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Infomat

A Weekly Review

Friday, June 8, 2001

OVERVIEW

- **Economic activity edges up in March**

  Gross domestic product by industry edged up 0.1% in March, offsetting a similar-sized decrease in February. Manufacturing output increased after four months of decline.

- **Real GDP maintains moderate growth in first quarter**

  Real gross domestic product grew 0.6% in the first quarter, after rising 0.4% in the fourth quarter. The fourth quarter growth was much slower than the average growth since mid-1998.

- **Another record surplus for current account**

  In the first quarter, the current account surplus jumped $4.2 billion to $12.7 billion. This hefty increase extends a run of record surpluses since the first quarter of 2000.

- **Weekly earnings grow at slower pace compared with the end of 2000**

  In March, average weekly earnings increased 2.1%, up from the 2.0% growth rates registered in January and February. However, gains in earnings were still below the average growth rate of 2.3% seen in the last three months of 2000.

- **Participation in activities has positive influence on children**

  Children who participate in activities such as sports, music, the arts or clubs tend to have higher self-esteem, interact better with their friends and perform better in school.

- **Computer use at work soars**

  From 1989 to 2000, the proportion of workers using a computer at their main job rose spectacularly, from 33% to 57%. The vast majority of those with access to a computer used it daily.

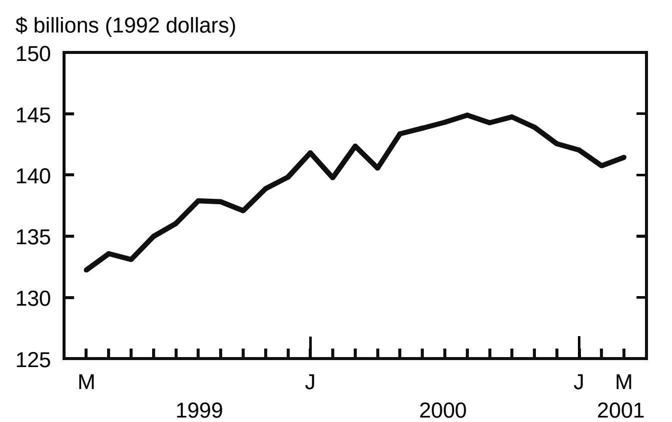
Economic activity edges up in March

Gross domestic product by industry edged up 0.1% in March. This offset a similar-sized decline in February. Both an increase in automotive output and continued growth at plants making pharmaceutical products gave a boost to the manufacturing sector, which saw output rise 0.5% after a four-month string of declines. Despite March's increase, manufacturing output has contracted 2.3% since its most recent peak in October 2000.

Automotive production rose 1.9% in March, its most significant gain in 10 months. Truck exports in particular rose a substantial 6.0%. Manufacturers of pharmaceutical products were responsible for the 2.5% increase in chemical production in March. The industry has increased plant capacity to satisfy stronger domestic and export demand, resulting in exceptionally strong growth in the last few months.

Also noteworthy was a modest 0.8% increase recorded by manufacturers of electronic products. This was the first increase since the series of sharp declines that began last November when major clients scaled back their spending plans. Despite March's advance, overall production of electrical and electronic equipment was 15.8% lower than in October 2000, the industry's most recent peak.

Manufacturing output



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Statistics Canada Statistique Canada
Canada

... Economic activity edges up in March

In March, weakness in manufacturing came from makers of wood products, paper and allied products and machinery. The last month of the quota-based Canada-U.S. Softwood Lumber Agreement saw lumber exports fall 11.8%. The output of sawmills dropped 10.6%, the largest monthly decline in almost 15 years.

Mining sector output rose 0.8% in March, the fifth increase in six months. As in previous months, the industry's upward progression was supported by the expansion of oil and gas extraction. A drop in the iron mine industry, to some extent induced by a strike, partially offset these gains, as did a decline in diamond mining.

Wholesaling activity was little changed in March; a modest gain by distributors of computers and software and automotive products was offset by decreases in wholesale sales of building materials, food products and newsprint. Retail sales activity edged up 0.3% in March, led by higher sales of both automobiles and furniture.

Among other sectors, the finance industries were virtually flat in March, with uncertainty in the financial market dragging down mutual fund sales. After rising in six of the previous eight months, construction activity edged down. Railway transportation was held back by fewer carloadings of wheat and iron ore. In the telephone carrier industry, activity declined 0.4% after four months of solid growth stimulated by the expanding use of cellular telecommunication services.

Note to readers

The gross domestic product (GDP) of an industry is the value added by labour and capital in transforming inputs purchased from other producers into outputs. Monthly GDP by industry is evaluated at 1992 prices. The estimates presented here are seasonally adjusted at annual rates.

The next annual revision of the monthly GDP by industry estimates, scheduled for release on September 28, will include major classification and conceptual changes. Among other things, the GDP by industry will be rebased to 1997, all spending on developing and purchasing software will be treated as a capital expenditure, and the aggregate GDP at factor cost will be revalued to include indirect taxes. For more information, consult the Statistics Canada Web site at www.statcan.ca, under "Statistical methods."

The March 2001 issue of ***Gross domestic product by industry*** *(Internet: 15-001-XIE, $11/$110) is now available. To purchase data, contact Yolande Chantigny (1 800 877-4623; imad@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Richard Evans (613-951-9145; evanric@statcan.ca), Industry Measures and Analysis Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 7.)*

Real GDP maintains moderate growth in first quarter

Real gross domestic product (GDP) grew 0.6% in the first quarter, up slightly from 0.4% in the fourth quarter of 2000. The fourth quarter growth was much slower than the average quarterly growth of 1.2% since mid-1998.

Consumer spending picked up 0.9% in the first quarter, after growing 0.3% in the previous quarter. Growth was boosted by purchases of new and used motor vehicles, which increased 2.1% after declining in the fourth quarter. Purchases of furniture, carpets and other floor coverings climbed 5.0%, the largest increase since the second quarter of 1991. Sales of household appliances advanced 2.9%, stimulated by the continued strength of investment in housing construction.

New housing construction grew by a solid 3.8%, the largest increase since the fourth quarter of 1999. Ownership transfer

Real gross domestic product in 1997 chained dollars[1]

	% change	Annualized % change	Year-over-year % change
First quarter 2000	1.5	6.1	5.0
Second quarter 2000	0.5	1.9	4.8
Third quarter 2000	1.1	4.5	4.4
Fourth quarter 2000	0.4	1.6	3.5
First quarter 2001	**0.6**	**2.5**	**2.6**

1 The change is the growth rate from one period to the next. The annualized change is the growth rate compounded annually. The year-over-year change is the growth rate of a given quarter compared with the same quarter of the previous year.

Note to readers: New measure of GDP

On May 31, 2001, on the occasion of releasing the national accounts data for the first quarter of 2001, Statistics Canada adopted a new measure of economic activity in order to make official estimates of Canada's economic growth more accurate and more comparable with U.S. estimates. This change in method had the effect of revising slightly downward the rates of growth of real gross domestic product (GDP). The quarterly income and expenditure accounts reflect the following four changes:

Chain Fisher formula: *A new formula (Chain Fisher) has been used to estimate real GDP. This change has been applied from the first quarter of 1981 to the first quarter of 2001, and it will be pushed back to 1961 within a year.*

Expenditures on software: *Business and government expenditures on software, which were treated as current expenses, have become capital expenditures. This has had the effect of raising the level of GDP from 1981 to the present. This change has been applied from 1981 to date.*

Gross domestic product at basic prices: *The concept of GDP at factor cost has been replaced by a new concept, GDP at basic prices. This concept includes indirect taxes on factors of production. This change has been applied back to 1961 and has had no impact on GDP at market prices.*

Estimates of labour income based on NAICS: *The labour income estimates are now based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). This change has had no impact on total GDP.*

(continued on page 3)

... Real GDP maintains moderate growth in first quarter

costs related to the sale of existing homes advanced 1.0%. The value of residential building permits jumped 10.8%, marking the best quarter since the first quarter of 1996.

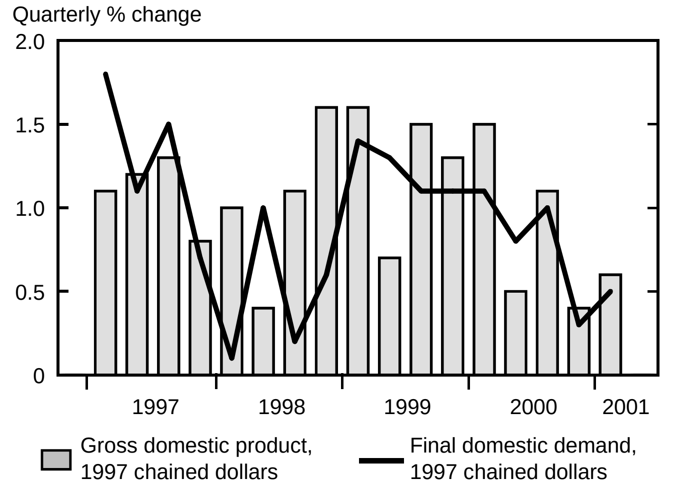
Business plant and equipment investment fell 1.9%, declining for a third consecutive quarter. Investment in non-residential construction remained flat; declines in building construction were offset by a rise in engineering construction, attributable to the oil and gas industry. Businesses spent 3.2% less on machinery and equipment, following a 1.8% decline in the fourth quarter.

Exports of goods and services fell 1.4%, with automotive products and machinery and equipment posting significant declines of 8.2% and 3.4% respectively. The decline in machinery and equipment exports was the largest in nearly a decade. A substantial increase in energy exports (+5.9%) partially offset these declines. Since the first quarter of 1999, export prices of crude petroleum have more than doubled, while natural gas prices have more than tripled.

Higher energy prices boosted corporate profits, which jumped 3.8% in nominal terms. However, manufacturing industry profits dropped. In Western Canada, corporations benefited from subsidies of $4 billion on an annualized basis, which boosted their profits.

Households too received relief from higher energy prices through provincial rebates of $1.8 billion on an annualized basis. They also benefited from a transfer from the federal government of $5.8 billion on an annualized basis.

Gross domestic product and domestic demand

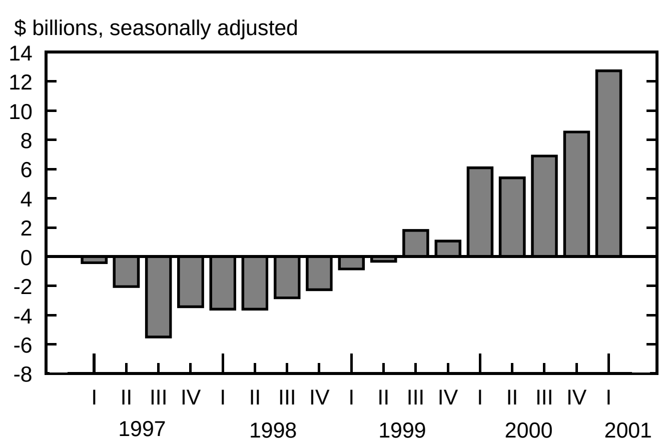


The first quarter 2001 issue of ***National income and expenditure accounts, quarterly estimates*** *(Internet: 13-001-XIB, $33/$108; paper: 13-001-XPB, $44/$145) is now available. For more information on the various products offered, contact Client Services (613-951-3810; iead-info-dcrd@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact the information officer (613-951-3640), Income and Expenditure Accounts Division.*

Another record surplus for current account

Canada's surplus on current account transactions jumped $4.2 billion in the first quarter to $12.7 billion on a seasonally adjusted basis. This hefty increase extends a run of record surpluses since the first quarter of 2000. Trade in goods was again behind this advance, led by a surge in natural gas sales to the United States.

Current account balance



Note to readers

As part of the normal four-year revision process, a large upward revision has been made to undercoverage of goods exported to countries other than the United States. This revision has affected the current account balance from 1997. In 1999, notably, the balance has become a small surplus of $1.7 billion. In addition, there has been a revision of just over $1 billion to the balance of payments adjustment for natural gas exports on a seasonally adjusted basis in the first quarter of 2001.

The goods surplus expanded for a fifth consecutive quarter, moving up $3.8 billion to $20.9 billion. Export growth slowed to 0.8%, while imports declined significantly (-3.1%) for the first time since mid-1996. Once again, trade with the United States contributed to the jump in the goods surplus. Deficits with other trading partners fell and, in the case of Japan, even moved into a small surplus position.

There was a modest boost from the other accounts that make up the current account. The small deficit in travel narrowed on the strength of spending by a larger number of U.S. visitors. Net imports of commercial services were marginally lower, while revenues from fees and commissions from abroad on security transactions strengthened. Substantially lower profits from Canadian and foreign direct investment offset one another during the first quarter; thus, the deficit on investment income changed little.

(continued on page 4)

... Another record surplus for current account

In the capital and financial account (not seasonally adjusted), both Canadian assets and liabilities increased, but at a more moderate pace than in the fourth quarter of 2000. The $12.4 billion increase in Canadians' outstanding foreign equity holdings was an all-time record, spurred by a 5% increase in the foreign content limit for Canadian pension funds. However, investment in these securities was down from the fourth quarter of 2000. Canadians also acquired about $1 billion in foreign bonds, mainly U.S. treasuries.

Canadian direct investment abroad in the first quarter was robust at $9.1 billion, but below the quarterly average of $12 billion recorded over the last three years. The electrical and electronic products industry received the largest share of this investment, which went primarily to European countries and the United States.

Canada increased its official reserve assets by $2.5 billion in the first quarter. Reserves have risen in eight of the last nine quarters. Meanwhile, the Canadian dollar lost three and a quarter cents against the U.S. dollar but gained against most other major foreign currencies. The dollar closed at 63.44 U.S. cents, below the previous record low close of August 1998.

Foreign direct investment slowed to $5.2 billion, its lowest level in two years. Foreign acquisitions of Canadian companies paused in the first quarter, following the record level in of the fourth quarter of 2000.

Foreign investors bought $10.2 billion worth of Canadian securities, more than reversing the large divestment in the fourth quarter. Foreigners renewed their interest in Canadian bonds; their investment surged to $8.9 billion, the highest level in more than four years.

The first quarter 2001 issue of ***Canada's balance of international payments*** *(Internet: 67-001-XIB, $29/$93; paper: 67-001-XPB, $38/$124) will be available soon. For more information, contact Hugh Henderson (613-951-9049) or Denis Caron (613-951-1861), Balance of Payments and Financial Flows Division.*

Weekly earnings grow at slower pace compared with the end of 2000

In March, average weekly earnings for all employees rose by $2.25 to $662.75 from February. Year-over-year average weekly earnings increased 2.1%, up slightly from the 2.0% growth rates registered in January and February. However, year-over-year earnings gains were still below the average growth rate of 2.3% seen in the last three months of 2000.

Note to readers

Starting with the January 2001 data, the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours is now publishing its estimates based on the North American Industry Classification (NAICS). The NAICS-based estimates are not comparable with the previously published estimates based on the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). To facilitate the transition, NAICS-based historical series from January 1991 to December 2000 have been produced. For more information on the NAICS, consult the "Statistical methods" page on Statistics Canada's Web site at www.statcan.ca.

Average weekly earnings by industry, March 2001
Seasonally adjusted

	$	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
All industries	**662.75**	**0.3**	**2.1**
Forestry, logging and support	815.23	0.3	0.6
Mining and oil and gas	1,150.00	0.2	2.0
Utilities	997.27	0.0	0.1
Construction	804.37	-0.3	-0.7
Manufacturing	803.13	0.9	1.2
Wholesale trade	763.59	1.0	0.0
Retail trade	432.79	0.0	1.5
Transportation and warehousing	738.17	0.0	1.6
Information and cultural industries	777.26	-0.5	1.3
Finance and insurance	845.03	-0.5	0.8
Real estate and rental and leasing	615.16	0.1	7.9
Professional, scientific and technical services	884.81	0.6	3.7
Management of companies and enterprises	839.02	-0.1	2.1
Admininistrative and support, waste management and remediation services	532.77	-0.3	5.1
Educational services	690.57	0.6	3.5
Health care and social assistance	578.88	0.5	4.1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	475.96	0.0	2.8
Accommodation and food services	282.49	0.2	4.6
Other services (excluding public administration)	516.64	0.3	3.6
Public administration	754.00	0.3	1.4

Average weekly earnings gains in March were predominantly in goods-producing industries. Stronger gains in manufacturing were offset somewhat by a slight decline in construction. Compared with March 2000, earnings gains in goods-producing industries were only 0.8%, while those in service-producing industries were much stronger, 2.7%.

Average hourly earnings for hourly paid employees were $16.59 in March, up six cents from February. Their average weekly hours were down slightly to 31.8. Average overtime hours were unchanged.

The number of employees on payrolls increased by 11,000 in March. Monthly employment growth has slowed since the third quarter of 2000, although year-over-year employment growth is still above 3%. Significant employment gains were confined to Alberta and Ontario. Alberta had notable gains in oil and gas; Ontario had more widespread gains by industry.

The March 2001 issue of ***Employment, earnings and hours*** *(Internet : 72-002-XIB, $24/$240) presents detailed industry data and other labour market indicators. For more information, contact Robert Frindt or Jean Leduc (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; labour@statcan.ca), Labour Statistics Division.*

Participation in activities has positive influence on children

Children who participate in organized activities outside school such as sports, music, the arts or clubs tend to have higher self-esteem, interact better with friends and perform somewhat better in school, according to new data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY).

In 1998/99, an estimated 87% of Canadian children aged 4 to 15 participated in organized activities outside school, such as sports-related activities, arts or music or belonging to a club or group. Children least likely to participate in organized activities were those in lower income families, those with very young parents, those whose primary care-giver had less than a high school education and those in single-parent families. These factors were more likely to act as barriers to participation for younger children, those aged 4 to 9.

At all ages, boys were more likely than girls to be participating in organized and unorganized sports. Girls, on the other hand, were more likely than boys to be participating in arts or music, and clubs or groups.

Overall, 76% of parents reported that their children were doing very well or well in school. Preliminary findings show that children between the ages of 4 and 9 who participated in activities, particularly sports, were less likely to have difficulties in reading or math than those who rarely or never participated. And according to their parents, young children who had little or no involvement in activities were twice as likely to exhibit lower levels of pro-social behaviour.

Among youths aged 12 to 15, 11% had never or rarely participated in organized sports with a coach or instructor during the four years covered by the survey. Some 16% of these youths reported low levels of self-esteem, four times higher than those who had always participated. In addition, youths who had participated in organized sports in 1994/95 and 1996/97, but had stopped participating by 1998/99, were three times more likely to report lower levels of self-esteem than those youths who had always participated.

The proportion of youths reporting that they were in excellent or very good health was higher among those who had participated regularly in sports over time (90%) than for those who had rarely or never participated (70%). Finally, of the youths who had never or rarely participated in organized sports, 23% reported that they smoked, almost three times the proportion of those who always participated (8%).

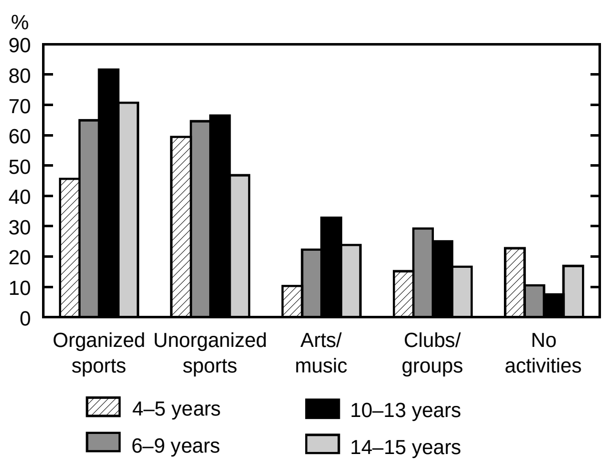
These findings demonstrate a relationship between participating in extracurricular activities and some positive outcomes such as improved health, higher self-esteem and improved emotional and social skills. However, more detailed analysis will be required to determine whether participation causes these outcomes.

For more information, contact Lecily Hunter (613-951-0597; lecily.hunter@statcan.ca) or Sylvie Grenier (613-951-0477; sylvie.grenier@statcan.ca), Statistics Canada, or Satya Brink (613-953-6622; satya.brink@spg.org.ca), Human Resources Development Canada.

Note to readers

The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), developed jointly by Human Resources Development Canada and Statistics Canada, is a comprehensive survey which paints a statistical portrait of the lives of children in Canada. The survey monitors their development and measures the incidence of various factors that influence it. Data from the third collection cycle of the NLSCY, conducted in 1998/99, have just been released. The first cycle was conducted in 1994/95 and the second in 1996/97. The survey will continue to collect information on these same children every two years as they move into adolescence and adulthood.

Children's participation in activities outside school



Computer use at work soars

More than one-half of all workers now use a computer on the job. In a single decade, from 1989 to 2000, the proportion of workers using a computer at their main job rose spectacularly, from 33% to 57% of the total employed. Of the 8.3 million persons who used a computer at work, nearly 80% did so daily.

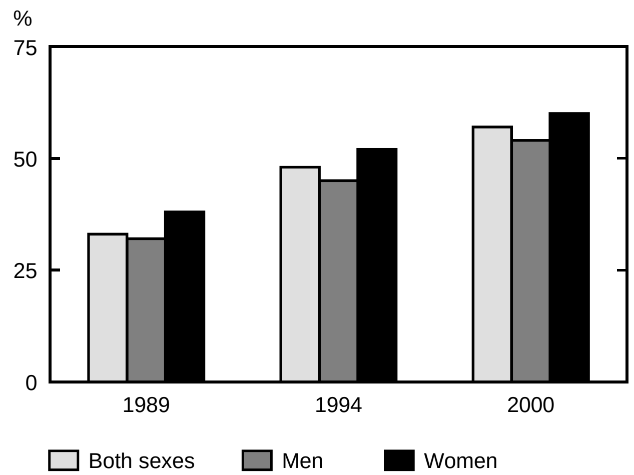
Workers were more likely to use a computer at work if they were under 55, had a high level of education or income, worked full-time or were in a high-skill or clerical occupation. While only 41% of workers with a high school education worked at a computer, 85% of those with a university degree did so. Only 36% of individuals with an income of less than $20,000 used a computer at work, compared with 80% of those with an income of $60,000 or more.

Just as in 1989, women were more likely than men to use a computer at work in 2000. In 1989, 38% of women and 32% of men used a computer on the job. A decade later, the corresponding proportions were 60% for women and 54% for men.

The tasks performed using a computer varied by sex. Except for word processing, men were more likely than women to perform all types of work at the computer. The gap was especially wide for using the Internet, producing graphics, analysing data and programming.

On-the-job training was the most common method of acquiring computer skills; this was employer-sponsored, for both public- and private-sector employees. The largest difference between the two sectors was in classroom training: about 68% of public employees had taken formal training in the classroom, compared with 53% of those in the private sector.

Computer use at work



*The May 2001 online edition of **Perspectives on labour and income**, Vol. 2, no. 5 (Internet: 75-001-XIE, $5/$48) is now available. For more information, contact Katherine Marshall (613) 951-6890 (marskat@statcan.ca), Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division.*

New from Statistics Canada

Trade and aviation passenger transportation
1966 to 1998

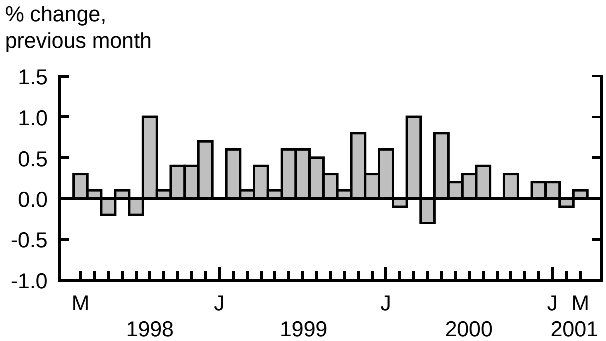
The research paper *Trade and transportation: The impact of the 1995 Transborder Air Services Accord* analyses the relationship between merchandise trade patterns and air passenger traffic between Canada and the United States between 1966 and 1998.

It assesses this relationship at three stages during the 30-year period in light of an air services accord that governed commercial air services between the two nations.The accord, signed in 1966, was quite restrictive, limiting entry and price competition in transborder markets. In 1995, the original agreement was replaced with a new accord that has granted entry and pricing freedom in transborder markets. By 1998, the correlation between air passenger traffic and merchandise trade flows on various intercity routes across the border had rebounded significantly.

*The research paper **Trade and transportation: The impact of the 1995 Transborder Air Services Accord** (Internet: 51F0007XIE, free) is now available. It is being released to coincide with National Transportation Week. It can be downloaded at Statistics Canada's Web site (www.statcan.ca). On the "Our products and services" page, choose "Research papers (free)," then "Transport and warehousing." For more information, contact Jean-Robert Larocque (613-951-2486; laroque@statcan.ca), Transportation Division.*

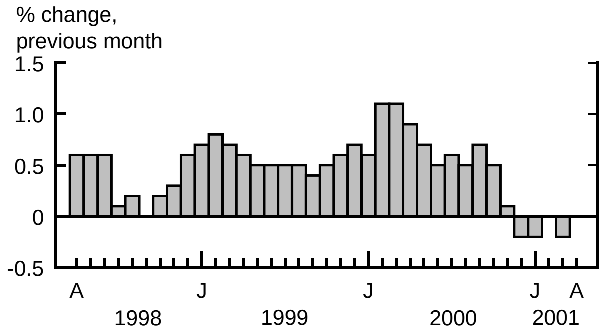
Current trends

Gross domestic product



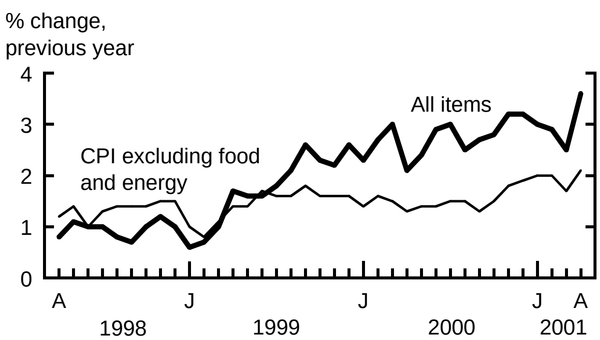
Gross domestic product edged up 0.1% in March, offsetting a similar-sized decline in February.

Composite Index



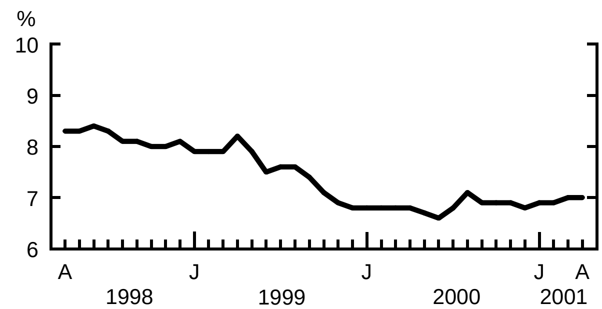
Following a decline in March, the leading indicator was unchanged in April. This was the fifth straight month without growth.

Consumer Price Index



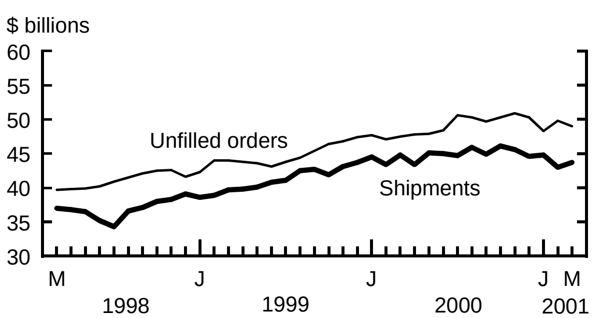
Consumer prices for goods and services were 3.6% higher in April than they were a year earlier. Excluding food and energy, prices rose 2.1%.

Unemployment rate



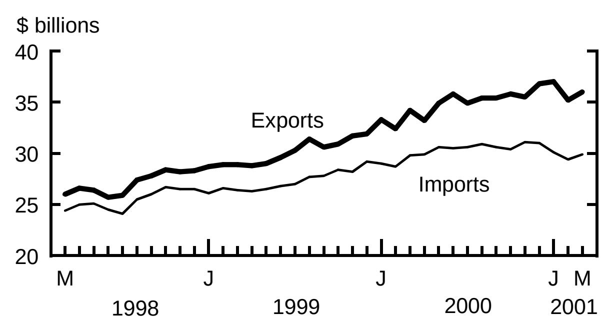
At 7.0%, April's unemployment rate was unchanged from March.

Manufacturing



Manufacturers' shipments rose 1.7% in March to $43.7 billion. The backlog of unfilled orders resumed a downward shift for the third time in four months, decreasing 1.6% to $49.0 billion.

Merchandise trade



In March, the value of merchandise exports increased 2.3% to just over $36.0 billion. Imports rose 1.7% to $29.9 billion.

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

Latest statistics

	Period	Level	Change, previous period	Change, previous year
GENERAL				
Gross domestic product ($ billions, 1992)	March	797.5	0.1%	2.0%
Composite Index (1992=100)	April	166.4	0.0%	3.0%
Operating profits of enterprises ($ billions)	Q1 2001*	44.9	-6.9%	-9.7%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q4 2000	85.4	-0.2†	0.7†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade ($ billion)	March	23.7	0.3%	3.8%
Department store sales ($ billions)	April*	1.64	0.6%	9.4%
New motor vehicle sales (thousands of units)	March	126.1	0.5%	-6.7%
Wholesale trade ($ billion)	March	32.2	1.7%	2.0%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	April	15.10	0.2%	1.6%
Unemployment rate (%)	April	7.0	0.0†	0.2†
Participation rate (%)	April	66.1	0.0†	0.3†
Average weekly earnings ($)[1]	March	662.75	0.3%	2.1%
Help-wanted Index (1996=100)	May*	164	-2.4%	-4.1%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports ($ billions)	March	36.0	2.3%	5.5%
Merchandise imports ($ billions)	March	29.9	1.7%	0.1%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in $ billions)	March	6.2	0.3	1.8
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments ($ billions)[1]	March	43.7	1.7%	-2.4%
New orders ($ billions)[1]	March	42.9	-3.5%	-5.1%
Unfilled orders ($ billions)[1]	March	49.0	-1.6%	3.1%
Inventory/shipments ratio[1]	March	1.49	-0.03	0.15
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	April	116.4	0.7%	3.6%
Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100)	April	130.3	0.2%	2.7%
Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100)	April	144.4	0.1%	7.9%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	March	105.2	0.3%	2.6%

Note: *All series are seasonally adjusted with the exception of the price indexes.*
* *new this week*
† *percentage point*
[1] *These estimates are now based on the North American Industry Classification (NAICS). They are not comparable to the previously published estimates based on the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) of 1980.*

Infomat
A weekly review

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