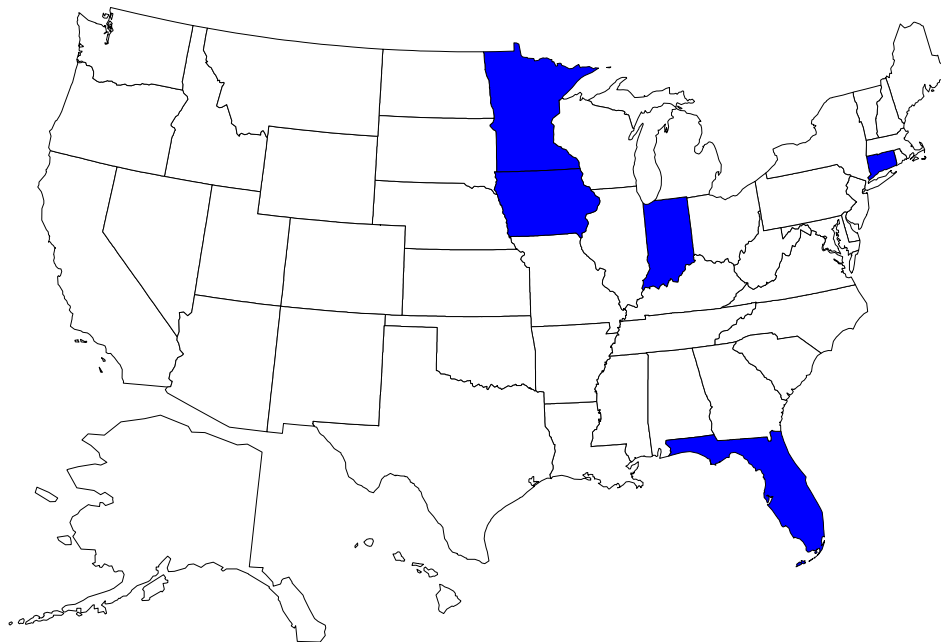


# The Impacts of Welfare Reform on Domestic Violence: Evidence from 5 States

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# Background



- ⌘ High rates of domestic violence (DV) among single mothers on welfare
- ⌘ TANF reauthorization may increase work requirements, so connection between work and DV is important
- ⌘ Important to account for DV in assessing policies to strengthen marriage

# Research Questions



1. Does welfare reform impact domestic violence?
2. How does welfare reform affect economic outcomes for women who have been abused?

# Prior research



## ⌘ Experimental evidence

- 5 State studies, but outcomes & samples differed
- NEWWS (Hamilton et al., 2001)

## ⌘ Non-experimental evidence of welfare reform's effects on DV

- Few studies with strong research design
- Income, employment, and welfare receipt as predictors of DV in probability samples (e.g., Caetano et al., 2001; Rodriguez et al., 2001)

# Prior research (cont.)

- ⌘ Non-experimental evidence of welfare reform's effects on economic outcomes of women who have experienced DV (e.g., reviews by Tolman and Raphael, 2000; GAO, 1998; Raphael, 2001; Riger and Staggs, 2004)
- Reports of “work interference” by intimate partners are common
  - DV effects on employment rates are unclear, but evidence of negative effect on stability and economic success

# Value of current study



- ⌘ Random assignment design
- ⌘ Samples in 5 states
- ⌘ Same questionnaire used across states
- ⌘ Administrative data on economic outcomes, as well as self-reports on DV and intimate partners' and others' efforts to interfere with work efforts

# Sample



- ⌘ Single mothers with children between age 5 to 12 at time of random assignment
- ⌘ Single: defined based on case type
- ⌘ Minnesota: Long-term and new recipients examined separately

## ⌘ Ns

CT: N=1,439

IN: N=1,609

FL: N=1,108

MN (Long-term): N=707

IA: N=1,224

MN (New): N=572

# Measures: Domestic violence



⌘ 16 non-mutually exclusive measures

⌘ Types of abuse (4)

- Physical, sexual, psychological, any type

⌘ Timing (2)

- Ever since random assignment, year prior to follow-up

⌘ Perpetrator (2)

- Intimate partner, someone else

# Measures: Work interference



## ⌘ Types (4)

- Disagreed that she should work
- Made it difficult for her to find/keep a job
- Caused her to lose or quit a job
- Prevented her from finding a job or working

⌘ By intimate partner vs. someone else

⌘ Ever since random assignment

# Measures: Economic outcomes



## ⌘ Earnings

- Total in each year & average across years

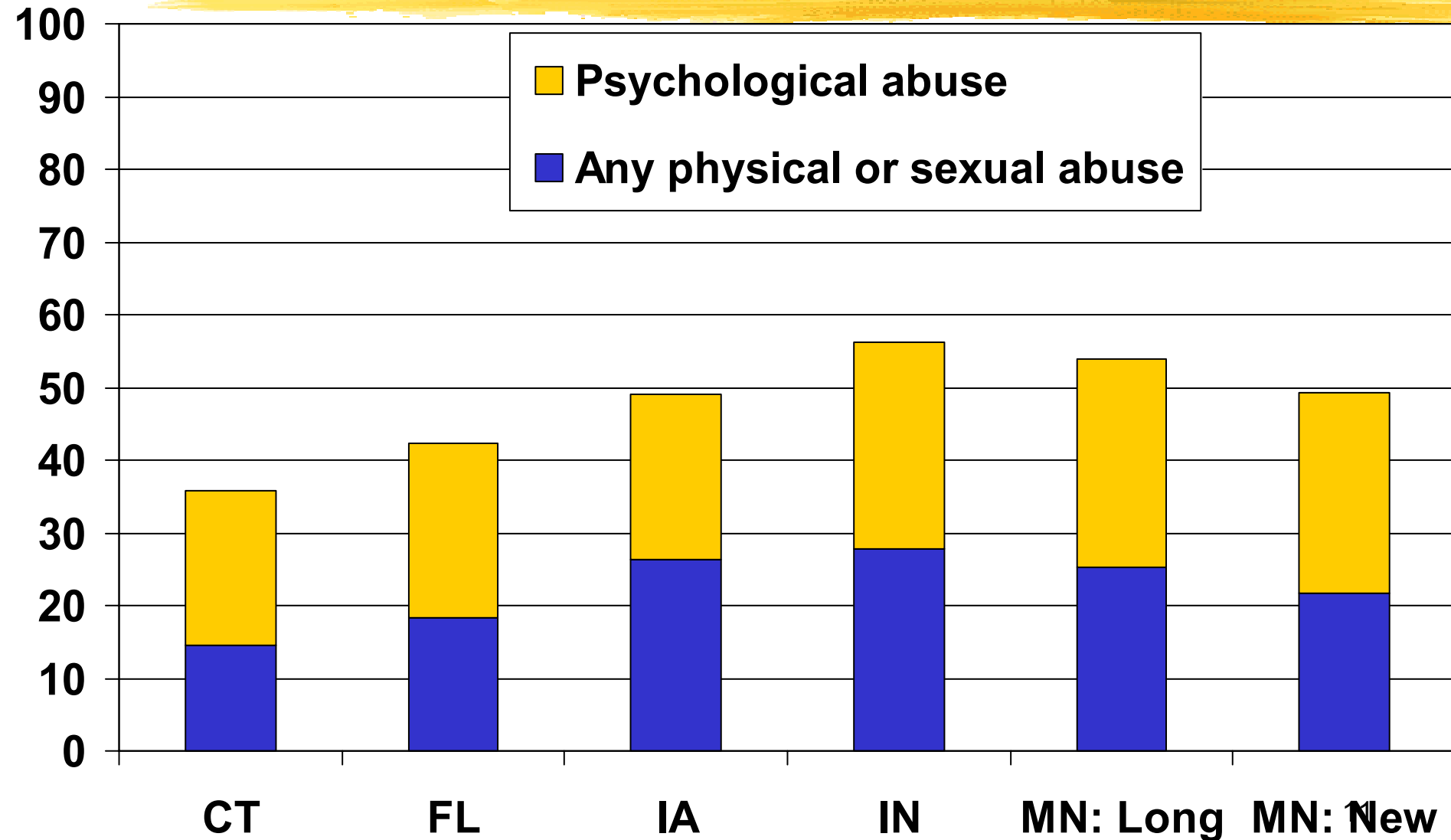
## ⌘ Employment

- Average quarterly employment & average across years
- Number of employers last 2 years
- Average job length (months) last 2 years

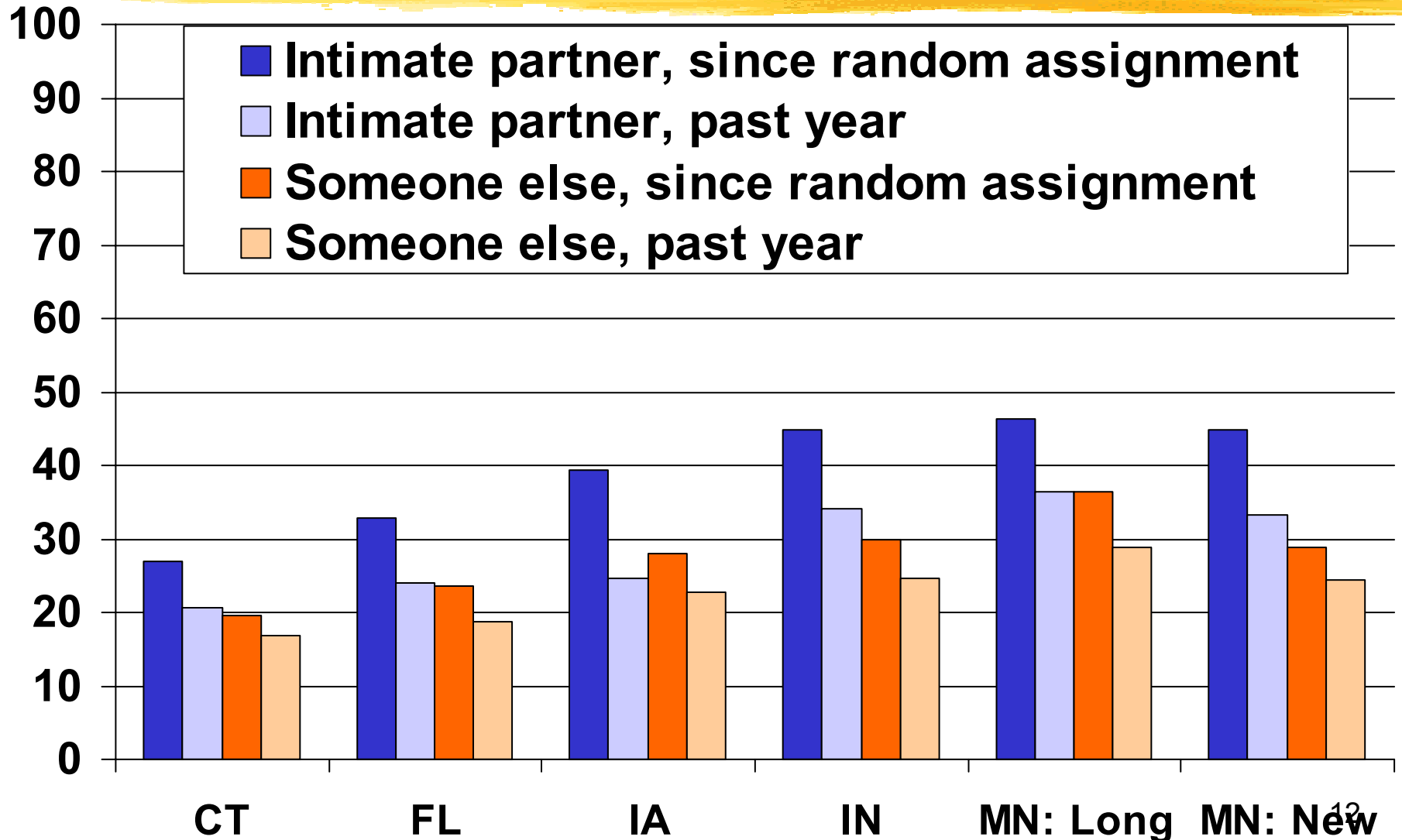
## ⌘ Welfare grant amounts

- Total in each year & average across years

# Incidence of DV by any perpetrator since random assignment in 5 states



# Incidence of physical abuse, by perpetrator and timing



# Question 1: Does welfare reform impact domestic violence?

## ⌘ Hypotheses (e.g., Riger and Krieglstein, 2000)

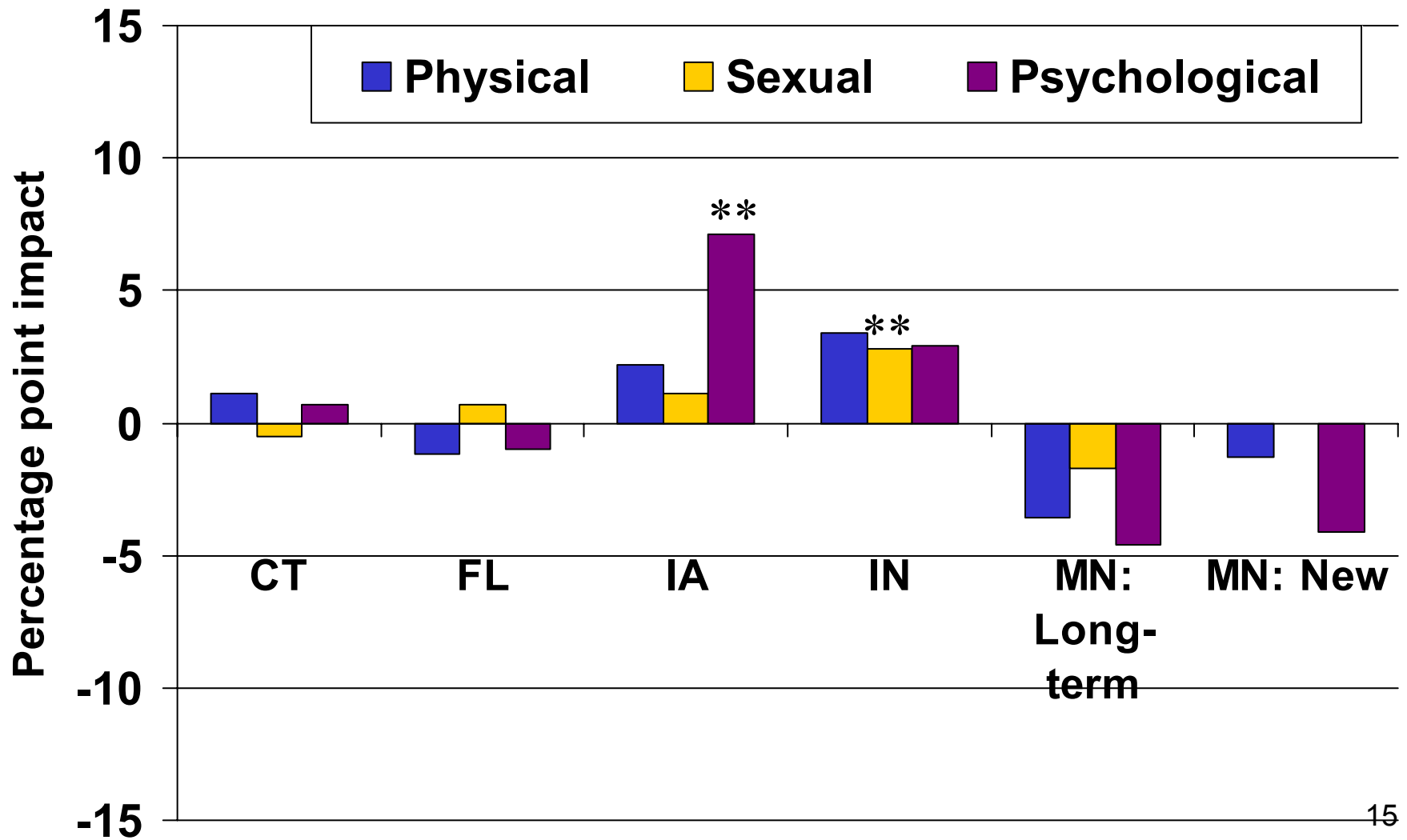
- Increased work → increases women's financial independence → decrease DV?
- More stringent work requirements → threatening to partners → increase DV?

# Analysis strategy

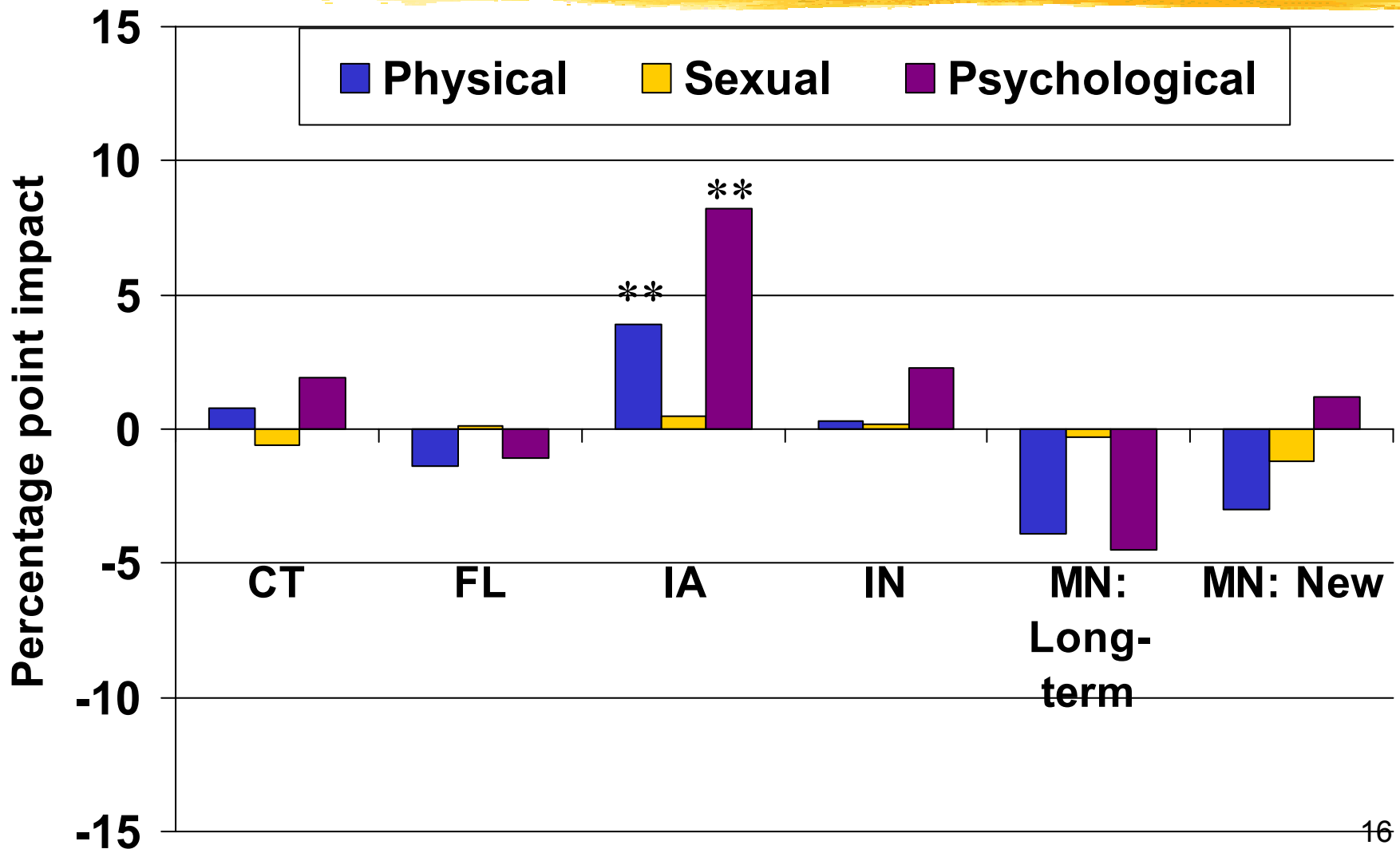


- ⌘ Compare rates of domestic violence for treatment and control group members

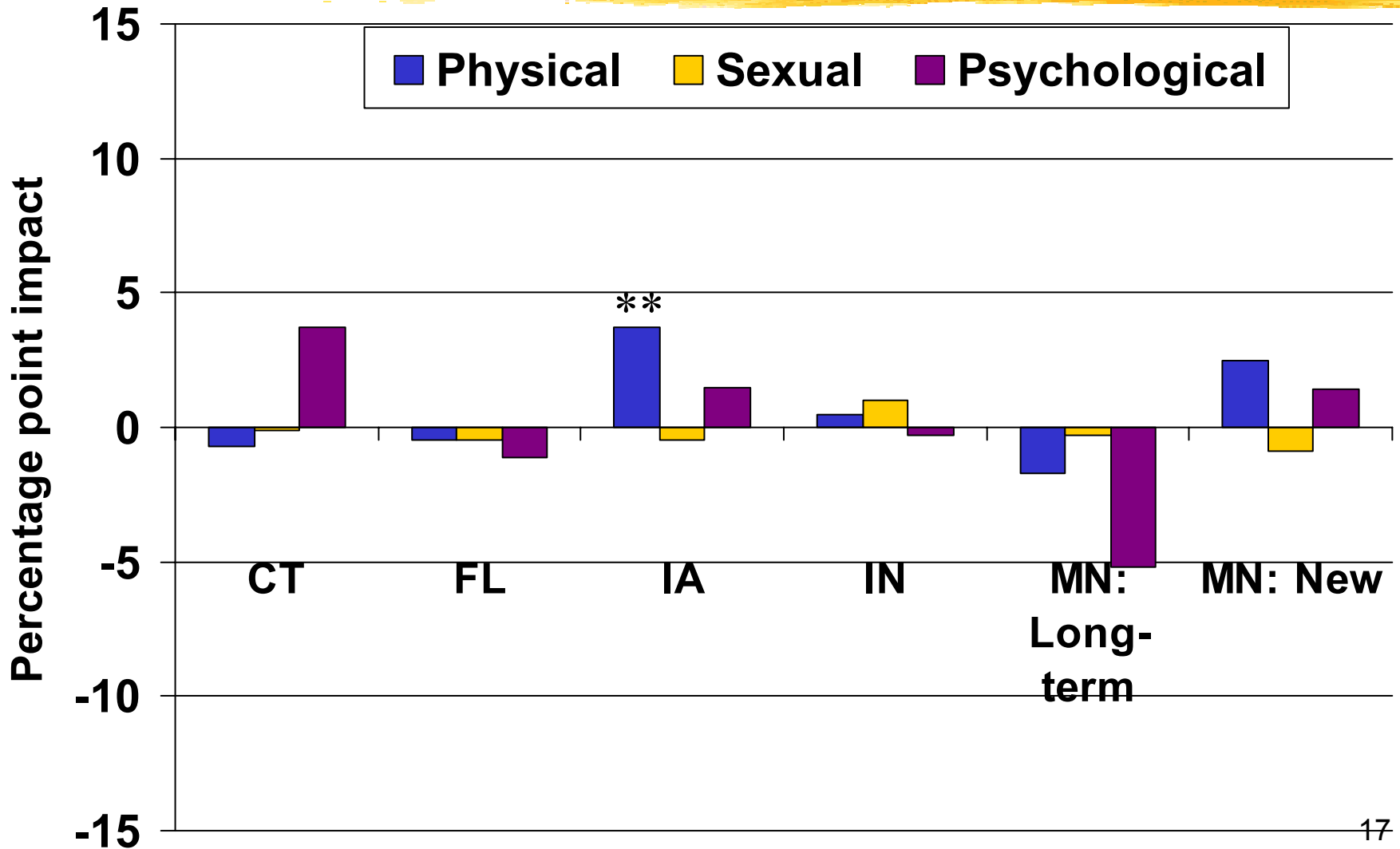
# Impacts on DV by intimate partner, ever since random assignment



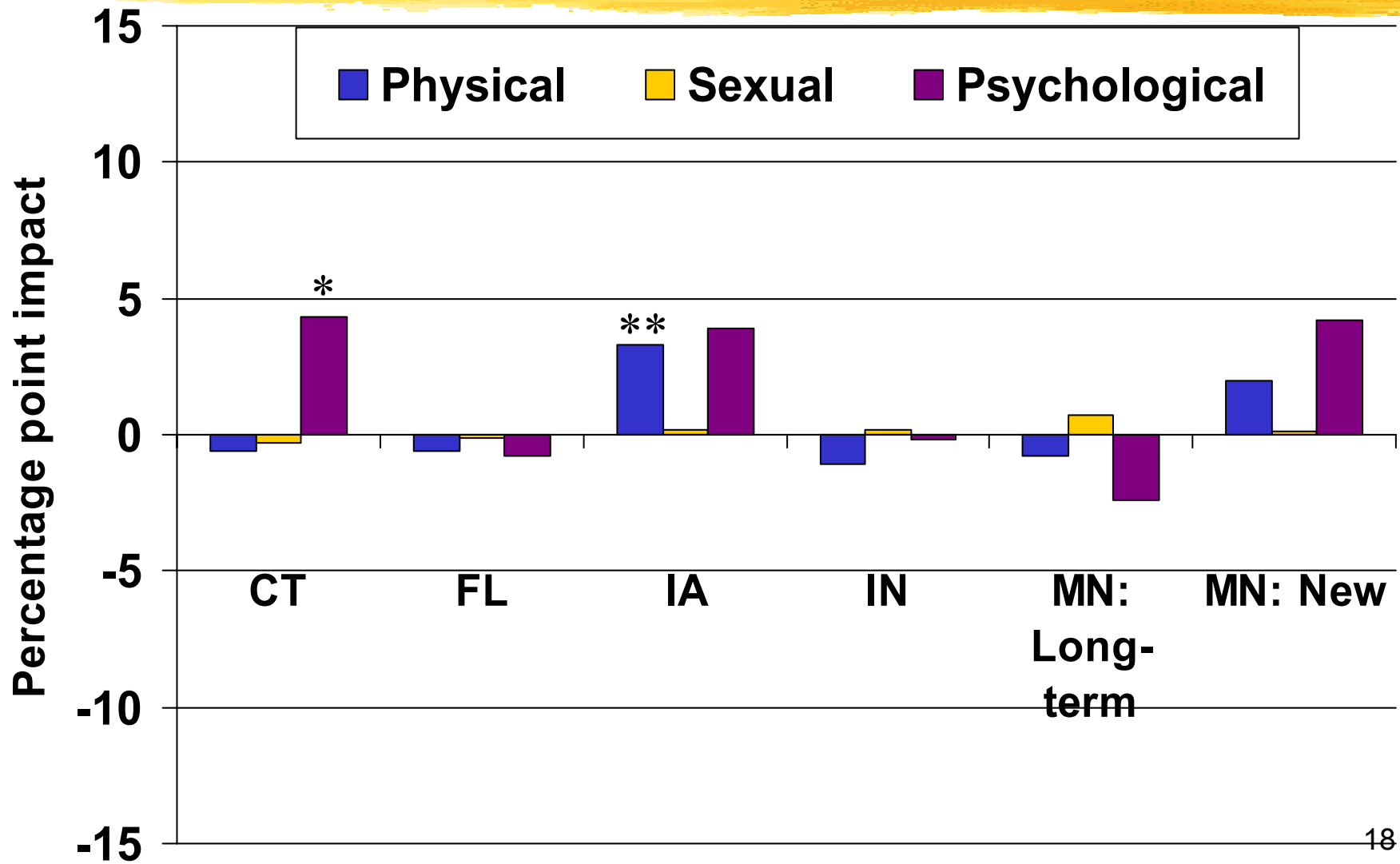
# Impacts on DV by intimate partner, year prior to survey



# Impacts on DV by non-intimate partner, ever since random assignment



# Impacts on DV by non-intimate partner, year prior to survey



# Why might impacts on DV differ for Iowa?



- ⌘ Impacts on work interference?
- ⌘ Impacts on marriage and cohabitation?
- ⌘ Different DV impacts for demographic subgroups?

# Impacts on work interference?



⌘ Across 5 states and 8 measures of work interference, only 3 statistically significant impacts (IA, FL, MN new recipients)

# Impacts on marriage/cohabitation?



- ⌘ In 4 states, few or no impacts on marriage/cohabitation
- ⌘ But in IA, evidence of decreased stability:
  - Decrease in marriage
  - Increase in “started living with a partner” and “stopped living with a partner”

# Different DV impacts for demographic subgroups?



- ⌘ In IA, intimate partner DV impacts concentrated among young (< 25 at random assignment).
- ⌘ In IA, larger marriage/cohabitation impacts for young women than for older women.
- ⌘ Across other states, no consistent pattern of subgroup impacts.

# Question 2: How does welfare reform affect economic outcomes for DV victims?

## ⌘ Hypotheses

- WR might be *less* effective for women who have experienced DV because of work interference or via negative effects on women's physical or mental health.
- WR might be *more* effective for women who have experienced DV because they may have a stronger motivation to become independent.

# Analysis strategy

- ⌘ Divide samples into 3 groups:
  - 1) any physical or sexual abuse since random assignment;
  - 2) psychological but no physical or sexual abuse;
  - 3) no abuse.
- ⌘ Compare effects on economic outcomes across the 3 groups.
- ⌘ Non-experimental because groups are defined based on DV experience *after* random assignment.

# Results



## ⌘ Employment:

- For MN long-term recipients, more favorable impacts for DV victims than for those reporting no abuse.
- Average employment rates were not lower for DV victims, but some evidence of slower growth in employment over time, especially in IA.

# Results (cont.)

## ⌘ Earnings:

- No clear evidence of systematic differences in earnings impacts for DV victims compared to women reporting no abuse. (Less favorable impacts for DV victims in MN-New recipients, but more favorable for DV victims in MN-Long term)
- Some evidence of slower earnings growth over time for DV victims compared to women reporting no abuse, especially in IA.

# Results (cont.)



## ⌘ Welfare receipt:

- Welfare reform group had larger reductions (IN) and smaller increases (MN-Long) in welfare payments for DV victims compared to women reporting no abuse.
- But across states, average welfare payments in last year of follow-up were higher for DV victims than for women reporting no abuse.

# Summary



- ⌘ Across the 5 states, no evidence that welfare reform *reduced* domestic violence
- ⌘ Adverse impacts on DV in Iowa
  - Not clearly linked to work interference
  - Maybe linked to marriage/cohabitation impacts
- ⌘ No clear evidence that welfare reform has differential effects on women who have been abused.

# Policy implications

- ⌘ DV victims may not be less likely to respond to work requirements, but may need more help to become self-sufficient (slower earnings growth, longer reliance on welfare).
- ⌘ The well-being of children of DV victims, & the potential effects of WR on these children, is also a concern.
- ⌘ Any focus on strengthening marriage needs to take into account the high rates of DV.

# Policy implications (cont.)

- ⌘ Programs did not test the Family Violence Option, but findings could inform it:
  - Low disclosure rates of DV to welfare workers (Raphael, 1999) despite high incidence.
  - Abuse by non-intimate partners is common
  - Welfare reform did not reduce DV; rates of abuse in last year of program were high. Understanding the circumstances under which welfare reform might increase DV (as in IA) could also inform FVO, but also need to learn how to reduce DV.