

Background

- Military sexual trauma (MST) impacts over a million Veterans and is highly detrimental to health
- Little is known about the association between MST and risk of suicide-related outcomes in later life

Objective

- Determine the association between MST and risk of suicide, overdose and related mortality among older women Veterans compared to men
- Investigate if posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) exacerbates risk

Design

- Longitudinal cohort study, baseline 2012-2013 with follow-up through December 31, 2020
- Setting: All VA medical centers in the US

Participants

- 5,059,526 Veterans aged 50 years or older

Analysis

- Exposure: Positive military sexual trauma screen
- Outcomes: Any suicide attempt, non-fatal suicide attempt, suicide death, or overdose death
- Proportional hazards regression, stratified by gender and adjusted for sociodemographics and the Charlson Comorbidity Index
- Examined interactions between MST and PTSD

Military sexual trauma was **over 10 times more prevalent** among women



In adjusted models, rates of suicide attempt were **3-fold higher** for women and men who had experienced MST.

Figure 1. Cumulative Incidence Women

Hazard Ratio: 3.32, 95%CI [3.07-3.58], $P < .001$

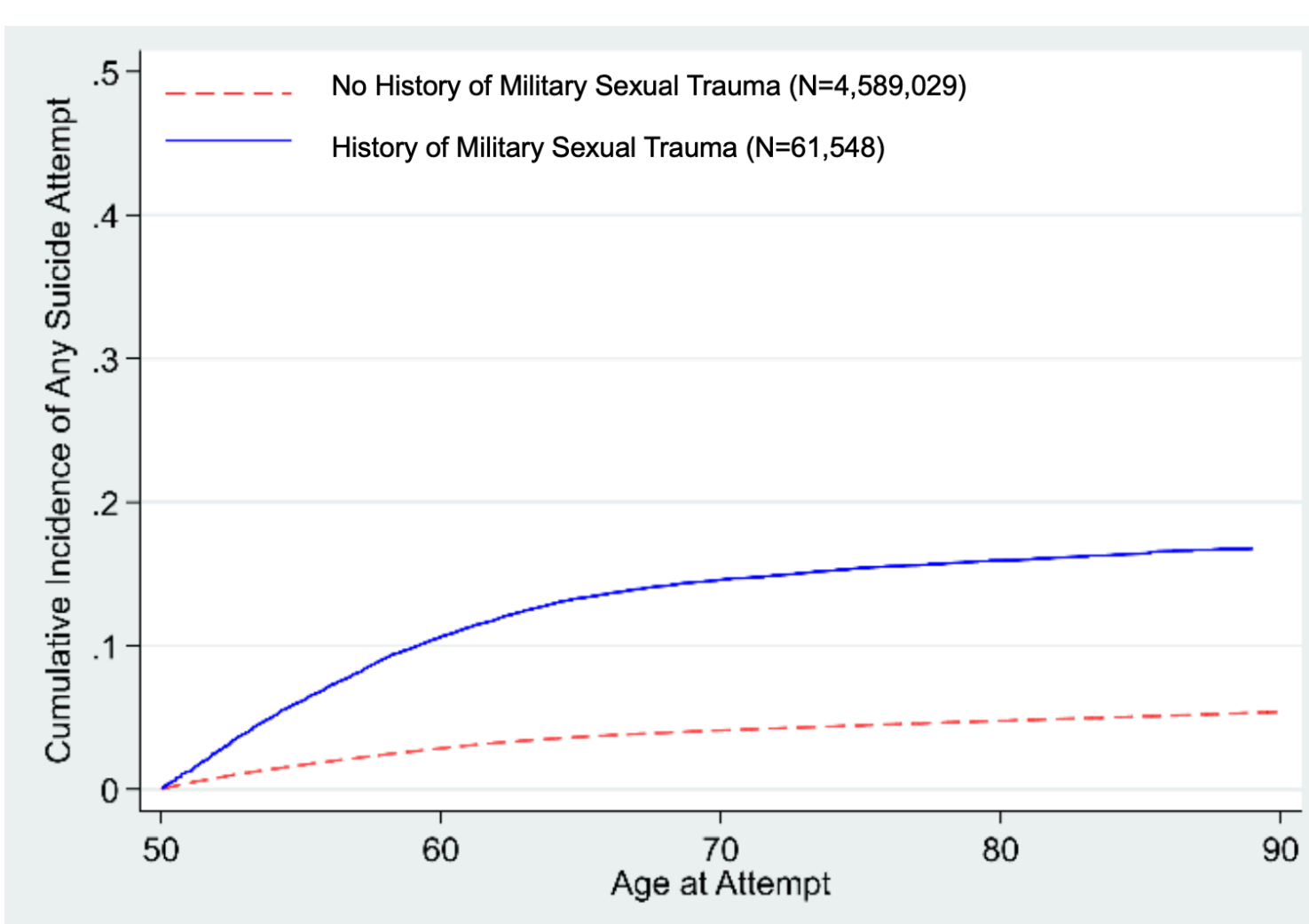
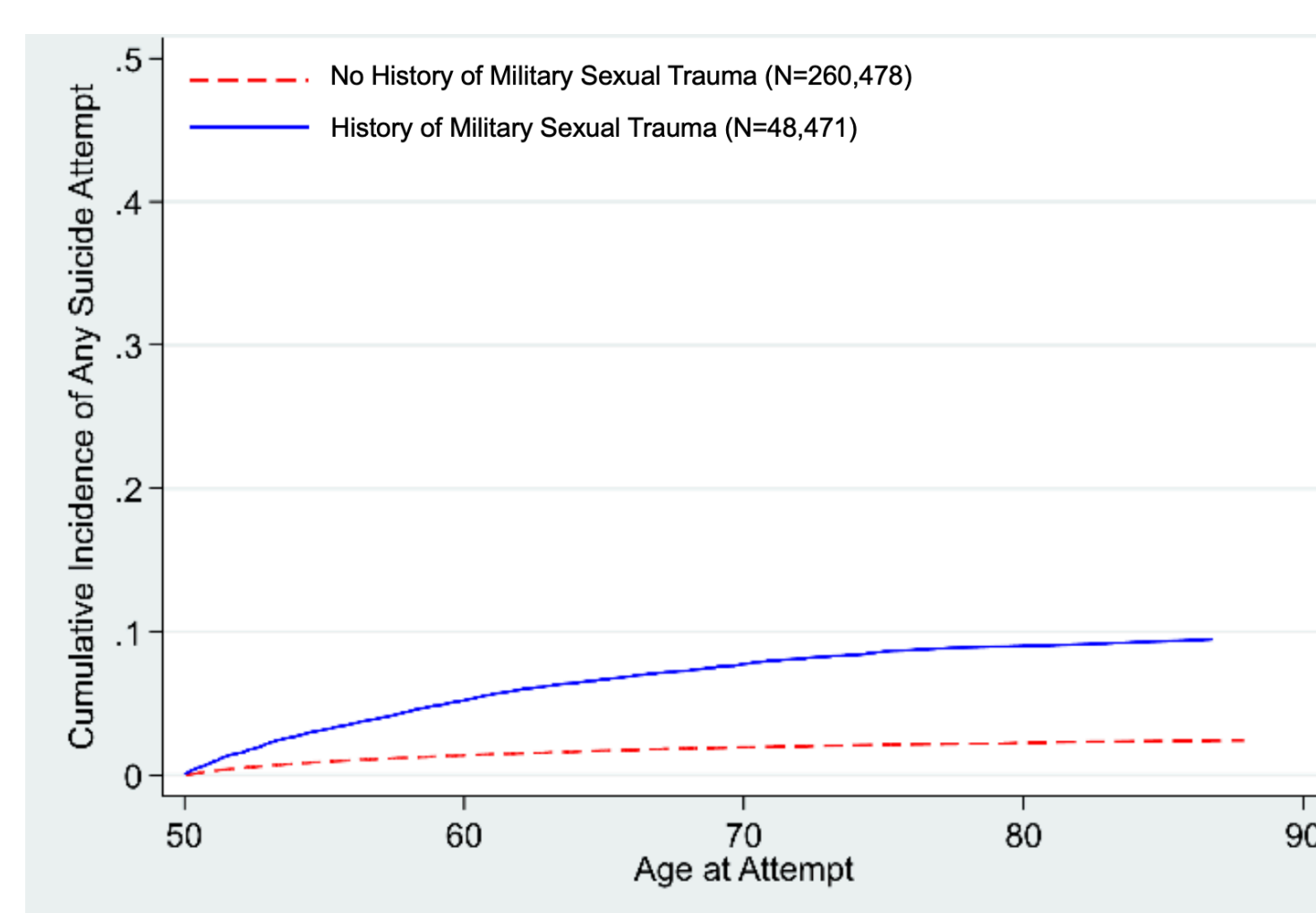
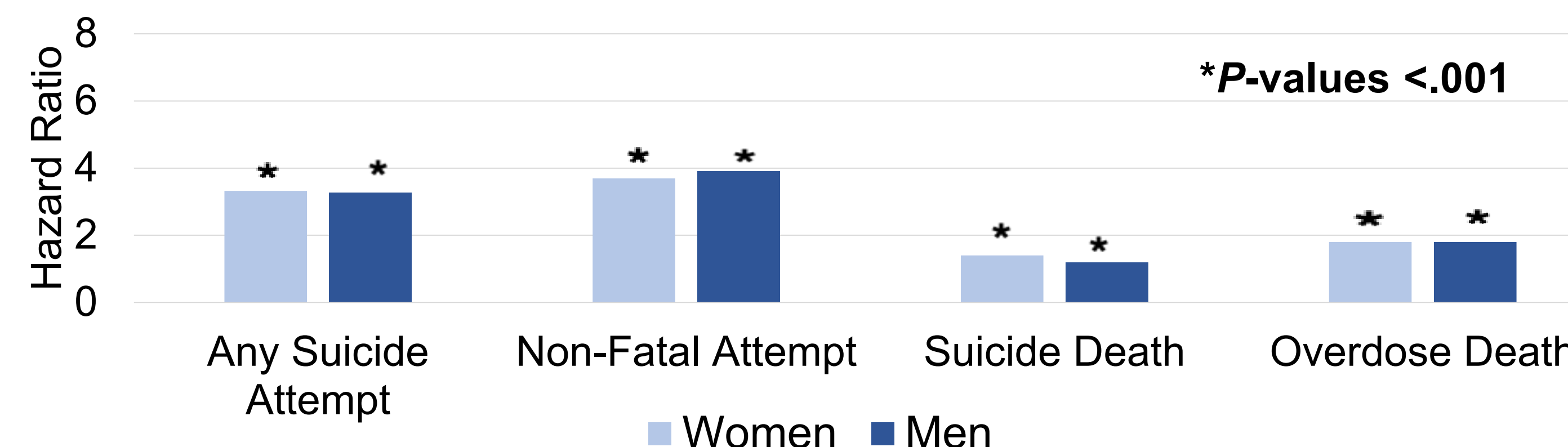


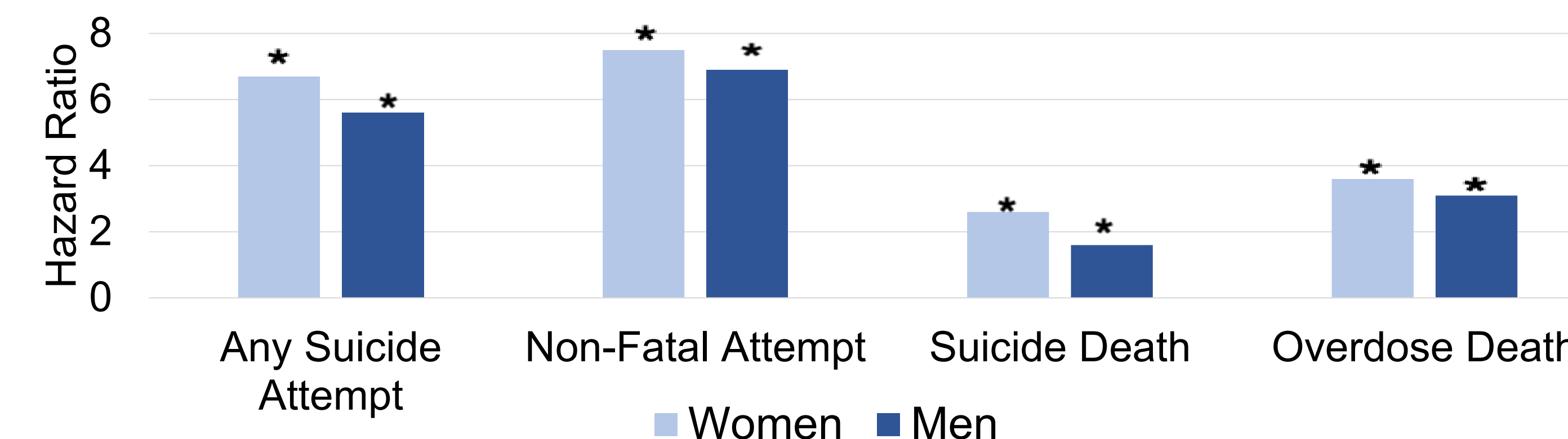
Figure 2. Cumulative Incidence Men

Hazard Ratio: 3.27, 95% CI [3.13-3.41] $P < .001$

Military Sexual Trauma and Risk of Suicide and Overdose by Gender



Comorbid MST and PTSD Increased the Risk of Suicide & Overdose



Limitations

Generalizability to non-VA Veterans and possible unmeasured confounding and missingness

Conclusions



(Scan to learn more)

- Late-life suicide attempt and death by suicide or overdose are strongly associated with prior MST, advancing our understanding of the lasting impact of sexual trauma on suicide risk and mortality
- Preventing MST, providing care for MST exposure, and treating its psychological sequelae are important for prevention of suicide in later life

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