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**Statistics Canada International Symposium
Series - Proceedings**

**Symposium 2004: Innovative
Methods for Surveying
Difficult-to-reach Populations**

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OPENING REMARKS

François Maranda¹

Good morning,

On behalf of Statistics Canada, I would like to welcome you all, friends and colleagues, to the Symposium 2004. This is the 21st International Symposium organized by Statistics Canada on survey methodology.

Some of you are familiar with this Symposium, and we are glad to have you back. Others are joining us for the first time, and I would like to extend our most cordial welcome to you.

One of the goals of this year's Symposium is to bring together people from a variety of horizons. The theme is broad enough that decision makers, social science and economics researchers, statisticians from universities and government agencies, and public and private survey organizations can all feel included. I am confident that the Symposium will provide us with a meeting place. Indeed, one of the presentations planned for this afternoon will focus on creating a common ground to participate in surveys.

From the diversity of topics to be discussed today and tomorrow, it is clear that surveying difficult-to-reach populations is a universal problem. Among other things, we will hear about surveys of the homeless, methods of designing questionnaires to incorporate the specific needs of respondents, adaptive sampling, non-response modelling, and ethical limits.

All of these topics are of particular importance in light of the social issues of today and the years ahead. These issues include the broader social safety net; an aging and more vulnerable population; diversification of work arrangements and locations; marginalization of some of our fellow citizens; and faster migration movement. If we are to monitor the evolution of our societies, we must constantly renew and adapt our survey methods, update our concepts and definitions, and react quickly and effectively to emerging trends. In very different ways, each of the three workshops held yesterday shone some light on these problems. In addition, the Waksberg address that Dr. Norman Bradburn will be delivering to us tomorrow morning identifies some of the avenues of development for methodological research. Undoubtedly, some of his ideas will apply to the particular context of difficult-to-reach populations.

Statistics Canada has a rich but relatively limited experience in the field of surveying difficult-to-reach populations. For example, remote areas, which are physically difficult to reach, are normally excluded from our survey populations. Although post-censal surveys of Aboriginal peoples and persons with disabilities go back to the mid-1980s, they actually only happen every five years! More recently, in 2001, Statistics Canada launched the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada. There are also components of difficult-to-reach populations in the General Social Survey: for example victimization, volunteering and community participation are topics covered on a five-year cycle. The International Travel Survey also involves a population that is difficult to survey, even though it is relatively easy to reach through customs control. All of these surveys focus, in one way or another, on a particular population with specific characteristics.

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At this year's Symposium, we have almost 400 participants from 14 countries: You have come from South Africa, Germany, Australia, Belgium, the United States, France, Kenya, Italy, Mexico, Nigeria, New Zealand, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and, of course, Canada. Over the next two days, we will try to shed new light on what we do well, what we can improve, and what we still need to explore further.

And now, before I declare this 21st Symposium officially open, I would like to thank the Organizing Committee, the presenters, the session's organizer and chairpersons, and all the volunteers who have made this event possible. I would also like to pay particular tribute to the leaders of the three workshops for their remarkable work:

- Dr. Annie Morin from the Université de Rennes and Dr. Jean-Hugues Chauchat from the Université de Lyon, who led the workshop on data mining;
- Dr. Marco DiZio and Dr. Mauro Scanu from the Italian Statistical Institute, who proposed a workshop on Bayesian networks; and
- our colleague, Dr. Pierre Lavallée from Statistics Canada, who spoke on a topic that is perfectly suited for the Symposium's theme: indirect sampling.

My sincere thanks to each of you.

Now I would like to open the sessions of this 21st Methodology Symposium by introducing our keynote speaker. Dr. Monroe Sirken does not require a long introduction, but I would like to mention a few remarkable items of his career. Dr Sirken has worked with the National Center for Health Statistics and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention for more than 50 years.

His many professional interests are, somehow, always connected to people. His work is at the intersection of the statistical, computer, behavioural and cognitive sciences. Dr. Sirken now chairs the Interagency Research Subcommittee of the Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology. This subcommittee, in collaboration with the National Science Foundation, fosters basic research on statistical issues relevant to surveys and programs of the American official statistical system.

After working on network sampling for more than 30 years and on cognitive methods applied to survey research for over a decade, Dr Sirken is well placed to look into how science works. His interest in the philosophy of science explains why his presentation will illustrate and test a theory of the 'serendipity pattern in science' in describing the history of network sampling.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Monroe Sirken.