

# Recent information on training

*Ken Bennett*

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At one time, most people could attend school, graduate and then join the labour market armed with all the formal education necessary to see them through their working life. A certain stability within industries, or at least a moderate pace of technological development, meant that the knowledge gained at school and the additional skills picked up on the job would be sufficient. Many workers stayed with one employer for most of their career; if they did move to another job, the requisite skills were largely transferable. Aside from apprenticeship training to learn a trade and employer-provided orientation for new workers, there was generally very little in the way of further systematic skills development.

Today, this approach to education and training is no longer adequate. Given the accelerating pace of technological change, skills must be constantly updated to remain relevant throughout an average working life. Moreover, individuals may have several "careers" with different employers before they retire. Consequently, a substantial share of the training needed to compete successfully in the workforce will be obtained after the initial years of formal education. In other words, it has become necessary to develop a "lifelong learning culture."

Government, business and the media have focused much attention on how people acquire new knowledge and skills, who provides the training, what the costs are, and the degree to which this training maintains competitiveness. As a result of several Statistics Canada initiatives, there is now a growing volume of data that provide answers to these questions.

## Early initiatives

In response to the demand for information on training and continuing education, Statistics Canada conducted several pioneering surveys in the mid-1980s. [\(1\)](#) Not only did these early efforts increase knowledge of the subject, but they also contributed to the evolution of methodologies for collecting such information. On the basis of these initiatives, Statistics Canada, in collaboration with survey sponsors, developed several new surveys: the Adult Education and Training Survey (AETS), [\(2\)](#) the National Training Survey, and the Private Training Schools Survey.

# Adult Education and Training Survey

Sponsored by Employment and Immigration Canada (now Human Resources Development), the Adult Education and Training Survey was conducted as a supplement to the Labour Force Survey in November 1990 and January 1992. The main objective was to measure the participation of adults (aged 17 and older) in education and training and to develop a profile of these individuals.

The AETS collected data on both courses and programs that respondents had taken during the previous 12 months. The emphasis was on job-related training, although data on other types of continuing education were also gathered. Because the AETS was a supplement to the Labour Force Survey, the socio-demographic and employment characteristics of training participants are also available. Respondents in approximately 45,000 households were interviewed. This sample size is large enough to provide data at both the national and provincial levels.

For more information about the AETS, contact Stephen Arrowsmith at (613) 951-0566.

# National Training Survey

Under contract to the Canadian Labour Force Development Board, Statistics Canada is developing the National Training Survey (NTS). The NTS approaches training from the employer's perspective. The objectives are to obtain information about training in the private sector: how often it is offered, who provides and who receives it, how much money firms spend on it, and what types of training are available.

The sample for the NTS will be drawn from Statistics Canada's Business Register. The aim is to produce national and provincial estimates. The NTS is scheduled for 1994.

For more information about the NTS, contact Douglas Higgins at (613) 951-5870.

# Private Training Schools Survey

Statistics Canada has collected data on the role of private training schools in the delivery of business and trade or vocational training since 1959. The most recent effort, the Private Training Schools Survey, was conducted in April and May 1993 as part of the College Statistics Enhancement Program, funded by Employment and Immigration Canada (now Human Resources Development).

The survey provides data about the number and types of programs offered in private training schools (for-profit and non-commercial) and enrolment in these programs in 1992.

Approximately 6,100 organizations, covering a combination of provincially registered private training institutions and non-registered schools, were included in the survey. Estimates on a broad range of variables will be available by province.

For more information about the Private Training Schools Survey, contact Michel Cormier at (613) 951-0608.

## Publications

The Education, Culture and Tourism Division of Statistics Canada has produced several reports based on the results of the above training surveys: "Private Business and Trade/Vocational Schools, 1986" (1988); "Adult Education and Training Survey, 1990" (1992); and "Full-time Enrolment in Trade and Vocational Programs in Canada, 1989-90" (1992). In September 1993, Employment and Immigration Canada (now Human Resources Development) released *The 1990 Adult Education and Training Survey: Summary Report of the Findings from the 1990 Adult Education and Training Survey*.

Training has also been a recurrent theme of articles in *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. In addition to the two articles in this issue, which use data from the 1992 AETS ("[Employer-supported training - it varies by occupation](#)" on pages 9-17 and "[A note on the self-initiated training of job-losers](#)" on pages 18-21), past editions have carried "[Studying on the job](#)" (Summer 1992); "[Lifelong learning: Who goes back to school?](#)" (Winter 1991); and "[Training the work force: A challenge facing Canada in the '90s](#)" (Winter 1990).

## Related work

Two other surveys, the School Leavers Survey and the National Graduates Survey, lend additional insight into the training and continuing education activities of groups who have recently completed specific phases of their formal education: 18 to 20 year-olds who have left secondary school with or without graduation, and graduates of trade or vocational programs, community colleges, or universities.

### School Leavers Survey

Employment and Immigration Canada (now Human Resources Development) commissioned Statistics Canada to conduct the first national School Leavers Survey (SLS) in the spring of 1991 using a sample of 18 to 20 year-olds selected from the Family Allowance files. Approximately 9,500 individuals were interviewed. Respondents were classified into three groups: non-completers (those who left high school without a diploma or certificate), continuers (those who were still in school), and graduates.

The survey gathered data on the factors that seem to predispose a teenager to leave school. Questions covered topics such as academic ability, attitudes toward school, and support from teachers and parents.

Information on training or education taken after high school was also collected from non-completers and graduates.

For more information about the SLS, contact Douglas Higgins at (613) 951-5870.

## National Graduates Survey

The National Graduates Survey (NGS), conducted under the sponsorship of Employment and Immigration Canada (now Human Resources Development), has a relatively long history. The first time the survey was carried out (1978), it collected information on the post-education activities of 1976 graduates of trade/vocational, college, and university programs. While the main purpose was to examine the labour market experiences of these groups in the years following their graduation, data were also gathered on their subsequent education and training activities and on their participation in specific government training programs.

Later surveys focused on the graduating classes of 1982, 1986, and 1990. As well, the classes of 1982 and 1986 were surveyed a second time, five years after graduation.

The NGS uses a sample selected from lists of graduates provided by the various institutions. For the 1990 survey, a sample of approximately 53,000 graduates was selected.

More information about the NGS is available from Phil Stevens at (613) 951-9481.

## Summary

The data from many of these surveys have already been used to analyze the rising rate of participation in "lifelong learning." However, the full potential of these databases has yet to be tapped; much more analysis can be done before the information is exhausted. As well, work is already underway to improve these surveys and collect additional information to meet the needs of a wider group of data users.

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## Notes

### *Note 1*

These are the Adult Education Survey in 1984, the Adult Training Survey in 1986, and the Human Resources Training and Development Survey in 1987.

### *Note 2*

Because the AETS differs from the 1984 and 1986 surveys in important respects, direct data comparisons

are inadvisable. As well, due to changes in methodology, comparisons should not be made between the 1990 and 1992 AETS.

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## Source

*Perspectives on Labour and Income*, Spring 1994, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 75-001E). This is the third of seven articles in the issue.

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