

MICRODATA ACCESS DIVISION NEWSLETTER

FALL 2020 EDITION

A MESSAGE TO OUR CLIENTS

As everyone continues to adapt to and navigate through these challenging times, the Microdata Access Division would like to extend its gratitude once again. We want to thank all of our clients and colleagues for their continued support. Our thoughts remain with all those who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. We have continued to work hard and provide innovative solutions to improve the way we give timely access to high-quality microdata that benefit all Canadians. Every day, we are reminded of how fortunate we are to be part of a strong community that continues to show resilience. On behalf of the Microdata Access Division, we extend our warmest wishes to all of our clients and friends.

RETIREMENT OF GABRIELLE BEAUDOIN AND WELCOME TO LEILA BOUSSAÏD

After 34 years in the public service, Gabrielle Beaudoin will retire in October 2020. Gabrielle became Director General of the Data Access and Dissemination Branch in 2019, after seven years as Director General of the Communications and Dissemination Branch. Over her career, Gabrielle channelled her experience and passion to transform and improve programs to provide the best possible services to Canadians. We wish her a happy retirement and all the best in this next stage of life!

We are pleased to welcome our new Director General, Leila Boussaïd. Leila's strategic thinking, energetic and inclusive approach, and extensive experience in leading both strategic and operational programs will be a definite asset to our Branch.

Welcome Leila!



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SELF-SERVE ACCESS

DATA LIBERATION INITIATIVE TEAM UPDATES

The Data Liberation Initiative (DLI) team cancelled its annual training sessions in the Atlantic and Quebec regions this past spring and summer because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The DLI team will lead its first virtual training sessions from November 23 to 27. These sessions will be hosted by Mount Saint Vincent University.

The External Advisory Committee has approved a new member to represent colleges across Canada on the DLI's Professional Development Committee (PDC). This is an exciting opportunity both for Canadian colleges and for the successful nominee. It will give colleges a seat at the table when the PDC meets to discuss professional development initiatives, and designs and develops its learning sessions (DLI National Training Day and regional training events) and training materials. It will also enable colleges to explain how DLI and Statistics Canada resources are used in colleges, in comparison with universities, and it will allow colleges to identify their unique training and material requirements.

A list of all products is available on the website: www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/dli/dli-products.

DATA RELEASES ON NESSTAR SINCE JUNE 2020:

- Postal Code Conversion File (PCCF)—May 2020
- Additional historical PCCF files
- Labour Force Survey files—monthly
- Social Policy Simulation Database and Model (V28)
- Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians crowdsourcing file
- Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians—Your Mental Health—2020 crowdsourcing file
- Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 2—Monitoring the Effects of COVID-19
- Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Postsecondary Students—2020 crowdsourcing file
- Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians—Perceptions of Safety—2020 crowdsourcing file
- Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians—Trust in Others—2020 crowdsourcing file
- Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 3—Resuming Economic and Social Activities During COVID-19
- Canadian Community Health Survey—2017 to 2018
- Canadian Business Patterns—June 2020
- Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians—Parenting During the Pandemic—2020 crowdsourcing file

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REAL TIME REMOTE ACCESS INITIATIVES: EXTENDING ACCESS

We are pleased to announce that we are extending free subscription to Real Time Remote Access (RTRA) to Research Data Centre (RDC) researchers until the end of March 2021. The original end date was October 31, 2020. The subscriptions of researchers who are already registered for RTRA will be automatically extended. Researchers who wish to register should email the RTRA team at statcan.madrtra-damadtr.statcan@canada.ca.

When RDC locations were shut down across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, free RTRA was put in place to assist researchers in their projects and provide continuity of service. RTRA accounts were created for 25 RDC researchers, and 1,020 data tables were produced. This is a great opportunity to explore what RTRA has to offer.

DATA FILES RELEASED IN REAL TIME REMOTE ACCESS

As of June 2020, the team has released a number of data files, including

- 2018 Canadian Internet Use Survey—released on June 11
- 2018 Canadian Income Survey—released on June 29
- Labour Force Survey—released monthly.



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RESEARCH DATA CENTRES

RESEARCH DATA CENTRE UPDATES

As we reported in June, all RDCs were closed in mid-March because of the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of May, the first RDC had reopened to researchers. Based on public health guidelines, and thanks to the hard work of many people at Statistics Canada and the universities, the majority of RDCs have now reopened. We hope to reopen the remaining centres by mid-October 2020. During the closures, four projects by RDC researchers using remote access were approved and are still underway. This research will directly inform program and policy development related to COVID-19.

A new remote code submission option using dummy files was also launched to aid researchers during the closures. We received 33 requests, and 10 projects were selected to participate. Researchers with active projects using 2016 Census and Canadian Community Health Survey data were eligible to apply. These researchers have been able to submit Stata and SAS code that is run by RDC analysts and vetted for confidentiality. Because of physical distancing requirements, RDC capacity is limited, so researchers continue to use the remote submit option to conduct their research.

The Canadian Research Data Centres Network (CRDCN), in partnership with Statistics Canada, is currently hosting its 20th anniversary virtual conference. With 12 panels with Canadian and international speakers, live Q&As and Twitter chats, a Three-Minute Thesis competition, and networking opportunities with research and policy colleagues. The conference is held throughout the month of October. Registration is still open on the [CRDCN website](#).

NEW RESEARCH DATA CENTRE HOLDINGS

A total of 16 products were added to our data holdings in the second quarter of 2020. These include two new surveys (the 2018 Canadian Housing Survey and Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1—Impacts of COVID-19), as well as updated survey cycles and administrative files.



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RESEARCH DATA CENTRES

COMPLETE LIST OF NEW DATA RELEASES FROM MAY TO AUGUST 2020:

- Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1— Impacts of COVID-19
- Canadian Vital Statistics Death Database (CVSD)—2018
- Labour Force Survey—Fast Track Option for COVID-19 supplementary files
- Canadian Income Survey—2018
- Canadian Tobacco and Nicotine Survey—2019
- National Apprenticeship Survey concordance keys
- Canadian Housing Survey—2018
- Employment Insurance Coverage Survey—2018
- General Social Survey – Giving, Volunteering and Participating—2018 (Cycle 33)
- British Columbia Kindergarten to Grade 12 linked to the T1 Family File (T1FF) parental tax component
- Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS) and Registered Apprenticeship Information System (RAIS) linked to T1FF
- Ontario Mental Health Reporting System (2006 to 2018) linked to the CVSD (2006 to 2018)
- National Ambulatory Care Reporting System (2002 to 2018) linked to the CVSD (2002 to 2018)
- Discharge Abstract Database (2000 to 2018) linked to the CVSD (2000 to 2018)
- PSIS (2005 to 2018)
- RAIS (2008 to 2018)

Want to check out some of the other data available in the RDCs? Visit

www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/rdc/data.

FEDERAL RESEARCH DATA CENTRE:

GOVERNMENT DATA ACCESS

The Federal Research Data Centre (FRDC) at Tunney's Pasture reopened on July 13, 2020, after a brief shutdown because of COVID-19 restrictions. Access is available for federal government researchers Monday to Friday from 8:30 to 4:30. New safety protocols and measures have been implemented to ensure physical distancing. Please contact us to reserve a workstation or for more information:

statcan.mad-frdcadmin-admindam-cfrd.statcan@canada.ca.

Work is underway with our partners at Employment and Social Development Canada to reopen the FRDC in Place du Portage Phase IV in fall 2020. A new model will be implemented that will include access within the centre and in authorized workspaces within the building. A data custodian will be appointed who will be responsible for monitoring access to and use of protected information. For more information about these initiatives or access to a centre, please contact us: statcan.mad-frdcadmin-admindam-cfrd.statcan@canada.ca.

STATCAN SECURE ACCESS POINTS

Work continues with three provinces on a pilot project to provide access to Education and

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RESEARCH DATA CENTRES

Labour Market Longitudinal Platform (ELMLP) data at a location convenient to provincial ministry researchers. For this pilot project, Statistics Canada will grant access to anonymized ELMLP data in secure StatCan premises within ministry offices. Each ministry will be responsible for monitoring deemed employees' access while they work on site and ensuring that no unauthorized individuals gain access to confidential information. The ministry employees responsible for these monitoring activities are data custodians. We have been working with these data custodians over the summer to train them in their roles and responsibilities. We have also finished training the deemed employees who will be accessing the data. We experienced some delays in implementing our model during the initial stages of COVID-19, since provincial offices were closed. However, we anticipate that these secure access points will be operational in fall 2020. We will then move on to new access points in underserved areas.

ACCESS TO BUSINESS DATA RESUMES UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

Under the direction of the Microdata Access Division, access to business data resumed within the data centre in Ottawa on July 15,

after a brief shutdown because of COVID-19. The centre has physical distancing measures in place, and researchers can book a workstation using our online booking system. For more information on booking a workstation, contact us: statcan.csc-csc.statcan@canada.ca.

Over the summer, the division worked closely with partners at the Bank of Canada to prepare a secure room for bank employees to access business data. The new room includes eight workstations with remote access to Statistics Canada and virtual monitoring. The room is slated to open in mid-September.

This fall, the Microdata Access Division will continue to work on consolidating administrative processes and knowledge transfer and will be moving to a new, brighter and roomier location. New requests for access to a wide variety of business data can be submitted through the Microdata Access Portal.

For more information on business data available at Statistics Canada, consult our website: <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/cder/data>.

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MODERNIZATION OF ACCESS

PILOT PROJECTS AND TESTING

The Data Lab team has continued to work with the Data Analytics as a Service team to test two platforms in a cloud environment with various tools to facilitate critical COVID-19 research. Statistics Canada received approval to put confidential information on the cloud, enabling pilot projects to be conducted using confidential microdata with low levels of sensitivity. Prior to this approval, a few federal partners were given access to the platforms to help with testing using public data. Low-sensitivity microdata will be used for testing in the forthcoming stage. The platform evaluations and improvements are still in progress, ensuring that users will have access to the environments and tools required to complete their research.

While RDCs were closed because of COVID-19, the Data Access and Dissemination Branch provided an alternative solution to academic researchers. Researchers contributing to the COVID-19 response effort, such as by informing public programs and policies, were granted remote access to detailed data using Statistics Canada laptops. The COVID-19 data collaboration was regarded as a huge success, demonstrating a responsive, agile and innovative approach to increasing access while protecting data confidentiality. Overall, six researchers successfully participated from the University of British Columbia, four from McGill University, four from the University of Toronto and one from Western University.

Additionally, the Data Lab team successfully launched an opioid pilot project in collaboration with Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada to give access to the Data Lab cloud workspace. The project was launched in July 2020, and five users (four external and one internal) were granted access to non-confidential data on the StatCan public cloud using virtual machines. Standard software was also provided, depending on the licensing. A second pilot project was launched in mid-September in collaboration with the Public Health Agency of Canada to test low-sensitivity confidential data in the StatCan protected cloud environment using virtual machines. Five accredited researchers were given access to this platform.

VIRTUAL DATA LAB PROJECT UPDATES

Progress is ongoing on a number of key initiatives to increase virtual data access and promote collaboration. These include the development of analytics platforms, and further development and integration of the Microdata Access Portal (MAP) and the Client Relationship Management System (CRMS). The Virtual Data Lab (VDL) will vastly improve access to statistical information for researchers by integrating the MAP with the new CRMS and the Microdata Search Tool. Users will have seamless 24/7 remote access to data housed at Statistics Canada using a secure IT connection and a protected cloud application.

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The CRMS pilot project is currently underway and slated to last six months to support the VDL. The project will be separated into phases 1 and 2. The Data Lab team will meet with the other programs in the Microdata Access Division to gather requirements in the 12 months following the pilot project. The project will be used to evaluate VDL access and will also assess setting and monitoring security and permissions, approving requests, managing project information, and building reliable dashboards. The CRMS will allow the VDL to effectively manage access for all researcher communities with an efficient and timely access process.

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

The Data Lab team hosted the third biannual meeting of the Advisory Council on Ethics and Modernization of Microdata Access on October 8, 2020.

The meeting included a panel of council members and representatives from Statistics Canada's senior management team.

Three additional guests joined the panel: David Green, Professor at the Vancouver School of Economics at the University of British Columbia; Chantal Guay, Chief Executive Officer of the Standards Council of Canada; and Alain Beaudoin, Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet at the Privy Council Office. Over the past year, Statistics Canada has been striving to modernize access to microdata to benefit all Canadians while working to integrate the concept of ethics within its access frameworks and modernization agenda. The meeting focused on the need to increase collaboration between researchers and organizations, as well as expand data access by leveraging new technologies. It also focused on the application of innovative ways to harvest data from new sources with new methods, while considering the ethics behind these methods.

Questions or comments? Visit our website: www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/help/microdata.

Check out the StatCan Blog: www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/blog.

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