

# The Health of Caregivers of Children with Disabilities

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# Context

- Challenges of caring for children with disabilities
- Prominence in policy and media

# Literature Review

- Associations with caregiver psychological health
- Limitations of existing studies

# Research Question

How does the health of caregivers of children with disabilities compare to the health of a general population of caregivers?

# 1) Caring About Caregivers Study

- Administered through CanChild, McMaster University
- Representative sample of children with Cerebral Palsy (CP) in Ontario
- Age 7-14 years
- N=468 (2001-2002)

## 2) National Surveys

- **NLSCY**
  - Cycle 3 (1998-1999)
  - Ontario cohort
  - Children aged 7-15 years
  - N=2,414
- **NPHS**
  - Cycle 2 (1996-1997)
  - Ontario cohort
  - Adult with child aged 7-15 years living at home
  - N=5,549

# Outcomes

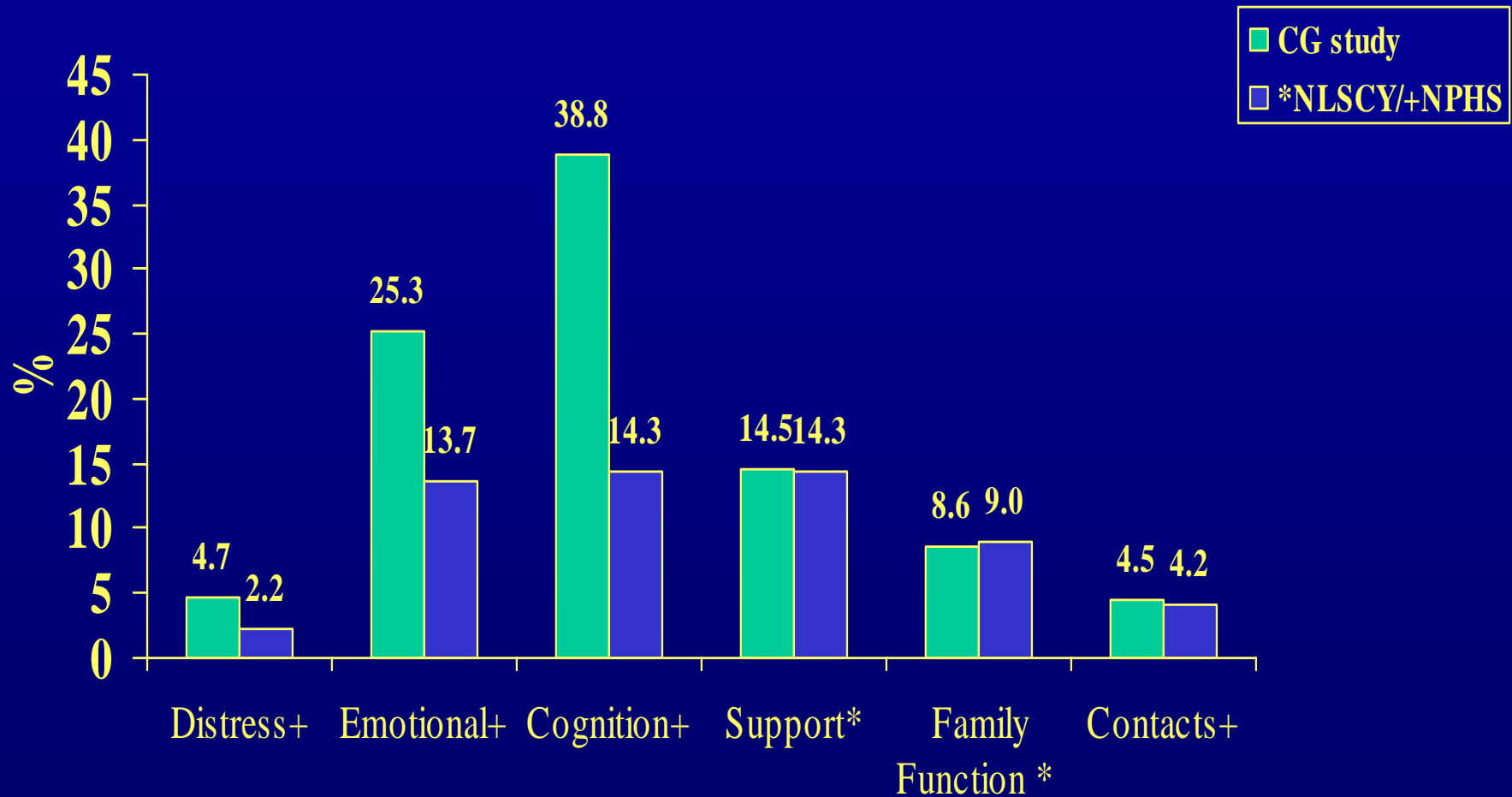
- Demographic information
- Psychological health (distress, emotional, cognitive problems)
- Social support
- Family functioning
- Physical health (presence and number of chronic conditions)



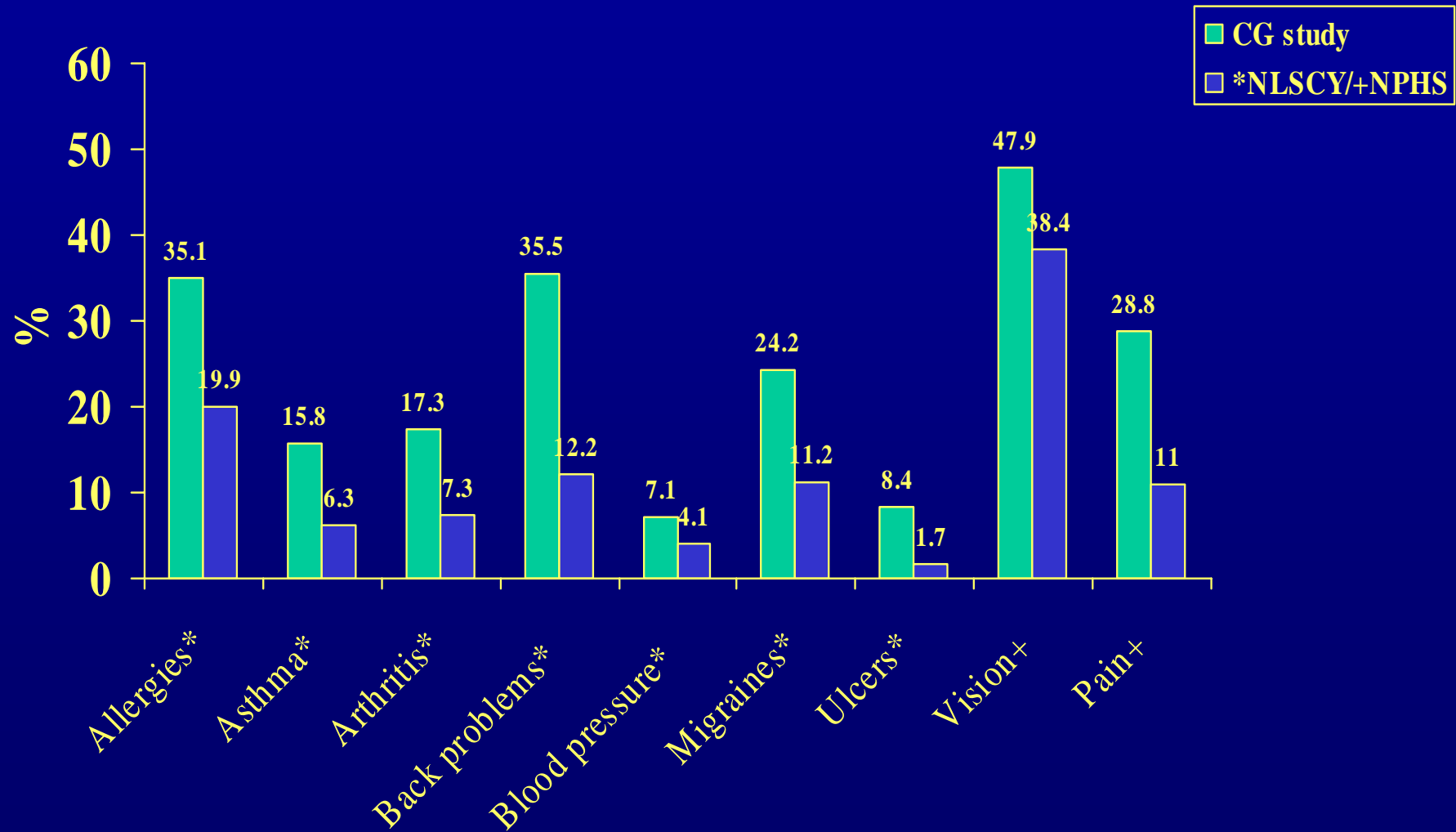
# Results: Demographics

	<b>% CG</b>	<b>% NLSCY/NPHS</b>
Age (yrs.)	40	40 / 40
Female	94	93 / 54
< High school	13	11
University	17	16
< \$30,000	25	16
> \$60,000	41	51
Paid work	66	81
Full time	67	73
Family care	37	28

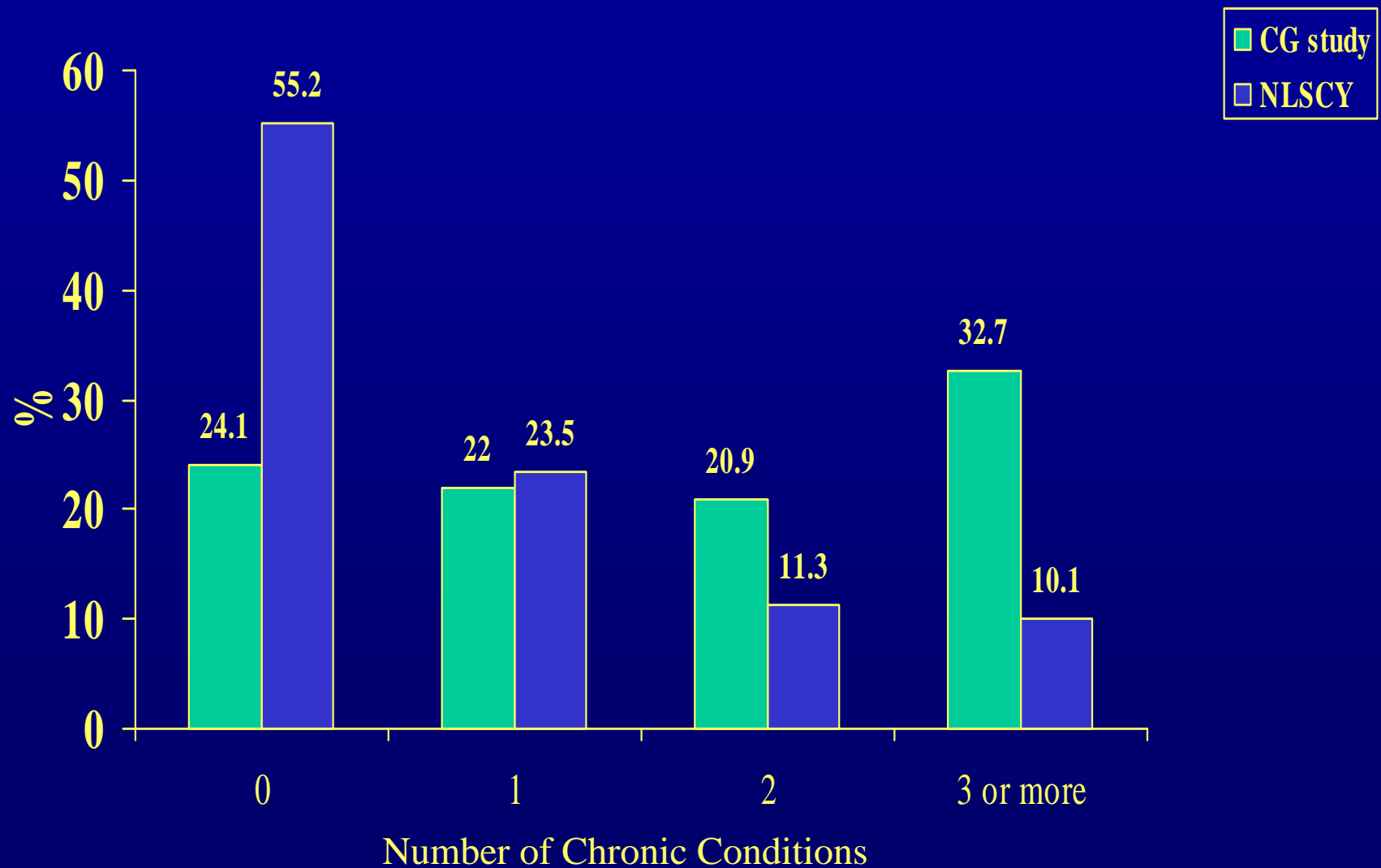
# Caregivers of children with disabilities report poorer psychological health



# Caregivers of children with disabilities report poorer physical health



# Caregivers of children with disabilities report more overall chronic conditions



# Summary

## Caregivers of children with disabilities:

- Have lower incomes despite absence in educational differences
- Differences may be due to less time available to work for pay
- Have poorer psychological health
- Have more physical health problems

# Limitations

- Fewer female respondents in NPHS sample
- Caregiver health may be confounded with SES
- Direction of effects unclear and causality can not be ascertained

# Implications

- For services: family centered, encourage parental well-being as well as child health
- For future research: different types of services associated with better health outcomes