



# CIHI Portal — Frequently Asked Questions

## About CIHI Portal

### **What organizations currently participate in CIHI Portal?**

Organizations from across Canada participate in CIHI Portal, including ministries of health, regional health authorities, hospitals and other health care organizations. For a complete list of these organizations, please visit the [Community tab](#) of Portal's web page.

### **What are the benefits to my facility of using CIHI Portal?**

CIHI Portal offers 3 key features: access to enhanced pan-Canadian CIHI data, a user-friendly way to build reports and perform complex analyses, and an easy way for users and communities of practice to share new information and knowledge with peers. In addition, CIHI Portal offers an education program and customized solutions to help meet client needs.

### **What is “business intelligence”?**

Business intelligence (BI) refers to skills, knowledge, applications and practices used to help a business acquire a better understanding of market behaviour and commercial context. This is accomplished by collecting, integrating, analyzing, interpreting and presenting business information.

BI applications provide historical, current and predictive views of business operations, most often using data already gathered into a data warehouse or a data mart. Software supports the use of this data by assisting in the extraction, analysis and reporting of information. Common functionalities of BI applications include reporting, analytics, dashboards, scorecards, data mining, corporate performance management (CPM) and predictive analysis.



## Portal access

### **Who has access to data from my facility?**

All organizations that participate in CIHI Portal will have access to facility-identifying data from your facility. For a complete list of these organizations, please visit the [Community tab](#) of Portal's web page.

### **I have access to CIHI Portal and can create reports starting from the NACRS, DAD, CMDB and NRS eReports. Can I access other applications through Portal (eOMHRS, eCCRS, eHCRS, etc.)?**

There are other eReporting products that are hosted by the MicroStrategy tool and that have formatted reports associated with them but do not actually exist within the CIHI Portal tool. Currently, the only projects available for ad hoc use (i.e., that can be used to create a report from scratch) are DAD, NACRS, CMDB and NRS. To request access to eReports, please go to the [My Services page](#) of CIHI's website and select **Request Access: New/Revoke**.

### **Can I access CIHI Portal from my home?**

For privacy and security reasons, CIHI allows users to access Portal from home only if they are connected via a secure network.

### **What is the difference between an analyst and an information consumer in terms of their use of CIHI Portal?**

Analysts can create reports using the design view of the tool and will have access to many report objects. Analysts can then share these reports with other authorized users.

Information consumers have access to wizard-like tools to build reports from pre-existing report objects. They do not have the ability to create new reports.

### **How many users in my facility can access CIHI Portal?**

The number of users at each facility is based on your CIHI Portal Service Agreement. Please contact your facility's designated CIHI Portal organizational contact for details on the service agreement and the number of users at your facility. To find the name of your organizational contact, please send an email to [portal@cihi.ca](mailto:portal@cihi.ca).

## Sharing and protecting information

### **What are the rules around sharing data obtained from Portal with people outside of my organization?**

Per the CIHI Portal Service Agreement, all information obtained through Portal is confidential and must be kept confidential. Therefore, you must take care to protect the identities of both individuals and organizations (regional health authorities, local health integration networks [LHINs], individual facilities, etc. [see Section 2.1.4 of the service agreement]) when considering the release of data from Portal.

The data/information can be shared internally (within your organization with authorized people, including the Board of Directors) and externally with other Portal subscribers (see sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). It can even be published if all reasonable attempts to prevent identification of individuals are employed and no cells contain fewer than 5 observations (see Section 2.1.3). You may not, however, release organization-identifiable information without the permission of the organization(s) in question (see Section 2.1.4).

Please review the CIHI Portal Service Agreement to ensure that your specific intended use of information derived from CIHI Portal is permitted. In addition, we recommend that you include a brief disclaimer on all information you export from CIHI Portal that communicates that the source of the data is the CIHI Portal tool but that any conclusions or opinions are your own. It is best practice to note that the information came from CIHI Portal on any screen shots or distributed materials. If you are unsure whether a specific report you have created can be shared externally, please send us a note at [portal@cihi.ca](mailto:portal@cihi.ca).

### **With whom can I share CIHI Portal data?**

Per the CIHI Portal Service Agreement, all information obtained through Portal is confidential and must be kept confidential. Therefore, you must take care to protect the identities of both individuals and organizations (regional health authorities, local health integration networks [LHINs], individual facilities, etc. [see Section 2.1.4 of the service agreement]) when considering the release of data from Portal.

The data/information can be shared internally (within your organization with authorized people, including the Board of Directors) and externally with other Portal subscribers (see sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). It can even be published if all reasonable attempts to prevent identification of individuals are employed and no cells contain fewer than 5 observations (see Section 2.1.3). You may not, however, release organization-identifiable information without the permission of the organization(s) in question (see Section 2.1.4).

Please review the CIHI Portal Service Agreement to ensure that your specific intended use of information derived from CIHI Portal is permitted. In addition, we recommend that you include a brief disclaimer on all information you export from CIHI Portal that communicates that the source of the data is the CIHI Portal tool but that any conclusions or opinions are your own. It is best practice to note that the information came from CIHI Portal on any screen shots or distributed materials. If you are unsure whether a specific report you have created can be shared externally, please send us a note at [portal@cihi.ca](mailto:portal@cihi.ca).

### **How can I share my work with other users in my facility and beyond my facility?**

CIHI Portal users can share reports by saving them under Shared Reports > Our Reports. You have permission to save reports that you have created in any of the subfolders in this folder, but you will likely want to navigate to your provincial folder and then the subfolder for your institution. If you are a member of a Portal community of practice, you can also save reports to these folders. They are located under Shared Reports > Communities of Practice.

**Note:** If you try to copy or move a report or object from your My Reports folder to one of the shared folders, the report will keep the security associated with your My Reports folder and only you will be able to see it. In order for others to see the same object, you will need to open it and use the **Save As . . .** feature in the menu to save it to the new location.

### **How do I cite CIHI Portal when publishing in external reports?**

Here is a sample citation using the *AMA Manual of Style*:

CIHI Portal, Release x.x. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Institute for Health Information; 2020.  
<https://www.cihi.ca/en/cihi-portal>. Accessed Month Day, Year.

### **What is the CIHI Portal Service Agreement?**

The CIHI Portal Service Agreement is a legal document that serves as an agreement between CIHI and each individual organization. The service agreement outlines the terms for accessing and using CIHI Portal. It also identifies an organizational contact who will be responsible for identifying Portal users and for ensuring that the terms of the service agreement are met.

### **Can I use Portal to link records?**

No. While it is possible to perform analyses within CIHI Portal that may return results of a single occurrence of a rare condition admitted on a specific date that may be attributed to a particular person based on information outside of CIHI Portal, users cannot use CIHI Portal to use (i.e., link) analytical results in combination with any other data holdings to gain additional information that may further identify or provide additional information about a particular individual.

## Analytical tool functionality

### **Can I create and save custom peer groups to use in my analysis?**

Yes, you can create and save your own custom peer groups. This can be done by using filters or by creating a custom group.

### **What does “drilling down” mean?**

Drilling down means that you can go to different levels of information. For example, if a report is produced using province-specific information and a given fiscal year, you can drill down to a specific hospital within that province and a specific quarter or month within that fiscal year.

### **My query returned unexpected results or an error that mentions an “incorrect join.” What is the problem?**

The query you created may be attempting to join data from multiple fact tables in 1 report (i.e., it is a multi-fact query). If you have attempted to mix attributes from the DAD Diagnosis Analysis and DAD Procedure Analysis folders or any other 2 fact tables, you will experience issues with your query (trying to combine CMG information from DAD Discharge Analysis and one of the All Diagnosis or All Procedure codes is another common error). If you have forgotten how to create a multi-fact query, please submit an eQuery request or refer to the eLearning course on multi-fact analysis. Please refer to the [Training tab](#) of Portal’s web page.

### **Why does 1 of the metrics on my report display only a dash (—) instead of numeric values?**

Some CIHI Portal metrics are calculated at the report level only. A dash means that you have likely included attributes in your report that are not visible on the actual report grid. Go to the **View** menu and click **Object Browser**. The Object Browser will appear on the left-hand side of your screen. Make sure you are on the Report Objects tab. If there are any additional attributes on your report, they will appear in bold in the list. To remove the dash from the report metrics, you can add the extra attributes to the report grid or delete them from the report entirely (right-click and select **Remove from Report**).

### **Can I create a report with readmission analysis?**

Yes, you can use the Patient Dimension Analysis base report. The base report is available within Portal by following this trail: Shared Reports > CIHI Portal: A Place to Start > Analysis > Analysis: Patient Dimension. You will be prompted to select a pre-built filter that identifies the initial patient population and the readmit time frame. If you have forgotten how to run a patient dimension query, please submit an eQuery request or refer to the eLearning course on patient dimensions. Please refer to the [Training tab](#) of Portal’s web page.

### **How do I use and interpret the readmission report?**

The readmission base report in Portal displays information on readmissions, not the initial patient population. For example, if you run the readmission base report with your filter and set the readmission range from Day 1–30, the readmission base report will display details of all qualified readmissions, that is, your initial patients (index group) who were readmitted within the chosen time frame. The data items on the readmission base report are all about readmissions: Master Institution Name/Num itemizes the hospitals where your index patients were readmitted; Cases (SUM) indicates the number of readmit cases; and Distinct Recipient indicates the counts of individual patients who had a readmission. Thus you can see that the readmission base report gives you the counts of readmissions.

If you would like information about your initial patient population, you can create a separate report for your index group. You can open up a blank report and add your filter for initial patients in the report filter and add 1 or more data items on the grid, including Cases (SUM). You will then get a report for the index group, which gives you the index count.

You can then calculate the readmission rate by dividing the readmission counts (from the readmission base report) by the index count (from your index report).

### **Can I export results from CIHI Portal into other software packages?**

Yes, reports generated in CIHI Portal can be exported into other formats such as Excel, comma-delimited files, HTML and PDF.

### **Can I personalize the way in which my toolbars and menu items are displayed?**

Yes. If you would like to see additional or fewer toolbars (the rows of icons that appear across the top of the report grid or graph), you can do so using the CIHI Portal menus. Simply select the **View** menu and **Toolbars**. There are 6 different groupings of toolbar icons; you can turn them on or off by selecting them from the list in the menu.

## CIHI Portal

### **What data is currently available in CIHI Portal?**

CIHI Portal currently contains Discharge Abstract Database (DAD), National Ambulatory Care Reporting System (NACRS), National Rehabilitation Reporting System (NRS) and Canadian MIS Database (CMDB) data. Census information on population counts and rates per 100,000 are also available. You can see an updated listing of the data that is currently available, including the years and grouping methodology being used, on the [Features tab](#) of Portal's web page. For more details, please refer to the latest release notes available on the [Support tab](#) of Portal's web page.

### **Is a schedule available for all of the data releases?**

The DAD and NACRS monthly data releases occur on the 15th business day of every month. NRS data is updated quarterly. CMDB data is updated annually.

### **Is the Postal Code Conversion File (PCCF) available in Portal?**

CIHI uses the PCCF for forward sortation areas (FSAs) and other geographic attributes. However, this list is not directly obtainable from CIHI. Statistics Canada makes available the PCCF with complete postal codes. In addition, Statistics Canada has aggregated postal codes into health regions, urban–rural splits, etc., in some of its reports. This information can be found on [Statistics Canada's website](#).

**Can I have access to current open years of data?**

Yes, open-year data is available in the DAD, NACRS and NRS projects in CIHI Portal.

**What specific data elements are available in CIHI Portal?**

Complete information on the available attributes and metrics can be found in the section **CIHI Portal metadata documents** on the [Support tab](#) of Portal's web page.

**Can I create reports with both NACRS and DAD data?**

No. DAD and NACRS data are in 2 separate environments and cannot be combined onto 1 report within Portal at this time. However, DAD and NACRS data can be exported for combined use outside of Portal (e.g., it can be exported to Excel for data merging and manipulation).

**Are chart numbers or abstract numbers available for my organization's data so that I can track cases back to my own system for data quality purposes?**

No. At the present time, organization-specific and/or record-level information such as chart or abstract numbers is not available to CIHI Portal users.

**Can I access record-level data?**

No. Although the tool contains record-level data, Portal users can access only aggregated counts at this time. Depending on the details included in the report, however, it is possible to get low cell counts or single cases. Identifying information is not available in Portal.

**Is financial data available in CIHI Portal?**

Yes. Financial and statistical data from hospitals across Canada is currently available through the CMDDB project in CIHI Portal.

**Can I analyze data on therapeutic abortions?**

Yes, you can analyze data on therapeutic abortions for all provinces in Canada, except British Columbia. From 2009 onward, for British Columbia only, the institution-/facility-identifiable and institution/facility geography data is masked for records that contain codes related to therapeutic abortions.

**What care types are currently available in CIHI Portal?**

- DAD: Acute inpatient care and same-day surgery
- NACRS: Emergency, day surgery and selected ambulatory care functional centres
- NRS: Inpatient rehabilitation data

## Cost

### **Is there a cost to my facility for using CIHI Portal?**

Yes, there is an annual cost associated with CIHI Portal. Details are contained in each separate service agreement. The cost is based on the number and types of CIHI Portal users included in the service agreement for your facility.

## Education

### **Why do CIHI Portal users have to complete a basic level of education before accessing CIHI Portal?**

Completing a basic level of education is required to ensure that the tool is used properly for analysis and that the results of data analysis are interpreted correctly, to facilitate sound decision-making.

### **What are the basic education requirements for CIHI Portal users?**

Analyst users must complete CIHI Portal self-directed eLearning modules.

**Note:** Once this basic training is complete, analysts are required to complete more advanced training in an intensive instructor-led training workshop, which provides detailed information on both the data included in CIHI Portal and the analytical tool.

Information consumer users are required to complete self-directed eLearning modules.

Find a complete overview of our education products on the [Training tab](#) of Portal's web page.

### **Is there a limit on the number of hours of technical support I can expect from CIHI Portal?**

The CIHI Portal Service Agreement states that each facility can expect up to 15 hours of technical support for the first analyst and 7.5 hours for each additional analyst per year. Users can also attend the User Community meetings that are held monthly, request a one-on-one session with a Portal Services analyst for support and use the eQuery tool for their technical support requests.

## CMDB in Portal

### **What data is included?**

The data mart for CMDB eReports and CMDB in Portal contains hospital data from all jurisdictions that submit MIS data to the Canadian MIS Database (CMDB). Non-hospital data is excluded from this data mart.

Both CMDB eReports and CMDB in Portal use the same data mart. Included in the data are identifiers for year, province, region and hospital, as well as data elements for supplier primary accounts, national primary accounts, supplier secondary accounts (both financial and statistical), national secondary accounts (both financial and statistical), sector code and quantity.

Users of CMDB eReports have access to only the latest 5 years of data due to formatting constraints that are specific to this product.

The data itself is refreshed once a year; the schedule depends on the availability of the source data from the jurisdictions. At present, the data for any one particular year is available approximately 16 months after the reporting period closes.

### **How is the data transformed?**

The raw data from the CMDB is transformed to address reporting practices that affect interjurisdictional comparability. After the data is transformed, it is used for CMDB eReports and CMDB in Portal.

The transformation consists of the following steps:

1. Remove extraneous data: Records containing accounts with a quantity of 0 are removed from the data.
2. Create derived variables and ensure consistency among existing ones: For example, a local health integration network (LHIN) number is assigned to each hospital in Ontario, as the LHIN number does not exist in the raw CMDB data. Another example is the creation of a hospital type variable and cohort variable based on existing variables in the data.
3. Clear the clearing accounts: Clearing accounts are temporary functional centre accounts that are transitional in nature, which were not distributed to consuming functional centres before reporting to CIHI but should have been. The data reported in these accounts is distributed by CMDB analysts to related operational functional centres within the hospital to provide a more accurate estimate of the costs in the operational functional centres. For example, the Nursing Inpatient Administration (71 2 05\*) clearing functional centre is allocated to other nursing inpatient functional centres.
4. Allocate regional centralized expenses: Expenses identified as regional centralized expenses in the CMDB submission are allocated to organizations within a region if they are not reported in patient care–related functional centres. Regional centralized data that is reported in a patient care–related functional centre remains in the region.
5. Aggregate all data to the CMDB minimum reporting levels: No detail beyond the minimum reporting level is displayed.

### **What is different between CMDB eReports and CMDB in Portal?**

While CMDB eReports and CMDB in Portal use the same data source, there are some differences in the manner in which these products utilize and portray the data.

One major difference between the 2 products is breadth of data. In CMDB eReports, only the 5 most recent years of data in the data mart are used, while users of CMDB in Portal have access to all of the data. This difference is primarily due to the fixed nature of the reports available in CMDB eReports.

Another major difference relates to functionality. CMDB eReports use pre-built metrics and reports that produce only selected criteria and indicators. The CMDB product in Portal provides a more flexible ad hoc reporting solution that gives users considerable leeway to define their own metrics, in addition to using pre-built metrics. Users can also select data based on virtually any criteria.

## Technical questions

### **How many items can be stored in my history list?**

The maximum number of history list messages has been set to 50. This includes the total of any reports you have in the history lists of all CIHI Portal projects you have access to. For example, if you have 20 reports in your DAD history list and 30 reports in your NACRS history list, you have reached the maximum of 50 reports and will not be able to add any more. You must delete reports from your history list, from either project, that you no longer need before you can continue to add additional reports. Reports will be available in your history list for a maximum of 60 days before automatically being deleted. **Warning:** Do not rely on the history list to save reports that you have been working on. You should always save any reports you want to keep either in your My Reports area or under an appropriate Shared Reports folder.

### **What is the maximum amount of time a query can run for?**

The maximum amount of time a query can run has been set to 150 minutes (2.5 hours). If the query time exceeds 150 minutes, no data will be returned. If a query that you have run times out, please contact the Portal Services team for assistance (via the eQuery tool), as most reports should execute well within this time frame.

### **Why should I not use my browser's back arrow while in CIHI Portal?**

The CIHI Portal tool does not support the use of the browser back arrow for navigation. You should use the breadcrumb trail to navigate, particularly when developing reports. This will ensure that any previous selections and/or prompts are saved, particularly when navigating in reports. You can also use the green back arrow within the application.

### **What is the maximum number of rows my query can return?**

The maximum number of rows a query can return is 200,000. The default maximum numbers of rows and columns to be displayed on a page of the grid are 50 rows and 10 columns. These default values can be modified by going into Preferences > Grid Display.

### **How many reports can I run at the same time in CIHI Portal?**

You can run a maximum of 4 reports at the same time. If you attempt to run additional reports, they will wait in a queue until your initial jobs are complete.

### **What are the minimum technical requirements for accessing CIHI Portal and exporting data?**

CIHI Portal is optimized to work with Internet Explorer; you may experience problems with other browsers. The latest version of Adobe Flash Player must be enabled as an add-on in your browser.

The minimum technical requirements for accessing CIHI Portal are as follows:

- Web browser (Windows computer)
  - Microsoft Internet Explorer 11.x
  - Mozilla Firefox
  - Google Chrome
  - Microsoft Edge
  - Adobe Flash Player
- Web browser (non-Windows computer)
  - Mozilla Firefox
  - Safari 7.x, 8.x
  - Google Chrome
  - Adobe Flash Player

The minimum requirements for exporting data are as follows:

- Adobe Acrobat Reader 10.x, 11.x
- Microsoft Office for Mac 2011 SP4
- Microsoft Office 2013 SP1
- Microsoft Office 2010 SP2
- OpenOffice.org Calc 3.3.0, 4.x

How to cite this document:

Canadian Institute for Health Information. *CIHI Portal — Frequently Asked Questions*. Ottawa, ON: CIHI; 2020.