General Social Survey 2009

Methodology

Target population

Canadian population aged 15 and over and not residing in institutions.

The GSS target population in the ten provinces is nearly the same as the Labour Force Survey (LFS), with two small differences: the GSS includes persons living on reserves and Armed Forces personnel not living in barracks. The GSS target population in the territories includes Armed Forces personnel not living in barracks but residents of certain remote regions in Nunavut were excluded from this survey.

Instrument design

The questionnaire was designed based on qualitative testing (focus groups), a pilot test and interviewer debriefing.

Sampling

This is a sample survey with a cross-sectional design.

The sample size was of approximately 19, 500 respondents.

In the ten provinces, households were selected for the survey by Random Digit Dialling. The telephone numbers in the sample were selected using the Elimination of Non-Working Banks technique. This sampling technique is a method in which an attempt is made to identify all working banks for an area (i.e., to identify all sets of 100 telephone numbers with the same first eight digits containing at least one number that belongs to a household). Thus, all telephone numbers within non-working banks are eliminated from the sampling frame.

Each of the ten provinces was divided into strata, i.e. geographic areas.

Many of the Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) were each considered separate strata. This was the case for St. John's, Halifax, Saint John, Montreal, Quebec City, Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and Victoria. CMAs not on this list are located in Quebec and Ontario. Two more strata were formed by grouping the remaining CMAs in each of these two provinces. Finally, the non-CMA areas of each of the ten provinces were also grouped to form ten more strata. This resulted in 27 strata in all.

In the three territories, respondents were selected from households which had completed an earlier Statistics Canada survey (Canadian Community Health Survey or Labour Force Survey). The 23 strata selected covered 28 communities. Most strata included a single community, but 7 strata included 2 communities, and Whitehorse was spread over 3 strata. Of

those 23 strata, 13 were identified as most in need of face-to-face interviews and were designated as mixed method of collection CATI and CAPI. CATI-only was used for the remaining 10 strata.

Data sources

Data collection for this reference period: 2009-02-02 – 2009-12-31

Data collection was conducted from February 2 to November 30, 2009 in the ten provinces and from August 31 to December 31, 2009 in the territories.

All respondents in the ten provinces were interviewed by telephone. Households without telephones were therefore excluded. There is evidence, however, that persons living in such households represent approximately 0.9% of the target population (Residential Telephone Services Survey (RTSS), 2008). As interviews were not conducted by cellular telephone, persons with only cellular telephone service were also excluded. The 2008 RTSS reported that 8% of households in Canada have cellular telephone service only.

In the territories, the method of collection was a mixture of telephone (CATI) and personal interviews (CAPI). Hence, all residents in the territories aged 15 years and over not living in an institution were part of the target population because those residing in a household without a telephone would be reached in person. The mixture of methods of collection is due to the lower penetration rates of telephone services in the territories compared to the provinces, particularly in Nunavut where at least 20% of households did not have regular land line in 2005. All cases started as CATI at the regional office and could be transferred to a CAPI-interviewer depending on the communities and collection constraints. It should be noted that some cases could have been assigned to CAPI for the purpose of contacting the household, but the interview was completed by CATI.