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# PERSPECTIVES

ON LABOUR AND INCOME

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Vol. 10, No. 3

- Earnings of women
- The recent labour market
- Work absence rates



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..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
0	true zero or a value rounded to zero
0 <sup>s</sup>	value rounded to 0 (zero) where a meaningful distinction exists between true zero and the value rounded
P	preliminary
r	revised
x	suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the <i>Statistics Act</i>
E	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published

# Highlights

*In this issue*

## ■ Earnings of women with and without children

- The hourly earnings of Canadian mothers, controlled for age, were 12% less than those of childless women, and the gap widened with more children.
- About 70% of the observed motherhood earnings gap can be accounted for by factors such as career interruption, part-time employment, and other individual or job characteristics.
- Overall, the results suggest that employer practices may not be a major factor underlying the gap. But the earnings losses incurred by single mothers, mothers with a long career interruption and those with three or more children are significant.

## ■ The recent labour market in Canada and the United States

- The collapse of the United States housing market and subsequent problems in financial markets began to affect that country's labour market at the start of 2008. Employment losses occurred throughout 2008, with especially steep declines in the final quarter of the year. Losses continued at the start of 2009.

- In Canada, employment grew over the first nine months of 2008, but declined in the last quarter of the year. And the losses worsened at the start of 2009. For all of 2008, however, Canada still managed a slight increase in employment.
- In 2008, all major labour market indicators (employment growth, unemployment rate, participation rate, employment rate) were more encouraging in Canada than in the United States, despite the deterioration observed toward the end of the year.
- The labour market for young people (age 16 to 24) was especially affected in the United States as their employment declined by 5.0%. Core-age employment (25 to 54) fell by 2.9%. This contrasts with Canada where the employment decline among youth was much slower (-1.9%) and the number of core-age workers rose marginally (0.2%).
- Industries most affected by employment losses in the United States (construction, financial activities, and wholesale and retail trade) were not affected in Canada. In 2008, these industries managed to maintain their employment levels and even add workers. The number of factory workers, however, continued its downward trend in both countries.

### Perspectives

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# Earnings of women with and without children

Xuelin Zhang

Raising children entails not only child care responsibilities, but also monetary costs. One cost is the so-called ‘family gap,’ also referred to as the ‘child penalty’ or ‘motherhood earnings gap.’ It measures how much the earnings of women with children fall below those of women without children, other factors being equal.

A significant earnings gap would place financial stress on young families and might discourage the labour force participation of new mothers, if, for example, the gap were sufficiently high to preclude the mother’s earnings from adequately covering her work-related expenses, including child care. Withdrawal from the labour market can become attractive in such circumstances.

Financial concerns related to childbirth may affect the take-up of maternity leave allowances made available through provincial and federal legislation. A recent survey showed that more than 40% of new parents could not take maternity leave because their financial situation did not allow it, and among parents who took the leave and returned to work, 81% indicated that they would have stayed home longer if they could have afforded to do so (Beaupré and Cloutier 2007).

In addition, studying the earnings gap between women with and without children helps to better understand issues related to parents’ decision about family size. As in other developed countries, the fertility rate in Canada has declined and stayed below the replacement level for many years. One reason for the low fertility rate may be the high costs associated with child rearing and child care.<sup>1</sup> The family gap concept captures, at least in part, the opportunity costs of having children.

It is not surprising that both economists and sociologists have studied the earnings gap between women with and without children. Indeed, family-gap studies

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## Data source and definitions

The Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) is a longitudinal household survey conducted by Statistics Canada. It collects information on human capital investment, labour market experience, earnings and income for Canadians age 15 and over. It also records important life events like childbirth, allowing the examination of the relationship between childbirth and mothers’ earnings through cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses.

SLID follows households for six years. Every three years, a new panel of respondents is introduced. Three completed panels were available (1993 to 1998, 1996 to 2001, and 1999 to 2004) for this study. Women between ages 18 and 44 were selected from the three panels and observed over a two- to six-year period. The pooled sample contained 9,239 women with children (among them, 3,429, or 37%, gave birth during the observation windows), and 6,393 women without children. The total number of observations was 69,819 (persons times years). The table below presents some descriptive statistics on a few characteristics of mothers and childless women (in their last year in sample).

**Table Women age 18 to 44**

	With children	Childless
<b>Average age</b>	<b>35.1</b>	<b>28.1</b>
Years of potential experience	16.2	7.9
Years of education	13.8	15.3
Years of work experience <sup>1</sup>	10.5	5.5
<b>Marital status</b>		%
Married or common-law	76.8	29.8
Separated	15.6	6.1
Never married	7.7	64.0
<b>Number of children</b>		
One	28.8	...
Two	43.4	...
Three	27.8	...
<b>Education</b>		
Less than high school	11.7	4.8
High school diploma	16.6	8.1
Some postsecondary	56.4	60.2
Bachelors or higher	15.1	26.8
<b>Full-time job</b>	<b>68.0</b>	<b>77.0</b>

1. Full-year full-time equivalent work experience.  
Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1993 to 2004.

by American and European researchers have proliferated in the past two decades. For instance, one study found the earnings of American and British mothers to be about 20% below those of their childless counterparts (Waldfoegel 1998a).

Several studies found that a sizeable portion, typically between 50% and 60%, of the observed gap can be explained by a number of socio-economic factors. Fewer years of work experience because of career interruptions due to childbirth is probably one of the most noticeable factors. As well, the presence of young children may limit the hours that mothers want to work, or may prompt them to choose jobs with more flexibility but lower pay. The unexplained portion of the earnings gap is typically attributed to unobserved individual characteristics like career motivation or to employer discrimination against mothers.<sup>2</sup>

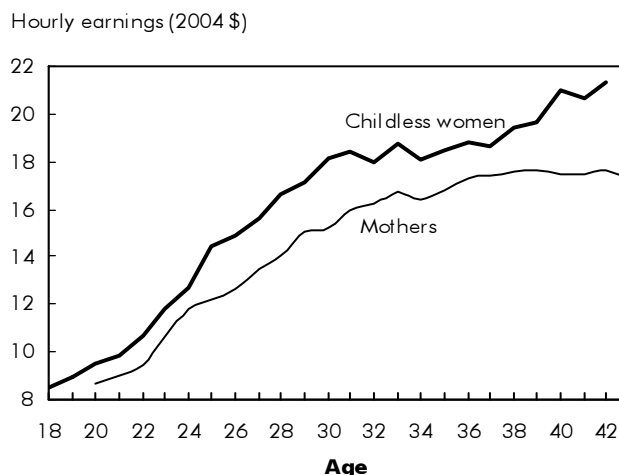
In Canada, much less research has been done, and with mixed results. For example, one study of child penalties for seven OECD countries, found, in the raw data, no earnings gap between mothers and childless women. But, after controlling for a few factors such as age and education, gaps of 4%, 5%, and 13% were found for mothers with one, two and three or more children respectively (Harkness and Woldfoegel 1999). In another study, a significant penalty was found for mothers born between 1948 and 1960, while those born after 1960 enjoyed an earnings premium compared with their childless counterparts (Drolet 2002).

This study expands the Canadian literature in several different ways. In particular, it is the first to use three complete panels of earnings data from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (see *Data source and definitions*), which allows controls for unobserved individual characteristics like career motivation that may be correlated with both earnings and childbirth.<sup>3</sup> It attempts to answer several key questions: Is there indeed an earnings difference between women with and without children in Canada? How large is the difference? Do different groups of mothers experience the same gap? What factors may explain the gap?

### Substantial earnings gap between women with and without children

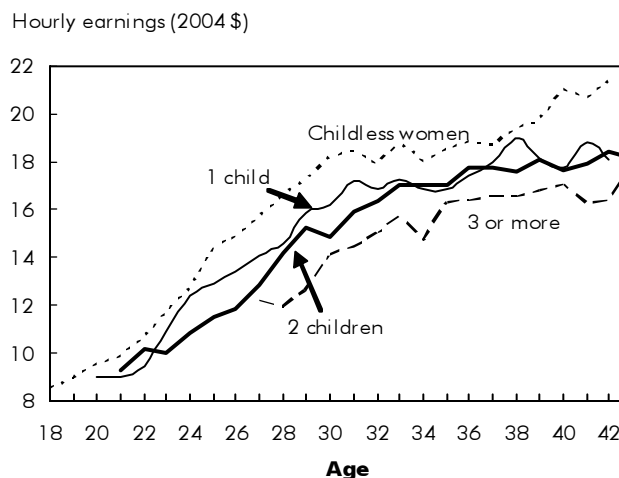
Age-earnings profiles of Canadian mothers and women without children show that women without children systematically earned more than women with children (Chart A). At age 30, for example, the aver-

**Chart A At any given age, mothers' hourly earnings were below childless women's...**



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1993 to 2004.

**Chart B ...and this gap generally widened as the number of children increased**



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1993 to 2004.

age hourly earnings of women with children were \$15.20 while those for women without children were \$18.10 (2004 dollars). Averaging the differences over all plausible ages showed that hourly earnings of mothers were about 12% lower than those of their childless counterparts.<sup>4</sup>

The gap widened with the number of children (Chart B). For mothers with one child, the average gap was about 9%. It increased to 12% and 20% respectively for mothers with two and three or more children. This indicates that, although the gap increased as the number of children increased, it did not do so proportionately. Nevertheless, the observed earnings gap grows with each successive child.<sup>5</sup>

At younger ages, the gap between women with and without children was quite small. For example, at age 20, earnings of women with one child and childless women were almost identical. This suggests that issues related to mothers' self-selection into childbirth were unlikely to be important.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, earnings of mothers did not grow as fast as those of childless women, so the earnings losses incurred by mothers might never be regained (Phipps et al. 2001).

### Mothers with long career interruptions face larger earnings gap

The data suggest an almost six-year difference between actual and potential work experiences of women with children, while the difference for women without children was only slightly above one year.<sup>7</sup> In other words, women with children experienced a much longer time out of work (or career interruptions) than their childless counterparts.

In order to see the effect of years of work experience on the motherhood earnings gap, mothers were grouped according to length of career interruption (years of potential work experience minus years of actual work experience).<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, long career interruptions had a negative impact on the earnings of mothers (Chart C). For example, the difference in average hourly earnings between childless women and mothers with more than three years of interruption was close to 30% at age 40. On the other hand, relatively short career interruptions made little difference—before age 33, average earnings of mothers with more than one year but less than three years of interruption were somewhat below the average of childless women, but after age 33, they were similar.

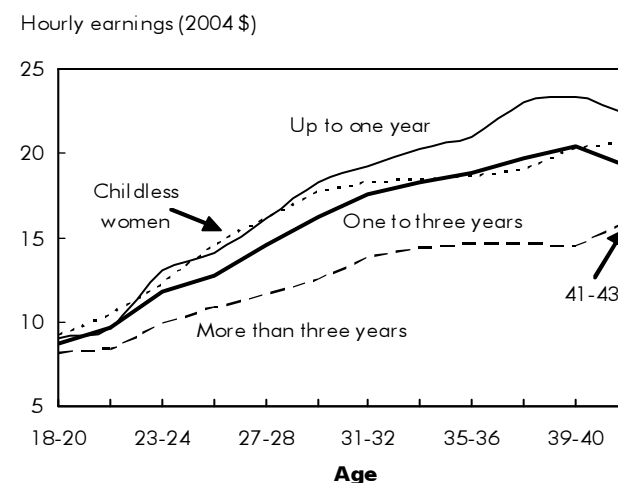
### Earnings gap higher for lone mothers than for married mothers

Of particular interest are single mothers, who are more likely to face financial hardship. How do their earnings compare with those of single childless women? How do the earnings of married (or common-law) mothers compare with those of their childless counterparts? And how do these two gaps compare?

Earnings of married and single childless women were similar, suggesting that marital status might not affect the earnings of childless women. This observation casts some doubt on the marriage-earnings penalty hypothesis (Chart D).<sup>9</sup> But the gap between single mothers and childless women appeared to be greater than that between married mothers and childless women. A comparison between single mothers and childless single women showed that the average earnings gap was close to 20%. But for married/common-law mothers versus childless women in couples, the gap was only about 10%.

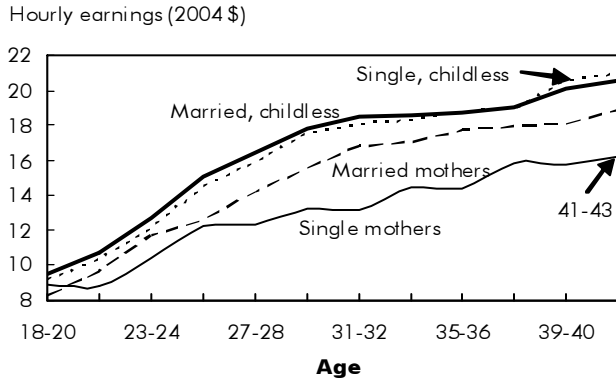
In other words, the earnings gap between single mothers and single childless women was almost twice as large as that between married mothers and married childless women. The presence of a partner seems to

**Chart C The longer the career interruption, the higher the earnings losses**



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1993 to 2004.

**Chart D Single mothers lost more earnings than married mothers**



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1993 to 2004.

age range, and beyond that, the gaps were very small. But for highly educated mothers, the gap was observed at almost all ages.

**Full- or part-time employment makes little difference**

Since mothers are more likely to work part time than childless women and part-time workers usually earn less than full-timers, a seemingly plausible way to deal with the child penalty would be to help mothers get full-time jobs.

However, beyond age 34, very few childless women worked part time and the earnings difference between mothers and childless women was trivial (Chart F). On the other hand, young mothers who worked part time seemed to be somewhat disadvantaged relative to childless part-timers. But, overall, the hourly earnings of mothers who worked full time were only

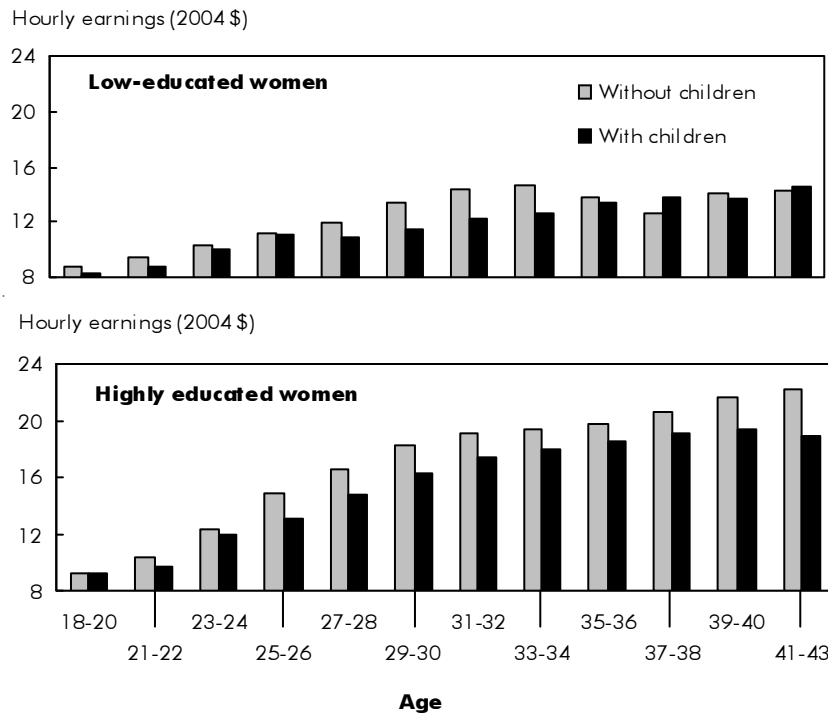
reduce the negative effect of child-birth on a mother's earnings, making it necessary to take marital status into consideration when examining the earnings gap between women with and without children.

**Earnings gap higher for highly educated mothers**

The link between delayed motherhood and the declining fertility rate among highly educated mothers can be seen in many countries. Since education is positively correlated with earnings, an important question is whether mothers with higher education incur a greater earnings penalty than their counterparts with less education.<sup>10</sup>

Among women with less education, the earnings gap between those with and those without children was generally lower than that for their highly educated counterparts (Chart E). For less-educated mothers and childless women, the gap was confined to the 27 to 34

**Chart E Highly educated mothers earned less than childless women at almost all ages; for low-educated mothers, earnings losses were confined mostly to those age 27 to 34**

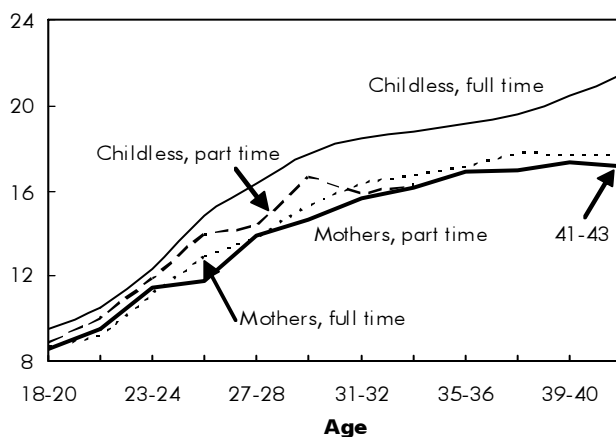


Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1993 to 2004.



**Chart F Mothers working full time incurred somewhat more earnings losses than those working part time**

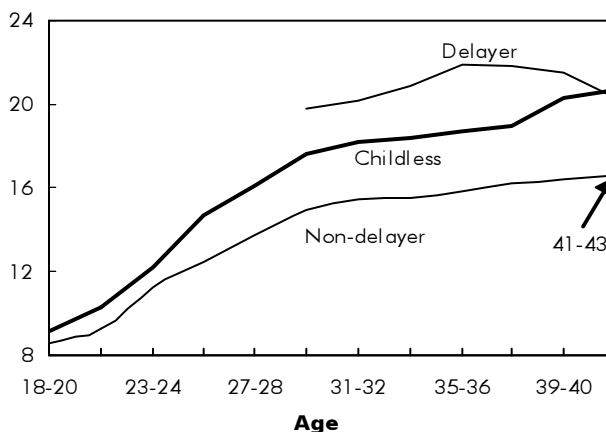
Hourly earnings (2004 \$)



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1993 to 2004.

**Chart G Mothers delaying their first childbirth beyond age 30 earned more than childless women**

Hourly earnings (2004 \$)



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1993 to 2004.

slightly higher than those of mothers who worked part time, suggesting that hours of work are unlikely to play any major role in the earnings gap.

### Earnings premium associated with delayed childbirth may eventually disappear

The pursuit of higher education and careers appears to lead many women in industrialized countries to delay marriage and childbirth. Canada is no exception—those who delayed marriage or childbirth earned more (Drolet 2002). However, the direction of any causality between earnings and delayed childbirth is unclear.

Conditional on age, the earnings of mothers who delayed childbirth (first child at age 30 or later) were higher than those of childless women by about 10% (Chart G).<sup>11</sup> But their earnings fell over time and dropped below the average of childless women after age 40.

### Factors explaining the earnings gap

The observed earnings gaps, while being accounted for by age, do not necessarily represent the true disadvantage incurred by women with children because

earnings are determined not only by age and the presence of children, but also by factors such as work experience, education, industry, occupation, union membership and unobserved individual characteristics like career motivation and ability. It may well be that women who became mothers had less education or fewer years of work experience, or chose to work for firms offering lower pay but more flexibility or other employment benefits.

In order to account for the effects of the above factors on the earnings of mothers and childless women, researchers typically estimate models that control for the presence of children (see *The earnings models*). The starting point in this study was an extended human capital model in which age, years of education, work experience, marital status, full- or part-time status, union membership, employer size, family income (earnings from spouse and other family members as well as non-employment income), industry, occupation and management responsibilities were included.<sup>12</sup>

The model simultaneously controlled for age, years of schooling and work experience. Since this is mathematically equivalent to controlling for the length of career interruptions—widely regarded as the most

### The earnings models

According to human capital theory, earnings depend on education, work experience, occupation, firm size, union membership, and so on. Following other researchers, the following model was used first

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 K_{1i} + \beta_2 K_{2i} + \beta_3 K_{3i} + \theta X_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1),$$

where  $Y_i$  represents earnings,  $K_1$ ,  $K_2$  and  $K_3$  are equal to 1 if a woman has one child, two children, or three or more children, respectively, and 0 if she has no children.  $X_i$  contains other variables affecting earnings, and the effects of these variables are captured by  $\theta$ . The term  $\varepsilon_i$  represents random error. The coefficients  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$  and  $\beta_3$  measure the penalty for mothers with one, two, or three or more children.

With longitudinal data, the model can be modified to control for unobserved factors affecting earnings

$$Y_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta_1 K_{1it} + \beta_2 K_{2it} + \beta_3 K_{3it} + \theta X_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (2),$$

where  $i$  indexes a worker and  $t$  indexes time (year). The constant term  $\alpha$  from equation (1) is now indexed by  $i$ , indicating that each worker now has a different intercept in her earnings profile. This person-specific intercept captures the joint effect of unmeasured factors such as motivation and ability affecting earnings.

The model given by equation (2) has two different specifications. If  $\alpha_i$  is assumed to be correlated with  $X_{it}$ , the specification is referred to as a fixed-effects model, otherwise, it is referred to as a random-effects model.

important factor underlying the earnings gap between women with children and those without—it overcomes a shortcoming of SLID whose panels span only six years, which prevents accurate calculation of the length of career interruptions.<sup>13</sup>

Under the above model, mothers with one child, two children, and three or more children still experienced earnings gaps of 2%, 3% and 6% respectively, meaning that at least 70% of the gaps were explained by the included factors (Chart H). But the remaining gaps were still significantly different from zero.

### The importance of unobserved factors

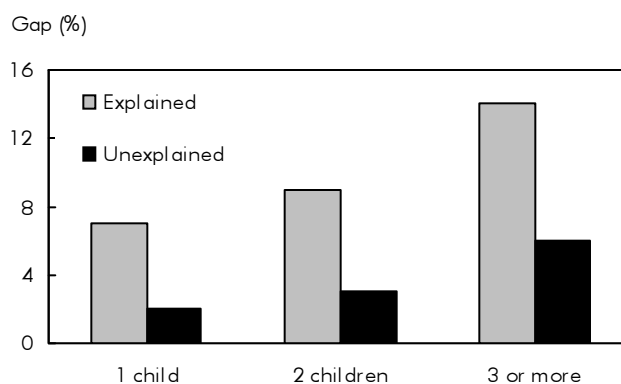
Unmeasured individual characteristics like motivation and innate ability may also affect earnings and, consequently, the gap between women with and without children. In particular, if unmeasured individual characteristics affect pay and fertility decisions at the same time, the estimated earnings gap can be spurious when unmeasured factors are not accounted for.

Two types of unmeasured factors can be postulated: those that affect earnings and fertility in the same direction, either increasing or decreasing them, and those that affect earnings and fertility in different directions. Innate ability is an example of the former, and it can be positively associated with both earnings and fertility. While career motivation is an example of the latter, it can be positively correlated with earnings but negatively correlated with fertility. Theoretically, the estimated earnings gap will have a downward bias when the former type is not accounted for, while the opposite would occur when the latter is not.

With longitudinal data, both types of unmeasured characteristics can be taken into consideration with a fixed-effects model.<sup>14</sup> With this model, earnings gaps were 1%, 4% and almost 8% for women with one child, two children and three or more children respectively. Compared with the results from the first model in which only observable factors were controlled for, the estimated disadvantages for mothers with two and three or more children became slightly higher, while the penalty for mothers with one child dropped and became statistically insignificant.

To check the robustness of the fixed-effects model, a random-effects model was also estimated. This model suggests that the gaps were reduced to 1% (and statis-

**Chart H About 70% of the motherhood earnings gap was accounted for by observable characteristics**



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1993 to 2004, author's calculation.

tical insignificance), 3% and 6%. Hence, for mothers with one child, the results based on random-effects and fixed-effects models were the same, while for mothers with two and three or more children, the former yielded results the same as under the cross-sectional model in which only observed individual characteristics were controlled for.

Overall, results based on longitudinal analysis are quite close to those based on cross-sectional analysis. They suggest that a significant portion of the observed earnings gap between women with children and those without can be explained by observable and unobserved individual characteristics. With longitudinal data, the earnings gap between women with one child and women without children was fully explained, and with either cross-sectional or longitudinal data, about 70% of the observed earnings gap was explained for mothers with two or more children. These results imply that employer practices are unlikely to play a major role in the motherhood earnings gap in Canada.

### **Earnings gaps for different groups of mothers under multivariate models**

Having discussed the earnings gaps for different groups of mothers separately—by length of career interruption, marital status, education, full- or part-time employment, and delayed first childbirth—what remains is to control for various determinants of pay.

Regression results from cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses showed that the earnings gap between women with children who experienced a short career interruption (one year or less) and women without children was not statistically different from zero.<sup>15</sup> Among mothers who interrupted their career for one to three years, a gap of 5% remained for those with three or more children. For those with one or two children, the gaps were not statistically significant. But for mothers who experienced more than three years of interruption, a significant gap of 6% to 8% persisted, regardless of the number of children.

When the effects of observable factors were controlled for, mothers who worked part time had no earnings disadvantage relative to their childless counterparts. On the other hand, although the gap for mothers with one child and working full time was not significantly different from zero, the gaps for mothers with two or more children who worked full time

persisted: for mothers with two children, the unexplained gap was about 3%; for mothers with three or more children, 6%.

The observed earnings gaps between married mothers with one or two children and their childless counterparts were fully explained by observable factors, while the gap between lone mothers and single women without children, and that between married mothers with three or more children and their childless counterparts, persisted. For married mothers with three or more children, the unexplained earnings gap was 4%, while for lone mothers with one child, it was about 3%, and for lone mothers with two or three or more children, the unexplained gaps were 6% and 9%, respectively.

Among less-educated women, the earnings gap between those with and those without children was fully explained by observable factors, regardless of the number of children. But for highly educated mothers, the gaps varied between 3% for those with one child and 6% for those with three or more children, and controlling for unobserved individual characteristics did not change the results in any significant way.

For mothers who had their first birth at age 30 or later, some of the observed earnings premium persisted in the multivariate model. But the estimated premiums for the delayers were not robust. When the same model was estimated under the fixed-effects specification, the premium for the delayers disappeared almost completely.<sup>16</sup> Hence, while mothers who delayed childbirth might earn a certain premium, part of that premium is due to unobserved factors.

### **Summary**

A sizeable earnings gap exists between Canadian women with and without children. On average, the earnings of women with children were 12% less than those of women without children, and this gap increased with the number of children: with one child, the gap was 9%; with two children, it was 12%; and with three or more children, 20%.

Pooled cross-sectional analyses show that about 70% of the observed earnings gap can be explained by age, education, experience, marital status, industry and occupation. Analyses taking advantage of the longitudinal nature of the SLID data suggest that, even though unobserved individual characteristics such as career motivation and innate ability may help explain the gap

between mothers with one child and women without children, they generally do not affect the gap in any significant way for mothers with two or more children.<sup>17</sup>

The analyses also show that different groups of mothers experienced different earnings disadvantages. In particular, lone mothers, mothers with long career interruptions, and mothers with more than a high school education incurred greater losses than married (or common-law) mothers, mothers with no or short career interruptions, and mothers with no more than a high school education, while the premium enjoyed by motherhood delayers was mostly due to unobserved characteristics.

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**Perspectives**

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**■ Notes**

1. Measures that reduce the direct and indirect costs have a positive effect on the fertility of Canadian women, as suggested by Bélanger and Oikawa 1999.
2. See Waldfogel 1998b for a survey of the international literature. A recent study regarding discrimination against women with children can be found in Correll et al. 2007.
3. The effects of unobserved characteristics are inferred by the change in results between the cross-sectional and longitudinal models.
4. Below age 20, fewer than 100 observations of women with children were available and hence their average earnings are not plotted in Chart A. Similarly, in Chart B, few women had three or more children before age 26, therefore their average earnings appear from age 27.
5. The result was confirmed by a descriptive model in which the log hourly earnings were regressed on age, age squared, and three dummy variables representing one child, two children, and three or more children. The model was also tested by including variables on marital status, province of residence, year, immigration status, employer size, union status and family income.
6. In Zhang 2008, the endogenous motherhood hypothesis was rejected.
7. Potential experience is defined as age minus 5, minus years of schooling.
8. In contrast with Chart A, here and later, individuals are grouped according to age in order to have a reasonable number of observations for each sub-group.
9. See, for example, Loughran and Zissimopoulos 2007.
10. Low-educated women are defined as those with a high school education or less. Those with more than a high school education (including some postsecondary education) are defined as highly educated.
11. Increasing or decreasing this age by one to two years does not quantitatively change the observation.
12. Immigration status, province and year dummies were also included. These variables did not affect the empirical results.
13. Work interruption is measured as the difference between potential and actual years of experience where potential experience is defined as age minus 5, minus years of schooling. See Anderson et al. 2003 for a discussion on the equivalence between controlling for age, schooling and actual experience and controlling for the length of work interruption.
14. There are two ways to estimate the fixed-effects model. One is to model the change of earnings over time. The other is to model the deviation from the average earnings for each person. Both approaches assume that the unmeasured factors are constant during the window of observation, and hence can be differentiated out. The two approaches produce identical results. The second approach was used.
15. The earnings model for each group of mothers was estimated according to the length of career interruption (see footnote 13 for the calculation details). The reference group consists of women without children in each case.
16. A few thresholds of delayed motherhood (ages 29, 31, 32, etc.) were tried, but the conclusions were essentially the same.
17. In the sample used, 29% of mothers had one child, while 71% had two or more children.

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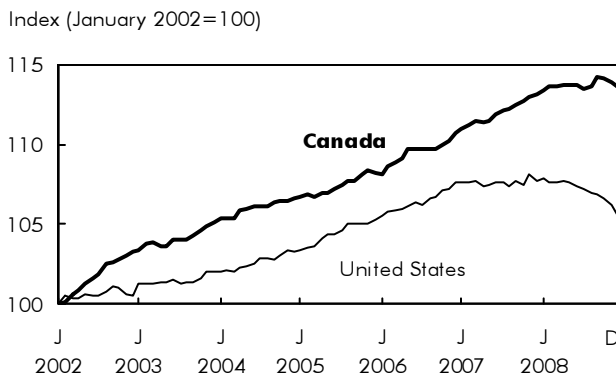
The research was conducted while the author was with the Social Research Division of Human Resources and Social Development. The author wishes to thank Catherine Massé, Mireille Laroche, Gordon Lenjosek and Cliff Halliwell for their comments.

# The recent labour market in Canada and the United States

Vincent Ferrao

Canadians are well aware of the economic turmoil caused by the collapse of the housing market in the United States and the subsequent problems in financial markets. Not surprisingly, the labour market has been hit hard, with U.S. job losses numbering in the millions over the past year. Given the level of trade across our border, some impact was to be expected in Canada. Yet differences in the structure of the two economies will affect both the severity and the timing of the downturn. This article uses Canadian numbers adjusted to U.S. definitions to exam-

**Chart A Employment growth in Canada surpassed the pace in the U.S. between 2002 and 2008**



Note: Canadian data adjusted to United States definitions.  
Sources: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

## Canadian data, U.S. definitions

This article compares total employment and unemployment, employment and participation rates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) in Canada and the Current Population Survey (CPS) in the United States. Both surveys follow similar questionnaire design and wording. The Canadian data have been adjusted to approximate definitions used by the CPS:

### Adjustment for employment

- Remove 15-year-olds because they are not surveyed in the CPS.

### Adjustments for unemployment

- Remove 15-year-olds.
- Remove people who looked for work only by using job ads. The U.S. does not include such 'passive job-searchers' among the unemployed.
- Remove people who did not look for work, but who had a job to start in the next four weeks. In Canada, these 'future starts' are counted as unemployed.
- Remove those unavailable to take a job because of personal or family responsibilities. In Canada, they are considered among the unemployed; in the U.S., no such exception is made.
- Add full-time students looking for full-time work. In Canada, they are not included among the unemployed; in the U.S., they are included.

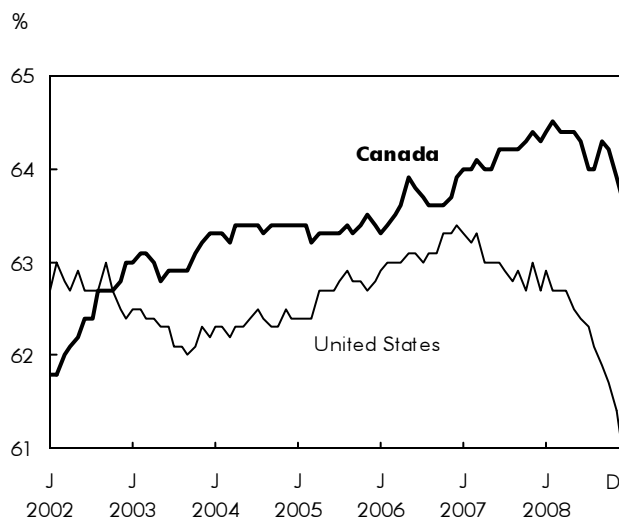
In any given month, these adjustments normally shave almost one full percentage point from the Canadian unemployment rate.

The data for total employment, unemployment rate, employment rate and participation rate are monthly seasonally adjusted estimates.

For industry employment, 12-month averages are used to ensure robustness in the data, because the monthly CPS figures are not seasonally adjusted.

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**Chart B Since 2003, Canada's employment rate has exceeded the U.S. rate**



Note: Canadian data adjusted to United States definitions.  
Sources: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

ine how labour markets in each country have responded to the recent economic events (see *Canadian data, U.S. definitions*).

A notable feature of the labour markets in Canada and the United States in 2008 was the contrasting trends for several key indicators. In Canada, employment continued to grow until the third quarter of the year, before declining sharply in the final quarter (Chart A). Still, Canada managed a slight increase of 75,000 (0.4%) for the entire year, down sharply from 355,000 in 2007 (2.1%). In contrast, employment in the United States experienced steep losses throughout 2008, for a total drop of 2,956,000 (-2.0%), after showing little change the previous year. Furthermore, the employment rate in Canada attained a record high of 64.5% in early 2008, but by year end it had settled at 63.7% (Chart B). In the United States, the rate displayed a steady and pronounced decline since the end of 2007, closing out 2008 at 61.0%, down nearly two full percentage points since December 2007.

Adjusted to U.S. definitions, the unemployment rate in Canada stood at 5.2% in December 2007 before touching a three-decade low of 5.1% at the start of

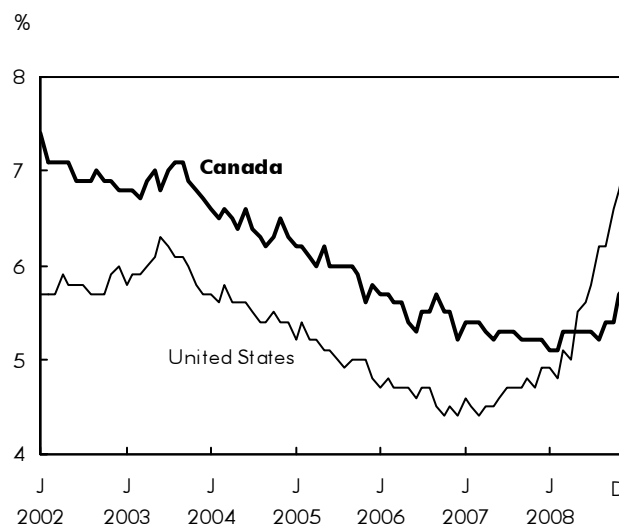
2008, but ended the year at 5.8% (Chart C). Most of this increase was the result of employment losses in the final quarter of 2008. In the United States, the rate increased by more than two full points since the end of 2007, rising from 4.9% to reach 7.2% in December 2008, its highest level since 1993. In fact, the pronounced employment losses in the United States pushed their unemployment rate in 2008 above the Canadian rate for the first time since the recession of the early 1980s. Moreover, proportionately more Canadians than Americans have been participating in the labour force since January 2002 (Chart D).

### The age difference

Employment losses in the United States in 2008 were especially pronounced among youth (age 16 to 24), down 985,000 (-5.0%), while in Canada the rate of decline was much less, with employment falling by 47,000 (-1.9%).

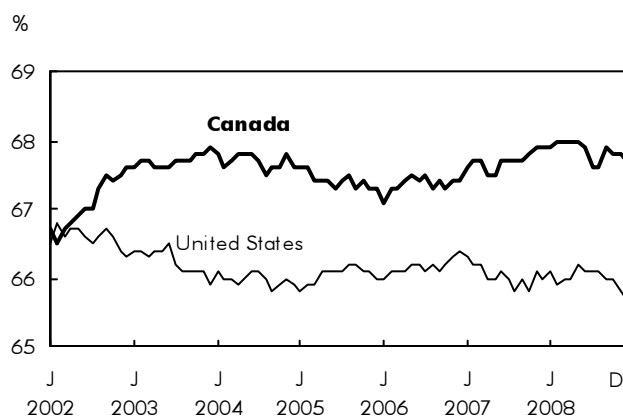
Another big difference was the situation for core-age workers (25 to 54). In Canada, this group managed to hold on to the employment increases in recent years

**Chart C In 2008, the U.S. unemployment rate jumped above Canada's**



Note: Canadian data adjusted to United States definitions.  
Sources: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

**Chart D Since 2003, Canada's participation rate maintained at least a one-point edge over the U.S. rate**



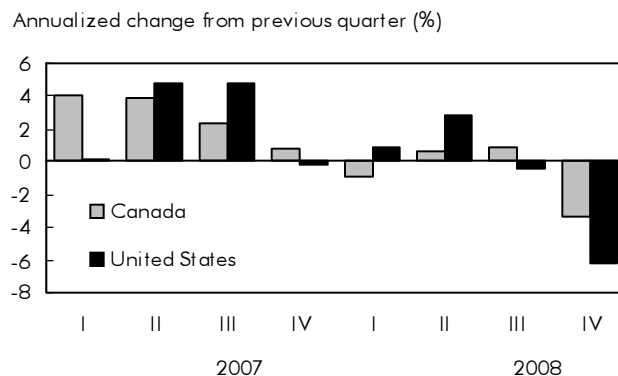
Note: Canadian data adjusted to United States definitions.  
Sources: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

and even managed to nudge up by 22,000 (0.2%) in 2008. This contrasts with the situation in the United States, where the number of core-age workers fell by 2.9% in 2008 (-2,868,000).

The number of older workers (age 55 and over) continued to grow in both countries in 2008, up 101,000 (3.9%) in Canada and 878,000 (3.3%) in the United States. While the population is aging in both countries, the increase in employment is much faster than the population increase for the age group, reflecting their increased participation in both labour markets.

The Canadian labour market was not as adversely affected in 2008 as the American labour market. The two economies experienced some marked differences in performance at different times of the year. In Canada, economic activity declined by an annualized rate of 0.9% in the first quarter, but subsequently rose by 0.6% in the second and by 0.9% in the third quarter (Chart E). In the fourth quarter, however, gross domestic product (GDP) contracted at an annualized rate of 3.4%. In the United States, on the other hand, eco-

**Chart E Real GDP quarterly growth rates contracted steeply in both countries toward the end of 2008**



Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Economic Accounts, chained 2002 dollars; U.S. Bureau of Economic Accounts, chained 2000 dollars.

nomics activity increased by 0.9% and 2.8% in the first and second quarters, but fell 0.5% in the third, and preliminary GDP estimates indicate that the U.S. economy contracted by 6.2% in the final quarter. In fact, toward the end of 2008 the National Bureau of Economic Research announced that peak economic activity in the United States had been reached in December 2007 and that the economy had subsequently fallen into recession at the start of 2008, just when employment began its steep decline.

### Strength in western Canada, woes in U.S. housing and financial sectors

The labour market in Canada, especially in the western provinces, has experienced the effects of a natural resources boom for several years, with rising commodity, oil and natural gas prices. Labour shortages have been especially acute in the West, where pay rates have risen the fastest in the country. In the latter half of 2008, however, commodity prices, including world oil prices, began to tumble.



**Table Change in employment, selected industries, 12-month averages**

	United States			Canada		
	2007	2008	Change	2007	2008	Change
	'000		%	'000		%
Construction	11,860	10,970	-7.4	1,130	1,230	8.6
Financial activities	10,490	10,230	-2.5	1,060	1,070	1.3
Manufacturing	16,300	15,900	-2.4	2,040	1,970	-3.7
Wholesale and retail trade	20,940	20,590	-1.7	2,660	2,650	-0.1
Education and health care services	30,660	31,400	2.4	3,030	3,090	2.2
Public administration	6,750	6,760	0.3	860	930	7.1
Mining, oil and gas extraction	740	820	11.3	250	260	3.7

Sources: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

The United States, amid the turmoil in its mortgage market and financial sector, experienced pronounced employment losses, first in construction and financial activities, then with declines spreading to several other sectors, including retail (Table). In fact, few industries in the United States added employment recently, the exceptions being education, health care services, and mining, oil and gas extraction.

A sour note in both countries was employment losses in manufacturing that began earlier in the decade. Canada and the United States, as well as other higher-cost countries, have been affected by global competition from countries with low production costs. Until recently, the soaring value of the Canadian dollar against its American counterpart posed an additional challenge to Canadian manufacturers. Employment losses have been pronounced in the manufacturing heartland of Quebec and Ontario.

In addition to manufacturing, the Canadian forestry sector has also trimmed its payrolls in recent years. This sector has had to endure several challenges, including trade disputes with the United States, an appreciating currency and the recent collapse of the U.S. house-building market (Chart F). These have been counterbalanced somewhat by strength in the domestic market, with construction activity in Canada soaring in recent years from the boost provided

by low interest rates. However, residential construction in Canada began to drop off at the end of 2008 (Chart G).

Non-residential construction has been spurred by mega-projects such as the tar sands in Alberta and preparations for the 2010 Olympic Games in British Columbia. Population growth in Alberta has also been a major contributor to the employment increase in construction.

### Conclusion

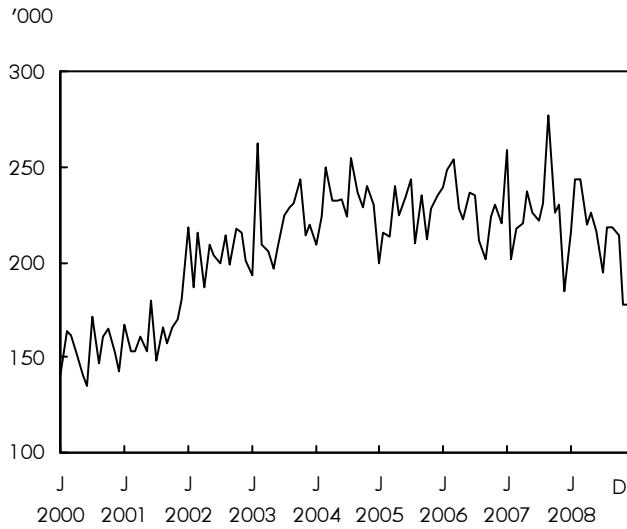
For most of 2008, employment in Canada continued to grow, albeit at a slower pace than the previous year. However, losses were evident in the final quarter of the year. In the United States, employment showed pronounced monthly declines throughout 2008. In fact,

**Chart F U.S. housing starts dropped by two-thirds between 2006 and 2008**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, seasonally adjusted at annual rates.

**Chart G In 2008, Canadian housing starts remained above their 2000 level, despite declines late in the year**



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, housing starts, all areas, seasonally adjusted at annual rates.

other major labour market indicators such as the employment rate, the unemployment rate and the participation rate in Canada have all outperformed their American counterparts. In Canada, construction employment increased steadily in 2008, with the exception of a substantial decline at the end of the year, while finance did not experience the turmoil seen south of the border. Continued weakness was evident, however, in manufacturing employment.

Overall, in 2008 the Canadian labour market weathered the economic storm much better than the American one. All eyes are now on the 2009 labour market, on both sides of the border. Early signs at the start of 2009 were not very encouraging for either country as both experienced substantial employment losses, with the unemployment rate in Canada, adjusted to U.S. definitions, jumping to 6.7% in February 2009 from 5.8% in December 2008, while in the United States, it increased by 0.9 percentage points to 8.1%.

**Perspectives**

# Work absence rates

There are many kinds of absence. Some, such as annual vacation, are generally considered beneficial for both the organization and the employee. Since they are usually scheduled, their effect on the organization can be fairly easily absorbed; the same can be said of statutory holidays. Other absences, such as those caused by illness and family-related demands, are generally unavoidable, as are those due to inclement weather.

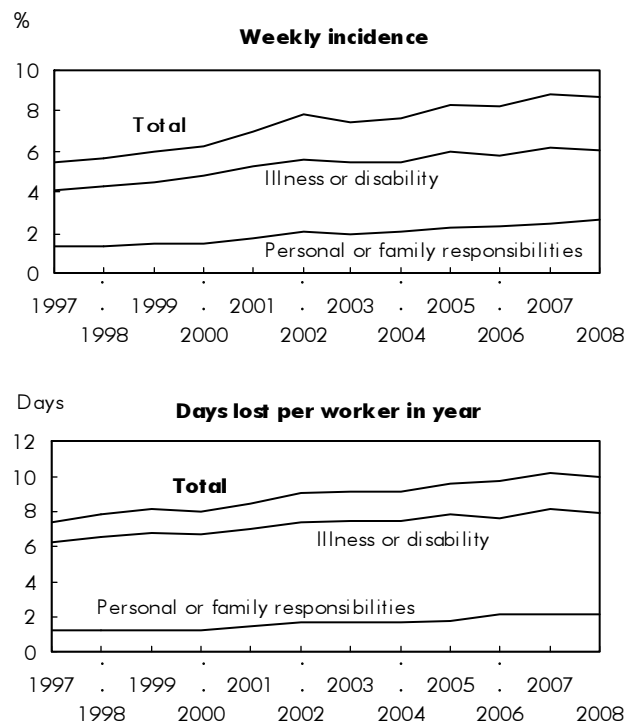
Absenteeism, a term used to refer to absences that are avoidable, habitual and unscheduled, is a source of irritation to employers and co-workers. Such absences are disruptive to proper work scheduling and output, and costly to an organization and the economy as a whole. Although absenteeism is widely acknowledged to be a problem, it is not easy to quantify. The dividing line between avoidable and unavoidable is difficult to draw, and absenteeism generally masquerades as legitimate absence. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) can provide measures of time lost because of personal reasons—that is, illness or disability, and personal or family responsibilities. However, within these categories, it is impossible to determine if an absence is avoidable or unscheduled. LFS data on absences for personal reasons can, however, be analyzed to identify patterns or trends that indicate the effect of absenteeism (see *Data source and definitions*).

## Recent trends—1997 to 2008

Since 2000, both the incidence and the number of days lost for personal reasons (illness or disability, and personal or family responsibilities) have shown a rising trend (Chart). Several factors have contributed: notably, an aging workforce; the growing share of women in the workforce, especially those with young children; high worker stress;<sup>1</sup> and more generous sick- and family-related leave benefits.

In an average week in 1997, excluding women on maternity leave, about 5.5% (484,000) of all full-time employees holding one job were absent from work for all or part of the week for personal reasons.<sup>2</sup> By 2008, the figure had risen to 8.7% (975,000) (Table 1). Total work time missed also rose steadily, from 3.0%

**Chart Work absence rates, 1997 to 2008**



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

of the scheduled week in 1997 to 4.0% in 2008; this was slightly down from 2007. Extrapolated over the full year, work time lost for personal reasons increased from the equivalent of 7.4 days per worker in 1997 to 10.0 days in 2008.

## Variations in absence rates in 2008

Absence for personal reasons differs among various worker groups. Several factors are responsible, principally working conditions (physical environment, degree of job stress, employer-employee relations, collective agreement provisions, work schedules);

adequacy and affordability of community facilities such as child-care centres and public transportation; family circumstances, especially the presence of pre-school children or other dependent family members; and physical health of the worker, a factor closely related to age. Measuring the effects of these and other contributing factors is not easy since many are not captured by the LFS. However, some insight is gained by examining personal absences in 2008 by selected demographic characteristics, occupation and industry, and other attributes such as union and job status.

### Demographic differences

In 2008, excluding women on maternity leave, an estimated 8.7% of full-time employees missed some work each week for personal reasons: 6.1% for own illness or disability, and 2.6% for personal or family responsibilities (Table 2). As a result, full-time employees lost about 4.0% of their work time each week.

On average, each full-time employee lost 10.0 days in 2008 for personal reasons (7.9 for own illness or disability plus 2.1 for personal or family demands). This amounted to an estimated 113 million workdays for all full-time employees. Men lost fewer days than women—8.8 (6.7 for illness or disability plus 2.1 for personal or family demands) versus 11.8 (9.6 plus 2.2).

The presence of pre-school aged children exerts a strong influence on work absences for personal or family responsibilities. In 2008, full-time employees in families with at least one pre-school aged child lost an average of 6.1 days, compared with only 1.6 for those in families without children.

The growing prevalence of family-leave entitlements in the workplace, the extension of Employment Insurance parental benefits,<sup>3</sup> and the greater involvement of fathers in child care appear to have eliminated the difference between the sexes with respect to personal and family-related absences (Marshall 2003; Marshall 2008). In 1997, women with pre-school aged children and working full time lost 4.1 days for such reasons, compared with 1.8 days for men in similar circumstances. By 2006, the gap had narrowed considerably (6.2 days for women versus 5.4 for men), and in 2007, it actually reversed (6.3 days for men versus 4.8 for women). In 2008, men with pre-school aged children and working full time again lost more time than women in similar circumstances (6.5 days versus 5.4).

Workdays missed because of illness or disability tended to rise with age, from an average of 5.1 days for youth (15 to 19) to 12.0 for full-time employees aged 55 to 64.

### Industry and sector

Work absence rates differ by sector (public or private) and industry, with almost all of the difference arising from illness and disability absences (Table 3). Contributing factors include the nature and demands of the job, the male–female composition of the workforce, and the union density—the last being a strong determinant of the presence of paid sick or family leave.

Full-time employees in the public sector (more likely unionized or female) lost more work time in 2008 for personal reasons (13.3 days, compared with 12.8 in 2007) than their private-sector counterparts (9.1 days, compared with 9.5 in 2007).

At the major (2-digit) industry level, the most workdays were missed by employees in health care and social assistance (14.9 days), public administration (13.8), and transportation and warehousing (12.3).

The lowest averages were recorded by full-time workers in professional, scientific and technical services (6.3 days). Those in accommodation and food services also missed fewer workdays (7.3).

### Occupation

Contributing factors for absence rates by occupation are similar to those for industry (Table 4). Again, as by major industry, differences arise mainly from time lost due to illness or disability.

The most days lost in 2008 were recorded for full-time employees in health occupations (16.1), and occupations unique to production (13.5). Workers in management (6.3), and in natural and applied sciences (7.8) recorded the fewest days lost.

### Union coverage, job status, workplace size and job tenure

Full-time workers who belonged to unions or were covered by collective agreements missed more workdays on average in 2008 for personal reasons than their non-unionized counterparts (13.9 versus 8.2) (Table 5).

Workers with permanent jobs (more likely to be unionized) lost more workdays (10.2) than those whose jobs were not permanent (8.2).



Days lost tended to rise with workplace size, increasing from a low of 8.5 in workplaces with fewer than 20 employees (firms more likely to have low union rates) to 11.9 in workplaces with more than 500 employees (firms likely to have high union rates).

Days lost tended to rise with job tenure, with almost all the differences arising from illness and disability. Employees with tenure of up to one year lost 7.5 days, while those with over 14 years lost 12.4 days (the latter group were also likely older).

### Province and CMA

Work absence levels differed by geographic area (Table 6), with most of the variation again arising from illness or disability.

Full-time employees in Quebec (11.6) and Nova Scotia (11.4) lost the most work time in 2008. Those in Alberta (8.3) and Prince Edward Island (9.0) lost the least.

Among the census metropolitan areas, Saguenay (13.7), Greater Sudbury (13.6) and Trois-Rivières (12.8) lost the most days per full-time worker. Kitchener-Waterloo (7.4), Calgary (8.1) and Toronto (8.3) had the least.

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#### Perspectives

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### ■ Notes

1. For more information on this subject, see Margot Shields, "Stress, health and the benefit of social support," *Health Reports* (Statistics Canada Catalogue 82-003-XIE) vol. 15, no. 1, January 2004. Also see Cara Williams, "Sources of workplace stress," *Perspectives on Labour and Income* (Statistics Canada Catalogue 75-001-XIE) vol. 4, no. 6, June 2003 online edition.
2. 1997 marks the introduction of the revised Labour Force Survey questionnaire.
3. In December 2000, changes in Employment Insurance regulations extended the duration of parental leave benefits from 10 to 35 weeks. The 35 weeks can be taken by one (qualifying) parent, or they can be split between both (qualifying) parents.

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## Data source and definitions

The data in this article are annual averages from the **Labour Force Survey (LFS)**. They refer to full-time employees holding only one job. Part-time, self-employed and unpaid family workers are excluded because they generally have more opportunity to arrange their work schedules around personal or family responsibilities. Multiple jobholders, too, are excluded because it is not possible using LFS data to allocate time lost, or the reason for it, to specific jobs. Women on maternity leave are also excluded. Some human resource practitioners exclude persons on long-term illness or disability leave (exceeding one year) from their attendance management statistics. Such persons are, however, included in Statistics Canada's work absence estimates if they count themselves as employed (that is, they continue to receive partial or full pay from their employer). In 2008, the number of employed persons on such long-term illness or disability leave averaged 29,500 in a typical week. Their exclusion would have reduced the weekly work absence incidence for illness or disability from 6.1% to 5.8%, the inactivity rate from 3.2% to 2.9%, and days lost per worker that year from 7.9 to 7.3.

**Personal reasons for absence** are split into two categories: 'own illness or disability' and 'personal or family responsibilities' (caring for own children, caring for elder relative, and other personal or family responsibilities). Absences for these two reasons represented 30% of all time lost by full-time paid workers each week in 2008. Vacations, which accounted for 41% of total time away from work, are not counted in this study, nor are statutory holidays, which represented 12%. Maternity leave represented 11% and other reasons, 6%.

The **incidence of absence** is the percentage of full-time paid workers reporting some absence in the reference week. In calculating incidence, the length of work absence—whether an hour, a day, or a full week—is irrelevant.

The **inactivity rate** shows hours lost as a proportion of the usual weekly hours of full-time paid workers. It takes into account both the incidence and length of absence in the reference week.

**Days lost per worker** are calculated by multiplying the inactivity rate by the estimated number of working days in the year (250).

### Reasons for work absences in the LFS

The LFS sets out the following reasons for being away from work:

- own illness or disability
- caring for own children
- caring for elder relative (60 years or older)
- maternity leave (women only)
- other personal or family responsibilities
- vacation
- labour dispute (strike or lockout)
- temporary layoff due to business conditions
- holiday (legal or religious)
- weather
- job started or ended during week
- working short time (because of material shortages, plant maintenance or repair, for instance)
- other

As normally published, personal or family responsibilities consist of caring for own children, caring for elder relative, and other personal or family responsibilities.

**Table 1 Absence rates for full-time employees by sex, 1997 to 2008, excluding maternity leave**

	Incidence <sup>1</sup>			Inactivity rate <sup>2</sup>			Days lost per worker in year <sup>3</sup>		
	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities
	%			%			days		
<b>Both sexes</b>									
1997	5.5	4.1	1.4	3.0	2.5	0.5	7.4	6.2	1.2
1998	5.7	4.3	1.4	3.1	2.6	0.5	7.8	6.6	1.2
1999	6.0	4.5	1.5	3.2	2.7	0.5	8.1	6.8	1.3
2000	6.3	4.8	1.5	3.2	2.7	0.5	8.0	6.7	1.3
2001	7.0	5.3	1.8	3.4	2.8	0.6	8.5	7.0	1.5
2002	7.8	5.6	2.1	3.6	3.0	0.7	9.1	7.4	1.7
2003	7.5	5.5	2.0	3.7	3.0	0.7	9.2	7.5	1.7
2004	7.6	5.5	2.1	3.7	3.0	0.7	9.2	7.5	1.7
2005	8.3	6.0	2.3	3.9	3.1	0.7	9.6	7.8	1.8
2006	8.2	5.8	2.4	3.9	3.0	0.9	9.7	7.6	2.1
2007	8.8	6.2	2.5	4.1	3.2	0.8	10.2	8.1	2.1
2008	8.7	6.1	2.6	4.0	3.2	0.9	10.0	7.9	2.1
<b>Men</b>									
1997	4.6	3.4	1.2	2.5	2.1	0.4	6.3	5.3	0.9
1998	4.9	3.7	1.2	2.7	2.3	0.4	6.9	5.8	1.0
1999	5.2	3.9	1.3	2.8	2.4	0.4	7.0	5.9	1.1
2000	5.5	4.1	1.4	2.8	2.4	0.4	7.0	5.9	1.1
2001	6.1	4.6	1.6	3.1	2.5	0.5	7.6	6.3	1.3
2002	6.7	4.8	1.9	3.2	2.6	0.6	8.0	6.5	1.6
2003	6.5	4.7	1.8	3.3	2.6	0.6	8.2	6.6	1.5
2004	6.6	4.6	2.0	3.2	2.6	0.7	8.0	6.4	1.6
2005	7.2	5.2	2.1	3.4	2.7	0.7	8.6	6.9	1.7
2006	7.2	5.1	2.1	3.5	2.7	0.8	8.7	6.7	1.9
2007	7.5	5.1	2.4	3.5	2.7	0.8	8.8	6.7	2.1
2008	7.5	5.1	2.4	3.5	2.7	0.8	8.8	6.7	2.1
<b>Women</b>									
1997	6.7	5.1	1.7	3.6	3.0	0.6	9.1	7.6	1.5
1998	6.7	5.1	1.6	3.7	3.1	0.6	9.2	7.8	1.5
1999	7.1	5.4	1.8	3.8	3.2	0.6	9.6	8.0	1.6
2000	7.5	5.7	1.8	3.8	3.2	0.6	9.4	7.9	1.5
2001	8.2	6.2	2.0	3.9	3.2	0.7	9.8	8.0	1.8
2002	9.2	6.7	2.4	4.3	3.5	0.8	10.7	8.7	1.9
2003	8.9	6.6	2.3	4.3	3.5	0.8	10.7	8.8	1.9
2004	8.9	6.6	2.3	4.3	3.6	0.7	10.8	9.0	1.9
2005	9.6	7.0	2.6	4.5	3.7	0.8	11.2	9.1	2.0
2006	9.5	6.8	2.7	4.5	3.5	1.0	11.2	8.8	2.4
2007	10.3	7.5	2.8	4.8	3.9	0.9	12.0	9.9	2.1
2008	10.2	7.3	2.8	4.7	3.8	0.9	11.8	9.6	2.2

1. Absent workers divided by total.

2. Hours absent divided by hours usually worked.

3. Inactivity rate multiplied by working days in year (250).

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

**Table 2 Absence rates for full-time employees by sex, age, education and presence of children, 2008, excluding maternity leave**

	Incidence <sup>1</sup>			Inactivity rate <sup>2</sup>			Days lost per worker in year <sup>3</sup>		
	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities
<b>Age</b>	%			%			days		
<b>Both sexes</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>2.1</b>
15 to 19	7.0	5.2	1.8	2.6	2.1	0.6	6.6	5.1	1.4
20 to 24	8.0	5.8	2.2	3.0	2.3	0.7	7.4	5.7	1.7
25 to 34	8.8	5.7	3.1	3.7	2.5	1.1	9.2	6.4	2.8
35 to 44	8.9	5.9	3.0	3.9	2.9	1.0	9.9	7.3	2.5
45 to 54	8.3	6.2	2.2	4.2	3.5	0.7	10.5	8.9	1.7
55 to 64	9.4	7.3	2.1	5.4	4.8	0.6	13.6	12.0	1.6
65 and over	7.8	5.6	2.2	4.5	3.7	0.8	11.4	9.3	2.0
<b>Men</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>2.1</b>
15 to 19	6.9	5.0	1.8	2.6	2.0	0.6	6.4	5.0	1.4
20 to 24	7.4	5.4	2.0	2.9	2.3	0.6	7.3	5.7	1.6
25 to 34	7.3	4.4	2.9	3.1	1.9	1.2	7.7	4.8	2.9
35 to 44	7.6	4.9	2.7	3.4	2.4	1.0	8.4	5.9	2.5
45 to 54	7.3	5.3	2.0	3.7	3.1	0.6	9.3	7.8	1.5
55 to 64	8.2	6.2	2.0	4.7	4.2	0.6	11.9	10.4	1.4
65 and over	8.1	5.9	2.2	4.8	4.0	0.8	12.0	10.0	2.0
<b>Women</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>2.2</b>
15 to 19	7.3	5.5	1.8	2.7	2.1	0.6	6.8	5.3	1.5
20 to 24	8.8	6.4	2.4	3.0	2.3	0.7	7.6	5.7	1.8
25 to 34	10.9	7.5	3.4	4.5	3.5	1.0	11.3	8.7	2.6
35 to 44	10.6	7.3	3.3	4.7	3.7	1.0	11.8	9.3	2.5
45 to 54	9.5	7.2	2.3	4.8	4.1	0.8	12.1	10.1	2.0
55 to 64	10.9	8.6	2.2	6.4	5.7	0.7	15.9	14.2	1.8
65 and over	7.4	5.2	F	4.0	3.2	F	10.0	8.0	F
<b>Educational attainment</b>									
<b>Both sexes</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>2.1</b>
Less than grade 9	9.2	7.1	2.1	5.6	4.8	0.8	14.0	12.1	1.9
Some secondary	10.0	7.3	2.7	5.1	4.2	0.9	12.8	10.5	2.4
High school graduation	8.3	6.0	2.3	4.0	3.2	0.8	9.9	8.0	1.9
Some postsecondary	9.4	6.7	2.6	4.2	3.3	0.9	10.6	8.3	2.2
Postsecondary certificate or diploma	9.0	6.3	2.7	4.3	3.4	0.9	10.7	8.5	2.2
University degree	7.7	5.1	2.6	3.1	2.2	0.9	7.7	5.5	2.2
<b>Presence of children</b>									
<b>Both sexes</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>2.1</b>
With children	9.4	6.0	3.4	4.3	3.1	1.2	10.8	7.9	3.0
Preschoolers- under 5 years	11.7	6.2	5.5	5.4	3.0	2.4	13.5	7.4	6.1
5 to 12 years	8.8	5.8	3.0	3.8	3.0	0.8	9.4	7.4	2.0
13 years and over	8.1	6.0	2.1	4.0	3.4	0.6	10.0	8.5	1.5
Without children	8.2	6.1	2.0	3.8	3.2	0.6	9.5	7.9	1.6

1. Absent workers divided by total.

2. Hours absent divided by hours usually worked.

3. Inactivity rate multiplied by working days in year (250).

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

**Table 3 Absence rates for full-time employees by industry and sector, 2008, excluding maternity leave**

	Incidence <sup>1</sup>			Inactivity rate <sup>2</sup>			Days lost per worker in year <sup>3</sup>		
	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities
		%			%		days		
<b>All industries</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>2.1</b>
Public employees	10.7	8.0	2.7	5.3	4.3	1.0	13.3	10.8	2.4
Private employees	8.0	5.5	2.5	3.6	2.8	0.8	9.1	7.0	2.1
<b>Goods-producing</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>2.1</b>
Primary	6.1	4.0	2.0	3.1	2.4	0.7	7.7	5.9	1.8
Agriculture	7.1	4.4	2.6	3.4	2.5	0.8	8.4	6.4	2.0
Other	5.7	3.9	1.8	3.0	2.3	0.7	7.5	5.8	1.8
Utilities	9.2	6.7	2.6	4.0	3.2	0.8	10.1	8.1	2.0
Construction	7.4	4.9	2.6	3.4	2.6	0.8	8.6	6.5	2.1
Manufacturing	8.8	6.1	2.7	4.3	3.4	0.9	10.7	8.6	2.1
Durable	8.9	6.2	2.7	4.2	3.4	0.8	10.5	8.5	2.1
Non-durable	8.5	6.0	2.6	4.4	3.5	0.9	11.0	8.8	2.2
<b>Service-producing</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>2.2</b>
Trade	8.0	5.5	2.5	3.5	2.7	0.8	8.8	6.8	2.0
Wholesale	8.2	5.3	2.9	3.3	2.5	0.8	8.3	6.3	2.0
Retail	7.9	5.5	2.4	3.6	2.8	0.8	9.1	7.1	2.0
Transportation and warehousing	8.7	6.6	2.2	4.9	4.1	0.8	12.3	10.3	2.0
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	7.8	5.4	2.4	3.3	2.5	0.7	8.2	6.3	1.9
Finance and insurance	8.0	5.6	2.4	3.4	2.6	0.7	8.5	6.6	1.8
Real estate and leasing	7.1	4.6	2.4	2.8	2.0	0.8	7.0	5.0	2.0
Professional, scientific and technical	7.6	4.5	3.1	2.5	1.7	0.8	6.3	4.2	2.1
Business, building and support services	10.4	7.6	2.8	4.6	3.6	1.0	11.5	9.0	2.5
Educational services	9.2	6.4	2.8	3.9	2.9	1.0	9.7	7.3	2.4
Health care and social assistance	10.9	8.5	2.3	6.0	5.1	0.9	14.9	12.7	2.2
Information, culture and recreation	7.8	5.2	2.5	3.2	2.4	0.8	7.9	5.9	2.0
Accommodation and food services	6.3	4.5	1.8	2.9	2.2	0.7	7.3	5.6	1.7
Other services	7.5	4.7	2.8	3.2	2.3	0.9	7.9	5.6	2.3
Public administration	11.8	8.6	3.2	5.5	4.4	1.1	13.8	11.0	2.8
Federal	14.5	10.2	4.3	6.5	4.9	1.5	16.2	12.3	3.8
Provincial	10.8	8.2	2.5	5.0	4.3	0.7	12.6	10.8	1.8
Local, other	9.3	6.9	2.4	4.8	3.8	1.0	12.0	9.6	2.4

1. Absent workers divided by total.

2. Hours absent divided by hours usually worked.

3. Inactivity rate multiplied by working days in year (250).

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.



**Table 4 Absence rates for full-time employees by occupation, 2008, excluding maternity leave**

	Incidence <sup>1</sup>			Inactivity rate <sup>2</sup>			Days lost per worker in year <sup>3</sup>		
	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities
<b>All occupations</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>2.1</b>
Management	6.1	4.0	2.1	2.5	1.9	0.6	6.3	4.7	1.6
Business, finance and administrative	9.8	6.8	3.0	4.0	3.2	0.9	10.1	8.0	2.1
Professional	7.4	4.9	2.4	3.0	2.2	0.8	7.4	5.5	1.9
Financial and administrative	9.0	6.1	2.9	3.6	2.8	0.8	8.9	6.9	2.0
Clerical	10.8	7.7	3.2	4.6	3.7	0.9	11.4	9.2	2.3
Natural and applied sciences	8.1	4.9	3.1	3.1	2.0	1.1	7.8	5.1	2.7
Health	11.0	8.8	2.1	6.4	5.6	0.8	16.1	14.0	2.1
Professional	7.6	5.7	F	4.0	3.1	F	10.0	7.8	F
Nursing	12.2	10.1	2.1	7.5	6.6	1.0	18.8	16.4	2.4
Technical	10.7	8.4	2.3	6.2	5.4	0.8	15.5	13.4	2.1
Support staff	11.1	9.0	2.1	6.4	5.7	0.7	16.1	14.3	1.8
Social and public service	9.2	6.4	2.8	3.9	2.9	1.0	9.8	7.3	2.5
Legal, social and religious	9.6	6.6	3.0	4.1	3.1	1.0	10.4	7.8	2.6
Teachers and professors	8.8	6.2	2.6	3.7	2.8	0.9	9.3	6.9	2.4
Secondary and elementary	9.7	7.0	2.8	4.0	3.1	1.0	10.1	7.6	2.4
Other	6.7	4.4	2.3	3.0	2.1	0.9	7.6	5.4	2.2
Culture and recreation	8.0	5.4	2.5	3.2	2.3	0.9	8.0	5.8	2.2
Sales and service	7.8	5.7	2.0	3.8	3.1	0.8	9.5	7.6	1.9
Wholesale	6.1	4.1	2.1	2.3	1.7	0.6	5.7	4.4	1.4
Retail	7.5	5.5	2.1	3.6	2.8	0.8	9.0	7.0	2.0
Food and beverage	6.1	4.4	1.7	3.1	2.4	0.7	7.7	5.9	1.8
Protective services	7.9	6.1	1.7	4.9	4.1	0.8	12.3	10.2	2.1
Childcare and home support	11.2	8.0	3.2	5.1	4.0	1.1	12.7	10.0	2.7
Travel and accommodation	9.2	7.0	2.2	4.6	3.8	0.8	11.5	9.6	2.0
Trades, transport and equipment operators	8.5	5.9	2.6	4.2	3.3	0.9	10.6	8.4	2.2
Contractors and supervisors	5.9	3.3	2.6	2.4	1.7	0.7	5.9	4.2	1.8
Construction trades	8.5	5.7	2.8	4.0	3.0	0.9	9.9	7.6	2.3
Other trades	8.7	5.9	2.8	4.1	3.2	0.9	10.3	7.9	2.4
Transport equipment operators	8.0	5.7	2.3	4.7	3.8	0.9	11.7	9.4	2.3
Helpers and labourers	9.9	7.4	2.4	5.0	4.2	0.8	12.5	10.6	1.9
Occupations unique to primary industry	6.8	4.5	2.3	3.7	2.8	0.8	9.2	7.1	2.1
Occupations unique to production	10.0	7.3	2.7	5.4	4.5	0.9	13.5	11.2	2.3
Machine operators and assemblers	10.0	7.2	2.8	5.5	4.5	1.0	13.7	11.3	2.4
Labourers	10.1	7.6	2.4	5.1	4.3	0.7	12.7	10.8	1.9

1. Absent workers divided by total.

2. Hours absent divided by hours usually worked.

3. Inactivity rate multiplied by working days in year (250).

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

**Table 5 Absence rates for full-time employees by workplace size, job tenure, job status and union coverage, 2008, excluding maternity leave**

	Incidence <sup>1</sup>			Inactivity rate <sup>2</sup>			Days lost per worker in year <sup>3</sup>		
	Total	Own illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities	Total	Own illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities	Total	Own illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities
	%			%			days		
<b>Workplace size</b>									
<b>Both sexes</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>2.1</b>
Under 20 employees	7.6	5.1	2.6	3.4	2.6	0.8	8.5	6.4	2.1
20 to 99 employees	8.7	6.1	2.6	3.9	3.1	0.8	9.7	7.7	2.1
100 to 500 employees	9.5	6.9	2.6	4.6	3.6	0.9	11.4	9.1	2.3
Over 500 employees	9.5	7.0	2.5	4.8	3.9	0.9	11.9	9.7	2.2
<b>Job tenure</b>									
<b>Both sexes</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>2.1</b>
1 to 12 months	7.7	5.3	2.4	3.0	2.2	0.8	7.5	5.6	1.9
Over 1 to 5 years	8.5	5.8	2.7	3.8	2.9	0.9	9.5	7.2	2.3
Over 5 to 9 years	9.3	6.4	2.9	4.4	3.3	1.1	10.9	8.3	2.6
Over 9 to 14 years	8.9	6.0	2.8	4.2	3.3	0.9	10.6	8.3	2.3
Over 14 years	9.2	6.9	2.3	4.9	4.2	0.7	12.4	10.6	1.8
<b>Job status</b>									
<b>Both sexes</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>2.1</b>
Permanent	8.8	6.2	2.6	4.1	3.2	0.9	10.2	8.1	2.2
Non-permanent	7.6	5.1	2.5	3.3	2.5	0.8	8.2	6.2	2.0
<b>Union coverage</b>									
<b>Both sexes</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>2.1</b>
Union member or covered by collective agreement	10.6	8.0	2.6	5.5	4.6	1.0	13.9	11.5	2.4
Non-unionized	7.7	5.1	2.6	3.3	2.5	0.8	8.2	6.2	2.0

1. Absent workers divided by total.

2. Hours absent divided by hours usually worked.

3. Inactivity rate multiplied by working days in year (250).

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

**Table 6 Absence rates for full-time employees by province, region and census metropolitan area (CMA), 2008, excluding maternity leave**

	Incidence <sup>1</sup>			Inactivity rate <sup>2</sup>			Days lost per worker in year <sup>3</sup>		
	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities	Total	Illness or disability	Personal or family responsibilities
<b>Province and region</b>		%			%			days	
<b>Both sexes</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>2.1</b>
Atlantic	8.8	6.5	2.2	4.3	3.6	0.7	10.8	8.9	1.8
Newfoundland and Labrador	7.7	6.0	1.7	3.9	3.3	0.6	9.8	8.2	1.6
Prince Edward Island	7.3	5.4	2.0	3.6	3.0	0.6	9.0	7.4	1.5
Nova Scotia	9.4	7.0	2.3	4.6	3.9	0.7	11.4	9.7	1.7
New Brunswick	9.0	6.6	2.4	4.4	3.5	0.9	11.0	8.8	2.2
Quebec	9.1	6.4	2.7	4.6	3.7	0.9	11.6	9.2	2.3
Ontario	8.6	5.9	2.7	3.8	2.9	0.9	9.5	7.4	2.2
Prairies	8.6	5.9	2.6	3.7	2.8	0.9	9.2	6.9	2.3
Manitoba	10.0	7.3	2.7	4.5	3.6	0.8	11.2	9.0	2.1
Saskatchewan	9.6	6.7	2.9	4.2	3.2	1.0	10.5	8.1	2.4
Alberta	7.9	5.4	2.6	3.3	2.4	0.9	8.3	6.1	2.3
British Columbia	8.2	6.1	2.0	3.9	3.2	0.7	9.8	8.0	1.8
<b>CMA</b>									
<b>Both sexes</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>2.1</b>
All CMAs	8.6	6.0	2.6	3.9	3.0	0.9	9.7	7.5	2.1
St. John's	8.5	6.7	1.9	3.8	3.2	0.5	9.5	8.1	1.4
Halifax	9.9	7.2	2.6	4.4	3.6	0.8	10.9	9.0	1.9
Saint John	8.4	5.9	2.5	4.0	3.1	0.9	10.1	7.7	2.4
Saguenay	8.9	6.7	F	5.5	4.6	F	13.7	11.6	F
Québec	8.6	6.0	2.6	3.8	3.1	0.7	9.4	7.6	1.8
Montréal	9.3	6.3	3.0	4.6	3.5	1.0	11.4	8.8	2.6
Trois-Rivières	9.4	7.5	F	5.1	4.5	F	12.8	11.3	F
Sherbrooke	8.5	6.3	F	4.6	3.8	F	11.6	9.6	F
Gatineau	11.9	8.1	3.8	5.0	3.8	1.2	12.6	9.5	3.0
Ottawa	10.4	6.9	3.5	4.3	3.2	1.1	10.8	8.1	2.7
Kingston	9.5	6.5	2.9	4.0	3.2	0.9	10.0	7.9	2.2
Greater Sudbury/ Grand Sudbury	10.4	7.4	3.0	5.4	4.3	1.2	13.6	10.7	2.9
Toronto	7.8	5.3	2.4	3.3	2.5	0.8	8.3	6.4	2.0
Hamilton	8.5	6.0	2.5	4.2	3.3	0.9	10.4	8.2	2.2
St. Catharines-Niagara	9.6	6.4	3.1	4.5	3.5	1.0	11.2	8.6	2.5
London	8.3	5.8	2.5	3.4	2.7	0.7	8.5	6.8	1.6
Windsor	9.5	6.6	2.9	4.8	3.8	1.1	12.1	9.5	2.6
Kitchener-Waterloo	7.7	4.9	2.8	3.0	2.2	0.8	7.4	5.5	1.9
Oshawa	9.1	6.4	2.6	4.4	3.5	0.9	11.0	8.7	2.3
Thunder Bay	10.2	7.7	F	4.9	4.0	F	12.2	10.0	F
Winnipeg	9.9	7.4	2.6	4.3	3.6	0.8	10.8	8.9	1.9
Regina	10.5	7.7	2.8	4.5	3.6	0.9	11.2	8.9	2.2
Saskatoon	8.8	6.4	2.4	3.6	2.9	0.8	9.1	7.2	1.9
Calgary	7.7	5.2	2.4	3.2	2.3	0.9	8.1	5.8	2.3
Edmonton	8.8	5.8	3.0	3.6	2.6	1.0	8.9	6.5	2.4
Abbotsford	8.8	7.2	F	4.5	3.9	F	11.2	9.7	F
Vancouver	7.5	5.7	1.8	3.4	2.8	0.6	8.5	7.1	1.5
Victoria	10.1	7.6	2.5	4.4	3.7	0.8	11.0	9.2	1.9
Non-CMAs	8.7	6.1	2.6	4.4	3.5	0.9	10.9	8.7	2.2
Urban Centres	8.8	6.4	2.5	4.3	3.4	0.9	10.7	8.6	2.1

1. Absent workers divided by total.

2. Hours absent divided by hours usually worked.

3. Inactivity rate multiplied by working days in year (250).

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.