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Statistics Canada

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Statistics Canada

<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/>

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Reviewer: Rhys Stevens, Librarian, University of Lethbridge

Perhaps you've heard the terms consumer price index (CPI), unemployment rate, retail/wholesale sales, population estimates, life expectancy, and total farm area. Ever wonder how these values are calculated? Who provides them for a particular country? Or where can they be accessed online? Typically a national statistical office collects indicators such as these for use by government departments, the business sector, academic researchers and the general public. In Canada, this central statistical office is named *Statistics Canada*. It is a federal organization responsible for providing and disseminating official statistics via its website for the country of Canada, including its ten provinces and three territories. Its website is a rich source of up-to-date statistical data about Canada's population, resources, economy, society and culture.

Statistics and data available from the *Statistics Canada* website are collected from 350+ active surveys which it is responsible for administering to Canadians. Examples of major recurring surveys include the Census of Population, Census of Agriculture, Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), Labour Force Survey, and General Social Survey (GSS). A selection of '**Key indicators**' important to Canada and its provinces are derived from these surveys and are displayed prominently on the right-hand side of the home page.

Raw data from all *Statistics Canada* surveys is first cleaned and anonymized before being

loaded into the “data portal”¹ which is accessed by clicking ‘**Data**’ in the website’s top navigation bar. The data portal contains 7,300+ tables of statistics gathered from questions asked on active and archived *Statistics Canada* surveys. To find specific statistical tables of interest within the data portal, users filter results by performing keyword searches across table content and browsing by subject category and survey name. Subject category browsing is also accessible separately by clicking ‘**Subjects**’. Statistics captured from iterations of particular survey questions are displayed once an identified table is selected. The default table view includes statistics for the entire country over the five most recent reference periods. Tables can normally be customized to display statistics for specific geographic locations or different temporal reference periods. Entire tables or selected data can also be downloaded as Excel-compatible CSV files. The video “[How to use the data tables](#)” provides more information.

The ‘**Analysis**’ section of the website contains articles and reports produced by analysts at *Statistics Canada* that provide added value from the interpretation of survey statistics and data. In the ‘**Reference**’ section there are details about key concepts, definitions, data sources and survey methodologies. The ‘**Geography**’ section allows users to find statistics and data by place name and also map geographic regions (e.g., census division, health regions, etc.). Lastly the ‘**Census program**’ section includes both the Census of Population and the Census of Agriculture, which are Canada’s most comprehensive surveys and are undertaken every five years. Within this section are specialized data products (e.g., Census Profile, Census Data Viewer, etc.)

¹ Until mid-2018 the data portal database was known as the Canadian Socio-Economic Information Management System (CANSIM).

produced specifically from census program data. Other census program content includes infographics and thematic maps which serve to visualize results in relevant and insightful ways.

In Short: The *Statistics Canada* website provides official statistical information relating to the commercial, industrial, financial, social, economic and general activities and condition of the people of Canada. Data tables can be searched, manipulated and viewed online from the '**Data**' portal section of the site. To identify tables and analytical reports of interest, users perform keywords searches and filter results by subject, geography or survey name. **Highly recommended** for those seeking current or historical Canadian statistics and data sources.