Canadian Vital Statistics System

Valérie Gaston,
Vital Statistics Section
Health Statistics Division

September 11, 2017
Vital Statistics in Canada

- Civil registration of birth, death, stillbirth and marriage events in 10 provinces and 3 territories
  - P/T Vital Statistics Act
  - Health Department to Service Departments

- Vital statistics on births, deaths, stillbirths released by Statistics Canada since 1921
  - Collected under Statistics Act
Vital Statistics Council for Canada

- Inter-jurisdictional advisory group composed of the heads of the vital statistics agencies from each provincial and territorial government and the Health Statistics Division of Statistics Canada.
- Created in 1945, council meets annually in person and via monthly teleconferences.
- Provides a forum for developing common approaches to:
  - Create a uniform approach to governing legislation
  - Collect vital statistics data
  - Share of information with external parties
  - Liaise with external stakeholders
  - Facilitate problem solving by sharing experiences
National Routing System (NRS)

- NRS is a set of technical and messaging standards that define what and how information will be transferred to the receiving party. It is point to point and based on bilateral agreements.

- NRS messages for
  - Birth, death, and stillbirth notifications
  - Birth certificate validation
  - Future messages: change of name, change of sex

- NRS partners:
  - Provincial and territorial vital statistics agencies
  - Three federal partners: Statistics Canada, Canada Revenue Agency, and Service Canada
  - Future partners: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (Passport Canada), Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Nunavut
Governance of the NRS

- Steering committee composed of a subset of federal, provincial and territorial partners. Sub-committees are formed to address specific technical and message standard issues
  - Gender identity (Introduction of “X”)
  - Identity management
  - Change of name, change of sex notifications
  - Inclusion of aboriginal characters
Canadian Coroner and Medical Examiner Database (CCMED)

- Standardized subset of death data investigated by coroners and medical examiners (approximately 16% of deaths)
- Provides additional detail on circumstances surrounding the death (activity, place of event, place of death, external factors, safety devices)
- Minimum dataset containing basic information available on all deaths
Continuum of data access

Data Access

Statistical Products
- www.statcan.ca
- Daily releases
- Aggregate data tables
- Analytic articles and reports

Custom Requests
- Data Tabulations

Microdata
- PUMFs (surveys)
- Real Time Remote Access
- Remote job submissions
- Research Data Centres
- Record linkage

Aggregated data

Open statistics

Microdata

Restricted data
Privacy and confidentiality

- Data provider authorizes disclosures.
  - Suppression and rounding
- Data sharing agreements between Statistics Canada and data users
Challenges in civil registrations which affect vital statistics

- Provincial and territorial vital statistics agencies faced with Human Rights complaints or Charter Challenges
  - Collection of sex at birth information on the registration of birth and display of sex/gender on the birth certificate
  - Amending parentage rules and birth registration laws to reflect family structures where children are conceived through assisted reproduction (e.g. surrogate), and where a child may have more than two parents
  - Truth and Reconciliation Commission – Reclaiming aboriginal names
Thank you

Valérie Gaston
Chief Vital Statistics, Health Statistics
Statistics Canada / Government of Canada
+1 (613) 852-5302
valerie.gaston@canada.ca