

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the use of helplines for violence against Peruvian women, youth, and children by perpetrator relationship

Renzo JC Calderón Anyosa, MD ^{a,b};
Felicia Knaul, PhD ^{c,d};
Jay S Kaufman, PhD ^a

- a. McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada
- b. Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, Lima, Peru
- c. University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL, USA
- d. Tómatelo a Pecho, Mexico City, Mexico

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- The *COVID-19* pandemic had disastrous consequences in all aspects of society.
- Violence against women and children was impacted unintentionally by lockdowns, generating more contact with some perpetrators and less contact with others.
- Lockdown led to surge in service needs associated with family violence, but interventions had to be adapted to the pandemic context.
- Several countries expanded **helplines** as a response.

- Peru had the highest cumulative pandemic excess mortality of any country, and highest per-capita COVID-related deaths, while having implemented one of the earliest and most stringent lockdowns.
- Insights into the relationship between lockdowns and changes in helpline utilization for violence against women and children aid policymakers in devising more effective strategies to reach and safeguard the public during emergencies such as COVID-19.

- Data from the Peruvian Ministry of Women portal, a de-identified administrative database that compiles records of all services rendered by the Ministry.
- Retrieved data from 2018 through December 2020 on calls received by the national helpline, "Linea 100."
- Linea 100 established as a free telephone service in 2006, and offers information, guidance, and emotional support to individuals impacted by, or involved in, incidents of gender-based violence nationwide.

- Trained helpline operators follow a set of care protocols and strict quality standards outlined by the National Registration System for Family and Sexual Violence.
- They document key information regarding the violence and the survivors, including the date, gender, age, and relationship to the perpetrator.
- Operators trained in psychological first aid and emotional support, allowing appropriate referrals to an Urgent Care Service (psychologist, social worker, lawyer).

- We studied children of both sexes <15 years, both sexes of teenagers 15-18 years, and women aged 18+.
- Perpetrator's relationship to the survivor:
 - (1) **Partner** (cohabitants, spouses, or boy/girlfriends)
 - (2) **Ex-partner** (categories above but relationship ended)
 - (3) **Parents** or stepparents
 - (4) **Other relatives**, including siblings, sons/daughters, grandchildren, or other family members
 - (5) **Others**, including strangers, study partners, co-workers, friends, teachers, neighbors, or other non-family members.

Type of violence documented in the database as the self-reported primary reason for the call:

(1) **Sexual violence** = non-consensual or coerced sexual acts

(2) **Physical violence** = actions causing harm to the body or compromising physical health

(3) **Psychological violence** = behaviors intended to control or isolate the individual against their will, to humiliate or shame them

Pre-lockdown period = Jan 1-March 16th

Post-lockdown period = March 16th- December 31

On March 16th, 2020, 10 days after 1st case, Peruvian government declared national state of sanitary emergency

- suspension of economic and academic activities
- restrictions on public and private gatherings
- only permitted to leave their home for essential purposes or to seek medical attention
- curfew in effect 8 p.m. to 5 a.m, with military and police personnel patrolling the streets
- international borders closed, inter-regional movement halted

Statistical analysis

- Difference-in-difference analysis using Callaway and Sant'Anna estimator, along with an event study to account for dynamic effects.
- Adjusted for regional fixed effects and utilized cluster-robust standard errors.
- Primary outcome of interest was the number of calls per million population within each 15-day time frame.
- Evaluated parallel trends assumption during pre-lockdown period using event study plots (null trend expected).

	January 01 st - March 15 th	March 16 th -Dec 31 st
	Pre	Post
	(N = 53,775)	(N = 221,198)
Type of violence		
Psychological violence	17819 (33.1%)	86379 (39.1%)
Physical violence	30014 (55.8%)	109850 (49.7%)
Sexual violence	5942 (11.0%)	24969 (11.3%)
Sex and age Group		
Male, <15y/o	9175 (17.1%)	33479 (15.1%)
Female, <15y/o	10622 (19.8%)	41182 (18.6%)
Male, 15-18 y/o	739 (1.4%)	3042 (1.4%)
Female, 15-18 y/o	2517 (4.7%)	10778 (4.9%)
Woman, ≥18 y/o	30722 (57.1%)	132717 (60.0%)
Perpetrator Relationship		
Parent	15999 (29.8%)	64956 (29.4%)
Partner	12736 (23.7%)	55166 (24.9%)
Ex-partner	5620 (10.5%)	24603 (11.1%)
Other relatives	5284 (9.8%)	25561 (11.6%)
Other	2888 (5.4%)	12582 (5.7%)
Missing	11248 (20.9%)	38330 (17.3%)

Figure 1. Aggregate effect estimates and 95% CI in calls per million

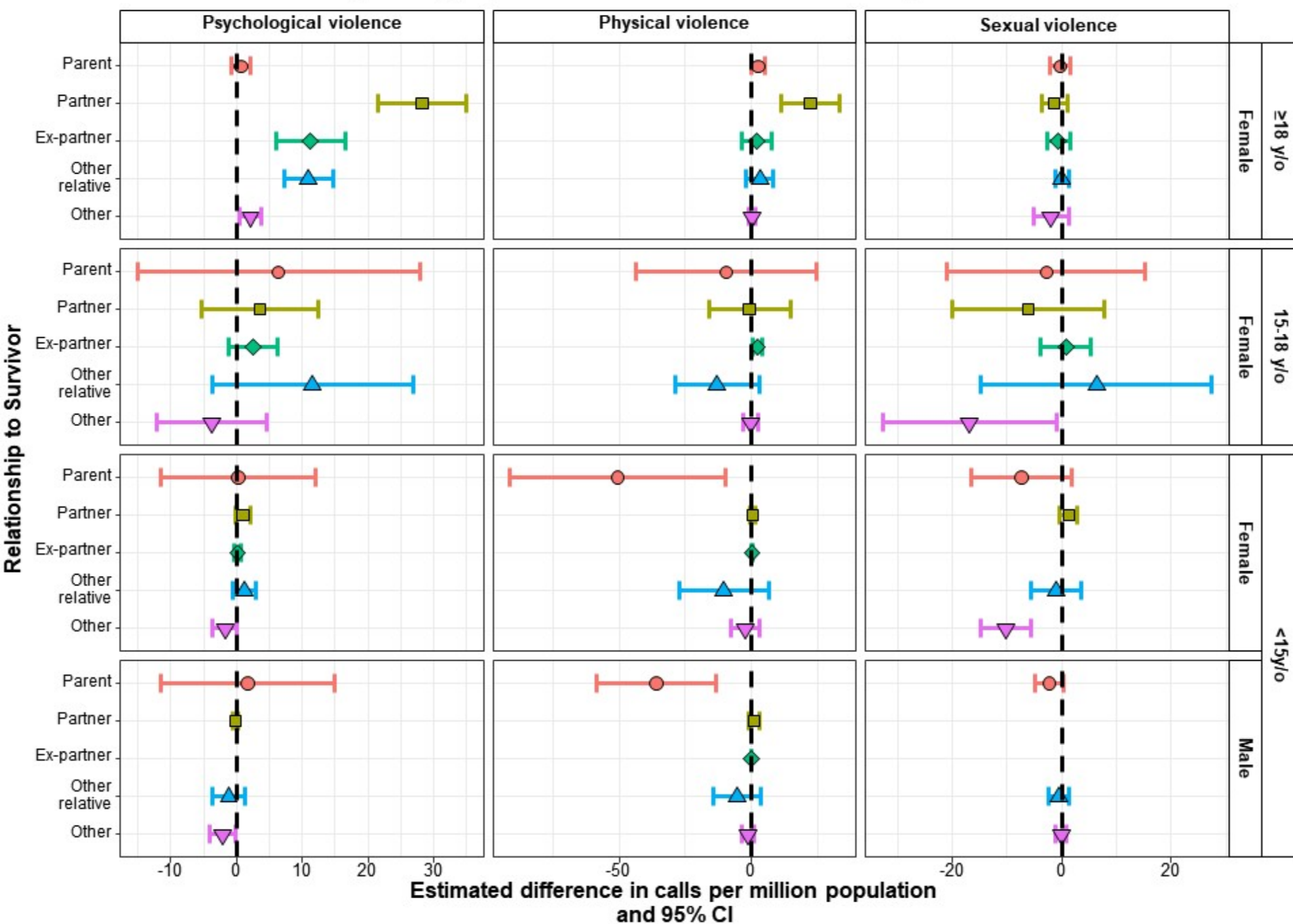


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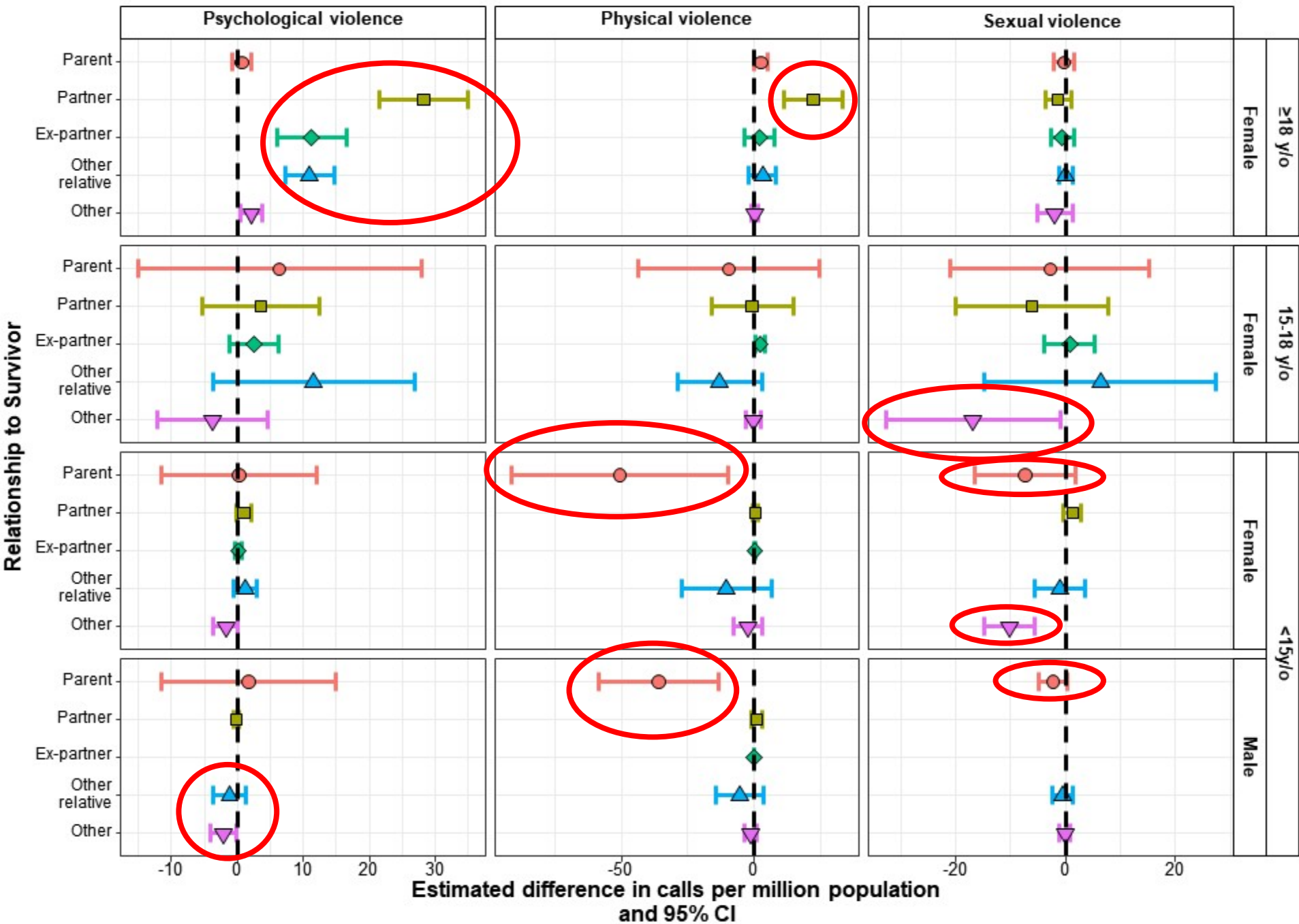


Figure 2. Event study plot for calls related to psychological violence

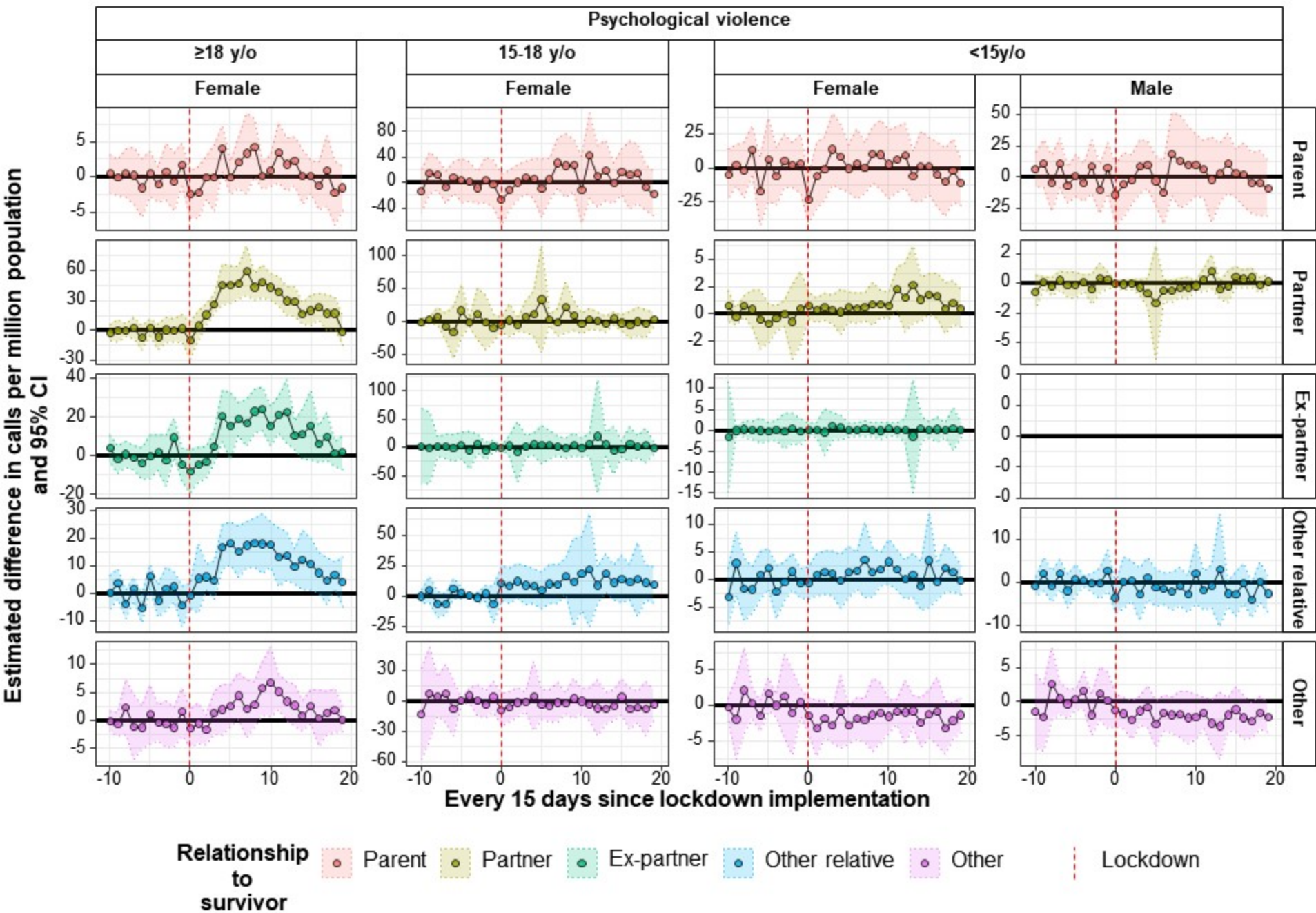
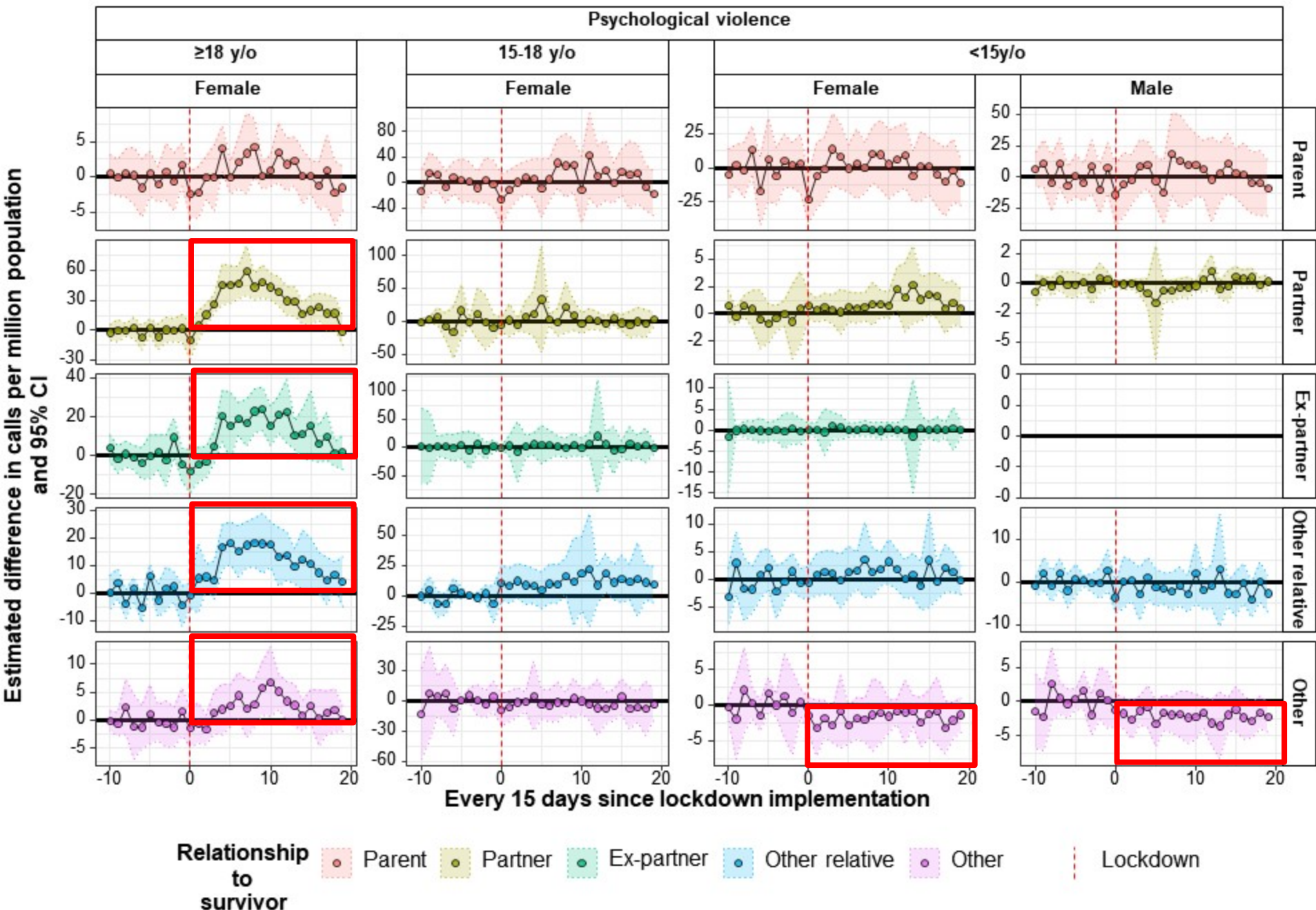
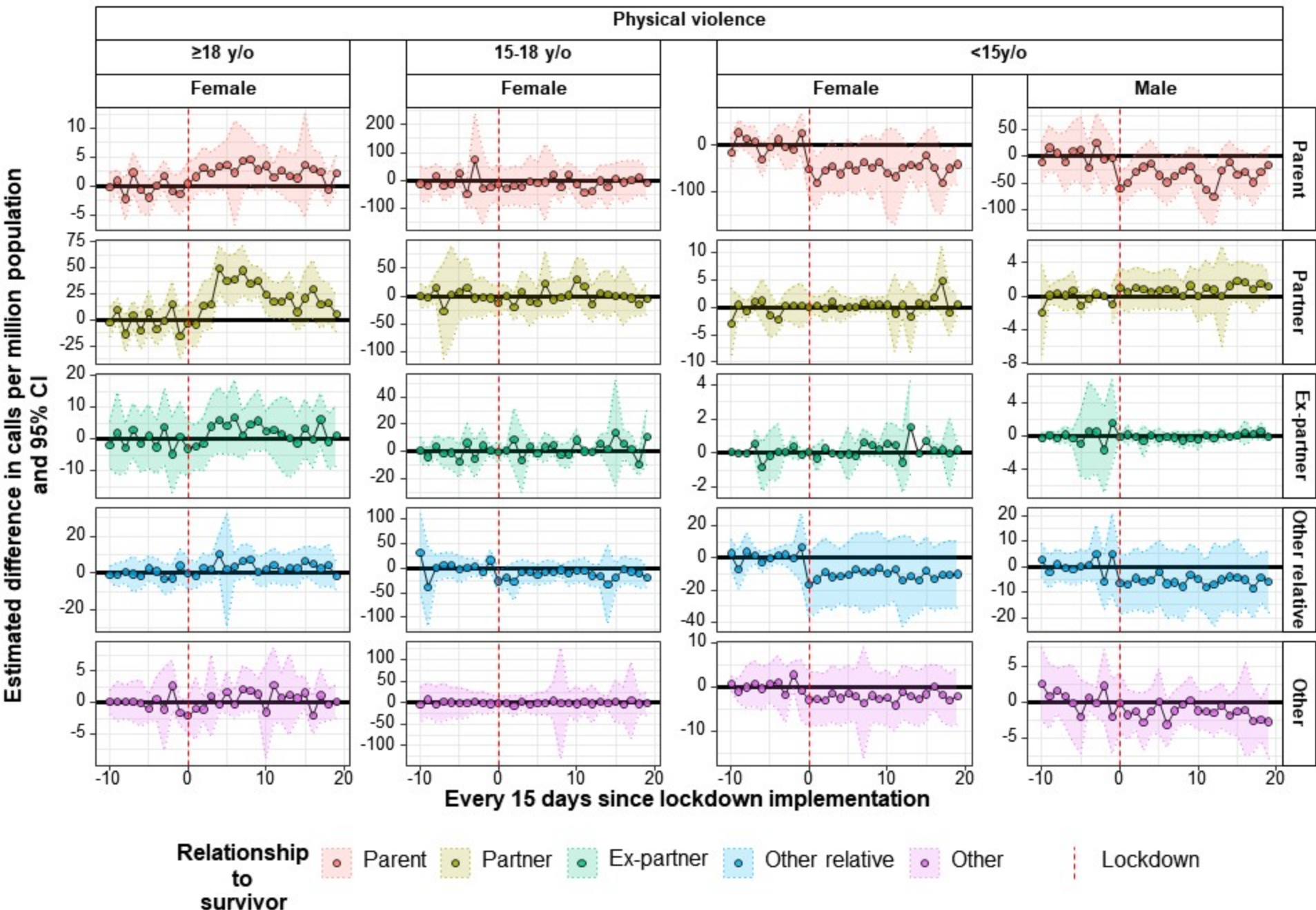


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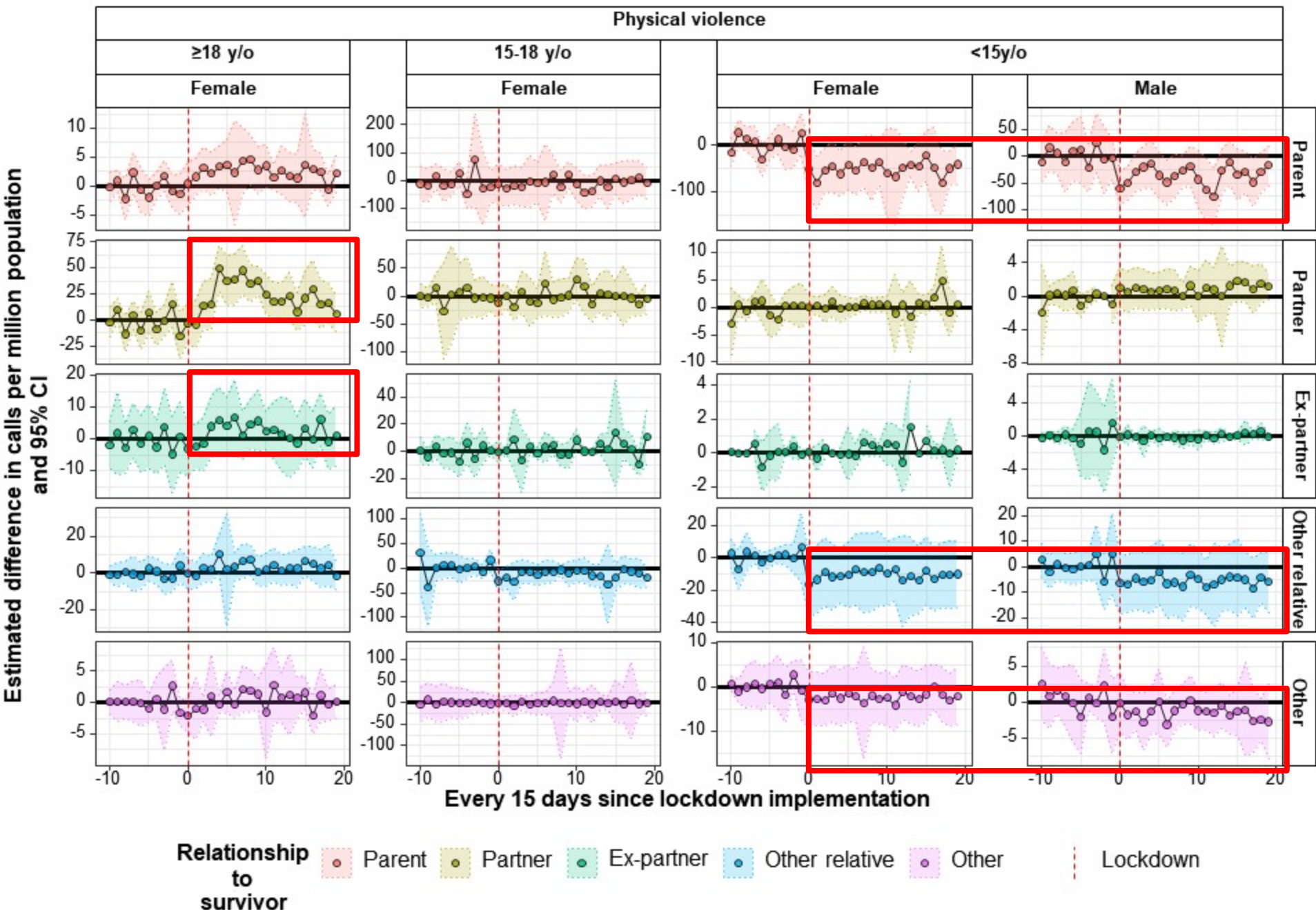
* Different scale on the vertical axis

Figure 3. Event study plot for calls related to physical violence



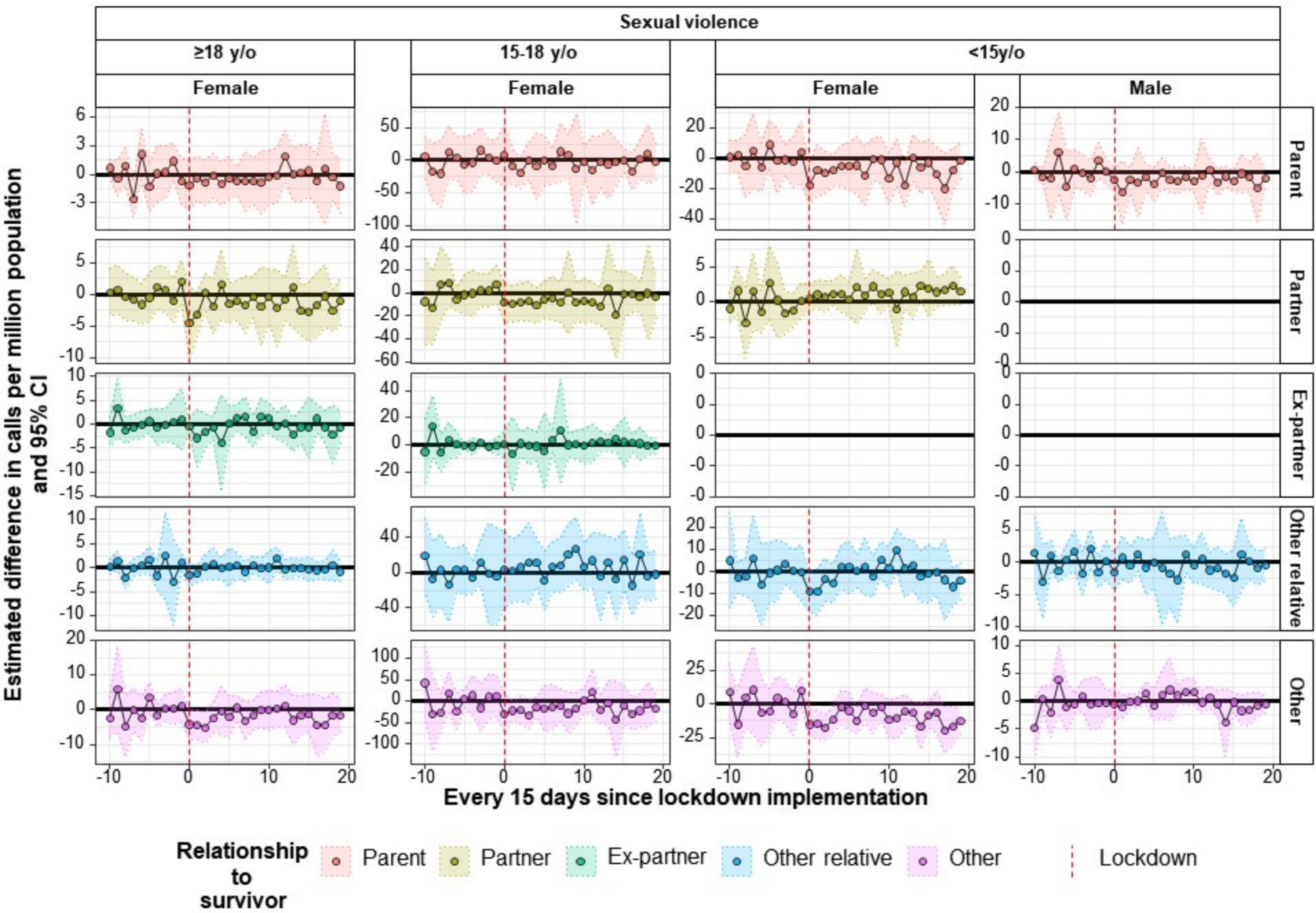
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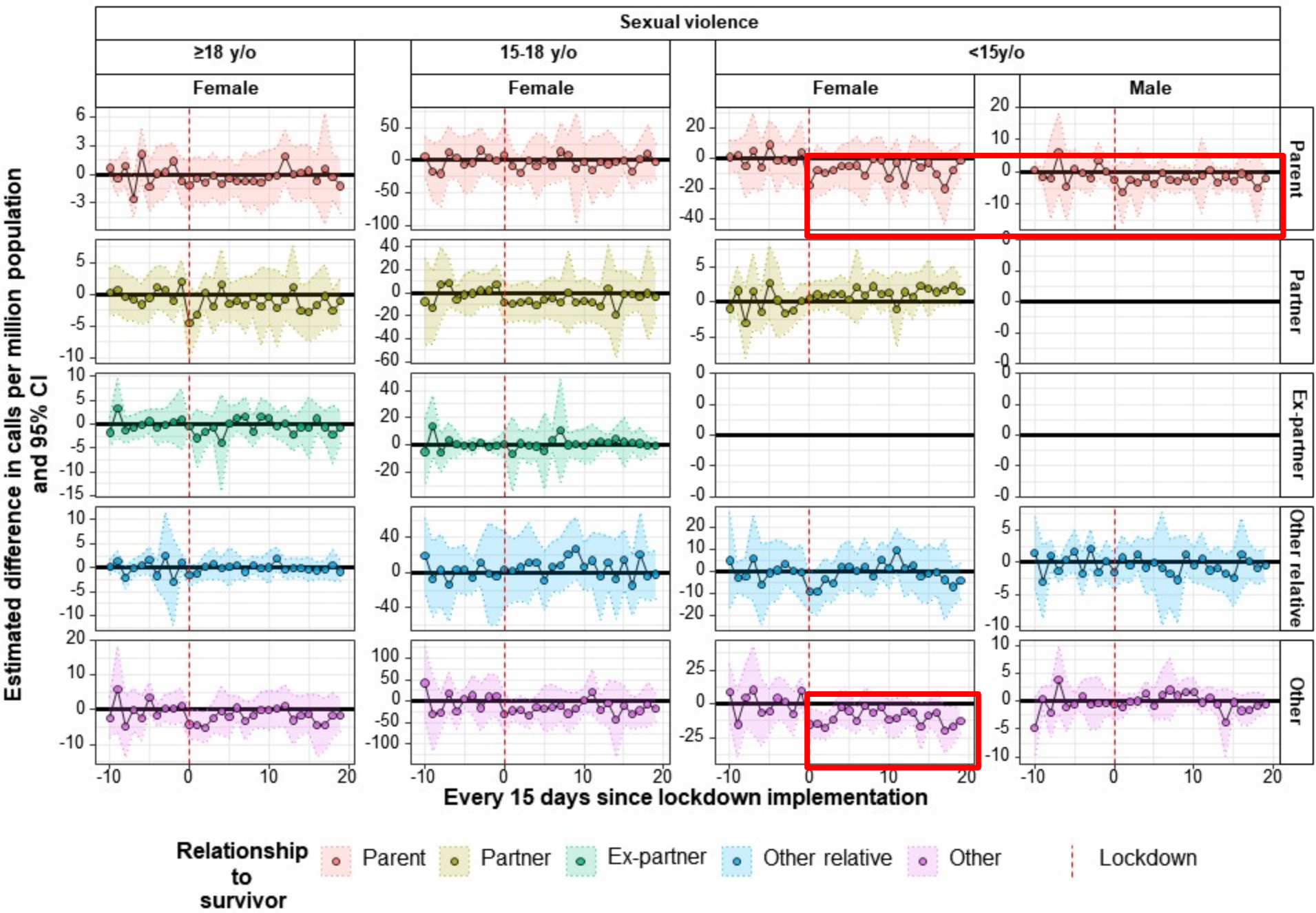
* Different scale on the vertical axis

Figure 4. Event study plot for calls related to sexual violence



* Different scale on the vertical axis

Figure 4. Event study plot for calls related to sexual violence



* Different scale on the vertical axis

Different dynamics concerning the number of calls, with distinct patterns according to survivor's gender, age, relationship to perpetrator, and phase of the pandemic.

Most substantial **increase** was in calls related to **psychological violence in adult women** after the lockdown.

Also saw **decrease** in calls for **sexual violence** when the perpetrator was someone from outside the household, and **decrease** in calls for **sexual violence** on children perpetrated by the parents.

- Forced isolation at home due to lockdown may have made the home an unsafe space for women and children.
- Sharp decrease in the number of calls right at beginning of the lockdown, but increased as the lockdown continued.
- Reduction in calls during lockdown related to sexual violence when perpetrator was outside the household/family.

Calls for sexual and physical violence against children perpetrated by parents decreased during the lockdown:

- May be attributed to the closure of schools, since teachers are often the ones who report signs of violence.
- A US study found number of child maltreatment allegations 27% lower in months with school closures during the pandemic.
- In US, teachers, lawyers, and health staff, submitted more than 2/3 of 2019 reports of child abuse, while friends, neighbors, and relatives submitted only 16% of the reports.
- Studies from Brazil and NYC also show pandemic decrease in reports of violence against children.

- 2019 National Survey on Social Relationships in Peru: of children <14 yrs who suffered sexual violence, 59% did not seek help, 25% sought help within the family, 16% from school, friends or others.
- For physical or psychological violence, 53% did not seek help, 39% looked within the family, 9% in school/friends/ others.
- Closure of schools and reduced mobility during lockdown might have decreased the opportunities for children to disclose abuse and seek help, which could explain some reduction in calls.

- Increase in pandemic calls from women for psychological violence.
- Lockdown measures may have had a protective effect on violence from sources outside the home for both women and children.
- Unclear how the changes in helpline calls correspond to actual incident cases of violence in family environments (most prevalent type of violence).
- Main limitation: can't distinguish between changes in reporting and actual incidence, since most incidents go unreported.
- The lockdown could impact the incidence and reporting of events in different ways.
- Intensity of abuse not captured -- could affect volume of calls.
- We lack information on multiple calls from the same survivor and the identity of the informant making the call.

Conclusions

- Insights into patterns of helpline use during COVID-19 pandemic in Peru.
- Substantial increase in number of calls to the helpline, particularly related to psychological violence against women.
- Decrease in calls for sexual violence against children and women when the perpetrator was someone from outside the household.
- Physical violence against children perpetrated by parents decreased during the lockdown.
- But changes in helpline calls may not necessarily reflect the actual changes in the incidence of violence during the pandemic, as not all survivors can or do access the helpline.

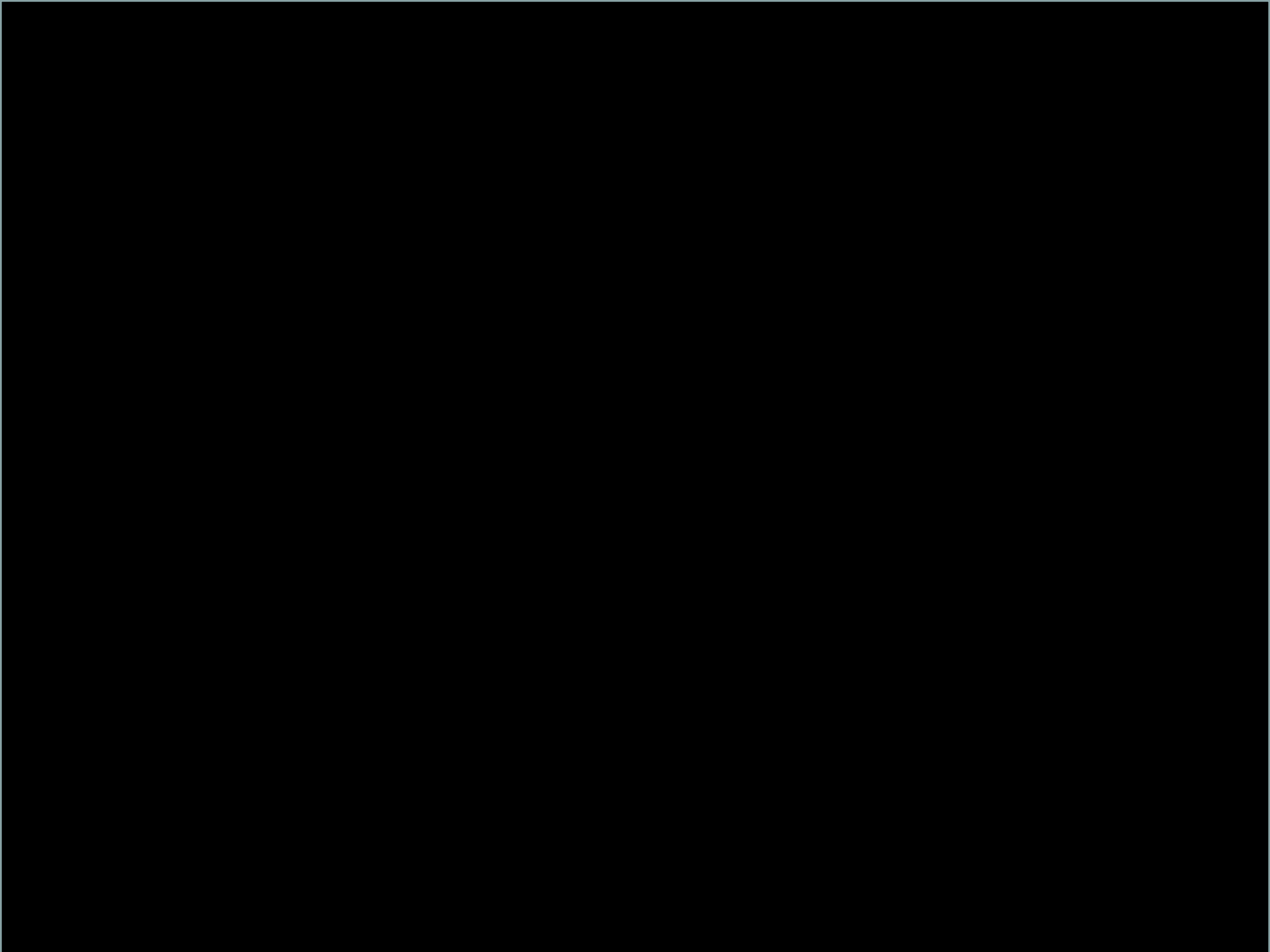


Figure A1. Event study plot for the sensitivity analysis of missing perpetrator relationship

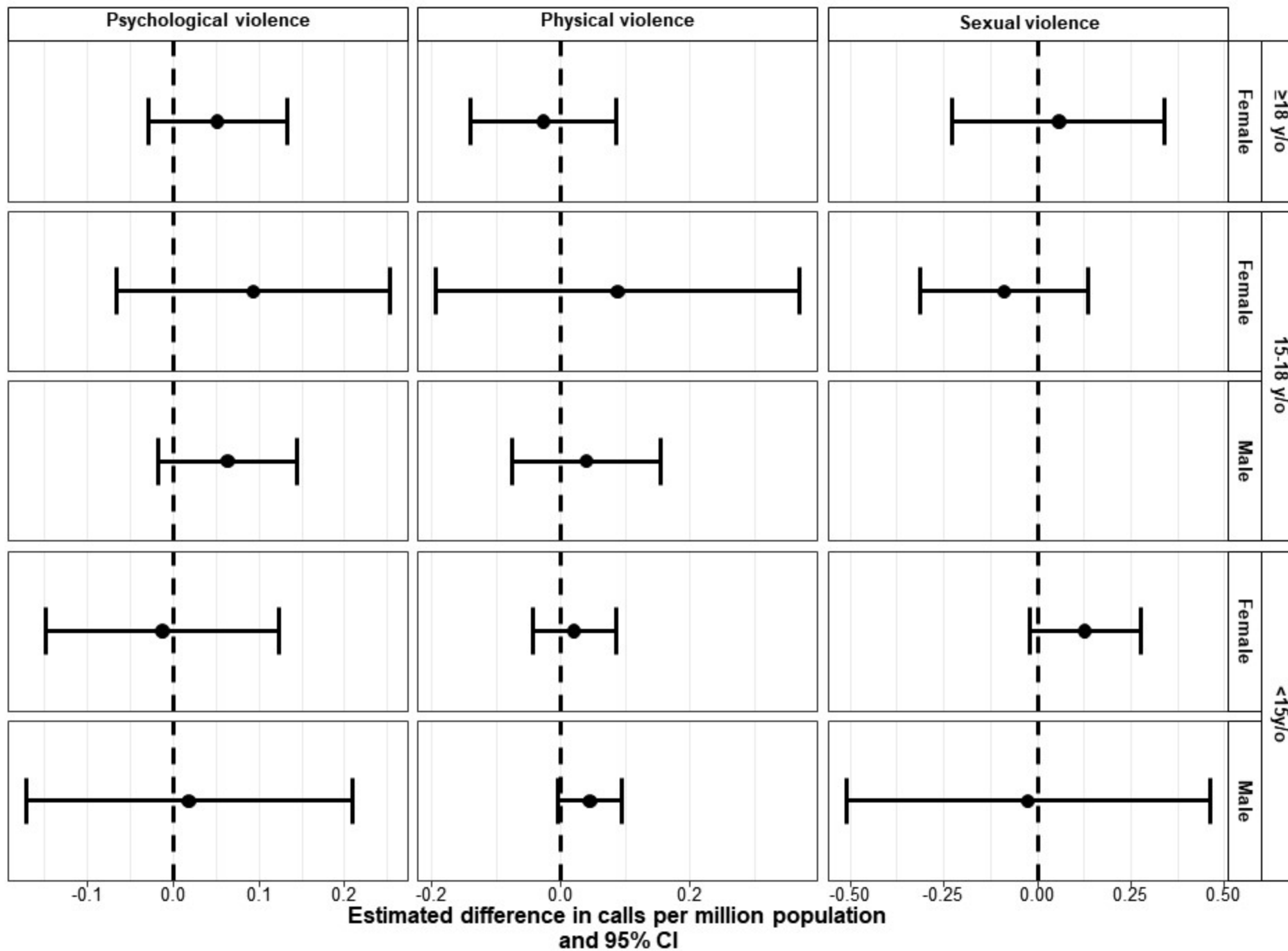


Figure A2. Aggregate effect estimates for the sensitivity analysis of missing perpetrator relationship

