



Sexual Assault in the Canadian Armed Forces: Prevalence, Circumstances, Correlates, and Mental Health Associations

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Faculty/Presenter Disclosure

- **Faculty:** Kimberley Watkins
- **Relationships with commercial interests:**
 - **Not applicable**

Disclosure of Commercial Support

- No commercial support
- Potential for conflict(s) of interest:
 - None

Mitigating Potential Bias

- Not applicable

Background

- Certain military characteristics are sexual assault risk factors:
 - Younger than the general population
 - Living quarters often isolated and integrated
 - Men greatly outnumber and frequently outrank women
- Existing data on military work-related sexual assault (MWSA):
 - Vast majority U.S.-based
 - Inconsistency in methodology and prevalence estimates

Rationale

- External review (Deschamps, 2015):
 - Interviews and focus groups ($n = \sim 700$ volunteers)
 - Sexual misconduct appears to be a problem in the CAF
- Aim: Investigate the prevalence, circumstances, correlates, and mental health associations of sexual assault in the CAF, with reliable methodology

Method

■ Data source and population: 2013 Canadian Forces Mental Health Survey

- stratified random sample of CAF Regular Force population ($n = 6,700$; 80% response rate)
- face-to-face interviews conducted by Statistics Canada

■ Measures:

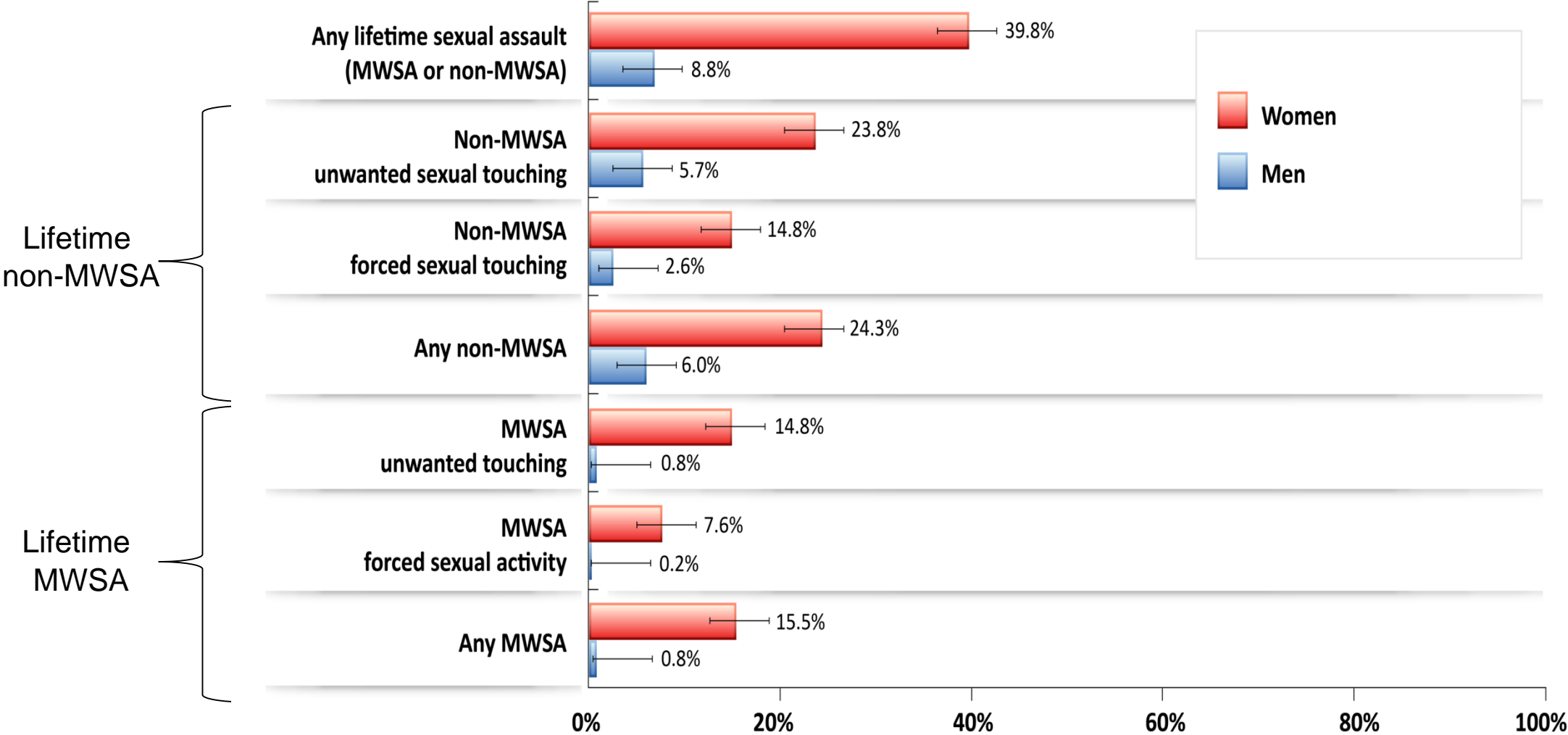
- Sociodemographic and military characteristics
- Lifetime and past-year PTSD and other mental disorders
- Lifetime sexual assault (forced sexual activity and/or unwanted sexual touching)

Definition of non-MWSA and MWSA

- Participants who reported lifetime sexual assault (forced sexual activity and/or unwanted sexual touching) were asked:
 - “Did this ever take place while deployed on a CAF operation?”
 - “Did this ever take place in your CAF workplace (other than on deployment)?”
 - “Were any of the persons who committed this or these acts a CAF member or civilian DND employee at the time of this or these events?”
- Those who answered “No” to all: lifetime non-military work-related sexual assault (non-MWSA)
- Those who answered “Yes” to any: lifetime MWSA

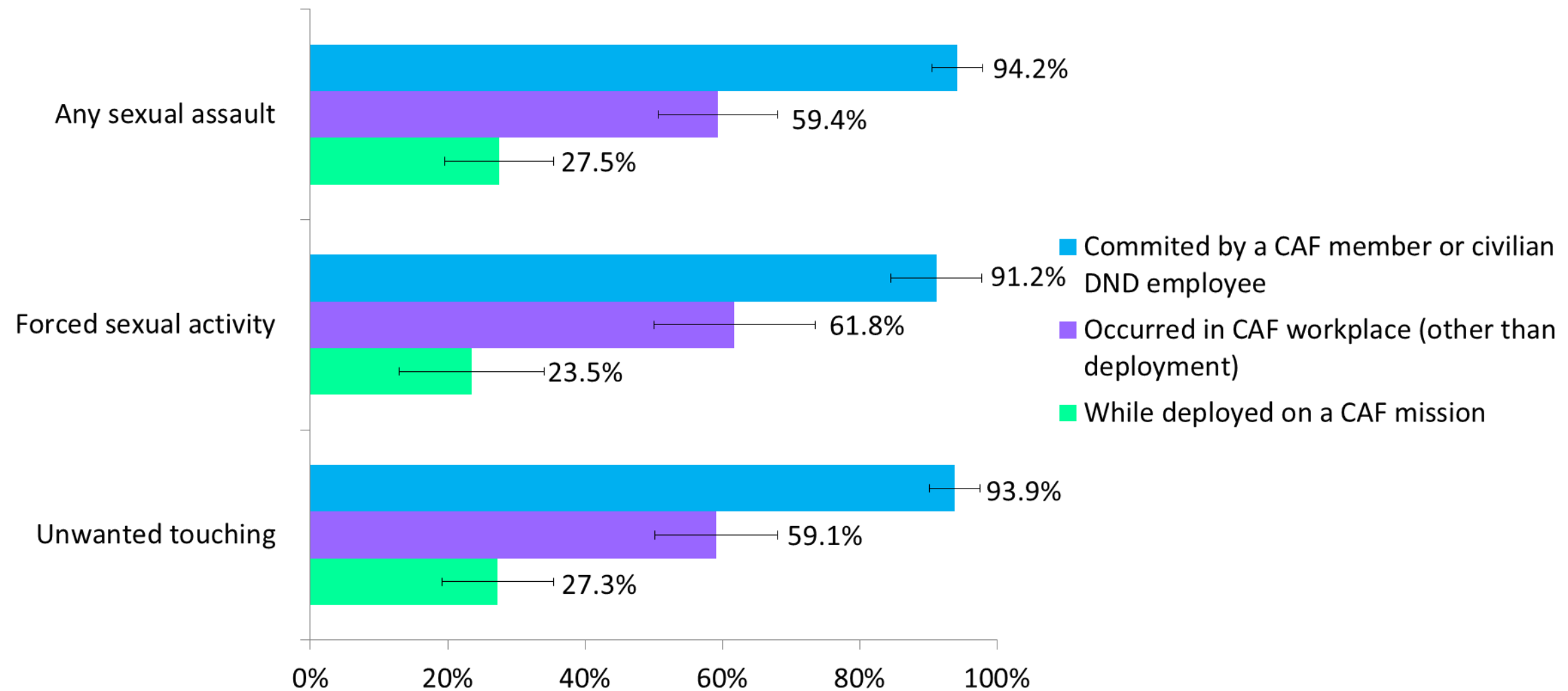
Results

Prevalence of Sexual Assault by Sex



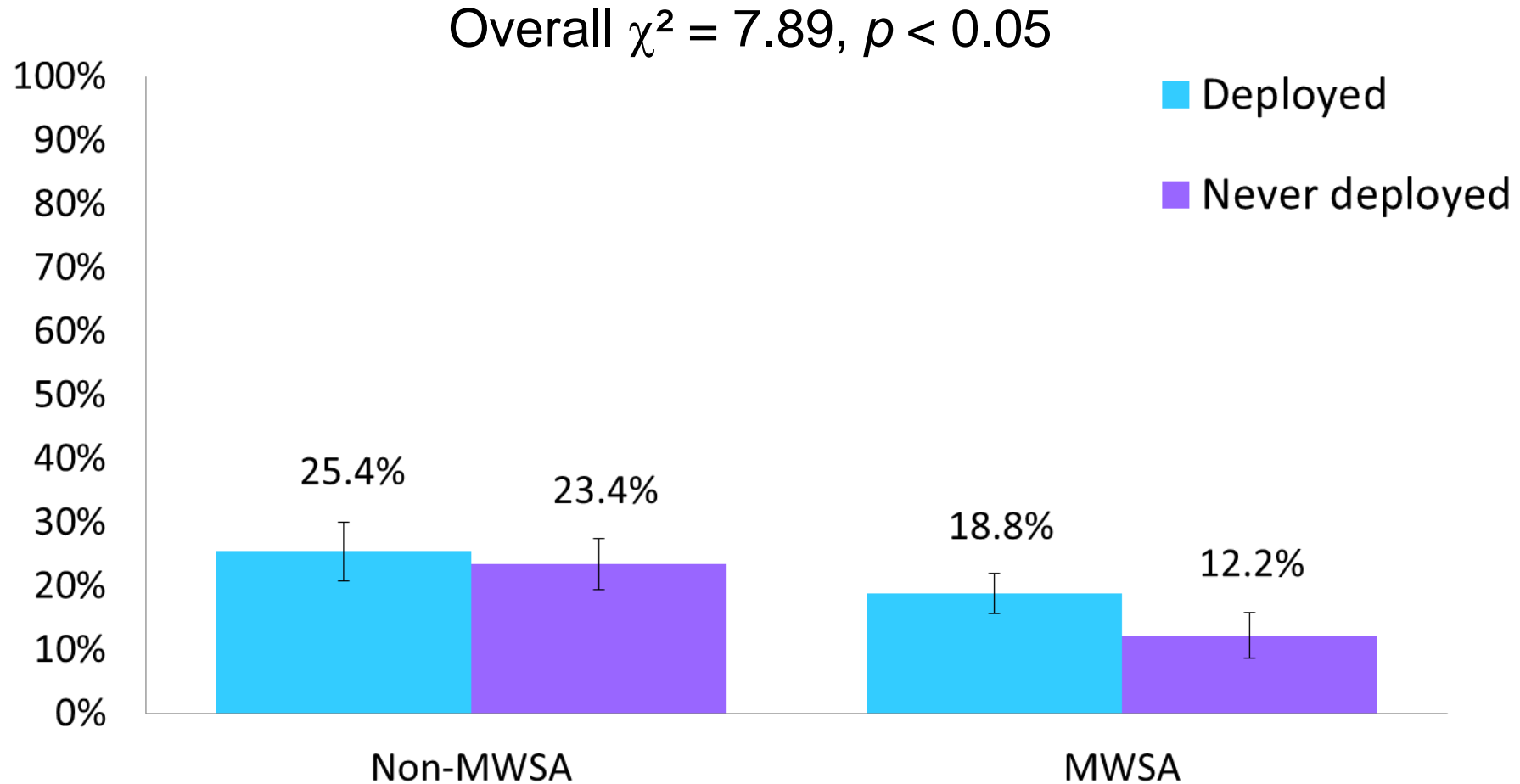
Results

Context of MWSA among women



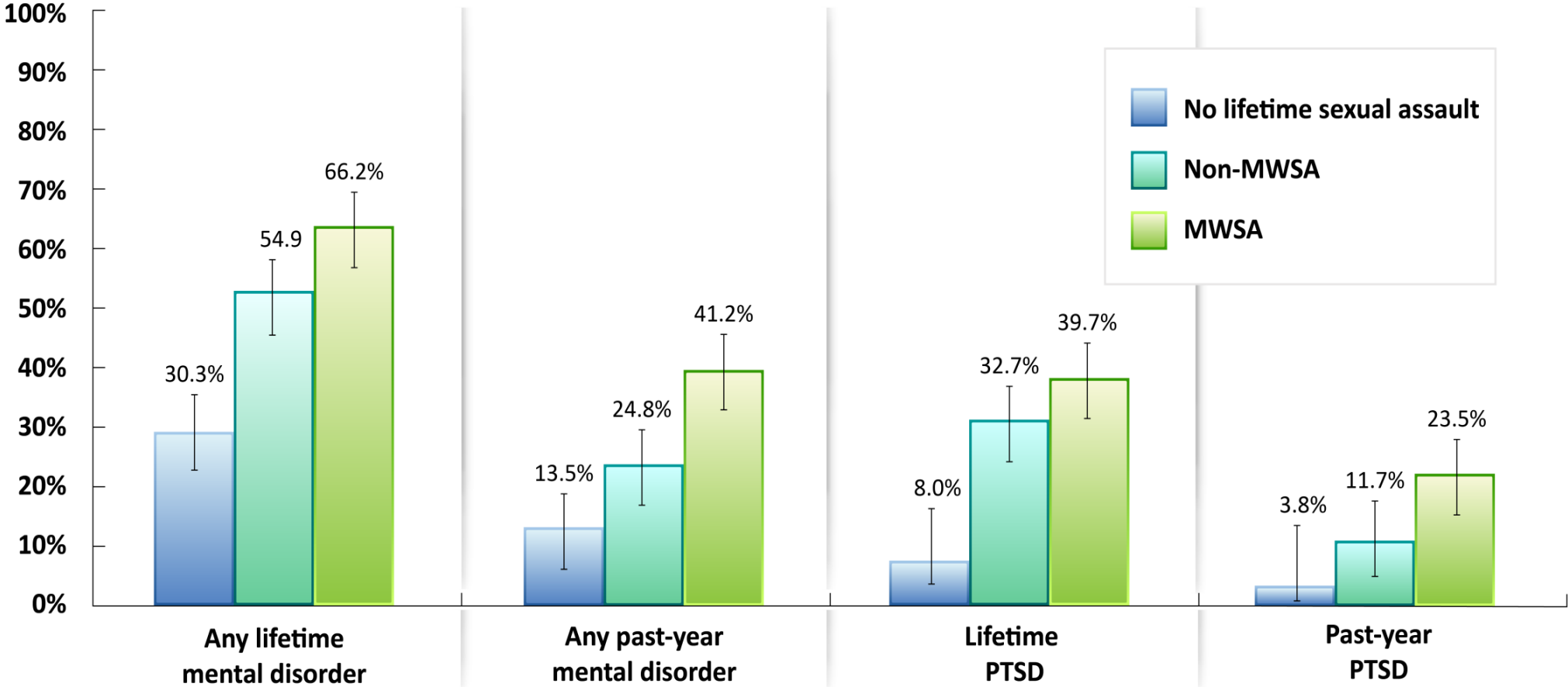
Results

Key sociodemographic and military risk factors among women – Deployment status



Results

Mental health outcomes among women



Conclusions

- MWSA has occurred in a sizeable fraction of CAF women
- Deployment is likely a period of elevated risk for women
- Both non-MWSA and MWSA are associated with an increased risk of mental disorders among women
- The prevalence of lifetime sexual assault did not differ substantially from that of the Canadian general population or the U.S. military

Limitations and Future Directions

■ Limitations:

- Lack of contextual and related (e.g., harassment) information
- Could not distinguish between MWSA with and without other adult sexual assault
- Cross-sectional data – causality cannot be determined

■ Next steps:

- Survey on Sexual Misconduct in the CAF
- DGMPPRA research program in support of OP HONOUR

Questions?

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