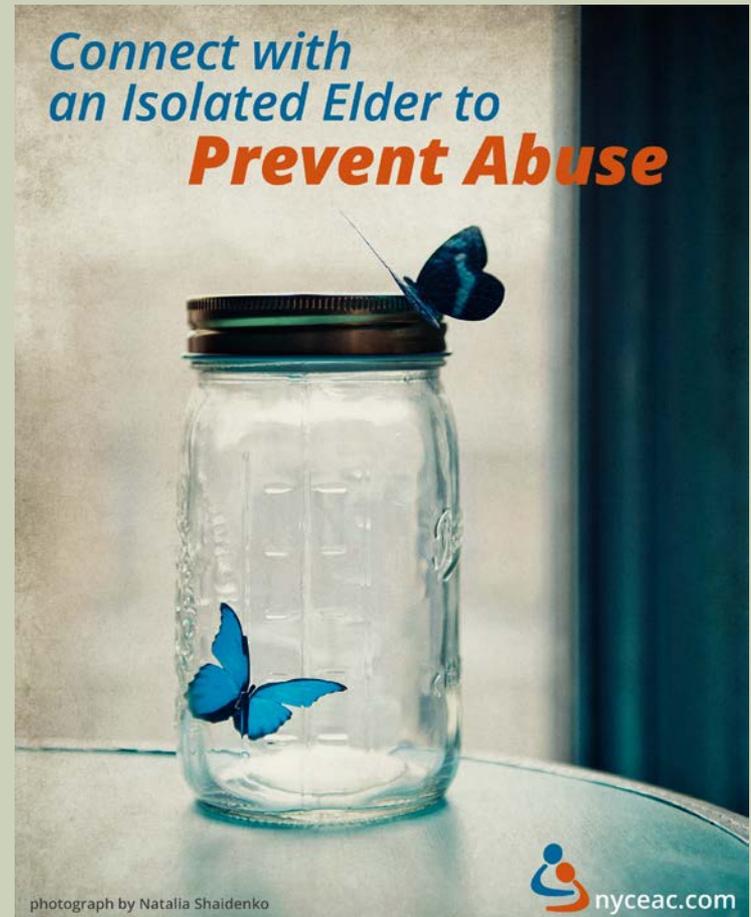
- **This work was supported by a grant from the National Institute on Aging and a National Institute on Aging Roybal Center grant**

# AIMS OF PRESENTATION

- To impart basic information about family, friends, and neighbors in the lives of elder abuse victims.
- To encourage the development of supportive services tailored to this population's needs.
- To provide information about a specialized service in NYC designed for concerned persons.

# BACKGROUND

- 7-10% of elders abused.
- In NYS, Only 1 in 24 victims of elder mistreatment are known to any service system - *Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Weill Cornell Medical College, NYC Department for the Aging, 2011*
- Often relatives, friends and neighbors intervene on behalf of the victim or consider it
  - Comprise 25% of all formal reports to Adult Protective Services - *Teaster, Dugar, Mendiondo, Abner, & Cecil, 2006*



# BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

**Concerned Persons: Non-abusing family friends and neighbors in the lives of elder abuse victims.**

**Their experiences, thoughts, emotions, contributions, strengths and needs have not yet been explored and understood by the elder justice field.**



# LITERATURE REVIEW

- When family members played a role in referring an older victim for services, the victim had a higher level of service utilization than when the referral came from a third party
  - *Burnes, Rizzo, Gorroochurn, Pollack, & Lachs, 2016*
- Domestic violence research finds that informal support in the lives of victims can reduce the deleterious impacts of the abuse on victims
  - *Sylaska & Edwards, 2014*
- Sexual assault literature indicate that “secondary victims” experience distress
  - *Davis, Taylor, & Bench, 1995*

# THE SURVEY: AIMS

- **The survey aimed to identify:**
  - **The prevalence of adults 18+ who have encountered an elder mistreatment situation**
  - **The proportion of these who helped the elder victim**
  - **The subjective levels of distress experienced by respondents who helped the victim versus those who did not.**

# DESIGN AND METHODS

- **4 items on Concerned Persons included in a nationally representative, omnibus survey conducted in 2015 by the Survey Research Institute at Cornell University.**
- **Data were collected via telephone survey of 1000 adults (18+).**

# ELDER MISTREATMENT DEFINITION UTILIZED

- **Some older individuals can become victims of elder mistreatment. By “elder mistreatment,” we mean situations in which a person age 60 and over experiences violence, or psychological abuse such as threats, or financial exploitation such as someone taking his or her money or property. It also includes situations in which a person age 60 and over has a caregiver who is supposed to meet their needs, but the caregiver does not do so.**

# SURVEY QUESTIONS

- **The respondents were asked 4 questions:**
  - **Q1. Have you ever had a family member, friend or neighbor who experienced elder mistreatment? Yes or No**
  - **Q2. IF YES: How was this person related to you?**
  - **Q3. IF YES TO EITHER ITEM ABOVE: Overall, how distressing was this situation for you personally if 0 is not distressing at all and 10 is extremely distressing?**
  - **Q4. IF YES TO EITHER ITEM ABOVE: Were you involved in helping this person deal with elder mistreatment in any way? Yes or No**

# RESULTS: PREVALENCE

- Using entire sample for analysis, those who knew an elder mistreatment victim = **29.4%**.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> analysis: those reporting as a CP. N=294
  - Of these, 8 cases were excluded from analysis due to missing data. Analytic sample = **286**.
  - The level of personal distress associated w/ knowing about an elder mistreatment situation was generally **very high** (mean score = 8.0), **with two thirds (67.0%) knowing a victim reporting a distress score of 8 or more.**

# RESULTS: PREDICTORS OF DISTRESS (CONTINUED)

- Of those knowing an elder victims, the proportion becoming involved as a helper was **59.9%**.
- Helpers had significantly higher distress levels than non-helpers
  - Women with knowledge of an elder abuse situation experienced significantly more distress than men
  - Increasing age was significantly associated w/ higher distress levels
  - Adults w/ household income greater or equal to \$30,000 experienced significantly less personal distress than those w/ income below that

# DISCUSSION

- Extended to the general population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016), these findings suggest that over 73 million adult Americans have had personal knowledge of a victim of elder mistreatment
- Almost 44 million adult Americans have become involved in helping a victim deal with their mistreatment situation.
- Over 32 million experience distress about this at a level of 8 or more on a subjective distress scale.
- Simply knowing about an elder mistreatment situation is generally highly stressful
  - Providing help to the victim in dealing with their mistreatment exacerbates levels of personal distress.

# DISCUSSION (CONTINUED)

- Survey limitations
- Next steps
- Thank you!
  - Concerned Persons who generously shared their stories with me
  - Cornell Survey Research Institute
  - Co-authors
  - Kasey Sinha
  - Survey participants



Graphic by Nancy Oatts

# ELDER ABUSE HELPLINE FOR CONCERNED PERSONS

NYC Elder Abuse Center's  
Elder Abuse  
Helpline for  
Concerned Persons



**You're their lifeline.  
We're your helpline.**

**CALL US TODAY  
212-746-6905**

A Free and Confidential Service  
For Concerned Persons  
in the Lives of Elder Abuse Victims

- **Information** about elder abuse
- **Guidance** to help individuals understand the various actions they might take that are appropriate to their situation
- **Referrals** to services for the older adult and/or the concerned person
- **Supportive counseling** to help individuals cope with the emotional trauma they are experiencing because of the elder abuse

# NYS OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES FUNDED THE ELDER ABUSE HELPLINE AND ITS STATEWIDE EXPANSION

The Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) defines “crime victim” or “victim of crime” as:

*A person who has suffered physical, sexual, financial or emotional harm as a result of the commission of a crime.*

New York State’s VOCA office determined “concerned persons” fit this definition and funded the Elder Abuse Helpline for Concerned Persons (2019-2022).

**UTILIZATION OF FORMAL  
SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ELDER  
ABUSE:  
DO INFORMAL SUPPORTERS  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

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# BACKGROUND

- Only 15% of EA victims ever seek or receive assistance from formal support services (Burnes, Acierno, & Hernandez-Tejada, 2018)
- Hidden nature of EA remains major challenge
- Formal support services are necessary to hold abusers accountable and to reduce the risk and magnitude of revictimization
- Little research available to understand factors that facilitate EA victim help-seeking.

# THEORY

- **Anderson's Behavioral Model of Health Services Use** proposes that the presence of supportive personal relationships in a person's social network is a key enabling resource to facilitate the usage of formal services
- **Prior study introduced group called "concerned persons"** in an EA victim's social network who informally support victims in coping with the mistreatment experience

# RESEARCH QUESTION

**Does the presence of third-party “concerned persons” in victims’ personal support networks play a role in enabling formal support service utilization?**

# METHODS

- Population-based omnibus study using computer-assisted telephone interviews with a representative community-based sample of adults (18+) in New York State, using random-digit dial sampling ( $n = 800$ )

# METHODS

Some older individuals can become victims of elder mistreatment. By elder mistreatment, we mean situations in which a person age 60 or over experiences any of the following types of behaviors by someone who they should be able to trust, like a family member, friend, caregiver, or professional:

Physical violence like hitting, pushing, or other forms of physical force

Psychological or emotional abuse like threats, regular insults, or yelling

Financial abuse or exploitation such as using or taking an older adult's money, property or other financial resources without their permission or understanding

Neglect such as situations in which an older adult has a caregiver who is supposed to help with their basic needs, but the caregiver does not do so

Do you know anyone who has been a victim of elder mistreatment in the past year?  
This could include friends, family members, or anyone else close to you.

# METHODS

## **Dependent Variable (Use of Formal EA Services)**

*“Did this older adult ever receive support from any type of formal service in the community to help deal with the elder mistreatment, such as a social service program, adult protective services, law enforcement, or a legal authority?”*

## **Key Independent Variable**

*“Did anyone from the older adult’s personal life, such as a family member, a friend, or yourself, become involved in helping the older adult deal with the elder mistreatment?”*

# METHODS

Logistic regression analysis controlled for other key variables:

- Victim age, gender, race/ethnicity
- Victim–perpetrator relationship type
- Victim–perpetrator living arrangement
- EA type
- Perceived EA severity

# RESULTS

- Adult respondents identified  $n = 83$  EA cases in their family or close social network
- EA victims who had a “concerned person” in their personal network significantly more likely to use formal EA support services than victims without a “concerned person”
- Victims who lived with their perpetrator significantly less likely to use formal support services

# IMPLICATIONS

- The presence of a concerned person in an EA victim's life strongly predicts their utilization of external formal support services
- Third-party concerned persons represent a critical population to target in efforts designed to promote EA victim help-seeking
- Victims who live with their perpetrator may be subjected to a heightened degree of power/control tactics that inhibit help-seeking.

# LIMITATIONS

- Data was collected from proxy respondents to identify EA cases, as opposed to EA victims directly

# FUNDING

- This work was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)

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