

Statistics Canada CANSIM Usability Testing

Final Report



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Executive Summary

- To provide feedback on CANSIM, 20 usability interviews were conducted with users of the database in late February and early March 2005.
- For the most part, participants in the interviews had generally positive feedback on CANSIM, noting that most of the functions and utilities they need are included in the application.
- When navigating the website during the interview, participants provided feedback on the different sections of the homepage. For the most part, comments on these focused on terminology and clarifying the function of certain features.
- Most participants noted that they tend to search for CANSIM data either by going through links in The Daily or by searching by table number. As such, few tended to access CANSIM through the Statistics Canada Homepage.

Executive Summary (cont.)

- Almost all participants had difficulty finding the correct path to CANSIM on the Statistics Canada homepage. Many suggested that a direct link to CANSIM should be included on the top or side menu of the homepage.
- Few generally search by subject, and when asked to search for unemployment data using this method, most participants encountered serious difficulties. The problems tended to emerge on the Search Results page. They included:
 - The list of tables was long and confusing;
 - Tables were classified according to their numbers which meant little to participants; and
 - The term “unemployment rate” did not appear in the table name as they would have expected.
- When using the text search function, many participants noted that the options provided are useful, but the search engine could be streamlined by including only a simple string search on the main text search page and incorporating all the additional options on the advanced search page.

Executive Summary (cont.)

- For the most part, once on the correct table page, participants were generally able to make the correct selections and continue to download the data. However, they did note a few suggestions in terms of terminology, the most important included:
 - Clarifying the function of “View checklist”; and
 - Clarifying the difference between “Retrieve as table” and “Retrieve as individual time series”
- The download options page also posed a few difficulties for participants. For the most part, these centered on the length of the output formats list, the options for altering the data and the warning note about altering the data.
- According to the interviews, streamlining the text search page, improving the search results page, clarifying some terminology and making some of the features available on CANSIM more prominent should significantly improve the function and utility of the database on the whole.

Sommaire

- Dans le but d'obtenir des renseignements sur la convivialité de CANSIM, on a réalisé 20 entrevues auprès des utilisateurs de la base de données, à la fin de février et au début de mars 2005.
- Dans l'ensemble, les participants ont formulé des commentaires favorables à l'égard de CANSIM, indiquant y trouver la plupart des caractéristiques et fonctions qui les intéressent.
- Lors de la navigation du site Web, pendant l'entrevue, les participants ont commenté les diverses sections de la page d'accueil. En général, les commentaires portaient sur la terminologie et sur la nécessité de préciser la fonction de certains éléments.
- La plupart des participants indiquent qu'ils accèdent généralement aux données de CANSIM par le biais de liens offerts dans *Le Quotidien* ou en effectuant une recherche par numéro de tableau. Ainsi, peu d'entre eux accèdent ordinairement à CANSIM par le biais de la page d'accueil de Statistique Canada.

Sommaire (suite)

- Presque tous les participants ont eu de la difficulté à trouver le chemin menant à CANSIM à partir de la page d'accueil de Statistique Canada. Plusieurs ont suggéré d'insérer un lien direct vers CANSIM dans la barre de menus, du haut ou verticale, de cette page.
- Peu de participants font généralement une recherche par sujet et, quand on leur demande de chercher des données sur le chômage en employant cette méthode, la plupart des participants connaissent des difficultés importantes. Les problèmes, qui sont survenus principalement dans la page intitulée *Résultats de la recherche*, étaient les suivants :
 - La liste des tableaux était longue et portait à confusion;
 - La liste des tableaux, classés par numéros, laissait les participants perplexes;
 - L'expression « taux de chômage » n'apparaissait pas dans le titre du tableau, contrairement aux attentes des participants.
- Au moment d'utiliser la fonction de recherche textuelle, plusieurs participants ont jugé utiles les options offertes mais estimaient que la recherche pourrait être simplifiée en limitant le nombre de champs de recherche, sur la page de recherche principale, à un seul. Les autres options de recherche pourraient être offertes à la page consacrée à la recherche avancée.

Sommaire (suite)

- En général, une fois à la page du tableau voulu, les participants arrivaient à faire les sélections nécessaires en vue du téléchargement des données. Ils ont cependant formulé quelques suggestions à l'égard de la terminologie, les plus importantes étant les suivantes :
 - Préciser la fonction du bouton « Liste à cocher » ;
 - Préciser la différence entre le bouton « Extraire : tableau » et le bouton « Extraire : séries chronologiques ».
- La page présentant les options de téléchargement a aussi causé quelques difficultés aux participants. Celles-ci concernaient principalement la longueur de la liste des formats de sortie, les options permettant de modifier les données ainsi que l'avis sur la modification des données.
- Compte tenu des commentaires obtenus dans le cadre des entrevues, les mesures suivantes devraient améliorer considérablement le fonctionnement et l'utilité de l'ensemble de la base de données : simplifier la page de recherche textuelle, améliorer la page présentant les résultats de la recherche, préciser la terminologie employée, et préciser certaines fonctions de CANSIM et améliorer leur visibilité.



Introduction

Background

- The primary objectives of this study were to provide feedback on the ease with which clients navigate the CANSIM database, find and download data.
- The results will serve to help Statistics Canada identify areas requiring improvement as well as new feature requirements, and ensure the online interface via www.statcan.ca continues to meet user needs and expectations in a timely fashion.

Methodology

- To test the CANSIM database, a series of 20 usability interviews were conducted with CANSIM users on February 21, February 23, February 24 and March 9, 2005.
- All usability interviews lasted one hour and were held in dedicated facilities to allow for viewing by clients and audio taping. In each interview, participants navigated CANSIM on an Internet-connected laptop via a registered CANSIM user account. Each participant received a \$50 honorarium.
- Most participants were recruited according to a list provided to EKOS by Statistics Canada. Statistics Canada recruited additional frequent users of CANSIM directly.
- It should be borne in mind when reading this report that these findings are drawn exclusively from qualitative research. While every effort is made to balance various demographic characteristics when recruiting participants, these interviews (and therefore the findings drawn from them) may not be said to be representative of the larger population as a whole. While usability interviews generally indicate appropriate directionality, they do not serve as a proxy for a fully representative quantitative methodology. For the reader's ease, these findings are depicted to some extent as definitive and "projectible". This is, however, true only for the universe represented by these participants.

Usability Interview Participants

- Some participants in the interviews were only occasional users of the CANSIM database, going online to retrieve data only once or twice a year.
- Other participants were frequent, and high volume users of CANSIM, retrieving data regularly.
- The types of information participants had downloaded through CANSIM varied greatly. They included:
 - Population and demographics;
 - Labour force, workforce trends;
 - Health;
 - Education;
 - The economy; and
 - Immigration.



General Findings

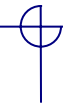
The Statistics Canada Website

- In general, participants offered very positive feedback on the Statistics Canada website.
- Most participants agreed that the Statistics Canada website is indispensable. Many receive The Daily.
- Specific feedback concerning the Statistics Canada website included that it is easy to use and an example for other Government of Canada Departments.
- Many participants appreciated the availability of free data on the website. A few noted that they would like access to additional free data.

Accessing CANSIM from Statistics Canada Homepage

- Accessing CANSIM from the Statistics Canada homepage proved to be challenging for participants, including some of the most experienced with CANSIM.
 - For some participants, it took a minute or two (and some false starts) to locate the link to CANSIM (in the Products and Services category);
 - Some suggested that the location of this link to CANSIM is not immediately apparent; and
 - Some questioned why a link to CANSIM is not included on the top or side menus of the homepage.
- However, few participants access CANSIM by following the path through Products and Services. Rather, they access CANSIM through the following paths:
 - Many access CANSIM data by conducting a search on the Statistics Canada homepage;
 - Regular users that access The Daily tend to access CANSIM through the links to the database listed in The Daily articles. They find this to be a straightforward and effective way to access the data they need; and
 - Registered users tend to have their login page bookmarked.

Statistics Canada Homepage



Statistics Canada / Statistique Canada

Canada



Français	Contact Us	Help	Search	Canada Site
The Daily	Canadian Statistics	Community Profiles	Our Products and Services	Home
Census				Other Links



Search the website [Advanced search](#) [How to search](#)

Free information only

[Browse by subject](#)

- [Site map](#)

- NEW!**
[Media Room](#)

- [Learning Resources](#)

- [Information for Survey Participants](#)

- [Definitions, Data Sources and Methods](#)

- [About Statistics Canada](#)

- [Studies](#)

Today's news releases from [The Daily](#)

Monday, March 7, 2005

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time

[Building permits, January 2005](#)

Construction intentions cooled down in January as municipalities issued \$4.5 billion worth of building permits, down 11.0% from December and the lowest monthly level since May 2004.

[Farm Product Price Index, December 2004](#)

[New products](#)

Canadian Economy Online

Latest indicators	
Population estimate (October 2004)	32,040,292
Consumer Price Index (January 2005)	2.0%
Unemployment rate (January 2005)	7.0%
Gross Domestic Product (December 2004)	0.2%
More in Canadian Statistics	

1 Link to CANSIM could be included on top or side menu

2 Many users access CANSIM through The Daily.

The CANSIM Database

- During the interview sessions, it was apparent that CANSIM is an indispensable tool for most participants. It was also clear that participants had a firm grasp of the enormity of the database. As such, they tended to be tolerant of a certain degree of complexity in its usage.
- Many participants acknowledged experiencing significant difficulties using CANSIM for the first time. A few were incapable of completing their data download independently and had to rely on help from a colleague or a Statistics Canada employee.
- Participants noted some key areas where the user interface could be improved to significantly simplify usage and improve the overall experience with finding and downloading data.

The CANSIM Database

- Some general observations that participants noted based on their own experiences with CANSIM prior to the interview session:
 - Some are unclear as to the exact definition of a series of data;
 - There is some confusion regarding the CANSIM pricing structure, which stems, for the most part, from misunderstanding of the series;
 - Some participants noted difficulties searching the Statistics Canada website in general, including for CANSIM data; and
 - Some participants, especially those less experienced with Statistics Canada data, noted difficulty judging if they had indeed downloaded the table that best met their data needs.

CANSIM Homepage

- Most participants responded positively to the CANSIM homepage saying it is generally clear and uncluttered.
- They tend to focus exclusively on the search box on this page.
- Many did not realize that the CANSIM Directory logo is hyperlinked to the Directory. Also, the purpose of the CANSIM Directory was unclear to some. After they had explored the Directory, a few participants felt that it could use an explanation, or at the very least, a clearer indication that it is hyperlinked.
- Most participants tended not to focus on the links at the bottom of the homepage, saying they were already familiar with the information, or did not need it.

CANSIM Homepage



Statistics Canada / Statistique Canada

Canada



Français	Contact Us	Help	Search	Canada Site
The Daily	Canadian Statistics	Community Profiles	Our products and services	Home
Census				Other links

CANSIM (\$)

Find it

Newsflash

Communiqué

CANSIM Help

Welcome to CANSIM

Your online resource for socio-economic statistics. Find the data you're looking for by selecting from the following options:

Find it by:

<input type="radio"/> Subject	<input type="button" value="Continue"/>
<input type="radio"/> Text search	
<input type="radio"/> Table number	
<input type="radio"/> Series number	
<input type="radio"/> Survey number	



- [Pricing Information](#)
- [User guide, animated tutorial and frequently asked questions](#)
- [NEW! Disc-on-demand](#)
- [About CANSIM](#)
- [List of CANSIM Data Distributors](#)

1 Main focus of page is the Search box

2 While CANSIM Directory is useful for some, a few did not know they could click here.

3 Information in these links seen as important but could be consolidated.

CANSIM Help, User Guide, Animated Tutorial

- During the usability interviews, very seldom did participants spontaneously access the help functions when they had questions.
- Most reported accessing help functions only on very rare occasions, saying they prefer a “trial and error” approach to navigating.
- When asked, few participant believed that the CANSIM Help on the side menu would take them to content-specific help information.
- Most participants felt that they would be unlikely to take the time to go through a user guide or animated tutorial. Many of the participants that did access the animated tutorial during the interview found that the pace was too slow and they showed little interest in completing the tutorial.

Side Menu

- Few participants reported using the features located on the side menu in their usage of CANSIM.
- Through exploration and navigation, participants noted the following:
 - The side menu does not consistently appear on all CANSIM pages (for example on the Newsflash and Communiqué pages);
 - They expected that clicking on the CANSIM logo would take them back to the homepage, but it does not; and
 - For many it was not intuitive to select “Find it” to return to the CANSIM homepage.

Side Menu: Newsflash

- Many are unsure of the purpose of Newsflash. A few assume that its content will be similar to The Daily.
- After exploring the Newsflash section, few believed that this was a section of CANSIM that they would go back to frequently.
- To clarify the purpose of Newsflash, participants suggested the following alternative names:
 - Newly Available Data;
 - Recently Released Data; and
 - Today on CANSIM.

Side Menu: Communiqué

- Similar to Newsflash, many are unclear as to the purpose of Communiqué. Some guess that it is the French version of Newsflash. An assumption for many, was that Communiqué would contain the same type of information as The Daily.
- Also similar to Newsflash, few participants found this section particularly pertinent for them. Some suggested that if the contents were organized by topic area rather than by date, it would be easier for them to search through.
- A participant suggested the following alternative title:
 - Latest changes to data structure.

Side Menu



- 1** The side menu should remain constant on all pages
- 2** CANSIM logo should link to CANSIM homepage
- 3** Find it could be changed to “Search CANSIM”
- 4** Newsflash label is unclear; many assume it is similar to The Daily.
- 5** Communiqué label is unclear: many think it is the French version of Newsflash
- 7** Most do not realize that CANSIM Help links to content-specific help



Searching CANSIM

Find it By

- For all participants, the Find it by box is clear and intuitive.
- The Text search, Table number or Series number search functions are the most frequently used by participants.
- Few participants report using the Subject or Survey number functions.

Find it By

Find it by:

Subject

Text search

Table number

Series number

Survey number

Continue

1 Find it by box is clear and simple





2 Text search or Table number most commonly used

3 Few search by Subject, Survey number

Search by Subject

- While few participants generally conduct their CANSIM searches by Subject, the functionality of this feature is clear and intuitive for all participants.
- Though few participants read, or even notice, the instructions at the top of the page, all are able to effortlessly navigate the page. They are all familiar with the “folder architecture”.
- For the most part, the category and sub-category labels are clear.

Search by Subject

- Clicking  or  expands this subject to show the next level of detail.
- Clicking  or  closes the lower levels of detail.
- Clicking on an **underlined higher-level or lower-level subject** retrieves all tables for that subject.



1

Few notice these instructions

2

All are familiar with the “folder architecture”

3

Category and subcategory labels are clear

Text Search

- For the most part, participants reported being able to use the Text search successfully with few problems.
- At the same time, however, some did point out the fact that the CANSIM search function is considerably more complicated than more common search functions (e.g., Google). Some find the additional options (i.e., type of search, etc.) add confusion and are intimidating to some users.
- Some added that they would prefer just to enter a string of text in the Text search. Only if the search terms generated too many results, would they choose to refine their search with a search within the results function or with Advanced Search options.

Text Search: Advanced Search

- Feedback on the Advanced Search options included:
 - Some noted that the search options found on the main Text search page could be included on Advanced Search page instead;
 - Some of the more advanced users of CANSIM liked the option of being able to specify which fields to conduct the search in;
 - Some of the search options are confusing, for example, participants were unfamiliar with the term “dimension”; and
 - While some participants were intimidated by Boolean operators, others were familiar and comfortable with them. Those that are familiar tended to assume they could use Boolean operators at any time during their search.

Text Search

Search:

1- Select the type of search:

All of these words ▼

2- Indicate whether you want all, active or terminated tables:

All tables matching search criteria ▼

3- Search within all text or table titles:

All text within the tables ▼

4- Search string:

Find tables

To perform Boolean searches, use the [Advanced Search](#).

1

Some find the additional search options confusing

2

They would prefer just to have a simple text search box

3

Term “Boolean” unfamiliar to some

Text Search: Advanced Search

Select one or more fields to search. Indicate whether you want all, active, or terminated tables. Enter a Boolean search click the Find tables button:

1- Search the following field(s):

- Table titles
- Table keywords
- Dimension descriptions
- Dimension member descriptions
- Units of measure
- Footnote texts

2- Include the following tables in the result:

- All tables matching search criteria
- Active tables matching search criteria
- Terminated tables matching search criteria

3- Search for (you may use Boolean operators AND, OR, NOT):

1 Some regular users find search fields option very useful

2 Users of Boolean operators assume they can use them at any time

Search Results Page

- The Search results page was certainly the most problematic page for participants. Very few were able to successfully select the most appropriate table from the search results listings quickly or easily. This led to significant frustration.
- During the sessions, participants were asked to search by subject to find the monthly unemployment rates for 2004. The specific problems encountered during this search focused on the Search results page included:
 - Participants generally scanned the list searching for the term “unemployment rate”. As this term was included only on the first table in the list (109-5204) they incorrectly assumed this was the most appropriate table. They were often frustrated to find that this table did not contain the most recent data, or monthly data (as had been specified in the exercise).
 - As many were unfamiliar with the title of the survey “Labour Force Estimates”, they quickly passed over these tables assuming they did not contain data on unemployment rates.

Search Results Page

- Other more general criticisms on the search results page included:
 - Often the list of returned tables is long;
 - The table titles are long and very similar;
 - It is not clear which dimensions are included in each table (province, type of labour force statistic, etc.);
 - While this information is included in the Summary link, many did not see this link, or did not realize it contained this type of information;
 - Tables are sorted by table number which is irrelevant to many users; and
 - It was not clear to many users how to perform a search within the results. While this is possible using the “Find on page” function in the Internet browser, this utility will only search the text on the page, but not locate text within the dimensions of each table.

Search Results Page

- Participants made the following suggestions:
 - Order the tables by most relevant or most frequently accessed;
 - Improve the visibility of the Summary link;
 - Clearly list the dimensions included in each table;
 - When there are several search results, classify them into sub-categories; and
 - Provide improved “search within results” functionality.

Search Results Page

Search results

Select a table from the list below by clicking on the table number:

36 Table(s) for *Unemployment*

Active tables:

109-5204	Unemployment rate, by age group, Canada, provinces, health regions (June 2003 boundaries) a 2002-2003 Summary
111-0007	Neighbourhood income and demographics, taxfilers and dependents with income, by source of i Summary
111-0009	Family characteristics, summary, annual (Number), 2000-2002 Summary
111-0016	Family characteristics, economic dependency profile, by family type and source of income, ann
111-0019	Family characteristics, persons receiving Employment Insurance, by sex and age group, annua
282-0001	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by sex and detailed age group, monthly (Persons), Jan 19
282-0002	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by sex and detailed age group, annual (Persons), 1976-20
282-0003	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by educational attainment, sex and age group, monthly (F Summary
282-0004	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by educational attainment, sex and age group, annual (Pe
282-0005	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by full- and part-time students during school months, sex Jan 1976-Jan 2005 Summary
282-0006	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by students during summer months, sex and age group, r 2005 Summary
282-0007	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS (Persons), Jan 1976-Jan 2005 Summary
282-0008	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS (Persons), 1976-2004 Summary
282-0009	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOI

1 Scanning through the search results is daunting for many

2 Table numbers mean little to most users

3 Many confused by the fact that the term “unemployment rate” appears only in the first listing



Retrieving CANSIM Data

Table Page: Table Information

- When arriving on the Table page, participants generally focused immediately on the sections of the page that ask them to make selections. Very few actually took the time to look through the links listed at the top of the page.
- The purpose and importance of each of these links was discussed and there was no consensus on their relative importance — some participants found them useful and essential, while others doubted they would ever click on them and would prefer they not be located on the top of the page. Specific findings for each link are below:
- Hyperlinked table number:
 - Most do not expect that the table number is hyperlinked to the table footnotes; and
 - Many assumed it would be a description of the data, the survey, etc.

Table Page: Table Information

- Definitions, data sources and methodology:
 - For most, a link to this information is essential; however
 - Some suggest the whole survey name should be hyperlinked rather than just the survey number.
- Categories:
 - The categories label was unclear as very few expected to be taken to search results pages for each category; and
 - Participants found these links somewhat useful.
- View vector directory:
 - Very few participants accurately guessed the purpose of View vector directory; and
 - Most participants stated that this link is of little use.

Table Page: Table Information

- The next three links (View latest article from The Daily related to this table, Display list of free Canadian Statistics tables related to this table and View list of online catalogue products) were seen to be somewhat important. While some participants would click occasionally, others would not do so.

Table Page: Table Information

Table [282-0001](#) - Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by sex and detailed age group, monthly (Persons unless otherwise noted) (7260 series)

Definitions, data sources and methods: [Labour Force Survey - 3701](#)

Categories: [Unemployment](#); [Employment](#); [Labour force characteristics](#); [Labour force participation](#)

[View vector directory](#)

View [latest article from The Daily](#) related to this table.

Display list of **free** [Canadian Statistics tables](#) related to this table.

View list of [online catalogue products](#), some of which may be **free**, related to this table.

- 1 Users did not expect this link would lead to footnotes
- 2 They suggest hyper linking entire survey title, not just number
- 3 Purpose of categories is unclear
- 4 Term vector directory is unclear

Table Page: Dimension Pick Lists

- For the most part, the process of selecting dimensions is simple and intuitive. However, selecting some, but not all, of the items on a list is not straightforward for all participants:
 - Some are not familiar with the CTRL+Click convention; and
 - While selecting some items is possible with “View checklist”, that terminology is not clear for many. Some suggest changing to “select some”.
- On the view checklist page, participants noted the following issues with the “Return to pick list” button:
 - It is not clear to which list “pick list” refers;
 - It is not clear if the selections will be saved when “Return to pick list” is clicked; and
 - It is not clear if the selections will be saved when clicking the “Back” button in the Internet browser.
- Some suggested that instead of giving the “There is no data for the combination of items you selected!” error message, the application should indicate for which dimensions selections have not been made.

Table Page: Dimension Pick Lists

Select all Deselect all **View checklist and footnotes**

- Population
- Labour force
- Employment
- Full-time employment
- Part-time employment

1 Not all users are aware CTRL+CLICK will allow them to select only some items

Sex (3 items)

Select all Deselect all View checklist

- Both sexes
- Males
- Females

2 “View checklist” label is not clear

Age group (22 items)

Select all Deselect all View checklist

- 15 years and over
- 15 to 24 years
- 25 years and over
- 25 to 44 years
- 45 to 64 years

Table Page: Retrieval Options

- Few bothered to read the note pertaining to the reference period. For those who did, the meaning was not immediately clear.
- A few participants noted that one drop-down menu lists the months and years in ascending order and the other does so in descending order.
- Even some of the most experienced users were confused by the “Retrieve as Table” and “Retrieve as individual time series” selection:
 - The difference between the two is not clear;
 - The help section on this topic does not clearly explain the difference; and
 - One participant suggested changing to “Download data” and “Save and add another table”.

Table Page: Reference Period Selection

Note: The most recent data available from this table is for **January 2005**. By default, only data for the most recent year available will be retrieved (this reduces the amount of data and download time). You may use the lists below to select a different time frame.

1 This note was confusing for some

Reference period:

From: Jan 2005 To: Feb 2005 (Monthly data)

Retrieve as [] as individual Time series

1995
1996
1997
1998
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005

2005
2004
2003
2002
2001
2000
1999
1998
1997
1996
1995

2 Some noted an inconsistent approach to dates

Table Page: Retrieval Type Selection

Note: The most recent data available from this table is for **January 2005**. By default, only data for the most recent year available is retrieved (this reduces the amount of data and download time). You may use the lists below to select a different time frame.

Reference period:

From: To: (Monthly data)

Retrieve as a Table

Retrieve as individual Time series

1

Difference between “Retrieve as Table” and “Retrieve as individual Time series” is not clear

2

The Help text does not clearly explain the difference

To continue, select either **Retrieve as a table** if you want output as a multidimensional table or **Retrieve as individual Time-series** if you want to see individual time series (possibly coming from more than one CANSIM table) in a two-dimensional layout.



Downloading CANSIM Data

Order Confirmation and Download Pages

- For the most part, the pages for verifying and confirming the order are clear and straightforward. While some considered there to be too many steps and pages, the majority did not mind the extra steps and appreciated being prompted to verify and confirm their request.
- On the request confirmation page, some were confused that the series shows the dates for the whole series of data rather than the dates they have selected on the previous step.
- While this page included a note alerting users to the fact that they can save their selections, few noticed it. Those that took the time to read the note found that the process to save the selections seemed too complicated.
- At this point, many users noted that they would have liked to be able to see an example of the data prior to paying for it, to ensure that they made the correct selections.

Order Confirmation Page

Table 282-0001: Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by sex and detailed age group, monthly (Persons unless otherwise noted)

Definitions, data sources and methods: Labour Force Survey - [3701](#)

The list of series that will be retrieved as part of your output table is shown below. Please review this list before proceeding with the retrieval; use the **Modify request** button if you wish to make any changes, or the **Continue** button if you are satisfied with the list.

The current request consists of **3 series**.
Data for year **2004** have been requested.

1

Some are confused that the dates listed do not match their selection

(Your request consists of the following 3 series)

v2091137 Canada; Unemployment (Persons x 1,000); Both sexes; 25 years and over (Monthly, 1976-01-01 - 2005-01-01)
v2091767 Newfoundland and Labrador; Unemployment (Persons x 1,000); Both sexes; 25 years and over (Monthly, 1976-01-01 - 2005-01-01)
v2097496 British Columbia; Unemployment (Persons x 1,000); Both sexes; 25 years and over (Monthly, 1976-01-01 - 2005-01-01)

Modify request

Continue

Note: Save this page with an **.htm** file extension on your local hard drive, so you can resubmit your request later without having to rebuild it. Consult [Help text](#) for an important consideration regarding saved requests.

2

Most fail to see this note

Data Download Page

- While most participants agreed that the list of output formats is long and many of the formats are unclear to them, few had trouble selecting the format they needed. Some suggestions for this output format list included:
 - Placing most frequently-used formats at the top of the list;
 - Listing examples of software packages for each format; and
 - As most participants are unclear as to the function of HTML accessibility tagging, including the note only if that format is selected.
- Most tended to skip over the drop-down menus that allowed them to modify the frequency or output of the data. Some suggestions for this options included:
 - Clarifying the wording;
 - Including only the options which are possible for the data retrieved; and
 - Not including these options on the main download page but rather creating an “advanced download options” section.

Data Download Page

- The note saying that “Statistics Canada is responsible for the quality of data as retrieved...” was not clear. Some suggestions included:
 - As most failed to read this note, drawing more attention to it is important;
 - Clarifying the wording; and
 - Displaying the note only if the data is being modified.
- Accessing data after downloading it:
 - Only the most regular users of CANSIM knew that they could go back and continue manipulating the data after they had downloaded it.
 - As such, the amount of time that users have access to the data should be made more apparent.

Data Download Page

Table 282-0001: Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by sex and detailed age group, monthly (Persons unless otherwise noted)

Definitions, data sources and methods: Labour Force Survey - [3701](#)

Select an output format from the list below, then click **Go**:

— SCREEN OUTPUT (select a format below) —

Enable accessibility tagging for HTML tables

The frequency of the output data will be left unchanged

The output will contain data as retrieved

Titles and labels will be in English

Data for Jan 2004 to Jan 2004 will be included in the table.

Statistics Canada assumes responsibility for the quality of data as retrieved with the frequency unchanged. Clients take responsibility for any manipulations made to the original data.

Go

Note: The Beyond 20/20 [output format](#) requires the Beyond 20/20 Table Browser, which may be [downloaded from Beyond 20/20 Inc.](#)

1

List of output formats long and cumbersome

2

Meaning of “accessibility tagging” is unclear

2

Frequency and output options confusing for some

3

Most do not read warning note and wording is unclear



Recommendations

Recommendations

- As users of CANSIM understand the complexity and enormity of the database, they tend to be tolerant of a certain degree of complexity in its usage. From that perspective, users do not expect the applications to be “fool proof”. However making some key changes and refinements should significantly improve the function and utility of the database on the whole.
- A first priority should be to rework the Search results page to place less of the burden of searching through the results on the user. This could be achieved by:
 - Classifying the results by relevance rather than table number;
 - Increasing the prominence of the Summary link;
 - Clarifying the table titles; and
 - Providing a “search within results” function.

Recommendations (cont.)

- The text search tool is particularly powerful, but many of its most useful features are lost on users unfamiliar with CANSIM terminology or advanced search options. As such, a second priority should be to simplify the text search by:
 - Including only a simple string search on the main text search page;
 - Migrating the search options to the Advanced Search page; and
 - Clarifying some of the CANSIM and search terms used on the Advanced Search page.
- While few users tend to rely on help functions on this website, the navigation experience could be improved by reworking these features by:
 - Clarifying the fact that CANSIM Help on the side menu offers content-specific help;
 - Re-writing some of the help text to make concepts and definitions of terms more clear;
 - Focusing help text on key trouble spots for users; and
 - Ensuring that the User Guide and Animated Tutorials are fast and user-friendly.

Recommendations (cont.)

- There are a number of features and concepts of CANSIM that are useful for users, but as few are aware of them, their utility is lost. Key features and elements to clarify include:
 - The definition of a series: specifically the fact that a series includes the entire time line of the data, not just a specific year or month and that the cost is \$3 per series regardless of whether users download 3 months or 3 years worth of data;
 - The fact that View checklist allows users to select some of the items in the list;
 - The difference between “Retrieve as table” and “Retrieve as individual time series” and that the latter allows users to add data from other tables to their data request;
 - The availability of the “save request” feature is useful but not prominent or simple enough; and
 - The fact that once the data is paid for, users have access to it for 24 hours and can go back and manipulate it on the download page during this time period.

Recommendations (cont.)

- Finally, some changes could be made to the side menu:
 - Include a clear path back to the CANSIM homepage by hyper linking the CANSIM logo on the menu; and
 - Re-wording the Newsflash and Communiqué links to make their contents more clear.



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