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GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY: USER GUIDE

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INQUIRIES

For further information about these and related statistics, contact the National Information and Referral Service on 1300 135 070.

NOTES

USING THIS PUBLICATION

Appropriate use and interpretation of the General Social Survey (GSS) results relies upon knowledge of what information was collected, how the information was collected and how the information was used to produce final estimates. This User Guide covers these topics in several chapters: Survey content; Survey methodology; Data processing; Data quality; and Data dissemination. The final chapter presents technical information to assist you in using the basic and expanded Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs).

In addition, the following are available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>: a comprehensive list of the data items available from the survey; the 2006 GSS questionnaire; the 2006 GSS prompt cards used to collect the data; and the data items available on the basic and expanded CURFs.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AHS	Australian Housing Survey
ANZSCO	Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations
ARA	any responsible adult
ASCED	Australian Standard Classification of Education
ASCL	Australian Standard Classification of Languages
ASCO	Australian Standard Classification of Occupations
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographical Classification
Aust.	Australia
CAI	computer assisted interviewing
CD	Collection District
CSV	comma separated value
CURF	confidentialised unit record file
ERP	estimated resident population
GSS	General Social Survey
GST	goods and services tax
no.	number
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAL	primary approach letter
Qld	Queensland
RADL	Remote Access Data Laboratory
RSE	relative standard error
SA	South Australia
SACC	Standard Australian Classification of Countries
SE	standard error
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SLA	statistical local area
Tas.	Tasmania
Vic.	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE SURVEY

In 2006, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) conducted the General Social Survey (GSS), a multi-dimensional social survey that ranges across many aspects of life, designed to enable analysis of the interrelationships in social circumstances and outcomes, including the exploration of multiple advantage and disadvantage. The survey provides information on people's health, family relationships, social and community involvement, education, employment, income and financial stress, assets and liabilities, housing and mobility, crime and safety, transport, attendance at culture and leisure venues, and sports attendance and participation. Key findings from the 2006 GSS are presented in *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia* (cat. no. 4159.0) which was released in May 2007 and is available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>.

The GSS collected information from March to July 2006 from 13,375 private dwellings throughout non-remote areas of Australia. The sample was designed to provide national and state level estimates, recognising state/territory responsibilities in many areas of social concern. The sample design ensured that within each state and territory, each person had an equal chance of selection. Information was obtained from one person aged 18 years or over in the selected household. If there was more than one person of this age, the person interviewed was selected at random. If the random person lived with one or both parents, a parent may have been selected to be the household spokesperson and provide information about the household.

The 2006 GSS is the second in the series, with the first GSS conducted in 2002. It is planned to repeat the survey at regular intervals (currently four-yearly). Each cycle of the GSS collects comparable information for the core dimensions to allow for analysis of changes over time. A flexible component is also included to collect additional information on emerging or important topics of social concern. The flexible component of the 2006 GSS included topics relating to social capital, voluntary work and category of visa held by Australian immigrants.

METHODOLOGY

The ABS was responsible for the development and conduct of the survey. As for all ABS surveys, extensive testing was carried out to ensure that the survey would collect objective and high quality data.

The 2006 GSS was conducted under the authority of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. The ABS sought the willing cooperation of households in the survey. The confidentiality of all information provided by respondents is guaranteed. Under its legislation the ABS cannot release identifiable information about households or individuals. All aspects of the GSS implementation were designed to conform to Information Privacy Principles set out in the *Privacy Act 1988*, and the Privacy Commissioner was informed of the details of the proposed survey.

METHODOLOGY

continued

Standard ABS interviewing techniques were used and the questionnaire was designed to be administered by experienced ABS interviewers, who had received specific training on this survey. The questionnaire was further supported by detailed interviewer instructions, covering general procedural issues as well as specific instructions relating to individual questions. As for all ABS surveys, standard ABS procedures (including office coding) and systems ensure the collection of objective and high quality data. The questionnaire is not fully indicative of the range of information available from the survey, as additional items were created in processing the data, and ABS classifications were applied to raw data inputs. Furthermore, some questions were asked solely for the purpose of enabling or clarifying other questions, and are not available in survey results.

INFORMATION COLLECTED

The 2006 GSS collected information about:

- demographic characteristics
- health and disability
- housing and mobility
- education
- employment
- income
- financial stress
- assets and liabilities
- information technology
- transport
- family and community involvement
- crime and feelings of safety
- attendance at culture and leisure venues
- sports attendance and participation
- social networks and social participation
- voluntary work
- visa category

All households were asked questions relating to the topics listed above. Most information was collected from the selected person aged 18 years or over. Some information relating to the household, e.g. financial and housing items, may have been collected from a household spokesperson if the selected person nominated a more appropriate person to report on behalf of other members of the household.

Further information about the content of the survey can be obtained by referring to the list of survey data items available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>. Many data items available from the survey were derived from responses to a number of survey questions. The questionnaire and the associated prompt cards used to collect the data are also available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>. The definitions and concepts used in the survey are detailed below.

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

The content of the 2006 GSS was finalised after extensive consultation with major users regarding data needs and priorities. The GSS Reference Group, comprising members from various government departments and social research agencies, was established to advise on definitions and concepts, analysis needs and data uses.

While much of the GSS content remains unchanged between each survey cycle, a number of new topics were included for 2006. Cognitive interviews were conducted for these new topics to ensure that concepts were understood by respondents. Cognitive interviews are semi-structured interviews in which the interviewer asks the respondent

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

continued

about their interpretation of questions and formulation of answers. Three rounds of cognitive interviewing were conducted from December 2004 to February 2005.

The next phase of survey development involved field testing the survey questionnaire and procedures. A 'Pilot Test' for the 2006 GSS was conducted in Tasmania in July/August 2005 and a 'Dress Rehearsal' was conducted in South Australia in November/December 2005. The final enumeration of the survey was conducted from March to July 2006.

SURVEY DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

The GSS is designed to collect information for a core set of topics in each cycle, to allow analysis of changes over time, and a flexible component to collect additional information on emerging or important topics of social concern. Approximately 80% of the content of the 2002 GSS was repeated in the 2006 GSS. Most of the differences in content between the surveys were in the flexible component of the GSS.

The flexible component of the 2002 GSS included topics on household use of information technology, attendance at selected culture/leisure venues, sports attendance, and participation in sport and recreational physical activities. Summary indicators for these topics were also collected in the 2006 GSS to allow comparisons over time.

The flexible component of the 2006 GSS included more detailed indicators of family and community involvement (i.e. indicators of social network structure, types, qualities and transactions including those related to voluntary work) which along with closely related items from the 2002 GSS is sometimes referred to as being the 'social capital' component of the survey. The flexible component also included items related to residential mobility, visa category, access to service providers and reasons did not undertake study or training. Some of this data may be included in the next cycle of the GSS, in less detail.

The following sections detail some of the new or changed topics in the 2006 GSS. Also refer to the content comparison table between the 2002 and 2006 GSS cycles.

Social capital

The ABS has adopted the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD) definition of social capital: "networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or among groups". This definition is emerging as a common basis for international comparability.

In the 2006 GSS, social capital forms a large part of the 20% flexible content component. Questions have been added to collect social capital data items which cover selected elements from the four dimensions of the ABS Social Capital Framework: network qualities, network structure, network transactions and network type.

The ABS Social Capital Framework conceptualises social capital as a resource, drawing on, and feeding back into, other types of resources. Social capital resources are presented as attributes of networks, organised as network qualities, structure, transactions and broad types (bonding, bridging and linking). Potential network participants (such as families, friends, organisations/groups) are indicated by network composition.

Social capital continued

Network qualities include norms, such as trust, reciprocity and inclusiveness, and common purposes, for networks or groups, such as social, civic and economic participation. Structure refers to size, frequency of interaction, density and openness, power relationships and transience/mobility. Network transactions are those interactions which at the same time invest in and maintain relationships and draw resources from them, such as sharing knowledge and sharing support.

Network types are a higher level classification. In the ABS framework, 'bonding' refers to relationships between similar kinds of people or groups; 'bridging' to connections where members have less in common, or even differences; and 'linking' to vertical relationships with sources of influence or authority which assist with access to financial and other resources. Further details relating to the conceptualisation of Social Capital can be found in *Measuring Social Capital: An Australian Framework and Indicators, 2004* (cat. no. 1378.0).

Data available on social capital from the 2006 GSS include:

- support for children and other relatives in other households
- support in time of crisis
- levels of trust in people and institutions
- whether feels able to have a say on important issues
- diversity of people's social networks
- active involvement in groups
- contact with family and friends
- close friendships
- provision of unpaid assistance
- civic and community activities
- linking relationships to people in organisations of influence

For a list of the Social Capital data items, please refer to the survey data item list on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>, organised under the four network headings described above.

Voluntary work

Voluntary work can be seen as an indicator of social capital, but it also has its own history of detailed analysis. The ABS collected voluntary work data in 1995 and 2000. The 2002 GSS also collected a broad indicator of voluntary work participation and types of organisations volunteered for. Voluntary work was included as an expanded module in the flexible component of the 2006 GSS. The voluntary work questions in the 2006 GSS were largely based on previous surveys, with some additional items requested by the GSS Reference Group. Detailed data are collected for up to three volunteer episodes by the selected person in the last 12 months for some data items in this module.

Some questions were added to the voluntary work module to reinforce the concept of willingly giving help in the form of time, service or skills. A question determines whether the voluntary work done for a specified organisation was to 'take part in the Work for the Dole program or Community Work under Mutual Obligation'. A positive response to this question ends the subsequent questions for the particular volunteer episode. Further questions covering work experience or unpaid work trials, community service orders, student placements, and emergency work during industrial disputes were asked to

Voluntary work continued

determine inclusion. However, if a person answered positively to these questions, data was still collected to enable comparison with the 2000 survey.

These questions allow voluntary work data in 2006 to exclude persons directed to volunteer. The voluntary work data collected in 2002 does not exclude these populations and therefore indicates a higher rate of voluntary involvement. For further information on voluntary work, and for comparisons over time, refer to the publication *Voluntary Work, Australia* (cat. no. 4441.0).

Data available on voluntary work from the 2006 GSS include:

- whether did unpaid voluntary work for an organisation in last 12 months
- reasons for volunteering
- length of time since first volunteered
- number of organisations volunteered for
- total annual hours of voluntary work
- sector and type of organisation
- type of voluntary activity
- group which organisation aims to assist
- expenses related to voluntary work
- financial donations made to organisations

Please refer to the data item list on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au> for a full list of the voluntary work data items.

Related data collected in the social capital component includes whether the selected person had been involved in organised activities or done voluntary work as a child, and whether their parents had volunteered.

Support for family members living outside the household

2002 GSS data users requested that more detailed information be collected regarding the support provided by households for children living outside the household. In order to be consistent with program delivery groups, users wanted the 15-17 year old children living elsewhere separated from those aged 18-24 years. It was also requested that more detailed information be collected on the types of support provided. Accordingly, the age groups were changed in 2006 to 0-17 years and 18-24 years, and the number of response categories for the types of support provided was increased.

In order to clarify the counts of people providing support to their children not living with them, it was decided to separately identify support provided by selected persons to their own children from support provided by their partner. To maintain comparability with the 2002 results, if selected persons do not provide support to their own children, data were collected to ascertain:

- whether the selected person's partner provides support to the selected person's child;
- whether the selected person provides support to the partner's child; and if not,
- whether the selected person's partner provides support to his/her own child who does not live with them.

Support for family members living outside the household continued

These questions provide data on whether the selected persons are in a couple relationship where either they and/or their partner provide support to the children aged 0-17 years or 18-24 years living outside the selected person's household, as well as on the support directly provided by the parent. A similar split is made between provision of support to other relatives outside the household by selected persons or by their partner. Comparisons with 2002 data can be made on whether selected persons and/or their partner provide support to children (aged 0-24) and to other relatives.

Housing mobility

A mobility module was added to the 2006 GSS, which collects information on the number of times moved, details on previous dwelling, and reasons for last move. Using this information, users will be able to obtain an understanding of the relationship between mobility, and economic and social circumstances. Users will also be able to examine the various social capital data items by mobility.

The majority of questions used were sourced from the ABS's 1999 Australian Housing Survey (AHS). The questions which collected reasons for last move were based on similar questions used in the ABS's 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS).

Access to education and training

Questions on access to education and training were added to the 2006 GSS, comprising four data items: reasons did not study although wanted to; main reason did not study although wanted to; reasons did not do training although wanted to; and main reason did not do training although wanted to. Submissions from 2006 GSS Reference Group members supported collection of these data items as an indicator of social exclusion. The questions used have been adopted from the ABS's 2001 Survey of Education, Training and Information Technology.

Whether work allows for family and community responsibilities

A major data gap identified by users of 2002 GSS data was whether work allows for family and community responsibilities to be fulfilled. Three questions have been added to the 2006 GSS: whether respondents have family or community commitments; whether their workplace has conditions which allow them to meet their family or community commitments; and if so, the regularity of being able to use these conditions. These questions have not been asked in other ABS surveys.

Travel time to work

2006 GSS Reference Group members indicated that a more useful measure of 'Travel time to work' would be an estimate of the amount of time travelled to work each week. This item, when added to the number of hours worked, would provide an indication of time available to spend on other activities. The 2002 GSS only provided a single journey measure of the time taken to travel to work, and no information was collected on the frequency of travel (e.g. three days per working week). Accordingly, a question was added in 2006 which collected the days of the week respondents usually travel to work.

Accessing service providers

2006 GSS Reference Group members indicated that a module similar to one included in the 2002 NATSISS, which collected difficulty in communicating with service providers would be very useful. Users were interested in identifying problems in service delivery to specific population groups such as the aged or disabled. A set of questions were included for 2006 which identified: whether respondents had problems accessing or

<i>Accessing service providers continued</i>	communicating with service providers; the reasons there were any problems; and the service sectors in which problems occurred.
<i>Frequency in experiencing difficulty in paying bills</i>	2002 GSS data users noted that the ability to adequately interpret the extent of cash flow problems was limited, as there was no indication of how often respondents experienced these problems. Interpreting the extent of hardship from these questions was also limited as some households may experience cash flow problems as a result of lifestyle choices, and while income, assets and liabilities data were available for extended analysis, the associated expenditure patterns could not be used to more fully interpret the results. It was also suggested there may be particular times of the year when households experienced financial stress. Accordingly, two extra questions were added to the Financial Stress module in 2006: the number of times respondents experienced difficulty paying bills; and whether there were any particular times of the year in which difficulties paying bills were experienced.
<i>Visa category</i>	<p>A new module has been included in the 2006 GSS that collects visa status of migrants who have arrived in Australia since 1985. This requirement arose through ABS consultation on data needs to assist migration policy development and evaluation. It was recognised that there are a range of settlement outcomes for migrants who come to Australia under different entry conditions. Factors such as English language proficiency, skills, level of education, and whether migrants have existing networks in Australia (e.g. family, employment) have an impact on the settlement outcomes for migrants. Understanding how these outcomes and factors relate to conditions of entry or, more practically, visa category, was identified as an important unmet data need. The 2006 GSS output will also provide the opportunity to cross-classify social capital variables with visa category. This information will help to illustrate the relationship of these factors with the well-being of migrants.</p> <p>Data available on visa category from the 2006 GSS include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Whether or not currently hold Australian citizenship ■ Visa category ■ Whether a temporary resident before becoming a permanent resident ■ Whether main applicant on application form to become permanent resident
<i>Feelings of safety</i>	There was a change in question design for the 'Feelings of safety' questions in the Crime module. The order of the response categories was changed for 2006 so 'Very safe' was the first possible response - 'Very unsafe' was the first possible response in 2002. This methodological change has had an impact on the data, with more people reporting they feel safer in 2006. Because of the change, 2002 and 2006 data comparisons are not possible.
COMPARABILITY WITH 2002 GSS	The following table summarises the comparabilities and differences in content between the 2002 GSS and the 2006 GSS.

COMPARABILITY WITH 2002 GSS <i>continued</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>2006 GSS</i>	<i>2002 GSS</i>	<i>Main items available from 2006</i>	<i>Comments</i>
	Demographics	Y	Y	Age; Sex; Social marital status; Relationship in household; State/territory; Remoteness areas; Country of birth; Main language other than English spoken at home; etc.	Same content in 2006 as in 2002 with some modifications. New items in 2006: Section of state; Age when first arrived in Australia
	Health	Y	Y	Self-assessed health status; Disability status; Disability type; Has education restriction; Has employment restriction	Same content in 2006 as 2002
	Housing	Y	Y	Tenure type; Landlord type; Weekly rent and mortgage payments	Same content in 2006 as 2002 with new items: Number of bedrooms; Dwelling structure
	Mobility	Y	N	Length of time in current dwelling; Number of times moved in last five years; Length of time in previous dwelling; Geographical area of previous dwelling; Tenure type of previous dwelling; All reasons and main reason for last move	New topic in 2006
	Education	Y	Y	Highest educational attainment; Main field of highest educational attainment; Highest year of school completed; Level of highest non school qualification; Full-time/part-time study; Type of educational institution	Same content in 2006 as 2002 with new items: Reasons (all and main) did not study although wanted to; Reasons (all and main) did not do training although wanted to

COMPARABILITY WITH
2002 GSS *continued*

Work	Y	Y	Labour force status; Full-time/part-time status; Hours usually worked in all jobs; Occupation in main job; Expected future duration in current job; Leave entitlements in main job; Retirement status	Same content in 2006 as 2002 with new items: Duration of unemployment; Whether work allows for family/community responsibilities; Employment type
Income	Y	Y	Gross weekly income; Sources of income; Type of government pension/allowance; Whether government support has been main source of income in last 2 years	Same content in 2006 as 2002 with income data also available at the income unit level in 2006.
Financial stress	Y	Y	Ability to raise emergency money; number and types of cash flow problems; number and types of dissaving actions	Same content in 2006 as 2002 with new items: Frequency in experiencing difficulty in paying bills; Whether experience difficulty in paying bills at particular periods of the year
Assets and liabilities	Y	Y	Value of dwelling; Equity in dwelling; Type of selected assets; Amount owing on mortgage; Consumer debt	Same content in 2006 as 2002
Information technology	Y	Y	Whether used computer at home; Frequency of internet access; Purpose of internet activity	Reduced content in 2006 compared to 2002
Transport	Y	Y	Perceived level of difficulty with transport; Access to motor vehicles; Travel time to work each day	Same content in 2006 as 2002 with new items: Days usually travel to work each week; Total travel time to work each week

COMPARABILITY WITH 2002 GSS <i>continued</i>	Family and community - Context	Y	Y	Types of personal stressors in last 12 months; Types of social activity in last 3 months	Same content in 2006 as 2002
	Family and community - Networks	Y	Y	Frequency of contact with family or friends; Source of support in time of crisis; Ability to ask for small favours	Same content in 2006 as 2002 with new items for face-to-face contact with family and friends and method of contact with family and friends
	Family and community - Support for others	Y	Y	Whether provide support for children 0-17 living outside the household; Number of children 0-17 supported; Whether provide support for children 18-24 living outside the household; Number of children 18-24 supported; Type of support for children outside the household; Reasons child(ren) living in another household; Whether provide support for other relatives outside the household; Type of support for other relatives	Collected in more detail in 2006, with selected person support for own children/other relatives collected separately to partner support.
	Crime	Y	Y	Victim of physical or threatened violence; Victim of actual or attempted break-in; Feelings of safety at home alone during day and at night	Same content in 2006 as 2002 with new item: Feelings of safety walking alone at night. Change in 2006 to questions for feelings of safety at home and comparisons with 2002 data for these items are not possible.

COMPARABILITY WITH 2002 GSS <i>continued</i>	Attendance at cultural venues and events	Y	Y	Whether attended selected cultural venues and events in last 12 months; Types of venues or events attended	Reduced content in 2006 compared to 2002
	Sports attendance	Y	Y	Whether has attended any sports events in last 12 months	Reduced content in 2006 compared to 2002
	Sports participation	Y	Y	Whether has participated in sport or recreational physical activity in last 12 months	Reduced content in 2006 compared to 2002
	Social capital - Network qualities	Y	N	Level of generalised trust; Level of trust in institutions - doctor, hospitals, police in local area, police outside local area; Feels able to have a real say with family/friends/within community on important issues; Active involvement in social groups/civic groups/community groups in the last 12 months; Type of civic activity engaged in; Has family members or friends can confide in; Number of family members or friends can confide in	New topic in 2006
	Social capital - Network structure	Y	N	Frequency of face-to-face contact with family and friends living outside the household; Frequency of other forms of contact; Other forms of contact used with family and friends; Frequency of Internet or SMS contact; Type of participation in group activities as child/youth; Whether parent(s) did voluntary work; Whether knows of someone in organisation would feel comfortable	New topic in 2006

COMPARABILITY WITH
2002 GSS *continued*

				contacting for information/advice.	
Social capital - Network transactions	Y	N	Provision of unpaid assistance in past four weeks to ex-household persons; Provision of unpaid assistance, by recipient; Whether provided unpaid care, help or assistance in last 4 weeks to others because of a disability, a long-term illness or problems related to old age; Whether attended a community event in past six months; Whether ever been active in project to organise new service or activity, or preserve existing one in the local area.	New topic in 2006	
Social capital - Network type	Y	N	Proportion of friends of similar age; Proportion of friends of same ethnic background; Proportion of friends with same level of education; Number of organisations where personally knows someone	New topic in 2006	
Voluntary work - Person level	Y	N	Whether did unpaid voluntary work in last 12 months; How first became involved in volunteer work; Length of time since first volunteered; Number of organisations volunteered for; Reasons for being a volunteer; Total annual hours of volunteer work; Expenses related to volunteer work; Whether donated money to an organisation in last 12 months	Expanded topic in 2006 only. The item 'Whether did unpaid voluntary work in last 12 months' was collected in 2002.	

COMPARABILITY WITH 2002 GSS <i>continued</i>	Visa category	Y	N	Whether hold Australian citizenship; Visa category; Whether temporary resident before becoming permanent; Whether main applicant	New topic in 2006
	Difficulty accessing service providers	Y	N	Whether had difficulty communicating with service providers; Whether had difficulty accessing service providers; Type of service provider where difficulty was experienced	New topic in 2006
	Voluntary work - Organisation level	Y	N	Sector and type of organisation; Type of volunteer activity done for the organisation; Length of time volunteered for the organisation; Total annual hours worked for the organisation; Group which organisation aims to assist	New topic in 2006. Data collected for up to three organisations per person.

COMPARABILITY WITH
OTHER ABS SURVEYS

A comparison of key data items from the 2006 GSS and other ABS surveys is presented in Appendix 3 of *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia* (cat. no. 4159.0) which was released in May 2007 and is available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>.

SCOPE AND COVERAGE

Only people who were usual residents of private dwellings in Australia were covered by the General Social Survey (GSS). Private dwellings are houses, flats, home units and any other structures used as private places of residence at the time of the survey. People usually resident in non-private dwellings such as hotels, motels, hostels, hospitals and short-stay caravan parks were not included in the survey. Usual residents are those who usually live in a particular dwelling and regard it as their own or main home. Visitors to private dwellings are not included in the interview for that dwelling. However, if they are a usual resident of another dwelling that is in the scope of the survey they have a chance of being selected in the survey or, if not selected, they will be represented by similar persons who are selected in the survey. At 30 June 2006, there were 376,000 people aged 18 years and over living in non-private dwellings throughout Australia. The exclusion of these people (2% of the population) is unlikely to impact on the estimates included in this publication.

The GSS was conducted in both urban and rural areas in all states and territories, except for very remote parts of Australia. Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory have very remote areas. With the exception of the Northern Territory, the population living in very remote areas represents only a small proportion of the total population (approximately 2%). For this, and other practical reasons, no adjustment was made to state population benchmarks (population benchmarks are discussed below) when deriving survey results. This exclusion is unlikely to impact on national estimates, and will only have a minor impact on any aggregate estimates that are produced for individual states and territories, except the Northern Territory where the excluded population accounts for over 20% of persons.

Only persons aged 18 years and over were included in the survey. The Australian population at 30 June 2006, after the exclusion of people living in non-private dwellings and very remote areas of Australia, was 20,051,650, of which 15,307,000 were aged 18 years and over.

The following non-residents were excluded from resident population estimates used to benchmark the survey results, and were not interviewed:

- diplomatic personnel of overseas governments
- members of non-Australian defence forces (and their dependants) stationed in Australia
- persons whose usual place of residence was outside Australia.

SAMPLE DESIGN AND SELECTION

The GSS was designed to provide reliable estimates at the national level and for each state and territory. The sample was therefore spread across the states and territories in order to produce estimates that have a relative standard error (RSE) of no greater than 10% for characteristics that are relatively common in the national population, say that at least 10% of the population would possess.

SAMPLE DESIGN AND SELECTION *continued*

Dwellings included in the survey in each state and territory were selected at random using multi-stage area sampling techniques. This sample included only private dwellings from the geographic areas covered by the survey. Each state and territory of Australia was divided into geographic regions and then into smaller areas known as Collection Districts (CDs), the basic unit of enumeration in the Population Census. CDs were then divided into strata according to their geographic region (metropolitan and non-metropolitan), and the required number of CDs were randomly selected.

In summary, sample selection of dwellings involved the selection of CDs at the first stage, selection of blocks within the selected CDs at the second stage and, at the last stage, dwellings within selected blocks. Within the selected dwelling, a random sub-sample of one person aged 18 years or over was enumerated. In strata with low population density each stratum was initially divided into units, usually corresponding to towns or Statistical Local Areas (SLAs), or combinations of both, and one or two units were selected from each stratum. Within selected units, the sample of dwellings was arrived at in the same manner as outlined for high population density areas. The Northern Territory sample was increased above the usual regional distribution to enable the production of more reliable data for the Northern Territory.

To satisfy the varying sampling and collection requirements, the sample was designed to be as flexible as possible. To ensure that the private dwellings selected were not too widely scattered throughout each state, the sample was designed (clustered) so that within the region CDs or groups of CDs were randomly selected to represent each region, and dwellings were selected only from these CDs. This resulted in dwellings being grouped closely together, saving travel costs and allowing interviewers to enumerate a reasonable number of dwellings.

In total, a sample of approximately 17,700 households were selected. The sample was designed to achieve a fully responding record count of approximately 13,400 households, or 89% of eligible dwellings in the sample, with an expected rate of sample loss (e.g. vacant dwellings, dwellings under construction, etc.) of 13%.

DATA COLLECTION

ABS interviewers conducted personal interviews at selected dwellings during the period March to July 2006. Much of the detail obtained from the GSS was provided by one person aged 18 years or over, randomly selected from each participating household. The random selection of this person was made once basic information had been obtained about all household members. Some financial and housing items collected in the GSS required the selected person to answer on behalf of other members of the household. In some cases, particularly where household information was not known by the selected person, a spokesperson for the household was nominated to provide household information.

Aspects of data collection are discussed below under the headings: Interviews, Interviewers and Questionnaires.

Interviews

Selected households were initially sent a Primary Approach Letter (PAL) by mail to inform the household of their selection in the survey and to advise that an interviewer would call to arrange a suitable time to conduct the interview. A brochure, providing some background to the survey, information concerning the interview process, and a

Interviews continued

guarantee of confidentiality was included with the letter. For a small number of households where the ABS did not have an adequate postal address, this was not possible.

On first face-to-face contact with the household by an interviewer, general characteristics of the household were obtained from a responsible adult member of the household (any responsible adult - ARA). This information included basic demographic characteristics of all usual residents of the dwelling (e.g. age and sex) and the relationships between household members (e.g. spouse, son/daughter, not related).

From the information provided by the ARA regarding household composition, the survey instrument identified those persons in scope of the survey and randomly selected one person aged 18 years or more to be included in the survey. A personal interview was conducted with the randomly selected person. If the random person lived with one or both parents, a parent may have been selected to be the household spokesperson and provide some information about the household (e.g. financial stress, household income and assets and liabilities). If the dwelling contained no usual residents aged 18 years or more, the dwelling was not enumerated.

In some instances selected adult respondents were unable to answer for themselves because of old age, illness, intellectual disability or difficulty with the English language. In these cases, a person responsible for them was interviewed on their behalf, provided the interviewer was assured that this was acceptable to the subject person. Where there were language difficulties, another person in the household may have acted as an interpreter if this was suggested by the respondent. If not, arrangements were made where possible for the interview to be conducted either by an ABS interviewer fluent in the respondent's own language or with an ABS interpreter.

In order to obtain a personal interview with appropriate respondents, interviewers made appointments to call-back as necessary to the household. In some cases appointments for call-backs were made by telephone; however, all interviews were conducted face-to-face. Interviews may have been conducted in private or in the presence of other household members according to the wishes of the respondent.

In cases where a respondent initially refused to participate in the survey, a follow-up letter was sent and a second visit was made to the respondent, usually by a supervisor, to explain the aims and importance of the survey and to answer any particular concerns the respondent may have had about the interview. Persons excluded from the survey through non-contact or refusal were not replaced in the sample.

On average, the interview took 45 minutes per fully responding household.

Interviewers

Interviewers for the 2006 GSS were primarily recruited from a pool of trained ABS interviewers having previous experience with ABS household surveys. Those selected to work on this survey, just over 250 interviewers, underwent 2 days of classroom training aimed at emphasising the survey concepts, definitions and procedures in order to ensure that a standard approach was employed by all interviewers concerned.

Interviewers continued

Each interviewer was supervised in the field in the early stages of the survey, and periodically thereafter to ensure consistent standards of interviewing procedures were maintained. In addition, regular communication between field staff and survey managers was maintained throughout the survey via database systems set up for the survey.

Interviewers were allocated a number of dwellings (a workload) at which to conduct interviews. The size of the workload was dependent upon the geographical area and whether or not the interviewer was required to temporarily live away from home in order to collect the data. Interviewers living close to their workload area in urban areas usually had larger workloads. Overall, workloads averaged 25-30 dwellings, to be enumerated over a two-week period.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to be administered using standard ABS procedures for conducting population interview surveys, having regard to the particular aims of the survey and of the individual topics within it, and to the methodological issues associated with those topics. Other factors considered in designing the questionnaire included the length of individual questions, the use of easily understood words and concepts, the number of subjects and overall length of the questionnaire, and sensitivity of topics. Where appropriate, standard questions from previous ABS surveys were included.

Interviews were conducted using a Computer Assisted Interviewing (CAI) questionnaire. CAI involves the use of a notebook computer to record, store, manipulate and transmit the data collected during interviews. The CAI questionnaire for the 2006 GSS was based on the 2002 version and modified to incorporate new and changed survey content. This type of instrument offers important advantages over paper questionnaires. These include:

- the ability to check the responses entered against previous responses, to reduce data entry errors by interviewers, and to enable inconsistent responses to be clarified with respondents at the time of the interview. The audit trail recorded in the instrument also provides valuable information about the operation of particular questions, and associated data quality issues.
- the ability to use complex sequencing to define specific populations for questions, and ensure word substitutes used in the questions are appropriate to each respondent's characteristics and prior responses.
- the ability to capture data electronically at the point of interview, removing the added cost, logistical, timing and quality issues around the transport, storage and security of paper forms, and the capture of information from paper forms into a computerised format.
- the ability to deliver data in an electronic semi-processed form compatible with ABS data processing facilities (semi-processed in terms of data validation and some derivations which occur within the instrument itself). While both the input and output data still need to be separately specified to the processing system, input of the data in this form assists in that specification task and reduces the amount and complexity of some later processing tasks.
- the provision for interviewers to record comments to help explain or clarify certain responses, or provide supplementary information to assist in office coding.

The questionnaire employed a number of different approaches to recording information at the interview:

Questionnaire continued

- questions where responses were classified by interviewers to one or more predetermined response categories. This approach was used for recording answers to more straightforward questions, where logically a limited range of responses was expected, or where the focus of interest was on a particular type or group of response (which were listed in the questionnaire, with the remainder being grouped together under 'other');
- questions asked in the form of a running prompt, i.e. predetermined response categories read out to the respondent one at a time until the respondent indicated agreement to one or more of the categories (as appropriate to the topic) or until all the predetermined categories were exhausted; and
- questions asked in association with prompt cards, i.e. where printed lists of possible answers were handed to the respondent who was asked to select the most relevant response(s). By listing a set of possible responses (either in the form of a prompt card or a running prompt question) the prompt served to clarify the question or to present various alternatives, to refresh the respondent's memory and at the same time assist the respondent select an appropriate response.

To ensure consistency of approach, interviewers were instructed to ask the interview questions as shown in the questionnaire. In certain areas of the questionnaire, interviewers were asked to use indirect and neutral prompts, at their discretion, where the response given was, for example, inappropriate to the question asked or lacked sufficient detail necessary for classification and coding.

A copy of the 2006 GSS interview questions and prompt cards is available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>.

MEASURES TO MAXIMISE
RESPONSE

Ideally, interviews would be conducted with all people selected in the sample. However, in practice, some level of non-response is inevitable. Non-response is classified where people refuse to cooperate, cannot be contacted or are contacted but cannot be interviewed. It is important that response be maximised in order to reduce sampling variability and minimise bias. Sampling variability is increased when the sample size decreases. Consequently, bias can arise if the people who fail to respond to the survey have different characteristics from those who did respond.

The ABS sought the willing cooperation of selected households. Measures taken to encourage respondent cooperation and maximise response included:

- information provided to selected households in the 2006 GSS, initially by letter and a brochure, explaining that their dwelling had been selected for the survey, the purposes of the survey, its official nature and the confidentiality of the information collected. The letters gave advance notice that an ABS interviewer would call, and provided an ABS contact number for more information if required.
- stressing the importance of participation in the survey by selected households, by explaining that each household selected represented a number of others similar in size, composition, location, occupation, lifestyle and health. Further explanation that the cooperation of those selected was important to ensure all households/persons were properly represented in the survey and properly reflected in survey results.
- stressing the importance of the survey itself, which measures the well-being of Australians and therefore helps plan and provide support to those groups in need.

MEASURES TO MAXIMISE
RESPONSE *continued*

- stressing the confidentiality of all information collected. The confidentiality of data is guaranteed by the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. Under provisions of this Act the ABS is prevented from releasing any identifiable information about individuals or households to any person, organisation or government authority.

Through call-backs and follow-up at selected dwellings, every effort was made to contact the occupants of each selected dwelling and to conduct the survey in those dwellings. Interviewers made several call-backs before a dwelling was classified as 'non-contact'. Call-backs occurred at different times during the day to increase the chance of contact. If any person who was selected to be included in the survey was absent from the dwelling when the interviewer called, arrangements were made to return and interview at a later date. Interviewers made return visits as necessary in order to complete the questionnaire for the selected person in scope of the survey. In some cases, the selected adult within a dwelling could not be contacted or interviewed, and these were classified as non-contacts.

Respondents who refused to participate were usually followed-up by letter, as well as a subsequent visit by a supervisor. Completed questionnaires were obtained where possible. There were instances in which respondents were willing to answer some, but not all, of the questions asked, or didn't know an answer to a particular question. The survey instrument was programmed to accept 'don't know' responses as well as refusals on sensitive topics, such as income. Respondents who refused or did not know an answer to only these sections of the questionnaire were classified as 'adequate complete'.

RESPONSE RATES AND
SAMPLE ACHIEVED

The initial sample selection of approximately 17,700 private dwellings was reduced to approximately 15,500 dwellings due to the loss of households which had no residents in scope for the survey and where dwellings proved to be vacant, under construction or derelict. Of the eligible dwellings remaining, 86.5% responded fully (or adequately), which yielded a total sample from the survey of 13,375 dwellings. The following table shows the number of fully responding households achieved for each state and territory, and the corresponding response rate achieved in the 2006 GSS.

2006 GSS

		NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Fully responding sample achieved(a)	'000	1 999	1 883	1 815	1 494	1 612	1 666	1 293	1 613	13 375
Response rate(b)	%	81.3	82.6	88.4	89.0	86.2	91.9	90.0	86.5	86.5

(a) Includes fully or adequately responding dwellings.

(b) Of eligible dwellings, excluding sample loss.

Some survey respondents provided most of the required information, but were unable or unwilling to provide a response to certain data items. The records for these persons were retained in the sample, and contribute to the fully responding count, and the missing values were recorded as 'don't know' or 'not stated'. No attempt was made to deduce or impute for these missing values. Approximately 2,100 respondents (16%) did not provide one or more required answers but were deemed to have responded adequately.

Comparability with 2002 GSS

The sample sizes differed between the 2006 and 2002 GSS. In 2006, the number of fully or adequately responding households achieved in the survey was 13,375, compared to approximately 15,500 for the 2002 cycle. The 2006 GSS had a smaller initial sample size (17,700 possible dwellings) compared to the 2002 initial sample size (19,500 possible dwellings). There was a reduction in achieved proportions of the initial sample sizes (86.5% in 2006 compared to 91% in 2002). This is due to higher sample loss in the 2006 GSS, because there were more households with no residents in scope for the survey or where dwellings proved to be vacant, under construction or derelict, and a higher rate of survey non-response from eligible households. These differences in the sample size for 2006 and 2002 should be considered when comparing results. The following table shows the number of fully responding households achieved for each state and territory, and the corresponding response rate achieved in the 2002 GSS.

2002 GSS

		<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>Australia</i>
Fully responding sample achieved(a)	no.	2 515.0	2 365	1 856	1 760	1 925	1 860	1 320	1 909	15 510
Reponse rate(b)	%	89.8	90.8	91.2	90.7	92.8	93.3	91.2	(c)89.8	91.1

(a) Includes fully or adequately responding dwellings.

(c) Response rate is for NSW/ACT combined.

(b) Of eligible dwellings, excluding sample loss.

DATA PROCESSING

Data capture

Computer-based systems were used to process the data from the survey. Internal system edits were applied in the CAI instrument to ensure the completeness and consistency of the questionnaire and responses during the interview. The interviewer could not proceed from one section of the interview to the next until responses had been properly completed.

A number of range and consistency edits were programmed into the CAI collection instrument. Edit messages appeared on screen automatically if the information entered was either outside the permitted range for a particular question, or contradicted information already recorded. These edit queries were resolved by interviewers on the spot with respondents.

Workloads were electronically loaded on receipt in the ABS office in each state or territory. Checks were made to ensure interviewer workloads were fully accounted for and that questionnaires for each household and respondent were completed. Problems with the questionnaire identified by interviewers were resolved by office staff, where possible, using other information contained in the questionnaire, or by referring to the comments provided by interviewers.

Coding

Computer-assisted coding was performed on responses to questions on country of birth, language, family relationships, educational qualifications and occupation. Geography data was also coded. The following details the classifications used to code data.

- Country of birth coding. The survey questionnaire listed 10 most frequently reported countries. Interviewers were instructed to mark the appropriate box, or if the reported country was not among those listed, to record the name of the country for subsequent coding. All responses for country of birth were coded according to the *Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC)*, 1998 (cat. no. 1269.0).
- Coding of language. The survey questionnaire listed 10 most frequently reported languages first spoken at home. Interviewers were instructed to mark the appropriate box, or if the reported language was not among those listed, to record the name of the language for subsequent coding. All responses for language spoken were coded to the *Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL)* (cat. no. 1267.0).
- Family relationships. Based on household information collected for all persons in each dwelling, all usual residents were grouped into family units and classified according to their relationship within the family.
- Coding of educational qualification. Level of highest educational qualification and field of study of that qualification were coded to the *Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED)* (cat. no. 1272.0). Coding was based on the level and field of study as reported by respondents and recorded by interviewers.

Coding continued

- Occupation data were dual classified according to the ASCO - *Australian Standard Classification of Occupations, Second Edition, 1997* (cat. no. 1220.0.30.001) - and the newly released ANZSCO - *Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations, First Edition, 2006* (cat. no. 1220.0).
- Geography data (Capital city, Balance of state/territory; Remoteness areas) were classified according to the *Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC)* (cat. no. 1216.0).

Output processing

Information from the questionnaires, other than names and addresses, was stored on a computer output file in the form of data items. In some cases, items were formed from answers to individual questions, while in other cases data items were derived from answers to several questions.

During processing of the data, checks were performed on records to ensure that specific values lay within valid ranges and that relationships between items were within limits deemed acceptable for the purposes of this survey. These checks were also designed to detect errors which may have occurred during processing and to identify instances which, although not necessarily an error, were sufficiently unusual or close to agreed limits to warrant further examination.

Throughout processing, frequency counts and tables containing cross-classifications of selected data items were produced for checking purposes. The purpose of this analysis was to identify any problems in the input data which had not previously been identified, as well as errors in derivations or other inconsistencies between related items. In the final stages of processing, additional output editing and data confrontation was undertaken to ensure GSS estimates conformed to known or expected patterns, and were broadly consistent with data from the previous GSS or from other ABS data sources, allowing for methodological and other factors which might impact comparability.

Data available from the survey are essentially 'as reported' by respondents. The procedures and checks outlined above were designed primarily to minimise errors occurring during processing. In some cases it was possible to correct errors or inconsistencies in the data which was originally recorded in the interview, through reference to other data in the record; in other cases this was not possible and some errors and inconsistencies remain on the data file.

Output file

A two level hierarchical data file was produced as outlined below:

- person level - (the main level) containing the majority of data about the respondent and household (e.g. demographics, income, education, employment, health, social capital, housing and mobility, crime and safety, etc.); and
- voluntary work level - containing information about the organisations a respondent has volunteered for over the past 12 months (e.g. type of volunteer organisation, frequency of volunteering for that organisation, type of volunteer activity did for that organisation, hours volunteered for that organisation), with a maximum of three volunteer organisations per person.

Output file continued

A hierarchical file is an efficient means of storing and retrieving information which describes one to many, or many to many, relationships. For example, a person may have worked for two voluntary organisations and received remuneration in relation to one but not the other. In this circumstance, different record levels are used to store the details related to these incidents.

Most data from the GSS is available at the person level and describes personal characteristics, or characteristics of the household to which the person belongs. Volunteer data can be obtained at both the person level (e.g. whether or not a person volunteers, number of organisations volunteers for, and total annual hours volunteers for all organisations) and at the volunteer organisation level, where data is presented per volunteer episode, i.e. data at this level is about the volunteer organisation. Data at this level is a volunteer organisation count rather than a person count.

WEIGHTING,
BENCHMARKING AND
ESTIMATION*Weighting*

Weighting is the process of adjusting results from a sample survey to infer results for the total population. To do this, a 'weight' is allocated to each sample unit e.g. a person or a household. The weight is a value which indicates how many population units are represented by the sample unit.

The first step in calculating weights for each person or household in the 2006 GSS was to assign an initial weight, which is equal to the inverse of the probability of being selected in the survey. For example, if the probability of a person being selected in the survey was 1 in 600, then the person would have an initial weight of 600 (that is, they represent 600 people).

Benchmarking

The initial weights were calibrated to align with independent estimates of the population of interest, referred to as 'benchmarks'. Weights calibrated against population benchmarks ensure that the survey estimates conform to the independently estimated distribution of the population, by age, sex and area of usual residence, rather than to the distribution within the sample itself. Calibration to population benchmarks helps to compensate for over- or under-enumeration of particular categories of persons which may occur due to either the random nature of sampling or non-response.

The 2006 GSS was benchmarked to the estimated resident population aged 18 years and over (ERP) living in private dwellings in each state and territory, excluding the ERP living in very remote areas of Australia, at 30 June 2006. The ERP estimates for 2006 were based on results from the 2001 Census of Population and Housing. Therefore the GSS estimates do not (and are not intended to) match estimates for the total Australian resident population (which include persons and households living in non-private dwellings, such as hotels and boarding houses, and in very remote parts of Australia) obtained from other sources.

Benchmark variables used in the 2006 GSS, with corresponding level of detail, were:

- State or territory of usual residence - all states and territories
- Age of person - in age groups 18 –19 years, 20 –24 years, 25 –29 years, 30 –34 years, 35 –39 years, 40 –44 years, 45 –49 years, 50 –54 years, 55 –59 years, 60 –64 years, 65 –69 years, 70 –74 years, 75 –79 years, 80 years or over
- Sex of person - males and females
- Area of usual residence - metropolitan and non-metropolitan

Benchmarking continued

The benchmark variables used in the 2006 GSS were the same as those used in 2002. The only change has been in the age groupings used. In 2002, age groups were: 18–24 years, 25–29 years, 30–34 years, 35–39 years, 40–44 years, 45–49 years, 50–54 years, 55–59 years, 60–64 years, 65–69 years, 70–74 years, 75 years or over. The expanded detail for age groups aims to improve estimates for younger and older age groups.

Estimation

Each record in the 2006 GSS contains two weights - a person weight and a household weight. The weights indicate how many population units, i.e. persons or households, are represented by the sample unit. In addition, replicate weights have also been included, with 30 person replicate weights and 30 household replicate weights. The purpose of these replicate weights is to enable calculation of the RSE for each estimate produced.

Survey estimates of counts of persons are obtained by summing the weights of persons or households with the characteristic of interest. Estimates for means, such as mean age of persons, are obtained by summing the weights of persons in each category (e.g. individual ages), multiplying by the value for each category, aggregating the results across categories, then dividing by the sum of the weights for all persons.

For more information on RSEs, please refer to Chapter 5: Data Quality. For more information on use of weights, please refer to Chapter 7: Using the CURF data. For a list of the weight variables on the GSS files (person weight, person replicate weights, household weight, household replicate weights), please refer to the survey data item list on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>.

DATA QUALITY

Although care has been taken to ensure the results of the 2006 GSS are as accurate as possible, all sample surveys are subject to error which can be broadly categorised as either sampling error or non-sampling error. Sampling error occurs because only a small proportion of the total population is used to produce estimates that represent the whole population. Sampling error can be reliably measured as it is calculated based on the scientific methods used to design surveys. Non-sampling errors occur when survey processes work less effectively than intended. For example, some persons selected for the survey may not respond (non-response); some survey questions may not be clearly understood by the respondent; and occasionally errors can be made in processing data from the survey. Sampling and non-sampling errors should be considered when interpreting results of the survey.

SAMPLING ERROR

Sampling error is the difference between the published estimates, derived from a sample of persons, and the value that would have been produced if all persons in scope of the survey had been included. The magnitude of the sampling error associated with a sample estimate depends on the following factors:

- Sample design - there are many different methods which could have been used to obtain a sample from which to collect data. The final design attempted to make survey results as accurate as possible within cost and operational constraints. (Details of sample design are contained in Chapter 3: Survey Methodology).
- Sample size - the larger the sample on which the estimate is based, the smaller the associated sampling error.

Population variability - the third factor which influences sampling error is the extent to which people differ on the particular characteristic being measured. This is referred to as the population variability for that characteristic. The smaller the population variability of a particular characteristic, the more likely it is that the population will be well represented by the sample, and therefore the smaller the sampling error. Conversely, the more variable the characteristic, the greater the sampling error.

Measures of sampling error

One measure of sampling variability is the Standard Error (SE) which indicates the extent to which an estimate might have varied by chance because only a sample of persons was included. There are approximately two chances in three that a sample estimate will differ by less than one standard error from the number that would have been obtained if all persons had been included in the survey, and about nineteen chances in twenty that the difference will be less than two standard errors.

Another measure of the likely difference is the Relative Standard Error (RSE), which is obtained by expressing the SE as a percentage of the estimate to which it relates:

$$RSE\% = \left(\frac{SE}{estimate} \right) \times 100$$

Measures of sampling error continued

Very small estimates may be subject to such high RSEs so as to seriously detract from their value for most reasonable purposes. Only estimates with RSEs less than 25% are considered sufficiently reliable for most purposes. However, estimates with RSEs of 25% or more are included in all published 2006 GSS output. Estimates with an RSE of 25% to 50% are preceded by an asterisk (e.g. *3.4) to indicate that the estimate should be used with caution. Estimates with RSEs over 50% are indicated by a double asterisk (e.g.**0.6) and should be considered unreliable for most purposes.

RSEs for estimates from the 2006 GSS are available in 'actual' form, i.e. the RSE for each estimate produced can be calculated using the replicate weights. Replicate weighting is a process whereby a small group of persons or households in the sample are assigned a zero weight and then the remaining records are reweighted to the survey benchmark population. For the 2006 GSS this process was repeated 30 times to produce 30 replicate weights. These replicate weights are used for calculating the variances of the estimate for each replicate group and the original estimate, by squaring the difference and summing these differences over all of the 30 replicate groups. The difference between the replicate estimate and the original estimate is then used in calculating the standard error of the estimate.

NON-SAMPLING ERROR

Errors made in giving and recording information during an interview can occur regardless of whether the estimates are derived from a sample or from a complete enumeration. Inaccuracies of this kind are referred to as non-sampling errors. The major sources of non-sampling error are:

- errors related to the survey scope;
- response errors such as incorrect interpretation or wording of questions, interviewer bias, etc.;
- bias due to non-response, characteristics of non-responding persons may differ from responding persons; and
- errors in processing such as mistakes in the recording or coding of the data obtained.

These sources of error are discussed in turn below.

Errors related to survey scope

Some dwellings may have been inadvertently included or excluded because, for example, the distinctions between whether they were private or non-private dwellings may have been unclear. All efforts were made to overcome such situations by constant updating of lists both before and during the survey. Furthermore, some persons may have been inadvertently included or excluded because of difficulties in applying the scope rules concerning who was identified as usual residents, and concerning the treatment of some overseas visitors. Other errors which can arise from the application of the scope and coverage rules are outlined in Chapter 3: Survey Methodology.

Response errors

In this survey response errors may have arisen from three main sources: deficiencies in questionnaire design and methodology; deficiencies in interviewing technique; and inaccurate reporting by the respondent.

*Response errors
continued*

Errors may be caused by misleading or ambiguous questions, inadequate or inconsistent definitions of terminology used, or by poor overall survey design (e.g. context effects where responses to a question are directly influenced by the preceding questions). In order to overcome problems of this kind, individual questions and the overall questionnaire were thoroughly tested before being finalised for use in the survey.

Testing took two forms:

- cognitive interviewing (further explained in Chapter 2: Survey Content); and
- field testing, which involved a pilot test and dress rehearsal conducted in Tasmania and South Australia respectively, each covering 250 - 300 households.

As a result of both forms of testing, modifications were made to question design, wording, ordering and associated prompt cards, and some changes were made to survey procedures. In considering modifications it was sometimes necessary to balance better response to a particular item/topic against increased interview time or effects on other parts of the survey. The result is that in some instances it was necessary to adopt a workable/acceptable approach rather than an optimum approach. Although changes would have had the effect of minimising response errors due to questionnaire design and content issues, some will inevitably have occurred in the final survey enumeration.

Response errors may also have occurred due to the large nature of the survey, resulting in interviewer and/or respondent fatigue (i.e. loss of concentration). While efforts were made to minimise errors arising from deliberate misreporting or non-reporting by respondents (including emphasising the importance of the data and checking consistency within the survey instrument), some instances will have inevitably occurred.

Recall error may also have led to response error. Information recorded in this survey is essentially 'as reported' by respondents, and hence may differ from information available from other sources or collected using different methodologies. Responses may be affected by imperfect recall or individual interpretation of survey questions. Reference periods used in relation to each topic were selected to suit the nature of the information being sought; in particular to strike the right balance between minimising recall errors while ensuring the period was meaningful, representative (from both respondent and data use perspectives) and would yield sufficient observations in the survey to support reliable estimates. It is possible that the reference periods did not suit every person for every topic, and that difficulty with recall may have led to inaccurate reporting in some instances.

A further source of response error is lack of uniformity in interviewing standards. Methods employed to achieve and maintain uniform interviewing practises included training and re-training initiatives, and regular supervision and checking of interviewers' work. These initiatives aimed to ensure that a high level of response accuracy was achieved. An advantage of the CAI technology used in conducting interviews for this survey is that it potentially reduced non-sampling error by enabling edits to be applied as the data was being collected. The interviewer was alerted immediately if information entered into the computer was either outside the permitted range for a question, or contradictory to information previously recorded during the interview. These edits allowed the interviewer to query respondents and resolve issues during the interview. CAI sequencing of questions was also automated such that respondents were asked only

*Response errors
continued*

relevant questions and only in the appropriate sequence, eliminating interviewer sequencing errors.

Some respondents may have provided responses that they felt were expected, rather than those that accurately reflected their own situation. Every effort has been made to minimise such bias through the development and use of culturally appropriate survey methodology. Non-uniformity of interviewers themselves is also a potential source of error, in that the impression made upon respondents by personal characteristics of individual interviewers such as age, sex, appearance and manner, may influence the answers obtained.

Non-response bias

One of the main sources of non-sampling error is non-response by persons selected in the survey. Non-response can affect the reliability of results and introduce bias. The magnitude of any bias depends upon the level of non-response and the extent of the difference between the characteristics of those people who responded to the survey and those who did not, as well as the extent to which non-response adjustments can be made during estimation through the use of benchmarks.

To reduce the level and impact of non-response, the following methods were adopted in this survey:

- face-to-face interviews with respondents;
- the use of interviewers who could speak languages other than English (where necessary);
- follow-up of respondents if there was initially no response; and
- ensuring the weighted file is representative of the population by aligning the estimates with population benchmarks.

Of the dwellings selected in the 2006 GSS, 13.5% did not respond fully or adequately. As the non-response to the GSS was low, the impact of non-response bias is considered to be negligible.

Errors in processing

Errors may also occur during data processing, between the initial collection of the data and final compilation of statistics. These may be due to a failure of computer editing programs to detect errors in the data, or during the manipulation of raw data to produce the final survey data files; for example, in the course of deriving new data items from raw survey data or during the estimation procedures or weighting of the data file.

To minimise the likelihood of these errors occurring a number of quality assurance processes were employed, including:

- computer editing - edits were devised to ensure that logical sequences were followed in the questionnaires, that necessary items were present and that specific values lay within certain ranges. These edits were designed to detect reporting and recording errors, incorrect relationships between data items or missing data items.

*Errors in processing
continued*

- data file checks - at various stages during processing (such as after computer editing or after derivation of new data items) frequency counts and/or tabulations were obtained from the data file showing the distribution of persons for different characteristics. These were used as checks on the content of the data file, to identify unusual values which may have significantly affected estimates and illogical relationships not previously identified. Further checks were conducted to ensure consistency between related data items and in the relevant populations.
- where possible, checks of the data were also undertaken to ensure consistency of the survey outputs against results of the previous GSS and data available from other sources.

INTERPRETATION OF
RESULTS

Care has been taken to ensure that the results of this survey are as accurate as possible. All interviews were conducted by trained ABS officers. Extensive reference material was developed for use in the field enumeration and intensive training was provided to interviewers in both classroom and on-the-job environments. However, there remain other factors which may have affected the reliability of results, and for which no specific adjustments can be made. The following factors should be considered when interpreting estimates for the 2006 GSS:

- information recorded in this survey is essentially 'as reported' by respondents, and hence may differ from information available from other sources or collected using different methodologies. Responses may be affected by imperfect recall or individual interpretation of survey questions.
- some respondents may have provided responses that they felt were expected, rather than those that accurately reflected their own situation. Every effort has been made to minimise such bias through the development and use of culturally appropriate survey methodology.

For a number of GSS data items, some respondents were unwilling or unable to provide the required information. No imputation was undertaken for this missing information. Where responses for a particular data item were missing for a person or household they were recorded in a 'not known' or 'not stated' category for that data item. These 'not known' or 'not stated' categories are not shown in the publication tables. However, the person or household has been included in the total for most data items. The exception is the equivalised gross household income data item where it was more appropriate to calculate percentages excluding the missing values. Below is a table showing the number and proportion of missing values for key GSS data items.

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS *continued*

GSS DATA ITEMS WITH A 'NOT KNOWN' OR 'NOT STATED' CATEGORY

<i>Data item</i>	<i>Estimated number of persons</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
	(000)	(%)
Landlord type	11.9	0.1
Weekly mortgage payments	460.0	3.0
Weekly rent payments	67.8	0.4
Personal gross weekly income	1 316.4	8.6
Equivalised household gross weekly income(a)	1 107.1	13.9
Principal source of personal income	30.0	0.2
Principal source of household income	111.0	0.7
Whether government support has been main source of income in last 2 years	14.1	0.1
Time that government support has been main source of income in last 2 years	41.0	0.3
Type(s) of cash flow problem(s) (and Number of different types of cash flow problems in last 12 months)	73.2	0.5
Types of dissaving actions taken in last 12 months (and Number of different types of dissaving actions taken in the last 12 months)	91.9	0.6
Value of dwelling	453.9	3.0
Equity in dwelling	813.9	5.3
Type(s) of selected assets	257.2	1.7
Type of consumer debt	264.6	1.7
Type of personal stressors experienced in the last 12 months	2.6	—

— nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

(a) Number of households, not individuals.

For persons or households reporting nil or negative total income, the principal source of income has been classified as 'undefined'. An estimated 490,000 persons (3%) live in households where the principal source of income was 'undefined'.

Comparison of estimates

Published estimates may also be used to calculate the difference between two survey estimates. Such an estimate is subject to sampling error. The sampling error of the difference between two estimates depends on their SEs and the relationship (correlation) between them. An approximate SE of the difference between two estimates (x-y) may be calculated by the following formula:

$$SE(x - y) = \sqrt{[SE(x)]^2 + [SE(y)]^2}$$

While the above formula will be exact only for differences between separate and uncorrelated (unrelated) characteristics of sub-populations, it is expected that it will provide a reasonable approximation for all differences likely to be of interest in this publication.

Significance testing

For comparing estimates between surveys or between populations within a survey it is useful to determine whether apparent differences are 'real' differences between the corresponding population characteristics or simply the product of differences between the survey samples. One way to examine this is to determine whether the difference between the estimates is statistically significant. This is done by calculating the standard error of the difference between two estimates (x and y) and using that to calculate the test statistic using the formula below:

$$\frac{[x - y]}{SE(x - y)}$$

*Significance testing
continued*

If the value of the test statistic is greater than 1.96 then we may say there is good evidence of a statistically significant difference between the two populations with respect to that characteristic. Otherwise, it cannot be stated with confidence that there is a real difference between the populations.

The imprecision due to sampling variability, which is measured by the SE, should not be confused with inaccuracies that may occur because of imperfections in reporting by respondents and recording by interviewers, and errors made in coding and processing data. Inaccuracies of this kind are referred to as non-sampling error, and they occur in any enumeration, whether it be a full count or sample. Every effort is made to reduce non-sampling error to a minimum by careful design of questionnaires, intensive training and supervision of interviewers, and efficient operating procedures.

*Calculating standard
errors for proportions and
percentages*

Proportions and percentages formed from the ratio of two estimates are also subject to sampling errors. The size of the error depends on the accuracy of both the numerator and the denominator. For proportions where the denominator is an estimate of the number of persons in a group and the numerator is the number of persons in a sub-group of the denominator group, the formula to approximate the RSE is given by:

$$RSE\left(\frac{x}{y}\right) = \sqrt{[RSE(x)]^2 + [RSE(y)]^2}$$

Seasonal effects

The estimates from the 2006 GSS are based on information collected from March to July 2006, and due to seasonal effects they may not be fully representative of other time periods in the year. For example, the GSS asked standard ABS questions on labour force status to determine whether a person was employed. Employment is subject to seasonal variation throughout the year. Therefore, the GSS results for employment could have differed if the GSS had been conducted over the whole year or in a different part of the year.

DATA AVAILABILITY

Below is information describing the range of data products available from the 2006 GSS, both in published form and on request. Products available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au> are indicated accordingly.

Publication

The publication, *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia* (cat no. 4159.0), presents summary results from the survey. The tables in the publication are predominantly national level data tables, but some tables show state and territory results. There are two time series tables. The publication was released in May 2007 and is available free of charge on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>. An electronic version of the tables released in the summary publication, in spreadsheet format, is also available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>. The spreadsheet presents the proportions and related RSEs for each publication table. The population estimate is also presented for Tables 1 and 2.

State/Territory tables

Versions of the tables from the summary publication compiled separately for each state and territory will be available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au> in July 2007. These tables will be customised depending on the size of the sampling error. They will be released in spreadsheet format as *General Social Survey: New South Wales* (cat. no. 4159.1.55.001) to *General Social Survey: Northern Territory* (cat. no. 4159.8.55.001).

Microdata

For users who wish to undertake more detailed analysis of the survey data, microdata from the 2006 GSS will be released in the form of two confidentialised unit record files (CURFs), the basic CURF and the expanded CURF. The expanded CURF will contain more detail than the basic CURF and will only be available via the Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL), which is a secure Internet-based data query service. The basic CURF will be available via CD-ROM or RADL. Information regarding the basic CURF (*General Social Survey: Basic Confidentialised Unit Record File*, cat. no. 4159.0.30.001) and the expanded CURF (*General Social Survey: Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File*, cat. no. 4159.0.30.002) is included in this user guide, Chapter 7: Using the CURF data.

Data available on request

Special tabulations of GSS data are available on request, for a fee. Subject to confidentiality and sampling variability constraints, tabulations can be produced from the survey incorporating data items, populations and geographic areas selected to meet individual requirements. These can be provided in printed or electronic form. Please refer to the contact details provided on the front of this publication.

Publication of supplementary topics

Detailed results on voluntary work will be released separately in the publication *Voluntary Work, Australia* (cat. no. 4441.0) which will be available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Current publications and other products released by the ABS are available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>. ABS publications which may be of interest are:

- General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2002* (cat. no. 4159.0)
- Aspects of Social Capital, Australia, 2006* (cat. no. 4911.0)
- Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events, Australia, 2005–06* (cat. no. 4114.0)
- Australia's Children, 1999* (cat. no. 4119.0)
- Australian Housing Survey, Housing Characteristics, Costs and Conditions, 1999* (4182.0)
- Australian Labour Market Statistics, January 2007* (cat. no. 6105.0)
- Census of Population and Housing: Selected Social and Housing Characteristics, Australia, 2001* (cat. no. 2015.0)
- Crime and Safety, Australia, April 2005* (cat. no. 4509.0)
- Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2003* (cat. no. 4430.0)
- Education and Training Experience, Australia, 2005* (cat. no. 6278.0)
- Education and Training Indicators, Australia, 2002* (cat. no. 4230.0)
- Employment Arrangements and Superannuation, Australia, April to June 2000* (cat. no. 6361.0)
- Household Expenditure Survey, Australia: Summary of Results, 2003–04* (cat. no. 6530.0)
- Household Income and Income Distribution, Australia, 2003–04* (cat. no. 6523.0)
- Information Paper: Measuring Social Capital, an Australian Framework and Indicators* (cat. no. 1378.0)
- Labour Force, Australia* (cat. no. 6202.0)
- Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Migrants, Australia, November 2004* (cat. no. 6250.0)
- Migration, Australia, 2004–05* (cat. no. 3412.0)
- National Health Survey: Summary of Results, 2004–05* (cat. no. 4364.0)
- Older People, Australia: A Social Report, 1999* (cat. no. 4109.0)
- Sports Attendance, Australia, 2005-06* (cat. no. 4174.0)
- Voluntary Work, Australia, 2000* (cat. no. 4441.0)
- Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006* (cat. no. 4441.0)

USING THE CURF DATA

Microdata from the 2006 GSS is available in the form of a basic Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) and an expanded CURF. The basic CURF is available via CD-ROM or the Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL). The expanded CURF contains more detailed data than the basic CURF and is only available via RADL.

The RADL is an on-line database query system, under which microdata are held on a server at the ABS, to which users can submit programs to interrogate and analyse data, and access the results. Further information about the RADL facility, and information about obtaining access to the CURFs, are available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au> (see Services We Provide/CURF Microdata/Accessing CURF Microdata).

This chapter details how to use the microdata, content of the files and conditions of microdata release.

About the microdata

The 2006 GSS microdata are released under the provisions of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. This Act allows for the release of data in the form of unit records where the information is not likely to enable the identification of a particular person or organisation. Accordingly, there are no names or addresses of survey respondents on the CURFs, and other steps have been taken to protect the confidentiality of respondents. These include removing some items from the CURFs, reducing the level of detail shown for some items, changing characteristics such as state or age for some records, and perturbing some data. As a consequence, data on the CURFs will not exactly match published data.

Steps to confidentialise the data made available on the CURFs are taken in such a way as to ensure the integrity of the data and optimise its content, while maintaining the confidentiality of respondents. Intending purchasers should ensure that the data they require, at the level of detail they require, are available on the CURFs. Data collected in the survey but not contained on the CURFs may be available as statistics in tabulated form on request. A list of the data items on both the basic and expanded CURFs is available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>, titled 'GSS 2006 CURF Data items'.

FILE STRUCTURE AND USE

The 2006 GSS basic and expanded CURFs each contain a set of two files with confidentialised records. These files provide records at the following levels:

- Persons
- Voluntary work organisations

Nature of the levels

The levels for the 2006 basic and expanded CURFs are in a hierarchical relationship. That is, each person who was involved in voluntary work during the previous 12 months, has up to three voluntary work records.

*Nature of the levels
continued*

The person level contains information about each selected person and the household to which they belong. The person level contains 13,375 records.

The voluntary work level contains information about each selected voluntary work organisation for which the selected person engaged in voluntary work during the previous 12 months. The voluntary work level contains 7,062 records.

USING THE EPISODIC
DATASET

The voluntary work level is an episodic dataset. The episodic dataset in the 2006 GSS is a set of data with a counting unit (voluntary work organisation) which may be repeated for a person. For example, a person may have engaged in voluntary work for more than one organisation during the previous 12 months.

Use of weights

The 2006 GSS was conducted on a sample of private households in Australia. It is important to take account of the method of sample selection when deriving estimates from the CURF. This is particularly important as a person's chance of selection in the survey varied depending on the state or territory in which the person lived. If these chances of selection are not accounted for, by use of appropriate weights, the results will be biased.

Each unit record contains two weights. The weights indicate how many population units, i.e. persons or households, are represented by the sample unit. The person weight identifier is FINPRSWT and the household weight identifier is HHWTPAA. In addition, replicate weights have also been included, with 30 person replicate weights (WPM0101 - WPM0130) and 30 household replicate weights (WHM0101 - WHM0130). The purpose of these replicate weights is to enable calculation of the RSE for each estimate produced from the CURFs. For more information on RSEs, please refer to Chapter 5: Data Quality.

Where estimates are derived from the CURF, it is essential that they are calculated by using the weights of persons or households in each category, and not just by counting the number of records in each category. If person or household weights were to be ignored when analysing the data to draw inferences about the population, then no account would be taken of a person's or household's chance of selection, or of different response rates across population groups, and the resulting estimates may therefore be seriously biased. The application of weights ensures that estimates conform to an independently estimated distribution of the population by age and other characteristics, rather than to the distributions within the sample itself.

It should be noted that as a result of some of the changes made to protect confidentiality on the CURFs, estimates of benchmarked items produced from the CURFs may not equal benchmarked values.

Identifiers

Each record has an individual person identifier called ABSPID and a voluntary work episode identifier called ABSVID.

Record types

There is a single record level available on the 2006 GSS CURFs which can be weighted to produce either person or household estimates. Person data exist only for persons aged 18 and over.

<i>Special codes</i>	Details of special codes to be aware of when analysing data are available in the CURF data item lists available on the ABS web site < www.abs.gov.au >.
<i>Multiple response items</i>	There are a number of data items on the 2006 GSS CURFs which have multiple responses. In these instances respondents were able to select more than one (multiple) category. Each item lists the applicable population, relevant categories and codes, and subsequent records that were not applicable. The 'Null response' (code 0) for multiple response items is a default code and should not be used in data analysis. Refer to the CURF data item lists for listings of multiple response items. An example is 'All sources of personal income' data item which lists eight categories from ALPINCFA-ALPINCFCG.
<i>Geography</i>	<p>The basic CURF has included two geographic items: 'State or territory of usual residence' (STATEUR) and 'Remoteness areas' (ARIACF). To enable users greater flexibility in their analysis, there are four geographic items on the expanded CURF: 'State or territory of usual residence' (STATEUR); 'Remoteness areas' (ARIACF); 'Capital city/balance of state' (CITIBAL); and 'Section of state' (SOSGSS).</p> <p>Simultaneous cross-tabulations of the various geographic variables on the expanded CURF will produce cells relating to some small geographic regions. Tables showing multiple data items, cross-tabulated by more than one sub-state geography at a time are not permitted due to the detailed information about people in some small geographic regions that could be presented. Users are advised that this condition is monitored through the RADL audit process.</p>
BASIC GSS CURF	
<i>Basic GSS CURF files</i>	<p>The basic CURF is available either on CD-ROM or through the RADL, in several different formats (SAS, SPSS, STATA). The 2006 GSS basic CURF includes an 'episodic' data file for users to examine voluntary work. The names of the basic CURF files are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ GSS06BPE.SAS7BDAT- the 2006 GSS basic CURF file in SAS for Windows format. ■ GSS06BVO.SAS7BDAT- the 2006 GSS basic CURF episodic file in SAS for Windows format (Voluntary Work). ■ FORMATS.SAS7BDAT - the format file which provides labels for associated codes in the SAS version of the 2006 GSS basic CURF. ■ GSS06BPE.SAV - the 2006 GSS basic CURF file in SPSS format. ■ GSS06BVO.SAV - the 2006 GSS basic CURF episodic file in SPSS format (Voluntary Work). ■ GSS06BPE.DTA - the 2006 GSS basic CURF file in STATA format. ■ GSS06BVO.DTA - the 2006 GSS basic CURF episodic file in STATA format (Voluntary Work).
<i>Basic CURF files only available for CD-ROM users</i>	<p>These files contain the raw confidentialised survey data in a comma separated file (CSV) format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ GSS06BPE.CSV - the 2006 GSS basic CURF file in CSV format. ■ GSS06BVO.CSV - the 2006 GSS basic CURF episodic file in CSV format (Voluntary Work).

*Basic CURF files only
available for CD-ROM
users continued*

- GSS2006B.SAS - This SAS program can be used to translate data from the CSV format to SAS. It also creates the formats library and attributes the formats to relevant variables. This file is for use with other analysis packages and describes the CSV file data. Relevant changes will need to be made to reflect the load statement for your analysis package.

*Basic CURF test files (only
available for RADL CURF
users)*

The test files mirror the actual data files, but have random data and random identifiers. For these files the ABSHID differs from the actual data, in that the episodic files do not use any identifier found in the main files. Users will not be able to match data from an episodic file to a main file using the test files. Each identifier in the episodic test files always appears 5 times. These files are located on the RADL and users can use these to test their code prior to submitting RADL jobs:

- GSS06BPE.SAS7BDAT - the 2006 GSS basic CURF file in SAS format test file.
- GSS06BVO.SAS7BDAT - the 2006 GSS basic CURF episodic file in SAS format test file (Voluntary Work).
- FORMATS.SAS7BDAT - the format file which provides labels for associated codes in the SAS version of the 2006 GSS CURF test files.
- GSS06BPE.SAV - the 2006 GSS basic CURF file in SPSS format test file.
- GSS06BVO.SAV - the 2006 GSS basic CURF episodic file in SPSS format test file (Voluntary Work).
- GSS06BPE.DTA - the 2006 GSS basic CURF file in STATA format test file.
- GSS06BVO.DTA - the 2006 GSS basic CURF episodic file in STATA format test file (Voluntary Work).

Information files

- 4159.0.55.002 GSS 2006 CURF Data items.XLS - Lists the data items included on the CURFs, including details of categories and code values for each data item. This is in an Excel spreadsheet format.
- FREQUENCIES_GSS_BASIC_CURF_PERSON_LEVEL_WEIGHTED.TXT - Contains documentation relating to the 2006 GSS basic CURF file. Data item code values and category labels are provided with weighted person frequencies of each code value. The file is in plain text format.
- FREQUENCIES_GSS_BASIC_CURF_PERSON_LEVEL_UNWEIGHTED.TXT - Contains documentation relating to the 2006 GSS basic CURF file. Data item code values and category labels are provided with unweighted person frequencies of each code value. The file is in plain text format.
- FREQUENCIES_GSS_BASIC_CURF_VOLWORK_LEVEL_UNWEIGHTED.TXT - Contains documentation relating to the episodic file for Voluntary Work on the 2006 GSS basic CURF file. Data item code values and category labels are provided with unweighted frequencies of each code value. The file is in plain text format.
- 4159055002_2006.PDF - is an acrobat file that contains this User Guide.
- 41590_2006.PDF- is an acrobat file that contains the Summary Results publication for the 2006 GSS Survey.
- Responsible access to CURFs.PDF - is an acrobat file that explains CURF users' roles and obligations when using confidentialised data.

EXPANDED GSS CURF

Expanded GSS CURF files

The expanded CURF contains more detailed data than the basic CURF and is only available via RADL. It is available in several different formats (SAS, SPSS, STATA). The 2006 GSS expanded CURF includes an 'episodic' data file for users to examine Voluntary Work. The names of the expanded CURF files are listed below:

- GSS06EPE.SAS7BDAT - the 2006 GSS expanded CURF file in SAS for Windows format.
- GSS06EVO.SAS7BDAT - the 2006 GSS expanded CURF episodic file in SAS for Windows format (Voluntary Work).
- FORMATS.SAS7BDAT - the format file which provides labels for associated codes in the SAS version of the 2006 GSS expanded CURF.
- GSS06EPE.SAV - the 2006 GSS expanded CURF file in SPSS format.
- GSS06EVO.SAV - the 2006 GSS expanded CURF episodic file in SPSS format (Voluntary Work).
- GSS06EPE.DTA - the 2006 GSS expanded CURF file in STATA format.
- GSS06EVO.DTA - the 2006 GSS expanded CURF episodic file in STATA format (Voluntary Work).

Expanded CURF test files

The test files mirror the actual data files, but have random data and random identifiers. For these files the ABSHID differs from the actual data, in that the episodic files do not use any identifier found in the main files. Users will not be able to match data from an episodic file to a main file using the test files. Each identifier in the episodic test files always appears 5 times. These files are located on the RADL and users can use these to test their code prior to submitting RADL jobs:

- GSS06EPE.SAS7BDAT- the 2006 GSS expanded CURF file in SAS format test file.
- GSS06EVO.SAS7BDAT- the 2006 GSS expanded CURF episodic file in SAS format test file (Voluntary Work).
- FORMATS.SAS7BDAT - the format file which provides labels for associated codes in the SAS version of the 2006 GSS CURF test files.
- GSS06EPE.SAV - the 2006 GSS expanded CURF file in SPSS format test file.
- GSS06EVO.SAV - the 2006 GSS expanded CURF episodic file in SPSS format test file (Voluntary Work).
- GSS06EPE.DTA - the 2006 GSS expanded CURF file in STATA format test file.
- GSS06EVO.DTA - the 2006 GSS expanded CURF episodic file in STATA format test file (Voluntary Work).

Information files

- 4159.0.55.002 GSS 2006 CURF Data items.XLS - Lists the data items included on the CURFs, including details of categories and code values for each data item. This file is in an Excel spreadsheet format and is available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>.
- FREQUENCIES_GSS_EXPANDED_CURF_PERSON_LEVEL_WEIGHTED.TXT - Contains documentation relating to the 2006 GSS expanded CURF file. Data item code values and category labels are provided with weighted person frequencies of each code value. The file is in plain text format.
- FREQUENCIES_GSS_EXPANDED_CURF_PERSON_LEVEL_UNWEIGHTED.TXT - Contains documentation relating to the 2006 GSS expanded CURF file. Data item code values and category labels are provided with unweighted person frequencies of each code value. The file is in plain text format.

*Information files**continued*

- FREQUENCIES_GSS_EXPANDED_CURF_VOLWORK_LEVEL_UNWEIGHTED.TXT - Contains documentation relating to the episodic file for Voluntary Work on the 2006 GSS expanded CURF file. Data item code values and category labels are provided with unweighted frequencies of each code value. The file is in plain text format.
- 4159055002_2006.PDF - is an acrobat file that contains this User Guide.
- 41590_2006.PDF - is an acrobat file that contains the Summary Results publication for the 2006 GSS Survey.
- Responsible access to CURFs.PDF - is an acrobat file that explains CURF users' roles and obligations when using confidentialised data.

CONDITIONS OF RELEASE

Release of CURF

The 2006 GSS basic and expanded CURFs are released in accordance with a Ministerial Determination (Clause 7, Statutory Rules 1983, No. 19) in pursuance of section 13 of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. As required by the Determination, the CURFs have been designed so that the information on the files are not likely to enable the identification of the particular person or organisation to which it relates.

The Australian Statistician's approval is required for each release of a CURF. In addition, the ABS requires all organisations and individuals within organisations who purchase or are seeking to use a CURF to sign an undertaking to abide by the legislative restrictions on use, before access to the CURF will be granted. The undertaking includes, among other conditions, that in using the data people will:

- use the information only for the statistical purposes specified in the Schedule to the Undertaking;
- not attempt to identify particular persons or organisations;
- not disclose, either directly or indirectly, the information to any other person or organisation other than members of this organisation who have been approved by the ABS to have individual access to the information;
- not attempt to match, with or without using identifiers, the information with any other list of persons or organisations;
- comply with any other direction or requirement specified in the ABS Responsible Access to ABS CURFs Training Manual;
- not attempt to access the information after the term of their authorisation expires, or after their authorisation is rescinded by the organisation which provided it, or after they cease to be a member of that organisation.

Use of the data for statistical purposes means use of the CURF data to produce information of a statistical nature. Examples of statistical purposes are:

- manipulation of the data to produce means, correlations or other descriptive or summary measures;
- estimation of population characteristics;
- use of data as input to mathematical models or for other types of analysis (e.g. factor analysis);
- providing graphical or pictorial representations of the characteristics of the population or subsets of the population.

All CURF users are required to read and abide by the Responsible Access to ABS Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs) Training Manual available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au> (see Services We Provide/CURF Microdata/Accessing CURF Microdata/Responsible Access to ABS CURFs).

*Release of CURF
continued*

Use of the data for unauthorised purposes may render the purchaser liable to severe penalties. Advice on the propriety of any particular intended use of the data is available from microdata.access@abs.gov.au.

Conditions of sale

All ABS products and services are provided subject to the ABS conditions of sale. Any queries relating to these Conditions of Sale should be referred to intermediary.management@abs.gov.au.

PRICE

The price of the 2006 GSS basic or expanded CURFs, as at June 2007, is \$1320, including GST.

ACCESSING THE CURFS

All clients wishing to access the 2006 GSS basic or expanded CURF should complete the Application and Undertaking available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au> (Services We Provide/CURF Microdata). Before completing the application form, clients should read the 'Responsible Access to ABS Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs) Training Manual' and related information which is also available from the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>.

AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

University clients should refer to the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au> (Services to Universities). The 2006 GSS basic and expanded CURFs can be accessed by universities participating in the ABS/Australian Vice Chancellors Committee CURF agreement for research and teaching purposes.

CHAPTER **8**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2006 GSS DATA ITEM LIST

The 2006 GSS survey data item list is available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>, titled '4159.0.55.002 GSS 2006 Survey Data items.XLS'.

2006 GSS QUESTIONNAIRE

The 2006 GSS questionnaire is available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>, titled '4159.0.55.002 GSS 2006 Questionnaire.pdf'.

2006 GSS PROMPT CARDS

The 2006 GSS prompt cards are available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>, titled '4159.0.55.00 GSS 2006 Prompt Cards.pdf'.

2006 GSS CURF DATA ITEMS

The 2006 GSS CURF data item list is available on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>, titled '4159.0.55.002 GSS 2006 CURF Data items.XLS'.

GLOSSARY

Ability to raise \$2,000 within a week for something important	A person's perception of whether they or other members of the household could obtain \$2,000 for something important within a week.
Access to motor vehicle(s) to drive	Access that a person has to any motor vehicle to drive. Such motor vehicles include vehicle(s) which they wholly or jointly own, vehicle(s) belonging to another member of the household, and company or government vehicle(s) which they have access to for personal use.
Age	The age of a person on their last birthday.
Attendance rate	For any group, this is calculated by expressing the number of persons who attended a venue or event at least once in the last 12 months as a percentage of the population aged 18 years or over in the same group.
Child	A person of any age who is a natural, adopted, step, or foster son or daughter of a couple or lone parent, usually resident in the same household, and who does not have a child or partner of his/her own usually resident in the household.
Consumer debt	Debt or liabilities usually associated with the purchase of consumables, such as clothing, electrical goods or cars, incurred by way of credit or store card which are not completely paid off, car or personal loans, interest free purchases and hire purchase agreements. Investment loans, lines of credit, overdue bills for telephone/electricity etc., outstanding fines or Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) debts are excluded.
Contact with family or friends living outside the household	Refers to face to face contact, or other types of contact such as telephone, mail and email, which a person has had with family or friends who do not live with them.
Couple	Two people in a registered or de facto marriage, who usually live in the same household.
Dependent child/ren/Dependents	All persons aged under 15 years; and people aged 15–24 years who are full-time students, have a parent in the household and do not have a partner or child of their own in the household.
Disability or long-term health condition	<p>A disability or long-term health condition exists if a limitation, restriction, impairment, disease or disorder, had lasted, or was likely to last for at least six months, and which restricted everyday activities.</p> <p>It is classified by whether or not a person has a specific limitation or restriction. Specific limitation or restriction is further classified by whether the limitation or restriction is a limitation in core activities or a schooling/employment restriction only.</p> <p>There are four levels of core activity limitation (profound, severe, moderate, and mild) which are based on whether a person needs help, has difficulty, or uses aids or equipment with any of the core activities (self care, mobility or communication). A person's overall level of core activity limitation is determined by their highest level of limitation in these activities.</p> <p>The four levels are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ profound – always needs help/supervision with core activities ■ severe – does not always need help with core activities ■ moderate – has difficulty with core activities ■ mild – uses aids to assist with core activities. <p>Persons are classified as having only a schooling/employment restriction if they have no core activity limitation and are aged 18 to 20 years and have difficulties with education, or are less than 65 years and have difficulties with employment.</p>

Donations	A voluntary transfer of funds made in the preceding 12 months by a person, on an individual not a business basis. The donor should not have received any benefit in return. Excludes purchases of goods and raffle tickets but includes door-knocks and sponsoring walkathons etc.
Equity in dwelling	Calculated as the value of the dwelling less the amount owing on mortgages or secured loans against the dwelling.
Equivalised gross household income	Gross household income adjusted using an equivalence scale. For a lone person household it is equal to gross household income. For a household comprising more than one person, it is an indicator of the gross household income that would need to be received by a lone person household to enjoy the same level of economic well-being as the household in question. For further information see Appendix 4: Equivalised gross household income quintiles in <i>General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia 2006</i> (cat. no. 4159.0) available on the ABS web site < www.abs.gov.au >.
Equivalised gross household income quintiles	These are groupings of 20% of the total population when ranked in ascending order according to equivalised gross household income. The population used for this purpose includes all people living in private dwellings, including children and other persons under the age of 18 years. As the scope of this publication is restricted to only those persons aged 18 years and over, the distribution of this smaller population across the quintiles is not necessarily the same as it is for persons of all ages, i.e. the percentage of persons aged 18 years and over in each of these quintiles may be larger or smaller than 20%. For further information see Appendix 4: Equivalised gross household income quintiles in <i>General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia 2006</i> (cat. no. 4159.0) available on the ABS web site < www.abs.gov.au >.
Family	Two or more persons, one of whom is at least 15 years of age, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who are usually resident in the same household. The basis of a family is formed by identifying the presence of a couple relationship, lone parent-child relationship or other blood relationship. Some households will, therefore, contain more than one family.
Feelings of safety	How safe a person feels in various circumstances (i.e. when home alone during the day, when home alone after dark or when walking alone through their local area after dark) was reported on a five point scale, from very safe to very unsafe. If the respondent indicated that they were never home alone or never walked alone after dark this response was recorded.
Financial stress	Three measures aimed at identifying households that may have been constrained in their activities because of shortage of money. The measures are the ability to raise 'emergency money', whether had cash flow problems and whether had taken dissaving actions. One person in the household was asked to provide these assessments of the household's financial situation.
Gross income	Regular and recurring cash receipts including monies received from wages and salaries, government pensions and allowances, and other regular receipts such as superannuation, workers' compensation, child support, scholarships, profit or loss from own unincorporated business or partnership and property income. Gross income is the sum of the income from all these sources before income tax or the Medicare levy are deducted.
Government support	Cash support from the government in the form of pensions, benefits or allowances.
Highest year of school completed	The highest level of primary or secondary education which a person has completed, irrespective of the type of institution or location where that education was undertaken.
Household	One or more persons usually resident in the same private dwelling.

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- Household composition** This publication presents information for a selection of household composition categories which are based on various family and household compositions, and sometimes, the age of the selected person (the survey respondent). Categories presented are:
- couple only, one family household – a household consisting of a couple with no other related or unrelated persons usually resident.
 - couple family with dependent children – a household consisting of a couple and at least one dependent child usually resident in the household. Related non-dependent children may also be present in the household. Households which also have other related or unrelated residents are not included.
 - other couple, one family households – all couple households not included in the two previous categories. It includes for example, households consisting of a couple and non-dependent children.
 - one parent family with dependent children – a household consisting of a lone parent and at least one dependent child usually resident in the household. Non-dependent children may also be present in the household. Households which also have other related or unrelated usual residents are not included.
 - lone person household – a household consisting of a person living alone
 - other households – comprises all other households, including multi-family households, and households consisting of unrelated adults.
- Household tenure type** The nature of a household's legal right to occupy the dwelling in which they usually reside. In this publication, households are grouped into one of four broad tenure categories:
- owner without a mortgage – the dwelling is owned by a resident of the household and there are no outstanding mortgages or loans secured against the dwelling
 - owner with a mortgage – a household where an outstanding mortgage or loan amount secured against the dwelling, for the purposes of housing, is greater than zero
 - renter – a household who pays rent to reside in the dwelling. In this publication, renters are further classified into one of three broad types according to whom rent is paid:
 - state or territory housing authority
 - private landlord – a real estate agent, parent or other relative not in the same household, or another person not in the same household
 - other renter – a parent or other relative in the same household, the owner/manager of a caravan park, an employer (including a government authority), a housing cooperative, community or church group, or any other landlord not included elsewhere
 - other tenure – includes households which are participants of a life tenure scheme, participants in a rent/buy (or shared equity) scheme, living rent-free, or are in a tenure arrangement not included elsewhere (e.g. house-sitting, payment in kind for a specific service).
- Index of relative socio-economic disadvantage** One of five of the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFAs) compiled by the ABS following each population census. Each of the indexes summarise different aspects of the socio-economic status of the people living in those areas; the index of relative socio-economic disadvantage includes attributes such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment and jobs in relatively unskilled occupations. The index refers to population of the area (the Census Collector's District) in which a person lives, not to the socio-economic situation of the particular individual. The index used in this publication was compiled following the 2001 Census. For further information about the SEIFAs see *Information Paper: Census of Population and Housing — Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas, Australia* (cat. no. 2039.0).
- Informal social activities** Refers to recreational activities undertaken with others which have not been organised by an organisation or group with a formal structure. The most common examples are where family and/or friends come together to enjoy themselves.
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Jobless households	A jobless household is one in which no usual resident of the household aged 15 years or over is currently employed.
Labour force status	Refers to the situation of respondents in relation to the labour force at the time of the survey. Categories are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ employed – had a job or business, or undertook work without pay in a family business in the week prior to the survey, including being absent from a job or business they had. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ full-time – persons who usually work 35 hours or more per week. ■ part-time – persons who usually work at least one hour, but less than 35 hours, per week. ■ unemployed – not employed and actively looked for work in the four weeks prior to the survey and available to start work in the week prior to the survey not in the labour force. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ retired from work – persons over the age of 44 years who were no longer working and did not intend to work in the future. ■ other – other persons who were neither employed nor unemployed. Such persons may have never worked and never intend to work, persons keeping house (unpaid), voluntarily inactive and permanently unable to work.
Main English-speaking countries	Refers to the main countries from which Australia receives, or has received, significant numbers of overseas settlers who are likely to speak English. These countries comprise the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, the United States of America and South Africa.
Marital status	The marital status of couples within households. This item includes Married in a registered marriage, Married in a de facto marriage, and Not married.
Mean	The sum of values divided by the number of values.
Mortgage	A mortgage is a loan which is secured against a dwelling.
Non-dependent children	All persons aged 15 years or over (except those aged 15–24 years who are full-time students) who have a parent in the household and do not have a partner or child of their own in the household.
Non-school qualifications	Non-school qualifications are awarded for educational attainments other than those of pre-primary, primary or secondary education. They include qualifications at the Post graduate degree level, Master degree level, Graduate diploma and Graduate certificate level, Bachelor degree level, Advanced diploma and Diploma level, and Certificates I, II, III and IV levels. Non-school qualifications may be attained concurrently with school qualifications.
Organisation or group	An organisation or group is any body with a formal structure. It may be as large as a national charity or as small as a local book club. Purely ad hoc, informal and temporary gatherings of people do not constitute an organisation.
Organised sport or physical recreational activities	Those sport and physical recreational activities which were organised by a club, association or other organisation. The organisation did not need to be a sporting body; for example, it may have been a work social club, church group or gymnasium.
Participants in sport and physical recreational activities	Participants comprise those people who physically undertook a sport or physical recreational activity in the last 12 months, as well as people involved in 'non-playing roles', such as coaches, officials, umpires and administrators.
Participation rate	For any group, the number of persons who participated in the activity or event at least once in the specified reference period (usually the last 12 months), expressed as a percentage of the population of that group.
Personal stressors	Any of the following events or circumstances which the person considers have been a problem for themselves or someone close to them in the last 12 months: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ serious illness

Personal stressors *continued*

- serious accident
- mental illness
- serious disability
- death of family member or close friend
- divorce or separation
- not able to get a job
- involuntary loss of job
- alcohol or drug related problems
- gambling problem
- abuse or violent crime
- witness to violence
- trouble with the police

Principal source of household income

The source of income from which the most positive income for the household is received. If total income is nil or negative the principal source is undefined. The household's principal source of income comes from:

- employee income – cash income received as an employee, i.e. person who works for a public or private employer and receives remuneration in wages or salary, or is paid a retainer fee by his/her employer and works on a commission basis, or works for an employer for tips, piece-rates or payment in kind; or, is a person who operates his or her own incorporated enterprise with or without hiring employees
- unincorporated business income – the profit or loss from own unincorporated enterprise in the previous financial year. Profit or loss consists of the value of the gross output of the enterprise after the deduction of operating expenses (including depreciation). Losses occur when operating expenses are greater than gross receipts and are treated as negative income
- government cash pensions and allowances – regular payments from government to persons under social security and related government programs. Included are pensions and allowances received by aged, disabled, unemployed and sick persons, families and children, veterans or their survivors, and study allowances for students
- other sources of household income – income received from sources such as superannuation and annuity funds, property, interest or dividends, child support, and workers' compensation.

Proficiency in spoken English

A self assessment by persons who speak a language other than English at home, of whether they speak English very well, well, not well, or not at all.

Remoteness areas

Broad geographical regions which share common characteristics of remoteness based on the Remoteness Structure of the ABS's AUSTRALIAN STANDARD GEOGRAPHICAL CLASSIFICATION (ASGC). In this publication the categories Major Cities of Australia, and Inner Regional Australia from the Remoteness Structure are presented along with a residual category labelled 'Other areas'. As the GSS did not cover very remote areas of Australia, 'Other Areas', encompasses most of Outer Regional Australia, part of Remote Australia, and only a small proportion of Very Remote Australia.

Rent

A payment made periodically by a tenant to an owner or landlord in return for lodgement.

Selected assets

Any of the following type of assets:

- over \$1,000 in cash or deposited in financial institutions
- own incorporated business
- shares, stocks and bonds
- investment property (i.e. land and buildings other than the dwelling in which the household resides).

Selected person

In the GSS only one adult (aged 18 years or over) in each dwelling was selected for the survey. This person was randomly chosen after all usual residents of the household were listed.

Self-assessed health status	The selected person's general assessment of their own health, against a five point scale from excellent through to poor.
Small favours	Assistance which a person may seek from other people in their day to day lives. Examples of small favours include looking after pets or watering the garden, collecting mail or checking the house, minding a child for a brief period, helping with moving or lifting objects, and borrowing equipment.
Social attachment	'Social attachment' refers to the nature and strength of relationships that people have with each other. It includes the more intimate relationships with family and friends as well as people's associations with individuals and organisations in the wider community.
Support in time of crisis	Refers to whether there is someone outside the person's household that could be asked for support in a time of crisis. Support could be in the form of emotional, physical or financial help. Potential sources of support could be family members, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and various community, government and professional organisations.
Support for children living outside the household	Support provided by a person (or where specified by a person and their partner) to their child(ren) (under the age of 25 years) who do not live with them. Support may be provided to the other parent/carer for the child(ren), or to the child themselves. Types of support may be financial, such as child support payments, paying for educational costs, or providing pocket money or an allowance, or non-financial, such as driving them places, letting them borrow the car, or providing food or clothing.
Support for other relatives living outside the household	Any of the following types of support provided to relatives, such as elderly parents, children aged 25 years or over, or grandchildren who live outside the household: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ give money to pay rent and/or other housing costs ■ give money to pay bills or meet debt ■ provide or pay for food ■ provide or pay for clothing ■ let them borrow the car ■ drive them places ■ pay for educational costs or textbooks ■ provide pocket money or an allowance ■ buy or give them money to buy big cost items such as a car, computer, sound system etc.
Transport difficulties	The person's assessment of how difficult it is for them to travel to places they may need to go to in normal circumstances. Four options were provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ can easily get to the places needed ■ sometimes have difficulty getting to the places needed ■ often have difficulty getting to the places needed ■ can't get to the places needed. <p>■ If they indicated that they never go out or are housebound this response was recorded. Difficulties which may have been taken into account are traffic problems, parking and distances, as well as those difficulties not directly related to transport such as poor health or lack of finances.</p>
Trust	To ascertain peoples feelings of trust in others, and in some major institutions, they were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statements, giving a rating on a 5-point scale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ That most people can be trusted? ■ That your doctor can be trusted? ■ That hospitals can be trusted to do the right thing by you? ■ That police in your local areas can be trusted? ■ That police outside your local area can be trusted? <p>The response categories in the five point scale were: 'strongly agree', 'somewhat agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'somewhat disagree', and 'strongly disagree'.</p>

Trust <i>continued</i>	The phrase 'most people' is based on the respondent's interpretation – there is no specific definition. The idea is whether persons can go about their affairs confidently, expecting that people will generally deal fairly with them and act in the ways normally expected in our society.
Victim of actual or attempted break-in	A person who had experienced a break-in or attempted break-in at any place they had lived in the last 12 months. Break-ins to homes, garages or sheds are included. However, break-ins to cars or gardens are excluded.
Victim of physical or threatened violence	A person who in the last 12 months had physical force or violence used against them or threatened in person to be used against them. It includes violence or threats made by persons known to the person.
Voluntary work	<p>The provision of unpaid help willingly undertaken in the form of time, service or skills, to an organisation or group, excluding work done overseas. Examples of groups shown to respondents were: an organised sporting group/team; a youth group, such as guides, scouts, a choir; a charity organisation or cause; student government; a religious organisation, school or preschool; or some other kind of volunteer work. Organisations, groups or associations were classified from their names to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Arts/Heritage ■ Business/Professional/Union ■ Community/Welfare ■ Education and Training ■ Emergency Services ■ Environment/Animal Welfare ■ International aid/development ■ Health ■ Law/Justice/Political ■ Parenting, children and youth ■ Religious ■ Sport and physical recreation ■ Other recreation or interest <p>For the 2006 voluntary work collection, in consultation with the peak body for volunteer organisations, the 'willingly' part of the definition was refined by the exclusion of an involvement with an organisation that, while recognised as unpaid community work, was not strictly voluntary or would not normally be seen as voluntary work: the Work for the Dole Program or Community Work under Mutual Obligation; work experience/part of an unpaid work trial; work under a Community Service Order; a student placement; or emergency work during an industrial dispute.</p>

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