

# Cumulative impact of protracted social conflicts and pandemic adds up to aggravate Depression and PTSD-related distress in Hong Kong

累積社會事件與疫症大爆發互相帶動  
令創傷和抑鬱症狀風險顯著倍增

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## Background 背景

In the past year, Hong Kong has experienced a succession of prolonged and resurging population stressors, including social unrest and COVID-19. Substantial mental health distress has already been observed in the early days of the unrest (Ni et al., 2020).

The impact of ongoing stressful events differs from that of one-off events (“continuous traumatic stress”). Different types of stressors may interact over time to aggravate the resulting impact.

- Traumatogenic: fear-inducing
- Depressogenic: helplessness-inducing

The impacts of these interactions however have rarely been studied.

在過去一年，香港經歷了長期而持續，並且反覆出現的事件，增添大眾所面對的壓力，包括社會事件和新冠病毒疫情。顯著的精神健康困擾在社會事件的早期已出現 ( Ni et al., 2020 ) 。

持續壓力事件與一次性事件對精神健康有不同影響（「持續創傷性壓力」）。不同類型的壓力來源有可能隨著時間，互相加劇對精神健康的影響。

- 導致創傷、驚恐反應
- 導致抑鬱、無力感

不過，暫時很少研究探討這些持續的事件之間的互相影響。

## Key Symptoms 創傷後壓力和抑鬱症的主要症狀

### Post-traumatic Stress Disorder 創傷後壓力症

- **Intrusive memories 侵入性記憶**  
Eg, flashbacks, nightmares  
例如：回憶重現、發噩夢
- **Avoidance 逃避與創傷事件相關的回憶和事物**  
Eg, distressing thoughts or feelings, external reminders  
例如：與事件有關的痛苦思緒或感覺、外在的事物
- **Negative changes in cognitions and mood 認知和情緒上的負面改變**  
Eg, inability to remember important aspect of the event; persistent feelings of fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame; feelings of detachment or estrangement from others  
例如：無法記起事件重要的細節，感覺與他人疏離或疏遠，持續感到恐懼、驚恐、憤怒、內疚或羞愧等
- **Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity 與事件相關的警醒性與反應性出現顯著變化**  
Eg, irritable and angry outbursts, self-destructive or reckless behaviors, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle responses, concentration problems, sleep disturbance)  
例如：易怒、無預兆發怒，自毀、衝動行為，過度警覺、驚嚇反應，難以集中精神，睡眠困擾

### Major Depressive Disorder 抑鬱症

- **Nearly every day 幾乎整天且每天...**
  - **Depressed most of the day 幾乎整天心情憂鬱**
  - **Markedly diminished interest/pleasure in activities 明顯對所有活動減低興趣或愉悅感**
  - **Significant weight loss/gain, decreased/increased appetite 體重明顯減輕或增加、慾降低或增加**
  - **Insomnia/hypersomnia 失眠/嗜眠**
  - **Psychomotor agitation or retardation 動作激動或遲緩**
  - **Fatigue or loss of energy 疲倦或無精打采**
  - **Feelings of worthlessness, excessive/inappropriate guilt 感到沒有自我價值、過度或不恰當的罪惡感**
  - **Trouble thinking, concentrating, or indecisiveness 思考能力和集中力降低、猶豫不決**
- **Recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal ideation (without specific plan), suicide attempt, or has a specific plan 反覆想到死亡、有自殺意念（沒有具體計劃），有自殺舉動或有具體自殺計劃**

(APA, 2013)

## The Online Community Mental Health Survey and the Flow Tool 精神健康自助工具 (「心之流」)

A survey combined with mental health self-help tool (“Flow Tool”) was launched from Feb to July 2020. The data help to understand:

- Interactions between continuous stressors
- Individual risk and protective factors.

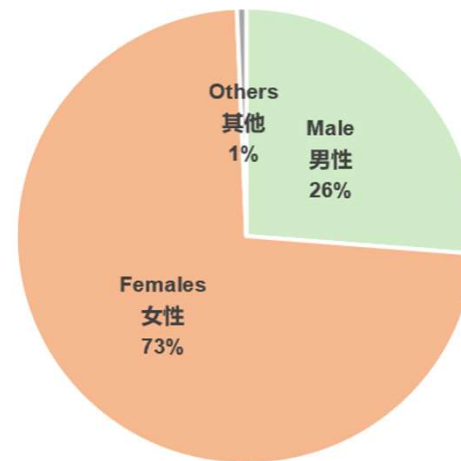
11,493 participants completed the survey

團隊於今年2月至7月推行了一套精神健康的自助工具 (「心之流」)。數據有助了解：

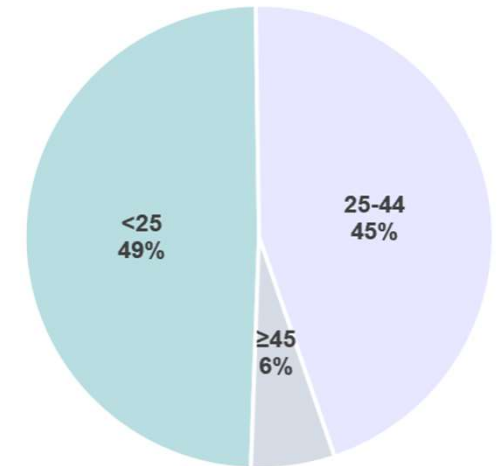
- 持續事件之間的互相影響
- 個人的風險和保護因素

11,493 位人士完成了問卷

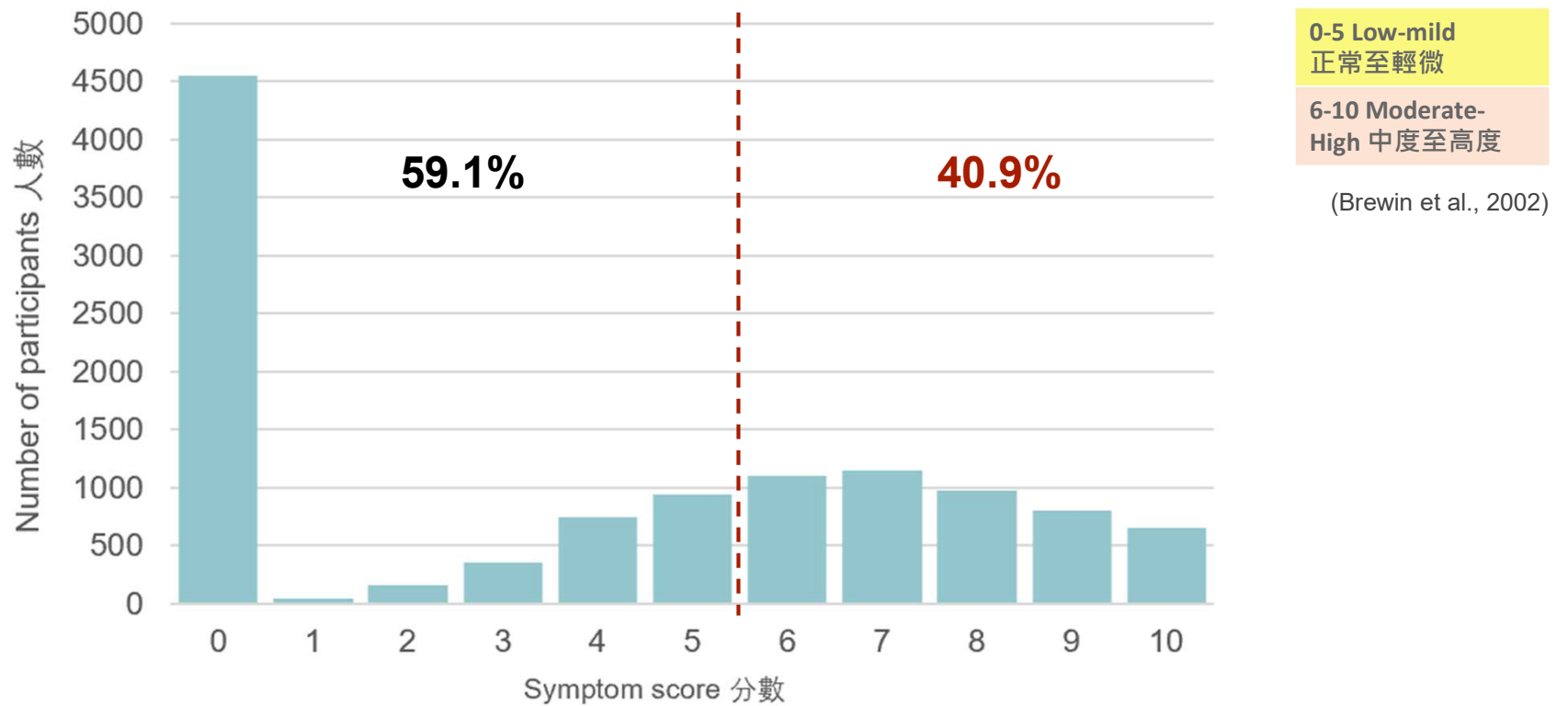
Gender 性別



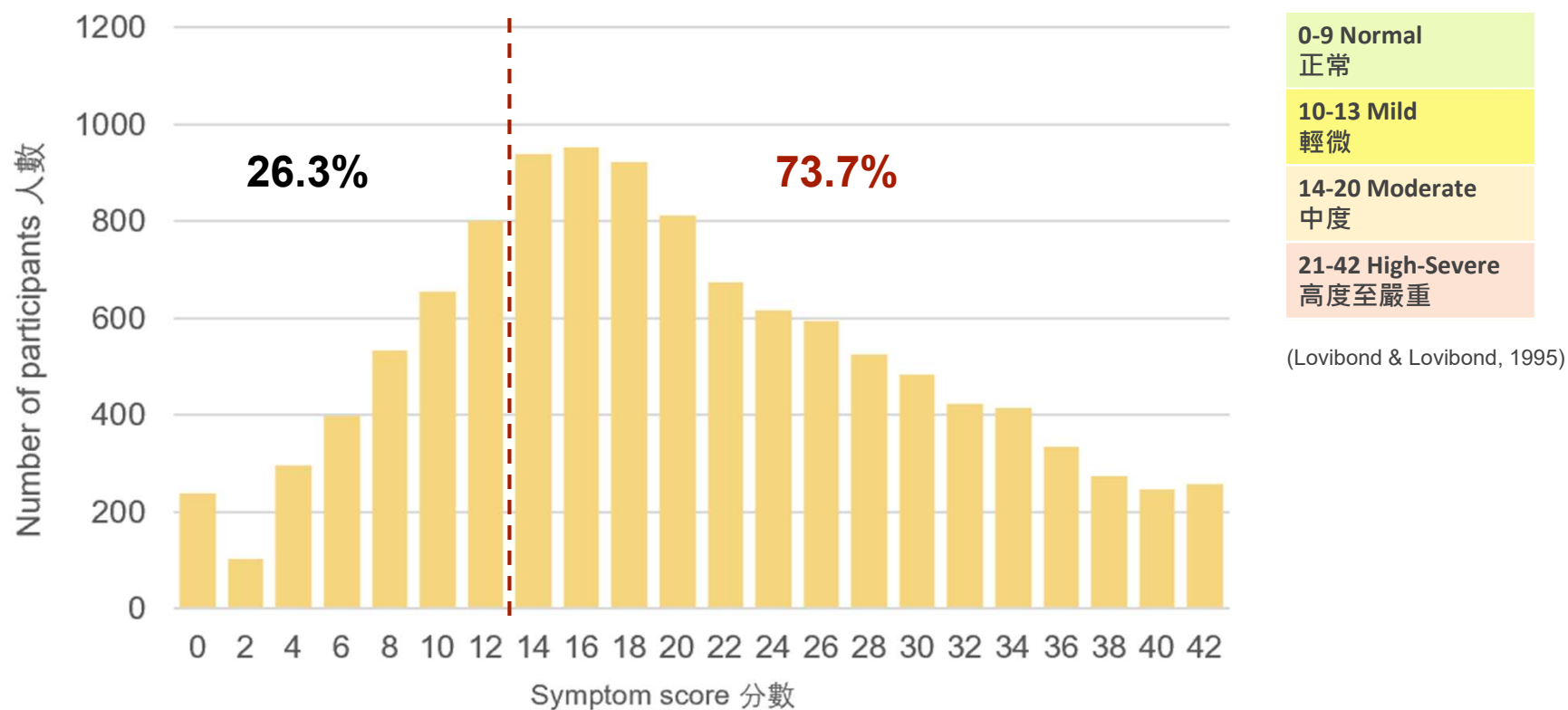
Age 歲數



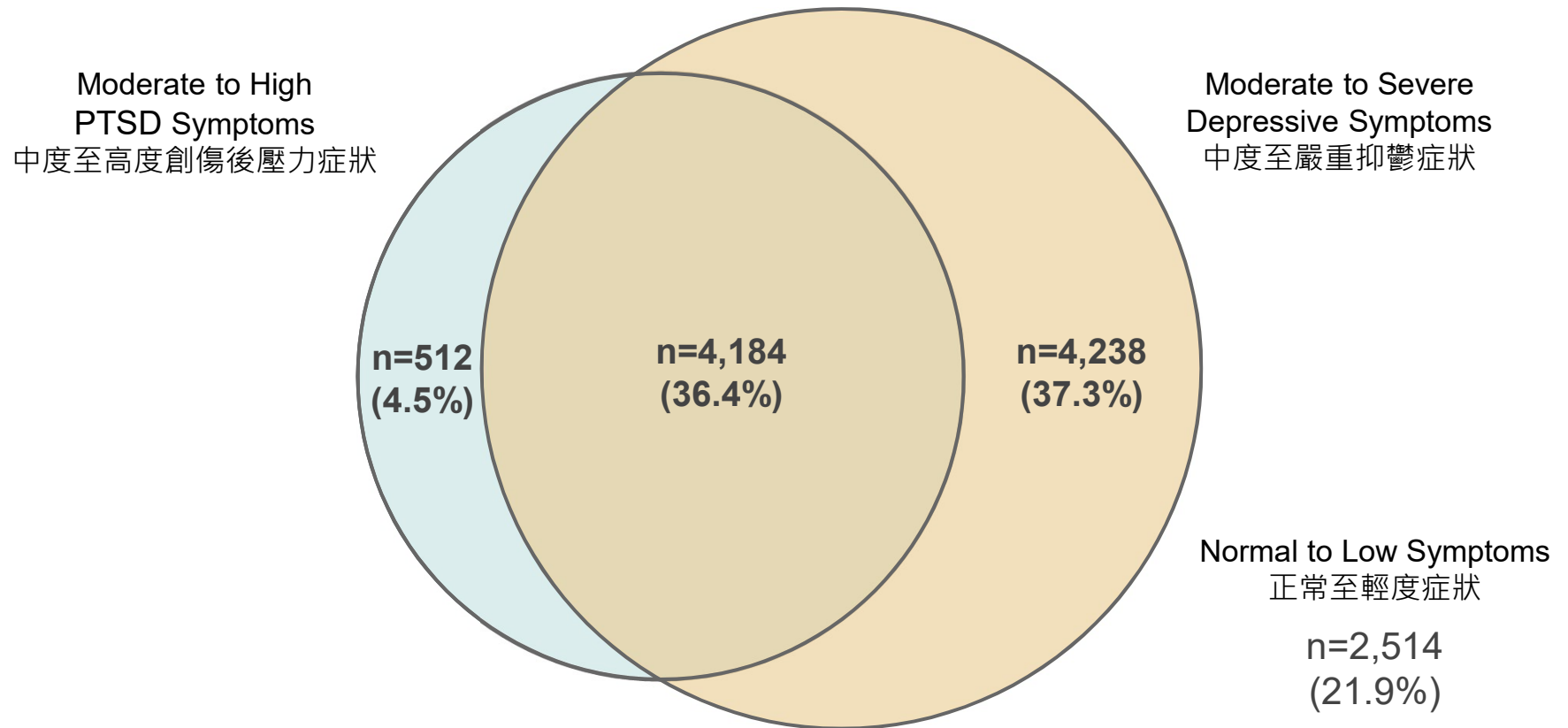
## PTSD symptom distribution (Trauma Screening Questionnaire) 創傷後壓力症狀分佈 (創傷甄別問卷)



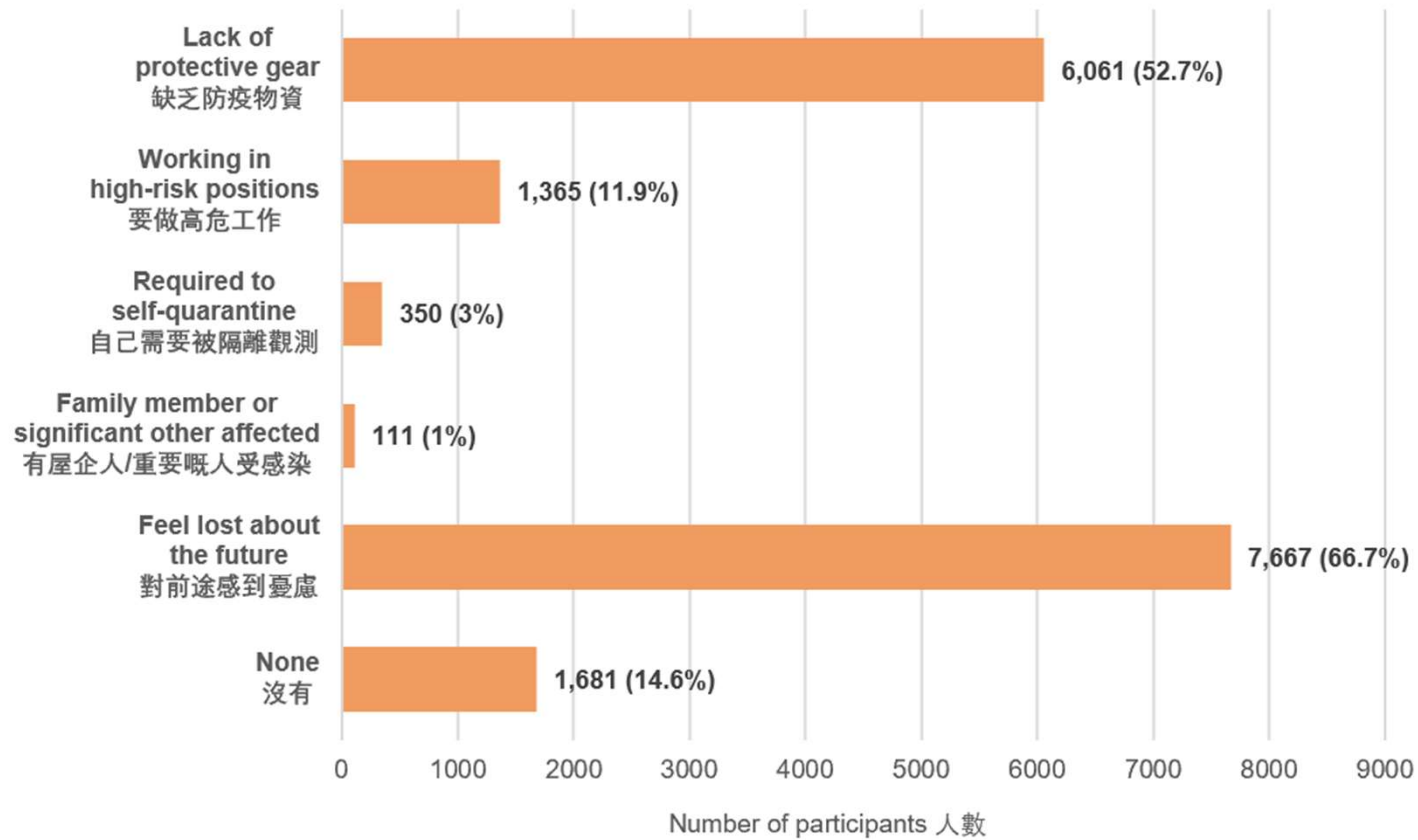
## Depressive symptom distribution (Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-Depression Subscale) 抑鬱症狀 ( 抑鬱、焦慮和壓力量表 - 抑鬱部分 )



## Co-occurrence of PTSD and Depressive Symptoms 創傷後壓力與抑鬱症狀的同時出現

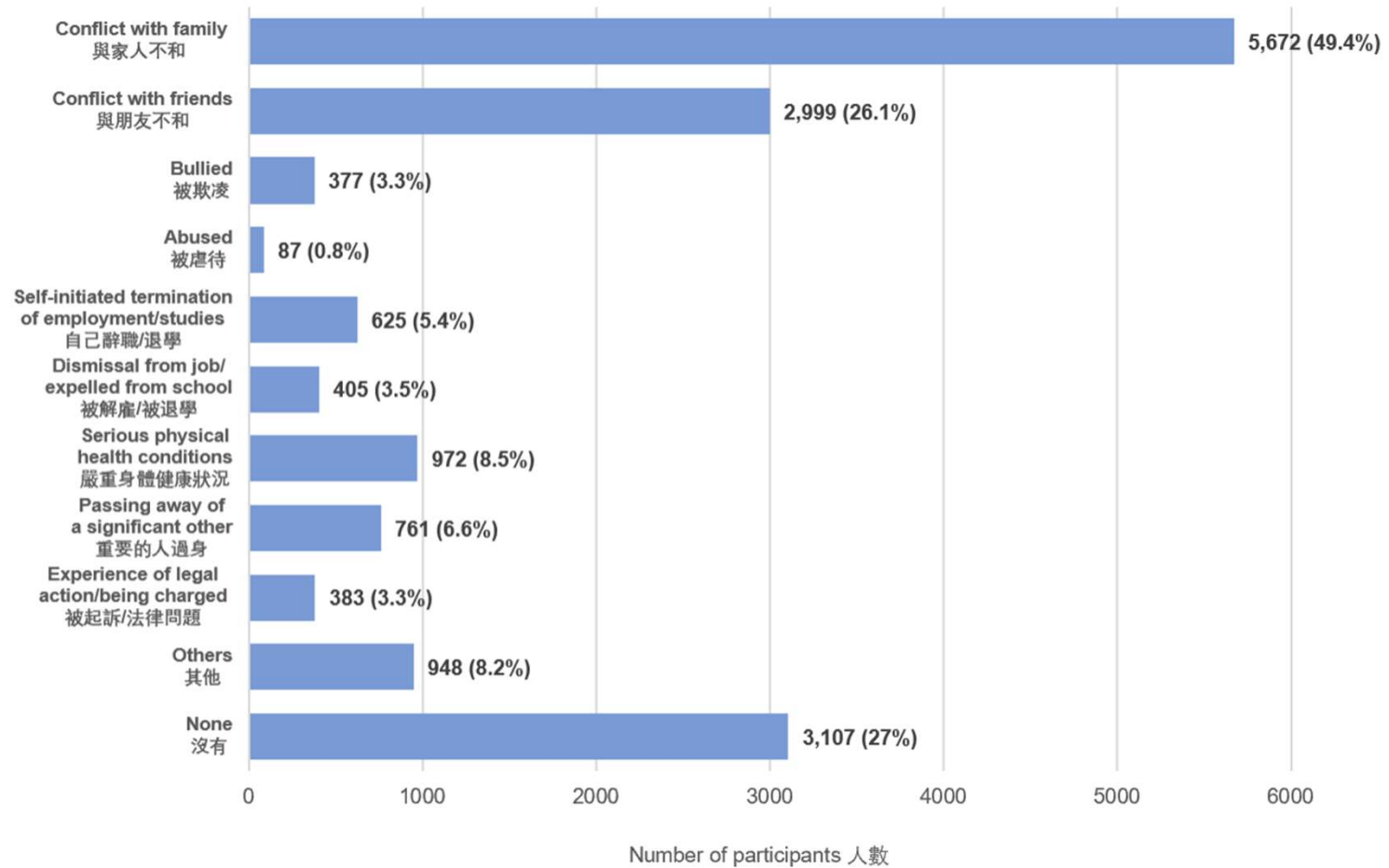


## COVID-19 pandemic-related events frequency 疫情相關事件頻率

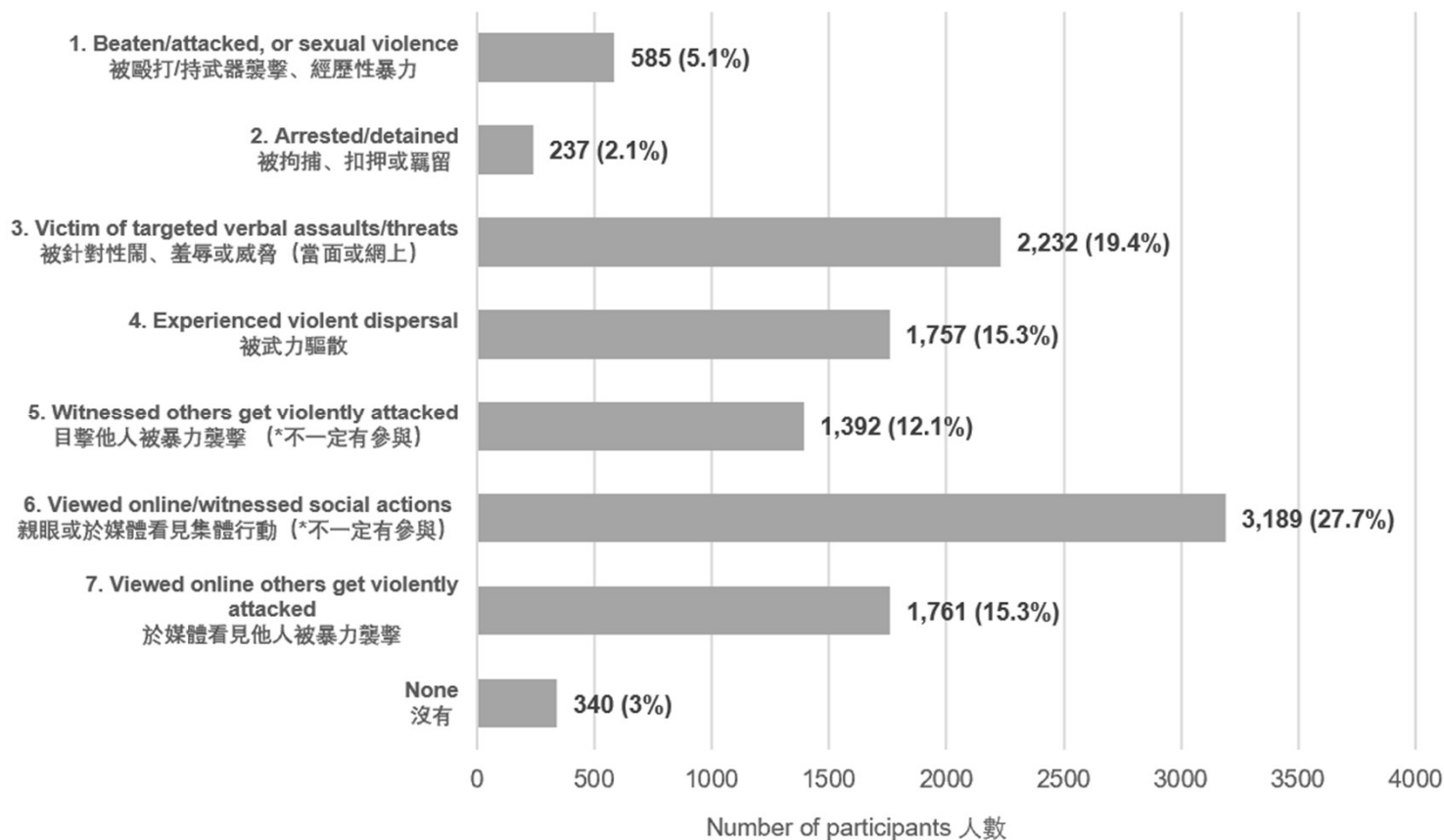




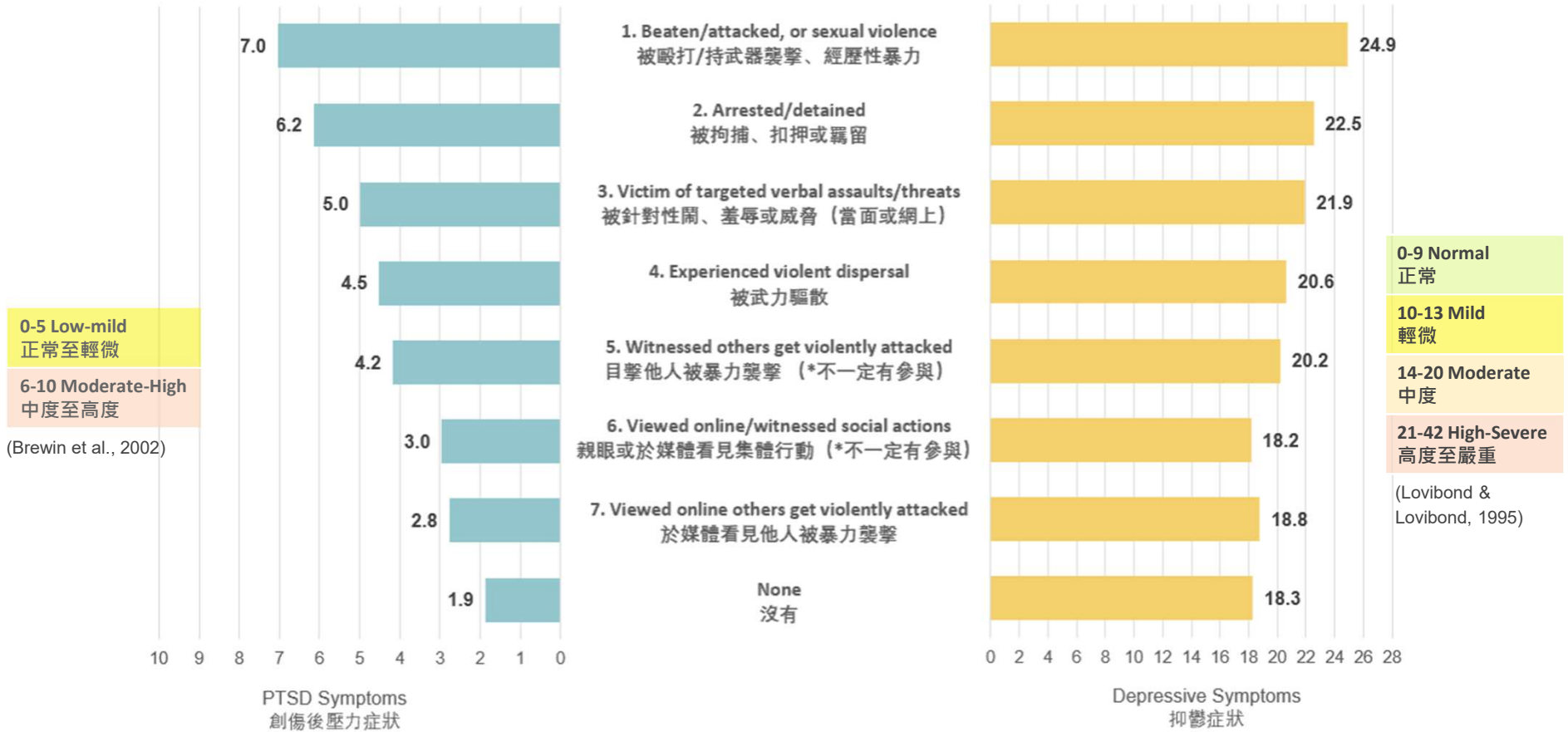
## Personal stressful life events frequency 個人壓力事件頻率



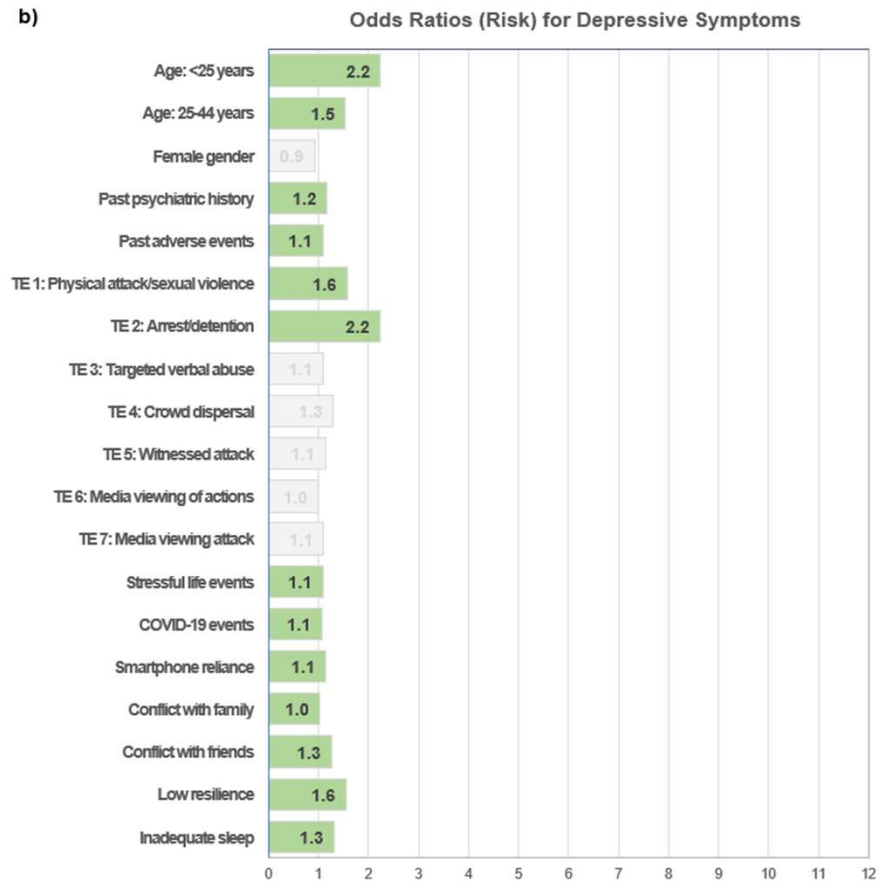
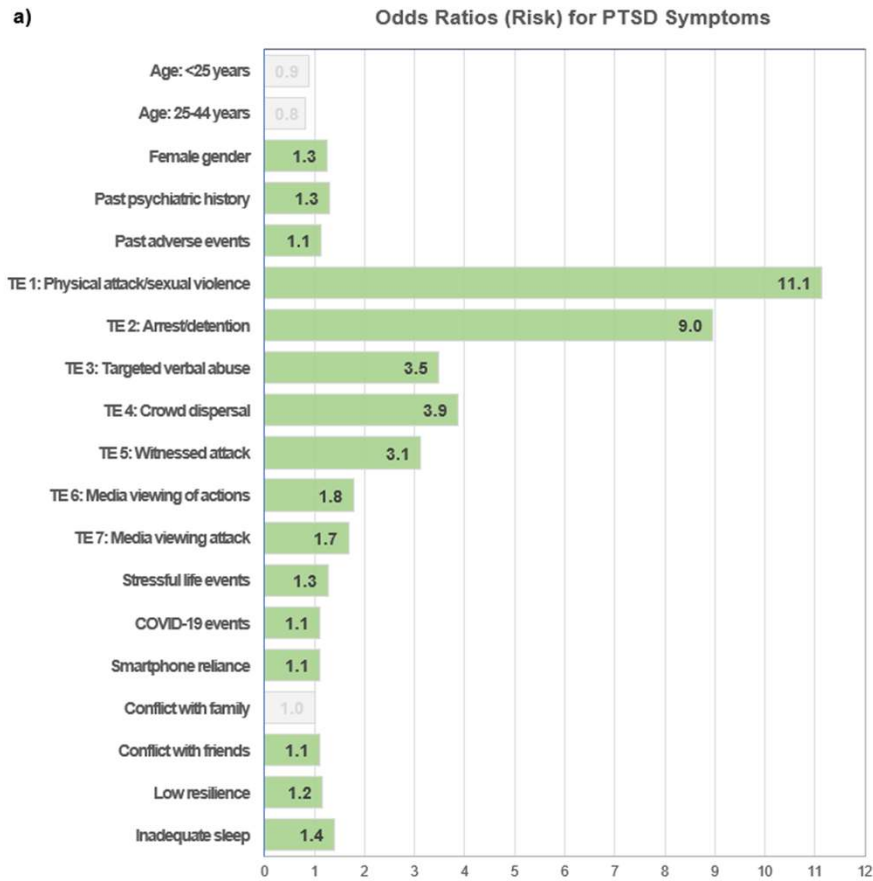
## Social unrest traumatic events – proportions by categories 社會事件創傷經歷 – 種類比例



## Symptom distribution across traumatic events categories 創傷經歷分類的症狀分佈

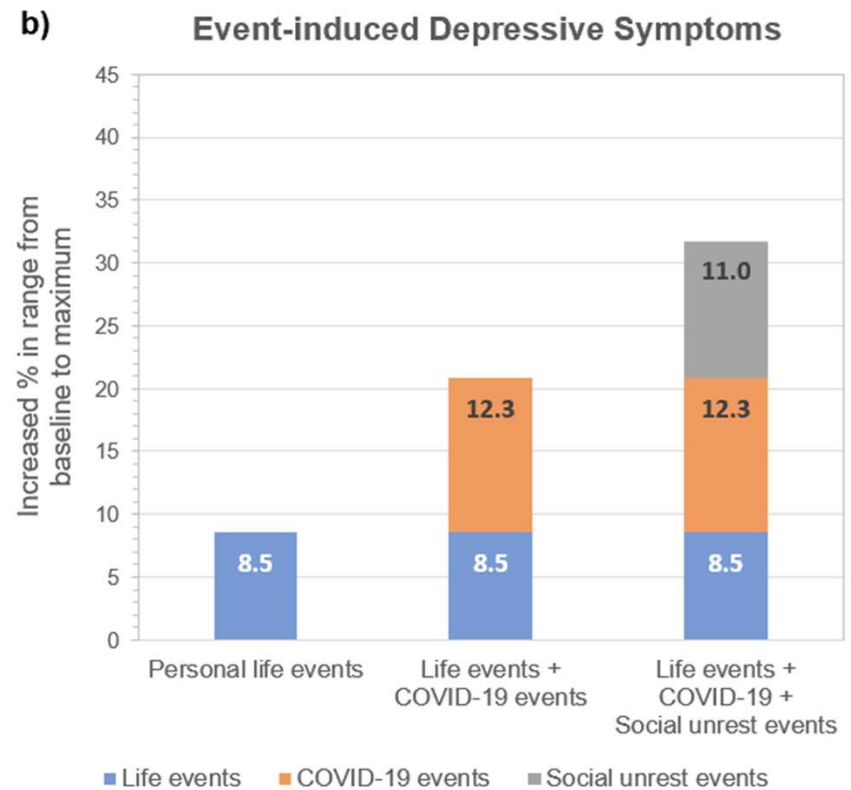
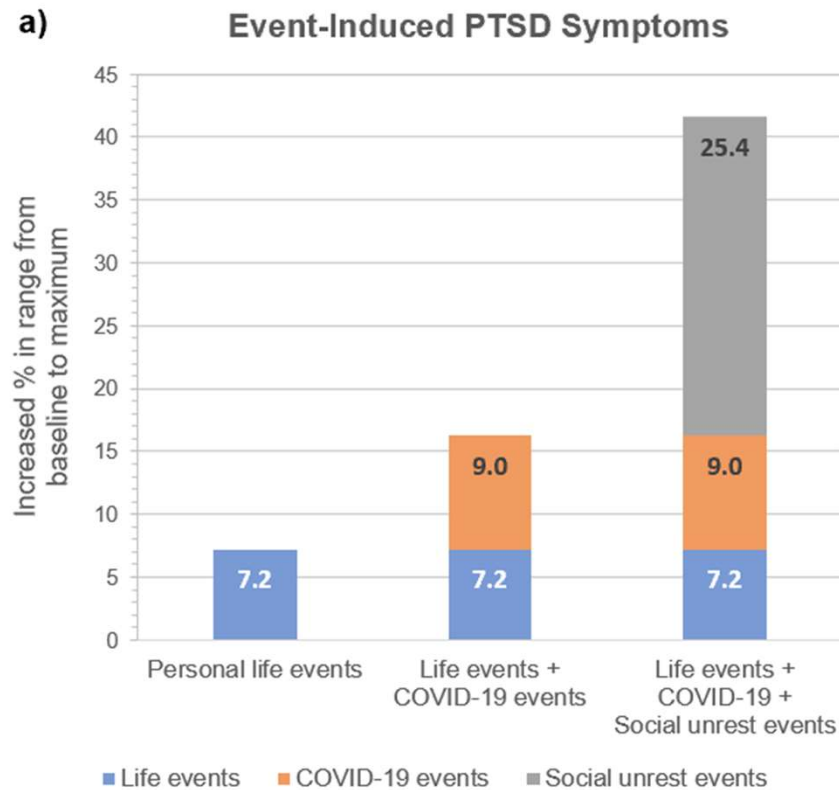


# Risk factors for PTSD and Depressive Symptoms 創傷後壓力和抑鬱症狀的風險因素

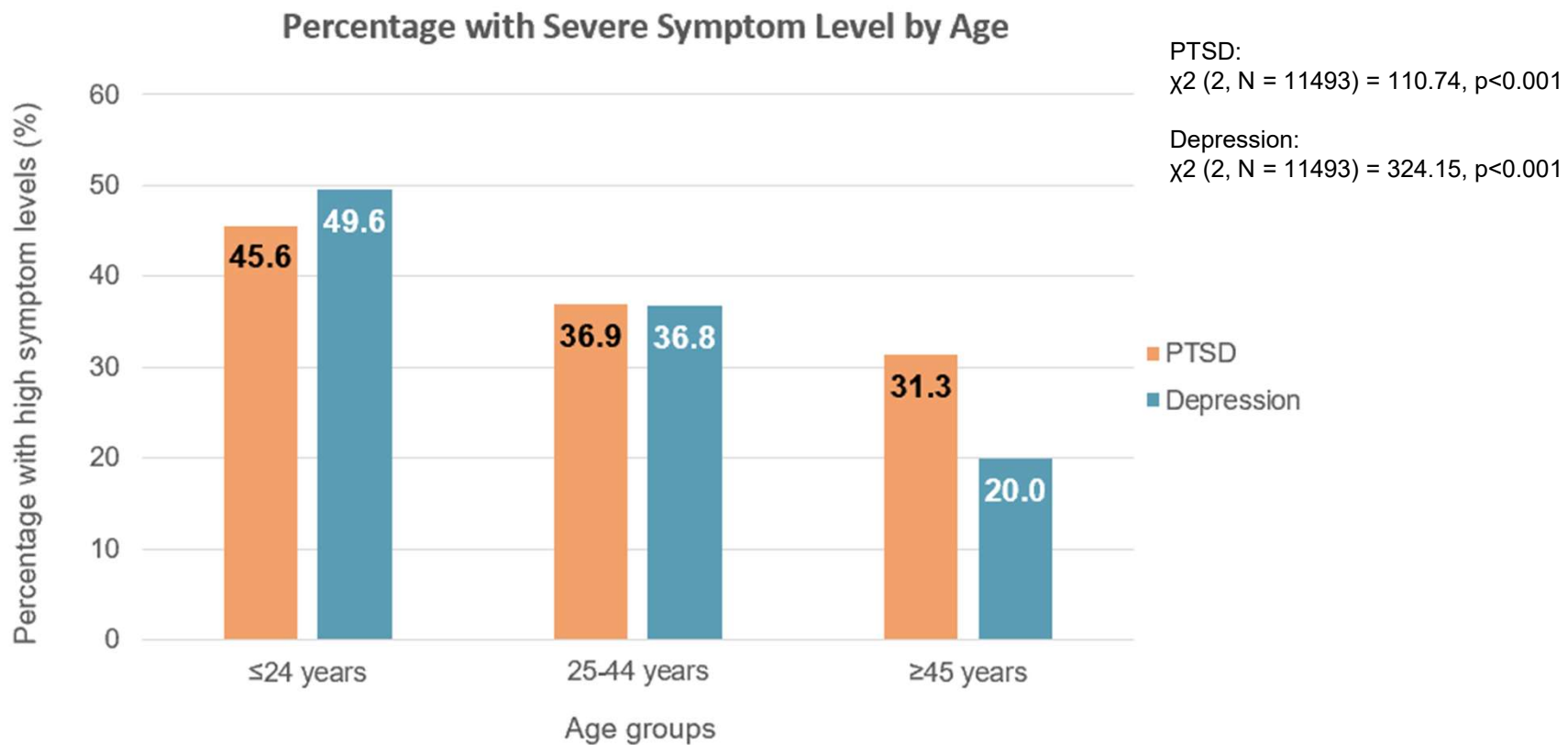


Note: PTSD = post-traumatic stress disorder, TE = social unrest traumatic events

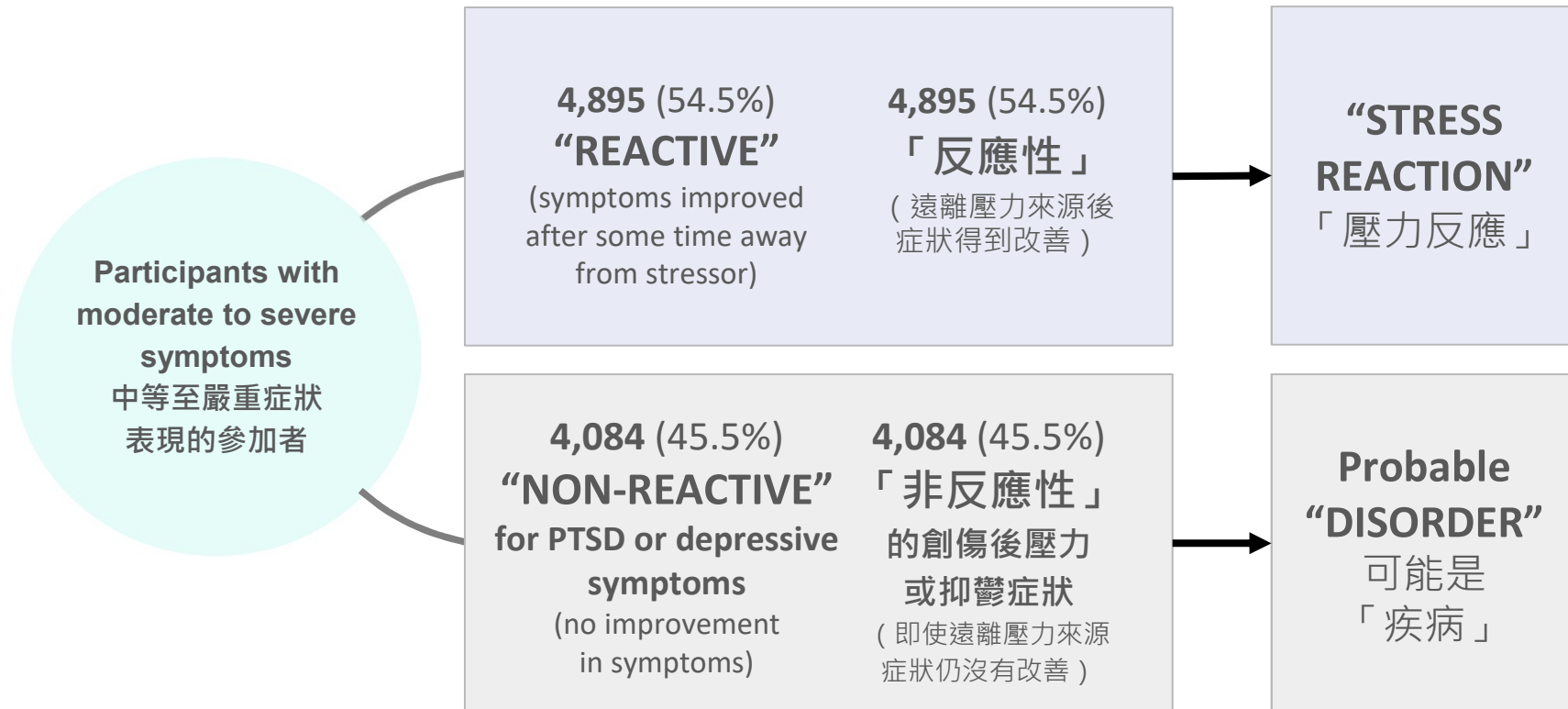
## Cumulative effects of COVID-19 and social unrest events significantly added to PTSD and Depressive symptoms 新冠病毒疫情和社會事件對創傷後壓力和抑鬱症狀的累積影響



## Age effect: Youth present significantly more PTSD and Depressive Symptoms



**Symptom reactivity: reactive vs non-reactive**  
症狀反應：反應性與非反應性



## Conclusion 總結

- Protracted and continuous stressors posed new challenges to mental health
  - Significant interaction between different types of events (social unrest traumatic events, COVID-19, stressful life events)
  - Prior trauma exposure should not be neglected
  - Adequate resolution of stressful experience is important for protecting mental health against psychological injury due to external stressors
  - Mental health outcomes depend on different types of population-level and individual-level stressors, their interactions and individual risk and protective factors
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- 持續不斷的壓力來源為精神健康帶來新挑戰
  - 而不同類型的事件，包括創傷經歷、疫症大流行及個人生活事件會互相影響，並累積成更大的精神困擾
  - 因此，以往所經歷的創傷事件不容忽視
  - 在面對高壓的經歷時，需要有合適和足夠的處理方法。這樣才能保護自己的精神健康，避免受到外在的壓力來源所傷害，和避免遭受外在壓力源導致的精神傷害
  - 社會事件、疫症大流行、個人生活事件以及其相互作用，和個人的風險及保護因素是影響精神健康的重要因素



Question and answers

## References

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Brewin, C. R., Rose, S., Andrews, B., Green, J., Tata, P., McEvedy, C., Turner, S., and Foa, E. B. (2002). Brief screening instrument for post-traumatic stress disorder. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 181, 158-162.

Lovibond, S.H. & Lovibond, P.F. (1995). *Manual for the depression anxiety & stress scales*. (2 Ed.) Sydney: Psychology Foundation.

Ni, M. Y., Yao, X. I., Leung, K. S., Yau, C., Leung, C. M., Lun, P., ... & Leung, G. M. (2020). Depression and post-traumatic stress during major social unrest in Hong Kong: a 10-year prospective cohort study. *The Lancet*, 395, 273-284.

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