

Distracted Driving: The Role of Survey Research

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Survey Research

 Approach

 Rationale

 Limitations

 Recent survey findings

Approach

- Questionnaire-based public opinion surveys
- Random sample of drivers in the population
- Valid, well-established, and efficient technique



Rationale

- To assess public opinions and/or perceptions of an issue
- How concerned they are
- How serious a problem it is
- Obtain estimates of prevalence
- What should be done about it



Limitations

- **Non-respondent bias**
- **Social desirability**
- **Problems of recall**
- **Over- or under-estimation**
- **Depends on question**

Recent Findings

- Recent telephone surveys in Canada and the United States
- NHTSA 2003
- Road Safety Monitor 2001 - 2005



Self-reported Distracting Behaviours

	<u>Trips per week</u>
➤ 81% Talk with passengers	• 2.38 billion
➤ 66% Change radio/CD	• 1.92 billion
➤ 49% Eat or drink	• 1.25 billion
➤ 26% Make/take calls	• 792 million
➤ 24% Deal with kids	• 776 million
➤ 12% Read map	• 414 million
➤ 8% Personal grooming	• 349 million

Crash Involvement

■ 26% in crash past 5 years



■ 3.5% attributed crash to distraction

- 23% looking for something outside
- 19% dealing with kids/passengers
- 14% looking for something inside
- 0.1% using cell phone

Road Safety Monitor

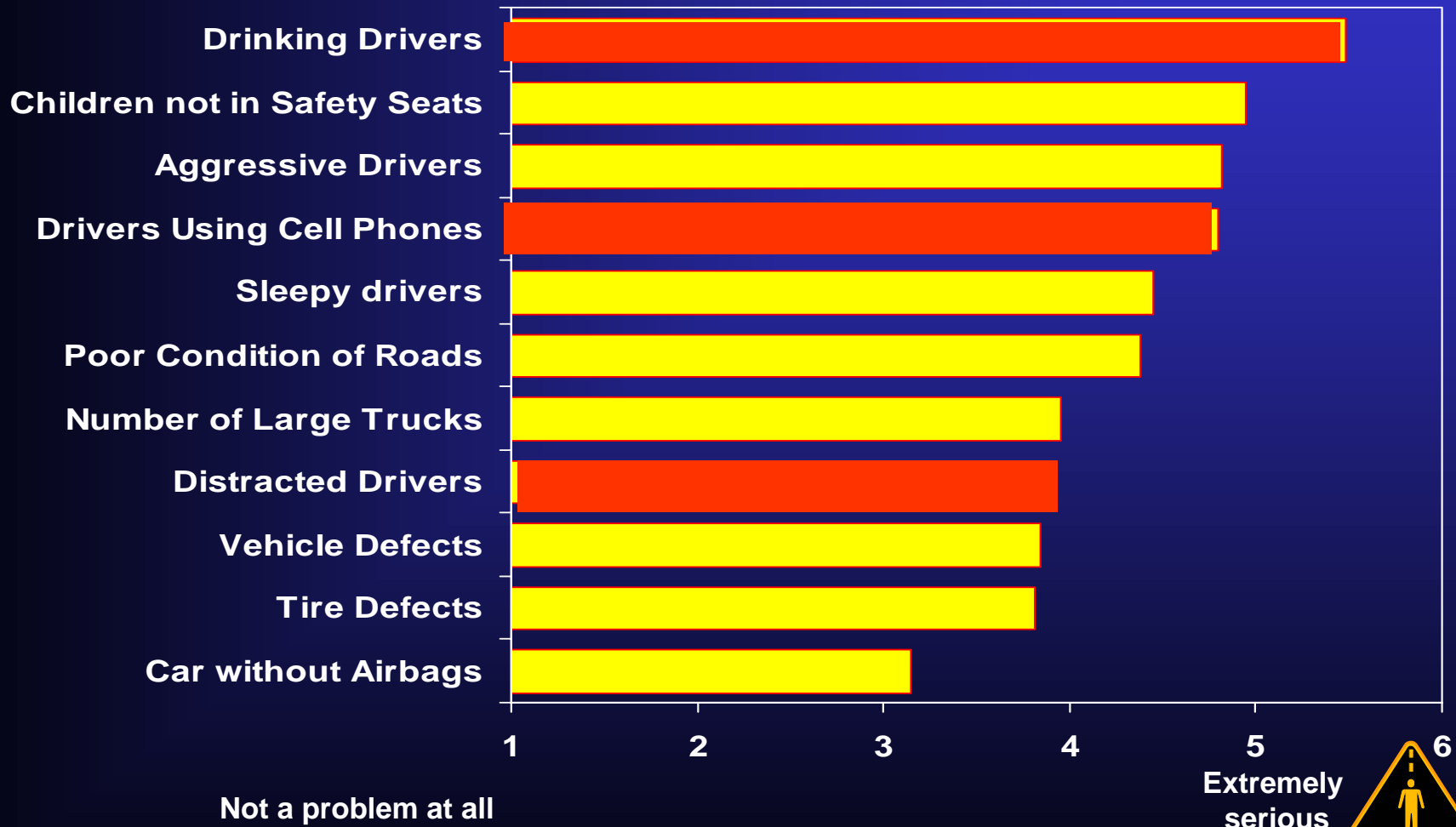
- Telephone interviews with 1200 drivers in Canada
- Variety of road safety issues
- 2001 - 2005



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How Serious a Problem?



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Cell Phone Use



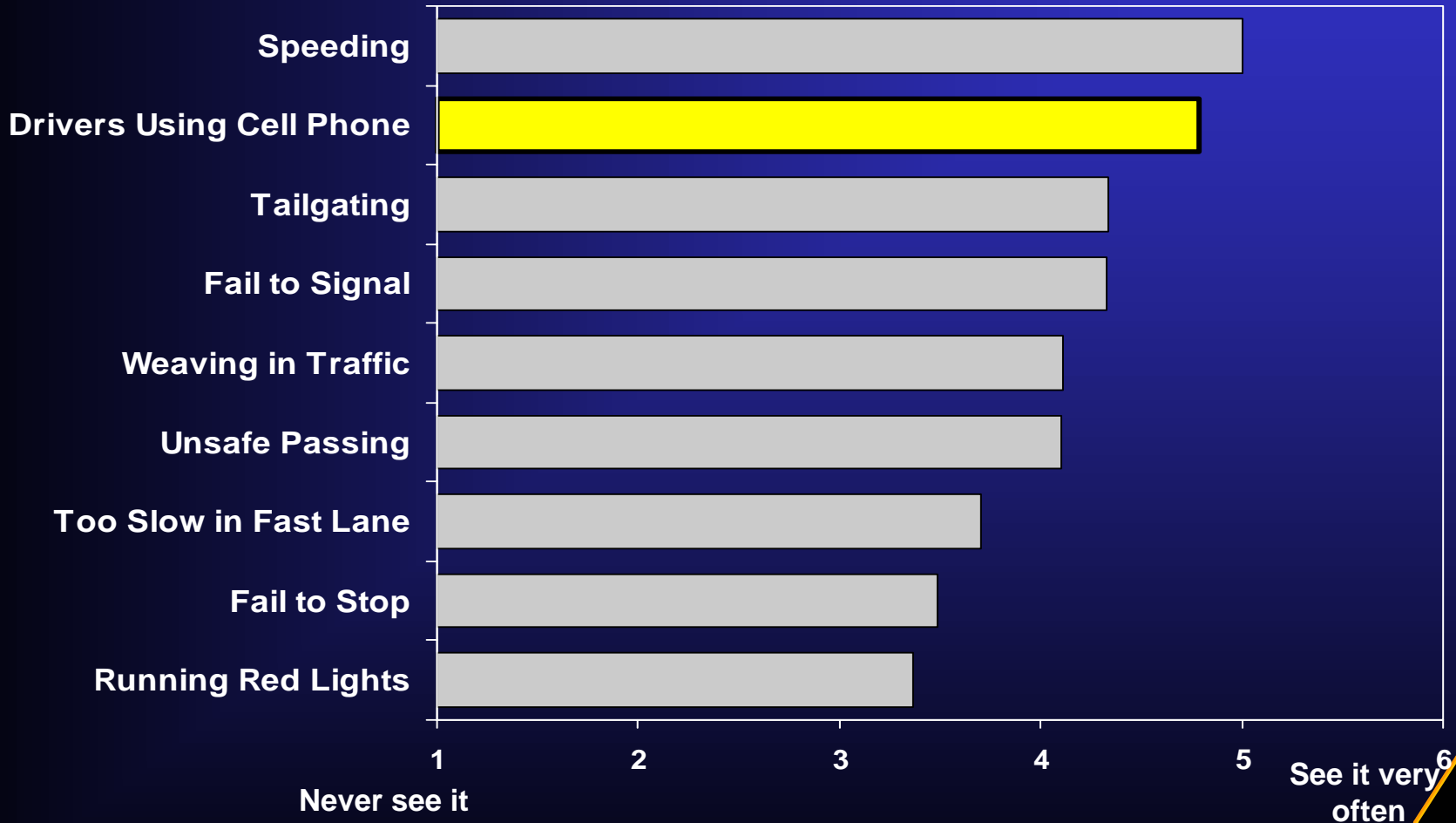
2/3 of Canadians believe cell phone use while driving is a “serious” or “extremely” serious problem



Only 40% rate distracted driving as “serious” or “extremely serious”



Perceived Frequency

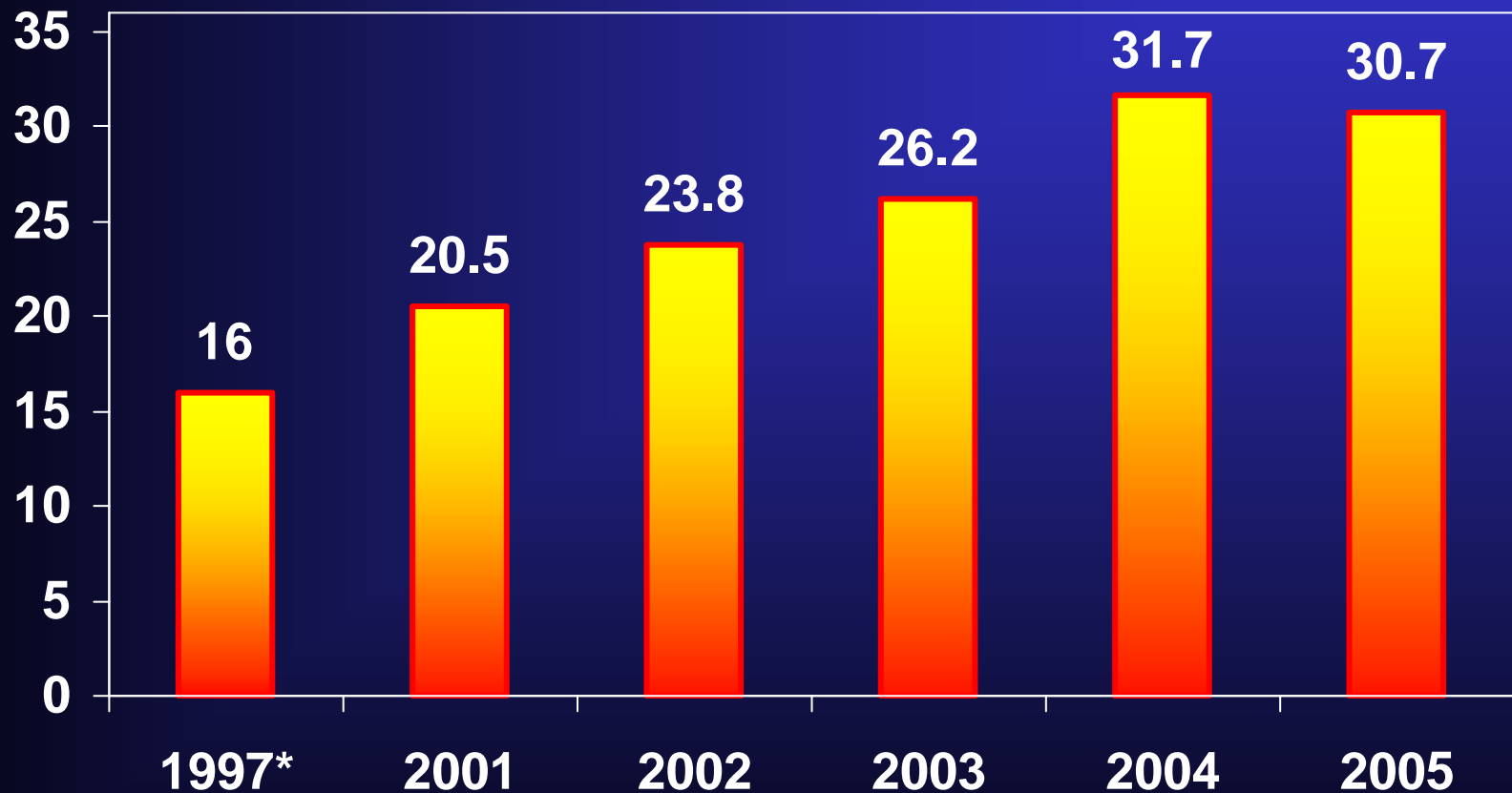


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Road Safety Monitor: Percent of Drivers who use Cell Phones



* Transport Canada

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Research Findings

Road Safety Monitor

➤ Characteristics of drivers who report using cell phone while driving:

- Male
- Single
- Urban dwellers
- Higher income
- Drive more/drive for work
- More tickets
- More likely to drive after drinking



It's a Matter of Perception...

- ❖ Concern about distracted driving focused on cell phones
- ❖ Drivers engage in many distracting behaviours but may not view them as risky
- ❖ Most don't attribute their crashes to distraction

Conclusions

- ✓ Survey research valuable tool that contributes to our understanding of an issue
- ✓ Limitations of survey research must be acknowledged
- ✓ Public opinion surveys can tell us things that other methods can't
- ✓ Assess awareness, concern, frequency of distracted behaviour, and support for action
- ✓ Information combined with that from other methods to guide research, policy, and action

