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National Elder Mistreatment Study: Selected Findings

Major Take Home Points from this COMMUNITY sample:

- Elder Mistreatment happens more than we like to admit: aggregate 1-yr prevalence of emotional, physical, and sexual mistreatment is 6.5%, higher if you add neglect.

- A large proportion of emotional, physical and sexual violence against elders is perpetrated by spouses: that is, it is domestic violence.

- Social Support is protective against mistreatment (and psychopathology given trauma) and speaks to the need for community reconnection (probably through transportation efforts) as preventive interventions.
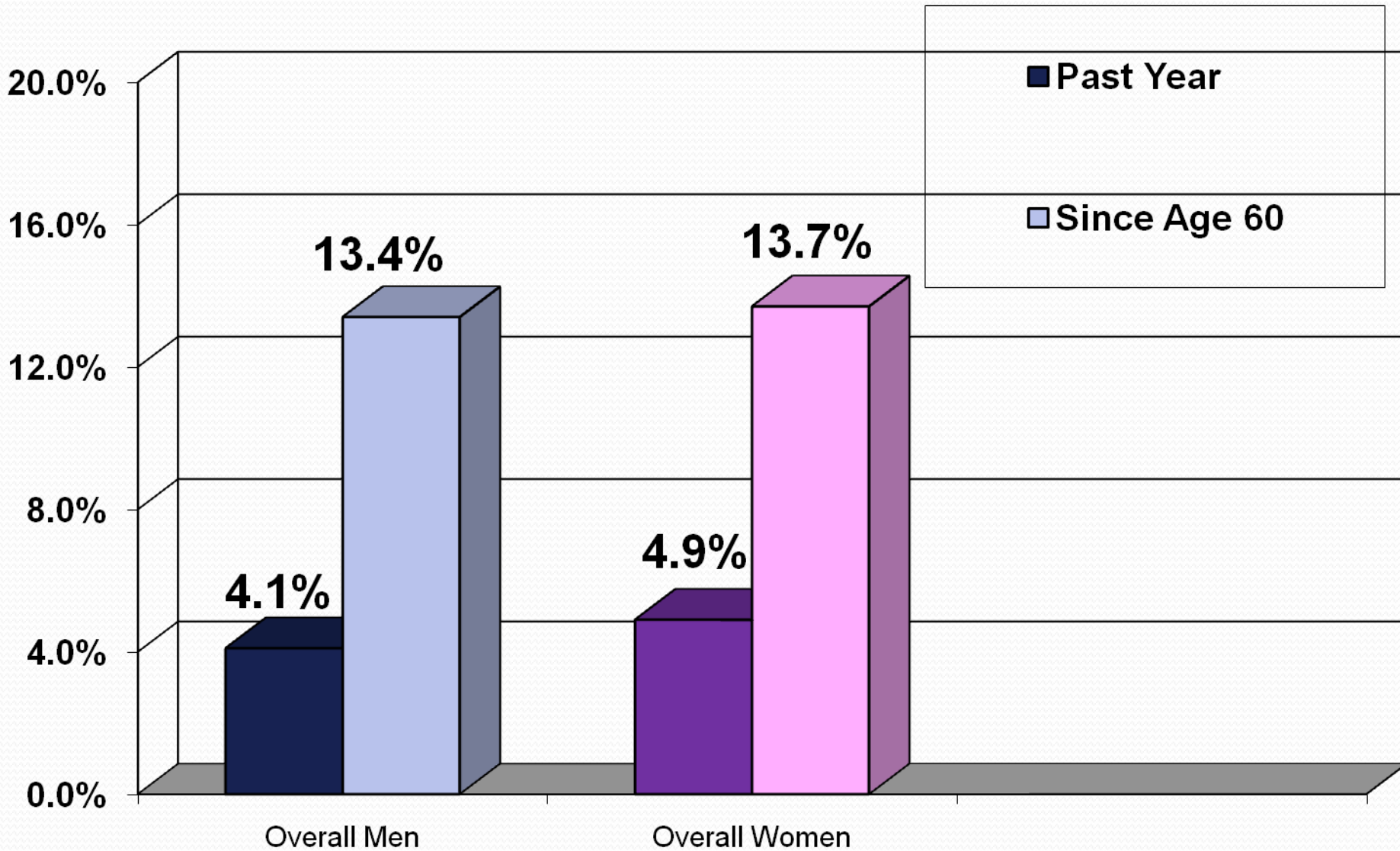
Methodology Overview

➤ Random Digit Dialing methodology was used to derive a representative national (continental US) sample of 5,777 community residing older adults

➤ Computer Assisted Interviewing procedures were used to standardize assessments and assured only relevant questions were asked

➤ Participants were interviewed via telephone in English or Spanish

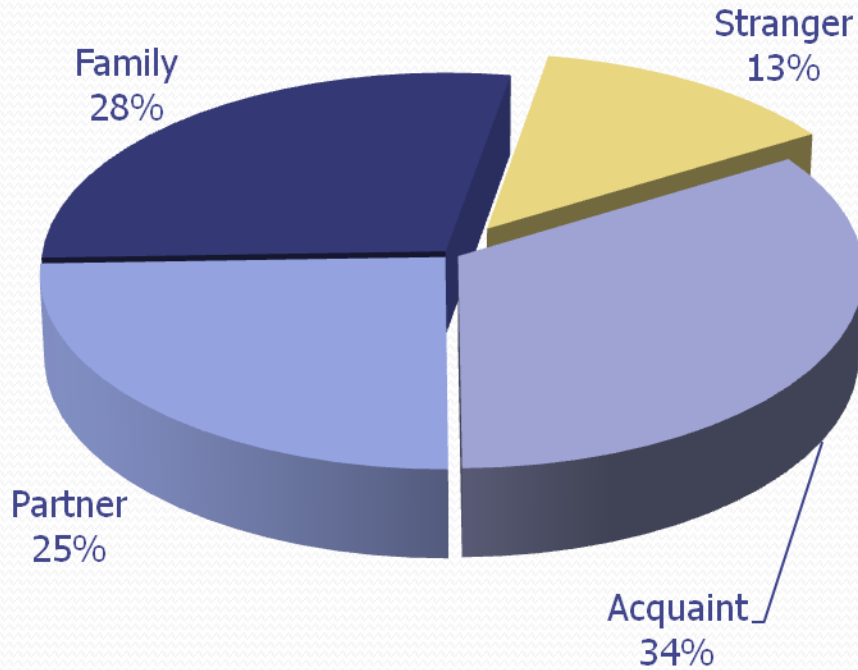➤ Cooperation rate was 69% for the sample.

Sample

- 5,777 adults age 60 and over
- 60.2% women / 39.8% men
- Average age 71.5 years (SD = 8.1), a range of 60 to 97 years.
- 57% married or cohabitating, 12% separated or divorced, 25% were widowed, and 5% never married
- 85% White, 7% Black, 2% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1% Asian, 0.2% Pacific Islander
- 4.3% of Hispanic or Latino origin.
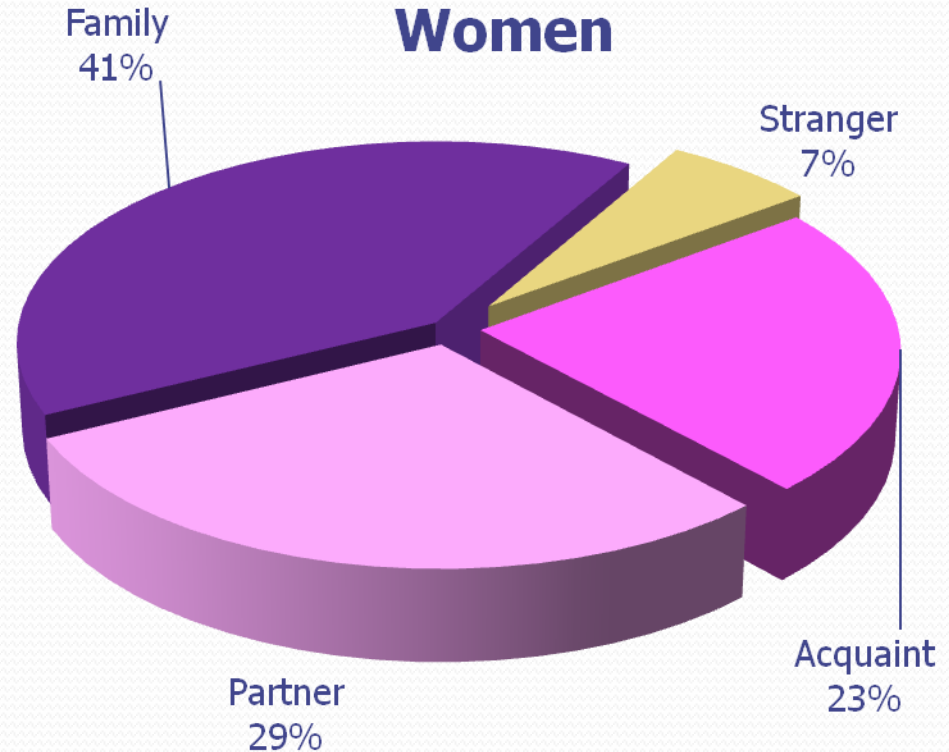
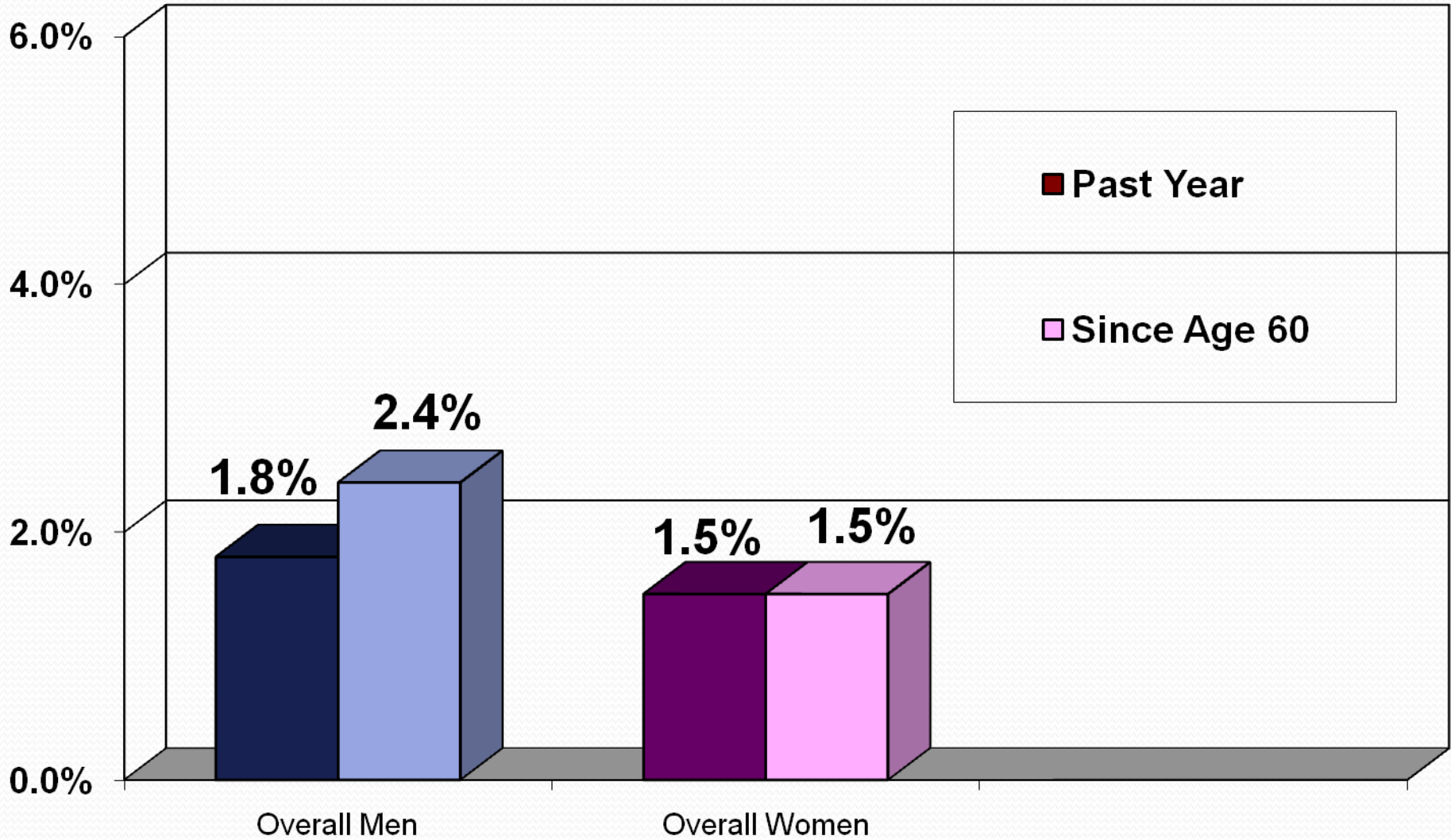# Emotional Mistreatment by Gender

Emotional Mistreatment Perps

Men

- Family 28%
- Stranger 13%
- Acquaint 34%
- Partner 25%

Women

- Family 41%
- Stranger 7%
- Acquaint 23%
- Partner 29%

Emotional Mistreatment: Significant Risk factors (logistic regression odds ratio results in red)
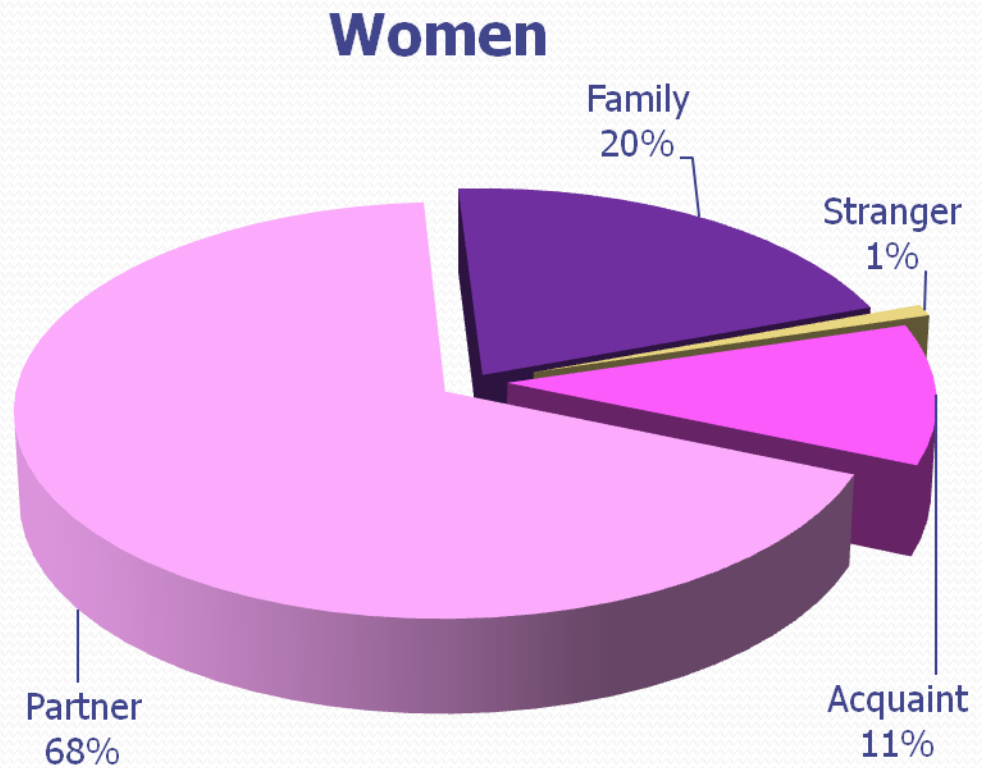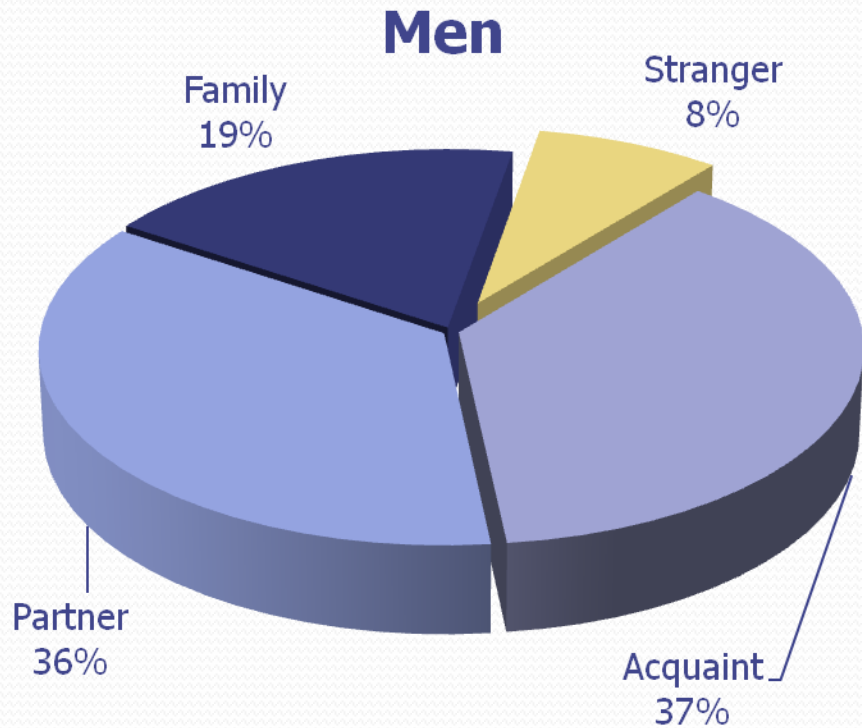
- Lower Age (OR = 3.2)
- Being Employed (OR = 1.8)
- Poor Self-Rated Health (ns)
- Prior Traumatic Event (OR = 2.3)
- Low Social Support (OR = 3.2)
- Needing ADL Assistance (OR = 1.8)
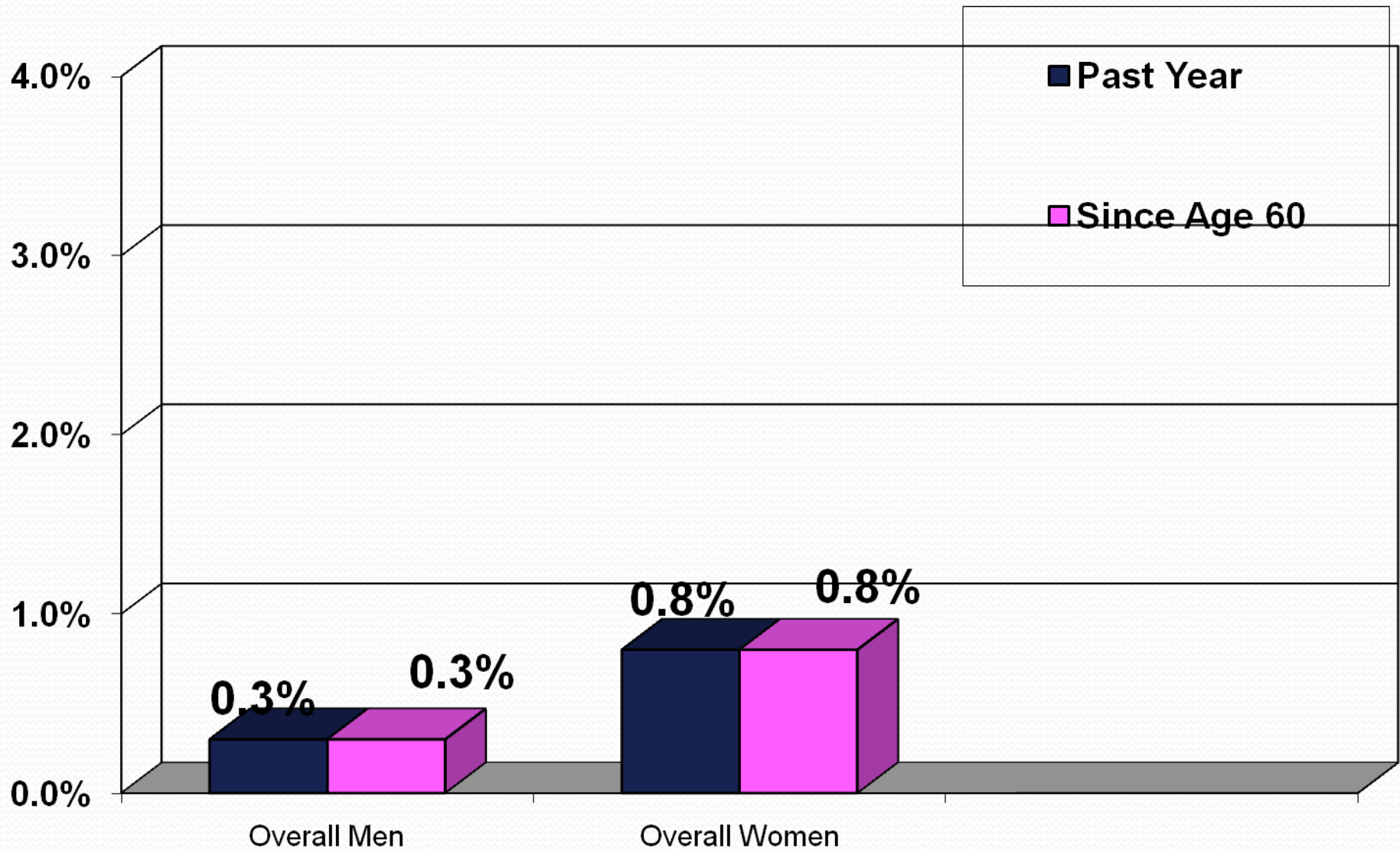
Physical Mistreatment by Gender

Physical Mistreatment Perps

Physical Mistreatment: Significant Risk factors (logistic regression results highlighted in red)
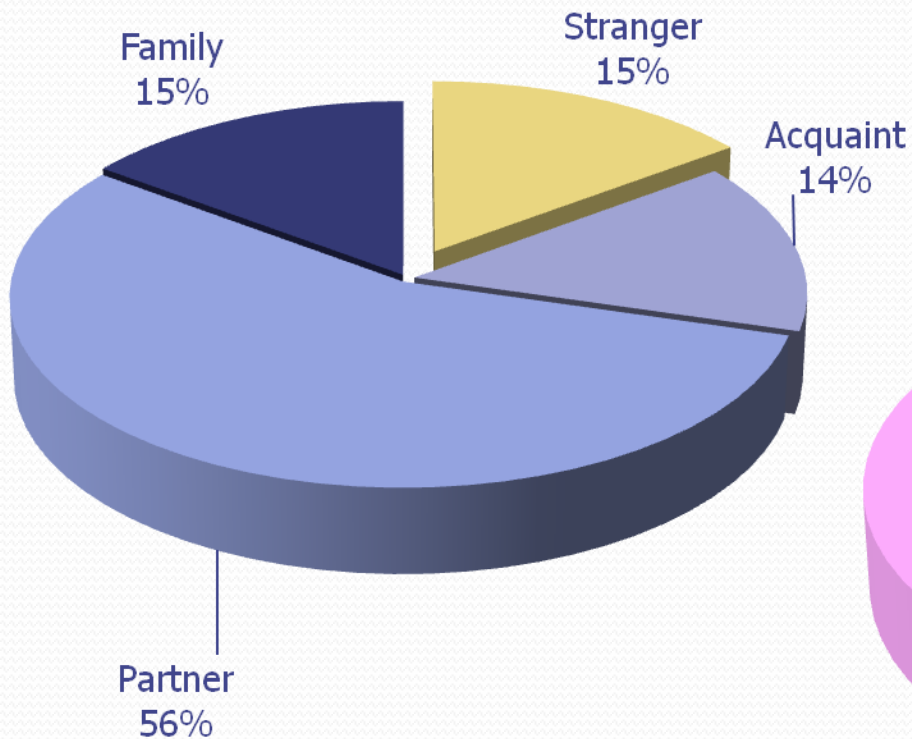
- Lower Age (OR = 4.1)
- Non-White Racial Status
- Lower Income
- Poor Self-Rated Health
- Prior Traumatic Event
- Low Social Support (OR = 3.0)

Sexual Mistreatment by Gender (sig)
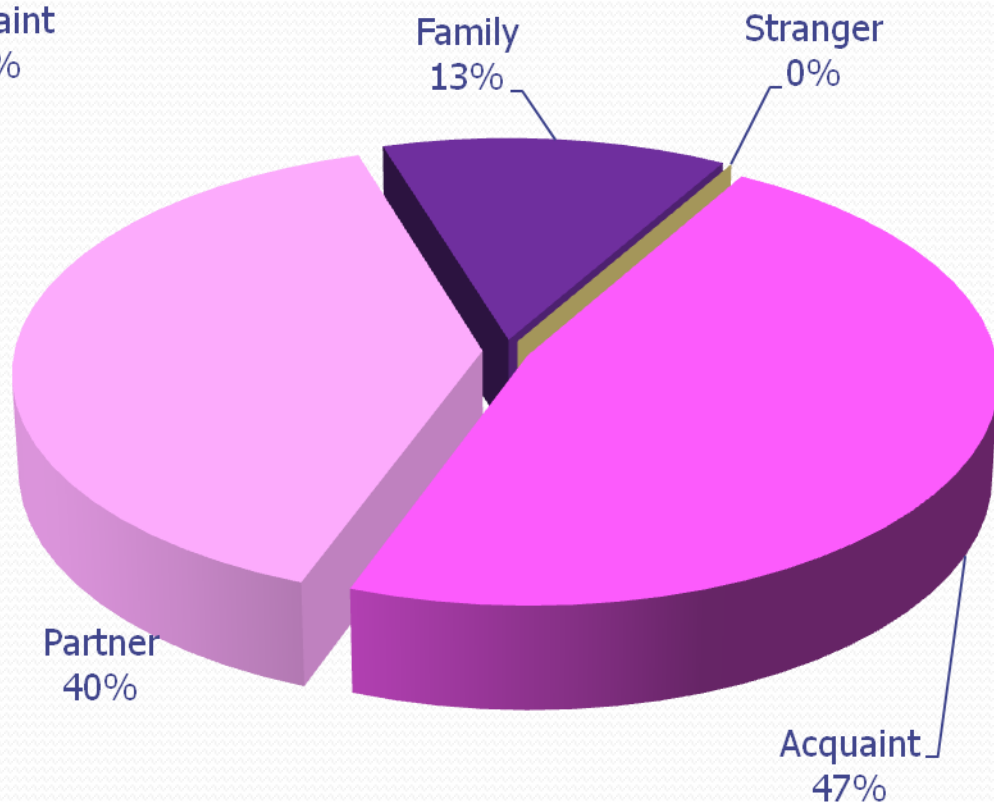
Sexual Mistreatment Perps. Note: N too small to be reliable

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

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

Overall Conclusions

- 1 in 17 community-residing older adults reported experiencing elder mistreatment in the past year, and this number climbs to 1 in 10 if neglect is considered alongside emotional, physical, and sexual mistreatment.

- Most of this is perpetrated by family members, and often spouses (particularly for women…68% physical violence by 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.**

Conclusions continued

- Prior studies demonstrate that transportation is the single biggest issue facing older adults who are trying to engage with their community. It may, therefore, be the case that lack of such transportation represents a very modifiable risk factor for elder mistreatment.

- An alternative tack would be to attempt to change societal acceptance of elder mistreatment, such as has been accomplished somewhat successfully in child abuse and domestic violence realms.

- However, such movement of social mores takes years, if not decades, and more rapid, feasible, and effective steps should be taken, based on the aforementioned data and study findings, in the short term.