Research Data Centres Program
Researcher Guide

Microdata Access Division
Statistics Canada

March 2012
Preface

The Research Data Centres Program is part of an initiative lead by Statistics Canada, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and a university consortium to help strengthen Canada’s social research capacity and to support the policy research community. The Research Data Centres Program comprises individual Statistics Canada research facilities located on the campus of hosting universities in the consortium; each research facility is referred to as a Research Data Centre (RDC).

The Research Data Centres Program, as part of the Microdata Access Division (MAD) of Statistics Canada, provides opportunities to: generate research on Canada’s social landscape; develop a network of research facilities across the country in both larger and smaller universities; complement the Data Liberation Initiative; train a new generation of Canadian data specialists; and expand the collaboration between Statistics Canada, Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR), universities and academic researchers.

The Mandate of the Research Data Centres Program is to:

- Promote and facilitate social science research that uses Statistics Canada analytical (confidential) microdata files on households and individuals. The Program is interdisciplinary and allows researchers from across the country to easily collaborate.

- Protect the confidentiality of respondents through the use of effective operational and analytical policies and procedures that create a culture of confidentiality amongst the research community.

- Liaise between the research community and Statistics Canada on matters related to data quality and concepts and on analytical methods.

- Disseminate research findings to the policy community and the public.

An RDC provides researchers with access to confidential microdata in a secure university setting. Each RDC is staffed by a Statistics Canada employee and operates under the provisions of the Statistics Act in accordance with all the confidentiality Statistics Canada guarantees its respondents.

The Statistics Act explicitly states only employees or “deemed employees” of Statistics Canada are legally allowed to access confidential microdata files. The RDC is only accessible to researchers with approved projects who have been sworn in under the Statistics Act as “deemed employees.”

Many people, through different roles, contribute to the operation and success of the RDC Program. These people are: Researchers, Academic Directors, Analysts, the Program’s Management and the RDC Program governing body, the Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN).
Researchers are data users under contract with Statistics Canada who have permission to access confidential microdata files. Researchers are either the Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator on a contract. The Principal Investigator is the researcher responsible for managing a contract and providing a product to fulfill contractual obligations. The Co-Investigator is any other researcher on a contract. The number of people collaborating on the research project may exceed the number of people who have signed the contract to work in the RDC. Only those members of the research team who will either need access to the data or need to assist another team member accessing the data will need to be included on the contract.

The Academic Director is typically a faculty member at the hosting university; and the primary liaison between the local RDC, the RDC Program, and the hosting university. The Academic Directors’ main roles are: (i) to advocate for the local RDC within the RDC Program initiative; and (ii) to promote the RDC’s research activities on campus.

RDC Analysts and Statistical Assistants are Statistics Canada employees who manage the daily operation of the RDC. Analysts promote the culture of confidentiality in the RDC and are available to provide assistance to researchers on administrative issues, as well as, data and methodological questions. Each Analyst has different program-wide responsibilities and many also use Statistics Canada data to do their own research.

The RDC Program Management is the primary liaison between Statistics Canada and the hosting university. They also provide support to Analysts in the management of their local RDC.

The CRDCN consists of RDC Academic Directors, the Statistics Canada RDC Program Manager and representatives from SSHRC and CIHR. The CRDCN applies for and allocates to the RDCs funding from SSHRC and CIHR and sets system-wide policies with respect to the network and operating standards within the legal boundary of the Statistics Act. The Chair of the CRDCN acts as a liaison between host universities and Statistics Canada.

This Researcher Guide describes the legal obligations, procedures and policies applicable to researchers as they conduct their research as a “deemed employee” at a Research Data Centre. Any comments or questions can be directed to the RDC Analyst or sent to:

RDC Program Manager
Research Data Centres Program, Microdata Access Division
Statistics Canada
150 Tunney’s Pasture Driveway,
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T6
Fax: (613) 951-4942
Email: rdc-cdr@statcan.gc.ca

A complete list of Research Data Centres Program employees can be found at:

English: (www.statcan.gc.ca/rdc-cdr/network-reseau-eng.htm)

Statistics Canada’s mandate and objectives, as well as the Statistics Act can be found at:

English:  (www.statcan.gc.ca/about-apercu/mandate-mandat-eng.htm)

French:  (www.statcan.gc.ca/about-apercu/mandate-mandat-fra.htm)

Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service can be found at the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat web site; more information can be found in Chapter 2.4 of this guide:

English:  (www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/chro-dprh/ve-eng.asp)

French:  (www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/chro-dprh/ve-fra.asp)

An up-to-date list of the projects being conducted at the various RDCs and the link to bibliographies of research papers published by RDC researchers can be found at:

English:  (www.statcan.gc.ca/rdc-cdr/prod-eng.htm)

French:  (www.statcan.gc.ca/rdc-cdr/prod-fra.htm)
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CHAPTER 1: How to Access the Research Data Centre

1.1 Services for Researchers: Determining Mode of Data Access

Researchers are to evaluate their own data access needs. Presumably researchers need for data access is closely related to the research question they are trying to answer. There are different needs for different researchers, and different types of data and statistics that can be used to answer a research question.

Statistics Canada provides different modes of access to statistics and data, with each mode providing a different level of access. The modes of access are placed on a continuum, ranging from open statistics (Internet) to restricted access (RDC). Researchers are encouraged to review the continuum of access to determine their preferred mode of access. If there are questions, please contact the RDC Analyst.

a) Statistics Canada Website

(www.statcan.gc.ca)

Information and documentation to help researchers interpret Statistics Canada data (such as information on methods, classifications, definitions, etc.) can be found at:

   English: (www.statcan.gc.ca/concepts/index-eng.htm)
   French: (www.statcan.gc.ca/concepts/index-fra.htm)

Descriptions of Statistics Canada surveys and survey documentation can be found at:

   • List by subject
     English: (www.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/indext-eng.htm)
     French: (www.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/indext-fra.htm)

   • Alphabetical list
     English: (www.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/indexA-eng.htm)
     French: (www.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/indexA-fra.htm)

b) Depository Services Program (DSP)

   English: (http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/depositoryLibraries/services.html)
The DSP acquires catalogues and distributes, free of charge, Federal government publications in all formats to a network of depository libraries as well as to Federal parliamentarians. The DSP acts as the government’s information safety net, collecting current and older government publications and making them widely available to the Canadian public through the depository library network.

c) Data Liberation Initiative (DLI)

English:  
(www.statcan.gc.ca/dli-idd/dli-idd-eng.htm)

French:  
(www.statcan.gc.ca/dli-idd/dli-idd-fra.htm)

The DLI provides Canadian academic institutions with affordable access to Statistics Canada standard products, databases (CANSIM II), public-use microdata files (PUMF) and geographical files. Most of the academic institutions provide their affiliated academic researchers DLI products free of charge.

If a research question can be answered with cross-sectional data or the time frame of the research project is limited, then the DLI is the suggested mode of access. All efforts should be made to determine if the project could be done using public-use files.

d) Custom Tabulations (customized services)

English:  
(www.statcan.gc.ca/reference/custom-personnalises-eng.htm)

French:  
(www.statcan.gc.ca/reference/custom-personnalises-fra.htm)

Some Statistics Canada surveys offer researchers the service of producing custom tabulations from the confidential microdata files. It differs from CANSIM (or CANSIM II) and other pre-defined data series, as it allows researchers to create unique tables to meet their own special data requirements. Tabulations can be created from the latest microdata as well as from historical databases and sometimes thematic maps.

The custom tabulations are produced on a cost-recovery basis. It does not require the researcher to purchase the public-use microdata data or seek data access permission to access the confidential microdata. It is a service that best serves researchers who are seeking aggregated frequencies tables or simple descriptive statistics of the microdata.

Any inquiry about the production of custom tabulations can be made through the customized services at the above link. Your request will then be sent to the appropriate survey division.
Research Data Centre (RDC)

A Research Data Centre (RDC) is the most restricted mode of access on the Statistics Canada spectrum of access. They are operated under the provisions of the Statistics Act in accordance with confidentiality rules and are accessible only to researchers with approved projects who have been sworn in under the Statistics Act as “deemed employees”.

This mode of access is appropriate when a research question can only be answered using inferential statistical analysis on the confidential microdata. The researcher must also be willing and able to become a “deemed employee” of Statistics Canada and conduct the data analysis in the RDC secured computer lab. RDC access is appropriate when:

(i) access to sensitive variables not provided in the PUMF is required for the analysis; or
(ii) a PUMF does not exist; or
(iii) longitudinal data are required for the analysis; or
(iv) the analytical work is complex in nature and not suitable for other forms of data access.

1.2 Preparing a Proposal for Data Access in the RDC

If an RDC is determined to be the appropriate mode of data access, the researcher must prepare a proposal requesting data access. The proposal defines the scope of the work proposed by the researcher and the data sets to be used in his/her analysis. When preparing the proposal, researchers are asked to define the research question(s) and objective(s), as well as statistical methods and software requirements. A researcher can consult the RDC Analyst or the RDC website for more information. It is strongly recommended that researchers discuss their project with the local RDC Analyst before submitting the proposal.

Scope of analysis in a typical RDC proposal:

- Focuses on modelling data (i.e., multiple regression, logistic regression, multi-level modelling, etc.)
• Produces minimal descriptive statistics (i.e., between 35-50 frequencies and/or 2 variable crosstabs)
• Access to 1-3 data sets (i.e., typically focused on one main dataset with possibly others for supporting analysis)
• Short to medium timeframe (i.e., 1-2 years for the initial data analysis as extensions are possible)
• Produces 1-2 products to be published in the public domain (i.e., presentation, journal article, dissertation, book chapter).

Researchers planning proposals outside of this scope should consult with the Analyst for further guidance before applying for RDC access.

Prospective researchers submit proposals that must be approved by one of two peer review procedures: the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC); or for policy-related work, “Provincial and Territorial Statistical Focal Points” of the province (the list of provincial contacts can be found on the application page of the RDC program website) within each ministry for federal-provincial-territorial governments. A Statistics Canada instutional review accompanies each of these application types.

Note: For federal and provincial government employees, as well as academic researchers conducting research on behalf of the government, although many of the topics discussed in this Researcher Guide are applicable to all RDC researchers, the application process as well as the confidential data access agreement is different. Government researchers should refer to the RDC application process on the RDC website for details.

1.2.1 Share File Users in the Research Data Centre

Researchers on contract to conduct researcher for a government agency may be accessing a share file if the government agency was a funding partner for that survey. When there is an external funding source to a Statistics Canada survey, each respondent can be asked if they would like their information shared with the funding government department. In these cases, a share file is the subset of the master file containing only those respondents who agreed to share their information with a partner agency.

Researchers accessing a share file in an RDC have a responsibility to protect the share file data. It is possible that a researcher may have other projects in the RDC in which (s)he accesses the master file of the same data at the time a share file project is approved. If this is the case, then the researcher can not use information from the master file to inform the share file. The restrictions on the use of the data are outlined in Appendix B to the Microdata Research Contract (MRC) and each research team member signs that they are aware and will conform to these restrictions. Specifically, this means that when conducting research with share files, statistical information from the corresponding master file in any form (verbal, written, electronic or printed) can not be used to support the research in a share file project.
1.2.1 Choosing Team Members (Investigators)

All data analyses on the project are conducted inside the RDC where access is limited to investigators listed on the MRC. It should be noted that security measures in the RDC go beyond the confidential microdata and include all confidential materials in the RDC. This includes preliminary research results that the team may wish to discuss. These discussions must not be done over the phone but within the RDC. For this reason, the Principal Investigator should assure that all team members are listed on the MRC whether or not they plan to examine the microdata.

If a student is using an RDC for his/her thesis or dissertation, it is strongly recommended that the student have his/her own MRC and be the Principal Investigator. At least one of the committee members, preferably the academic supervisor, should be on the MRC as a co-investigator so that (s)he is able to provide support to the student inside the centre.

Help on software or statistical methods will have to come from members of the research team listed on the MRC. Therefore, the team should consist of members with expertise on the research topic, statistical methods, data and the use of statistical software.

1.2.2 Ethics approval

Many universities have decided that secondary analysis, using Statistics Canada data, does not require an ethics review. However, in some universities an ethics review is necessary. In addition, some journals, especially in the medical fields, require an ethics review in order for the article to be published in the journal. Should a researcher find that an ethics review for his/her RDC research is necessary, the document in Appendix I outlines the policies and procedures Statistics Canada has established to mitigate the risk to respondents of Statistics Canada’s surveys.

This document has been reviewed by the RDC Program Manager and Data Access and Control Services Division at Statistics Canada. It is hoped that the information provided will assist the researcher should an ethics review be required.

1.2.3 Software Packages

The RDC computing environment provides the majority of researchers with the resources they require to conduct analysis; such as text editors and spreadsheets, as well as the widely used statistical packages of SAS, SPSS and STATA. Most centres and branches also have statistical packages specializing in longitudinal data analysis and/or designed to handle complex survey data. Researchers are encouraged to contact the local RDC to check for specific software availability before finalizing their RDC proposal. Approval of new software purchases or upgrades to existing software is at the discretion of the Academic Director of the hosting academic institution. Researchers must allow time for any new software purchases or upgrades and installations, and the worst case scenario being, the requested software could not be provided.
1.2.4 Survey Weights and Sample Design

If the research plan is not to utilize survey weights for the statistical analyses, the researcher should provide this information in the RDC proposal or notify the Analyst, as soon as possible, before any output leaves the RDC. This is because not using weights impacts the confidentiality vetting of the research outputs. Survey weights and confidentiality is discussed in Chapter 4.

Statistics Canada household surveys are based on complex sample designs that include stratification, multiple stages of selection, and unequal probabilities of selection. Weighting brings results from a sample to the level of the population. Even when population estimates are not the main interest of the research, weighting corrects for sample bias arising from the survey design. Sample bias can arise from over/under sampling population sub-groups, response bias, data collection and processing operations.

Ignoring the design complexities of the survey can influence the results of the analysis. As an example, a survey might over-sample some units relative to other units. Ignoring the over-sampling in an analysis of the entire population will generally produce biased estimates. Or, a survey may include clusters of units in a sample, such as several people from the same household. This clustering may lead to correlation between the respondents. Ignoring this correlation could lead to underestimation of the variance estimates.

Many standard analytical procedures have been adapted to incorporate complex sample design information. However, there are some analytical procedures for which there is currently no recommended design-based approach. The researcher should consult the survey documentation for more information on the use of survey weights.

1.2.5 Analyzing Non-RDC approved data inside a RDC

On occasion, a project may require use of other data sets other than those provided by the RDC program. Examples are the publicly available aggregate Census data, administrative data collected by a provincial agency, or data collected by the research team. Researchers are to justify the need to bring this data into an RDC in the proposal, as any data used in the RDC must be approved by Statistics Canada.

A researcher may want to link the micro-records between two data sets. No linked data are allowed in a RDC without formal approval from Statistics Canada. If approved, the actual linking of the records will be conducted at Statistics Canada and a fee may be charged. Please contact the Analyst for more details.

On rare occasions, a researcher may be allowed to analyze another government department’s or public institution’s data inside the RDC. A researcher must make special arrangements with the RDC program in advance to lay out access details. All special arrangements must be clearly understood and agreed on by all parties involved before data access can begin.
1.3 Notification of Review’s Results

After the review process, for a SSHRC peer review project, the Principal Investigator receives a letter from SSHRC notifying the researcher of the status of the proposal and providing a copy of the reviewers’ comments. Researchers should note that even if the project is approved, minor modifications, based on reviewers’ comments, may be advisable.

If the proposal is approved, the letter from SSHRC asks the Principal Investigator to contact the RDC Analyst to make an appointment to begin the administrative process to gain access to an RDC. The team has 12 months from the date of the letter to start the project; whereupon the approval of the proposal will expire and (s)he will need to re-apply to SSHRC. If the researcher is unable to start the research project within the 12-month time frame, the Principal Investigator can contact the Analyst to make special arrangements.

For a federal government project, the researcher will receive the approval notification directly from the Statistics Canada’s RDC Program in Ottawa. The Principal investigator is to contact the RDC Analyst to make an appointment to begin the administrative process to gain access to an RDC.

For a provincial government project, the application process is slightly different as the contractual agreement is drawn up between Statistics Canada and the provincial government. The “Provincial and Territorial Statistical Focal Points” of the province notifies the Principal Investigator of the application status. If the project is approved, the data access contract will be drawn up by the Statistics Canada’s RDC Program in Ottawa and not at the RDC. The Principal investigator then contacts the Analyst to make an appointment to begin the administrative process to gain access to an RDC.

**Note:** Any section of this document that deals with the contractual policies and procedures has been written for SSHRC peer reviewed projects. Government sponsored projects have slightly different procedures with respect to contracts. Differences include the proposal process, submission of products and fees for service, if required. Researchers with government sponsored projects should consult the RDC website or speak with the Analyst.
CHAPTER 2: Deemed Employee Responsibilities

The Statistics Act defines a legal relationship between a researcher, their affiliation with Statistics Canada and access to confidential microdata and related confidential materials. Section 17 of the Statistics Act states:

“No person, other than a person employed or deemed to be employed under this Act, and sworn under section 6, shall be permitted to examine any identifiable individual return made for the purposes of this Act.”

In order for a researcher to access the Statistics Canada confidential microdata, the researcher must either be an employee or become a “deemed employee” of Statistics Canada. Once a researcher has an approved research proposal, the process to become a “deemed employee” can begin.

The process consists of the researcher passing a security check, attending an RDC orientation session, affirming the Oath of Office and Secrecy (Section 6 of the Statistics Act), initialing acknowledgement of the Values and Ethics Code and signing the MRC of the approved project. Once a researcher completes the access process, (s)he receives the status of a “deemed employee” and is granted access to the confidential microdata.

Individuals who will not be analyzing the confidential data in the RDC, but who come to the RDC as part of a research team and have contact with confidential materials, are also required to follow the same process to become a “deemed employee”.

2.1 Security Clearance

A researcher must pass a Statistics Canada security check before being allowed to access the confidential data. The security check is conducted to establish the person’s identity, confirm his/her work/education credentials, and establish his/her personal reliability and ability to be entrusted with Statistics Canada’s confidential microdata.

It is preferable that the researchers complete a security check request form at the RDC in the presence of the Analyst or Statistical Assistant, who witness the signing of the form and confirm the researcher’s identification. Once completed, the Analyst or Statistical Assistant will courier the material gathered for the security check request to Statistics Canada’s Head Office in Ottawa for processing.

2.1.1 Out-of-town Researchers

If the researcher has to travel a considerable distance to the RDC to complete the security form, (s)he can request to complete the form via telephone. To accomplish this the Analyst sends a copy of the form to the researcher via email and then assists the researcher to
complete the security form over the phone. This form can then be mailed/couriered with a copy of official Photo ID to the Analyst who will, upon receiving the form, call the researcher to verify a few key facts on the form to ensure that it is indeed the researcher’s information. A faxed version of the form is not acceptable because the researcher’s original signature is required.

The Analyst may want to work closely with each member of the project team to ensure the form is completed properly.

2.1.2 Information Needed for Security Clearance

For the security check, the RDC Program generally requires Canadian citizens to provide the following:

- Proof of Identity with an Official Photo ID
- 5-year address history (part of the Personnel Screening, Consent and Authorization form)
- CV
- Personnel Screening, Consent and Authorization Form
- Proof of the researcher’s affiliation with one of the universities in the CRDCN (such as a university or academic institution identity card), or a letter from the Academic Director of the RDC authorizing access to the centre.

Foreign scholars in Canada for less than five years must also submit the security check form, as well as, additional documentation:

- Photocopy of their passport, Visa or permanent resident papers
- Proof of Canadian address (driver’s licence, copy of a bill or other documentation showing their address such as a lease or hotel reservation. The documentation must have the name of the researcher and their address while a resident of Canada.
- 5-year address history
- For all student researchers, the PI must provide a letter of support; and,

In some instances the researcher is required to submit their fingerprints to the RCMP for processing:

- All researchers, whose name results in a “hit” in the RCMP database
- If a researcher checks the "Yes" box on the "Personnel Screening, Consent and Authorization" form beside the question that asks "Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence for which you have not been granted a pardon?"
Researchers are to contact the Analyst in advance to confirm what documents are needed and to make an appointment for the security check.

2.1.3 Results of Security Clearance

Once the Analyst is informed of the security clearance result, (s)he will contact the researcher and pass along the result. Departmental Security grants clearance for a 10-year period. The exceptions to this case occur when either a researcher's Visa or Permanent Resident card expires or the researcher has not been involved in an active contract within a year of submitting a proposal for a new contract.

2.2 Attending an Orientation Session

A new researcher or a researcher who has not been working in an RDC for the past year will be invited to attend an RDC orientation session. The orientation session is designed to familiarize researchers with the responsibilities associated with Statistics Canada “deemed employee” status and the security measures surrounding access to the RDC.

The orientation session provides an opportunity for researchers to ask questions and discuss any concerns about data access in the RDC, and the responsibilities associated with using the confidential data, before they make the final decision to become a “deemed employee”.

The researchers can also use the orientation session as an opportunity to discuss with the Analyst any unique features of the project or important timelines, such as conference dates or impending deadlines.

Concluding the orientation session, the researcher confirms (s)he has received, read and agreed to the procedures and policies contained in this Guide, agreed to follow the Values and Ethics Code of Statistics Canada, and sworn/affirmed the Oath of Office and Secrecy.

Please note that the orientation session is not a substitute for a thorough reading of this document.

2.3 The Oath of Office and Secrecy

Under the Statistics Act, a researcher is to swear/affirm the Oath of Office and Secrecy prior to being given access to the confidential microdata. The Oath, sworn/affirmed by all employees and “deemed employees” of Statistics Canada, conveys the obligation of the “deemed employee” to protect the confidentiality of the data.

The Oath of Office and Secrecy states that each employee or “deemed employee” of Statistics Canada will:
“........solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully and honestly fulfill my duties as an employee of Statistics Canada in conformity with the requirements of the Statistics Act, and of all rules and instructions thereunder and that I will not without due authority in that behalf disclose or make known any matter or thing that comes to my knowledge by reason of my employment.”

This Oath of Office and Secrecy requires researchers to be personally accountable, to uphold the confidentiality provisions of the Statistics Act and not to reveal anything about individual respondents, either directly or indirectly.

The oath is legally binding for life; hence even after researchers have completed their research contract, they may not reveal any confidential information derived from knowledge gathered while working with the data. Violations, as identified by the Chief Statistician, are punishable by a lifetime ban from access to Statistics Canada detailed microdata. As well, they are subject to prosecution and are liable on summary conviction to a fine and/or imprisonment.

A violation of confidentiality, intentional or accidental, would put the RDC program at risk and reduce future research opportunities. The RDC culture of confidentiality is intended to help prevent an accidental breach of confidentiality.

2.4 Values and Ethics Code for “Deemed Employees”

After a researcher has sworn/affirmed to the Oath of Office and Secrecy and becomes a “deemed employee” of Statistics Canada, (s)he agrees to follow all rules and instructions under the Statistics Act, as well as, Statistics Canada policies. One of the Statistics Canada policies is the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service.

The Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service sets forth guidelines to maintain and enhance public confidence in the integrity of the Public Service. The Code also serves to strengthen respect for, and appreciation of, the role of the Public Service within Canadian democracy. The Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service states that public servants shall perform their duties and arrange their private affairs so public confidence and trust in the integrity, objectivity and impartiality of government are conserved and enhanced.

Researchers, as “deemed employees” of Statistics Canada using the RDC facilities, must conduct themselves in accordance with the principles and spirit of the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service to prevent real, apparent or potential conflicts of interest from arising.

If a conflict of interest exists prior to the RDC contract or during the life of the contract, it is the researcher’s responsibility to discuss the conflict of interest with the Analyst and/or RDC Program Manager.
The researcher must also initial the Values and Ethics Code for Deemed Employees section of the Microdata Research Contract pertaining to the conflict of interest measures.

Violations as determined by the Chief Statistician will be punishable by a lifetime ban from access to Statistics Canada microdata.

2.5 Signing the RDC Microdata Research Contract

The approved proposal is part of the MRC (or contract) between the Principal Investigator and Statistics Canada. The proposal defines the scope of the research to be done under the contract. The contract specifies the following terms of access:

- Purpose and scope of the research project as outlined in the approved research proposal
- Agreement by Statistics Canada to provide access to confidential microdata
- Agreement of the researchers to abide by the RDC security and confidentiality requirements
- Agreement of the work to be done in the RDC by the researchers and the results produced are to correspond to the objectives identified in the research proposal
- Agreement on the length of the contract
- Agreement of the Principal Investigator to provide a final product to Statistics Canada at the end of the contract

The contractual arrangements for “deemed employees” allow the researcher access to confidential microdata granted on the part of Statistics Canada, and in turn, the researcher is required to deliver a product to Statistics Canada. It also makes clear that team members who are not listed on the contract cannot access the confidential microdata provided by the RDC.

An MRC with Statistics Canada allows access only to the microdata specified in the approved research project and only for the purpose of completing the research as defined by the research proposal. Researchers are not to use RDC data to conduct data analysis outside the mandate of his/her approved project. And, researchers must not examine the confidential data for others who do not belong to the same RDC approved project. A researcher is to submit a new proposal for any subsequent research to be carried out at an RDC. In addition, SSHRC and/or Statistics Canada may ask for a new proposal if the scope of the research changes significantly during the course of the project.

2.6 When can Data Access Begin?

Once a researcher has security clearance, attended an Orientation session, sworn the Oath of Office, and signed the Values and Ethics Code and the MRC, (s)he is officially a “deemed employee” of Statistics Canada.
After the Microdata Research Contract is also signed by Statistics Canada, either by the Manager of the RDC Program or the Director of the survey division, a researcher can then be given access to confidential microdata and begin data analysis in the RDC.
CHAPTER 3: Culture of Confidentiality

3.1 Culture of Confidentiality

Promoting a culture of confidentiality is of the highest priority for the RDC Program, as maintaining the confidentiality of survey respondents is of paramount importance to Statistics Canada. It is the trust of the respondents that makes it possible for Statistics Canada to provide valuable data on the socio-economic condition of Canadian society. Under the Statistics Act, all employees and “deemed employees” must play their part to protect data confidentiality.

Since participation in the majority of household surveys is voluntarily, Statistics Canada encourages participation by informing all respondents their identity and information will remain confidential. Statistics Canada puts great effort into maintaining the trust of its survey respondents, as this is critical to maintaining high response rates and collecting high quality data.

Besides the researcher’s responsibility to become a “deemed employee” of Statistics Canada, there are other important elements of the culture of confidentiality. These include the physical and computer protection of the RDC, as well as the confidentiality vetting of research outputs before the results are released from the RDC.

3.2 Physical Security of the RDC

The RDC is a physically secure research facility, with reinforced ceilings, floors and walls and the door is either solid core or steel with tamperproof hardware and magnetic locks. Each centre also keeps a record of RDC entry by way of electronic access cards.

A researcher with “deemed employee” status receives an access card to enter the RDC secure area for the duration of the contract. A researcher cannot share or lend his/her access card to others.

In order for an RDC to be open, a Statistics Canada employee and not a “deemed employee” must be on site; this means either the Analyst or his/her statistical assistant is on-duty.

Visitors are not allowed in the RDC without being escorted by a Statistics Canada employee. Researchers are not to escort unauthorized individuals into the RDC, even if they are members on the same team. If a researcher forgets to bring his/her access card, the researcher should not borrow an access card from other researchers or follow others into the centre. The Analyst or the statistical assistant can provide the researcher temporary access for the day.

If the access card is lost or stolen, the researcher must report this immediately to the Analyst. The lost card will be disabled and a new card can then be issued.
3.3 Computer Security in the RDC

The RDC has a secure network environment with layers of computer security. Each workstation’s computer is connected to a central server to create a network. The RDC network has no external connectivity (i.e. there is no Internet or e-mail access from any workstation). Research files and data are stored on the RDC server.

Researchers play a crucial role in computer security through responsible use of the RDC.

3.3.1 User Accounts and Storing of Researchers Electronic Working Files

After researchers sign the MRC and are ready to start the data access, each researcher is given a unique username and password by the Analyst to access the approved data set(s) and folder(s) for each contract. Researchers are not to share passwords.

The set of folders includes: a folder where the Statistics Canada data are stored and accessed by researchers with approved projects; a folder specific to the project for investigators listed on the same contract to share, store and organize their working files; and, a folder for vetted output, syntax etc. that are permitted to leave the RDC. Researchers are encouraged to create sub-folders to organize their work. Certain folders, such as data folders and the vetted output folders, will be “Read-Only”.

Files stored on the RDC server are regularly backed up. To abide by Statistics Canada data security protocols, researchers must not save any files to the workstations’ local drives. Any files stored on the local hard drive are erased without warning.

3.3.2 Importance of Syntax Files

A researcher is responsible to clearly document how (s)he conducts her/his research. The use of syntax files to construct data sets and generate output is strongly encouraged.

Maintaining syntax files is important to save time when similar analyses are conducted with a different variable or sub-population, or if there is a re-release of data and analyses need to be re-run. In many cases, if the same data set is to be used for a new RDC contract, the syntax can be transferred to the new project. Furthermore, syntax files are frequently requested by the Analyst as supporting documentation when conducting confidentiality vetting on outputs.

3.3.2.1 Notification of changes to Statistic Canada files

It is common for Statistics Canada to revise a file (either data or documentation): by re-releasing the data file; by providing a patch to fix a problem; or occasionally, by notifying users of a problem with a file (without providing a new file or patch). It is the Analyst’s responsibility to notify researchers who are accessing the data that have been affected. It is the researcher’s responsibility to pay attention to data-related emails sent from the...
Analyst. The researcher should also regularly check for data-related announcements at the RDC. If the Analyst and researcher follow these procedures, it should ensure that the appropriate data are being used by researchers even when there are changes to the file, after the project has began.

3.3.3 RDC Computer Terminal

Researchers are not assigned a specific workstation in the RDC, and in most centres, researchers are expected to book a workstation in advance to minimize conflicts over limited resources. As a courtesy to other users, researchers should adhere to the booking as best they can.

At the end of the work session, researchers must log off. If a researcher is away from the workstation for a short break, the researcher must lock the computer to prevent others from accessing it.

All RDC computers are shut down at the end of each day. The Analyst may force a shut down even if the computer is still logged on the network, all unsaved work can potentially be lost. Permission is needed to run programs overnight and researchers are to discuss this need with the Analyst in advance.

In an emergency, such as a fire, researchers are still expected to lock, log off or shutdown the computer terminal before leaving the RDC.

3.3.3.1 Drives Connectivity to a Workstation’s Computer

Drives/connections (floppy disk drives, CD/DVD-ROMs, USB ports, etc.) on the computers are disabled to protect against accidental breaches of data confidentiality and harmful computer viruses.

Electronic file transfers between RDC projects are done by the Analyst and the Analyst reviews and loads to, or extracts from, the server all files entering or exiting the RDC. Therefore, researchers should make arrangements with the Analyst, in advance, to reduce wait time.

It is strictly prohibited to connect or attempt to connect, any portable or mass storage devices to a workstation computer.

3.3.4 Software Installation

A researcher must not install software on an RDC computer without permission. Permission may be needed from Statistics Canada to install an “open source” type of software or procedure. This is to ensure there is no risk to the computer security.
3.3.5 Bringing Electronic Devices inside the RDC

Researchers may carry electronic devices with them in the RDC, however, researchers are not to operate any text editing or messaging or image/text capture devices (for example, laptop computers, palm pilots, cellular phones or other device with optical beam capability) at the workstation or inside the RDC secure area.

A cell phone (or similar communication device) should not be operated in the RDC and must never be used to communicate/discuss confidential data or outputs with team members. Discussing confidential material on a wireless device is a serious breach of security.

If researchers wish to have a conference call with team members in another RDC, it can be arranged through the Analyst. Most centres are equipped with a land-line phone in their conference rooms.

In case of emergencies, researchers may leave their cell phones on (preferable in vibration mode) while in the centre. To answer a call, the researcher must do so away from the workstation and conduct the conversation outside of the RDC secure area.

Cell phones may be used inside the RDC to call for help if an emergency occurs inside the RDC.
CHAPTER 4: Confidentiality Vetting

4.1 Confidentiality Vetting and Removing Output from the RDC

Statistics Canada considers it important not only to avoid disclosure of confidential information, but also to avoid the perception of a prohibited disclosure.

Release of confidential information is a release of attributes of an individual respondent. A prohibited disclosure relates the particulars obtained from any individual Statistics Canada survey response to any identifiable individual person, business or organization. Output generated during the course of a microdata access research contract poses some degree of risk of a prohibited disclosure.

Confidentiality vetting is the process of screening research outputs, syntax or any confidential data-related material to assess the risk of a prohibited disclosure.

The final component of the RDC culture of confidentiality is the confidentiality vetting of research outputs before they are removed from the RDC. Once the output files are released, the research results are considered public.

4.1.1 Managing Research Outputs Leaving the RDC

Vetting research outputs before they leave RDCs (or any Statistics Canada offices) is part of the organizational procedures necessary to avoid accidental release of confidential material.

Microdata, in any form, never leave the secure area of the RDC. This also applies to any approved non-RDC microdata or aggregate data brought in by researchers to be used in conjunction with the confidential data housed in the RDC.

Output produced, used and stored inside the RDC is not subject to confidentiality vetting. It is only when a researcher requests to remove output from the RDC are the vetting rules applied.

All outputs and syntax leaving the RDC must go through confidentiality vetting; first by the researcher and then approved by the Analyst.

Any file previously vetted for confidentiality and approved for removal by the Analyst has been recorded and may again be removed from the RDC. Any file not previously vetted for confidentiality and approved for removal cannot be removed from the RDC.

Files in the RDC will either be electronic and stored on the RDC server, or printed on coloured paper, locked away at the end of each day by the Analyst and shredded when no longer needed or after the project is completed.
These rules and regulations also apply to hand-written notes produced in the RDC. At the end of a work session, hand-written notes are to be given to the Analyst for either shredding, storage, or vetting (if the notes contain no confidential information and the researcher wishes to remove them from the RDC).

Any unvetted material in any form (electronic, printed or handwritten) is presumed confidential.

Researchers are allowed to bring their own supporting documentation inside the RDC and researchers can leave the RDC with the material. However, any outside material brought into the centre should not be printed on coloured paper to avoid accidentally confusion with the confidential material.

Researchers MUST comply with Statistics Canada rules and regulations on data confidentiality when removing output and material from the RDC. The removal or attempted removal of confidential information from the RDC will result in a ban from accessing RDCs and all Statistics Canada confidential microdata.

4.1.2 An Overview of General Disclosure Risk on Research Output

Although the “direct identifiers” such as name, address, telephone number (which provide explicit information about or link to a respondent’s identity) are removed from the confidential microdata housed in the RDCs, most “indirect identifiers” (such as age, sex, race, occupation, area of residence, etc.) are retained. When these indirect identifiers are used together they can potentially lead to disclosure. This occurs when confidential information, which can be attributed to an individual, is revealed. It is not necessary for a specific individual to be identified or for a specific value to be given for attribute disclosure to occur. For example, publishing a narrow salary range for persons in a particular profession in one region may constitute a disclosure. This is particularly an issue when researchers are using narrowly defined geography or easily distinguishable population groups for their analyses.

To minimize the risk of disclosure, protocols and best practices\(^1\) are established for vetting research outputs.

In the RDC, output generally refers to any statistical result produced by analyzing the confidential microdata. Frequency tables, univariate statistics, estimates of regression model parameters or complex nonparametric kernel density estimates are examples of output.

Information based on an individual survey record is data and is not considered to be statistical output. This can also be viewed as anecdotal information and cannot be removed from the RDC.

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\(^1\) Many details in the current Data Confidential Vetting Guide are themselves confidential and not to be distributed to researchers; however, the Analyst will discuss protocol and best practices that are relevant to the project with researchers during the orientation session and throughout the project.
Outputs, such as aggregated frequencies, means, modes, proportions, percentiles, prevalence and ratios used to summarize or describe a sample, are generally referred to as descriptive statistics. These statistics pose a much higher risk of disclosing the identity or an attribute of a respondent. Variance estimation and inferential statistics of model outputs such as coefficients of variation, F-test statistics, estimated coefficient values, maximum likelihood estimation, etc. pose much lower risk of disclosure.

4.1.3 Survey Weights and Data Confidentiality

Chapter 1 discussed the methodological importance of using the sampling weights in the data analysis. Another important feature of the weights is that their application also helps to protect respondent confidentiality. This is because when the weights are applied, each respondent in the sample represents a certain number of persons in the target population. When descriptive statistics and tabulations have been weighted, there is far less chance that information specific to one respondent may be isolated and attributed to an individual. This is because the weighted frequency is no longer a raw count of respondents in the sample.

In general, output released from the RDC should have been produced using weights (generally referred to as weighted output). In very limited circumstances, results using raw data (generally referred as un-weighted output) can be released. For example, some analytic methods do not permit the use of weights. When un-weighted output is desired, a researcher must provide a written justification for why un-weighted results are to be released. It is also advisable to include a statement in research manuscripts and presentations informing the audience that estimates may be influenced by the survey design and that population inferences may not be valid when based on un-weighted results.

4.1.4 Confidentiality versus Dissemination Guidelines

The rules for confidentiality vetting may not always match the dissemination guidelines found in the survey documentation. The dissemination rules may be more or less strict than the vetting rules. However, all output that leaves the RDC must be vetted for confidentiality and is not vetted using the dissemination guidelines for the survey. It is important for a researcher to understand the distinction between what the survey documentation recommends be "reported" versus what is "released" from an RDC. Whether or not output is released from an RDC depends upon whether the output meets the guidelines on confidentiality. Whether an output should be reported (in a publication) is up to the discretion of the researcher and the peer review process, with consideration of the dissemination guidelines provided in the survey documentation.

4.2 Confidential Vetting of Research Outputs

There are confidential vetting protocols and best practices in place for many commonly produced statistics (for example, a minimum cell count is needed to release a frequency table). But, given the seemingly endless list of research outputs, having analysts apply the
confidentiality vetting rules only goes so far. The most important element of protecting respondents’ confidential information is researchers who exercise caution when removing vetted outputs from the RDC and when reporting and publishing results.

4.2.1 Responsibilities of RDC Researchers

To minimize the risk of residual disclosure\(^2\), researchers are asked not to request intermediate outputs and to limit preliminary vetting requests to results needed for conferences and presentations. The risk of detecting a respondent from a combination of information becomes more probable the more that is published using data from a particular survey.

Intermediate output is typically produced during the exploratory and model development stages of the analysis. These outputs often consist of detailed tables to check for sample size and data quality, as well as different ways of recoding a variable. Such outputs often present more detailed information than what is normally found in publications. Removal of such detailed, overlapping results can greatly increase the risk of disclosure. Outputs for the purpose of discussion and shaping of the final models should remain inside the RDC. Team members are encouraged to meet in the RDC to discuss these results.

The process of confidentiality vetting takes time. Conditional on the number of active contracts in an RDC and the point in the life cycle of the active contracts, Analysts could have a number of vetting requests in the queue. While Analysts will attempt to process a confidentiality vetting request in a timely manner, researchers are to account for the processing time when planning research activities and submitting output for release.

If researchers are in doubt about a potential disclosure risk or foresee potentially high disclosure risk in their outputs, researchers are encouraged to discuss their results with the Analyst.

4.2.2 Responsibilities of the Analyst

The Analyst’s primary responsibility in confidentiality vetting is to ensure confidentiality is not breached when allowing research outputs to leave the RDC. The Analyst reviews all the materials that the researcher would like to remove from the RDC, and the final responsibility and decision to release the output rests with the Analyst.

In the event a disclosure risk is identified, all attempts are made by the Analyst, in collaboration with the researchers, to find a solution. However, the Analyst must maintain confidentiality of survey respondents and when the risk of disclosure is too high, sometimes the output may not be released.

\(^2\) Residual disclosure occurs when released information can be combined with other available information to obtain confidential information. While a table on its own might not disclose confidential information, disclosure can occur by combining information from several sources (e.g., suppressed data in one table can be derived from other tables).
Researchers should also note that only the Analyst can allow outputs to leave the RDC and the final vetting cannot be performed by the Statistical Assistant. If the local Analyst is away from the office for a few days, slowdown of the vetting services is to be expected. If the Analyst is on a longer leave, vetting may be provided by an Analyst in another centre. For researchers working in a Branch, output is sent to the host RDC for vetting.

4.2.3 Preparing Output for Confidentiality Vetting

One of the security practices the RDC follows is to keep track of all outputs leaving the RDC. When a request is made for output or syntax to be released, the researcher completes a Vetting Request Form (formerly known as Disclosure Request Form) which provides the required information for the Analyst to conduct and document the vetting request.

The request form asks the researcher to provide the name of the output file, the name of the survey and cycles used in the analysis, the characteristics of the population being analyzed, the statistical procedure, the weights used, and if applicable, to verify the extent of residual disclosure risk.

To help the Analyst understand the output, researchers provide a description of the variables on the request form or in a separate document. The syntax may not provide the sufficient information about the derived variables for the Analyst to do the confidentiality vetting.

The Analyst can request to see the data sets and syntax files used to produce the final releasable output. This is especially important for outputs produced from survey data that requires rounding of descriptive results.

For any descriptive results, researchers are asked to produce the same outputs both weighted (by applying the survey weights) and un-weighted (outputs from the raw data) as supporting documentation for confidentiality vetting. Analysts rely on the un-weighted outputs to confirm that the results meet the thresholds of the minimum number of respondents necessary to produce releasable estimates. After the vetting is completed, the weighted outputs are released from the RDC to the researcher.

To expedite confidentiality vetting, all statistical outputs are submitted electronically along with the Vetting Request Form and the supporting documentation. The material is copied by the researcher to a pre-assigned folder. Researchers are expected to request outputs based on need (such as for conference presentations or drafting an article for publication); this helps to reduce the risk of residual disclosure and facilitates the timeliness of the vetting process.

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3 For example, information gathered in a household survey may not necessarily be restricted to the primary respondent; instead, similar information may have been collected from all household members. If the researcher names a variable “AGE”, it may not necessarily be clear to the Analyst which members of the household that “AGE” variable is referred to.
4.2.4 Best Practices for Confidentiality Vetting Requests

Here are some examples of what researchers can do to minimize delays in the vetting process:

Do

- Schedule time with the Analyst well in advance of an initial vetting request and well before any anticipated deadlines.
- For descriptive statistic outputs, provide weighted and corresponding un-weighted output in separate and well labeled files.
- Restrict cross-tabular analysis to two or three dimensions.
- Limit the release of tabular output to just before the end of the project.
- Take care when using small subgroups or small areas.
- Check with the Analyst for specific rounding rules on descriptive statistical outputs that are applicable to some surveys.
- Check with the Analyst on atypical outputs that may require extra supporting documents (for example, provide raw counts for each pair of the variables in the correlation or in the variance and covariance matrix).
- Double check for any output errors and remove needless results before submitting the files for vetting.
- Provide all necessary details in the Vetting Request Form. If applicable, inform the Analyst if similar output has been previously released (include the details of the differences between similar requests). If applicable, separate requests with differently defined working samples and provide the Analyst the corresponding sample sizes.
- Check survey documentation dissemination guidelines.

Do not

- Request tables for which the corresponding un-weighted cell counts are low.
- Request anecdotal information (such as min/max statistics).
- Request graphs with individual points plotted or that show outliers (e.g. scatter plot of the raw data or box-plots).
- Request un-weighted outputs without first discussing this with the Analyst.
CHAPTER 5: Research support inside the RDC

With the RDC Program firmly entrenched in the social research fabric of Canada, one of the continuing goals of the program is to help foster a growing community of interdisciplinary academic researchers. The Program accomplishes this by offering other services to its researchers.

5.1 General Support Provided by the RDC

When a research team is approved to use the RDC, it is assumed the team has the statistical and software knowledge, as well as the research experience necessary, to complete the proposed research.

Researchers are responsible to thoroughly read the User Guide provided for each Statistics Canada survey. User Guides are posted on Statistics Canada’s website and stored on the RDC server with the microdata. Researchers should familiarize themselves with the survey documentation as it often provides the answers to questions a researcher may have.

Sometimes the documentation can not answer a question and the Analyst’s main role is to help researchers find the information they need. The Analyst can help researchers on conceptual, methodological and procedural questions and on data concepts and data structures. The Analyst can also direct questions to other Statistics Canada employees, if needed.

Based on the Analyst’s own research experiences, (s)he may also provide advice on the use of software, analytical methods, and suitable methods for variance estimation, such as weighting.

The level of support available to a researcher can also vary depending on the dataset being analyzed. Statistics Canada datasets are categorized based on their usage, timeliness and frequency of data collection. In the RDC program, survey data are grouped into three major tiers; researchers can contact the Analyst to find out more for the level of support of any particular dataset.

Sometimes statistical or data challenges cannot be fully anticipated ahead of time and discussions of methodological problems with colleagues, who are not on the contract, may be necessary. Researchers must be conscious of the confidential information they are working with when discussing methodological issues outside the RDC. If it is necessary for that colleague to access the confidential material, in order to help solve the analytical problem, the team can arrange to add the colleague to the MRC.
5.1.1 Support for Students

While students with approved projects have completed some courses in analysis and/or methods and are familiar with statistical software package(s), they are often in the early stages of their research career and may need additional support to carry out their RDC research. Any additional support they need should come from their academic supervisor and committee members and not the Analyst.

5.2 Statistical Training

Throughout the year, training and information sessions on data sets, statistical programs or procedures and methodological issues are offered by the CRDCN in various academic institutions. Also, every year a member of the CRDCN hosts a network conference which provides an opportunity for researchers to present their results and connect with other RDC researchers across the country.

Additionally, the RDC program produces a Statistics Canada publication the Information and Technical Bulletin. This report is a forum for current and prospective RDC users to exchange information on data and techniques for analyzing data.

Another Statistics Canada resource, the Data Analysis Resource Centre (DARC), can provide suggestions on suitable methods and software tools to RDC researchers. The methodologists and statisticians who work in this division have conducted research on the appropriateness of various analytical techniques for surveys with complex sample designs. DARC also offers (on a cost-recovery basis) seminars on various methods. For more details, please contact the Analyst or the Statistics Canada website.

Please check the Statistics Canada, RDC or CRDCN (www.rdc-cdr.ca) websites or with the Analyst for current information on all of these RDC endeavors and upcoming events, as well as for conferences, symposiums and workshops organized by Statistics Canada.
CHAPTER 6: Contract Management

RDC research projects are often long in duration. Each project may have several contracts, each providing the researcher with access to Statistics Canada’s confidential microdata files to help answer the research questions of the project. During the life course of a contract, changes inevitably occur in the team members or the data required. This section provides an explanation of what changes can occur and the procedures in place to manage these changes in a contract’s life cycle.

The Principal Investigator is to uphold the contractual obligations on-behalf of the team and have administrative control of the MRC. Therefore, the Principal Investigator is expected to become a “deemed employee” of Statistics Canada. It should be noted that the Principal Investigator, usually the lead on the research project, needs not be the fund or grant holder of the project.

The information presented in this chapter mostly applies to academic researchers with SSHRC approved proposals. For government employees, since the contract agreements with Statistics Canada are different, amendments to the contract will also vary. Please consult the RDC website for details and/or discuss any potential contractual changes with the Analyst.

6.1 Files Transfers and Contract Transfers

If the investigators of a project are not located in the same area and require access to more than one RDC, the primary RDC is usually the RDC of the Principal Investigator, and the other RDCs are called secondary RDCs. The management and administration of the contract is done by the Analyst in the primary RDC.

Output and syntax files may be encrypted and transferred to another RDC, without confidentiality vetting, for use by the investigators on the same contract in other centres. File transfers are done by the Analyst. It is best if the researcher discusses and schedules time with the Analyst prior to the transfer request.

For permanent relocation of investigators, a Principal Investigator can ask to transfer his/her contract along with the working files to another RDC. Non-affiliated researchers must obtain permission to access the facility from the Academic Director of the designated RDC where the contract is being transferred to, before the transfer can take place.

6.2 Remove or Add a Team Member

To remove a Co-Investigator from an active contract, the Principal Investigator must provide a written request to the Analyst. Both the Principal Investigator and the Co-Investigator being removed from the contract must sign an amendment to the original contract. The amendment specifies the Co-Investigator will no longer be permitted access to the RDC to work on the Principal Investigator’s contract.
To add a Co-Investigator to an existing contract, the Principal Investigator is to provide to the Analyst a written request explaining the role of the new member, along with the curriculum vitae of the Co-Investigator. If the added Co-Investigator is a student, the Principal Investigator needs to provide a letter of support for the student. Appendix II provides a sample letter which is also available on the RDC website. The researcher being added must become a “deemed employee” of Statistics Canada. Both the Principal Investigator and the Co-Investigator being added then sign an amendment to the original contract that specifies the Co-Investigator will now be permitted access to the RDC to work on the Principal Investigator’s contract. As the project is already underway, the Investigator should also consider how the new Co-Investigator will function with respect to the team’s organization when requesting output for vetting.

For provincial government sponsored projects amendments to the contract are done through the Statistical Focal Point of the province. The list of “Territorial and Provincial Focal Point” is posted on the application page of the Statistics Canada RDC program web site.

6.3 Add or Remove a Data Set

Researchers are granted access only to the microdata requested in their approved proposal. On rare occasions, it may be appropriate to add a data set to the original contract in order to answer the research question defined in the approved proposal. An example of an appropriate case would be when the sample size in the original data set is not of sufficient size to answer the original research question and another data set is available with similar information and a larger sample size. A researcher may also want to verify his/her findings from one data set using another dataset.

In all cases, when requesting to add a data set, the nature of the research project or objective of the research questions must not change.

The Principal Investigator will need to submit a written request to the Analyst detailing the rationale for why a new data set needs to be added and outline a commitment to maintain the objectives of the original proposal. The subject matter division responsible for the requested data will review the request and must approve the use of the data set before it can be added to the contract. In some cases, the best course of action may be to withdraw the on-going project and submit a new proposal.

If the proposed study is utilizing a longitudinal dataset, a new cycle of the approved longitudinal data set will be provided to researchers upon data release with no need for an amendment to the contract.

For provincial government sponsored projects amendments to the contract are done through the Statistical Focal Point of the province. The list of “Territorial and Provincial Focal Point” is posted on the application page of the Statistics Canada RDC program web site.
6.4 Amendment of the Contract End Date

If the team realizes they have underestimated the time needed to complete the contract or other extenuating factors have prevented completion of the contract by the end date, the Principal Investigator can request a contract extension.

Contract extensions are not automatically granted and reasonable justification must be provided before they are granted. A researcher must allow the RDC Program time to assess the request and if the extension is to be granted, the amendment to extend the contract must be signed by the Principal Investigator (who signs on behalf of the team) before the contract end date. Typically, with good reason, a contract can be extended for 6 months to a maximum of one year past the contract end date.

The Principal Investigator should provide the Analyst with a written justification for the extension. Valid reasons for a contract extension include:

- The data analysis is in the final stages and the extension will cover the completion of the data analysis
- Funding or staffing shortages have prevented progress on the contract to date (including leaves of absence, long-term illnesses, etc.)
- There have been complications in obtaining data to complete the analysis.

In all cases, when requesting to extend a contract, the nature of the research project or objective of the research questions must not change.

6.5 Contract Withdrawals and Dormant Contracts

It is possible for the Principal Investigator to withdraw his/her contract by providing a written request to the Analyst.

A request to withdraw may require the researcher to provide an explanation. For example, when a researcher has been spending a lot of time working on the project in the RDC and/or many outputs have been released from the RDC the Principal Investigator may be asked to provide a summary report briefly explaining the analysis, the outcome of the analysis, and the reason for discontinuing the study.

If there is a subsequent discovery of published or otherwise disseminated works without the researcher notifying the RDC program, but traceable to a withdrawn RDC contract, the researcher will be prevented from returning to the RDC.

In other instances, the Principal Investigator may wish to continue the project but is unable to work on the project for an extended period of time during the life of the contract (for example due to maternity leave or health reasons). The Principal Investigator may request in writing that the contract be made “dormant” for a specified period of time. After the
dormancy period, the contract is either given a new end date or the Principal Investigator can decide to withdraw it.

6.6 Sub-Contract

While working on one contract, a researcher may begin to develop ideas for future research; and if those ideas do not fit with the original objectives and goals of the approved proposal, researchers are to submit a new proposal for a new contract. Violation of this rule will result in immediate withdrawal of data access privileges including data access to projects currently under contract.

On rare occasions, when the proposed research questions remain the same but the purpose of the project has expanded, it may make sense to consider a sub-contract rather than having the researcher apply for a new contract. For example, a student Co-Investigator wishes to expand the on-going project in order to carry out research for his/her dissertation. A separate contract with the student as Principal Investigator is preferable since the student may wish to bring in different team members, employ different statistical methods, or have different time lines. The final product for the sub-contract will be the thesis work.
CHAPTER 7: Completing the Contract

When the contract is almost complete and close to the contract end date, it is time to prepare for the end of that particular RDC contract, regardless of whether there are plans to begin another RDC project.

7.1 Exit Process

It is the responsibility of researchers to delete any copy of the data files or sub-datasets that were not essential to the analyses in order to free up space on the RDC server. All output released is stored, as well as any essential programs or syntax, as requested by the researcher.

Close to the end of the contract, researchers are advised to request the release of syntax files and research records since researchers cannot return to the RDC to examine material after the contract end date (without applying for a new contract).

Access to the RDC will end with the contract and researchers are to take with them all the materials that they brought into and stored in the centre. Confidential material that cannot leave the RDC (such as output printed on coloured paper) will be destroyed. If applicable, access cards are returned to the Analyst.

7.2 Submission of a Product

The contract is complete when a product is submitted to Statistics Canada and thus the contractual obligations are fulfilled. The Principal Investigator can expect a letter reminding him/her of the approaching end date of the contract approximately one to two months prior to the end of the contract.

An electronic copy of the product should be submitted to the Analyst on or before the contract end date. The Principal Investigator is required to provide a product prior to its submission for publication.

The expected product is described in Appendix A of the MRC. There are five types of products that will be accepted:

- RDC working paper
- Peer-reviewed journal article
- Book or book chapter
- Graduate level thesis or dissertation
- Commissioned report (e.g., a government commissioned report)

It is possible that other types of products (such as a symposium paper) could fulfill contractual obligations. This is negotiated on a contract-by-contract basis.
For government sponsored projects, before the submission of products, please consult the Analyst.

7.2.1 Use of Submitted Product by Statistics Canada

The work(s) submitted to Statistics Canada in fulfillment of the contract will not be considered for publication or otherwise disseminated without discussion and explicit permission of the research team. The submitted work will be used internally for record keeping and program monitoring purposes.

7.2.2 Missed the Contract End Date

If a product is not submitted to Statistics Canada within a reasonable timeframe, that is six months after the contract end date, or the Principal Investigator has not expressed his/her intentions now that the end date has passed, the contract will be declared incomplete. If a follow-up by the RDC program still yields either no product or no information, the contract is then terminated whereby no amendment is possible and the Principal Investigator can be prohibited from accessing the RDC for up to 5 years.

In order to re-initiate or complete the contract, the Principal Investigator can submit a draft or complete product. It is advisable to discuss with the Analyst if there is a foreseeable delay in submitting a product.

It happens from time to time that a research project simply proves unsuccessful. In such cases, the Principal Investigator can consider withdrawing the contract. A brief summary report from the researcher may be required.

7.3 Publication and Dissemination of Research Outcomes

The success of the RDC Program is tied to the output produced by the projects. Researchers should inform the Analyst of all conference presentations (or other public presentations such as interviews planned with the media), working papers or publications produced during the life of the project. The RDC will use this information to produce summary reports on specific themes and bibliographies of RDC publications. Academic Directors may also use this information to secure funding for the operation of their RDC; and may decide on making direct enquiries to researchers if more information is needed.

Statistics Canada, together with the CRDCN Knowledge Transfer Officer, may approach researchers directly about opportunities for disseminating their findings.
7.3.1 Disclaimer in Publications

Researchers are encouraged to submit their research for scholarly publication. Statistic Canada requests researchers publishing findings from their RDC research to include a notice:

“The research and analysis are based on data from Statistics Canada and the opinions expressed do not represent the views of Statistics Canada.”

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4 Ownership Section 6.6 of the Microdata Research Contract.
CHAPTER 8: Return to the RDC

After the contract end date, a researcher no longer has access to his/her research or data folders for that expired contract. However, a researcher may apply for access to a closed project by means of a “revision contract” or a new approved proposal.

8.1 Re-entry after submission to an academic journal

The original MRC is complete when the terms of the agreement expire and a product is submitted to Statistics Canada. Often the product submitted, to fulfill the contractual obligations of the contract, is a copy of the article submitted to a journal.

It may take a considerable amount of time for a journal to review an article and provide feedback. After review, if the journal requests that new analysis be conducted to revise the article and the contract end date has passed, the Principal Investigator can submit a request for a revision contract.

Revision contracts are not an extension of the original MRC but are new contracts with new terms of data access (i.e., new start and end dates and new product obligations). The duration of a revision contract is typically six months and the contract is for the express purpose of revising a product in order to achieve approval for publication, not for undertaking new research hypotheses.

In order to fulfill the contractual obligations of the revision contract, another product must be submitted. Typically this product would be the revised journal article.

Revision contracts are granted only when the Principal Investigator has fulfilled the contractual obligations on the original MRC (that is a product has been submitted) and when written comments from a journal or reviewer are provided to the Analyst along with an explanation of what further analysis will be undertaken during the revision contract.

8.1.2 Student Dissertation or Thesis Revision after Defense

For a student, the original contract is complete when the terms of the agreement expire and a product, often the dissertation or thesis, is submitted to Statistics Canada. If, after submission to the academic review committee, the student receives comments that new analysis needs to be conducted to revise the dissertation or thesis, the student can submit a request for a revision contract.
8.2 New Idea is a New Project

Besides the revision contract, revisiting a closed contract after the end date is only possible by submitting a new RDC application. It is possible for a researcher to re-visit a closed project using a similar proposal. However, it is more likely that a researcher will develop new ideas for future research while working on an RDC project. In this case, it is best to submit a new application with a new proposal so not to violate the contractual agreement of the closed contract. Researchers need not wait for one MRC to end before starting a new one.

After a research contract is closed, a researcher who does not start a new contract within a year may need to repeat some of the access procedures in order to re-gain access to the RDC.

If the new approved project is to use the same data file as the closed or active project, researchers can request to have the stored working files transferred from the closed project to the new project, even if they are working in a different RDC. A researcher can discuss the file transfer with the Analyst.
Chapter 9: Dissemination of RDC Research

Research informs public debate on issues that are crucial to Canadian society and also helps to demonstrate the value of collecting nationally representative statistics.

There is always the will of those who spend public money on research to demonstrate that their investment is paying off. Continually demonstrating the quality and impact of RDC research is vital to sustaining the CRDCN. Both Statistics Canada and CRDCN, are strengthening current approaches and actively exploring new ways and opportunities to make the results of RDC research known to the broader policy community and the general public, and to demonstrate its impact on decision making at all levels.

Dissemination is taking on increasing importance in the network as the RDC Program is seeing a rapidly growing body of results and key findings coming from RDC research.

This chapter discusses the roles of Statistics Canada and the CRDCN in disseminating research findings of the RDC. What is important to remember is that the CRDCN needs the researchers’ help even after the contractual obligations associated with data access have been met.

9.1 Who’s involved?

Since all partners in the CRDCN have a stake in its long-term success, all partners are involved in dissemination efforts, to some extent, with the aim of building a cohesive, coherent and coordinated set of options for the RDC research community.

The CRDCN, through their Knowledge Transfer Coordinator, has made systematic efforts to disseminate results of research by posting a bibliography of research papers published by researchers involved in the program through their own website (www.rdc-crd.ca). The list, as it stands, currently shows the breadth and depth of RDC research and the many high caliber academic publications that arise from it.

While many authors would prefer not to post their research findings in a working paper for fear that this constitutes “prior publication” and prohibits opportunities in scholarly journals, for others this is not a major concern. The CRDCN has established a working paper series to highlight RDC research findings; researchers who are interested in posting a working paper may visit the website (www.rdc-crd.ca) and follow the link under “Working Papers” for more information.

Statistic Canada’s Microdata Access Division, of which the RDC program is a part, has set up a website to list the title and the survey data used of the approved RDC projects. Researchers are also encouraged to work with Statistics Canada to publish articles in Statistics Canada flagship publications such as Health Reports, Perspectives on Labour and Income or Canadian Social Trends. These publications are widely read by academic researchers, policy-makers...
and often the media. Researchers who are interested in pursuing such an option may contact the local RDC Analyst.

9.2 Synthesis Reports

Sometimes a number of research papers are published on a particular set of questions that contribute collectively to the body of knowledge in an important area of public interest. In such cases, Statistics Canada and the CRDCN may produce a report on the topic of interest and summarize the contribution of RDC research to knowledge in that field. A team’s research may be incorporated into such a report.

If a researcher has a substantial body of research in a particular area and would like to propose a topic for such a report or assist in the preparation of one, the researcher can contact the CRDCN Knowledge Transfer Coordinator or the RDC Analyst for more information.

9.3 Follow-up is critical

Research projects often generate more than one publication. A major challenge to effective dissemination has been the long-term follow-up on publications being produced from work in an RDC by researchers whose projects are “complete” from a contractual standpoint. It is important that researchers inform the RDC program if there are subsequent publications after the team has completed their work in the RDC.

The Academic Director of each of the local RDCs will contact the local RDC researchers each year asking for updates on publications, book chapters, conference presentations or other outputs arising from the RDC projects since the previous year. It usually will take no more than a few moments to provide the requested information. Each RDC in the CRDCN receives a share of funding based on its research output. Accurate counting of research output will ensure that RDCs will receive an accurate share of the resources it needs to maintain its level of research activity. But more importantly, this knowledge ensures that the CRDCN can assure its public funding agencies that the research taking place in the Network is yielding tangible results, contributing to knowledge and informing policy. Continually demonstrating this research productivity is essential to maintaining long term support fro the RDC Network.

9.4 Public Accessibility of Research – Key to the Program’s Success

The major effort of Statistics Canada and the CRDCN will be to find ways to help researchers translate the often obscure (to a layperson) and narrowly focused discussions found in most academic research articles into something that can be offered to a more general audience, thereby raising the visibility of the research and, hopefully, its impact on public understanding of important social issues.

When interest is generated in academic research in this way, more non-specialist readers (for example, journalists, policy makers, etc.) will seek out the research articles being
featured. While the writing of academic articles is ultimately driven by the needs of the scholarly community and the particular journals being targeted, researchers may want to keep in mind that, sometimes, it is important not only experts should understand the contribution of researchers’ research, but also the general Canadian public.

To conclude this guide, the following text was prepared by the CRDCN Knowledge Transfer Coordinator to help researchers when thinking about how to write up their research results and its ultimate accessibility to a wider audience.

9.5 Disseminating academic articles to a non-academic public

(or: Putting the public into publication....)

Most research projects carried out in the RDCs are on subjects of direct policy or public interest. To reach policy makers or the general public, research findings need to be expressed in terms accessible to a non-specialist audience.

The translated text is a brief and readable story about the research that a) sets the scene, b) presents some interesting facts and figures in an easily understandable way, and c) explains what new insights the study brings to the issue in question. To tell this story, these elements must be present in the academic article itself.

Two items that facilitate translation of academic papers:

- Include simple descriptive statistics relevant to the research question

These are often the most accessible figures for a non-academic audience; they provide the background, and are an entry point for findings from complex statistical models. Giving sample statistics for each category of the dependent variable rather than for total only in the descriptive statistics table, for example, improves enormously the story line. (See example overleaf).

- Explicit discussion of how findings relate to the original research question

The discussion needs to return to the social issue that gave rise to the study, (generally spelled out in the demand for data access). Findings are usually relevant to the issue, but unless this aspect is discussed explicitly in the article, the research “story” lacks its ending.

The background or literature review sections usually provide the information needed to set the scene, but the other two elements sometimes require attention. Researchers can make academic articles easier to translate simply by: a) including some descriptive statistics that are relevant to the research question, and b) ensuring that the discussion section deals explicitly with the way findings relate to the original research question.
Keeping the original research question, broader context or relevant social issue in mind throughout also seems to have a positive effect on the quality of the analysis itself, making it easier to publish**. It helps avoid more fundamental problems found in some analyses (an inappropriate sample, a key variable omitted etc.) which can remove the policy or public interest from a potentially fascinating analysis.

**Example: A study of stepfamily fertility illustrates how descriptive statistics relevant to the research question increase the interest of the research story**

**Context:** Rising separation rates among young parents in recent years have increased the number of stepfamilies. When most stepfamilies are formed, only one member of the couple has children; approximately half of stepfamily couples then go on to have a child together.

This study explores whether certain types of stepfamily couples are more likely to have a child than others, or whether stepfamily fertility, like fertility in general, depends on demographic factors such as mother’s age and the time since the last child was born.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable: the birth of a child in a stepfamily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control variables: Four main stepfamily types:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- stepfather + single mother (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- stepfather + separated (or divorced) mother (40%);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- stepmother + lone father (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- stepfather + stepmother (union of two lone parents: 8%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus two demographic variables: the age of the mother, and the age of the youngest child, when the stepfamily is formed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results of the statistical model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effect of socio-demographic characteristics on the risk of having a child in a stepfamily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model (exp β)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stepfamily type</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepfather + single mother</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepfather + separated mother (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepmother</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepfather and stepmother</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>At start of stepfamily episode:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age of mother</td>
<td>0.94***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age of youngest child</td>
<td>0.90***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** coefficient significant at p<=.001
Version 1: The story of the statistical analysis from an article that includes total sample statistics only (Table 1).

Table 1: Total sample statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stepfamilies with child born to couple</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stepfamily type</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepfather + single mother</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepfather + separated mother</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepmother</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepfather and stepmother</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>At start of stepfamily episode:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age of mother</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age of youngest child</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study shows that the type of stepfamily does not have a significant influence on whether a child is born within the stepfamily. Instead, as with fertility more generally, demographic factors play a central role in stepfamily fertility. The older the mother, and the older the youngest child, when the stepfamily was formed, the less likely the stepfamily couple was to have a child together.

In Version 1 of the translated story, the total sample statistics (Table 1) give no information about fertility in the different stepfamily types. Version 2 is based on the same table of results, but on a more detailed descriptive statistics table (Table 2, below). Here, descriptive information about differences between stepfamilies in terms of fertility, mothers’ age and children gives extra insights into the question, and enriches the story line.
Version 2: The story of the analysis from an article with detailed descriptive statistics

Table 2: Detailed descriptive statistics table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Stepfather single mother</th>
<th>Stepfather/sep. mother</th>
<th>Stepmother</th>
<th>Stepfather/Stepmother</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of total number of stepfamilies</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with child born to stepfamily</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At start of episode:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age of mother</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age of youngest child</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whether or not stepfamily couples have a child together varies enormously from one type of stepfamily to another. Two-thirds (66%) of single mothers who formed stepfather families had a child with their new partner, compared with just over one-third of separated mothers (35%). Surprisingly, fertility was barely lower in stepfamilies where both parents already had children from a previous union (34%). Finally, in families where women first experienced motherhood as a stepmother, half (50%) went on to have their own child.

The statistical analysis shows that these marked variations between stepfamily types are largely due to differences in the age of mothers and their children. When the stepfamily episode began, single mothers were, on average, much younger (22.6 years) than their separated counterparts (30.4 years), and they also had younger children.

As with fertility more generally, demographic factors play a central role in stepfamily fertility. The older mothers were when the stepfamily was formed, and the longer the time since the last child was born, the less likely the stepfamily couple was to have a child together.

** One colleague’s comments on these dissemination guidelines: “This message is important for authors aiming to publish their work as well. One of my roles is as Senior Editor for ...(prestigious social science journal!)..., and I notice that reviewers do often ask for some information on the basic distributions in the data as a background to the more complex analyses. Another thing which is often picked up by reviewers, and which might be worth stressing in your document is that for social science publications particularly, it helps to have a clear theoretical framework for the analysis explained at the outset, including an explicit discussion of the kinds of associations of interest, and causal pathways that may be involved, as well as the significance of the associations for our knowledge in the field. Maybe your job would be easier if authors always included these elements! Certainly mine would be, as a journal Editor!”
Appendix I

Mitigation of Risk to Respondents of Statistics Canada's Surveys

Research Data Centres Program,
Statistics Canada,
June 2010

Statutory Protection:

The Statistics Act (1985) prescribes the mandate of the Agency, its role in the federal government, its powers and responsibilities, and its operating structure. Central to the Act's provisions is an implicit social contract with respondents under which the Agency may burden respondents with requests for information, and in some cases demand response, in order to provide information that is clearly of broad public benefit, but with an absolute undertaking to protect the confidentiality of identifiable individual responses. Any disclosure of information that identifies an individual, business or organization is a punishable offense.

The confidentiality provisions of the Statistics Act are not affected by either the Access to Information Act or any other Legislation.

Consent:

The Privacy Act (1983) applies not only to the activities of Statistics Canada but to all federal government organizations. The Privacy Act requires that personal information must only be collected if it “relates to an operating program or activity of the institution”. In the case of Statistics Canada, this would include surveys collected under the provisions of the Statistics Act. The Privacy Act requires that the individual be informed of the purpose for which the personal information is being collected. It includes the right for an individual to know of, and have access to, their personal information. Informed consent is not a component of the Privacy Act.

However, informed consent is utilized by Statistics Canada as part of certain activities. With the exception of the Census of Population and the Labour Force Survey, all Statistics Canada household surveys are voluntary. Implicitly, participation in a voluntary survey requires consent. Respondents are informed of the voluntary nature of the survey through a notice prior to the start of the data collection, such as the one below. Interviewers are also instructed to permit respondents to refuse to answer any question or to terminate an interview at any time.

Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and used only for statistical purposes. While participation is voluntary, your cooperation is important to ensure that the information collected in this survey is as accurate and as comprehensive as possible.

Measures to protect the identity of respondents:
**Data collection and nature of data files available for access:**

- The majority of the data collected by Statistics Canada use sampling frames in which households are randomly sampled. Within selected households, sometimes all persons are requested to participate in the survey. In many cases, a random selection of a person within the household is done by the interviewer. The Census of Population and the Labour Force Survey are the only mandatory surveys due to the key role they play in the informing political and business decisions in the country.
- Background survey material explaining the data to be collected and the reasons for the data collection is provided to survey participants.
- Any microdata accessed by a researcher will have all personal identifiers, such as name, address, SIN, and personal health number removed from the record.
- Researchers may only access those data that are required for their particular project.

**Procedures to access data:**

- As required by the Policy on Government Security, researchers must obtain Reliability Status from the STC Departmental Security before having access to the data in the RDC. Security checks are conducted by the RCMP for each researcher accessing data in the RDC.
- As required by the Statistics Act, each researcher accessing data in the RDCs has deemed employee status and swears a legally binding oath to protect the confidentiality of Statistics Canada data utilized in the RDC. This oath is binding for life.
- Each researcher is required to attend an orientation session during which a RDC Analyst explains the researchers’ legal responsibilities to protect the confidentiality and all the security measures in place within the RDC.
- There is a Statistics Canada employee on site to ensure the above measures are clearly understood and adhered to by all researchers participating in the RDC program.

**Physical protection of data**

- Each RDC is a secure physical environment where the only people permitted entry are researchers working on active approved projects and Statistics Canada staff.
- Doors to the facility are opened with secure swipe cards assigned to each researcher.
- Researchers are prohibited from having any electronic devices, such as laptop, PDAs or cell phones in the vicinity of their workstation.
- The computing environment inside an RDC cannot be linked externally, in particular to the internet.
- The file structures and permissions are created to ensure that researchers have access only to the data for which they have received permission to use.

**Control of released results:**

- The RDC Analyst is the only person who can release analytical output from a RDC.
- All analytical output, including programs and compiled results, are vetted for confidentiality using rules developed by Statistics Canada methodologists.
Where confidentiality is at risk, the researcher and Analyst work together to eliminate the risk of disclosure and release the necessary information to answer the research question but at the same time, protect the confidentiality of respondent data.
Appendix II

Letter of Support

Supervisor Name .......................................................... Date
Address

Ms. Mika Oehling
RDC Program Officer
SSHRC
350 Albert Street
P.O. Box 1610
Ottawa, ON K1P 6G4

Dear Ms. Mika Oehling,

I am writing to you on behalf of [insert student name] who is in the process of submitting a proposal to access the RDC (insert proposal title). Please find this letter as evidence of my support for this student’s application. I have reviewed the proposal and find it suitable for submission to the RDC program.

[Insert Student Name] is prepared to access data in the RDC as they have completed the following courses in analysis, methods and software training:

•
•

In addition to this, the student has experience with the software packages that will be utilized over the course of the research project:

• SAS
• STATA
• SPSS
• other____________

We have also put in place the following supports should the student need any additional resources while working in the centre:

• as their supervisor, I will be available to come to the centre to assist with issues that arise and to preview output before vetting
• a statistical consultant is available to assist with software training and methodological procedures
• other__________________.

As the student’s supervisor, I accept responsibility for the needs of my student and welcome recommendations from the RDC analyst as to how the needs of the student can be met.
Sincerely,