

# Payroll employment, earnings and hours, and job vacancies, April 2021

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Thursday, June 24, 2021

In April, as the third wave of COVID-19 in Canada took hold, public health measures were tightened for most areas of the country. In Ontario, a province-wide stay-at-home order was implemented on April 8. Stricter public health measures were also re-instated in many parts of Quebec, including the suspension of various business activities, as well as the extension of curfews. Nova Scotia entered a province-wide shutdown on April 28, closing non-essential retail stores and moving all schools to remote learning. British Columbia had been under "circuit breaker" restrictions as of March 30, which included limits on indoor dining and gyms, while New Brunswick eased restrictions in some regions in late April.

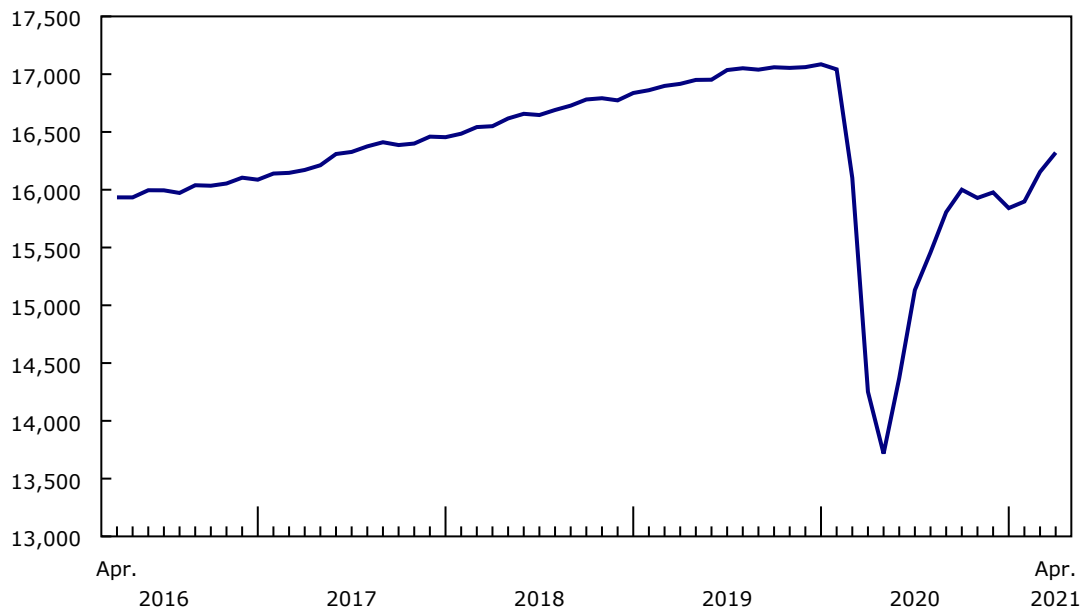
## Payroll employment increases in April

The number of employees receiving pay or benefits from their employer—measured in SEPH as payroll employment—increased by 166,900 (+1.0%) in April. In contrast, Labour Force Survey (LFS) employment—an account of the number of people working during the LFS reference week of April 11 to 17—decreased by 207,000 (-1.1%).

Differences between SEPH and LFS results for April are largely the result of two factors related to very rapid changes in employment, like those observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. First, when employment falls rapidly—as reported in April LFS—some workers who lose a job but continue to receive pay beyond their last day of work are included in SEPH payroll employment but not in LFS employment. Second, when LFS employment increases rapidly—as was the case in March—delays in new or returning employees receiving their first paycheck can result in a one-month delay in the growth of SEPH payroll employment.

**Chart 1**  
**Payroll employment continues to increase in April**

payroll employment (thousands)



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



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SEPH payroll employment rose in nine provinces in April, with the largest increases in Ontario (+59,600; +1.0%), Quebec (+45,800; +1.2%), and Alberta (+24,900; +1.3%). Despite these increases, Ontario (-373,300; -5.6%), Quebec (-126,400; -3.3%) and Alberta (-110,900; -5.5%) remained the furthest from their pre-COVID February 2020 level. New Brunswick was the lone province that had surpassed its pre-COVID payroll employment level in April, up 7,600 (+2.4%).

Compared with February 2020, payroll employment in Canada was down by 720,700 (-4.2%) in April 2021.

### **Upward trend continues for average weekly earnings**

Average weekly earnings rose 0.7% from March to \$1,129 in April as employment gains were driven by salaried—and largely higher-paid—employees. Salaried employment increased by 154,400 (+2.7%) while hourly paid employment rose by 47,400 (+0.5%).

Compared with February 2020, earnings were 8.0% higher in April 2021. The higher average weekly earnings since the beginning of the pandemic reflects a number of factors, including changes in the composition of employment by type of employee, occupation and industry. For example, the sectors which remained furthest from their pre-COVID employment levels in April—arts, entertainment and recreation (-33.5%) and accommodation and food services (-28.5%)—are among those with the lowest average weekly earnings. This disproportionate loss of lower-wage employment has the effect of increasing average earnings.

### **Average hours worked up for salaried employees**

Hourly paid employees worked an average of 31.7 hours in April, little changed from the previous month. Average hours worked per week for salaried employees was up 0.3% from March to 37.2.

### **April payroll employment increase led by health care and social assistance**

Payroll employment in health care and social assistance rose by 35,100 (+1.7%) in April, the largest monthly increase among the sectors. There were notable month-over-month increases in all four subsectors (ambulatory health care services; hospitals; nursing and residential care facilities; and social assistance) and in every province except Saskatchewan, where there was little change. Payroll employment in health care and social assistance has been trending upward since June 2020.

The April increase in health care and social assistance brought payroll employment in the sector to 3.4% above its pre-COVID February 2020 level. Average weekly earnings in the sector were \$999 in April, up 4.7% compared with February 2020.

### **Payroll employment in construction exceeds pre-pandemic levels**

There were 25,700 (+2.5%) more payroll employees working in construction in April, with most of the gains occurring in Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. The number of payroll employees rose in every subsector within construction, led by specialty trade contractors, and coincided with a 6.3% increase in [building construction investment](#) in April.

Compared with February 2020, there were 1.7% more payroll employees working in construction in April, and average weekly earnings were up 8.0% over the same period to \$1,420.

### **Payroll employment up for third consecutive month in retail trade**

Despite tighter public health measures in some areas of the country, payroll employment in retail trade rose for the third consecutive month, up by 19,800 (+1.0%) in April. Some new or returning employees in retail trade hired in March—prior to the tightened measures for retail—may have been included in payroll employment for the first time

in April when they received their first pay cheque a few weeks after being hired or returning to work. The increase in payroll employment in retail trade was spread across subsectors, but largest in food and beverage stores and motor vehicle and parts dealers.

Despite the increase in April, payroll employment in retail trade was 1.8% below the pre-COVID level. Meanwhile, average weekly earnings in the sector were \$636, up 1.7% compared with February 2020.

### April job vacancies remain highest in health care and social assistance

In April, Canadian employers were actively recruiting for an estimated 682,800 positions amid the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The job vacancy rate, which measures vacant positions as a proportion of all positions (vacant and occupied), was 4.3%, following rates between 3.0% and 4.1% from October 2020 to March 2021 (all data from the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey are unadjusted for seasonality).

Quebec (5.4%) had the highest job vacancy rate among the provinces. The job vacancy rate was lowest in Newfoundland and Labrador (3.0%) and Alberta (3.3%).

Health care and social assistance had the largest number of job vacancies for the sixth consecutive month (96,300) in April, accounting for approximately 14% of total vacancies. As job vacancies provide a measure of unmet labour demand, the high level of vacancies—combined with rising payroll employment—suggest ongoing staffing challenges in this sector. Retail trade (79,600) and manufacturing (67,100) had the second- and third-highest number of job vacancies in April.

### 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.

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*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 data tables 14-10-0357-01, 14-10-0358-01, 14-10-0331-01 and 14-10-0332-01 will be updated on July 12.*

**Next release**

*Data on payroll employment, earnings and hours, and job vacancies for May will be released on July 29.*

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

	April 2020	March 2021 <sup>r</sup>	April 2021 <sup>p</sup>	March to April 2021	April 2020 to April 2021	March to April 2021	April 2020 to April 2021
	current dollars			change in current dollars		% change	
<b>Sector aggregate<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1,116.30</b>	<b>1,120.90</b>	<b>1,128.72</b>	<b>7.82</b>	<b>12.42</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>1.1</b>
Forestry, logging and support	1,221.79	1,298.97	1,310.09	11.12	88.30	0.9	7.2
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	2,125.20	2,092.34	2,096.14	3.80	-29.06	0.2	-1.4
Utilities	1,937.19	1,801.19	1,914.47	113.28	-22.72	6.3	-1.2
Construction	1,296.62	1,360.44	1,419.54	59.10	122.92	4.3	9.5
Manufacturing	1,159.75	1,174.97	1,170.73	-4.24	10.98	-0.4	0.9
Wholesale trade	1,271.38	1,320.77	1,329.30	8.53	57.92	0.6	4.6
Retail trade	640.67	631.53	636.45	4.92	-4.22	0.8	-0.7
Transportation and warehousing	1,136.65	1,207.93	1,171.97	-35.96	35.32	-3.0	3.1
Information and cultural industries	1,400.11	1,568.09	1,513.44	-54.65	113.33	-3.5	8.1
Finance and insurance	1,486.42	1,450.44	1,469.45	19.01	-16.97	1.3	-1.1
Real estate and rental and leasing	1,146.32	1,164.19	1,186.05	21.86	39.73	1.9	3.5
Professional, scientific and technical services	1,451.97	1,510.64	1,533.68	23.04	81.71	1.5	5.6
Management of companies and enterprises	1,536.41	1,560.76	1,500.11	-60.65	-36.30	-3.9	-2.4
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	893.94	934.36	965.31	30.95	71.37	3.3	8.0
Educational services	1,137.51	1,199.69	1,171.04	-28.65	33.53	-2.4	2.9
Health care and social assistance	995.00	1,006.88	999.36	-7.52	4.36	-0.7	0.4
Arts, entertainment and recreation	787.32	729.02	758.12	29.10	-29.20	4.0	-3.7
Accommodation and food services	468.75	450.27	454.31	4.04	-14.44	0.9	-3.1
Other services (excluding public administration)	956.77	951.42	939.99	-11.43	-16.78	-1.2	-1.8
Public administration	1,397.42	1,469.26	1,470.66	1.40	73.24	0.1	5.2
<b>Provinces and territories</b>							
Newfoundland and Labrador	1,121.70	1,096.19	1,083.53	-12.66	-38.17	-1.2	-3.4
Prince Edward Island	967.26	921.20	933.03	11.83	-34.23	1.3	-3.5
Nova Scotia	996.75	948.74	953.10	4.36	-43.65	0.5	-4.4
New Brunswick	1,038.64	1,004.77	1,009.52	4.75	-29.12	0.5	-2.8
Quebec	1,051.79	1,062.51	1,068.81	6.30	17.02	0.6	1.6
Ontario	1,132.50	1,166.21	1,170.73	4.52	38.23	0.4	3.4
Manitoba	1,034.46	1,004.02	1,011.16	7.14	-23.30	0.7	-2.3
Saskatchewan	1,129.81	1,098.19	1,100.33	2.14	-29.48	0.2	-2.6
Alberta	1,241.11	1,207.60	1,223.18	15.58	-17.93	1.3	-1.4
British Columbia	1,105.84	1,104.90	1,110.80	5.90	4.96	0.5	0.4
Yukon	1,255.60	1,290.86	1,256.18	-34.68	0.58	-2.7	0.0
Northwest Territories	1,597.02	1,507.38	1,479.35	-28.03	-117.67	-1.9	-7.4
Nunavut	1,469.68	1,481.19	1,418.03	-63.16	-51.65	-4.3	-3.5

<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 2020	March 2021 <sup>r</sup>	April 2021 <sup>p</sup>	March to April 2021	April 2020 to April 2021	March to April 2021	April 2020 to April 2021
	thousands			change in thousands		% change	
<b>Sector aggregate<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>14,251.8</b>	<b>16,154.2</b>	<b>16,321.1</b>	<b>166.9</b>	<b>2,069.3</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>14.5</b>
Forestry, logging and support	33.6	38.3	40.4	2.1	6.8	5.4	20.3
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	186.5	188.4	191.9	3.5	5.3	1.8	2.8
Utilities	124.2	121.9	123.0	1.1	-1.2	0.9	-0.9
Construction	810.0	1,042.6	1,068.3	25.7	258.3	2.5	31.9
Manufacturing	1,315.0	1,500.3	1,501.6	1.3	186.6	0.1	14.2
Wholesale trade	727.2	784.2	786.0	1.8	58.7	0.2	8.1
Retail trade	1,585.5	1,951.1	1,970.9	19.8	385.5	1.0	24.3
Transportation and warehousing	719.0	765.2	767.0	1.8	48.0	0.2	6.7
Information and cultural industries	326.3	345.5	348.8	3.3	22.6	1.0	6.9
Finance and insurance	729.8	756.7	760.6	3.8	30.8	0.5	4.2
Real estate and rental and leasing	236.1	258.3	258.5	0.3	22.4	0.1	9.5
Professional, scientific and technical services	915.9	1,011.3	1,022.0	10.7	106.2	1.1	11.6
Management of companies and enterprises	106.5	117.8	117.8	0.0	11.3	0.0	10.6
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	718.7	789.9	804.8	14.9	86.1	1.9	12.0
Educational services	1,242.1	1,315.7	1,315.5	-0.1	73.5	-0.0	5.9
Health care and social assistance	1,866.8	2,114.4	2,149.5	35.1	282.6	1.7	15.1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	165.1	199.5	209.3	9.8	44.2	4.9	26.8
Accommodation and food services	688.4	950.2	959.1	8.9	270.7	0.9	39.3
Other services (excluding public administration)	398.9	487.6	493.3	5.7	94.4	1.2	23.7
Public administration	1,120.7	1,145.1	1,159.4	14.2	38.7	1.2	3.4
<b>Provinces and territories</b>							
Newfoundland and Labrador	180.1	205.4	208.6	3.2	28.5	1.6	15.8
Prince Edward Island	60.3	69.4	69.7	0.3	9.4	0.4	15.6
Nova Scotia	364.0	417.3	419.1	1.7	55.1	0.4	15.1
New Brunswick	277.7	325.6	331.8	6.2	54.1	1.9	19.5
Quebec	3,099.2	3,663.3	3,709.1	45.8	609.8	1.2	19.7
Ontario	5,608.1	6,218.4	6,278.0	59.6	669.9	1.0	11.9
Manitoba	536.1	589.0	599.3	10.3	63.2	1.7	11.8
Saskatchewan	418.8	467.5	470.8	3.3	52.0	0.7	12.4
Alberta	1,692.0	1,866.7	1,891.6	24.9	199.6	1.3	11.8
British Columbia	1,954.5	2,263.2	2,274.2	10.9	319.7	0.5	16.4
Yukon	20.1	22.7	22.9	0.2	2.7	0.8	13.7
Northwest Territories	23.1	26.0	26.3	0.3	3.2	1.0	13.8
Nunavut	17.9	19.6	20.0	0.4	2.1	2.0	11.8

<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).

**Table 3**  
**Job vacancies and job vacancy rate, unadjusted for seasonality<sup>1</sup>**

	April 2021 <sup>P</sup> Payroll employment <sup>2</sup>	April 2021 <sup>P</sup> Job vacancies	April 2021 <sup>P</sup> Job vacancy rate
	thousands		%
<b>Sector aggregate<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>15,142.6</b>	<b>682.8</b>	<b>4.3</b>
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	201.8	15.1	7.0
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	185.6	8.1	4.2
Utilities	120.7	3.6 <sup>E</sup>	F
Construction	971.3	61.4	5.9
Manufacturing	1,468.4	67.1	4.4
Wholesale trade	775.4	30.9	3.8
Retail trade	1,904.5	79.6	4.0
Transportation and warehousing	751.5	31.9	4.1
Information and cultural industries	343.3	12.4	3.5
Finance and insurance	751.1	28.5	3.7
Real estate and rental and leasing	250.9	6.9	2.7
Professional, scientific and technical services	1,007.5	53.4	5.0
Management of companies and enterprises	115.0	4.0	3.3 <sup>E</sup>
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	754.1	49.1	6.1
Educational services	1,414.0	14.9	1.0
Health care and social assistance	2,103.6	96.3	4.4
Arts, entertainment and recreation	176.6	18.0	9.3
Accommodation and food services	899.0	62.5	6.5
Other services (excluding public administration)	478.8	26.5	5.2
Public administration <sup>4</sup>	469.6	12.7	2.6
<b>Provinces and territories</b>			
Newfoundland and Labrador	172.1	5.3	3.0
Prince Edward Island	59.3	2.9	4.7
Nova Scotia	383.6	13.6	3.4
New Brunswick	293.1	12.0	3.9
Quebec	3,416.3	195.1	5.4
Ontario	5,844.2	250.7	4.1
Manitoba	567.1	19.5	3.3
Saskatchewan	438.1	16.3	3.6
Alberta	1,780.1	61.0	3.3
British Columbia	2,137.9	103.6	4.6
Yukon	16.7	1.2	6.8
Northwest Territories	20.1	1.1 <sup>E</sup>	5.1
Nunavut	14.2	0.5 <sup>E</sup>	3.2

<sup>P</sup> preliminary

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

<sup>F</sup> too unreliable to be published

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

2. JVWS employment estimates may differ from SEPH employment estimates due to 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](#), [14-10-0214-01](#), [14-10-0216-01](#), [14-10-0218-01](#), [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](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).