



General Social Survey
Enquête sociale générale

Housing Data in Canada's General Social Survey

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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.





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Twenty Years of General Social Survey Data



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Background

- Have 20 complete cycles of data
- User guides, data dictionaries, methodology descriptions, weighting and estimation guides, etc. available
- Many research articles have been written over the years



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Historical Data Base

- Now have a wealth of data available
 - 330,000 respondent records (albeit over different years), thousands of variables on each respondent
 - Also, time use information, episodes of victimization, etc.
- Idea is to package the data in an easily accessed form and provide tools for use
- Provide a database containing the 20 years of data



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Historical Data Base

- Not pooled database but separate data sets with harmonized variables and concepts in some coherent way
- Goal
 - “Glue” respondent files together by cycle
 - 330,000 rows x thousands of columns
 - Have a year (= cycle = file) identifier
 - Bootstrap weights
 - Full collection of supporting information





Housing variables on the GSS Historic Database

- Variables harmonized across years when they are available
- Variables available for 2+ years included
- Not all GSS variables on the file



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Housing variables on the GSS Historic Database

- Dwelling type of respondent
- Dwelling owned by a member of the household
- Number of rooms in the current dwelling

- Length of time respondent has lived in current dwelling
- Length of time respondent has lived in current neighbourhood
- Length of time respondent has lived in current city or local community





Housing variables on the GSS Historic Database

- Living arrangement of respondent
- Three-generation or more family in respondent's household
- Reason respondent first left parental household
- How old was respondent when respondent first left parental household to live on their own?
- How many times did respondent leave parental household?





Housing variables on the GSS Historic Database

- Did respondent install burglar alarms or motion detector lights in the last 12 months to protect himself or his property?
- Did respondent ever install new locks, security bars to protect himself or his property?
- How satisfied is respondent about his housing?
- What was the reason for moving to present address?





Housing variables on the GSS Historic Database

- Neighbourhood is place where neighbours help each other
- Respondent knows people in neighbourhood
- Respondent has done a favour for a neighbour
- Neighbour has done a favour for respondent





Matter of Fact

Analytic series highlighting what the GSS has contributed to understanding Canadian society over the last 20 years.

“Have patterns of living in owned versus rented dwellings changed since 1985?”

Source: Catalogue no. 89-630-X Matter of Fact

<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-630-XIE/2008001/article/10647-en.pdf>



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Highlights

- Between 1985 and 2006, the % of Canadians living in dwellings where someone in the household was the owner gradually increased from 70% to 78%.
- Youth in 1995 are less likely to live in rented dwellings than earlier cohorts.
- Seniors are more likely to stay in owned homes.





Highlights

- Vast majority of 60 year olds in all three cohorts lived in owned dwellings at age 60. For the 1985 cohort, after their mid-sixties, there was a gradual, yet significant, decrease in owning homes.
- For the 1990 and 1995 cohorts, there was a subsequent increase in living in owned homes.





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Housing data in the 2008 and 2009 General Social Surveys



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Standard GSS housing module questions

- In what type of dwelling are you now living?
- Is this dwelling owned by a member of this household?
- How long have you lived in this dwelling?



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About respondent's immediate neighbourhood:

Would you say that you know: most/ many/ a few/ nobody else in your neighbourhood?

Would you say this neighbourhood is a place where neighbours help each other?

In the past month, have you done a favour for a neighbour?

In the past month, have any of your neighbours done a favour for you?

How long have you lived in this neighbourhood?

How long have you lived in this city or local community?

What is your postal code for your current address?





GSS 2007 – Family, Social Support and Retirement: Analysis

- “The retirement plans and expectations of older workers” by Schellenberg and Ostrovsky (2008)
 - Found that housing tenure was related to planned age of retirement for 45- to 59-year olds who had never retired.
 - Compared with renters (the reference group) homeowners with a mortgage planned to retire 5½ months earlier; homeowners without a mortgage planned to retire more than 17 months earlier.
- Source: (Statistics Canada: Canadian Social Trends, Cat. No.11-008-X200800210666)





2008 GSS: Social Networks

- Changes experienced by the respondent during the past 12 months (either positive or negative)
 - Respondents are asked if they experienced changes in various aspects of their lives.
- Examples include:
 - Finances, Employment and Health
 - Living arrangements (for example, moving to a new house, moving in with another family member, etc.)





2008 GSS: Social Networks

- Housing characteristics
 - Standard GSS module (as above)

Plus

- Sense of belonging to your local community, province and Canada

First release: Summer 2009



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GSS 2009: Victimization

- Housing characteristics
 - Standard GSS module (as above)
- Plus
 - Have you ever been homeless?
 - What is the longest period of time for which you have been homeless?
 - Have you ever changed residence or moved to protect yourself or your property from crime? Have you done this in the last 12 months?





Contact information

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