How to take a sample of Canadians; and how we’re doing it in the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging

Obtaining a representative sample of Canadians can be tricky. Ideally, we would take a simple or stratified sample from a list of the population, such as a provincial health registry. However, privacy concerns limit access to such lists. One alternative is to use Random Digit Dialing (RDD) to select a sample.

The Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging is selecting 50,000 Canadians aged between 45 and 85 for a 20-year study. We want the sample to be representative of the eligible Canadian population. We will discuss options for choosing the sample, including recruitment from participants of the Canadian Community Health Survey on Healthy Aging, provincial health registries, and RDD. For RDD, we will also examine how the increasing use of cell phones complicates the procedure. We will describe how partial samples using different selection methods can be combined.