



# Interpersonal violence in sport: what do we know?

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T. VERTOMMEN - UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL - 18 SEPTEMBER 2018

# The story of Jolien

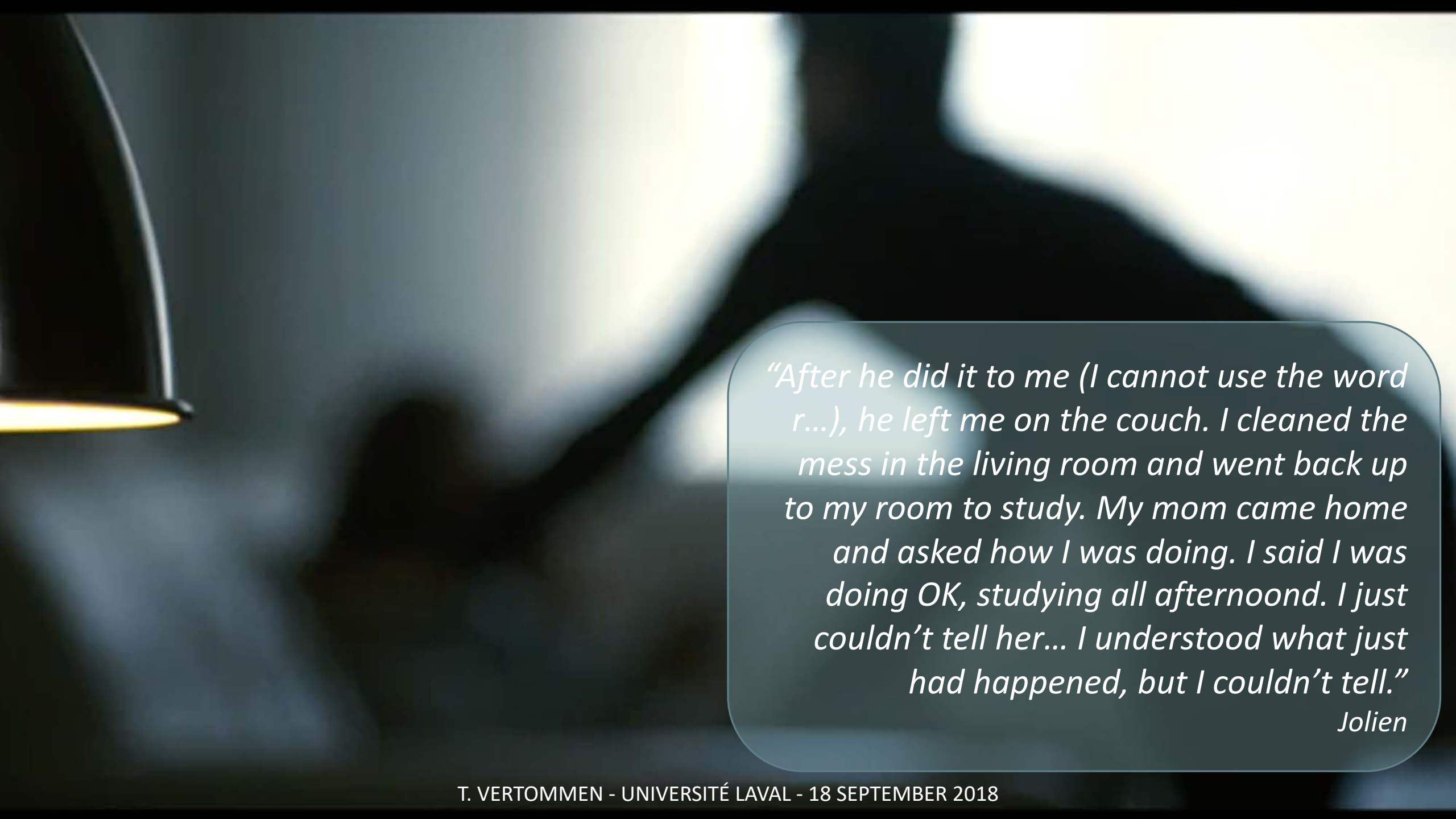
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# Overview

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1. Definitions , prevalence and methodology
2. Policy & prevention
- 3.
4. A long road ahead: continuing the journey towards safe sport



*“After he did it to me (I cannot use the word r...), he left me on the couch. I cleaned the mess in the living room and went back up to my room to study. My mom came home and asked how I was doing. I said I was doing OK, studying all afternoon. I just couldn’t tell her... I understood what just had happened, but I couldn’t tell.”*

*Jolien*





# Conducive climate

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- ✓ Relation of power and trust
- ✓ Pressure of competition
- ✓ Physical contact
- ✓ High tolerance of physical violence
- ✓ Gender imbalance in managing & coaching staff
- ✓ Young start age
- ✓ Countless practical opportunities
- ✓ Boundless ambitions of athletes and entourage
- ✓ Closed communities

A close-up photograph of a woman's face. Her eyes are wide open and looking directly at the camera. Her mouth is covered by several hands, suggesting she is being silenced or that there is a taboo around speaking. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on her face.

# One of the last taboos in sport?

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Why wouldn't it happen in sport?

Why don't they speak up?

Why didn't we see it or speak up?

How to find out what happens?





**1 in 3**

32% of Canadian Adults reported to experiencing some form of Child Abuse before the age of 16.



Stats according to the "Raising Canada: A report on children in Canada, their health and wellbeing" 2018 Report

**one in five**  
**un sur cinq**



# Definitions, prevalence & methodology

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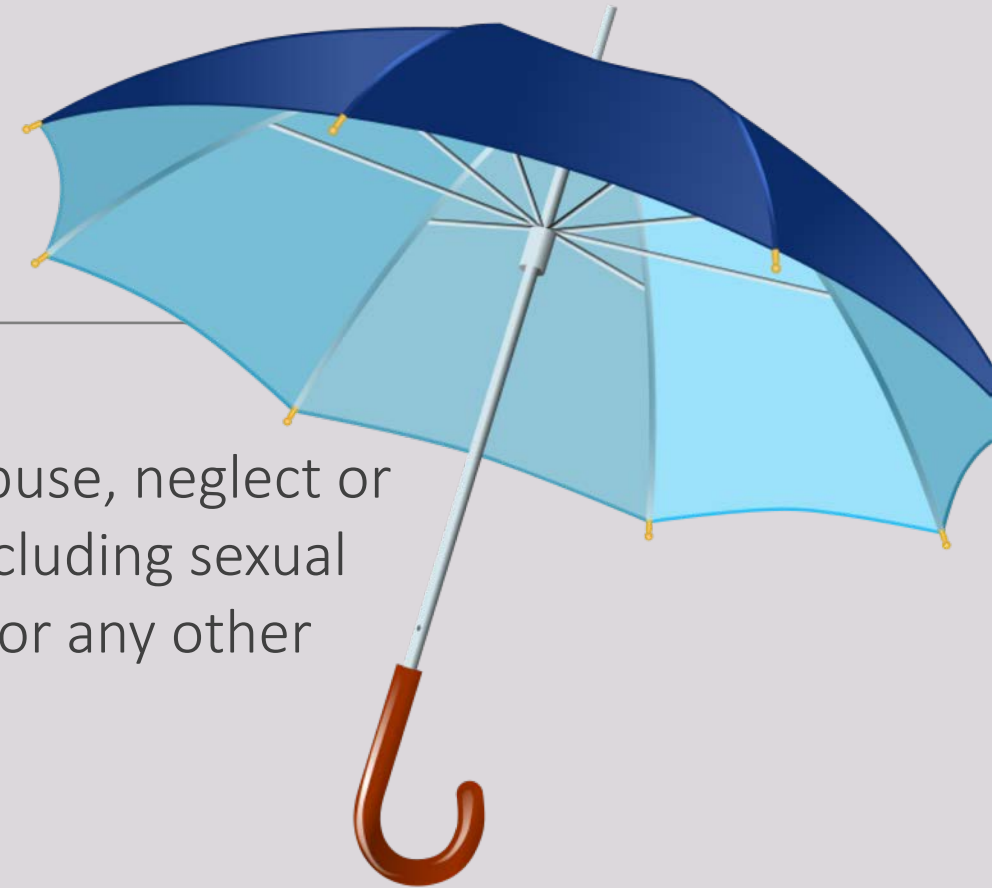


# UN CRC Definition

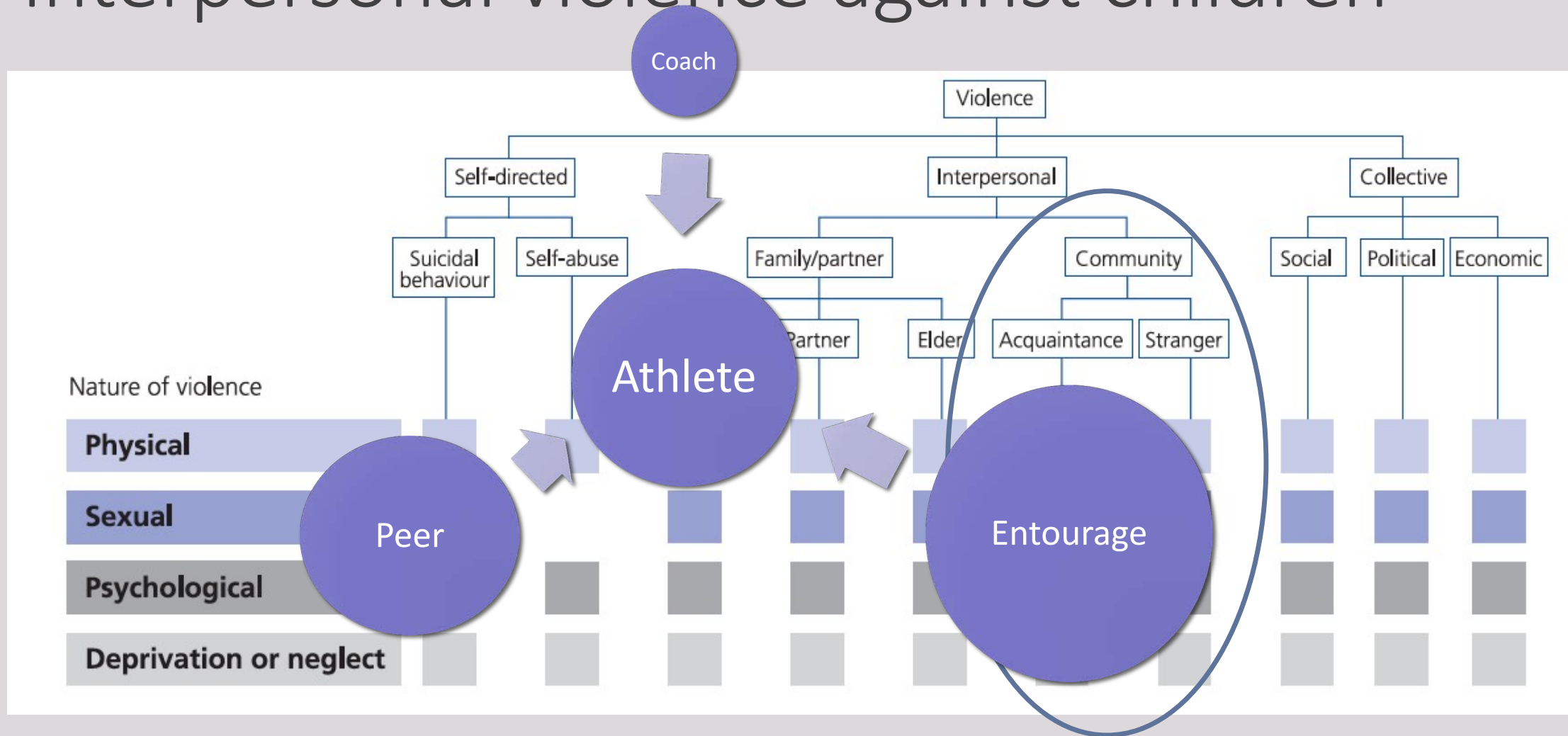
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“All forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child”

“All forms of violence against children, however light, are unacceptable.  
... **Frequency, severity of harm and intent to harm** are not prerequisites for the definitions of violence...”



# Interpersonal violence against children



# Prevalence estimates

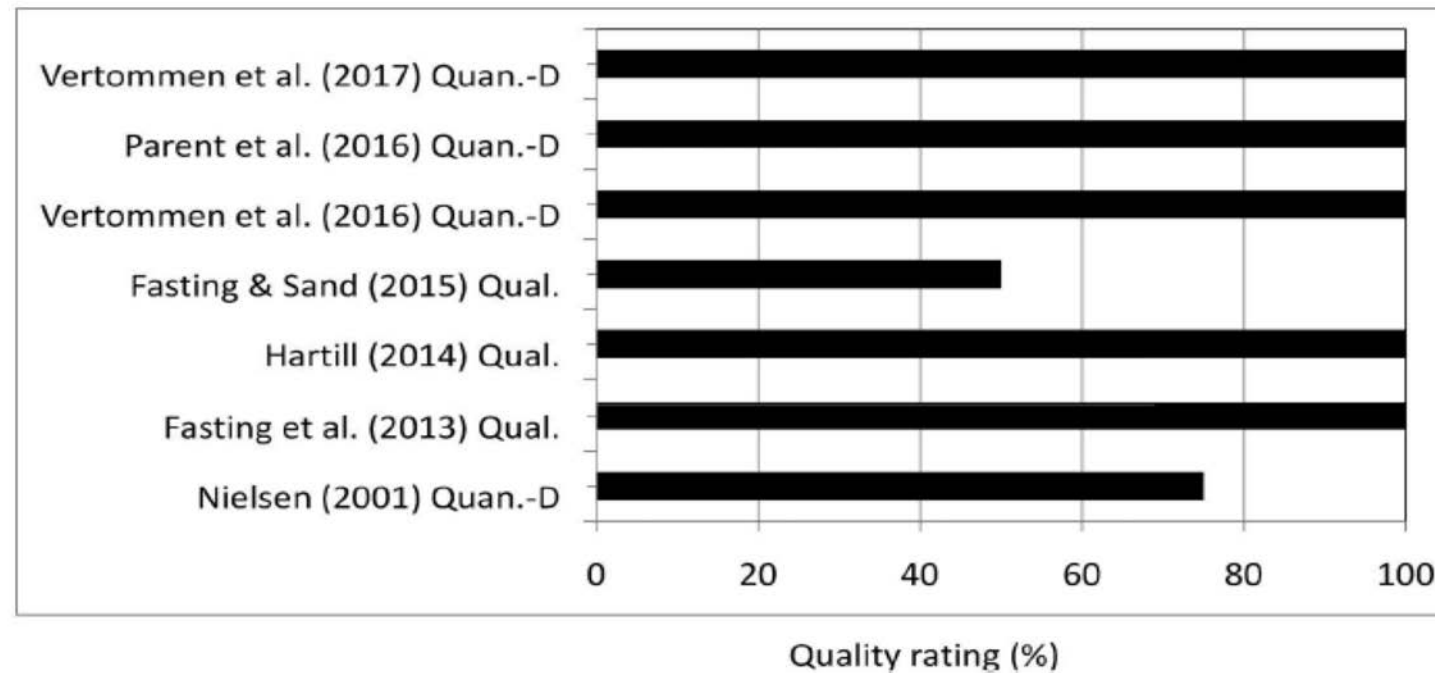
Type	Prevalence estimate
Sexual harassment	14-49% (outliers 2- 92%)
Sexual abuse	Women: 2-13% (outlier 49%) Men: 6%
Physical violence	11%
Psychological violence	38% (outlier 75%)
Neglect	?
Bullying	+/-30%

Some of the most influential studies:

Volkwein et al, 1996, USA  
Kirby & Greaves, 1996, CAN  
Leahy et al, 2002, AUS  
Fasting et al, 2003, NO  
Fasting et al, 2011, NO, GRE, CZ  
Alexander et al, 2011, UK  
Vertommen et al, 2016, NL and BE  
Parent et al., 2016, CAN



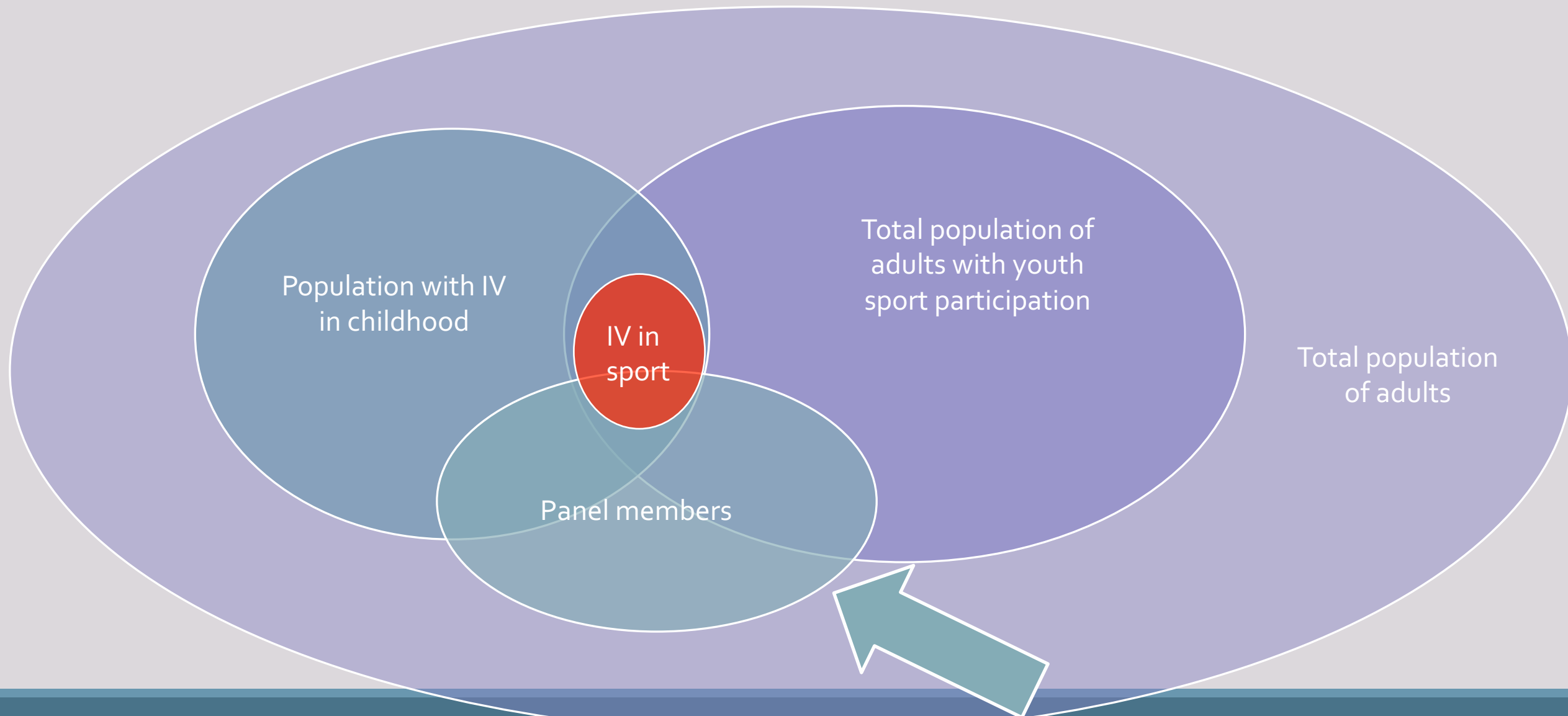
# QUALITY ASSESSMENT



**Figure 2.** The results of the assessment of the risk of bias in the seven studies included in the current systematic review.

Bjørnseth, I., & Szabo, A. (2018). Sexual Violence Against Children in Sports and Exercise: A Systematic Literature Review. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 27(4), 365–385.

# STUDY DESIGN: SAMPLING



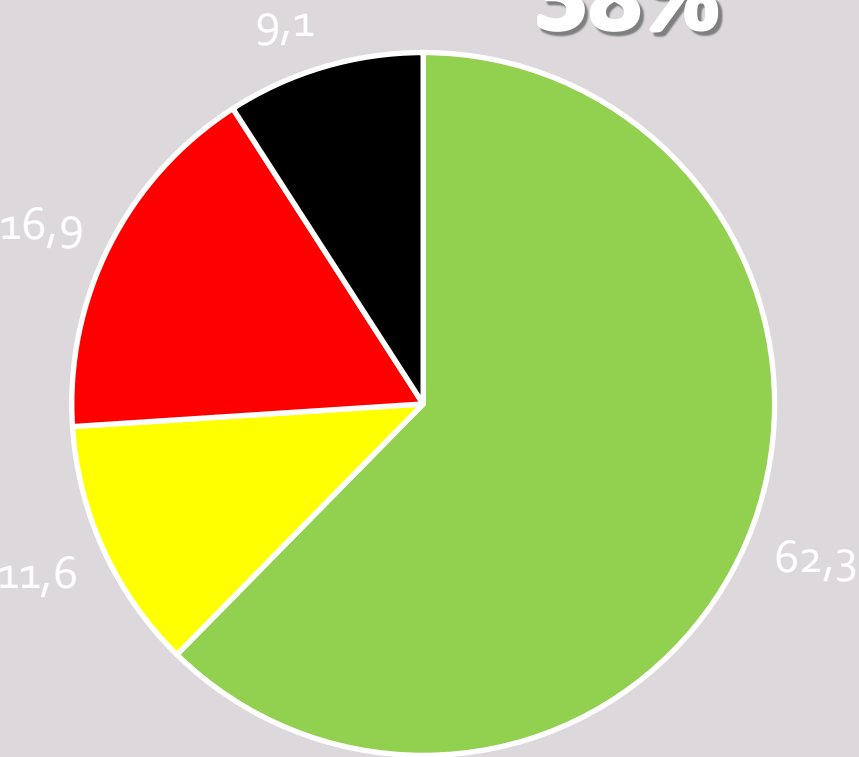
# STUDY DESIGN: CLASSIFICATION

	Frequency		
	Once	A few times	Regularly, often
Event severity score 1 (low)	<b>Mild</b> e.g., you were negatively criticized about your performance	<b>Mild</b> e.g., your privacy was invaded (someone was standing too close to you, etc.)	<b>Moderate</b> e.g., you were shouted or cursed at
Event severity score 2 (medium)	<b>Mild</b> e.g., you were being touched during training in a way that made you uneasy	<b>Moderate</b> e.g., you were put down, embarrassed or humiliated	<b>Severe</b> e.g., you were threatened with being thrown out (of the team, club, gym, etc.)
Event severity score 3 (high)	<b>Severe</b> e.g., someone touched you sexually against your will	<b>Severe</b> e.g., you were hit with an object (e.g. shoe, racket, hockey stick)	<b>Severe</b> e.g., you were grabbed by the throat / choked, You were forced to have sex with penetration

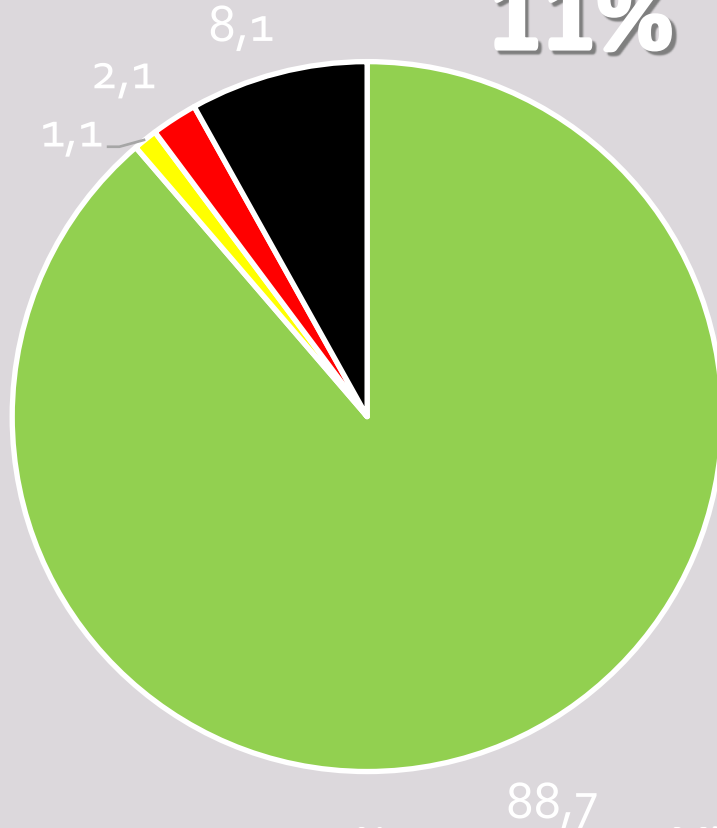


# BE/NL Prevalence rates

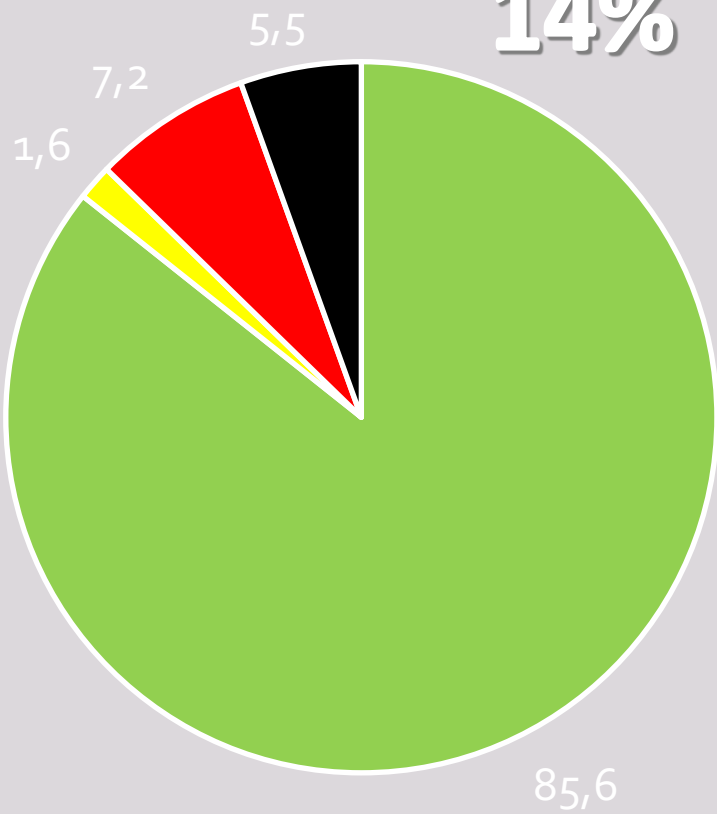
Psychological violence  
**38%**



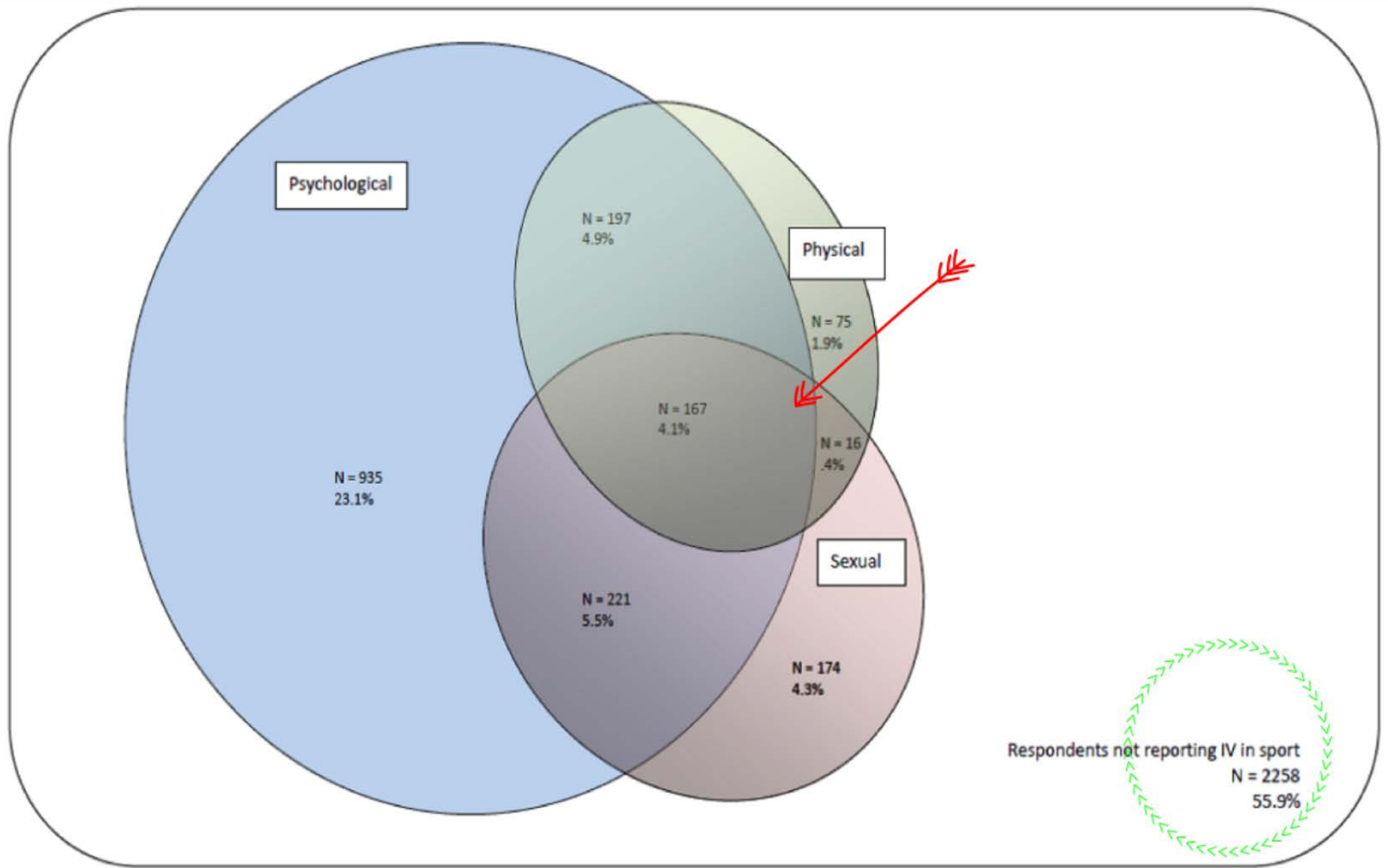
Physical violence  
**11%**



Sexual violence  
**14%**

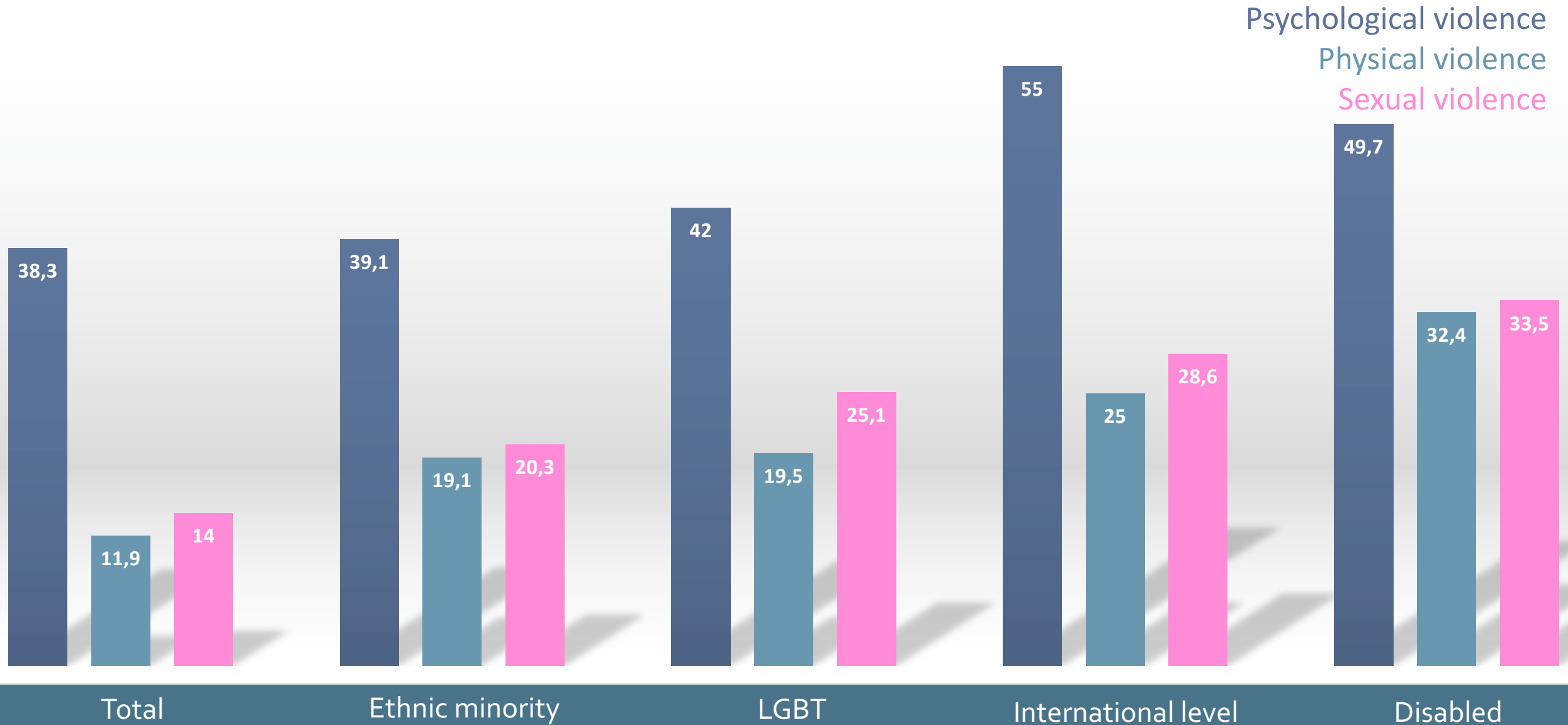


No Mild  
Moderate Severe

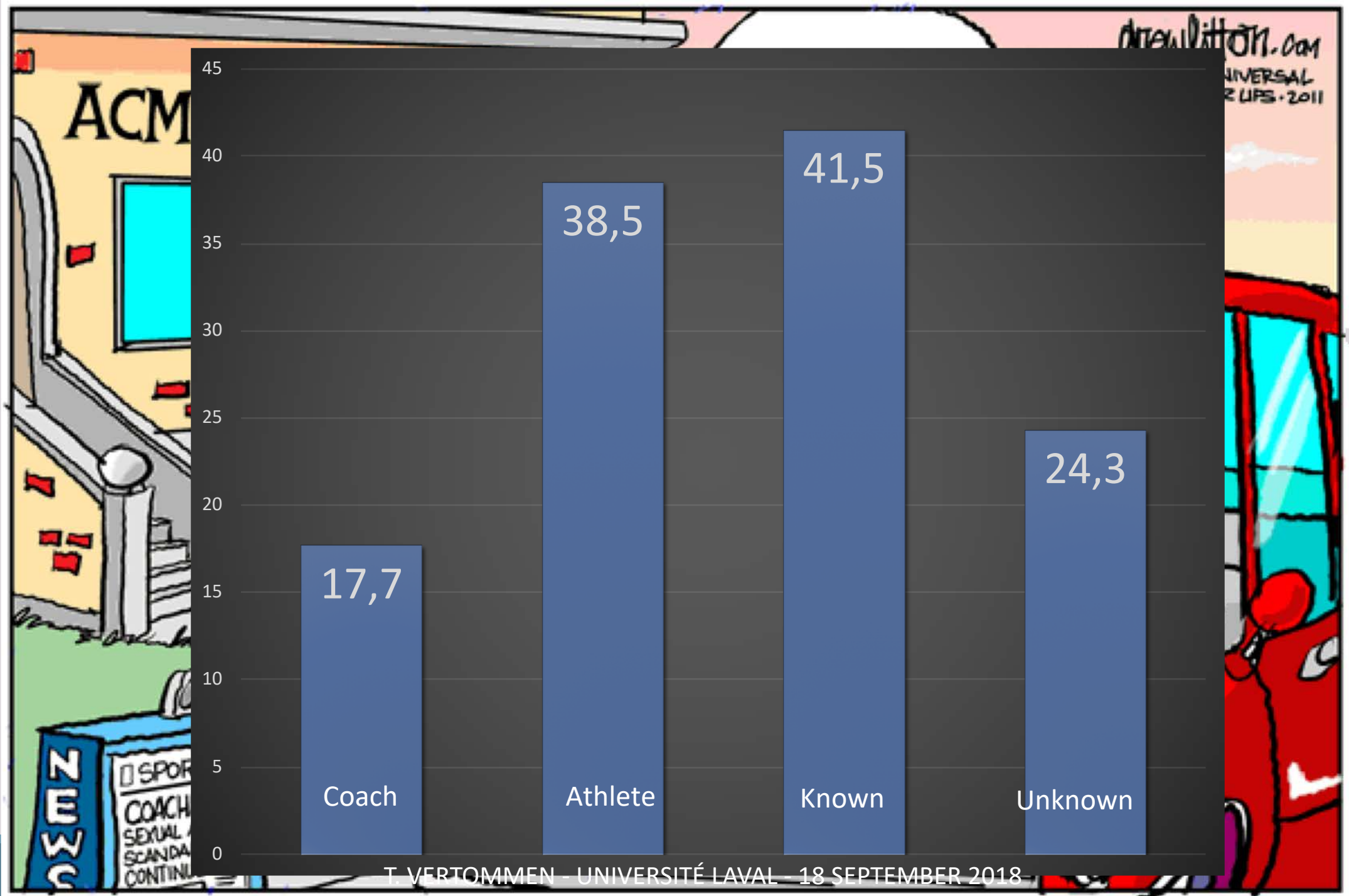


# Vulnerable subgroups

Vertommen et al. 2016







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# LET'S REMEMBER

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Majority reports more than one (male) perpetrator (More common in males).

**Athletes (!)** are the most frequently reported perpetrators of psy and phys violence, other (un-)known adults (not coach) in sexual violence.

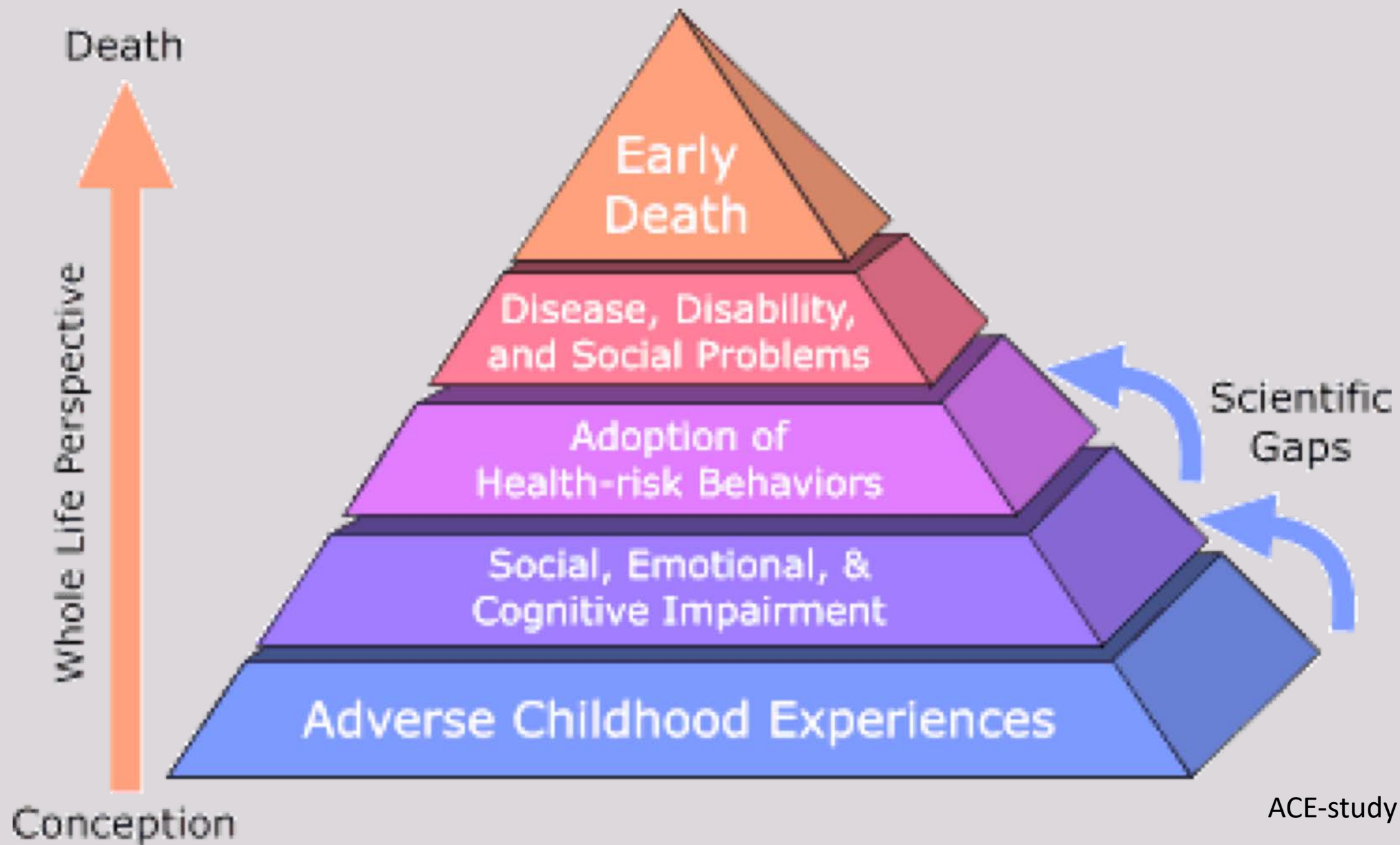
Top profiles:

- Psy: athletes: peer or older male ▷ male, and female ▷ female athletes
- Phys: one male coach ▷ several male athletes
- Sex: several male others, one male other, one male coach

# Impact on severity of experiences

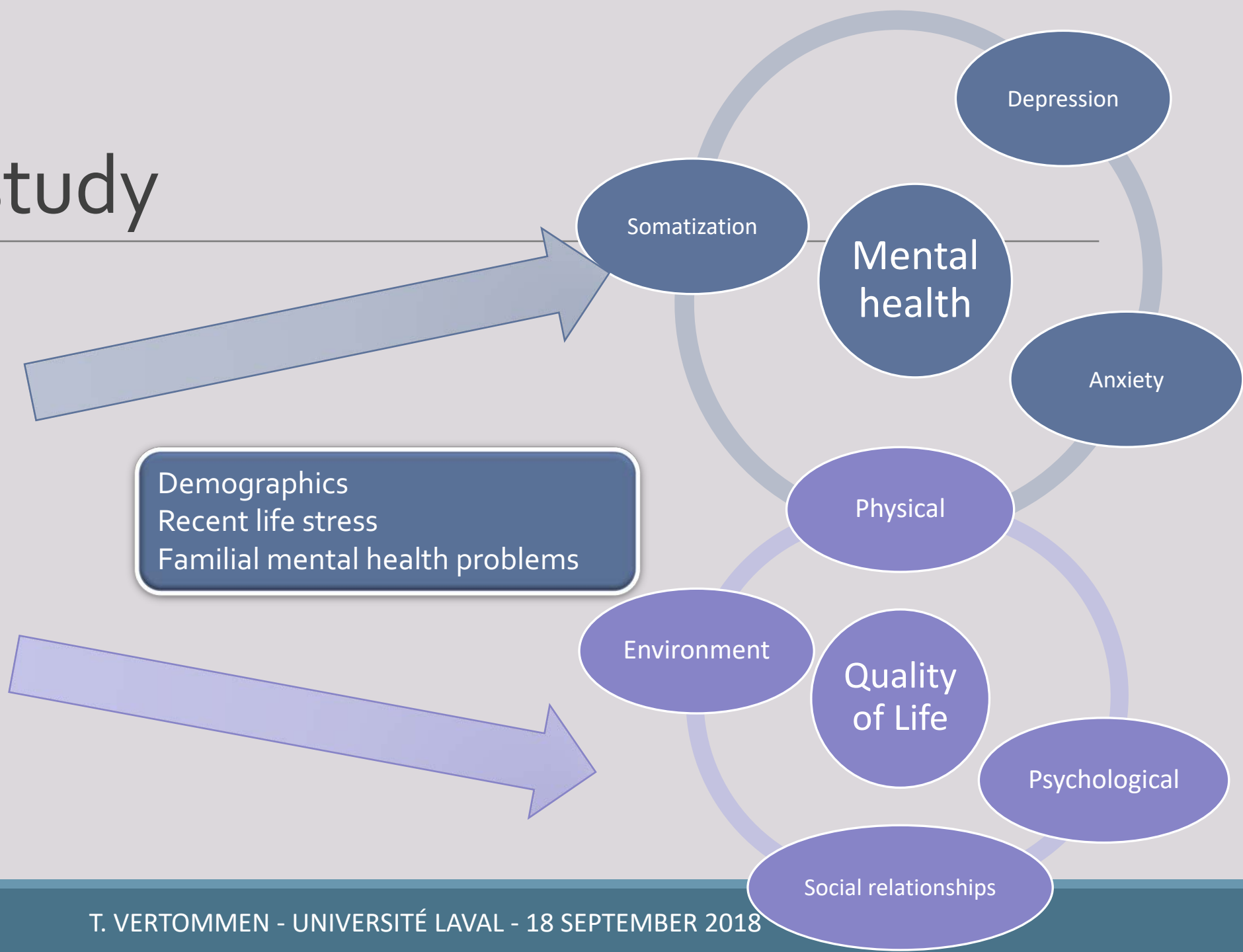
		Psychological Violence (n=1520)		Physical Violence (n=452)		Sexual Violence (n=529)	
		OR	p	OR	p	OR	p
Perpetrator's sex	Male <sup>a</sup>						
	Female	1.479	0.010	0.771	0.408	0.909	0.756
	Both	1.655	0.001	1.487	0.424	0.851	0.536
Perpetrator's role	Coach	1.084	0.485	0.168	0.000	1.733	0.028
	Athlete	1.215	0.170	1.857	0.118	0.989	0.962
	Known other	1.480	0.003	2.023	0.106	1.651	0.015
	Unknown	1.164	0.466	2.469	0.271	1.077	0.760
Number of perpetrators	One <sup>a</sup>						
	More than one	3.593	0.000	2.047	0.018	1.696	0.011
Victim's sex	Male <sup>a</sup>						
	Female	0.936	0.613	1.58	0.099	1.247	0.227





ACE-study: Felitti et al.

# Impact study



Victimization types		BSI GSI	QOL1 Physical health	QOL2 Psychological health	QOL3 Social Relationships	QOL4 Environment
All 3 types of IV (N=52-53)	Mean	27.5	12.0	12.9	13.0	13.3
Psychological and physical violence (N=72-75)	Mean	18.2	13.2	13.5	12.6	14.3
Psychological and sexual violence (N=24-26)	Mean	17.6	13.9	14.2	13.9	15.2
Physical and sexual violence (N=32-33)	Mean	24.3	13.6	13.6	13.5	14.5
Psychological violence only (N=205-2013)	Mean	12.1	14.1	14.0	13.9	15.3
Physical violence only (N=158-164)	Mean	11.2	14.6	14.5	14.1	15.5
Sexual violence only (N=104-111)	Mean	11.8	14.0	14.5	14.3	15.2
No IV (N=3260-3366)	Mean	8.1	15.3	15.0	14.9	16.0
<b>Total (N=3907 - 4038)</b>	Mean	9.1	15.0	14.8	14.7	15.8
<b>ANOVA</b>	F	54.73	27.72	19.73	18.49	25.8
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

# Policy & prevention

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A LONG ROAD AHEAD



# Important international initiatives

2000

- Council of Europe Resolution on Prevention of SHA against women, young people and children in sport

2007

- IOC Consensus Statement on Sexual harassment and Abuse in Sport

2016

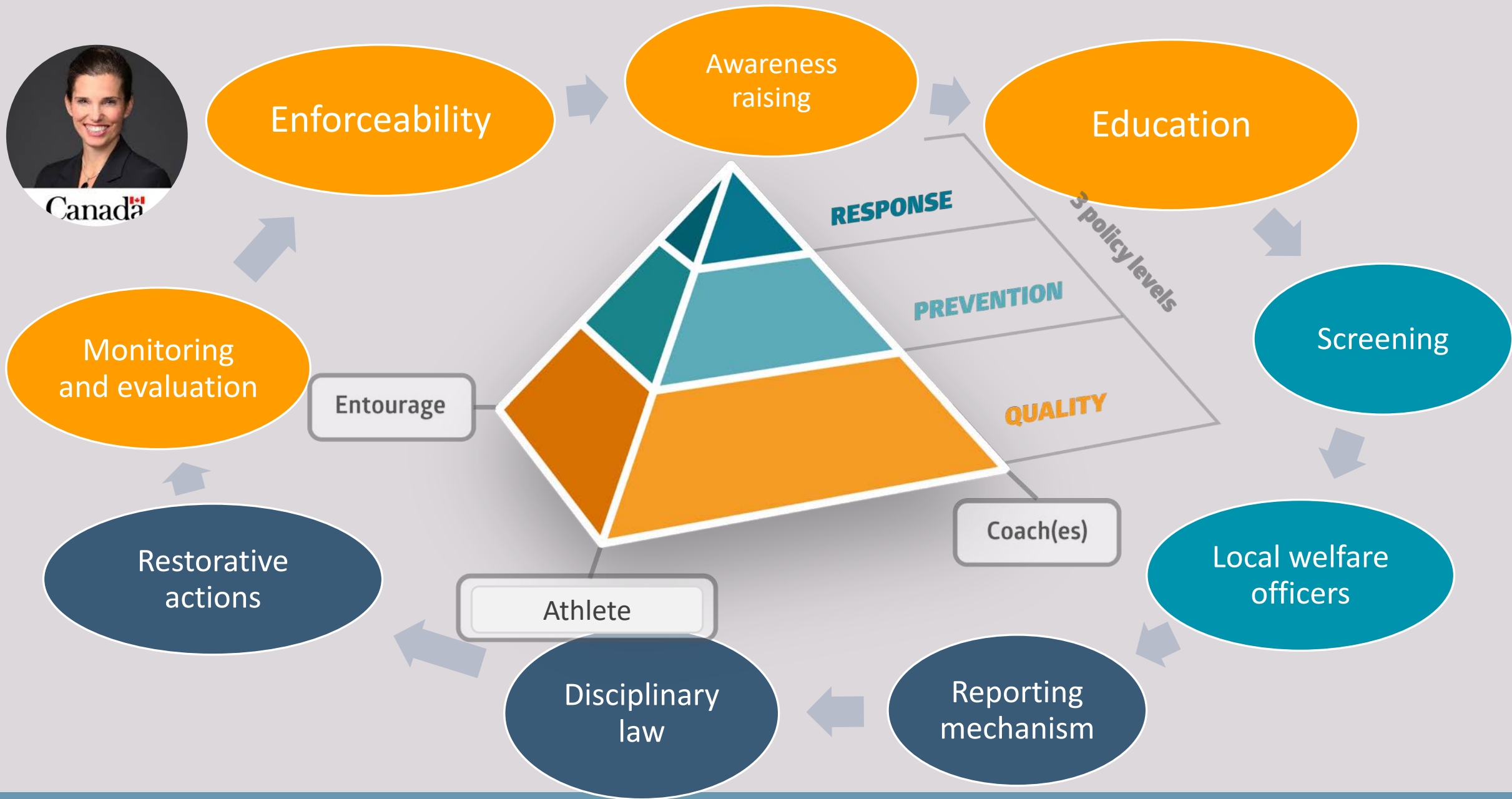
- IOC Consensus Statement on Harassment and Abuse in sport
- Launch of Safe Sport International
- International Safeguards: 8 pillars for prevention
- Gender-based Violence in Sport (DG EAC, EurCom)
- VOICE project: using narratives to combat sexual violence in sport

2017

- Pro Safe Sport+, Council of Europe
- Play the Game Conference, Eindhoven

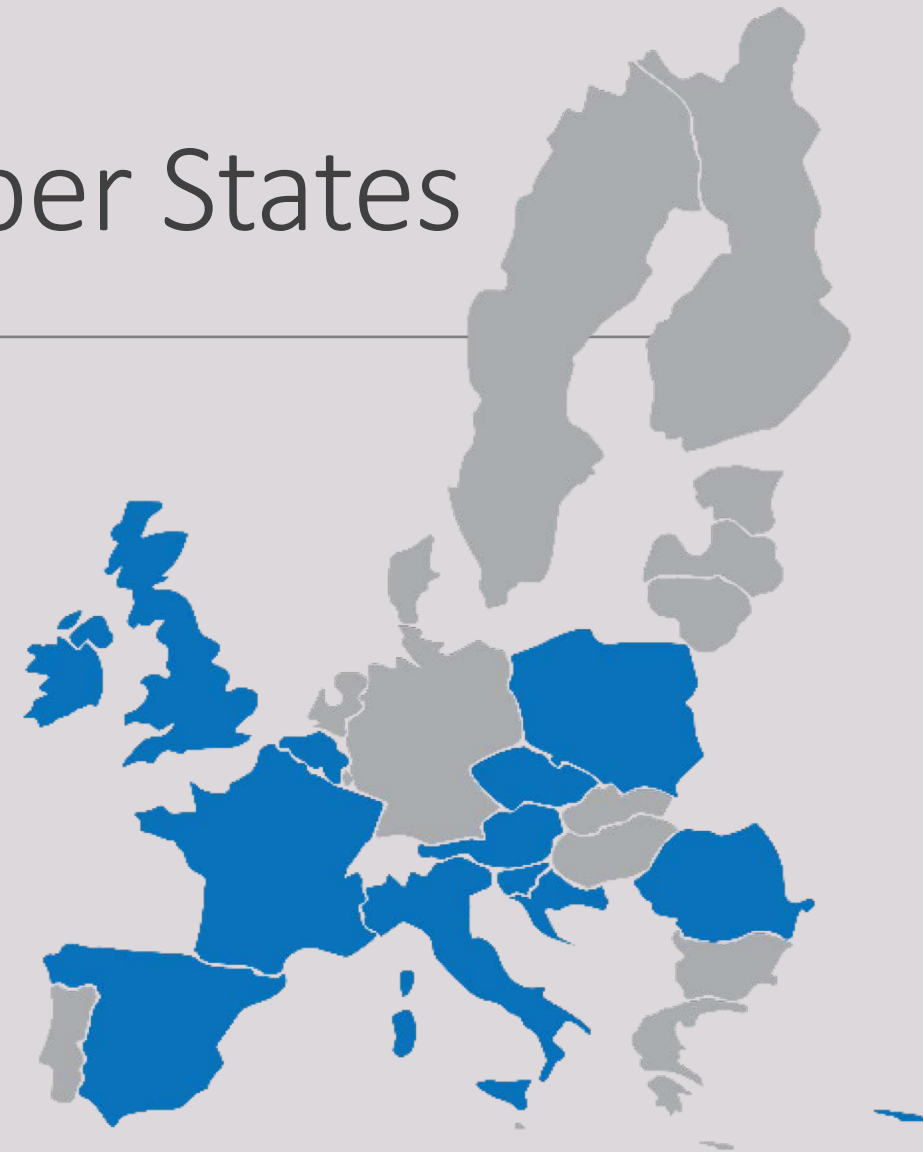
2018

- Erasmus+ i-Protect: quality label development for European sport clubs
- IOC Toolkit (IF's en NOC's)
- Council of Europe #starttotalk campaign



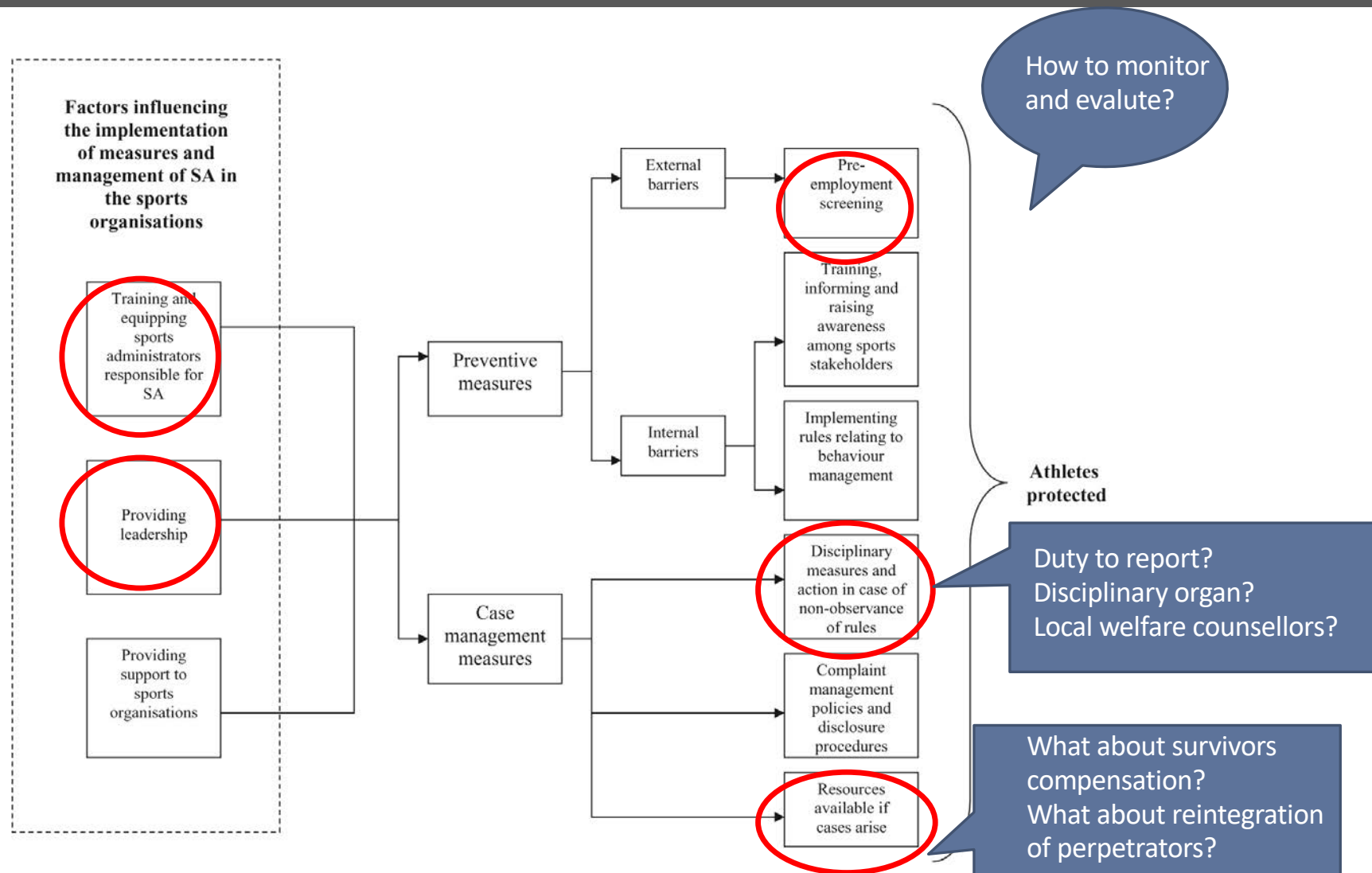
# Policy framework @EU Member States

- Less than half of the EU Member States make explicit reference to forms of IV in sport in their policy frameworks
- Policies seldom refer to LGBTQI violence
- Few countries have specific national policies to address forms of IV in sport (a holistic approach is usually adopted)
- All policies target sport organisations
- Implementation is in most cases neither mandatory, nor followed up



Explicit references to forms of IV in sport in policies of EU Member States

Mergaert, L., Arnaut, C., Vertommen, T., & Lang, M. (2016). *Study on gender-based violence in sport*. Brussels: European Commission.



**Figure 1.** Sexual abuse (SA) prevention model for sports organisations

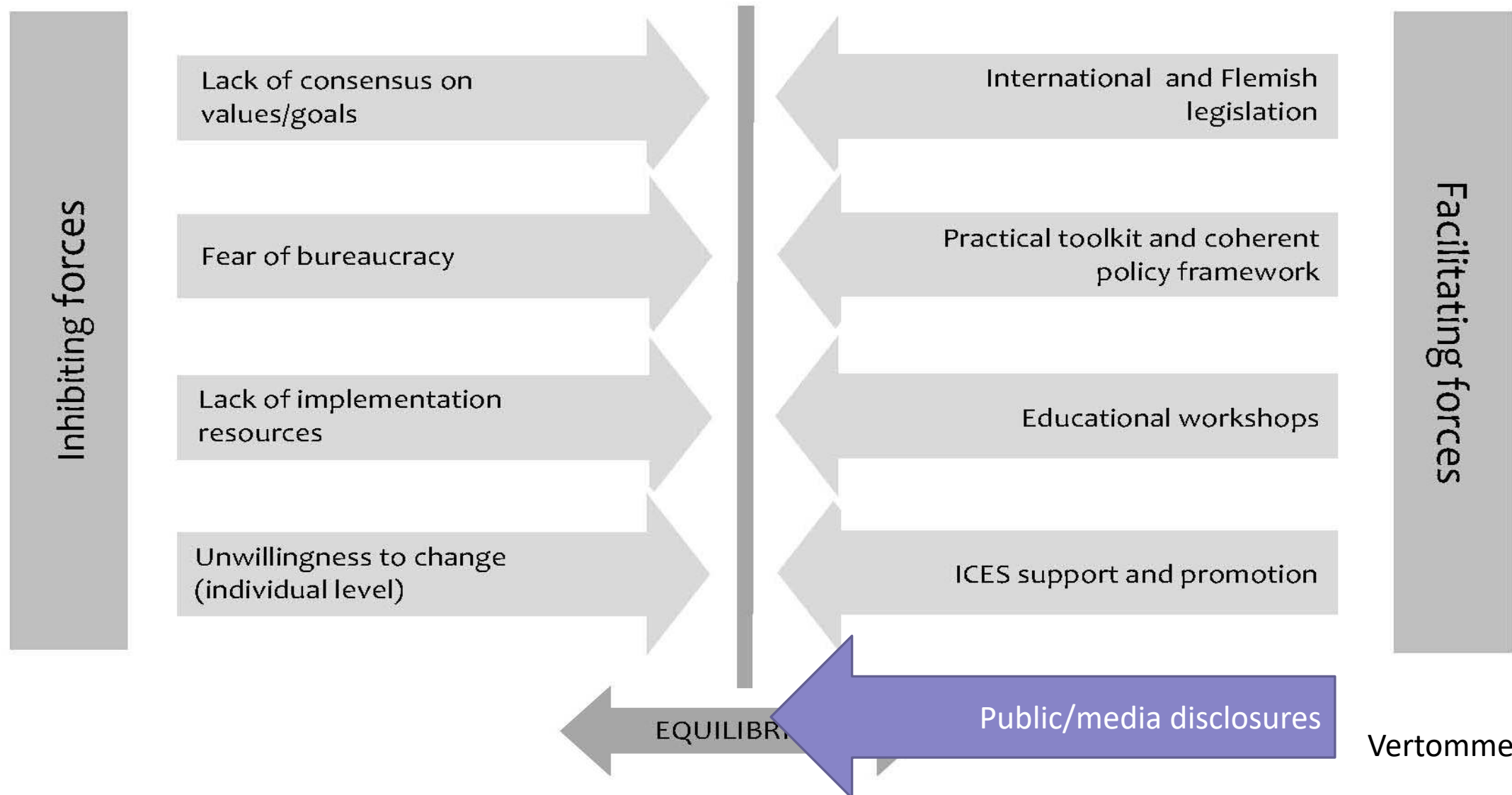
Sylvie Parent, 2011



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# Flemish equilibrium anno 2017



Vertommen et al 2015



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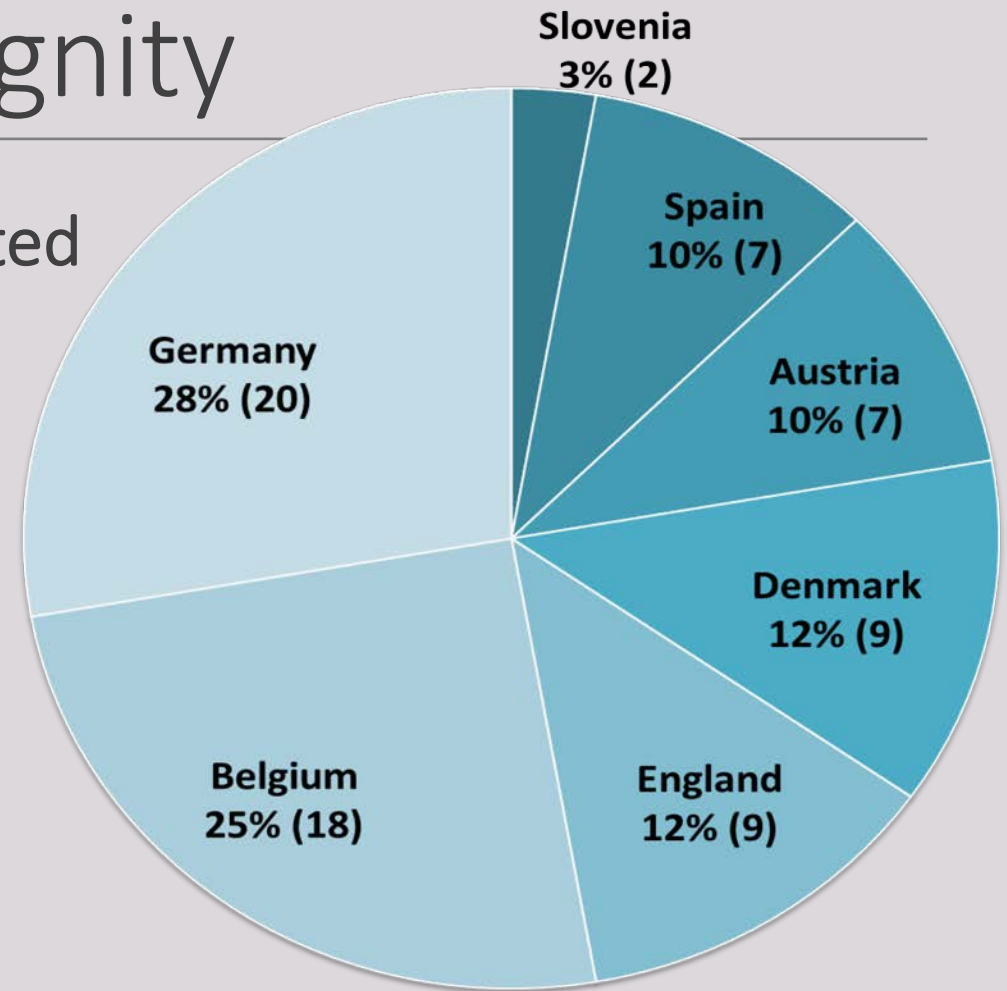
WAT AAN DOEN

I want to do something about it.

# VOICES for truth and dignity

How is sexual violence in sport constructed by those who have been affected?

72 in-depth survivor interviews



<http://voicesfortruthanddignity.eu/>



## EVIDENCE-BASE

Widespread and diverse phenomenon  
Increased risk in minority groups

Focus on adult male coaches perpetrators -> Divers group of perpetrators

Qualitative and quantitative evidenc of the negative impact of IViS

International policy framework: monitoring and evaluation is lacking

## LIMITATIONS

Retrospective, quantitative data, selective samples, crossectional study design

Victim-reported perpetrator characteristics

Selective associated health measures: broader impact?

## RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Questionnaire update and validation: recurrent (and longitudinal) prevalence studies

Systematic review of case information

Sport-related consequences of IV

Including the voices of those affected by IV in sport in research AND policy

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Minimum standards in comprehensive IV policy

Introduce monitoring and evaluation framework

Partnership and leadership in EDUCATION!

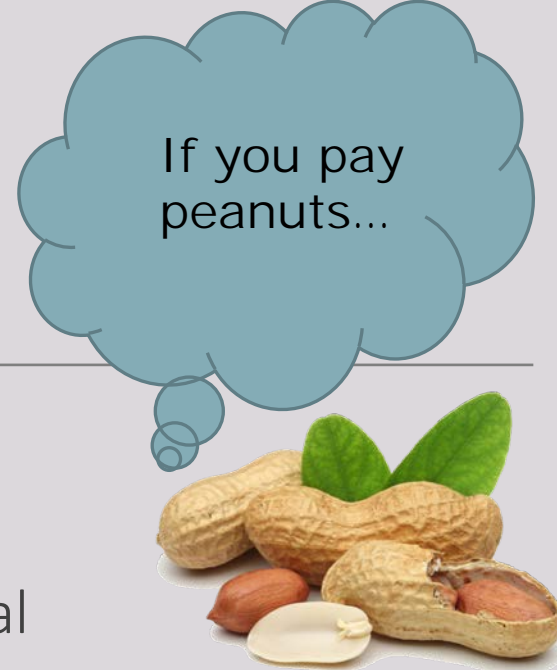
Legal and disciplinary framework



# Food for thought

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- ✓ Sexual violence is a widespread problem in European sport  
<-> compare WADA's **budget** to that of Safe Sport International
- ✓ Sexual violence in sport is associated with individual, interpersonal, organizational, societal and economical **harm**
- ✓ Prevalence data, monitoring and evaluation of evidence-based prevention initiatives are **lacking**
- ✓ **Listening to and acknowledging survivors** is crucial and can trigger political action and strengthen prevention: Are we at a tipping point on leadership and partnership on this issue?



“A woman with a  
voice is, by definition,  
a strong woman”

Melinda Gates

Picture removed for distribution

Thank you!

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