

Informal caregivers:
Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities

Canadian Families Under Pressure?

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By

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Overview of the presentation

Introduction

- ➔ Motivation, purpose and objective of this paper
- ➔ Context of informal care giving in Canada

Characteristics of informal care givers in paid work

- ➔ Who are informal caregivers in Canada?
- ➔ What type of informal care do they provide?

The effects of informal care giving on Canadians in paid work

- ➔ What social and personal consequences do they experience?
- ➔ What attitudes do caregivers portray with respect to caregiving?

What supports do Canadians need in balancing family and work responsibilities?

- ➔ What would help informal care givers?
- ➔ The case of the sandwich generation?

Conclusions, policy implications and future research

Introduction: Motivation for research

Motivation for the paper

Care giving is currently a policy priority for the government of Canada. There is need for more research and information on the role of families as caregivers and the implications for their well-being.

- ➔ There is policy recognition of the growing burden placed on families who care for the elderly or family members with disabilities
- ➔ Low fertility trends and improved life expectancy increasing Canada's "eldest" - most likely to require some care
- ➔ Canadians aged 85 years and over are projected to increase from over 430,000 in 2001 (1.4% of total population) to 1.6 million in 2041 (4% of the overall population)
- ➔ Aging population will likely put pressure not only on the health care system but also increase demand for informal and formal care

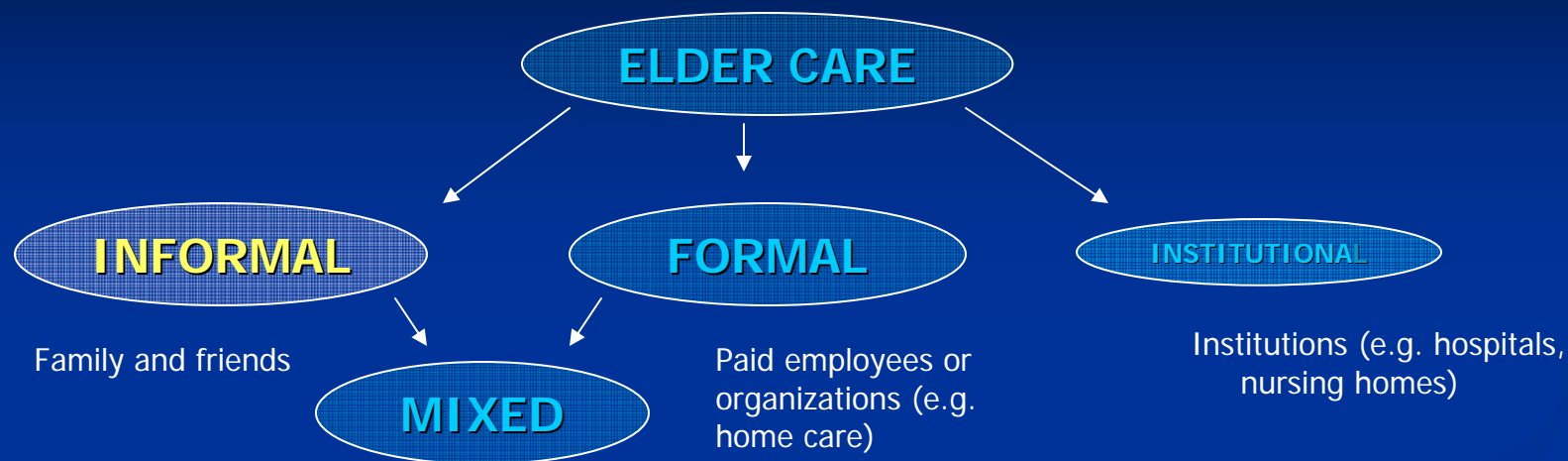
Introduction: Purpose and objective

Objective and purpose

Using the 2002 General Social Survey, this paper has three main objectives:

- ➔ Profile informal caregivers (family and friends) in paid work
- ➔ Identify
 - ➔ the consequences of care giving (work, family, personal)
 - ➔ caregiver attitudes towards care giving responsibilities
- ➔ Consider potential policy areas to address the burden of care giving

Introduction: Elder care in Canada



The Canadian family and traditional care giving roles have changed over the last few decades: *Canada has experienced a shift of responsibilities from formal institutions to the family (Ward-Griffin and Marshall, 2003; Wiles, 2003)*

- ➔ Aging of the population could increase the ratio of care receivers to caregivers
- ➔ Smaller families, changing family structures, increased geographical mobility can exacerbate this (fewer children caring for elderly parents)
- ➔ Women, traditionally caregivers, now mostly in paid work

Definitions and source of data

Definition of terms

Caregivers: Canadians 45 to 64 years of age, in paid work and providing informal care to an elderly care receiver

Care receivers: Canadians 65 years of age and over with a long-term health problem or disability

Sandwich generation : Caregivers with one or more children under 18 years of age living at home

Data Source:

2002 General Social Survey: Aging and social support *

Sample size: Over 25,000 Canadians were sampled. Data is weighted to reflect Canada's population (32 million)

Age sampled: Canadians 45 years of age and over

**The source of all charts is the 2002 GSS, unless otherwise indicated*

Characteristics: Who are informal caregivers?

Caregivers in paid work: Gender, marital status, children and age
Men (23.5%) and women (23.9%) are equally likely to provide care.
Typically most caregivers in paid work are men, married and in their prime working years.

- ➔ Slightly more than half of caregivers in paid work are men (54.3% for men versus 45.7% for women)
- ➔ Nearly four in five working caregivers are married/common-law
- ➔ Slightly more than one in four have dependent children at home
- ➔ More than seven in ten caregivers are between 45 and 54 years of age. This suggests that a majority of caregivers are in their peak earning years and at the height of their career path and savings for retirement

Characteristics: Who are informal caregivers?

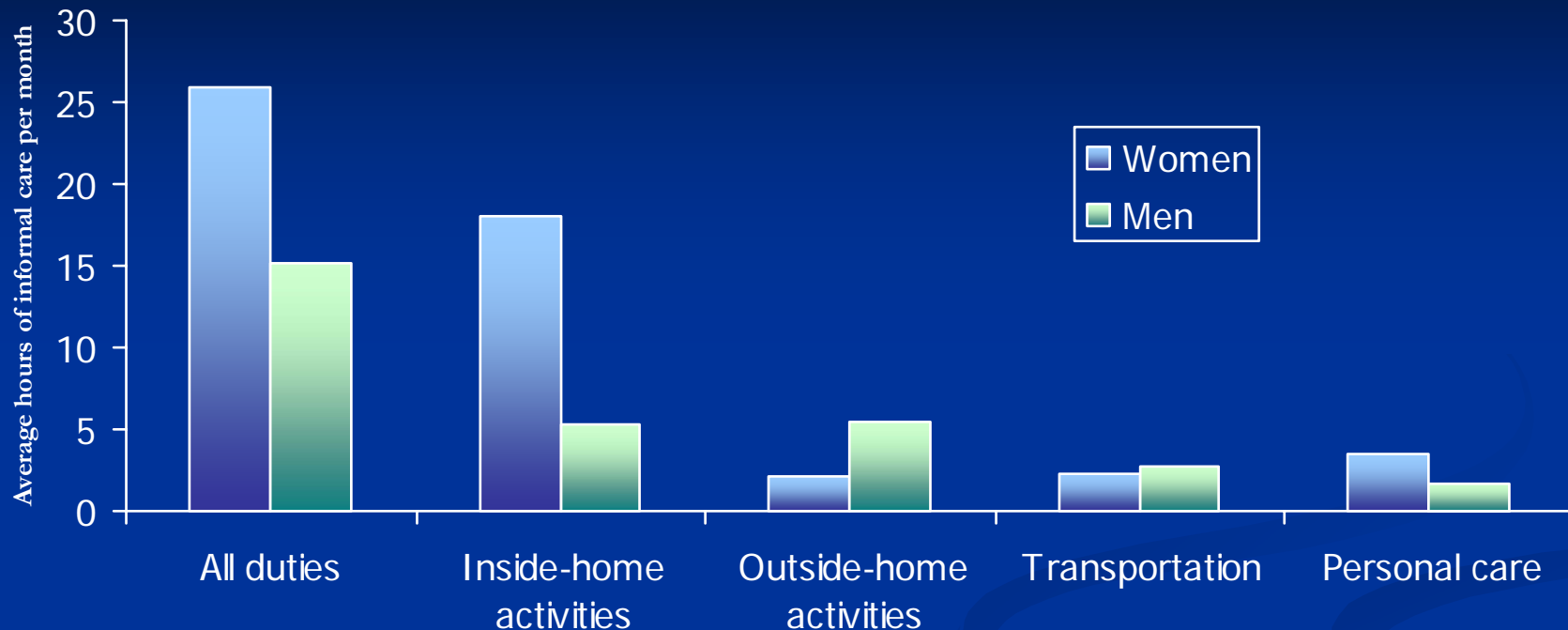
Caregivers in paid work: Education, employment and household income

- ➔ More than seven in ten have some post secondary education (PSE). (in 2001, slightly less than half of Canadians 45-64 had some PSE)
- ➔ Most work full-time, as do their spouses
- ➔ More than one in three had a family income of at least \$80,000; slightly more than one in seven had less than \$40,000 (median family income in 2001 was slightly over \$50,000)

Sandwich Generation:

- ➔ More than eight in ten have some post secondary education
- ➔ More than half are men (women have children earlier)

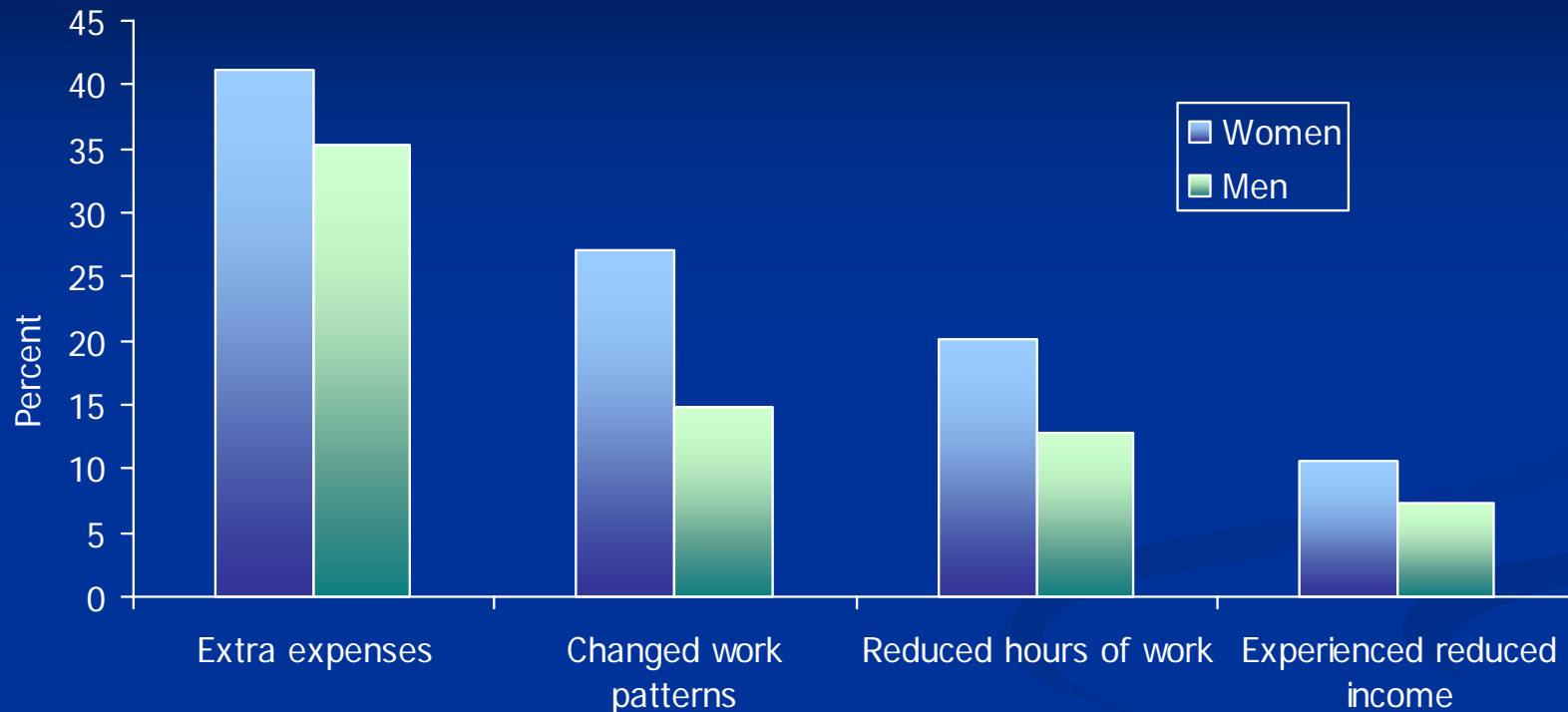
Characteristics: What type of care do they provide?



On average, women in paid work provide more hours of care than men. This is likely due to the type of care they provide

- ➔ On average, women provided 26 hours of care per month versus 15 hours per for men
- ➔ Women spent the bulk of their time doing inside home activities (e.g. household chores and assistance) while men were care giving in activities outside the home (e.g. transportation, yard work)

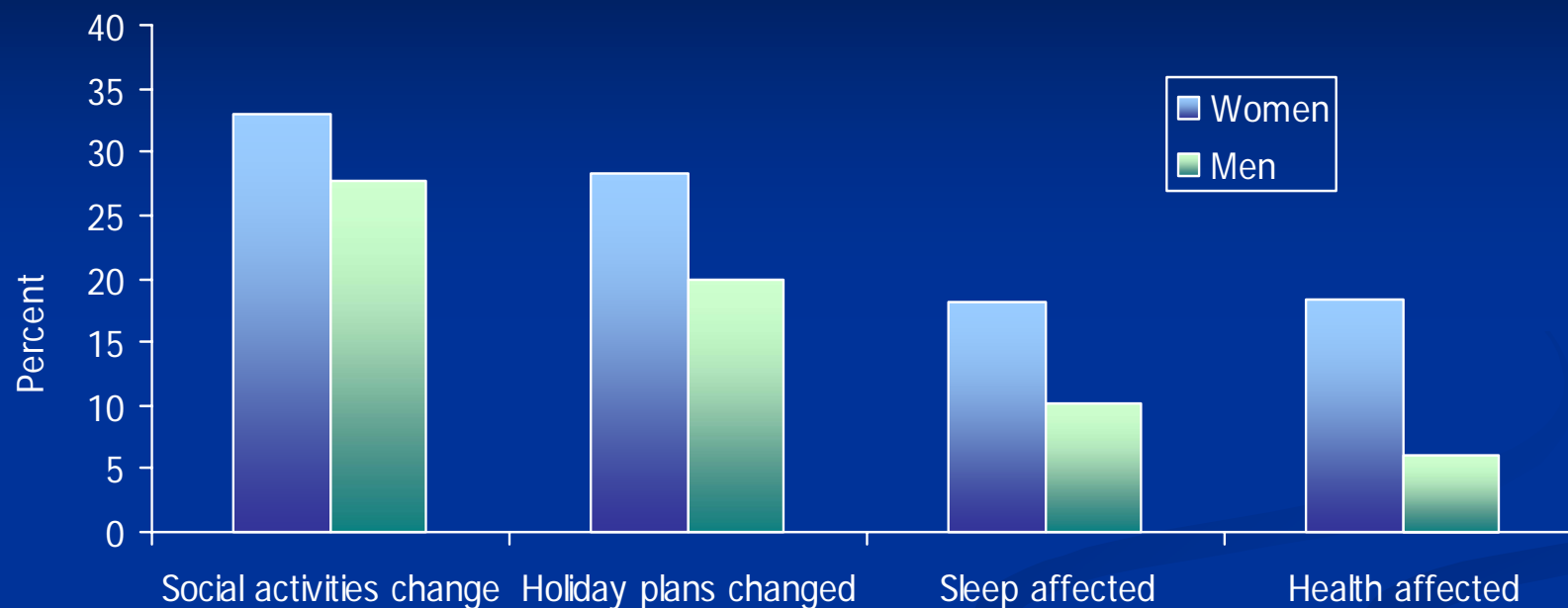
Consequences: Employment and economic



Evidence suggests that in providing care, women were more likely to make work adjustments and incur financial expenses than men

- ➔ Although both men and women reported reducing their hours of work and changing work patterns, relatively few reported a reduction in income
- ➔ Suggests however: duration, intensity of care giving could have a cumulative impact on current and future income of caregivers

Consequences: Social and personal



Evidence suggests that in providing care, women were more affected than men both in terms of their social and personal life

- ➔ The most commonly reported consequence was a change in social activities
- ➔ Sleep and health consequences, were experienced by at least one in ten of all caregivers (women more than men)
- ➔ Cumulatively, these consequences suggest that caregivers may be compromising their current and future health and well-being

Consequences: Social and personal

	Men	Women
In general	%	%
Life is very stressful	11.7	15.5
Very satisfied with life	33.9	33.6
Very satisfied with work-family balance	27.6	24.4
In care giving, nearly always feel		
Stressed	6.3	16.2
Not enough time for myself	3.9	13.0
Wish someone would take over	2.2	3.4
Should be doing more	20.6	22.2
Giving back what life has given	61.0	60.8
Helping others strengthens relationships	66.1	66.4

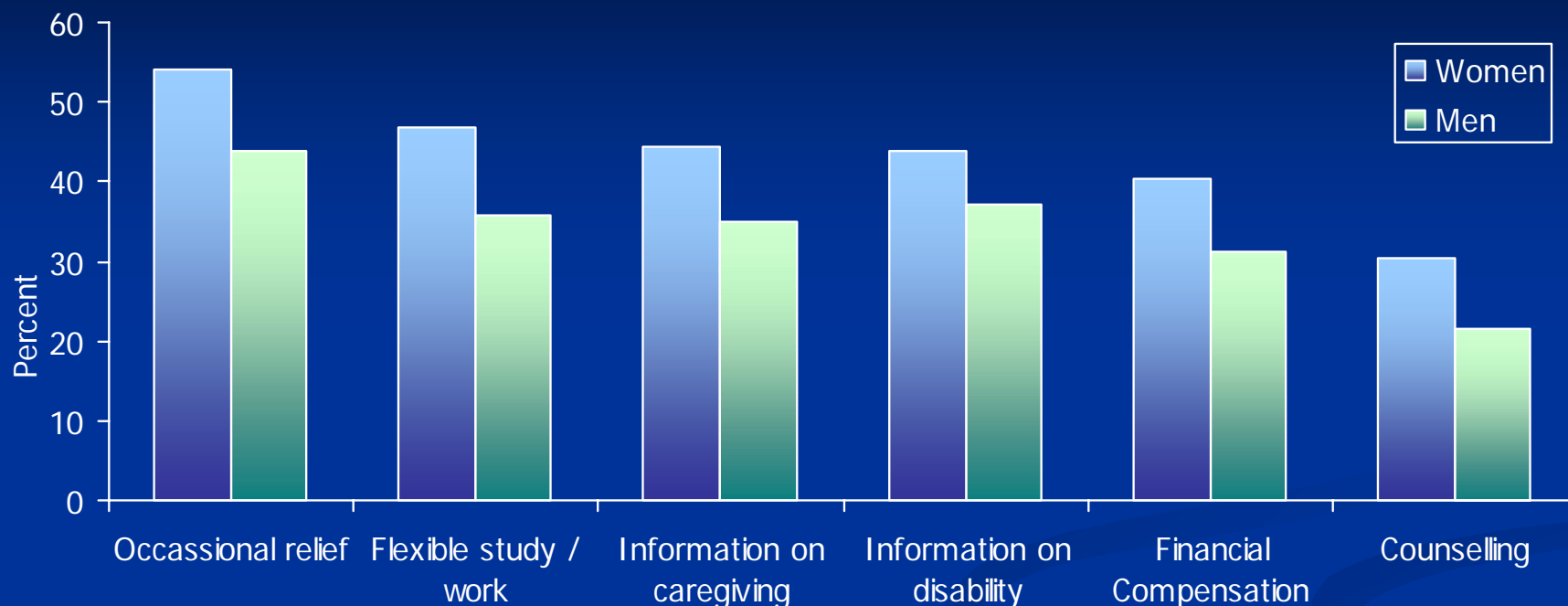
use with caution due to small sample size

Consequences: Social and personal

	Children at home			
	None	Less than 18	18 and over	All ages
In general,	%	%	%	%
Very satisfied with work-family balance	28.7	19.9	24.0	25.9
In care giving, nearly always feel				
Should be doing more	19.8	23.9	22.7	22.1

Use with caution due to small sample size

What do informal care givers say would help?



Evidence suggests that for both women and men, flexibility in the scheduling of their time is a high priority

- ➔ Both women and men most commonly reported that occasional relief would help them to continue to provide informal care.
- ➔ Flexible work arrangements and information are cited as more important than financial assistance

Conclusions

What have we learned?

- ➔ Balancing care giving with paid work has employment, economic, social and personal consequences. Canadian caregivers reported more time pressures than financial consequences related to providing informal care.
- ➔ Many Canadians also report incurring extra expenses and having to reduce work hours, however, fewer report experiencing a reduction in income.
- ➔ Caregivers experience personal and social consequences which could compromise their current and future health and well-being.
- ➔ Attitude of caregivers indicate that, despite the stress, care giving is seen as strengthening relationships and giving back what life has given

Policy Considerations

More research is required on the duration, intensity and other factors associated with care giving to better address:

Potential inequities

- ➔ There is need to identify any inequities facing families in meeting their care giving responsibilities.

Undue burden to families

- ➔ Are caregivers at risk of compromising their health and well-being or current and future income?

Work-life balance issues

- ➔ To what extent do caregivers require support to reconcile work and family responsibilities? How well do they cope? Policy considerations will need to address strategies to help caregivers balance their work and family responsibilities.

Future Research Needs

- ➔ Who among caregivers is most likely to experience social and economic consequences?
- ➔ How do intra-family allocations of time impact the care giving experience?
- ➔ What are the long-term implications for the health, earnings and pension income of caregivers?
- ➔ How does care giving impact on transitions to retirement for caregivers?
- ➔ What legislative and workplace supports are available for caregivers?
- ➔ What role does community and social participation play in care giving/receiving?
- ➔ What is the appropriate balance of supports for caregivers (e.g. respite care, financial supports)?
- ➔ How does care differ among ethnic groups / Aboriginal people of Canada?
- ➔ Evaluation of current policy tools (e.g. compassionate care leave)

Thank-you.

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