

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

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Payroll employment fell by 257,500 (-1.6%) in May, with much of the decline concentrated in service industries in Ontario. Average weekly earnings increased, as job losses were concentrated in lower-paying industries.

In May, third-wave COVID-19 public health measures continued or were further tightened in several parts of the country. In Ontario, the stay-at-home order implemented on April 8 continued, affecting many non-essential businesses. Remote schooling, which began following the April spring break, also continued across the province.

Both Alberta and Manitoba introduced new measures in early May, including the closure of personal care services, recreational facilities and in-person dining, as well as limits on retail store capacity and a transition to remote schooling for all or large parts of each province.

In Nova Scotia, where a province-wide shutdown had begun on April 28, provincial border restrictions were tightened on May 10. By contrast, New Brunswick and Quebec eased restrictions in some regions through late April and early May.

Payroll employment declines in May

The number of employees receiving pay or benefits from their employer—measured in the Survey of Employment, Payroll and Hours (SEPH) as payroll employment—decreased by 257,500 (-1.6%) in May. Labour Force Survey (LFS) employment—an account of the total number of people working during the LFS reference week of May 9 to 15—decreased by 68,000 (-0.4%).

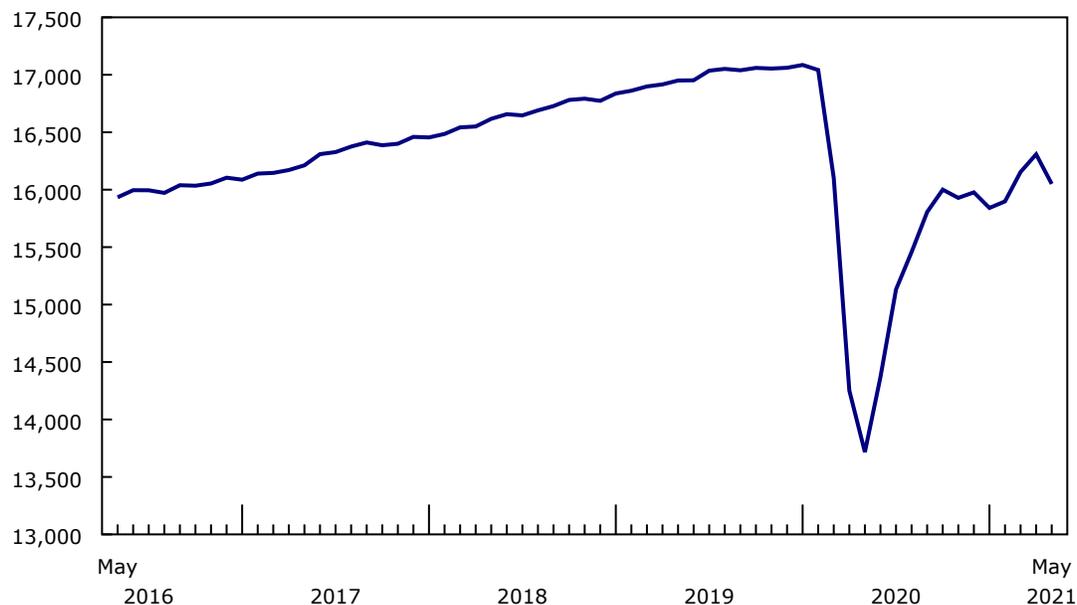
Payroll employment decreased in eight provinces in May. Ontario (-174,000; -2.8%) accounted for two-thirds of the decline, followed by Alberta (-30,100; -1.6%) and Quebec (-19,900; -0.5%). At the same time, payroll employment rose in Newfoundland and Labrador (+5,000; +2.4%) and Prince Edward Island (+2,700; +3.8%).

Nationally, payroll employment was 991,500 lower (-5.8%) in May 2021 than in February 2020.



Chart 1
Payroll employment declines in May

payroll employment (thousands)



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

May decline led by accommodation and food services, and retail trade

Payroll employment fell in most of the services-producing sectors in May (-239,400; -1.8%), led by retail trade (-76,100; -3.9%) and accommodation and food services (-74,700; -7.8%), which were hit hard by tightened public health measures.

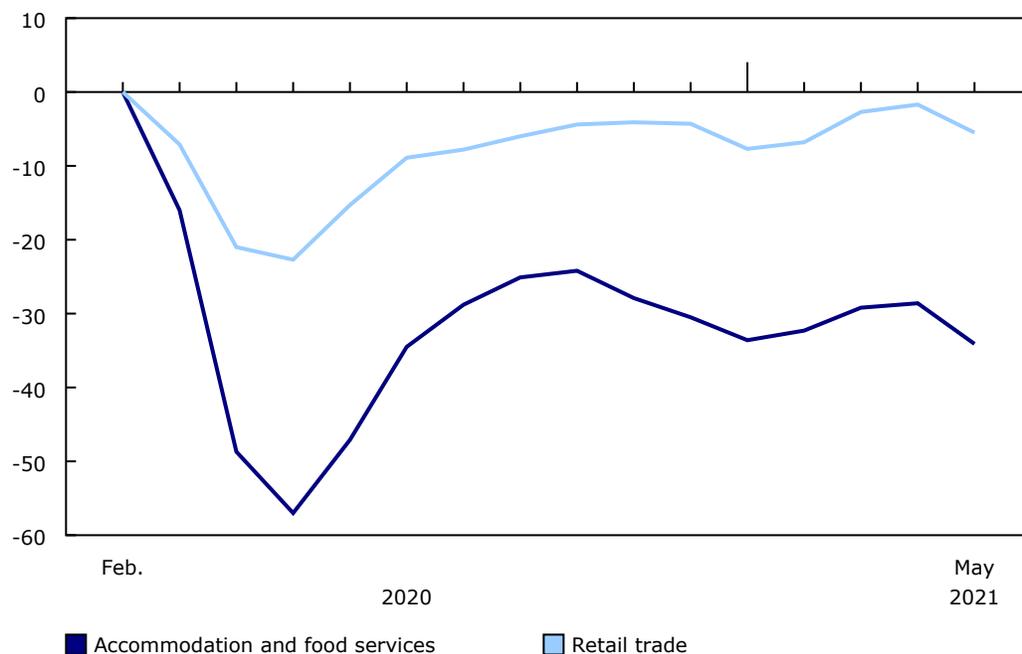
The largest declines in payroll employment in retail trade were in clothing stores and in sporting goods, hobby and musical instrument stores. This is broadly consistent with retail sales, which fell by 2.1% in May, with an 11.6% decrease in clothing stores. Average weekly earnings in retail trade were \$641 in May, up 2.5% compared with February 2020.

Most of the month-over-month decline in accommodation and food services was in full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places, where payroll employment was down by nearly one-third compared with the pre-pandemic level in February 2020. Average weekly earnings in accommodation and food services were \$457 in May, up 6.7% compared with February 2020.

In May, payroll employment was one-third (-34.1%) below the pre-COVID-19 level in accommodation and food services, while it was down by 5.5% in retail trade.

Chart 2 Payroll employment below pre-COVID-19 levels in accommodation and food services, and retail trade

Payroll employment change (%) compared with February 2020



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

Average weekly earnings increase in May as job losses are concentrated in lower-paying industries

Average weekly earnings rose 0.9% from April to \$1,138 in May, caused in part by the concentration of employment losses in lower-paying industries. The largest employment declines in May were in the two sectors with the lowest average weekly earnings: retail trade (\$641 per week) and accommodation and food services (\$457 per week).

Average weekly earnings were 8.9% higher in May than in February 2020. This increase reflects a number of factors, including changes in the composition of employment by type of employee (hourly or salaried). For example, in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector, average weekly earnings for all employees were 33.5% higher in May than in February 2020. This increase was driven in part by a significant shift in the relative share of hourly-paid and salaried employees in the sector. In May, hourly employees—who earned \$498 per week on average, compared with \$1,285 for salaried employees—made up two-thirds (67.2%) of payroll employment in the sector, a drop from just over three-quarters (76.8%) in February 2020.

When hourly and salaried employees are examined separately, hourly-paid employees in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector saw an increase in average weekly earnings of 8.7% between February 2020 and May 2021, while salaried employees saw a 4.7% gain. Within each of these groups of employees, changes in average weekly earnings are influenced by factors such as the share of employment by occupation, tenure and level of education.

Average hours worked unchanged in May

Average hours worked were unchanged in May, with hourly paid employees working an average of 31.6 hours per week, while salaried employees worked an average of 37.2 hours per week.

Accommodation and food services has the highest job vacancy rate among all sectors in May

Canadian employers were actively recruiting for an estimated 671,100 positions in May 2021 amid tightened public health measures. The job vacancy rate, which measures vacant positions as a proportion of all positions (vacant and occupied), was 4.2% in May. Since October 2020, the job vacancy rate had ranged from 3.0% in December 2020 to 4.3% in April 2021. (Data from the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey are unadjusted for seasonality).

Quebec (5.1%), British Columbia (5.0%) and New Brunswick (4.9%) had the highest job vacancy rates among the provinces in May. The job vacancy rate was lowest in Newfoundland and Labrador (2.8%).

For the seventh consecutive month, health care and social assistance had the largest number of job vacancies (107,300) in May, representing nearly one-sixth of all job vacancies in Canada. Accommodation and food services (78,000) and retail trade (73,800) had the second- and third-highest number of job vacancies.

Among the sectors, the job vacancy rate was highest in accommodation and food services (7.8%) in May. Along with seasonal hiring, the vacancy rate in this sector could also reflect recruitment challenges as businesses looked to prepare for the eventual easing of pandemic restrictions. June estimates from the LFS suggest increased demand for labour in the sector, as employment in accommodation and food services grew 11.8% from May to June.

Looking ahead: Impact of easing health measures

Following two months of tightened public health measures in several parts of the country, measures had been significantly eased in many jurisdictions by the end of June. June SEPH data—to be released on August 26—will provide detailed information on sectors and subsectors that may have benefitted from this loosening of public health measures going into the summer.

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 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 data tables 14-10-0357-01, 14-10-0358-01, 14-10-0331-01 and 14-10-0332-01 will be updated on August 16.

Next release

Data on payroll employment, earnings and hours, and job vacancies for June will be released on August 26.

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

	May 2020	April 2021 ^r	May 2021 ^p	April to May 2021	May 2020 to May 2021	April to May 2021	May 2020 to May 2021
	current dollars			change in current dollars		% change	
Sector aggregate¹	1,139.14	1,127.73	1,138.23	10.50	-0.91	0.9	-0.1
Forestry, logging and support	1,237.28	1,303.01	1,248.45	-54.56	11.17	-4.2	0.9
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	2,146.70	2,094.04	2,108.95	14.91	-37.75	0.7	-1.8
Utilities	1,913.35	1,911.80	1,890.44	-21.36	-22.91	-1.1	-1.2
Construction	1,312.65	1,411.54	1,371.39	-40.15	58.74	-2.8	4.5
Manufacturing	1,133.28	1,168.39	1,176.94	8.55	43.66	0.7	3.9
Wholesale trade	1,269.49	1,325.63	1,375.96	50.33	106.47	3.8	8.4
Retail trade	671.63	637.84	641.48	3.64	-30.15	0.6	-4.5
Transportation and warehousing	1,154.54	1,164.79	1,148.67	-16.12	-5.87	-1.4	-0.5
Information and cultural industries	1,449.81	1,549.26	1,606.52	57.26	156.71	3.7	10.8
Finance and insurance	1,503.32	1,462.05	1,508.10	46.05	4.78	3.1	0.3
Real estate and rental and leasing	1,116.54	1,191.14	1,199.54	8.40	83.00	0.7	7.4
Professional, scientific and technical services	1,484.76	1,532.29	1,540.70	8.41	55.94	0.5	3.8
Management of companies and enterprises	1,684.83	1,503.79	1,549.55	45.76	-135.28	3.0	-8.0
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	902.23	960.58	969.57	8.99	67.34	0.9	7.5
Educational services	1,142.64	1,165.63	1,158.12	-7.51	15.48	-0.6	1.4
Health care and social assistance	1,019.52	1,002.27	996.08	-6.19	-23.44	-0.6	-2.3
Arts, entertainment and recreation	798.54	756.23	821.27	65.04	22.73	8.6	2.8
Accommodation and food services	476.05	454.94	457.46	2.52	-18.59	0.6	-3.9
Other services (excluding public administration)	967.48	946.55	957.64	11.09	-9.84	1.2	-1.0
Public administration	1,438.79	1,469.41	1,436.07	-33.34	-2.72	-2.3	-0.2
Provinces and territories							
Newfoundland and Labrador	1,141.84	1,085.41	1,078.63	-6.78	-63.21	-0.6	-5.5
Prince Edward Island	996.01	934.86	934.41	-0.45	-61.60	-0.0	-6.2
Nova Scotia	1,014.88	955.25	991.52	36.27	-23.36	3.8	-2.3
New Brunswick	1,010.44	1,011.59	996.42	-15.17	-14.02	-1.5	-1.4
Quebec	1,076.90	1,068.60	1,075.08	6.48	-1.82	0.6	-0.2
Ontario	1,170.84	1,166.85	1,183.09	16.24	12.25	1.4	1.0
Manitoba	1,039.36	1,020.51	1,037.78	17.27	-1.58	1.7	-0.2
Saskatchewan	1,149.91	1,109.68	1,113.13	3.45	-36.78	0.3	-3.2
Alberta	1,251.27	1,223.31	1,234.51	11.20	-16.76	0.9	-1.3
British Columbia	1,127.73	1,111.16	1,124.55	13.39	-3.18	1.2	-0.3
Yukon	1,270.29	1,254.09	1,273.01	18.92	2.72	1.5	0.2
Northwest Territories	1,576.39	1,479.41	1,517.47	38.06	-58.92	2.6	-3.7
Nunavut	1,469.87	1,413.98	1,491.26	77.28	21.39	5.5	1.5

^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

	May 2020	April 2021 ^r	May 2021 ^p	April to May 2021	May 2020 to May 2021	April to May 2021	May 2020 to May 2021
	thousands			change in thousands		% change	
Sector aggregate¹	13,716.3	16,307.8	16,050.3	-257.5	2,333.9	-1.6	17.0
Forestry, logging and support	33.1	40.4	40.0	-0.4	6.9	-1.0	20.8
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	177.4	191.3	191.1	-0.2	13.8	-0.1	7.8
Utilities	120.8	122.9	122.7	-0.2	1.9	-0.2	1.5
Construction	841.4	1,069.2	1,050.7	-18.5	209.3	-1.7	24.9
Manufacturing	1,312.0	1,498.6	1,492.6	-6.0	180.7	-0.4	13.8
Wholesale trade	710.4	786.6	783.5	-3.1	73.1	-0.4	10.3
Retail trade	1,550.0	1,972.0	1,895.9	-76.1	345.9	-3.9	22.3
Transportation and warehousing	684.5	768.7	757.5	-11.2	73.0	-1.5	10.7
Information and cultural industries	305.8	348.5	347.1	-1.4	41.3	-0.4	13.5
Finance and insurance	724.9	758.4	756.6	-1.8	31.7	-0.2	4.4
Real estate and rental and leasing	222.4	258.8	254.6	-4.2	32.2	-1.6	14.5
Professional, scientific and technical services	895.9	1,023.7	1,032.8	9.1	136.9	0.9	15.3
Management of companies and enterprises	103.1	117.3	116.4	-1.0	13.2	-0.8	12.8
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	683.5	805.9	799.2	-6.7	115.7	-0.8	16.9
Educational services	1,170.2	1,312.7	1,289.8	-22.8	119.6	-1.7	10.2
Health care and social assistance	1,813.1	2,147.3	2,140.8	-6.6	327.7	-0.3	18.1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	134.4	206.7	177.2	-29.6	42.7	-14.3	31.8
Accommodation and food services	577.1	958.4	883.7	-74.7	306.6	-7.8	53.1
Other services (excluding public administration)	372.0	487.5	468.3	-19.2	96.3	-3.9	25.9
Public administration	1,063.1	1,157.3	1,167.1	9.8	104.0	0.8	9.8
Provinces and territories							
Newfoundland and Labrador	177.0	210.1	215.0	5.0	38.0	2.4	21.5
Prince Edward Island	57.6	70.3	73.0	2.7	15.3	3.8	26.6
Nova Scotia	349.5	419.6	408.2	-11.4	58.8	-2.7	16.8
New Brunswick	278.1	331.2	328.2	-3.0	50.1	-0.9	18.0
Quebec	3,090.4	3,703.2	3,683.3	-19.9	592.9	-0.5	19.2
Ontario	5,273.1	6,275.0	6,101.0	-174.0	827.9	-2.8	15.7
Manitoba	510.9	599.5	591.9	-7.6	80.9	-1.3	15.8
Saskatchewan	406.7	472.4	468.7	-3.6	62.0	-0.8	15.2
Alberta	1,611.9	1,891.1	1,861.0	-30.1	249.1	-1.6	15.5
British Columbia	1,902.7	2,266.3	2,252.3	-14.0	349.6	-0.6	18.4
Yukon	19.0	23.0	22.3	-0.7	3.4	-3.0	17.7
Northwest Territories	22.2	26.4	25.7	-0.7	3.5	-2.7	15.6
Nunavut	17.2	19.8	19.7	-0.2	2.5	-0.9	14.5

^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

	May 2021 ^P Payroll employment ²	May 2021 ^P Job vacancies	May 2021 ^P Job vacancy rate
	thousands		%
Sector aggregate³	15,403.4	671.1	4.2
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	224.9	15.9	6.6
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	184.1	8.7	4.5
Utilities	122.3	2.4 ^E	1.9 ^E
Construction	1,013.1	59.3	5.5
Manufacturing	1,494.2	62.6	4.0
Wholesale trade	785.5	27.6	3.4
Retail trade	1,935.6	73.8	3.7
Transportation and warehousing	756.5	33.5	4.2
Information and cultural industries	347.4	13.0	3.6
Finance and insurance	755.5	18.6	2.4 ^E
Real estate and rental and leasing	250.7	6.0	2.3
Professional, scientific and technical services	1,015.2	47.1	4.4
Management of companies and enterprises	116.3	2.3	2.0
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	777.3	47.6	5.8
Educational services	1,419.9	17.1	1.2
Health care and social assistance	2,131.0	107.3	4.8
Arts, entertainment and recreation	192.1	13.0	6.3
Accommodation and food services	922.7	78.0	7.8
Other services (excluding public administration)	486.6	26.2	5.1
Public administration ⁴	472.4	11.1	2.3
Provinces and territories			
Newfoundland and Labrador	177.6	5.2	2.8
Prince Edward Island	60.2	3.0	4.7
Nova Scotia	423.1	13.6	3.1
New Brunswick	289.0	14.8	4.9
Quebec	3,487.3	188.0	5.1
Ontario	5,928.9	227.9	3.7
Manitoba	559.5	21.9	3.8
Saskatchewan	447.3	14.0	3.0
Alberta	1,826.5	68.2	3.6
British Columbia	2,152.6	112.3	5.0
Yukon	16.9	0.9 ^E	4.9
Northwest Territories	20.2	F	F
Nunavut	14.6	0.7 ^E	4.9 ^E

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, Payroll 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](#) to [14-10-0206-01](#) , [14-10-0208-01](#) to [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).