

DATA ACCESS DIVISION NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2021 EDITION

GREETINGS TO OUR STAFF AND CLIENTS

The Data Access Division (DAD) would like to wish you a merry Christmas and happy New Year! We want to thank our staff for demonstrating strong teamwork and dedication, and leading the division to success. With your continued effort, we have achieved a lot in the past year.

We also want to extend our warmest wishes of the season to all clients and partners for their continued support and trust through a special year. We are grateful to be part of such a strong community. In the New Year, the DAD remains devoted to providing consistent and high-quality data access service for researchers and clients to best serve data needs across the country.

We wish our staff and clients a wonderful and safe winter vacation. ❄️



For more information, please visit the [Data Access Division website](#).

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DATA LIBERATION INITIATIVE UPDATES

The Self-Serve Access (SSA) section has received approval for each institution to have two Real Time Remote Access (RTRA) accounts. One account will be considered a backup. We ask that you use it for this purpose only in order to not overload the system. Please indicate in your email to the RTRA team if your account will be the primary or alternate account. For those who have already requested or received accounts, we will consider those as the primary, unless we're told otherwise.

The pre-recorded webinars and other resources are saved on the [GCcollab](#) group. Once you have created your account, please request membership to the following group: **StatCan - Real Time Remote Access (RTRA)**. The pre-recorded webinars have also been saved on the Data Liberation Initiative (DLI) electronic file transfer (EFT) folder to provide you with immediate access. If the account holder is not a DLI contact, the learning material must be accessed from GCcollab.

The RTRA team is working on creating more resources, including ones for the SAS Assistant.

EXTERNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The External Advisory Committee (EAC) Bi-Annual meeting was held on October 19, 2021. The minutes will be available on the EFT folder in January.

The EAC sent a call-out in February to the Listserv for volunteers. The Atlantic seat still remains vacant. Siobhan Hanratty and Elizabeth Hill have been appointed as co-chairs of the EAC. We are very happy to have them step into the new role immediately. We would like to thank Gilbert Bede for his service as the co-chair of the EAC.

PROGRAM REVIEW

A consultant was hired to complete a strategic review of the program following a request for proposal process.

Communication was sent out in October to DLI members, past and present, by the chair of the EAC (Gilbert Bede) to notify members that they will be contacted by the consultant for interviews and focus groups.

The findings were presented by Jennifer Smith from Intergage at the National Training on November 22, 2021.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The National Training was November 22 to 26, 2021. You may refer to the [website](#) for more information.

The Professional Development Committee (PDC) sent a call-out to the Listserv in March for a volunteer to represent the Quebec region. This seat remains vacant.

The PDC is working on several initiatives.

- Contacts and Alternates Survey: The collection period ended on November 2, 2021, and an overview of the results was

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presented at the National Training on November 26, 2021.

- DLI Training Repository: A sub-committee of the PDC is working on transitioning from Carleton University Digital Objects to the [Scholars Portal Dataverse](#).
- Training: A working group is in place to discuss training needs and coordinate with other data-centric organizations such as the Canadian Research Data Centres Network (CRDCN) and the Digital Research Alliance of Canada.

STATISTICS CANADA TRAINING

Statistics Canada (StatCan) provides training for all levels of data users using different platforms, as well as other data services such as [customized products](#). The training is provided by the [Data Service Centres](#). Over the past year, they have expanded many of their offerings. See below for the most up-to-date information.

- [Workshop series](#): Our workshop series provides you with direct access to StatCan's extensive survey methodology and analysis experience.
- [Webinars](#): The webinar series covers a broad range of topics from the census program to navigating the Statistics Canada website.
- [Data literacy](#): This training targets those who are new to data or those who have some experience with data but may need a refresher or want to expand their

knowledge. We invite you to check out our [Learning catalogue](#) to learn more about our offerings, including a great collection of short videos. Be sure to check back regularly as we will be continuing to release new training.

- [Statistics: Power from Data!](#): **Updated on September 2, 2021**, this training tool for students, teachers and the general population will help get the most from statistics. This resource aims to help readers:
 - Gain confidence in using statistical information
 - Appreciate the importance of statistical information in today's society
 - Make critical use of information that is presented to them.

These goals are at the heart of Statistics Canada's mission to assist Canadians make informed decisions based on data.

NESSTAR REPLACEMENT

The SSA section is collaborating with Materials and Contract Services, Public Services and Procurement Canada, IT, and a Business Relations Manager at StatCan in the procurement of a new platform to replace Nesstar.

The SSA section is also collaborating with the StatCan Colectica team. The plan is to migrate the metadata already available in Nesstar (both public use microdata files (PUMF) and masterfiles) to

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Colectica because of its availability in the Data Documentation Initiative format.

PUBLIC USE MICRODATA FILES ONLINE

PROJECT

The SSA section has completed its part in this initiative. The StatCan Dissemination team is now working on putting all older PUMFs online in a downloadable format. Newly released PUMFs are being added to the website as they become available. Digital object identifiers are being assigned to the PUMFs as they are made available.

A list of all DLI products is available on the website:

<https://www.statcan.ca/eng/microdata/dli>

DATA RELEASES TO DLI JULY TO DECEMBER 2021:

- Canadian Perspectives Survey (CPSS) Series 6: Substance Use and Stigma During the Pandemic
- Impacts of COVID-19 on Health Care Workers: Infection Prevention and Control (ICHCWIPC) 2020
- Social Policy Simulation Database and Model (SPSD/M)
- Visitor Travel Survey (VTS) 2018
- Visitor Travel Survey (VTS) 2019
- National Travel Survey (NTS) 2019
- Survey of Financial Security (SFS) 2019
- Canadian Tobacco and Nicotine Survey (CTNS) Series 5
- Labour Force Survey (LFS) - monthly

REAL TIME REMOTE ACCESS UPDATES

Research Data Centre (RDC) researchers have had their access extended to March 31, 2022.

43 new users subscribed between July and December 2021.

SAS ASSISTANT

The SSA section is continuing its work adding more surveys and creating pre-recorded webinars.

A list of all RTRA products is available on the website:

<https://www.statcan.ca/eng/microdata/rtra>

DATA RELEASES TO RTRA JULY TO OCTOBER 2021:

- Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) 2017
- Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) 2018
- Survey on Maternal Health (SMH) 2018
- Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS) Cycle 5
- Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2019
- Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2019: Disability
- Labour Force Survey (LFS) - monthly

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RESEARCH DATA CENTRES

RESEARCH DATA CENTRES UPDATE

In 2021, RDCs across the country continued to operate with COVID-19 restrictions in place. Also, many universities implemented COVID-19 vaccination requirements for their students and staff to work on campus. The government also instituted vaccination requirements for all federal government employees. We would like to thank all of our staff and researchers for their collaboration and patience as we provided data access and support services in this ever-changing work environment.

Work done to modernize data access for RDC researchers continues to progress. The core Virtual Research Data Centre (vRDC) project team has been focused on refining the detailed architectural design for the network and procuring hardware and software for the centralized hub locations. Additional resources from Shared Services Canada and Statistics Canada have been engaged to support the new system. Challenges resulting from pandemic shortages have led to delays in sourcing some key components. This has shifted the timeline for the construction of the system and the pilot, but adjustments have been made to other tasks to keep the project on track. Academic Directors and local IT and

facilities support personnel have been engaged through a series of meetings with each site to coordinate the preparations on campus in anticipation of a staged rollout of the vRDC starting next spring.

The 2022 CRDCN National Policy Challenge, in partnership with SAS and Statistics Canada, is well underway. A total of eight RDC projects are participating, and analyses will be conducted between now and the finals in May. A variety of topics are being studied from demand for recreational cannabis to support for informal caregivers. Best of luck to all the participants!

Once again, the CRDCN hosted a very successful conference. There were over 400 registrants for the 2021 conference. While there were more than 200 registrants per session, Chief Statistician Anil Arora's session garnered more than 250 registrants to close the conference.

NEW RESEARCH DATA CENTRES HOLDINGS

The RDC Program has received funding from Statistics Canada to update the Extending the Relevance of the Longitudinal Files project. Permission is being sought to: update the files

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to reflect the most current years of data; to expand the income variables; add all NLSCY respondents to the file; add more detailed health information to the NPHS file; and link NLSCY and YITS to the Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform (ELMLP). It was decided not to update the LSIC files as the Longitudinal Immigration Database is now the source of information on immigration. The updates are expected to be completed this fiscal year and the files will be available for access.

A total of 25 products were added to our data holdings in the second quarter of the fiscal year. These include a new administrative data file, the Canadian Housing Statistics Program (CHSP), three new surveys which include the Canadian COVID-19 Antibody and Health Survey (CCAHS), five new integrated data files, and updates to many data files.

PARTIAL LIST OF DATA FILES ADDED FROM JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2021

- Canadian Health Measures Survey linked to the Canadian Vital Statistics – Death Database (CVSD), the Canadian Cancer Registry (CCR) and the Discharge Abstract Database
- British-Columbia Income Assistance (BCIA) linked to income taxation administrative files
- Survey of Household Spending (SHS) 2019
- COVID-19 Vaccination Coverage Survey (CVCS) 2021 Cycle 2
- Future to Discover Project (FTD).

For a complete list of data available in RDCs and government access centres, visit <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/microdata/data-centres/data>.

As well, access to business data continues to expand with the successful transfer of many business data projects from head office in Ottawa to the researchers' local RDCs.

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OFFICIAL LAUNCH INTO PRODUCTION

It is with great enthusiasm that we announce that the Virtual Data Lab (vDL) is now in production! This is a significant achievement, as the agency has been working on developing the vDL to improve access to detailed, anonymized data holdings. Statistics Canada will be better positioned to advance its user-centricity by introducing this new mode of access as it will enhance StatCan's existing access methods and will expand microdata offerings to accredited researchers.

The vDL vision began in 2018. In March 2019, the vDL team partnered with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to build and test its first ever prototype environment with researchers from the CMHC. The prototype proved to be greatly successful and paved the way in providing remote access for research on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, as well as in creating an improved vDL platform hosted on the Cloud. A number of pilots were successfully conducted with provincial, federal and academic partners, which helped evaluate the nuances of onboarding different types of researchers, as well as helped inform how the user-experience of the environment could be improved for production.

Going forward, the agency will continue to migrate existing researchers and strive towards onboarding new researchers from the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal research communities, as well as non-governmental partners. The level of success of this project could not have been reached without the collaborative effort of every member involved in this process, including the Virtual Data Lab Project Team led by Marc St-Denis; the Data Analytics as a Service Division (DAaaS) led by Sarah MacKinnon and Rob McLellan; the Data Access Division; the Office of Privacy Management and Information Coordination; IT Operations Services; the Economic Analysis Division; the International Cooperation and Methodology Innovation Centre; and the Financial Planning Division.

On behalf of Statistics Canada's senior management, all members involved would like to take this opportunity to thank all parties for your hard work and continued support.

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 continued development of analytics platforms and monitoring capabilities, and development

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and integration of the Client Relationship Management System.

The ongoing elaboration of platform requirements, schedules and testing for the Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD)—the end-state technology for the vDL—will continue under the DAaaS-IT team in collaboration with the DAD. Additionally, the vDL project team will continue to review and revise the transition plan in cooperation with the DAD to identify partners with active projects. They will also review the Division’s resources and capacity. A series of knowledge transfer sessions have been held with various project teams to help transfer over roles and responsibilities. The onboarding schedule has been revised by the DAD and has been prioritized by fiscal year.

Three organizations—the BC Ministry of Education, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) —were ambassadors for

our pilot exercise that was underway for several months. These organizations have been converted to our production environment. In collaboration with the Strategic Communications and Stakeholder Relations Division, a second series of consultations were conducted with pilot participants from CMHC and the BC Ministry of Education, which resulted in a final report and recommendations to improve the user experience when using the vDL. These recommendations are paired with the first series of consultations conducted with participants from the academic pilots, completed with the University of Toronto, the University of Montreal, Calgary University and McMaster University. Feedback provided during the sessions was positive, and participants were extremely pleased overall with the new platform. Recommendations from the consultations are being implemented for future iterations of the vDL.

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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