

Guide to Employment Insurance Statistics (EIS), 2017



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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 Employment Insurance program

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.

Today, the Employment Insurance (EI) program is administered by Service Canada on behalf of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). EI program Part I provides temporary financial assistance to workers who have lost their job through no fault of their own, as long as they look for work or upgrade their skills. It also provides assistance to workers who are sick, pregnant, or caring for a newborn or adopted child, as well as those caring for a family member who is seriously ill or those who must provide care to their critically ill or injured child. EI program Part II, called Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSMs), provides more of an 'active support' component. EBSMs are labour market programs and services established to assist individuals in Canada to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment. They are delivered mostly by provinces and territories through Labour Market Development Agreements.

1.2 Employment Insurance Statistics

Employment Insurance Statistics (EIS), released monthly by Statistics Canada, aim 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, benefit payments, number of weeks paid and number of disqualifications and disentitlements, are available on a monthly basis in CANSIM, Statistics Canada's key socioeconomic database.

1.3 Administrative data

The EIS are based on administrative data. Microdata on beneficiaries are collected and provided by Service Canada. On their side, ESDC 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 (provinces and territories, 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 required.

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. 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 the document entitled “**Seasonally adjusted data – Frequently asked questions**” on the Statistics Canada website. 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 revisions 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**. There have been changes to the EI program in the past, with the most recent series of changes introduced in July 2016. More information on the **2016 EI changes** is available on the ESDC website.

The Act allows each province or administrative region – as defined by ESDC – 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 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.

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 CMAs and CAs

See the **Standard Geographical Classification (SGC) 2011 – Definitions** for more information.

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 (SGC) 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 (SGC) 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 (NOC) 2011**.

Part I - Benefits:

The temporary financial assistance provided by EI Part I is categorized under a number of types of benefits: regular, fishing, work-sharing and special benefits (maternity, parental, sickness and compassionate care).

- **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).
 - **Maternity benefits¹:** These benefits are offered to biological mothers, including surrogate mothers, who cannot work because they are pregnant or have recently given birth.
 - **Parental benefits¹:** These benefits are offered to parents who are caring for a newborn or newly adopted child.
 - **Parents of critically ill children benefits:** 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 when they have an interruption of earnings due to illness, injury or quarantine.

Part II - Employment Benefits and Support Measures:

EI Part II includes the following types of benefits: Skills Development, Targeted Wage Subsidies, Self-Employment, Job Creation Partnerships and Targeted Earnings Supplements. Overall, these benefits allow EI-insured clients to gain work skills and experience through a combination of specific employment interventions. The EIS give information mainly on the following benefit types:

- **Job Creation Partnerships:** These projects provide insured participants with opportunities to gain work experience to improve their long-term employment prospects. Projects under this initiative help develop the community and the local economy.
- **Self-Employment:** These projects provide financial assistance and business planning advice to EI-eligible participants to help them start their own business. This financial assistance is intended to cover personal living expenses and business-related expenses during the initial stages.
- **Skills Development:** These projects help insured participants obtain skills for employment by providing direct financial assistance that enables them to select, arrange for and pay for their own training.

Note: For more information on the definitions, see **Employment Insurance benefits on the Service Canada website**.

1. 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 **Employment Insurance benefits** on the Service Canada website for more details.

Related products

Selected CANSIM tables from Statistics Canada

276-0003	Employment Insurance program (EI), number of disqualifications and disentitlements by province and reason, unadjusted for seasonality, monthly
276-0004	Employment Insurance program (EI), claims received and allowed by province and type of claim, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted, monthly
276-0011	Employment Insurance program (EI), persons covered by employment insurance program, unadjusted for seasonality, monthly
276-0017	Employment Insurance program (EI), benefit characteristics by province, type of income benefits and class of worker, unadjusted for seasonality, monthly
276-0018	Employment Insurance program (EI), 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, unadjusted for seasonality, monthly
276-0021	Employment Insurance program (EI), beneficiaries by province, total and regular income benefits, declared earnings, sex and detailed age, unadjusted for seasonality, 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, unadjusted for seasonality, 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, unadjusted for seasonality, monthly
276-0042	Employment Insurance program (EI), beneficiaries receiving regular income benefits by province and National Occupational Classification (NOC), unadjusted for seasonality, monthly
276-0043	Employment Insurance program (EI), beneficiaries receiving regular income benefits by province and National Occupational Classification (NOC), seasonally adjusted, monthly

Selected surveys from Statistics Canada

2604	Employment Insurance Statistics – Monthly (EIS)
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Selected summary tables from Statistics Canada

- Latest statistics (monthly)