



# The probability of offender remorse based on the presence of a victim impact statement

Gena Dufour, Nicole Hopper, Krystal Lowe, Adina Gherman, Louise Mason, Marguerite Ternes, & Veronica Stinson.

Halifax, Nova Scotia



**SAINT MARY'S**  
UNIVERSITY SINCE 1802

One University. One World. Yours.

*The offender showing  
remorse made my heart  
feel better.*

- Marilyn Cross, mother of Mark Cross, Humbolt Bronco's tragedy victim

# Purpose & Rationale

««« Past Research

- What victims want
- Expressions of remorse and acceptance of responsibility

Current Research »»»

- Is the presence of a VIS associated with expressions of offender remorse, apology, or acceptance of responsibility?

# Methods



- 2016 to 2018 CanLII hearings
- 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Territories

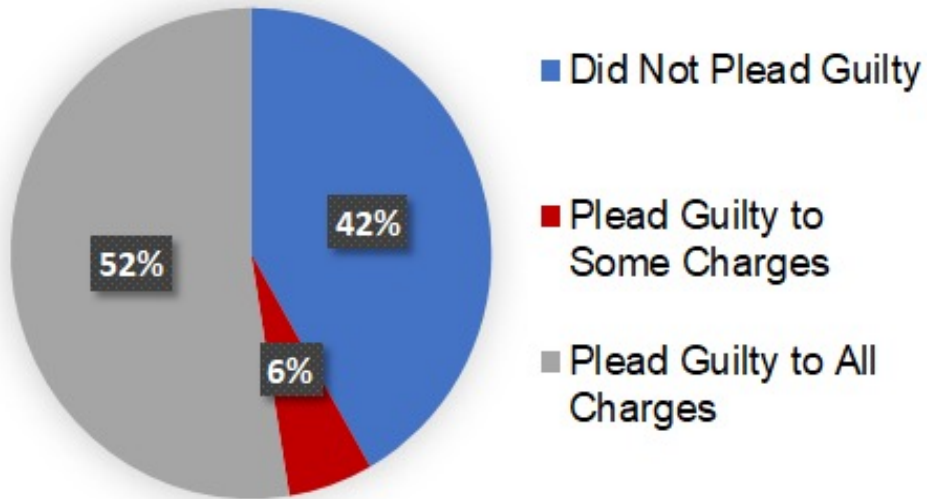


- Key search word = "Impact Statement"
- 1332 cases in the data set

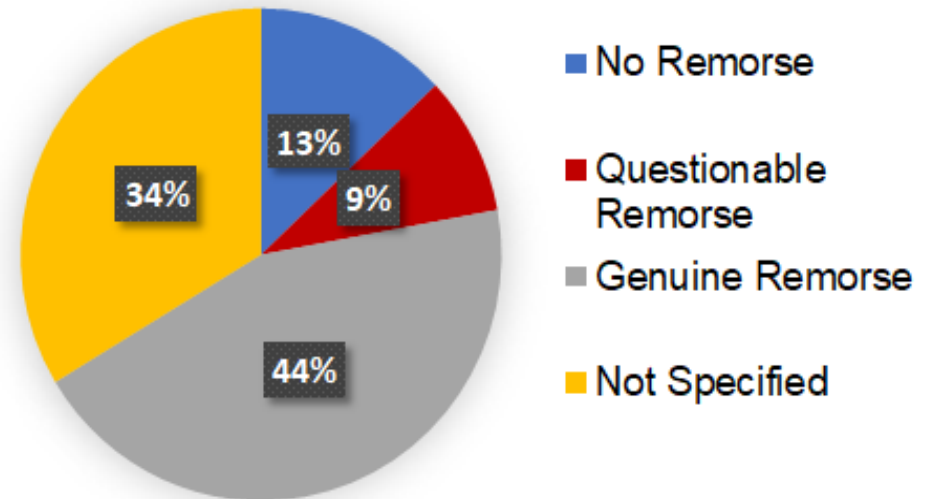


- Expression of offender remorse, apology, and taking responsibility
- Coded as present, absent, questionable, or unspecified

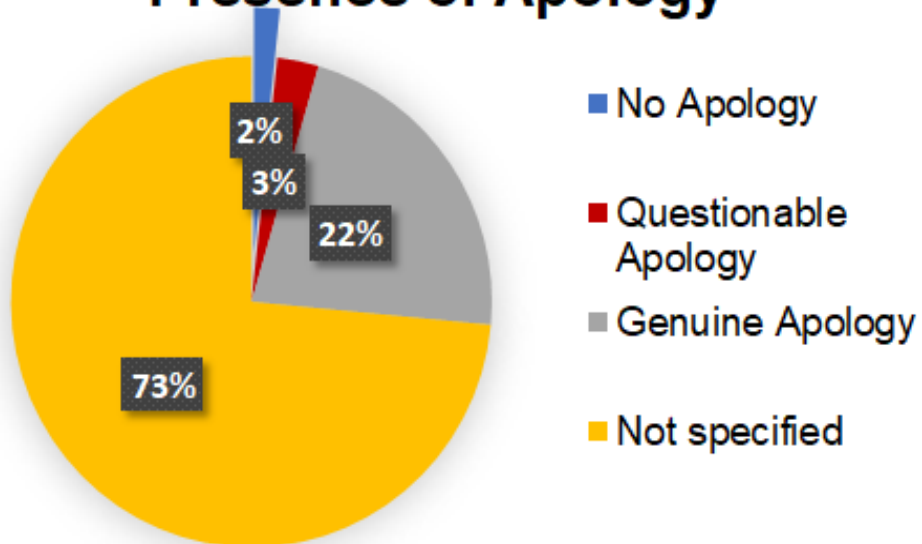
## Guilty Plea



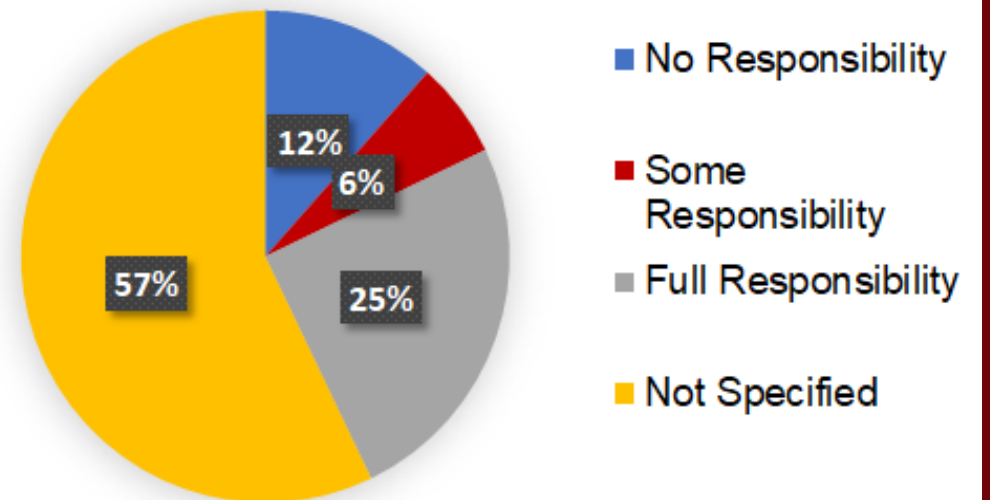
## Presence of Remorse



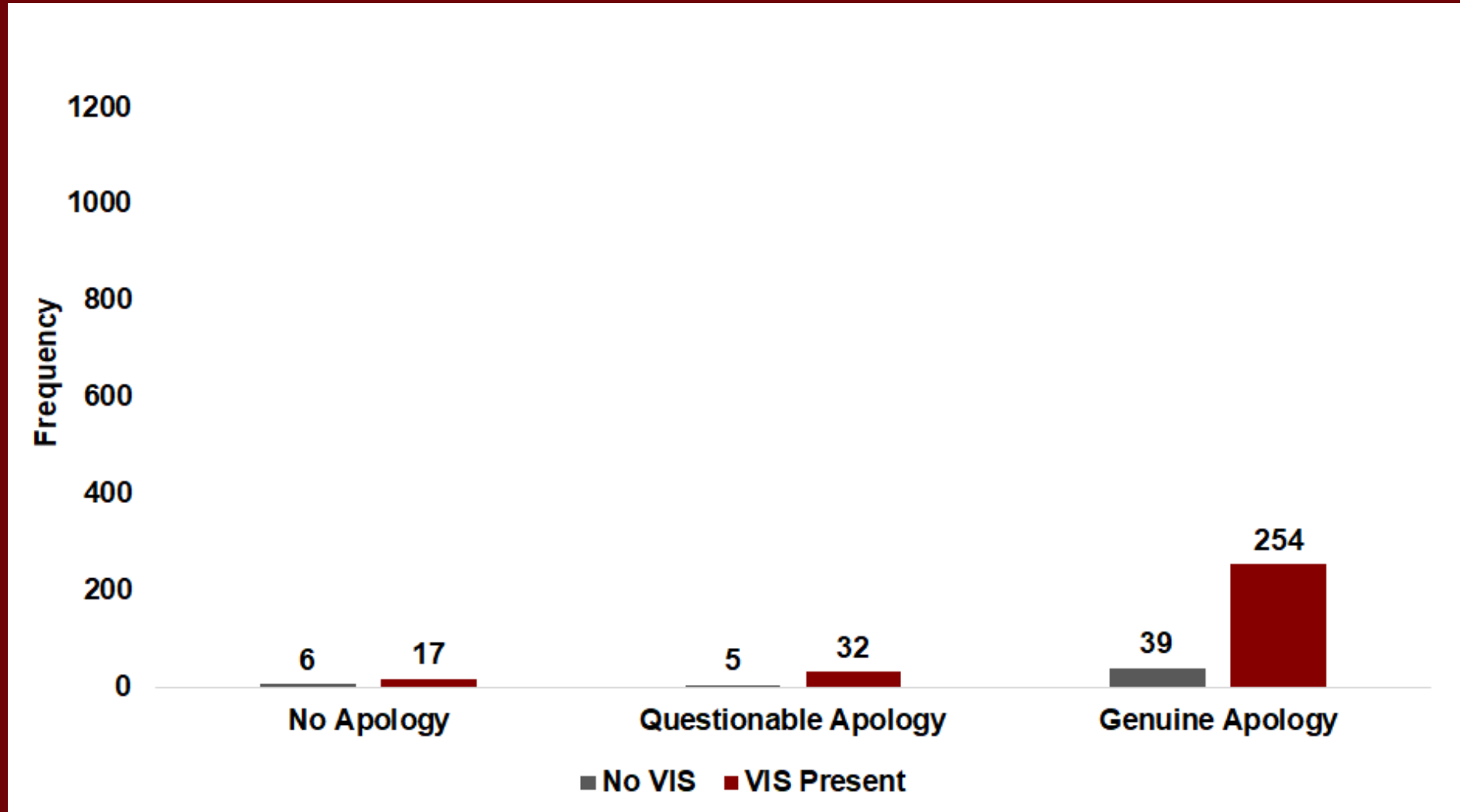
## Presence of Apology



## Responsibility of Actions

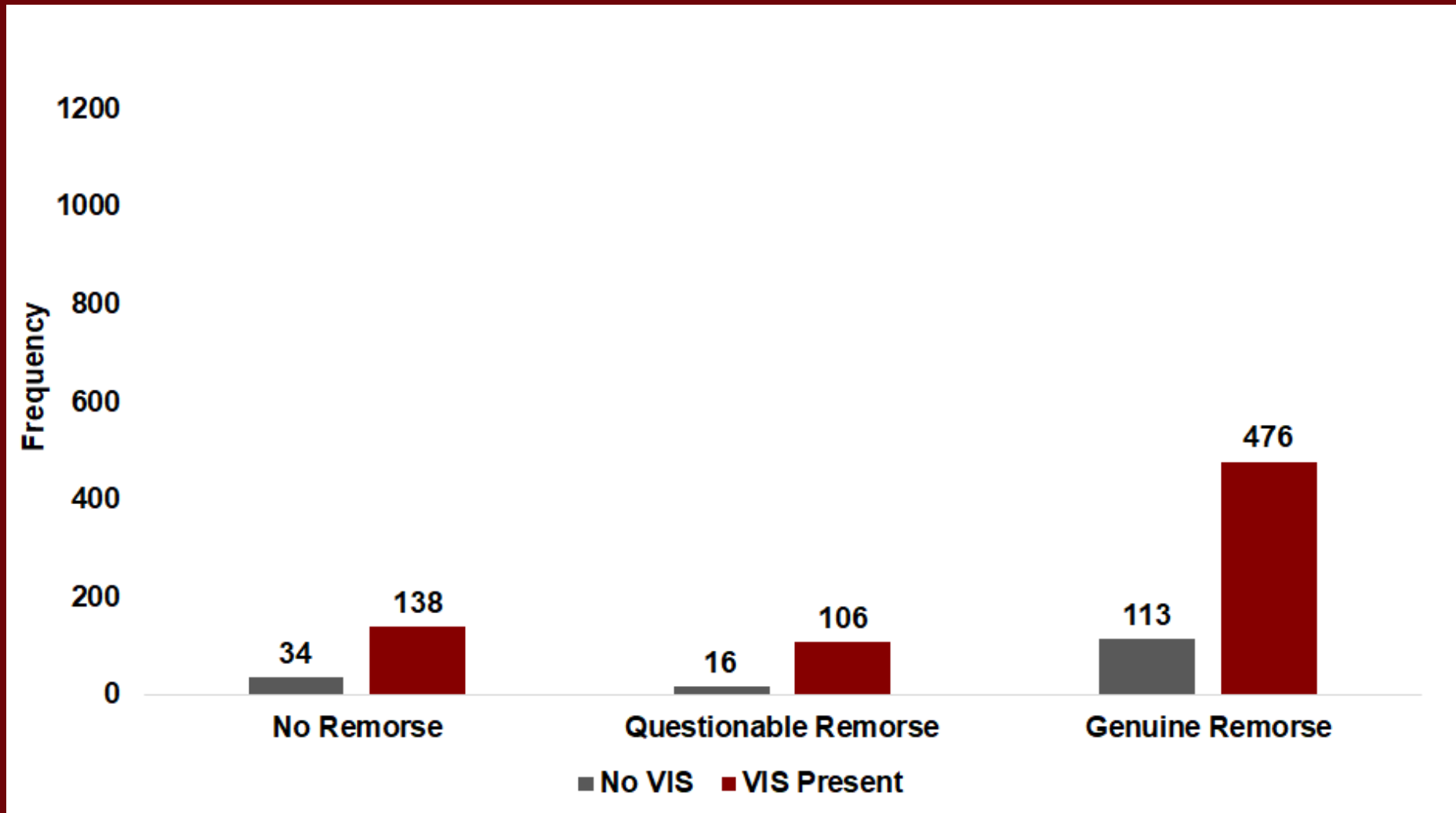


# Is the Presence of a VIS Associated with Offender's Apology?



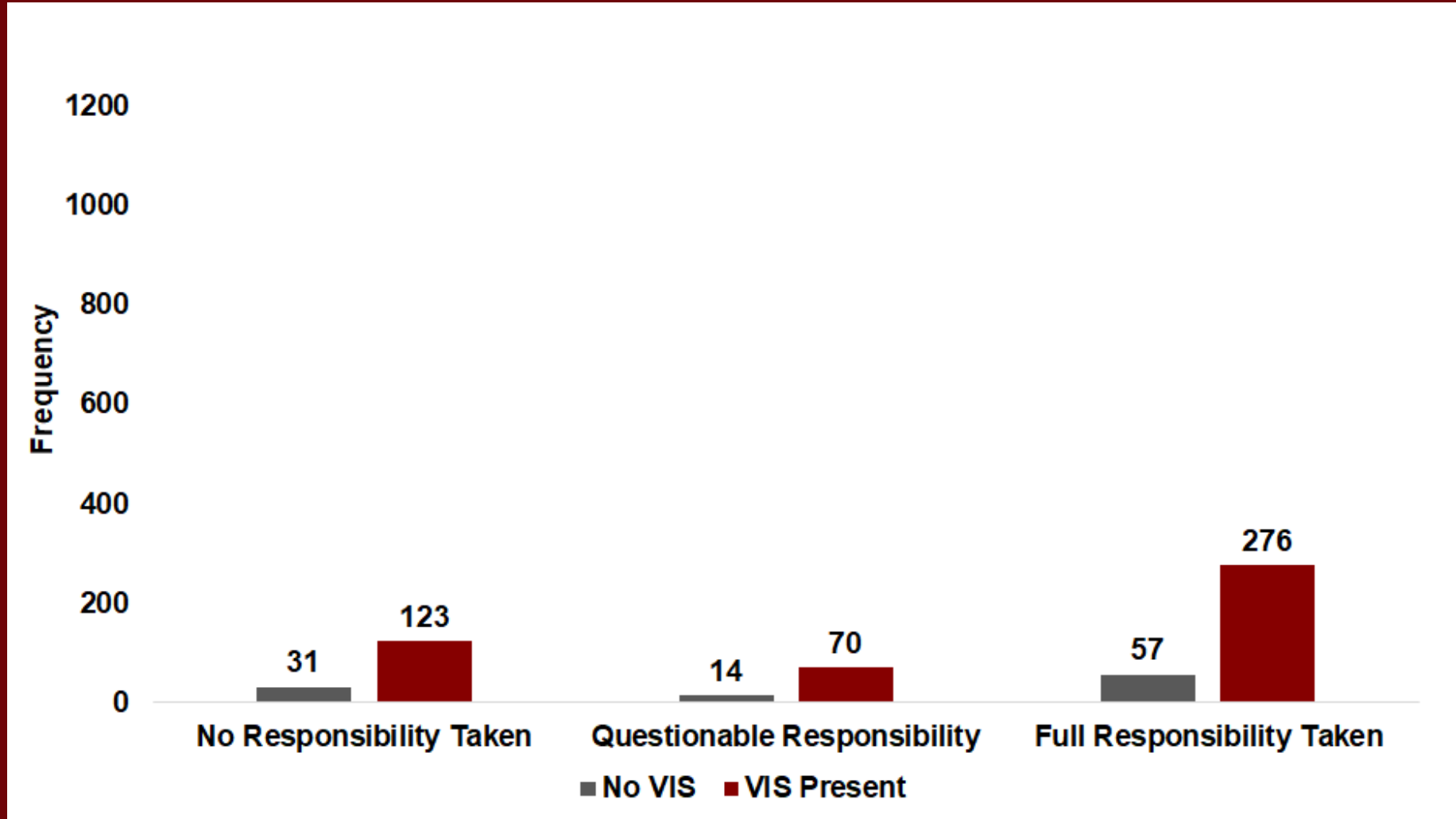
The relationship between the presence of VIS and an apology was non-significant,  $\chi^2(2)=2.878$ ,  $p=.237$ .  $N=353$ . 6

# Is the Presence of a VIS Associated with Offender's Remorse?



The relationship between the presence of VIS and remorse was non-significant,  $\chi^2 (2) = 2.717, p=.257, N=883$  7

# Is the Presence of a VIS Associated with the Offender Taking Responsibility of Actions?



The relationship between the presence of VIS and offender's responsibility was non-significant,  $\chi^2(2)=0.748$ ,  $p=.688$ .

N=571



# Discussion

---

- No association between VIS and remorse, apology or acceptance of responsibility
- This result is still important
- What does this mean for victims?

## Strengths & Limitations

- Real world decisions
- Effects on victims
- Interrater reliability estimates are in progress

## Future research

- Judicial evaluations of remorse, apology, & responsibility
- Offenders with personality disorders, addictions, and/or psychological disorders



# Thank You

Questions?

Contact Us

- [Gena.dufour@smu.ca](mailto:Gena.dufour@smu.ca)
- [Nicole.hopper@smu.ca](mailto:Nicole.hopper@smu.ca)
- [Krystal.lowe@smu.ca](mailto:Krystal.lowe@smu.ca)
- [Adina.gherman@smu.ca](mailto:Adina.gherman@smu.ca)
- [Louise.mason@smu.ca](mailto:Louise.mason@smu.ca)

- [Veronica.stinson@smu.ca](mailto:Veronica.stinson@smu.ca)  
(faculty supervisor)
- [Meg.ternes@smu.ca](mailto:Meg.ternes@smu.ca)  
(faculty supervisor)