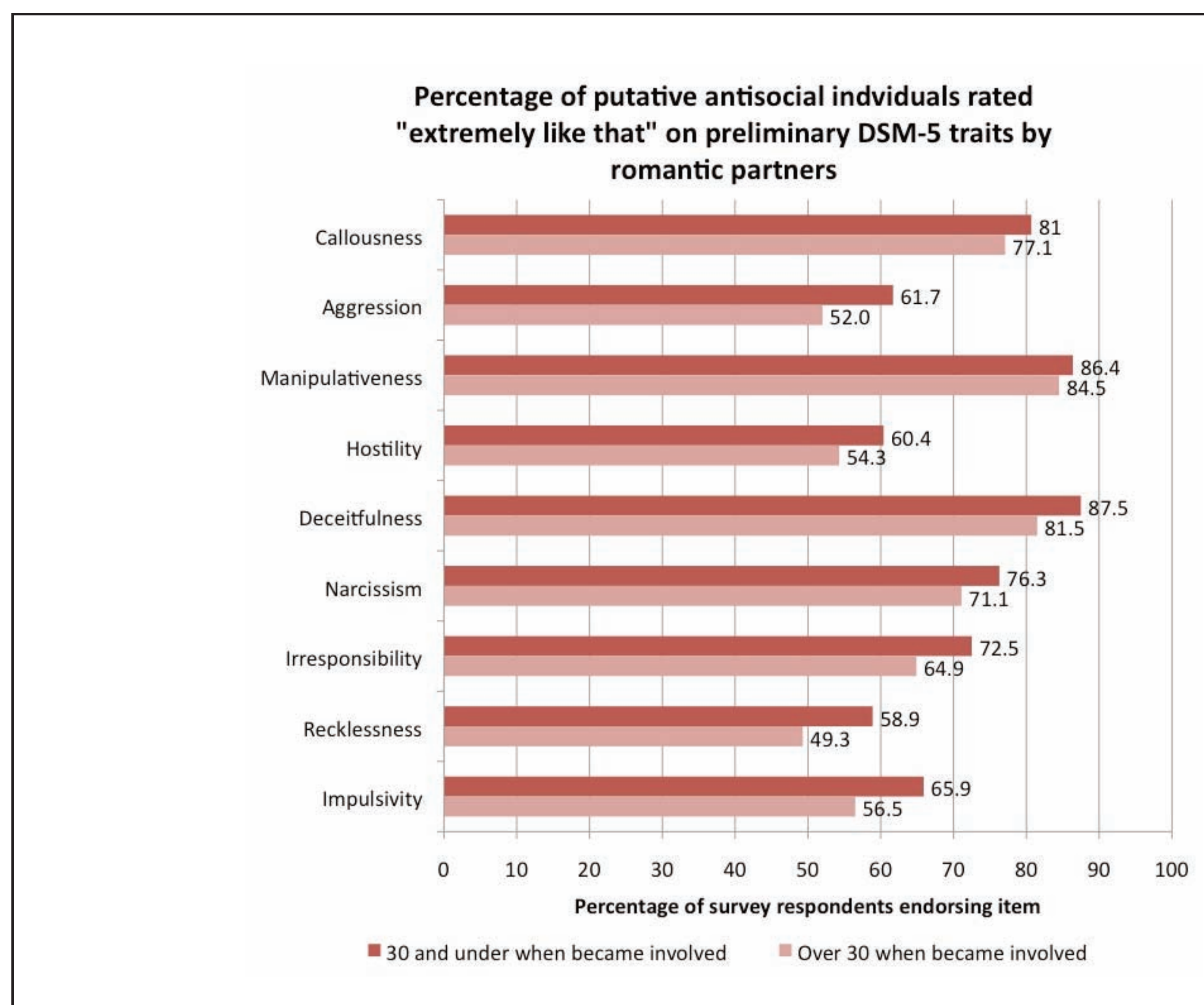


In Love with an Exploiter

How Age Affects the Harm Experienced by Romantic Partners

Presented to the Society for the Scientific Study of Psychopathy biennial conference, June 6-8, 2013, Washington, D.C.



A romantic involvement with an antisocial individual at a young age can lead to significantly more harm than if such a relationship begins later in life.

Readers of Lovefraud.com who believed they were romantic partners of putative antisocial individuals were invited to participate in an anonymous on-line survey. The objective was to determine whether they were, in fact, involved with antisocial individuals, and to gather data about the experience.

In this analysis of the survey data, respondents were divided into two groups according to their ages when they became romantically involved:

- Youthful relationships – both parties were between 14 and 30
- Mature relationships – both parties were 31 or older

The data also revealed how the behavior and tactics of putative antisocial individuals change as they age.

Method

An anonymous Internet survey was hosted on SurveyMonkey.com.

- Survey time frame: February 15 – April 18, 2011
- 1,352 people from around the world responded
- 77.9% completed the entire survey (1,053)

Romantic partner demographics

- 88.9% female (1,150)
- 11.1% male (144)

Youthful relationships

In 312 surveys, the relationship began when both parties were age 14-30:

- 11.0% of survey respondents were male (34)
- 89.0% of survey respondents were female (276)
- 88.7% of putative antisocial individuals were male (275)
- 11.3% of putative antisocial individuals were female (35)

Mature relationships

In 721 surveys, the relationship began when both parties were over 30:

- 9.8% of survey respondents were male (70)
- 90.2% of survey respondents were female (643)
- 90.8% of putative antisocial individuals were male (653)
- 9.2% of putative antisocial individuals were female (66)

Antisocial traits

The first draft of DSM-5, released February 10, 2010, included nine traits to describe antisocial personality disorder. When assessing a client, clinicians were to score each trait as follows:

- 0 – Very little or not at all like that
- 1 – Mildly like that
- 2 – Moderately like that
- 3 – Extremely like that

Survey respondents rated the individuals they were romantically involved with using the same scale. In nonforensic settings, psychopathy data derived from both self-reports and informant reports have utility in understanding the relations between psychopathic traits and externalizing behaviors (Jones and Miller, 2011).

In identifying traits of antisocial personality disorder, romantic partners of both age groups reported two of the top characteristics, manipulativeness and callousness, at similar rates. However, all other traits—deceitfulness, narcissism, irresponsibility, impulsivity, aggression, hostility and recklessness—were reported to be 5.2 to 9.7 percentage points higher among the younger individuals.

Length of the involvement

Romantic partners who became involved in the relationships while young stayed in them far longer. A total of 54% stayed for 10 years or more, compared to 13% of the mature group.

Behavior experienced by the romantic partner:

In the mature relationships, the putative antisocial individuals seemed to put more effort into sweet talking and seducing the romantic partners, as can be seen by these behaviors:

- "Swept me off my feet" – 59.1% v. 66.5%
- "Promised to make my dreams come true" – 49.4% v. 58.8%
- "Called me frequently" – 66.8% v. 79.8%
- "Told elaborate stories of his/her past" – 56.0% v. 68.5%

Financial harm reported by romantic partners

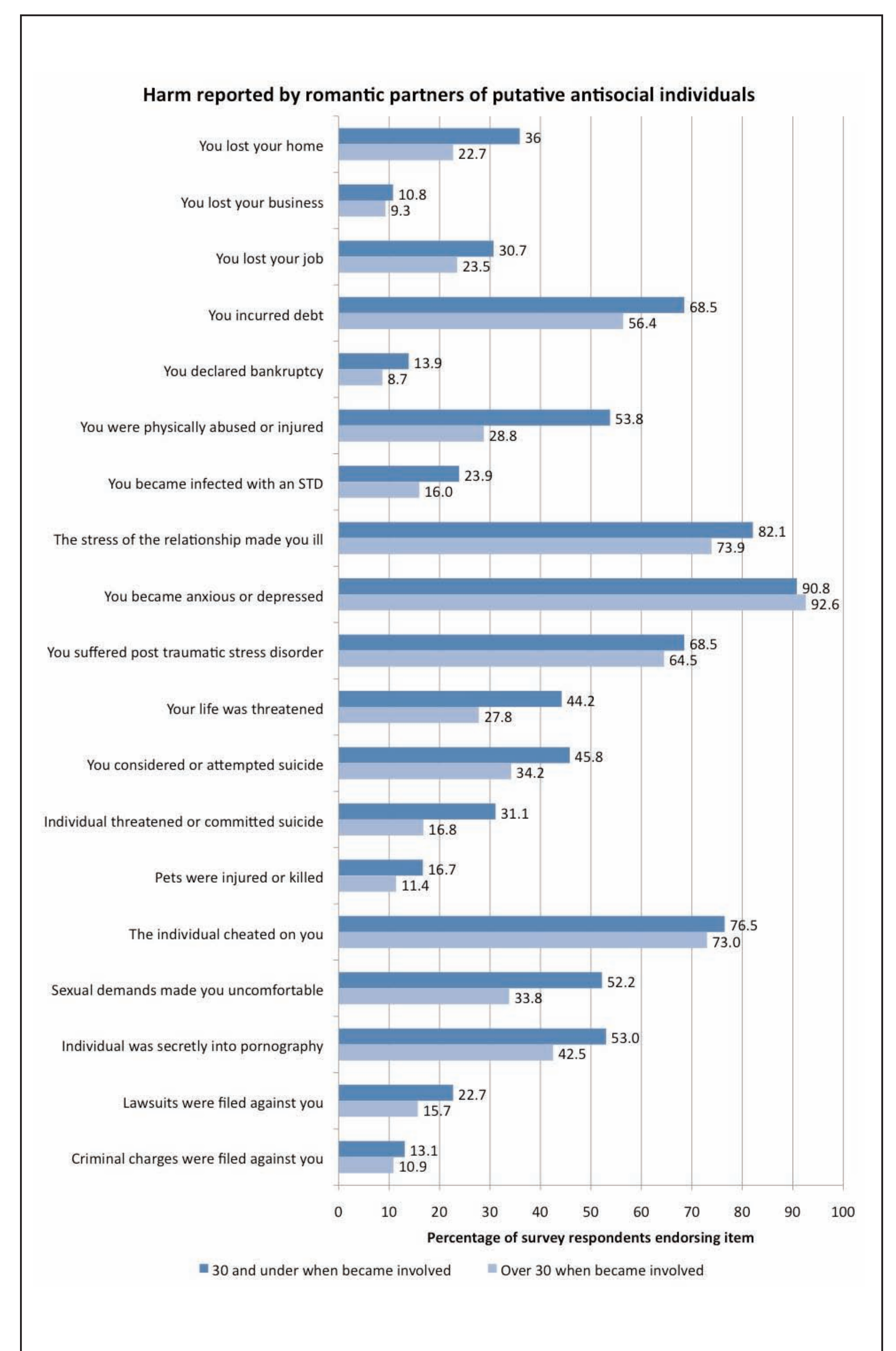
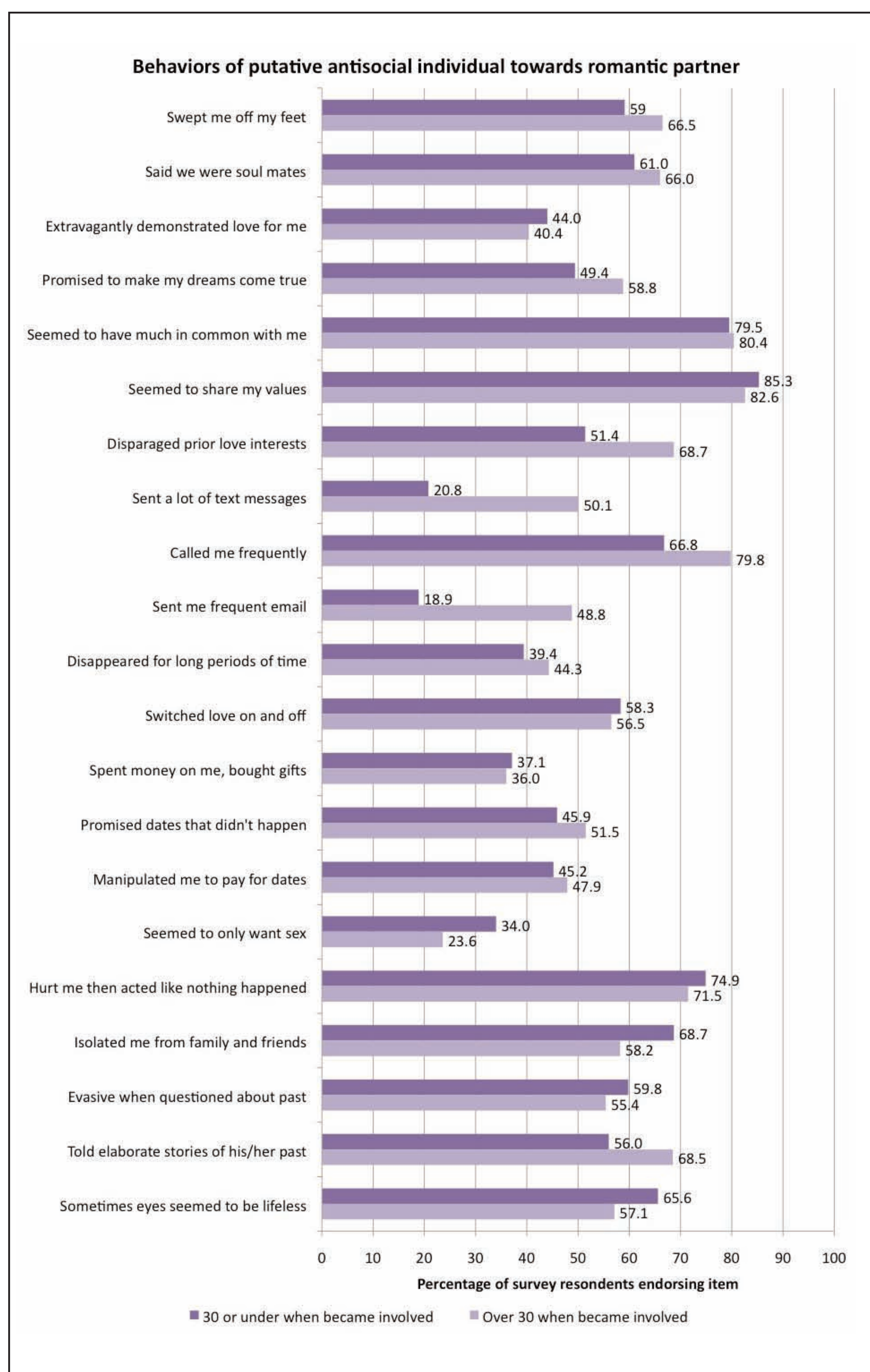
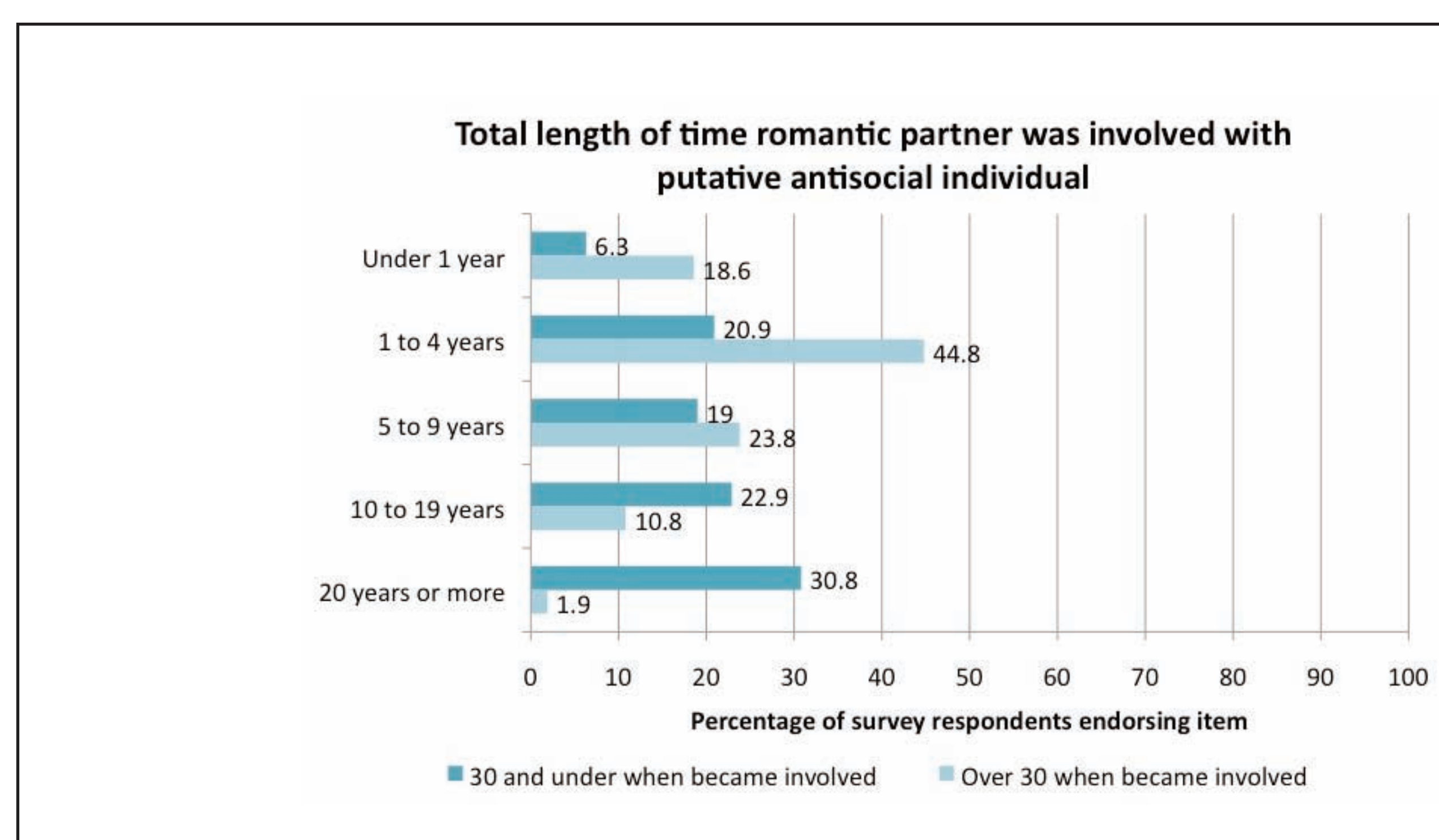
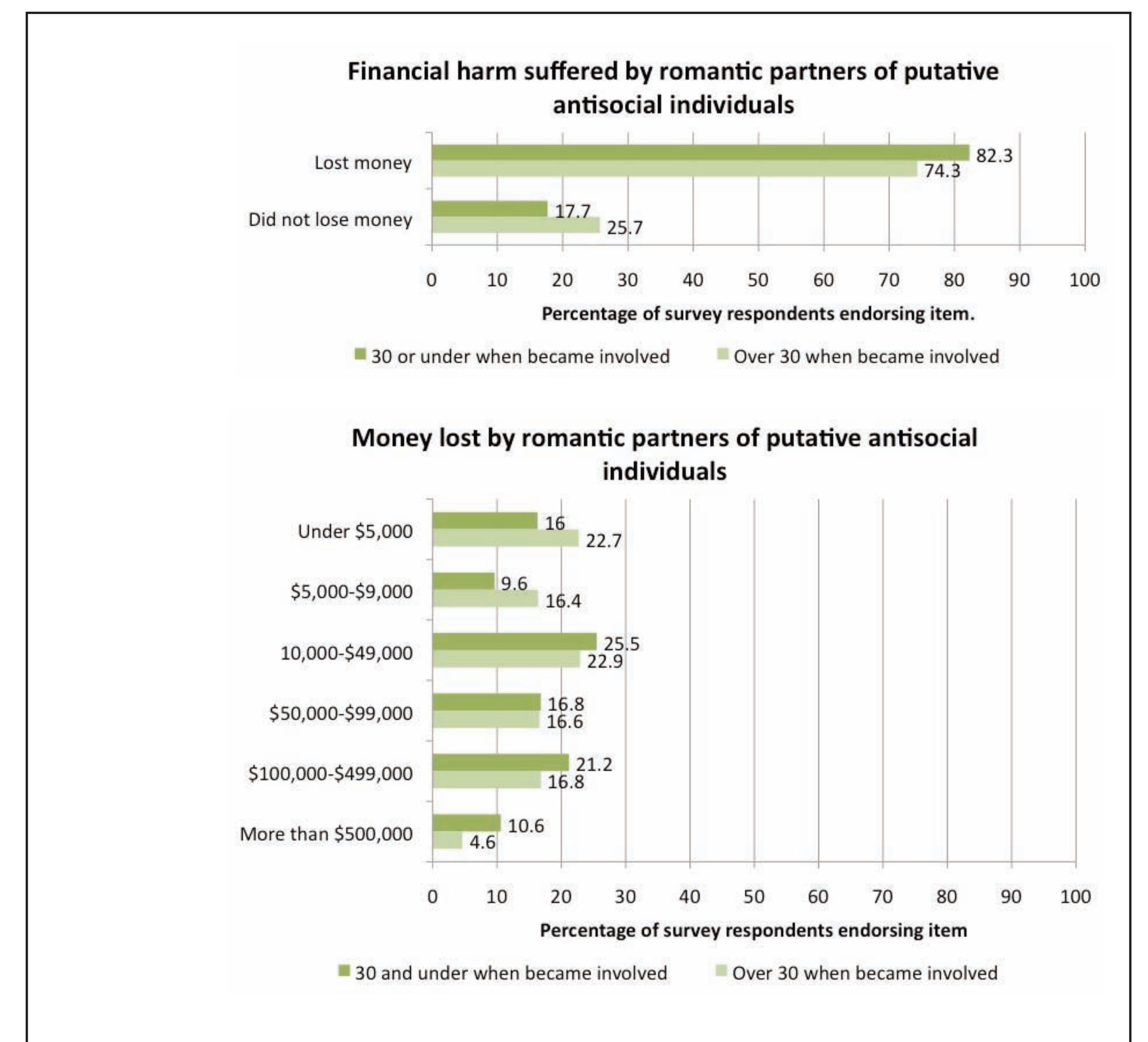
- Lost \$9,000 or less – 25.9% youthful v. 39.1% mature relationships
- Lost \$100,000 or more – 31.8% youthful v. 21.4% of mature relationships

Additional harm reported by romantic partners

Respondents who became involved with putative antisocial individuals at a younger age experienced significantly more harm than those who were mature, especially in relation to physical violence and financial abuse. Comparing the youthful vs. mature involvements:

- "You were physically abused or injured" – 53.8% v. 28.8%
- "Your life was threatened" – 44.2% v. 27.8%
- "You considered or attempted suicide" – 45.8% v. 34.2%
- "Individual threatened or attempted suicide" – 31.1% v. 16.8%
- "Sexual demands made you uncomfortable" – 52.2% v. 33.8%
- "You lost your home" – 35.9% v. 22.7%
- "You incurred debt" – 68.5% v. 56.4%

All of the putative antisocial individuals caused harm for their romantic partners. Survey respondents who became involved at a young age experienced measurably more harm.



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Red Flags of Love Fraud – 10 signs you're dating a sociopath