

The HSRC is gearing up for a comprehensive and hugely complex 'longitudinal' public opinion survey: the annual South African Social Attitude Survey (SASAS), which will go into the field in August 2003. SASAS will determine the views of 5 000 households on issues such as governance, service delivery, safety and security, crime, corruption, and trust in public institutions.

The intricacies of **LARGE SURVEYS**

By Dr Udesch Pillay

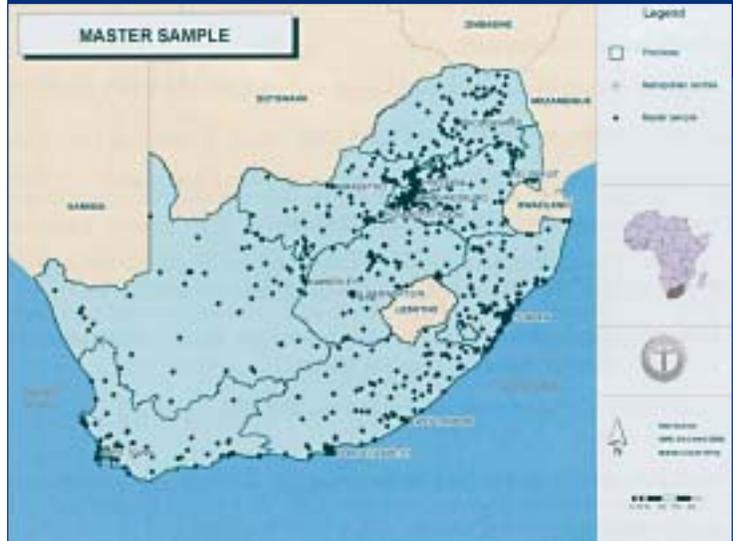


Figure 1: Location of master sample enumerator areas in South Africa

A longitudinal survey implies that the same households can be visited repeatedly over periods of time to identify changes and trends in public opinion, as well as any other subject matter where time-series analysis is deemed to be beneficial. A key requirement for such repeat-visit surveys in the South African context is the development of an accurate and complete 'master sample' of areas that represent the country's provincial, settlement, and racial diversity and dynamics.

The Surveys, Analyses, Monitoring and Mapping (SAMM) research programme, headed by Dr Udesch Pillay, set out to develop an HSRC master sample last year, using the 1 000 enumerator areas (EAs) identified by StatsSA for the 2001 census.

The decision to use the 2001 EAs was based on the consideration that the sampling units should remain relevant for future HSRC

surveys until the next census in five years. It also meant that the HSRC would have access to the most recent census statistics and geographic databases over this period to allow for adjustments for possible annual distortions to the master sample that may compromise future survey results.

The master sample was designed to allow reporting of results at a provincial, geographical type and race level. The two main levels were provinces and geography type. In the 2001 census, the four geography types were urban formal, urban informal, rural formal (including commercial farms) and rural informal (i.e. the deep rural areas). In the formal urban areas, race was used as a third reporting level.

The HSRC hired a specialist geographical information systems (GIS) company, Geospace International, to provide the aerial photography and assist in the fieldwork and capturing the

features of the sample on a database. With the assistance of 15 HSRC staff members and the use of a GIS platform that generated digitised maps from satellite images, aerial photography and ground-based maps of sites, the master sample was eventually created.

Hand-held global positioning systems were used by fieldworkers on the ground to identify the spatial co-ordinates of where they were, and the dwelling units they needed to reach. It's from this master sample that the 2002 Nelson Mandela/HSRC study of HIV/AIDS, involving 10 000 households, was conducted.

The massive project of developing the HSRC master sample was completed in September 2002, and hardcopy and electronic master sample 'navigational kits' have recently been archived in SAMM. •

Dr Udesch Pillay is executive director of the HSRC's Surveys, Analyses, Monitoring and Mapping research programme.



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