

# Elder Abuse and Its Consequences: Findings from Waves I and II of the National Elder Mistreatment Study

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# Goals

- ◆ Discuss **Prevalence** of *COMMUNITY BASED* Elder Mistreatment in the US
- ◆ Outline just who the **Perpetrators** are
- ◆ Discuss **Outcomes** of Elder Mistreatment in the US
- ◆ Discuss the importance of **Social Support** and **Connection**, both with respect to prevalence **AND** outcomes

# The NIJ National Elder Mistreatment Study

## Wave I

- Random Digit Dialing methodology was used to derive a representative national (continental US) sample of 5,777 older adults
- Participants were interviewed via telephone in English or Spanish
- Cooperation rate was 69% for the sample.

## Wave II

- Followed up of all reachable participants who reported abuse at Wave I (n=183) and a comparison group of those who did not (n=591)

# Mistreatment Variables



- ◆ Emotional

- ◆ Physical

- ◆ Sexual

- ◆ Also neglect and financial....not discussed here

# Risk / Protective Variables

- ◆ Demographic Factors
- ◆ Health Status
- ◆ Prior Traumatic Event
- ◆ Use of Social Services
- ◆ Level of Functional Impairment
- ◆ Perceived Social Support

# Mistreatment variables **EMOTIONAL**

Emotional mistreatment was defined as an affirmative answer to any one of the following four questions following the contextually orienting preface statement.

*“Now we want to ask you about some things that people in your life might do that make you feel bad, such as saying very mean things to you, or being rude to you. A lot of people say this happens to them, and we really need to find out how often it happens. Sometimes, we call these things emotional mistreatment. The person who might do these things could be a romantic partner, spouse, family member, friend, or someone who helps take care of you.*

# Mistreatment variables

## EMOTIONAL

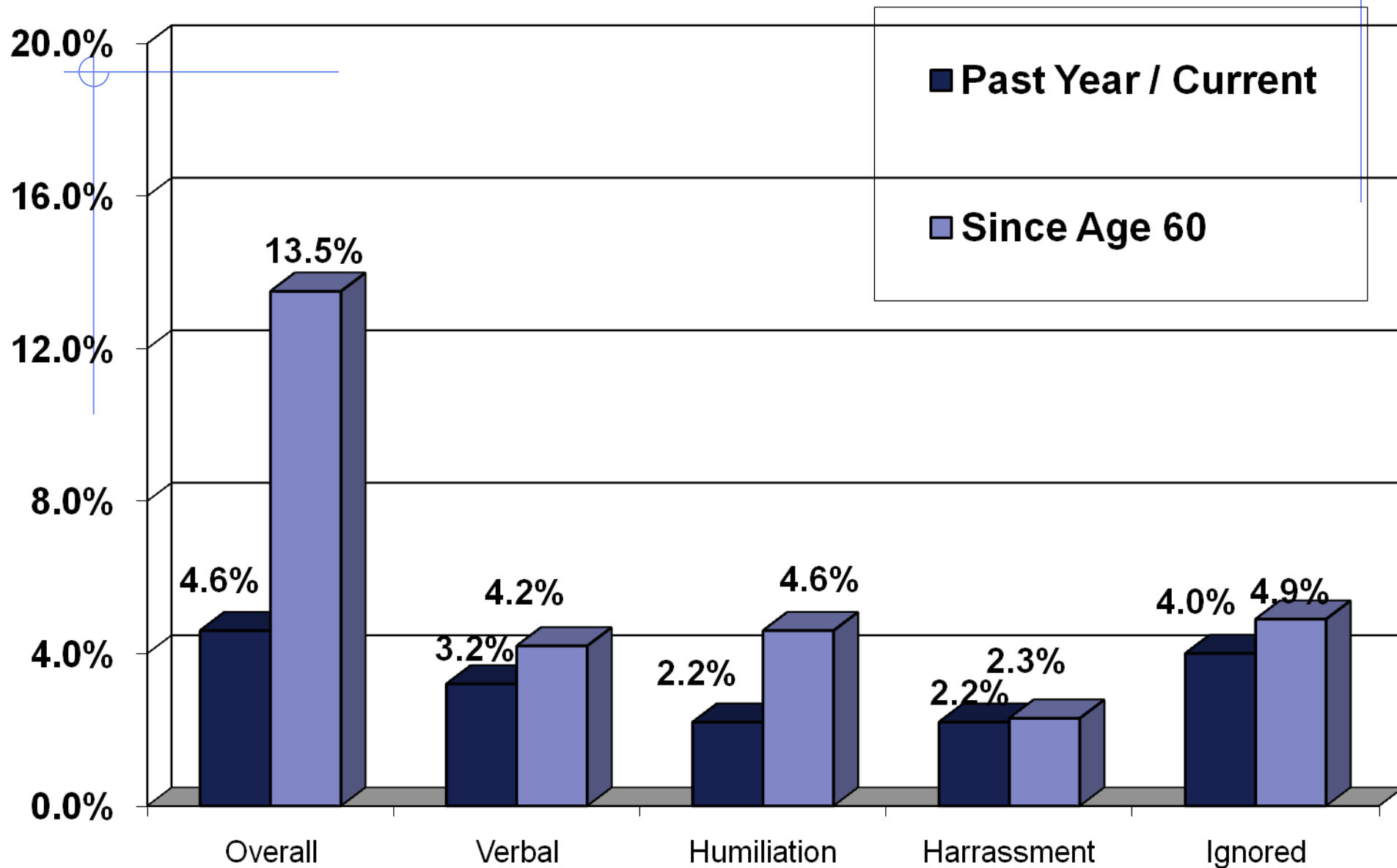
- ◆ *1. Has anyone ever verbally attacked, scolded, or yelled at you so that you felt afraid for your safety, threatened or intimidated?"*
- ◆ *2. "Has anyone ever made you feel humiliated or embarrassed by calling you names such as stupid, or telling you that you or your opinion was worthless?"*

# Mistreatment variables

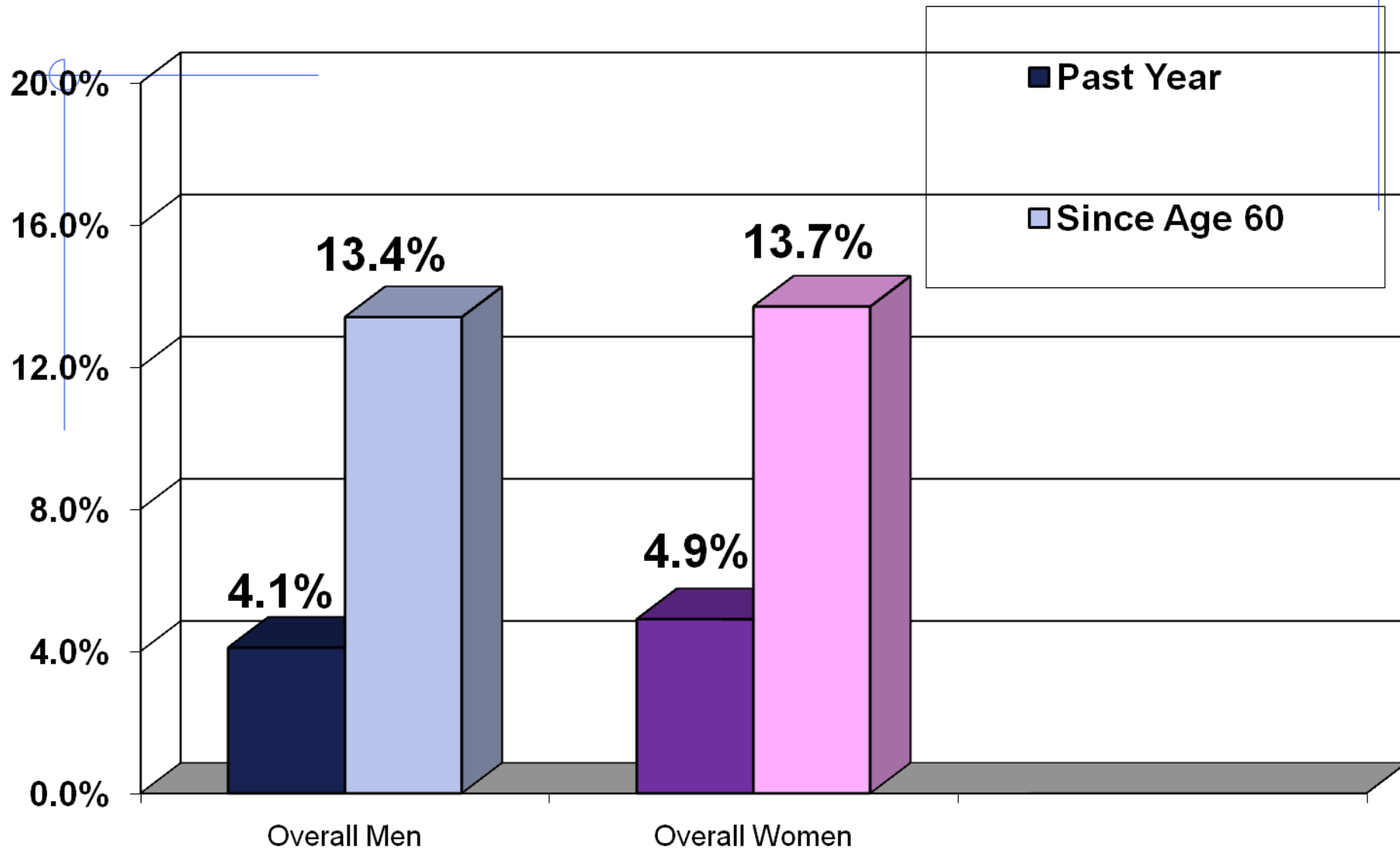
## EMOTIONAL

- ◆ 3. *“Has anyone ever forcefully or repeatedly asked you to do something so much that you felt harassed or coerced into doing something against your will?”*
- ◆ 4 *“Has anyone close to you ever completely refused to talk to you or ignored you for days at a time, even when you wanted to talk to them?”*

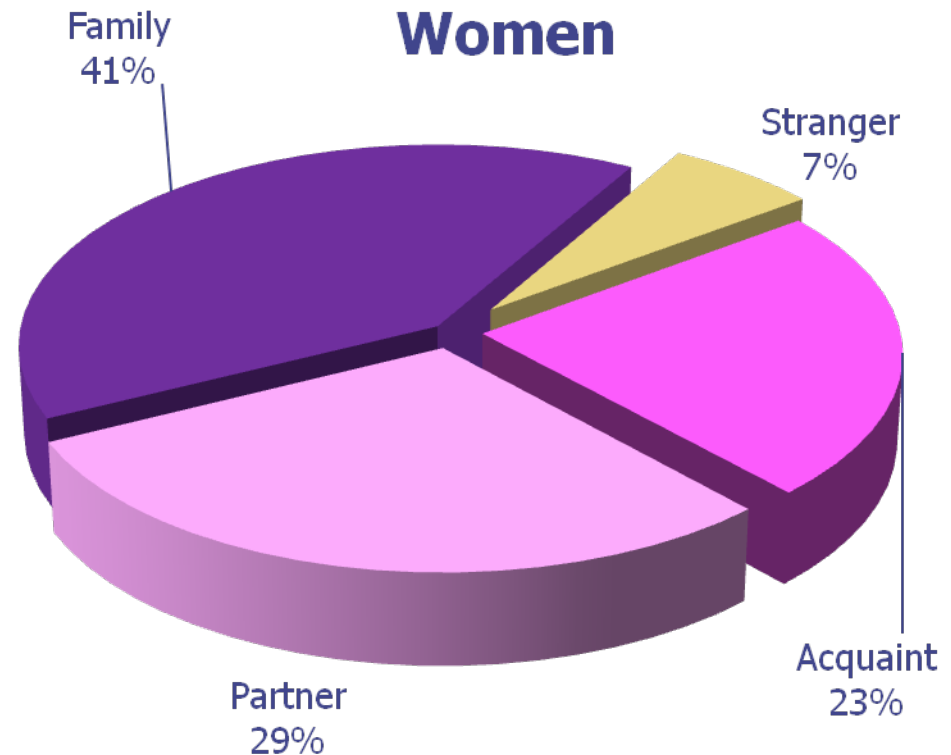
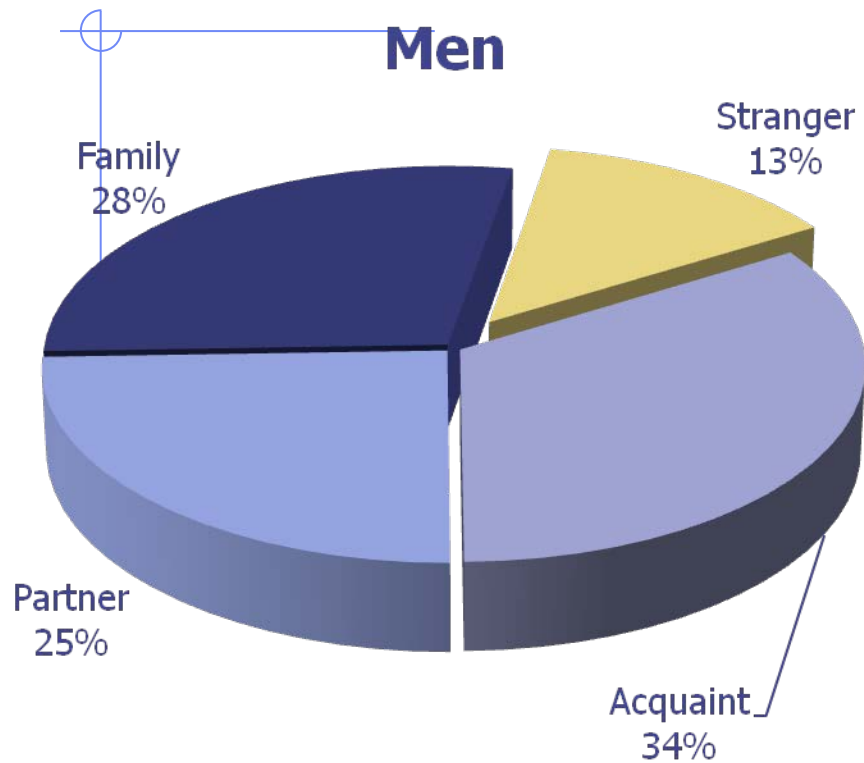
# Emotional Mistreatment



# Emotional Mistreatment by Gender



# Emotional Mistreatment Perps



# Emotional Violence As Family Domestic Violence

- ◆ So Family Domestic Emotional Violence (Spouse + family member) accounts for
  - **53%** of ALL emotional violence against cognitively intact older adult men
  - **70%** of ALL emotional violence against cognitively intact older adult women

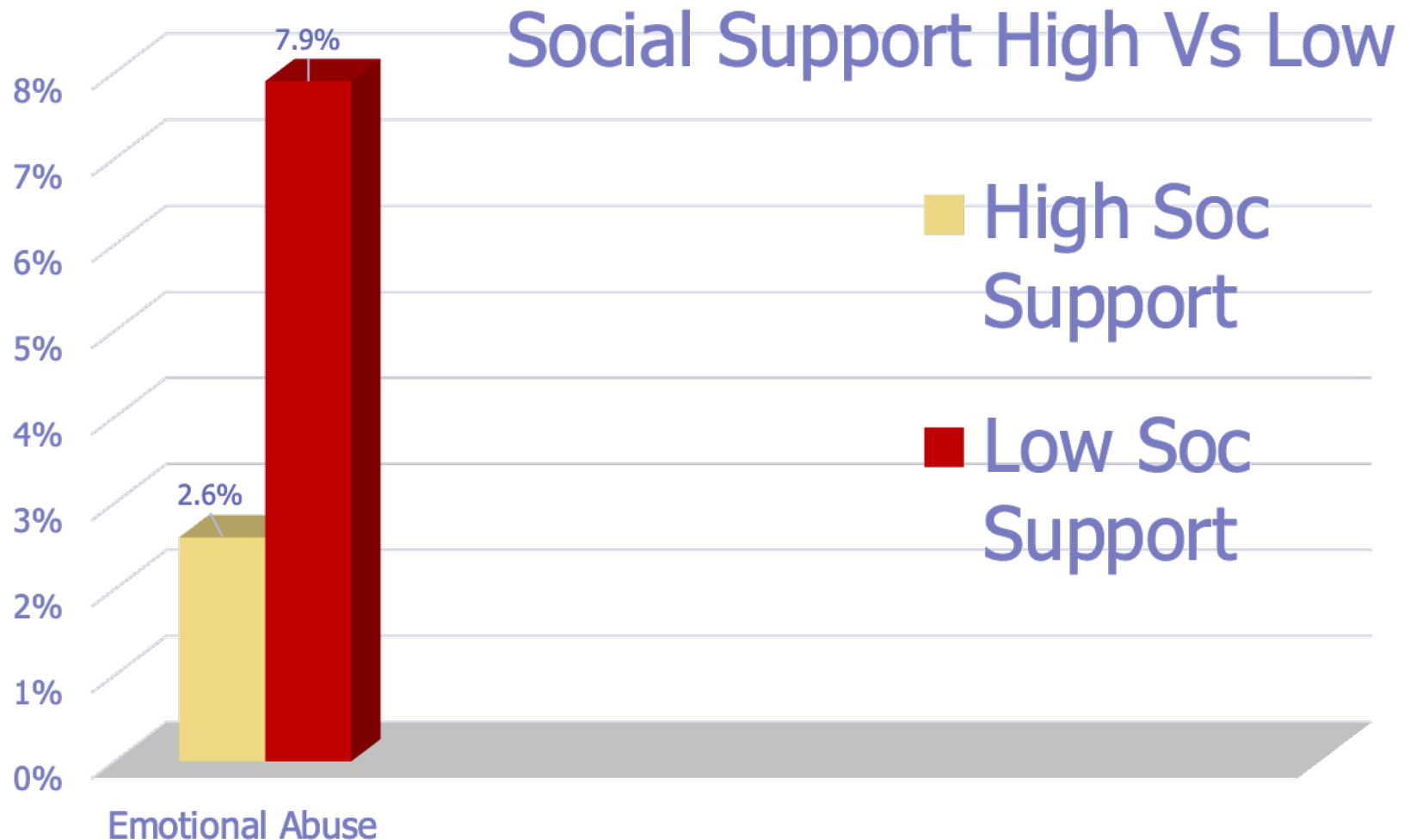
# Emotional Mistreatment: Significant Risk factors (logistic regression odds ratio results in red)

- ◆ 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)**



Let's take a look at that  
Social Support risk factor

# Rate of Emotional Abuse in terms of Social Support



# Some thoughts

- ◆ a large percentage were related to and lived with the victim
- ◆ Less so for men, but still at high levels, although twice as many men report emotional abuse by strangers.
- ◆ Supports domestic violence as the primary focal target for emotional mistreatment intervention for women, may be workplace for men, ironically.
- ◆ low Social Support was powerful, and is a modifiable risk factor

# Mistreatment variables **PHYSICAL**

Physical mistreatment was defined as an affirmative answer to any one of the following three questions following the following contextually orienting preface statement.

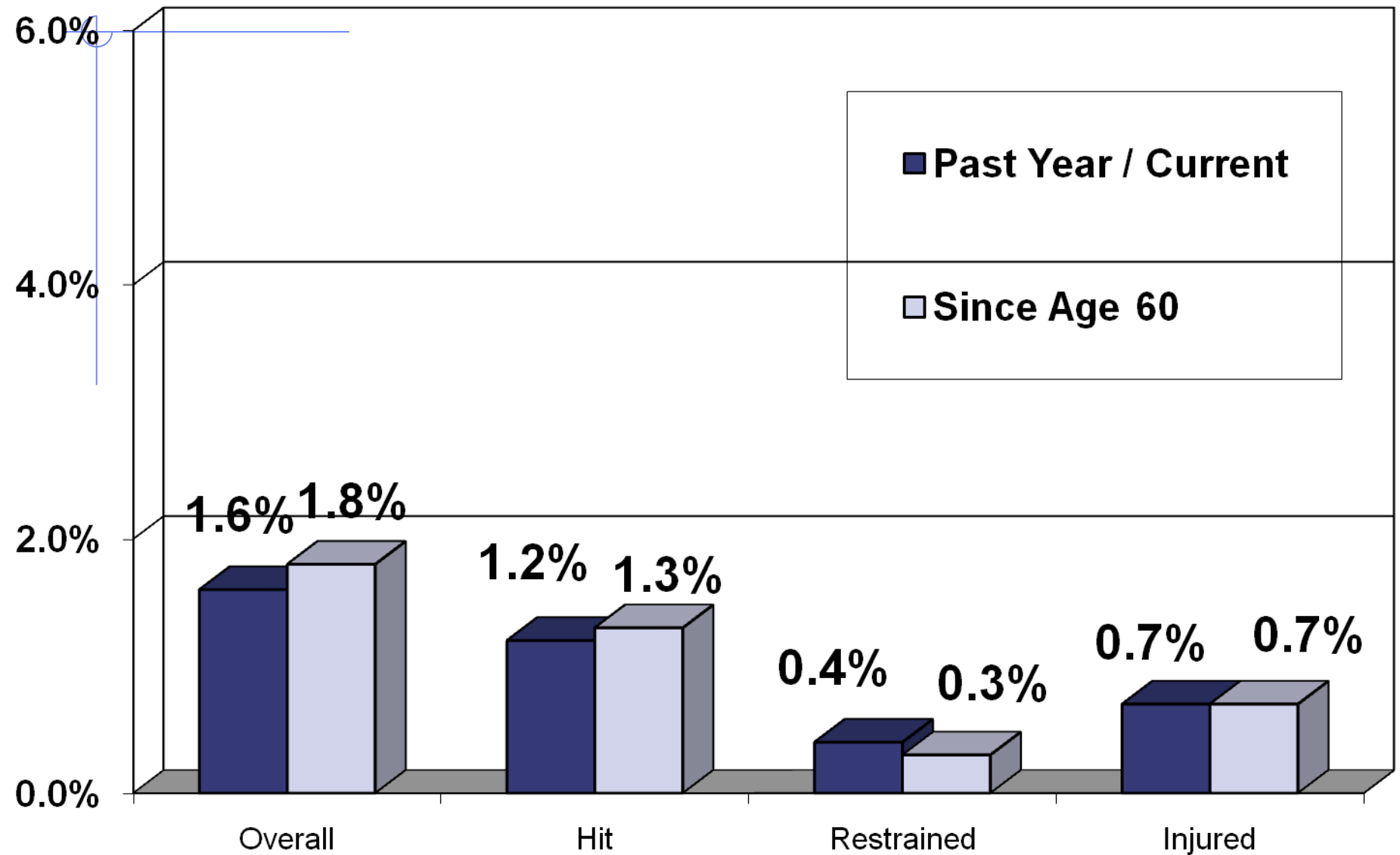
*Another type of stressful event that people sometimes experience is being physically hurt by another person. The person doing these things could be a romantic partner, spouse, family member, friend, or someone who helps take care of you.*

# Mistreatment variables

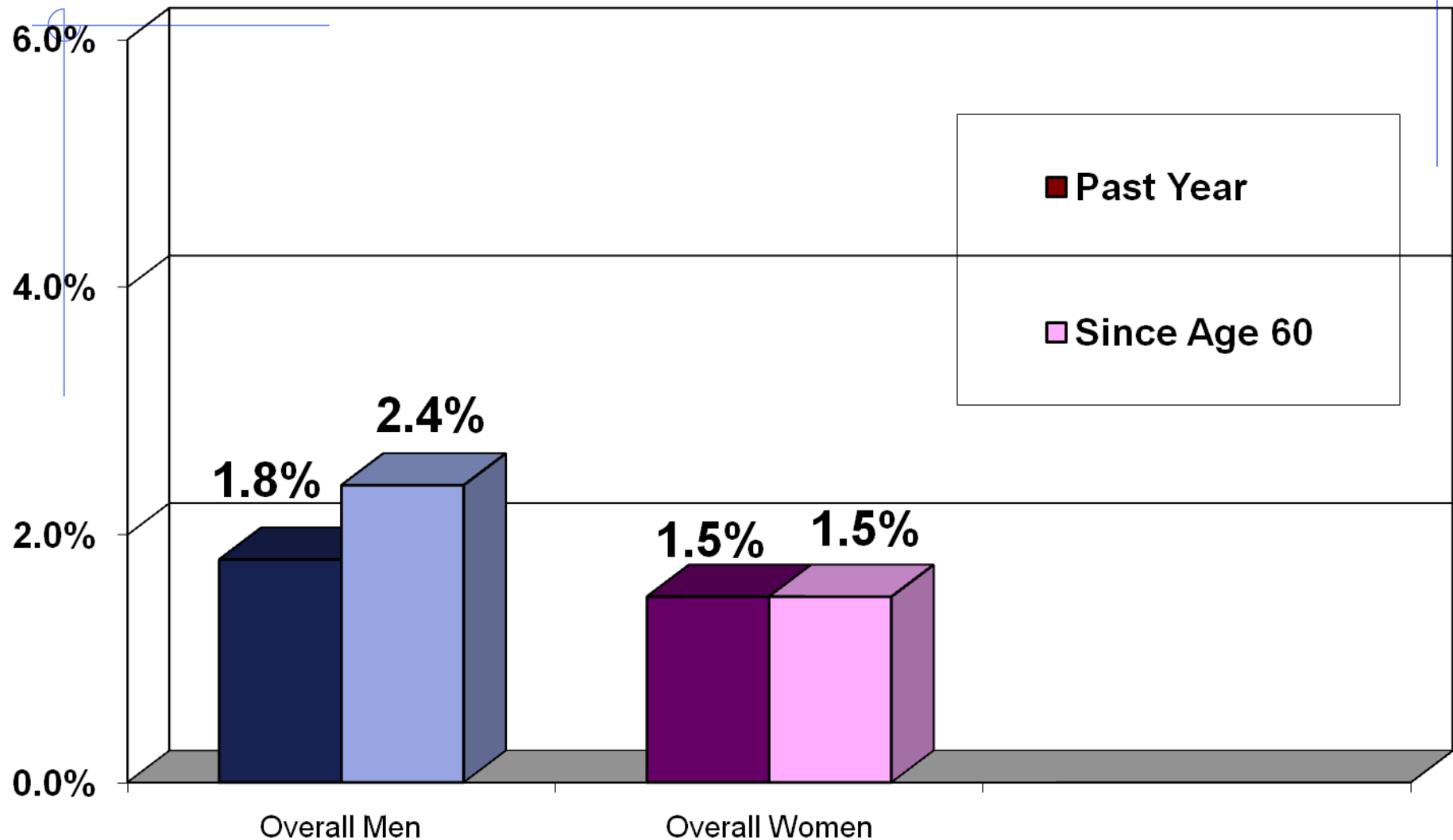
## PHYSICAL

- ◆ 1. *"Has anyone ever hit you with their hand or object, slapped you, or threatened you with a weapon?"*
- ◆ 2. *"Has anyone ever tried to restrain you by holding you down, tying you up, or locking you in your room or house?"*
- ◆ 3. *"Has anyone ever physically hurt you so that you suffered some degree of injury, including cuts, bruises, or other marks?"*

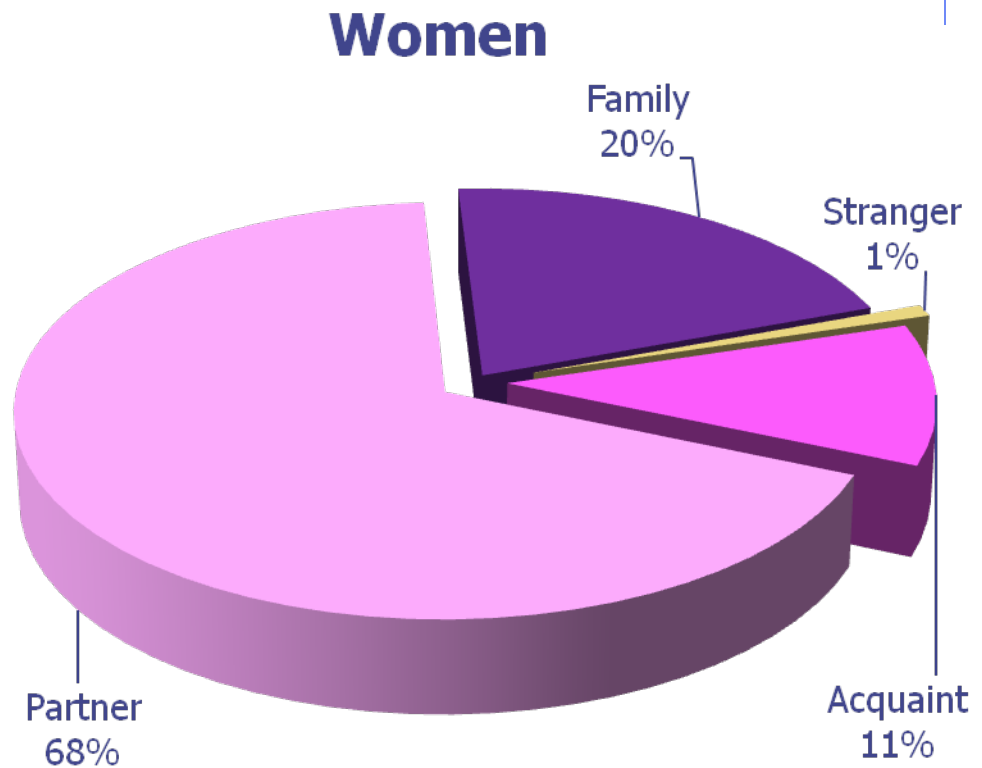
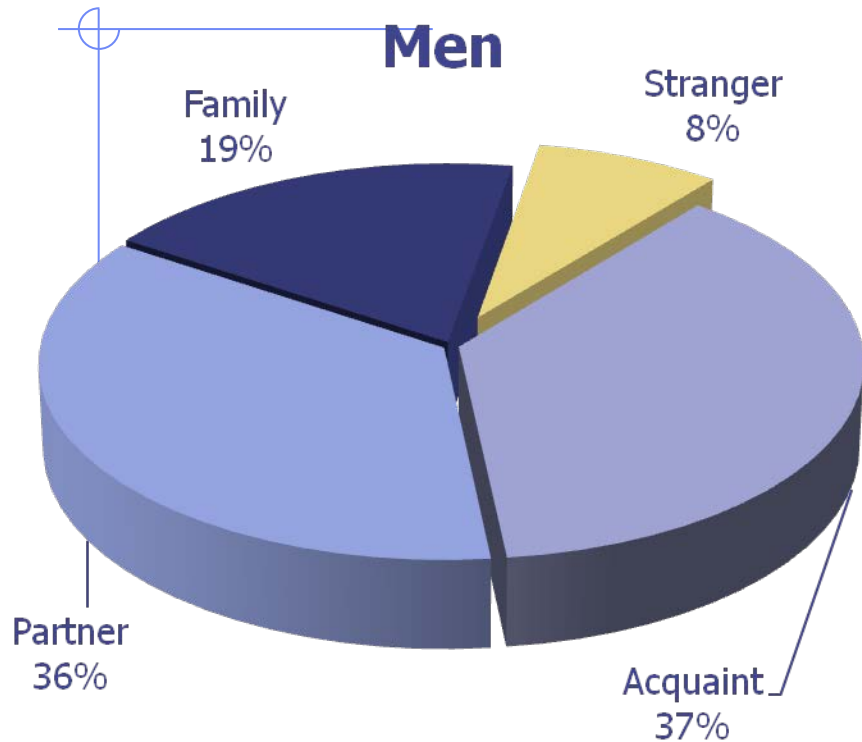
# Physical Mistreatment



# Physical Mistreatment by Gender



# Physical Mistreatment Perps



# Physical Violence As Family Domestic Violence

- ◆ So Family Domestic Physical Violence (Spouse + family member) accounts for
  - **55%** of ALL physical violence against cognitively intact older adult men
  - **88%** of ALL physical violence against cognitively intact older adult women

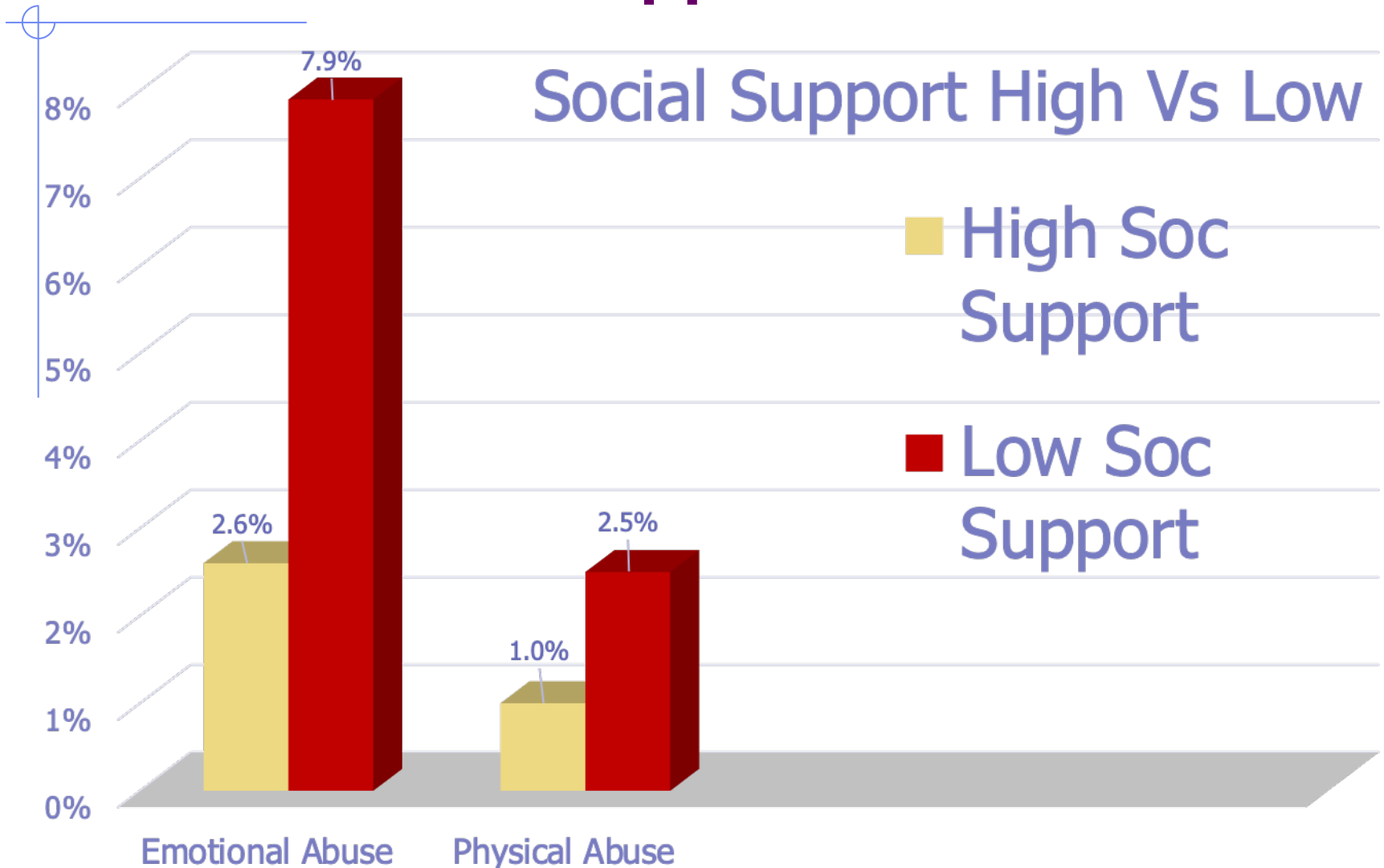
# Physical Mistreatment: Significant Risk factors (logistic regression results highlighted in red)

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



And now Let's take a look at  
that Social Support risk factor  
again

# Rate of **Emotional** and **Physical** Abuse in terms of **Social Support**



# Thoughts...

- ◆ Again, for both genders, but for women especially, **this form of violence is apparently a domestic problem**: the perpetrator is related to, and living with them
- ◆ Older men are far more likely than women to be physically assaulted by strangers, but still only 8%
- ◆ Also perpetrators against men are more likely to have substance use, legal problems and be unemployed...perhaps a more impaired group
- ◆ Again, Low Social Support is a strong, BUT modifiable risk factor

## Mistreatment variables **SEXUAL**

Sexual mistreatment was defined as an affirmative answer to any one of the following three questions following the contextually orienting preface statement.

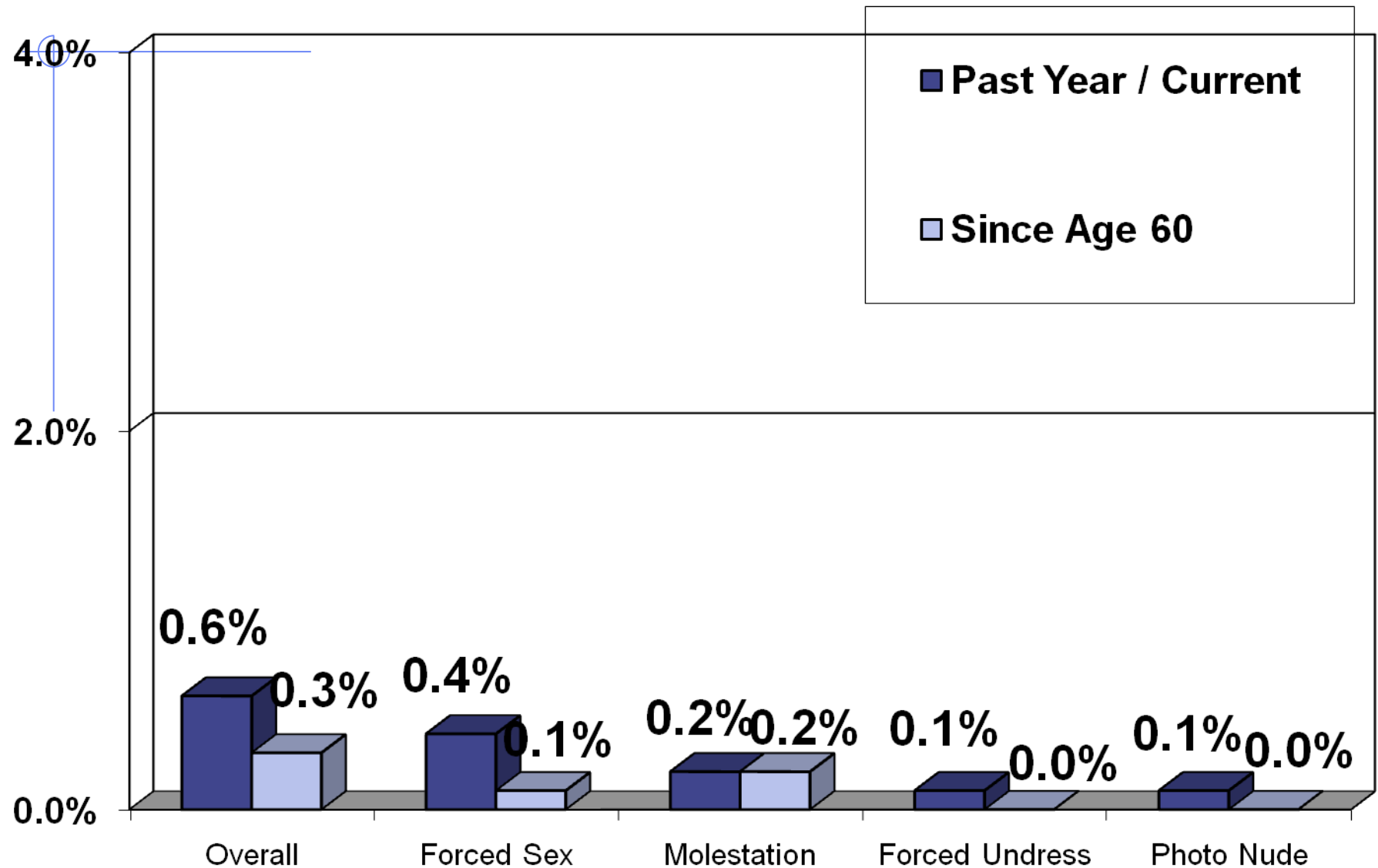
*"I am going to ask you questions about unwanted sexual advances that you may have experienced over your lifetime. People do not always report such experiences to the police or discuss them with family or friends. The person making the unwanted advances isn't always a stranger, but can be a friend, romantic partner, or even a family member or someone you trust to help you or help take care of you. Such experiences can occur anytime in a person's life. Regardless of how long ago it happened or who made the advances,*

# Mistreatment variables

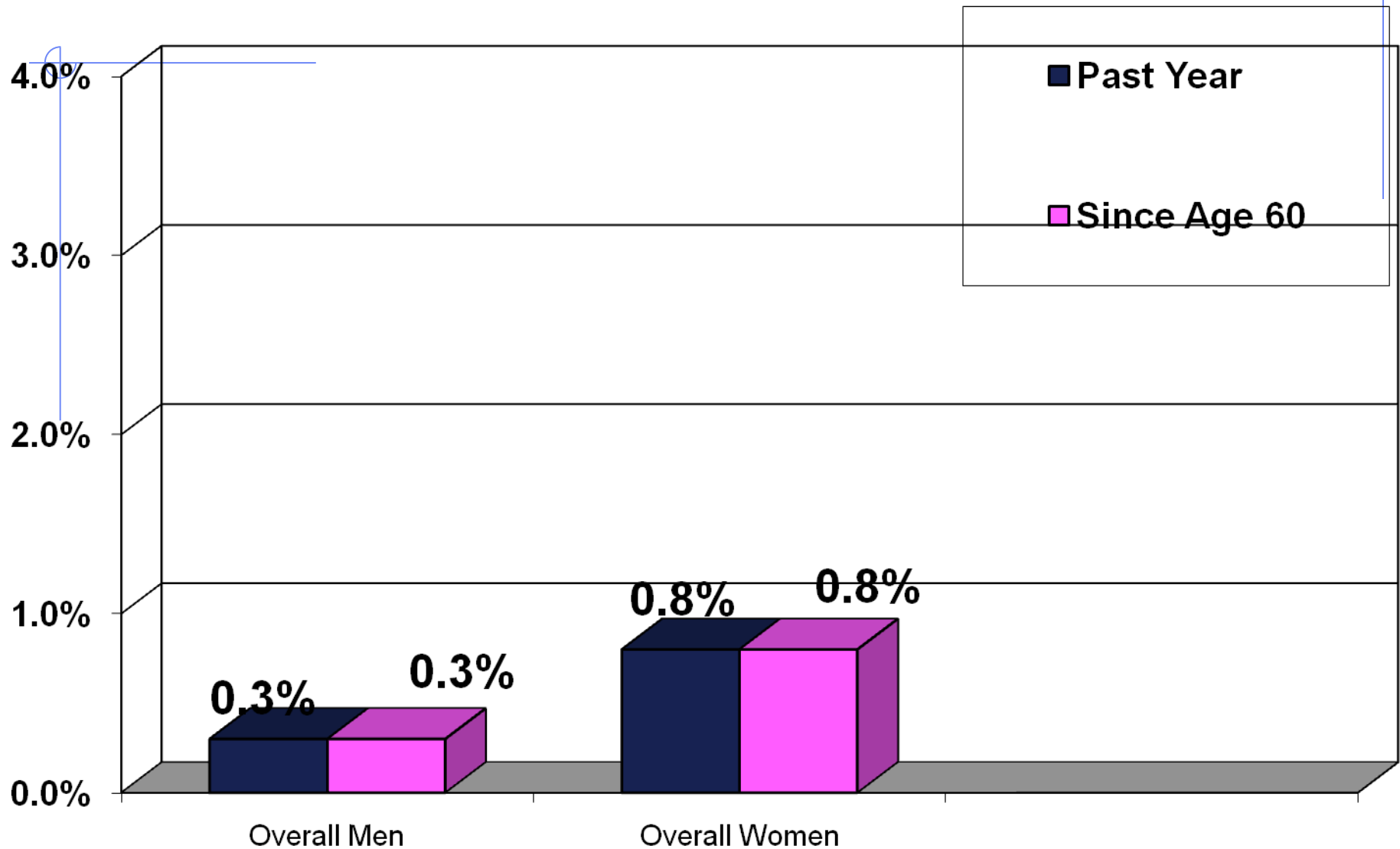
## SEXUAL

- ◆ 1. *“Has anyone ever made you have sex or oral sex by using force or threatening to harm you or someone close to you?”*
- ◆ 2. *“Has anyone ever touched your pubic area or made you touch their pubic area by using force or threat of force?”*
- ◆ 3. *“Has anyone ever forced you to undress or expose your breasts or pubic area when you didn’t want to?”*

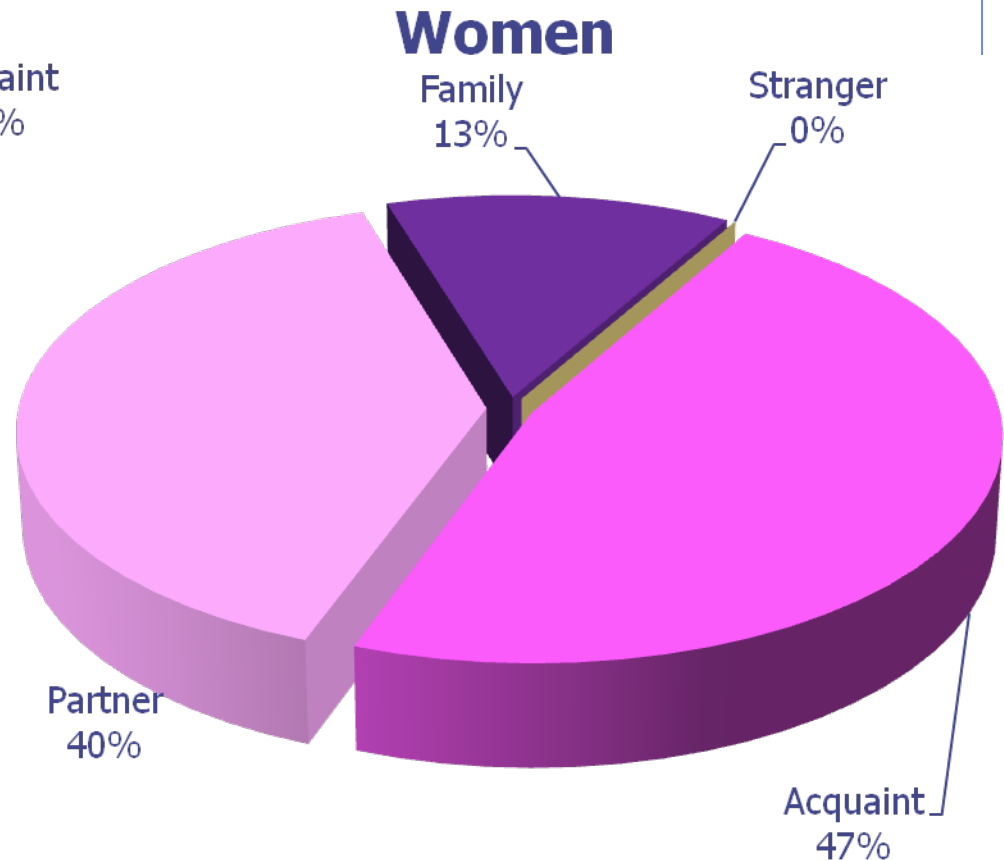
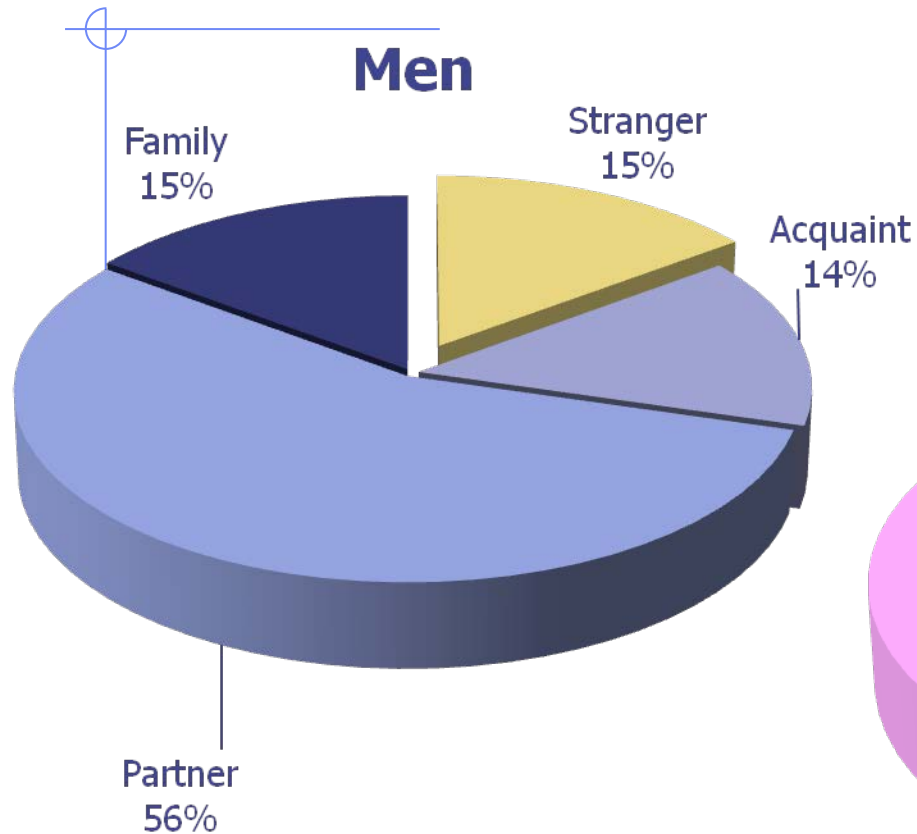
# Sexual Mistreatment



# Sexual Mistreatment by Gender (sig)



# Sexual Mistreatment Perps. Note: N too small to be reliable



# Sexual Violence As Family Domestic Violence

- ◆ So Sexual Domestic Violence (Spouse + family member) accounts for
  - 71% of ALL sexual violence against cognitively intact older adult men \*(very very small N , so this may not be a reliable finding, but the trend is consistent with other violence forms)
  - 53% of ALL sexual violence against cognitively intact older adult women

# Sexual Mistreatment: Significant Risk factors (logistic regression Not Appropriate Due to Low N)

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

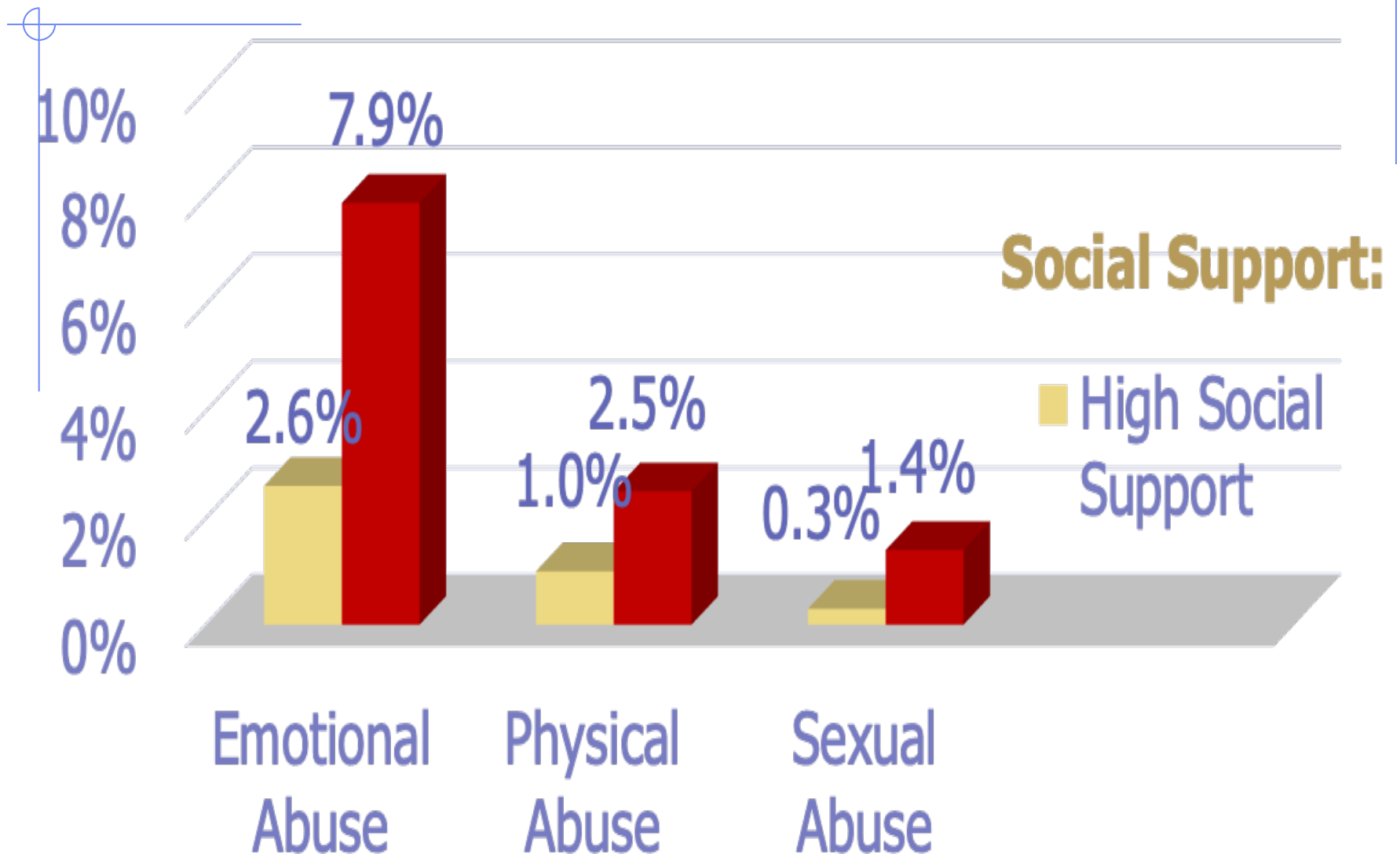
# Thoughts...

- ◆ Sample size is too small to dig too deeply into the data for sexual mistreatment .....But low Social Support was again in the predictor set.

# Summary: Risk Factors Across Mistreatment:

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

# Rates of Emotional, Physical, and Sexual Abuse, in terms of Social Support



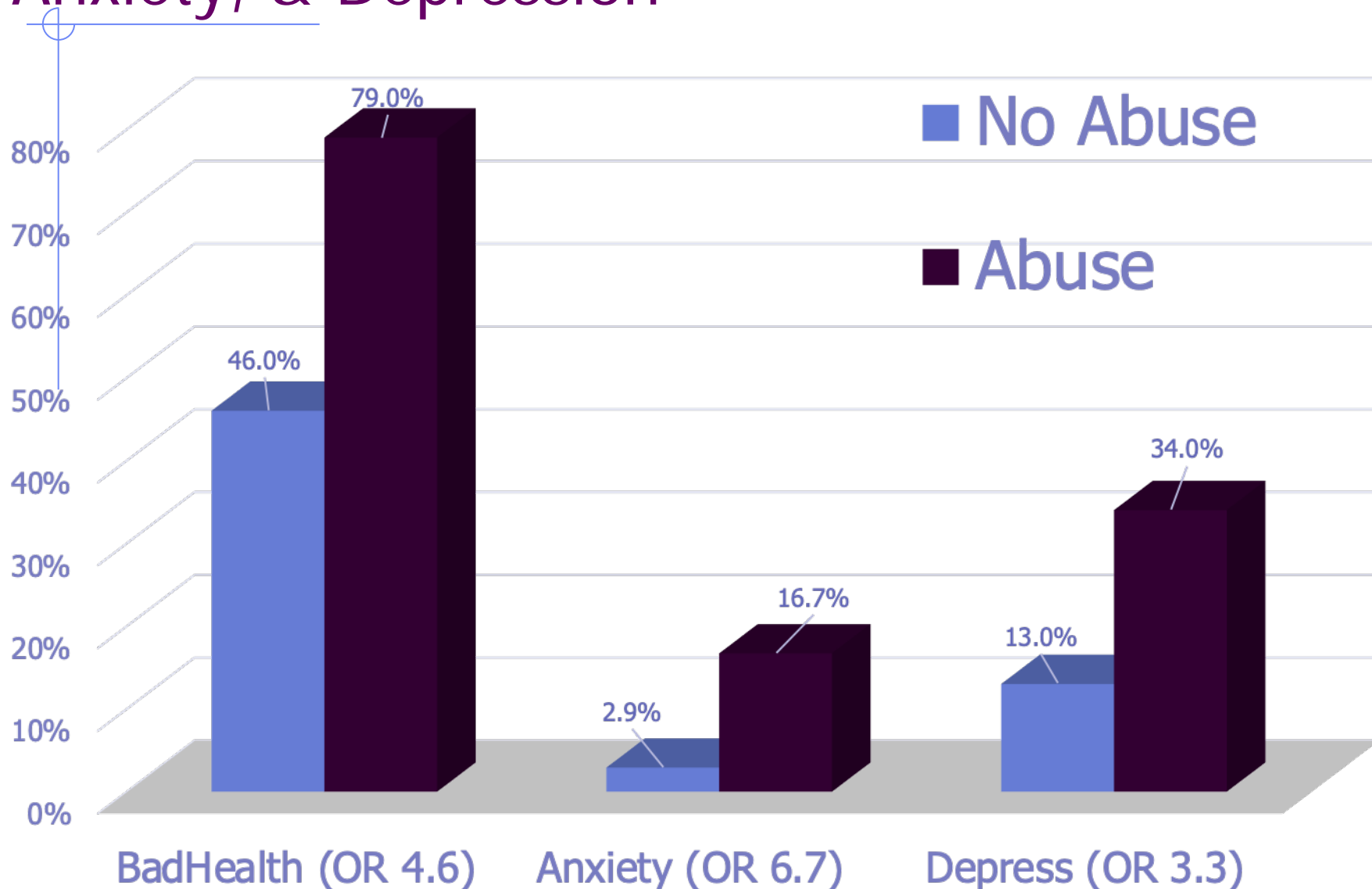
# Overall Conclusions

- ◆ 1 in 10 community-residing older adults reported experiencing elder mistreatment in the past year.
- ◆ Most of this is perpetrated by family members, not just spouses
- ◆ Thus, the focus should not be on partner violence per se, but on domestic violence
- ◆ There are some interesting differences between male and female victims; This may indicate the need for different treatment and prevention approaches for each gender.
- ◆ **Social Support is a consistent risk factor for all abuse types, and fortunately, modifiable.**

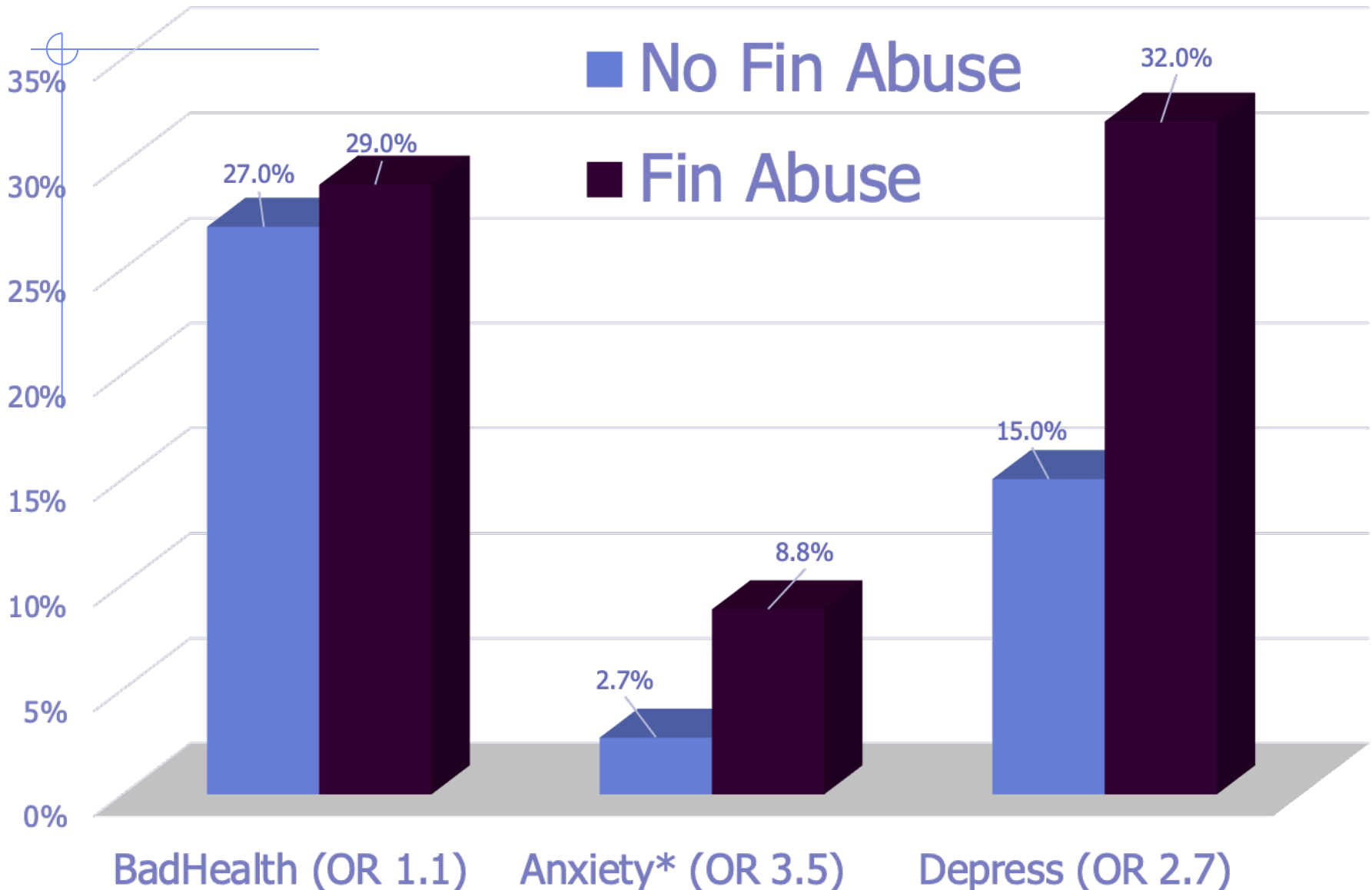
So, that was '*how often*'  
abuse happens. And how  
Social Support can reduce the  
risk of even being abused

How about '*so what,*' as in:  
what are the effects of abuse  
and what can make it better  
or worse

# NEMS 8 Years Later: Effects of Elder Abuse in Terms of Health, Anxiety, & Depression

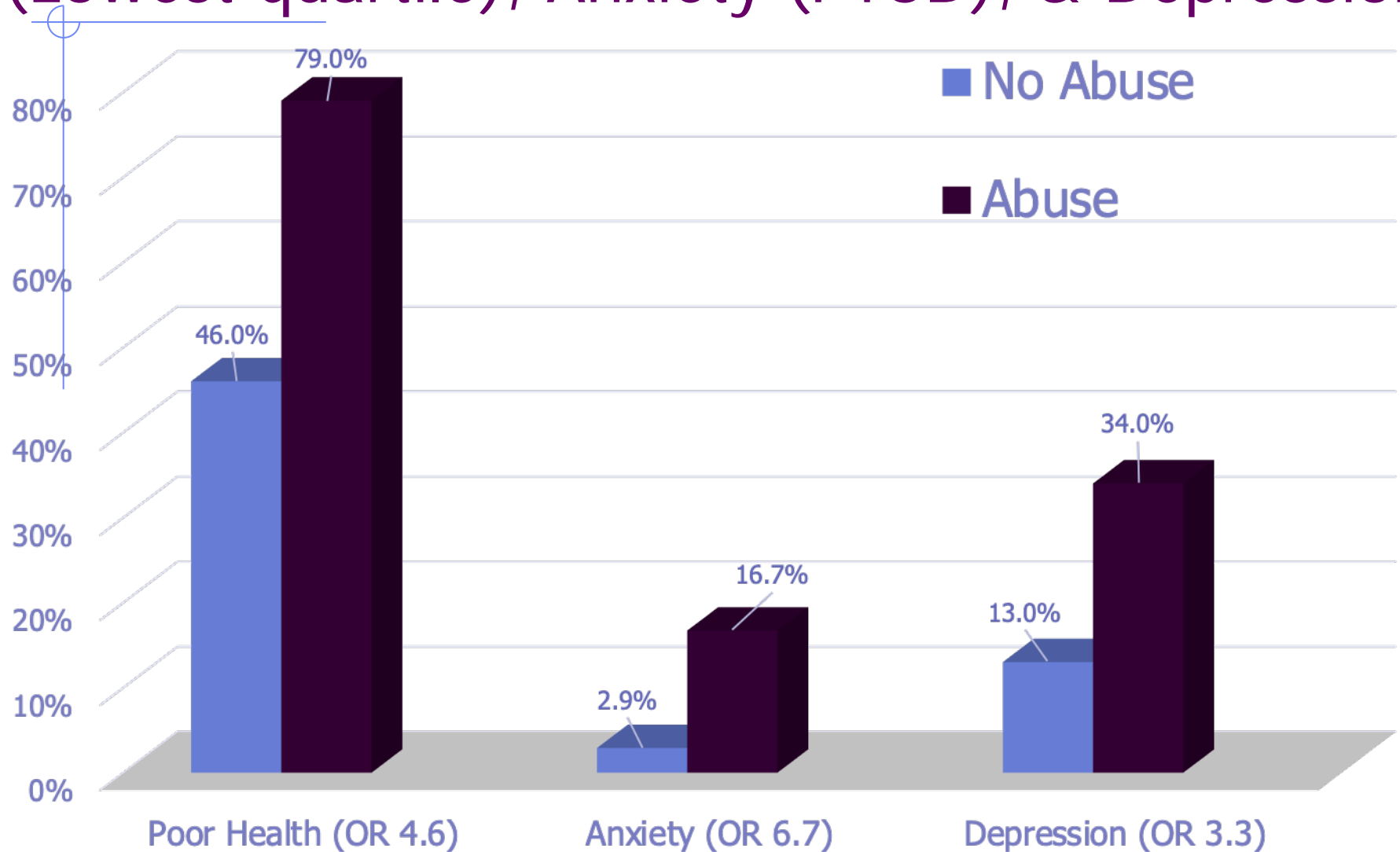


# W I Financial Abuse Hurts Too

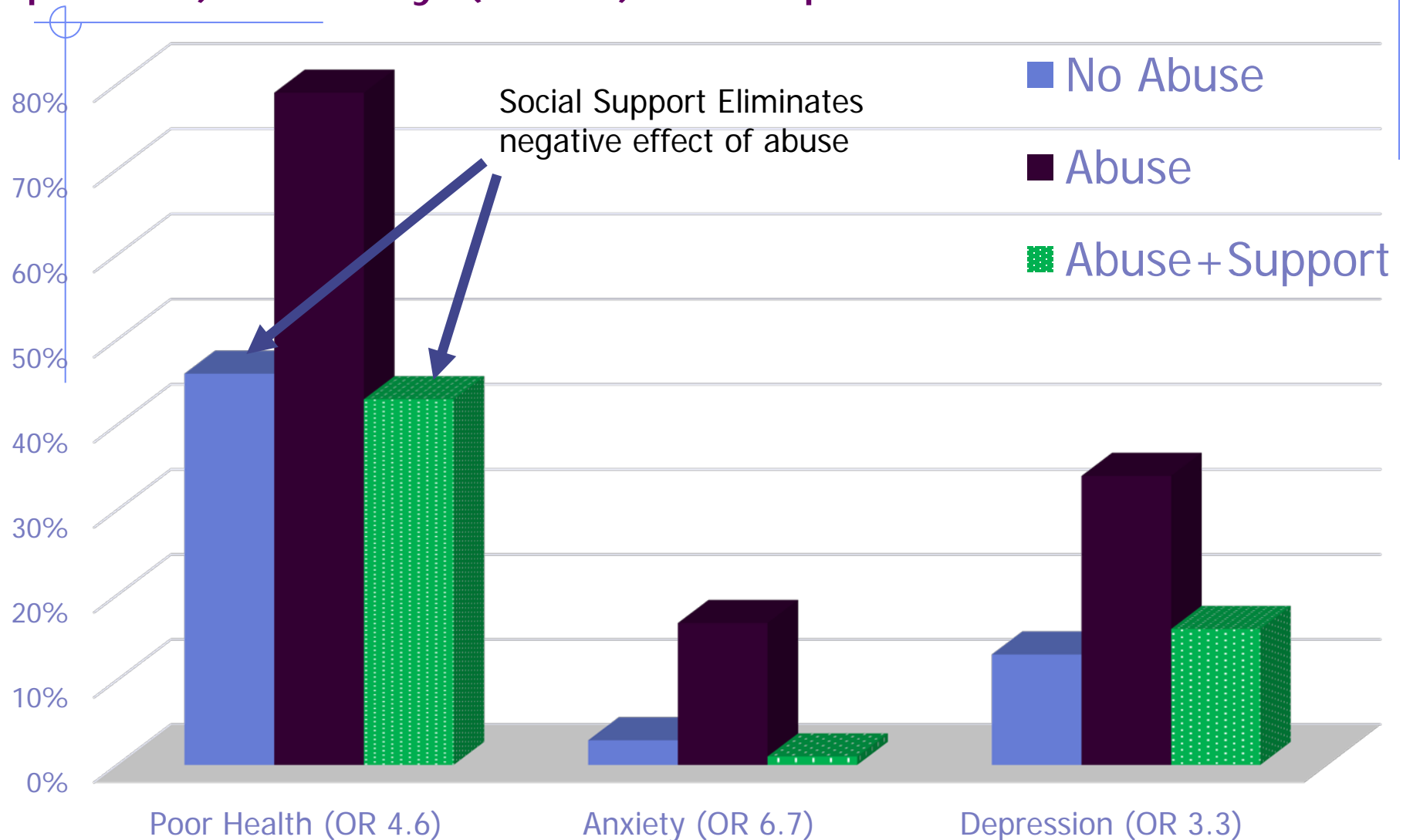


But now let's see what happens if we consider high *social support*, as rated by the older adult back then, 8 years ago when the abuse happened

# 8 Years Later: Social Support's impact on Effects of Elder Abuse in terms of Health (Lowest quartile), Anxiety (PTSD), & Depression



# 8 Years Later: Social Support's impact on Effects of Elder Abuse in terms of Health (Lowest quartile), Anxiety (PTSD), & Depression



# Summary: Considering Elder Abuse

- ◆ 1 in 10 community-residing older adults reported experiencing elder mistreatment in the past year.
- ◆ But...Social support is a central protective factor, preventing virtually all forms of elder mistreatment.
- ◆ And...Followup research 8 years later shows social support protects you after you've been abused from developing problems with health, anxiety, and depression



# Conclusions: **Bad stuff happens**

➤ *If you consider mistreatment, disasters, war and loss, bad stuff happens to older adults. A lot.*

BUT MAYBE ITS NOT SO BAD.....

➤ Older Adults deal with these events relatively better than younger adults

➤ There are certain things we can do to improve chances that things will be ok:

➤ **Social Support** is foremost among these, either before the abuse through social connection, or following the abuse through being good neighbors

# **This social support thing seems to be important**



**what kind of tea is that??  
i don't know. i found it at my  
grandson's room!**

LOW Social Support is related to everything bad that can happen.....but, on the flip side that also means high social support 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.

# These findings suggest using an atypical approach to addressing elder abuse:

## Increasing Social Support by meeting patients *where they're at*

- Perhaps starting health and wellness groups in community settings that include assessment of mental health and abuse, alongside blood pressure and weight, with subsequent opportunities for discussion of these issues.
- Things like redesigned **meeting places** (benches, tables, public café permits) or easy public **Transportation** are very likely the most effective, useful, and efficient *mental health* and socialization elder abuse interventions for older adults
- **the “evening walk” in the community has to return**



# We need to make it easier for older adults to connect.....





# Social Support Can come in Many Forms



[www.GeezerPlanet.com](http://www.GeezerPlanet.com)