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**LIFE EVENTS:  
HOW FAMILIES CHANGE**

In 1993, one in seven Canadians aged 15 and over experienced some change in who they lived with over the year. In most cases, their family structure was significantly altered, for example an unattached individual became part of a couple, or an adult daughter moved out on her own, and so on.

The distribution of different types of families in Canada is fairly stable from one year to the next, but there is a great deal of change in *individual* families. These changes are usually related to significant events, such as moving out of the parental home, forming a couple, or separating.

Changes of residence are also frequently triggered by family events, even for a population which is fairly mobile. Of all people who moved in 1993, 38% experienced a change in their family membership.

The economic repercussions of family change can be considerable and should be taken into account when studying the economic well-being of individuals over time. An obvious

**Editor's Note**

The Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) is building a picture of people's jobs, income changes and family events over time. With this issue of *Dynamics*, SLID releases its first *longitudinal* data and the first of six annual "waves" of information.

Background information, including marital history, ethnocultural traits, fertility, schooling and work history, was collected in January 1993. In January 1994, the survey returned to the same people for their labour market activities and family changes over the previous year. It returned again in May 1994 for income information.

Beginning today, most of the information from Wave 1 plus the full range of background characteristics are available on a cost recovery basis. The rest of Wave 1 will be released in May. Public use microdata files on diskette and CD-ROM will follow shortly.

Featured in this issue of *Dynamics* is the first of two studies demonstrating the scope of the Wave 1 information.

Heather Lathe

example is the loss of a breadwinner in a family which depended heavily on that person's income, but in fact almost every family change will affect family resources and the number of adults and children who depend on them. To study changes in the economic well-being of individuals using income data, SLID also makes available family relationship information and family labour data on the same individuals.

Changes in a family's membership or structure may also affect the eligibility of family members for government benefits which are based on family income. Some major programs in Canada which take into account family characteristics or family income include the Child Tax Benefit, social assistance programs, the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors and the GST Credit. SLID includes data on these separate income sources.

**Definitions:**

*Families:* Economic families, or all persons sharing a dwelling who are related by blood, marriage, common-law relationship or adoption. The economic family structure is based on the following categories: people living alone (with or without room-mates), couples, couples with children, lone parent families (by sex of the parent) and finally all other types of economic families. Loosely defined, these "other" economic families can be thought of as members of an extended family living together.

*Family membership:* Individuals who make up a family at a point in time. Family membership changes when one or more people join the family or leave. (Changes that are reversed within the year are not counted.)

In this study, family changes were obtained by comparing household membership as of December 31, 1992 and December 31, 1993. Marital relationships (married or common-law) were also identified this way, rather than using SLID's marital status question.

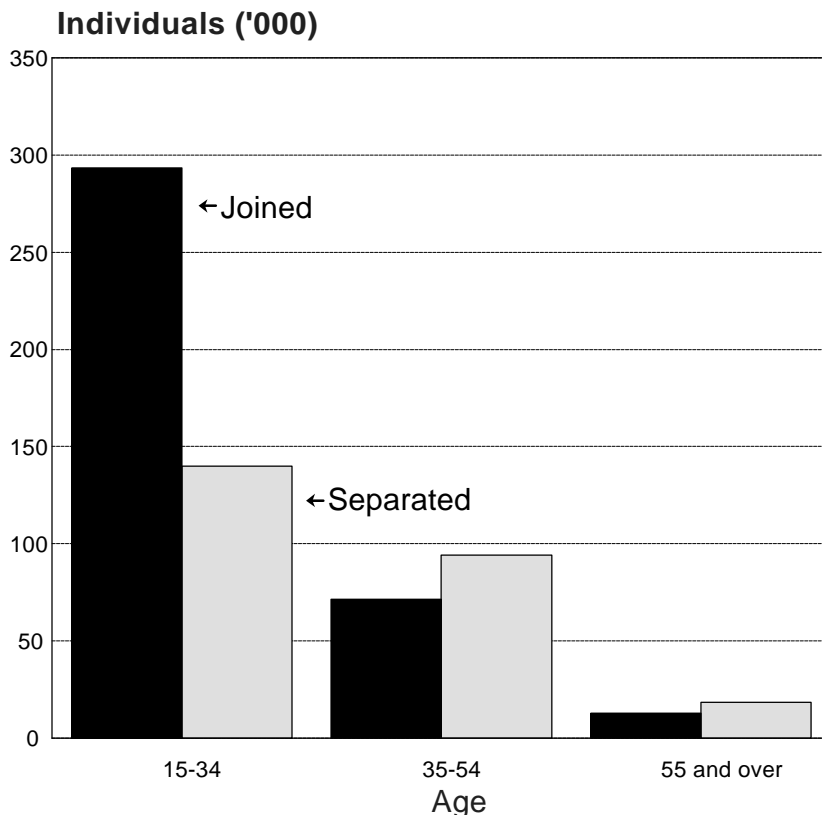
For each member in the person's family in 1992, a check was made to see if that member was still present in 1993, and if not, whether that member had become a long-term resident of an institution or died (important for identifying real marital separations, for example). Likewise, family members in 1993 were identified as new or continuing from 1992.

### More people entered a union than separated from one

In 1993, an estimated 378,000 Canadians began to live together as couples, including marriages and common-law relationships. In contrast, two-thirds as many people, or 253,000, separated from a common-law or marriage partner. The people who formed a new couple during the year represented approximately 3% of all people living in married or common-law unions at the end of 1993.

Both those forming new unions and those separating were predominantly in their 20s or 30s. About 79% of people joining and 71% of those separating fell into this age group. Those separating were on average six years older than those forming a union.

### Just about half as many adults under age 35 separated as those who formed a union



Separations can have a serious impact on people's financial situation, including the resources available for raising and providing a home for children. It will be possible to study the economic impact of separations with future waves of SLID data.

The survey shows the extent to which women predominantly keep the children after separation. Almost two-thirds of those who separated in 1993 had children in their home at the beginning of the year. At the end of the year, 88% of these mothers and 27% of the fathers had some or all of their children still with them.

A high proportion of those who separated (73% of men and 65% of women) also moved at least once during the year. The higher proportion of men who moved indicates that it is more often the man who moves out during a separation.

One in ten people who formed a new union in 1993 brought children from a previous relationship into their new family unit, creating a step family. Most of the people who did so were women.

### **Many young adults returned to a parent's home**

In 1993, 200,000 people started a family, so to speak: they began the year with no children of their own present and, by year end, they had an infant child. In contrast, 148,000 parents became "empty nesters" in the traditional sense. That is, their last (or only) son or daughter aged 15 to 24 moved out.

Adult children may, on the other hand, move back. While 5% of young people or 212,000 sons and daughters between the ages of 15 and 24 left a parent's home during 1993, another 1% (or 36,000) moved back. The survey will show the sequence of events preceding a return to the parent's household, such as possible difficulty in finding adequate work.

### **Family change is less common for seniors**

Relatively few people aged 65 and over living in private dwellings experienced a change in their family membership in 1993: 6% compared with 16% of adults aged 15 to 64. For the 205,000 seniors who experienced a change in family membership, the reasons were often the same as for younger people, such as adult children leaving home. For a minority, the reasons were related more specifically to advancing age. For example, for 39,000 seniors, family membership changed because their spouse died. In a few cases, their spouse moved into an institution.



- activity limitation
- household size, type, dwelling ownership
- family demographics, including detailed relationships
- spells of receiving unemployment insurance, social assistance and workers' compensation, available at both the individual and family level
- educational activity during the year
- educational attainment, including years of schooling, degrees and diplomas, major field of study
- total years of work experience
- many characteristics of jobs held during the year, among them:
  - start and end dates, how the job was obtained, why it ended
  - industry, firm size, class of worker
  - wage rate, including changes during year
  - union membership and pension coverage
  - occupation, including changes during year
  - managerial and supervisory responsibilities
  - work schedules, including changes during year
  - reasons for part-time and irregular work schedules
  - hours worked at home
  - total annual hours worked
- absences from work of one week or more, including dates, duration, the reason and whether or not the absence is paid
- dates and duration of jobless spells and job search during those spells

*Data users interested in obtaining custom retrievals:* Please see "For Further Information" at the end of this newsletter.

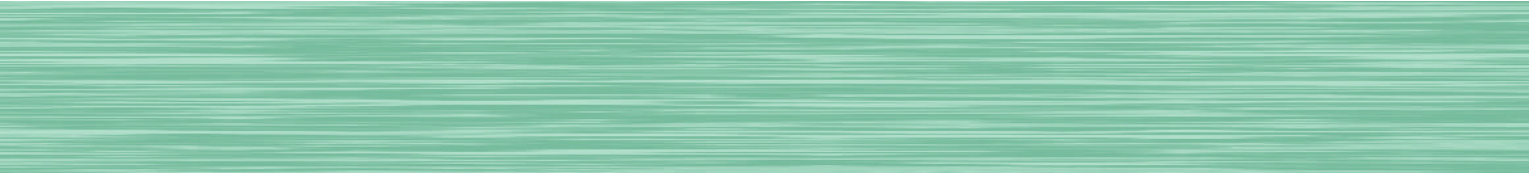
*Microdata users:* Are you interested in becoming familiar with the variables in preparation for the release of the public use microdata file? If so, please contact us (see below) and we will send you the SLID Electronic Data Dictionary, at no charge. Designed for a





What is being released	Release date	How to get data
85% of the variables collected in SLID's first wave	April 11, 1996	Place a request for a custom data retrieval. See <i>For further information.</i>
Remaining 15% of the variables collected in SLID's first wave	Early May, 1996	
Microdata from the preliminary interview + first wave on diskette (person file + job file)	Late May, 1996	To order the CD-ROM, or diskettes in the interim, see pricing and ordering information (orders now being taken). Anyone who purchases diskettes will automatically receive the CD-ROM when it is available. The <i>Microdata User's Guide</i> may be ordered separately. Custom retrievals continue to be available.
Microdata from the preliminary interview + first wave on CD-ROM (person file + job file). Product includes on-line documentation and Ivision, as well as ASCII files.	Late June, 1996	





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The second wave of SLID data was collected in 1995 and the task of adding this new information to the database will begin as soon as the first wave is released. The second wave will add tremendously to the value of the data. For example, it will be possible to look at income stability: how many families fell below the low-income cutoff from one year to the next, and how many managed to rise above it? Spells of receiving unemployment insurance and social assistance, spells of joblessness and unemployment, geographical mobility and family events will be all measured over a two-year span.

**BEYOND WAVE 1**

Wave 2 data will be merged with Wave 1 results to form a single, integrated two-year database. A two-year public use microdata file will be released, encompassing those two years of data. This file will *replace* the Wave 1 public use file.

Like any longitudinal survey, the value of the data grows with time. Still, data users interested in the public use microdata file are encouraged to begin with the Wave 1 file, which is already massive and contains many variables that capture changes during the reference year. Through retrospective variables, many changes and events prior to the reference year are also recorded. The pricing approach below was developed with a view to encouraging users to acquire the Wave 1 file and replace it each year. The variables are already set for all years of the panel—each additional wave will simply add new time points to existing variables.

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*Custom retrievals*

**ORDERING AND PRICING**

Each request is individually priced, based on established cost-recovery rates. The process works as follows. A consultant works with you to define your requirements precisely. Before proceeding, the specification is sent to you for confirmation along with a cost estimate. There is no charge for the consultation.

*Public use microdata files*

(Product No. 75M0001XCB or 75M0001XDB; ISSN: 1203-4932)

The table below shows the prices of microdata files for the first three years. Users are encouraged to purchase the CD-ROM rather than diskettes. The diskettes are available mainly as an interim product while the CD-ROM is in production. It requires at least 12 diskettes to hold the two Wave 1 microdata files (that is, the person file and the job file). Also, the CD-ROM product will have a version of the files interfaced with IVision data retrieval software, for those who find this useful. Anyone who purchases the diskettes will receive the CD-ROM as soon as it is available if they wish. The cost for those buying diskettes or just the CD-ROM is the same.

Waves	Years	Cost of CD-ROM
1	1993	\$1700
1, 2	1993- 1994	\$2700 <b>OR</b> \$1000 if you purchased Wave 1
1, 2, 3	1993- 1995	\$3700 <b>OR</b> \$1000 if you purchased Wave 1&2 <b>OR</b> \$2000 if you purchased Wave 1

Standard Statistics Canada discounts apply for users such as educational institutions and public libraries. The usual premiums apply for multiple users.



*Microdata User's Guide*

(Product No. 75M0001GPE or 75M0001GPF)

This is a comprehensive description of the survey objectives, design, methods and content. One copy (English, French, or one of each) is included with the public use microdata files, but the guide can also be purchased separately, for \$25 a copy. You can purchase the guide first and the CD-ROM later, in which case the cost of the guide will be deducted.

*SLID Electronic Data Dictionary*

This is a bilingual diskette available at no charge. It contains a list of the variables and the code sets. Menu-driven; requires Windows.

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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

To order or for further information on custom retrievals, microdata files and related products, please call us at (613) 951-4633 or (613) 951-4643. The fax number is (613) 951-3012. By Internet, we can be reached at: [dynamics@statcan.ca](mailto:dynamics@statcan.ca)



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**RESEARCH PAPERS**

The following are recently released Research Papers which can be ordered individually (\$5) or by annual subscription (\$15 on diskette or \$50 for paper versions). For more information, see the contact information above.

*95-19 Combining Administrative And Survey Data To Reduce Respondent Burden In Longitudinal Surveys*  
Sylvie Michaud, David Dolson, Donna Adams and Martin Renaud

Traditionally, administrative data have been used to enrich, but not replace, data obtain through survey taking. To reduce response burden, SLID is using administrative income tax data to replace survey data for some but not all respondents. Results from both collection methods are merged into a single output file. The document presents the predicted impact of this mixed collection method on response and data quality, and discusses related measurement issues.

*96-01 SLID Questionnaire For Demographics And Contact: 1996*  
Ruth Dibbs and Debbie Lutz

*96-02 1996 Preliminary Interview Questionnaire*  
Ruth Dibbs, Jenifer Glover and Debbie Lutz

As with previous years, paper versions of the 1996 SLID computer-assisted interview are published in the SLID research paper series. These two research papers represent two out of the four SLID “questionnaires” for collection year 1996.