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**THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY: DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR 1997**

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Preparing for the new Questionnaire

Output Changes in 1996

Changes are being made to some LFS estimates beginning January 1996 in order to align the outputs from the current and redesigned questionnaire and reduce the disruption of the phase-in of the redesigned questionnaire beginning August 1996. Year-end products for 1995 will be revised to reflect these changes historically.

Analysis of the impact of the changes on historical series will be provided with all products at the time the revisions are introduced.

1. Definitional change for part-time/full-time

Change

- A classification of full or part-time has been determined at the person level since 1976. That is, a person is considered full-time if his/her usual hours at all jobs are greater than 29 per week. In addition, the current measure includes some degree of subjectivity since those who report fewer than 30 hours but consider themselves full-time are classified as full-time
- the new measure will be completely objective, and job rather than person-based. That is, no matter how many jobs a person holds, or the reason for their work hours, if the hours of their main job are usually less than 30 they will be classified as part-time workers.

Rationale

- in 1976 only 2% of workers were multiple job holders. Now about 5% hold more than one job. A growing number of people are stringing together part-time jobs to gain full-time employment (107,000 persons in 1994, or 16% of all moonlighters). With the current definition, these people are considered full-time and are not eligible for the questions used to determine reason for part-time and involuntary part-time status.
- also, currently, those with usual work hours less than 30, but who report that their job is full-time are counted as full-time (132,000 persons in 1994). This response is permitted to allow for rare but valid circumstances where employment policy etc. restricts the number of work hours allowed (eg. airline pilots). Recent analysis of LFS response data suggests, however, that most of those so classified are more properly considered part-timers.

- most of the job information that will be collected by LFS concerns the main job (industry, occupation, establishment size, wages, permanent/temporary, tenure etc.). Cross-classifications of these characteristics by full and part-time will be improved with the new definition.

Impact

- reclassifying those who say their work hours of less than 30 per week are full-time to part-time increases the 1994 part-time rate from 17.0% to 18.0% (+132,000 persons). Classifying part-time on the basis of the main job further raises the rate to 18.8% (an additional 107,000 persons).
- series can be revised for new definition back to 1976. Seasonally adjusted estimates will be re-calculated.

CURRENT	REDESIGN	
	Full-time	Part-time
SJH, UHRSALL >29	X	
MJH, UHRSALL >29, UHRSMMAIN >29	X	
MJH, UHRSALL >29, UHRSMMAIN <30		X
SJH, UHRSALL <30, PT=FT		X
MJH, UHRSALL <30, PT=FT		X
Part-time		
SJH, UHRSALL <30, PT=PT		X
MJH, UHRSALL <30, PT=PT		X

SJH = single job holder

MJH = multiple job holder

UHRSALL = total usual hours at all jobs

UHRSMMAIN = usual hours at main job

PT=FT = respondent considers hours under 30 to be full-time

Action

- beginning 1996, all published tables in 71-001P and 71-001 will use this new definition. Seasonal factors will be recalculated where applicable.
- 1995 year end products will be revised to reflect this change in definition of full-time and part-time (CANSIM, CDROM, 71-220, 71-201)

2. Job description restricted to recent employment

Change

- Collection of job description and reason for leaving last job restricted to those who worked within 12 months (currently collected of anyone who worked within 5 years).

Rationale

- reduces respondent burden and survey costs
- improves relevance of such indicators as labour force and unemployment rates by industry and occupation of last job for analysis of worker displacement
- clarifies interpretation of movements in reasons for leaving last job for those currently unemployed or not in the labour force (long-term labour market dynamics of job displacement available from SLID)

Impact

- lowers estimates of labour force, unemployment and unemployment rates by industry and occupation.
- in February 1992, the new definition lowers unemployment rates by about 1 percentage point for most industries. The rate falls by 2 to 3 points for manufacturing, construction, trade and business/personal services.

Action

- beginning 1996, all published tables in 71-001P and 71-001 will use this new definition
- 1995 year end products will be revised to reflect this change (CANSIM, CDROM, 71-220, 71-201)

3. Restrict Estimates of Time Lost (work absence) to employees

Change

- currently, data is collected on number of hours lost and reason for absence from work from all workers
- in the redesign, data on part-week absences will be collected for employees only

Rationale

- The concept of hours away from work is most relevant for those in an employee situation with work hours set by an employer

Impact

- Revision of tables containing data on hours lost

Action

- beginning 1996, all tables in 71-001P and 71-001 concerning work absence will concern employees only
- 1995 year end products will be revised to reflect this change (CANSIM, CDROM, 71-220, 71-201)

4. Modification to Estimates of Reason for Part-time

Change

- in order to continue to publish these data, certain modifications are necessary during 1996. Estimates must reflect the move to a definition of part-time based on the usual hours worked at the main job. However, this can only be approximated during 1996. In cases where the current LFS questionnaire is used, those whose usual hours are less than 30 at the main job but 30 or more at all jobs will be assigned to the 'Other reasons or not known' category for Reason for working part-time, since they are not asked this question. In addition, those who respond that they consider their part-time hours to be full-time will also be coded to 'Other reasons or not known'.

Impact

- Currently, both these groups are not counted as part-time and do not appear in estimates of reason for part-time. The impact will be an increase in the number of persons working part-time for 'Other reasons'. This change paves the way for the new questionnaire but does not provide a perfect link for historical series of part-time for involuntary and voluntary reasons. The magnitude of the break will be analysed during the phase-in of the questionnaire.

Action

- beginning 1996, all published tables in 71-001P and 71-001 will use this new definition. Seasonally adjusted series of involuntary part-time currently published in the 71-201 will be suspended.
- 1995 year end products will be revised to reflect this change (CANSIM, CDROM, 71-220, 71-201)

5. Suspend publication of estimates of discouraged workers, involuntary part-time, alternative measures of unemployment

Questions measuring "involuntary part-time" and "discouragement" are much more direct in the redesigned questionnaire than the current one and probably result in complete breaks in these series. Following full implementation of the new questionnaire, the impact of these changes will be studied.

The 8 Alternative measures of unemployment are under review and production will be suspended during 1996. Four of these indicators are directly affected by questionnaire changes such as the new definition of full and part-time, more direct measurement of discouraged workers and involuntary part-time.

THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY: DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR 1997

1. Introduction

All long-standing surveys must undergo periodic reviews of their objectives, and their success in meeting those objectives. Economic and social change give rise to gaps between survey outputs and information needs. Long-term use also tends to reveal conceptual and measurement problems. Moreover, new collection technology encourages structural change to the questionnaire. The Canadian Labour Force Survey (LFS) is undergoing major revisions to its questionnaire, sample design, collection technology and processing systems. In 1991 work began on the redesign of the questionnaire, with an intended implementation date of January 1997. The initiative to redesign the questionnaire arose from three concerns: the need to address data gaps in the current LFS that have emerged as a result of significant changes in the Canadian labour market; the importance of improving data quality through changes in question wording and sequence; and the ability to further increase data quality by more fully exploiting the potential of computer assisted interviewing (CAI), which allows a full array of on-line edits and complex branching beyond that possible with a paper questionnaire. All three motives for change are inextricably connected in the redesign solution.

This report documents the questionnaire redevelopment process that led to the final version of the redesigned questionnaire.

2. Rationale for redesign

2.1. Content Relevance

The LFS has a fifty year history, but the current questionnaire is somewhat younger, having been implemented in 1976 as part of the last major revision of the survey. Since then, the questionnaire has done its job of measuring both monthly levels and trends in labour force activity rather well by classifying the non-institutional, civilian population aged 15 and over as either employed, unemployed or not in the labour force. Those involved with the 1976 redesign were remarkably sensitive to emerging labour market trends, and the current questionnaire gathers useful but limited information on issues such as underemployment and marginal labour force attachment. Twenty years have elapsed since the last questionnaire redesign, though, and the labour market has changed beyond what could have been foreseen in 1976.

Since 1976, there has been a tremendous influx of women, especially young mothers, into the labour market. Over the same period, employment has become increasingly polarized in terms of work hours, wages, benefits and job security, with much of this change occurring since the economic downturn of 1982. The hard lessons of that recession, and rising competitiveness as markets become more global, appear to have encouraged employers to deal with uncertainty and fluctuations in consumer demand through flexible labour strategies. The incidence of on-call, part-time, shift, contract and temporary employment has grown sharply. Today, a national labour force



survey must not only identify labour force status, but must also characterize degrees of employment, underemployment, and marginal labour force attachment.

In order to specify precisely what new data elements were needed, major users of LFS data were consulted early in the questionnaire planning phase. As well, the practices and experiences of a number of other countries that conduct labour force surveys were studied. These activities confirmed the need for new questions that would enable analysis of the quality as well as quantity of job formation or loss.

New content was developed after careful consideration of several important factors: the relative value of the additions for analysis and policy formulation; the suitability of the LFS as a vehicle for collecting the information; the possible effects on response burden and non-response; and, finally, the cost of the additions.

Monthly content additions

Job characteristics and quality (employees)

- measures of average weekly and hourly earnings
- union membership
- permanence of job
- size of employing establishment

While crucial to a full understanding of the labour market, questions on earnings have generally been included with great caution, or not at all, by those designing labour force survey questionnaires. For example, the US and the UK confine such questions to respondents in their last month in survey, while Sweden and Canada do not currently ask earnings questions. The redesigned LFS includes a series of questions, modelled closely on those in the new Current Population Survey (US), that permits the estimation of both weekly earnings, and hourly wage rates for all employees. Unlike the US and the UK, these questions are included in the first (birth) interview, and updated only for job changers and new hires during the subsequent five months. Most first interviews are conducted in person, and it is anticipated that this personal contact will ease the questioning process and assure the respondent that the information will be kept confidential. Updating the information during subsequent interviews is thought to be too invasive, especially when previously acquired information may be fed back to a different household member for verification. Asking earnings questions in the first month allows publication of data for the full sample size making more detailed breakdowns possible, but does have the disadvantage of lagging any changes in wages due to periodic raises and increments.

Union membership will also be collected from employees during their first interview, and updated for job changers in subsequent months. Inclusion in the LFS provides far broader coverage of the incidence of union membership and its correlates than is available from any other STC source, and adds important information on union membership as one of the determinants of the price of labour.



Since job security is a prominent labour market issue, and there is growing concern that employers are increasingly turning to contingent workers to gain flexibility and reduce long-term costs, the proposed questionnaire also includes questions designed to distinguish temporary from permanent work, and to characterize the nature of temporary work (casual, seasonal, term, etc.). Swedish and UK questionnaires were consulted for approach and wording on this topic.

Employer size is known to play a role in wage rates, and may affect other job characteristics such as permanency of work, employer-sponsored training, turnover, and benefits. Estimates of employment change by establishment size and industry will assist analysts interested in the sources of growth and decline in the economy.

Labour turnover

- identification of new hires and new permanent separations
- detailed reasons for job loss

LFS estimates of net employment change give little information about the underlying dynamics. For example, while the net employment change over 1988 was 251,000 as measured by the LFS, a longitudinal survey of labour market activity measured 4.6 million permanent separations and almost 5 million new hirings over the course of the year. Regular information on new hirings and permanent separations can provide a timely indicator of changes in labour market behaviour. In order to directly measure turnover, a small addition was made to the questionnaire: those who started or left a job or business in the month preceding the survey are asked if that event occurred after the last reference period. Adding these events to those occurring during the survey month provides estimates of the total volume of new hirings and permanent separations from one reference period to the next. Analyses can be based on monthly averages, or the cumulative number of events over any specified period.

However, it must be recognized that hirings and separations derived in this manner have some imperfections that will have to be studied when data become available. First, the structure of the survey makes it too difficult and costly to measure events which concern a second job or business, so hirings and separations will be systematically underestimated. Second, job description information (eg. industry) will not be directly available for recent separations that are followed by a new hire since last reference period. For the five sixths of the sample that had at least one previous interview, previous month's job description may be an adequate proxy. Third, separations occurring in reference week will not be detected, and will have to be estimated by extrapolating separations in the weeks between reference periods.

Currently, the LFS distinguishes between job losers (employer initiated, or "involuntary"), and job leavers (worker initiated or "voluntary"). In the redesign, an additional question is added that probes for the specific nature of involuntary job loss. The expanded response categories allow identification of those who lost their jobs because they were seasonal, temporary or contract, casual, because the companies moved or went out of business, as a result of poor business conditions or temporary closures, or because of dismissals for other reasons. This information should greatly assist the analysis of the nature of job loss and improve the measurement of



temporary layoffs.

Work and family responsibilities

- more detail on personal or family reasons for working part-time or for work absences.

The simplest addition to the questionnaire involved code splits for questions that allow "Personal or family responsibilities" as a response. These include questions on reason for absence from work, reason for part-time employment, and, for those neither employed nor unemployed, reason for not searching for work in the reference period. It was felt that breaking the available responses down into "caring for own children", "caring for elder relative" and "other personal or family responsibilities" would allow analysis of labour market behaviour and family circumstances, especially important because of the high participation rates of adult women, and the aging population that will put increasing demands on persons of working age. Maternity/pregnancy was also added as a possible reason for temporary absence or separation from a job. This response is currently lost in the general "personal or family responsibilities" category, greatly distorting analyses of work absence.

2.2. Improving Data Quality

In addition to enhanced content, a major goal of the questionnaire redesign is to improve data quality by addressing known questionnaire deficiencies, especially where they impact on estimates of labour force status. Problems of validity arise when questions are not understood by interviewers or respondents, leading to response error, and when the reality that questions were designed to measure has changed.

Several techniques were used to identify problems with validity in the current LFS. Interviews were observed, and separate follow-up focus groups involving respondents and interviewers were conducted to explore interviewer/respondent reactions to, and interpretation of, the current questions (Price Waterhouse, 1991). This technique uncovered a number of problem questions, some of them likely to affect labour force classification. The most notable problem areas included the questions used to identify job attachment for those who did not work during the LFS reference week, and the series of questions regarding hours of work. Problems of validity arising from current questionnaire wording and structure were also investigated through analysis of response inconsistencies in longitudinal survey data, and a supplementary survey designed to test alternative wording and structure.

Resolution of these problems led to an extensive restructuring of the questionnaire, rewording of key questions on labour force attachment and hours of work, and more use of direct questions.

Restructuring

The LFS converted its method of data collection from paper and pencil to CAI, using a phased



approach, between November 1993 and March 1994. The questionnaire was programmed for CAI in a manner which replicated as closely as possible its paper predecessor to minimize the risk of a mode-of-collection effect on the data. This direct mapping to CAI neither addressed the recognized data gaps and deficiencies with the current questionnaire, nor took full advantage of the opportunities presented by CAI.

The redesigned questionnaire exploits the power of CAI by using complex branching strategy that more efficiently selects the questions to be asked, and better customizes the question wording to the respondent's particular situation. These changes help make the LFS interview more understandable, thereby reducing interview time and minimizing respondent burden.

For example, in the current questionnaire, questions on class of worker and job description are asked at the end of the interview, after labour force classification has already been determined. This ordering is far from ideal, since correct labour force classification of persons absent from work depends on class of worker and job description information. The current structure arose primarily because the current questionnaire was designed within the constraints of a single, printed, page with simple, easy to follow flows. In the redesigned questionnaire, questions regarding class of worker and job description have been placed early in the interview. Subsequent question flow and edits can thus be optimally controlled in the CAI environment. Also, for multiple job holders, all questions dealing with the main job are asked sequentially, providing a clear distinction between the main job and any other jobs.

Job attachment and temporary layoff

The primary function of the Labour Force Survey is the classification of persons as employed, unemployed, or not in the labour force. This requires the correct identification of job attachment, a straightforward matter for those who are unambiguously employed or without employment, but problematic for those whose attachment is less clear. In particular, it appears many persons on temporary layoff fail to identify themselves as having job attachment in response to the current question "Last week did ... have a job or business at which he/she did not work?" A negative response precludes classification as temporary layoff (unemployed), and the respondent is therefore not considered to be unemployed unless he happened to have searched for a job in the preceding four weeks. Since most persons on temporary layoff do not search for another job, the result may be an overestimation of persons not in the labour force, and an underestimation, of unemployment.

Comparisons between LFS estimates of temporary layoffs and those from administrative data (Record of Employment) suggest temporary layoffs are underestimated by the LFS (Robertson, 1989). According to this analysis, about a third of all "unemployed" return to their former employer. But the stock of temporary layoffs as a proportion of unemployment is only about 5% according to LFS numbers. While much of the difference is accounted for by seasonal returns (not removed from the record of employment data), it appears likely that some temporary layoffs are being missed in the LFS.

The problem was further investigated within Statistics Canada. Longitudinal analysis of survey



results identified the presence of response inconsistencies associated with the measurement of temporary layoffs. The longitudinal structure of the sample design was useful in the study of this problem (Kinack, 1991a). The LFS uses a rotating panel design in which dwellings remain in the survey for 6 consecutive months. Analysis of individual records over the 6 months permits the identification of logical inconsistencies and recurring code changes at the respondent level, both indicators of misunderstood questions or misapplied concepts. These studies found that many non-employed respondents who were permanent layoffs from their last job actually returned to work at that same job sometime during their subsequent months in the LFS.

A small follow-up survey was conducted in March 1992 to further assess this problem. A sample of respondents who were classified as either temporary layoffs or permanent layoffs in the regular LFS were reinterviewed one week later using a short test questionnaire that identified job attachment differently. In particular, respondents who were not currently employed were asked for specific reasons for leaving their last job. If job loss was because of business conditions, or if layoff was specifically mentioned, the respondent was asked explicit questions about the expectation of recall. The result of this alternative questioning was a doubling in the number of persons classified as temporary layoffs. In order to improve labour force classification, this question strategy has been incorporated into the redesigned questionnaire.

Involuntary part-time

"Involuntary part-time" is the label given to employed persons who work less than 30 hours per week because they are unable to find full-time work. The incidence of involuntary part-time is used as an indicator of the amount of unutilized labour supply, or "underemployment". In the current survey, identification of these people depends on their answer to one question: "What is the reason ... usually works less than 30 hours per week?". Permitted responses include personal and family reasons, school, could only find part-time work (involuntary part-timer), did not want full-time work. Longitudinal analysis of responses to this question indicate high levels of movement in and out of the involuntary category among those who were part-time workers at the same job during all months in the LFS (Kinack, 1991b). In fact, the movement was often between the opposing categories "Could only find part-time work" and "Did not want full-time work". The lack of response consistency most likely arises because the question is somewhat vague in its intent. Given the importance of this item as an indicator of underemployment, two questions were added to improve measurement. The first is a direct question on the desire for full-time employment. Those who want full-time are then asked why they work less than 30 hours a week. If the reason is because they could not find full-time work, they are asked if they have searched for full-time work in the last 4 weeks. This provides a better measure of the actual unutilized supply and complies more closely with ILO concepts of underemployment.

Discouraged workers

Discouraged workers are those persons interested in work but not searching because they believe no suitable work is available. While officially classified as not in the labour force, their separate identification is useful for extended measures of unemployment. The series of questions used in



the current monthly LFS to identify discouraged workers was found to be too restrictive. Only those who have searched for a job at some time in the preceding 6 months are eligible for questions that determine discouragement, and no direct question on the desire for work is asked. The criteria of job search within the last 6 months serves to de-classify long-term discouraged workers. Those who had looked 6 months earlier would be classified as discouraged in month t , but de-classified in month $t+1$, although there has been no real change in their circumstances.

The proposed solution removes the 6 month job-search criteria, but includes a direct question on the desire to have a job. Those who wanted to work last week are asked the reason for failure to search. Respondents who did not engage in job search because they felt no suitable work was available, but were ready and willing to work in reference week will be classified as discouraged workers, a sub-set of persons not in the labour force.

Hours of work

Early in the content development process, the focus groups conducted by Price Waterhouse identified cognitive problems with the existing series of questions dealing with hours of work. Self-employed respondents, and those with variable work schedules, found the questions regarding usual hours and hours away from work particularly difficult. Intensive observation during the first phase of testing of the redesigned questionnaire (which contained no changes to the current hours questions) confirmed these concerns, and highlighted the associated costs. Time-consuming negotiations over the meaning of the questions, the fact that actual hours were often determined by interviewer calculation rather than by the respondent, and inconsistencies and response errors noticed during respondent debriefings were all indicators of trouble with these questions.

The problems with the current set of hours questions appear to be multi-faceted:

- a) For the self-employed, the concept of missing work and working extra hours in a week seems largely irrelevant, since variation in work hours is mostly a function of the amount of work on hand. To be absent from work one must have a notion of being scheduled for work, but many of the self-employed set their own schedules. Thus, the concepts behind the questions concerning usual hours and hours away are incongruent with the experience of the self-employed respondent and this leads to both time-consuming probing on the part of the interviewer and responses of questionable validity.
- b) The concept of usual hours used in the current questionnaire refers to hours worked in a typical week, whether or not they are paid hours. But observation confirms the suspicion that many employees report their "contractual" or "standard" work hours, leading to a discordance between the concept the survey is attempting to measure and the concept embodied in most of the responses.
- c) Variable weekly work hours are becoming increasingly common. If the respondent indicates his hours are variable, the interviewer is instructed to collect "average hours worked in the previous 4 weeks in which some work was done". But the questionnaire does not explicitly ask about variable hours and relies, therefore, on the respondent to volunteer this information



and the interviewer to remember and apply the special instructions in the manual.

- d) The question on extra hours in the current survey is intended to capture hours worked over and above the usual. However, the focus group study revealed that "overtime or extra" hours mean different things to different people. Some feel it includes only paid overtime, potentially leading to an underestimation of extra hours. For others, extra hours may be double-counted since they are likely to report them here even though they had included them in usual hours.
- e) For those who have straightforward work hours, the question on actual hours seems repetitive and pointless. Some respondents become confused at this point, believing that they have already provided the information. Interviewers are aware of this reaction and may avoid the question by calculating the answer and asking for confirmation: "So, that means you actually worked X hours last week?"

LFS hours data support a number of important analyses including productivity measures, decomposition of trends in labour income, tracking of work distribution and polarization of hours, classification of the employed as part-time or full-time, indicators of underemployment (involuntary part-time), and analyses of work absence. With the redesign, accurate data on paid work hours are critical for the calculation of average weekly and hourly earnings.

The redesign provided an opportunity to reassess uses of hours data and revise the questions to meet both cognitive and analytic objectives. Several activities were initiated to facilitate the process: a special group of major users of LFS hours data within Statistics Canada was formed to examine the current and projected uses of hours data and to determine the most appropriate concepts; the Advisory Committee on Labour Statistics was asked for direction; and, a special group experienced in labour market questionnaire design was asked to critique a number of alternative question sets in light of the conceptual goals established by the first two initiatives. The resulting redesigned question set places special emphasis on detailed information regarding the work hours of employees. There will be new information on the number of jobs with variable hours, hours normally worked for pay (standard hours), the number of paid overtime hours, and the number of extra hours worked without pay. Actual hours will continue to be available. However, for those with invariant work schedules, response burden will be reduced by determining actual hours arithmetically during processing, rather than with an explicit question. Usual and actual hours will be asked of the self-employed, and of the second job of multiple job holders.

2.3 Other questionnaire changes

Job description information for those without recent work experience

The LFS currently collects job description information for those not employed but who have worked within the last 5 years. This involves 8 questions, asking details about class of worker, the kind of job, duties, and start date. This information is costly to collect and code, and imposes a high degree of response burden, especially among proxy respondents. The use of the data is also somewhat problematic. Unemployment rates are calculated by industry of last job, even if that job



was up to 5 years ago, while users tend to misinterpret the estimates as representing job search within an industry.

In order to reduce response burden and response error, contain costs, and improve the relevance of unemployment by industry, job description questions in the redesigned questionnaire are limited to those who are currently employed or have worked within the previous year. A further impact of this change is that eligibility for classification as temporary layoff is effectively limited to those who were laid off within the last 12 months. Persons on layoff for longer periods must be searching for a job to be considered unemployed.

Consistent application of availability criteria for unemployment

The redesign addresses a minor problem of inconsistent classification treatment. The structure of the current questionnaire permits those who are unemployed because of temporary layoff or future start to bypass the availability questions, unless they also happened to look for employment within the last four weeks. The new questionnaire ensures that all persons eligible for classification as unemployed receive the availability questions.

The wording of the availability question has also been slightly altered, to allow a positive response from those who would have made themselves available had a suitable job been offered.

Old wording

"Was there any reason why ... could not take a job last week?"

New wording

"Could ... have worked last week (if he/she had been recalled) (if a suitable job had been offered?"

Job search question modified

Currently, persons without a job but who have job searched in the last 6 months are asked "In the last 4 weeks, what has ... done to find work?". This wording is thought to be somewhat leading, in that it suggests that some sort of search has taken place, and may have a small, inflating effect on the unemployment rate. This effect is neutralized in the redesign. First the respondent is asked "In the 4 weeks ending last Saturday, (date), did ... do anything to find work?" A positive response is followed by the question "What did ... do to find work in the past 4 weeks?"

3. Questionnaire assessment: cognitive test highlights

A quality assessment of the new questionnaire took place in three phases between September 1994 and January 1995. Each phase involved intensive field testing and observation, and lessons learned at each phase were incorporated in subsequent test versions of the redesigned questionnaire.

During each test phase, every interview was directly observed by a member of the questionnaire development team, who made detailed notes on both interviewer and respondent behaviour. This



information served as a guide during the respondent debriefing that took place immediately following the interview. Respondent debriefings focussed on the resolution of any apparent response inconsistencies, the cognitive processes behind particular responses, and possible areas of misunderstanding, hesitation, or resistance.

Immediately following the completion of each phase of testing, meetings were held with the interviewers involved to explore any difficulties they encountered with question wording or meaning, response categories and questionnaire flow.

During Phase I testing, about 100 personal interviews took place in Ottawa and Toronto, and 50 telephone interviews extended the test to rural areas in Alberta. Phase II involved telephone interviews to about 200 households in British Columbia and Nova Scotia. Phase III focussed on french-speaking respondents and included personal interviews of 30 households in Montreal. The tests clearly demonstrated that most proposed content changes and additions are feasible. Structural changes to the flow of the questionnaire were well received, and appeared to both facilitate the correct classification of respondents and improve the flow of the interview. Some questions required minor rewording before further testing, while a few others appeared unworkable and were dropped.



4. Summary

The LFS questionnaire redesign required the resolution of the conflict between the benefits of maintaining historical continuity, while improving the validity and usefulness of the data. Ultimately, relevance and validity were considered most important. However, the implementation of the new questionnaire will occur in such a way that meaningful links with historical data can also be determined.

Extensive consultation with both the user community and similar surveys in other countries provided a valuable source of information on emerging trends, data gaps, and questionnaire design. Observation of interviews, followed by both respondent and interviewer debriefings, provided the opportunity to evaluate the efficacy and validity of both new and unchanged items. In the qualitative testing phase, an iterative approach enabled designers to isolate problems and test solutions incrementally. The finalized questionnaire reflects a concerted effort to balance issues of relevance and validity with concerns for on-going costs, respondent burden and historical continuity.

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LABOUR FORCE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE: 1997 VERSION

Demographic information

-
- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>HOUSEHOLD MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>10 Hello, I'm (your name) from Statistics Canada. I'm calling regarding the Labour Force Survey.</p> <p>11 Would you prefer to be interviewed in English or in French?
<i>If birth interview go to 12</i>
<i>If subsequent interview go to 20</i></p> <p>12 Confirm the listing address.</p> <p>13 Select the dwelling type.</p> <p>14 What is your correct mailing address?</p> <p>15 What are the names of all persons who usually live here?
(Begin with adults who have responsibility for the care or support of the family)</p> <p>16 Is anyone staying here temporarily?
Add a person unless he/she has a usual residence elsewhere.</p> <p>17 Are there any other persons who usually live here but are now away at school, in hospital or somewhere else?
<i>Go to 30</i></p> <p>20 Are you still living in the same dwelling as last month?</p> <p>21 Do the following people still live or stay in this dwelling?
Select a member and press Enter to change membership status.
<i>Go to 21A if member selected</i>
<i>Otherwise go to 22 if F12 selected</i></p> <p>21A Is ...
Now a member
No longer a member
Deceased</p> <p>22 Does anyone else now live or stay there?</p> | <p>37</p> <p>38</p> <p>39</p> <p>40</p> <p>41</p> <p>50</p> <p>50A</p> <p>60</p> | <p>Determine a reference person for the family and enter ...'s relationship to that reference person. A reference person should be an adult involved in the care or support of the family.</p> <p>What is the highest grade of elementary or high school ... ever completed?</p> <p>Did ... graduate from high school?</p> <p>Has ... received any other education that could be counted towards a degree, certificate or diploma from an educational institution?
<i>No, go to 30</i></p> <p>What is the highest degree, certificate or diploma ... has obtained?
<i>Go to 30 to complete demographic information for all family members.</i>
<i>When complete, go to 50</i></p> <hr/> <p>ARMED FORCES MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>Is anyone in this household a full-time member of the regular armed forces?
Select a member and press Enter to change the response indicated.
<i>Go to 50A if member selected</i>
<i>Otherwise go to 60 if F12 selected</i></p> <p>Is ... a full-time member of the Regular Armed Forces?</p> <p>Is this dwelling owned by a member of this household?
If rented, complete Rent questions and return.
GO TO LABOUR FORCE INFORMATION COMPONENT FOR EACH PERSON AGED 15+ AND NOT A REGULAR MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES</p> |
|---|--|--|
-
- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>INDIVIDUAL DEMOGRAPHICS</p> <p>30 Select a member and press Enter to enter or update the demographic information. When the information is correct, press F12 to continue
Name Age Sex MS FID RR Ed1 Ed2 Ed3 Ed4
.....</p> <p>31 What is ...'s date of birth?</p> <p>32 So ...'s age last Saturday was (AGE).
Is that right?
<i>Yes, go to 34</i>
<i>No, go to 33</i></p> <p>33 What is ...'s age?</p> <p>34 Enter ...'s sex.</p> <p>35 What is ...'s marital status?
(Read categories to respondent)</p> <p>36 Enter ...'s family code: A to Z.
Assign the same letter to all persons related by blood, marriage or adoption.</p> | <p>37</p> <p>38</p> <p>39</p> <p>40</p> <p>41</p> <p>50</p> <p>50A</p> <p>60</p> | <p>Determine a reference person for the family and enter ...'s relationship to that reference person. A reference person should be an adult involved in the care or support of the family.</p> <p>What is the highest grade of elementary or high school ... ever completed?</p> <p>Did ... graduate from high school?</p> <p>Has ... received any other education that could be counted towards a degree, certificate or diploma from an educational institution?
<i>No, go to 30</i></p> <p>What is the highest degree, certificate or diploma ... has obtained?
<i>Go to 30 to complete demographic information for all family members.</i>
<i>When complete, go to 50</i></p> <hr/> <p>ARMED FORCES MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>Is anyone in this household a full-time member of the regular armed forces?
Select a member and press Enter to change the response indicated.
<i>Go to 50A if member selected</i>
<i>Otherwise go to 60 if F12 selected</i></p> <p>Is ... a full-time member of the Regular Armed Forces?</p> <p>Is this dwelling owned by a member of this household?
If rented, complete Rent questions and return.
GO TO LABOUR FORCE INFORMATION COMPONENT FOR EACH PERSON AGED 15+ AND NOT A REGULAR MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES</p> |
|--|--|--|

Labour force information

-
- PATHS**
- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Employed, at work |
| 2 | Absent from work |
| 3 | Temporary layoff |
| 4 | Job seeker |
| 5 | Future start |
| 6 | Not in labour force, able to work |
| 7 | Not in labour force, permanently unable to work |
-

- JOB ATTACHMENT**
- 100 Many of the following questions concern ...:s activities last week. By last week I mean the week beginning on Sunday, [date], and ending last Saturday [date].
Last week, did ... work at a job or business? (regardless of the number of hours)
Yes, PATH = 1, go to 102
No, go to 101

- Permanently unable to work, PATH = 7, go to 104*
- 101 **Last week did ... have a job or business from which he/she was absent?**
No, go to 104
- 102 **Did ... have more than one job or business last week?**
No, go to 110
- 103 **Was this a result of changing employers?**
go to 110

PAST JOB ATTACHMENT

- 104 **Has ... ever worked at a job or business?**
No, go to 170
- 105 **When did ... last work?**
If subsequent interview and no change in 105 and PREVIOUS-PATH = 3, go to 131
If subsequent and no change in 105 and PREVIOUS-PATH = 4 to 7, go to 170
If not within last year, go to 170
If not last month, and PATH = 7, go to 131
If not last month and PATH not 7, go to 110
- 106 **Was that before or after Sunday, [date following last reference week]?**
If PATH = 7, go to 131, Otherwise go to 110

JOB DESCRIPTION

- 110 **I am now going to ask some questions about ...'s [new] job or business [at which he/she usually works the most hours]. Was ... an employee or self-employed?**
If not "self employed", go to 114
- 111 **Did ... have an incorporated business?**
- 112 **Did ... have any employees?**
- 113 **What was the name of ...'s business?**
go to 115
- 114 **For whom did ... work?**
- 115 **What kind of business, industry or service was this?**
- 116 **What kind of work was ... doing?**
- 117 **What were ...'s most important activities or duties?**
- 118 **When did ... start working [at name of employer]?**
If not last month, go to 130
- 119 **Was that before or after Sunday [date following last reference week]?**
go to 130

ABSENCE - SEPARATION

- 130 *If PATH = 1, go to 150*
If 101 = No, go to 131
What was the main reason ... was absent from work last week?
Temporary layoff, go to 134
Seasonal layoff, go to 136
Casual, go to 137
Otherwise, Employed but absent, PATH = 2, go to 150
- 131 **What was the main reason ... stopped working at that [job/business]?**
If not "Lost job or layoff", go to 137
- 132 **Can you be more specific about the main reason for ...'s job loss?**
If PATH = 7, go to 137
If not "Business conditions", go to 137
- 133 *If date last worked over one year ago, go to 137*
Does ... expect to return to that job?
No or "Not sure", go to 137

- 134 **Has ...'s employer given him/her a date to return?**
Yes, go to 136
- 135 **Has ... been given any indication that he/she will be recalled within the next 6 months?**
- 136 **As of last week, how many weeks had ... been on layoff?**
If 130 = "seasonal layoff" or absent more than 1 year, go to 137; otherwise, PATH = 3, go to 137
- 137 **Did ... usually work more or less than 30 hours per week?**
If PATH = 3, go to 190
Otherwise go to 170

WORK HOURS (MAIN JOB)

- 150 **The following questions refer to ...'s work hours at [name of main job]. [Excluding overtime], does the number of [paid] hours ... works vary from week to week?**
Yes, go to 152
- 151 **[Excluding overtime,] how many [paid] hours does ... work per week?**
If PATH = 2, go to 158
If not employee, go to 157
Otherwise, go to 153
- 152 **[Excluding overtime,] on average, how many [paid] hours does ... usually work per week?**
If PATH = 2, go to 158
If not employee, go to 157
- 153 **Last week, how many hours was ... away from this job because of vacation, illness, or any other reason? (remember that [civic holiday] occurred last week)**
0 hours, go to 155
- 154 **What was the main reason for that absence?**
- 155 **Last week, how many hours of paid overtime did ... work at this job?**
- 156 **Last week, how many extra hours without pay did ... work at this job?**
- 157 *If (employee and 150 = no) actual hours = 151 - 153 + 155 + 156, go to 158*
Last week, how many hours did ... actually work at [name of main job]? (Remember that [civic holiday] occurred last week)
- 158 *If 151 or 152 > 29, and PATH = 2, go to 162*
If 151 or 152 > 29, and PATH = 1, go to 200
Does ... want to work 30 or more hours per week (at a single job)?
Yes, go to 160
- 159 **What is the main reason ... does not want to work 30 or more hours per week (at a single job)?**
If PATH = 2, go to 162
Otherwise go to 200
- 160 **What is the main reason ... usually works less than 30 hours per week (at his/her main job)?**
If not ("business conditions" or "couldn't find full-time") and PATH = 2, go to 162
If not ("business conditions" or "couldn't find full-time") and PATH = 1, go to 200
- 161 **At any time in the 4 weeks ending last Saturday, [date], did ... look for full-time work?**
If PATH = 2, go to 162
Otherwise go to 200

ABSENCE

- 162 As of last week, how many weeks had ... been continually absent from work?
If not (employee or incorporated owner), go to 200
- 163 Is ... getting any wages or salary from his/her [employer/business] for any time off last week?
Go to 200

JOB SEARCH - FUTURE START

- 170 If PATH = 7, go to 500
In the 4 weeks ending last Saturday, [date], did ... do anything to find work?
No, and age > 64, PATH = 6, go to 420
No, and age < 65, go to 174
Yes, PATH = 4
- 171 What did ... do to find work in the past 4 week?
Did ... do anything else to find work?
- 172 As of last week, how many weeks had ... been looking for work? (since date last worked)
- 173 What was ...'s main activity before he/she started looking for work?
Go to 177
- 174 Last week did ... have a job to start at a definite date in the future?
No, PATH = 6, go to 176
- 175 Will ... start that job before or after Sunday, [date four weeks from survey week]?
Before, PATH = 5, go to 190
On or after, PATH = 6, go to 420
- 176 Did ... want a job last week?
No, go to 420
- 177 Did ... want a job with more or less than 30 hours per week?
- 178 If PATH = 4, go to 190
What was the main reason ... did not look for work last week?
If not "Believes no work available", go to 420
Otherwise, go to 190

AVAILABILITY

- 190 Could ... have worked last week [if he/she had been recalled/if a suitable job had been offered]?
Yes, go to 400
- 191 What was the main reason ... was not available to work last week?
Go to 400

EARNINGS - UNION - PERMANENCE

- 200 If not Employee (at main job), go to 300
If subsequent and no change in 110, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, go to 260
Now I'd like to ask a few short questions about ...'s earnings from (name of main job). Is ... paid by the hour?
- 201 Does ... usually receive tips or commissions?
If 200 = no, go to 204
- 202 [Including tips and commissions,] what is ...'s hourly rate of pay?
go to 220
- 204 What is the easiest way for you to tell us ...'s wage or salary [including tips and commissions], before taxes and other deductions? Would it be yearly, monthly, weekly, or on some other basis?
- 205 [Including tips and commissions,] what is ...'s

- to [weekly/bi-weekly/semi-monthly/monthly/yearly]
- 209 wage or salary, before taxes and other deductions?
- 220 Is ... a union member at [name of main job]?
Yes, go to 240
- 221 Is ... covered by a union contract or collective agreement?
- 240 Is ...'s job permanent, or is there some way that it is not permanent? (e.g. seasonal, temporary, term, casual, etc.)
Permanent, go to 260
- 241 In what way is ...'s job not permanent?
Go to 260

FIRM SIZE

- 260 About how many persons are employed at the location where ... works for [name of business/his/her employer]? Would it be less than 20, 20 to 99, 100 to 500, or over 500?
If not September or November, go to 300
- 261 Does [name of business/...]'s employer] operate at more than one location?
No, or 260 = "over 500", go to 300
- 262 In total, about how many persons are employed at all locations? Would it be less than 20, 20 to 99, 100 to 500, or over 500?
Go to 300

CLASS OF WORKER - HOURS AT OTHER JOB

- 300 If 102 = no, go to 400
Now I have a couple of questions about ...'s [other/old] job or business. Was ... an employee or self-employed?
If not "self-employed", go to 320
- 301 Did ... have an incorporated business?
- 302 Did ... have any employees?
- 320 Excluding overtime, how many [paid] hours [did/does] ... usually work per week at this [job/business]?
If PATH = 2, go to 400
- 321 Last week, how many hours did ... actually work at this [job/business]? [Remember that [civic holiday] occurred last week.]
Go to 400

TEMPORARY LAYOFF JOB SEARCH

- 400 If PATH not 3, go to 420
In the 4 weeks ending last Saturday, [date], did ... look for a job with a different employer?
Go to 420

PREVIOUS SEPARATION

- 420 If not (118 = survey month or 119 = since previous reference week) go to 500
If 103 = 1, go to 423
Before ... started working at [name of main job], had he/she ever worked at a job or business [not counting the other [job/business] he/she also works at now]?
No, go to 500
- 421 When did ... last work at that job or business?
If prior to month preceding this survey, go to 500
If this survey month, go to 423
- 422 Was that before or after Sunday, [date of Sunday

following last reference week]?

Before, go to 500

- 423 What was the main reason ... stopped working at that [job/business]?
- If not "Lost job or laid off", go to 425
- 424 Can you be more specific about the main reason for ...'s job loss?
- 425 If 103 = 1, go to 500
- At that job or business, did ... usually work more or less than 30 hours per week?
- Go to 500

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

- 500 If age > 64, go to END
- Last week, was ... attending a school, college or university?
- No, go to 520
- 501 Was ... enrolled as a full-time or part-time student?
- 502 What kind of school was this?
- Go to 520

SUMMER STUDENT CONTENT

- 520 If survey month not May thru August, END
- If age not 15 to 24, END
- If subsequent and PREVIOUS-520 = "no", END
- If subsequent and PREVIOUS 520 = "yes", go to 521
- Was ... a full-time student in March of this year?
- No, END
- 521 Does ... expect to be a full-time student this fall?
- END

Codes for demographic component

- 35
- 1 Now married or living common-law
 - 2 Single, never married
 - 3 Widow or widower
 - 4 Separated or divorced
- 37
- 1 Reference person
 - 2 Spouse
 - 3 Son or daughter (natural, adopted or step)
 - 4 Grandchild
 - 5 Son-in-law or daughter-in-law
 - 6 Foster child (less than 18 years of age)
 - 7 Parent
 - 8 Parent-in-law
 - 9 Brother or sister
 - 0 Other relative - Specify in Notes
- 38
- 0 Grade 8 or lower (Quebec: Secondary II or lower)
 - 1 Grade 9 - 10 (Quebec: Secondary III or IV)
(Newfoundland: 1st year of secondary)
 - 2 Grade 11 - 13 (Quebec: Secondary V)
(Newfoundland: 2nd to 4th year of secondary)
- 41
- 1 No postsecondary degree, certificate or diploma
 - 2 Trades certificate or diploma from a vocational school or apprenticeship training
 - 3 Non-university certificate or diploma from a community college, CEGEP, school of nursing, etc.

- 4 University certificate below bachelor's level
- 5 Bachelor's degree
- 6 University degree or certificate above bachelor's degree

Codes for labour force component

106/119/174/422

- 1 Before the date above
- 2 On or after the date above

110 / 300

- 1 Employee
- 2 Self-employed
- 3 Working in a family business without pay

130

- 01 Own illness or disability
- 02 Caring for own children
- 03 Caring for elder relative (60 years of or older)
- 04 Maternity leave (females only)
- 05 Other personal or family responsibilities
- 06 Vacation
- 07 Labour dispute (strike or lockout)
- 08 Temporary layoff due to business conditions (Employees only)
- 09 Seasonal layoff (Employees only)
- 10 Casual job, no work available (Employees only)
- 11 Work schedule (eg. shift work, etc.) (Employees only)
- 12 Self-employed, no work available (Self-employed only)
- 13 Seasonal business (excluding employees)
- 00 Other - Specify in Notes

131 / 423

- 01 Own illness or disability
- 02 Caring for own children
- 03 Caring for elder relative (60 years of age or older)
- 04 Pregnancy (Females only)
- 05 Other personal or family responsibilities
- 06 Going to school
- 07 Lost job, laid off or job ended (employees only)
- 08 Business sold or closed down (Self-employed only)
- 09 Changed residence
- 10 Dissatisfied with job
- 11 Retired
- 00 Other - Specify in Notes

132/ 424

- 1 End of seasonal job
- 2 End of temporary, term or contract job (non-seasonal)
- 3 Casual job
- 4 Company moved
- 5 Company went out of business
- 6 Business conditions (e.g. not enough work, drop in orders, retooling, etc.)
- 7 Dismissal by employer (i.e. fired)
- 0 Other - Specify in Notes

154

- 01 Own illness or disability
- 02 Caring for own children
- 03 Caring for elder relative (60 years of age or older)
- 04 Maternity leave (Females only)
- 05 Other personal or family responsibilities
- 06 Vacation
- 07 Labour dispute (strike or lockout)
- 08 Temporary layoff due to business conditions
- 09 Holiday (legal or religious)

- 10 Weather
- 11 Job started or ended during week
- 12 Working short-time (due to material shortages, plant maintenance or repair, etc.)
- 00 Other - Specify in Notes

137/177/425

- 1 30 or more hours per week
- 2 Less than 30 hours per week

159

- 1 Own illness or disability
- 2 Caring for own children
- 3 Caring for elder relative (60 years of age or older)
- 4 Other personal or family responsibilities
- 5 Going to school
- 6 Personal preference
- 0 Other - Specify in Notes

160

- 1 Own illness or disability
- 2 Caring for own children
- 3 Caring for elder relative (60 years of age or older)
- 4 Other personal or family responsibilities
- 5 Going to school
- 6 Business conditions
- 7 Could not find work with 30 or more hours per week
- 0 Other - Specify in Notes

171

- 1 Public employment agency
- 2 Private employment agency
- 3 Union
- 4 Employers directly
- 5 Friends or relatives
- 6 Placed or answered ads
- 7 Looked at job ads
- 0 Other - Specify in Notes

173

- 1 Working
- 2 Managing a home
- 3 Going to school
- 4 Other - Specify in Notes

178

- 1 Own illness or disability
- 2 Caring for own children
- 3 Caring for elder relative (60 years of age or older)
- 4 Other personal or family responsibilities
- 5 Going to school
- 6 Waiting for recall (to former employer)
- 7 Waiting for replies from employers
- 8 Believes no work available (in area, or suited to skills)
- 9 No reason given
- 0 Other - Specify in Notes

191

- 1 Own illness or disability
- 2 Caring for own children
- 3 Caring for elder relative (60 years of age or older)
- 4 Other personal or family responsibilities
- 5 Going to school
- 6 Vacation
- 7 Already has a job
- 0 Other - Specify in Notes

204

- 1 Yearly
- 2 Monthly
- 3 Semi-monthly
- 4 Bi-weekly

- 5 Weekly
- 0 Other - Specify in Notes

241

- 1 Seasonal job
- 2 Temporary, term or contract job (non-seasonal)
- 3 Casual job
- 4 Work done through a temporary help agency
- 0 Other - Specify in Notes

260/262

- 1 Less than 20
- 2 20 to 99
- 3 100 to 500
- 4 Over 500

501

- 1 Full-time
- 2 Part-time

502

- 1 Primary or secondary school
- 2 Community college, junior college, or CEGEP
- 3 University

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