

# MICRODATA ACCESS DIVISION NEWSLETTER

## SUMMER 2020 EDITION

### A MESSAGE TO OUR CLIENTS

In light of the recent events regarding the outbreak of COVID-19 over the course of the last few months, the Microdata Access Division would like to extend our thoughts to all of those affected by the virus. As we adapt and navigate through these challenging times, we are devoted to continuing our work to ensure that you are provided with the real time data and services that you need. We would like to extend our gratitude to all our clients and friends as we are constantly reminded of how fortunate we are to be part of such a strong community. On behalf of the Microdata Access Division, thank you for your continued support and partnership. We wish you and your loved ones well.



### WELCOME TO OUR NEW DIRECTOR

Geneviève Jourdain left the private sector to join Statistics Canada in 2006. After 10 years with

the Canadian Health Measures Survey, she was appointed as a chief in the Microdata Access Division in 2017. She was nominated Acting Director of the Microdata Access Division on May 1, 2020. Congratulations Geneviève!

### ACCESS TO BUSINESS DATA:

#### CDER JOINS THE MICRODATA ACCESS DIVISION

The Microdata Access Division (MAD) now has new responsibilities under its umbrella. As of April 1, 2020, the operations of the Canadian Centre for Data Development and Economic Research (CDER) was integrated into MAD. As the division already provides data access to federal and academic researchers through the Federal Research Data Centre and the Research Data Centres located across the country, it just made sense to bring CDER onboard.

This integration will take a few months to complete and will include the consolidation of administrative processes, the knowledge transfer of various skill sets among staff, the review and update of training materials, the IT files transfer, the website rebranding, and so on. Stay tuned for further updates on our journey!

Want more information on CDER? Please visit our website:

<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/cder/index>

# MICRODATA ACCESS DIVISION NEWSLETTER

## SELF-SERVE ACCESS

### DLI TEAM:

#### THE DLI COLLECTION

The focus this year is on improving the technical infrastructure, consulting with the Data Liberation Initiative (DLI) community on program developments, and enhancing data service delivery.

New Public Use Microdata Files (PUMFs) and aggregate data products, are added to the DLI Collection and hosted on the Electronic File Transfer (EFT) repository. The EFT and NESSTAR are used to disseminate the Collection to subscribers. A Listserv continues to be actively used for networking and discussion among the DLI Contacts.

A list of all products is available on the website:

[www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/dli/dli-products](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/dli/dli-products)

#### DATA GAP CODING PROJECT

The Data Gap Coding project has been completed. As of March 31, 2020, all of the outstanding PUMF files from the project were published to NESSTAR, coded to DDI standards. The team released 428 PUMFs to NESSTAR last fiscal year. Other releases include:

- Postal Code Conversion File plus (PCCF+)
- Social Policy Simulation Database and Model (SPSD/M V28)
- Tuition and Living Accommodation Costs (TLAC) Standard Tables 2018/19, 2019/20

#### DATA RELEASES ON NESSTAR SINCE SEPTEMBER 2019:

- Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2019/2020 (monthly files)
- International Travel Survey (ITS), 2017
- National Graduates Survey (NGS), Class of 2015
- Survey of Household Spending (SHS), 2017
- Employment Insurance Coverage (EICS), 2018
- Canadian Income Survey (CIS), 2017
- National Travel Survey (NTS), 2018
- Canadian Tobacco and Nicotine Survey (CTNS), 2019
- Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS), 2017
- General Social Survey – Family (GSS), cycle 31
- Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1: Impacts of COVID-19

#### REAL TIME REMOTE ACCESS INITIATIVES

The Real Time Remote Access (RTRA) program is piloting a Graphical User Interface called the SAS Assistant. The project seeks to promote RTRA to a broader range of users by eliminating the need for SAS knowledge and software, and increase the usability of RTRA by creating a one-stop-shop environment to select datasets, variables, and data steps from menus within the GUI, by providing a platform that is accessible via Web Browser. There are about 20 users currently testing and providing feedback through GCCollab to the team to make improvements before official release.

There are a number of files with subject matter areas waiting approval to add the RTRA system including many health files.

# MICRODATA ACCESS DIVISION NEWSLETTER

## RESEARCH DATA CENTRES

### RDC UPDATES

By mid-March all Research Data Centres (RDCs) were closed to comply with public health authorities guidance to counter the COVID-19 pandemic. At the end of May the first RDC re-opened to researchers, under new social distancing procedures, with other centres working towards opening as local conditions allow.

Many projects that will benefit RDC researchers have progressed during the closure. Work has focused on streamlining RDC application procedures, training materials for RDC staff and researchers, improvement to confidentiality vetting services and initiatives in RDC microdata and metadata.

Statistics Canada utilized remote access to support academic research that will generate empirical evidence to inform program and policy development related to COVID-19. To date, RDC researchers have four COVID projects underway using remote access technology.

A new remote code submission option using dummy files is also being piloted to aid researchers during closures. Researchers with active projects using Census 2016 and Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) data are able to submit code in Stata and SAS that will be run by RDC analysts. RTRA subscriptions have also been offered to RDC researchers, free of charge, to help facilitate research during the closure.

### DEDICATION IN THE FACE OF COVID-19: INITIATIVES UNDERWAY

Despite the challenges created by the pandemic, MAD has taken steps to ensure that when data centres re-open, researchers can continue their important work of using Statistics Canada confidential microdata to inform and guide policy and research on issues that are important to Canadians. Among our initiatives is a streamlining of operational procedures to make it easier to process new applications and researchers, and to do so remotely.

Adopting exclusively the use of electronically fillable forms with secure digital signatures on documents such as the Microdata Research Contract, contract amendments, and the Personnel Screening Form have not only resulted in a more efficient process, but allowed us to perform these necessary services for our clients safely, effectively, and uninterrupted during these extraordinary times. Indeed, the response from the research community has been very positive and appreciative of these efforts. Another initiative that is underway includes the creation of a downloadable proposal template for applicants to facilitate the completion of their proposals, and to ensure that they have the best chance of submitting a successful application. The proposal template is also being standardized across microdata access programs to ensure consistency and ease of review, with the goal of reducing the timeline further from application submission to approval.

# MICRODATA ACCESS DIVISION NEWSLETTER

## RESEARCH DATA CENTRES

### STATCAN SECURE ACCESS POINTS

Work continues with three provinces on a pilot project to test access to the Education, Labour Market Longitudinal Platform (ELMLP) data at a location convenient to provincial ministry researchers. For this pilot, Statistics Canada (StatCan) will be granting access to anonymized ELMLP data in a secure StatCan premise located in secure ministry government offices. With feedback from the ministries, StatCan has improved organizational agreements that outline the roles and responsibilities of StatCan and each ministry involved. This includes the responsibilities assigned to a ministry employee whose role it is to monitor the use of the secure premise (Data Custodian). StatCan conducted inspections of all three sites and has designated all sites as secure access locations. Data Custodians for all three sites have successfully completed the mandatory training and we are now in the process of arranging mandatory training for the researchers who will become deemed employees of StatCan and access data within the sites.

A signed organizational agreement for access to the microdata is in place with British Columbia and we are in the final stages of signatures of a similar agreement for the Alberta site. The Ontario agreement is fast approaching finalization as well. Access for researchers to the sites is currently on-hold pending public health recommendations related to the re-opening of workspaces in these provinces after COVID. Our

goal is to open these sites for access as soon as the COVID restrictions have been lifted.

### NEW RDC DATA HOLDINGS!

A total of 15 releases were added to our data holdings in the last quarter of 2019. A total of 17 releases were added to our data holdings in the first quarter of 2020. A number of these were integrated data sets including: British Columbia Kindergarten to Grade 12 linked to T1FF (BC\_K12\_T1FF), British Columbia Kindergarten to Grade 12 linked to Census of Population 2016 (BC\_K12\_CEN) and Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) 2000 to 2017 linkages to the: Canadian Cancer Registry All Years (CCR); CENSUS 2011 and 2016 (CCHS-CEN); and T1FF.

#### SAMPLE OF NEW DATA AVAILABLE FROM JANUARY TO MARCH 2020 IN THE RDCS

- British Columbia Kindergarten to Grade 12 (BC\_K12)
- Canadian Internet Use Survey (CIUS) 2018
- General Social Survey - Caregiving and Care Receiving (GSS) Cycle 32
- Longitudinal Administrative Databank (LAD) 2017
- Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) 2018
- Survey on Maternal Health (SMH) 2018-2019
- Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS) 2018
- Travel Survey of Residents of Canada (TSRC) 2011-2017
- Vital Statistics - Birth Database (VSBD) 2018
- Vital Statistics - Stillbirth Database (VSBD) 2018

Want to take a look at some of the other data available in the RDCs? Visit:

[www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/rdc/data](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/rdc/data)

# MICRODATA ACCESS DIVISION NEWSLETTER

## MODERNIZATION OF ACCESS

### CREATOR OF THE FIVE SAFES FRAMEWORK VISITS STATISTICS CANADA

Statistics Canada is moving forward with modernization; using new types of data, modernizing systems, and modernizing access to microdata. As such, Statistics Canada adopted a smart risk management approach. To better prepare for this journey, the DataLab team hosted Dr. Felix Ritchie, renowned expert who devised the Five Safes Framework, to discuss Access Risk Management and Accountability, including Building a Trust Culture with Researchers.

Dr. Ritchie is Professor of Applied Economics at the University of the West of England (UWE), and Director of Bristol Centre for Economics and Finance. He is also an applied economist with particular research interests in the use, quality and accessibility of government data; labour economics; data management, data confidentiality, security and access; and statistical disclosure control.

Prior to joining UWE Bristol in 2012, Dr. Ritchie spent nearly a decade as Head of Microdata Analysis and User Support at the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS). The experience of working with government departments, ensuring that research is relevant, policy-oriented and accessible to users, has driven much of his subsequent career and focus on user-centered system design. Dr. Ritchie devised the Five Safes in 2003 while at ONS. This popular framework for managing data access has been widely adopted by government departments across the world,

and many national statistical organizations including StatCan.

Dr. Ritchie presented to a variety of audiences at Statistics Canada, using different styles and approaches. Notably, Dr. Ritchie addressed the Advisory Council on Ethics and Modernization of Microdata Access, and a group of Government of Canada Chief Data Officers, on the topics of data sharing and data management, and frameworks and attitudes. To the internal audience of Statistics Canada, Dr. Ritchie delivered workshops on the topics of vetting outputs and training, and presented hands-on sessions detailing the Five Safes Framework and how it could be applied.

Dr. Ritchie's visit was a resounding success.

Statistics Canada and the DataLab team look forward to continuing this relationship with Dr. Felix Ritchie.

### PILOTS AND TESTING

The DataLab team has been working with the Data Analytics as a Service (DAaaS) team to test two platforms, in a cloud environment, with various tools that will be available to facilitate critical COVID-19 research. The platform evaluations are ongoing, with the goal to ensure that researchers will have the options, tools, and environments necessary to conduct the research that they and their organizations require. This work will deliver the ability for data scientists and analysts to conduct analysis, modelling, machine learning, and publishing. The various tools available in these platforms run in an isolated area within the StatCan Azure cloud. It supports access from personal or work devices,



# MICRODATA ACCESS DIVISION NEWSLETTER

## MODERNIZATION OF ACCESS

with access through a secure web browser, and using StatCan cloud userids. Data is initially limited to open, non-sensitive data in which a protected environment is forthcoming.

### THE MICRODATA ACCESS PORTAL

We are proud to announce that the Microdata Access Portal (MAP) was successfully launched on January 29, 2020! Within just hours after the launch we received our first submitted application through the MAP. Researchers (federal, provincial, and academic) can now apply for access to Statistics Canada's microdata files in a simplified and streamlined manner. With its real-time data validation, file uploads and web-standard and language-requirement compliant features, MAP is streamlining the application process and accelerating the timelines for researchers to gain access at an approved access site. Through their dashboards, researchers are able to see the status of their application. Currently there are numerous researchers using the portal with new applications being submitted on a daily basis.

The redesign of our Microdata Access Division webpages for the Research Data Centre (RDC) and the Federal Research Data Centre (FRDC) was implemented in January.

To access the MAP please visit our new web page at:

<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/microdata/data-centres> (Net B only).

Looking to the future, the vision is to integrate MAP with the new Client Relation Management System and with the Microdata Search Tool which will allow users to discover different avenues to access the data they are interested in, such as public use microdata files and real-time remote access.

A live webinar was hosted on March 5 and March 9 to provide a demo of the MAP to current and prospective RDC researchers.

For more information, please contact:

[statcan.mad-damdam-mad.statcan@canada.ca](mailto:statcan.mad-damdam-mad.statcan@canada.ca)

**Questions/Comments? Visit our website:** [www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/help/microdata](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/help/microdata)

**Check out the StatCan Blog:** [www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/blog](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/blog)

**Don't forget to follow us on Social Media!**



[Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Reddit](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#)