



# **Prevalence and Perpetrators of Elder Abuse in Canada: Does victim sexual orientation matter?**

**Findings from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA)**

**CLSA webinar presentation by Dr Gloria Gutman, June 12, 2024**

# Research Team:

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# 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 & Tatar, 2005; Boldy, Horner, Crouchley et al, 2005; Vida & Des Rosiers, 2002

# Background

- 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 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.**

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)

1. Are prevalence rates for abuse types different among gender-sexual orientation groups?
2. Are perpetrator profiles different among abuse types?
3. Are perpetrator profiles different among gender-sexual orientation groups?

- We analyzed data from Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) participants aged 65 and over at follow-up 1 (n=23,466).
- 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.
- 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

- Completed by participants who were age 65 or over at follow-up 1 and adapted from work by the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE, 2016).
- The 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 then?

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 then?

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)

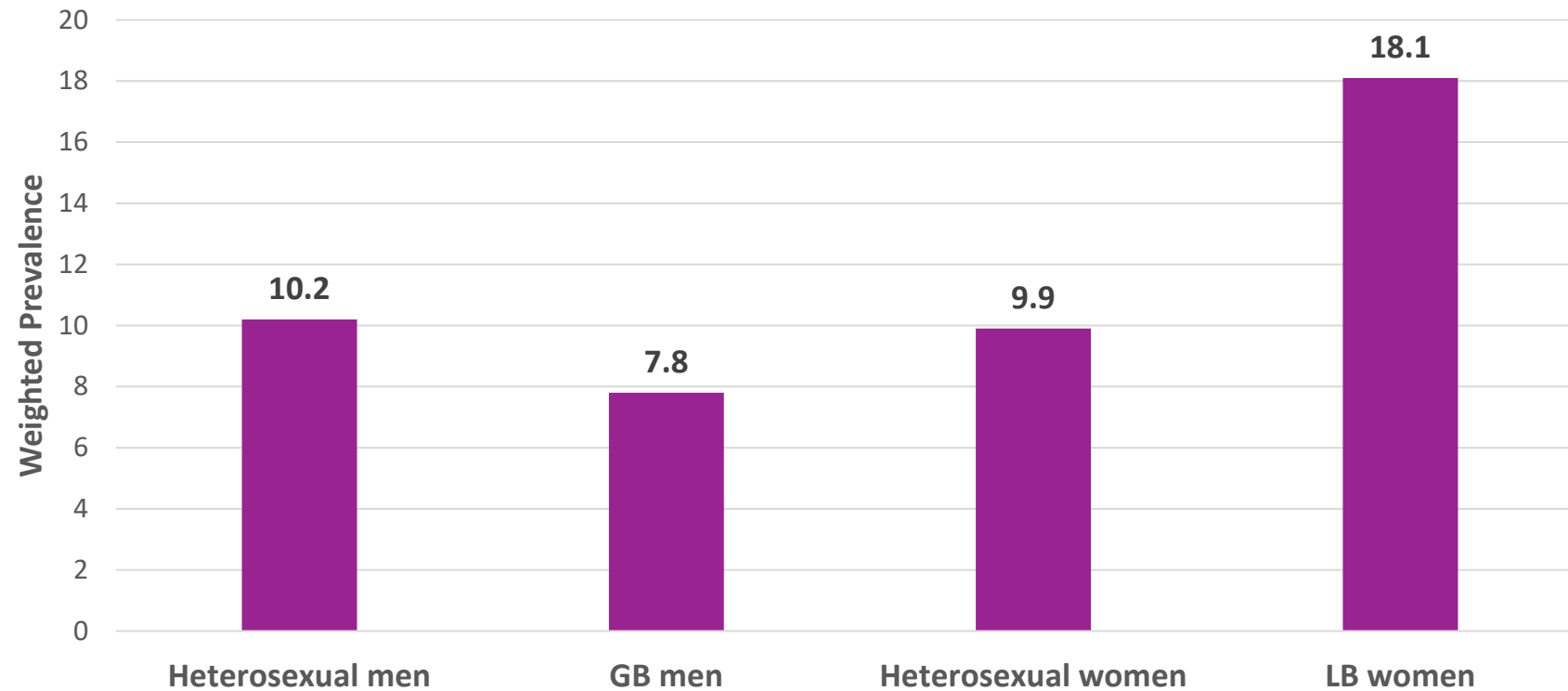
Over the past 12 months has anyone made you give them your money, possessions or property?  
How often did this happen over the last 12 months?  
Who did this?  
Was this person male or female?  
Did that person (or any of those persons) live with you then?

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 gender-sexual orientation

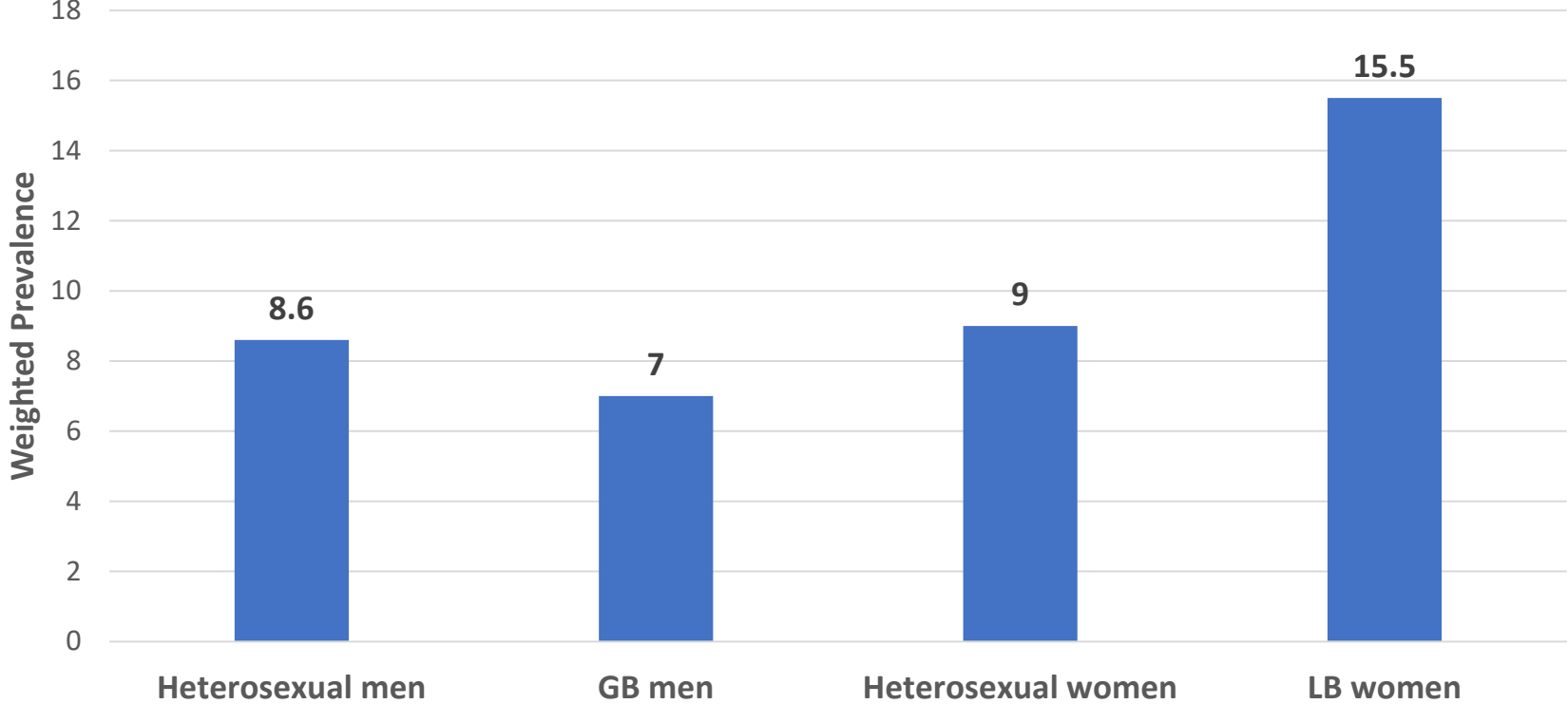
Overall prevalence: 10.0%



**P value=0.009**

# % Experiencing psychological abuse by gender-sexual orientation

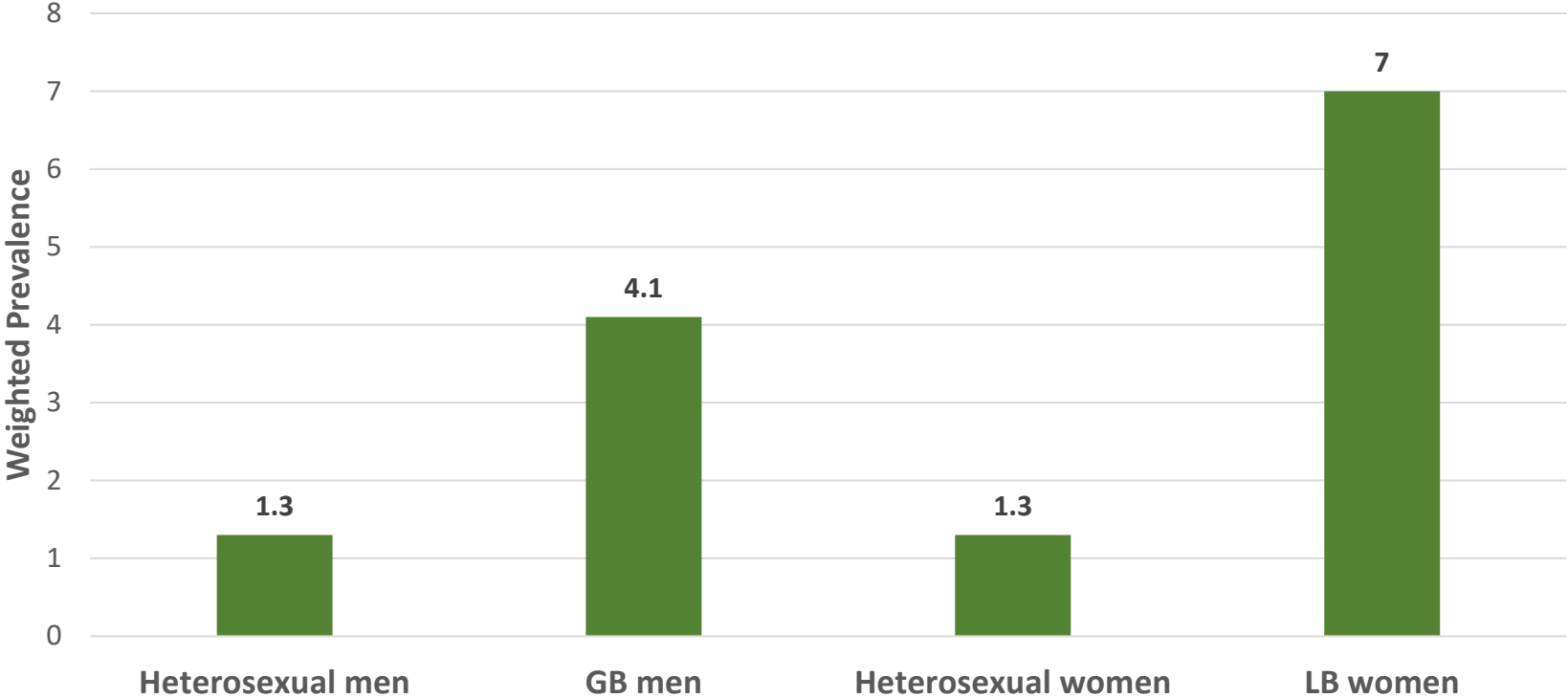
Overall prevalence: 8.8%



**P value=0.017**

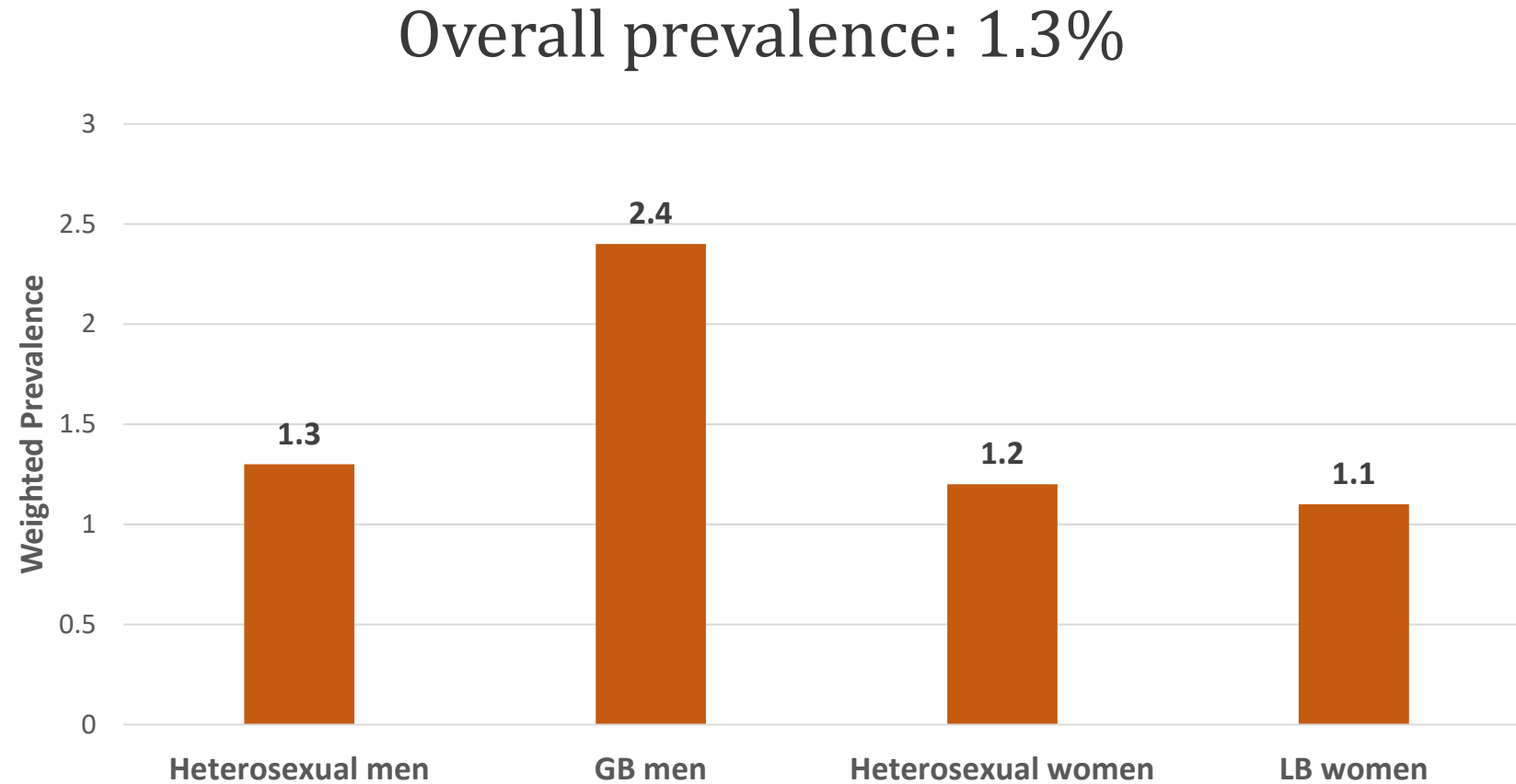
# % Experiencing financial abuse by gender-sexual orientation

Overall prevalence: 1.3%



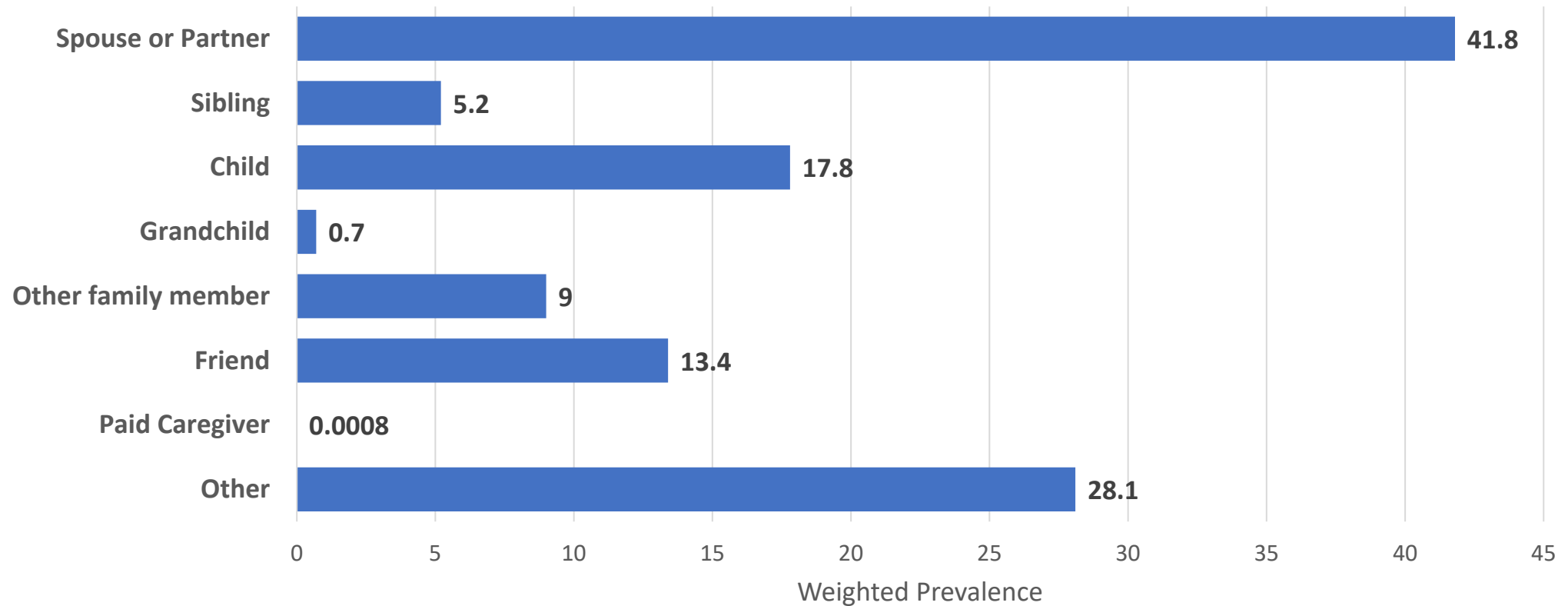
**P value < 0.001**

# % Experiencing physical abuse by gender-sexual orientation



P value=0.236

# Psychological abuse: perpetrator relationship\*

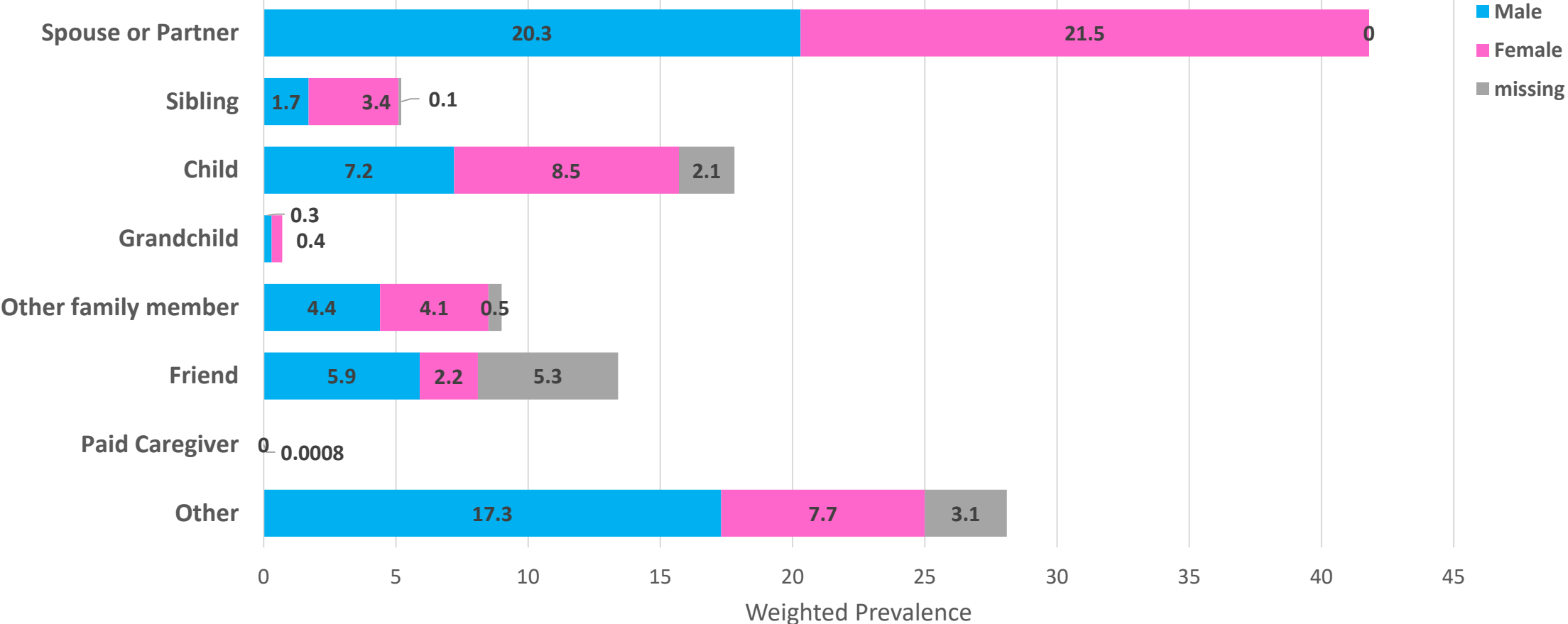


Respondents could choose more than one option (i.e. perpetrator type)

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

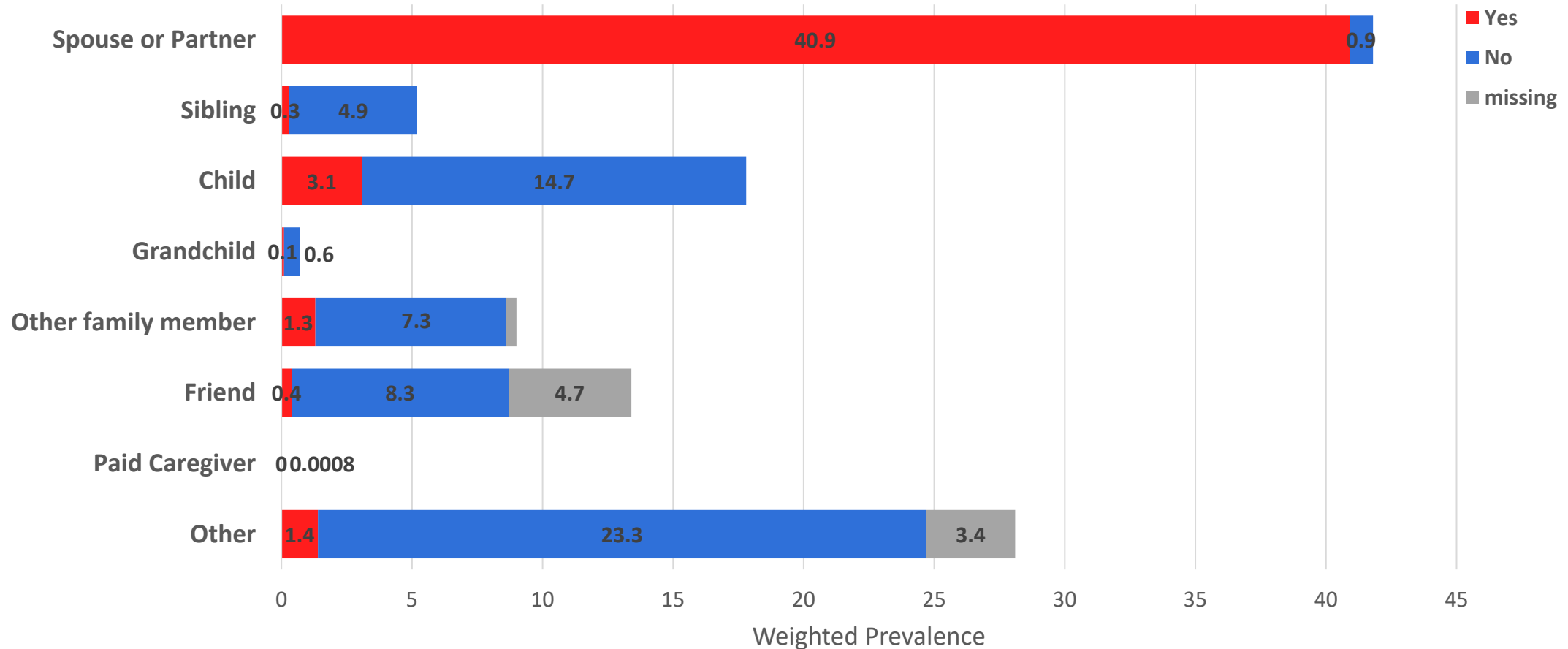


# Psychological Abuse: perpetrator sex \*



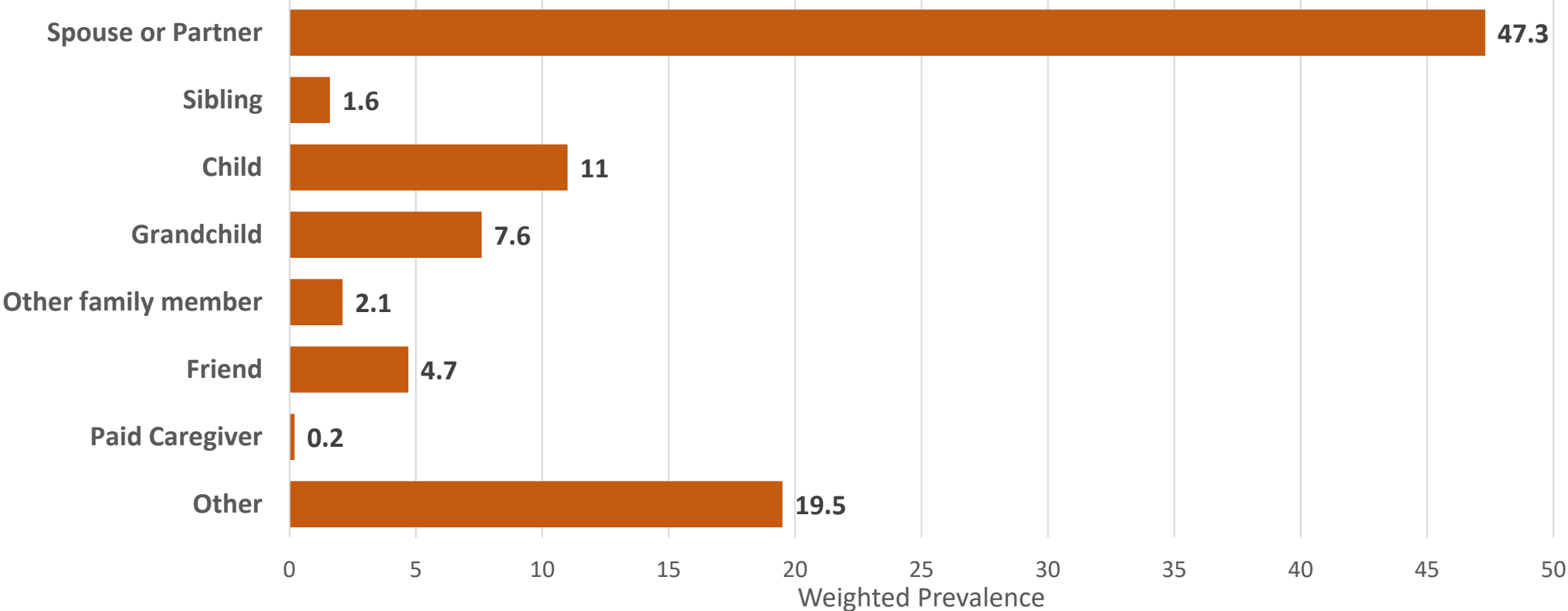
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# Psychological Abuse: perpetrator lived with the victim (Y/N)\*



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

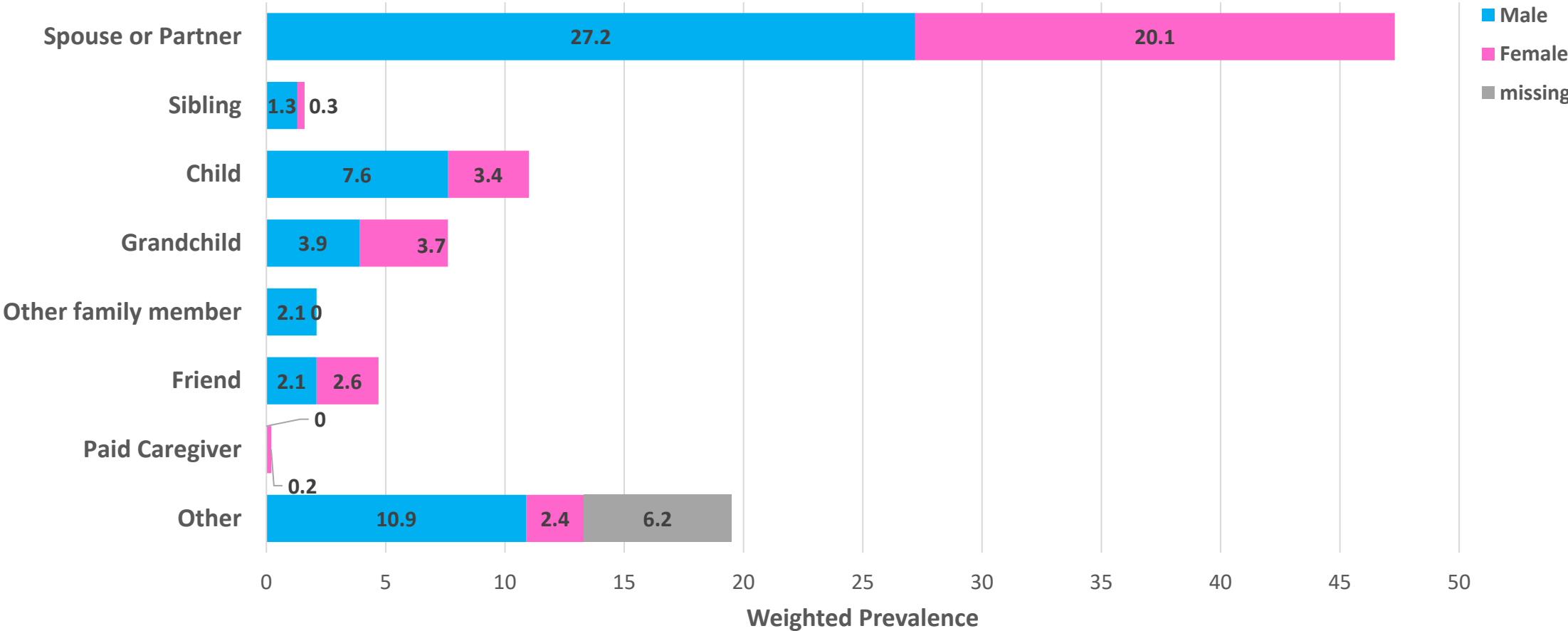
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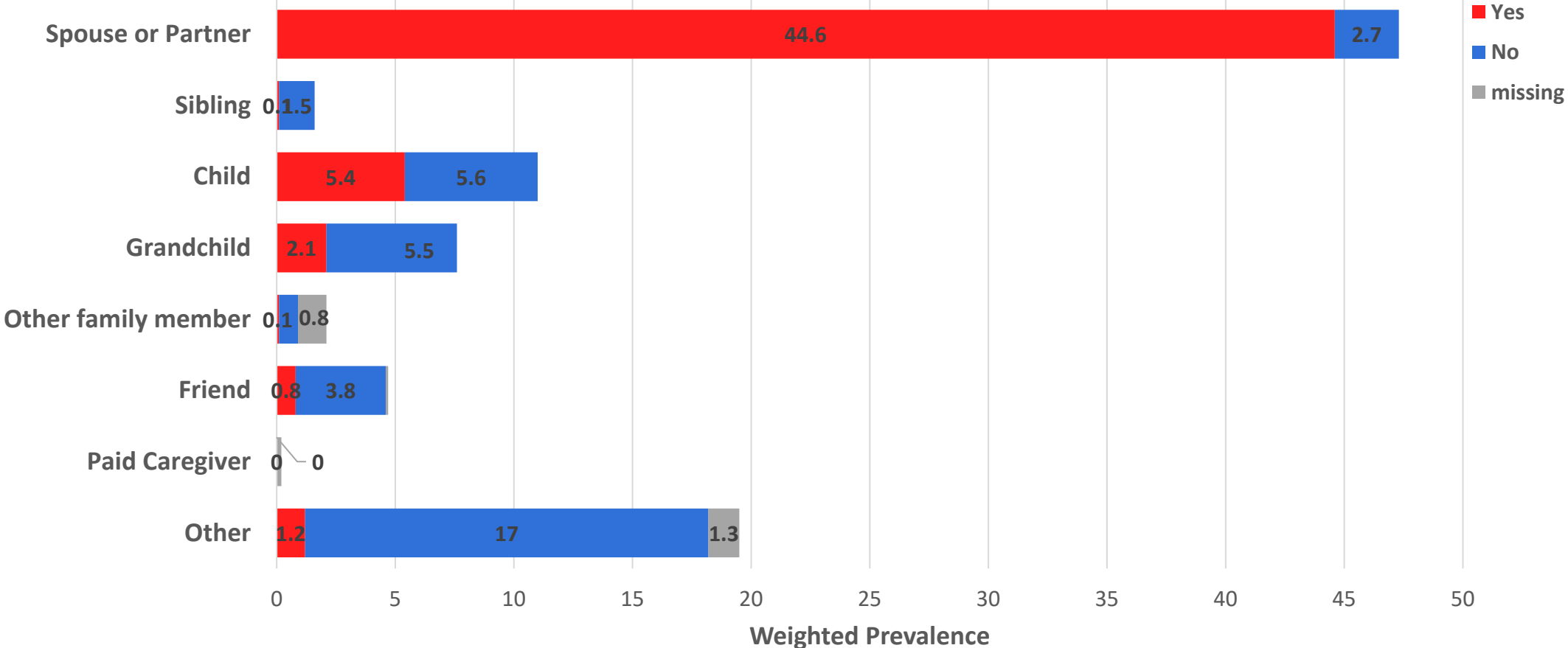
**\* Among individuals who reported physical abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=59,482)**

# Physical Abuse: perpetrator sex \*



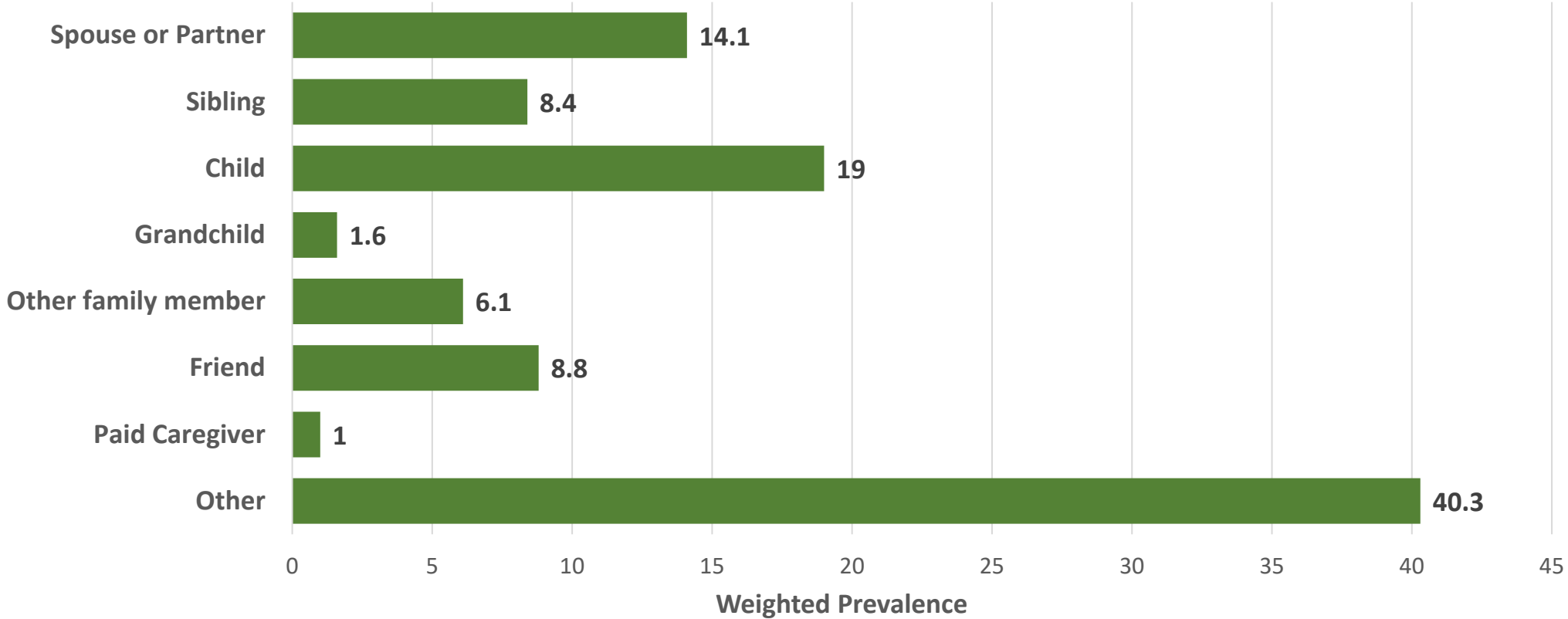
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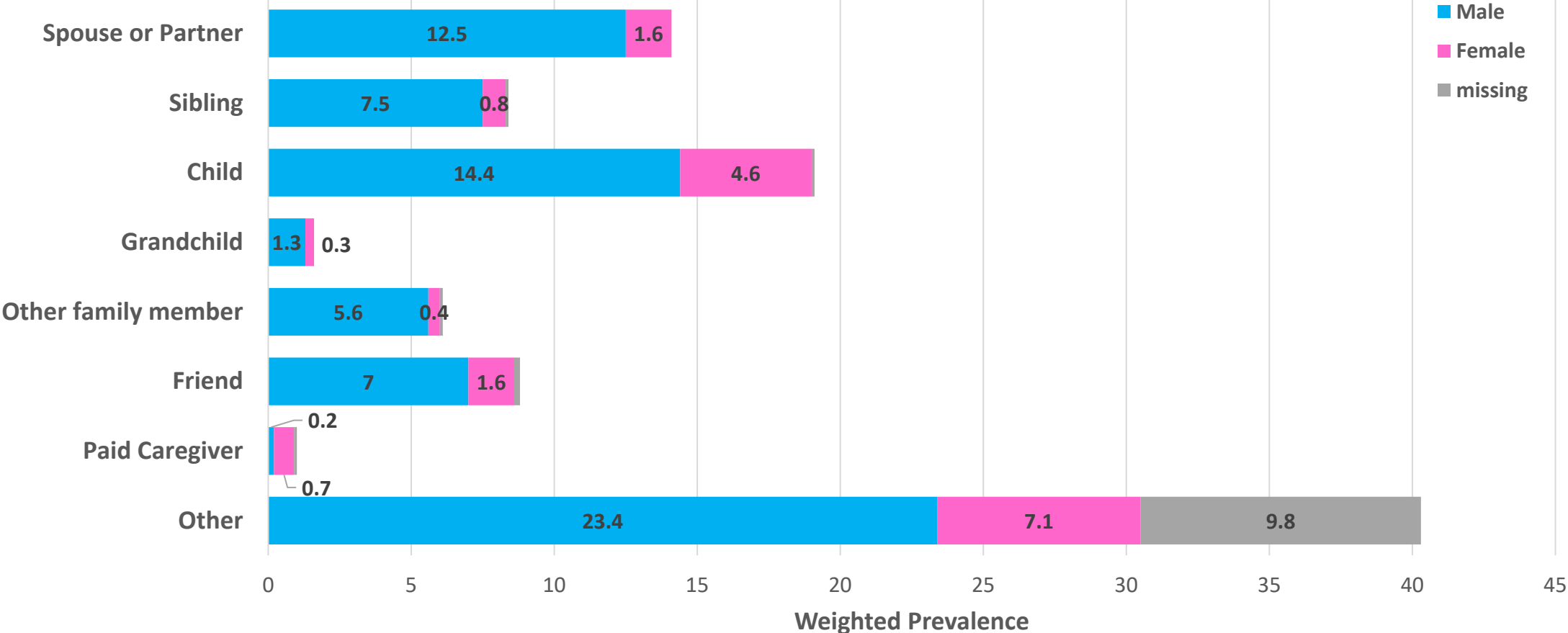
# Financial Abuse: perpetrator relationship\*



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

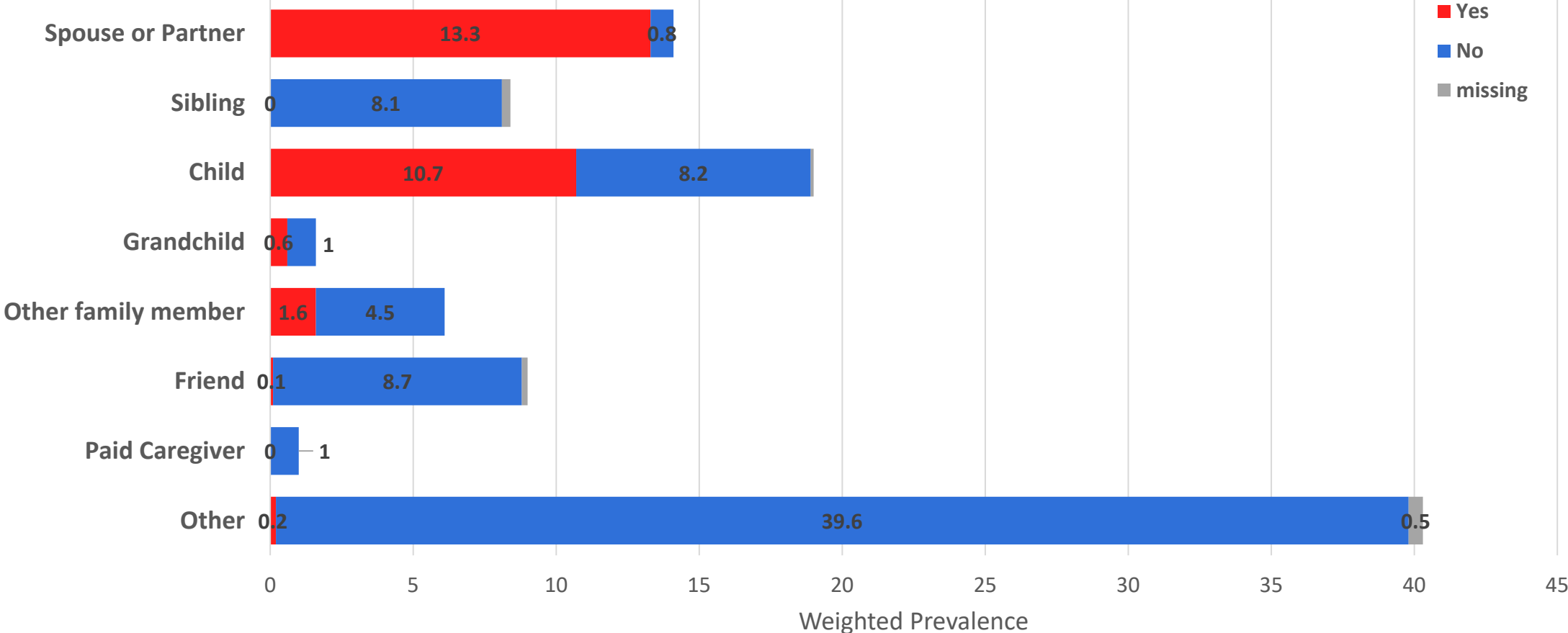
**\* Among individuals who reported financial abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=65,575)**

# Financial Abuse: perpetrators sex \*



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

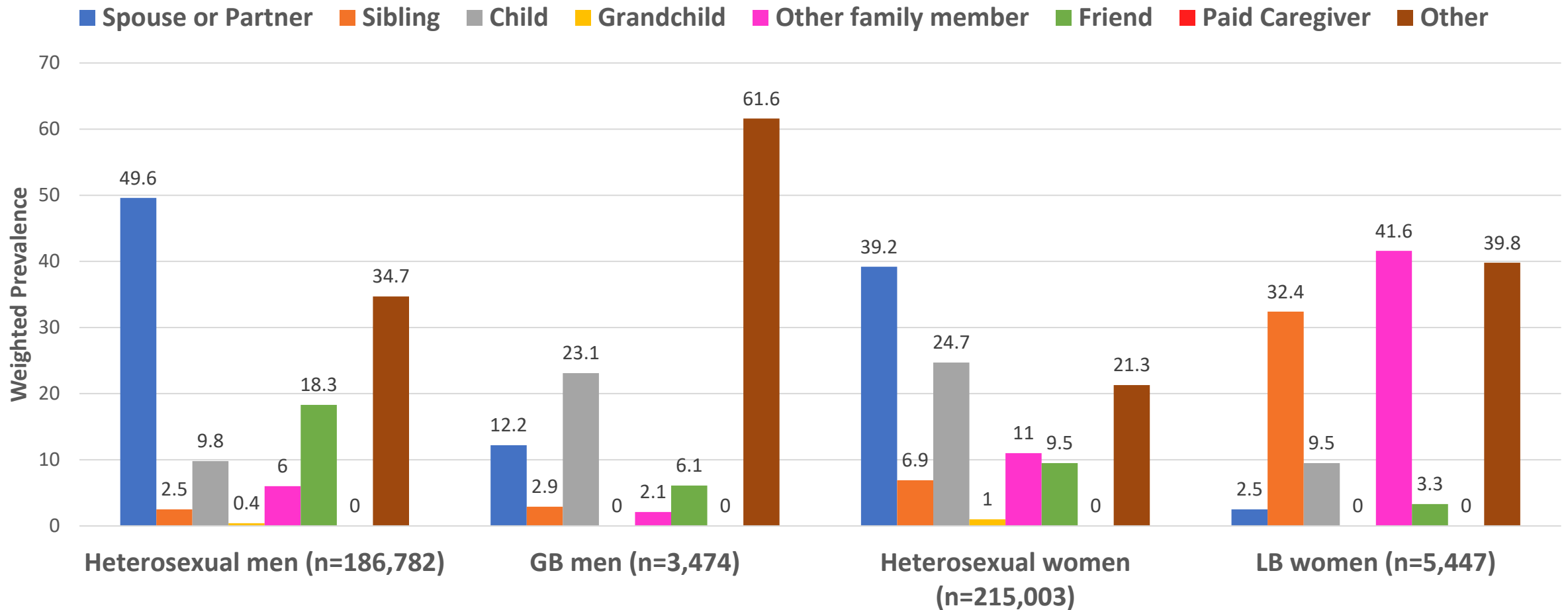
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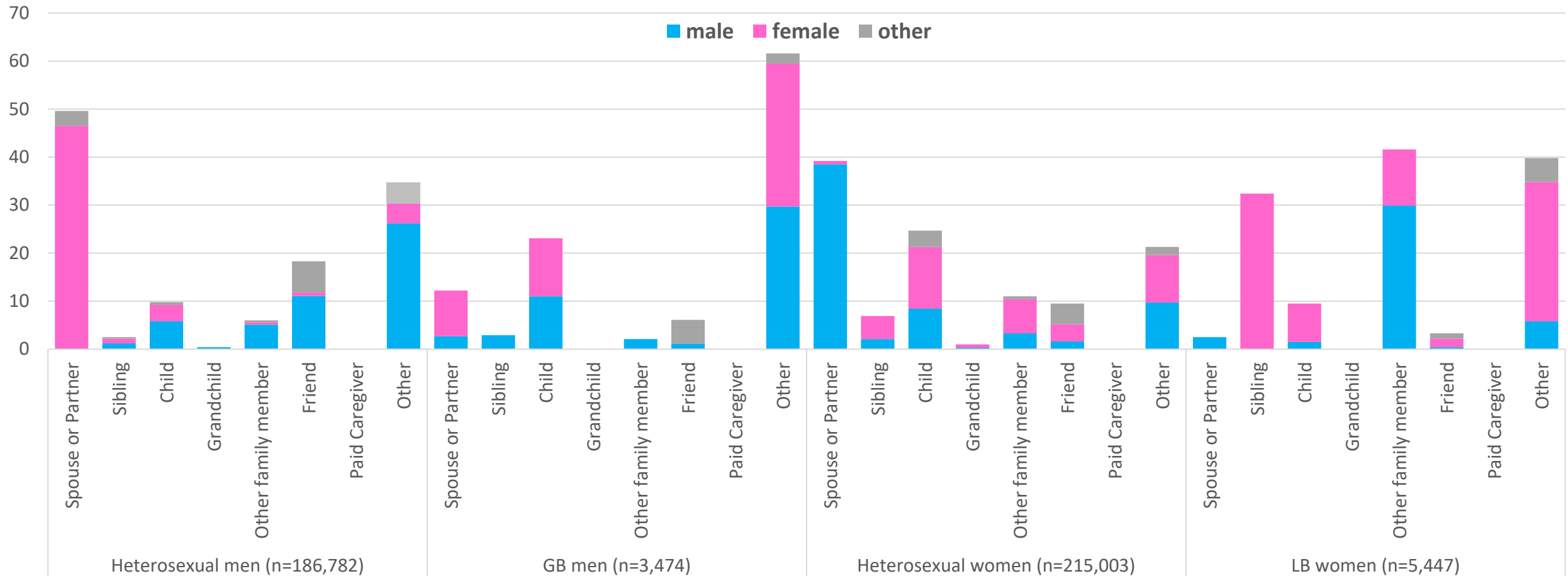


# Psychological abuse: perpetrator relationship by gender-sexual orientation of the victim



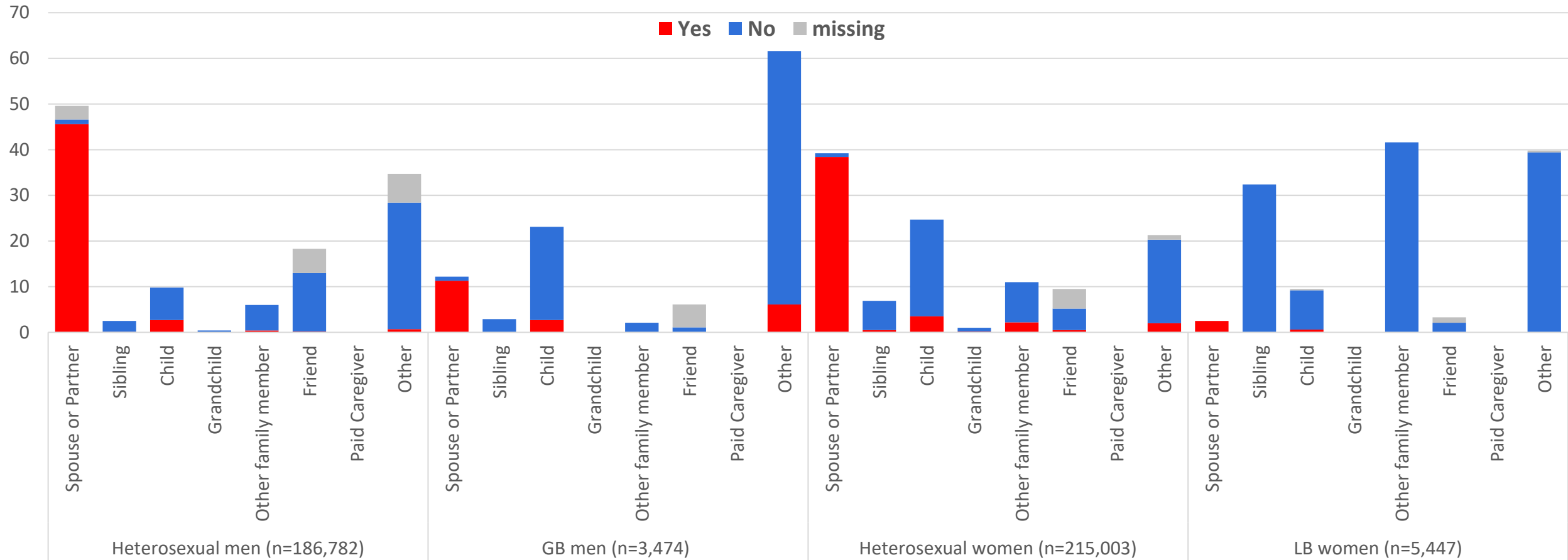
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# Psychological abuse: perpetrator sex by gender-sexual orientation of the victim



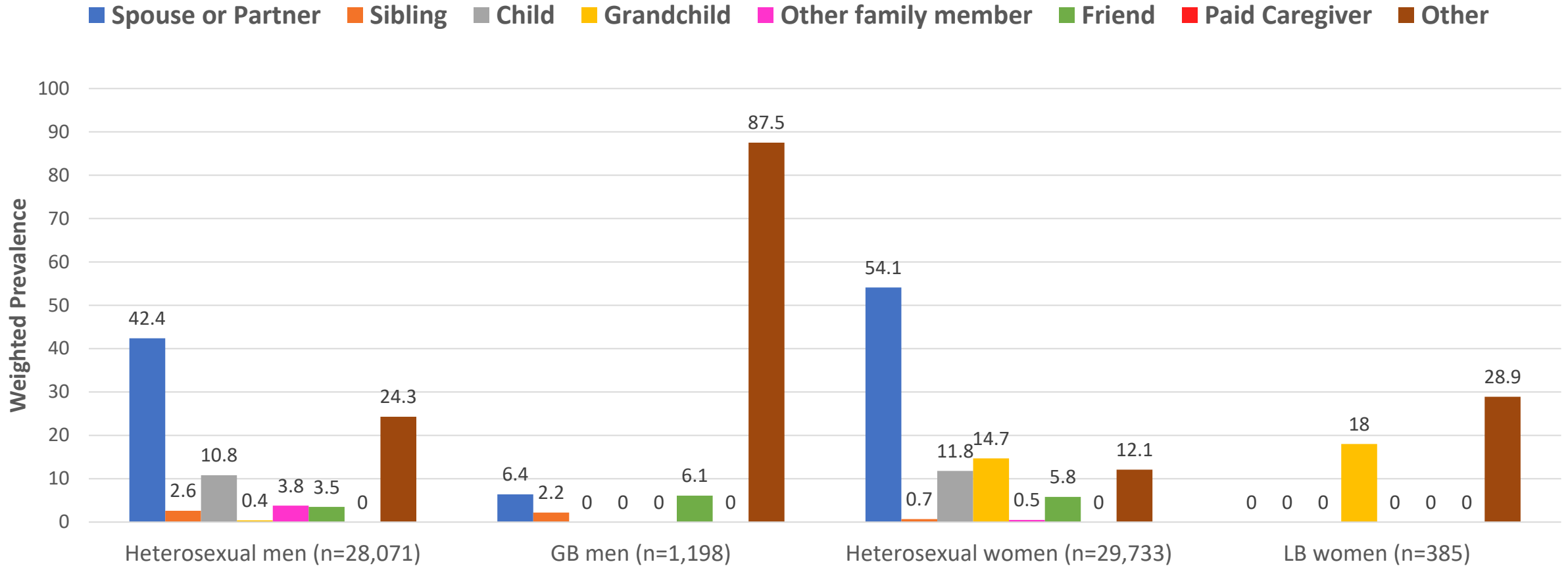
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# Psychological abuse: perpetrator lived with the victim (Y/N) by gender-sexual orientation of the victim



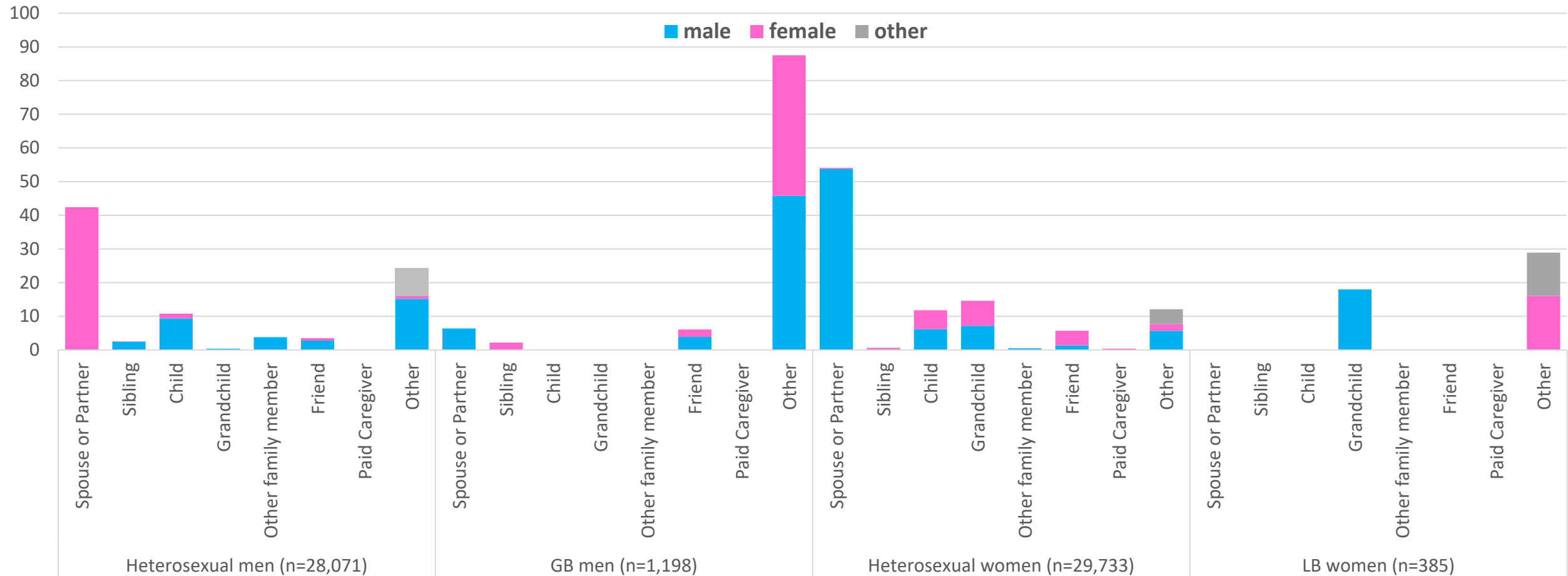
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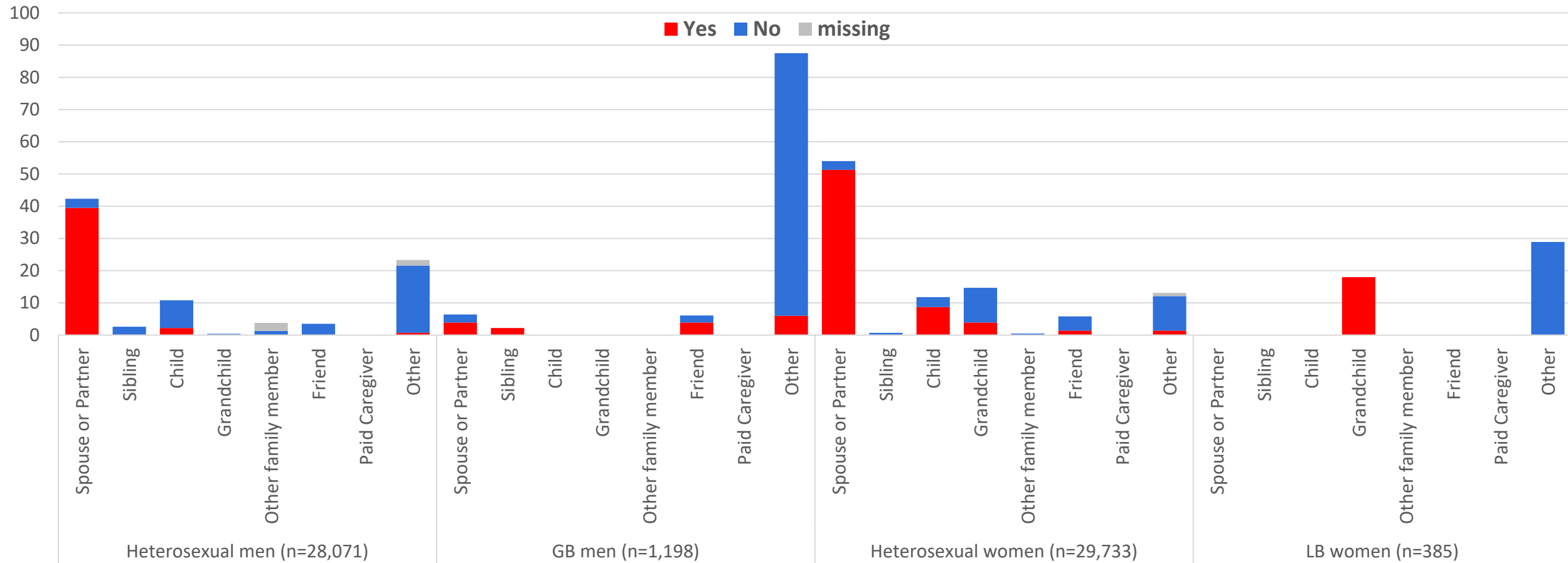
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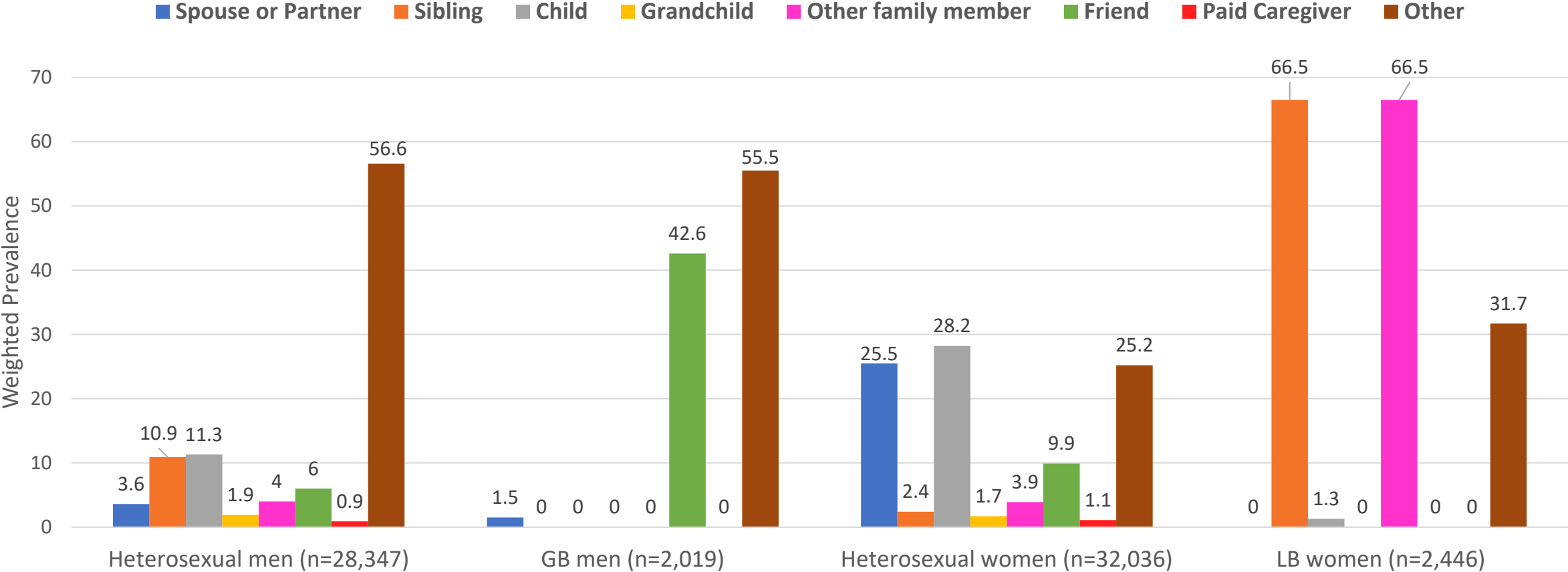
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# Physical abuse: perpetrator lived with the victim by gender-sexual orientation of the victim



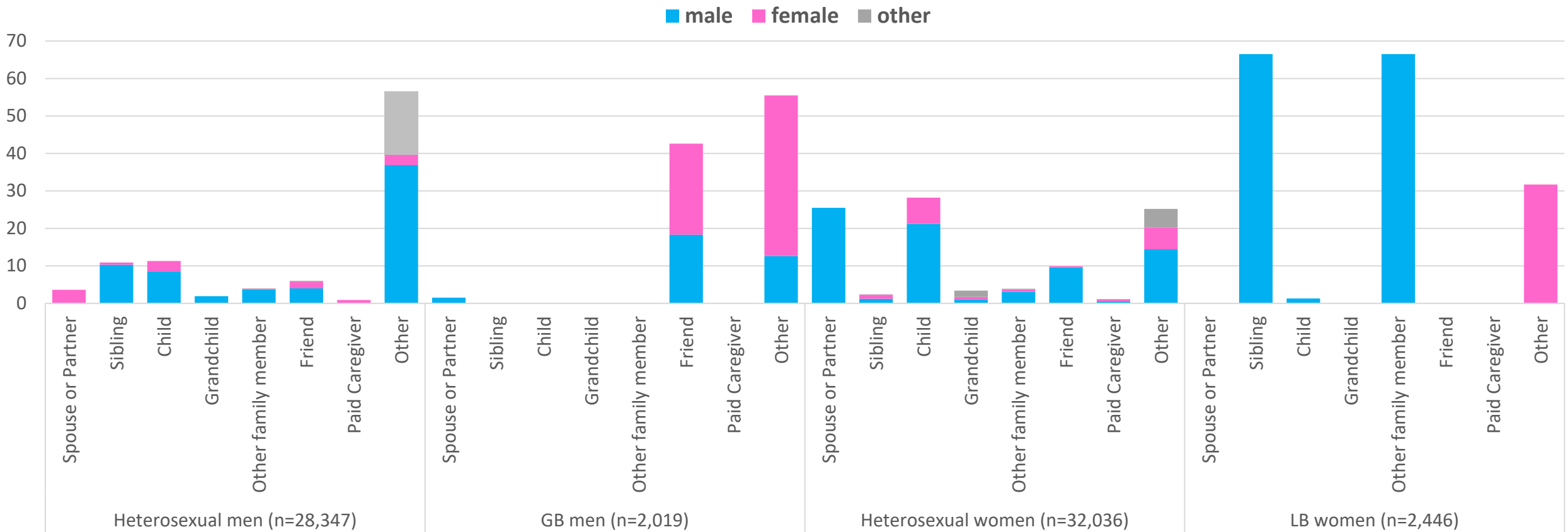
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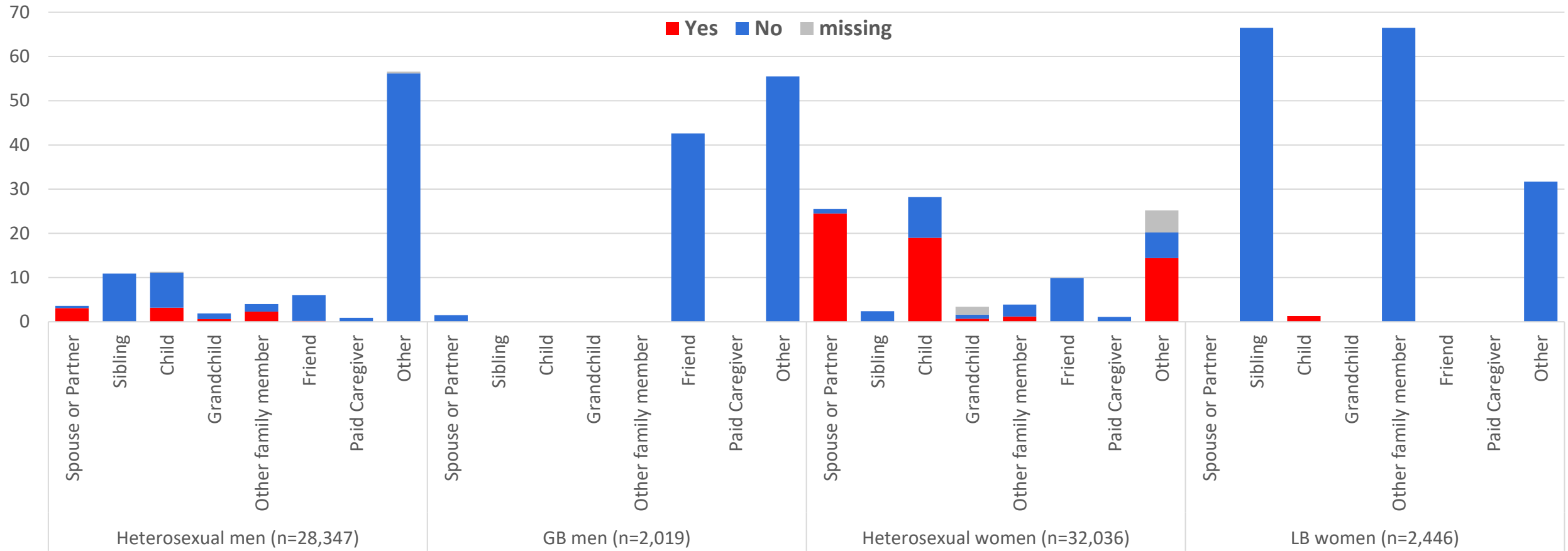
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**\* Among individuals who reported financial abuse over the last 12 months (Weighted sample n=65,575)**

# 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

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- 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
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# 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

- “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.

# Limitations

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

# CONTACT US

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**For further information on the iCAN-ACP Diversity Access Team,  
please visit:**

<https://icanacp.ca/project-teams/diversity-access-team/>

**For further information about the Canadian Longitudinal  
Study on Aging (CLSA), please visit:**

<https://www.clsa-elcv.ca/>



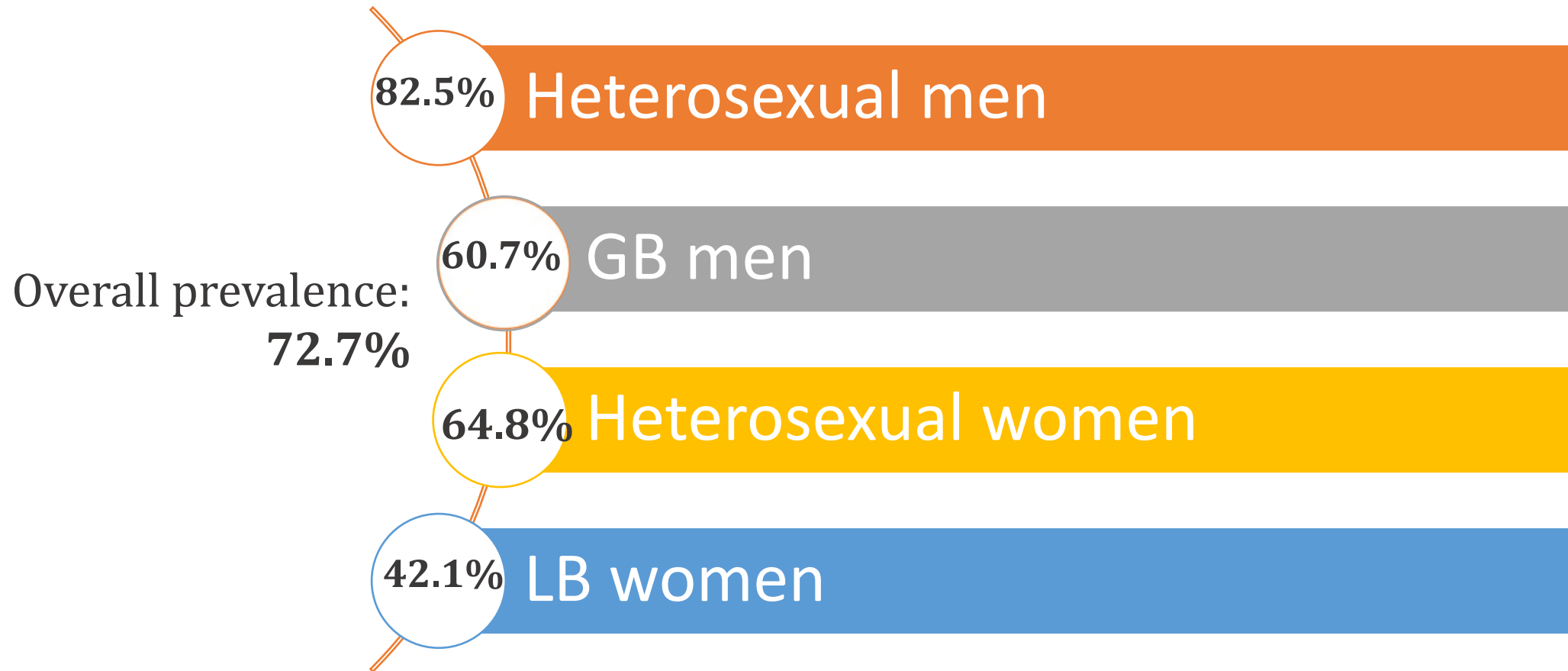


# Acknowledgments

- This research was made possible using the data/biospecimens collected by the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA).
- Funding for the CLSA is provided by:
  - The Government of Canada through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) under grant reference: LSA 94473.
  - The Canada Foundation for Innovation.
- This research has been conducted using data from the CLSA Baseline, Follow-up 1, and COVID-19 datasets, under Application Number [214047]. The CLSA is led by Drs. Parminder Raina, Christina Wolfson and Susan Kirkland.
- We are grateful to the study participants and data collection teams for their service and commitment to the CLSA since 2011.
- Funding for this analysis was provided by a grant from CREA - the Council to Reduce Elder Abuse, province of British Columbia.

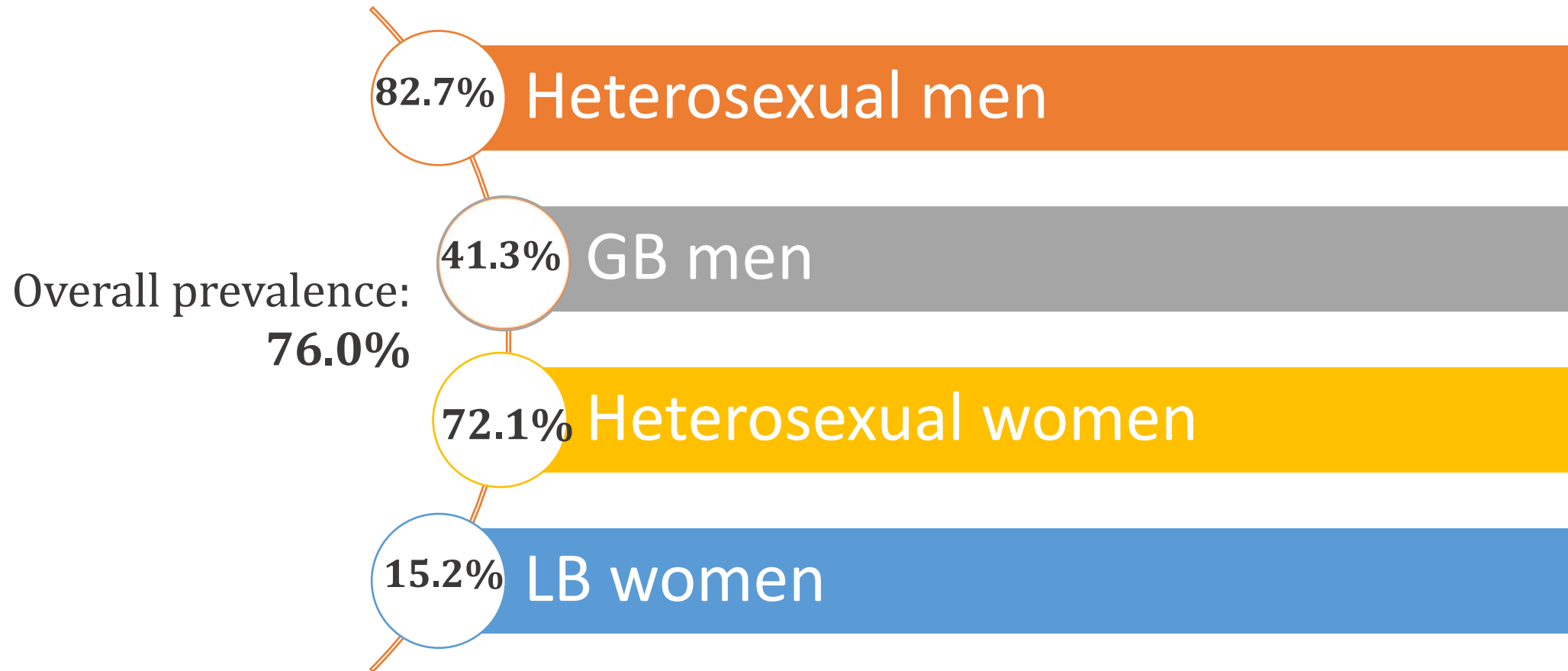


# Prevalence of living with at least one person\*



**\* 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)