

PRASC



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

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

Funded by the
Government
of Canada

Canada



Writing about data

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

Statistic Canada
February 24-28, 2020
Kingston (Jamaica)

Delivering insight through data, for a better Canada



Statistics
Canada

Statistique
Canada

Canada



Outline

- About Statistics Canada's story-telling
- Best practices
- Elements of a data release
- Writing tips
- After break: hands-on activity – develop your story!



Government of Canada Communications Policy

- Provide information about its programs and services
- Take into account the public's concerns and views
- Information is visible, accessible and answerable to the public



Statistics Canada's mandate

- Collect
- Compile
- Analyse
- Abstract
- **Publish** statistical information



Policy on Official Release

- *The Daily*
- Announce every new dataset and related products
- Must be done before products are shared with external partners

The Daily	
⚡ In the news	★ Indicators
🔗 Special interest	📅 Release schedule

Friday, January 31, 2020


The Daily is released Monday to Friday at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time, except during [holidays](#).

Economic accounts

Gross domestic product by industry, November 2019

Real gross domestic product edged up 0.1% in November, offsetting most of the decline in October.

[Continue reading →](#)



Best practices

- Template of essential elements
- Standards and guidelines for writing style
- Standards for visuals
- Timeline for development
- Review, approval and QC processes
- Media coverage
- Correction protocol

Elements of a data release

Data vs story



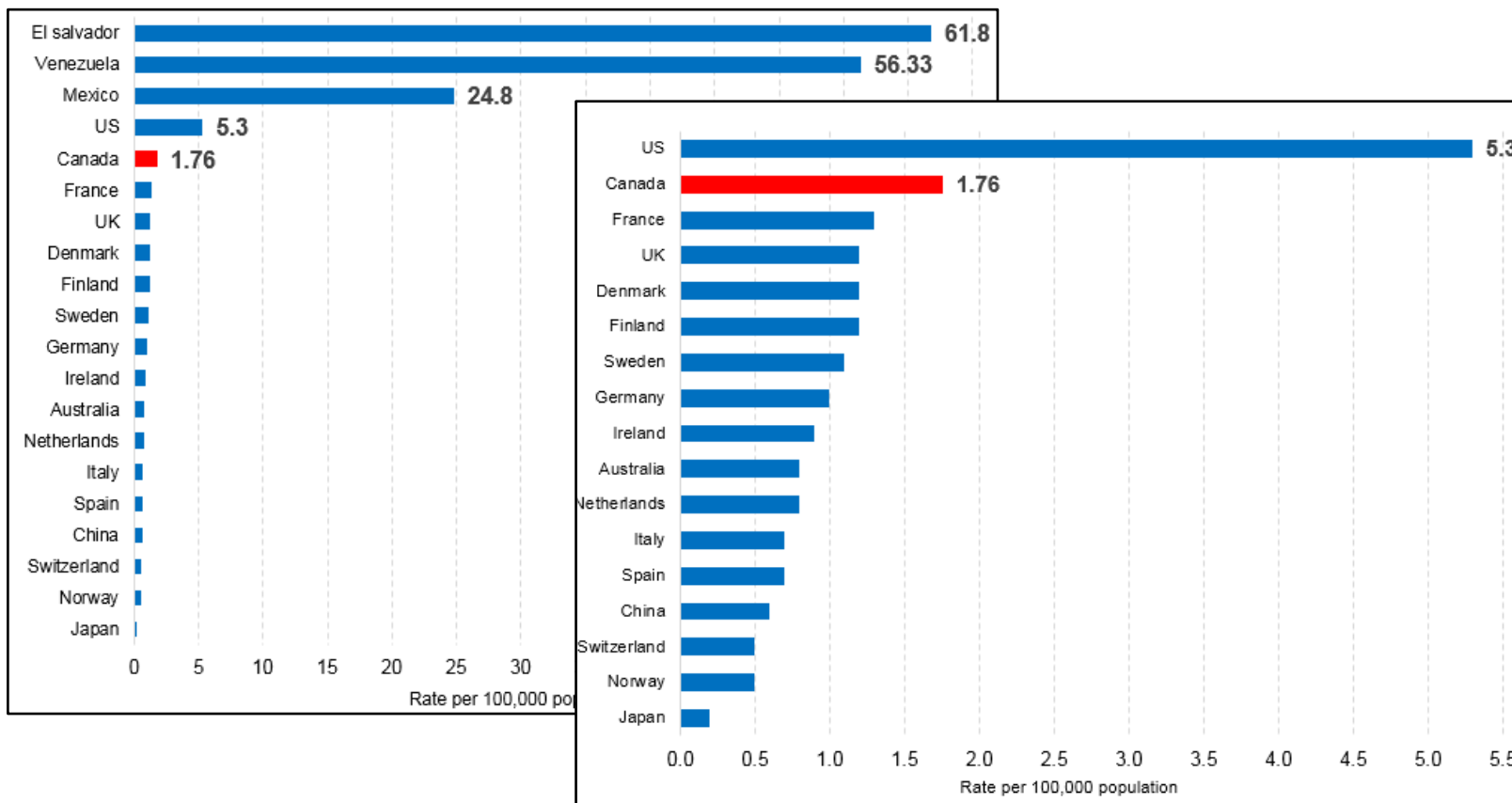
The story behind the data

...unemployment rate increased
0.3%

...retail sales went up \$52 billion



The importance of context



Types of articles

	Major	Minor
Word count	1,000 or less	15 to 600
Themes	Key economic indicators Significant and newsworthy findings about the economy or society.	Findings of interest to specific groups or specialists
Promo	Summary displayed on website's home page.	n/a
Published per day	Maximum of two	Maximum of five

Elements of a data release

- Title
- Text and subheadings
- Charts, tables and infographics
- Links
- Contact information
- Note to readers

Gross domestic product by industry, November 2019

Text Tables Related information Release schedule Previous release PDF (215 KB)

Released: 2020-01-31

Real gross domestic product (GDP) edged up 0.1% in November, offsetting most of the decline in October. Increases in 15 of 20 industrial sectors more than offset notable declines in the mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction and transportation and warehousing sectors, influenced partly by disruptions in rail transportation service and crude oil pipeline transportation.

Goods-producing industries edged up 0.1% after posting declines in September and October, while services-producing industries also edged up 0.1%.

On a three-month rolling average basis, GDP was up 0.1%, down from a 0.2% increase in October.

Chart 1 Real gross domestic product edges up












Real GDP by industry

November 2019

0.1% ↑
(monthly change)

Source(s): Table [36-10-0434-01](#)

Title

	Building permits November 2019 <i>(Released: 2020-01-09)</i>	
	Canada's balance of international payments Third quarter 2019 <i>(Released: 2019-11-28)</i>	
	Canada's international investment position Third quarter 2019 <i>(Released: 2019-12-12)</i>	
	Canada's international transactions in securities November 2019 <i>(Released: 2020-01-17)</i>	
	Canadian international merchandise trade November 2019 <i>(Released: 2020-01-07)</i>	
	Consumer Price Index December 2019 <i>(Released: 2020-01-22)</i>	
	Employment Insurance November 2019 <i>(Released: 2020-01-23)</i>	
	Farm income 2018 (revised data) <i>(Released: 2019-11-26)</i>	
	Gross domestic product by industry November 2019 <i>(Released: 2020-01-31)</i>	

Wholesale trade, November 2019

Monthly civil aviation statistics, November 2019

Monthly Passenger Bus and Urban Transit, November 2019

Text

Released: 2020-01-31

Real gross domestic product (GDP) edged up 0.1% in November, offsetting most of the decline in October. Increases in 15 of 20 industrial sectors more than offset notable declines in the mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction and transportation and warehousing sectors, influenced partly by disruptions in rail transportation service and crude oil pipeline transportation.

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On a three-month rolling average basis, GDP was up 0.1%, down from a 0.2% increase in October.

Utilities up because of colder weather in central Canada

A major factor in November's increase in GDP was a 2.1% rise in utilities, as a result of unseasonably cold weather in central Canada. This marked the largest growth in utilities in over a year.

Construction rises as all subsectors increase

After three months of stagnation, the construction sector was up 0.5% in November, with growth in all subsectors. Residential construction rose 0.6% on growth in alterations and improvements and apartment construction. Non-

Subheadings

Record snowfall impacts a number of businesses in the northeast Avalon Peninsula

Among the impacts of [January's major snowstorm in Newfoundland and Labrador](#) were those on businesses, their customers and employees.

In the northeast Avalon Peninsula, there were approximately 18,100 business locations in the areas identified as those hit hardest by the storm. This included 11,100 business locations in the St. John's census subdivision, and 7,000 in other municipalities such as Mount Pearl, Conception Bay South and Paradise.

In total, this represented 43% of all Newfoundland and Labrador business locations.

The businesses in the identified areas were mostly in the real estate and rental and leasing sector (18%), the professional, scientific and technical services sector (10%), and the construction sector (10%).

Almost 8,000 of the business locations were employer businesses, with 44% employing at least five people.

Most caregivers provide care to parents or parents-in-law

Almost half of all caregivers (47%) reported caring primarily for their parents or parents-in-law in 2018. Caring for parents was the most common form of caregiving reported in Canada, and was particularly common among caregivers aged 45 to 64 (61%).

Those who provided care to their parents or parents-in-law typically spent four hours a week on caregiving responsibilities. For this category of caregivers, the most common type of help given was transportation (such as to run errands, shop or attend medical appointments), reported by 84% of caregivers. This was followed by meal preparation and house cleaning, reported by 64% of caregivers.

About 13% of caregivers reported that they provided care to their spouse or partner. These caregivers were more likely to be older than those who cared for a parent or parent-in-law, and spent about 14 hours a week on caregiving activities.

Charts

Chart 1
Real gross domestic product edges up



Chart 3
EI beneficiaries by occupation, November 2018 to November 2019

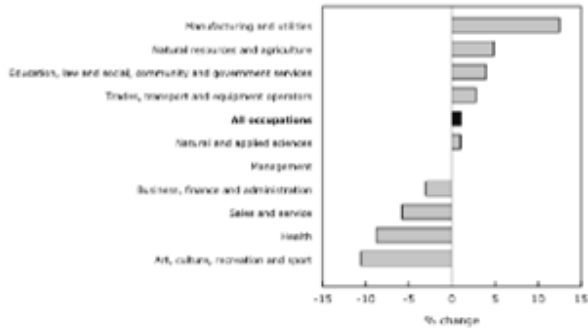


Chart 2
Notable increases in EI beneficiaries in three provinces, particularly Saskatchewan

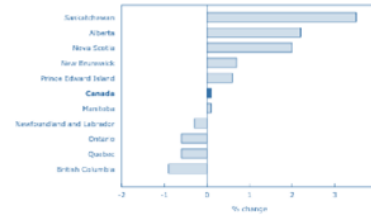


Chart 2
Construction increases



Tables

Table 1
Wholesale merchants' sales by industry – Seasonally adjusted

[← Back to main article](#)

[CSV \(3 KB\)](#)

Select columns

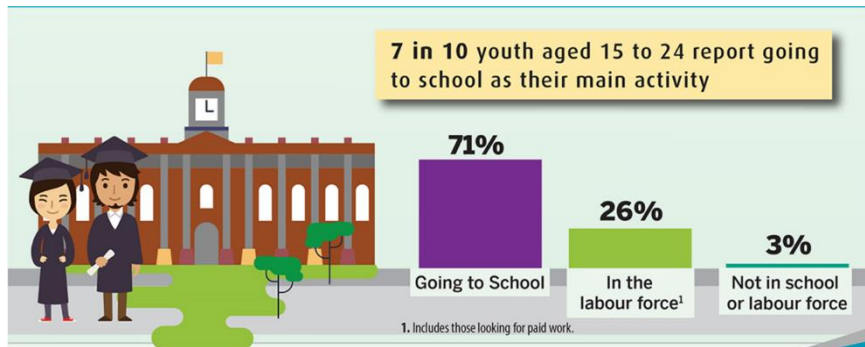
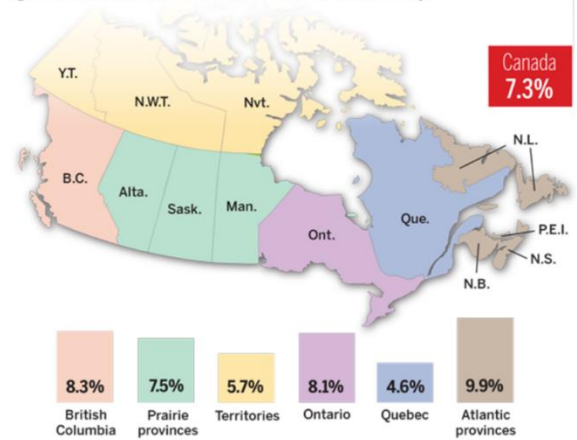
	November 2018	October 2019 ^r	November 2019 ^p	October to November 2019	November 2018 to November 2019
	millions of dollars	millions of dollars	millions of dollars	% change	% change
Total, wholesale sales (current dollars)	62,849	64,003	63,229	-1.2	0.6
Total, wholesale sales (2012 chained dollars)	55,755	56,482	55,949	-0.9	0.3
Total wholesale sales (current dollars), excluding motor vehicle and parts	52,304	52,971	52,560	-0.8	0.5
Farm product	829	911	922	1.2	11.3

Infographics



The representation of **women** and **men** in leadership positions was measured for corporations conducting business in Canada in 2016.

Over 2 million Canadians aged 15 and older have a mental health-related disability.¹



Each Canadian used on average **250 litres** of water per day in 2013.

Total household water use was **3.2 km³**.

That's over **1.2 million** Olympic swimming pools!

Links, contact information and note to readers

Contact information

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free [1-800-263-1136](tel:1-800-263-1136); [514-283-8300](tel:514-283-8300); [✉ STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations ([613-951-4636](tel:613-951-4636); [✉ STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).

Note to readers

Unless otherwise stated, this release presents seasonally adjusted data, which facilitate month-to-month comparisons by removing the effects of seasonal variations. For information on seasonal adjustment, see [Seasonally adjusted data – Frequently asked questions](#).

The Building Permits Survey covers over 2,400 municipalities, representing 95% of the Canadian population. The communities representing the other 5% of the population are very small, and their levels of building activity have little impact on the total for the entire population.

Building permit data are used as a leading indicator of activity in the construction industry.

The value of planned construction activities presented in this release excludes engineering projects (such as waterworks, sewers or culverts) and land.

Writing tips: Flashy alternatives to increases/decreases

⊗ **Avoid**

- Skyrocket
- Jump
- Plummet
- Spike
- Crash

✓ **Use**

- Coincides with
- Decline
- Rise/fall
- Up/down
- Higher/lower

Writing tips: Reciting a table

Sales totalled \$3.4 billion in June 2009, down 12.3% from June 2008.

The volumes of sales to the institutional (-13.7%), commercial (-11.2%) and household (-5.9%) sectors were down in June compared with June 2008. Total sales in June were 19.7% lower compared with May 2009.

	June 2008	May 2009	June 2009	May to June 2009	June 2008 to June 2009
	millions of dollars			% change	
Total sales	3,905.4	4,267.1	3,425.0	-19.7	-12.3
Household	547.7	864.2	515.6	-40.3	-5.9
Commercial	433.6	640.4	385.1	-39.9	-11.2
Institutional	2,924.1	2,762.5	2,524.3	-8.6	-13.7



Writing tips: Describing numbers

Describing large numbers

- use percentage changes to describe the data movement
- round to the first decimal point

Describing small numbers

- use raw numbers

Describing numbers (example)

Travel between Canada and other countries – Seasonally adjusted

	November 2018 ^r	October 2019 ^r	November 2019 ^p	October to November 2019
	thousands	thousands	thousands	% change 1
Canadian trips abroad 2	4,591	4,647	4,659	0.3
To the United States	3,594	3,617	3,620	0.1
To other countries	997	1,029	1,040	1.0
Same-day car trips to the United States	1,779	1,770	1,776	0.4
Total trips, one or more nights	2,774	2,750	2,757	0.2
United States 3	1,777	1,721	1,717	-0.2
Car	880	898	878	-2.2
Plane	825	760	773	1.8
Other modes of transportation	72	64	66	3.2

Describing numbers (example)

.... the number of incidents rose
from 6 in 2014 **to 18** in 2015

instead of

....the number of incidents rose **200%**
from 2014 to 2015

Writing tips

- ❌ Avoid starting a sentence with a year or a number
- ✅ Use simple ratios where possible
- ✅ Numbers under 10 are words
- ✅ Numbers 10 and over are numerals

....four of six industry groups

.... 55 communities

25

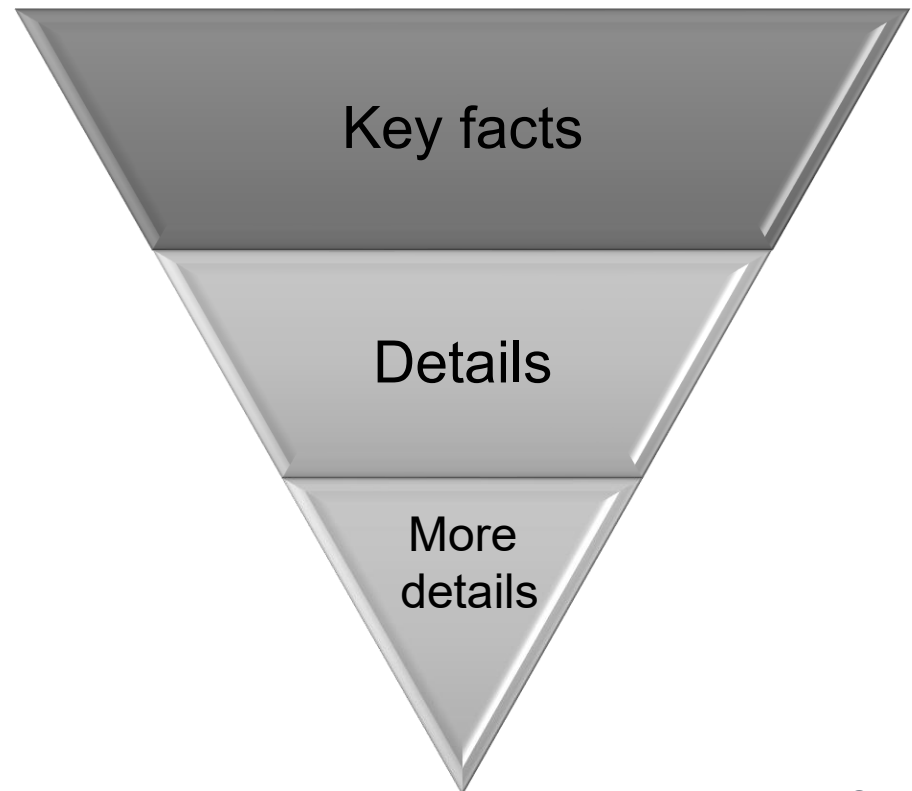
Writing tips: Be relatable

“Of \$246.8 billion in retail spending last year, consumers spent \$86.4 billion on cars and parts, and \$59.3 billion on food and beverages.”

“Of every \$100 spent in retail stores last year, consumers spent \$31 on cars and parts, compared with \$23 on food and beverages.”

In summary...

- Inverted pyramid
- Key story lines
- Be relevant
- Neutral language
- Facts
- Context



Writing about data

- Write a short article based on New Motor Vehicle Sales in Canada (*table to follow*)
- Consider linkages that could you make with another one of your surveys
- Include one subheading
- Suggest the key elements of an infographic and an infobyte
- Write two Facebook posts to:
 - announce your upcoming release
 - announce the availability of your release
- Suggest another communication activity to generate awareness and target it to a specific audience group of your choice.



New motor vehicle sales

	Canada (map)				
	Total, new motor vehicles				
	Total, country of manufacture				
Sales	July 2019	August 2019	September 2019	October 2019	November 2019
	Units				
Units	177,238	186,107	169,967	163,136	146,259
	Dollars				
Dollars (x 1,000)	7,512,668	7,946,491	7,528,261	7,076,304	6,459,098