Employment Insurance Coverage Survey, 2019

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New data from the 2019 Employment Insurance Coverage Survey (EICS) provide insights into the proportion of Canadians using the Employment Insurance (EI) program during the calendar year 2019. These data serve as a baseline for understanding the impact of COVID-19 on Canadian workers in 2020, including the introduction of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) in March and changes to the EI program introduced in September.

In 2019, about 1.1 million Canadians were unemployed at some point during the year. Of these, 61.5% (669,600) had contributed to the EI program. Among those who had contributed to EI and had a valid job separation (for example, laid off or quit for just cause), 82.4% had accumulated enough insurable hours to be eligible for regular EI benefits, down from 87.4% in 2018 but little changed from 84.3% in 2017.

In addition to regular EI benefits, information on maternity and parental benefits is also available. In 2019, 77.7% of all new mothers (those with a child aged 12 months or less) had insurable employment, that is, employment for which EI premiums were paid. This proportion is virtually unchanged from 2018. Among these mothers, 90.3% received maternity and/or parental benefits in 2019, little changed compared with 2018.

In December 2017, changes to the EI program were introduced, including an extended parental benefits option. The full impact of this change was not felt in 2018, as more than 40% of mothers in the EICS receiving EI benefits in that year had their children before the change was introduced. In 2019, 32.3% of mothers intended to take more than 12 months of leave, compared with 22.9% in 2018 and 21.7% in 2017. In March 2019, parents choosing to share parental benefits were able to receive additional benefit weeks available exclusively to the second parent. The proportion of spouses or partners of recent mothers who claimed or intended to claim parental benefits rose to 35.4% in 2019 from 31.3% in 2018 and 29.1% in 2017.

Note to readers

The Employment Insurance Coverage Survey (EICS) sheds light on the coverage of the Employment Insurance (EI) program. It provides an overview of who does or does not have access to EI regular benefits as well as to maternity and parental benefits. The survey is administered in the provinces to a sub-sample of respondents of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) four times a year, namely in April, July, November and January.

In 2019, the total sample size for the EICS was 13,229 people, composed of unemployed individuals (as defined by the LFS) and other individuals who, given their recent status in the labour market, were potentially eligible for EI.

To be eligible to receive regular benefits, unemployed individuals have to: (a) contribute to the EI program, (b) meet the criteria for job separation and (c) have accumulated enough insurable hours over the past 12 months.

Job separations that are deemed invalid to receive regular benefits include quitting a job without just cause (including leaving a job to go to school, dissatisfaction with the job and retirement) and dismissal with cause.

*The **eligibility rate** is the number of unemployed people who had accumulated enough insurable hours to be eligible to receive regular EI benefits, expressed as a proportion of unemployed people who had contributed to the EI program and separated from their job for a reason deemed valid.*

The survey is conducted on behalf of Employment and Social Development Canada.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 4428.

The product *Employment Insurance Coverage Survey: Public Use Microdata Files,* 2019 (**89M0025X**) is now available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; **STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca**) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; **STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca**).