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Infomat

A Weekly Review

Friday, March 14, 1997

OVERVIEW

- **Labour market remains stable in February**

  There was little change in the labour market in February. The unemployment rate remained at 9.7%.

- **Industrial capacity use rises throughout 1996**

  In the fourth quarter—and in every quarter of 1996—industries increased their use of production capacity.

- **Lower truck sales pull down vehicle sales in January**

  Declining truck sales pulled down new motor vehicle sales in January. On a year-over-year basis, however, 1997 was off to a better start than 1996.

- **Number of help-wanted advertisements rises again**

  In February, the number of help-wanted advertisements in newspapers rose for the fifth consecutive month.

- **Demand for homes spurs increase in building permits**

  Low mortgage rates and a stronger demand for housing were behind the increase in the overall value of building permits issued in January.

- **New housing prices weaken, but at lower rate**

  On a year-over-year basis, new housing prices weakened in January, but at a lower rate than in the three previous months.

Labour market remains stable in February

The labour market was characterized by stability in February. Employment fell slightly, for the first time since last September, leaving gains over the last five months at 72,000. The labour force also declined in February, holding the unemployment rate at 9.7%.

While gains of 19,000 part-time jobs were made, there were 38,000 fewer full-time workers. Part-time employment has grown at a faster pace than full-time work since September. The number of people with part-time jobs increased 1.2% in February; full-time employment edged up 0.4%.

The full-time employment loss was concentrated among adult women, who lost 44,000 jobs. Adult men, however, gained 23,000 full-time jobs. Part-time employment for adult women has been on an upward trend since December 1994. Since that time, their part-time employment rate has increased from 23.1% to 25.1%, with more part-time than full-time jobs. Over the same period, full-time employment among adult men increased much more than part-time employment.

There were an estimated 22,000 fewer youth workers (15- to 24-year-olds) in February and most of the losses occurred in full-time employment (-17,000). Consequently, the youth employment rate

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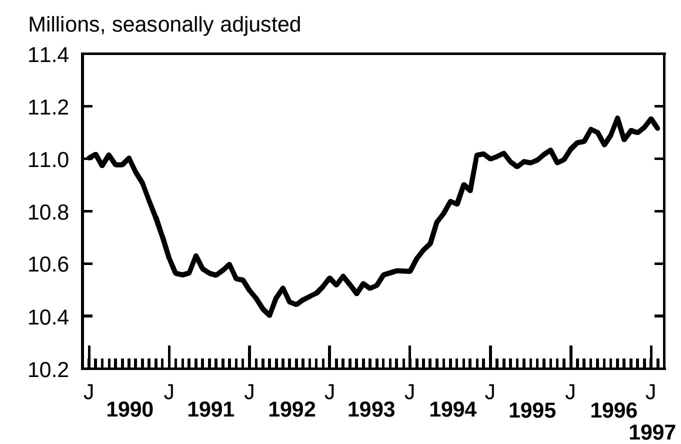
Full-time employment



... Labour market remains stable in February

fell 0.6 percentage points to 50.5%, its lowest in 20 years. Because of a drop in youth participation, their unemployment rate edged down to 16.9%.

The number of private sector employees fell by 31,000 in February. Declines since August contrast with strong growth in 1994 and at the beginning of 1995. Public sector employment was little changed, as in the previous seven months. The number of self-employed workers was also close to January's level. However, there were 11% more self-employed in February compared with July 1996, an increase of 250,000.

Regionally, Ontario and British Columbia had the largest declines in employment in February (-20,000 and -13,000 respectively). The number of employed in Ontario was 57,000 lower than it was last August. In British Columbia, it remained 2.6% higher than a year ago. With the exception of Saskatchewan, where employment rose by 4,000 in February, there was little change in any of the other provinces.

Employment in the retail trade sector fell by 27,000 in February. Employment in this industry increased in the last quarter of 1996, but was little changed in January. In agriculture, employment also fell (-19,000). Employment in agriculture has been trending down since rising strongly in October. The falling employment in retail trade and agriculture was somewhat offset by improvements in transportation, storage and communications (+14,000). After declining steadily since it peaked in August 1995, employment in this industry seems to be on an upward trend. Employment in the utilities industry, which has trended downward since August last year, added 7,000 jobs in February.

Construction employment was unchanged, following gains of 36,000 in the preceding four months. In manufacturing, employment grew strongly through the summer of 1996, fell in October, and has remained flat since.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 3450–3471, 3483–3502 and table 00799999.

***Labour force information** for the week ending February 15, 1997 (paper version: 71-001-PPB, $10/$100; fax version: 71-001-PFB, $300 annually) is now available. For further information, contact Deborah Sunter (613-951-4740), or Vincent Ferrao (613-951-4750), Household Surveys Division. (See also "Current Trends" on p. 8.)*

Labour Force Survey, February 1997
Seasonally adjusted

	Labour force		Employment		Unemployment	
	thousands	% change, previous month	thousands	% change, previous month	thousands	Rate (%)
Canada	**15,217.6**	**-0.1**	**13,740.1**	**-0.1**	**1,477.4**	**9.7**
Newfoundland	238.8	-1.0	191.1	-0.5	47.7	20.0
Prince Edward Island	70.2	-0.8	59.0	-0.5	11.2	16.0
Nova Scotia	449.4	0.4	388.6	-0.3	60.8	13.5
New Brunswick	360.0	0.4	311.9	0.0	48.1	13.4
Quebec	3,657.2	-0.1	3,222.8	0.3	434.4	11.9
Ontario	5,830.9	-0.3	5,302.1	-0.4	528.8	9.1
Manitoba	580.3	-0.3	541.4	0.1	38.8	6.7
Saskatchewan	496.3	0.8	465.5	0.8	30.8	6.2
Alberta	1,534.0	0.1	1,429.9	0.2	104.1	6.8
British Columbia	2,000.4	-0.1	1,827.9	-0.7	172.5	8.6

Industrial capacity use rises throughout 1996

In every quarter of 1996, industries increased their use of production capacity. This brought the level to 84.8% by the end of the year, slightly less than the most recent peak reached in the fourth quarter of 1994 (85.1%). This narrows the gap to 2 percentage points when compared with the historical peak of 86.8% reached in 1988.

Responding to an upsurge in domestic demand, stronger business investment in machinery and equipment, and the rebound of the housing sector, industries increased production by 0.8% in the fourth quarter of 1996. According to the latest Business Conditions Survey, manufacturers will also increase production in the first quarter of 1997.

Note to readers

An industry's capacity use is the ratio of its actual output to its estimated potential output. Statistics Canada derives estimates of an industry's potential output from measures of its capital stock. In addition, since 1987, Statistics Canada has been surveying companies for their estimates of annual capacity use in order to produce survey-based industry measures. A company's measure of its level of operation, as a percentage of its potential, takes into account changes in the obsolescence of facilities, capital-to-labour ratios and other characteristics of production techniques. The surveyed rates anchor the calculated quarterly series and ensure they reflect such changes.

(continued on page 3)

... Industrial capacity use rises throughout 1996

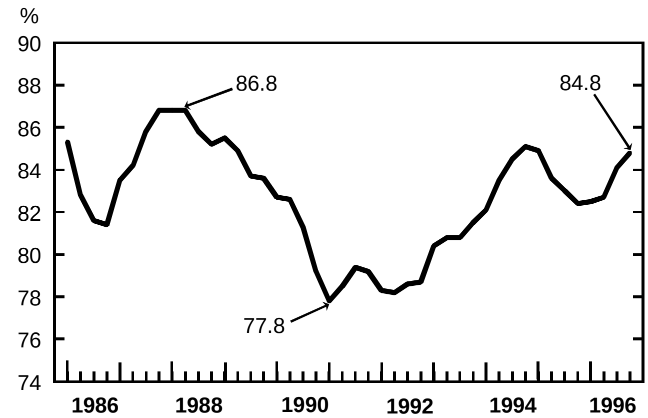
Industries are expanding their production capacity: the recent survey of private and public investment showed that business investment increased in 1996 over 1995, and further increases are anticipated for 1997. In January, the annual rate of increase in the Consumer Price Index was at the same level as in December and industrial product prices showed little change for an eighth consecutive month.

Manufacturers' use of capacity advanced for the third consecutive quarter, bringing the fourth-quarter level to 85.3%. Eighteen of the twenty-two industry groups in manufacturing raised their level of capacity use. Machinery, non-metallic mineral products, and electrical and electronic products (computers and other office machines, and communications and telecommunications equipment) all increased their use of production capacity. Increased consumer spending led to higher rates of capacity use by various manufacturers of non-durable goods, including leather and textile products.

The transportation equipment industries showed the most significant decrease: capacity use was down 4.7 percentage points because of lost production time during the October GM strike. Wood industries also recorded a decrease, as sawmill activity was cut back.

In logging and forestry, capacity use rose by 3.5 percentage points. Capacity use in the mining, quarrying and oil wells sector increased 0.7 percentage points to 88.1%, due mainly to crude petroleum and natural gas, which saw the use of capacity rise by 1.5 percentage points. For the fourth consecutive quarter, capacity use rose in the construction industries, where higher production combined with decreased capacity led to a 1.5 percentage point rise in the fourth quarter. Capacity use by electric utilities fell, mostly due to a marked decrease in demand because of December's warmer weather.

Industrial capacity utilization rate



Available on CANSIM: 3140.

For further information, contact Susanna Wood (613-951-0655) or Richard Landry (613-951-2579), Investment and Capital Stock Division.

Industrial capacity utilization rates

	Q3 1996	Q4 1996	Q3 1996 to Q4 1996	Annual average 1996	1996	1995 to 1996
	%		percentage point change	%		percentage point change
Industry						
Total, non-farm goods-producing	**84.1**	**84.8**	**0.7**	**83.5**	**83.5**	**0.0**
Logging and forestry	75.1	78.6	3.5	83.9	77.9	-6.0
Mining (including milling), quarrying and oil wells	87.4	88.1	0.7	85.3	86.8	1.5
Manufacturing	84.8	85.3	0.5	84.3	84.1	-0.2
Durable goods	84.6	84.4	-0.2	84.4	83.8	-0.6
Non-durable goods	85.1	86.5	1.4	84.3	84.4	0.1
Construction	78.4	79.9	1.5	77.8	78.2	0.4
Electric power and gas distribution systems	86.3	86.1	-0.2	85.5	85.7	0.2

Lower truck sales pull down vehicle sales in January

In January 1997, declining truck sales pulled down monthly new motor vehicle sales 6.3% (seasonally adjusted). But 1997 did start off better than 1996, with a 12.0% year-over-year sales gain in the first month.

Dealers sold 105,430 new vehicles (seasonally adjusted) in January: 57,180 passenger cars and 48,250 trucks (includes vans and buses). While passenger car sales slipped 1.2%, truck sales plunged 11.7%. The decline in truck sales offset December's gain and followed five consecutive months of growth. Despite January's declines, however, both car and truck sales are following an upward trend.

The Big Three automakers were most affected by falling truck sales. In January, their share of the truck market (86%) was their lowest share since August 1995.

(continued on page 4)

... Lower truck sales pull down vehicle sales in January

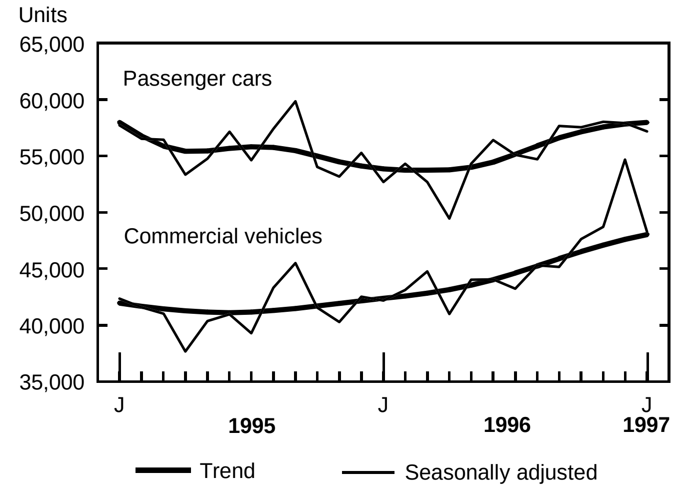
Despite the month-to-month decline in new vehicle sales, about the same number of vehicles were sold this January compared with January 1994. This was the fourth year-over-year increase in vehicle sales in as many months, and the gain came from cars as well as trucks.

Since the early 1990s, foreign automakers have built more vehicles in North America, which has bolstered the total volume of vehicles built. Sales of passenger cars built in Japan plunged (-79.8%) between 1992 and 1996. Sales of other imported cars also declined (-30.4%) during the same period. In January, April and August of last year, sales of cars built in other countries outnumbered sales of cars built in Japan.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 64.

*The January 1997 issue of **New motor vehicle sales** (63-007-XPB, $16/$160) will be available shortly. For further information, contact Louise Généreux (613-951-3549), Industry Division.*

New motor vehicle sales



Number of help-wanted advertisements rises again

The Help-wanted Index rose for a fifth consecutive month in February. The index increased 1% in February to 97, its highest level since May 1995. Nine provinces recorded increases, led by New Brunswick and Alberta. After a relatively flat period between February and September 1996, the index has been showing some strength. The growth in payroll employment seen in the last quarter of 1996 has confirmed the movement in the index.

The index in British Columbia posted its sixth consecutive increase (+1%) in February. Since September 1996, the index has grown by 10.8%. In the Prairies, the number of help-wanted ads rose in all three provinces, with the 4% rise bringing the total increase since September to 20.2%.

Ontario's index advanced 2%, bringing growth since September to 13.2%. The index in Quebec grew 2%; since August 1996, there has been little change in the index. In the Atlantic provinces, the index moved up 5% to 108 to reach its highest level since March 1991. Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick all posted gains, while Newfoundland was unchanged.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 105 (levels 8, 9 and 10).

For further information, contact Michael Scrim (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; Internet: labour@statcan.ca), Labour Division.

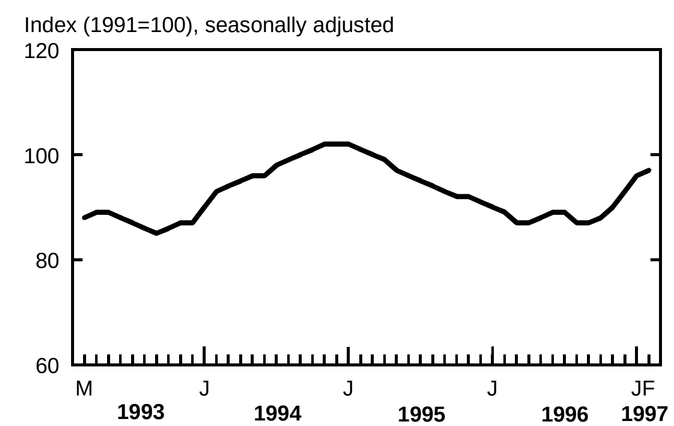
Help-wanted index, February 1997
(1991=100), seasonally adjusted

	Level	% change, previous year	% change, previous month
Canada	**97**	**10**	**1**
Atlantic provinces	108	5	5
Newfoundland	81	5	0
Prince Edward Island	143	-14	1
Nova Scotia	104	9	2
New Brunswick	111	-6	5
Quebec	87	-5	2
Ontario	103	12	2
Prairie provinces	113	31	4
Manitoba	127	23	4
Saskatchewan	111	22	2
Alberta	108	40	5
British Columbia	72	6	1

Note to readers

The Help-wanted Index is compiled from the number of help-wanted ads published in 22 newspapers in 20 major metropolitan areas. The index is a measure of companies' intentions to hire new workers. These indexes have been seasonally adjusted and smoothed to ease month-to-month comparisons.

Help-wanted index



Demand for homes spurs rise in building permits

Low mortgage rates and stronger demand for new and existing homes boosted applications for residential building permits in January, resulting in an 8.5% increase in the overall value of permits issued by municipalities. Consumer optimism was reflected in the 39.8% increase in residential permits over January 1995. After dropping in December, non-residential permit applications rose 4.8% in January 1997, caused by a marked increase in the institutional components of the sector.

The single-family component, which is the key part of the housing sector, led the residential advance. Single-family permits rose 15.0% in January, the fifth consecutive monthly increase. The multi-family component fell 1.0%, its second drop in a row. But despite this slight decrease, January's level was 39.9% higher than in the same month last year.

The overall housing market has shown higher activity since the beginning of 1996. Stronger demand for housing has translated into more building permits. This is partly reflected in the latest tally of starts published by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which reported a 7.8% jump in housing starts in January, the highest value since November 1994.

Ontario led the region in housing intentions, up 25.1% in January. Quebec and Alberta also posted increases (16.6% and 15.9% respectively). British Columbia reported the largest decrease, dropping 19.0%. Ontario also recorded a 29.2% increase in the value of non-residential permits, propelled by institutional projects. Alberta posted a 23.3% increase in non-residential construction intentions, as its industrial and commercial components surged.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 80 (levels 3–7, 16–22, 24–32), 129, 137, 443, 987, 989–992, 994, 995 and 4073.

The January issue of ***Building permits*** *(64-001-XPB, $24/$240) will be available shortly. For further information, contact Joanne Bureau (613-951-9869; Internet: burejoa@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Nathalie Léveillé (613-951-2025; Internet: levenat@statcan.ca), Investment and Capital Stock Division.*

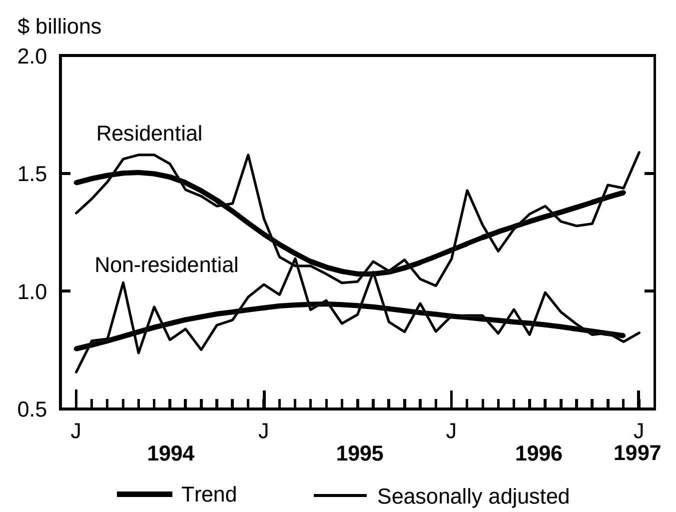
Note to readers

The Building and Demolitions Permits Monthly Survey covers 2,400 municipalities representing 93% of the population. It provides an early indication of building activity. The communities representing the other 7% of the population are very small, and their levels of building activity have little impact on the total.

The value of planned construction activities excludes engineering projects (waterworks, sewers, culverts, etc.) and land.

Unless otherwise stated, seasonally adjusted data are presented. The annual rate is a monthly figure that has been seasonally adjusted and multiplied by 12 to reflect annual levels.

Value of building permits



Building permits, January 1997
Seasonally adjusted

	Total		Residential		Non-residential	
	$ millions	% change, previous month	$ millions	% change, previous month	$ millions	% change, previous month
Canada	**2,413**	**8.5**	**1,590**	**10.6**	**823**	**4.8**
Newfoundland	33	64.2	28	82.3	5	6.3
Prince Edward Island	16	208.0	8	106.6	8	481.5
Nova Scotia	68	-25.9	57	-15.9	11	-54.5
New Brunswick	33	-12.0	21	-0.9	12	-27.1
Quebec	417	10.0	241	16.6	176	2.0
Ontario	1,007	26.4	675	25.1	332	29.2
Manitoba	61	12.9	32	14.7	29	11.0
Saskatchewan	41	-12.4	20	7.1	21	-25.7
Alberta	350	18.2	236	15.9	114	23.3
British Columbia	380	-22.2	266	-19.0	114	-28.8
Yukon	3	2.7	2	18.1	1	-22.9
Northwest Territories	2	-36.4	2	33.4	0	-89.2

New housing prices weaken, but at lower rate

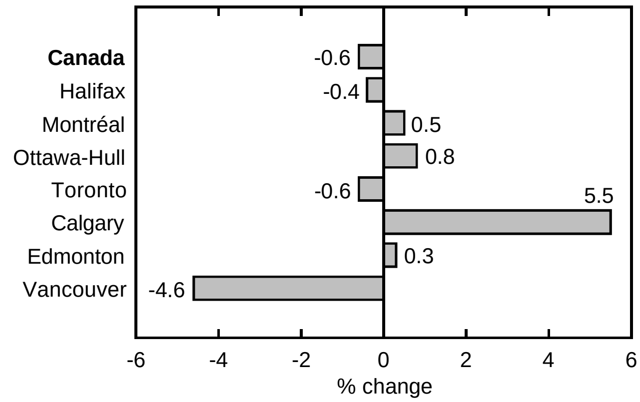
In January 1997, the New Housing Price Index decreased 0.6% compared with January 1996. The downward movement of new housing prices experienced over the last 2 1/2 years has continued to ease, particularly since May. The drop in the index seen in January was lower than the rates recorded in the three previous months.

Among the cities reporting the highest annual decreases were Vancouver (-4.6%) and Victoria (-4.5%). The highest increases were recorded by Calgary (+5.5%), Windsor (+3.3%) and St. Catharines–Niagara (+3.0%).

On a monthly basis, prices rose 0.2% over December 1996. In 11 of the 21 cities surveyed, increases were registered; five cities reported decreases. The highest increases were in London (+0.7%), St. Catharines–Niagara (+0.6%), Edmonton (+0.5%) and Ottawa–Hull (+0.5%).

Once again, builders reported increased construction costs. However, these increases were moderated by the improving but competitive markets in many of the surveyed cities.

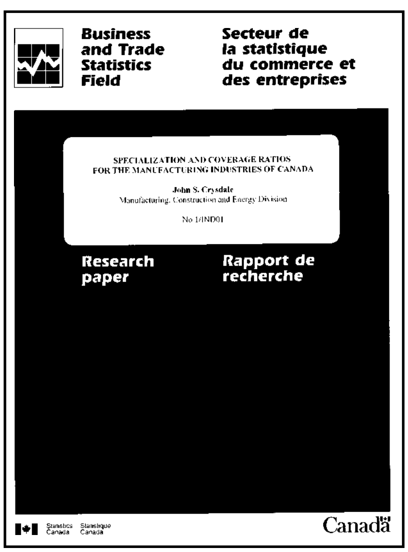
New housing price indexes
January 1996 to January 1997



Available on CANSIM: matrix 2032.

The first quarter 1997 issue of ***Construction price statistics*** *(62-007-XPB,$23/$76) will be available in June. For further information,contact Paul-Roméo Danis (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-2848; Internet: danipau@statcan.ca), Prices Division.*

New from Statistics Canada



Specialization and coverage ratios for the manufacturing industries

Primary product specialization and coverage ratios for the manufacturing industries of Canada for the period from 1971 to 1994, as well as a complementary technical paper, are now available.

These ratios are important to users of establishment-based industry data. For any given industry, the ratios help answer two basic questions: How homogeneous is that industry in terms of the activities that define it? And how complete? The primary product specialization ratio addresses the first question. The primary product coverage ratio addresses the second.

In the sweater industry (SIC 2491), for example, the questions become: What percentage of sweater industry shipments are sweaters? And, what percentage of all sweaters produced by the manufacturing industries come from this industry? The answers, for 1994, are: 91% and 93%.

The time-series table, ***Manufacturing industries of Canada: primary product specialization and coverage ratios****, is available in print or electronic format (31F0002XPB, $40). The technical paper,* ***Specialization and coverage ratios for the manufacturing industries of Canada****, is available in print (61F0041MPE, $5) or electronic format (61F0041MIE) through www.statcan.ca. For further information, contact John Crysdale (613-951-3589; fax: 613-951-9499; Internet: crysdal@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division.*

New from Statistics Canada

StatCan: *CANSIM Time Series Directory*

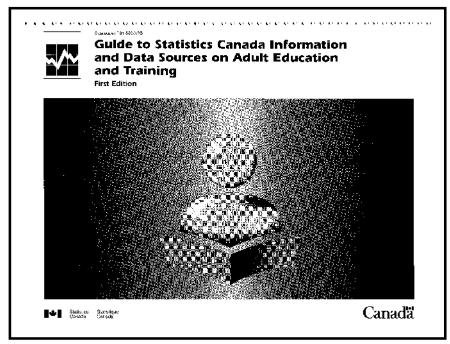
March 1997

The *CANSIM Time Series Directory* is a guide to the data contained in the CANSIM Time Series Database. Online access to this database is available worldwide through a number of distributors.

The compact disc makes finding data easy. You can search by keyword or by topic. The disc contains the Statistical Data Documentation System, a database of information about the surveys and statistical programs used at Statistics Canada. Also included is a thesaurus of terms used by Statistics Canada and an instructional module called About Statistics Canada Data, which contains additional information on data and services.

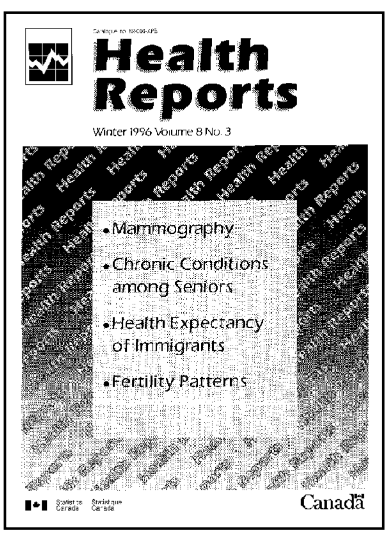
The March 1997 edition of the ***CANSIM Time Series Directory*** *is now available on compact disc. An annual subscription, which includes four quarterly issues, is priced at $100 in Canada and US$100 in other countries. For further information, please contact your nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre.*

Guide to adult education and training statistics



The *Guide to Statistics Canada information and data sources on adult education and training* reviews over 30 Statistics Canada surveys related to adult participation in education or training activities. It provides users with a summary of the data source, the surveyed population, the data collection method and the reference period for each survey, as well as a list of the most relevant variables. A grid and detailed index of the variables allows researchers to quickly identify data sources. Finally, a glossary and case studies help users interpret the data.

The ***Guide to Statistics Canada information and data sources on adult education and training*** *is now available (81-580-XPB, $10). For further information, contact Robert Couillard (613-951-1519; fax: 613-951-9040; Internet: couirob@statcan.ca), Centre for Education Statistics.*



Health reports

Winter 1996

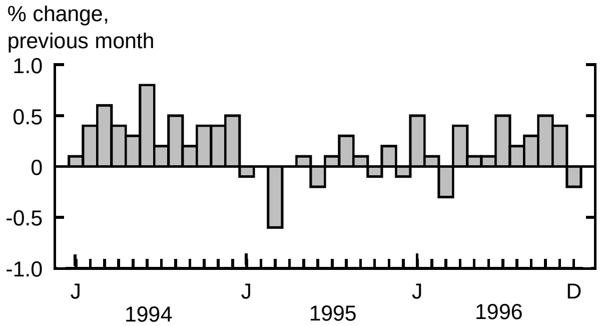
The Winter 1996 issue of *Health reports* contains articles entitled “Chronic conditions, physical limitations and dependency among seniors living in the community,” “Trends in mammography utilization, 1981 to 1994,” “Health expectancy by immigrant status, 1986 to 1991,” and “Changing fertility patterns, 1974 to 1994.”

Health reports provides comprehensive and timely analysis of national and provincial health information and vital statistics derived from surveys or administrative databases. It is designed for a broad audience that includes health professionals, researchers, policy makers, educators and students.

The Winter 1996 issue of ***Health reports****, Vol. 8, no. 3 (82-003-XPB, $34/$112) is now available. For further information, contact Jane Gentleman (613-951-8553) or Client Custom Services (613-951-1746), Health Statistics Division.*

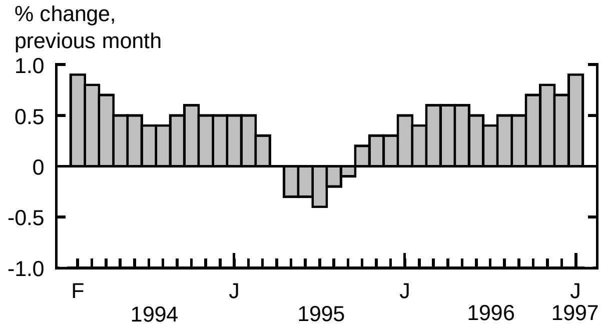
Current trends

Gross domestic product



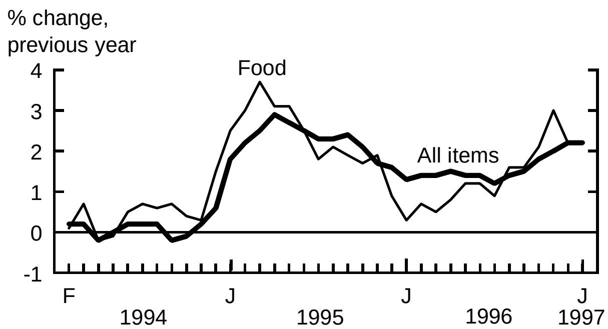
Real gross domestic product at factor cost decreased 0.2% between November and December.

Composite index



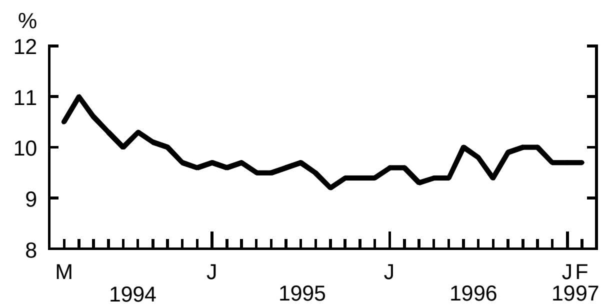
The composite index grew by 0.9% in January.

Consumer price index



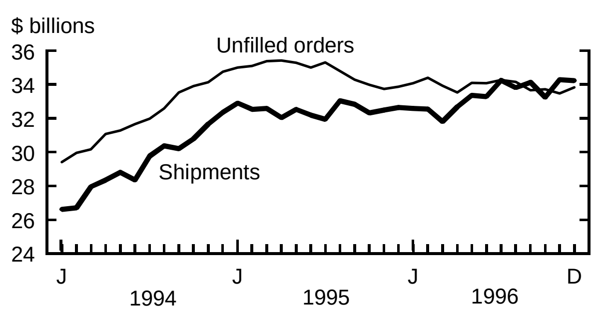
Consumers paid 2.2% more for goods and services in January 1997 than the year before. Food prices also rose by 2.2%.

Unemployment rate



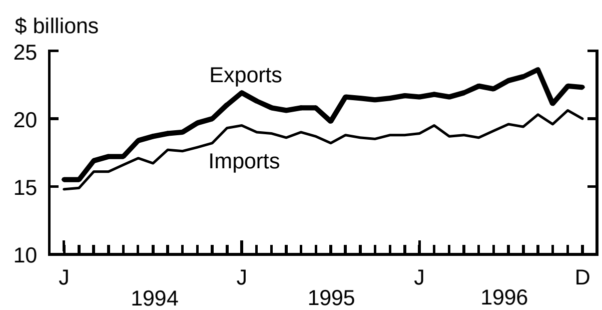
In February, the unemployment rate held at 9.7%.

Manufacturing



Manufacturers' shipments dropped 0.5% in December to $34.2 billion. The level of unfilled orders rose 1.1% to $33.8 billion.

Merchandise trade



In December, the value of merchandise exports dropped 1.1% from November to $22.3 billion. Imports decreased 2.7% to $20.0 billion.

Note: *All series are seasonally adjusted except the Consumer Price Index.*

Latest monthly statistics

	Period	Level	Change, previous period	Change, previous year
GENERAL				
Gross domestic product ($ billion, 1986)	December	557.5	-0.2%	2.6%
Composite index (1981=100)	January	186.9	0.9%	7.7%
Operating profits of enterprises ($ billion)	Q4 1996	25.7	5.7%	10.4%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q4 1996*	84.8	0.7†	2.4†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade ($ billion)	December	18.5	-0.3%	4.3%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	January*	105.4	-6.3%	12.0%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	February*	13.7	-0.1%	0.6%
Unemployment rate (%)	February*	9.7	0.0†	0.1†
Participation rate (%)	February*	64.6	-0.1†	-0.5†
Labour income ($ billion)	November	36.5	0.8%	3.6%
Average weekly earnings ($)	December	593.82	0.2%	2.7%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports ($ billion)	December	22.3	-1.1%	2.7%
Merchandise imports ($ billion)	December	20.0	-2.7%	6.1%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in $ billion)	December	2.4	0.3	-0.6
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments ($ billion)	December	34.2	-0.5%	4.8%
New orders ($ billion)	December	34.6	1.3%	5.5%
Unfilled orders ($ billion)	December	33.8	1.1%	-0.1%
Inventory/shipments ratio	December	1.33	0.00	-0.06
PRICES				
Consumer price index (1986=100)	January	137.1	0.2%	2.2%
Industrial product price index (1986=100)	January	129.4	-0.2%	-0.5%
Raw materials price index (1986=100)	January	141.8	0.1%	10.5%
New housing price index (1986=100)	January*	132.2	0.2%	-0.6%

Note: *All series are seasonally adjusted with the exception of the price indexes.*
* *new this week*
† *percentage point*

Infomat

A weekly review

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Reference period:	Issue date:
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