

# Adversity & Resilience Among Older Adults Living With Chronic Pain

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## Introduction

The literature on adversity and resilience is often only focused on younger and middle-aged adults to the exclusion of older adults. Given that chronic pain is most prevalent among older adults, however, understanding the relationship between adversity, resilience, and chronic pain among older adults is important. Thus, the aim of this study was to investigate adversity and resilience among older adults currently living with chronic pain.

## Results

As shown in Figure 1, a series of independent samples t-tests revealed the following significant differences in reported pain severity levels:

1. Analyses revealed a significant effect of parental incarceration on pain severity,  $t(42) = 1.743$ ,  $p = .044$ , with older adults who experienced parental incarceration ( $M = 2.73$ ,  $SD = .647$ ) reporting significantly lower levels of pain severity compared to those who did not experience parental incarceration ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = .650$ ).
2. Analyses revealed a significant effect of parent loss through separation, divorce, or death on pain severity,  $t(37) = 2.421$ ,  $p = .010$ , with older adults who experienced parent loss ( $M = 2.64$ ,  $SD = .674$ ) reporting significantly lower levels of pain severity compared to those who did not experience parent loss ( $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = .612$ ).
3. Analyses revealed a significant effect of sexual abuse on pain severity,  $t(49) = 2.544$ ,  $p = .008$ , with older adults who experienced sexual abuse ( $M = 2.69$ ,  $SD = .704$ ) reporting significantly lower levels of pain severity compared to those who did not experience sexual abuse ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = .577$ ).

## Methods

### Study Design

- Cross-Sectional Observational Study

### Participants

- Older adults with chronic pain who were living in Canada and were at least 65 years of age ( $N = 46$ )

### Measures

- Chronic Pain Questionnaire (i.e., severity, distress, interference, temporal characteristics)
- Adverse Childhood Experiences: International Questionnaire (ACE-IQ)
- Pain Resilience Scale (PRS)
- Demographics Questionnaire

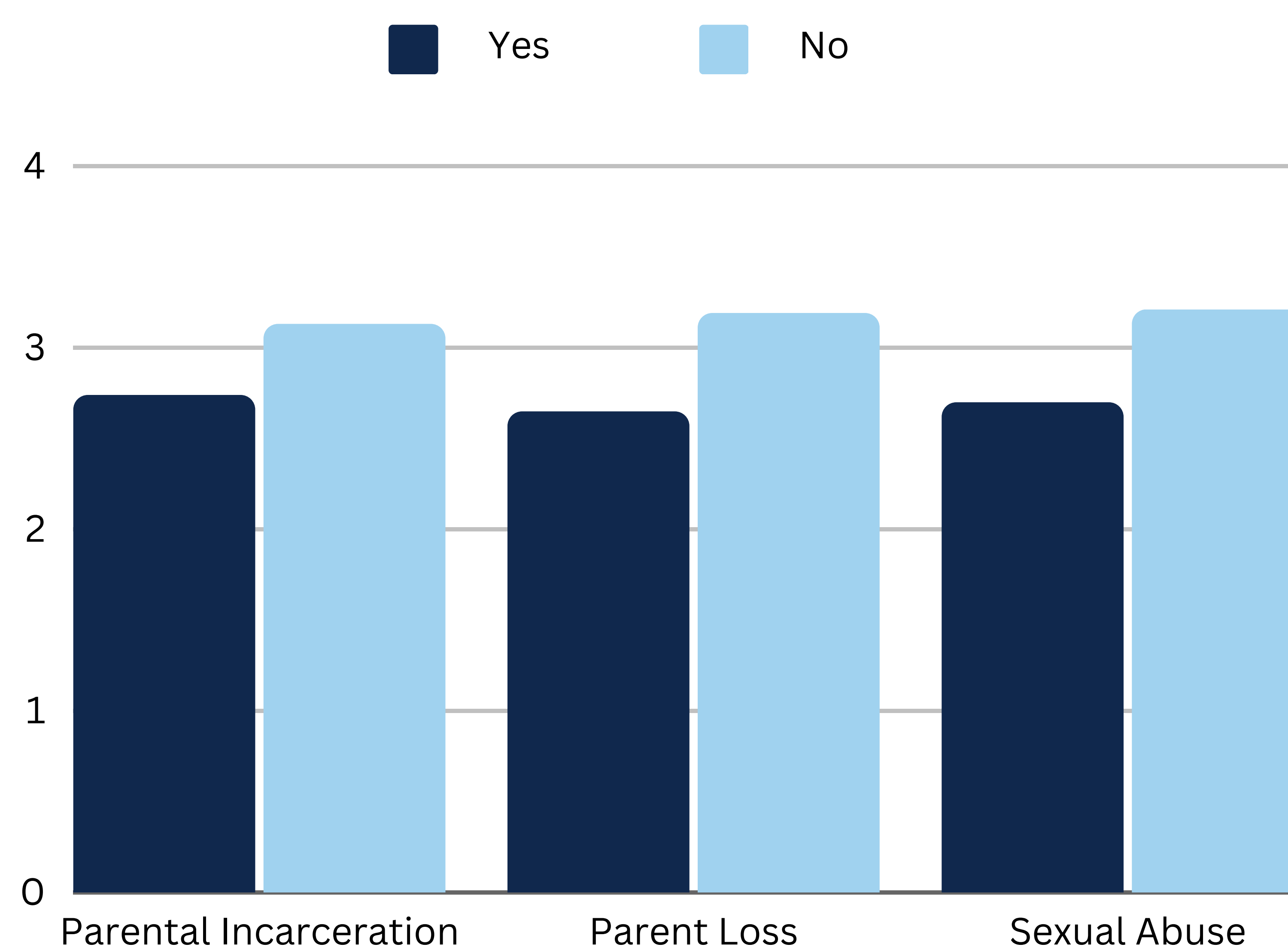
### Procedure

- Participants completed a set of online questionnaires on adversity, resilience, and pain

### Planned Analyses

- A series of independent samples t-tests were conducted

**Figure 1.** Significant differences in pain severity between older adults who did and did not experience specific childhood adversities



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## Discussion

Adversity may play a role in pain severity among older adults, but only certain adversities seem to have this effect. More specifically, differences in pain severity were found for parental incarceration, parent loss, and sexual abuse. The direction of the difference was in contrast to the literature as those who experienced these adversities reported less severe pain. Our study did not find differences between these groups in terms of resilience, so other factors should be explored (e.g., coping strategies, emotion regulation). These results are also preliminary, so more research is needed before conclusions can be made.