



National  
Institute  
for Health  
Development

# Mental health and well-being of Ukrainian war refugees in Estonia

Preliminary results from a population-based survey

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# Background and Aims

- Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 -> largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II
  - > 6 million Ukrainians displaced
  - 32,500 refugees registered in Estonia (2.4% of the population)
- Previous studies indicate poorer physical and mental health of refugees
  - Evidence mostly from research focusing on refugees originating outside the Europe
  - Available studies on Ukrainian refugees often hampered by methodological limitations with implications on generalizability
  - No specific surveys on UA refugees in Estonia
- **Aim: Collect representative data on health, health behaviour and well-being of Ukrainian war refugees in Estonia**
  - Context: biennial study Health Behaviour among Estonian Adult Population (HBEP)

# Study design and materials

- Cross-sectional study with option for longitudinal design (repeated survey + registry follow-up)
  - Simple random sample (n=4000) of UA refugees aged 18-64 years from population registry
    - Criteria: obtained temporary protection permit in Estonia since 24.02.2022
  - Study approved by Research Ethics Committee of National Institute for Health Development (TAIEK decision no 1314)
- Mixed-mode (web + mailed questionnaires) data collection, max 4 contact attempts
- Questionnaire in Ukrainian (+ Estonian, English, Russian versions)
  - Based on HBEP 2024 questionnaire (key indicators of health status, behaviour, health service use)
  - Specific modules on mental health (PTSD, WHO-5), migration and SES

# Data collection

- Data collection during 10.05.2024 - 31.07.2024
  - Contact made with 1907 of 3997 sampled individuals
  - 1430 valid responses, 397 refusals, 189 non-eligible responses
- Crude response rate 35,8%, adjusted response rate 36,5%
- 92,4% responses from web-mode, response-bias by sex/age:  
Distribution of age groups (%) in total population, study sample and respondents by sex and age

	Males						Females						Total
	Age group					Total	Age group					Total	
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64		
Population	5,8	10,3	13,0	11,4	9,7	<b>50,2</b>	5,7	9,7	12,1	11,3	11,0	<b>49,8</b>	100
Sample	6,8	7,7	9,5	5,3	3,1	<b>32,4</b>	9,5	16,9	21,2	12,7	7,4	<b>67,7</b>	100
Respondents	4,6	5,5	7,2	3,8	2,3	<b>23,4</b>	8,9	19,0	25,6	15,4	7,8	<b>76,7</b>	100

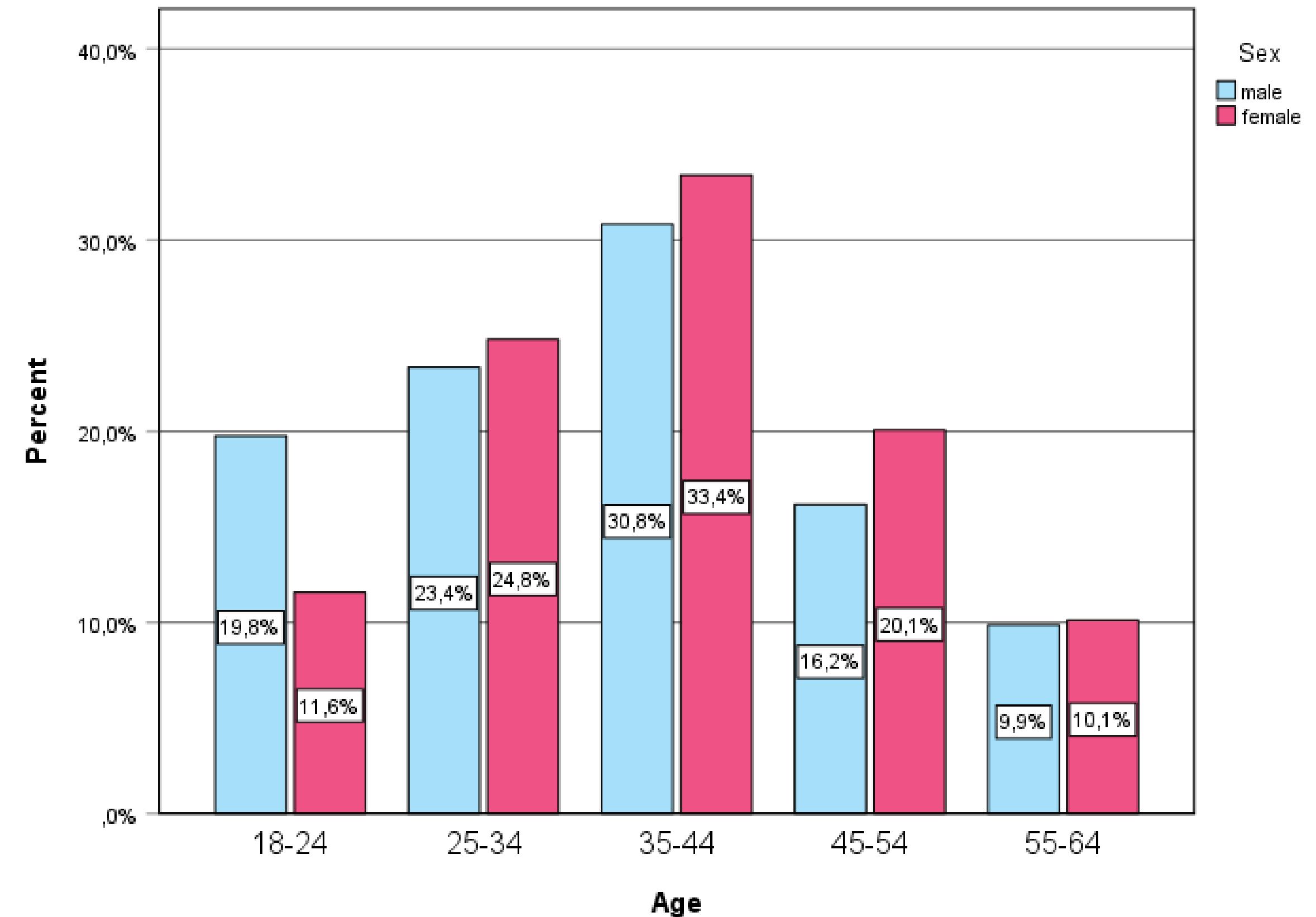
- HBEP 2024 study (n=5000, sampled from general population) carried out in parallel -> population controls



# Preliminary results

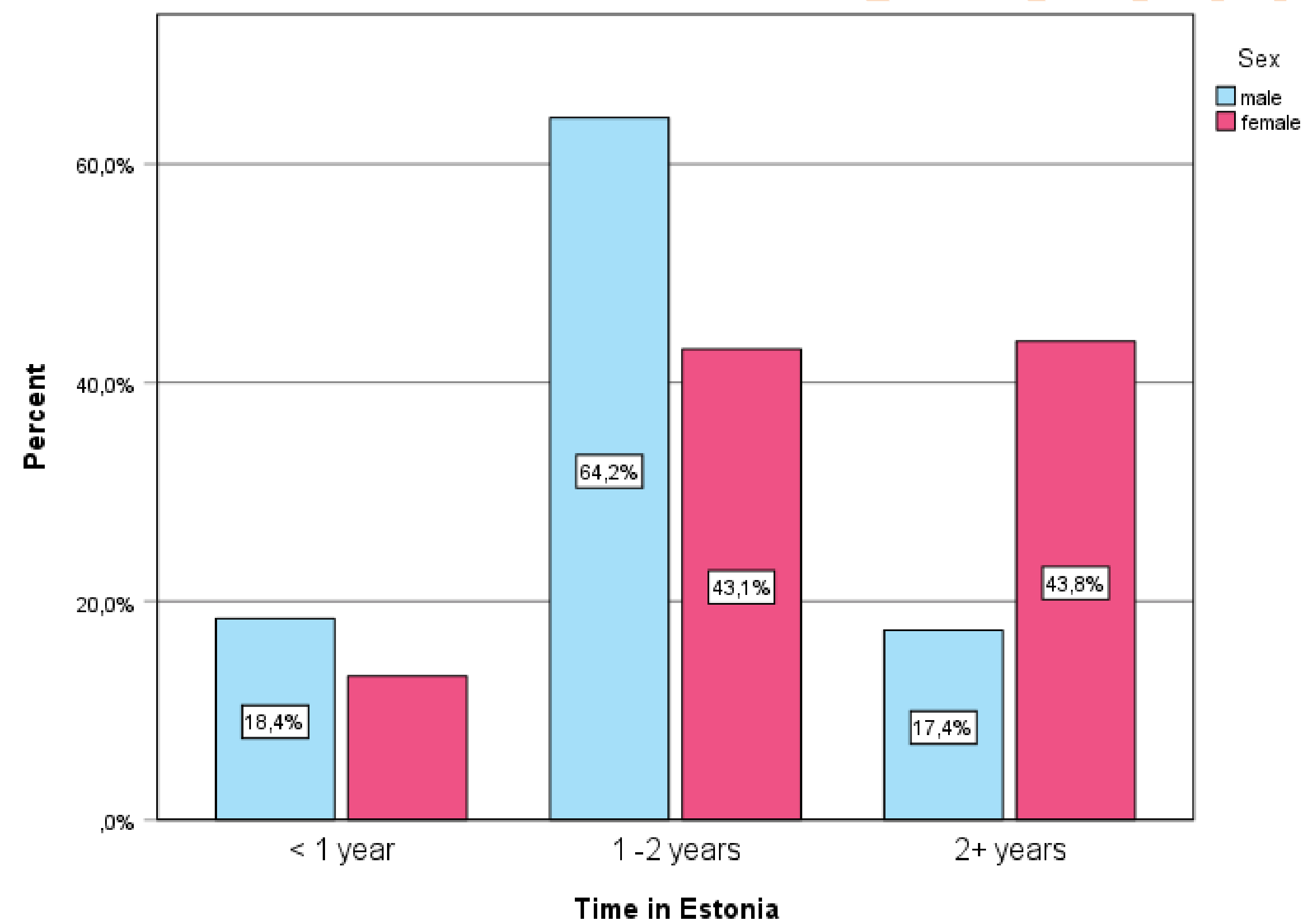
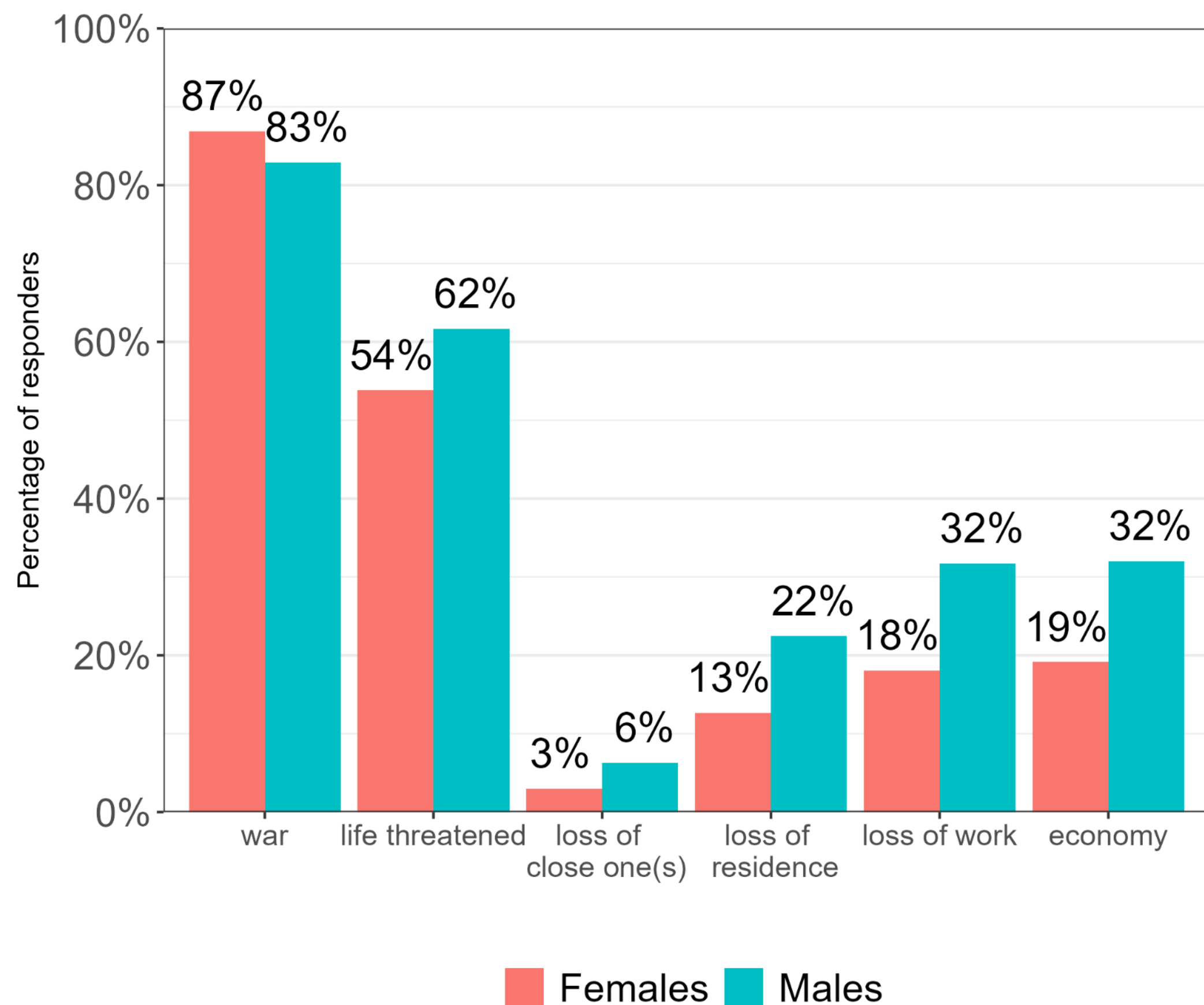
# Socio-demographics of Ukrainian refugees in Estonia

- 23,4% (n=334) males, 76,6% (n=1096) females
- Mean age 38,3 years
- 88,7% ethnic Ukrainians with 90,5% UA citizens
- 47,7% with tertiary, 50,0% secondary/vocational education
- 75,2% employed previously vs 68,4% currently
  - Unemployed 4,3% ->18,3%
- Household financial problems 15,1% previously -> 34,6% currently



# Reasons and duration of migration

- War and threat to life as main reason for emigrating to Estonia
- Average time lived in Estonia 1.7 years

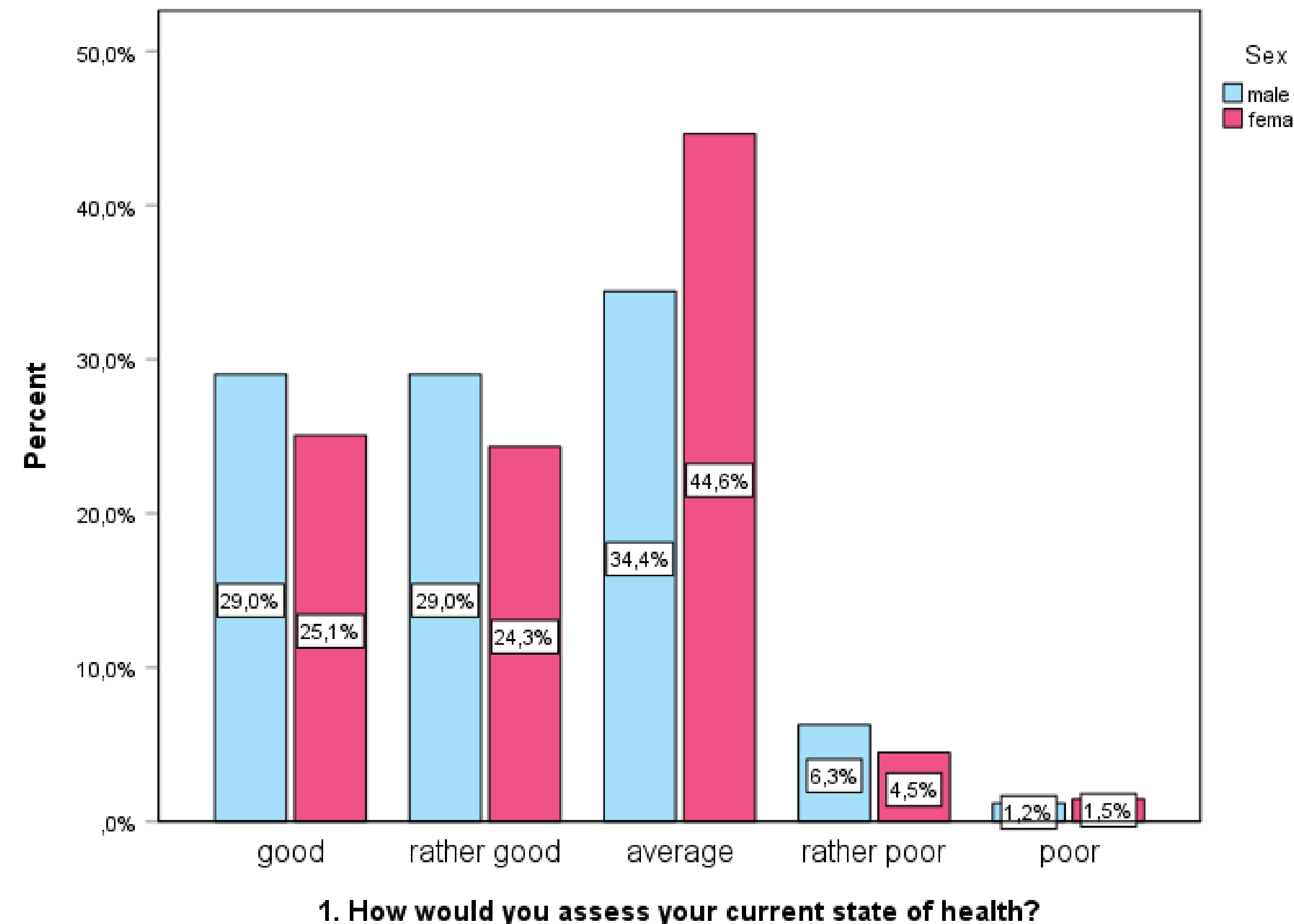






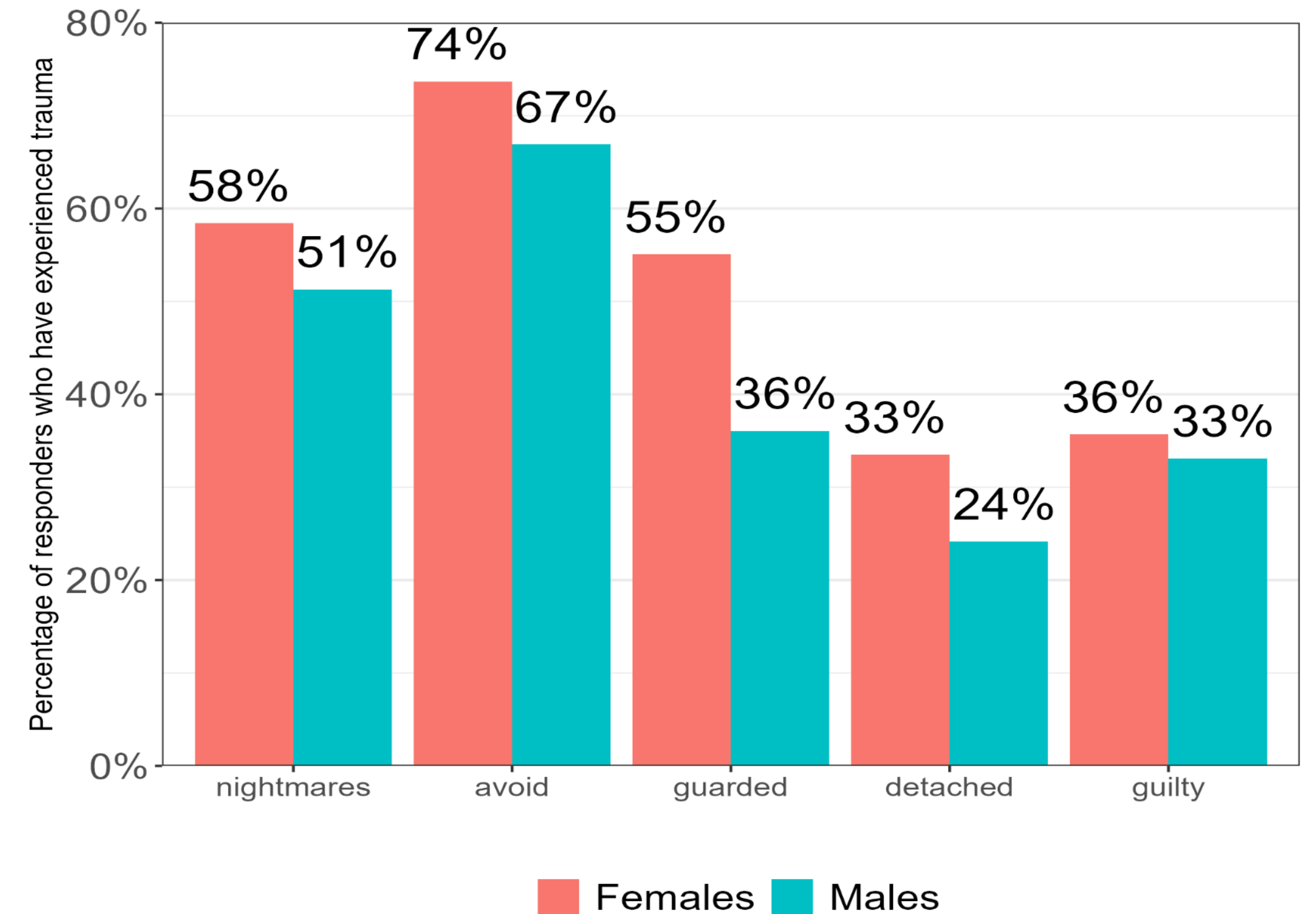
# Health status and healthcare use

- 51,4% assess health as 'good/rather good', 50,6% has longstanding illness/conditions and no health-related activity limitations in 36,9%
- >80% had used health services past 12 months, incl:
  - GP visits by 66,4%
  - Dentist visits by 57,0%
  - Other medical specialist by 58,5%
  - ER visits by 29,6%
  - Hospitalized 11,5%
- Unmet healthcare needs past 12 months by <10%
  - 2,2% for psychologist/mental health counsellor



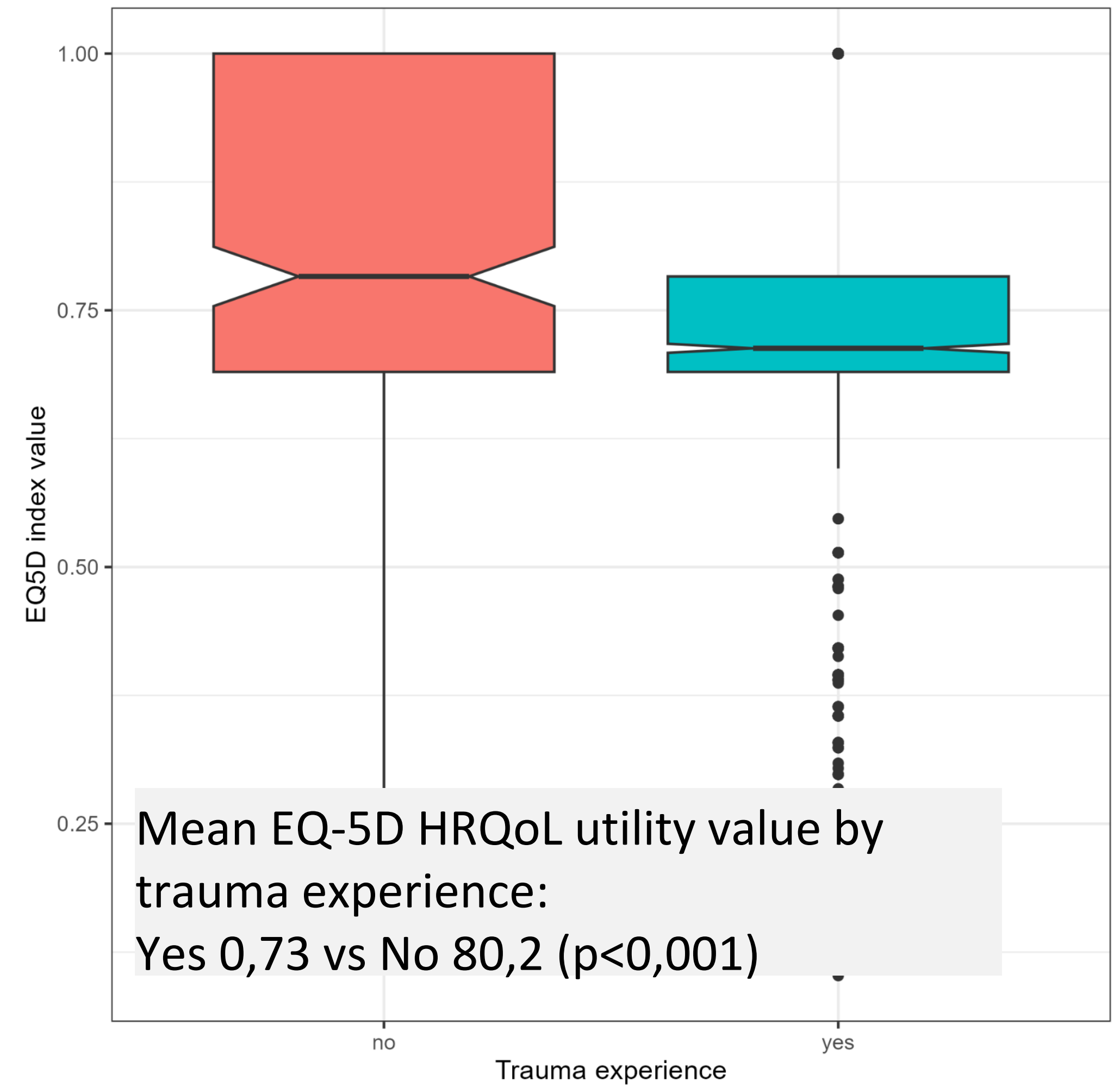
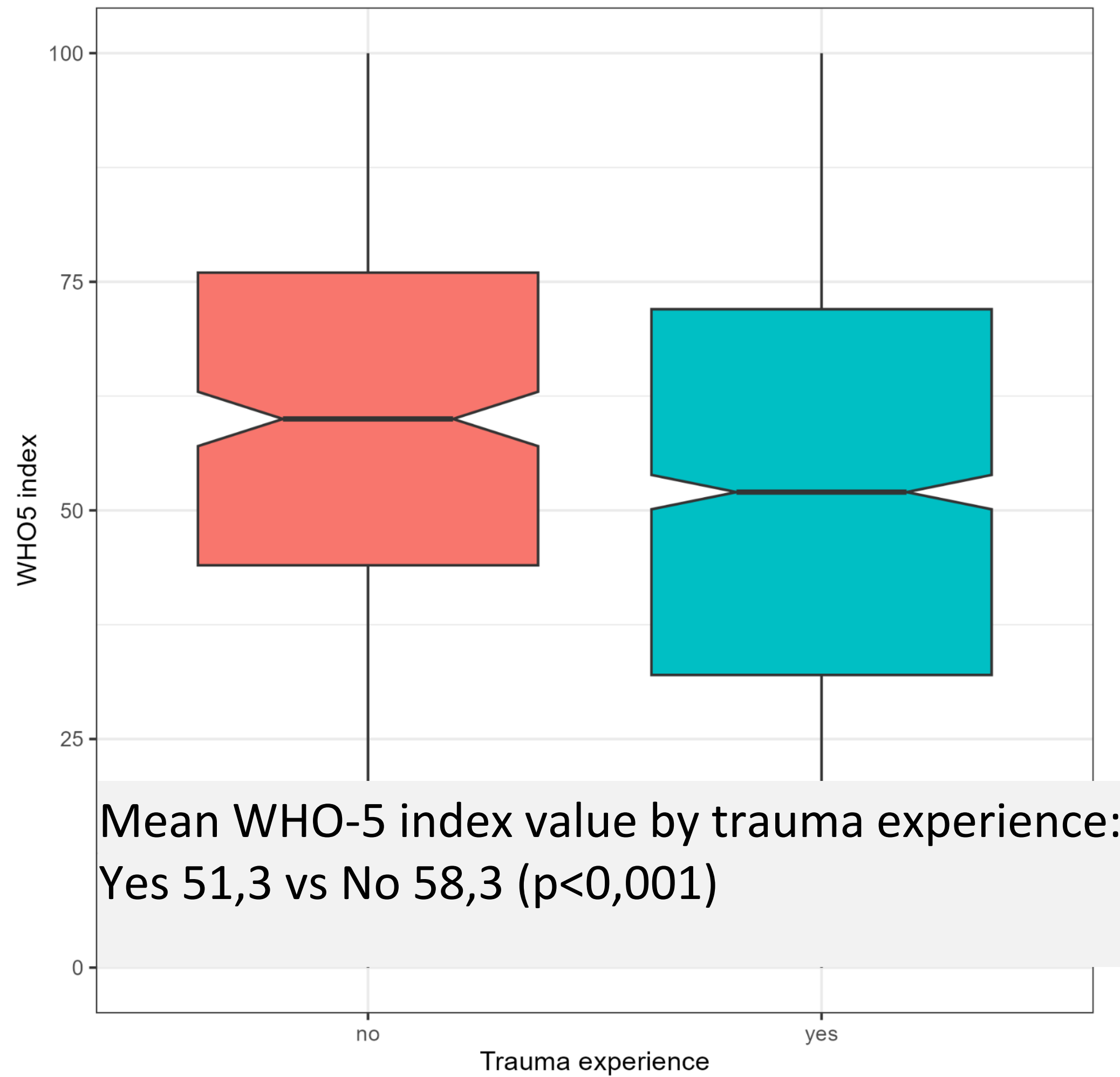
# Mental health

- Perceived stress 20,7%
- Depressiveness 27,1%
- Overtiredness 51,5%
- Suicidal thoughts 4,5%
- Mental health related medication use past 7 days:
  - Antidepressants: 7,2%
  - Hypnotics: 10,4%
  - Sedatives/tranquilizers: 9,7%
- Trauma experience based on PTSD Screen for *DSM-5* (PC-PTSD-5): **79,6%**



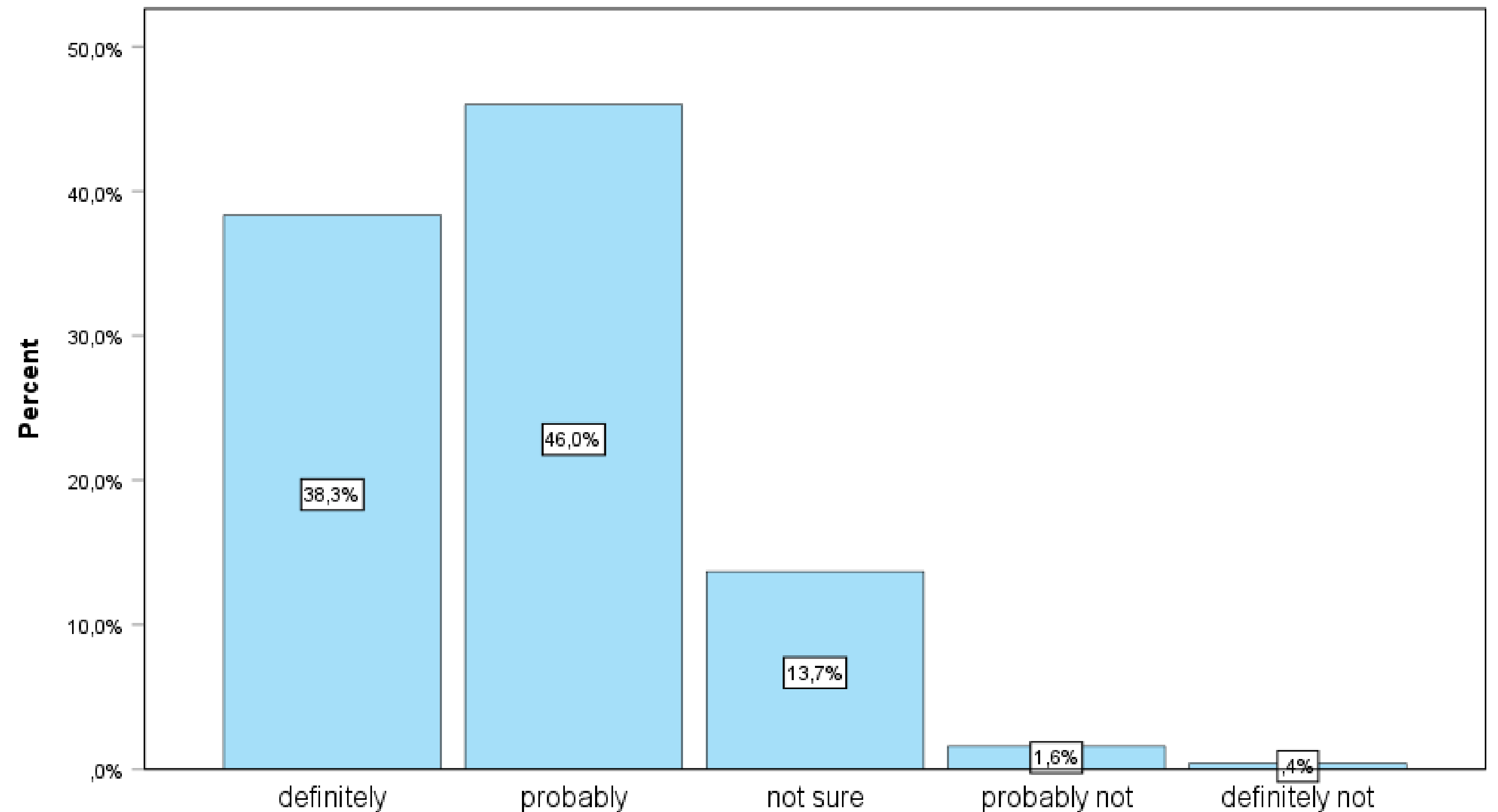
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|--|-----|-------|
| a. had nightmares about the event(s) or thought about the event(s) when you did not want to?                                 | yes | 57,5% |
| b. tried hard not to think about the event(s) or went out of your way to avoid situations that reminded you of the event(s)? |     | 73,1% |
| c. been constantly on guard, watchful, or easily startled?   |     | 51,7% |
| d. felt numb or detached from people, activities, or your surroundings?  |     | 32,0% |
| e. felt guilty or unable to stop blaming yourself or others for the event(s) or any problems the event(s) may have caused?   |     | 35,9% |

# Trauma experience and well-being/HRQoL



# Current well-being of refugee population

- 70,8% satisfied with life in general
  - 93,1% felt safe
  - 18,6% had felt discrimination
- Refugees have high trust in institutions
  - Education mean 8,51
  - Healthcare mean 7,84
  - Social welfare mean 8,48
  - Police 9,06
- 84,3% are likely to stay in Estonia



69. Finally, do you see yourself living in Estonia in 12 months?

# Conclusions

- First representative health study among UA refugees in Estonia contributing to limited population-based studies available in Europe
- Preliminary results suggest that UA refugees in Estonia have:
  - Socio-demographic profile distinct from general population,
  - Have migrated to Estonia mostly due to war/threat to life reasons and have high PTSD symptom prevalence,
  - Have worse SES than before migrating but have high trust towards institutions and well-being in host country,
  - Report relatively good health and have higher healthcare usage, but trauma experience differentiates both HRQoL and well-being scores.
- Next steps: publications, population controls from HBEP2024 survey

# Thank you!

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