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Does the Desire for Fatherhood affect Men?

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1. Introduction

There is little research on the desire for fatherhood. What exists has mostly concentrated on studies of couples in infertility treatment, fertility intentions, fathers to be, or those who are already fathers.

2. Objective

This research originates from a previous study which explored the yearning for parenthood in men (broodiness). One of the outcomes from that research was to assess the level of the desire for parenthood in childless men.

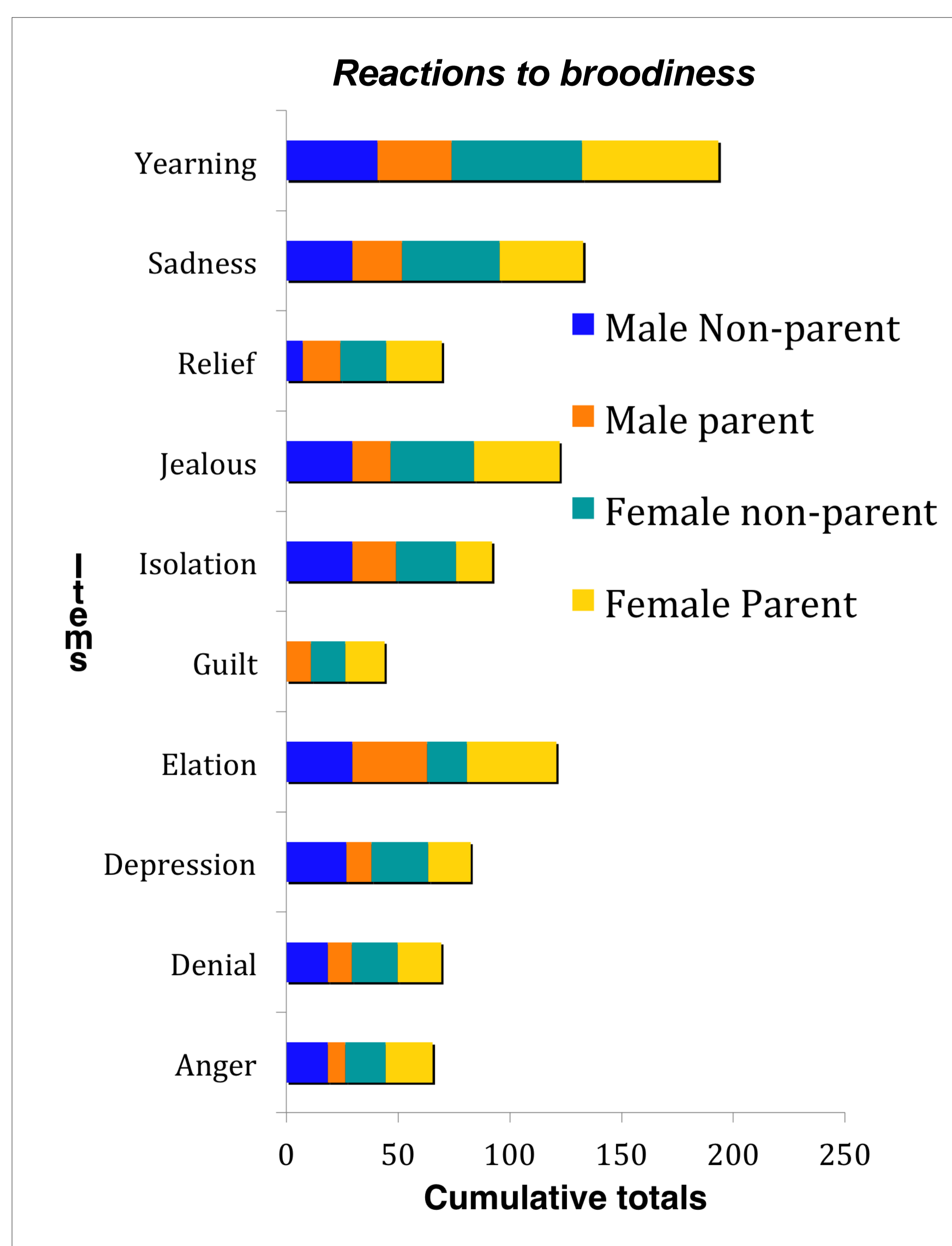
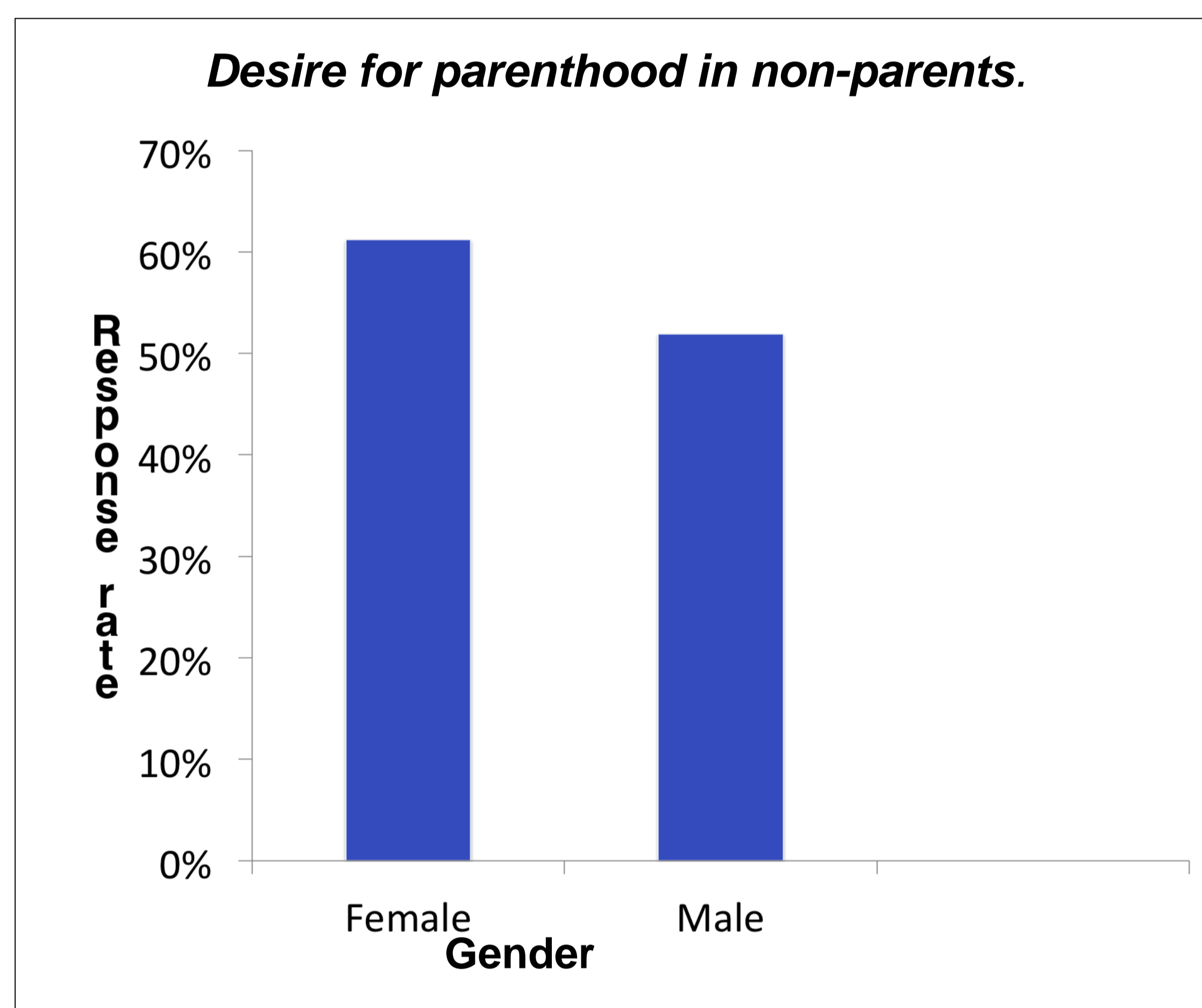
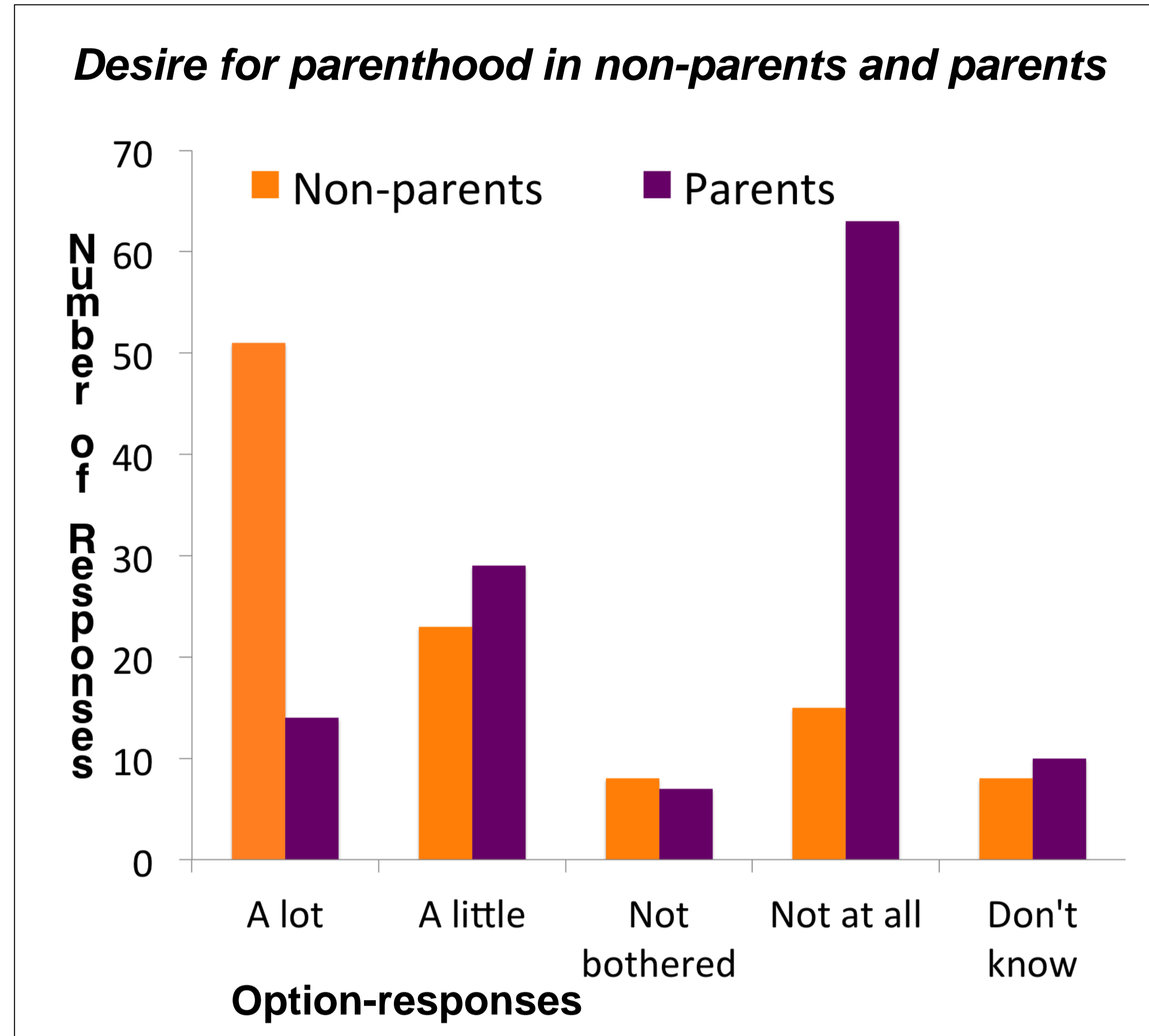
3. Research Questions

- 1) What is the incidence of broodiness in childless men?
- 2) What is the incidence of broodiness in females and males and those with and without children?
- 3) What factors influence the decision to parent?
- 4) What reasons influence the decision to parent between those with and without children?
- 5) What are the levels of reactions associated with broodiness?

4. Methods

- A sequential exploratory mixed-methods quantitative-qualitative approach was taken.
- An on-line survey was designed and consisted of twenty-nine questions (dichotomous, open, and scaled). Included was an item attempting to measure the reactions associated with broodiness.
- Recruitment was by snowball method via email with embedded web-link to the survey.
- Two hundred and thirty two replies ($n=232$) were analysed using descriptive, Mann-Whitney, and Spearman's rho statistical methods.
- Open questions were integrated into the survey to access life experience, aid validity, and provide feedback. Replies were examined by thematic analysis.
- The sample was formed by non-parents ($n=107$), parents ($n=125$), and composed of females ($n=167$), and males ($n=65$). Central tendency mode was female. The mean age was 41.37 years ($SD=10.83$).
- The majority of respondents were White-British (83.3%), degree educated (68.9%), professional (69.8%), worked full-time (68%), heterosexual (90.2%).

5. Results



6. Conclusions

- 51.9% of the *childless men* in the survey indicated a desire for parenthood compared to 25.9% who did not.
- *Female and male non-parents* showed a similar level of desire for parenthood: ($Mdn= 1.00$ [Yes]), $U= 995.000$, $z=-.688$, $p=.492$ and $r=-0.06$.
- *Female and male parents* demonstrated an equal desire not to repeat parenthood: ($Mdn= 2.00$ [No]), $U=1479.000$, $z=-1.047$, $p=.295$ and $r=-0.09$.
- The decision to parent for *non-parents* indicated **economic** and **social** factors as the main influences, with greater differences between *females* and *males*. *Females* noted **personal desire** as a major influence. The *males* indicated **cultural/societal** and **family expectations**, with an underlying trend of **personal desire** and **biological urge**. For the *parent group*, **health** and **age** were the main influences, with few differences between female and male.
- Common reasons influencing parenthood for both non-parents and parents were **cultural** and **family expectations**, and items **feel parent-child bond** and **give love and affection**. *Parents* highlighted **receive love and affection** and **improve on my childhood experience**. *Non-parents* reported **I do want a child and children complete a relationship** as reasons.
- '**Yearning**' was the item most associated with broodiness. Compared to parents, *non-parents* were more affected by **Yearning**, **Sadness**, and **Depression**. *Females* from both groups had similar response levels, with *non-parent females* indicating higher responses in **Isolation** and **Sadness**. *Male non-parents* demonstrated higher responses than both female non-parents and male parents for **Depression** and **Isolation**. They recorded higher levels in all items, compared to male parents, except for **Elation**, **Guilt**, and **Relief**.
- Qualitative analysis provided non-parents and parent's themes in areas such as **age**, **health**, and **relationships**. A theme of 'motivation' highlighted *parent's unwillingness* to repeat parenthood compared to *non-parents* emphasis on **desire** and **future plans**.

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