

# Consumer Perceptions of Product Safety –

## *A Canadian Perspective*

*Presented to ICPHSO*

*March, 2004*

# *Presentation Outline*

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- Background
- Consumer Survey - Objectives
- Survey Methodology
- Perceptions of Product Safety in Canada

# *Background*

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- In Canada, products that pose a risk to health or safety can be prohibited or restricted under the *Hazardous Products Act* administered by Health Canada.
- Consumer Product Safety mandate is broader than enforcement and involves prevention of injury associated with unregulated products through voluntary industry standards and information/education of industry and public.

# *Background*

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- In 2003, survey undertaken for Health Canada by Ipsos-Reid (public opinion research firm) to explore the general awareness and understanding that Canadians have of the safety of consumer products:
  - qualitative focus groups (limited numbers to identify trends in perceptions)
  - quantitative national random telephone survey

# *Methodology*

- National random telephone survey among 1,582 adults between the ages of 18 and 70 and parents of children aged 10 or under (included 749 parents of children aged 10 and under and 833 adults between 18 and 70 years of age)
- Results weighted by age, gender and region to accurately reflect the Canadian population according to the 2002 Census
- A sample of 1,582 has an associated margin of error of  $\pm 2.4$  percentage points, nineteen times out of twenty.

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*Consumer Perceptions  
of Product Safety  
in Canada*

# Confidence in Product Safety

## **Most Confident in Product Safety:**

- lower level of education and those within middle income range
- those who do not have any personal experience with an unsafe product
- those who believe that products on the market have been tested

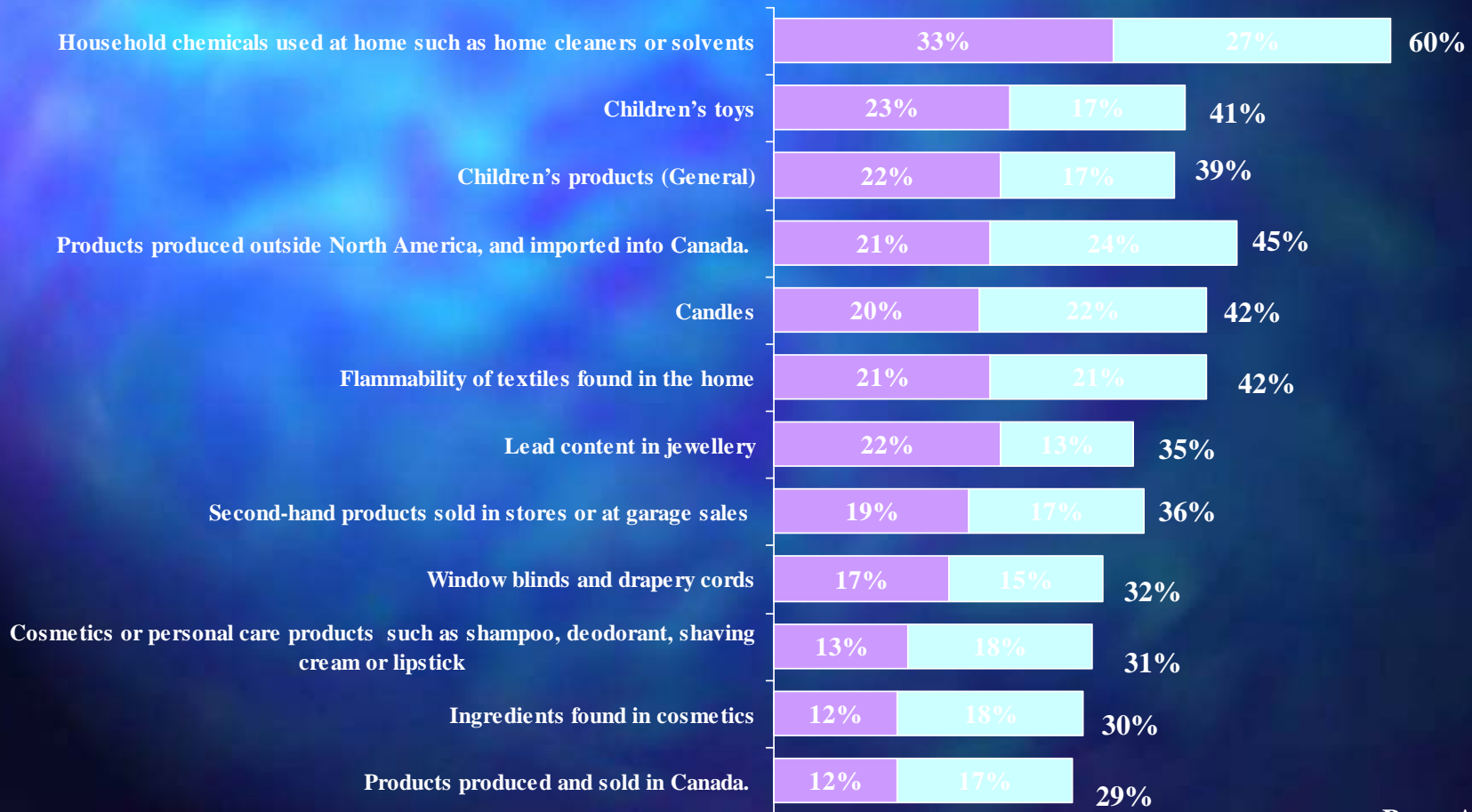
## **Less Confident in Product Safety:**

- those with a higher level of academic attainment and household income
- those less likely to rely on assumptions about product testing, the responsibility of manufacturers,

# Adults – Ranked Concern

*Using a scale from '0' to '10', where '0' means you are not concerned at all and '10' means you are very concerned, please tell me how concerned you are about the safety of the following.*

■ Very Concerned 9,10 ■ Somewhat Concerned 7,8



# Safety of Children's Products

## Concerned

- Parents
- Women
- Parents of younger children
- Respondents between ages of 35 and 54
- Mid-income (\$25 – 59K)

## Less concerned

Adults

Men

Younger respondents between ages of 18 and 34 and those aged 55 or more

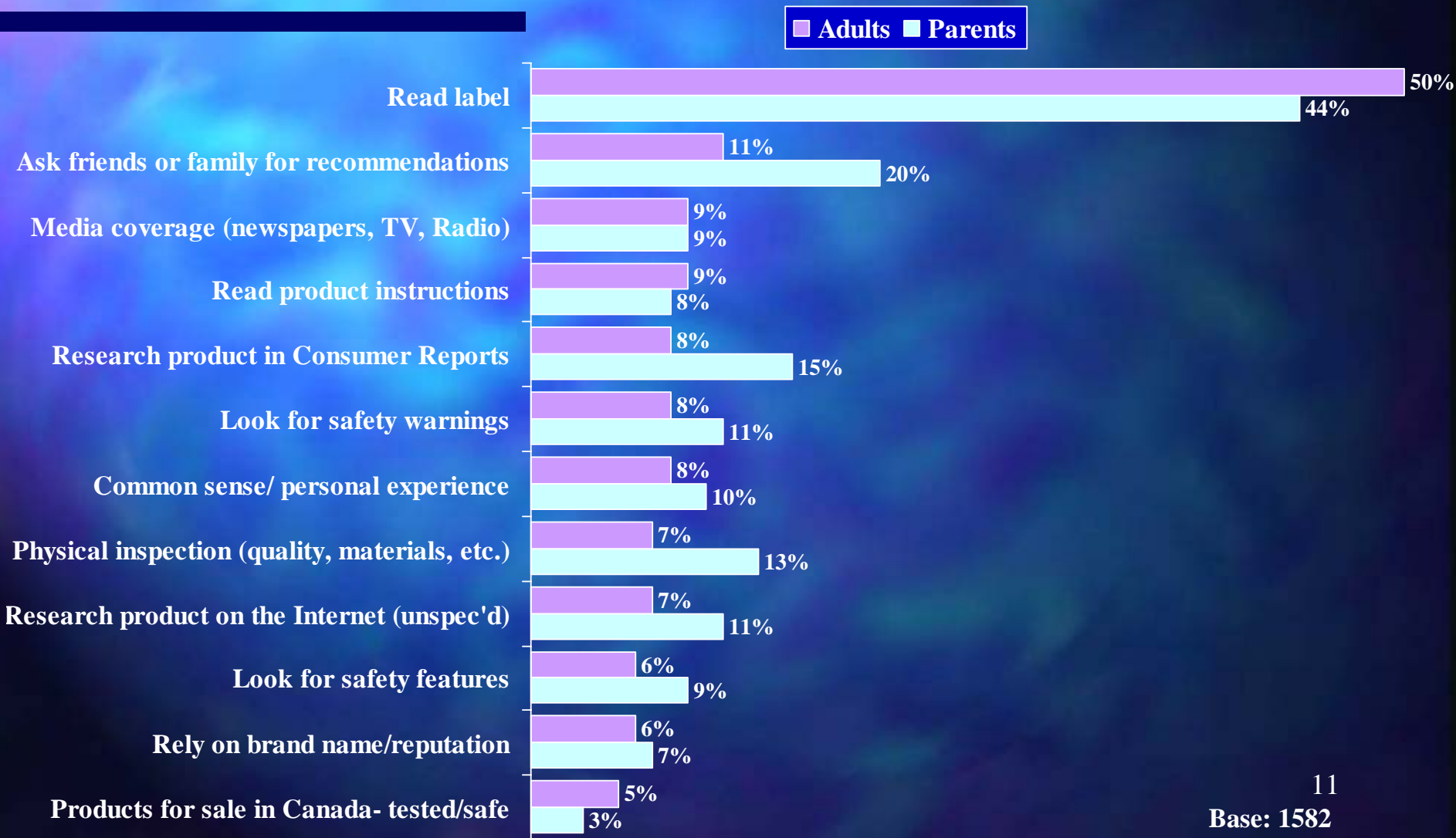
Higher income (\$60K +)

# Check the Safety of Products Before or After Purchase

- More likely to occur at the pre-purchase stage
- 79% say that they always/sometimes check the safety of all the products they buy before purchase
- 82% say that they always/sometimes check the safety of some of the products they buy before purchase
- 68% say that they always/sometimes check the safety of all the products they buy after purchase
- 72% say that they always/sometimes check the safety of some of the products they buy after purchase
- Parents, respondents aged 35 and older, women and those with higher level of educ are more likely to check safety of products prior to purchase

# Determining Product Safety

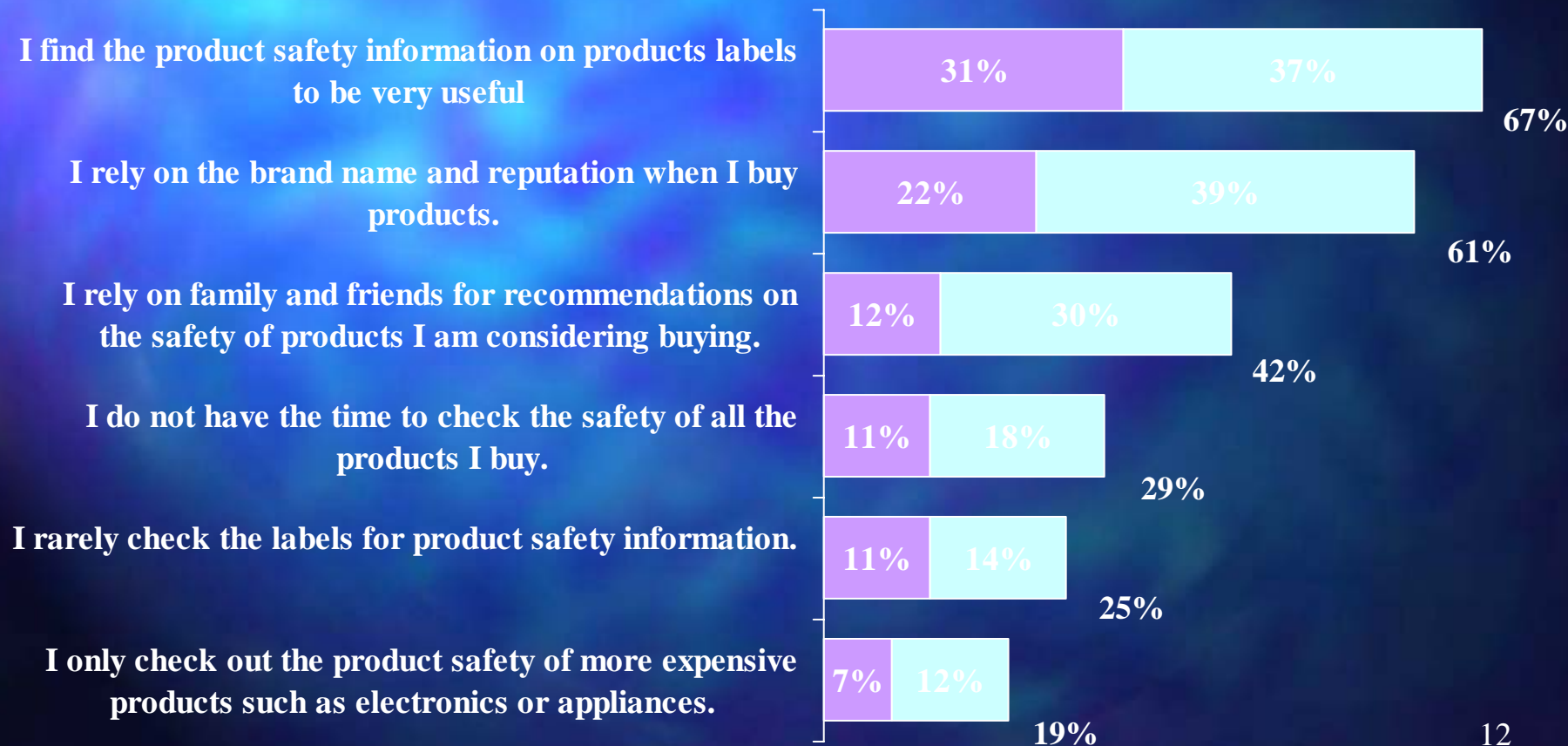
*Now thinking about product safety, how do you as a consumer determine whether or not, a product that you are thinking of buying is safe or not?*



# Product Safety Behaviour

*On a scale from '0' to '10', where '0' means you completely disagree and '10' means you completely agree, do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?*

■ Strongly Agree (9,10) ■ Somewhat Agree (7,8)



# Testing & Regulation of Products

*On a scale from '0' to '10', where '0' means you completely disagree and '10' means you completely agree, do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?*

■ Strongly Agree (9,10) ■ Somewhat Agree (7,8)

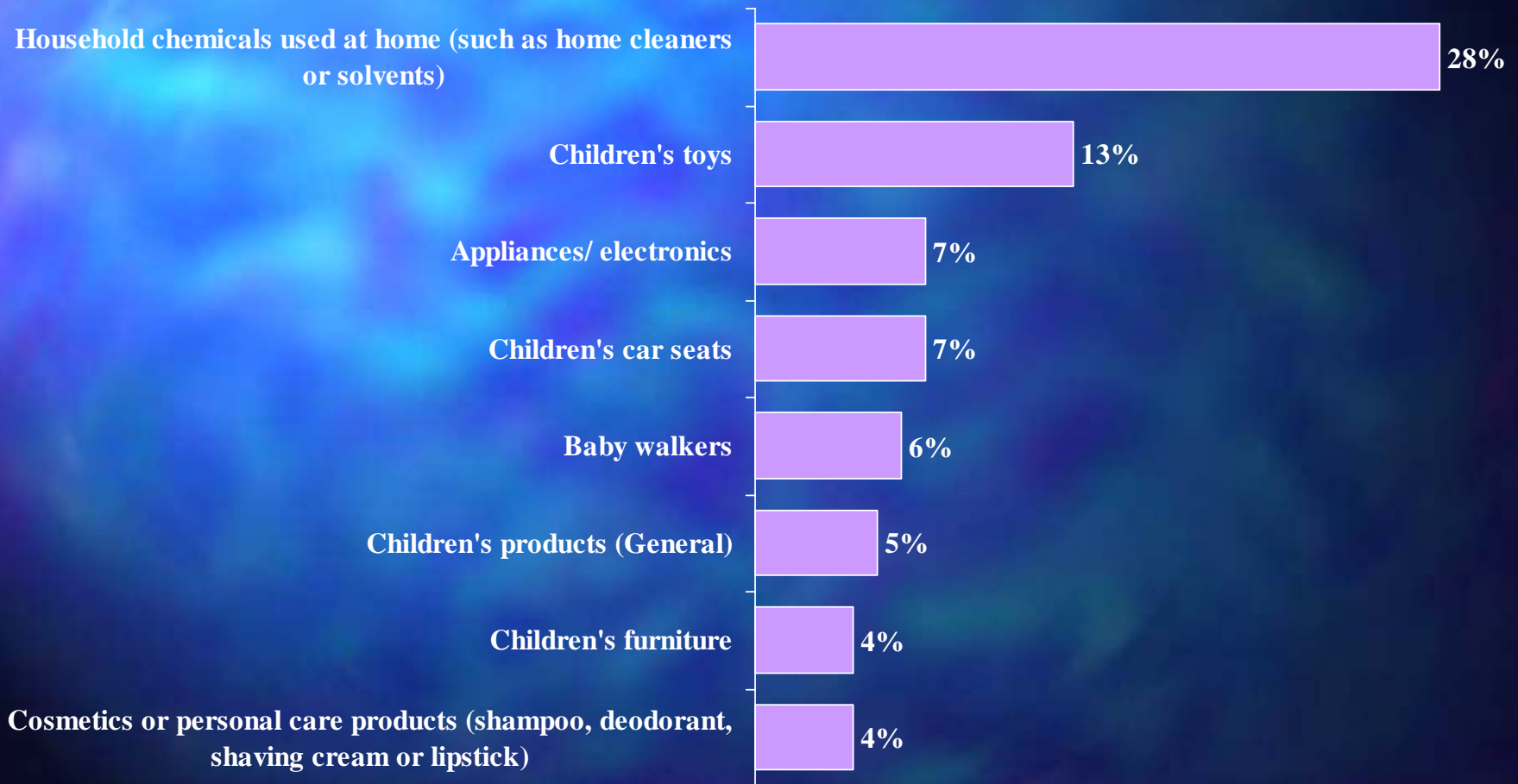


# Experience with Unsafe Product

- >20% of adults have had experience with unsafe products
- Type of product: Household cleaners, followed by children's toys, appliance/electronics and children's car seats, walkers, products in general and children's furniture and cosmetics and personal care products
- Action most commonly taken: Threw product away, followed by contacting manufacturer or returning product to retailer
- 85% of adults would report an unsafe product
- Retailers, followed by manufacturers are the two main places respondents would report an unsafe item

# Type of Unsafe Product

*What type of product was it?*



# Reporting An Unsafe Product

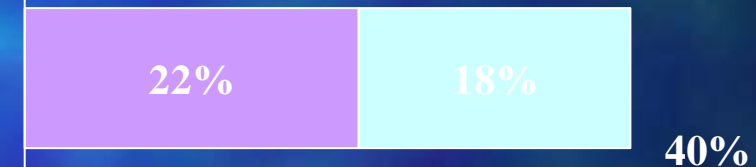
*On a scale from '0' to '10', where '0' means you completely disagree and '10' means you completely agree, do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?*

■ Strongly Agree (9,10) ■ Somewhat Agree (7,8)

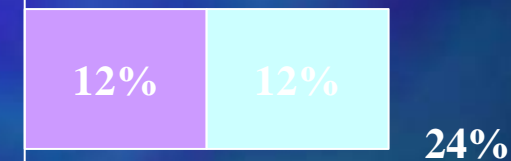
**I would only report an unsafe product if I thought it was a risk to others**



**I don't know where to report an unsafe product.**



**I wouldn't report an unsafe product to anyone; I would just return it to the retailer.**



**I don't think that I would get anywhere if I reported an unsafe product.**

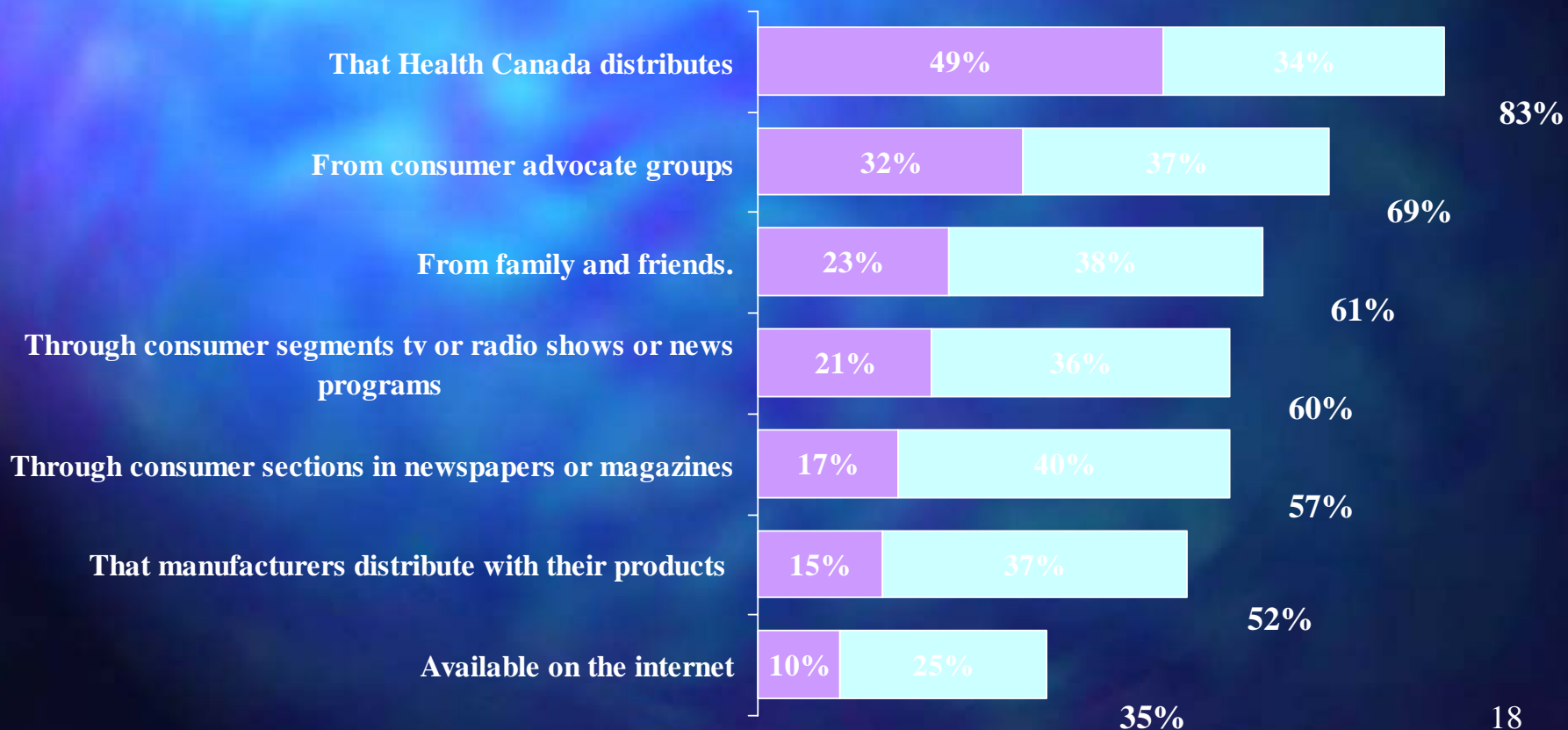


# Perceptions of Product Safety Information

- Respondents split as to whether they have enough information on product safety
- Women and those with a lower level of annual household income are more likely to say they don't have enough
- Overall, respondents are interested in information that directly pertains to products they buy and use for their children. They are less interested in more generalized information on general safety practices and product safety

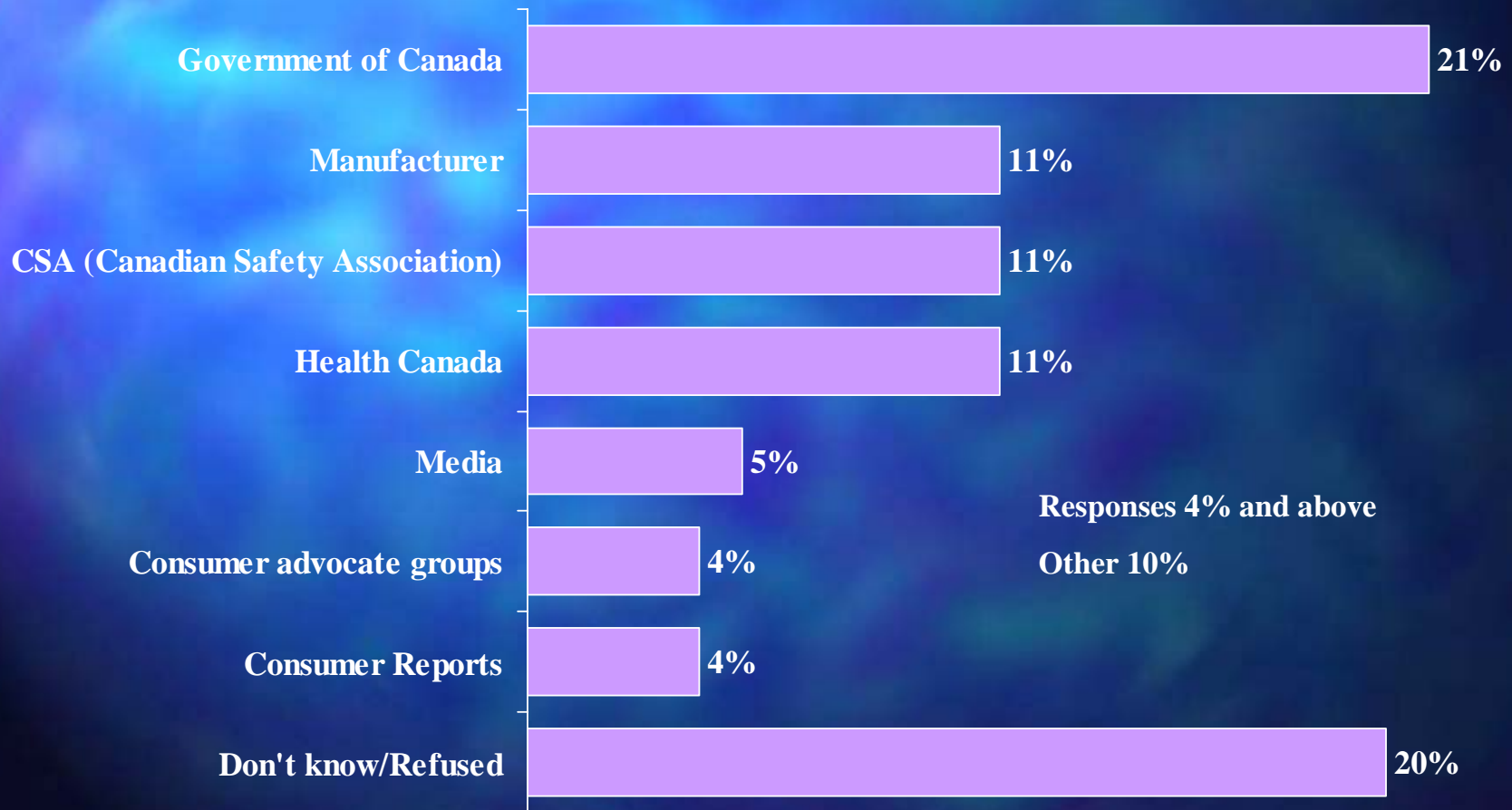
# Product Safety – Trusted Sources of Information

■ Very Trustworthy (9,10) ■ Somewhat Trustworthy (7,8)

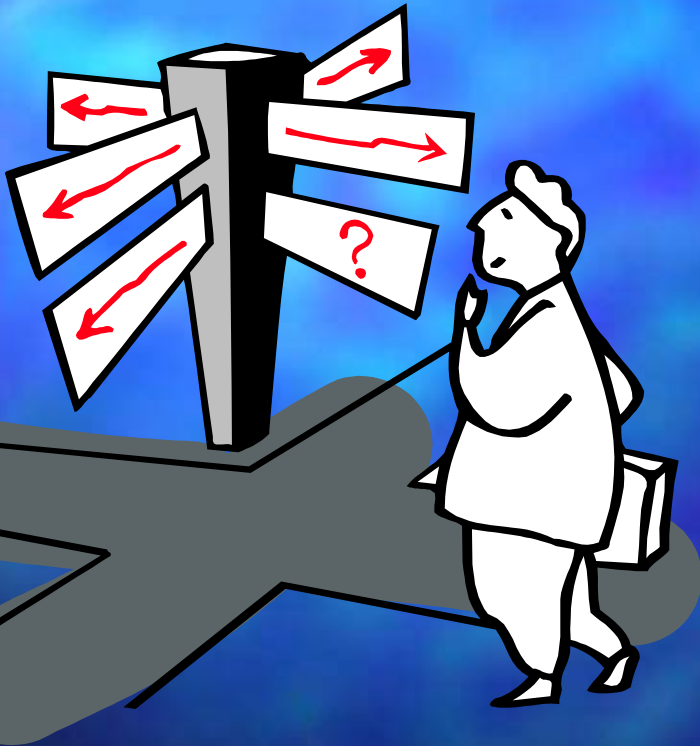


# Public Warnings/Advisories on Product Safety

*What organization do you think is most responsible for providing the public with warnings, advisories or tips on product safety*



# Thank you....



Looking for more information ?

Director

Consumer Product Safety

Health Canada

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