

INTRODUCTION

The General Household Survey (GHS) is a large-scale national survey collecting information on the population and households in Singapore. The GHS is conducted in between the Population Censuses which are taken once in ten years, during the years ending in '0'. As a mini-Census, the GHS is the most comprehensive source of information on the profile of Singapore's population and households.

The GHS 2005 is the second in the series of mid-decade mini-censuses. The first GHS was conducted in 1995.

Coverage

Following from the Population Census 2000, the General Household Survey 2005 adopted the de jure population concept. Under the de jure concept of "usual residence", all Singapore residents (citizens and permanent residents) with valid local addresses were included in the total population count. Non-residents who stayed in Singapore were also included in the total population. The non-resident population comprised foreign workers, students and other foreigners who were not granted permanent residence in Singapore. The transient population such as tourists was excluded.

Register-Based Approach and Sample Enumeration

The GHS 2005 built upon the experiences of the Population Census 2000, combining a register-based approach with a large-scale sample survey. Under the register-based approach, key demographic data on the size, growth and structure of the population were obtained from the Singapore Department of Statistics' Household Registration Database (HRD). The HRD captured basic individual information such as sex, age, ethnic group and type of house. Such information was updated by linking with existing government databases through unique identification numbers.

Additional data items in the GHS 2005 were collected from a sample survey of 8 per cent sample of dwellings. These included marital status and fertility, education and home language, economic characteristics, mode of transport, and overseas travel characteristics of the population, as well as housing and household characteristics.

For the sample enumeration, the GHS 2005 adopted the tri-modal data collection strategy which was successfully implemented in Population Census 2000. This strategy comprised Internet Enumeration, Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) and face-to-face interviews. A key innovation in GHS 2005 was the use of Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) in the face-to-face interviews. This was a first in Singapore's history of household surveys.

A total of 90,000 dwelling units throughout the whole island of Singapore was selected for GHS 2005. These dwelling units were divided into 15 batches which were spread over a period of 12-15 weeks. From the practical perspective, this helped to even out the load on resources for internet submission, CATI operations and fieldwork. Households in each batch had the option to submit their survey returns through the Internet or telephone interviews. Field interviewers visited the households only if they had not completed their survey returns via Internet or telephone interview after the appropriate due date.

Data collected via Internet, CATI and PDAs were captured in the GHS 2005 database without the need for data entry at the back-end. Coding of data on vocational qualification, occupation and industry was first carried out using a batch coding process. For records that could not be coded automatically, online coding was then carried out using a search function to facilitate the selection of the relevant codes. The final processing of the survey data involved the editing and verification of erroneous and inconsistent records.

Upon completion of data processing, statistical tables were generated with the use of in-house tabulation templates and SAS software.