

# Marriage & Health, Especially at Older Ages

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# Old Story: Marriage Improves Health

- Physical health & mortality, esp. men
- Mental health of both men and women

# Old Story: Marriage Improves Health

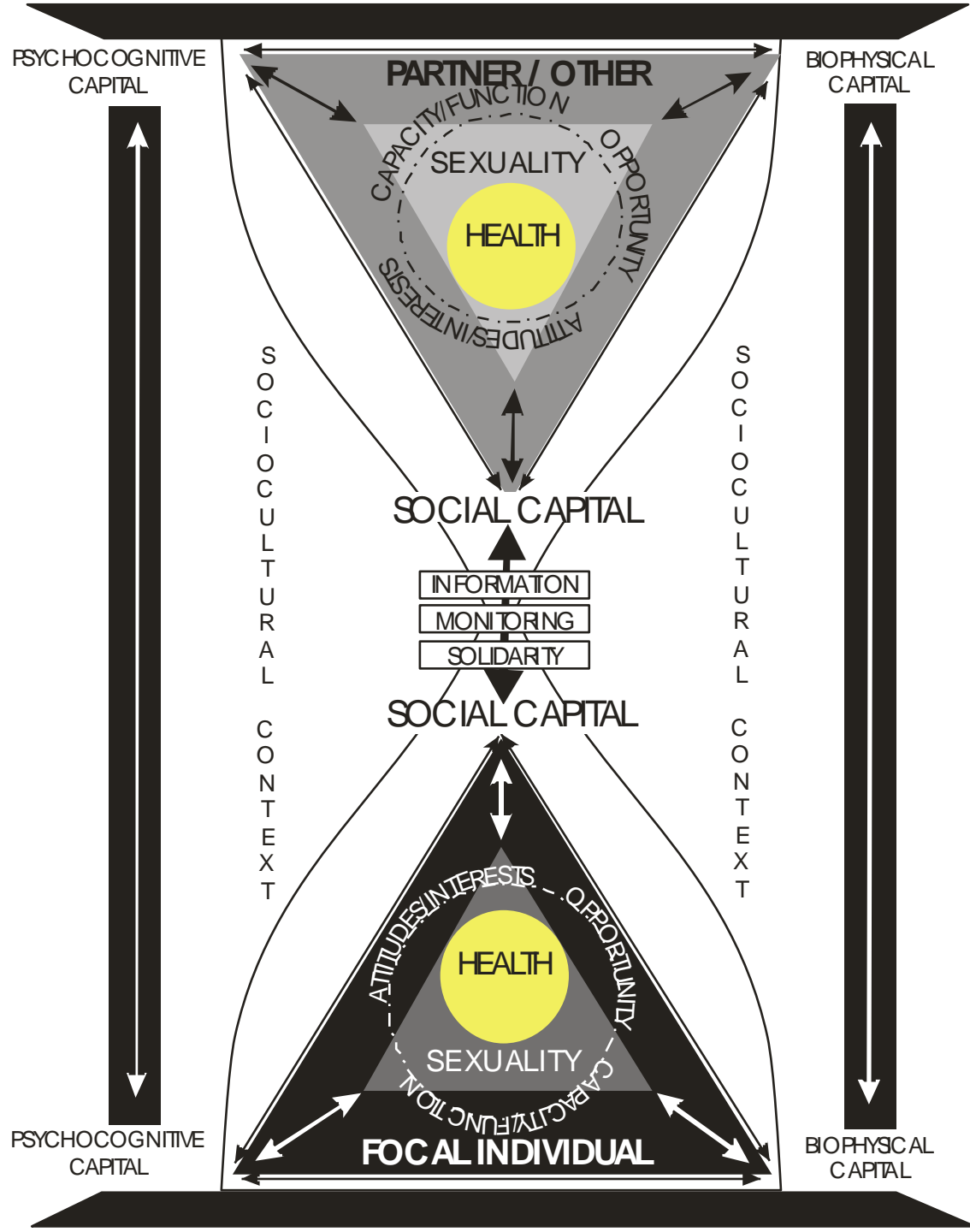
- Physical health & mortality, esp. men
  - Self-rated health
  - Disease incidence and prevalence
- Mental health of both men and women
  - Depression
  - Alcohol Abuse

# Challenges & Controversies

- Expand the way we look at production of health
- Expand our notion of “health”
- Use conceptual framework from NSHAP

# Health is Produced in the Dyad

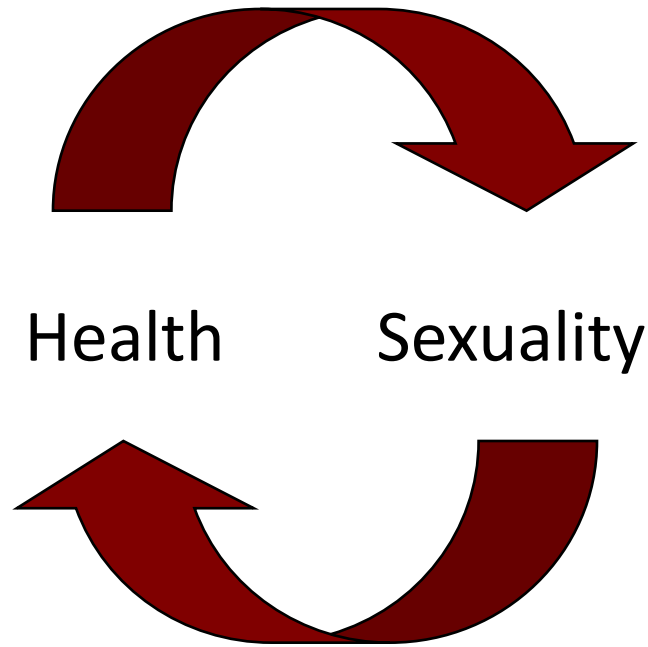
- For most people, dyad is marriage
- Unpartnered may lack some of the inputs to health
- Bio-psychosocial Model of Health



# Expanded Definition of “Health”

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Satisfaction with life or “happiness”
- Physiological functioning
- Sexuality

# Bi-directional Relationship between Health and Sexuality



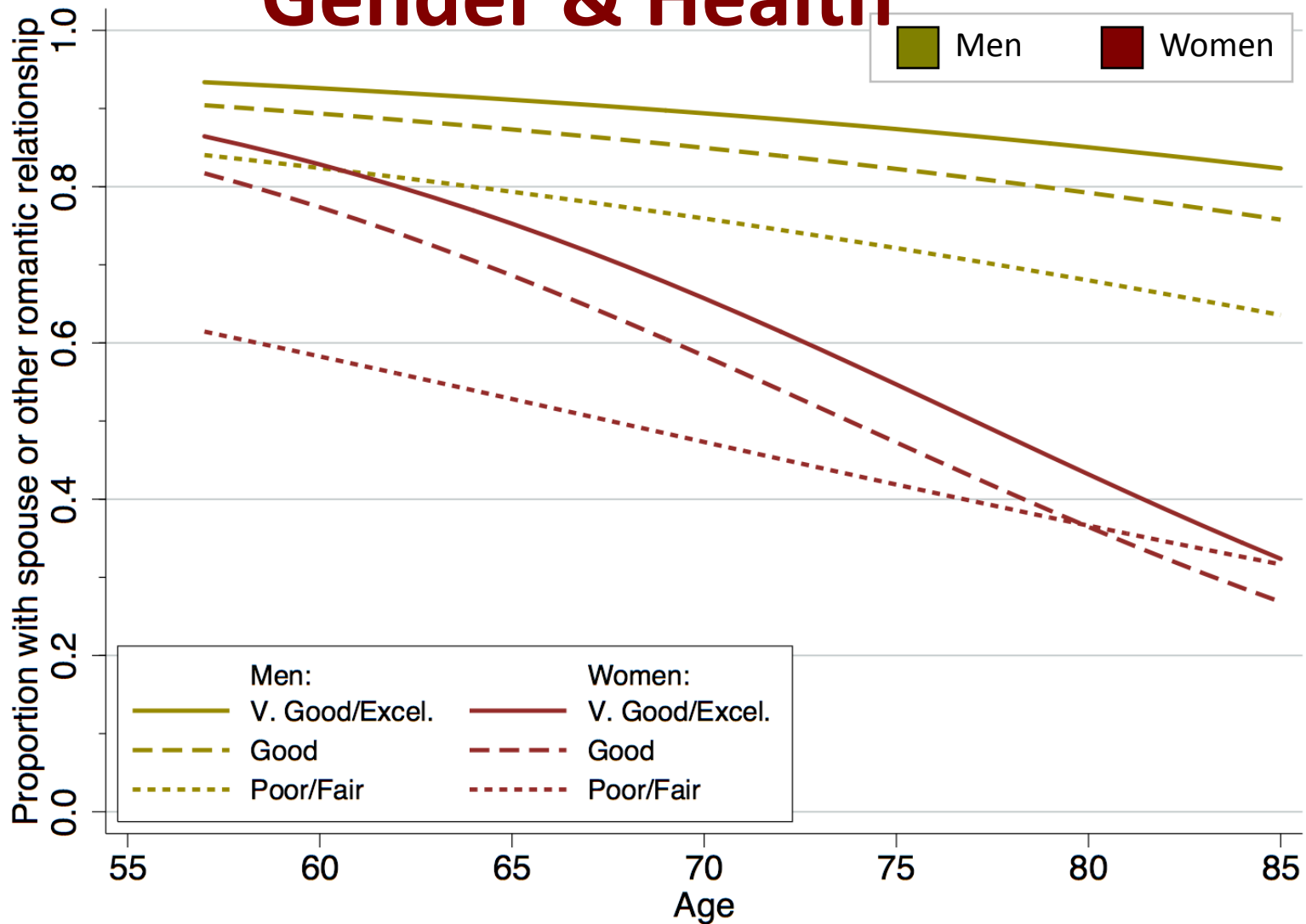
While health alters attitude, opportunity and physical capacity for intimate activities, sexual expression is a key component of healthy aging.



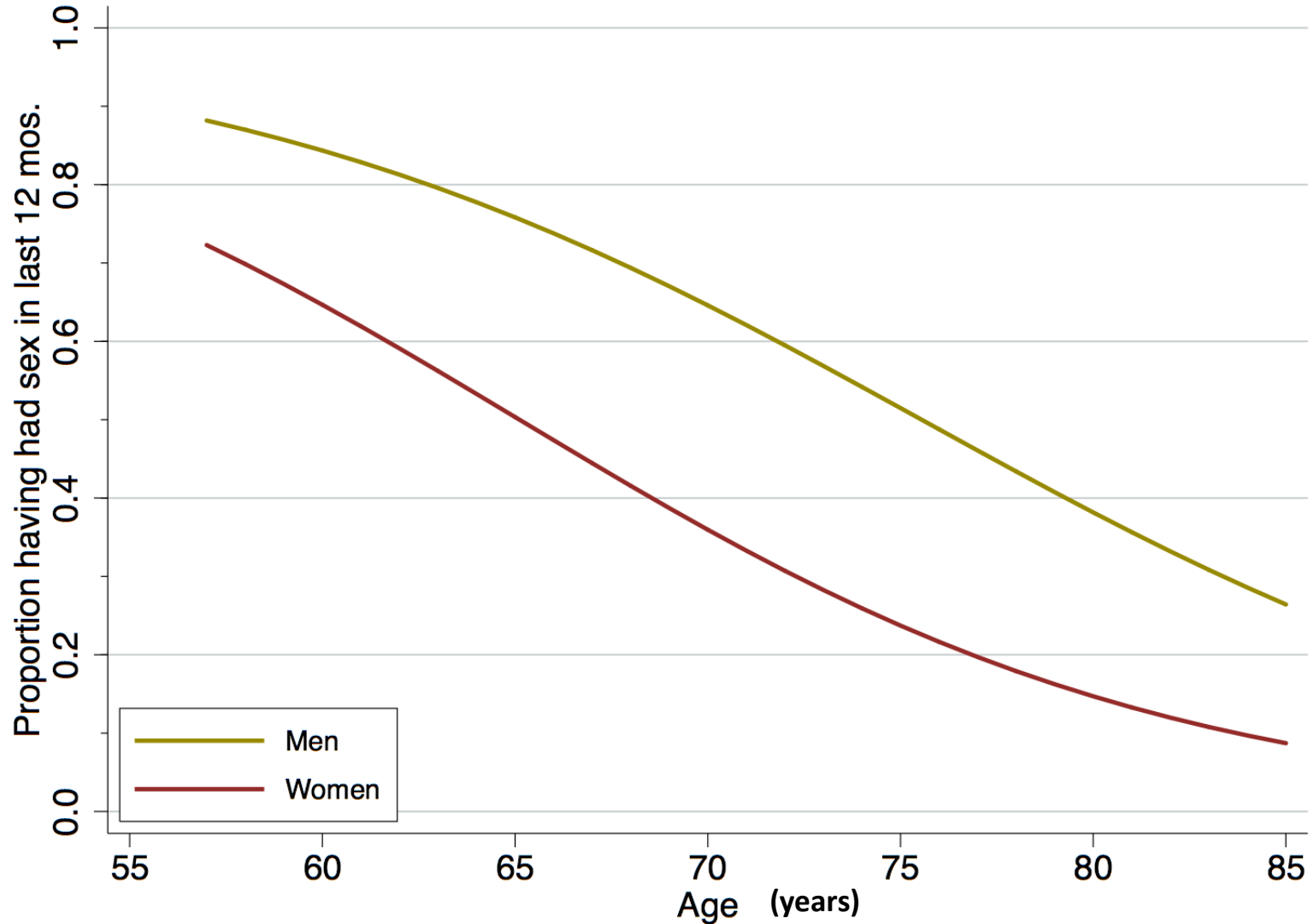
# Partnerships

- IF health is produced in the dyad
- IF sexuality is an important component of health
- THEN it is important to look at partnering
- Especially at older ages, when things are in flux

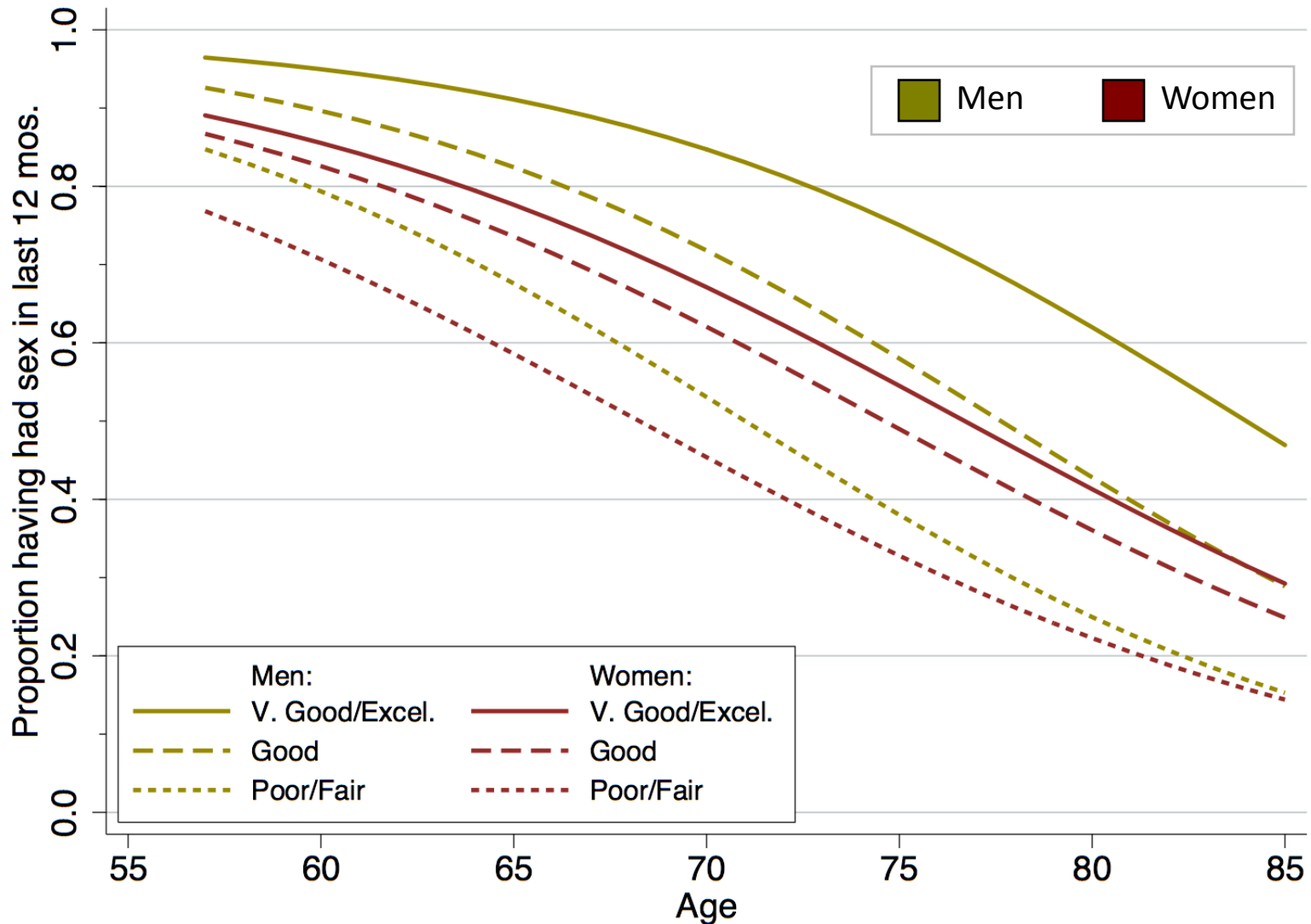
# Probability of Having a Partner, by Gender & Health



# Prevalence of Sexual Activity (%)



# Probability of Sex in Last 12 Months for those with a Partner, by Health



\* among those with a spouse or other romantic relationship

# Relationship between marriage & health depends

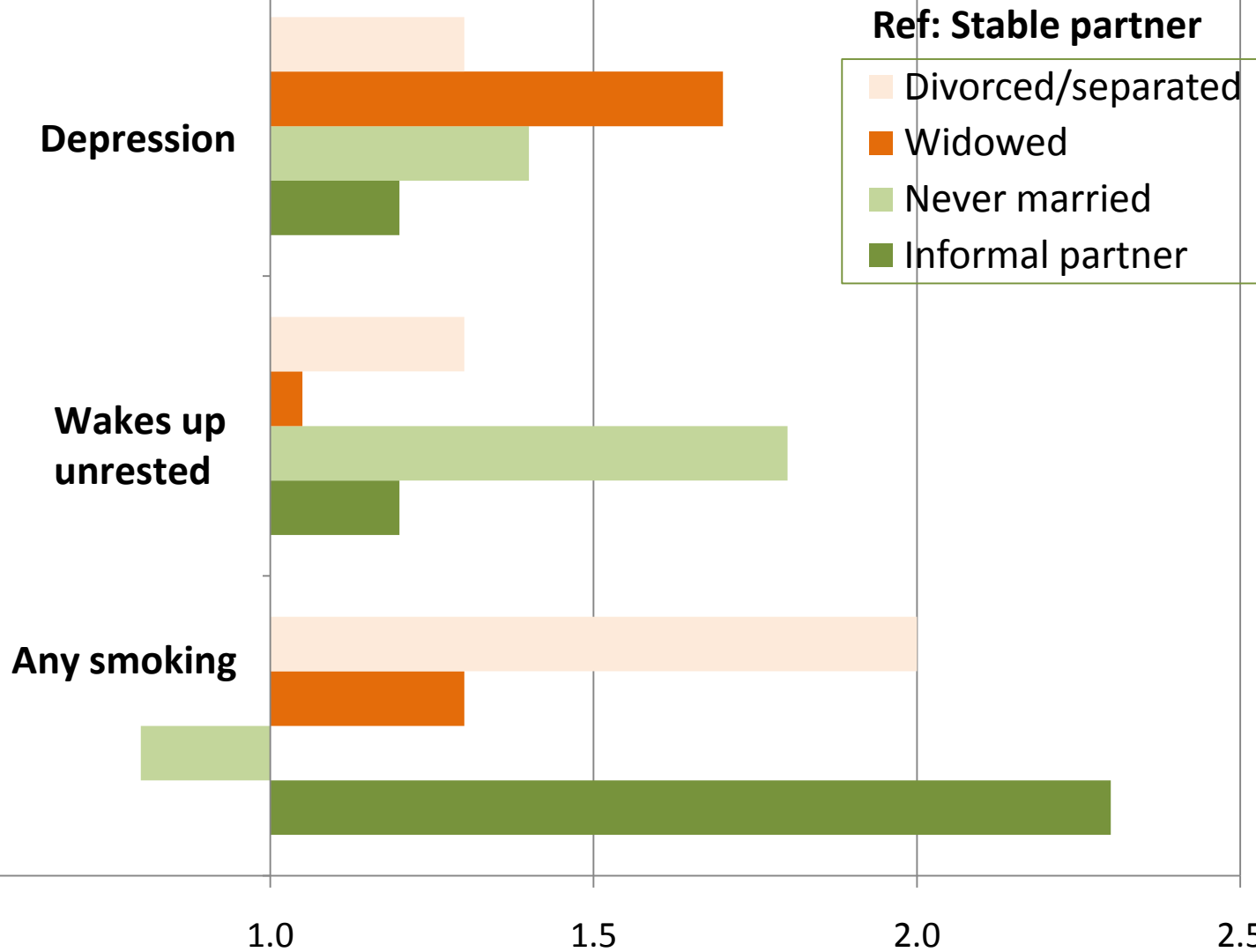
- On marital quality
- On gender
- On race/ethnicity
- On age/stage in the life course
- On dimension of health
- On history of marriage/partnership
- All of these are interrelated

# Marital Status and Health

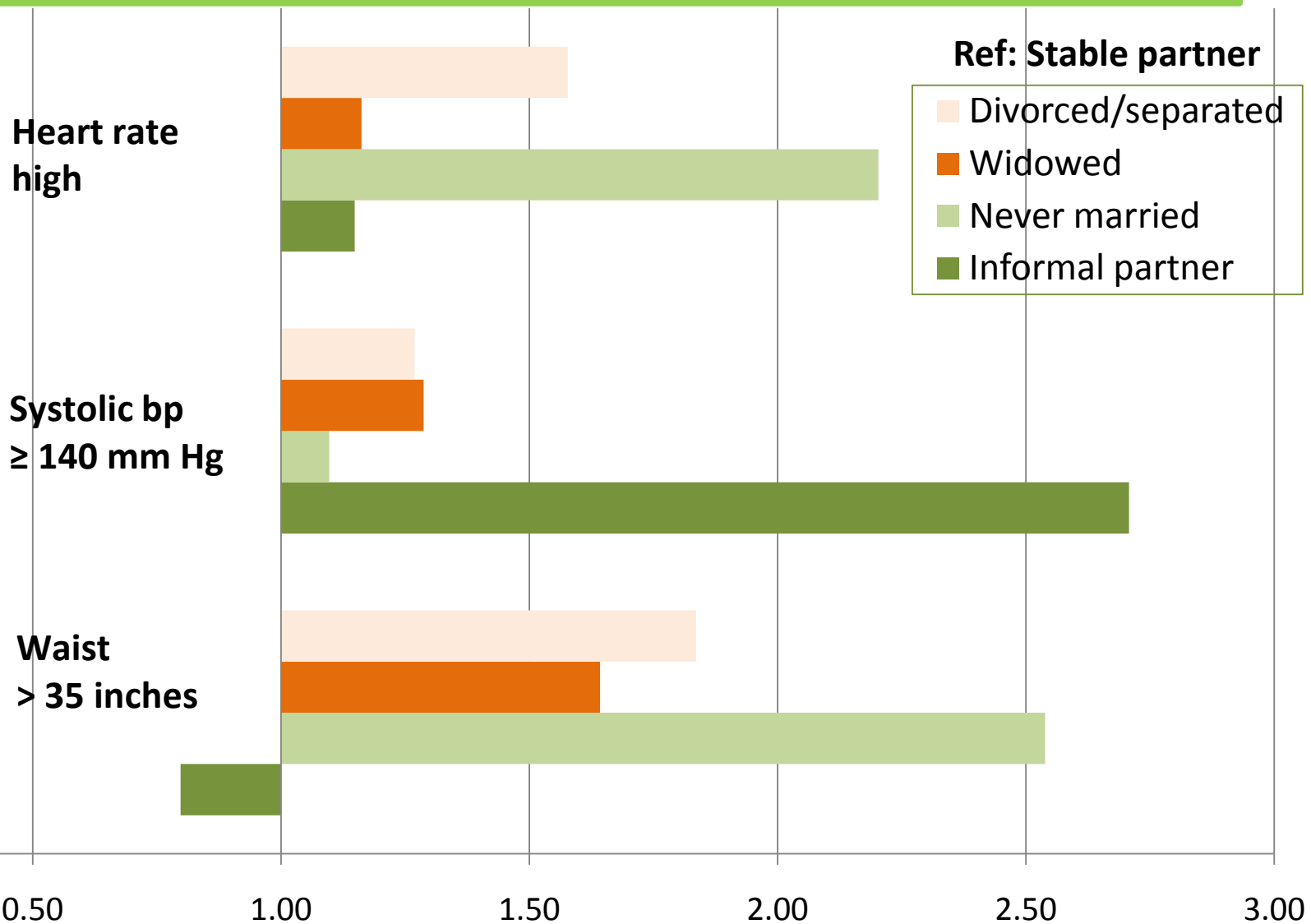
- Benefits of marriage (and costs of marital loss) may differ for blacks than whites
  - The economic well-being of black wives less tied to marriage
  - Networks of black mothers less marriage based
  - Divorce/partner loss more common

Illustrative preliminary findings: Bobby Das

# Women's partnership & health: Odds Ratios

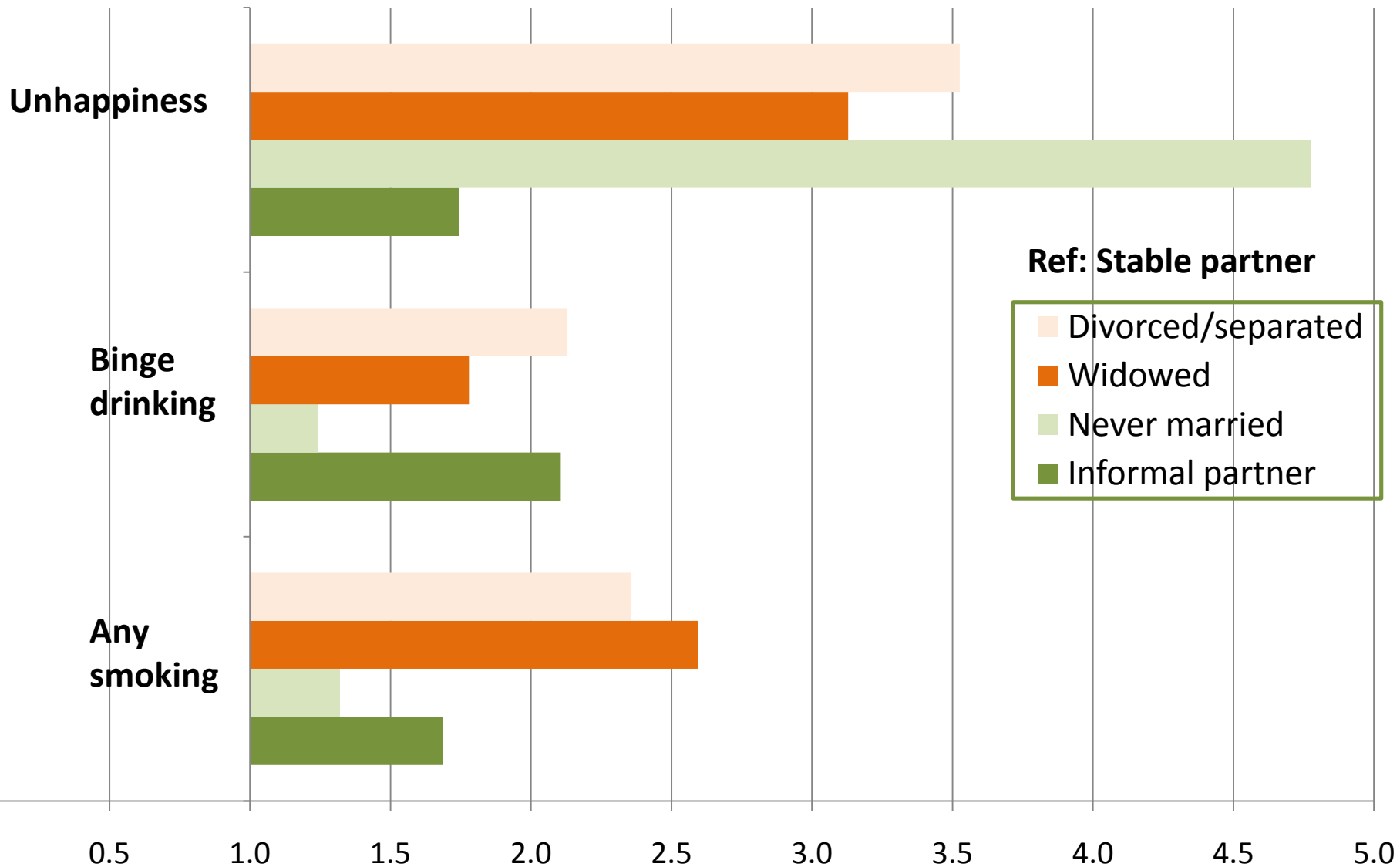


# Women's Odds Ratios (contd.)

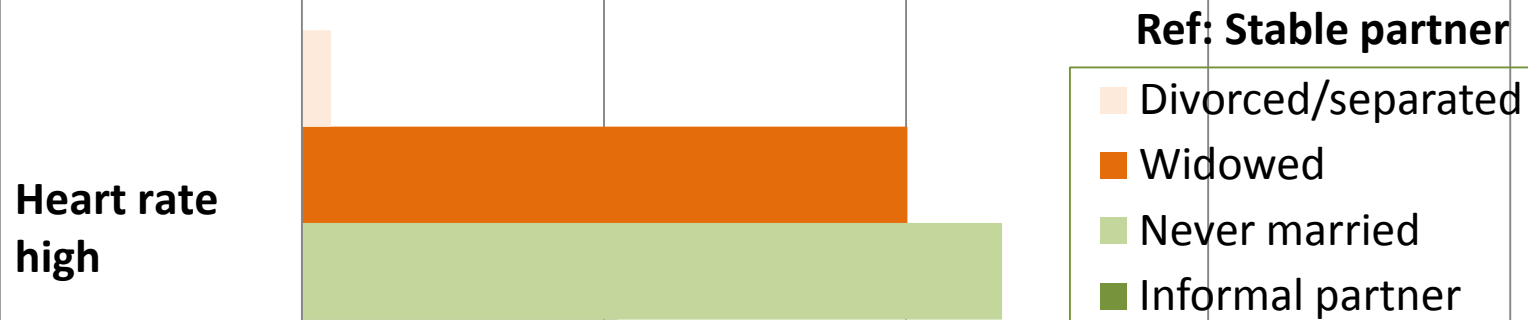




# Men's partnership & health: Odds Ratios



# Men's Odds Ratios (contd.)



Heart rate  
high

CRP high

Ref: Stable partner

Divorced/separated

Widowed

Never married

Informal partner

0.00

0.50

1.00

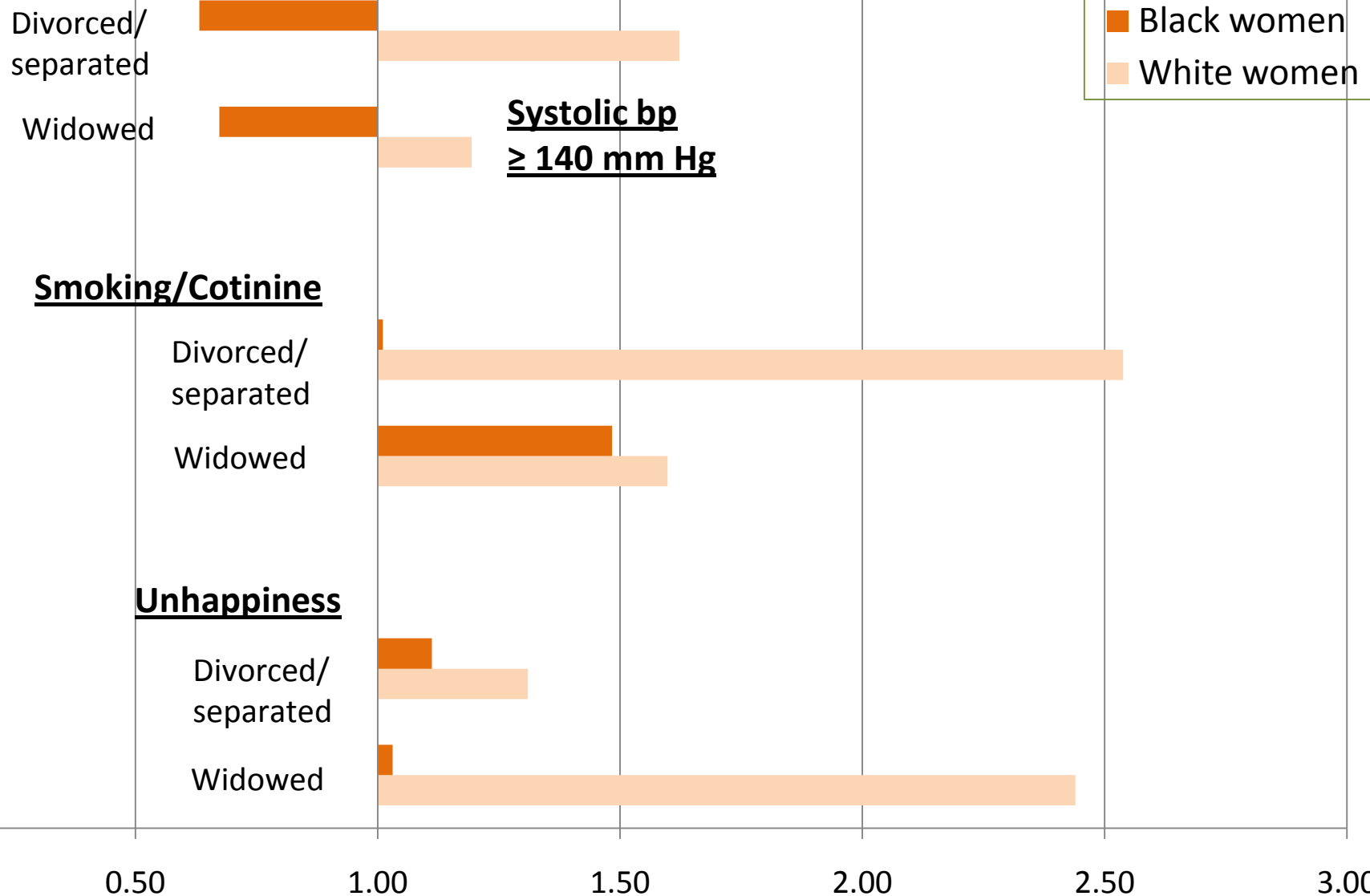
1.50

2.00

2.50

3.00

# Ethnicity and Partnership: Women's Odds Ratios (ref: stable partner)



# Marital Quality & Health

- Poor quality marriages may bring few resources
- Poor quality marriages may carry high costs
- Some evidence suggests poor quality marriage worse than none at all

# Relation satisfaction and sexual problems: Odds Ratios

	Lacked interest in sex	Unable to achieve orgasm	Experienced pain during sex	Sex not pleasurable	Anxious about performance	Trouble lubricating
Women's Relationship Satisfaction	<b>0.7*</b> (0.5-0.9)	<b>0.7**</b> (0.5-0.9)	<b>0.7*</b> (0.5-1.0)	<b>0.6**</b> (0.4-0.8)		
Men's Relationship Satisfaction	<b>0.6**</b> (0.5-0.8)			<b>0.5**</b> (0.3-0.8)		<b>0.7*</b> (0.6-0.9)

# Challenges & Questions

- Marriage-*like* relationships
- Other sources of resources
- Other relationships
- Non-relationship sources of intimacy