



General Social Survey
Enquête sociale générale

Canada's General Social Survey

Social and Aboriginal Statistics
Division



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Primary Objectives of GSS

- to monitor changes in the living conditions and wellbeing of Canadians over time by gathering data on social trends
- to provide information on current or emerging issues in Canadian society.



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The GSS program

- Started in 1985
- Telephone surveys in 10 provinces
- Repeated cycles by topic (usually every 5 years)
- Some topics moved to subject areas (health, education, technology)
- New topics introduced



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Methodology

- Data collected over a 12-month period from the population living in private households in the 10 provinces
- Population aged 15 and older, except:
 - Cycles 16 and 21 only sampled persons aged 45 and older



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Methodology continued

- Response rates for the GSS are typically around 70 to 80%.
- Prior to 1999, the sample size was 10,000
- 1999 to present, sample increased to approximately 25,000
- With a sample of 25,000, basic estimates are available at the national, provincial and CMA levels.





Producing estimates

- We can produce estimates for some small population groups such as persons with disabilities, people in visible minorities and seniors (some cycles oversample)
- The sample size is not large enough to produce estimates for Aboriginal peoples except all groups combined, for Canada





Monitoring changes: Repeated cycles

	Cycle year (Cycle number)			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
Health	1985(1)	1991(6)		
Time Use	1986(2)	1992(7)	1998(12)	2005(19)
Victimization	1988(3)	1993(8)	1999(13)	2004(18)
Education, work, retirement	1989(4)	1994(9)	2002(16)	2007(21)
Family	1990(5)	1995(10)	2001(15)	2006(20)
Social Support and Aging	1985(1)	1990(5)	1996(11)	2002(16) 2007 (21)
Access to and use of ICT	2000(14)			
Social Engagement	2003(17)	2008(22)		





Content common to GSS cycles

- **Demographic** characteristics of respondent
- General **health**
- **Main activity** of respondent and respondent's spouse or partner
- **Education** of respondent, spouse or partner and parents
- **Housing** characteristics
- **Other characteristics** (immigration status, aboriginal, visible minority status (sometimes), language)



Victimization





GSS Themes → Victimization

Four cycles of data – 1988, 1993, 1999, 2004

(Fifth planned for 2009)

Population survey

- provides an important complement to officially recorded crime rates
- measures both crime incidents that come to the attention of the police and those that are unreported

Collects comprehensive information on Canadians'

- experiences of victimization
- perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system
- characteristics of the victim, the incident and the perpetrator



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Criminal Victimization Screening

Measures 8 types of crimes

Personal Victimizations:

Violent Victimizations

- Sexual assault
- Robbery
- Physical assault

Theft of personal property

Household victimizations:

- Break and enter
- Motor vehicle/parts theft
- Theft or Attempted theft of household property
- Vandalism





Notes on victimization cycles

Cycle 18:

- Oversampled Winnipeg (500 cases)
- Neighbourhood data from Census on the main file

- Cycles 13 & 18 - Same file structure:

- Main file: contains questionnaire responses and associate information (1 line = 1 resp.)
- Incident file: contains information about any individual victimization incidents which the respondent may have experienced (1 line = 1 incident)



Time use





GSS themes → Time use

**Four cycles of data available –
1986, 1992, 1998, 2005**

Major subjects surveyed in 2005:

- Time Use Diary
- Child Care Diary
- Social Capital
- Transportation
- Culture Activities
- Sports Participation Activities



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Summary of new features for 2005 GSS

- Increased sample size
- New modules:
 - Transportation
 - Close social network ties
- Expansion of activity codes
 - Impact of Internet use
 - Email/chat communication
- Canada/US comparisons



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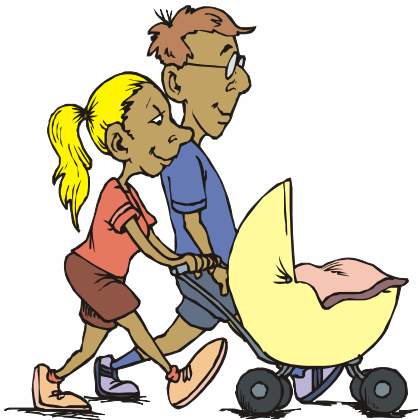


Notes on using time use cycles

- **All cycles:**
 - Main file: Contains information from respondents who answered questions on unpaid help, cultural activities and organized sport (1 line = 1 respondent)
 - Episode file: provides the detailed information on each activity episode reported by respondents (1 line = 1 episode)
- **Cycles 2 & 7:**
 - Summary file: contains information from respondents who answered the time use diary



Family





GSS themes → Family

Four cycles of data available –
1990, 1995, 2001, 2006

Major subjects surveyed in 2006:

- Family history and structure
- Birth/Adoption of child in past 5 years
- Child custody
- Financial support agreements and arrangements for child and ex-Spouse/ex-Partner
- Social networks
- Work-family balance and family functioning
- Well-being





Notes on family cycles

- Cycle 5 – oversampled the elderly
- Cycle 10 – additional 1,250 in sample from Quebec
- Cycle 15 – focused on family history and family structure
- Cycle 20 – Beginning to have a life course perspective





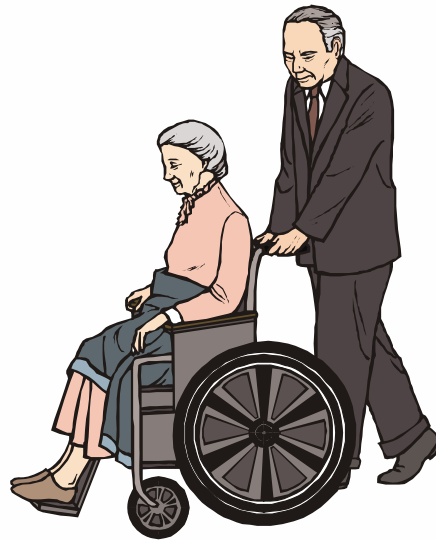
Notes on family cycles

- **Cycles 10 and 15:**
 - Main File: includes one record per respondent and provides the data for most sections of the questionnaire
 - Child File: consists of all children ever raised by the respondent
 - Union File: consists of all unions reported by the respondent

- **Cycles 5 and 20:**
 - Main File: includes of one record per respondent and provides the data for most sections of the questionnaire



Social Support





GSS Themes → Social Support

Two cycles of data –

1996 and 2002 (aged 45+)

(Third cycle to be released September 2008)

Major subjects surveyed in 2007:

- Health status and well-being
- Care given
- Care received
- Housing
- Social contact



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GSS Themes → Retirement

Two cycles of data –

1996 and 2002 (aged 45+)

(Third cycle to be released September 2008)

Major subjects surveyed in 2007:

- Retirement planning
- Retirement experiences
- Motivation and obstacles to returning to work
- Education
- Main activity



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Notes on social support cycles

- Cycle 11 – oversampled 65+, with more from Quebec
- Cycle 16 – only respondents aged 45+
 - Care receiving (by respondents 65+)
 - Care giving (by respondents 65+, to all ages)
 - Care giving (by respondents 45-64, to people 65+)
- Cycle 21 – only respondents aged 45+
Life Course Perspective



Social Networks





GSS Themes → Social Networks

Two cycles of data –

2003, 2008 (currently in collection!)

Major subjects surveyed in 2008:

- Mobilization of social networks during life changes
- Civic participation
- Sense of community belonging
- Wellbeing, happiness and life satisfaction



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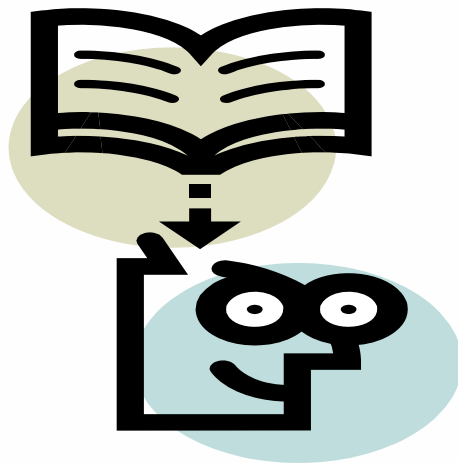


Notes on social networks cycles

- Census community variables available
- New urban/rural derived variable added called LUC_RST (based on commuting distance)



Access to and Use of Information Communication Technology





GSS themes → Access to and use of info & communication technologies (ICTs)

Two cycles of data – 1994 and 2000

Major subjects surveyed in 2000:

- Access to ICTs in the home, at work, at school, at public location
- Uses of Internet
- Pornography and hate on the Internet
- Computers at work
- Learning to use computers



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Notes on ICT cycle

- Since 2003 – annual questions on Internet use in the past 12 months
- In the 2005 Time Use Survey - new codes for:
 - email use, surfing the Internet, chatting online, playing computer or video games, general computer use and other Internet communication
 - These are all relevant only to non-work time spent
- In the 2009 Victimization survey - a section on Internet Victimization, including cyber-bullying





Data Files

- **Analytic files available in the RDCs**
- **PUMFs available for all released cycles**



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Contact information

Dissemination and client services

sasd-dssea@statcan.ca

(613) 951-5979



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