Employment Insurance Statistics (EIS)
User Guide

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Statistics Canada   Statistique Canada

Canada

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Note of appreciation

Canada owes the success of its statistical system to a long-standing partnership between Statistics Canada, the citizens of Canada, its businesses, governments and other institutions. Accurate and timely statistical information could not be produced without their continued co-operation and goodwill.

Standard table symbols

The following symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

.	not available for any reference period
..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
0	true zero or a value rounded to zero
0^s	value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
p	preliminary
r	revised
x	suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
E	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published
*	significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

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Section 1: Overview

1.1   Overview

The Employment Insurance (EI) program is administered by Service Canada on behalf of Employment and Social Development Canada. The program provides temporary financial assistance to unemployed Canadians who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own, as long as they look for work or upgrade their skills. Canadians who are sick, pregnant, or caring for a newborn or adopted child, as well as those who must care for a family member who is seriously ill or those who must provide care or support to their critically ill or injured child, may be assisted by Employment Insurance.

The Unemployment Insurance program, as it was then called, was first implemented in 1940. The last major reform occurred in 1996. At that time, the name of the program was changed from 'Unemployment Insurance' to 'Employment Insurance,' to reflect the program's primary objective of promoting employment in the labour force, and to better emphasize that individuals' access to the program is linked to significant work attachment.

Employment Insurance Statistics (EIS), released monthly by Statistics Canada, aims to report on the statistics of the EI program. The mandate for the compilation of EIS was given to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (now Statistics Canada) by Order-in-Council in 1941.

The major data points of the EIS are the number of people receiving regular benefits and the number of initial and renewal claims received. These statistics are the focus of the analysis published each month in *The Daily*. Other statistics, such as the type of benefits received, the benefit payments, the number of weeks paid and the number of disqualifications and disentitlements, are available monthly on CANSIM, Statistics Canada's key socioeconomic database.

1.2   Administrative data

The Employment Insurance Statistics are based on administrative data. Microdata on beneficiaries are collected and provided by Service Canada. On their side, Employment and Social Development Canada provides aggregated information on the number of claims, disqualifications and disentitlements, benefits paid and number of weeks covered. Those data provide a readily accessible source of statistical information and remove the need for a costly survey.

Geographic data (province, census metropolitan categories and census divisions) are produced by linking the EI beneficiaries' postal codes, available on the microdata file, to the Statistics Canada Postal Code Conversion File (PCCF). The PCCF includes Canadian postal codes and their associated geographies.

Section 2: Methodology

2.1   Target population

The number of EI beneficiaries represents a count of persons who qualified for employment insurance benefits during the Labour Force Survey reference week, usually the week containing the 15th day of the month. Therefore, individuals who exhaust their benefits the week before the survey reference period or who start to collect benefits the week after are not included in the count of beneficiaries for that month.

The number of claims represents a count of persons who made a claim during the reference month. Similarly, the number of disqualifications and disentitlements is based on the set of all claims processed during the reference month. Finally, the benefit payments and the number of weeks paid cover the whole reference month.

2.2   Sampling

This survey is a census with a cross-sectional design. Data are collected for all units of the target population; therefore no sampling is done.

2.3   Seasonal adjustment

Some of the data series are seasonally adjusted to facilitate month-to-month comparisons and to show trends. A seasonally adjusted time series is a monthly or quarterly time series that has been modified to eliminate seasonal and calendar effects. These variations result from the composite effects of climatic events, institutional decisions or modes of operation which occur repeatedly with some regularity within the year. Calendar effects are related to the composition of the calendar and include trading-day effects associated with the location of the Labour Force Survey reference week, moving holiday effects associated with non-fixed date holidays such as Easter, and other predictable events from the calendar. The seasonal adjustments are based on statistical models that are reviewed every year. However, the parameters of those models change every time a new data point (month) is added to the series. This results in revised and more accurate estimates for past seasonally adjusted values.

For more information on seasonal adjustment, see Seasonally adjusted data – Frequently asked questions. Seasonal adjustment is performed according to Statistics Canada's Quality Guidelines.

2.4   Revisions

2.4.1   Monthly revision

Each month, Statistics Canada releases the EIS data for a new reference month. Two months later, an updated microdata file becomes available and the statistics related to the beneficiaries are subject to revision. For example, in the March release, the January data are estimated for the first time, the December seasonally adjusted data are reviewed with new parameters, and all November data are revised. Although estimates associated with months prior to November may have changed because of seasonal adjustments, those are only released with an annual or historical revision.

Note that data for claims, benefit weeks and benefit payments are all produced from aggregate data and are not subject to monthly revisions.

2.4.2   Annual or historical revision

On an annual basis, seasonal adjustment models are revised to include the latest year of data. This revision affects the last three years.

In addition, a historical revision is done occasionally to maintain the comparability of time series and current estimates during major changes affecting the survey. These changes may be warranted by a change in concepts, occupational and/or geographical classification systems and methods.

These kinds of revisions to the data are normal in a complex survey program. All components of the EIS are subject to annual or historical revision. Revisions should always be taken into consideration by data users.

2.5   Data comparability over time

EIS data are produced from an administrative source and may from time to time be affected by changes to the *Employment Insurance Act*.

The Act allows each province or administrative region—as defined by Employment and Social Development Canada—to have certain autonomy in applying administrative procedures regarding renewal claims. Data users must note that month-to-month changes in levels may be affected by differences in administrative procedures between one province, territory or region and another.

2.6   Data confidentiality

Statistics Canada is prohibited by law from releasing any information it collects which could identify any person, business or organization, unless consent has been given by the respondent or as permitted by the *Statistics Act*. Various confidentiality rules are applied to all data that are released or published to prevent the publication or disclosure of any information deemed confidential. If necessary, data are suppressed to prevent direct or residual disclosure of identifiable data.

Section 3: Terms and definitions

Beneficiary: A person who receives employment insurance benefits during the Labour Force Survey reference week (usually the week containing the 15th day of the month).

Benefit payments: Benefits paid to a beneficiary during the reference month. The gross amount represents the total employment insurance disbursements, including retroactive adjustments.

Benefit types:

- **Regular benefits:** Regular benefits are paid to claimants who have temporarily or permanently lost their job. In order to be eligible for regular employment insurance benefits, individuals must have lost their jobs through no fault of their own (for example, due to shortage of work, seasonal layoffs, etc.) and are available for and able to work.

- **Fishing benefits:** These benefits provide support to self-employed fishers who are actively seeking work. Benefits are based on earnings during a fishing season, rather than hours. To qualify, self-employed fishers need sufficient earnings in a maximum 31-week period before the claim starts.

- **Work–sharing benefits:** This is a program designed to help employers and employees avoid layoffs when there is a temporary reduction in the normal level of business activity that is beyond the control of the employer. The measure provides income support to employees eligible for employment insurance benefits who work a temporarily reduced work week while their employer recovers. Work-sharing is a three-party agreement involving employers, employees and Service Canada. Employees on a work-sharing agreement must agree to a reduced schedule of work and share the available work over a specified period of time.

- **Special benefits:** In addition to regular benefits, the EI program also provides special benefits:

  - **Compassionate care benefits:** These benefits are paid to people who have to be away from work temporarily to provide care or support to a family member who is gravely ill and who has a significant risk of death within 26 weeks (six months). A maximum of up to six weeks of compassionate care benefits may be paid to eligible claimants.

  - **Maternity benefits:** These benefits are offered to biological mothers, including surrogate mothers, who cannot work because they are pregnant or have recently given birth. A maximum of 15 weeks of EI maternity benefits is available. The 15 weeks can start as early as eight weeks before the expected date of birth, and can end as late as 17 weeks after the actual date of birth.

  - **Parental benefits:** These benefits are offered to parents who are caring for a newborn or newly adopted child. A maximum of 35 weeks of parental benefits is available to biological, adoptive, or legally recognized parents. The two parents can share these 35 weeks of benefits.

    Note: Since Quebec has its own program that offers maternity, paternity, and parental benefits, the Government of Canada has adjusted the province's premiums accordingly. See the Service Canada website for more details.

  - **Parents of critically ill children benefits:** Up to 35 weeks of temporary income support is provided to eligible parents who take time off work to provide care or support for their critically ill or injured child under the age of 18.

  - **Sickness benefits:** This is payable to claimants for up to a maximum of 15 weeks when the interruption of earnings is due to illness, injury or quarantine. The sickness benefits can be combined with maternity and parental benefits. However, the maximum of special benefit entitlements is 30 weeks.

Benefit weeks: Total number of eligible weeks for which benefit payments have been made to a person in receipt of employment insurance benefits. The unemployment rate of the claimant's area of residence is used to determine the minimum number of weeks of insurable employment an individual must have worked to be eligible for EI benefits. The maximum number of weeks he/she would be entitled to receive benefits (the maximum duration of a regular benefit period) is 52 weeks, including a two-week waiting period.

Census metropolitan category: The census metropolitan categories are groupings of census metropolitan areas, census agglomerations and census metropolitan influenced zones outside census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations established for the purpose of statistical reporting. There are three census metropolitan categories:

A. Census metropolitan areas (CMAs)
B. Census agglomerations (CAs)
C. Outside census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs)

Census division: Census division (CD) is the general term for provincially legislated areas (such as county, 'municipalité régionale de comté' and regional district) or their equivalents. Census divisions are intermediate geographic areas between the province/territory level and the municipality (census subdivision). See the Standard Geographical Classification 2011 – Definitions for more information.

Census metropolitan area (CMA) and Census agglomeration (CA): Formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core). A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000, of which 50,000 or more must live in the core. A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000. See the Standard Geographical Classification 2011 – Definitions for more information.

Claims: Any person seeking employment insurance benefits must first file a claim. The claim is categorized as 'initial' if no benefit period was established previously. However, if benefit rights are in existence, the claimant is given a choice between continuing an existing claim, a 'renewal', or starting a new one. When a person applies for benefits, the claim is adjudicated and is either allowed or disallowed. A claim could be allowed with or without disqualification or disentitlement.

Class of worker: There are two broad categories of workers: those who work for others (employees) and those who work for themselves (self-employed). As of January 31, 2010, EI special benefits were extended to self-employed people who could opt into the EI program for the first time. Benefits were payable as of January 1, 2011.

Disqualifications and disentitlements: A disqualification or disentitlement is imposed on a claimant because of circumstances surrounding the claim. A person may be ineligible for benefits for a stated period (disqualification) or until a condition causing the non-receipt of benefits has been removed (disentitlement).

Occupation: The principal activity a person is engaged in at his or her last place of work. The occupation of a beneficiary is coded according to the National Occupational Classification - Statistics 2006.

Unemployment: Unemployed persons are those who during reference week, were available for work and were either on temporary layoff, had looked for work in the past four weeks or had a job to start within the next four weeks. There is always a certain proportion of unemployed people who do not qualify for benefits. Some unemployed people have not contributed to the program because they have not worked in the past 12 months or their employment is not insured. Other unemployed people have contributed to the program but do not meet the eligibility criteria, such as workers who left their job voluntarily or those who did not accumulate enough hours of work to receive benefits.

Note: For more information on the definitions, you can visit the Service Canada website.

Related products

Selected CANSIM tables from Statistics Canada

276-0003   Employment Insurance Program (E.I.), number of disqualifications and disentitlements by province and reason, monthly

276-0004   Employment Insurance Program (E.I.), claims received and allowed by province and type of claim, monthly

276-0011   Employment Insurance Program (E.I.), persons covered by employment insurance program, monthly

276-0017   Employment Insurance Program (E.I.), benefit characteristics by province, type of income benefits and class of worker, monthly

276-0018   Employment Insurance Program (E.I.), regular income benefit characteristics by province, seasonally adjusted, monthly

276-0020   Employment Insurance program (EI), beneficiaries by province, type of income benefits, sex and age, monthly

276-0021   Employment Insurance program (EI), beneficiaries by province, total and regular income benefits, declared earnings, sex and detailed age, monthly

276-0022   Employment Insurance program (EI), beneficiaries receiving regular income benefits by province, declared earnings, sex and age, seasonally adjusted, monthly

276-0033   Employment Insurance program (EI), beneficiaries by province, census metropolitan category, total and regular income benefits, declared earnings, sex and age, monthly

276-0034   Employment Insurance program (EI), beneficiaries receiving regular income benefits by province and census metropolitan category, seasonally adjusted, monthly

276-0035   Employment Insurance Program (EI), beneficiaries by province, census division, total and regular income benefits, declared earnings, sex and age, monthly

276-0040   Employment Insurance program (EI), beneficiaries receiving regular income benefits by province and National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S), monthly

276-0041   Employment Insurance program (EI), beneficiaries receiving regular income benefits by province and National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S), seasonally adjusted, monthly

Selected surveys from Statistics Canada

2604   Employment Insurance Statistics - Monthly