

# PRASC



**Project for the Regional  
Advancement of Statistics  
in the Caribbean**

**Projet régional pour  
l'avancement de la statistique  
dans les Caraïbes**



In partnership with

**Canada**



# Storytelling: Telling your country's story in numbers

Project for the Regional Advancement of Statistics in the Caribbean (PRASC)



Prepared by Statistics Canada  
November 2022

Delivering insight through data for a better Canada



# Storytelling has always been an integral part of our mission

- Canada's first chief statistician Robert Coats was a journalist by trade who deplored “dry as dust” statistical writing. He wanted to bring statistics to the people.

# How we currently communicate with Canadians

- Directly through surveys (we ask Canadians questions and hopefully they answer).
- Indirectly through administrative or “other” data sources.
- The *Daily*, published every working day at 8:30.
- Publications, data availability announcements.
- Media Relations.
- *StatsCAN Plus*.
- Social media.
- Podcasts

# Encouraging storytelling while remaining true to our guiding principles

- **Accurate:** Your presentation and description of the data must be accurate. Nothing destroys your credibility more than a data error or misinterpretation, it nullifies everything else you do.
- **Concise:** A visitor spends on average less than five minutes on our website. Canadians read about 200 to 250 words a minute. For a story to be effective it must be short and focused.
- **Neutral:** To maintain the trust of all Canadians, we must remain neutral when describing our data. Neutral, however, does not mean detached or boring.
- **Engaging:** Make your story an interesting read while remaining true to the data.

# Telling your data story: Identify your audience

- Every data story should have a specific audience in mind
- The *Daily*, in its current form, is aimed at those with a Grade 12 education or higher and includes researchers, data users, policy makers, industry groups and journalists.
- On the day you release your data the data are news. Shortly thereafter it becomes reference material. Write for both audiences (that is, media and researchers)
- Most *Daily* releases are based on a survey and they provide a broad overview of the “highlights” of the survey.
- Social media *and StatsCAN Plus* aims to broaden this audience to include all Canadians of all ages with subject driven rather than survey driven data stories.

# Telling your story: Choose your words carefully

- Write about people and actions rather than numbers and things.
- Write in active voice.
- Use plain language, keep sentences short.
- Keep track of time. Ensure the reader knows what period you are talking about.
- Maintain strict neutrality when presenting the numbers.
- Write authoritatively. We are the experts. Our data are the closest approximation to the truth that we are going to get. Do not equivocate when telling your story.

## Telling your story: Flesh out your story with additional context

- Don't write in a vacuum. How was the data affected by external events? Make use of other Stats Can data sets to tell a better story.
- Use photos, infographics, charts and tables to tell a better story.
- Use proportions when possible. Writing “one-third of Canadians” will resonate more with readers than writing 33.4% of Canadians.
- Add subheadings to break up the text. This will make the text easier to read and help researchers more easily find the information they need.



# Keys to a great story

- Numbers should always play the starring role in every statistical story.
- Build great table(s) and everything else will fall into place.
- Use tables, charts and words to tell a complete story.
- Avoid conjecture, forecasting or opinion.
- Keep it simple to appeal to a broader audience



# Taking an analytical report and making it into a data story

- Data stories aimed at a general audience should be based upon a sound research paper aimed at sophisticated data users, complete with methodology, footnotes, tables and charts.
- Data stories aimed at a general audience should take key findings from the original technical report and frame them in a way and format that will resonate with the average citizen such as a social media campaign, a tweet, a news release or a short “journalistic” style report that would take less than five minutes to read.
- Data stories aimed at a general audience will not need to include methodology or footnotes. Those wanting the additional information can click on a link to see the full report.

# Examples of Storytelling



Blockades put a dent in cross-border truck traffic



What we know about COVID-19 today and what you can learn with a few clicks

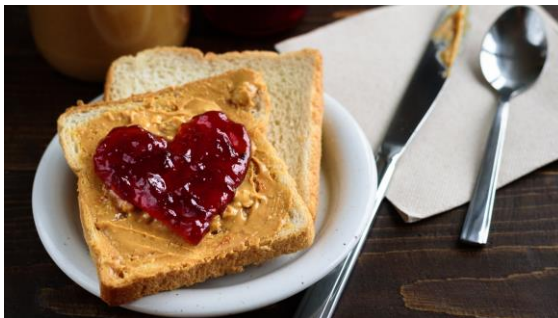


Fewer people calling Newfoundland and Labrador home

# Examples of Storytelling



[North to Yukon... the rush I on again](#)



[National Peanut Butter and Jelly Day, you say?](#)



[A gouda'mount of data](#)

# Examples of Storytelling



[World Food Day: Feeding Canadians and those abroad](#)



[Auto-tune up: Maintenance and repair, prices and job vacancies increase in 2022](#)

# Now its your turn

## Analysts

Although it can be a challenge to find on our website, we have data stories about your country's relationship to Canada in terms of immigration, trade and a host of other topics.

Your job is to research and write a short technical report (about 1,000 words) about your country based on our data.

## Communications officers

Your job is to take the technical report prepared by your colleague and make it into a StatsCAN Plus article (250 to 500 words), that is, make it into a story that will resonate with everyone.

# Links for work assignment

[Ethnic or cultural origin by gender and age: Canada, provinces and territories](#)

[Travel between Canada and other countries, September 2022](#)

[Profile of immigrants in nursing and health care support occupations](#)

[Non-resident visitors entering Canada, by country of residence](#)

[Non-resident visitors entering Canada, by country of residence, mode of transportation, arrival type and traveller type](#)

[Trade in goods by exporter characteristics, by country of destination](#)

[Trade in goods by importer characteristics, by enterprise employment size and country of origin](#)

[Import/export tool](#)