Exploring the Characteristics of Partial Interviews in the Consumer Expenditure Survey

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Outline

- Brief overview of the CE
- Response Rates and Partial Interviews
- Research Questions
- Findings

Consumer Expenditure Survey

- Collects spending data on the U.S. Population
- Sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, collected by the Census Bureau
- Survey participants report dollar amounts for all non-investment purchases. Business expenses and reimbursements are excluded.
- Provide expenditure weights for the U.S. Consumer Price Index (CPI)
- Quarterly Interview and Diary Survey

Data

- 2017 CE Quarterly Interview (CEQ)
  - Personal interview
  - Rotating panel, collected quarterly, each household interviewed 4 times.
  - 3-month recall
  - Designed to collect larger, recurring expenses that are easy to recall

Response Rates and Partials

- In CE, interviews are counted as complete if they cover all expenditure sections (through section 20).
- "Sufficient Partials" are interviews that complete everything, but the income, assets, and liability questions (section 21 and 22).
- "Insufficient Partials" are classified as Type A non-interviews and are indistinguishable based on our final interview classification codes.

2017 CEQ	n	Rate (% eligible)
Eligible	**40,193**	**100**
Complete Interviews	**24,479**	**60.9**
Type A Non-interview	**15,714**	**39.1**
Insufficient Partials	??	??

Research Questions

- Who are those that drop out?
- Can they help provide insight on other non-responders?
- Can their break-off point inform us about survey design?
- Could their data somehow be used in our processing?

Defining a Partial: Data

- Audit trail data: paradata created during a Blaise programmed Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) instrument that records a detailed history of the sequence, timing, and flow of an interview
  - Summarized Audit Trail timing data in survey files
  - Detailed, accessible audit trail tables (see Brandon Kopp's poster in Poster Session 3 on Saturday)

Defining a Partial

- Type A (Noninterview) cases with time > 0 for expenditure sections
- Eliminate cases where cumulative expenditure time < 65 seconds or where demographic questions were never asked.

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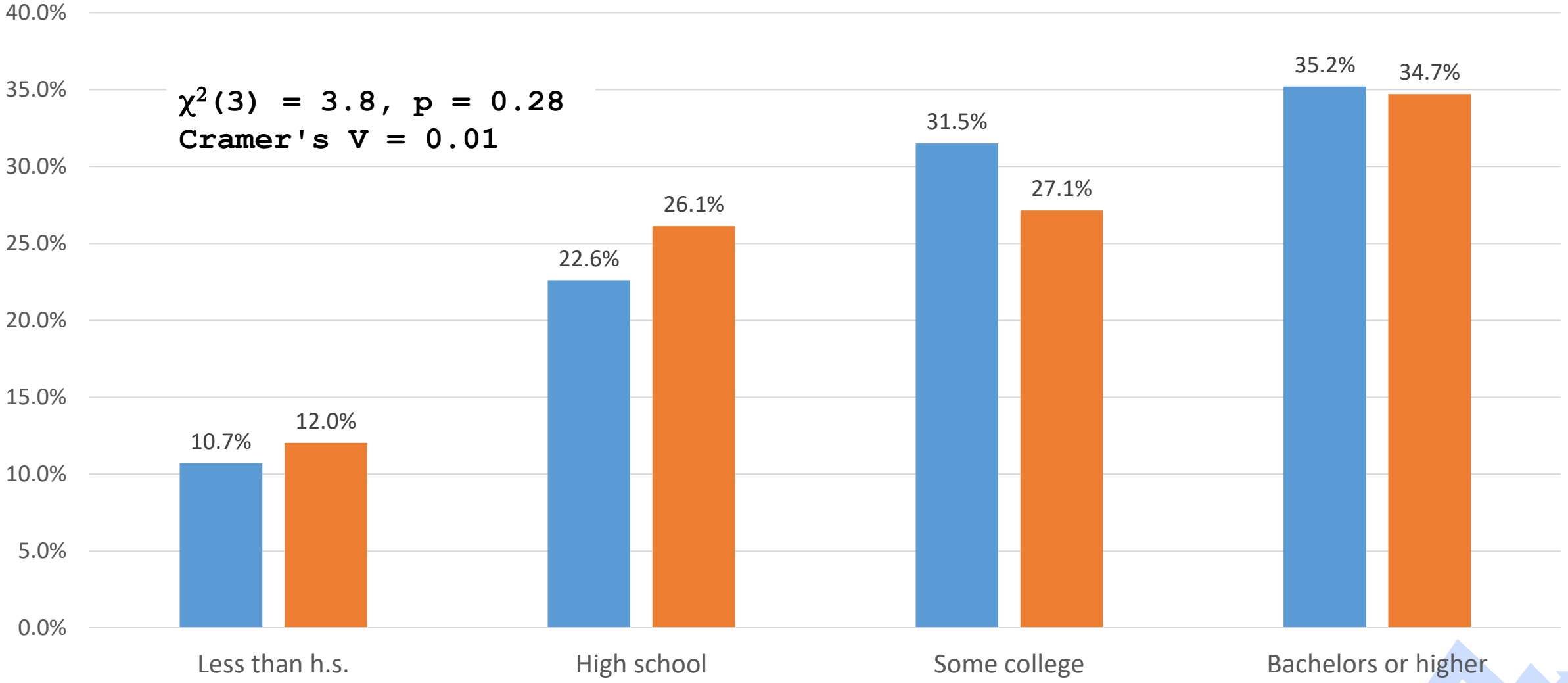
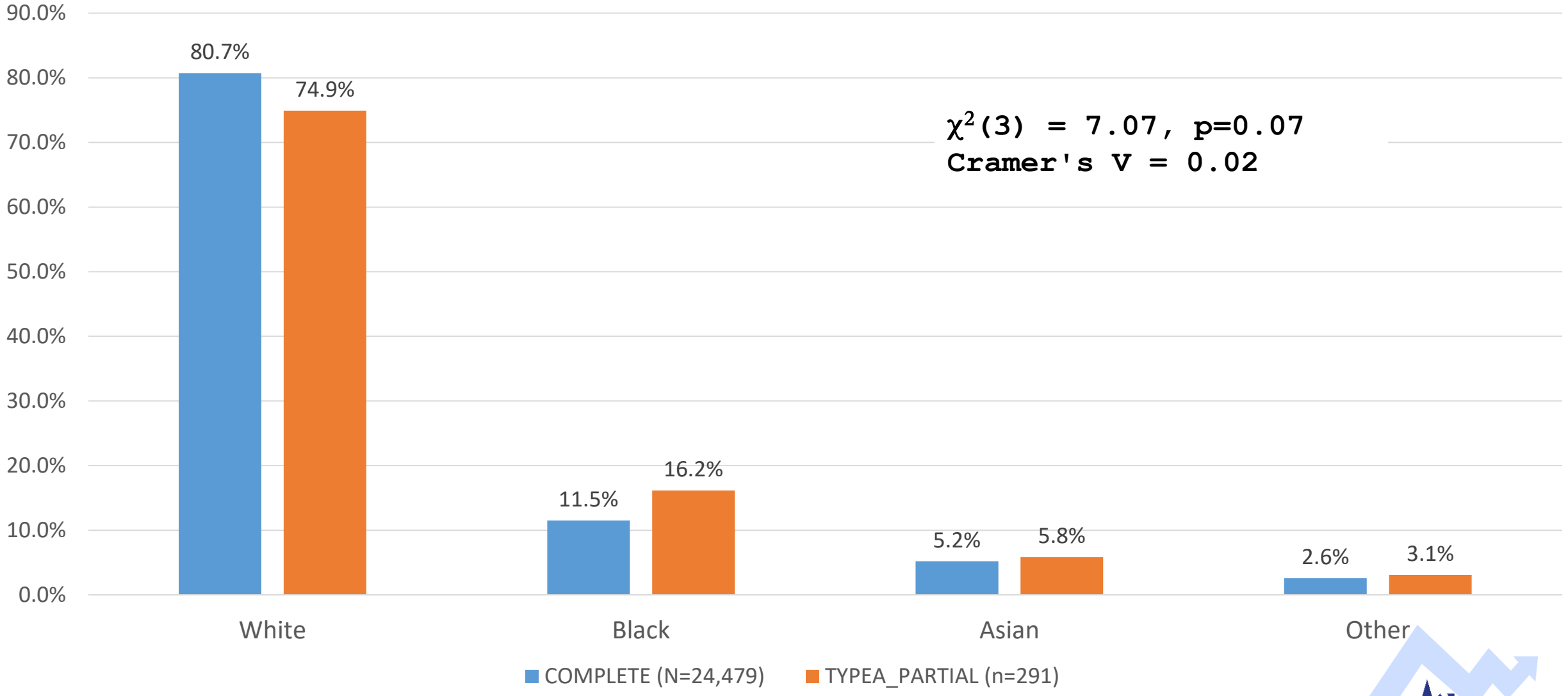
Type A Non-interview	**15,714**	**39.1**
Insufficient Partials	294	0.7

Who are these partials?

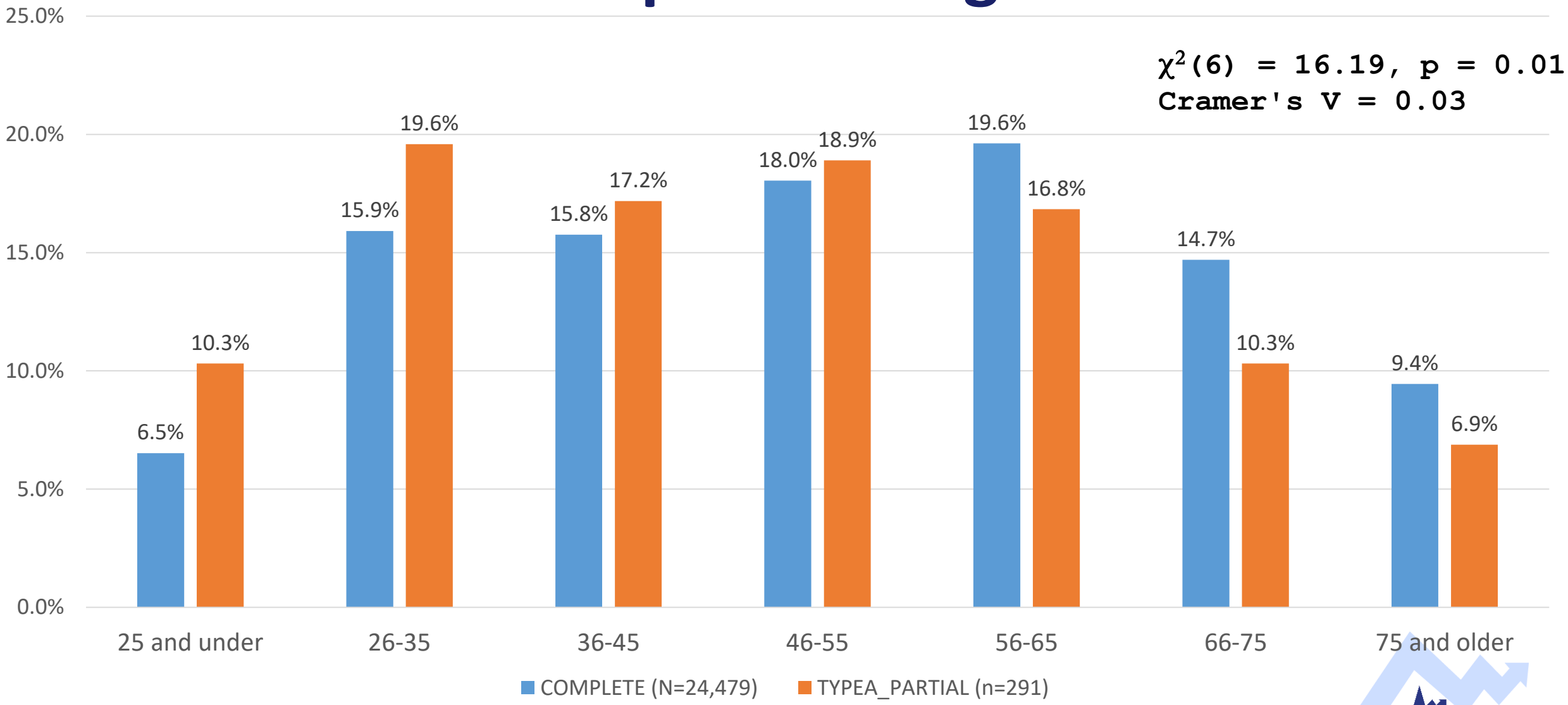
Respondent Education Level



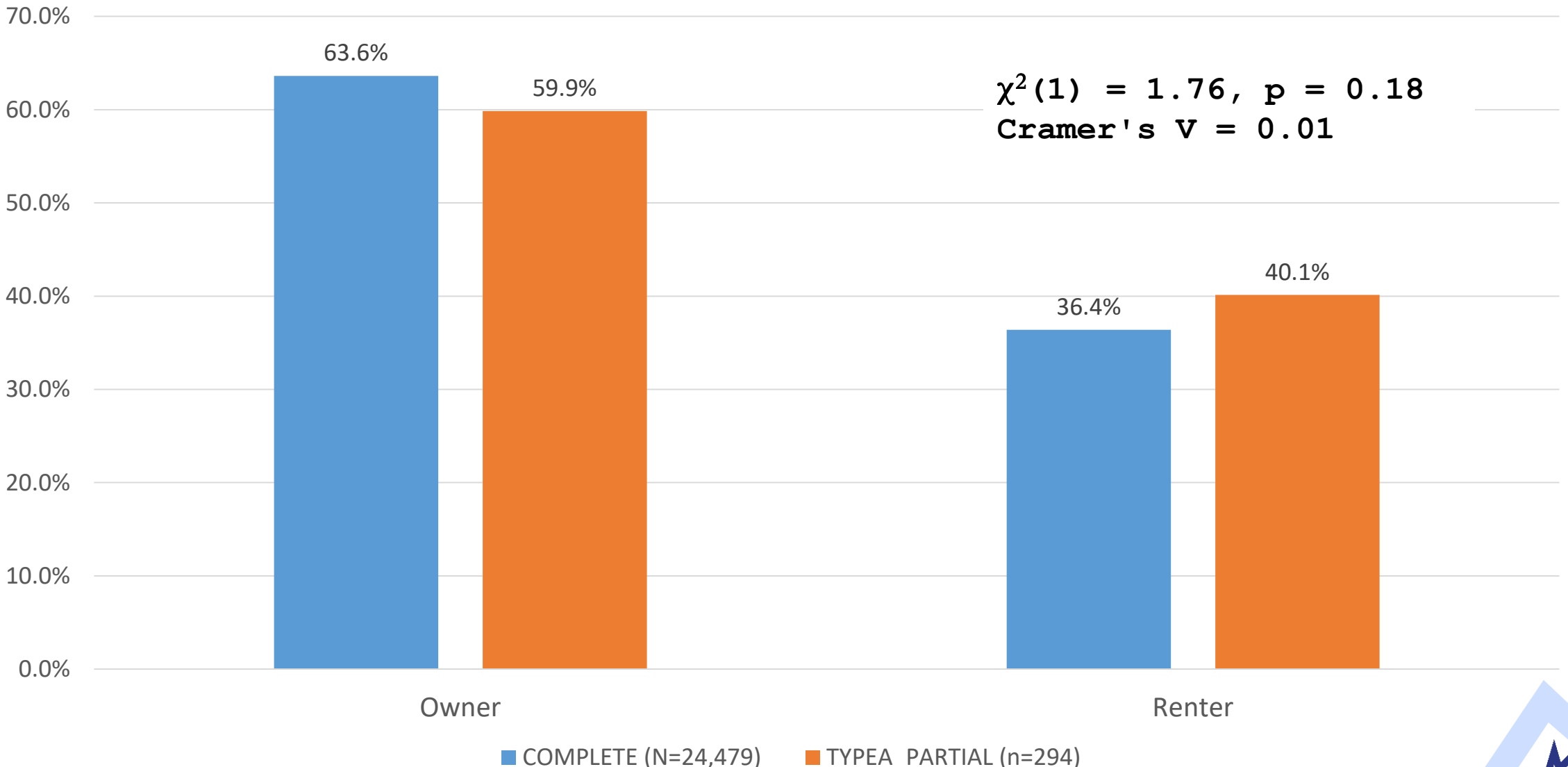
Respondent Race



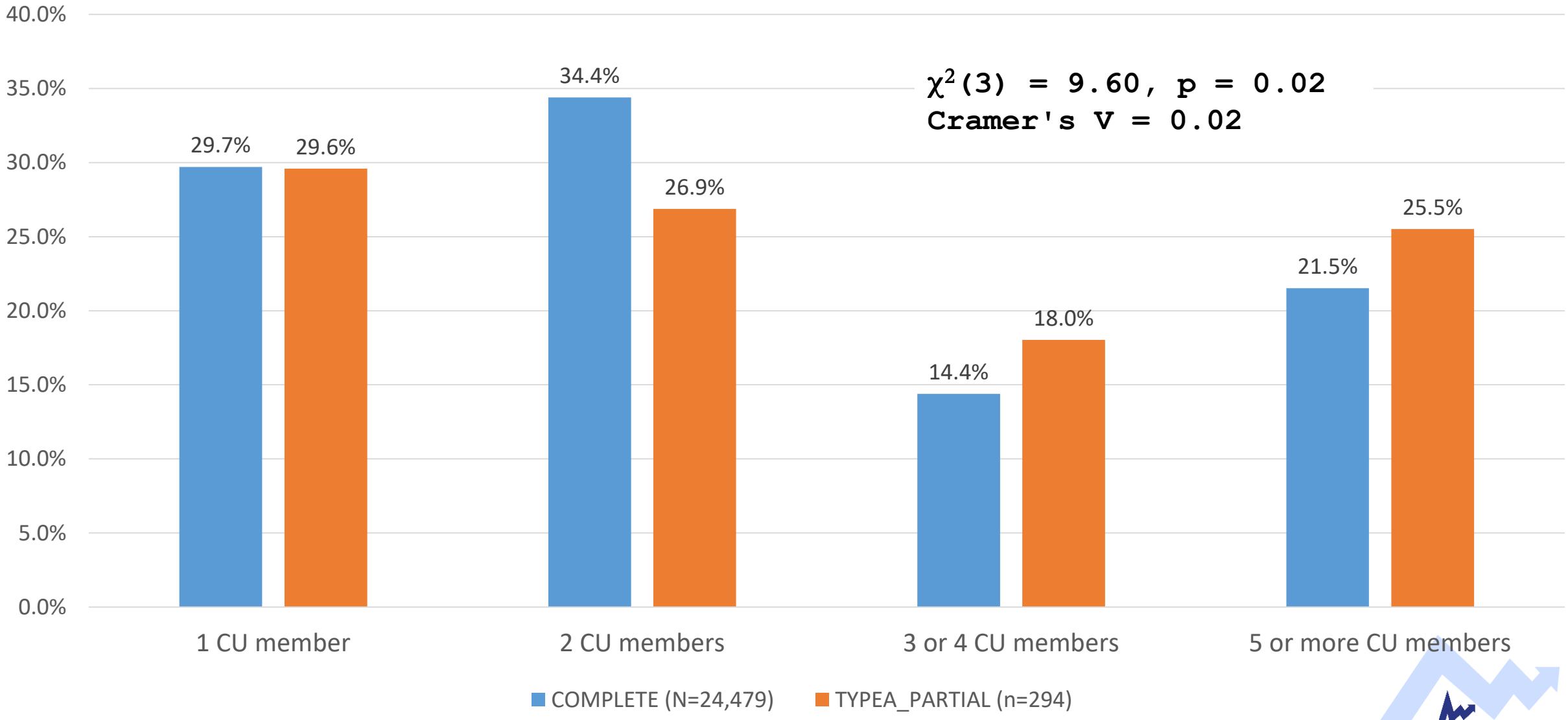
Respondent Age



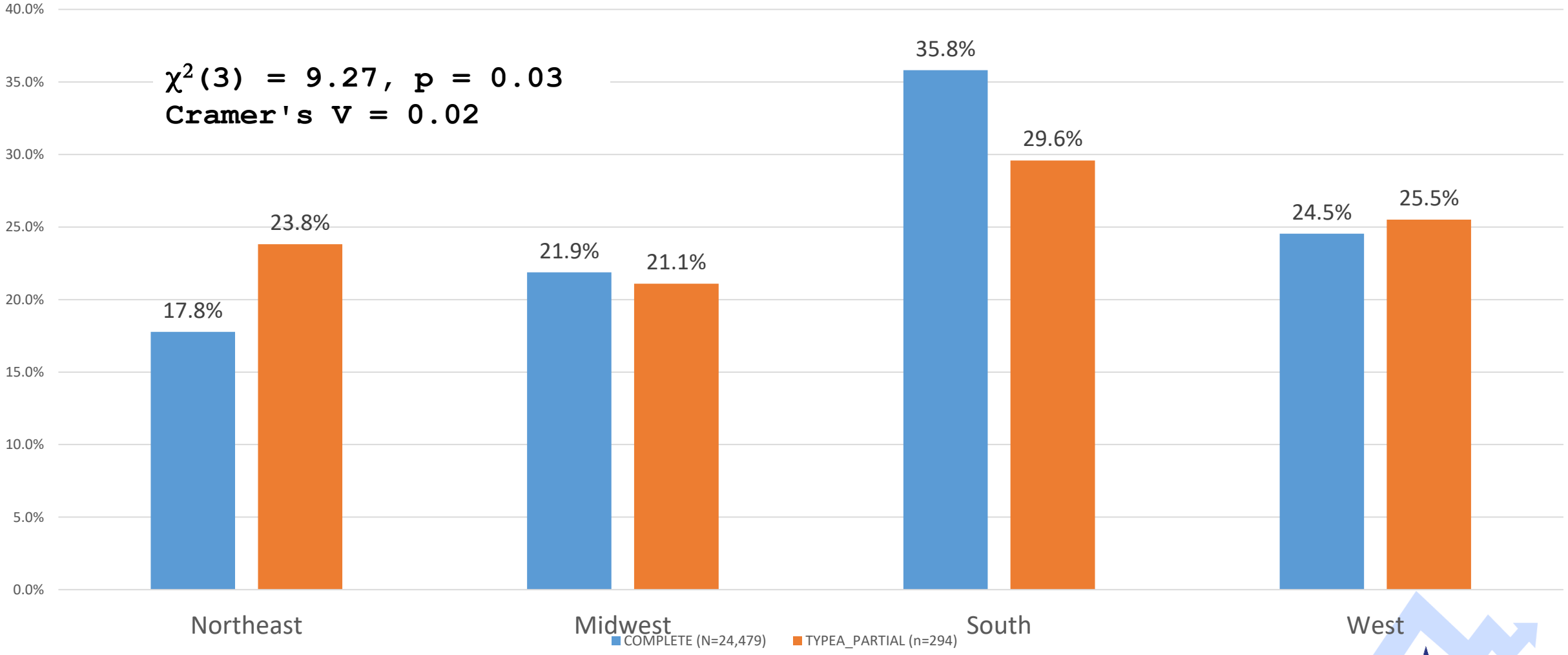
Household Tenure



Household Size



Region


$\chi^2(3) = 9.27, p = 0.03$
Cramer's V = 0.02
40.0%
35.0%
30.0%
25.0%
20.0%
15.0%
10.0%
5.0%
0.0%
17.8%
23.8%
21.9%
21.1%
35.8%
29.6%
24.5%
25.5%
Northeast
Midwest
South
West
COMPLETE (N=24,479)
TYPEA_PARTIAL (n=294)

Participation - Wave

- Wave of data

Count of complete interviews	Percent of Completes (n=24,773)	Percent of Partials (n=294)
1	25.8	28.6
2	24.7	25.5
3	24.2	28.2
4	25.4	17.7

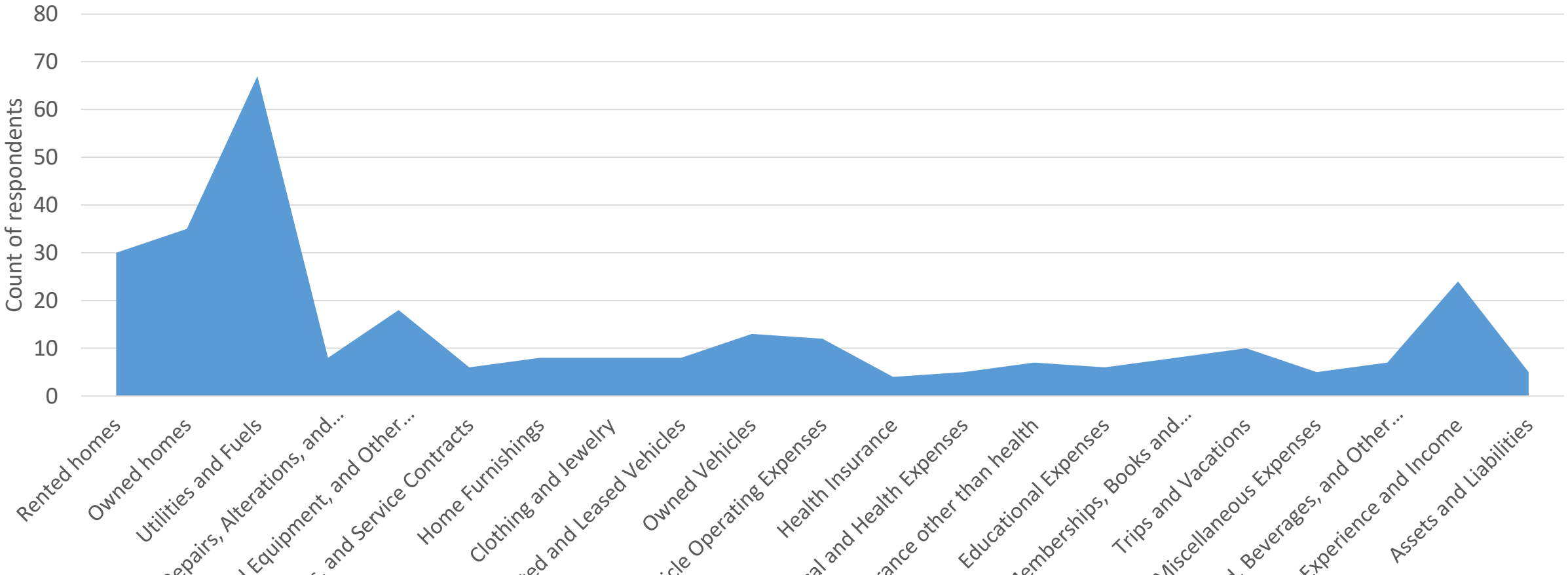
Participation – other waves

- With 4 waves of data collections, what happens in the other waves?

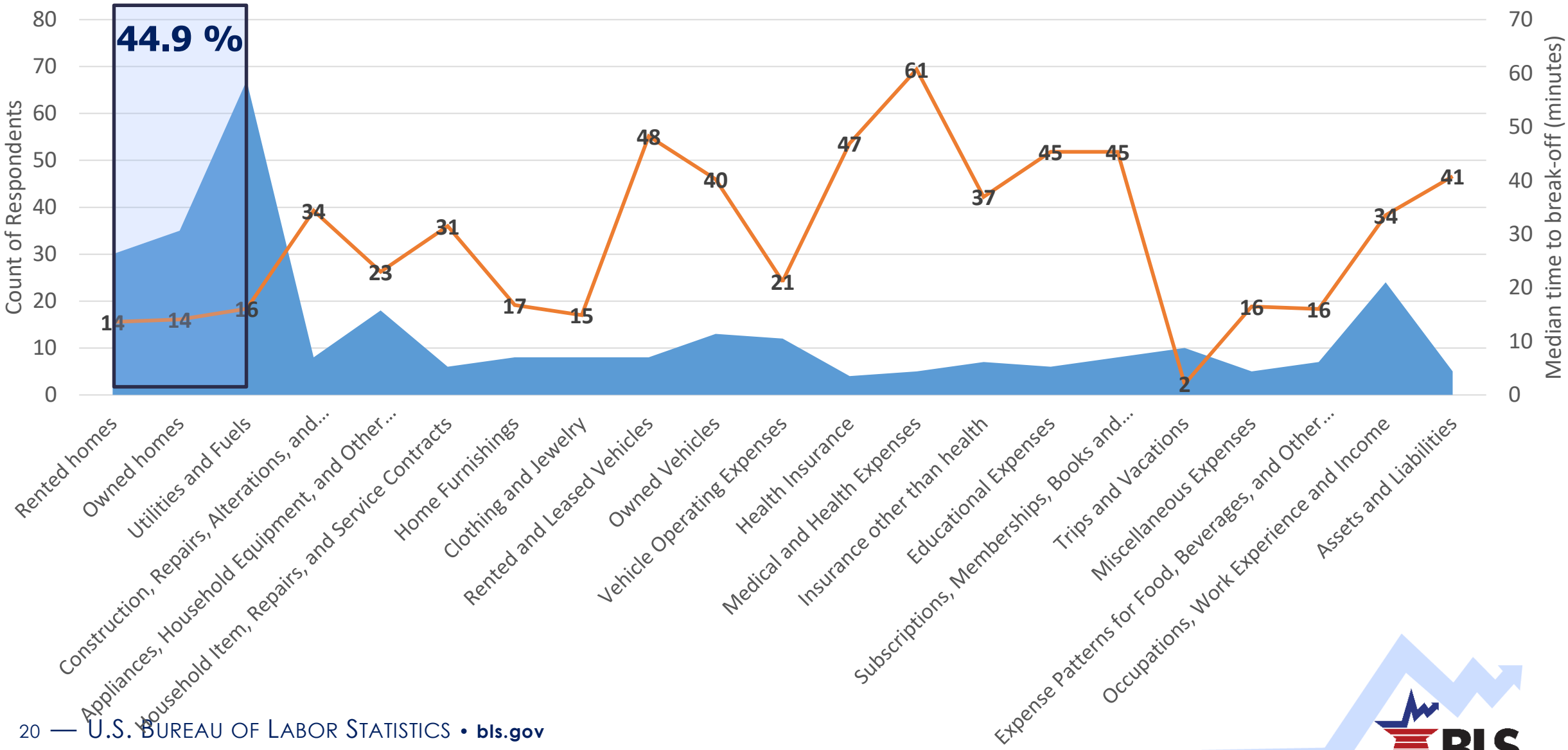
Count of complete interviews	Percent of Completes (n=24,773)	Percent of Partials (n=294)
0	-	36.1
1	8.25	30.3
2	10.7	20.1
3	17.25	13.6
4	63.81	-

Where do respondents break-off?

Where Respondents Break-Off



Where Respondents Break-Off



How do the expenditure data compare?

How do their expenses compare? (Rented Property)

	N	Mean
Average monthly rent (1st property)		
Completes	8,225	$ 900
Partials	62	$ 1,100

How do their expenses compare? (Owned Property)

	N	Mean
Annual property tax (1st property)		
Completes	13,169	$ 3,200
Partials	98	$ 5,700
Original mortgage amount (1st loan)		
Completes	8,315	$ 186,000
Partials	73	$ 349,000
Amount of last monthly payment (Fixed rate mortgage) (1st loan)		
Completes	8,343	$ 1,500
Partials	75	$ 1,600

How do their expenses compare? (Utilities)

	N	Mean
Monthly telephone/internet/cable bills		
Completes	22,571	$ 204
Partials	120	$ 216
Monthly electric/gas/water/etc		
Completes	22,406	$ 203
Partials	98	214

Research Questions

- Who are those that drop out?
  - *Slightly younger, larger, non-white households, in the Northeast*
- Can they help provide insight on other non-responders?
  - *Reported expenditures are higher for those that break-off*
- Can their break-off point inform us about survey design?
  - *Around 15-30 minutes seems to be where the majority of partials lose interest…or is it content of the sections? More research is needed.*
- Could their data somehow be used in our processing?
  - *Data for partials were very sparse, so not likely.*

Next Steps

- Closer look at the definition of a partial (presence of respondent)
- Investigate respondents that do stick around for >1 hour and then drop out
- Look at data quality of sections (e.g. item nonresponse) for partials
- Investigate interviewer reported reasons that the respondents didn't complete the interview ("doorstep concerns")

Contact Information

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