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BREAKING NEW GROUND IN DATA COLLECTION: ELECTRONIC DATA REPORTING AT STATISTICS CANADA

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ABSTRACT

The advent of the Internet and the rapid expansion of computing technologies in the mid-1990s brought about a number of innovations in the way Statistics Canada collects data. The traditional methods of paper and telephone survey taking were complemented by electronic options. Over the past decade, electronic data collection has evolved from the mailing of diskettes to the completion of web surveys using public key encryption technologies-all the while ensuring the security and confidentiality of the information. In addition to addressing security requirements, the development and implementation of Electronic Data Reporting brings other challenges. Many of these hinge on striking a balance between the needs of the end-user and the demands of Statistics Canada's internal processes. The applications have to be user friendly so that take-up rates are sufficient to generate cost-savings over existing collection methods. The level of editing must be adequate to ensure data quality and ease the integration of the electronic data with that collected using other methods. However, the level of editing must not interfere with the respondent experience. This presentation will describe Statistics Canada's strategy for electronic data reporting, the success that we have had implementing the next generation of EDR tools and the challenges for the future.

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