

# Survey Research Center

## SRC Project Growth

FY Project Income

2001-03: \$ 629,096.04

2003-04: \$ 853,402.40

By the end of 12/2004, the Survey Research Center (SRC) was involved with 167 different research projects. Of these, 109 were active or completed.

What does  
collecting

**saliva**

have to do with  
Survey  
Research?

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## SRC Increases Staff to Handle Demand for Survey Research

The SRC has grown from a staff of 2 persons in 2001 to 16 full-time staff and 100 part-time employees. The full-time staff focus on project manage-

ment, supervision, training, and administration. They

direct the trained part-time staff who conduct personal and telephone interviews, code and analyze data, prepare mail surveys and do clerical work.



Some of the SRC's 16 full-time staff members

## From the Director

The statistics and charts in this report focus on the third year of activity of the Survey Research Center. This was a period of rapid growth for us with most of our efforts going into meeting the needs of the research projects and maintaining a high quality of service. There was little time to prepare for further growth.

Although our work load continued to expand, we took steps at the beginning of the fourth year to better organize our services. We added a full time Faculty Research Associate (Brian Grim) who has taken a major role in working with researchers to prepare budget estimates and work plans. Our survey operations were reorganized into four divisions with a manager for each division. The divisions are field work, telephone surveys, mail and scannable surveys, and web surveys.

An important change that will take place beginning in the

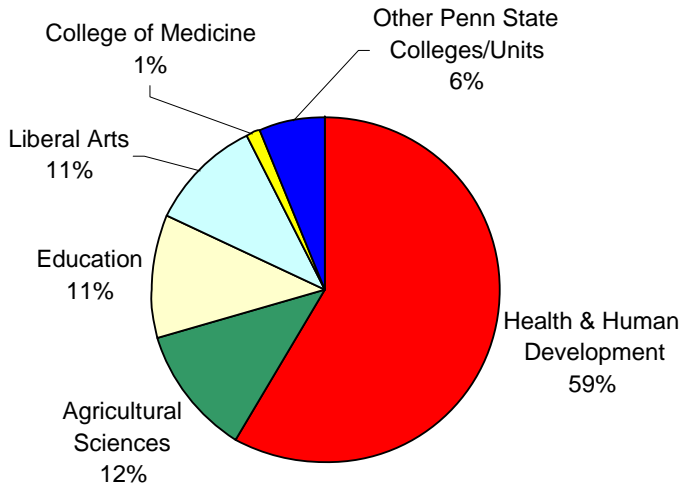
fifth year is the affiliation of Eric Plutzer, a professor in Political Science and survey research specialist, with the SRC. Professor Plutzer will focus on the educational mission of the survey center and will work towards developing a cross-disciplinary specialization in survey research at the graduate level.

In the fourth year we have seen a significant shift in the survey modes used by our clients. Telephone surveys were a minor part of the work of the Center in the first three years. In our third year these represented only 8 percent of our revenue and we had more telephone interviewing capacity than was normally used. This year we have been at full capacity in the telephone division and have even had to postpone or turn down some telephone interviewing projects because of the lack of space to further expand our interview stations beyond the 21 we currently use.

As has been the case since the inception of the SRC, the mix of services we offer continues to reflect the types of social science research being conducted at Penn State. Adapting and expanding our services to meet the diverse survey needs has included collection of biological samples and experimentation with PDA-based data collection modes. Technology developments and changes have a large impact on collecting survey data and it is our goal to stay abreast of these changes to better serve our Penn State researchers.



David R. Johnson  
Director



SRC's income by College served (In-Progress or Completed by 12/04)

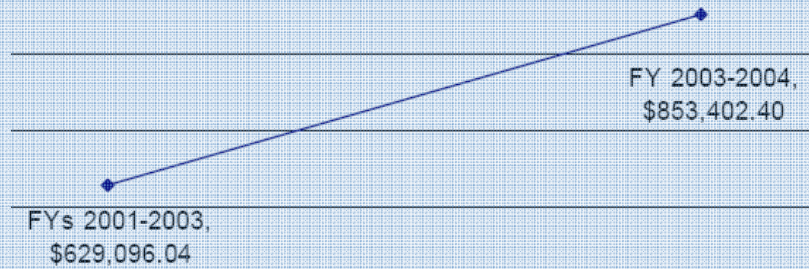
### Serving Penn State Colleges

The SRC is housed within the Social Science Research Institute (SSRI) at Penn State. The SRC's mission is to serve researchers at Penn State, particularly assisting facilitation of survey research in the five colleges which are represented on the SSRI's Executive Committee.

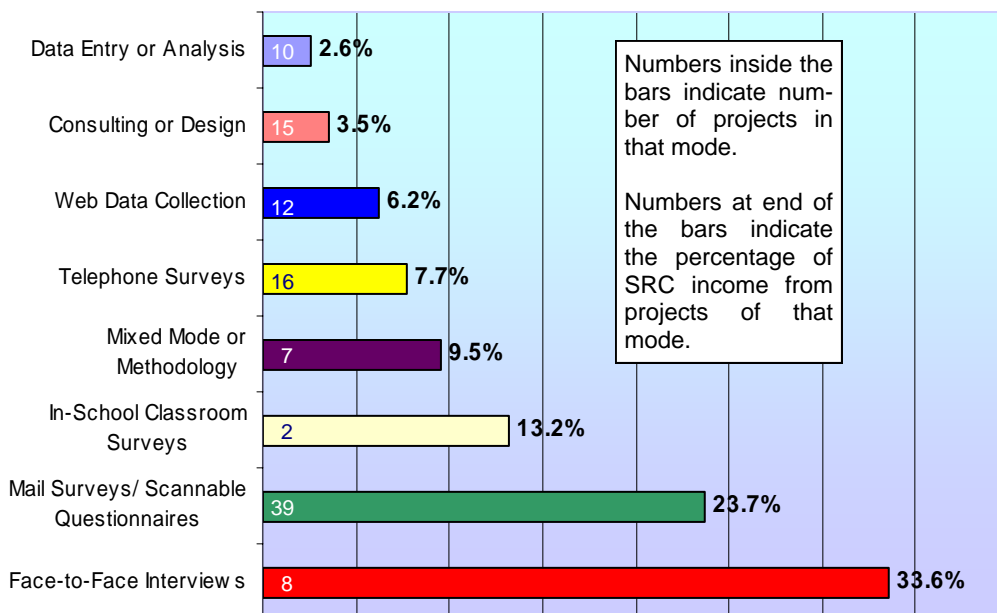
To date, the SRC has facilitated 24 projects for the College of Agriculture, 11 for Education, 37 for Health and Human Development, 15 for The Liberal Arts, and 4 for the College of Medicine. 16 projects were facilitated for other Penn State colleges/units. Only 2 of the 109 projects which were in-progress or completed by 12/2004 were external to Penn State, accounting for less than 0.3% of the SRC's income.

### 36 % Growth in Income

The SRC's growth in income reflects its growth in active and completed projects. In FYs 2001-03, there were 68 active or completed projects. By the end of 2004, there were 109 active or completed projects in total, i.e., the SRC took on 41 new projects since July 1, 2003.



Income growth from SRC's inception in 2001 through FY 2003-04



Percentage of SRC's income by mode of research (In-Progress or Completed by 12/04)

### Multiple Modes

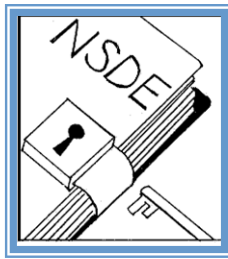
To meet the needs of Penn State researchers, the SRC conducts survey and interview research in a variety of modes.

Field interview projects include in-school surveys of children, in-home surveys of parents and families, focus groups, and computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI).

Mail and telephone projects use the latest technologies including scannable surveys and computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI).

## Biological Data (Saliva) Enhances Survey Project on Stress

The SRC is combining biological and survey data to enhance findings by collecting cortisol, a hormone contained in saliva that indicates respondents' stress levels. Extensive literature documents that psychological factors may influence the production of cortisol. Specifically, studies suggest that physical and psychological stressors may influence levels of cortisol in the body.



ences" (NSDE), a part of the National Survey of Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) funded by the National Institute on Aging. The NSDE is a telephone study examining the daily stressful experiences of a sample of MIDUS respondents. Before beginning the eight-day telephone diary, subjects receive a package containing plastic vials known as salivettes. With instruction from SRC telephone interviewers, beginning on the second day of the diary, participants collect their own

saliva samples 4 times per day by chewing on a cotton swab for one minute. On day 5, the salivettes are mailed to the University of Wisconsin for analysis. Adding saliva collection to any research method poses various challenges. Respondents may be hesitant about providing biological samples and must be instructed on how the samples should be handled, stored, and prepared for shipping. This requires competent interviewers who are trained to handle the respondent's questions with understanding.

The SRC strives to be part of such cutting edge research.

*The ability to combine biological data with survey data increases the strength of a study. The SRC strives to be part of such pioneering methodologies and research.*

## Pennsylvania School Nurses Respond to Asthma Survey

There are currently over 180,000 school-aged children in Pennsylvania with asthma. Nationally, asthma is the single most prevalent cause of childhood disability, responsible for 14 million missed school days each year.

The SRC recently conducted a mail study to gather information about the scope of the asthma burden among chil-

dren, barriers to optimal asthma management in the school setting, and school nurses' recommendations for policies that could improve the capacity for asthma management in schools. This survey yielded a high response rate (76%) due to surveying a target population who cared about the saliency of the topic and due to the methodology, which included

a \$2.00 cash pre-incentive and multiple mailings. The SRC mailed an initial survey to 996 randomly selected Pennsylvania schools, to the attention of the "School Nurse." A week later, reminder postcards were sent to each address, and then a week after that a second mailing of the survey was sent to non-respondents. A total of 757 surveys were completed.



*Asthma is a leading cause of missed school among Pennsylvania children.*

## Web "Management Information System" Furthers Survey Project

The Better Jobs Better Care Program is intended to improve workplace practices for direct care workers in personal care agencies, home health agencies, nursing homes, and adult day care organizations. A combination of web and scannable paper surveys were designed to evaluate the effect of changes in the work place on direct

care worker job quality and retention. Survey data is being collected from clinical managers, direct care workers, and frontline supervisors of health care providers in Oregon, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and North Carolina participating in the Better Jobs Better Care Program. In addition to collecting survey data, the SRC is maintaining a

management information system. This web-based system is designed to track employee changes over a three-year period and is updated by participating organizations each pay period.



### Administrative Offices

327 Pond Laboratory  
University Park, PA 16802  
Phone: 814-863-0170  
Fax: 814-865-3098  
[www.ssri.psu.edu/survey/](http://www.ssri.psu.edu/survey/)

### Project Offices

135 East Nittany Drive  
Suite 407, Marion Place  
State College, PA 16801  
Phone: 814-861-6362  
Fax: 814-861-5439

## Contacts & Budget Estimates

The Survey Research Center provides state-of-the-art and cost-effective survey research services to Penn State faculty and administrative units. The Survey Research Center operates on a fee-for-service basis. Project cost estimates are gladly provided upon request. For more information, contact:

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## Training in Survey Methodology

The SRC's Director offers an advanced sociology graduate course on survey methodology, and a certificate program in survey methodology is being developed (see *From the Director* on page 1). The Survey Research Center offers workshops, internships and other training opportunities for the Penn State research community. Online versions of workshops are at the SRC's website:

<http://www.ssri.psu.edu/survey/educ.htm>

### Recent Workshop Topics:

- Making Survey Research Smoother
- Multi-Mode Survey Research
- Focus Groups for Academic Research
- Person to Person Data Collection Techniques
- Mail Survey Implementation
- Introduction to Web Surveys
- Questionnaire Design

## The SRC Facilitates Multiple Modes of Research

**Self-Administered & Mail Surveys.** The SRC provides cost effective mailing and survey receiving services. TELEform® software is used to create scannable self-administered and mail surveys. This software allows custom design of surveys while providing reliable data collection. Following data collection, responses are quickly scanned and imaged, expediting the data entry process.



The SRC has 20 CATI stations

**Telephone Surveys.** SRC telephone interviewers use Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (WinCATI®) to guide them through complex interview schedules. Quality control is facilitated by audio-visual monitoring and interview verification.

**Internet & Web Surveys.** Resources at the SRC, including secure servers and experienced programmers, offer quality web-based data collection. The SRC uses Perseus® software to create internet and web surveys.

**Face-to-Face Interview Surveys.** The SRC provides field project management, utilizing various research data-gathering techniques for collecting data (e.g., CAPI-Computer Assisted Personal Interviews, paper & pencil scannable surveys for assisted self-administration, saliva sample collection, etc.). The SRC has a network of trained interviewers throughout Pennsylvania.



Some of the SRC's 30 part-time field interviewers

**Focus Groups.** Focus group data collection services include: question route design, moderation, note-taking, voice and/or video recording, transcription services, and reporting.

**Multi-Mode.** A combination of modes is often used to reach various populations and increase response rates. The SRC helps researchers identify the appropriate method(s).

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