

The accompanying data set is drawn from an integrated household survey that was undertaken in the second half of 1999 in the Langeberg health district of the Western Cape province of South Africa. This area comprises three magisterial districts of Mossel Bay, Heidelberg, and Riversdal which, at the time of the 1996 census, had a population of just under 97 000 persons of whom more than three-quarters (78%) lived in urban areas. The remaining 22% of the population lived in 'non-urban' areas, mainly commercial farms. In terms of South Africa's apartheid racial categories the population of the district in 1996 was 59 percent Coloured, 26 percent White and 14 percent Black. This is in contrast to the country as a whole which is a little more than 52% urbanized and, in racial terms, slightly more than 1 percent asian, 10 percent Coloured, 12 percent White and 76 percent Black. Information was collected from a stratified sample consisting of 294 households (103 Black; 126 Coloured; and 65 White) by means of four questionnaires: one directed at 121 adults of 55 years and older; one at 573 younger adults between 18 and 54 years of age; and two focused on health (including anthropometric measurements) of 812 adults and 294 children.

The survey instrument used was one that had been developed over a four year period and was the joint product of researchers at the University of Cape Town (Monica Ferreira, HSRC/UCT Centre for Gerontology, Karen Charlton, Nutrition and Dietetics Unit; and Jaqui Goldin, SALDRU); University of the Western Cape (Pieter le Roux, Economics); University of the Witwatersrand (Merton Dagut, and Martin Wittenberg, Faculty of Commerce); Rhodes University (Valerie Moller); the Medical Research Council (Krisela Steyn and Debbie Bradshaw); Princeton University (Anne Case and Angus Deaton, Economics and Woodrow Wilson School); Harvard University (Robert Jensen, Kennedy School of Government, and David Bloom, School of Public Health); MIT (Courtney Coile, Economics); the Health Systems Trust (Dr John Gear) and the Western Cape Provincial Dept. of Health (Drs. Najma Shaikh, Mike Hendricks & Ingrid le Roux) together with other persons in the medical community of South Africa. This team of gerontologists, economists, public health experts and physicians grappled with the survey design, both structure and content, through many rounds of piloting, until there was consensus that the questionnaire worked well in the field.

A special feature of this survey was the attempt to design a questionnaire which academics believed would yield the information necessary for analysis and which those working directly with health policy at different levels of government believed would be useful for their needs. To this end the support of the Western Cape Provincial Department of Health both in participating in the debate about the questionnaire and in facilitating the actual field-work from the clinics in Groot Brak, Heidelberg, Mossel Bay & Riversdal was particularly important as was the help of municipal officials in the region. It is hereby acknowledged with much appreciation. The Langeberg area was chosen for the survey as a result of discussions between Saldru, the Health Systems Trust and the Western Cape Provincial Department of Health as part of an interactive process between government and universities, attempting to improve information needed by health policy makers.

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The survey was carried out under the auspices of SALDRU, the Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit in the School of Economics at the University of Cape Town (UCT), under the direction of Francis Wilson advised by a committee of colleagues drawn from 7 departments representing 4 different faculties in the university. The survey manager was Jaqui Goldin who organized the fieldwork over several months and supervised the interviewing which was done largely by community workers but also, during the first two weeks of the survey, by students of the Department of Social Development (formerly Social Work) at UCT all of whom were specially trained in using the questionnaire by Anne Case, Angus Deaton & Ingrid le Roux. Matthew Welch and Faldie Esau did sampling and listing with generous advice from Jim Lepkowski of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan.

Consistent with our belief that ready access to data is fundamental both for ensuring the ongoing vitality of democracy within countries but also to facilitate impartial scientific collaboration around the world, this dataset is hereby released into the public domain.