



The Intersection of Animal Maltreatment and Intimate Partner Violence in Canada: Findings from Recent and Ongoing Research

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Our studies:

(1) Surveys of clients and staff at shelters for abused women across Canada

- Five articles published/in press

(2) Analysis of all shelter websites across the country

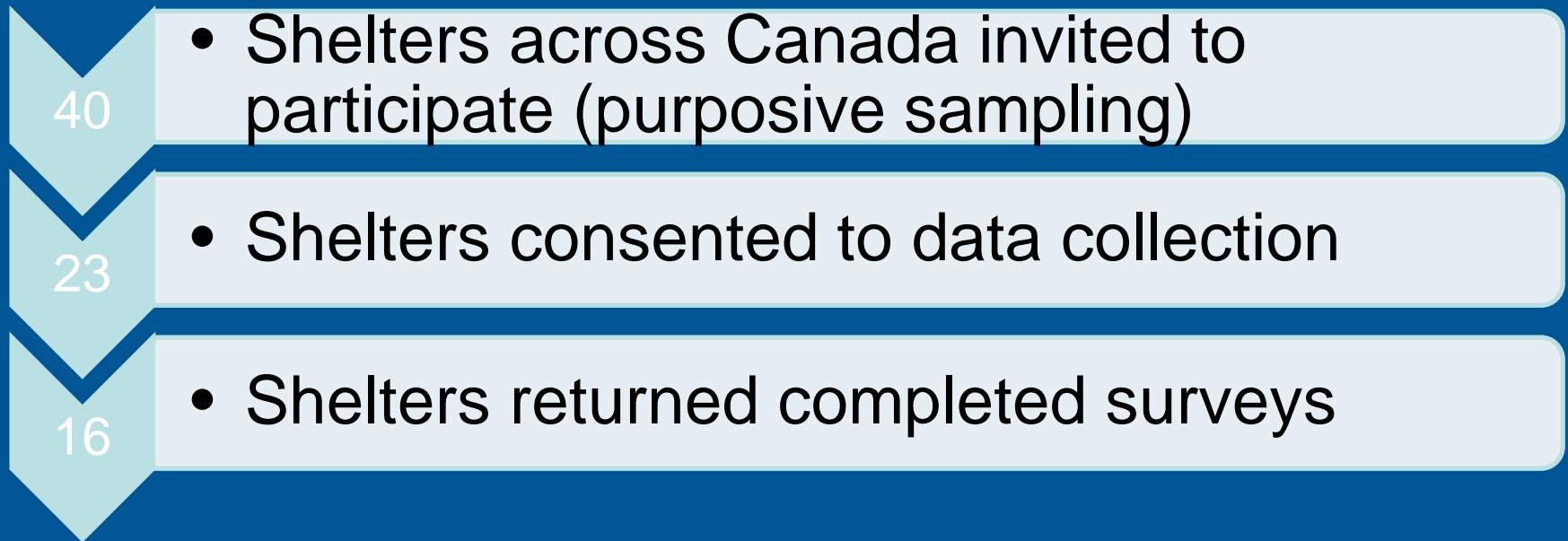
- One article in progress

(3) Analysis of 2014 General Social Survey

- Four articles in progress

(1) Surveys of clients and staff at shelters for abused women across Canada

- Focus group consultations held with clients and staff at eight shelters
- Surveys:



The Samples

- 100 completed client surveys
- 116 completed staff surveys
- Representation from nine provinces

“Pet ownership” among clients



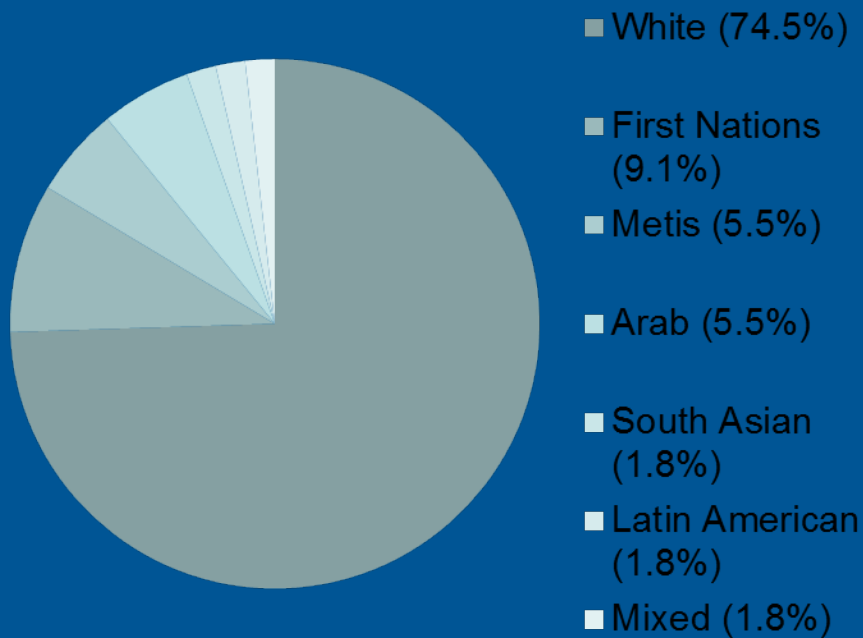
Most common:
Cats (78.2%)
 $M = 1.69$, $SD = 1.32$
Range = 0 to 6

Second most common:
Dogs (63.6%)
 $M = 1.24$, $SD = 1.32$
Range = 0 to 5

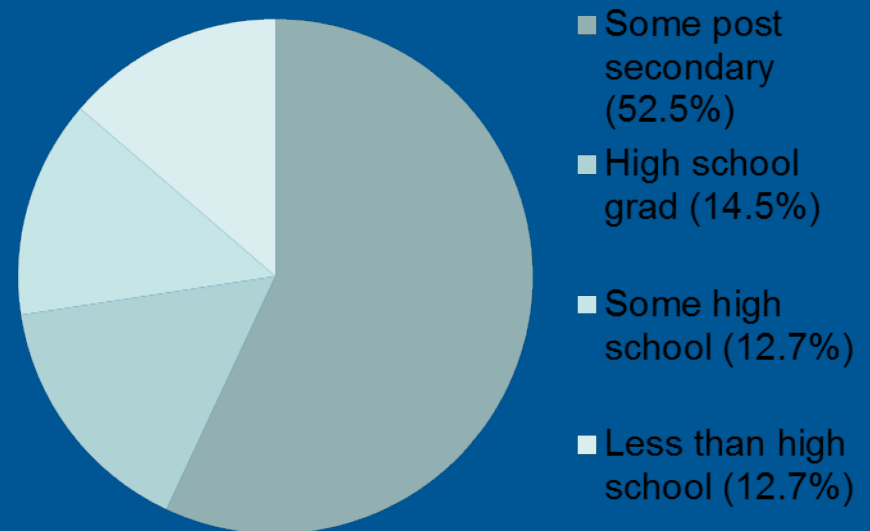


Sample characteristics

Race-ethnicity



Education

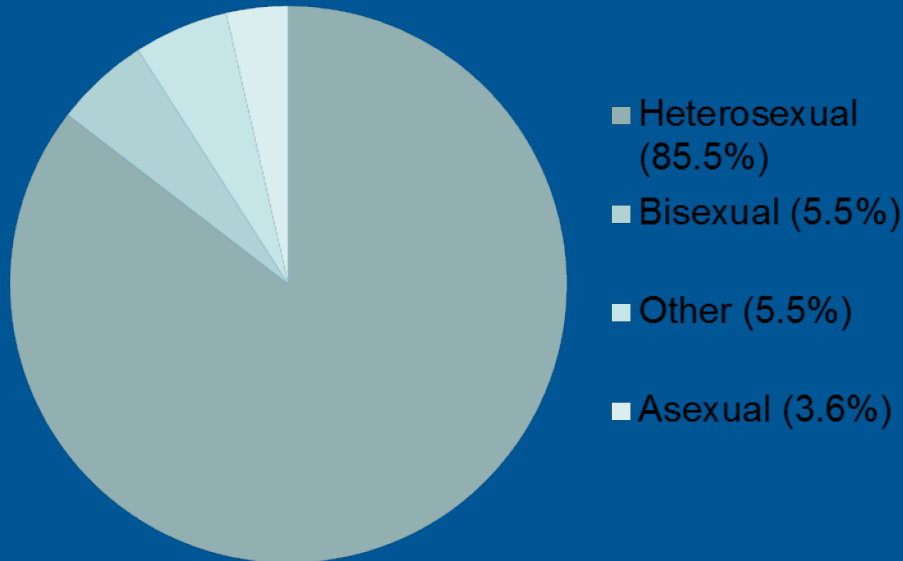


Children with abuser: $M = 1.4$ ($SD = 1.65$)

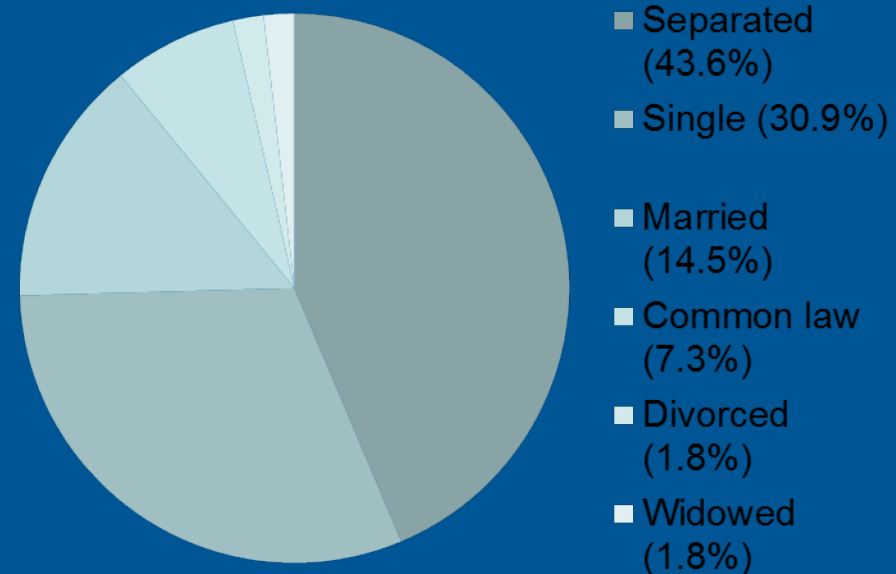
Children with others: $M = 1.2$ ($SD = 1.42$)

Sample characteristics

Sexuality

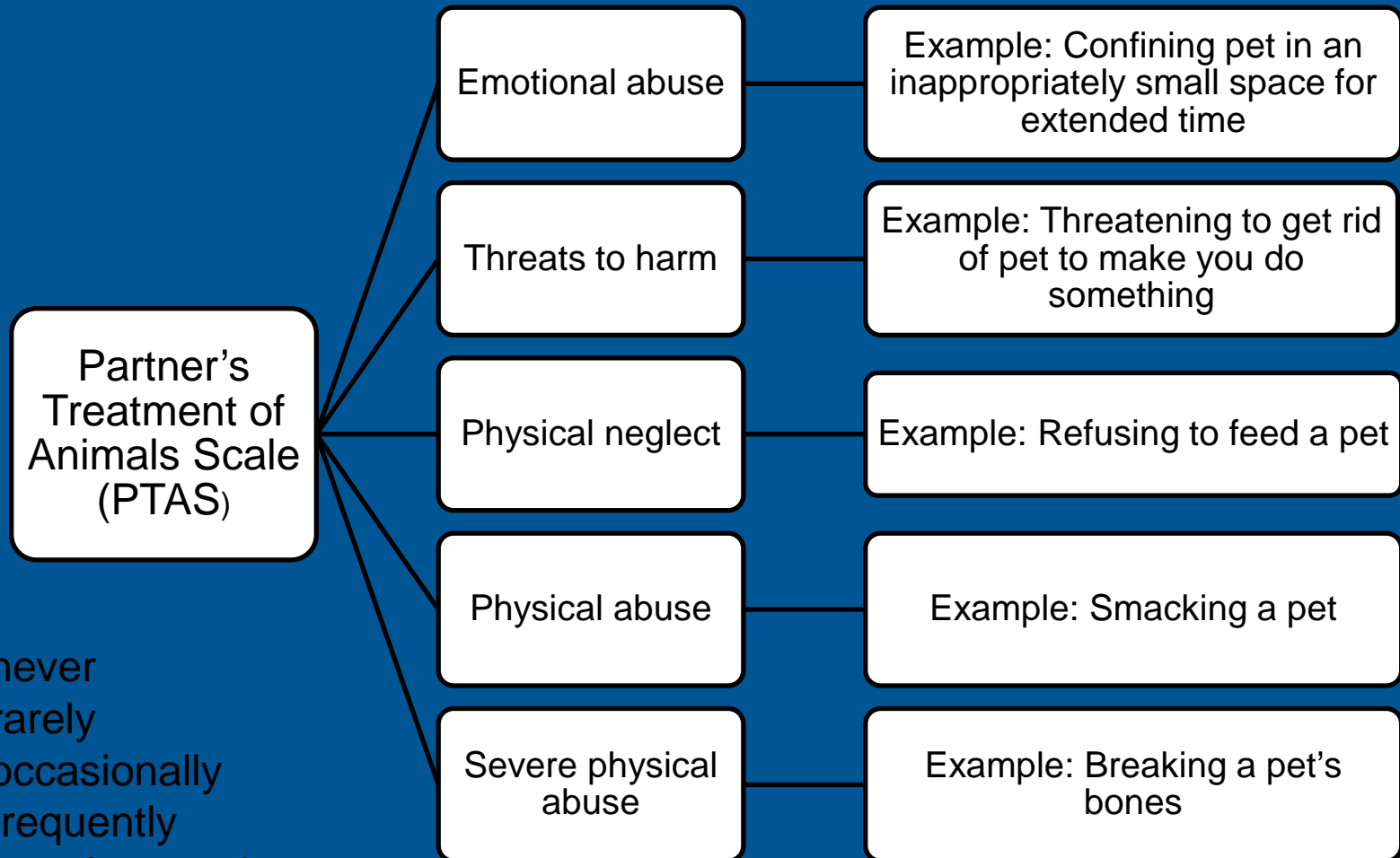


Relationship Status



Age: $M = 40.5$, $SD = 10.99$ (Range: 21 to 66 years of age)

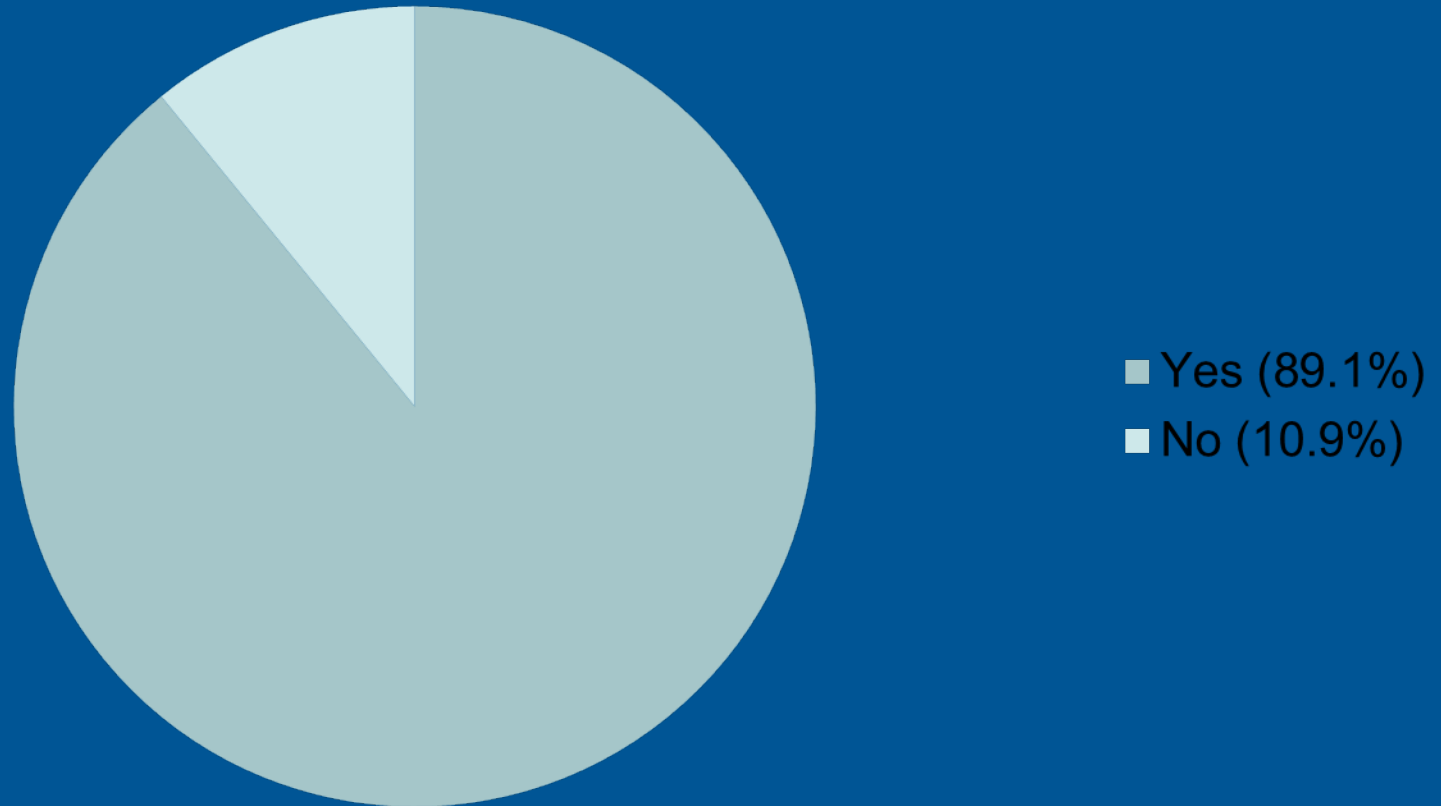
Measure of animal maltreatment



0 = never
1 = rarely
2 = occasionally
3 = frequently
4 = very frequently

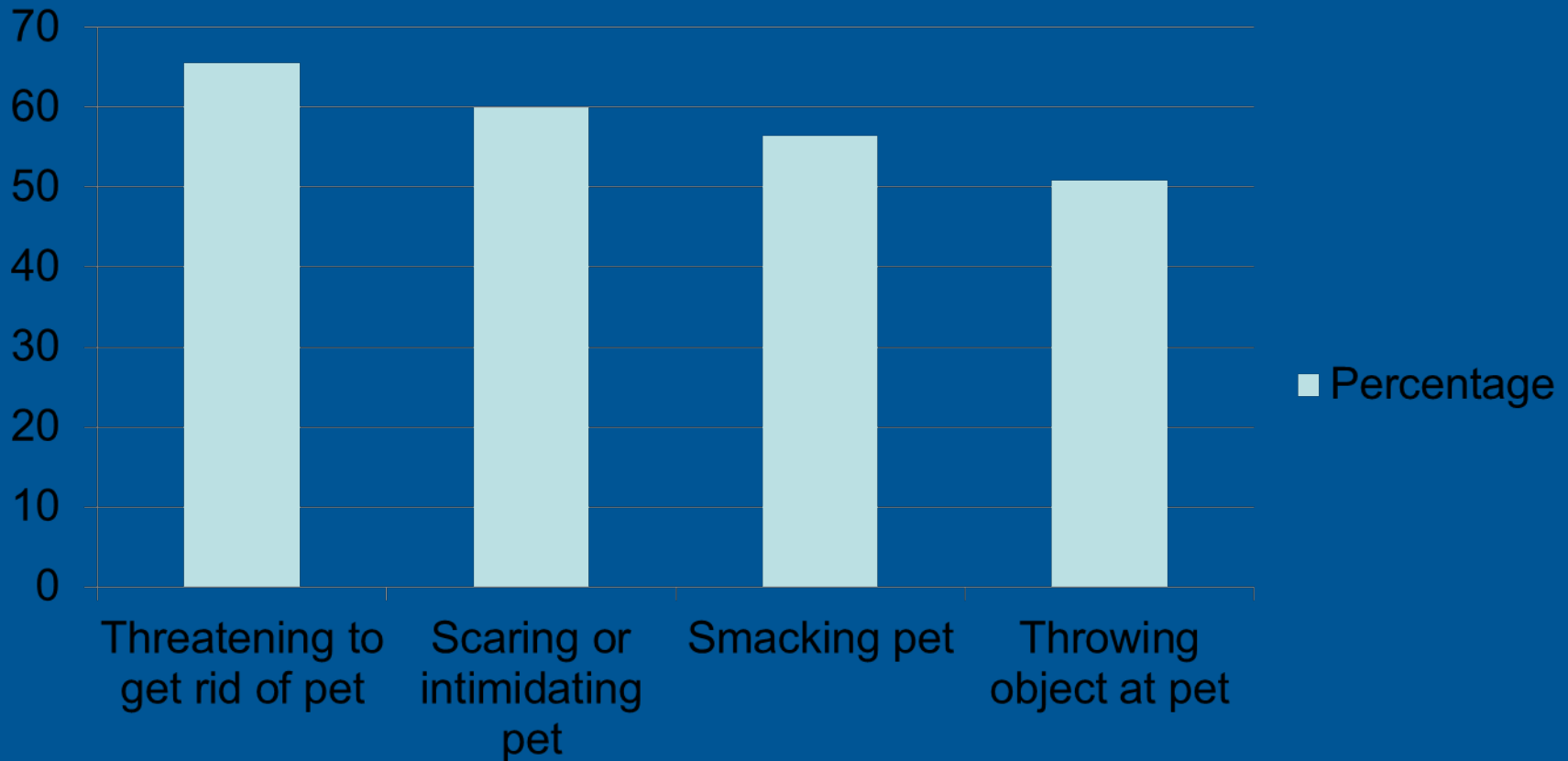
Results

Experienced any pet abuse



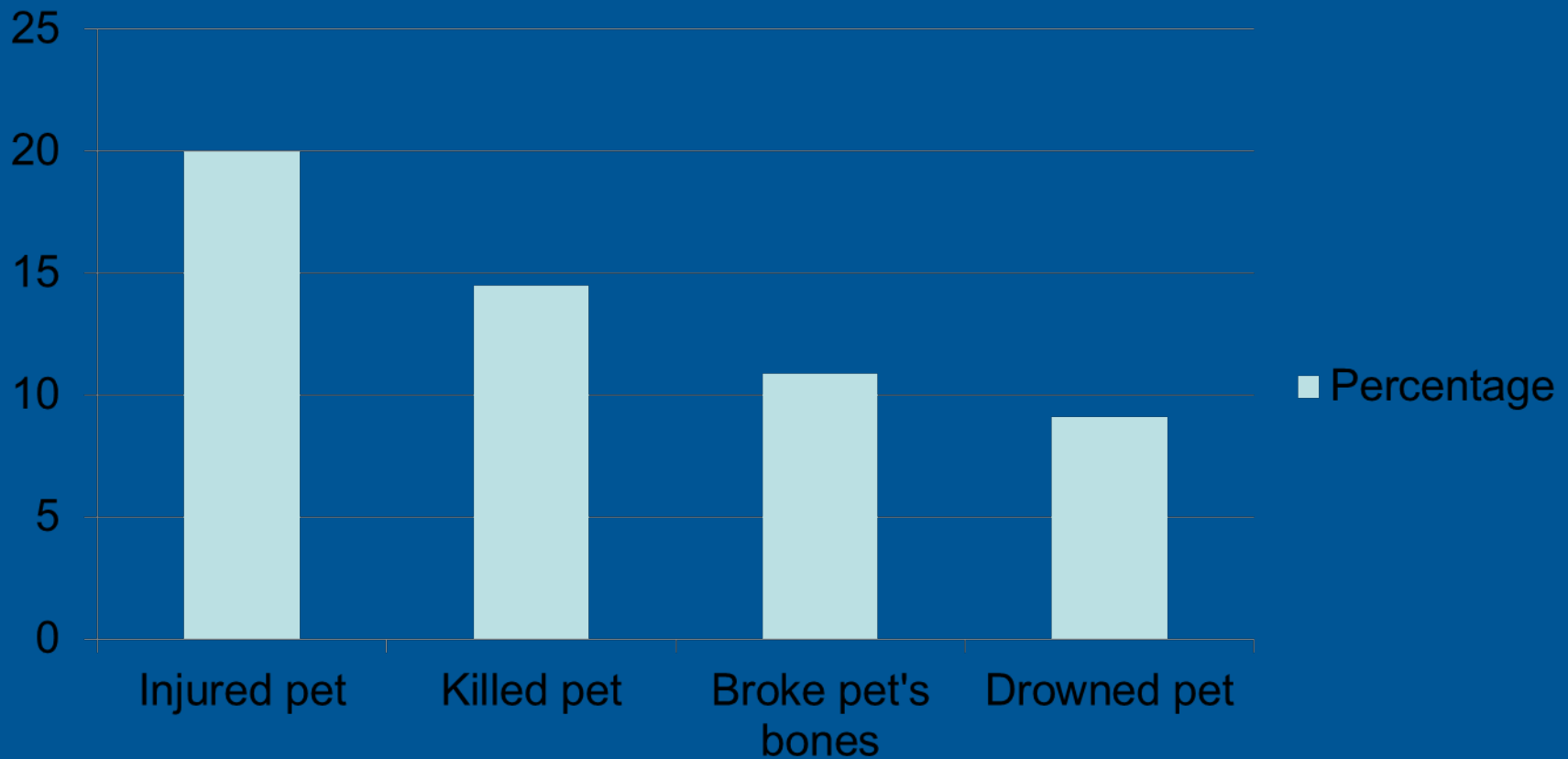
Most common forms

Percentage



Most severe forms

Percentage



Connections to severity and types of IPV

- Women who reported frequent/severe animal abuse were significantly more likely to report more frequent and severe IPV
 - Particularly psychological, physical, and sexual abuse
- Also of note: women who reported little or no animal abuse were least likely to report severe forms of IPV, even compared to those without pets.

Connections to help-seeking

2/3

- Animal maltreatment had a strong impact on their decision to leave their abuser

56%

- Delayed leaving due to fear for their pet's safety

47%

- Likely or extremely likely that they would have left earlier if they could have taken their pet to shelter with them

Going to shelter

48%

- Not advised of pet services by staff
- An additional 25% were advised, but not until they were in shelter

60%

- Left their pets with their abuser

1/3

- Considering returning to abuser because he had their pet

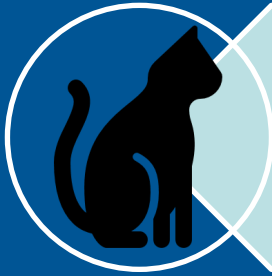
Abused women with pets are in a bind

- All subtypes of animal maltreatment are associated with a significant increase in the desire to leave an abuser.
 - Even when controlling for length of relationship and severity of IPV.
- Increased frequency of physical IPV is associated with an increased likelihood that she would have left earlier if she could have brought her pet to shelter.

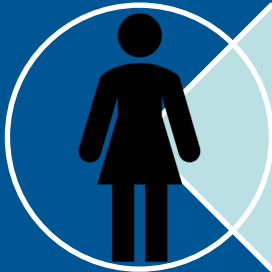
Perceptions of motivations for animal maltreatment

- Threats, emotional animal abuse, and neglect were perceived by participants as intentional and motivated by a desire to upset and control them.
 - Controlling for demographic characteristics and IPV.
- Yet physical animal abuse was not perceived as being intentional or motivated by desire to upset and control.

Potential reasons for divergent findings



Threats/emotional abuse/neglect may be more easily perceived as being intentional and motivated to upset and control;



As abuse escalates over time, coercive control may become more focused on the woman.



Could be related to subtypes of abusers.

What do shelter staff report?

25%

- No services available for pets

0.06%

- Allow pets on-site

Approx. 3/4

- Refer to community agency or program

What do shelter staff report?

70%

- Aware of women who delayed leaving abuser out of concern for their pet(s)

47%

- Aware of women who had left the shelter temporarily to return home to care for their pet(s)

43%

- Aware of women whose partners had threatened or harmed their pet(s) while they were in shelter

- 75% were aware of women in the community who had refused to come to shelter because they could not bring their pet(s) with them.
- Respondents were statistically more likely to support co-sheltering at other shelters than at their own.
- Being aware of women who had not come to shelter because of their pets was significantly related to support for on-site sheltering programs at one's own shelter and other shelters.

Potential Barriers and Benefits



Potential Barriers

- Allergies
- Financial resources
- No space
- Safety concerns
- Liability issues
- Fear of animals



Potential Benefits

- Easier to leave abuser
- Removing leverage abuser has over victim(s)
- Get clients to stay in shelter longer
- Pet safe
- Pet provide support for clients

(2) Analysis of Shelter Websites

- All 337 first stage shelters in Canada with publicly accessible websites.
 - 155 mention pets
- Analyzed the way pets and their abuse are framed, how animal abuse is discussed in reference to IPV, what programs are available for women with pets.

Are pets allowed on-site?

	Description of pet/animal policy
67%	No policy mentioned
17%	All pets prohibited (including service animals)
12%	Only clients' service animals allowed
3% (n=4)	Clients' pets permitted
2% (n=3)	Some clients' pets permitted (e.g., only small animals in cages)

Off-site services

	Reference made to off-site service(s)
70%	No explicit mention of off-site pet services
17%	Offers to (potentially) assist clients seeking off-site pet services
12%	Directly connected with organizations/services/veterinarian to offer off-site pet <i>sheltering</i> services
4%	Directly connected with organization(s) to offer off-site pet <i>care</i> services (e.g., veterinarian)
3%	Other

How is animal abuse described?

- Most commonly described as part of the psychological abuse of human victims (48%).
- Commonly described in conjunction with objects/property.
- Only 16% of websites noted that pets can be a barrier to leaving an abuser.
 - Significantly more likely to provide on or off-site animal sheltering services (54% vs. 28%)
- Only approx. 35% of websites mention pets in relation to safety planning.
 - Significantly more likely to provide on or off-site services (57% vs 19%)

(3) Animal abuse and IPV in the general Canadian population

- Research on animal abuse and IPV has focused on shelter samples.
 - Associated limitations
- 2014 GSS
 - First known nationally representative sample asked about animal abuse in conjunction with IPV
 - 33,127 respondents (age 16+)

Animal maltreatment question

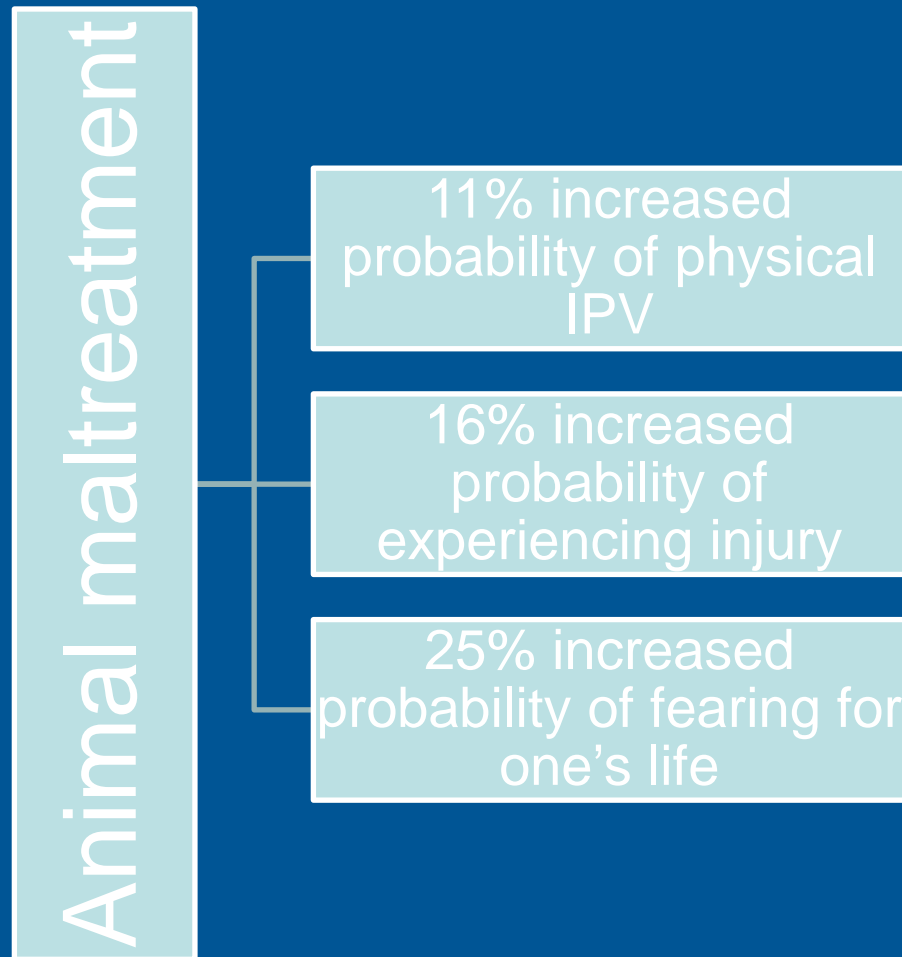
I'm going to read a list of statements some people have used to describe their spouse/partner. I'd like you to tell me whether or not each statement describes your spouse/partner.

- He/she harms or threatens to harm your pet(s).
 - Coded as yes / no / don't have pets

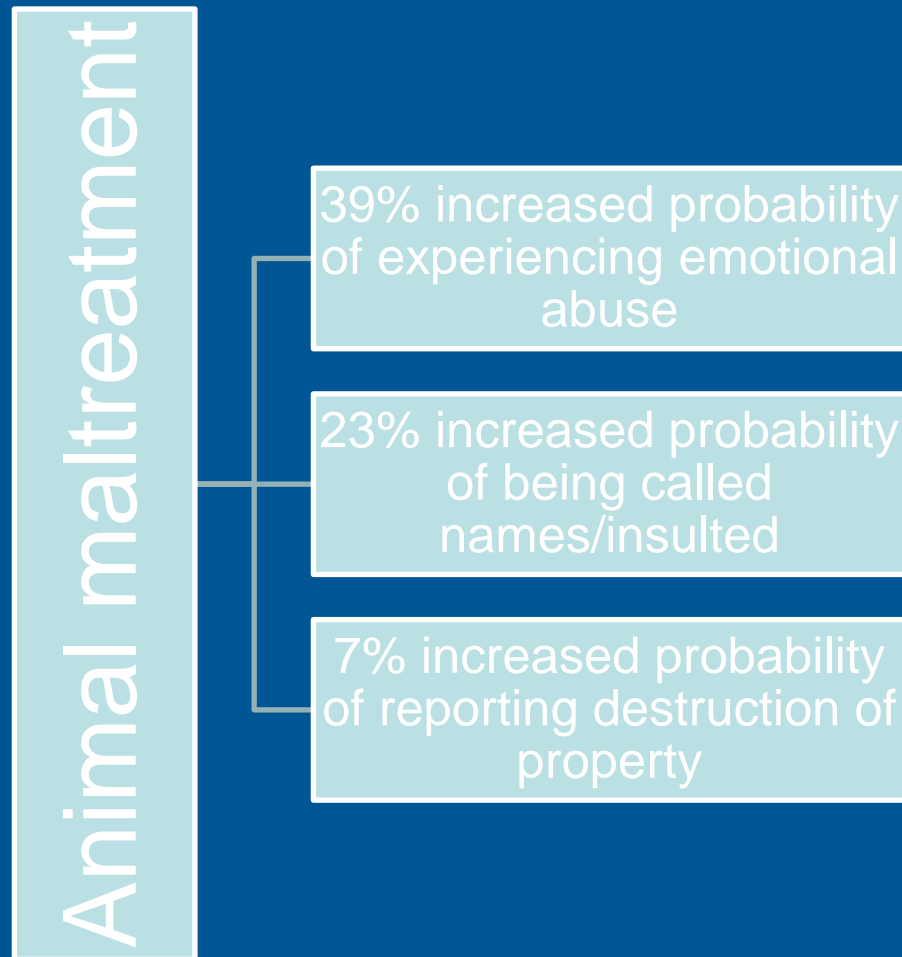
Overview of main findings

- <1% of general GSS sample report animal maltreatment by partner.
 - Animal maltreatment was significantly more common among those who reported IPV (13.2%).
- Animal maltreatment is more common among those reporting physical IPV
 - Among those who said there was no animal maltreatment, only 4% reported physical IPV, whereas 50% of those who reported animal maltreatment also reported physical IPV

Predicting Physical Spousal Violence Victimization and Severity (controlling for socio-demographic variables)



Predicting Emotional IPV Victimization (controlling for socio-demographic variables)



Summary

1. Threats against companion animals and animal abuse are red flags for physical and emotional IPV in Canada.
2. In our sample of abused women in shelter, a large proportion (89%) report animal maltreatment and delaying leaving (56%).
3. In our sample of staff, nearly half were aware of women who had left the shelter due to their pets, and three-quarters were aware of women in the community who had refused to go to shelter due to their pets.
4. Among websites for shelters across the country, less than half mention animals, approx. 1/3 reference off-site services, and only 7 on-site services.

Recommendations

- (1) Animal maltreatment **must** be taken seriously.
- (2) Cross-reporting could have significant benefits.
- (3) Academics and practitioners need to stop grouping animal abuse with property destruction.
- (4) More shelters should provide information on their websites about the role of animal abuse in the context of IPV.

Recommendations

- (5) More off-site and on-site programs for sheltering animals are urgently needed.
- Programmatic information for new and existing programs needs to be communicated to those who might need it.
 - Also need additional research...

PLEASE
HELP US!

- PEOPLE
- DOG
- CAT

gettyimages
AFP

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