

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)



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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](#)

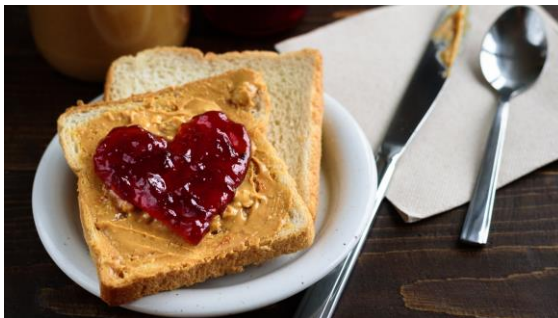


[Fewer people calling Newfoundland and Labrador home](#)

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](#)