

## **History of the Labour Force Survey prior to November 2000.**

At its inception in 1945, the Labour Force survey was a quarterly survey; it became a monthly survey in 1952. The information generated by the survey has expanded considerably over the years with a major re-design of the survey content in 1976 and again in 1997.

### **January 2000**

Estimation – Two changes were implemented. First, all estimates produced by the Labour Force Survey were adjusted to reflect population counts based on the 1996 Census. Secondly, “composite estimation”, was adopted; this new method of estimation has the advantage of reducing the volatility of month-to-month changes for a number of variables.

Revisions and Seasonal Adjustments – With the adoption of composite estimation, seasonally adjusted data at the provincial level started being published on the basis of monthly estimates rather than three-month moving averages.

Detailed information about these changes can be found in a free research paper, *Improvements in 2000 to the LFS*, Catalogue no. 71F0031XIE2000001.

Geographic classification - Economic regions in Alberta were modified: Census Division 9 was moved from ER 850 to ER 840, Census Division 10 was moved from ER 880 to ER 820 and Census Division 13 was moved from ER 840 to ER 870. Also, the Winnipeg and St. Catharines - Niagara CMAs were changed to reflect the final 1996 Census boundaries. All estimates related to these regions were revised back to 1987 so that comparability through time was maintained.

### **January 1999**

Three important changes have affected the Labour Force Survey estimates. First, the coding of industry estimates was no longer based on the 1980 Standard Industry Classification. Instead, the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) started being used. Second, the coding of occupation estimates has changed from the 1980 Standard Occupation (SOC) to the 1991 SOC. Lastly, a new definition of public and private sectors was introduced which led to workers in hospitals and universities being recoded from private to public. In addition, with the release of January data, the former economic region 470 in Quebec has been split into two new regions, ER 433 (Centre-du-Québec) and ER 470 (Mauricie).

### **January 1997**

Questionnaire – A new questionnaire was implemented. While it continued to deliver most of the information collected by the previous questionnaire, it also collects additional information on the volume and quality of jobs (e.g. wages,

union membership, permanency of job, hirings and separations, workplace size etc.)

Details of the changes to the questionnaire are available in a document entitled “Labour Force Survey: Development of a new questionnaire for 1997”. A link to this document is provided on the description page of this survey at the end of the descriptive text for the ‘Instrument design’ methodology component.

Collection – The LFS converted its method of data collection from paper and pencil to Computer Assisted Interview (CAI).

### **January 1996**

Questionnaire – Some questionnaire changes were introduced, including: modifying the definition of part-time employment; limiting job description information and reason for leaving last job to those with recent work experience; and collecting information on work absence and overtime paid for paid employees only.

### **January 1990**

Questionnaire – The LFS revised the questions used to measure the educational attainment of respondents. Details of these changes are available in a document entitled “The impact of the 1990 changes to the education questions on the Labour Force Survey”.

### **January 1976**

Questionnaires - The 1976 LFS questionnaire introduced direct questioning to determine labour market status.

Direct questioning to determine labour market status was introduced, to replace the “main activity” style of information previously recorded. The direct questioning approach adopted in 1976 is the same as that used by the LFS today – a hierarchy of questions determine first if the person is employed (either at work or not during the reference week), then if they are not employed, the questions determine if they are unemployed. The residual population is not in the labour force.

Defining who was part of the supply of labour became more refined with the 1976 redesign. Under the old design, people who were economically active but who did not report employment as a main or secondary activity were not counted among the employed. As well, people who did not report looking for work as a main/secondary activity were not counted among the unemployed, even though they would today be counted as such (e.g. people on temporary layoff not looking for work). In the end, with the 1976 redesigned questionnaire, new concepts of employment and unemployment fit better within the production boundary as defined by the System of National Accounts.

With the 1976 redesign, new survey content was introduced. Much of it focused on hours worked. Firstly, rather than a dichotomous full-time/part-time status recorded under the old design, usual hours were recorded as answered by the respondent. As well, overtime or extra hours information was collected for the first time, as was data on hours lost due to part or full week absence. Actual hours information, previously logged in groupings, was recorded to the hour. Since questions on multiple job holding were added, usual and actual hours at the main and other jobs could be measured.

The other major change with the 1976 redesigned questionnaire was the addition of questions to collect more information on the non-employed population. The unemployed could now be split into three groups – job searchers, people on temporary layoff, and those who had a job to start in the near future. Duration of joblessness was also new, as was a question on the main reason for leaving the previous job. Discouragement was also measured for the first time, although the definition was more restrictive than the one currently used in the LFS. For job searchers, the type of job sought (full-time or part-time, lasting 6 months or more) was added.

### **1945 to 1975**

The Labour Force Survey was initially developed to satisfy a need for reliable and timely data required on the massive labour market changes involved in the transition from a war-time to a peace-time economy. The survey was designed to provide estimates of employment by industry and occupation at the regional as well as the national level. A quarterly survey initially, the LFS became a monthly survey in 1952.

The original LFS was a simple questionnaire, relying on questions of “main activity” to determine labour force status. As of the late 1950s, relatively little additional labour-related information was collected on the short, 31 question form. Industry, occupation, class of worker and some information on hours worked was collected on those whose main or secondary activity was “working”. For the unemployed, there was a question on duration of unemployment, and whether the person was looking for full-time or part-time work. From the main activity questions, one could also see the general nature of the activities of those not in the labour force (e.g. keeping house, attending school or retired).