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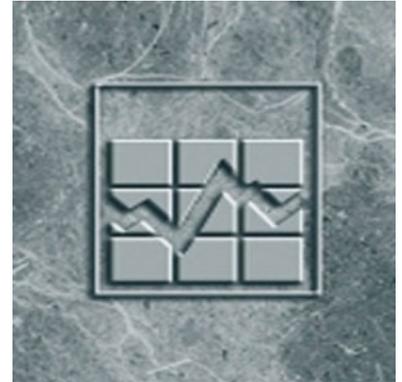
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Survey of Household Spending 2006: Data Quality Indicators

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Survey of Household Spending 2006: Data Quality Indicators

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Note of appreciation

Canada owes the success of its statistical system to a long-standing partnership between Statistics Canada, the citizens of Canada, its businesses, governments and other institutions. Accurate and timely statistical information could not be produced without their continued cooperation and goodwill.

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Symbols

The following standard symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

- . not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- ^P preliminary
- ^r revised
- x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published

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Highlights

Sampling errors

- The coefficients of variation (CVs) of the average estimates of total expenditure per household vary between 1.3% and 1.9% for the provinces. The CV at the national level is 0.7%.
- The coefficients of variation (CVs) of the average estimates for the different summary level expenditure categories are in most cases less than or equal to 1.9% at the national level and are generally lower than 5.0% at the provincial level. The results for dwelling and household equipment characteristics are similar. Since the sample size is smaller in Prince Edward Island, the CVs tend to be higher than those of the other provinces.

Nonresponse

- The final response rate is 71.6%. Provincial response rates range from 68.0% in British Columbia to 75.9% in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The nonresponse rate is 28.4%. Nonresponse is due to refusals (19.9%), to households that could not be contacted (6.5%), and to households with data that were considered unusable (2.0%).
- The nonresponse rate tends to increase with the urbanization level. The nonresponse rate is 24.2% in rural areas and 31.3% in urban centres with a population of one million or more.
- According to an analysis of nonresponse rates in the strata consisting of the high-income geographic areas created under the sample design, the rate in high-income strata (37.8%) is higher than the rate observed in other strata (27.4%). The refusal rate for high-income strata (28.0%) is higher than the rate observed for other strata (19.1%).

Coverage errors

- Undercoverage of households is 9.6% at the national level. Undercoverage of households is also observed for all provinces, with rates varying from 6.0% to 12.4%. Ontario has the highest undercoverage of households.
- Undercoverage of persons is 11.0% at the national level. Undercoverage of persons is observed for all provinces and territories, with rates varying from 6.2% to 14.8%. Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest undercoverage of persons.
- The national slippage rate for children (aged 0 to 17) is very different from the rates for other age groups. For children, the undercoverage rate is 4.6%, whereas for adults, undercoverage is much higher at 12.7%.

Response errors

- Response errors include recall errors, telescopic error and errors due to proxy response. Because the Survey of Household Spending (SHS) interview is lengthy, the response burden can lead to respondent fatigue and have an impact on the data quality. Total interview time varies depending on household characteristics. The average interview time was one hour and thirty-seven minutes. For approximately 5% of households, the interview time exceeded two hours and fifty-five minutes.

Processing errors related to imputation

i) Expenditure variables

- It was necessary to impute at least one expenditure variable¹ for 61.6% of households nationally. Contributing strongly to this rate is the section of the questionnaire dealing with expenditures related to communications services in the home (telephone, cell phone and Internet access), cable television services and satellite distribution services. Since 2004, it has been accepted that for these services, a respondent household can provide only total expenditure for a package (bundled services), indicating which services are included. Approximately 48.9% of usable households required imputation for at least one of these five services.
- The overall imputation rate excluding these five services is 26.9% at the national level. For these expenditures, most households required imputation for one or two of the 243 expenditure variables. Provincially, imputation rates range from a low of 21.0% for Newfoundland and Labrador to a high of 30.7% for Quebec.
- Imputed values account for 44.5% of the estimate of total expenditure on cable television services and 63.2% of the estimate of total expenditure on Internet access services. Imputation rates for households reporting expenditures on one or the other of these two services are respectively 43.6% and 73.1%. These higher rates are mainly due to the fact that among households that reported paying for a package, a large proportion of packages included these two services.
- About 9% of individuals required imputation for clothing variables, but in the vast majority of such cases, the respondents provided the totals and only the components were imputed.
- About 17% of individuals aged 15 and over required imputation on at least one variable in the Personal Taxes, Security and Money Gifts section.

1. Excluding the Clothing section and Personal Taxes, Security and Money Gifts section, which are collected at the individual level and not the household level.

ii) Income variables

- Imputation for at least one income variable was required for 8% of individuals aged 15 and over.

➤ iii) Categorical variables

- For 6.6% of households, it was necessary to impute at least one categorical variable. Approximately 70% of them had only one variable imputed. Provincially, imputation rates range from a low of 1.7% for Newfoundland and Labrador to a high of 10.8% for Ontario. Categorical variables that required imputation can be found in the following sections of the questionnaire: Dwelling Characteristics; Facilities Associated with the Dwelling; Tenure; and Tobacco and Miscellaneous, for variables pertaining to purchases through direct sales.

Introduction

The Survey of Household Spending (SHS) is an annual survey that collects data on household income and expenditure using personal interviews. The 2006 SHS sample consists of 20,436 households² distributed throughout the ten provinces. Collection takes place in January, February and March, and income and spending figures are obtained for the period from January 1 to December 31 of the previous year. Following a redesign that took place in 1997, this survey replaces the periodic Family Expenditure Survey and the Household Facilities and Equipment Survey (with modifications to questionnaires and samples).

Like all surveys, the SHS is subject to errors, despite all the precautions taken at the different stages of the survey to control them. While there is no comprehensive measure of the quality of the data generated by a survey, some quality measures produced at the different stages of the survey can provide users with the information needed in order to interpret the data properly.

This report therefore seeks to describe the quality indicators produced for the 2006 Survey of Household Spending. It covers the usual quality indicators that generally help users interpret data, such as coefficients of variation, response and nonresponse rates, slippage rates and imputation rates.

Quality indicators have been classified according to the main types of error encountered in a survey. Section 1 deals with sampling errors—that is, errors due to the fact that the inferences about the population drawn from the survey are based on information collected from a sample of the population, rather than the entire population. The subsequent sections cover errors not due to sampling. Nonresponse and coverage errors are first discussed in sections 2 and 3. Response errors and processing errors are dealt with in sections 4 and 5 respectively.

This report focuses on data quality. For a detailed description of the methodology of the survey, see reference [1].

2. The initial sample is made up of 24,201 dwellings. From these dwellings, it is necessary to identify and exclude ineligible dwellings (see Section 2.1) to obtain the 20,436 households from which data on income and expenditure are collected.

1 Sampling errors

Sampling errors exist when inferences about the population are drawn from the survey using information collected from a sample, rather than from the entire population. In addition to the sample design and the estimation method used in the Survey of Household Spending, the sample size and the variability of each characteristic are factors that determine sampling error. Characteristics that are rare or are distributed very unevenly in the population will have greater sampling error than characteristics that are observed more frequently or are more homogeneous in the population.

1.1 Measures of sampling error

Standard error is a commonly used measure of sampling error. Standard error is the degree of variation of the estimate considering that a particular sample was selected, rather than another, among all possible samples of the same size under the same sample design. Since the SHS uses a complex sample design and estimation method, the standard error is estimated using a resampling method known as the bootstrap technique. Prior to the 2003 reference year, the jackknife resampling method was used to produce standard error estimation for the SHS. Starting with the 2003 SHS, a decision was made to use the bootstrap resampling method, mainly because the Income Statistics Division was going to publish median expenditure estimates and needed the coefficient of variation of those estimates. The bootstrap resampling method is suitable for variance estimation of non-smooth statistics such as quantiles. For more details on this method, see reference [2].

The coefficient of variation (CV) is also a frequently used measure of the reliability of an estimate. It simply expresses the standard error as a percentage of the estimate. Thus, if an estimate Y is obtained for a certain characteristic and SE is the estimated standard error, then the CV will be $(SE/Y) \times 100$.

Finally, either the standard error or the coefficient of variation may be used to derive another measure of the accuracy of estimates, namely the confidence interval. This measure indicates the level of confidence that, for a characteristic observed, the true value for the population lies within the interval. An interval with a confidence level of 95% corresponds to the estimate obtained from the sample ± 2 standard errors: $(Y \pm 2 SE)$.³ This means that if the sampling were repeated a large number of times, each sample would provide a different interval and 95% of the intervals would contain the true value of the characteristic. Similarly, if the sampling were repeated, the interval $Y \pm SE$ would contain the true value in 68% of cases.

1.2 Coefficients of variation

Estimates of coefficients of variation are calculated for estimates of many characteristics collected in the SHS. The CVs of detailed average household

3. The confidence interval is calculated directly from the CV in similar fashion, namely $Y \pm 2 (CV \times Y)/100$.

expenditure, as well as the CVs of dwelling characteristics and household facilities and equipment, are available at the national and provincial levels (Income Statistics Division, 1-888-297-7355: income@statcan.gc.ca).

It should be noted that the estimated CVs do not take account of the fact that some of the data were imputed and thus may underestimate the true CVs. For most variables, the imputation rates are low (see Section 5) and the provided CVs represent good estimates of the true CVs. However, to assess the reliability of detailed expenditures with a high imputation rate, the CV and the imputation rate should both be considered.

Table 1.1 gives an overview of the CVs of estimates of household averages for a few of the summary-level expenditures categories and for income at the provincial, territorial and national levels.

Table 1.1
Coefficients of variation by province and at the national level for the estimation of average household expenditures for several summary level expenditure categories and for the estimation of average income

Summary level expenditure categories	Can.	N.L.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.
	%										
Total expenditure	0.7	1.5	1.8	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.9	1.4	1.6	1.7
Total current consumption	0.6	1.5	1.8	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.6	1.3	1.8	1.5
Food	0.6	1.4	2.3	1.3	1.4	1.1	1.2	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.4
Shelter	0.8	2.1	2.7	1.6	1.8	1.5	1.5	2.0	1.7	2.0	1.9
Household operation	0.9	2.0	3.0	2.3	2.0	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.8	2.3	2.3
Furnishings	1.6	3.6	4.7	3.9	3.4	3.7	3.1	3.8	4.2	4.8	3.8
Clothing	1.1	2.5	4.6	3.2	2.5	2.2	2.0	3.0	2.8	2.6	3.3
Transportation	1.3	3.7	4.8	3.0	3.1	2.5	2.6	2.9	3.3	3.6	3.5
Health care	1.4	2.9	3.9	2.9	2.7	2.4	3.6	3.2	3.0	3.0	2.7
Personal care	1.1	2.5	3.6	2.4	2.2	1.9	2.1	3.0	2.3	2.5	2.3
Recreation	1.7	4.1	6.2	2.7	4.6	3.9	2.9	3.2	3.4	5.6	3.6
Reading & printed materials	1.8	4.4	4.9	3.3	3.7	4.9	2.8	3.7	4.0	3.6	5.4
Education	3.1	7.3	14.2	8.6	7.8	5.5	5.5	7.9	8.4	8.1	7.3
Tobacco, alcoholic beverages	1.6	4.4	6.9	3.8	3.9	3.0	3.2	4.6	4.0	4.0	4.1
Games of chance (net)	3.2	6.5	13.6	6.2	8.0	7.9	6.0	9.2	6.9	6.7	8.6
Miscellaneous expenditures	2.7	5.5	10.0	6.2	7.1	5.2	5.4	5.5	5.9	5.9	6.6
Personal income tax	1.6	2.9	4.5	3.4	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.6	3.0	3.0	3.7
Personal insurance and pension contributions	1.6	2.9	4.4	2.3	2.3	1.6	2.5	2.2	2.5	4.6	7.4
Gifts and contributions	3.8	5.9	9.6	9.4	10.0	9.9	6.8	22.3	7.6	6.2	8.2
Income	0.8	1.5	2.1	1.4	1.2	1.6	1.5	2.0	1.7	1.4	1.7

The coefficients of variation of the average estimates of total expenditure per household vary between 1.3% and 1.9% for the provinces, and the national figure is 0.7%.

For summary-level expenditure categories, the CVs at the national level are less than or equal to 1.9%, except for the following categories: education, games of chance, miscellaneous expenditures and gifts of money and contributions. These expenditure categories represent respectively: 1.7%, 0.4%, 1.6% and 2.2% of

total expenditure (data not shown). Also, with the exception of these categories, the CVs are generally less than or equal to 5% at the provincial level. Since the sample size was smaller in Prince Edward Island, the CVs tend to be higher than those of other provinces.

Table 1.2 gives an overview of the CVs for some dwelling characteristics and household equipment estimates at the provincial level as well as the national level.

Table 1.2
Coefficients of variation by province and at the national level for some dwelling characteristics and household equipment

Categories	Can.	N.L.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.
	%										
Owner	0.9	1.6	2.6	1.9	1.7	2.1	1.7	2.0	1.9	1.9	2.0
Renter	1.7	5.8	6.3	4.3	5.7	2.7	3.5	4.5	5.0	5.4	4.0
Washing machine	0.7	0.9	1.6	1.5	1.1	1.1	1.4	1.7	1.2	1.5	1.6
Clothes dryer	0.7	0.9	1.8	1.6	1.1	1.2	1.5	1.6	1.1	1.5	1.7
Dishwasher	1.1	3.1	3.9	3.2	3.0	2.0	2.3	2.8	2.5	2.2	2.1
Freezer	1.1	1.6	3.2	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.3	1.7	1.4	2.1	2.5
Microwave oven	0.3	0.6	1.0	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.7
Cellular phone	0.7	2.2	3.4	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.3	2.1	1.7	1.4	1.5
CD player	0.6	1.2	1.5	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.1	1.2
Cable TV	0.9	2.5	4.8	3.0	2.9	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.8	2.5	1.5
Satellite dish	2.2	5.7	7.1	5.5	4.4	4.5	4.5	5.3	3.8	5.1	6.2
DVD player	0.5	1.3	2.2	1.2	1.3	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.1
Home computer	0.6	2.0	2.9	1.5	1.7	1.2	1.1	1.5	1.7	1.2	1.2
Regular tel. connection to a computer (Modem)	4.0	12.5	14.3	11.9	9.5	6.5	8.2	10.4	8.0	10.0	10.8
High-Speed tel. connection to a computer	1.9	5.9	6.3	5.3	4.1	4.9	3.6	4.3	4.2	5.1	5.1
Cable connection to a computer	1.9	6.0	19.4	5.8	11.4	4.1	3.5	5.7	7.7	4.6	3.5
Use of internet (home)	0.7	2.3	3.3	1.9	2.1	1.7	1.3	1.9	1.9	1.5	1.4
Owned vehicles (one)	1.4	3.2	5.1	3.2	3.2	2.9	2.5	3.4	3.5	4.3	3.2
Owned vehicles (2 or more)	1.4	4.7	4.3	3.8	3.4	3.6	2.8	3.6	2.8	3.4	2.8

The coefficients of variation for dwelling characteristics and household equipment are generally below 5% at the provincial level, with some exceptions in the following categories: *renter*, *satellite dish*, *regular telephone connection to a computer (modem)*, *high-speed telephone connection to a computer* and *cable connection to a computer*. Prince Edward Island is an exception. Since the sample size there is smaller, the CVs tend to be higher than those of the other provinces. Only Quebec has a CV below 3% for the renter category. It is also the province with the largest proportion of renters (43.2%).

The CVs for dwelling characteristics and household equipment at the national level are less than or equal to 2.0% with the exception of the following categories: *satellite dish* and *regular telephone connection*. There is a smaller proportion of households with such equipment for these two categories. At the national level, the proportions are respectively 24.1% and 10.2%.

1.3 Model for deriving an approximation of the CV

Estimates for different domains of interest (for example, by income quintile) for the summary level expenditure categories are available in the publication *Spending Patterns in Canada* (see reference [4]). Estimates for different domains of interest for detailed expenditures are available upon request from the Income Statistics Division. (For more details on tables available upon request from the Income Statistics Division, see reference [3] or [4].) For operational reasons, it is not possible to produce CVs for all the characteristics collected by the survey at all the different levels of aggregation that may interest users.

1.3.1 Approximation of the CV for domain estimates

It is, however, possible to calculate an approximation of the CV by using a relationship between the number of households in the sample who reported expenditures for a given category and the CV at an aggregated level. This relationship, based on the CV's tendency to increase in proportion to a decrease in the square root of the number of households reporting an expenditure, is illustrated below.

Formula for approximating the CV for a domain (subgroup of the population)

If $CV(Y)$ represents the CV for the estimate of the average per household of a certain characteristic for the entire population, then an approximation of the CV of the estimate of that characteristic can be calculated for a domain (which may be considered as a subgroup of the population, such as a household type, an income quintile, an urbanization level) according to the following equation:

$$CV(Y_d) = CV(Y) \times \sqrt{\frac{nP}{n_d P_d}}$$

where

- n: number of households in the sample
- P: estimate of the proportion of households reporting a value > 0 for this characteristic in the population
- n_d : number of households in the sample in domain d
- P_d : estimate of the proportion of households reporting a value > 0 for this characteristic in domain d

Generally, approximations for the different domains are calculated using the CV, size n and proportion P at the national level. If an approximation of a CV is desired for a domain that is entirely contained within a single province (for example, a metropolitan area), then it is preferable to use these values at the provincial level, since provincial CVs are published for the 2006 SHS (reference [3]). It should be noted that a CV obtained using this approach is only an approximation of the real value.

1.3.2 Approximation of the CV from the microdata file

Microdata file users can obtain an approximation of the CV of the estimates using another method that will generally provide better results than the method described in the previous section for the CVs of detailed expenditure categories. This approach is described in detail in the documentation provided with the 2006 microdata file. This method of approximation can be used only with the microdata file, since it requires having data and weights for each household.

The document on data quality for the 1997 SHS contains the results from the performance evaluation of these two CV approximation methods.

1.4 Suppression of unreliable data in estimation tables

Since the coefficient of variation is an indicator of the reliability of data, we would like to use it to determine whether or not the estimates should be published. Estimates for which the CV is more than 33% are not considered sufficiently reliable to be published. However, CV estimates are not calculated for many of the published estimates. The suppression rule for expenditure estimates is therefore based on the number of households reporting a value greater than zero.⁴

It can be shown that CVs are usually below 33% when the number of households reporting an expenditure is greater than 30. Since this is an approximate rule, some estimates may be published even though the CV is greater than 33%, and some estimates will not be published even though the CV is less than 33%. The document on data quality for the 1997 SHS gives the results from the evaluation of the risk of error in the use of the suppression rule.

2 Nonresponse

Errors due to nonresponse result from the fact that some potential respondents do not provide the necessary information or the provided information proves to be unusable. When the respondent has failed to respond to only some questions, this is referred to as partial nonresponse. In such a case, the missing data are imputed. Errors associated with imputation are described in Section 5, which deals with processing errors. In the present section, nonresponse includes collection nonresponse, which is mainly due to the inability to contact the household or to the refusal of the members of the household to participate partially or completely in the survey, as well as data collected from households that prove to be unusable.

The main impact of nonresponse on data quality is that it can introduce a bias in the estimates if the characteristics of respondents and nonrespondents differ and the difference has an impact on the characteristics studied. Nonresponse rates may easily be calculated, but they have only an indicative value with regard to

4. In practice, we use the estimate of the proportion of households reporting an expenditure, which is multiplied by the sample size.

data quality, since they do not allow estimation of the bias associated with the estimates. The scope of nonresponse may be considered as an indicator of the risks of bias in the estimates.

2.1 Response, nonresponse and vacancy rates

Since the units selected in the SHS are dwellings, interviewers must first identify ineligible dwellings, that is, dwellings occupied by persons who are not part of the target population, as well as dwellings that no longer exist (demolished, mobile home moved or dwelling converted to business) and vacant dwellings (unoccupied, seasonal or under construction).

Among eligible dwellings, the proportion of households that did not respond to the survey is evaluated next. This is called the collection nonresponse rate. Included are households that refused to participate in the survey and households where no contact could be made with the respondents, either because they were absent or because of special circumstances (language problem, illness, death).

Again among eligible dwellings, the rate of unusable data is determined. Unusable data refers to the number of households whose questionnaires were at least partially completed but which were rejected during data processing. When many questions on income or expenditures have been left unanswered, the questionnaire is classified as incomplete and is not used.

Note that in the years prior to the 2006 SHS survey, a data quality control measure called the balance edit check was used. This measure identified the records where the expenditure reported was more than 20% different from the sum of income and net change of assets for a household. The interviewer or senior interviewer was instructed to attempt to collect additional information to try to balance the expenses with income and changes in assets within 15%. Unbalanced questionnaires (more than 20%) at the processing stage were deemed unusable and were not included in estimates. In the 2006 SHS, with the introduction of computer assisted interviews, the balance edit was not used at the collection stage. Instead a number of automatic edits flagged entries that seemed unusual or inconsistent. However, when the balancing was applied at the processing stage, the number of unbalanced questionnaires in the 2006 SHS increased significantly, from 546 questionnaires for the 2005 reference year to 4,300 or 29.4% of the 14,635 completed questionnaires for 2006.

Discarding as unusable this number of questionnaires would seriously risk biasing the results, so a careful analysis was done comparing the balanced and the unbalanced questionnaires. There were few significant differences in the average and percentage reporting of expenses between the balanced and the unbalanced questionnaires. Most of the difference lay in the income and the change of assets reported on the unbalanced responses. We concluded that we could include the unbalanced questionnaires in the estimates of expenses, but users should note that the quality of the income and change of assets may be lower than in previous years.

For the 2007 SHS, the electronic questionnaire will be modified to re-introduce the balance edit feature and ensure identification and correction of out-of-balance

records during the interview and collection, as in previous years. The rates of unusable data shown in the tables of this document are therefore lower than those of previous years, since they do not take out-of-balance questionnaires into account.

Note that all rates provided in this section are unweighted. For the 2006 Survey of Household Spending, the final response rate is 71.6%. Table 2.1-1 shows the final response rate as well as the sample size (eligible households) broken down by refusals, units not contacted, unusable data and usable data. This rate is provided at both the national and the provincial level.

**Table 2.1-1
Sample size and response rate (%) by province and at the national level**

Province	Eligible households	Non-contacts	Refusals	Unusables	Usables	Final response rate (at estimation stage) ¹
	number					%
Canada	20,436	1,325	4,073	403	14,635	71.6
Newfoundland and Labrador	1,753	105	293	24	1,331	75.9
Prince Edward Island	873	44	185	27	617	70.7
Nova Scotia	2,013	167	401	33	1,412	70.1
New Brunswick	1,774	124	295	42	1,313	74.0
Quebec	2,648	190	542	33	1,883	71.1
Ontario	3,097	209	654	78	2,156	69.6
Manitoba	1,957	91	358	36	1,472	75.2
Saskatchewan	1,898	84	357	27	1,430	75.3
Alberta	2,011	137	460	34	1,380	68.6
British Columbia	2,412	174	528	69	1,641	68.0

1. Usable/eligible x 100

Table 2.1-2 shows the final nonresponse rate; the collection nonresponse rate, broken down by refusals and units not contacted; and the rate of unusable data owing to incomplete questionnaires. The vacancy rate is also included. These rates are provided at the national and provincial level.

Note that the vacancy rates shown in tables of Section 2 include vacant dwellings (unoccupied, seasonal or under construction) as well as dwellings that no longer exist (demolished, mobile home moved or dwelling converted to business).

**Table 2.1-2
Nonresponse and vacancy rates by province and at the national level**

Province	Vacancy rate	Collection nonresponse rate			Unusable data rate total	Final nonresponse rate(at estimation stage)
		Total	No contact	refusal		
%						
Canada	13.4	26.4	6.5	19.9	2.0	28.4
Newfoundland and Labrador	16.8	22.7	6.0	16.7	1.4	24.1
Prince Edward Island	18.1	26.2	5.0	21.2	3.1	29.3
Nova Scotia	14.9	28.2	8.3	19.9	1.6	29.9
New Brunswick	17.6	23.6	7.0	16.6	2.4	26.0
Quebec	11.3	27.6	7.2	20.5	1.2	28.9
Ontario	11.2	27.9	6.7	21.1	2.5	30.4
Manitoba	8.4	22.9	4.6	18.3	1.8	24.8
Saskatchewan	14.6	23.2	4.4	18.8	1.4	24.7
Alberta	11.5	29.7	6.8	22.9	1.7	31.4
British Columbia	13.6	29.1	7.2	21.9	2.9	32.0

The final nonresponse rate in Canada is 28.4%. It is due to refusals (19.9%), to households that could not be contacted (6.5%), and finally to households for which the data were unusable (2.0%). For each province, refusals are the main cause of nonresponse, followed by units not contacted and by the households for which the data were unusable.

The final nonresponse rate varies from one province to another. Newfoundland and Labrador has the lowest nonresponse rate at 24.1%. Saskatchewan has the lowest rate of units not contacted (4.4%). The rate of unusable data is very low in Quebec at 1.2%. The nonresponse rates in Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba and Saskatchewan are all less than 25%, while rates in excess of 30% are observed in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. The latter provinces have an especially high refusal rate, combined with a rate of units not contacted that is above the national average.

Vacancy rates are shown in Table 2.1-2, but it should be kept in mind that vacant dwellings do not contribute to the bias of the sample if they are correctly identified. By analysing vacancy rates, we can detect dwelling identification problems associated with the collection process. The national vacancy rate for the 2006 SHS is 13.4%.

2.2 Nonresponse according to urbanization level

Nonresponse varies according to urbanization level. The various rates at the national scale are shown by urbanization level in Table 2.2.⁵

5. Tables on nonresponse rates by urbanization level and province are available on request from the Household Survey Methods Division.

Table 2.2
Nonresponse and vacancy rates (%) by urbanization level

Urbanization category	Vacancy rate	Collection nonresponse rate			Unusable data rate (incomplete questionnaires)	Total nonresponse rate (at estimation stage)
		Total	No contact	Refusal	Total	
Urban		%				
1,000,000 or more	9.9	29.3	7.5	21.8	2.0	31.3
500,000 to 999,999	7.3	29.0	6.4	22.6	1.6	30.6
250,000 to 499,999	9.7	32.4	9.7	22.8	2.5	34.9
100,000 to 249,999	11.6	28.4	7.0	21.4	2.0	30.3
30,000 to 99,999	11.8	24.0	5.4	18.6	1.8	25.8
Less than 30,000	11.9	20.6	5.2	15.4	2.3	22.9
Rural	25.6	22.3	5.1	17.2	1.8	24.2
Total	13.4	26.4	6.5	19.9	2.0	28.4

The final nonresponse rate generally increases with urbanization level. The urbanization category "250,000 to 499,999" has the highest rates of units not contacted (9.7%), refusal (22.8%) and unusable data (2.5%).

The collection nonresponse rate also tends to increase with urbanization level. There is a difference of nearly 9% between the urbanization categories "6,000 to 30,000" and "1,000,000 or more." Refusals account for more than 50% of total nonresponse at each level of urbanization.

From an examination of the vacancy rate by urbanization level, it emerges that the vacancy rate in rural areas (25.6%) is at least twice that for low-population urban areas (11.9%). These low-population urban areas also have a higher vacancy rate, on average, than higher-population urban areas. This phenomenon is also observed in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and is probably attributable to a greater number of seasonal dwellings in rural areas. This explains, among other things, why the vacancy rate is higher in the Atlantic provinces, as illustrated in Table 2.1-2, and especially in Prince Edward Island, since that province has a higher proportion of rural dwellings in the sample.

2.3 Nonresponse according to income strata

Since income information is not available for nonrespondents, it is not possible to compare nonresponse rates according to income. However, the LFS sample design, used for the SHS, was constructed in such a way that in census metropolitan areas, there are strata consisting of geographic areas with a high concentration of high-income households. While the number of high-income strata remains relatively small (51 out of a total of 1,060 strata), the comparison of response rates in this group in relation to the other strata provides relevant information on the potential effect of nonresponse (see Table 2.3).

Note that in addition to regular strata, the "Other" strata category includes the following four types of strata: strata with a high vacancy rate, high-cost strata, strata with a concentration of immigrants, and strata with a concentration of

Aboriginals. Since the portion of the SHS sample allocated to the latter four strata was smaller, the results for them are not broken out in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3
Comparison of nonresponse and vacancy rates in high-income strata in relation to other strata

Stratum type based on income	Vacancy rate	Collection nonresponse rate			Unusable data rate	Total nonresponse rate (at estimation stage)
		Total	No contact	Refusal	Total	
%						
High-income	7.2	35.2	7.2	28.0	2.6	37.8
Others	14.0	25.5	6.4	19.1	1.9	27.4
Total	13.4	26.4	6.5	19.9	2.0	28.4

In high-income strata, the final nonresponse rate (37.8%) is approximately 38% higher than in the other strata. The refusal rate for high-income strata is 28.0%, which is higher than for the other strata. High-income strata and the other strata also have different rates of unusable data.

As may be seen, the vacancy rate is lower for high-income strata than for the other strata. This phenomenon was also observed for previous surveys.

2.4 Adjustment for nonresponse

To compensate for nonresponse, the weights in the SHS are inflated by the inverse of the weighted response rate within certain predefined groups. Following the overhaul of the LFS sample design, the nonresponse adjustment groups were redefined. As was the case for previous years, these groups are defined on the basis of the different urbanization levels in each province and of sub-provincial geographic areas for Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. Also, specific nonresponse adjustment groups were created for high-income strata. As was seen in the previous section, the number of high-income strata was increased with the introduction of the new LFS sample design. Thus, it is now possible to form nonresponse adjustment groups for high-income strata in all provinces except Prince Edward Island. Such a group cannot be formed in Prince Edward Island because that province has no high-income strata.

The weighted rates differ from the rates presented in this section, since the former take the sampling weight of each household into account. An algebraic description of the adjustment for nonresponse is provided in Appendix A.

The adjustment of weights for nonresponse serves to take account of differences in nonresponse by urbanization level (as illustrated in Section 2.2) and geographic area or by groups of high-income strata. It will serve to reduce the bias insofar as the characteristics of respondents and non-respondents are similar for a given urbanization level and geographic area or for a given group of high-income strata.

It should be noted that a nonresponse adjustment group can be combined with another group if the number of households in the group is too small or the adjustment factor is too high.

3 Coverage errors

The target population was defined in the design of the survey. It is useful to go over this definition, since a good understanding of the target population is necessary in order to properly interpret the survey data. It is important to note that the SHS uses the sampling frame of the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

Target population

The target population consists of individuals living in private households. It therefore excludes residents of institutions such as prisons, chronic care hospitals or senior citizens' homes, as well as members of religious orders and other groups living communally, members of the Armed Forces living in military compounds, and individuals residing permanently in hotels or rooming houses. Also excluded are foreign countries' official representatives residing in Canada and their families as well as individuals residing on Indian reserves or public lands (with exception for the Territories). With these exclusions, the survey covers nearly 98% of the population in the ten provinces. The Territories are excluded from the target population for the 2006 SHS, since the survey covers this region only every second year.

We did not collect data from persons temporarily living away from their families (for example, students at university) because the information would be obtained from their families if selected in the sample.

Coverage errors result from inadequate representation of the target population based on the units in the sampling frame. Some units of the target population may be omitted from the sampling frame, in which case there is undercoverage. Other units that are not in the target population may be included by error, or some units may be included more than once. These units are responsible for overcoverage.

3.1 Undercoverage and overcoverage: slippage rates

In the SHS, the sample is selected using a list of dwellings in each selected cluster. Factors contributing to undercoverage are: the omission of dwellings in the creation of the list, new dwellings that are added between the creation of the list and the interviewer's visit (mainly in developing areas), and the erroneous classification of vacant dwellings. The inclusion of dwellings that are not within the boundaries of the cluster is a source of overcoverage. Similarly, errors can occur during data collection, due to improper identification of persons as members of the selected household. These errors also contribute to undercoverage or overcoverage.

Also, as described in Section 2.4, reweighting methods are implemented to take account of nonresponse. However, when these adjustments are made, it is impossible to correct the survey weights to ensure that all subgroups within the population are well represented.

A good representation of the target population is essential to the production of realistic expenditure estimates. The sample must adequately represent the individuals in the target population as well as the distribution of households according to their size.

There is generally a net undercoverage of the number of persons and the number of households in the SHS. This undercoverage is corrected by an adjustment of weights using auxiliary or reference data based on post-censal demographic estimates. The slippage rate (see Appendix A) is a measure of the percentage of difference between the estimates from these auxiliary data and the survey estimates calculated using weights not adjusted with these data.⁶ Slippage therefore represents the combined effect of undercoverage and unbalance in certain subgroups of the population created by survey nonresponse that could not be corrected at the reweighting stage.

Slippage rates by age group at the national and provincial level are shown in Table 3.1, while slippage rates by household size, used in adjusting weights, are shown in Table 3.2. A positive rate indicates overcoverage of the number of persons or households in the survey.

Table 3.1
Slippage rates for provinces by age group

Slippage rates for provinces by age group											
Age	Newfoundland and Labrador	Prince Edward Island	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Quebec	Ontario	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia	Canada
	%										
0-6	-11.8	0.2	-8.6	-5.4	9.1	0.7	8.0	-8.5	0.7	-7.5	1.0
7-17	-11.7	3.0	-5.8	-7.2	1.5	-12.7	-1.6	0.3	-4.4	-1.0	-6.0
18-24	-32.5	-53.1	-19.4	-27.6	-15.7	-18.5	-16.0	-11.9	-27.1	-27.9	-20.5
25-34	-25.1	-26.8	-23.2	-21.7	-8.8	-26.3	-10.8	-17.9	-13.9	-22.5	-19.3
35-44	-14.7	-7.1	-18.0	-17.4	-4.5	-14.5	-1.8	-10.1	-7.0	-11.4	-10.6
45-54	-16.9	-16.1	2.2	-0.1	-14.9	-16.6	-12.2	-10.8	-15.7	-17.9	-15.0
55-64	-3.7	-0.1	-9.4	-9.0	0.8	-7.8	-6.5	-7.3	-11.5	-1.2	-4.9
65 +	-7.1	-7.7	-4.9	-7.3	-10.3	-9.0	-6.6	-11.6	-7.6	-1.9	-8.0
Total	-14.8	-12.7	-10.2	-11.4	-6.2	-14.0	-6.3	-9.6	-11.1	-11.4	-11.0

6. The subweight, which is the survey weight adjusted for nonresponse, is used (see Appendix A).

For the 2006 SHS, the net national undercoverage rate was 11.0%. An analysis of Table 3.1 with respect to age groups reveals that at the national level, the slippage rates for children (aged 0 to 6 and 7 to 17) are very different from those for the other age groups. The net undercoverage rate for all children combined is 4.6%, while it is 12.7% for adults (data not shown). The slippage rates for those aged 55 and over are also lower than for other adults. The highest rates at the national level are for individuals in the 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 age groups.

We also observe net undercoverage for all provinces, with the rates varying from 6.2% to 14.8%. Quebec has the lowest net undercoverage rate (6.2%). Note, however, that a low overall undercoverage rate does not guarantee better coverage for all subgroups in the population. For example, the general slippage rate observed in Quebec (-6.2%) conceals one of the worst cases of overcoverage at the provincial level for the 0 to 6 age group (9.1%) and one of the worst cases of undercoverage for the 65 and over age group (10.3%). The highest net undercoverage rate is in Newfoundland and Labrador, where it stands at 14.8%.

When we analyse the cross-tabulation of provinces and age groups, we observe that the highest net undercoverage rate is for the 18 to 24 age group in Prince Edward Island (53.1%). Another point worth noting is that the pattern of slippage rate variation differs substantially for age groups from one province to the next. However, the worst undercoverage rates are generally observed in the 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 age groups. The lowest rates are for the 0 to 6 and 7 to 17 age groups, as was seen at the national level.

As mentioned previously, the SHS uses the LFS sampling frame. Over the same period, the national LFS undercoverage rate was 9.5% (reference [5]). This is slightly lower than the 12.9% SHS rate for those aged 15 and over.

Table 3.2
Slippage rates for provinces by household size

Province	Slippage rate			
	Households	One-person households	Two-person households	Three-person and more households
	%			
Canada	-9.6	-12.8	-6.4	-10.2
Newfoundland and Labrador	-11.8	-20.0	-1.1	-17.4
Prince Edward Island	-9.8	-6.7	-6.2	-15.0
Nova Scotia	-6.6	-3.6	-3.2	-12.6
New Brunswick	-10.4	-15.7	-5.2	-12.3
Quebec	-6.1	-8.2	-2.4	-7.8
Ontario	-12.4	-18.7	-9.7	-10.8
Manitoba	-6.0	-8.9	-3.4	-6.0
Saskatchewan	-8.3	-10.0	-6.5	-8.8
Alberta	-8.7	-3.3	-9.8	-10.9
British Columbia	-11.0	-16.8	-5.2	-11.5

Nationally, the number of households was underestimated by 9.6%. This underestimation is slightly lower than the underestimation of 11.0% observed for the number of individuals. Both nationally and provincially, undercoverage is observed for all sizes of household. Nationally, the undercoverage rate for one-person households (12.8%) is twice as high as the corresponding rate for two-person households (6.4%).

Provincially, there is also a sizable variation in slippage rates, with rates varying from -6.0% in Manitoba to -12.4% in Ontario. These rates are generally consistent with the slippage rates at the person level, seen in Table 3.1.

For all provinces except Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Alberta, the underestimation for one-person households is much more important than the underestimation for two-person households (1.5 to 18 times higher). In these provinces, the slippage rate for households of three or more persons is between these two rates, although it is generally closer to the slippage rate for one-person households. In Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, the slippage rates for one- and two-person households are equivalent, while households of three or more persons are substantially under-represented. Alberta has a distinctive pattern, since the lowest underestimation is for one-person households while the rates for two-person households and households of three or more persons are fairly similar.

3.2 Adjustment at the population and household levels

To correct the problem of the sample's representativeness, shown in Table 3.1, and to reduce the resulting bias, the survey data are adjusted during weighting using demographic estimates for the age groups defined in this table, for each province. For more details on the adjustment methodology, see references [1] and [6]. This adjustment reduces the bias but does not eliminate it entirely if the characteristics of the individuals omitted from the survey differ from those of individuals included for a given age group in a province.

It should also be noted that the effectiveness of the adjustment based on demographic estimates depends largely on the quality of those estimates and their accuracy in representing the target population of the survey. The demographic estimates are not error-free. They are post-censal estimates based on the population counts from the 2001 Census adjusted for net undercoverage, and they take into account recent statistics on migration, births, deaths, etc. These demographic estimates are adjusted to account for certain exclusions specific to household surveys, such as persons living in institutions. Conceptually, they differ slightly from the SHS target population in that they include persons living in non-institutional collective dwellings, such as members of groups living communally and individuals permanently residing in hotels or rooming houses. However, this difference is considered negligible, since such individuals represent less than 0.4% of the Canadian population.

To remedy the problem of the representativeness of the sample in terms of the number of households by size as illustrated in Table 3.2, the survey data are adjusted using auxiliary data. By adjusting the SHS weights to reflect post-censal

estimates of the number of households by size, the goal is to compensate for the bias resulting from inadequate representation of households. However, the bias will not necessarily be eliminated if characteristics of households not interviewed (i.e., omitted or non-responding households) differ from those of responding households for a given household size. As in the case of demographic estimates of population, the effectiveness of the adjustment will depend on the quality of the auxiliary data on the number of households.

In addition to demographic estimates of age groups by province, two other sets of auxiliary data are used during weighting to adjust survey data and thereby improve their representativeness. The first set of data is used to control for the number of children and adults in certain major cities. For the second set, counts for major categories of income from wages and salaries are used when adjusting weights to ensure a degree of consistency between the income distributions from the SHS and those from outside sources.

4 Response errors

Response errors represent a lack of accuracy in responses to questions. They can be attributed to different factors, including a questionnaire that requires improvements, misinterpretation of questions by interviewers or respondents, and errors in respondents' statements.

In the SHS, there can be various reasons for errors in respondents' statements. First, there are recall errors that occur when a respondent forgets expenditures made during the period covered by the survey (which corresponds to the calendar year), or when a respondent provides an erroneous value because of the time interval that has elapsed between the time of purchase and the date of the interview. Recall errors are probably the survey's largest source of response error, since the reference period is long (12 months) and a great variety of information is requested.

To reduce the magnitude of this type of error, respondents are encouraged to consult various documents (bills, bank statements, etc.) in order to provide more accurate information. To determine expenditures for small items purchased at regular intervals, interviewers generally suggest that respondents estimate the frequency of the purchases and the price generally paid in order to derive expenditures for a 12-month period.

A second source of error in respondents' reporting is telescopic error, which consists of including in the reference period events that occurred before or after it. In the SHS, the use of the calendar year is considered to provide a good marker for the start of the reference period. Furthermore, since the reference period is a long one, telescopic error has less impact.

Responses by proxy can also contribute to response error. The household member who made an expenditure is generally best able to report it accurately. This is definitely the case with, say, personal purchases. Expenditures reported

by an intermediary are more likely to be tainted by response error, and this type of error tends to have a greater effect on certain types of expenditures.

Among other sources of response error, the extent of the respondent's cooperation should not be overlooked. For personal reasons, the respondent may decide not to mention particular expenditures or decide to twist the facts.

In the SHS, another factor is the response burden, owing to the length of the interview and the great variety of items to be reported, as well as the pace of the interview. This can lead to respondent fatigue and affect the quality of the responses obtained. The interview time varies greatly from one household to another, depending on household size, income and various other characteristics. The average interview time was one hour and thirty-seven minutes. Also note that for approximately 5% of households, the interview time exceeded two hours and fifty-five minutes.

While response errors are a major source of error in a recall interview, they are the aspect of data quality that is the hardest to measure. Generally, it is necessary to conduct quite costly special studies in an attempt to measure them. Efforts are made to combat response errors by using survey techniques designed to reduce them.

5 Processing errors

Errors can arise in all types of data handling. The main stages of data processing are response coding, data entry, editing, imputation of partial nonresponse and weighting. In the SHS, different procedures are applied at each stage in order to minimize processing errors, and the survey estimates are compared with other data sources prior to release. Errors related to the adjustments made at the weighting stage have been described in sections 2 and 3. The other types of processing errors are covered in this section.

Owing to the shift to a computer assisted collection method in 2006, data processing and quality control procedures were altered. Automated edits incorporated into the questionnaire replaced the previously conducted balance edit checks and edits in regional offices. For the 2006 SHS, interviewers entered responses on a portable computer and conducted an initial edit simultaneously. Thus, interval controls, which showed minimums and maximums for certain purchases, were applied if the interviewer entered an unusual amount. Other edits targeted inconsistent responses, such as where the household was renting its dwelling but no rent was paid.

The processing of SHS data also involves imputation for partial nonresponse. Partial nonresponse occurs when the respondent refuses to answer or does not know the answer to certain questions. The imputation approach differs depending on whether the data are categorical or continuous. Categorical data take on only specific values (as in yes/no questions or type of dwelling questions), while continuous data can take any numerical value (as for income and expenditure data).

Income and expenditure data are imputed using the nearest neighbour technique. The imputation is done on one group of variables at a time, with the groups chosen by taking the relationships among the variables into account. A group generally corresponds to a section of the questionnaire. For each group, the missing values for a recipient (a household that has some missing data for at least one of these variables) are imputed from data on the most similar record among all donors (households that have no missing values for these variables). For each recipient, the closest donor is chosen as the one that minimizes a particular distance function. This function is based on matching variables that are chosen because they are correlated with the variables to be imputed. For example, the total income of a household is chosen as a matching variable for all sections pertaining to expenditures. It must also be ensured that, after receiving the donor values, the recipient household satisfies certain consistency rules. In general, the imputation is done at the household level, but in some groups (e.g., income and clothing expenditures), the imputation is done at the person level since the original data are collected at that level for these variables.

Note that since 2001, the imputation of all expenditure and income data has been done using the Canadian Census Edit and Imputation System (CANCEIS) of Statistics Canada. This new system is based on methodology that is slightly different from that in the system used previously. The new system allows a better use of categorical variables as matching fields when selecting a donor. Moreover, this system lends itself to the imputation of both continuous and categorical data. The new system was tested prior to its implementation and the results it gave were similar to those with the old system. Starting with 2003, categorical data, which are found mainly in the dwelling characteristics and facilities sections of the questionnaire, are imputed with the CANCEIS system. The categorical data were previously imputed with the help of a "hot deck" imputation technique that randomly chooses a donor from a group of respondent households with similar characteristics.

The bias caused by imputation of partial nonresponse is difficult to evaluate. It depends on the differences between respondents and nonrespondents as well as the ability of the imputation method to produce unbiased estimates. However, the imputation rates give an indication of the importance of partial nonresponse. They are presented in the following section.

5.1 Proportion of households or individuals requiring imputation, at the national and provincial levels

A first indication of the magnitude of partial nonresponse is the proportion of households requiring imputation and the number of variables imputed per household. The questionnaire can be divided into two major groups of variables: those collected at the household level and those collected at the individual level (such as income and clothing expenditure). For the latter, it is important to note that the respondent may provide only the total income or total clothing expenditures if he/she is unable to provide the breakdowns by source of income or type of expenditure. The level of imputation for the components of income and clothing expenditure is then larger, but this does not affect total income, total clothing expenditure or total expenditure.

The percentage of households requiring imputation for household expenditure (excluding clothing expenditures and expenditures in the section on Personal Taxes, Security and Money Gifts) is presented in the next sub-section. The subsequent sub-section presents the percentage of persons requiring imputation for a clothing expenditure variable, the percentage of persons requiring imputation for an income variable and the percentage of persons requiring imputation for a variable in the section on Personal Taxes, Security and Money Gifts. Finally, the last sub-section presents the results for the percentage of households requiring imputation for at least one of the categorical variables. After data imputation by the system, some corrections might have been needed on both imputed and non-imputed variables, in order to ensure data consistency. In reality, these changes constitute only a very small percentage. The results are provided at the national and provincial levels. This gives an indication of which provinces are most affected by imputation.

5.1.1 Household expenditure imputation by province

Table 5.1-1 shows the percentage of usable households requiring imputation of at least one expenditure variable. Usable households are all households living in eligible dwellings, excluding households who could not be contacted, who refused to participate in the survey, or who provided incomplete data or who were out of balance (see definitions in Section 2.1). The table is broken down by the number of imputed variables (out of 243) for a household.

Note that regular mortgage payments and mortgage insurance premiums are included under shelter costs and thus under total expenditure. Starting with 2002, these two variables were added to the calculation of imputation rates shown in Table 5.1-1. The impact of this change is a higher overall imputation rate.

Starting in 2004, a change was made to the questionnaire regarding expenditures on communication services in the home (telephone, cell phone and Internet access), cable television services and satellite distribution services. Because of the growing use of packages (bundled services), a household may be billed for combined services, with the result that it is more difficult for it to provide expenditures for individual services. In such a case, the respondent household may provide only the total expenditure for these services while indicating which services are included in the package. Expenditures for individual services are then imputed in two stages. First, we impute households for which only a few services are missing, followed by households for which only the total expenditure for the package is available. For the latter households, the imputed expenditures for services (those included in the package) are adjusted proportionally so that their sum corresponds to the total expenditure on the package as provided by the respondent household. Since this change has had a major impact on the overall imputation rate for expenditures, the imputation rates in Table 5.1-1 are shown separately with and without the costs of communications services in the home, rental of cable television services and rental of satellite distribution services. Also, since this change has had an impact on the level of imputation of expenditures for these five services, Table 5.1-2 is provided, showing the imputation rate and a measure of the impact of imputation for each of these services.

**Table 5.1-1
Households requiring expenditure imputation by province**

Province	Households requiring imputation for expenditure variables ¹ (excluding clothing expenditures and expenditures in the section on Personal Taxes, Security and Money gifts)							
	Excluding expenditures related to communications services in the home and rental services for cable television and satellite distribution				Including expenditures related to communications services in the home and rental services for cable television and satellite distribution			
	Number of variables imputed (out of 243)			Total	Number of variables imputed (out of 248)			Total
	1	2	3 or more		1	2	3 or more	
	%							
Canada	14.5	5.5	6.9	26.9	7.5	23.2	30.9	61.6
N.L.	13.2	4.3	3.5	21.0	6.9	23.2	24.6	54.8
P.E.I.	16.9	6.2	6.8	29.8	6.3	17.5	41.2	65.0
N.S.	16.4	6.7	6.5	29.7	7.0	19.8	41.7	68.6
N.B.	15.5	5.8	5.6	26.8	8.1	20.6	29.0	57.8
Que.	18.3	5.0	7.4	30.7	11.7	16.1	28.6	56.4
Ont.	12.2	5.1	7.0	24.3	6.3	19.8	32.6	58.6
Man.	13.4	4.3	6.0	23.7	7.0	18.1	29.9	55.0
Sask.	14.0	6.0	6.6	26.6	8.0	25.5	31.7	65.2
Alta.	15.1	5.9	8.0	29.1	6.9	34.7	29.3	70.9
B.C.	11.5	6.2	10.5	28.2	6.0	35.4	26.2	67.6

1. Includes regular mortgage payments and mortgage insurance premiums.

Table 5.1-1 shows that it was necessary to impute expenditures for 61.6 % of households nationally. Since 2004, this rate has been higher owing to the change made to the questionnaire regarding expenditures related to communications services in the home (telephone, cell phone and Internet access), cable television services and satellite distribution services. Thus, approximately 50% (data not shown) of usable households required imputation of at least one of these five services. In almost all of these cases, the household had reported paying for a package (bundled services) and the expenditures associated with the services included in the package were imputed. The higher imputation rates when these five variables are taken into account, such as shown in the column “2 variables imputed” and the column “3 or more variables imputed,” are due to the fact that a package usually includes two or more services. Excluding expenditures related to communications services in the home, cable television services and satellite distribution services, the overall imputation rate is 26.9% at the national level. Just for the variable representing mortgage insurance premiums, imputation is required for 6.3% of usable households (or 16.6% of households when selecting only households that reported mortgages on dwellings that they owned and occupied).

When expenditures related to telecommunications services in the home (telephone, cell phone and Internet access), cable television services and satellite distribution services are excluded, it may be seen that nearly 54% of usable households required imputation of a single variable. Also, relatively few households had more than one variable imputed (12.4%). At the provincial level,

Newfoundland and Labrador (21.0%) and Manitoba (23.7%) have the lowest proportions of households requiring imputation of at least one expenditure variable. The highest rate is in Quebec (30.7%). British Columbia has the highest percentage of households that required imputation for more than one expenditure variable. In that province, more than 59% of the households that required imputation had two or more expenditure variables imputed.

If we exclude regular mortgage payments, mortgage insurance premiums, expenditures related to communications services in the home, cable television services and satellite distribution services, then the low percentage of households for which variables had to be imputed, combined with a generally low number of variables to be imputed when imputation is required, suggests that the impact of imputed values on the estimates should not be too high.

Since there is a higher level of imputation for expenditures related to communications services in the home, cable television services and satellite distribution services, it is important to measure the effect of imputation on the estimates of totals for these five variables. This measure, along with the imputation rate, can be used to see how the amount of imputation done for these variables changes over time. Owing to the growing popularity of packages (bundled services) within the population, the imputation level should increase over time. To measure the impact of imputation, the weighted total of the imputed data is divided by the total estimate (sum of weighted values). This measure represents the proportion of the total value of the estimate that is obtained from imputed data.

Table 5.1-2
Impact of imputation of communications services in the home, cable television services and satellite distribution services at the national level

Characteristics	Impact of Imputation	Households requiring imputation of communications services in the home, cable television services or satellite distribution services
	%	
Telephone services	30.4	36.6
Cell phone, pager and handheld text messaging services	14.2	18.8
Rental of cable television services	44.5	43.6
Satellite distribution services	13.9	12.0
Internet access services	63.2	73.1

According to Table 5.1-2, the imputation rate and the impact of imputation are greater for expenditures related to Internet access services and the rental of cable television services. This is mainly due to the fact that among households that reported paying for a package, a large proportion of packages included these two services. The high level of imputation performed on the components in Table 5.1-2 suggests that the estimates of these components might be greatly affected by imputation, while the effect on the estimate of the total of these five services

combined will be negligible, since households must provide the total expenditure associated with the package. While the imputation rate and the impact are high for expenditures on Internet access services, the increase that occurred in 2006 for average Internet access expenditures was consistent with the trends observed from other independent sources of information. Internet access services accounted for 18.2% of all household expenditures on communications. Total expenditures on the five services in Table 5.1-2 combined represent only 2.7% of total household expenditure.

5.1.2 Person expenditure and income imputation by province

Since some respondents provide only totals for clothing expenditure and income variables, a two-step procedure is used to impute these variables (at the individual level). Individuals who require imputation of only certain components are imputed first, followed by those for whom only totals are available but imputation on all components is required. (See reference [1] for a more detailed description of this process.)

The percentage of usable individuals (persons who are members of usable households) requiring imputation for an income variable is presented by province in Table 5.2. The table shows the percentage of persons who had exactly one variable imputed, the percentage of those who had two or more variables (but not all) imputed and the percentage of persons for whom only total income was available (and hence required having all their components imputed). The total percentage of persons requiring some form of income imputation is also provided. The second to last column of Table 5.2 indicates the total percentage of persons requiring some form of imputation for clothing expenditure variables. The last column of Table 5.2 indicates the total percentage of persons requiring some form of imputation for the Personal Taxes, Security and Money Gifts section of the questionnaire.

Note that questions related to personal income, personal taxes, security and money gifts are asked for each household member aged 15 or over on December 31 of the reference year. Thus, since the 2003 reference year, the percentage of persons requiring some form of imputation for income variables as well as for the Personal Taxes, Security and Money Gifts section was calculated using only persons aged 15 or over and was not based on all persons as done in previous years. This modification resulted in an imputation rate slightly higher for those variables. As was done in previous years, the percentage of persons requiring imputation for clothing expenditure variables is based on all persons, since those expenditure questions are asked for each household member.

Table 5.2
Persons requiring income imputation, persons requiring clothing expenditure imputation and persons requiring imputation for variables in personal taxes, security and money gifts section by province

Province	Percentage of persons requiring imputation for Income variables				Percentage of persons requiring imputation for at least one of the 11 clothing expenditure variables	Percentage of persons requiring imputation for at least one of the 15 variables in the section on personal taxes, security and money gifts
	1 income variable imputed	2 or more income variables imputed (not all)	All income variables imputed (total income known)	Total (any form of income imputation)		
%						
Canada	5.0	2.1	0.5	8.0	8.8	16.6
N.L.	3.8	1.6	1.0	6.5	2.8	12.9
P.E.I.	4.5	3.1	0.6	8.3	10.1	17.8
N.S.	4.9	1.9	1.2	8.1	9.8	18.3
N.B.	4.9	1.9	0.8	7.9	9.3	23.2
Que.	4.5	1.7	0.3	6.9	9.9	13.5
Ont.	5.4	2.2	0.4	8.2	6.4	16.6
Man.	4.2	2.4	0.2	7.1	7.5	9.9
Sask.	5.0	1.9	0.5	7.6	9.6	15.7
Alta.	5.3	2.8	0.2	8.9	7.7	16.7
B.C.	6.6	2.6	0.3	10.0	15.3	22.8

These results show that 8% of persons from usable households had imputation performed on at least one income variable. For nearly 62% of them, exactly one variable was imputed. For the vast majority of the other persons who required imputation, it was necessary to impute two or more variables, but not all. Provincially, the percentages of persons requiring imputation on at least one income variable range from a low of 6.5% for Newfoundland and Labrador to a high of 10.0% for British Columbia.

From the second to last column of the table, it can be seen that about 9% of persons required imputation for at least one of the clothing expenditure variables. Provincial rates range from 2.8% for Newfoundland and Labrador to 15.3% for British Columbia. Almost all these people provided their total expenditure on clothing but required imputation of the components. Newfoundland and Labrador is the only province with an imputation rate smaller than 5%. The relatively high level of imputation required on clothing expenditure components suggests that the estimates for these components could be greatly affected by imputation, while the effect on the estimates for total clothing expenditure will be negligible.

From the last column of the table, results show that approximately 17% of persons had some imputation performed on at least one variable in the Personal Taxes, Security and Money Gifts section. Provincially too, this percentage is rather high, ranging from a low of 9.9% for Manitoba to a high of 23.2% for New Brunswick. Only New Brunswick and British Columbia have a rate in excess of 20%. In both

those provinces, the higher imputation rate is due to the variable corresponding to personal income tax paid on 2006 income, which required proportionally more imputation than for the other provinces.

5.1.3 Imputation of categorical variables by province

Table 5.3 shows the percentage of usable households requiring imputation of at least one categorical variable. The table is broken down by the number of imputed variables (out of 41) for a household. Categorical variables that required imputation can be found in the following sections of the questionnaire: Dwelling Characteristics (with the exception of the dwelling type variable); Facilities Associated with the Dwelling; Tenure (with the exception of variables related to a tenure change during the reference year); Tobacco and Miscellaneous for variables pertaining to purchases through direct sales (yes/no questions). Note that other categorical variables from the questionnaire, such as the household composition variables or questionnaire skips, are edited and validated by subject matter experts from the Income Statistics Division. Therefore, the latter variables are not imputed using the nearest neighbour technique.

Table 5.3
Households requiring imputation of categorical variables by province

Province	Households requiring imputation of categorical variables			
	Number of variables imputed (out of 41)			Total
	1	2	3 or more	
	%			
Canada	4.6	1.1	1.0	6.6
Newfoundland and Labrador	1.0	0.1	0.6	1.7
Prince Edward Island	7.1	0.6	0.2	7.9
Nova Scotia	4.2	0.8	0.5	5.5
New Brunswick	3.3	0.3	0.7	4.3
Quebec	4.6	0.4	0.4	5.4
Ontario	6.5	2.6	1.6	10.8
Manitoba	6.8	1.4	1.4	9.6
Saskatchewan	5.4	1.7	1.0	8.2
Alberta	2.6	0.7	0.5	3.8
British Columbia	4.1	1.6	1.8	7.6

Table 5.3 indicates that at the national level, 6.6% of households required some categorical imputation for dwelling characteristics, facilities associated with the dwelling, tenure and purchases through direct sales, but approximately 70% of those households had only one variable imputed. Provincially, the total rate of imputation ranges from a low of 1.7% for Newfoundland and Labrador to a high of 10.8% for Ontario.

References

- [1] Tremblay, J. and Arsenault, S. 2001. *Methodology of the Survey of Household Spending*. Catalogue no. 62F0026MIE2001003. Ottawa. Household Survey Methods Division, Statistics Canada.
- [2] Rao, J.N.K., Wu, C.F.J., Yue, K. 1992. Some recent work on resampling methods for complex surveys. *Survey Methodology* (Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 12-001); 18(2):209-217.
- [3] Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division. 2006. *User Guide for the Survey of Household Spending*. Catalogue no. 62F0026MIE - N° 001. Ottawa.
- [4] Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division. 2006. *Spending Patterns in Canada*. Catalogue no. 62-202. Ottawa.
- [5] Statistics Canada, Household Survey Methods Division. 2006. *Labour Force Survey, Operations Report*. Survey 200612. Ottawa.
- [6] Lessard, S. 2005. *Revision of the Calibration Strategy for the Survey of Household Spending*. Ottawa. Household Survey Methods Division, Statistics Canada.

Appendix A Algebraic Notation

1. Nonresponse adjustment

The subweight (i.e. the design weight adjusted for nonresponse) for a household k , denoted as w_k^{NR} , is

$$w_k^{NR} = \pi_k^{-1} * \frac{1}{rate_g} \quad \text{with} \quad rate_g = \frac{\sum_{k \in S_{g,r}} \pi_k^{-1}}{\sum_{k \in S_{g,r}} \pi_k^{-1} + \sum_{k \in S_{g,nr}} \pi_k^{-1}}$$

where

$S_{g,r}$ is the set of respondents in nonresponse group g ,

$S_{g,nr}$ is the set of nonrespondents (refusals, units not contacted, unusable data) in nonresponse group g , and

π_k^{-1} is the design weight attributed to household k .

2. Calculation of the slippage rate

The slippage rate for a control group c , denoted as $rate_c$, is

$$rate_c = 100 * \frac{\left(\sum_{k \in S_{c,r}} w_k^{NR} \right) - t_c}{t_c}$$

where

$S_{c,r}$ is the set of respondents in control group c ,

w_k^{NR} is the subweight of household k , and

t_c is the total of the auxiliary data for control group c .