

Changing Economy, Changing Roles?

Households' Unpaid Labor and Travel Responses to the Great Recession

INTRODUCTION

Household-serving travel, including chauffeuring children and driving to the store, is vital to household maintenance and an out-of-home extension to household-serving labor. However, while research has examined household-serving labor responses to the Great Recession, travel is omitted from these studies. So how did American families adjust household-serving travel during and following the Great Recession and what do these patterns mean for gender roles in travel?



AIM

This paper asks:

- 1) How did American parents adjust their household-serving labor—including travel—in response to the Great Recession?
- 2) What are the implications for a potential narrowing of the gender gap in household-serving labor and travel?

METHODS

Data: American Time Use Survey, 2003-2014

Sample: 2-parent cohabitating households

Expansion	Recession	Recovery
2003-2007	2007-2009	2009-2014



- Travel related to housework, household maintenance, household member care.
- Travel for and with children.
- Excludes travel related to animal care, socializing, or volunteering.
- Activities related to caring for household members
- Household maintenance activities such as household cleaning and laundry

Logistic regressions separately for men and women:

1. Did ≥ 1 minute of household-serving labor
2. Did ≥ 1 minute of child-serving labor
3. Made ≥ 1 household-serving trip
4. Made ≥ 1 child-serving trip

Descriptive Statistics	Expansion (2003-2007)	Recession (2007-2009)	Recovery (2009-2014)
% Living in MSA	78.4%	80.1%	83.9%
Mean Number of Household Children	1.95	1.99	1.95
Mean Household Income [^]	\$83,794	\$86,858	\$83,491
% with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	32.3%	35.4%	37.1%
% White	85.3%	85.0%	84.2%
	Men / Women		
% Employed	91.7 / 65.7%	91.2 / 67.9%	88.4 / 64.4%
Full-time	87.4 / 43.7%	85.7 / 46.8%	82.6 / 44.2%
Part-time	4.3 / 21.9%	5.5 / 21.1%	5.8 / 20.2%
% Unemployed	3.1 / 4.1%	4.0 / 4.6%	5.1 / 5.8%
% Not in Labor Force	5.2 / 30.2%	4.7 / 27.5%	6.5 / 29.8%
Total (n)	71,906	20,558	67,471

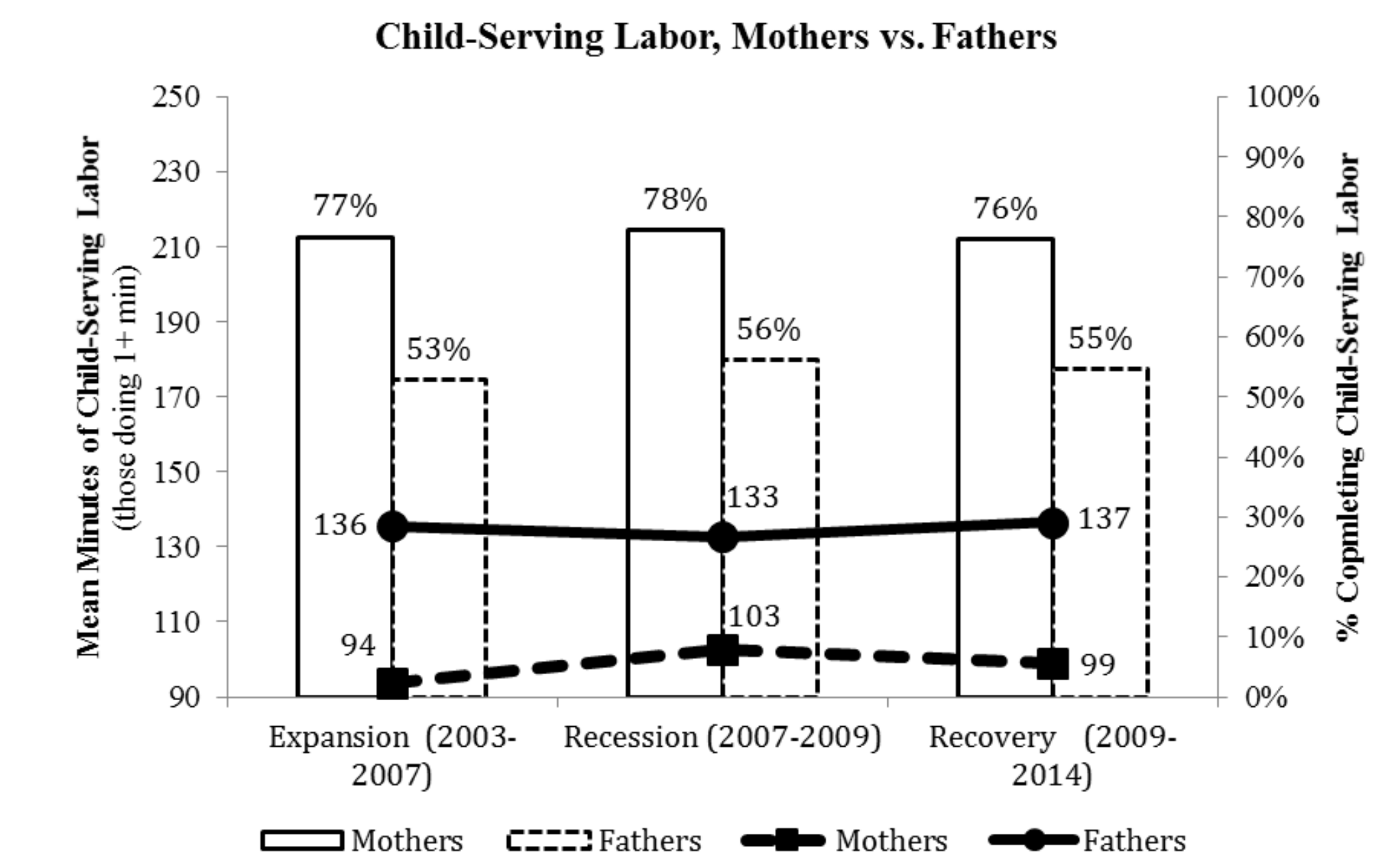
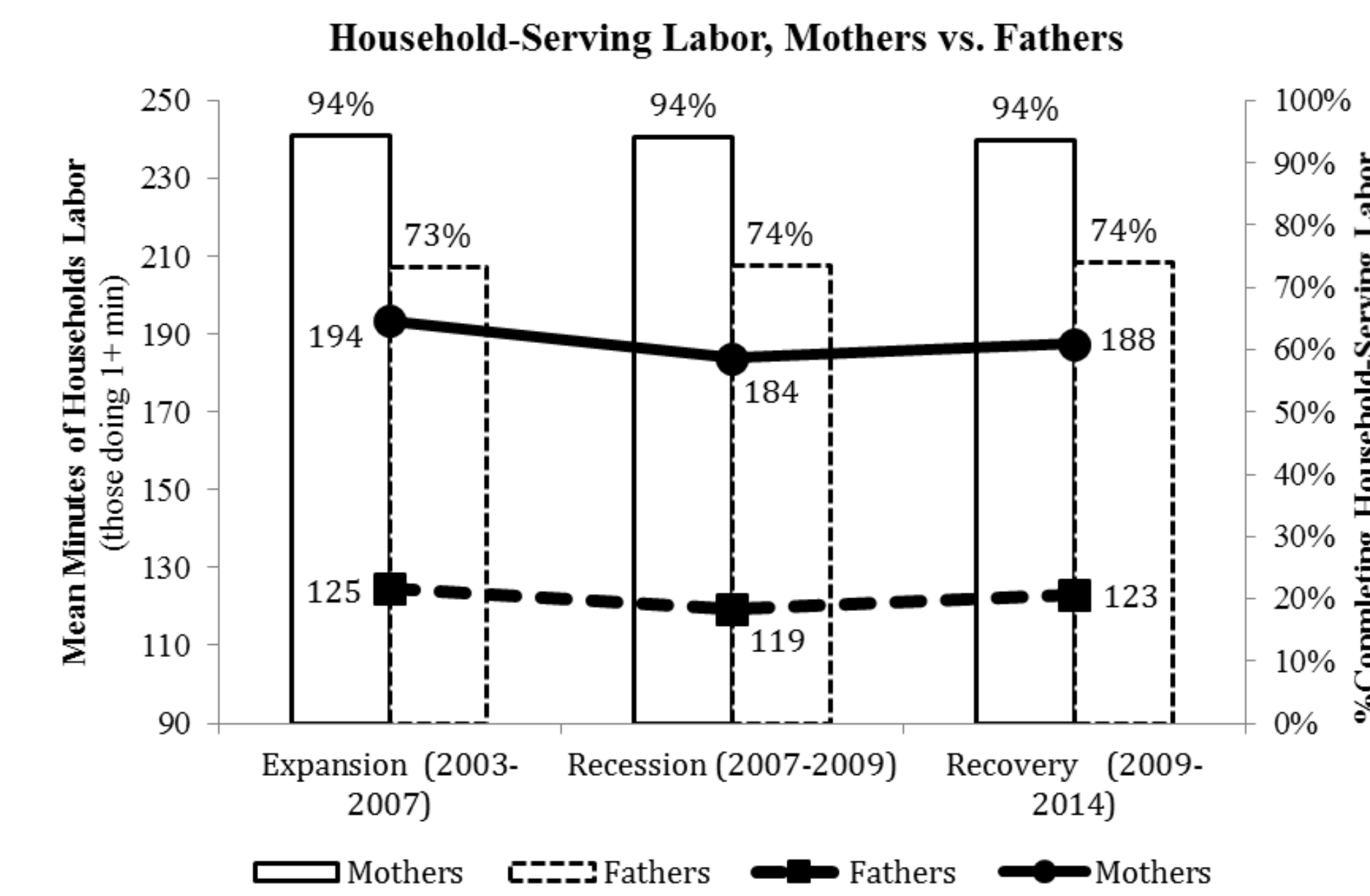
Source: American Time Use Survey, 2003-2014; weighted results. Standard errors are in italics, while bold values indicate a statistically significant change ($p < 0.05$) between the Expansion and Recession or Recovery period.

[^]All dollars are adjusted to 2013 dollars.

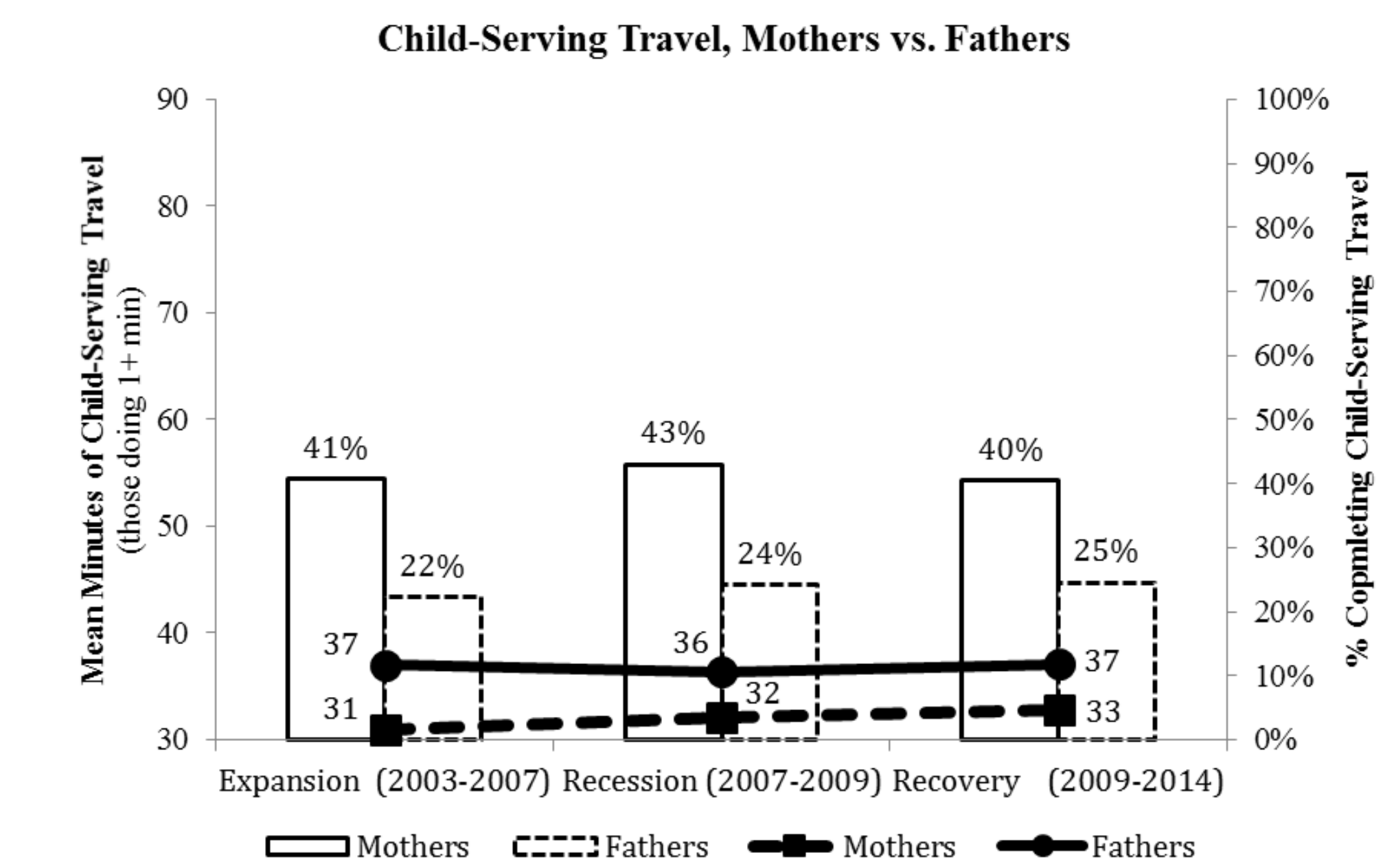
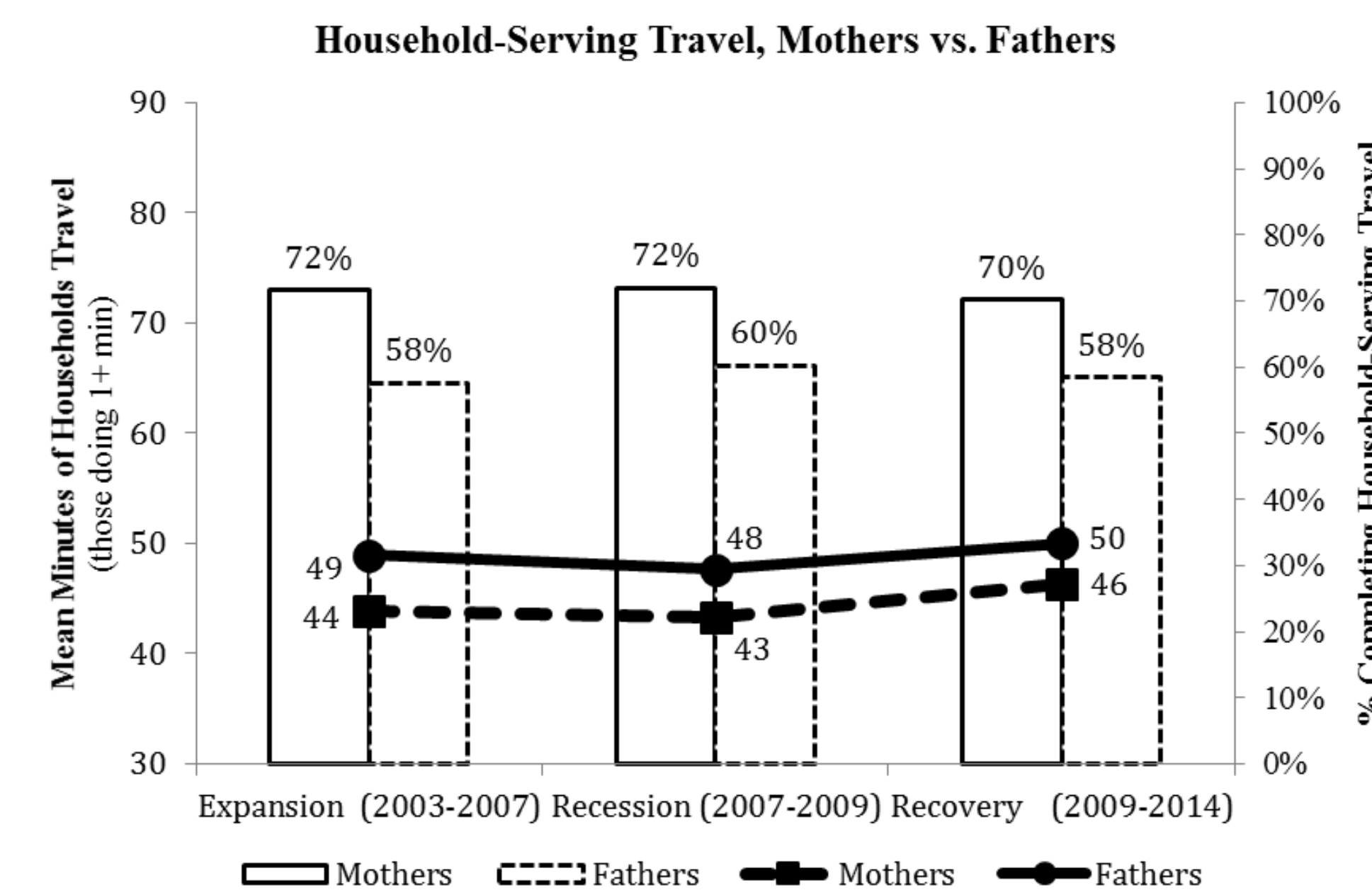
Note: All values reflect survey weights. Employment may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

RESULTS

Household and Child-serving Labor



Household and Child-serving Travel



CONCLUSIONS

- The gender gap in household and child-serving labor and travel persisted through the Great Recession.
- While the gender gap narrowed during the Recession, pre-recession patterns reemerged during recovery. The exception is among fathers, a higher proportion of whom completed child-serving trips over time and spent increasing amounts of time doing so. This suggests that men may be picking up more household-serving responsibility than estimated by studies omitting travel.
- Economic recessions explain little if any of variation in mothers' and fathers' household labor and travel time use over time; rather, other household factors such as income, number of children, and spousal employment are stronger shapers of both.