

# Gender and age differences in the prevalence of different types of aggression and victimization in Spanish adolescents

Rodríguez-Naranjo, C. and Caño, A.  
University of Málaga. Faculty of Psychology

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## Overview and Objectives

Aggressive behaviors are currently an important social problem, especially in childhood and adolescence. Given the serious consequences of aggression for both aggressors and victims (Chiung *et al.*, 2020), it is important to study its prevalence at these ages. In this study, we examined the prevalence of different types of interpersonal aggression in a sample of Spanish adolescents. Specifically, we studied overt and relational aggression in both aggressors and victims and in aggressor-victims. In addition, we tested for gender and age differences in aggression and victimization.

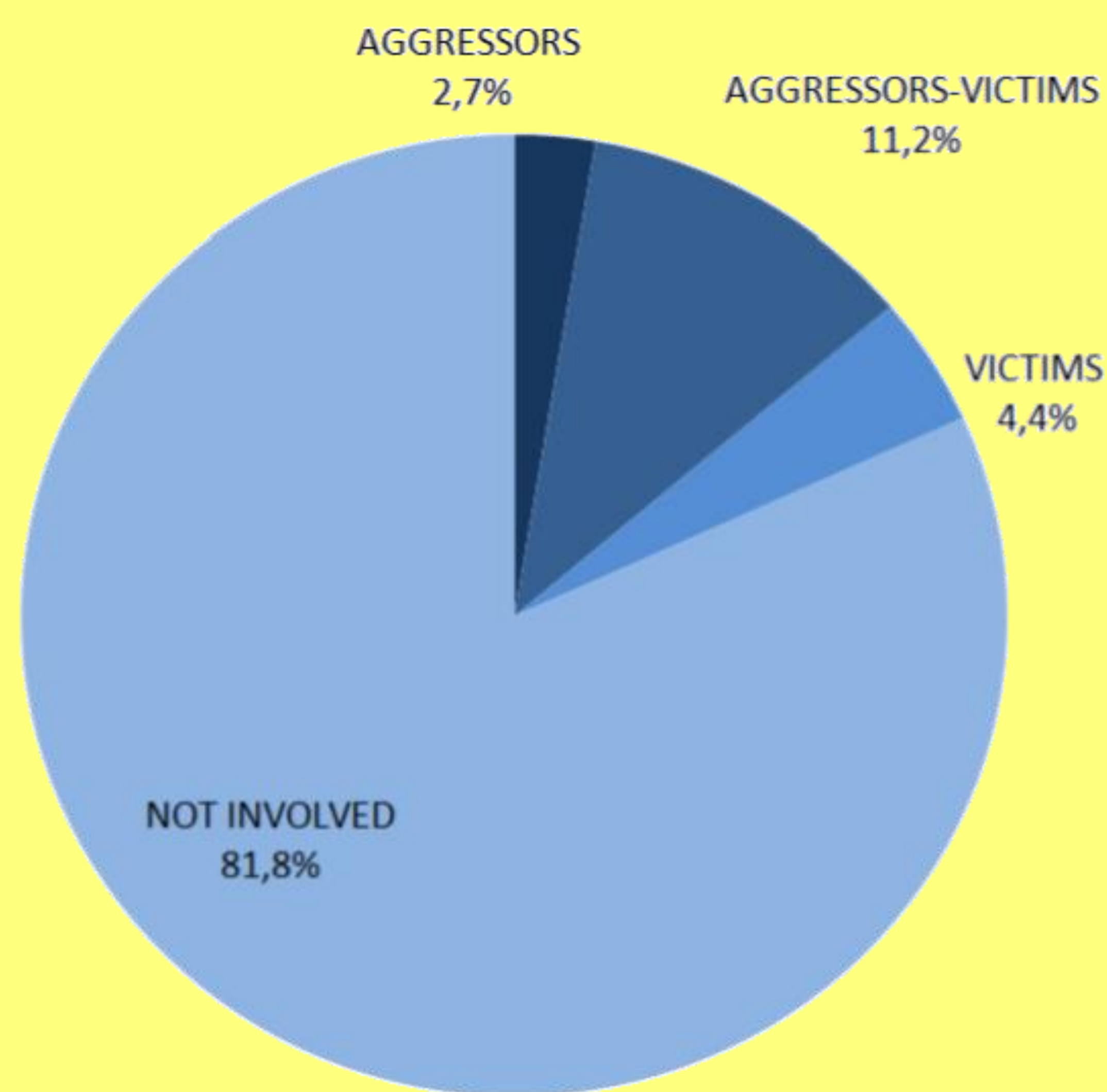


Figure 1. Prevalence of aggressors, victims, and aggressor-victims.

## Method

**Participants:** 981 adolescents (502 females and 479 males), with ages ranging from 12 to 18 years ( $M = 14.80$ ;  $SD = 1.76$ ). For the analyses, the participants were divided in two age groups: early adolescence (12 to 15 years old) and late adolescence (16 to 18 years old).

### Measures:

- ✓ *Children's Social Behavior Scale-Peer-Report* (CSBS-P; Crick and Grotpeter, 1996)
- ✓ *Children's Social Experiences Questionnaire-Peer-Report* (CSEQ-P; Crick y Bigbee, 1998)

## Statistical Analyses

### Identification of groups:

- **Role of involvement (aggressor, victim, aggressor-victim, and not involved):** scores 0.5 *SD* above and below on the aggression and victimization scales.
- **Type of aggression (overt and relational aggression):** scores 0.5 *SD* above and below on the aggression scale.
- **Type of victimization (overt and relational victimization):** scores 0.5 *SD* above and below on the victimization scale.

Chi-square and Fisher tests were performed in order to examine the differences between the groups.

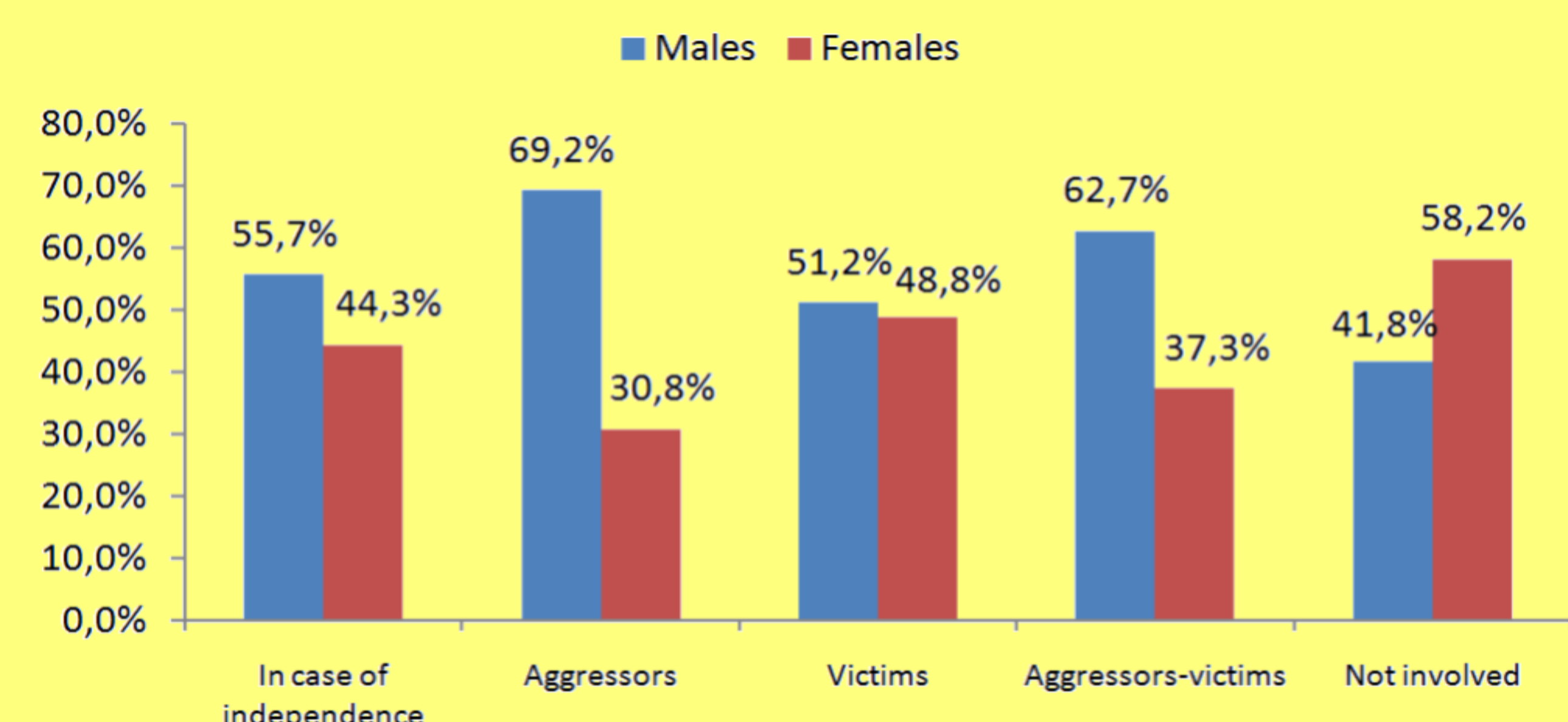


Figure 2. Results of the role of involvement by gender

## Results and discussion

Figure 1 shows that 18.2% of the adolescent sample was involved in the problem of aggression. And of the adolescents involved, 61.4% were aggressors and victims at the same time. Being identified by peers as aggressor and victim was related [ $\chi^2(1, N = 246) = 45.17$ ;  $p < .001$ ], even for specific types of aggression and victimization (overt and relational) [ $\chi^2(1, N = 322) = 41.25$ ;  $p < .001$ , for overt aggression-victimization;  $\chi^2(1, N = 348) = 42.55$ ;  $p < .001$ , for relational aggression-victimization]. Being identified as an overt aggressor and as a relational aggressor was also related [ $\chi^2(1, N = 374) = 195.56$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ], and the same result was obtained for overt and relational victimization [ $\chi^2(1, N = 331) = 173.30$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ]. Interestingly, over 70% of aggressors and the same percentage of victims behaved overtly and relationally at the same time.

Figures 2, 3 and 4 show that gender was significant for role of involvement, type of aggression and type of victimization [ $\chi^2(3, N = 246) = 9.742$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ;  $\chi^2(3, N = 374) = 62.208$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ;  $\chi^2(3, N = 331) = 31.713$ ;  $p \leq .001$ , respectively], showing higher involvement of boys in all categories except in relational aggression and victimization, and non-involvement, which were higher for girls. Age was only significant when analyses were done according to gender, showing more boys as aggressors and aggressor-victims only in the group of younger adolescents [ $\chi^2(3, N = 154) = 8.21$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ]. In both age groups, more boys were found to be both aggressors and victims of overt and overt-relational aggression, and more girls were found to be both aggressors and victims of relational aggression [ $\chi^2(3, N = 241) = 53.06$ ;  $p \leq 0.001$ ; Fisher test (3, N = 133) = 13.38;  $p \leq .01$ , for type of aggression in early and late adolescence, respectively;  $\chi^2(3, N = 21) = 21.95$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ; Fisher test (3, N = 12) = 11.08;  $p \leq .01$ , for type of victimization in early and late adolescence, respectively].

In summary, the results of this study reveal that approximately 2 out of 10 secondary and high school students are involved in school aggression, which means that the prevalence of aggression in Spanish adolescents is lower than that found in other countries, but still significant. A particularly high perpetrator-victim frequency was observed, suggesting that the two phenomena are mutually reinforcing. In terms of gender, more boys than girls were found to be involved in aggression as aggressors and as aggressor-victims, with a similar number of victims among boys and girls. Additionally, boys and girls tend to exhibit distinct forms of aggression (overt aggression and victimization for boys and relational aggression and victimization for girls).

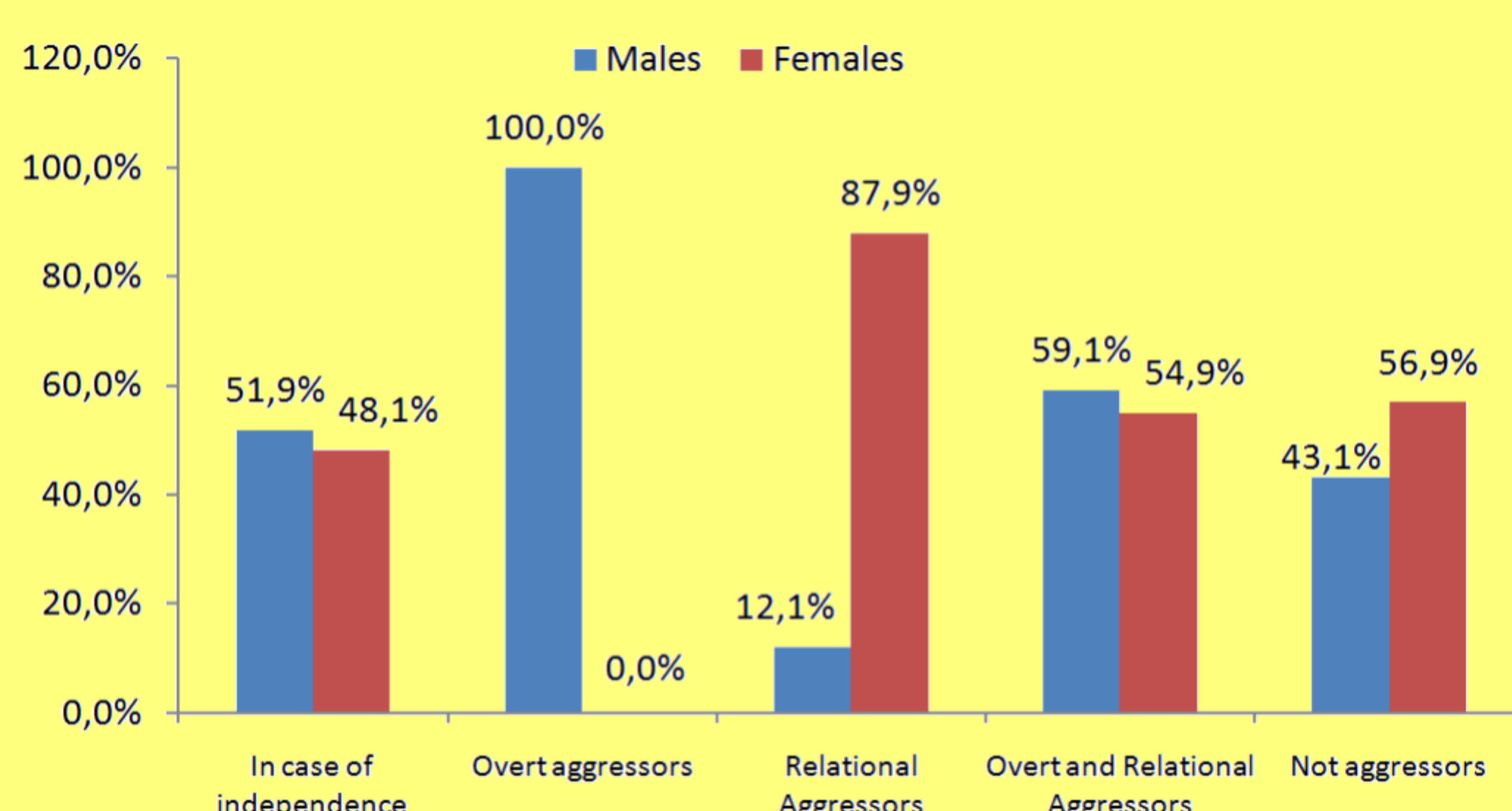


Figure 3. Results for type of aggression by gender

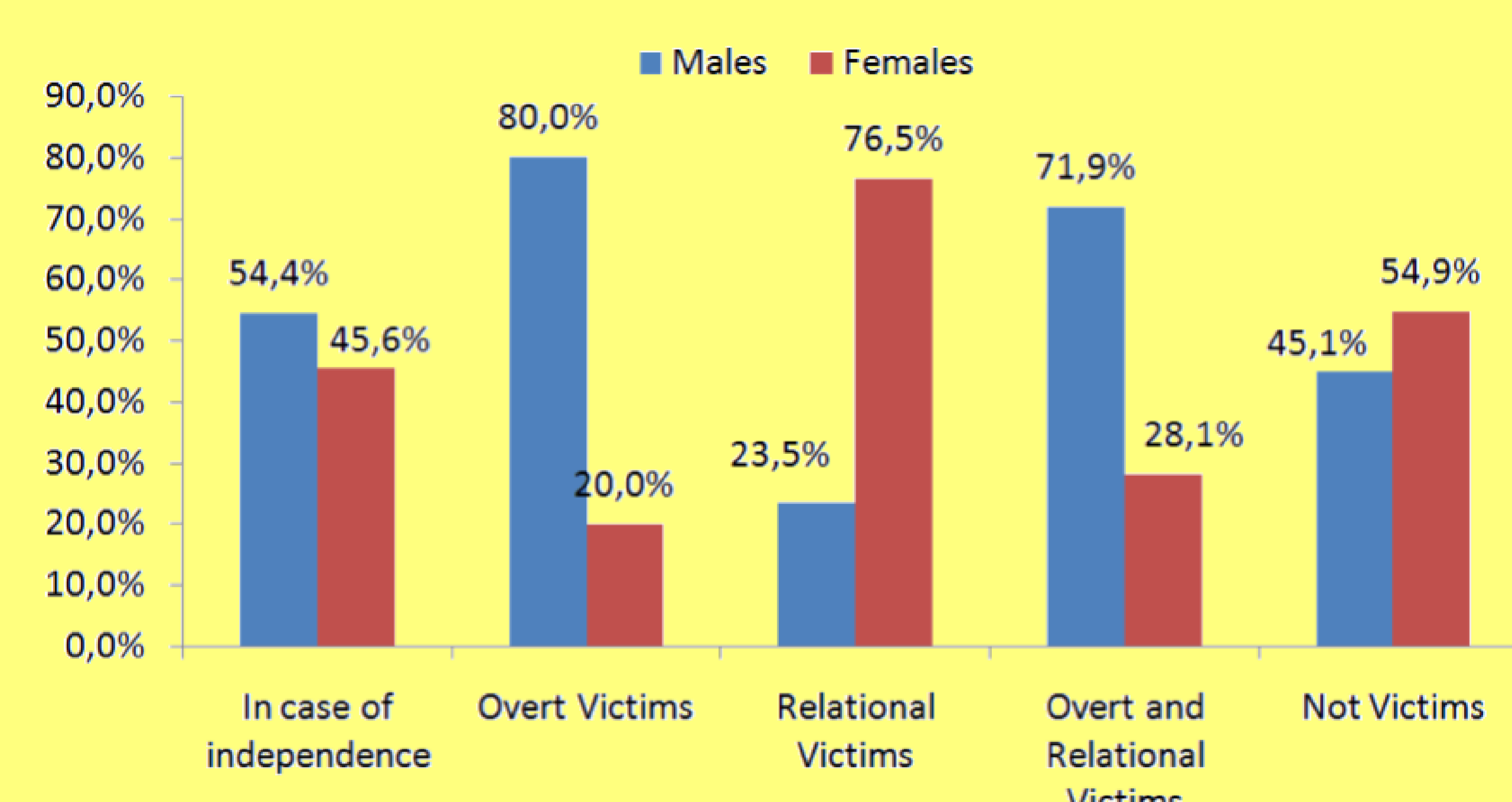


Figure 4. Results for type of victimization by gender