FINDING STATISTICS USING STATCAN'S DATA PORTAL

FINDING STATISTICS

In this video we'll look at how to find online statistics from Statistics Canada.

StatCan puts nearly all the statistics resources from its surveys into one spot: the Data Portal. This is a free site available to anyone.

You can access it by going to the Statistics Canada web site and clicking on the Data button. Or, if you know what subject you're looking for, you can scroll down. Then choose from a list of key indicators or subjects.

For example, I can pick Languages from the Subjects. This gives me a list of tables I can choose from on Languages. You can see a list of more specific topics within this subject on the left side. I'm going to choose Languages spoken at home. When I choose it, ways I can narrow my search appear again on the left side. For example, I can choose only data tables, or only tables that have information broken into census metropolitan areas, or from a specific survey.

One thing to keep in mind is that you may see what look like duplicate links or tables. Your topic might have data coming from different surveys, or which has been collected differently.

In this case, the table numbers are different, and you can see at a quick glance that the geographic area covered in each is different.

To show you how to use the Data Portal in more detail, let's search for statistics on youth smoking. We'll start with the list of subjects on the main Statistics Canada page, and click Health. Youth smoking doesn't appear in the list on the left, so I'm going to type it in the search box and do a search instead.

The list of links that come up should be related to youth smoking in some way. I'll choose the first one for this example, Canadian health characteristics.

I see a table that lists all kinds of health issues for people 12 years of age and over across Canada for 2016 and 2017. If I look carefully at the list, I do see smokers as one of the options, but it's not broken down into youth the way I need.

This often happens--you'll find a useful table, but it isn't quite right.

ADDING OR REMOVING DATA FROM TABLES

You can customize a table by clicking on the *Add/Remove Data* button, sometimes also called the *Customize Table* button. Once I do that, I see some options for customization in tabs above the table.

Here I'm going to change from all of Canada to just Ontario and Quebec, so I need to go to the Geography tab, and uncheck the box next to Canada. Next click the arrow next to Canada to expand the options. I see a list of provinces, and can choose Ontario and Quebec.

In the Age group tab, I only want youth. Click the arrow to expand this. In this case the options that might correspond to youth are 12-17 years and 18-34 years, so I'll check those and uncheck the box next to Total: 12 years and older.

I want both sexes, so don't need to make changes to the Sex tab.

In the Indicators tab, there are a lot of options, and I only want smoking. So I click next to All twice to uncheck all the options, then check Current smoker.

When you're done all your customizations, make sure you click Apply.

This table is much better: it only shows youth smokers, which is what I need. It's not that easy to read though, and I'd like percentages instead of numbers of people.

CUSTOMIZING TABLE LAYOUT

I can customize how this displays.

If I click the Add/Remove Data button again, I can change to percent in the Characteristics tab. Then in the Customize Layout tab, I can change the Reference period, or year, to display as a row instead of a column. Don't forget to click Apply.

Now this table is easier to read. It shows percentages, and groups data by year for easy comparison.

DOWNLOADS, FOOTNOTES, MORE INFORMATION, AND CITING

Once you have your table the way you need it, you can download your data by clicking the Download button. Normally you'd pick the first option in the list, which downloads the table the way you just made it display.

There are a few other things to note before you're done.

In this table, some of the percentages have an E next to them. You'll need to look at the legend or footnotes to see what this means. In this case, E means "use with caution," which likely means there was only a small sample of people in the survey. If you have questions about the footnotes or terminology, you can sometimes find out more by looking at the link under Source, which specifies where the data came from

In this table we only have data from 2016 and 2017. If I want data from 2015, I can click on Replaces to see older surveys with similar data that might be comparable.

Finally, you'll need to cite your data. The information you need is in the How To Cite area.

RECAP

That's how to find statistics through the Data Portal and manipulate tables to give you the data the way you need it.

Remember, look carefully at the tables you choose to make sure you've picked one that has what you need.

You might not immediately find the table useful, so customize the data and display to meet your needs.

Make sure you read the footnotes, and ask for help if you're not clear about anything.

QUESTIONS & FEEDBACK

If you have any questions, ask us at library.wlu.ca/help/askus.

Help us improve. How useful was this video? Let us know at library.wlu.ca/videofeedback.