OLDER WOMEN EXPERIENCING SEXUAL VIOLENCE
IMPROVING EARLY IDENTIFICATION & THERAPEUTIC RESPONSES

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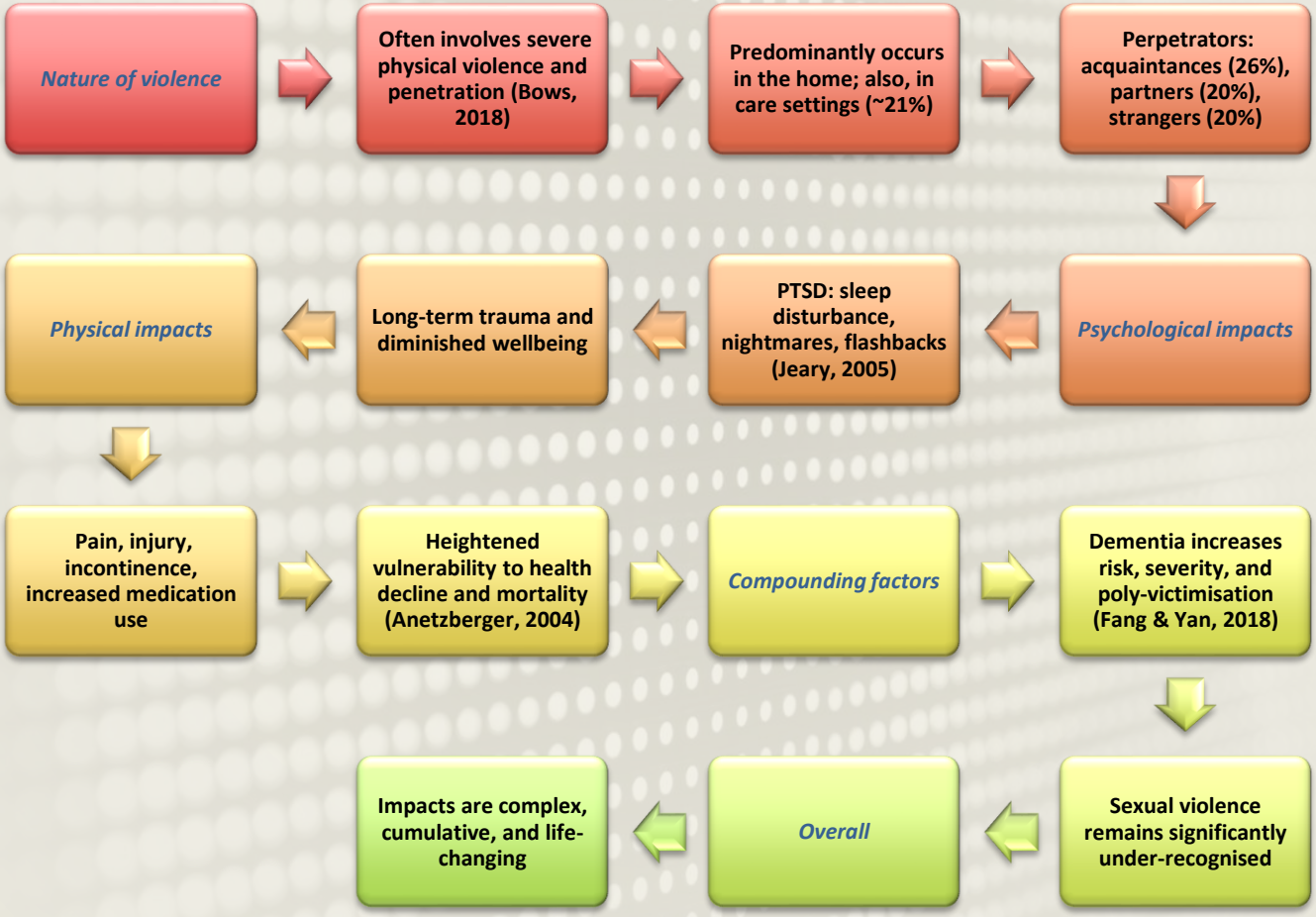
Why this research matters

Impacts of Sexual Violence on Older Women



Unique Researcher Positionality

Researcher context

- • Manager, SECASA – specialist sexual assault service - Victoria
- • Insider perspective across service systems and client pathways

Key insights shaping the research

- • Service models (e.g. phone-based intake) misaligned with older adults' needs
- • Under-representation of women 65+ in referrals despite known prevalence
- • Structural, cultural and practice barriers influencing identification

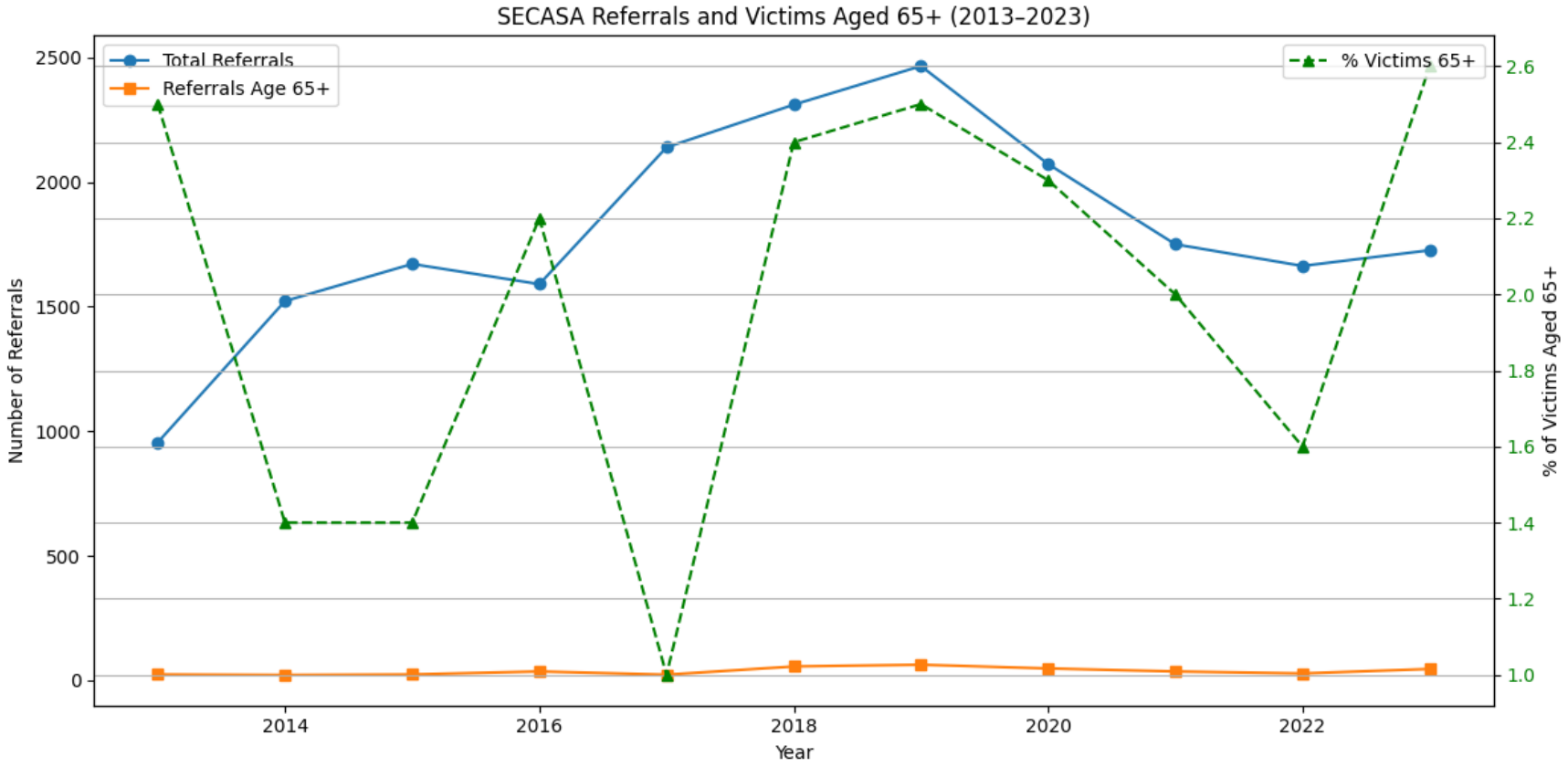
Strengths of insider position

- • Deep contextual knowledge and access to systems/data
- • Enhanced rapport and understanding of practice realities

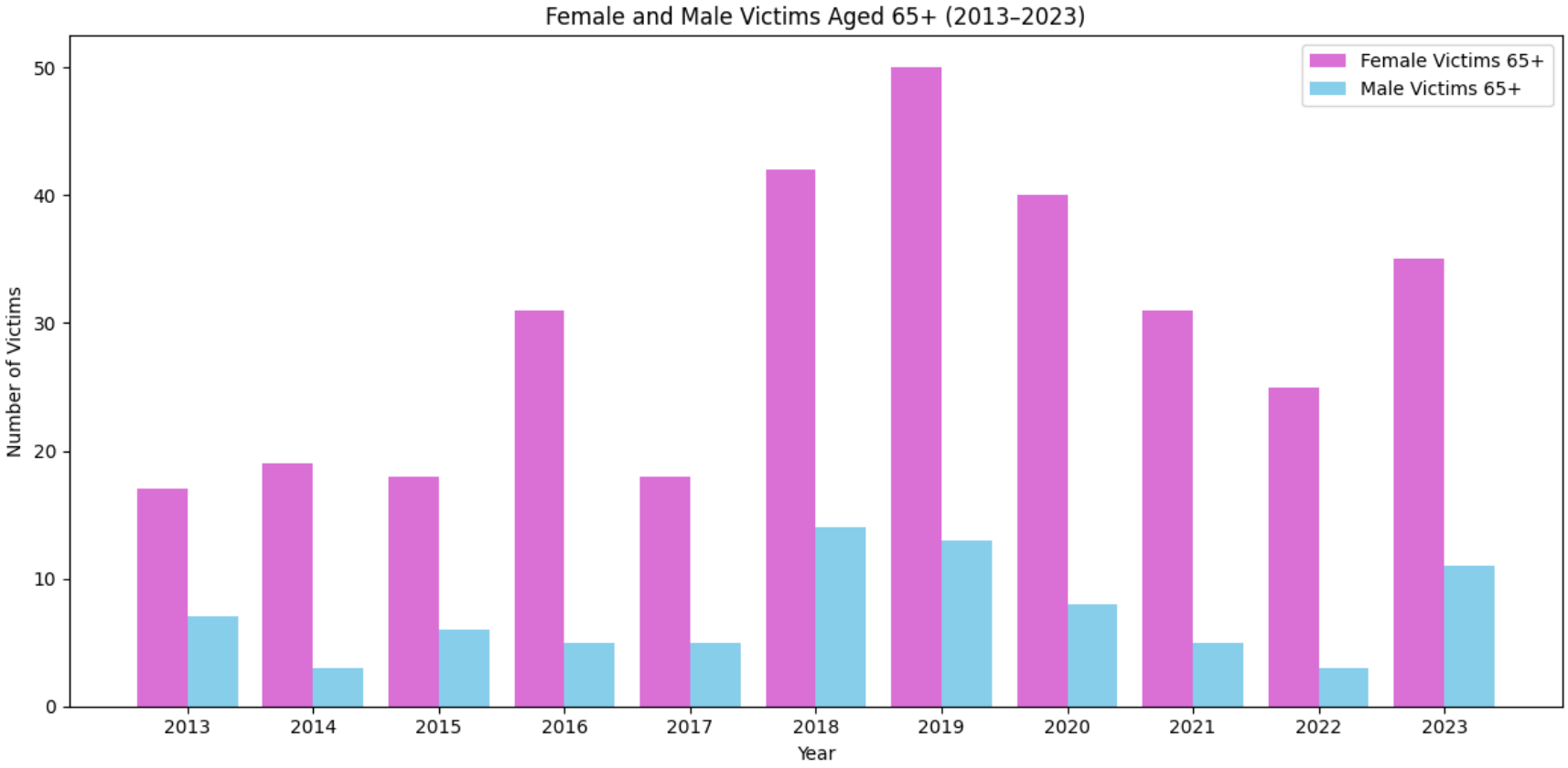
Reflexivity and rigour

- • Reflexive journaling and supervision
- • Triangulation with literature and diverse perspectives
- • Critical engagement with insider/outsider dynamics

SECASA Referral Rates for Victims-Survivors Aged 65+ vs. All Ages (2013–2023)

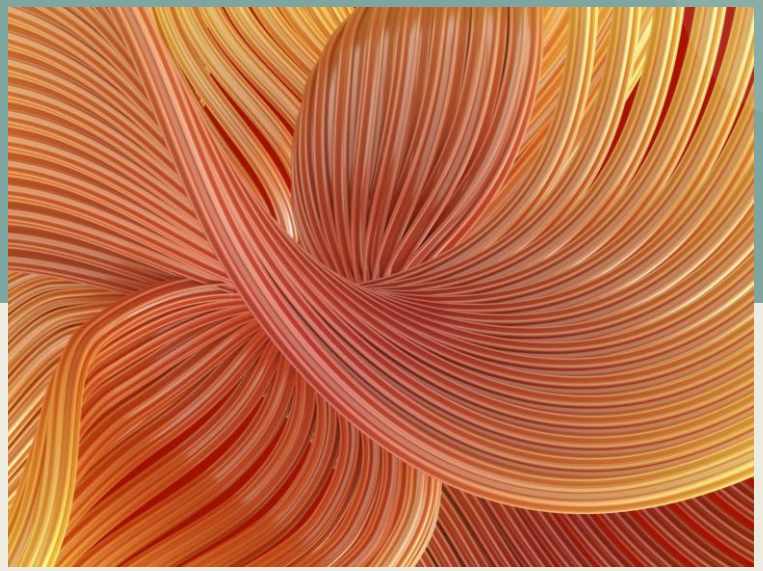


SECASA Referral Rates for Victims Aged 65+ by Gender (2013–2023)



Qualitative - Methods

- Practitioner interviews - 24 in total
- Sexual assault services, Aged Care, Academics, Policy Makers, Victoria Police
- National and International participants
- Qualitative, thematic analysis
- Conceptual Framework –SEM, intersectionality and Concept Mapping



Silencing and Stigma

Sexuality in later life is difficult to discuss; stigma inhibits disclosure.

Narrow Sexual Scripts

Dominant sexual norms marginalise older women and obscure harm.

Practitioner Knowledge & Confidence

Uncertainty and limited training affect recognition of sexual violence.

Emotional & Relational Dynamics

Emotional discomfort and boundary concerns shape practice.

Organisational Constraints

Workload, time pressures, and culture limit effective responses.

Fragmentation of Responsibility

Unclear roles and pathways lead to missed opportunities.

Key Implications

Multi-level, coordinated responses are required.

Changes to SECASA Service Delivery

- Accessibility and Equality
- Relatability
- Modification to therapeutic service offered
- Education to the wider community
- Development of user-friendly resources
- Partnering with key stakeholder
- Hopefully offering a template for other sexual assault services.

Thank you for listening