

7. Before and after: Applying good writing techniques

To illustrate how to turn a routine statistical story into one with a much stronger story-line and more effective use of data, here is a 'before' and 'after' example. Note the differences.

BEFORE

Divorces 2003

In 2003, 70,828 couples divorced, up a slight 1.0% from the recent low of 70,155 in 2002.

The number of divorces has remained relatively stable over the last few years. The year-to-year change has been below two percent for every year since 1999.

The increase in the number of divorces between 2002 and 2003 kept pace with the increase in the Canadian population over this period. As a result, the crude divorce rate for 2003 remained the same as in 2002, at 223.7 divorces for every 100,000 people in the population.

The 1.0% increase in the number of divorces across Canada is primarily due to a 5.1% increase in the number of divorces in Ontario and a 1.4% increase in Quebec between 2002 and 2003. Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan were the only other provinces to experience an increase in the number of divorces between these years. Newfoundland and Labrador showed the largest percentage decrease by far in the number of divorces, down 21.4%.

Repeat divorces, involving people who had been divorced at least once before, are accounting for an increasing proportion of divorces.

In 1973, only 5.4% of divorces involved husbands who had previously been divorced. Thirty years later this proportion has tripled to 16.2% of all divorces.

The proportion of divorces involving wives who had previously been divorced is similar, rising from 5.4% to 15.7% over this thirty year period.

Marriage stability can be assessed using divorce rates based on years of marriage. The proportion of marriages expected to end in

divorce by the 30th wedding anniversary inched up to 38.3% in 2003, from 37.6% in 2002.

The divorce rate varies greatly depending on how long couples have been married, rising rapidly in the first few years of marriage. The peak divorce rate in 2003 occurred after three years of marriage, when 26.2 out of 1,000 marriages ended in divorce. The risk of divorce decreased slowly for each additional year of marriage.

The custody of dependents, the vast majority of whom are children aged 18 and under, was granted through divorce court proceedings in 27% of 2003 divorces

In the remaining divorces, couples arrived at custody arrangements outside the divorce proceedings, or they did not have dependents. The number of dependents in these divorces is not available.

There has been a 17-year trend of steady increases in joint custody arrangements. Of the 33,000 dependents for whom custody was determined through divorce proceedings in 2003, 43.8% were awarded to the husband and wife jointly, up 2.0% from 2002. Under a joint custody arrangement, dependents do not necessarily spend equal amounts of their time with each parent.

The custody of 47.7% of dependents was awarded to the wife and 8.3% to the husband in 2003. In 2002, these percentages were 49.5% and 8.5%, respectively.

The shelf tables Divorces, 2003 (84F0213XPB, \$22) are now available.

For general information or to order custom tabulations, contact Client Custom Services (613-951-1746; hd-ds@statcan.ca). To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Brent Day (613-951-4280; brent.day@statcan.ca) or Patricia Tully (613-951-1759; patricia.tully@statcan.ca), Health Statistics Division.

AFTER

Divorces – 2003

Repeat divorces, those involving people who had been divorced at least once before, are accounting for an increasing proportion of divorces in Canada, according to new data.

In 1973, only 5.4% of divorces involved husbands who had previously been divorced. Some 30 years later, this proportion has tripled to 16.2% of all divorces. Similarly, the proportion of divorces involving wives who had previously been divorced rose from 5.4% to 15.7% during this three-decade period.

The number of couples getting a divorce in 2003 edged up 1.0% from a year earlier to 70,828. This slight increase was due primarily to a 5.1% jump in divorces in Ontario, and a 1.4% increase in Quebec. Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan were the only other provinces to experience an advance.

The number of divorces fell 21.4% in Newfoundland and Labrador, by far the largest decline. No information on the reason for this decrease is available.

The number of divorces has remained relatively stable over the last few years. The year-to-year change has been below 2% since 1999. The slight rise in divorces in 2003 kept pace with the increase in the Canadian population.

Divorces			
	2002	2003	2002 to 2003
	number		% change
Canada	70,155	70,828	1.0
Newfoundland and Labrador	842	662	-21.4
Prince Edward Island	258	281	8.9
Nova Scotia	1,990	1,907	-4.2
New Brunswick	1,461	1,450	-0.8
Quebec	16,499	16,738	1.4
Ontario	26,170	27,513	5.1
Manitoba	2,396	2,352	-1.8
Saskatchewan	1,959	1,992	1.7
Alberta	8,291	7,960	-4.0
British Columbia	10,125	9,820	-3.0
Yukon	90	87	-3.3
Northwest Territories	68	62	-8.8
Nunavut	6	4	-33.3

Total divorce rate, by the 30th wedding anniversary			
	2002	2003	2002 to 2003
	per 100 marriages		increase/decrease
Canada	37.6	38.3	0.7
Newfoundland and Labrador	21.8	17.1	-4.7
Prince Edward Island	25.2	27.3	2.1
Nova Scotia	30.4	28.9	-1.5
New Brunswick	27.2	27.6	0.4
Quebec	47.6	49.7	2.1
Ontario	34.9	37.0	2.1
Manitoba	30.3	30.2	-0.1
Saskatchewan	28.7	29.0	0.3
Alberta	41.9	40.0	-1.9
British Columbia	41.0	39.8	-1.2
Yukon	43.4	40.0	-3.4
Northwest Territories and Nunavut ¹	31.2	27.6	-3.6

1. Northwest Territories and Nunavut are combined to calculate the rates in this table because marriage and divorce data are not available for these territories separately for the 30-year period required for the calculation of the total divorce rate.

As a result, the crude divorce rate for 2003 remained stable at 223.7 divorces for every 100,000 people in the population.

Marriage stability can be assessed using divorce rates based on years of marriage. The proportion of marriages expected to end in divorce by the 30th wedding anniversary inched up to 38.3% in 2003, from 37.6% in 2002.

The divorce rate varies greatly depending on how long couples have been married. It rises rapidly in the first few years of marriage. The peak divorce rate in 2003 occurred after three years of marriage, when 26.2 out of 1,000 marriages ended in divorce.

The risk of divorce decreased slowly for each additional year of marriage.

The custody of dependents, the vast majority of whom are children aged 18 and under, was granted through divorce court proceedings in 27% of 2003 divorces.

Available on CANSIM: table 053-0002. Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3235.