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## Inventory of Rural Health Research Related Databases

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Database name: **Health Services Access Survey**

Thematic Coverage: This survey collected data on wait times for key diagnostic and treatment service and access to 24/7 first contact health services. It focused on two main topics: waiting for specialized services for a new illness or condition and access to basic health care.

Maintained by: Health Statistics Division, Statistics Canada

Availability: Custom tabulations are available on a cost-recovery basis. This database can be linked to the Canadian Community Health Survey.

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Start Date: 2001  
Release Date: Approximately 6 months after data collection period  
Frequency of collection: Occasional

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Data Collection: A sub-sample of the respondents to the Canadian Communities Health Survey. One person aged 15 years and older was asked to complete this survey for the household. Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) was used for data collection.

Sample size: 17 616

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Geographic coverage: All provinces, excluding residents of Territories, residents of institutions, residents on First Nation reserves and some remote areas of Ontario and Quebec. Three provinces paid to participate in this survey with representative sample sizes: PEI, Alberta, BC. Data was collected from the other jurisdictions provinces with smaller samples for the purposes of comparisons.

Lowest geographic level collected: Postal Code  
Lowest geographic level of release: Province. Data is suppressed for unweighted cells with less than 30 observations. The stability of the provincial estimates does depend in part on the variable of interest.

Existing rural variable: Yes

### **2 level rural/urban flag**

“This field permits the identification of “urban” areas, or indicates that the Enumeration Area (EA) is in a rural area. Urban areas are those continuously built-up areas having a population concentration of 1,000 or more and a population density of 400 or more per square kilometers based on the previous census. To be considered as continuous, the built up area must not have a discontinuity exceeding two kilometers. In Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta this variable is set to “valid skip” due to the fact that the grouped health area variable is available for these provinces. In Quebec and British Columbia, records falling within the CMA boundary of Montreal or

Vancouver will also have this variable set to “valid skip” since the grouped CMA variable is available. This definition of urban/rural may not correspond to the areas which Canada Post identifies as urban or rural postal codes.” *Extracted from the CCHS users manual.*

### **5 level rural/urban flag**

Urban core, urban fringe and rural fringe distinguish between central and peripheral urban and rural areas within a census metropolitan area (CMA) or census agglomeration (CA). **Urban core** is a large urban area around which a CMA or a CA is delineated. The urban core must have a population (based on the previous census) of at least 100,000 persons in the case of a CMA, or between 10,000 and 99,999 persons in the case of a CA. The urban core of a CA that has been merged with an adjacent CMA or larger CA is called the secondary urban core. **Urban fringe** includes all small urban areas (with less than 10,000 population) within a CMA or CA that are not contiguous with the urban core of the CMA or CA. **Rural fringe** is all territory within a CMA or CA not classified as an urban core or an urban fringe. The other levels of geography in this classification are **urban area outside of CMA** and **rural area outside of CMA**.

Rural definitions that can be constructed from this database include (building block)<sup>†</sup>:

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| ✓ Census “rural areas”  | (Enumeration Area)                |
| ✓ Rural and Small Town definition                             | (Census Subdivision)              |
| ✓ Metropolitan area and census agglomeration Influenced Zones | (Census Subdivision)              |
| ✓ OECD “rural communities” definition                         | (Census Consolidated Subdivision) |
| ✓ OECD “predominantly rural regions” definition               | (Census Division)                 |
| ✓ Ehrensaft’s “Beale codes”                                   | (Census Division)                 |

<sup>†</sup> Results for these areas of geography could conceivably be derived from postal codes if respondent confidentiality is ensured.

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### Data Elements:

Experience of respondents requiring: care from a medical specialist, non-emergency surgery, or diagnostic tests

- Waiting times to access
- Acceptability of waiting times
- Impact of the wait on the respondent

Experience of respondents in getting: health information or advice, health care services for routine or on-going care, immediate care for minor health problems and health care services in general

- Access to services at different times of the day
- Difficulties encountered in getting services
- Type of services required
- Where services were obtained

### Notes:

For more information, contact the Data Access Unit, Population Health Surveys, Health Statistics Division at [cchs-escc@statcan.ca](mailto:cchs-escc@statcan.ca).