
Inventory of National Rural Health Research Related Databases

Database name: **Participation and Activity Limitation Survey**

Thematic Coverage: This post-censal disability survey collected information on the type and severity of disabilities and the impact of disability on everyday activities. This survey covered a larger proportion of the target population than the 1991 Health and Activity Limitation Survey, and most importantly, did not leave out a significant portion of the population with severe disabilities.

Maintained by: Housing, Family and Social Statistics, Statistics Canada

Availability: A public release version of the data files is available through the Data Liberation Initiative (DLI). Some variables are suppressed and other are aggregated to protect the anonymity of individual survey respondents. Custom tabulations are also available on a cost recovery basis.

Start Date: 2001
Release Date: 14 months after the reference period
Frequency of collection: Occasional

Data Collection: Two Census questions, for both children (under 15) and adults (15 and over) on activity limitation and long term disability was used to select the survey population. These two filter questions are significantly different from the Census filter questions used on the 1991 Health and Activity Limitation Survey. The Participation and Activity Limitation Survey disabled population consists of those respondents who answered 'Yes' to the census filter questions and then during the follow-up survey reported a limitation through a positive answer to either filter questions or a series of detailed screening questions on activity limitations.

Most of the interviews were conducted by telephone to individuals 15 years and older. In special cases, personal interviews were carried out. Statistics from this survey are estimates based on sample survey of a portion of the Canadian population.

Sample size: Approximately 35,000 adults and 8,000 children

Geographic coverage: Persons from all Provinces residing in private and some collective households. Persons living in institutions, persons living in the three territories and people living on the First Nations reserves were excluded from this survey.

Lowest geographic level collected: Postal Code
Lowest geographic level of release: Province/Territory
Existing rural variable: No

Rural definitions that can be constructed from this database include (building block)[†]:

- ✓ 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)

[†] Results for these areas of geography could conceivably be derived from postal codes if respondent confidentiality is ensured.

Data Elements:

- Impact of disability on everyday activities
- Help required to complete everyday activities
- Impact on employment education, leisure, accommodation and transportation
- Difficulties with certain daily activities, such as moving around, hearing, seeing, communicating and learning
- Type and severity of the activity limitation
- Specialized equipment and aids that are used and/or needed
- Information on out-of-pocket expenses related to specialized aids and services, medications, transportation, etc.
- Economic characteristics, such as insurance coverage and sources of income.

Notes:

Data from the Health and Activity Limitations Survey (HALS), which is also included in this inventory, and the Participation and Activity Limitations Survey (PALS) cannot be compared because of significant differences.

The following summarizes the major differences between the 1991 HALS and 2001 PALS:

- 1) **New filter questions:** The 2001 PALS uses new census disability filter questions to identify its population. The new filter questions are more inclusive than the ones used in 1991;
- 2) **New sampling plan:** The HALS sample included both respondents who answered YES to the disability filter questions on the census form and those who answered NO. But the 2001 PALS survey sampled only those individuals with positive answers to the 2001 Census filter questions. Respondents who answered NO to the census disability filter questions were excluded from the PALS.
- 3) **New questionnaire content:** The PALS questionnaire content, including new screening questions, is significantly different from that used in the 1991 HALS questionnaire, in particular the content related to the identification of the types and severity of activity limitations. This expanded content provides more detailed information regarding the type of disabilities. In addition, the new severity scale takes into account the whole range of disabilities.

The new set of filter questions could also be used as a “global disability indicator” in other Statistics Canada’s surveys, thereby increasing the scope of available data on persons with disabilities. Although it was recognized that the resulting disability rates would vary depending on the survey context and methodology, this improved consistency in the measurement of disability would enhance the usefulness of data on persons with disabilities.