

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

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February data from the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (SEPH) and the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey (JVWS) are now available. The SEPH provides an account of payroll employment—that is, the number of employees receiving pay or benefits during a given month—as well as earnings and hours worked. In conjunction with results from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), which provides an account of the number of people working during a specific week in the month, data from the SEPH and the JVWS contribute to a fuller understanding of labour market conditions in Canada.

Payroll employment increases in February

The number of employees receiving pay or benefits from their employer—measured in the SEPH as payroll employment—increased by 43,400 (+0.3%) in February. This followed a notable decline in January, when employment losses associated with the tightening of public health restrictions were recorded by both the SEPH and the LFS. The February increase in SEPH payroll employment was smaller than the LFS employment increase (+259,000; +1.4%), partly because of lags in new or returning employees receiving their first paycheques.

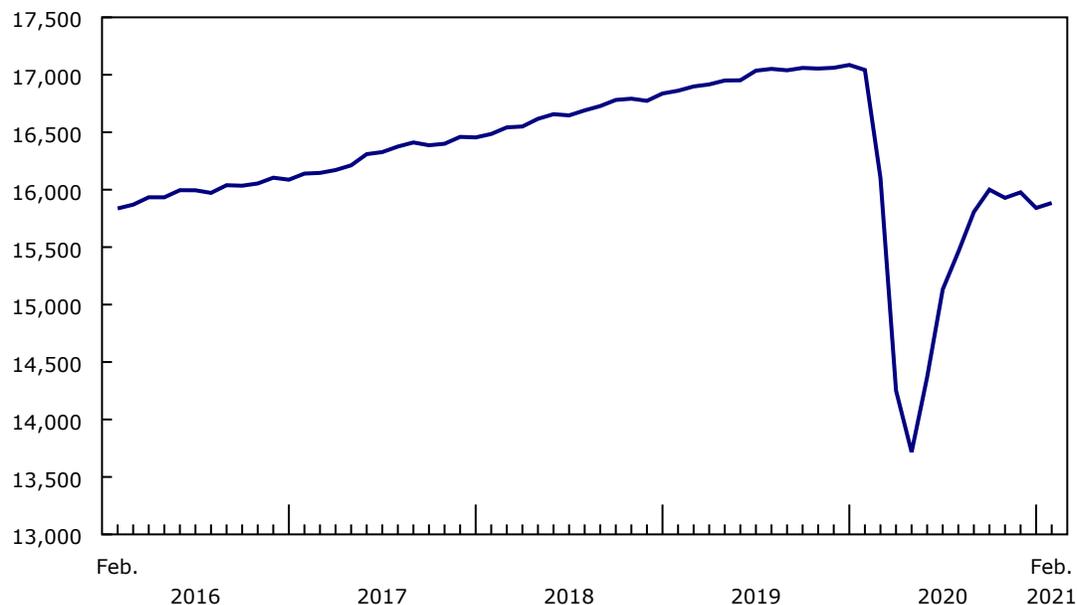
The largest increases in payroll employment were in Quebec (+27,200; +0.8%), Alberta (+19,600; +1.1%) and British Columbia (+9,400; +0.4%). These increases were partially offset by a decrease in Ontario (-20,800; -0.3%), where public health restrictions remained in place for Toronto, Peel and North Bay Parry Sound throughout the month. Consistent with the February LFS results, the largest increases were in the accommodation and food services (+14,700; +1.7%) and retail trade (+13,300; +0.7%) sectors.

The total number of payroll employees in February was down 1.2 million (-6.8%) from one year earlier, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Chart 1 Payroll employment increases in February after dip in January

payroll employment (thousands)



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

Average weekly earnings up in February

Average weekly earnings were \$1,140 in February, up 0.7% compared with January and 9.0% compared with one year earlier. Year-over-year earnings growth reflects a number of factors, including the changes over the period in the number of hourly paid—and largely lower-paid—employees, compared with salaried employees. In February, the number of hourly paid employees was 9.2% below its pre-COVID-19 level, compared with a gap of 4.3% for salaried employees.

Average hours worked increase for hourly paid employees

Average hours worked per week for hourly paid employees were 32.0 in February, 4.2% higher than one year earlier, as the remaining hourly employees worked more hours on average. In comparison, the average hours worked per week for salaried employees were 37.0, up 0.5% from one year earlier.

Payroll employment increases in services-producing sector as public health measures ease in many provinces

Payroll employment increases in the services-producing sector (+64,000; +0.5%) were partially offset by a decline in the goods-producing sector (-13,200; -0.5%) in February.

The largest month-over-month payroll employment increases in February were in accommodation and food services (+14,700; +1.7%) and retail trade (+13,300; +0.7%), likely the result of public health measures being eased in many jurisdictions. Despite these increases, these two sectors remained two of the furthest from pre-COVID-19 February 2020 levels, with payroll employment down 32.5% year over year in accommodation and

food services and 7.0% in retail trade. Within retail trade, year-over-year employment changes varied by subsector. Payroll employment in clothing and clothing accessories stores was 32.2% lower than one year earlier, while in general merchandise stores, it was 5.4% higher.

In February, these two sectors also continued to have the lowest average weekly earnings, at \$459 in accommodation and food services and \$642 in retail trade, despite year-over-year earnings growth of 6.9% and 2.5%, respectively.

Upward trends continue for payroll employment in professional, scientific and technical services, and health care and social assistance

In February, payroll employment rose by 9,600 (+1.0%) in professional, scientific and technical services, one of the sectors least affected by public health measures. Most of the monthly growth was in Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec, with increases spread across several industries. Employment in the sector was up 1.5% compared with its pre-COVID-19 February 2020 level.

In health care and social assistance, payroll employment rose for a ninth consecutive month, up 9,100 (+0.4%) in February. This month-over-month rise was driven by increases in hospitals and in ambulatory health care services. Payroll employment in the sector was 0.7% above its pre-COVID-19 February 2020 level.

Payroll employment down in administrative and support services, and in arts, entertainment and recreation

Payroll employment declined in the administrative and support services (-10,500; -1.3%) and arts, entertainment and recreation (-3,600; -1.9%) sectors in February.

The February decline in administrative and support services was the first since May, and it was largely in employment services (which include employment placement agencies) and services to buildings and dwellings. Despite trending up in recent months, payroll employment in administrative and support services has not yet returned to its pre-COVID-19 February 2020 level, with employment in February 2021 down 7.4% year over year.

In arts, entertainment and recreation—the sector furthest below its pre-pandemic employment level (-41.0%)—the February 2021 decline was driven by other amusement and recreation industries (which include, for example, recreational, sport and fitness centres and bowling centres).

Job vacancies in health care and social assistance hit new record high

In February, health care and social assistance had more job vacancies (112,800, not seasonally adjusted) than any other sector for the fourth consecutive month. Vacancies in this sector represented more than one-fifth of all vacancies in Canada.

The job vacancy rate, which represents vacant positions as a proportion of all positions (vacant and occupied), was 5.2% in health care and social assistance in February, the highest vacancy rate of all sectors. This was the highest job vacancy rate for this sector since monthly job vacancy estimates became available in October 2020. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the quarterly job vacancy rate for this sector ranged from 3.0% to 3.3% from the first quarter of 2019 to the first quarter of 2020.

Following a decline during the first wave of COVID-19, payroll employment in health care and social assistance has been trending upward, surpassing its pre-COVID-19 level in December 2020. The high level of vacancies and the high job vacancy rate indicate that, despite this increase in employment, employers in health care and social assistance continued to face staffing challenges as they addressed the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, Canadian employers were actively recruiting for an estimated 505,900 positions in February (not seasonally adjusted), corresponding to a job vacancy rate of 3.3%. This follows rates between 3.0% and 3.9% from October 2020 to January 2021. British Columbia (4.9%) and Quebec (3.6%) continued to have the highest job vacancy rates among the provinces (not seasonally adjusted).

Looking ahead

March SEPH data—to be released on May 27—will provide detailed information on sectors and subsectors that may have benefited from the further loosening of COVID-19 public health measures that month.

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

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 the 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 the 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 occupation for Canada and the provinces, territories and economic regions, offered hourly wages and job vacancy characteristics. Quarterly data for the second and third quarters of 2020 are unavailable because survey operations were 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 the JVWS 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.

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.

While JVWS employment is calibrated to the SEPH, SEPH payroll employment and JVWS preliminary monthly employment figures may differ because of 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 May 17.

Next release

Data on payroll employment, earnings and hours, and job vacancies for March will be released on May 27.

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

	February 2020	January 2021 ^r	February 2021 ^p	January to February 2021	February 2020 to February 2021	January to February 2021	February 2020 to February 2021
	current dollars			change in current dollars		% change	
Sector aggregate¹	1,045.53	1,132.59	1,140.02	7.43	94.49	0.7	9.0
Forestry, logging and support	1,207.72	1,232.79	1,248.65	15.86	40.93	1.3	3.4
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	2,139.73	2,077.16	2,151.92	74.76	12.19	3.6	0.6
Utilities	2,025.42	1,894.27	1,897.55	3.28	-127.87	0.2	-6.3
Construction	1,314.98	1,360.73	1,375.97	15.24	60.99	1.1	4.6
Manufacturing	1,151.91	1,181.58	1,187.32	5.74	35.41	0.5	3.1
Wholesale trade	1,243.17	1,363.00	1,365.31	2.31	122.14	0.2	9.8
Retail trade	626.00	649.98	641.73	-8.25	15.73	-1.3	2.5
Transportation and warehousing	1,133.61	1,171.46	1,206.60	35.14	72.99	3.0	6.4
Information and cultural industries	1,389.88	1,537.48	1,686.22	148.74	296.34	9.7	21.3
Finance and insurance	1,360.33	1,536.56	1,488.63	-47.93	128.30	-3.1	9.4
Real estate and rental and leasing	1,096.44	1,184.17	1,169.90	-14.27	73.46	-1.2	6.7
Professional, scientific and technical services	1,463.14	1,501.31	1,511.92	10.61	48.78	0.7	3.3
Management of companies and enterprises	1,623.47	1,553.31	1,577.73	24.42	-45.74	1.6	-2.8
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	850.88	913.96	949.67	35.71	98.79	3.9	11.6
Educational services	1,090.06	1,193.36	1,195.91	2.55	105.85	0.2	9.7
Health care and social assistance	954.62	999.83	993.54	-6.29	38.92	-0.6	4.1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	615.08	728.49	793.31	64.82	178.23	8.9	29.0
Accommodation and food services	428.87	448.08	458.62	10.54	29.75	2.4	6.9
Other services (excluding public administration)	876.02	964.22	972.01	7.79	95.99	0.8	11.0
Public administration	1,367.76	1,468.08	1,478.06	9.98	110.30	0.7	8.1
Provinces and territories							
Newfoundland and Labrador	1,060.39	1,085.48	1,084.58	-0.90	24.19	-0.1	2.3
Prince Edward Island	889.85	952.71	927.55	-25.16	37.70	-2.6	4.2
Nova Scotia	929.33	993.77	969.95	-23.82	40.62	-2.4	4.4
New Brunswick	965.47	1,012.86	1,012.70	-0.16	47.23	-0.0	4.9
Quebec	988.51	1,076.15	1,075.73	-0.42	87.22	-0.0	8.8
Ontario	1,063.87	1,175.16	1,188.29	13.13	124.42	1.1	11.7
Manitoba	957.54	1,027.47	1,035.36	7.89	77.82	0.8	8.1
Saskatchewan	1,058.28	1,094.24	1,098.09	3.85	39.81	0.4	3.8
Alberta	1,179.64	1,237.67	1,241.91	4.24	62.27	0.3	5.3
British Columbia	1,024.80	1,115.13	1,118.42	3.29	93.62	0.3	9.1
Yukon	1,208.80	1,275.89	1,276.95	1.06	68.15	0.1	5.6
Northwest Territories	1,489.55	1,506.82	1,486.63	-20.19	-2.92	-1.3	-0.2
Nunavut	1,460.50	1,504.57	1,518.29	13.72	57.79	0.9	4.0

^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

	February 2020	January 2021 ^r	February 2021 ^p	January to February 2021	February 2020 to February 2021	January to February 2021	February 2020 to February 2021
	thousands			change in thousands		% change	
Sector aggregate¹	17,041.8	15,841.0	15,884.4	43.4	-1,157.3	0.3	-6.8
Forestry, logging and support	35.8	37.7	37.7	-0.1	1.8	-0.2	5.1
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	198.3	184.5	185.0	0.6	-13.2	0.3	-6.7
Utilities	126.7	121.7	121.2	-0.5	-5.5	-0.4	-4.3
Construction	1,050.6	1,041.0	1,028.9	-12.1	-21.8	-1.2	-2.1
Manufacturing	1,557.0	1,484.7	1,483.6	-1.1	-73.4	-0.1	-4.7
Wholesale trade	817.9	779.4	779.9	0.6	-38.0	0.1	-4.6
Retail trade	2,006.2	1,852.1	1,865.3	13.3	-140.9	0.7	-7.0
Transportation and warehousing	790.0	763.5	767.5	4.1	-22.4	0.5	-2.8
Information and cultural industries	356.6	343.4	344.7	1.3	-11.9	0.4	-3.3
Finance and insurance	752.3	738.2	748.8	10.6	-3.5	1.4	-0.5
Real estate and rental and leasing	291.3	252.3	256.9	4.6	-34.4	1.8	-11.8
Professional, scientific and technical services	990.9	996.2	1,005.9	9.6	14.9	1.0	1.5
Management of companies and enterprises	114.4	116.8	116.9	0.1	2.5	0.1	2.2
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	845.3	793.3	782.7	-10.5	-62.6	-1.3	-7.4
Educational services	1,371.4	1,296.7	1,298.9	2.2	-72.5	0.2	-5.3
Health care and social assistance	2,079.3	2,084.3	2,093.4	9.1	14.1	0.4	0.7
Arts, entertainment and recreation	314.6	189.2	185.6	-3.6	-129.0	-1.9	-41.0
Accommodation and food services	1,341.8	891.0	905.8	14.7	-436.0	1.7	-32.5
Other services (excluding public administration)	554.6	471.5	477.9	6.5	-76.7	1.4	-13.8
Public administration	1,154.8	1,134.4	1,136.0	1.6	-18.8	0.1	-1.6
Provinces and territories							
Newfoundland and Labrador	216.1	208.1	206.4	-1.7	-9.7	-0.8	-4.5
Prince Edward Island	70.0	68.8	72.2	3.4	2.2	4.9	3.1
Nova Scotia	423.6	412.1	411.9	-0.2	-11.7	-0.0	-2.8
New Brunswick	324.1	323.9	321.9	-1.9	-2.2	-0.6	-0.7
Quebec	3,835.5	3,572.3	3,599.5	27.2	-235.9	0.8	-6.2
Ontario	6,651.3	6,113.6	6,092.8	-20.8	-558.4	-0.3	-8.4
Manitoba	611.7	574.7	581.9	7.1	-29.8	1.2	-4.9
Saskatchewan	483.1	462.8	463.1	0.4	-20.0	0.1	-4.1
Alberta	2,002.5	1,812.9	1,832.5	19.6	-169.9	1.1	-8.5
British Columbia	2,356.4	2,224.9	2,234.3	9.4	-122.1	0.4	-5.2
Yukon	22.5	22.5	22.4	-0.1	-0.1	-0.5	-0.4
Northwest Territories	26.0	25.3	25.6	0.3	-0.4	1.1	-1.6
Nunavut	19.0	19.1	19.8	0.7	0.8	3.9	4.4

^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

	February 2021 ^P Payroll employment ²	February 2021 ^P Job vacancies	February 2021 ^P Job vacancy rate
	thousands		%
Sector aggregate³	14,802.2	505.9	3.3
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	195.1	8.4	4.1
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	176.9	5.0	2.7
Utilities	120.9	1.3	1.1
Construction	936.0	36.1	3.7
Manufacturing	1,450.7	48.1	3.2
Wholesale trade	772.4	22.8	2.9
Retail trade	1,851.4	42.3	2.2
Transportation and warehousing	767.4	31.1	3.9
Information and cultural industries	339.2	11.0	3.1
Finance and insurance	737.2	16.5 ^E	2.2 ^E
Real estate and rental and leasing	247.8	6.1	2.4
Professional, scientific and technical services	991.9	45.4	4.4
Management of companies and enterprises	116.0	1.1 ^E	0.9 ^E
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	767.6	30.7	3.8
Educational services	1,334.7	15.0	1.1
Health care and social assistance	2,071.5	112.8	5.2
Arts, entertainment and recreation	159.2	4.2	2.5
Accommodation and food services	843.3	35.8	4.1
Other services (excluding public administration)	459.6	22.0	4.6
Public administration ⁴	463.2	10.4	2.2
Provinces and territories			
Newfoundland and Labrador	189.5	3.8	2.0
Prince Edward Island	57.4	1.0	1.8
Nova Scotia	386.6	11.3	2.8
New Brunswick	286.5	9.2	3.1
Quebec	3,289.8	122.3	3.6
Ontario	5,746.5	169.7	2.9
Manitoba	534.0	15.8	2.9
Saskatchewan	432.4	12.0	2.7
Alberta	1,746.4	52.8	2.9
British Columbia	2,084.4	106.4	4.9
Yukon	16.3	0.5	3.0
Northwest Territories	18.7	0.5 ^E	2.4 ^E
Nunavut	13.6 ^F	F	F

^P preliminary

^E use with caution

^F too unreliable to be published

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

2. Job Vacancy and Wage Survey (JVWS) employment estimates may differ from Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours employment estimates because of calibration grouping and differences in scope and reference period. Additionally, JVWS 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](#), [14-10-0203-01](#), [14-10-0205-01](#), [14-10-0209-01](#), [14-10-0211-01](#), [14-10-0213-01](#), [14-10-0220-01](#) 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).