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General Social Survey

An Overview

November 2010



Outline

- Overview of General Social Survey (GSS)
- Cycle topics in more detail
- GSS Redesign

Objectives of the General Social Survey (GSS)

- To monitor changes in the living conditions and well-being of Canadians over time by gathering data on social trends.
- To provide information on current or emerging issues in Canadian society.



Monitoring changes: Repeated topics

Core content	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th
Health	1985(1)	1991(6)				
Time use	1986(2)	1992(7)	1998(12)	2005(19)	2010(24)	
Victimization	1988(3)	1993(8)	1999(13)	2004(18)	2009(23)	
Education, work, retirement	1989(4)	1994(9)	2002(16)	2007(21)		
Family	1990(5)	1995(10)	2001(15)	2006(20)	2011(25)	
Social support and caregiving	1985(1)	1990(5)	1996(11)	2002(16)	2007(21)	2012(26)
Access and use of ICTs	2000(14)					
Social Networks	2003(17)	2008(22)	2013(27)			

Output of GSS data

- Release article published in Daily
- Set of basic tables
- Analytical file
- Public Use Microdata File (PUMF)
- Articles published in STC flagships
- Stand-alone publications

General Social Survey

Stakeholders

- Federal government departments
- Provincial / territorial ministries
- Academics / researchers
- Non-government organizations

Governing and Advisory Bodies

- Policy Research Data Group (PRDG)
 - Interdepartmental committee that provides funding for the GSS and approves the topic for each cycle.
- GSS Steering committee
 - Team of federal departments who guides and approves the content development of each GSS cycle. Reports to PRDG.
- Advisory Committee on Social Conditions
 - Group of experts who advise on the relevance of particular social conditions.

Survey methodology

- Conducted by computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) in 10 provinces
- Random Digit Dialing (RDD) survey
- Data collected over 10- to 12-months from the population aged 15 and over living in private households
- Voluntary
- Average interview length 45 to 60 minutes

Sample size

- Prior to 1999, the sample size was 10,000
- In 1999, sample increased to approximately 25,000
- Sample of 25,000 allows basic estimates at lower levels of detail

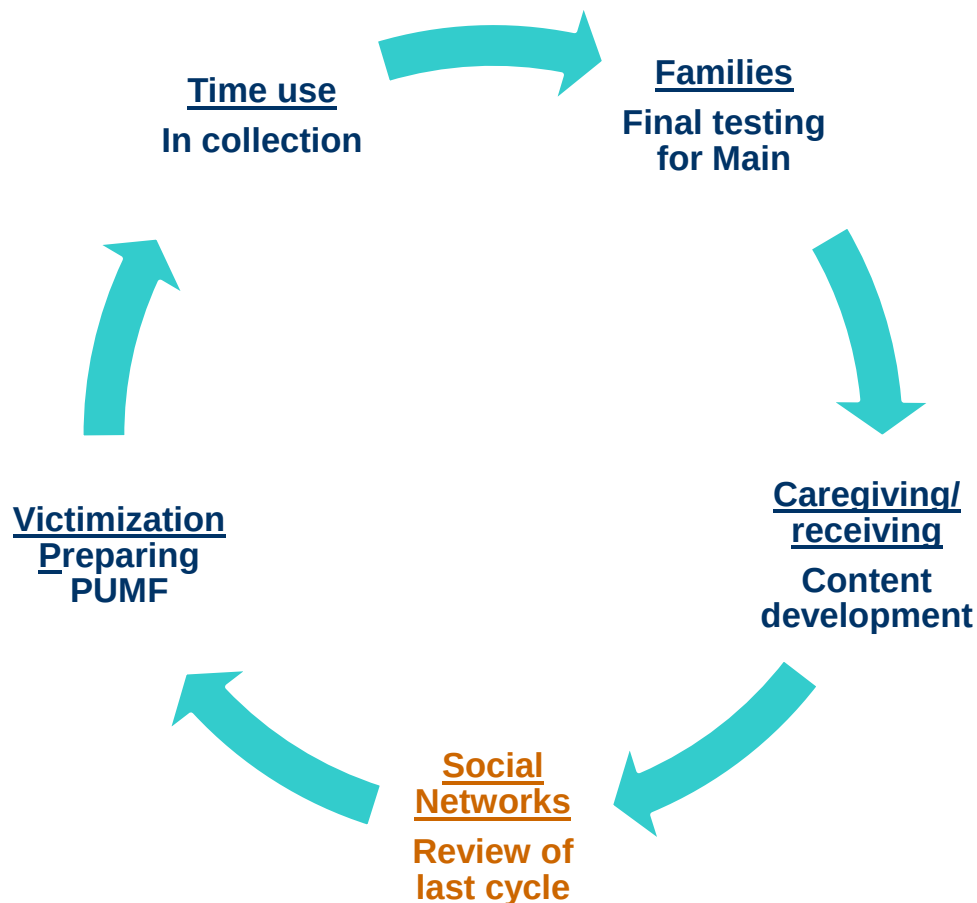


Stages of survey development

Consult/content development	6 months
Qualitative testing	1 month
Programming/testing	6 months
Pilot test—prepare/conduct	2 months
Redevelopment/testing	5 months
Main Collection/prepare files	12 months
Master file/initial release	6 months
Creation of PUMF	4 months
Total time	3 ½ years



GSS cycles in November 2010



Consultation/content development

- Starting point is previous cycle on same topic.
- New and revised content is developed through consultation with stakeholders.
- New content and revised questions prepared for Qualitative Testing.

Qualitative testing

- Provides insights into how respondents react to questionnaires.
- GSS uses in-depth (one-on-one) interviews to help assess the validity of questions and identify potential sources of response error.

Applications testing

- Computer program is tested to ensure application works according to standards with respect to:
 - Flows and logic
 - Dynamic text
 - Wording
 - Format
 - Consistency

Pilot Test

Conducted to observe all survey operations working together, including the administration of the questionnaire.

- “Pilot a “dress rehearsal.” It replicates the final survey design on a small scale from beginning to end.
- Provides the opportunity to fine-tune the questionnaire before collection of the Main Survey.

Survey modifications/testing

- Changes made based on observation, interviewer debriefing and results of Pilot.
- Reword, recode categories, add new categories, redesign flows, clarify content.
- Application retested with revised content to prepare for Main Survey.

Main Survey/file preparation

- Main Survey collection
- File edits
- 6-month file
- Final file
- First release
- PUMF



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Cycle topics

Components of each cycle

- Core topic to collect information on social issue of interest
- Focus/new content to satisfy emerging data needs
- Common set of sociodemographic variables to place the core topic and new content in context

Common variables

- Roster: list of household members, age, sex, relationship to each other, marital status
- Health and well-being
- Education and main activity
- Housing characteristics
- Other characteristics: birthplace, ethnic ancestry, immigration status, aboriginal identity, visible minority status, language, religion, sexual orientation, income



Social Networks

Cycle 22, 2008

Why social networks?

- To better understand how Canadians use their social networks to help them through key life transitions.

Social Networks

Key content:

- Social contacts
- Volunteering and civic participation
- Changes experienced over the past year
- Well-being and sense of belonging

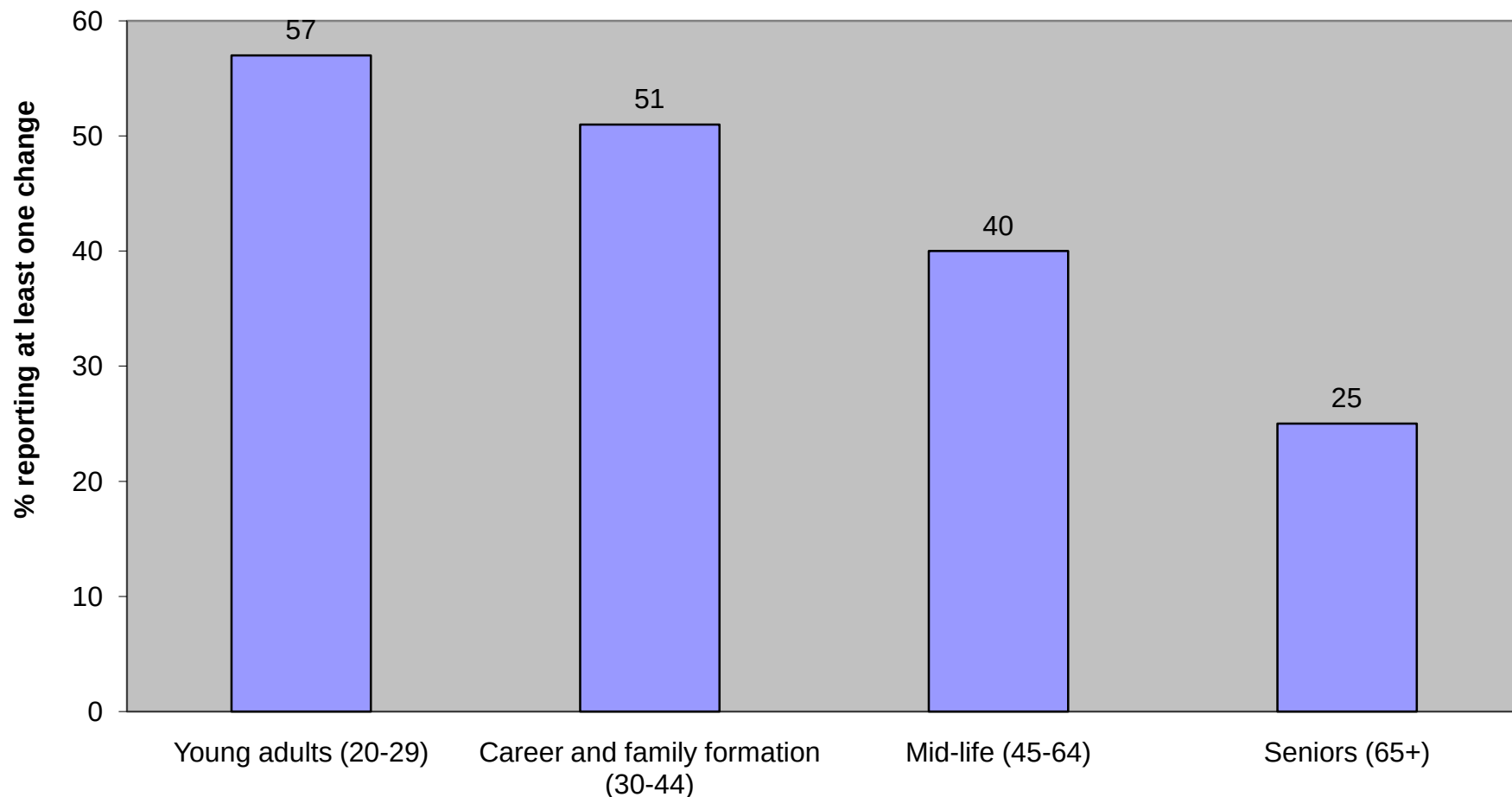
PUMF released in March 2010

Social Networks: Research questions

- What types of resources and social networks help Canadians through difficult times (e.g., bankruptcy, unemployment or illness)?
- What types of resources do young people access from their support network as they transition from school to work?
- To what extent does the support of family and friends explain life satisfaction?
- What are the characteristics of those who do not mobilize available resources?
- Are the size, density and diversity of social networks related to income?



Canadians experience fewer major changes later in life





Victimization Cycle 23, 2009

Why victimization?

- To have an informed, up-to-date picture of the nature and extent of criminal victimization and spousal violence in Canada.

Victimization

Key content:

- Fear of crime and perceptions of the criminal justice system
- Crime prevention
- Spousal violence and criminal victimization
- Nature and consequences of victimization
- Internet victimization: cyberbullying (new in 2009)

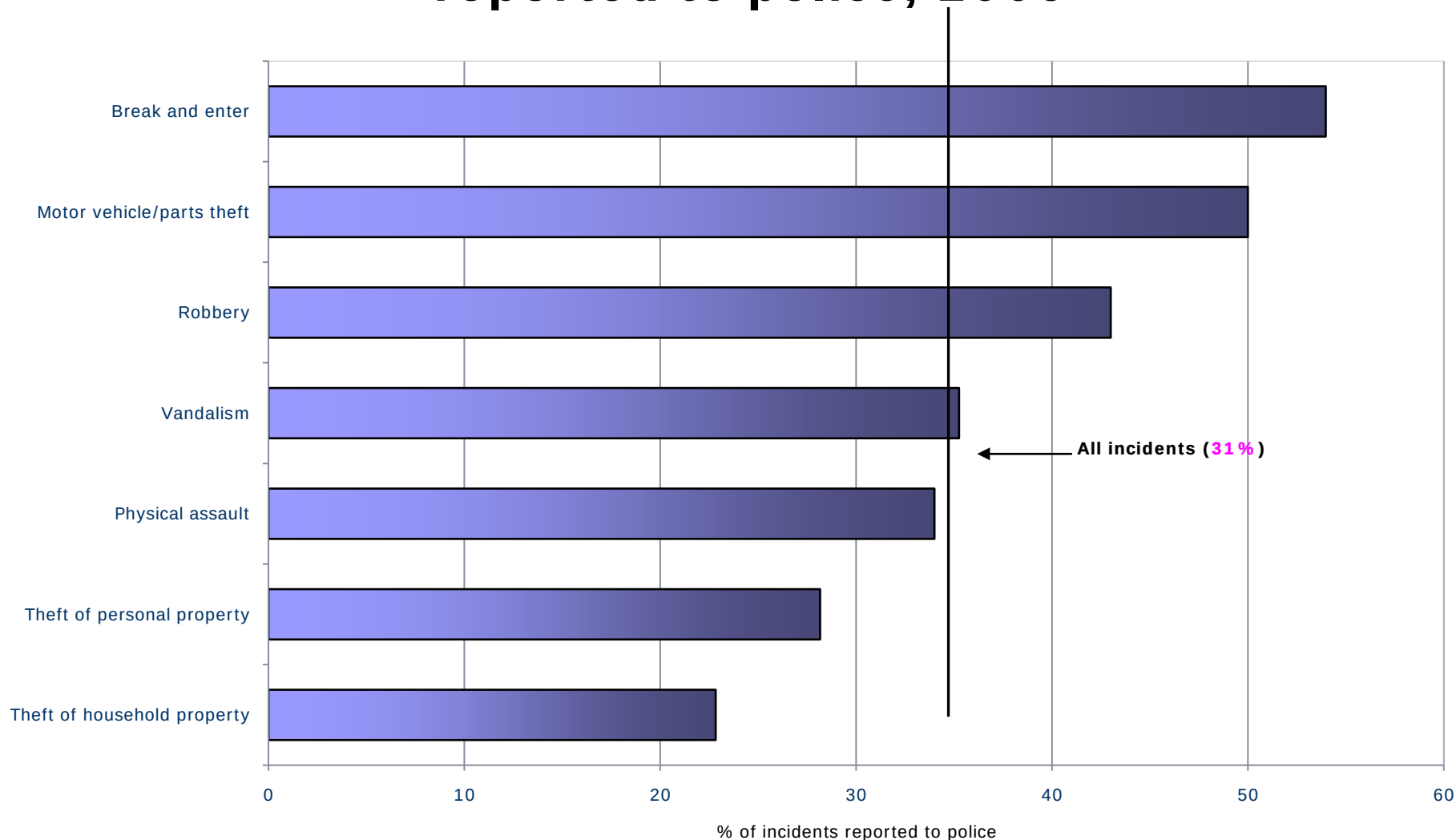
**First data release: Criminal Victimization in Canada,
September 28, 2010**

Victimization: Research questions

- What types of offences are not reported to police and why are they not reported?
- Who are the Canadians most at-risk of being victimized?
- In what context do crimes occur and what is crime's impact on victims and society?
- What are Canadians' perceptions of crime and the justice system?
- Who are the victims of Cyberbullying?



Incidents of break and enter more likely to be reported to police, 2009





Time use

Cycle 24, 2010

Why time use?

- To better understand how Canadians use their time on a typical day and what this means for their general well-being.

Time use

Key survey content:

- Activities reported in a 24-hour diary
- Balancing work and home, perceptions of time
- Unpaid work
- Sports and leisure activities
- Well-being and life satisfaction
- Simultaneous activities, multitasking (new in 2010)

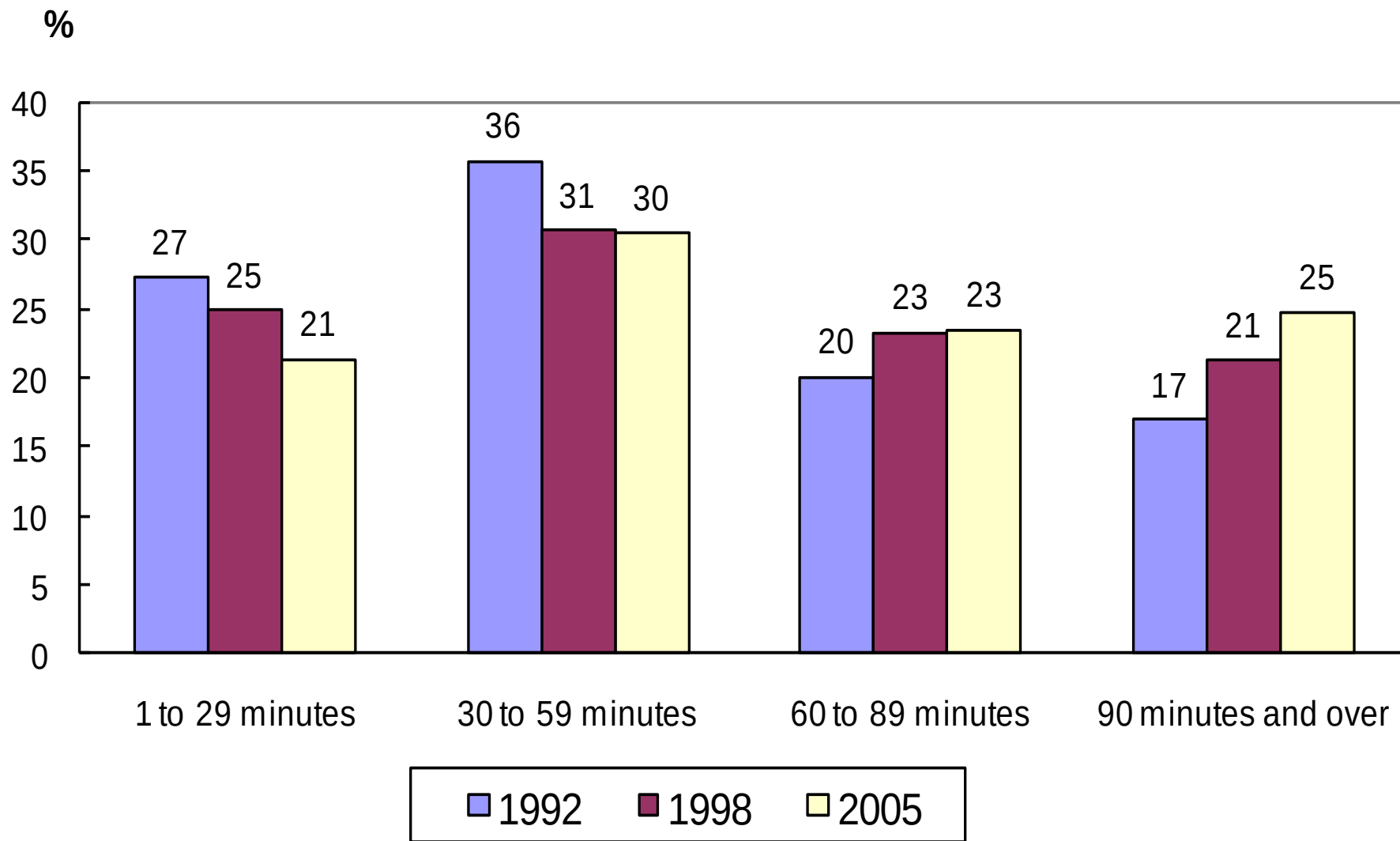
**Survey currently in the field—collection ends
December 31, 2010**

Time use: research questions

- How do Canadians balance work and home responsibilities?
- How much time is spent on childcare—active and passive?
- What is the contribution of sports and culture to well-being?
- What is the relationship between new technologies and multitasking?
- How well are Canadians coping with time stressors such as longer commutes and new care-giving responsibilities?



Proportion of workers by average duration of round trip commute, 1992, 1998 and 2005, Canada





Family

Cycle 25, 2011

Why the family?

To better understand how demographic changes have affected the composition of households and families, and the number and types of transitions experienced by families.

Family

Key survey content:

- Leaving the household
- Entering the labour market (work history)
- Union formation (marriages/common-laws)
- Birth/adoption of children
- Union/family break-up (separation/divorce)
- Organization and decision making among couples
- Financial resiliency

Main collection begins February 2011

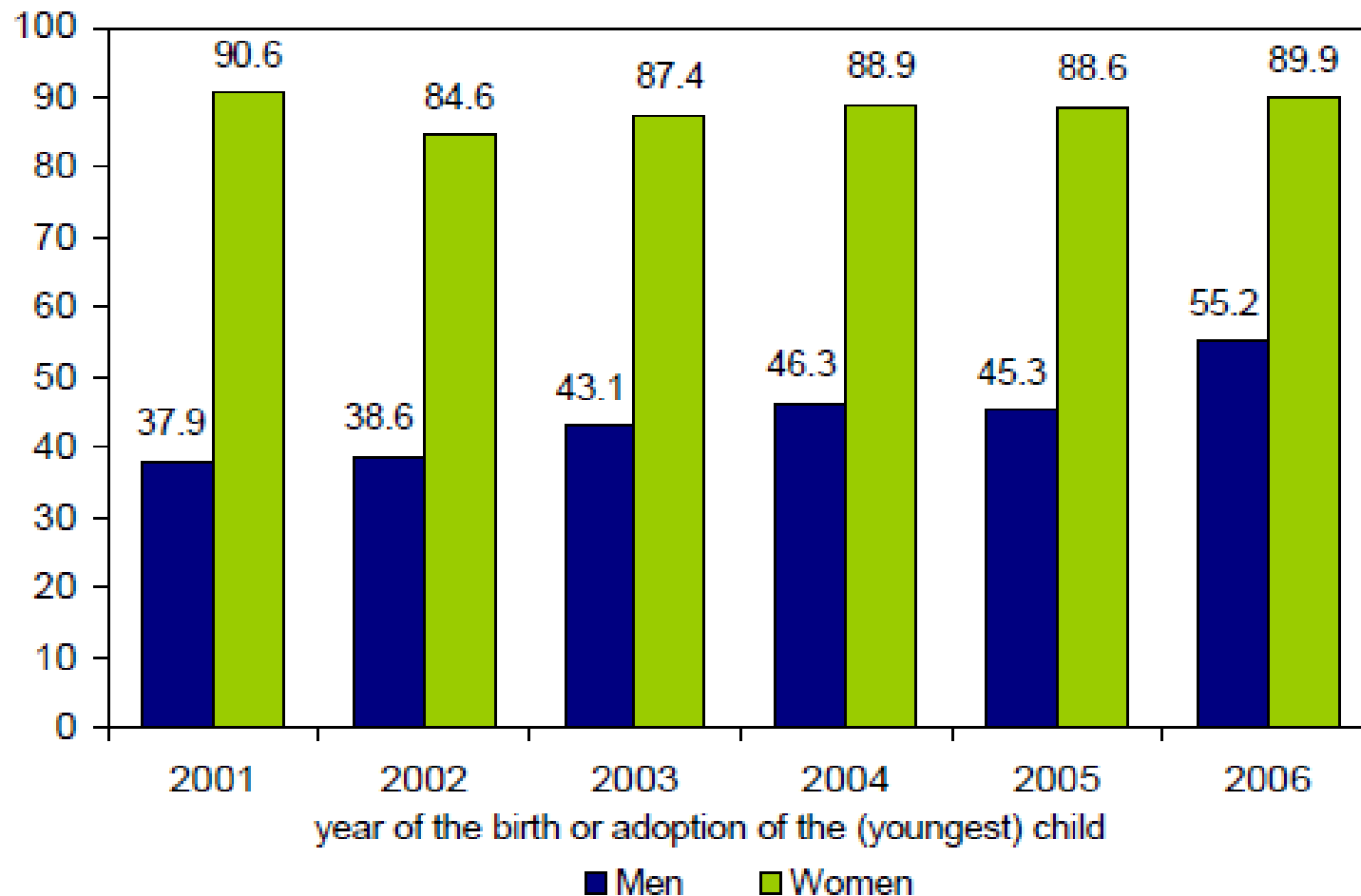
Family: research questions

- What do families look like in 2011 and how have they changed since 5 years ago?
- Are Canadians less likely to get married than before? How can we explain this change?
- Who looks after the children when the parents cannot take care of them?
- How are household tasks distributed between couples and how do they manage their finances?
- Do Canadians intend to have many children?



More fathers are taking time off work for the birth or adoption of a child

percentage



Caregiving Cycle 26, 2012

Why Caregiving?

- To better understand the needs of Canada's care receivers and the challenges that today's family caregivers face.
- To have better means of helping caregivers continue to provide help to their family and friends.

Caregiving

Key survey content:

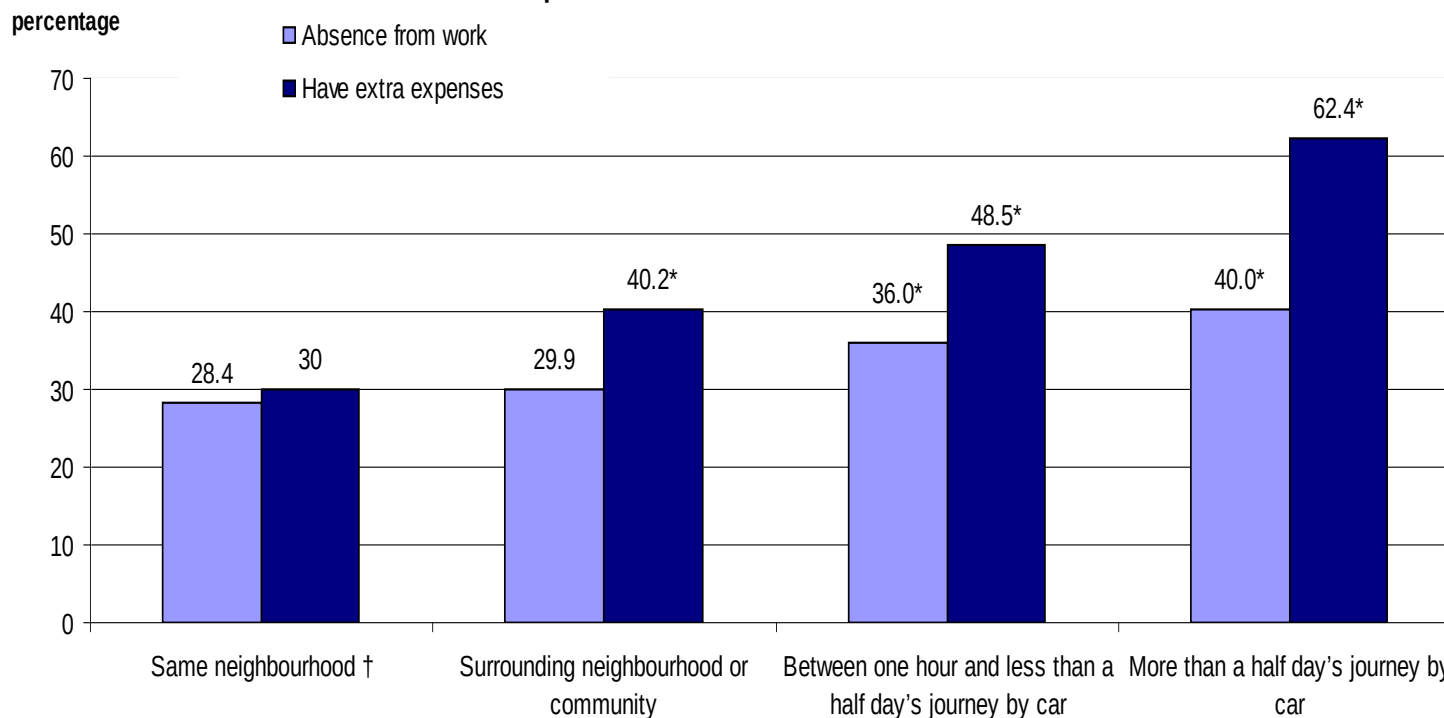
- Care receiving/caregiving because of a physical or mental disability, a chronic illness or problems resulting from aging
- Types of activities Canadians provide/receive help with
- The characteristics of Canada's care receivers and caregivers
- Caregiving networks
- The consequences of providing care for the caregiver (new for 2012)

Qualitative testing in February 2011

Caregiving: research questions

- What is the impact of providing care on employment and financial security?
- Do Canadians receive most help from formal sources or from family and friends?
- How many Canadians have unmet needs and what are those needs?
- Which caregiving activities result in the highest levels of stress for the caregiver?
- Who are the at-risk caregivers?
- Do caregivers with a support network fare better than those without?

Chart 1 The farther away a caregiver lives from the care receiver, the more likely they are to have extra expenses or be absent from work





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Looking ahead:

Redesigning the General Social Survey

Why redesign the GSS?

■ Environment

- Canadians busier than ever
- Number of calls from telemarketers, charities, opinion polls etc. increased dramatically

■ Technology

- Call display/call answer functions allow screening of calls
- Cell phone-only households (mostly under 30s) on the rise and not included in RDD surveys

■ Survey length and complexity

- Length and complexity of GSS surveys increased significantly

Current GSS challenges

Quality

- Declining response rates (over 80% to under 60%) leading to suppression of estimates
- Decreased coverage leading to underrepresentation of certain groups

Cost pressures

- Increasing collection costs

Relevance

- Increased demands for new content
- Demands for faster response to current, emerging issues

Planned survey enhancements over the next 3 to 5 years

- Transition to an alternative sampling frame
- Implement multiple modes of data collection
- Develop a more flexible survey

Benefits of redesign for the GSS

- Improve response rates and coverage
- Improve quality and timeliness of estimates
- Offer alternative to traditional telephone collection methods
- Decrease respondent burden
- Ability to oversample target groups
- Increase ability to address data gaps
- Reduce/contain collection costs