

Payroll employment, earnings and hours, and job vacancies, January 2021

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Tuesday, March 30, 2021

January data from the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (SEPH) and the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey (JVWS) are now available. SEPH provides monthly information on payroll employment, earnings and hours worked in Canada, the provinces and the territories. In conjunction with results from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), data from the SEPH and JVWS contribute to a fuller understanding of labour market conditions.

The ongoing and additional public health measures put in place in many provinces in late December were maintained throughout the month of January. In Ontario, tighter restrictions already in place for most of the southern regions were extended to the rest of the province on Boxing Day. In Quebec, non-essential retail businesses were closed as of Christmas Day, while a curfew implemented on January 14 further affected the operating hours of some businesses. Public health measures affecting retail stores, in-person dining, recreation facilities and personal care services also remained in place in Alberta and Manitoba.

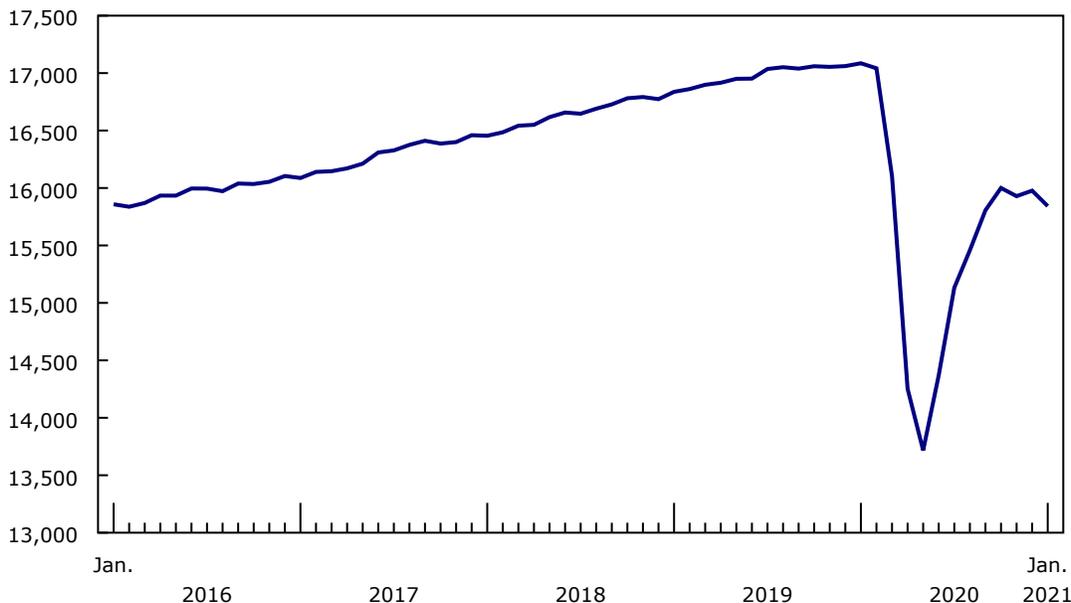
Payroll employment falls in January

Payroll employment fell by 134,500 (-0.8%) in January, following an increase of 48,000 (+0.3%) in December. The largest declines were in Ontario (-66,100; -1.1%) and Quebec (-43,700; -1.2%). Nationally, losses were driven by sectors affected by tightened public health measures, including retail trade, accommodation and food services, and arts, entertainment and recreation. January LFS results included a drop in employment of 213,000, driven by losses in the Quebec and Ontario retail trade sectors (not seasonally adjusted).

The total number of payroll employees in January was 1.2 million (-7.0%) lower than in February 2020.

Chart 1
Payroll employment declines in the first month of 2021

payroll employment (thousands)



Source(s): Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (2612), table 14-10-0220-01.



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Average weekly earnings up in January

Average weekly earnings were \$1,135 in January, up 1.8% compared with December. On a year-over-year basis, earnings grew 8.3%, as job losses since February 2020 have been concentrated among hourly paid—and largely lower-paid—employees. In January, the number of hourly paid employees was 10.0% below its pre-COVID level, compared with a gap of 3.2% for salaried employees.

Total hours worked decline and average weekly hours worked rise

Total hours worked fell 0.5% in January and were 5.2% below their pre-COVID February level, compared with a gap of 16.5% in May. Average hours worked per week rose 0.6% (+0.2 hours) in January to 33.9 hours. In February 2020, payroll employees worked an average of 33.0 hours per week. Average hours worked can be influenced by a number of factors, such as compositional changes in employment by industry or changes in the typical work schedule.

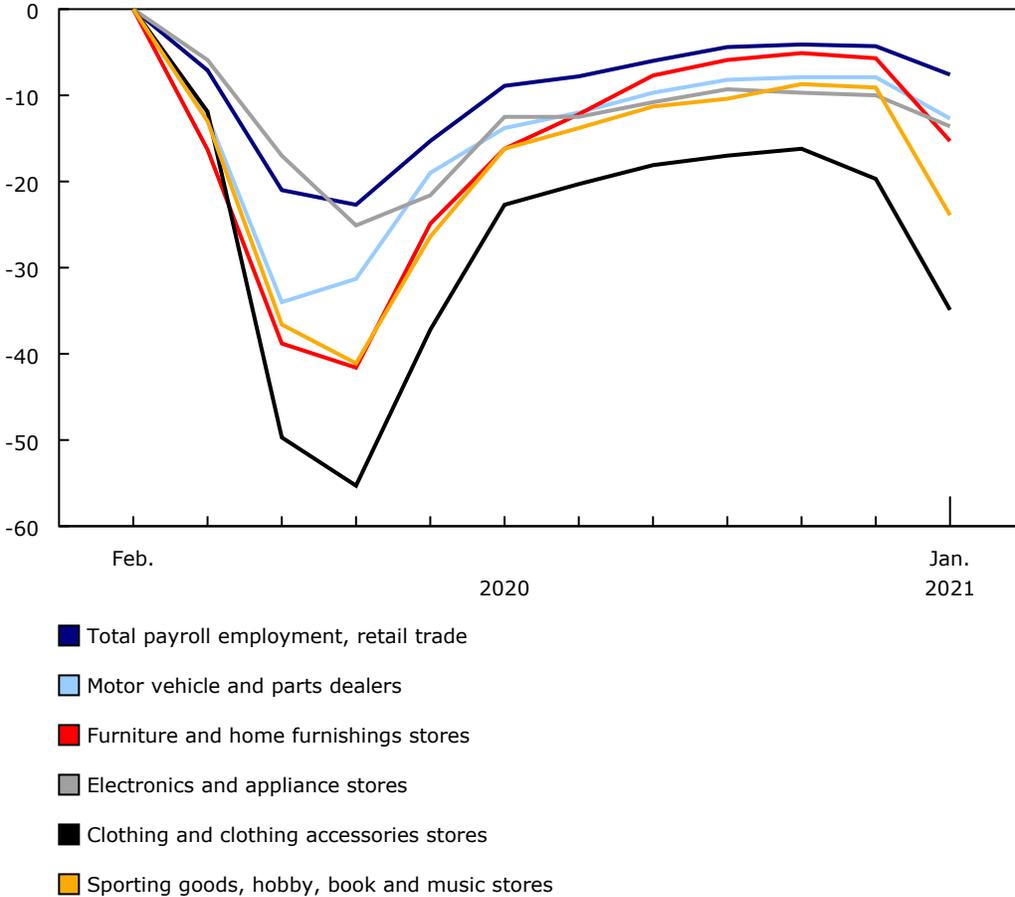
Employment falls in four sectors directly affected by tighter public health measures

Payroll employment in retail trade fell by 65,900 (-3.4%) in January, notably in Ontario and Quebec where tighter public health measures were put in place in late December. While January LFS data reflected this decline in retail trade as well, data from the SEPH are particularly useful in shedding new light on employment by subsector. January SEPH results showed that declines were spread across most subsectors, led by clothing and clothing accessories stores (-34,500; -19.0%), the hardest hit subsector within retail trade since the start of the pandemic. In contrast, employment increased in food and beverage stores (+10,100; +1.9%) in January. Core [retail sales](#)—which exclude gasoline stations and motor vehicle and parts dealers—fell for the second consecutive month (-1.4%) in January, because of lower sales at non-essential retailers. Year over year, average weekly earnings in the sector increased 4.0% to \$650.

Chart 2

Clothing and clothing accessories stores drive the January payroll employment decline in retail trade

payroll employment change (%) compared with February 2020



Source(s): Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (2612), table 14-10-0220-01.

Payroll employment in accommodation and food services declined for the third consecutive month, down by 44,000 (-4.7%) in January, with full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places, traveller accommodation, and drinking places continuing a downward trend that started in autumn 2020. In January, most of the declines were in Ontario, Alberta and Quebec. Year over year, average weekly earnings in the sector increased 3.0% to \$445.

In arts, entertainment and recreation, employment fell by 29,500 (-13.6%) in January, with the largest decreases in other amusement and recreation industries—which include recreational, sports and fitness centres—and gambling industries. Compared with January 2020, average weekly earnings in the sector rose 17.9% to \$742.

According to data from the [Canadian Survey on Business Conditions](#), nearly one-quarter of businesses in accommodation and food services (24.9%), and arts, entertainment and recreation (23.3%) reported that they could continue to operate at their current level of revenue and expenditures for less than 12 months before having to consider closure or bankruptcy, a larger proportion than the average across all businesses (10.1%).

In the "other services" sector, employment decreased by 18,400 (-3.8%), mainly in the personal care services industry, including hair care and esthetic services. According to LFS data, about 9 in 10 employees in personal care services in 2020 were women.

Payroll employment gains in construction led by Quebec and Ontario

Payroll employment in construction rose by 24,800 (+2.4%) in January, driven by increases in Quebec (+14,700; +7.2%) and Ontario (+7,100; +2.0%). Employment gains in January were largest among specialty trade contractors (+17,300; +2.8%) and in construction of buildings (+8,900; +3.6%).

Notable employment gains in residential building construction (+6,400; +4.5%) drove the increases in construction of buildings. [Investment in residential construction](#) rose 3.9% to a record \$11.6 billion in January.

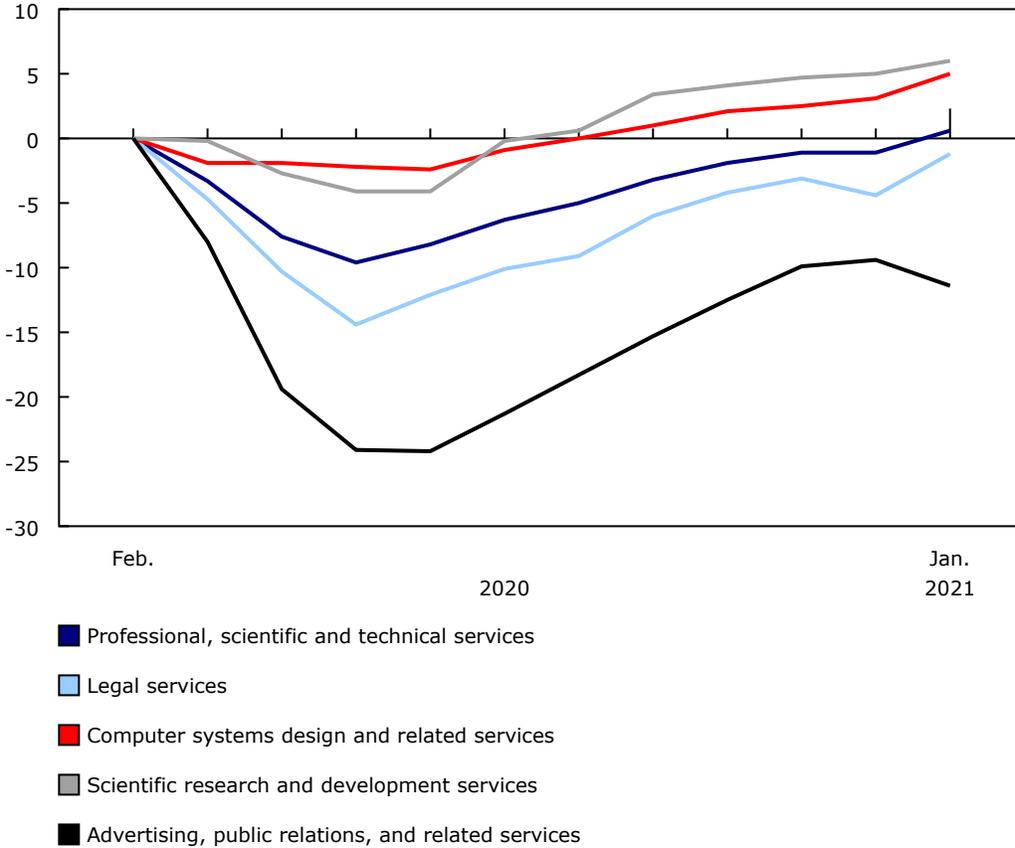
Average weekly earnings in construction were \$1,352 in January, little changed compared with 12 months earlier.

Employment in professional, scientific and technical services surpasses pre-pandemic level in January

Payroll employment increased in professional, scientific and technical services in January (+16,300; +1.7%), surpassing its pre-pandemic level for the first time. Employment in scientific research and development services was the furthest above its pre-pandemic level (+6.0%), followed by computer systems design and related services (+5.0%), while advertising, public relations, and related services was the furthest below its February level (-11.4%).

Chart 3
Payroll employment in professional, scientific and technical services surpasses its pre-pandemic level in January

payroll employment change (%) compared with February 2020



Source(s): Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (2612), table 14-10-0220-01.

The recovery of payroll employment in professional, scientific and technical services might be due to the fact that most jobs (84%) in this sector can potentially be performed from home, compared with an overall average of 39% across all sectors, according to a [previous Statistics Canada release on working from home](#).

Year over year, average weekly earnings in professional, scientific and technical services were up 3.0% to \$1,512.

Monthly results from the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey

In January, Canadian employers were actively recruiting for an estimated 484,400 positions (not seasonally adjusted). The job vacancy rate, which represents vacant positions as a proportion of all positions (vacant and occupied) was 3.0%, following vacancy rates between 3.0% and 3.9% from October to December 2020 (not seasonally adjusted). While monthly and quarterly job vacancy statistics are not directly comparable, the quarterly job vacancy rate was 3.1% in the first quarter of 2020.

Health care and social assistance continues to have the most vacancies

In January, health care and social assistance had more job vacancies (88,600) than any other sector for the third consecutive month, and had a job vacancy rate of 4.1% (not seasonally adjusted). Prior to the pandemic, the quarterly vacancy rate in this sector ranged from 3.0% to 3.3% from the first quarter of 2019 to the first quarter of 2020. Results from the [Canadian Survey on Business Conditions](#) showed that 26.8% of businesses in health care and social assistance expect to face labour shortages in the first few months of 2021, higher than the average for all sectors (19.5%).

Along with surpassing its pre-COVID level of payroll employment in January, professional, scientific and technical services also had the second-highest vacancy rate (4.5%) among the sectors, and 47,500 vacancies (not seasonally adjusted). Prior to the pandemic, the highest quarterly vacancy rates in this sector were in the first quarters of 2019 (4.2%) and 2020 (4.1%). The relatively high vacancy rate in this sector corresponds to a seasonal increase in demand for some services in this sector, such as tax preparation, during the first few months of the year.

Looking ahead

February SEPH data—to be released on April 29—will provide detailed information on sectors and subsectors that may have benefited from the loosening of COVID-19 public health measures, including retail stores, bars and restaurants and personal care services.

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 following 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

Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours

With this release of January 2021 estimates, seasonally adjusted data have been revised based on the latest seasonal factors. Seasonally adjusted estimates have been revised historically back to 2001. Historical revisions have also been made to a small number of industries (four-digit level of the North American Classification System).

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.

Payroll employment, as measured by the SEPH, refers to the number of employees receiving pay or benefits (employment income) during a given month. The survey excludes the self-employed, owners and partners of unincorporated businesses and professional practices, and employees in the agricultural sector.

SEPH estimates are produced by integrating information from three sources: a census of approximately 1 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 occasionally. However, the trends in the data are 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 because the effects of seasonal variations are removed. For more information on seasonal adjustment, see [Seasonally adjusted data – Frequently asked questions](#).

Non-farm payroll employment data are for all hourly and salaried employees, and 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.

Job Vacancy and Wage Survey

Beginning with the release of October 2020 data, new preliminary monthly estimates from the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey (JVWS) are released on a monthly basis. These estimates provide more timely information on the number of job vacancies and the job vacancy rate by province and by industrial sector.

The JVWS collection is done on a quarterly basis. The quarterly sample of business locations is allocated to the three collection months of the quarter, approximately balanced by province and by industrial sector across each of the three months. This allows for the production of both quarterly and monthly estimates.

The JVWS also provides comprehensive quarterly data on job vacancies by industrial sector and detailed occupations for Canada, the provinces, territories and economic regions, offered hourly wage and job vacancy characteristics. Quarterly data for the second and third quarters of 2020 are unavailable due to survey operations being temporarily suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic. More information about the concepts and use of data from the JVWS is available in the Guide to the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey ([75-514-G](#)).

Preliminary monthly estimates are produced for job vacancies, job vacancy rates, and payroll employment, using available responses from business locations sampled in the corresponding reference month. The reference period for JWWS is the first day of the respective month.

These preliminary monthly estimates are revised and finalized when the corresponding quarterly estimates are released or shortly thereafter. Users are encouraged to use the most up-to-date data available for each month. This release includes revised monthly estimates for October, November, and December 2020.

JVWS estimates are not seasonally adjusted. Therefore, month-to-month and quarter-to-quarter comparisons should be interpreted with caution as they may reflect seasonal movements. In addition, year-over-year comparisons between estimates of different frequencies (month vs quarter) should be interpreted with caution as job vacancy statistics can vary month to month within a quarter.

While JWWS employment is calibrated to Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (SEPH), SEPH payroll employment and JWWS preliminary monthly employment figures may differ due to calibration grouping and differences in scope and reference period.

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 April 19.

Next release

Data on payroll employment, earnings and hours and job vacancies for February will be released on April 29.

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

	January 2020	December 2020 ^r	January 2021 ^p	December 2020 to January 2021	January 2020 to January 2021	December 2020 to January 2021	January 2020 to January 2021
	current dollars			change in current dollars		% change	
Sector aggregate¹	1,047.92	1,115.14	1,135.41	20.27	87.49	1.8	8.3
Forestry, logging and support	1,231.87	1,241.31	1,236.49	-4.82	4.62	-0.4	0.4
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	2,188.66	2,059.19	2,083.37	24.18	-105.29	1.2	-4.8
Utilities	2,024.97	1,809.75	1,880.10	70.35	-144.87	3.9	-7.2
Construction	1,331.65	1,330.55	1,352.05	21.50	20.40	1.6	1.5
Manufacturing	1,154.05	1,192.58	1,199.40	6.82	45.35	0.6	3.9
Wholesale trade	1,226.74	1,347.38	1,363.20	15.82	136.46	1.2	11.1
Retail trade	625.55	633.80	650.30	16.50	24.75	2.6	4.0
Transportation and warehousing	1,134.70	1,176.93	1,174.12	-2.81	39.42	-0.2	3.5
Information and cultural industries	1,350.92	1,494.32	1,559.76	65.44	208.84	4.4	15.5
Finance and insurance	1,356.36	1,548.76	1,510.80	-37.96	154.44	-2.5	11.4
Real estate and rental and leasing	1,001.34	1,121.57	1,173.73	52.16	172.39	4.7	17.2
Professional, scientific and technical services	1,468.73	1,490.50	1,512.31	21.81	43.58	1.5	3.0
Management of companies and enterprises	1,655.25	1,534.95	1,544.88	9.93	-110.37	0.6	-6.7
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	876.47	905.64	910.53	4.89	34.06	0.5	3.9
Educational services	1,073.77	1,181.60	1,193.81	12.21	120.04	1.0	11.2
Health care and social assistance	956.73	1,032.18	1,017.27	-14.91	60.54	-1.4	6.3
Arts, entertainment and recreation	629.79	697.11	742.22	45.11	112.43	6.5	17.9
Accommodation and food services	431.71	441.18	444.79	3.61	13.08	0.8	3.0
Other services (excluding public administration)	862.95	927.86	968.95	41.09	106.00	4.4	12.3
Public administration	1,360.93	1,450.09	1,451.37	1.28	90.44	0.1	6.6
Provinces and territories							
Newfoundland and Labrador	1,069.74	1,079.85	1,085.55	5.70	15.81	0.5	1.5
Prince Edward Island	882.33	930.97	955.37	24.40	73.04	2.6	8.3
Nova Scotia	932.23	1,005.03	992.38	-12.65	60.15	-1.3	6.5
New Brunswick	962.39	1,007.31	1,011.12	3.81	48.73	0.4	5.1
Quebec	994.37	1,052.76	1,080.44	27.68	86.07	2.6	8.7
Ontario	1,064.01	1,148.49	1,178.95	30.46	114.94	2.7	10.8
Manitoba	952.21	1,019.06	1,028.90	9.84	76.69	1.0	8.1
Saskatchewan	1,047.80	1,097.90	1,094.22	-3.68	46.42	-0.3	4.4
Alberta	1,185.29	1,201.81	1,238.65	36.84	53.36	3.1	4.5
British Columbia	1,025.98	1,109.54	1,115.99	6.45	90.01	0.6	8.8
Yukon	1,199.45	1,278.44	1,272.35	-6.09	72.90	-0.5	6.1
Northwest Territories	1,467.33	1,503.28	1,534.83	31.55	67.50	2.1	4.6
Nunavut	1,564.92	1,498.25	1,505.06	6.81	-59.86	0.5	-3.8

^r revised

^p 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

	January 2020	December 2020 ^r	January 2021 ^P	December 2020 to January 2021	January 2020 to January 2021	December 2020 to January 2021	January 2020 to January 2021
	thousands			change in thousands		% change	
Sector aggregate¹	17,085.6	15,976.8	15,842.3	-134.5	-1,243.3	-0.8	-7.3
Forestry, logging and support	36.4	37.1	37.7	0.6	1.3	1.7	3.7
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	200.4	185.0	184.0	-1.0	-16.4	-0.5	-8.2
Utilities	128.5	122.7	121.6	-1.1	-6.9	-0.9	-5.4
Construction	1,049.9	1,013.1	1,037.9	24.8	-12.0	2.4	-1.1
Manufacturing	1,563.7	1,484.8	1,482.4	-2.4	-81.3	-0.2	-5.2
Wholesale trade	823.9	781.5	778.9	-2.6	-45.0	-0.3	-5.5
Retail trade	2,004.1	1,920.2	1,854.3	-65.9	-149.8	-3.4	-7.5
Transportation and warehousing	798.4	765.0	765.7	0.8	-32.7	0.1	-4.1
Information and cultural industries	357.7	343.3	341.9	-1.4	-15.7	-0.4	-4.4
Finance and insurance	754.6	739.7	738.9	-0.9	-15.7	-0.1	-2.1
Real estate and rental and leasing	292.6	253.5	253.0	-0.5	-39.6	-0.2	-13.5
Professional, scientific and technical services	991.5	980.4	996.7	16.3	5.3	1.7	0.5
Management of companies and enterprises	112.8	115.1	116.4	1.3	3.6	1.2	3.2
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	846.1	785.6	800.5	14.9	-45.6	1.9	-5.4
Educational services	1,372.8	1,312.9	1,298.6	-14.3	-74.2	-1.1	-5.4
Health care and social assistance	2,080.0	2,080.5	2,084.2	3.7	4.1	0.2	0.2
Arts, entertainment and recreation	313.5	216.5	187.0	-29.5	-126.5	-13.6	-40.4
Accommodation and food services	1,343.9	933.2	889.2	-44.0	-454.7	-4.7	-33.8
Other services (excluding public administration)	556.3	489.9	471.5	-18.4	-84.8	-3.8	-15.2
Public administration	1,158.4	1,146.8	1,133.0	-13.8	-25.4	-1.2	-2.2
Provinces and territories							
Newfoundland and Labrador	216.1	208.2	207.5	-0.7	-8.6	-0.3	-4.0
Prince Edward Island	70.4	68.4	69.0	0.5	-1.4	0.8	-2.0
Nova Scotia	425.2	409.4	411.6	2.2	-13.6	0.5	-3.2
New Brunswick	324.9	323.3	323.9	0.6	-1.0	0.2	-0.3
Quebec	3,833.4	3,616.9	3,573.2	-43.7	-260.2	-1.2	-6.8
Ontario	6,663.5	6,182.7	6,116.6	-66.1	-547.0	-1.1	-8.2
Manitoba	618.9	570.1	576.6	6.5	-42.3	1.1	-6.8
Saskatchewan	484.5	462.6	461.9	-0.7	-22.6	-0.2	-4.7
Alberta	2,019.0	1,841.5	1,809.3	-32.2	-209.7	-1.8	-10.4
British Columbia	2,361.9	2,227.8	2,226.1	-1.7	-135.9	-0.1	-5.8
Yukon	22.5	22.2	22.6	0.4	0.1	1.9	0.5
Northwest Territories	26.3	25.2	25.1	-0.1	-1.2	-0.3	-4.4
Nunavut	19.0	18.6	19.0	0.4	-0.0	2.1	-0.2

^r revised

^P 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).

Table 3
Job vacancies and job vacancy rate, unadjusted for seasonality¹

	January 2021 ^P Payroll employment ²	January 2021 ^P Job vacancies	January 2021 ^P Job vacancy rate
	thousands		%
Sector aggregate³	15,439.9	484.4	3.0
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	222.2	12.1	5.2
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	186.0	5.2	2.7
Utilities	123.2	1.3	1.1
Construction	1,007.5	38.9	3.7
Manufacturing	1,488.6	51.0	3.3
Wholesale trade	788.3	21.2	2.6
Retail trade	1,997.5	44.0	2.2
Transportation and warehousing	783.8	26.8	3.3
Information and cultural industries	337.4	8.2	2.4
Finance and insurance	754.5	27.8	3.6
Real estate and rental and leasing	259.4	5.2	2.0
Professional, scientific and technical services	997.9	47.5	4.5
Management of companies and enterprises	116.0	2.8	2.4
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	780.1	30.4	3.7
Educational services	1,405.8	16.2	1.1
Health care and social assistance	2,087.3	88.6	4.1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	191.7	3.8	1.9
Accommodation and food services	926.7	30.1	3.1
Other services (excluding public administration)	496.0	15.1	2.9
Public administration ⁴	490.1	8.3	1.7
Provinces and territories			
Newfoundland and Labrador	180.0	2.9	1.6
Prince Edward Island	59.9	1.4 ^E	2.3 ^E
Nova Scotia	385.1	10.7	2.7
New Brunswick	302.7	9.1	2.9
Quebec	3,476.5	130.8	3.6
Ontario	6,003.6	183.6	3.0
Manitoba	547.0	14.1	2.5
Saskatchewan	457.8	11.1	2.4
Alberta	1,809.5	36.8	2.0
British Columbia	2,166.6	81.9	3.6
Yukon	17.1	0.8 ^E	4.6
Northwest Territories	20.3	0.8	3.9
Nunavut	13.7	0.3 ^E	2.0 ^E

^P preliminary

^E use with caution

1. Estimates are preliminary before the associated quarterly data are released.

2. JWWS employment estimates may differ from SEPH employment estimates due to calibration grouping and differences in scope and reference period. Additionally, JWWS data are not seasonally adjusted.

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

4. Excluding provincial, territorial and federal public administration, as well as international and other extraterritorial public administration.

Source(s): Tables [14-10-0371-01](#) and [14-10-0372-01](#).

Available tables: [14-10-0201-01](#) to [14-10-0206-01](#) , [14-10-0208-01](#) to [14-10-0223-01](#) , [14-10-0255-01](#), [14-10-0371-01](#) and [14-10-0372-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [2612](#) and [5217](#).

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

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, 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).