

# STATISTICS CANADA

## Criteria for an effective news release

Statistics Canada has developed a number of elements it considers necessary for an effective news release to be published in The Daily, the Agency's official release bulletin. The major criteria are outlined below, with examples from two major releases from The Daily:

These releases are the "National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth: Challenges of late adolescence", published June 16, 2003

(<http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/030616/d030616a.htm>),

and "Performing arts", published September 9, 2003

(<http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/030909/d030909a.htm>)

- **Quality of writing:** Both texts are well-written, and more to the point, written for the Internet. Sentences are reasonably short and clear; paragraphs are also brief, in most cases no more than two sentences long.
- **Theme or storyline:** Both texts assess developments along a central issue or theme. In the case of the longitudinal study on children, the central theme is the health of children over time, combined with an assessment of risky behaviours which some youngsters exhibit as they get older. In the case of performing arts, it is the acute financial deficit faced by orchestras, which clouds an otherwise healthy situation for most arts companies.
- **Trends:** The release on children assesses their development using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth between 1994/95 and 2000/01. The performing arts release compares data for 2001 to equivalent data for 1999.
- **Quality of analysis:** Both releases attempt to provide explanations and perspective for certain developments. For example, the Performing arts text points out that one reason orchestras are in financial difficulty is that they have less flexibility in cutting expenses. The situation is more difficult for small and medium-sized organizations.
- **Tables and charts:** The one release is illustrated with readable charts. The other contains a set of useful tables.

- Media coverage and relevance for local readers: One test of the relevance of a news release is whether journalists will “localize” it for the benefit of their readers. Please see the Hamilton Spectator’s story on the NLSCY and the Winnipeg Free Press’s story on performing arts. Both have local news angles. As a corollary, both releases got excellent play. The Free Press story on the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra was on Page A4, the Spectator story about Hamilton teens on Page A1.