

# Payroll employment, earnings and hours, April 2020

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Thursday, June 25, 2020

By April, the COVID-19 economic shutdown—including widespread travel restrictions, the closure of non-essential businesses, and public health measures to limit public interactions—was fully in place across Canada. These interventions resulted in a dramatic slowdown in economic activity and an unprecedented shock to the Canadian labour market, with the impact from February to April previously documented in the [April release for the Labour Force Survey \(LFS\)](#).

April data are now available from the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (SEPH), which provides monthly information on payroll employment, earnings, and hours worked for Canada, the provinces and territories. In conjunction with LFS data, SEPH data help complete the portrait of the Canadian labour market and Canada's economic performance, in large part through the provision of detailed subsector and industry statistics. Detailed data from the SEPH are available on the Statistics Canada website.

Monthly estimates for the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (SEPH) are produced using a combination of the Business Payrolls Survey and a census of payroll deduction accounts provided by the Canada Revenue Agency. The reference period for the SEPH corresponds to the last seven days of the month (April 24 to 30). For businesses which report for pay periods longer than one week, or for periods outside the reference period, data are adjusted to reflect the number of days worked during the reference period.

The "payroll employee" concept used in the SEPH includes all employees who received any pay or special payments at any point during the last pay period of the month, even if they became unemployed during the pay period. SEPH payroll employment excludes the self-employed, owners and partners of unincorporated businesses and professional practices, and employees in agriculture.

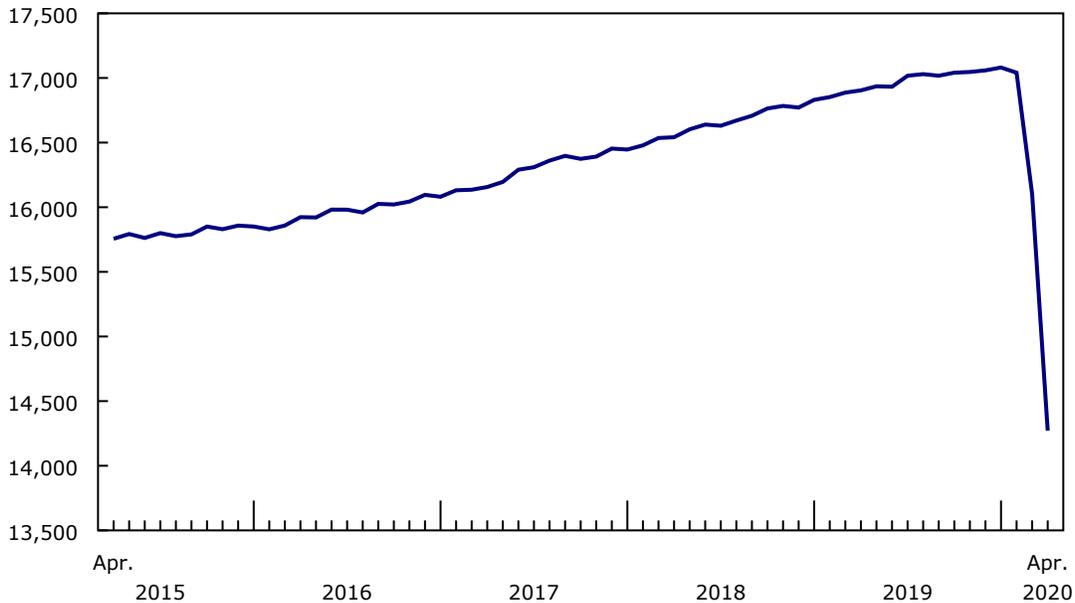
## Continuing decline in payroll employment in April

Following a decline of almost one million payroll jobs in March, payroll employment fell by an additional 1,830,200 (-11.4%) in April, bringing total losses since February to 2,769,500 (-16.3%). This is consistent with April data from the LFS, which showed total employment down 11.0% in the month and 15.7% since February.



**Chart 1**  
**Payroll employment declines by more than 2,700,000 from February to April**

payroll employment (thousands)



Source(s): Table 14-10-0220-01.

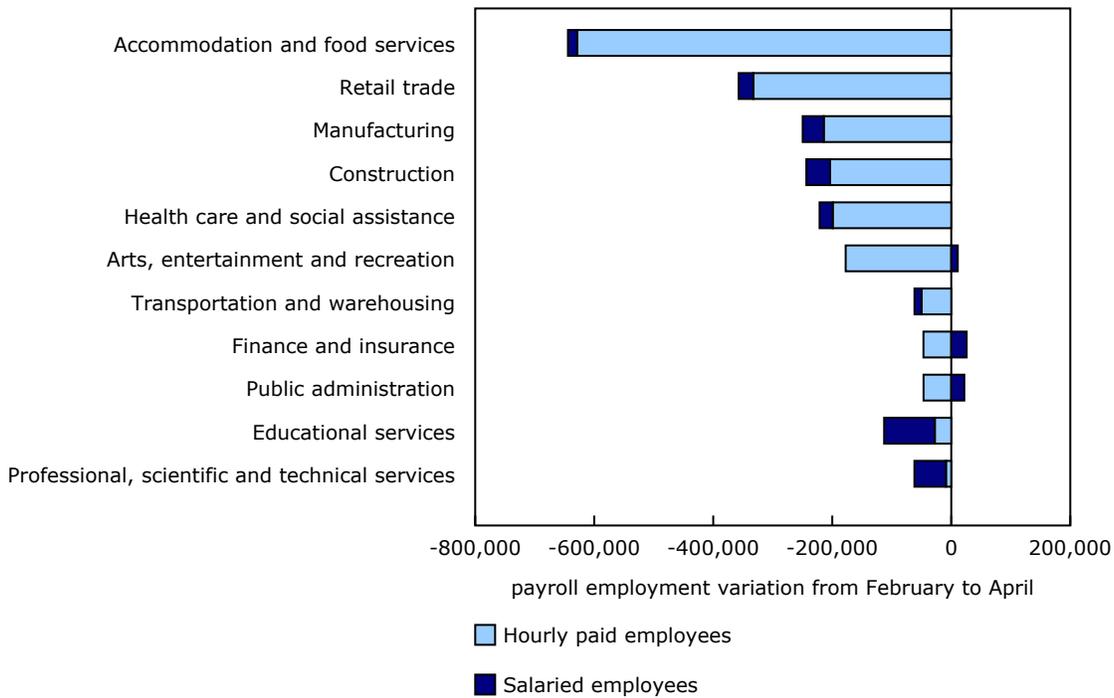
Compared with March, payroll employment declined in all provinces in April, with the largest relative decreases observed in Quebec (-13.1%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (-12.6%), consistent with April LFS results. Quebec also had the largest cumulative employment decline since February (-19.4%), followed by British Columbia (-16.8%), Newfoundland and Labrador (-16.3%), Alberta (-15.7%) and Ontario (-15.4%). For comparison, the smallest declines over the period were in Manitoba (-12.3%), New Brunswick (-13.3%) and Saskatchewan (-13.5%). Employment declines by province reflect a number of factors, including the severity of the restrictions and mandatory closures in each province, differences in the share of employment in each sector, as well as the severity of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Consistent with April LFS results, SEPH data show that both the goods-producing sector (-17.2%) and the services-producing sector (-16.0%) experienced significant job losses from February to April.

Compared with salaried employees, employees paid by the hour were harder hit by job losses in most sectors. From February to April, hourly-paid workers accounted for 84.0% of the total decline in payroll employment, despite accounting for less than 60% of all payroll employment in February.

**Chart 2**

**Larger job variation from February to April for hourly paid employees than for salaried employees**

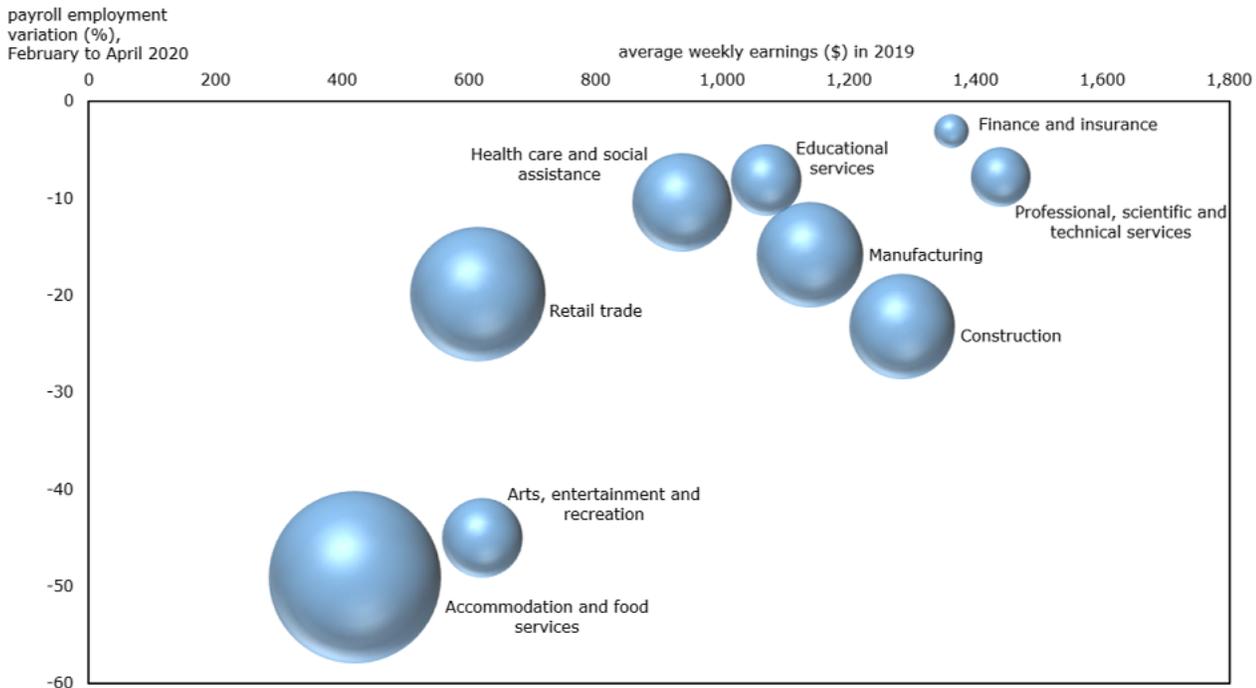


Source(s): Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (2612).

**Average weekly earnings increase as lower-paid workers are disproportionately affected by job losses**

Total weekly payroll (including overtime) for all employees fell 6.0% in April, bringing the total cumulative decline since February to 11.1%. Average weekly earnings rose 6.1% in April to \$1,112, partly the result of job losses being greater in sectors with relatively low average weekly earnings.

## Infographic 1 – Largest employment decline from February to April in lowest-paid sector



**Note(s):** Size of bubble represents contribution to total employment loss.  
**Source(s):** Statistics Canada, Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours.

## Total hours worked continue to decline, while overtime increases in hospitals and nursing and residential care facilities

Total hours worked fell 8.0% in April, bringing the total decline since February to 15.1%. At the same time, average weekly hours worked rebounded in April (+1.2 hours) following a decline in March (-0.6 hours), bringing the average to 33.6 hours per week. This was largely due to the remaining hourly paid employees in April working more hours per week on average (31.2 hours, up from 29.6 in March).

In hospitals, total hours worked increased from February to April and overtime earnings rose by 31.2% (not seasonally adjusted), likely reflecting the response of these institutions to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these increases, the number of payroll employees working in hospitals declined by 13,000 (-2.0%) from February to April, as many elective treatments and consultations were cancelled or delayed. Earnings in hospitals grew 5.0% year over year (to \$1,209 in April), mostly due to increases since February.

In the community care facilities for the elderly industry, overtime pay rose by more than half (+52.5%) from February to April (not seasonally adjusted). Employment for the nursing and residential care facilities subsector as a whole was little changed in both March and April.

Payroll employment in the health care and social assistance sector overall declined by 150,400 (-7.5%) in April, pushing total losses since February to 215,200 (-10.4%). Most of the decrease was in ambulatory health care services (which includes the offices of both physicians and dentists, among others) (-128,200 or -22.3%) and social assistance (-73,500 or -19.0%), as regular health appointments were cancelled and only essential workers had access to child-care services.

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## Employment changes in support activities for mining and oil and gas extraction

In previous shocks to oil prices or international demand—such as the 2014/2015 oil price shock—employment fell in support activities for mining and oil and gas extraction before declining in oil and gas extraction itself. From February to April, the number of payroll employees in such support activities declined by 11,200 (-15.8%), mainly in Alberta (not adjusted for seasonality). This was the largest two-month decline since comparable data became available in 2001. Average weekly earnings in this subsector declined to \$1,764 in April, a drop of 8.1% compared with February.

Despite record-low oil prices and declining domestic and international demand, payroll employment in oil and gas extraction was little changed from February to April, while earnings (\$2,786) were little changed compared with April 2019. Employment in this subsector has been relatively flat since late 2018.

## New insights into job losses in accommodation and food services and retail trade

As a result of the public health measures and business closures due to COVID-19, payroll employment in accommodation and food services fell by nearly half (-658,700 or -49.1%) from February to April. The majority of the decline was in the food services and drinking places subsector (-564,200 or -49.6%). Losses were heaviest in full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places.

The decrease in payroll employment in food services and drinking places from February to April represented one-fifth (20.4%) of total payroll employment losses over the period. Average weekly earnings in food services and drinking places were \$422 in April, the lowest among all subsectors, but up 11.2% compared with April 2019.

Retail trade had the second-largest decrease in payroll employment among all sectors from February to April (-402,000 or -19.9%). As reported in the release on retail trade, retail sales fell by 26.4% in April, following a 10.0% decline in March. While there were employment declines in all 12 retail trade subsectors from February to April, losses were heaviest in clothing and clothing accessories stores (-101,500 or -45.0%). Food and beverage stores (including grocery stores) and general merchandise stores (including department stores) were the least affected retail trade subsectors, with employment declines of 31,500 (-5.9%) and 14,400 (-5.9%) respectively. Average weekly earnings in the retail trade sector were \$638 in April, up 6.3% compared with 12 months earlier.

Heavy employment losses were recorded in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector, with employment falling by 141,700 (-45.0%) from February to April. This was largely due to losses in the amusement, gambling and recreation industries (-111,400 or -50.2%). A sharp decline was also observed in performing arts, spectator sports and related industries (-25,300 or -39.5%). As a result of employment losses among lower-paid workers in the sector, average weekly earnings in arts, entertainment and recreation were \$770 in April, up 25.8% from a year earlier.

## Large employment declines in transportation equipment manufacturing, and among specialty trade contractors

Within the goods-producing sector, job losses from February to April were most notable in manufacturing (-247,100 or -15.8%) and construction (-244,300 or -23.2%).

In manufacturing, declines in payroll employment over the period were widespread across subsectors. The largest loss in absolute terms was in transportation equipment manufacturing (-41,600 or -20.6%), which includes motor vehicle and parts manufacturing industries, where a combined 30,200 (-23.2%) jobs were lost from February to April. Data from the Monthly Survey of Manufacturing indicate that sales in transportation equipment fell by over three-quarters (-76.4%) in April, the largest decline on record, as every Canadian assembly plant had ceased operations. Average weekly earnings in the manufacturing sector were \$1,158 in April, up 2.0% year over year.

Within the construction sector, losses over the period were heaviest in the specialty trade contractors subsector (-159,900 or -25.3%), followed by construction of buildings (-54,500 or -21.2%) and heavy and civil engineering construction (-29,900 or -18.2%). Average weekly earnings in the sector were \$1,297 in April, up 2.7% compared with 12 months earlier.

## Looking ahead: Notable employment declines in export-dependent subsectors

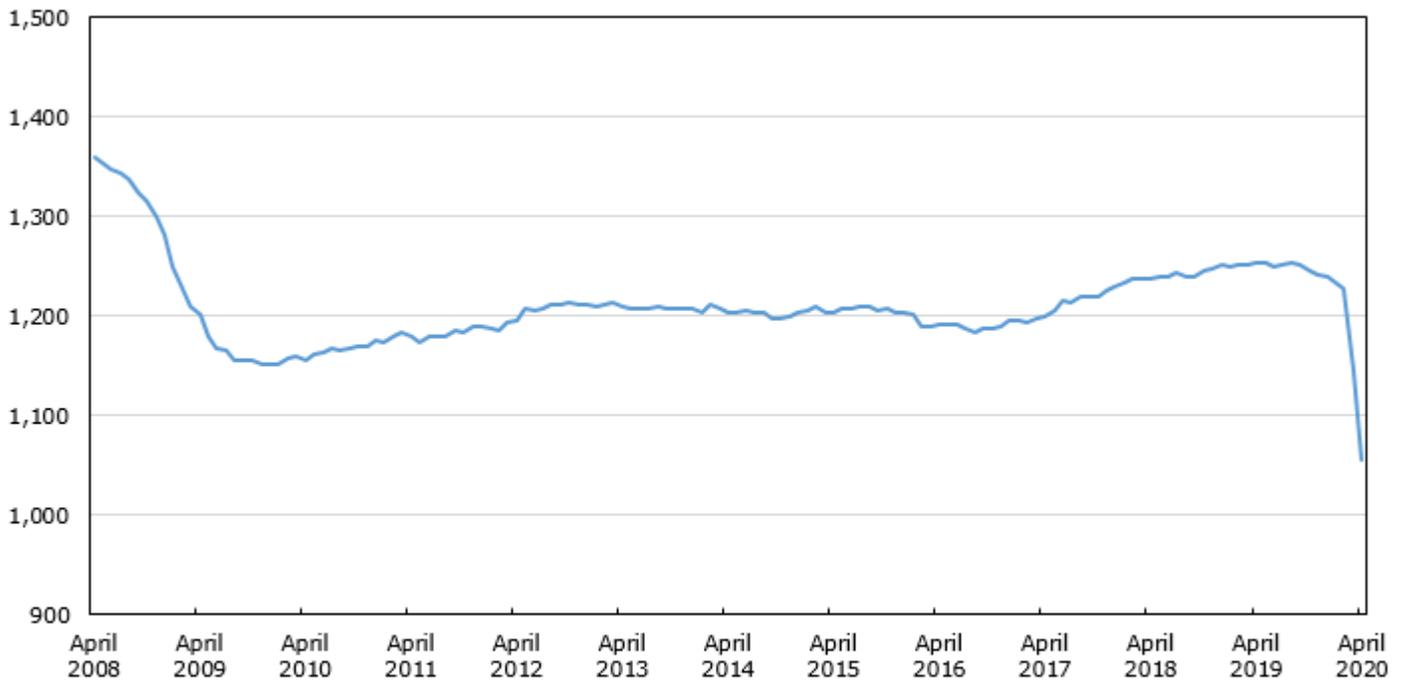
As the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 economic shutdown are gradually eased, labour market conditions will be affected by not only domestic physical distancing requirements, but by international demand and the restoration or adaptation of global supply chains.

As reported in the release on Canadian international merchandise trade, exports fell by 29.7% in April, led by motor vehicles and parts. Export-dependent subsectors—defined as the 23 subsectors where 35% or more of jobs were directly dependent on exports in 2016 (latest available data, excluding agriculture, fishing, hunting and trapping)—tend to involve a higher proportion of well-paying jobs. In February, for example, payroll employees in these subsectors earned 33.6% more on average per week than their counterparts in non-export-intensive subsectors.

From February to April, employment fell by 14.0% (-171,900) in these export-dependent sectors, similar to the 16.4% decline in all other sectors. Losses were greatest in manufacturing subsectors, including transportation equipment; furniture and related products; plastics and rubber products; machinery; miscellaneous; and wood product manufacturing.

### Infographic 2 – Payroll employment in export-dependent subsectors, Canada, April 2008 to April 2020

thousands



**Note(s):** Export-dependent subsectors are defined as the 23 subsectors (North American Industry Classification System) with the largest proportion of direct jobs dependent on exports in 2016 (35% or more of jobs in these subsectors were directly dependent on exports, excluding agriculture, fishing, hunting and trapping).

**Source(s):** Statistics Canada, Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours, custom tabulation.

SEPH results for May will be released on July 30, shedding light on how employment, earnings, and hours by detailed subsector were affected as some jurisdictions began to gradually ease their restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. May results from the LFS—reflecting labour market conditions for the week of May 10 to 16—showed that a partial recovery had begun in most provinces and some sectors.

June results from the LFS will be released on July 10, with these results reflecting labour market conditions during the week of June 14 to 20.

## Sustainable Development Goals

On January 1, 2016, the world officially began implementing the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)—the United Nations' transformative plan of action that addresses urgent global challenges over the next 15 years. The plan is based on 17 specific sustainable development goals.

The Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours is an example of how Statistics Canada supports the reporting on the global sustainable development goals. This release will be used to measure the following goals:



## Note to readers

The key objective of the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (SEPH) is to provide a monthly portrait of the level of earnings, employment and hours worked, by detailed industry, at the national, provincial and territorial levels.

SEPH estimates are produced by integrating information from three sources: a census of approximately one million payroll deduction records provided by the Canada Revenue Agency; the Business Payrolls Survey, which collects data from a sample of 15,000 establishments; and administrative records of federal, provincial and territorial public administration employment provided by these levels of government.

Estimates of average weekly earnings and hours worked are based on a sample and are therefore subject to sampling variability. This analysis focuses on differences between estimates that are statistically significant at the 68% confidence level. Payroll employment estimates are based on a census of administrative records and are not subject to sampling variability.

With each release of SEPH data, data for the preceding month are revised. Users are encouraged to use the most up-to-date data available for each month.

Statistics Canada also produces employment estimates from its Labour Force Survey (LFS). The LFS is a monthly household survey, the main objective of which is to divide the working-age population into three mutually exclusive groups: the employed (including the self-employed), the unemployed and those not in the labour force. This survey is the official source for the unemployment rate, and it collects data on the sociodemographic characteristics of all those in the labour market.

As a result of conceptual and methodological differences, estimates of changes from the SEPH and LFS differ from time to time. However, the trends in the data are quite similar. For a more in-depth discussion of the conceptual differences between employment measures from the LFS and SEPH, refer to Section 8 of the Guide to the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours ([72-203-G](#)).

Unless otherwise stated, this release presents seasonally adjusted data, which facilitate comparisons by removing the effects of seasonal variations. For more information on seasonal adjustment, see [Seasonally adjusted data – Frequently asked questions](#).

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*Non-farm payroll employment data are for all hourly and salaried employees, as well as for the "other employees" category, which includes piece-rate and commission-only employees.*

*Unless otherwise specified, average weekly hours data are for hourly and salaried employees only and exclude businesses that could not be classified to a North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code.*

*All earnings data include overtime and exclude businesses that could not be classified to a NAICS code. Earnings data are based on gross taxable payroll before source deductions. Average weekly earnings are derived by dividing total weekly earnings by the number of employees.*

**Real-time data tables**

*Real-time tables 14-10-0357-01, 14-10-0358-01, 14-10-0331-01 and 14-10-0332-01 will be updated on July 14.*

**Next release**

*Data on payroll employment, earnings and hours for May will be released on July 30.*

**Table 1**  
**Average weekly earnings (including overtime) for all employees – Seasonally adjusted**

	April 2019	March 2020 <sup>r</sup>	April 2020 <sup>p</sup>	March to April 2020	April 2019 to April 2020	March to April 2020	April 2019 to April 2020
	current dollars			change in current dollars		% change	
<b>Sector aggregate<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1,019.32</b>	<b>1,048.06</b>	<b>1,112.22</b>	<b>64.16</b>	<b>92.90</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>9.1</b>
Forestry, logging and support	1,141.59	1,144.76	1,189.66	44.90	48.07	3.9	4.2
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	2,143.82	2,171.37	2,081.58	-89.79	-62.24	-4.1	-2.9
Utilities	1,861.15	2,005.75	1,992.22	-13.53	131.07	-0.7	7.0
Construction	1,263.01	1,261.33	1,296.60	35.27	33.59	2.8	2.7
Manufacturing	1,135.12	1,123.46	1,157.75	34.29	22.63	3.1	2.0
Wholesale trade	1,216.22	1,228.59	1,256.01	27.42	39.79	2.2	3.3
Retail trade	599.95	601.67	637.78	36.11	37.83	6.0	6.3
Transportation and warehousing	1,090.85	1,109.24	1,143.04	33.80	52.19	3.0	4.8
Information and cultural industries	1,270.40	1,366.85	1,399.82	32.97	129.42	2.4	10.2
Finance and insurance	1,365.58	1,359.21	1,464.31	105.10	98.73	7.7	7.2
Real estate and rental and leasing	1,063.52	1,108.30	1,127.89	19.59	64.37	1.8	6.1
Professional, scientific and technical services	1,455.14	1,440.04	1,448.96	8.92	-6.18	0.6	-0.4
Management of companies and enterprises	1,512.19	1,418.73	1,594.55	175.82	82.36	12.4	5.4
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	834.14	862.72	871.75	9.03	37.61	1.0	4.5
Educational services	1,060.07	1,108.39	1,132.04	23.65	71.97	2.1	6.8
Health care and social assistance	931.68	960.10	992.12	32.02	60.44	3.3	6.5
Arts, entertainment and recreation	612.15	651.23	769.85	118.62	157.70	18.2	25.8
Accommodation and food services	410.32	427.39	466.49	39.10	56.17	9.1	13.7
Other services (excluding public administration)	842.58	881.47	947.90	66.43	105.32	7.5	12.5
Public administration	1,323.13	1,370.76	1,397.81	27.05	74.68	2.0	5.6
<b>Provinces and territories</b>							
Newfoundland and Labrador	1,066.11	1,084.42	1,118.07	33.65	51.96	3.1	4.9
Prince Edward Island	853.43	894.72	959.72	65.00	106.29	7.3	12.5
Nova Scotia	893.78	928.66	993.81	65.15	100.03	7.0	11.2
New Brunswick	935.14	970.55	1,031.33	60.78	96.19	6.3	10.3
Quebec	954.34	995.54	1,045.23	49.69	90.89	5.0	9.5
Ontario	1,040.39	1,064.91	1,129.32	64.41	88.93	6.0	8.5
Manitoba	942.40	942.89	1,024.11	81.22	81.71	8.6	8.7
Saskatchewan	1,041.38	1,061.77	1,122.08	60.31	80.70	5.7	7.7
Alberta	1,143.83	1,169.04	1,241.42	72.38	97.59	6.2	8.5
British Columbia	991.01	1,029.38	1,106.25	76.87	115.24	7.5	11.6
Yukon	1,159.90	1,224.62	1,252.54	27.92	92.64	2.3	8.0
Northwest Territories	1,470.06	1,491.23	1,609.25	118.02	139.19	7.9	9.5
Nunavut	1,477.48	1,471.26	1,459.44	-11.82	-18.04	-0.8	-1.2

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>p</sup> preliminary

1. Sector breakdown is based on the 2017 North American Industry Classification System Version 3.0.

**Note(s):** Earnings data are based on gross payroll before source deductions.

**Source(s):** Table 14-10-0223-01 (formerly CANSIM table 281-0063).

**Table 2**  
**Number of employees – Seasonally adjusted**

	April 2019	March 2020 <sup>r</sup>	April 2020 <sup>p</sup>	March to April 2020	April 2019 to April 2020	March to April 2020	April 2019 to April 2020
	thousands		change in thousands		% change		
<b>Sector aggregate<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>16,904.0</b>	<b>16,101.4</b>	<b>14,271.2</b>	<b>-1,830.2</b>	<b>-2,632.8</b>	<b>-11.4</b>	<b>-15.6</b>
Forestry, logging and support	39.7	35.2	33.1	-2.1	-6.6	-6.0	-16.6
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	199.8	196.3	186.3	-10.0	-13.5	-5.1	-6.8
Utilities	127.3	126.0	123.2	-2.8	-4.1	-2.2	-3.2
Construction	1,038.1	969.6	809.0	-160.5	-229.0	-16.6	-22.1
Manufacturing	1,583.6	1,453.0	1,313.2	-139.9	-270.5	-9.6	-17.1
Wholesale trade	821.0	778.4	725.9	-52.5	-95.1	-6.7	-11.6
Retail trade	2,019.1	1,874.5	1,614.6	-259.9	-404.4	-13.9	-20.0
Transportation and warehousing	775.0	753.7	718.6	-35.1	-56.4	-4.7	-7.3
Information and cultural industries	343.6	337.5	317.5	-20.0	-26.1	-5.9	-7.6
Finance and insurance	749.6	749.0	729.8	-19.1	-19.8	-2.6	-2.6
Real estate and rental and leasing	299.6	264.9	235.7	-29.2	-64.0	-11.0	-21.3
Professional, scientific and technical services	961.8	958.5	914.6	-43.9	-47.2	-4.6	-4.9
Management of companies and enterprises	108.5	113.2	106.2	-7.0	-2.3	-6.2	-2.1
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	820.5	787.1	701.6	-85.5	-118.9	-10.9	-14.5
Educational services	1,349.0	1,348.9	1,256.0	-92.9	-93.1	-6.9	-6.9
Health care and social assistance	2,014.4	1,999.9	1,849.5	-150.4	-164.8	-7.5	-8.2
Arts, entertainment and recreation	311.2	284.3	172.9	-111.4	-138.3	-39.2	-44.4
Accommodation and food services	1,334.8	1,126.5	683.1	-443.4	-651.7	-39.4	-48.8
Other services (excluding public administration)	556.0	500.1	399.5	-100.6	-156.4	-20.1	-28.1
Public administration	1,143.2	1,154.3	1,131.2	-23.2	-12.0	-2.0	-1.0
<b>Provinces and territories</b>							
Newfoundland and Labrador	217.5	207.1	181.0	-26.1	-36.5	-12.6	-16.8
Prince Edward Island	68.8	67.1	60.3	-6.8	-8.6	-10.2	-12.4
Nova Scotia	422.6	408.6	366.3	-42.3	-56.3	-10.4	-13.3
New Brunswick	322.9	311.7	281.2	-30.5	-41.7	-9.8	-12.9
Quebec	3,765.2	3,545.4	3,082.0	-463.4	-683.2	-13.1	-18.1
Ontario	6,591.0	6,307.6	5,630.4	-677.2	-960.6	-10.7	-14.6
Manitoba	613.3	586.6	536.8	-49.8	-76.5	-8.5	-12.5
Saskatchewan	483.4	466.5	418.7	-47.7	-64.7	-10.2	-13.4
Alberta	2,021.7	1,904.5	1,692.3	-212.2	-329.4	-11.1	-16.3
British Columbia	2,331.6	2,230.5	1,961.2	-269.2	-370.4	-12.1	-15.9
Yukon	22.3	21.5	20.1	-1.4	-2.3	-6.6	-10.1
Northwest Territories	26.4	25.4	23.1	-2.3	-3.4	-9.1	-12.7
Nunavut	17.2	18.9	17.8	-1.1	0.5	-6.0	3.2

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>p</sup> preliminary

1. Sector breakdown is based on the 2017 North American Industry Classification System Version 3.0.

Source(s): Table 14-10-0223-01 (formerly CANSIM table 281-0063).

**Available tables:** [14-10-0201-01](#), [14-10-0203-01](#), [14-10-0205-01](#), [14-10-0209-01](#), [14-10-0211-01](#), [14-10-0213-01](#), [14-10-0214-01](#), [14-10-0216-01](#), [14-10-0218-01](#), [14-10-0220-01](#) to [14-10-0223-01](#) and [14-10-0255-01](#).

**Definitions, data sources and methods:** survey number [2612](#).

More information about the concepts and use of the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours is available in the *Guide to the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours* ([72-203-G](#)).

The product "[Earnings and payroll employment in brief: Interactive app](#)" ([14200001](#)) is now available. This interactive data visualization application provides a comprehensive picture of the Canadian labour market using the most recent data from the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours. The estimates are seasonally adjusted and available by province and largest industrial sector. Historical estimates going

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back 10 years are also included. The interactive application allows users to quickly and easily explore and personalize the information presented. Combine multiple provinces and industrial sectors to create your own labour market domains of interest.

For more information, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)).

To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Myriam Hazel (343-550-6742; [myriam.hazel@canada.ca](mailto:myriam.hazel@canada.ca)), Centre for Labour Market Information.