Special Event

Elder Abuse in the Canadian LGBTQ2SA+ Community: Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

Presented by:

Gloria Gutman and Claire Robson

Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario

Western Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children
LEARNING NETWORK

Indigo Survivors Project

SFU

An innovative partnership

- Claire Robson (GSWS, BOLDFest, Quirk-e)
- Jen Marchbank (GSWS, Surrey Pride Society, Y4AC)
- Dr. Gloria Gutman (CM OBC, Gerontology, SFU)
- Makaela Prentice (RA)

QMUNITY
BC'S QUEER, TRANS, AND TWO-SPIRIT RESOURCE CENTRE

- Courtney Dieckbrader (Specialist in Seniors Programming)
- Devan Christian (Trauma Counsellor)

What counts as elder?

- 55+

What counts as abuse?

- Types of elder abuse as defined in the literature (NICE)
  - physical
  - emotional/ psychological
  - financial
  - sexual
  - neglect

Queer terminology

- Cisgender – body matches assigned gender identity
- Transgender – a person who identifies as a gender different from the one assigned – may or may not have had gender-affirming surgery
- Heteronormative – the assumption that all persons are heterosexual
- CisHet – the assumption that all persons are cisgender and heterosexual
- GSM – gender and sexual minorities

Why did we need this project?

Queer elders are more likely to

- Live alone
- Be depressed
- Have one or more disabilities
- Have less or no contact with their family of origin
- Have experienced trauma
- Self-medicate

Trudy's story

Well. We knew you were different when you were two, because we would teach you how to throw and you always threw like a girl. We tried to beat it out of you.

Trudy’s story

- Experienced an early sense of difference
- Attempted suicide at age of six
- Frequented gay bars from the age of 14
- Arrested and subjected to weekly conversion therapy
- Underwent gender affirming surgery in NYC

- Abused by in home care staff
  - Ignored
  - Subject to homophobic slights & inappropriate touch

Systemic cultural violence

- Our cohort of queer elders lived through a time when
  - Being gay was a crime
  - Being gay was an illness
  - Many of us lived in the closet
  - We could not marry so our financial arrangements were often informal
  - We experienced constant slights and psychic wounding (and still do)
  - We were not counted in the census (gender identity only added last year) and thus not identified as needing specific services.

This makes us more likely to tolerate and accept high levels of abuse

“Homo/transphobic prejudice and hate assaults the most profound levels of being, impeding healthy emotional development and maturation, the capacity for rewarding wholesome relationships with oneself and others; and generates destructive forces within the person who can no longer connect with the deepest gift of life – the truth and beauty of their own being”

Grace (participant)

Our relationship with health care professionals has been troubled

- The AIDS epidemic left us with deep distrust of medical institutions
- Doctors, nurses and elder care providers still exhibit ignorance and homo/transphobia
- We are less likely to visit doctors…
- …and less likely to come out when we do

Project Participants

- 2 transwomen
- 2 gay men
- 5 lesbians
- Interviews were also conducted with QMUNITY's seniors' specialist & an experienced trauma counsellor

What we did

- I conducted at least two interviews with all nine participants
- Several received one-on-one support from a trauma-informed therapist.
- Four met as a group, which continued after the end of the project
- I worked with the narrators to turn their interview transcripts into tight first-person narratives
- These were published as a book, together with analysis & recommendations

International Perspectives on Aging 37

Claire Robson · Jen Marchbank · Gloria Gutman · Makaela Prentice

Elder Abuse in the LGBTQ2SA+ Community

The Impact of Homophobia and Transphobia

This book describes and analyzes the lived experience of elder abuse from the queer community. It discusses the experiences by transwomen, gay men and lesbians of financial abuse, physical and sexual abuse, homophobic abuse, and neglect within partner relationships, residential care, in home care, and religious organizations. Queer and trans elders have been described as 'The Silent Generation', since they have lived through times when their sexual and gender identities were criminalized and pathologized. The book shows that they are far more at risk to suffer abuse and neglect by those they should be able to trust, since they are more likely to have encountered all key risk factors, such as isolation, previous abuse and trauma, and mistrust of the health care system. Their vulnerability has been overlooked and this book addresses that gap. As such, this book provides a great resource to anyone working with elders, including medical professionals, care providers, police, counsellors, and policy makers.

ISBN 978-3-031-33316-3

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▸ springer.com

Robson · Marchbank · Gutman · Prentice

Elder Abuse in the LGBTQ2SA+ Community

International Perspectives on Aging 37

Series Editors: Jason L. Powell, Sheying Chen

Claire Robson
Jen Marchbank
Gloria Gutman
Makaela Prentice

Elder Abuse in the LGBTQ2SA+ Community

The Impact of Homophobia and Transphobia

Springer

Context and type of abuse covered in the study

- In-home care
  - Inappropriate touching & neglect — Trudy
  - Neglect & failure to recognize her lesbian widowhood — Zoe
- Institutions
  - Ostracism and spiritual abuse in religious organizations — Grace
- Residential care
  - Neglect, overmedication, harassment & physical abuse — Michele
  - Neglect — Donald
- Within Romantic Relationship
  - Financial abuse, emotional abuse (death threats) — Bruce
  - Financial abuse, emotional/psychological abuse — Pam
- Within Lesbian Community
  - Financial abuse, theft — Flygirl

Findings

Participants experienced a strong sense of difference and dislocation, which ‘put a target on their backs,’ and may have contributed to the early abuse reported by all (the chicken and the egg)

At the same time, they did not have the mentorship and family support that might have helped them navigate this situation

Similarities with mainstream populations included

- Neglect in residential care because of staff shortages
- Abuse and neglect by inadequately trained in home care staff
- Escalating financial and emotional abuse & isolation by romantic partners

Differences

Systemic organizational cultural violence

- early abuse increases vulnerability for this generation of elders
- historic homophobia in health care
- failure to provide informed and effective care for trans clients
- unchecked homophobic attitudes and comments
- rejection & stigmatization by faith communities

overt homo/transphobia

covert homo/transphobia

assumption of cis/heteronormativity

internalized homophobia

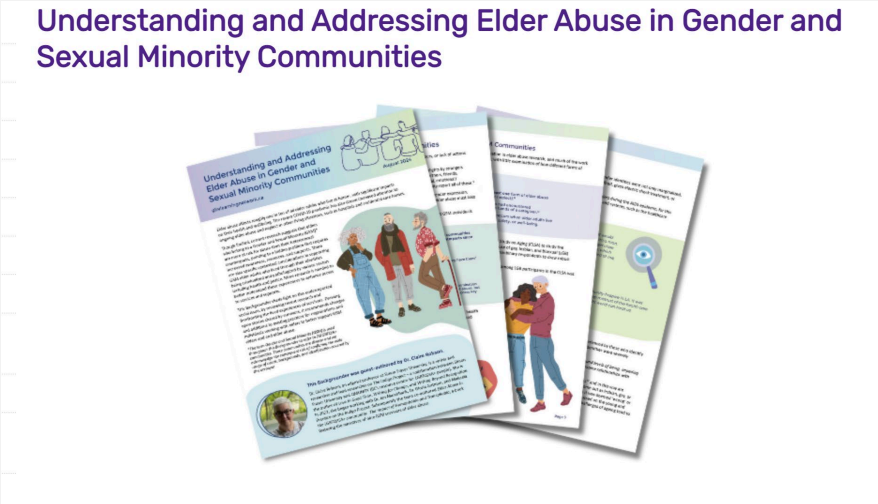
Recommendations

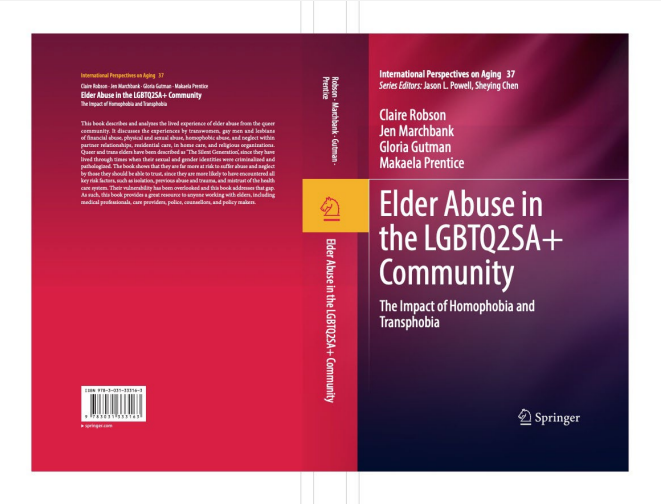
- Service providers must not assume cis/het, nor assume clients wish to disclose That said, intake procedures should allow for disclosure if desired
- Dedicated means of reporting abuse for GSM people
- Queer competency training for all, especially ‘on the ground’ staff – ongoing
- Awareness of complex history of GSM folks
    - signage eg rainbow flags – safe space
    - GSM themed events – speakers, Pride breakfast
    - GSM media available
    - inclusive language
    - zero tolerance of homo/transphobic behaviour
- Increased availability of affordable counselling & supports for survivors
- Further research required, both quantitative and qualitative

Key resources

https://www.lidsen.com/journals/geriatrics/geriatrics-special-issues/Elder-Abuse-LGBT-Community-Hidden-Problem

https://scholar.google.ca/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=V3fUuW0AAAAJ&citation_for_view=V3fUuW0AAAAJ:iH-uZ7U-co4C





SFU GERONTOLOGY RESEARCH CENTRE

Elder Abuse Prevalence and Perpetrators: Does abuse type and victim SOGI make a differnce?

Findings from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA)

Learning Network/EAPO Special Virtual Event presentation, Dr Gloria Gutman, September 10, 2024

Research Team:

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- Heather Stewart[2]

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SFU GERONTOLOGY RESEARCH CENTRE

TYPES OF ELDER ABUSE AND WHERE IT OCCURS

Internationally recognized types are:

- **Physical**
- **Psychological**
- **Financial**
- **Sexual**
- **Neglect**

- **Elder abuse and neglect occurs in multiple settings - in the community and across a range of institutional settings**
- **Psychological and financial are the most common**

  Source: Podnieks, Pillemer, Nicholson, et al. 1990; Boldy, Horner, Crouchley, et al, 2005; Ockleford, Barnes-Holmes, Morichellim et al, 2003)
- **Multiple forms - many victims experience more than one type, concurrently or sequentially**

- **Source: Anme & Tatara, 2005; Boldy, Horner, Crouchley et al, 2005; Vida & Des Rosiers, 2002**

Background

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- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB*) older adults have long experienced trauma, isolation, stigma and discrimination.
- They are less likely than their heterosexual peers to be partnered, have children or be supported by the children they have.
- These characteristics make them potentially more vulnerable than other older adults to typical elder abuse as well as to unique forms.

***We use the acronym LGB instead of the more inclusive acronym LGBTQI2S+, as the CLSA datasets include only information on lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals.**

Objectives

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To estimate the prevalence of three different types of elder abuse among heterosexual and LGB Canadian older adults and explore perpetrator profiles.

- Types of abuse examined: psychological, physical, financial
- Perpetrator profile variables: relationship to victim, sex, living with the victim (Y/N)

Research Questions

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1. Do prevalence rates for abuse types differ when we look at survivor's SOGI?
2. Do perpetrator profiles differ when we look at different abuse types?
3. Do perpetrator profiles differ when we look at survivor's SOGI?

Methods

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- The Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) is a national cohort study of 51,338 Canadian residents, aged 45–85 years at baseline (2012–2015), with follow-ups being conducted every 3 years, for at least 20 years (until 2033) or until death or loss to follow-up.
- We analyzed data from Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) participants who were aged 65 and over at follow-up 1 (n=23,466).
- Eligible participants had to be physically and cognitively able to participate on their own, and able to communicate in English or French.

Methods (Cont'd): the CLSA elder abuse module

- was adapted from work by the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE, 2016).
- conceptual definitions were developed in a pilot study (McDonald & Beaulieu, 2012) and estimates for Canadian older adults were reported in the Canadian National Survey on the Mistreatment of Older Canadians in 2015 (McDonald, 2018).
- included 4 questions on psychological abuse, 6 questions on physical abuse and 3 questions on financial abuse.
- Dichotomous variables were constructed for each abuse type and overall.

Methods (Cont'd): Psychological Abuse (PSY)

Over the past 12 months has anyone criticized you?
How often did this happen over the last 12 months?
Who did this?
Was this person male or female?
Did that person (or any of those persons) live with you then?

Over the past 12 months has anyone threatened or intimidated you?
How often did this happen over the last 12 months?
Who did this? Was this person male or female?
Did that person (or any of those persons) live with you then?

Over the past 12 months has anyone insulted you?
How often did this happen over the last 12 months?
Who did this? Was this person male or female?
Did that person (or any of those persons) live with you then?

Over the past 12 months has anyone excluded you or ignored you?
How often did this happen over the last 12 months?
Who did this? Was this person male or female?
Did that person (or any of those persons) live with you then?

- Psychological abuse was deemed present if the criticism, insulting, or exclusion/ignoring items were affirmed with a past-year frequency of "many times" or "every day".
- For the threats/intimidation item, any level of past-year frequency was deemed as positive (Burnes et al., 2022).

Methods (Cont'd): Physical Abuse (PHY)

Over the past 12 months has anyone pushed, shoved or grabbed you?
How often did this happen over the last 12 months?
Who did this? Was this person male or female?
Did that person (or any of those persons) live with you

Over the past 12 months has anyone thrown something at you?
How often did this happen over the last 12 months?
Who did this? Was this person male or female?
Did that person (or any of those persons) live with you

Over the past 12 months has anyone hit or slapped you?
How often did this happen over the last 12 months?
Who did this? Was this person male or female?
Did that person (or any of those persons) live with you then?

Over the past 12 months has anyone tried to hit you with something?
How often did this happen over the last 12 months?
Who did this? Was this person male or female?
that person (or any of those persons) live with you then?

Over the past 12 months has anyone tried to choke you with something?
How often did this happen over the last 12 months?
Who did this? Was this person male or female?
that person (or any of those persons) live with you then?

Over the past 12 months has anyone threatened you with a weapon? How often did this happen over the last 12 months?
Who did this? Was this person male or female?
that person (or any of those persons) live with you then?

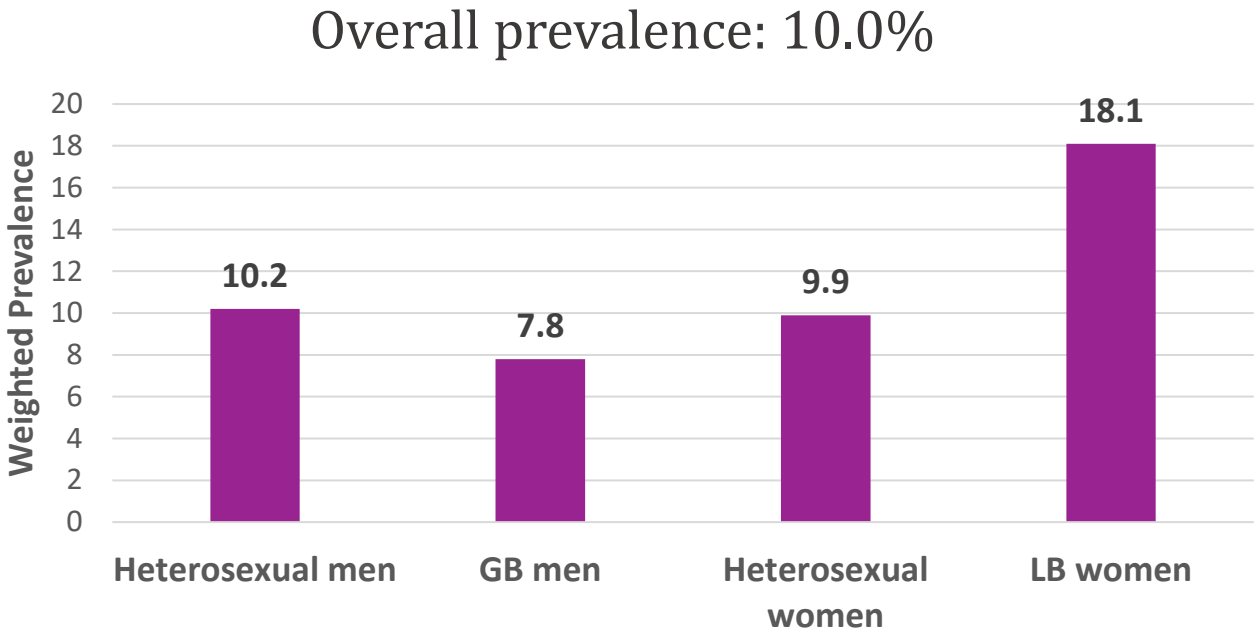
Methods (Cont'd): Financial Abuse (FIN)

Over the past 12 months has anyone made you give them your money, possessions or property?
How often did this happen over the last 12 months?
Who did this?
Was this person male or female?
Did that person (or any of those persons) live with you then?

Over the past 12 months has anyone taken money, possessions or property from you?
How often did this happen over the last 12 months?
Who did this?
Was this person male or female?
Did that person (or any of those persons) live with you then?

Over the past 12 months has anyone deliberately prevented your access to your money, possessions, or property?
How often did this happen over the last 12 months?
Who did this?
Was this person male or female?
Did that person (or any of those persons) live with you then?

% Experiencing any type of elder abuse by SOGI



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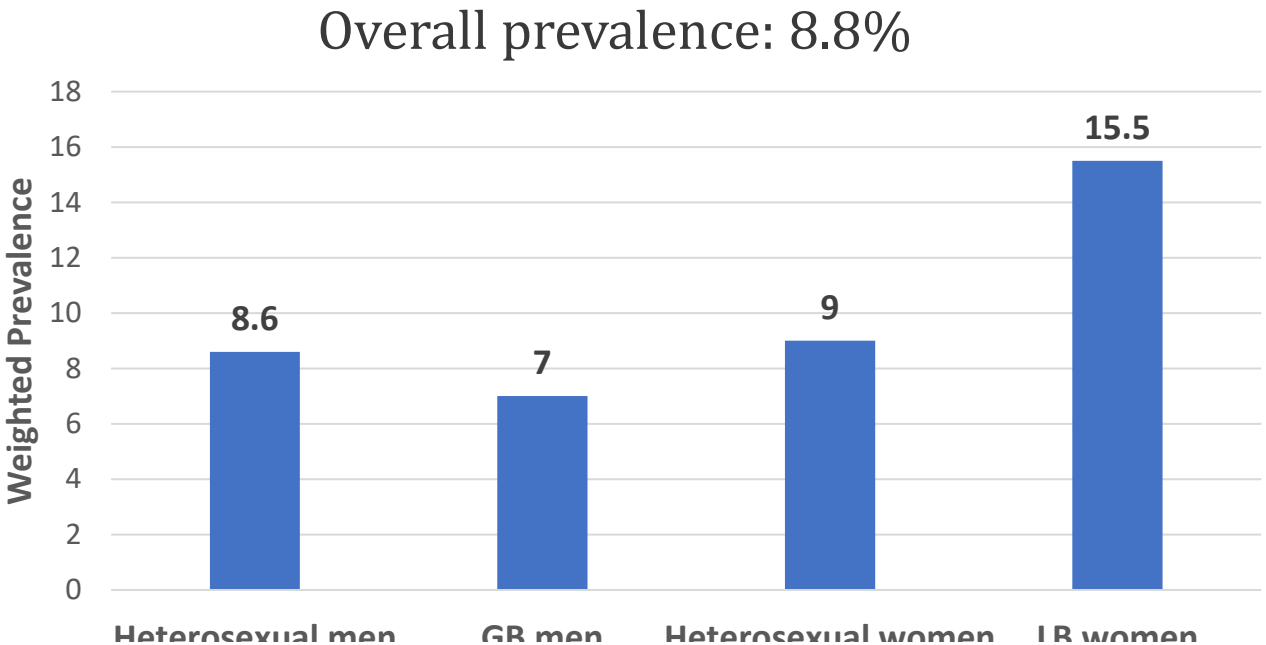
% Experiencing psychological abuse by SOGI



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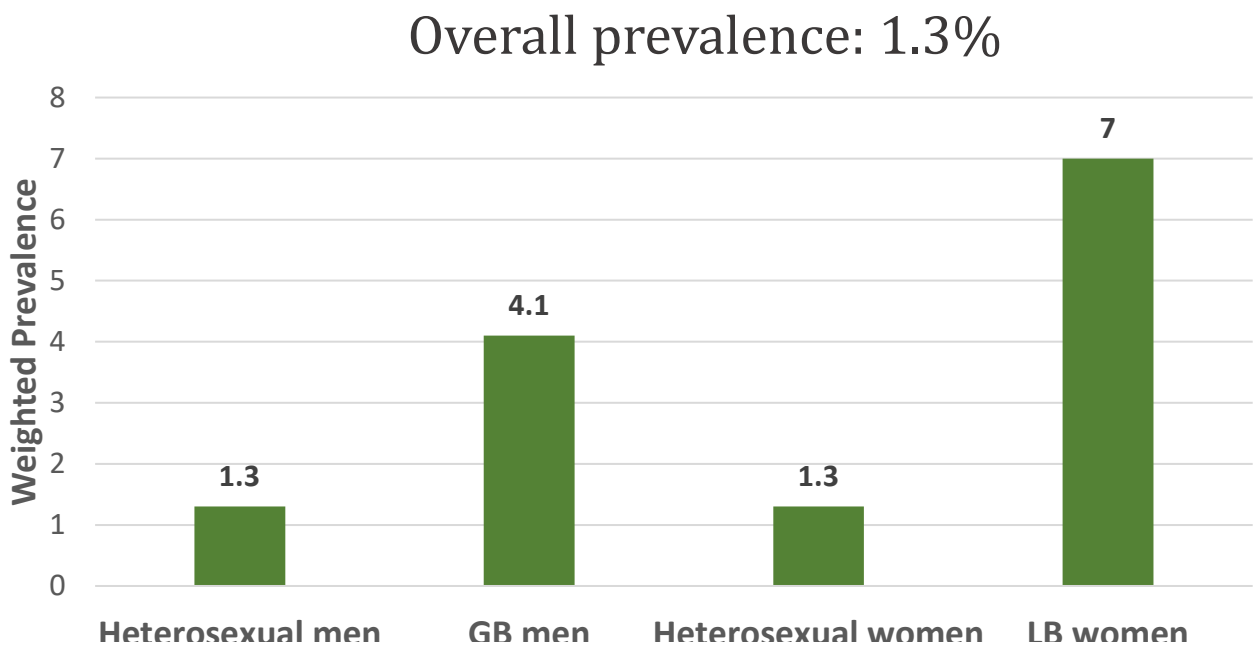
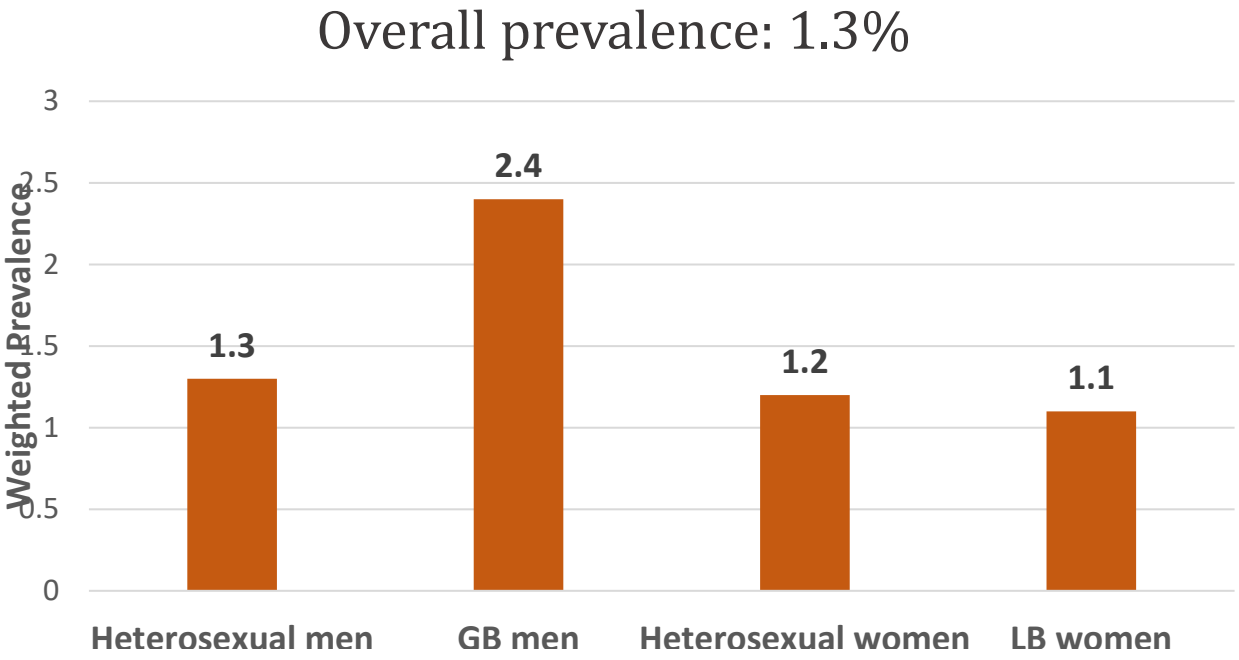
% Experiencing financial abuse by SOGI



P value<0.001

% Experiencing physical abuse by SOGI



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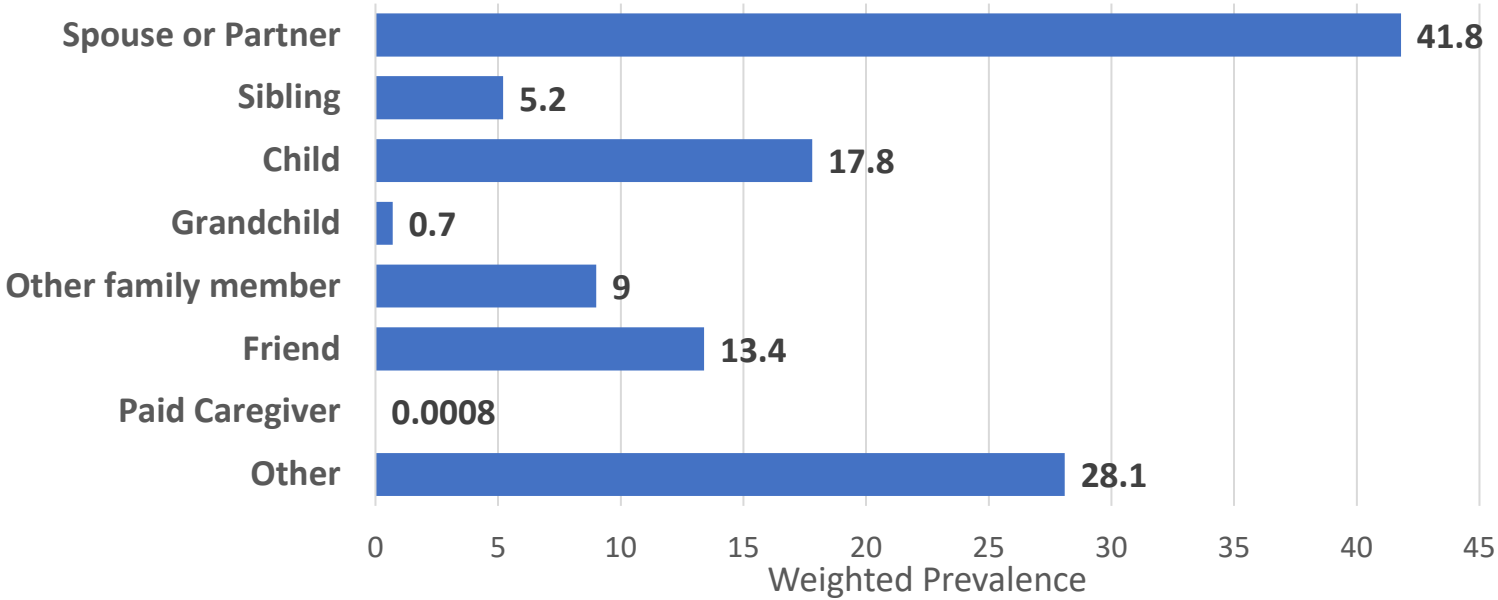
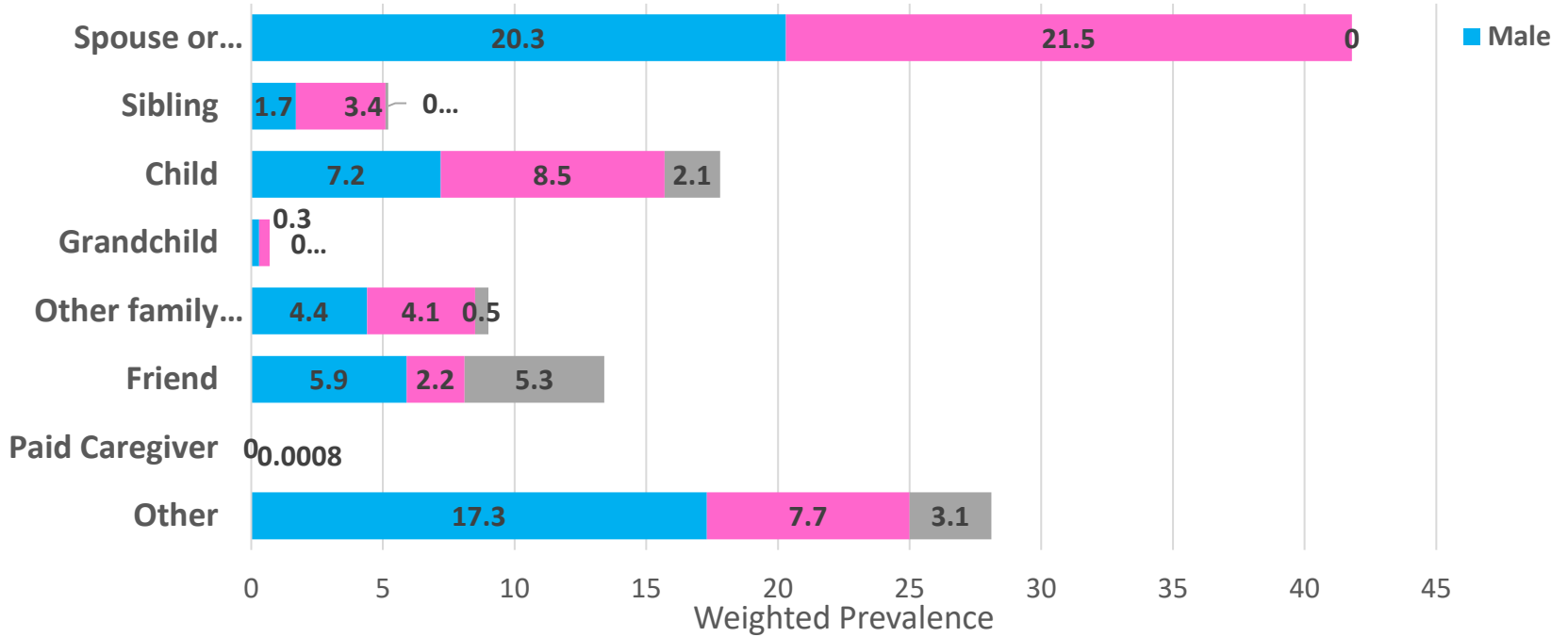
Psychological abuse: perpetrator relationship*



Respondents could choose more than one perpetrator type

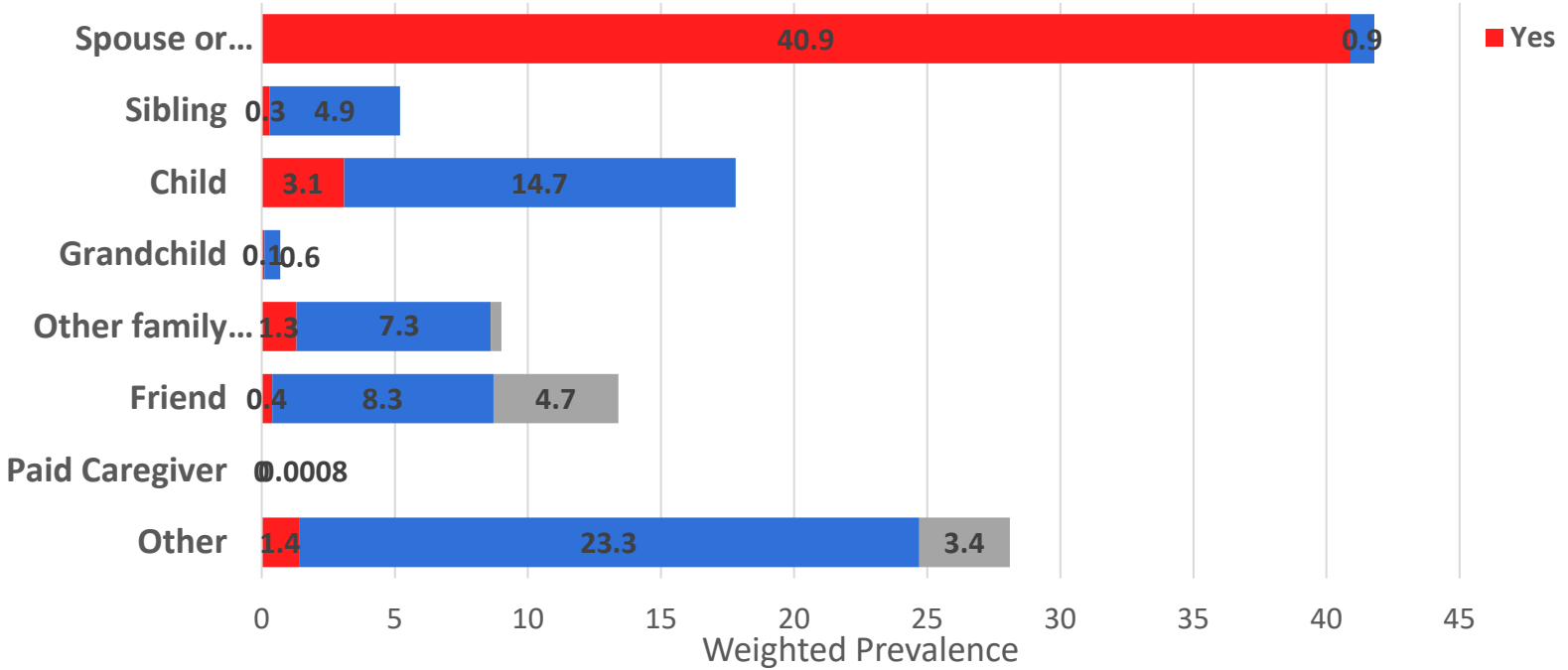
*** Among individuals who reported psychological abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=411,526)**

Psychological Abuse: perpetrator sex *



*** Among individuals who reported psychological abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=411,526)**

Psychological Abuse: perpetrator lived with the victim (Y/N)*



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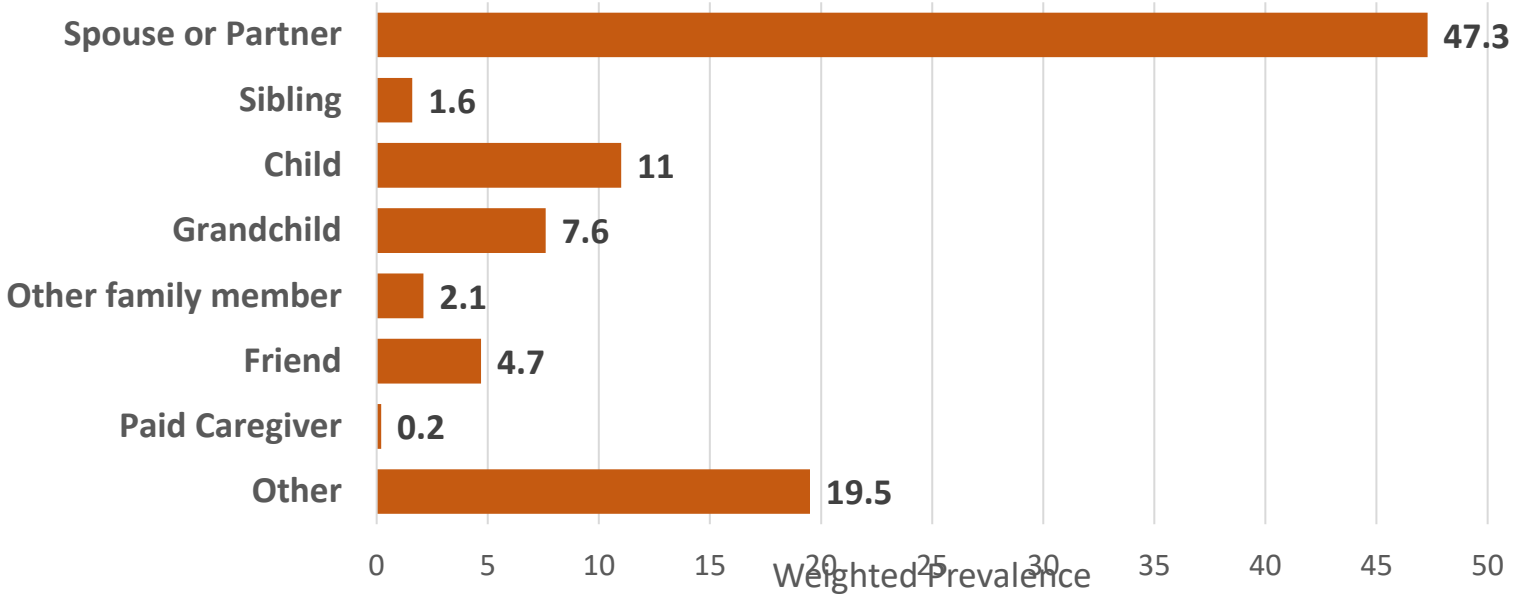
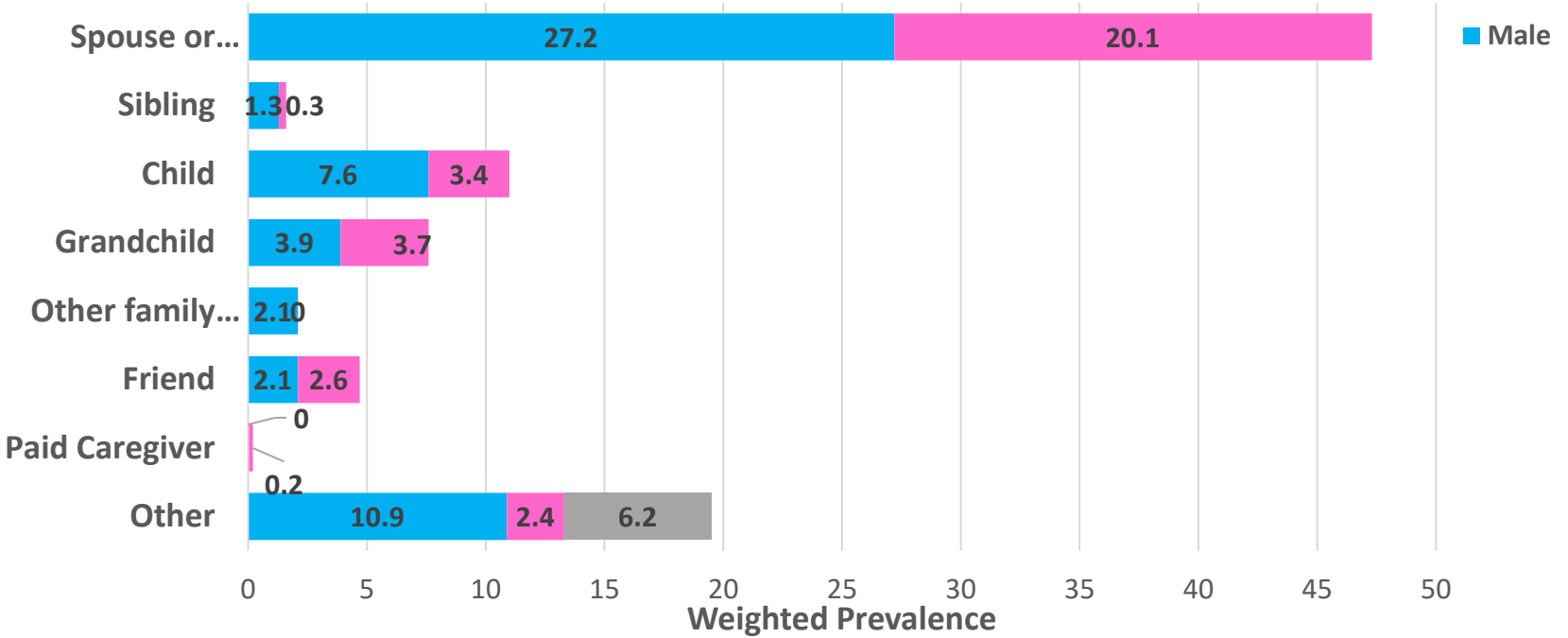
Physical Abuse: perpetrator relationship*



Respondents could choose more than one option (i.e. perpetrator type)

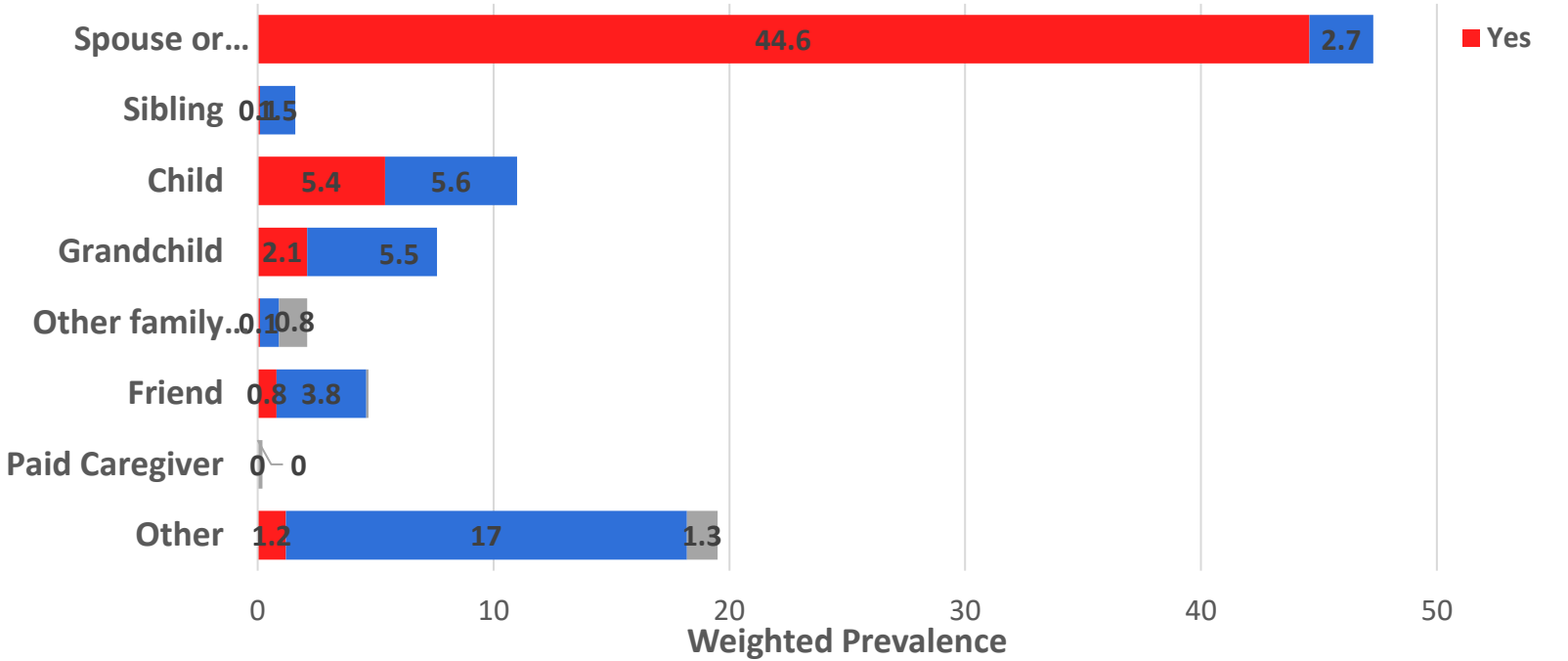
*** Among individuals who reported physical abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=59,482)**

Physical Abuse: perpetrator sex *



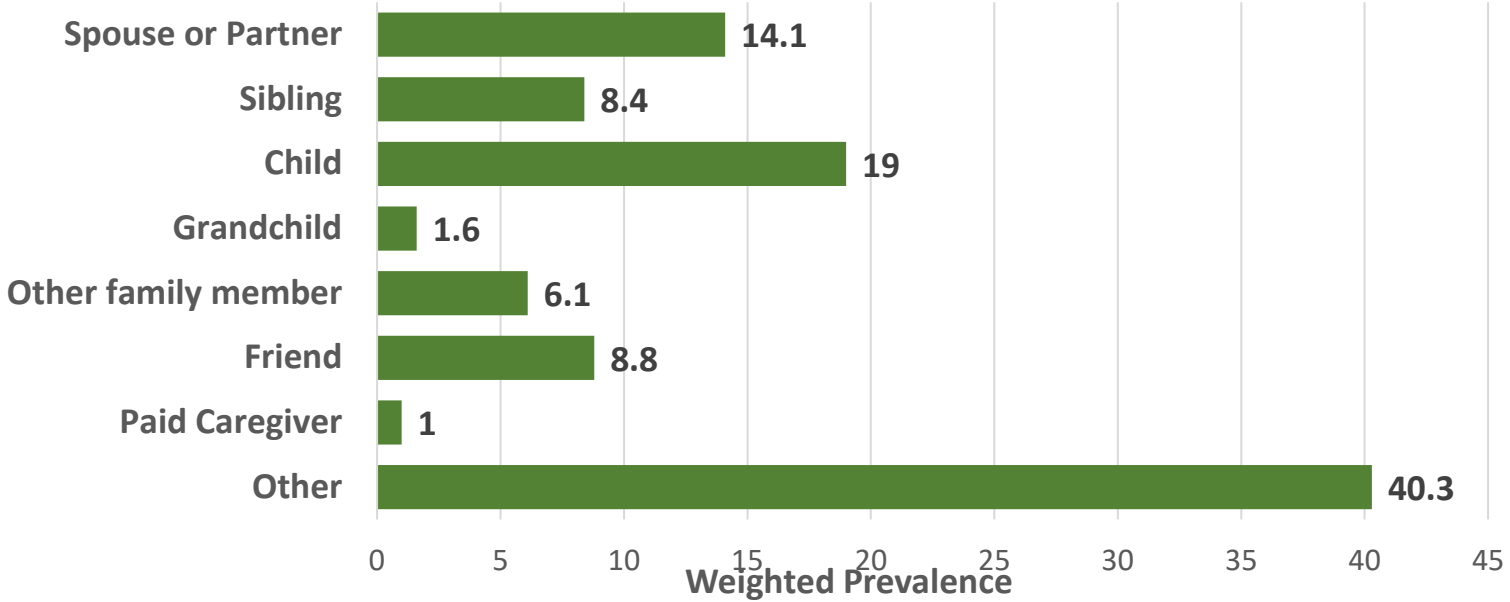
*Among individuals who reported physical abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=59,482)

Physical Abuse: perpetrator lived with the victim (Y/N)*



*Among individuals who reported physical abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=59,482)

Financial Abuse: perpetrator relationship*



Respondents could choose more than one option (i.e. perpetrator type)

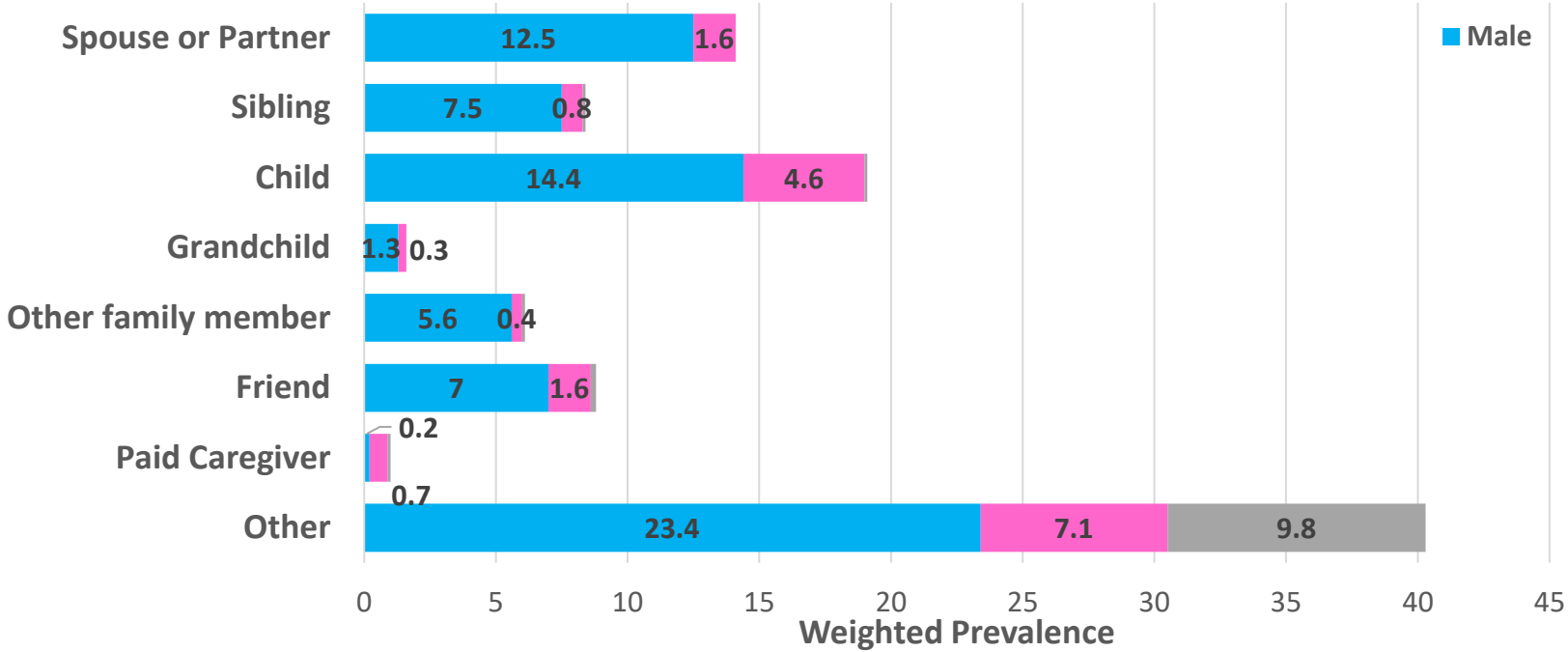
*** Among individuals who reported financial abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=65,575)**

What do we know about “other” perpetrators?

Open text response to Q1-Took money, possessions or property Q2- Made you give money, possessions or property:

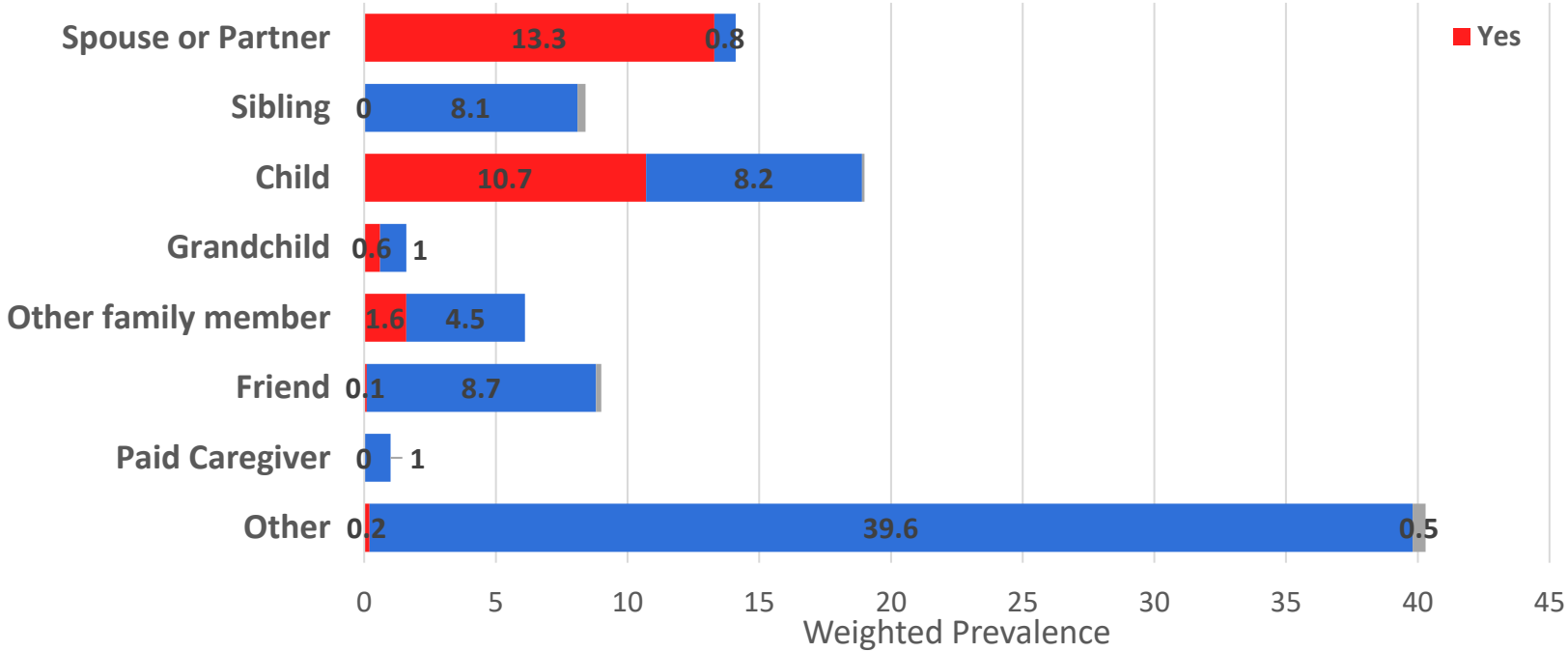
- furnace/hot water heater rental company kept taking out money even after she moved.
- a robber broke into our home
- Acquaintance
- Apartment superintendents, one male one female
- Ex-spouse & lawyers; lawyer
- Adopted child, aunt, brother
- Guy from street, guy from bar, panhandler
- Tenant
- Neighbour
- Work colleague
- Stranger; stranger pretending to be ministry of transport
- Bank; CRA, taxation - government
- False advertising on internet, internet scam, someone met on internet, telemarketer, spam or telephone, fraud online

Financial Abuse: perpetrator's sex *



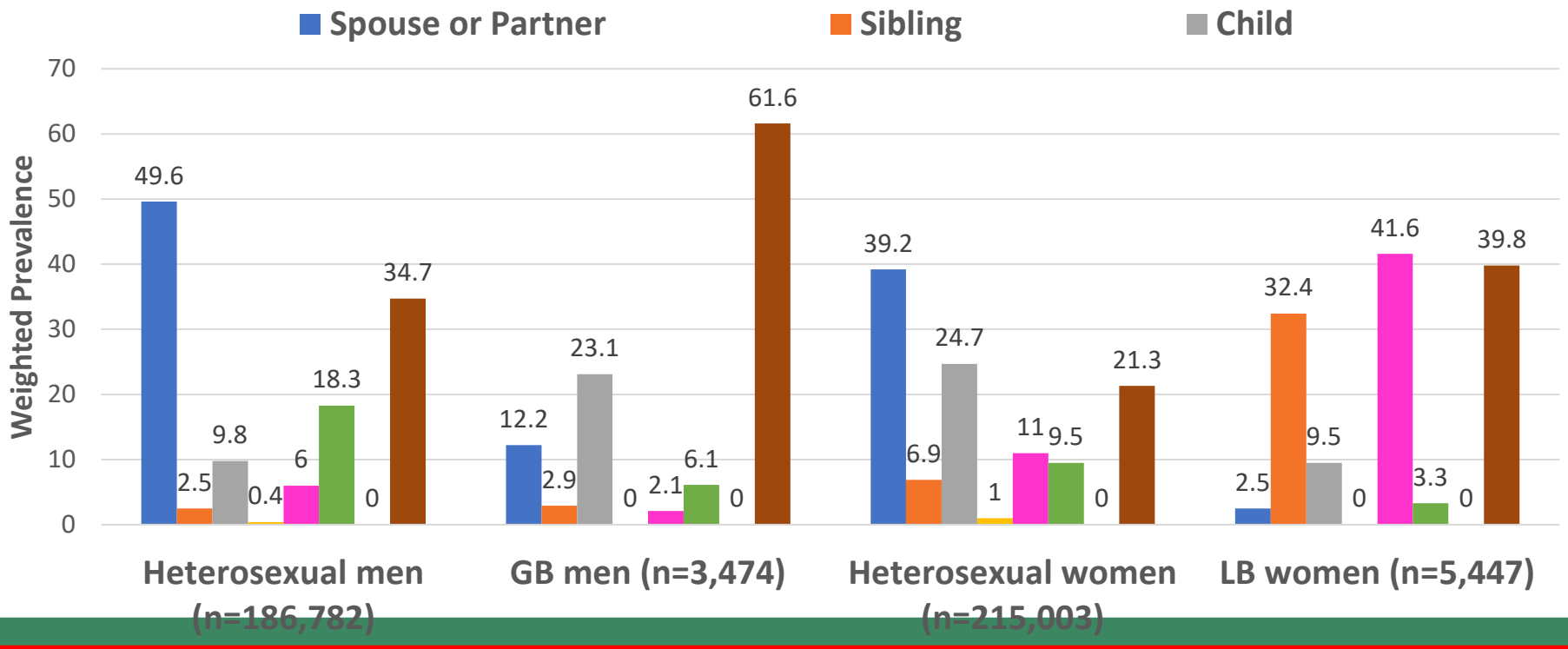
*** Among individuals who reported financial abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=65,575)**

Financial Abuse: perpetrator lived with the victim (Y/N)*



*** Among individuals who reported financial abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=65,575)**

Psychological abuse: perpetrator relationship by SOGI of the survivor



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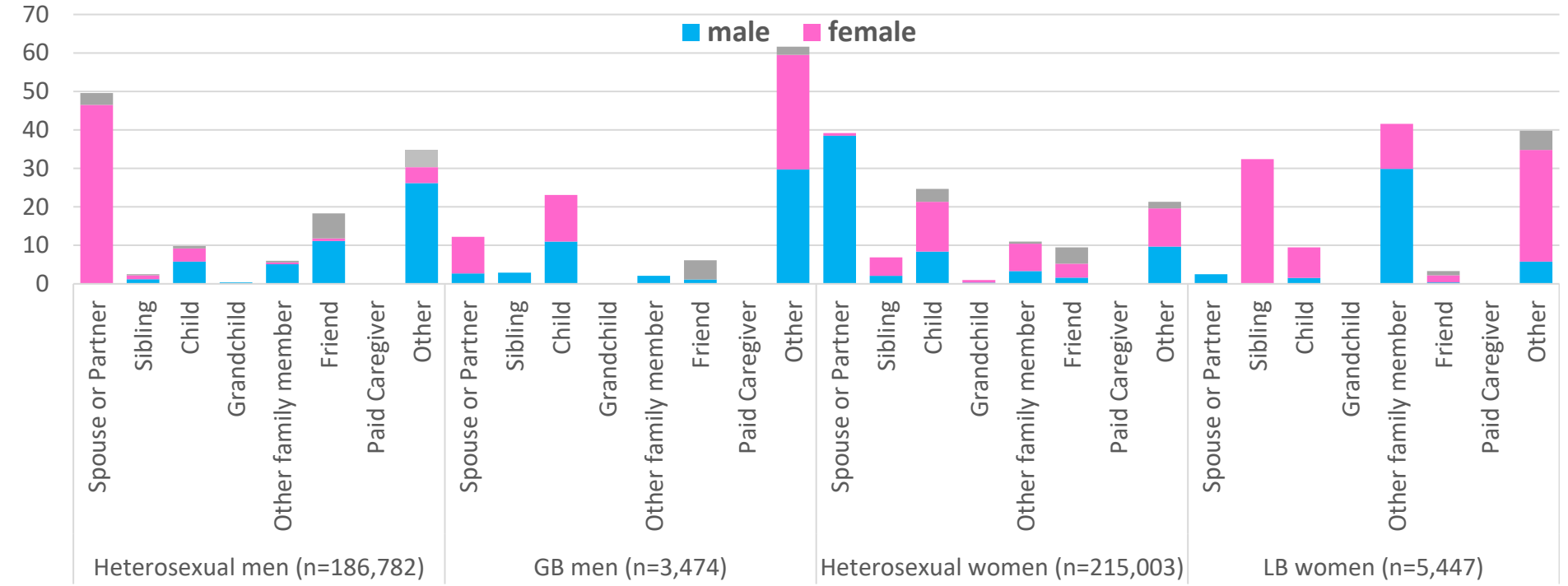
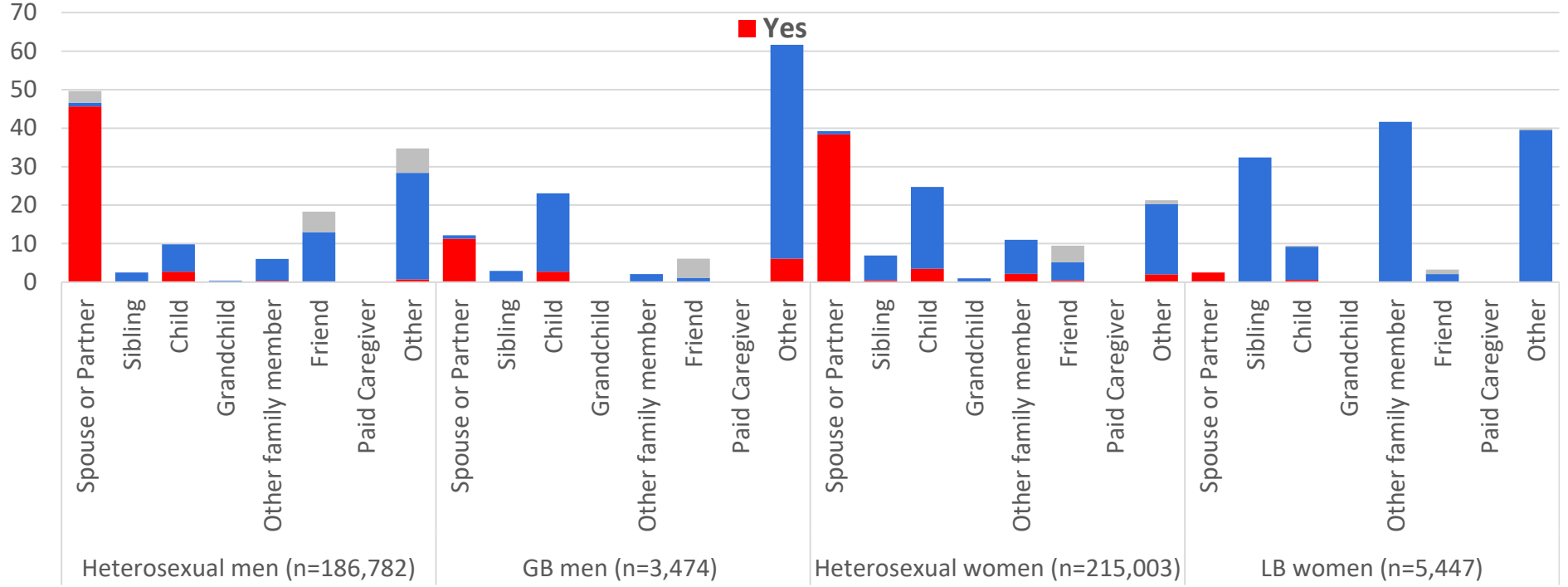
Psychological abuse: perpetrator sex by SOGI of survivor



*** Among individuals who reported psychological abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=411,526)**

Psychological abuse: perpetrator lived with the victim (Y/N) by SOGI of the survivor



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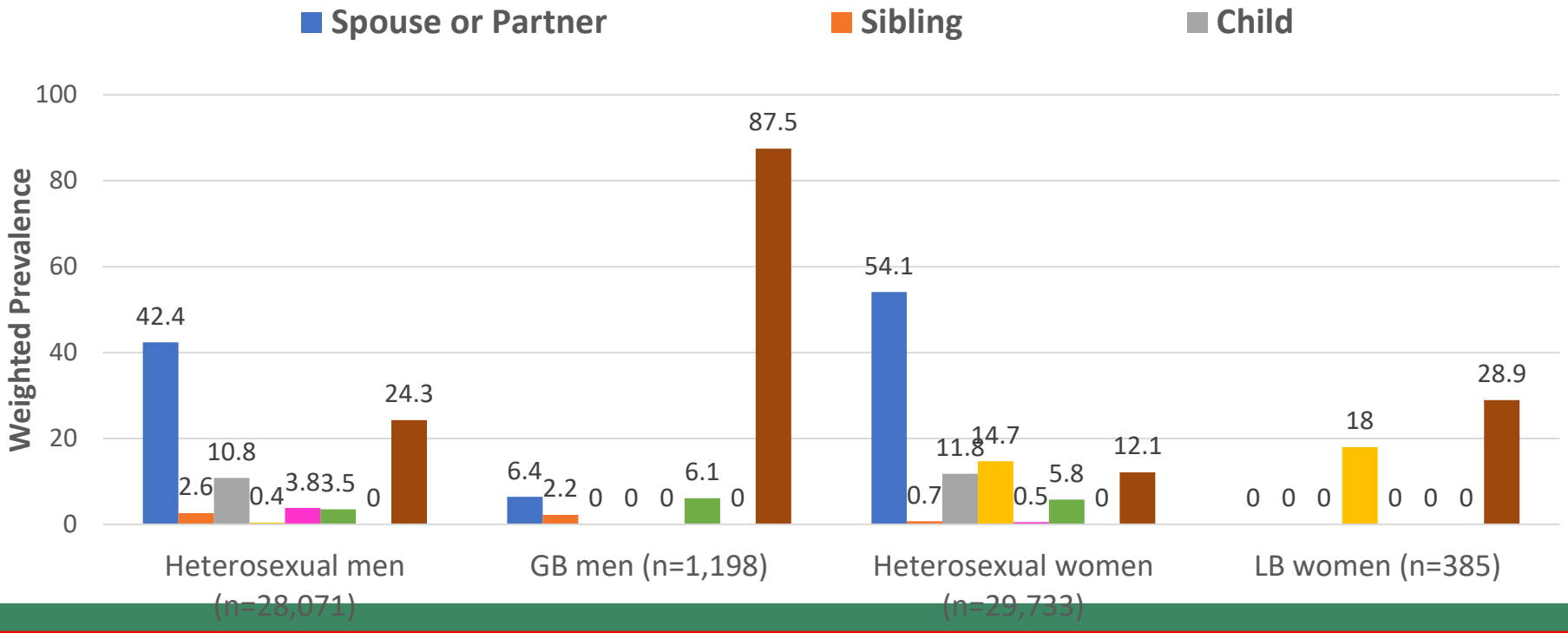

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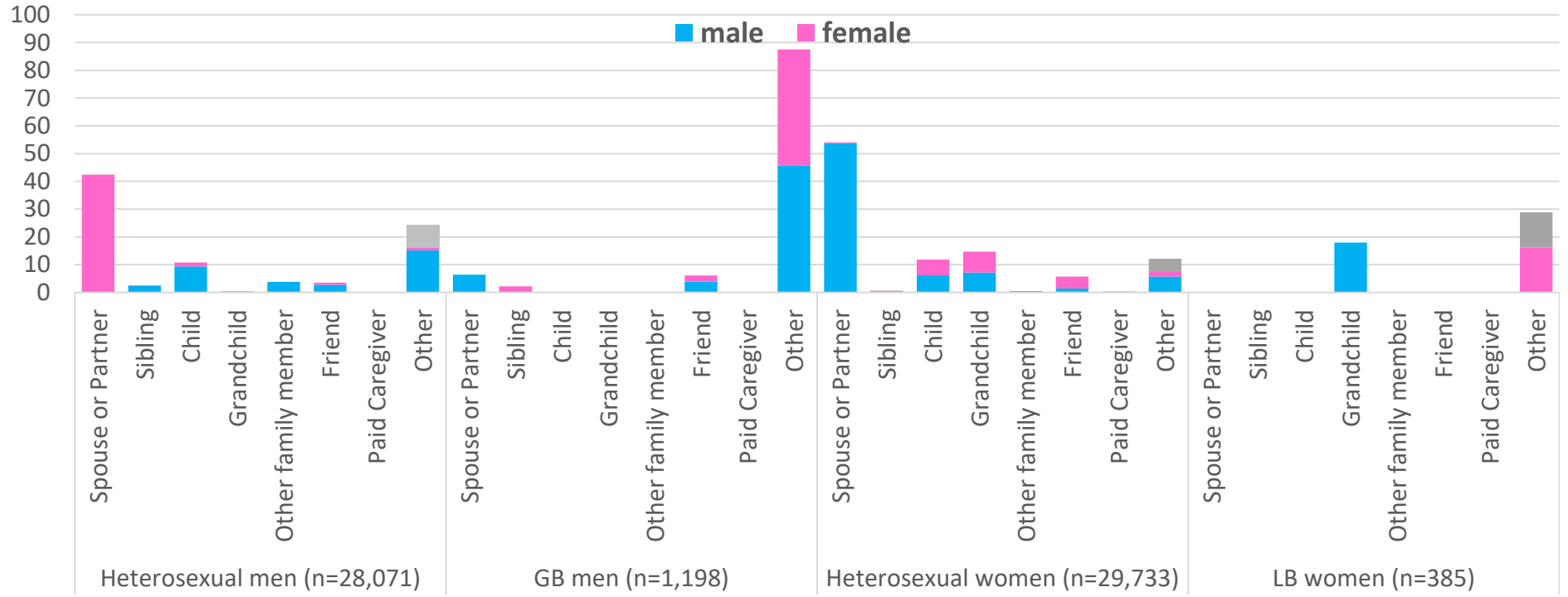
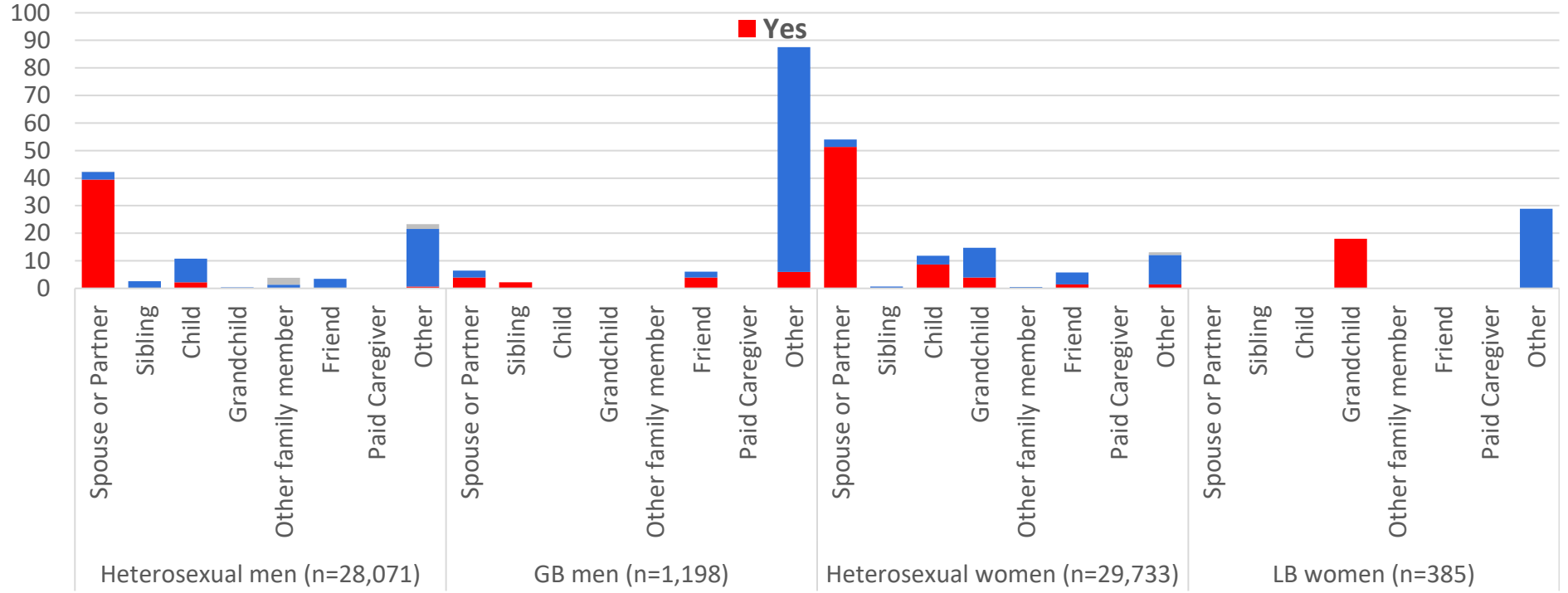


*** Among individuals who reported physical abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=59,482)**

Physical abuse: perpetrator lived with the victim by gender-sexual orientation of the victim



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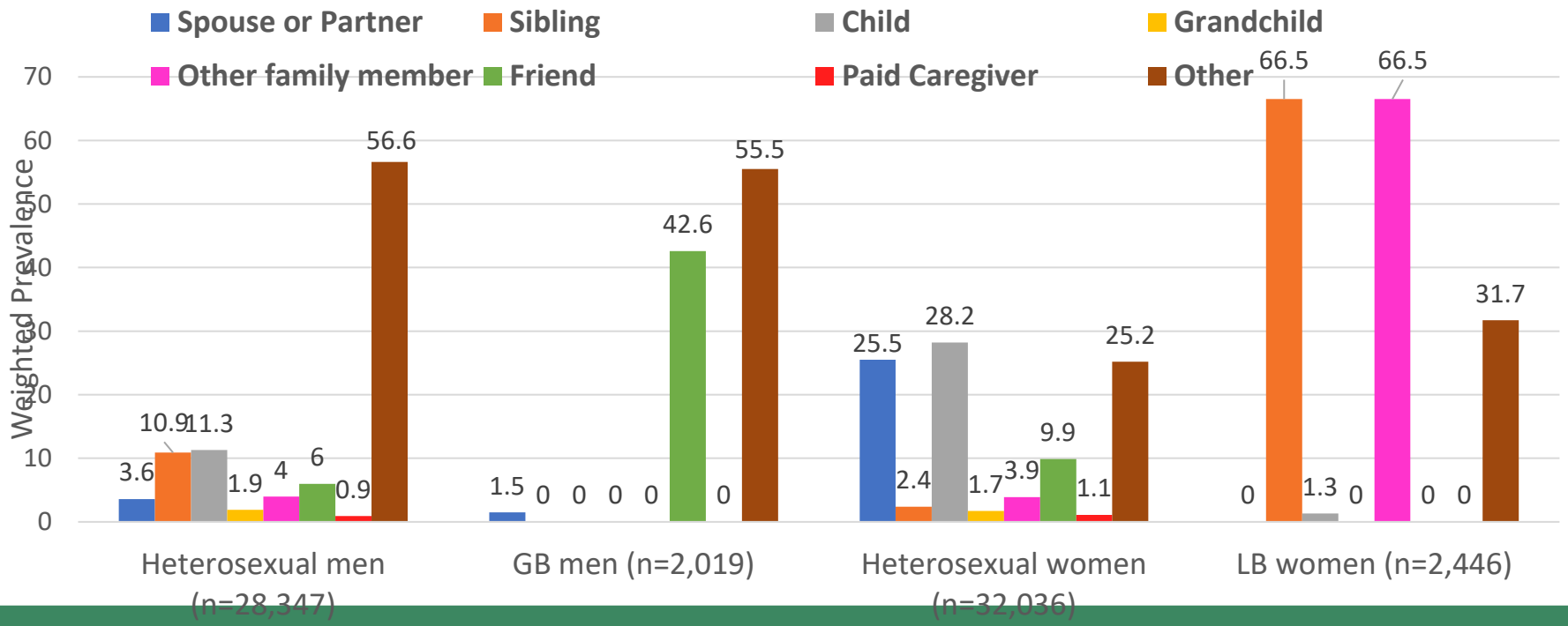

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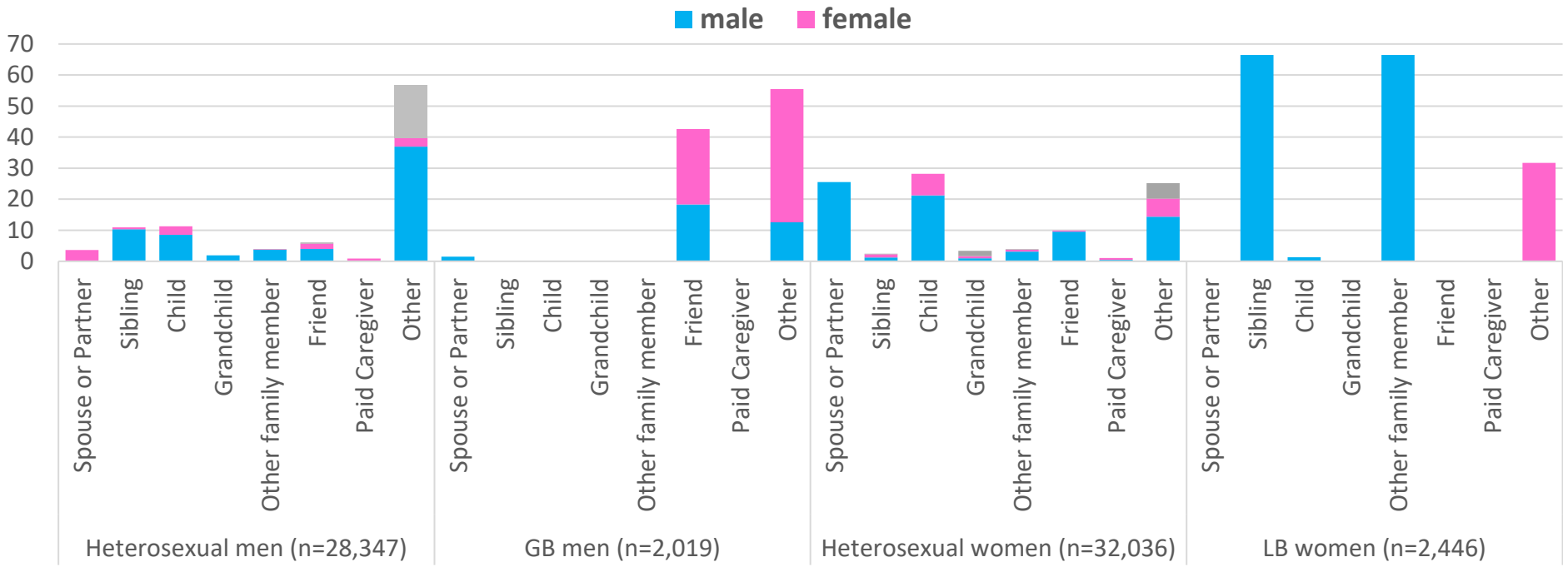
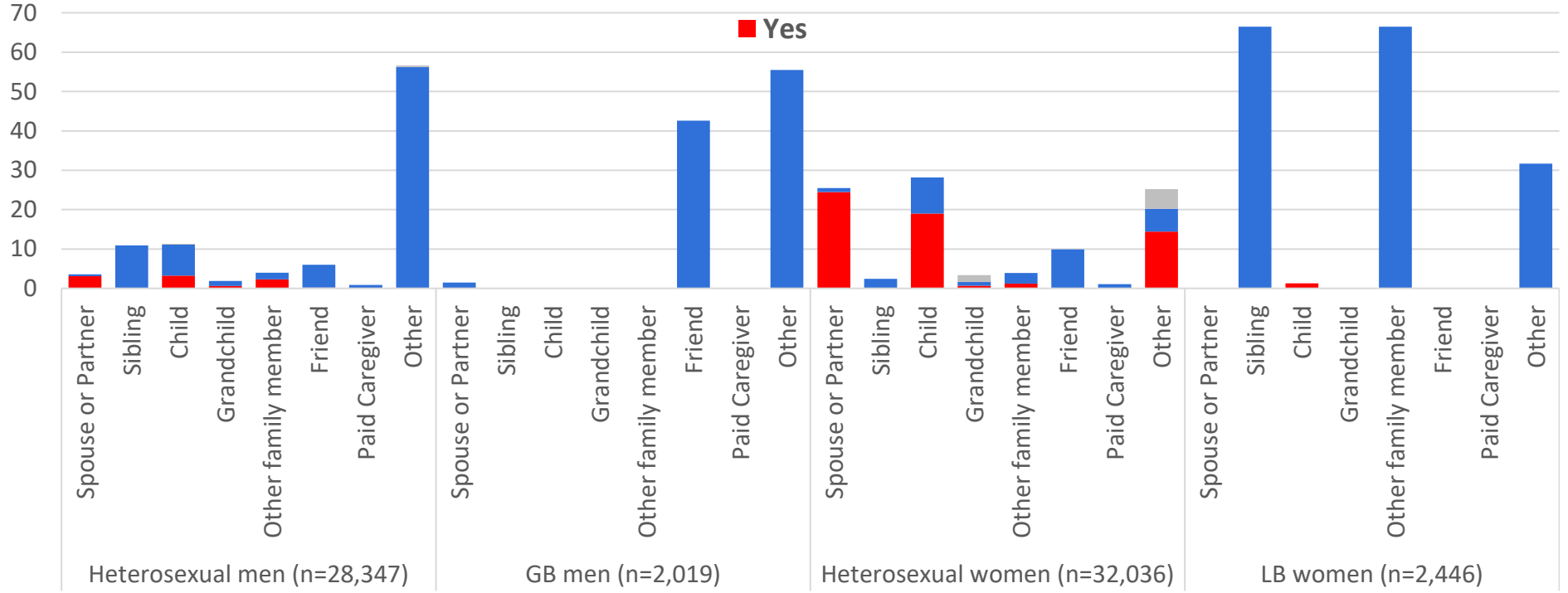
Financial Abuse: perpetrator sex by SOGI of survivor



*** Among individuals who reported financial abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=65,575)**

Financial Abuse: perpetrator lived with the victim (Y/N) by SOGI of survivor



*** Among individuals who reported financial abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=65,575)**

Summary

- Psychological abuse was most common, experienced by 8.8% of the sample; rate for physical and financial was 1.3%
- L/B women were more likely than individuals in the other SOGI groups to have experienced psychological and financial abuse; G/B men were most likely to have experienced physical abuse.
- Perpetrator relationship:
  - psychological and physical abuse: most commonly spouse/partner, followed by child, and friend.
  - financial abuse: most commonly “other”

Summary

- Psychological and physical abuse: most commonly perpetrated by someone who lived with the victim.
- Financial abuse: most commonly perpetrator was a male who did not live with the victims.
- Patterns differed among SOGI groups

THE WAY FORWARD…

Photo by Coombesy from Pixabay

RECOGNIZE THAT RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTORS DIFFER FOR DIFFERENT LIVING ARRANGEMENTS AND ABUSE TYPES AS WELL AS BY SOGI

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- "Safer at Home" was a slogan used to promote staying at home as a means of curbing the spread of COVID-19.
- But the potential for violence spikes when people spend 24/7 isolated at home with their abuser(s).
  - In the case of an older adult, the abuser can be a spouse or same sex partner, child, other relative or, a hired/paid or even a volunteer caregiver.
- Living alone may be a protective factor for physical abuse, but a risk factor for financial abuse, fraud and scams.
- Researchers' and lay persons' definition of abuse vary

Ageism, discrimination or abuse?

- “A family doctor dismissed me as a patient (I didn’t know that was even a possible thing). And a lab tech who called me ‘childish’ repeatedly because I hadn’t signed in on my cell phone. Both hurt a lot. I am still struggling with the doc dismissal in a situation of shortage of GPs” (age 65+ female).

Limitations

- Elder abuse data collection is not performed every cycle of the study- it was first done during follow-up 1, was repeated in follow-up 3 (~6-year interval between data points)
- Elder abuse data collected only captures experiences over “the past 12 months”, no conclusions can be drawn about prior abuse history

Limitations

- This study does not address mitigating and aggravating factors for abuse beyond relationship and residential location (perpetrator living with victim Y/N). Factors such as age, health status, social support, will be examined in the next set of studies we conduct.
- Examination of open text responses suggests that what some respondents considered abuse by “others” does not meet the usual criterion (e.g. Canada Revenue Agency as perpetrator of financial abuse)

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For further information about the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA), please visit:
https://www.clsa-elcv.ca/

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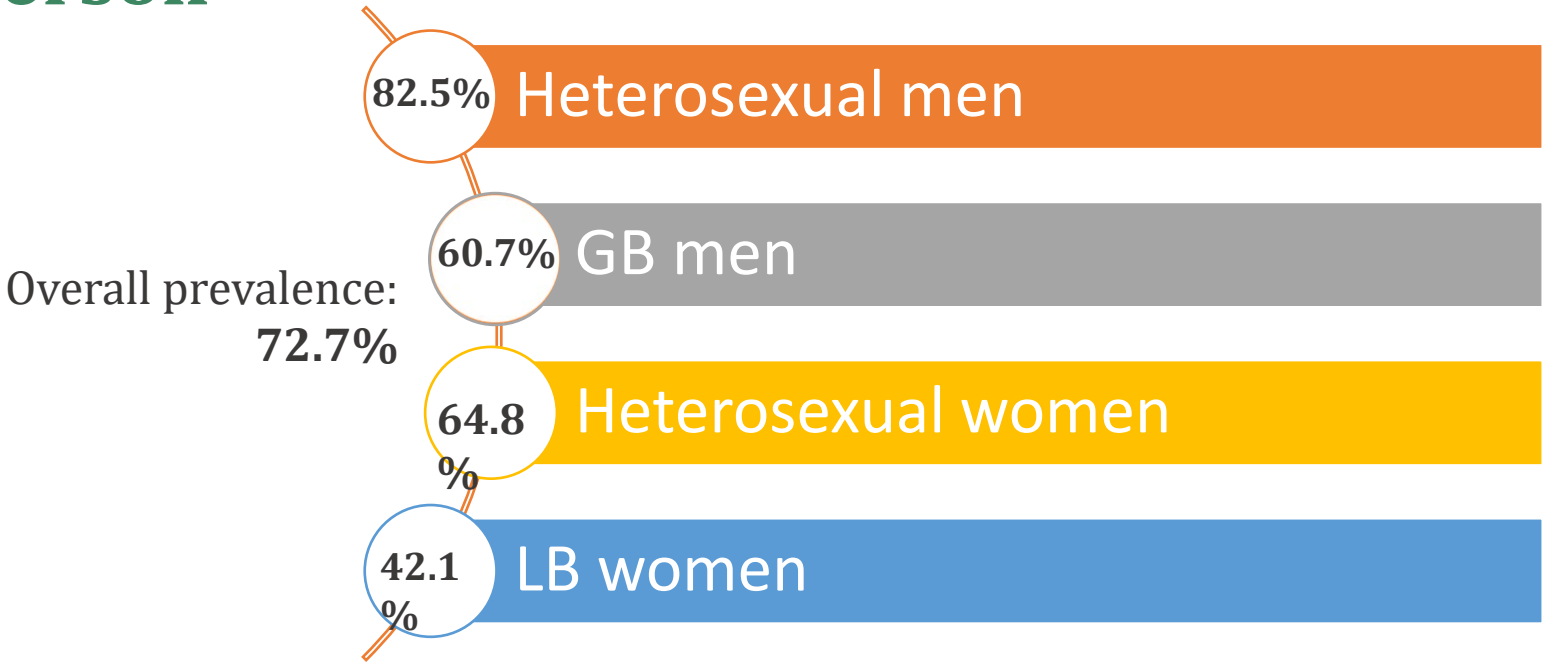
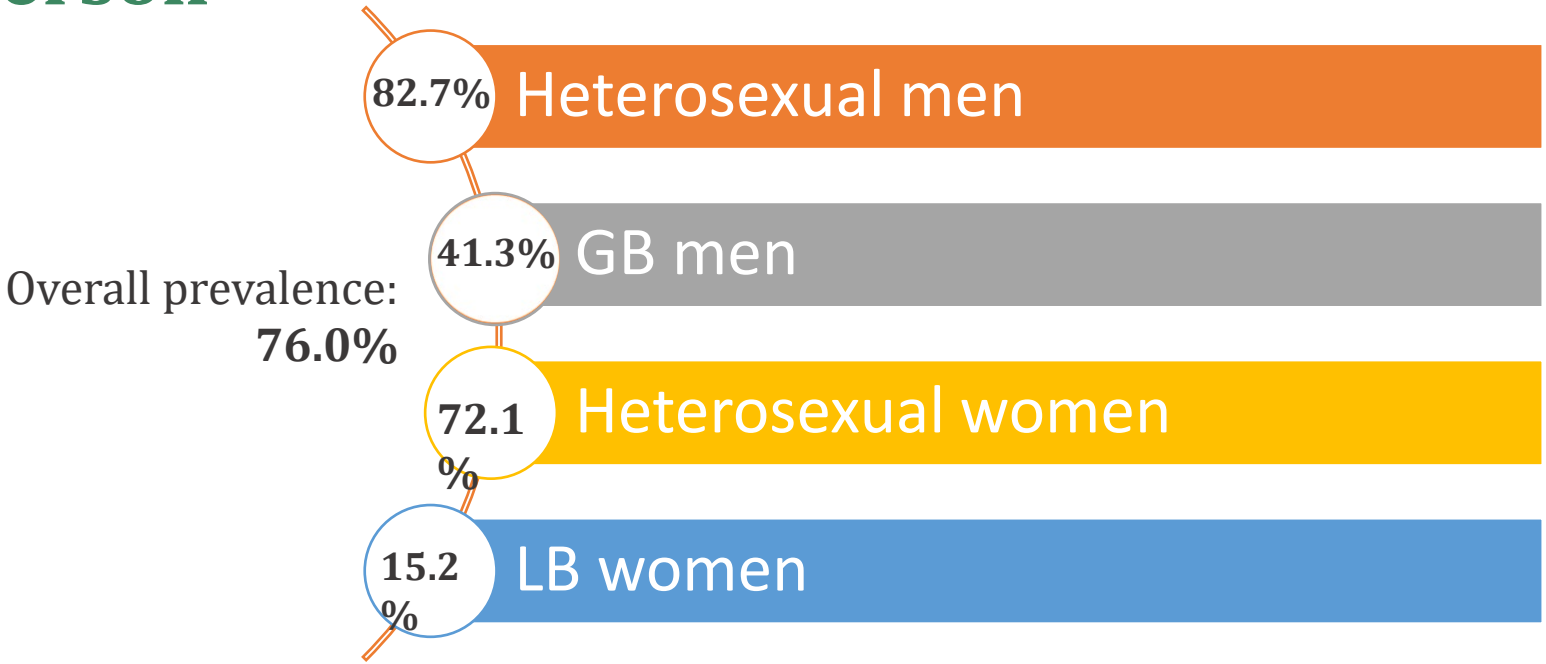
Prevalence of living with at least one person*



*** Among all the included study sample (Weighted sample n=4,681,075)**

Prevalence of living with at least one person*



*** Among the individuals experiencing at least one type of elder abuse (Weighted sample n=468,540)**