



– Documenting & Tracking How Couples Meet –

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Purpose of project

- To explore ways that the Internet is changing the formation of romantic relationships.
- Uses a new dataset, the How Couples Meet and Stay Together (HCMST) survey.
- HCMST is a nationally representative longitudinal study of American adults.
- Individuals who face a thin market for potential partners, such as gays, lesbians, and middle aged heterosexuals, are especially likely to use the Internet to find partners.
- For all couple types, reliance on the Internet to meet romantic partners has been rising sharply in recent years, displacing neighborhood, family, and the workplace as venues for meeting partners.
- The data show that nearly three fourths of couples formed online had no prior social connection.
- One result of the increasing importance of the Internet in meeting partners is that adults with Internet access at home are substantially more likely to have partners, even after controlling for other factors.



Funding & Citation Information

- **Principal Investigator:** Prof. Rosenfeld, Michael J.
- **Funding Agency:** Core funding from the US National Science Foundation, award # SES-0751977
- **Supplementary funding** from Stanford's Institute for Research in the Social Sciences
- **Supplementary funding** from the UPS endowment at Stanford University
- **Bibliographic Citation:** Rosenfeld, Michael J., and Reuben J. Thomas. 2010. *How Couples Meet and Stay Together, Waves I and II: Public version 2.04* [Computer file]. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Libraries, 2011-Jan-12.



Overall study design

- This is a study of how Americans meet their spouses and romantic partners.
- The sample is nationally representative of American adults. 4,002 adults responded to the survey, 3,009 of those had a spouse or main romantic partner.
- The study oversamples self-identified gay, lesbian, and bisexual adults
- Follow-up surveys will be implemented one and two years after the main survey, to study couple dissolution rates.
- Version 2.0 of the dataset includes the first follow-up survey



Study Questions are ...

- *Do traditional couples and nontraditional couples meet in the same way? What kinds of couples are more likely to have met online?*
- *Have the most recent marriage cohorts (especially the traditional heterosexual same-race married couples) met in the same way their parents and grandparents did?*
- *How do the couple dissolution rates of nontraditional couples compare to the couple dissolution rates of more traditional same-race heterosexual couples?*
- *How does the availability of civil union, domestic partnership or same-sex marriage rights affect couple stability for same-sex couples? This study will provide the first nationally representative data on the couple dissolution rates of same-sex couples.*



Sample Description & Response

- The survey was carried out by Knowledge Networks using KnowledgePanel ®
- The dataset contains variables that are derived from several sources.
 - The Main Survey Instrument,
 - Variables generated by the investigators, created after the Main Survey,
 - Demographic background variables from Knowledge Networks which pre-date the Main Survey.
- Respondents without a spouse or main romantic partner were dropped from the Main Survey.
 - Unpartnered respondents remain in the dataset, and demographic background variables are available for them.
- Sample cooperation rates:
 - Main survey = 71%.
 - Follow-up survey one year later = 84%.



KnowledgePanel Methodology

KnowledgePanel® the opportunity to be heard

A SURVEY FOR YOU

50,000 members
representing
America

Probability-based recruitment, representative of U.S. adult population

Includes:

- Households with **no Internet access** when recruited
 - 33% of US adults have no Internet access KN provides laptop computer, free monthly ISP
- **Cell phone only** households (through mail recruitment)
- **Spanish-language** households
- Extensive **profile data** maintained on member demographics, attitudes, opinions, behaviors, media usage, etc.
- Samples from the panel are assigned to client studies using e-mail invitations and a link to the online survey questionnaire



Key Characteristics of KnowledgePanel

Only **probability-based** web panel where:

- All surveys administered online
- Covers all age groups 18+, non-Internet adults, cell only adults
- Includes Spanish-dominant Hispanic households
- Probability structure allows for projectable population estimates
- Valid confidence intervals (margins of error) can be constructed

Lower costs because **study subjects are already recruited and profiled**

- KN conducts up to 15 annual profile surveys to aid in pre-identified sampling, prevalence estimations and secondary data analysis
- Existing profile data can be added to any client survey data with minimal impact on cost



Methodological Advantages

Low attrition rate facilitates longitudinal surveys

- Can follow the same respondents over time for repeated measure studies

Web mode superior to telephone and mail for some designs

- Use of online or embedded multimedia, administer complex willingness-to-pay questions, improve reliability of answers to sensitive topics, real-time links to other Websites, etc.

Can conduct **non-response follow-up (NRFU) bias tests**

- For study samples non-responders are identifiable and reachable
- Embed survey questions in panel surveys for which benchmarking data are available for comparison
- For panel recruitment, original contact information of non-responders and refusals is retained for follow-up for self-selection bias assessment by comparing on demographic, socio-economic, and other variables correlated with survey estimates



The American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Task Force On Online Panels:

*Researchers should **avoid nonprobability online panels when one of the research objectives is to accurately estimate population values.***

*There currently is no generally accepted theoretical basis from which to claim that survey results using samples from nonprobability online panels are projectable to the general population. Thus, **claims of “representativeness” should be avoided when using these sample sources.***

*From a total survey error perspective, the principal source of error in estimates from these types of sample sources is a combination of the **lack of Internet access in roughly one in three U.S. households and the self-selection bias inherent in the panel recruitment processes.***

(AAPOR Report on Online Panels, March 2010)

Citation: “AAPOR Report on Online Panels,” prepared by the AAPOR Online Task Force Report, March 2010. Available at www.aapor.org.



The Statistical Components of Design

Recruitment to the Panel

- The ABS frame
- The invitation

Profile

- Becoming active
- Weighting the panel

Retention

- Burden
- Tenure and retirement

Project Sampling

- Repeated samples
- Patented solution

Weighting

- Base weights
- Study weights



Using an ABS Sample Frame to Recruit a Probability-Based Online Panel

The Knowledge Networks Experience

RDD Recruitment Issues to Solve

2008:

Declining response rates in RDD samples

No cell phone only households recruited

Fewer young adults found

Fewer minorities found

Eroding coverage threatens a representative picture





Solution: Address-based Sample (ABS) Switch to Mail Recruitment

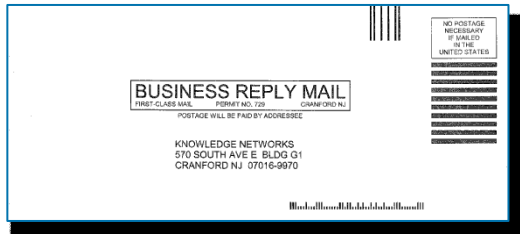
U.S. Postal Service Delivery Sequence File (DSF)

- ~97% coverage of physical addresses
- Frequently updated including status of addresses, such as, seasonal homes, vacant houses, etc.
- Can be matched to available telephone numbers
- Can be geo-coded
- Can attach demographic data (actual and modeled) from a variety of sources (e.g., block-level Census data) for purposes of
 - Non-response analyses
 - Targeted demographic mailings

Three Response Modes for Recruitment

Respond by:

1. Mail



2. Online



3. Telephone



Toll-free
number

Non-Responders:



Outbound Telephone Recruitment



Mailing Strategy (12-week time frame)

Recruitment packet with cash incentive

After 1 week: *Reminder postcard to all*

After 3 weeks: *Letter to non-responders*

After 5 weeks: *Outbound recruitment calls to non-responders with a telephone match*

7-week tail of response/returns/outbound recruit

Race/Ethnicity Results for Recruited Adults Compared to Census (*unweighted*)

2010 ABS Recruited Sample Jan-Mar		CPS
Race/ethnicity	Overall	Dec. 2009
White	63%	68%
African American	14%	11%
Hispanic	18%	14%
Others and 2+ race	5%	6%

Note: White, African American and Other/2+ race are all non-Hispanic

Cell Phone Only Adults: Recruits Compared to Census (*unweighted*)

2010 ABS Sample Recruits Jan-Mar		NHIS
	Overall	Dec. 2009
Cell phone only	20%	25%
Landline, other	80%	75%





Tracking Participants: Followup survey one



Overview of Followup One

- Sample was respondents who were partnered at the time the baseline survey was conducted.
- Prior to fielding, baseline data for the 3,009 partnered respondents was examined
- Those with deceased partners (n=26) and those claiming multiple simultaneous partners (n=4) were dropped.
- The remaining sample totaled 2,979 baseline respondents
 - 2,540 were active Knowledge Networks panelists
 - 439 were no longer active.



Survey Design for Followup One

- The design called for inclusion of all baseline respondents in the followup, regardless of their active/non-active panel status.
- However, 110 of the non-active cases had stipulated that they not be contacted for any future survey efforts after they left the panel.
- Thus, the 2,540 active panelists and the 329 non-active panelists who were willing to be contacted for additional surveys were ultimately contacted for the followup survey, for a total of 2,869 cases.



Sample size & cooperation rate

- The followup survey was fielded between March 12 and June 8, 2010.
- The initial and resulting sample size and the survey completion rate are ...
 - Number sampled = 2,869
 - Number completed = 2,520
 - Cooperation Rate = 87.8%



When couples first met

Heterosexual partners

Total = 1,996 (86%)

Pre 1995 = 51%

1995-2004 = 32%

Since 2005 = 17%

Same-sex partners

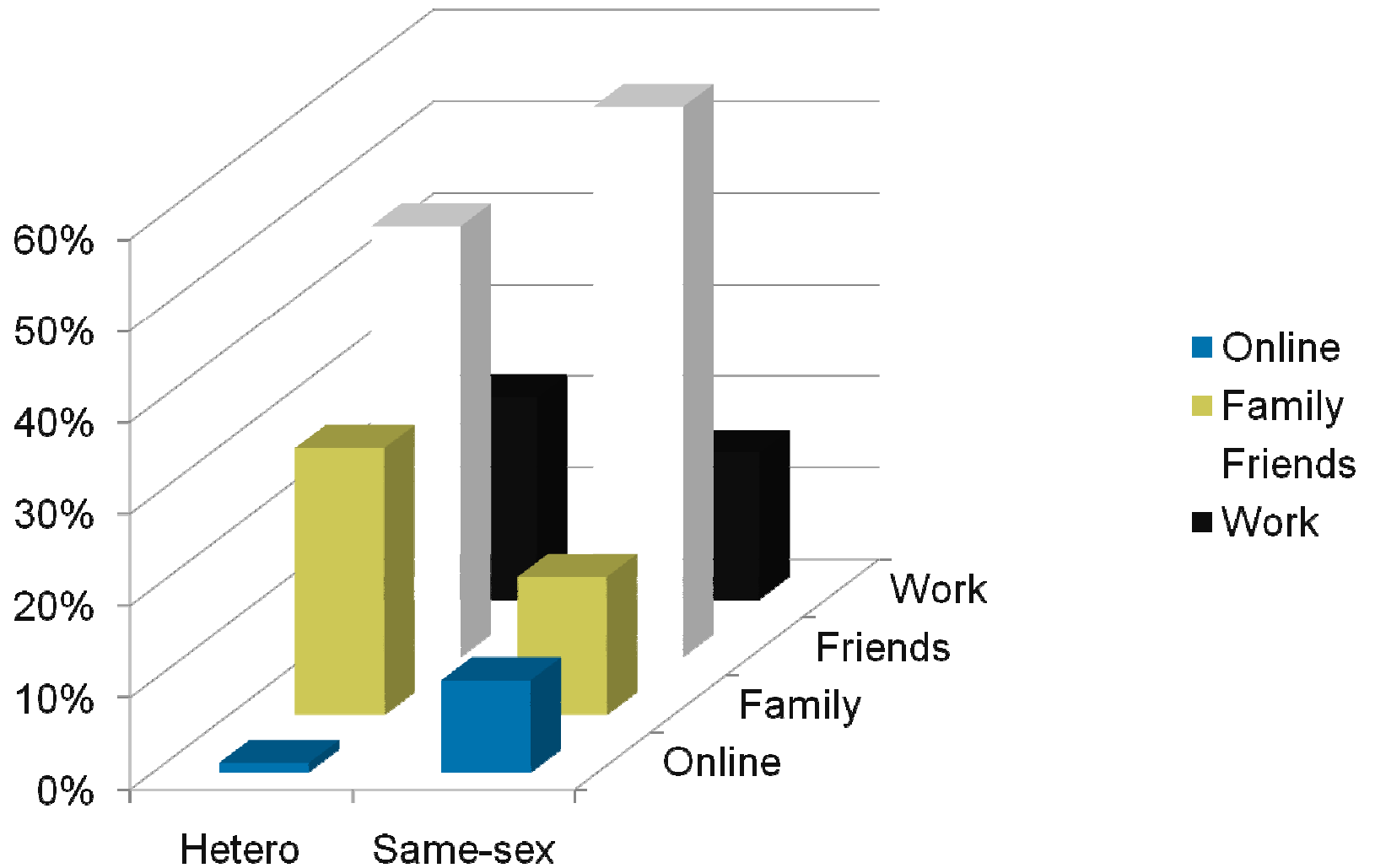
Total = 313 (14%) [Oversample]

Pre 1995 = 33%

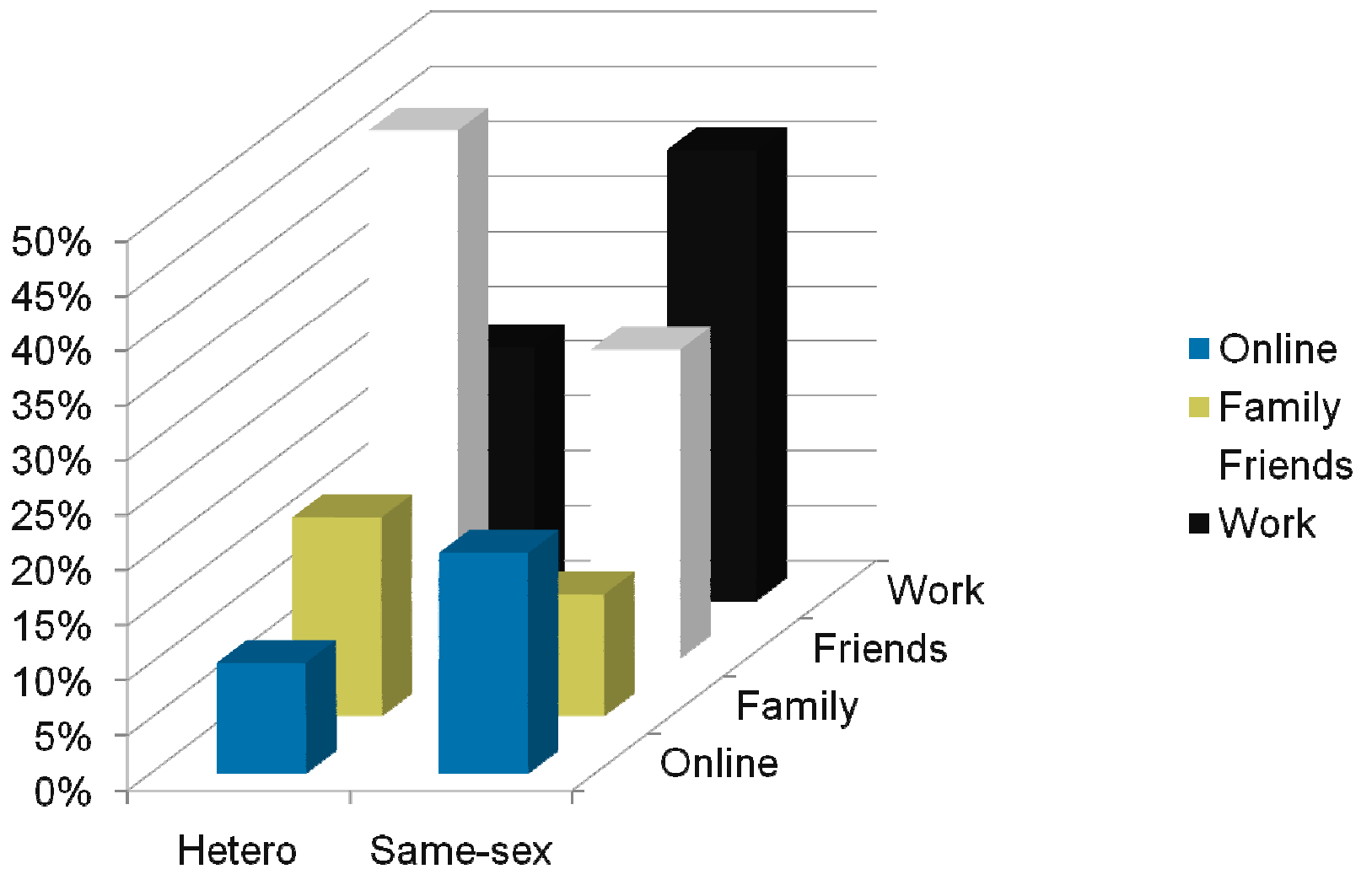
1995-2004 = 42%

Since 2005 = 25%

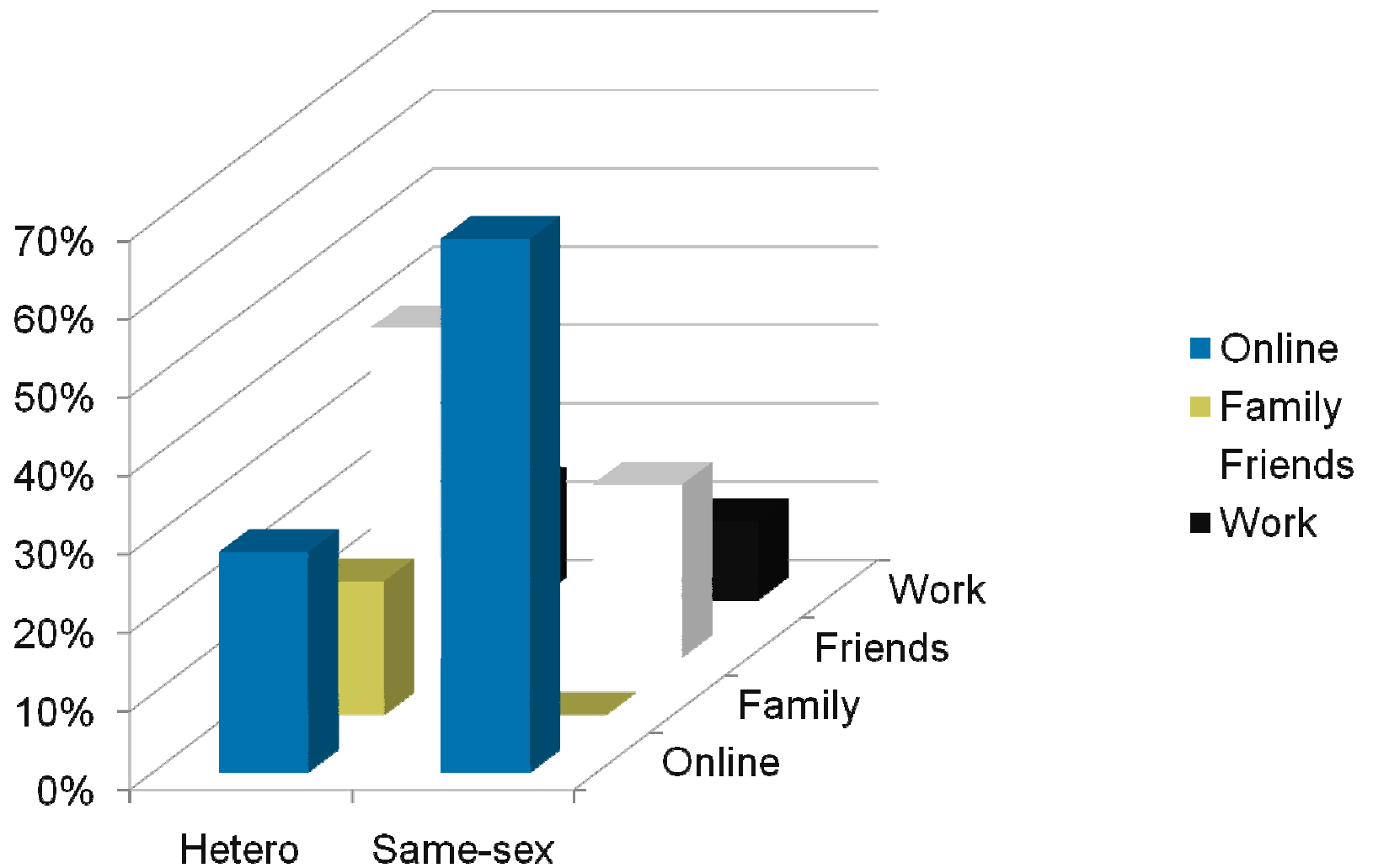
Styles-of-meeting pre-1995



Styles-of-meeting 1995 to 2005



Styles-of-meeting since 2005





Mixed Mode Methodology for tracking

- Various methods were used to maximize the number of followup respondents.
 - ✓ Customized e-mail reminders were sent to non-respondents at regular intervals throughout the field period.
 - ✓ Cases still not responding after multiple e-mail prompts were called by professional interviewers.
 - ✓ If possible, the interviewers would conduct the followup survey over the telephone.
 - ✓ If the respondent was not able to complete the survey at the time of the call, they were asked to complete the survey via the Internet and provided again with all necessary information to allow them to do so.



Mode of Response to the Follow-up

Of the 2,520 respondents who completed the survey,

- ❖ 2,371 (94.1%) were active KN panel members at the time of survey assignment,
- ❖ 149 (5.9%) were withdrawn/non-active.
- ❖ 2,318 respondents (or 92.0%) completed the followup survey online
- ❖ 202 (8.0%) completing by phone.



Links and Downloads available ...

[User's Guide with basic information about data sources and variable layout, version 2.0, Oct 23, 2010](#)

[Codebook with frequencies Wave I and II, data version 2.04, date Jan 12, 2011](#)

[Main Survey Instrument Wave I updated Feb 4 2011 \(pdf\)](#)

[Questions from Knowledge Network's prior demographic surveys Date Oct 16, 2009](#)

[Notes on the coding of open text Q24, "How did you meet.." Date Sept 26, 2009 \(pdf\)](#)

[Notes on Knowledge Networks Survey Methodology, with references Date Sept 26, 2009 \(pdf\)](#)

[Selections from the Knowledge Networks Field Report, Main Survey Date September 26, 2009 \(pdf\)](#)

[Notes on the Weights for data ver 2.0 Date October 23, 2010 \(pdf\)](#)

[Wave II \(first follow-up\) survey instrument Date Oct 24, 2010](#)



News coverage ...

- * USA Today, Feb 11, 2010 [story by Sharon Jayson on friends, the Web, and How Couples Meet](#)
- * Stanford Report, Feb 11, 2010 [a feature story on How Couples Meet, with video](#)
- * San Jose Mercury News, Feb 14, 2010 Growing Number of Singles Find Their Valentines Online (link currently unavailable).
- * NPR, "[Computers are Becoming Cupid's Best Weapon](#)," story by Jennifer Ludden August 16, 2010
- * Reuters Newswire [Being Online can Boost Your Chances of Being In Love](#) , August 16, 2010
- * Radio Nacional de Colombia [story](#) , August 16, 2010
- * The Economist story "[Love at First Byte](#)", December 29, 2010.
- * The Discovery Chanel story "[Does Online Dating Work?](#)", February 11, 2011
- * The ABC News version of the Discovery Chanel Story [Here](#), from February 12, 2011



Thank you!

For information please contact ...

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