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Infomat

A Weekly Review

Friday, June 19, 1998

OVERVIEW

- **Jobs, unemployment rate hold steady**

  Overall labour market conditions were relatively stable in May: The unemployment rate held steady and employment changed little.

- **Sales of new vehicles strong**

  New motor vehicle dealers recorded strong sales in April. Consumers returned to their traditional buying pattern, purchasing more new cars than new trucks.

- **Growth in GDP maintains its pace**

  Real gross domestic product at market prices rose in the first quarter, matching the average growth of the six previous quarters. Demand shifted to domestically produced goods and services.

- **Industrial capacity use up slightly**

  Industries raised their rate of capacity use slightly in the first quarter of 1998, reflecting the moderate rate of economic growth.

- **New homes slightly more expensive**

  The cost of new housing rose between April 1997 and April 1998, and remained stable between March and April. Halifax posted the largest monthly increase.

- **Many children exposed to second-hand smoke**

  Despite known health problems, many parents who smoke expose their children to second-hand smoke in their homes. Teenagers are most likely to encounter others' smoke at home.

- **Children face parents' separation earlier in life**

  Separation and divorce has increased over the past few decades, and children are facing the breakdown of their parents' marriages at an increasingly younger age.

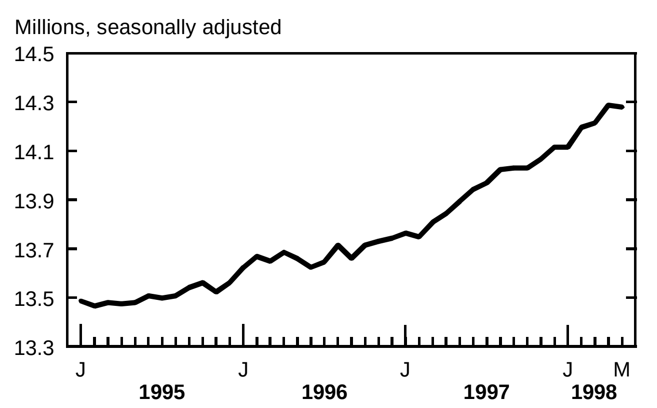
Jobs, unemployment rate hold steady

Between April and May, overall labour market conditions changed little. Employment was virtually unchanged, and the unemployment rate remained at 8.4% in May. The upward trend in full-time employment continued into May, with a slight (+26,000) increase. The number of part-time jobs declined by 34,000. All of the growth since the beginning of 1997 has been in full-time employment.

Employment among adults (those aged 25 and over) was little changed in May. The pace of job growth for men has slowed so far this year, following strong gains in 1997. For women, however, job growth has picked up slightly so far in 1998. Youths (those aged 15 to 24) saw no change in their employment picture in May, when an increase of 18,000 full-time jobs offset a similar drop in part-time employment. The youth unemployment rate remained at 15.7% for a third consecutive month.

The summer job market for students aged 20 to 24 showed signs of improvement. Among those planning to return to school in the fall, an estimated 55.4% were employed in May, up 1.1 percentage points from a year earlier. And, at 17.2%, the unemployment rate for this same group was down 2.1 percentage points from a year earlier. Although this is encouraging, the summer has actually started on a slower note than it did two years ago.

Employment



(continued on page 2)

Labour Force Survey, May 1998
Seasonally adjusted

	Labour force		Employment		Unemployment	
	thousands	% change, previous month	thousands	% change, previous month	thousands	rate (%)
Canada	**15,585.9**	**0.0**	**14,278.9**	**– 0.1**	**1,307.0**	**8.4**
Newfoundland	239.8	– 0.1	199.5	0.5	40.3	16.8
Prince Edward Island	71.7	0.7	62.0	2.0	9.7	13.5
Nova Scotia	455.1	0.0	407.7	0.4	47.4	10.4
New Brunswick	367.8	– 1.6	321.1	– 0.7	46.7	12.7
Quebec	3,686.6	– 0.4	3,299.7	– 0.4	386.9	10.5
Ontario	6,037.3	0.2	5,607.5	0.2	429.7	7.1
Manitoba	573.4	– 0.6	543.1	– 0.4	30.3	5.3
Saskatchewan	503.7	– 1.0	476.6	– 0.5	27.1	5.4
Alberta	1,603.0	0.1	1,511.9	– 0.4	91.0	5.7
British Columbia	2,047.7	0.6	1,849.8	0.2	197.9	9.7

In May, job growth in construction (+12,000) was offset by a loss of jobs in education (–13,000). Although employment in manufacturing has changed little over the past two months, this industry has posted robust growth (+9.2%) since the beginning of 1997. Over the same period, business and personal services has also contributed strongly to overall employment growth (+8.3%).

Except for Prince Edward Island, where employment rose by 2.0%, employment did not change significantly across the country in May. Since the beginning of 1997, employment growth has been above the national average of 3.9% in Newfoundland (+6.5%), Nova Scotia (+5.8%), Alberta (+5.5%), Ontario (+5.4%) and New Brunswick (+4.2%).

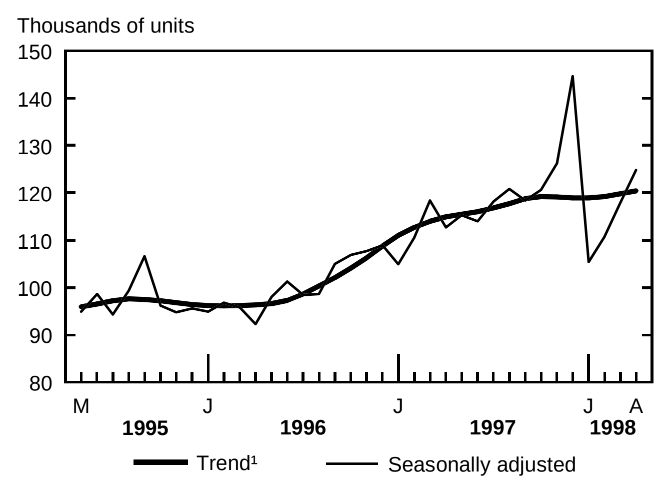
Available on CANSIM: matrices 3450–3471, 3483-3502 and table 00799999.

***Labour force information** (71-001-PPB, $11/$103; fax version: 71-001-PFB, $300/year) for the week ending May 16, 1998 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 page 7.)*

Sales of new vehicles strong

New motor vehicle dealers posted strong sales in April 1998, recording 124,826 vehicles sold. This represented a 5.9% increase compared with March. With the exception of November and December 1997, sales were at their highest level since September 1989. Compared with April 1997, sales of new vehicles advanced 10.8%.

New motor vehicle sales



1. The short-term trend represents a moving average of the data.

Note to readers

Passenger cars include those used for personal and commercial purposes (such as taxis or rental cars). Trucks include minivans, sport utility vehicles, light and heavy trucks, vans, coaches and buses.

The Big Three automakers (General Motors, Ford and Chrysler) may sell new motor vehicles in Canada that were manufactured in North America or overseas (imported).

For reasons of confidentiality, data for the Yukon and Northwest Territories are included with British Columbia. All numbers have been seasonally adjusted unless otherwise specified.

In April, as in February and March, consumers continued their traditional buying pattern, purchasing more new passenger cars (64,931) than new trucks (60,435). This contrasts with the October 1997-to-January 1998 period, when truck sales dominated. Sales of new cars rose 2.7% between March and April; new trucks, 9.4%. April’s gain in new car sales was entirely due to higher sales of cars made in North America (+3.6%), while imports slipped 0.3%. Automakers other than the Big Three accounted for more than 75% of the increase.

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... Sales of new vehicles strong

Compared with April 1997, sales of new cars outnumbered those of new trucks in six of the provinces (unadjusted). Consumers in all provinces east of Manitoba purchased more cars than trucks. Quebec consumers led those in all other provinces in their preference for cars, buying 189 for every 100 trucks purchased in April. By contrast, consumers in Alberta bought only 53 new cars for every 100 new trucks.

Sources in the auto industry have estimated that new vehicle sales will show a slight increase for May.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 64.

The April 1998 issue of ***New motor vehicle sales*** *(63-007-XIB, $13/$124) will be available shortly on the Internet (http://www.statcan.ca). For further information, contact Serge Dumouchel (613-951-2210); for analytical information, contact Jason Randall (613-951-5668; randjas@statcan.ca), Distributive Trades Division.*

Growth in GDP maintains its pace

In the first quarter of 1998, real gross domestic product (GDP) at market prices rose 0.9%, matching the average growth of the six preceding quarters. Demand shifted to domestically produced goods and services, with strength in exports (+1.5%) and non-residential construction (+4.5%). After a strong 1997, imports declined slightly (–0.2%).

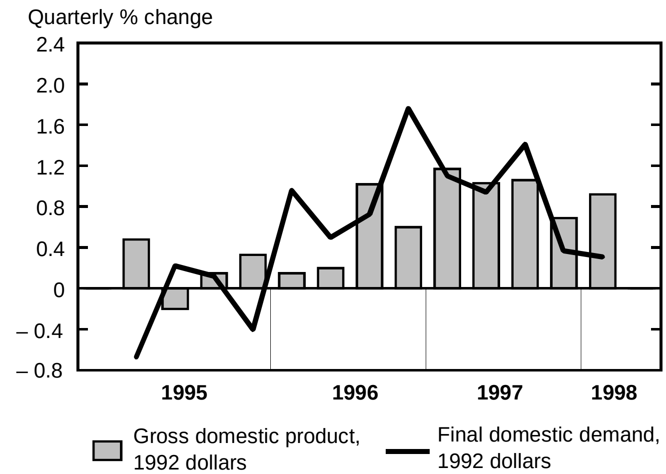
The gains in exports were concentrated in machinery and equipment, energy products, passenger cars, and industrial goods and materials. Final domestic demand, which slowed in the fourth quarter after several strong increases, continued to grow at a moderate pace (+0.3%). Both building and engineering construction registered healthy advances, with the gains in engineering concentrated in the petroleum and natural gas, communications, and mining industries. Investment in machinery and equipment declined, while residential investment edged down.

Personal spending increased 0.6% in the first quarter. Although consumers bought fewer vehicles, they spent more on other items, such as clothing, footwear and household furnishings and equipment. Businesses continued to invest in inventories, and the overall accumulation nearly equalled the high level recorded in the previous quarter. Retailers piled up stocks of durable goods, particularly motor vehicles. Wholesalers and manufacturers also increased inventories.

Corporate profits fell 6.6% after strong increases in the previous two quarters. Falling crude oil and natural gas prices led to lower profits in the petroleum and natural gas industry, while property and casualty insurers suffered from higher claims as a result of January's ice storm in Eastern Canada. Government business enterprises were also affected by the ice storm, as lower revenues and higher repair expenses pulled down the profits of provincial electric utilities.

Personal income improved (+1.6%), led by strong growth in labour income (+1.5%) and healthy gains in the other components. As personal income accelerated and consumer spending slowed, the saving rate jumped to 1.2%—the first increase after two years of steady declines.

Economic activity



The chain price index of GDP—the best measure of economy-wide price change—declined 0.3% at quarterly rates. Consumer prices were virtually unchanged; the price index for machinery and equipment investment dipped 0.6%. The chain price index for merchandise exports declined 1.2%, pulled down by big drops in the prices of crude oil, natural gas, and petroleum-related products. Prices of metals and computer equipment also fell sharply.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 701–726, 728–735, 737–744, 748–750, 796, 797, 6520–6585 and 6597–6624.

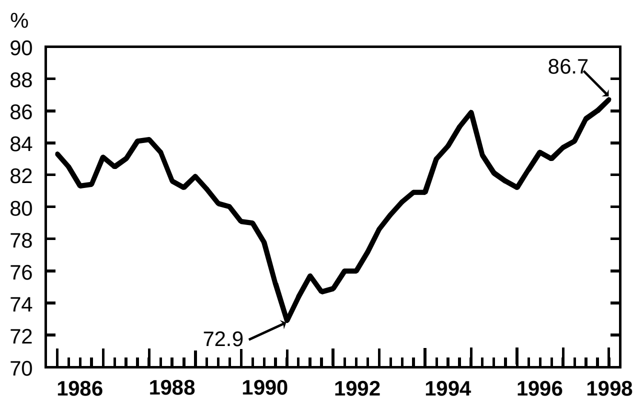
The first quarter 1998 issue of ***National economic and financial accounts, quarterly estimates*** *(13-001-XPB, $44/$145) will be available shortly. Detailed printed tables of the unadjusted and seasonally adjusted quarterly national accounts (13-001-PPB, $50/$180) and the financial flow statistics (13-014-PPB, $50/$180), plus supplementary analytical tables and charts, are available now. For further information, contact the information officer (613-951-3640), Income and Expenditure Accounts Division.*

Industrial capacity use up slightly

Given the moderate rate of economic growth in the first quarter, the industrial capacity utilization rate rose slightly to 86.0%. The 0.3 percentage-point rise over the fourth quarter of 1997 marked the ninth consecutive quarterly increase.

Exports and consumer spending both increased, and businesses continued to build inventories, which led to this first-quarter rise in production. The construction industries also stepped up output (+4.0%), as residential and non-residential construction activity increased and repair work surged in the wake of January's ice storm. Capacity use in the construction industry rose 3.5 percentage points to 90.5%—the first time since 1990 that the rate for this industry has exceeded 90%.

Rate of capacity use in manufacturing



Manufacturers boosted their rate of capacity use by 0.7 percentage points in the first quarter, bringing it to a 20-year high of 86.7%. This marked the fifth consecutive quarterly increase. Among the 22 industry groups in manufacturing, 12 recorded an advance. In the transportation equipment industries, the rate of capacity use rose 1.5 percentage points to 89.0%. The rubber products industries posted a 2.6 percentage point rise, reaching a new historic peak of 99.4%. Producers of furniture and fixtures boosted their capacity use to 93.8%, a new record. The electrical and electronic products and the non-metallic mineral products industries also posted increases. And new production capacity in the machinery industry together with reduced levels of production led to a drop of 3.0 percentage points as the industry's rate of capacity use hit 87.8%.

In all but one of the other non-manufacturing industries, rates of capacity use declined in the first quarter. Mild winter weather reduced demand for both electricity and natural gas, which led to a 5.3 percentage point drop in electric power and gas distribution systems (78.0%). In the mining, quarrying and oil wells sector, the rate of capacity use declined 0.9 percentage points to 84.6%, as the decline in mining and quarrying was partly offset by a rise in crude petroleum and natural gas.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 3140.

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

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 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 that the series reflect such changes.

Industrial capacity utilization rates

	Q1 1997	Q4 1997	Q1 1998	Q1 1997 to Q1 1998	Q4 1997 to Q1 1998
	%			% point change	
Total, non-farm goods-producing industries	**83.4**	**85.7**	**86.0**	**2.6**	**0.3**
Logging and forestry	76.0	80.0	79.1	3.1	– 0.9
Mining (including milling), quarrying and oil wells	82.1	85.5	84.6	2.5	– 0.9
Manufacturing	83.7	86,0	86.7	3.0	0.7
Durable goods	83.6	86.6	87.8	4.2	1.2
Non-durable goods	83.8	85.1	85.5	1.7	0.4
Construction	83.7	87.0	90.5	6.8	3.5
Electric power and gas distribution systems	84.5	83.3	78.0	– 6.5	– 5.3

New homes slightly more expensive

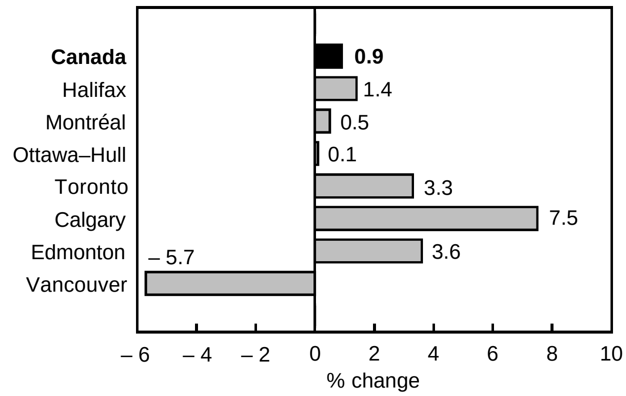
In April, the New Housing Price Index increased 0.9% compared with April 1997. On a monthly basis, the index showed no change compared with March, as changes in the indexes of the surveyed cities offset each other.

The largest monthly increase was posted by Halifax (+1.5%), followed by Saskatoon (+0.6%) and Calgary (+0.5%), as some builders added their increased construction costs to the price of new homes. Smaller increases were noted in several other cities, as builders reacted to improving market conditions. However, these increases were offset by significant monthly declines in the indexes for Victoria (–1.2%), Vancouver (–1.1%) and Sudbury–Thunder Bay (–0.7%), along with smaller decreases in several other cities. According to contractors, competitive market conditions were behind these declines.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 9921.

The second quarter 1998 issue of ***Construction price statistics*** *(62-007-XPB, $24/$79) will be available in September. For further information, contact Elvira Marinelli (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-2848; infounit@statcan.ca), Prices Division.*

New housing price indexes, April 1997 to April 1998



Many children exposed to second-hand smoke

Although second-hand smoke is a recognized cause of bronchitis and pneumonia in children, data from the 1995 General Social Survey (GSS) show that less than half of parents who smoked and who had children under the age of five restricted smoking in their homes. Teenagers were most likely to be exposed to second-hand smoke, and most likely at home. Second-hand smoke has also been linked to heart disease and lung cancer in non-smokers.

Parents who did smoke were more likely to restrict smoking in their homes if they had children under age 5. Even so, only 45% of this group actually imposed restrictions. Where the youngest child was aged 5 to 14, slightly more than one-third (34%) restricted smoking at home in some way. This proportion declined to 23% in homes where the youngest child was 15 or older.

Nearly half of non-smokers (46%) were exposed to second-hand smoke at some point during the year. And the majority (28%) were inhaling someone else’s cigarette smoke every day. Another 14% were exposed to second-hand smoke at least once a week; 5% faced less frequent exposure.

Rates of daily exposure to second-hand smoke were higher for males than for females. Among non-smokers, about one in three males aged 15 and over reported breathing second-hand smoke every day, compared with fewer than one in four females. On the other hand, almost equal percentages of men and women reported that they were exposed to second-hand smoke, even though they did not encounter it every day.

Women who did not smoke reported that they were most likely to encounter second-hand smoke in their homes: 13% inhaled second-hand smoke every day at home, double the proportion (6%) who did so at work. The opposite was true for male non-smokers. In this group, about 15% encountered second-hand smoke in the workplace, compared with 9% at home.

In 1995, about half of adults in non-smoking households reported that they banned smoking in their homes. When smokers and non-smokers lived together, smoking restrictions were less common. Only one-third of households had limits, but in these, the most common type of restriction was a total ban. Not surprisingly, only about 10% of households composed solely of smokers had limits on cigarette smoking within the home.

The Summer 1998 issue of ***Canadian social trends*** *(11-008-XPE, $11) is now available. For further information, contact Warren Clark (613-951-2560), Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division.*

Note to readers

The 1995 General Social Survey (GSS) collected data from nearly 11,000 persons aged 15 and over living in private households in the 10 provinces, representing over 23 million people. The large majority of respondents (70%) were either non-smokers, meaning they had never smoked cigarettes, or former smokers who had not smoked in the 30 days before the survey interview. People were asked how often and where they were exposed to environmental tobacco smoke; what, if any, side effects they had noticed; whether they restricted smoking in their homes; and what illnesses or physical irritations they attributed to second-hand cigarette smoke.

Smoking restrictions included smokers abstaining from smoking in the house, limiting smoking to certain rooms, or restricting smoking in the presence of young children.

Children face parents' separation earlier in life

New information from the 1994–95 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) show that not only has separation and divorce among parents increased over the past few decades, but that children are facing their parents' separation at an increasingly younger age.

One in every five children born between 1961 and 1963 had to deal with the separation of their parents by the time they were 16 years old. Between 1971 and 1973, one in five children born had seen their parents separate by the time they reached 11. By the time they were just over 6, one in five children born in 1983 and 1984 had separated parents. And the same proportion of children born in 1987 and 1988 were just under 5 when their parents' union dissolved.

By the time they are 10 years old, 63% of children with parents living in a common-law union have seen their parents separate, compared with only 14% of children whose parents were married and had not previously lived common-law. The 1996 Census clearly indicated that common-law couples are most prevalent in Quebec. However, NLSCY data reveal that common-law unions in Quebec may provide a more stable environment for children than do such unions in the rest of Canada. In 1994–95, by the age of 6, 37% of children raised in common-law families in Quebec had seen their parents separate, compared with 61% in Ontario, 60% in British Columbia, 56% in the Prairie provinces and 44% in Atlantic Canada.

In 1994–95, custody was decided out of court for just over half (53%) of the children of separated couples. Custody was decided by court order for 37% of the children, and 10% were awaiting a court decision. But these figures varied depending on the time that had elapsed since the separation. Among children whose parents had been separated for a year or less, decisions on custody were made out of court for 73% of them. Out-of-court decisions were made for only 47% of the children whose parents had been separated for more than a year.

The financial situation of children in separated families is a growing concern among Canadians. NLSCY data show that about one in three children whose parents have separated live in a situation where no financial support agreement is in place. Court orders do not ensure financial agreements: nearly 20% of children whose custody was decided by court order are not covered by a financial support agreement. Among children whose custody was decided out of court, 45% were in situations with no financial support agreements.

When financial support agreements have been made by court order or privately, support payments are received regularly or with occasional delays for 6 of 10 children. Regular financial payments are received for 76% of children whose parents reached their own financial arrangements, but only 53% of children for whom financial support has been court ordered receive it regularly. In addition, 31% of court-ordered support payments were in arrears for at least six months.

Most children (86%) lived with their mother after separation. Only 7% lived with their father, about 6% lived under a joint custody arrangement, and the rest (less than 1%) lived under another type of custody agreement. When no joint custody agreement existed, 58% of children saw their non-custodial parent regularly (at least once a month).

For further information about the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, contact Sylvie Michaud (613-951-9482; michsyl@statcan.ca) or Yvan Clermont (613 951-3326; cleryva@statcan.ca) at Statistics Canada, or Allen Zeesman (819-994-3039; allen.zeesman@spg.org) at Human Resources Development Canada.

Note to readers

The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), developed jointly by Human Resources Canada and Statistics Canada, is a comprehensive survey that will follow the development of children in Canada and paint a picture of their lives. In late 1994 and early 1995, the parents of approximately 23,000 children up to the age of 11 were interviewed. They shared information about their children, themselves and the children's families, and their schools and neighbourhoods. The survey will collect information on these same children every two years as they move into youth and adulthood.

New from Statistics Canada

Basic summary tabulations
1996 Census

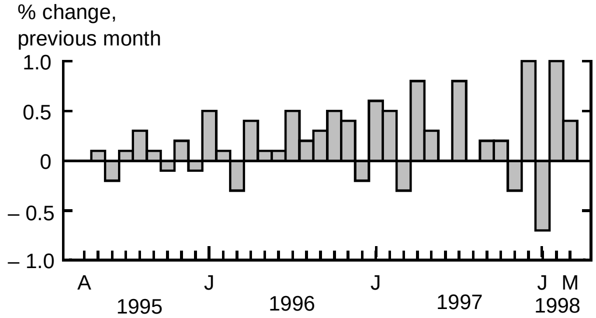
This series from the 1996 Census comprises 66 basic tabulations and provides summary information for small geographic areas of the country in tabulations using two or more inter-related census variables.

Sixteen tabulations on labour market activities, industry and occupation, household activities, place of work, and mode of transportation to work are now available. Geographic areas include census divisions and subdivisions; census metropolitan areas, tracted census agglomerations and census tracts; federal electoral districts (1996 representation order); federal electoral districts (1987 representation order) and enumeration areas; and forward sortation areas. All geographies include data for Canada, provinces and territories.

Prices begin with a flat fee of $60, plus $1 for each of the first 100 geographic areas, and 5 cents for each additional area. For further information, contact your nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre.

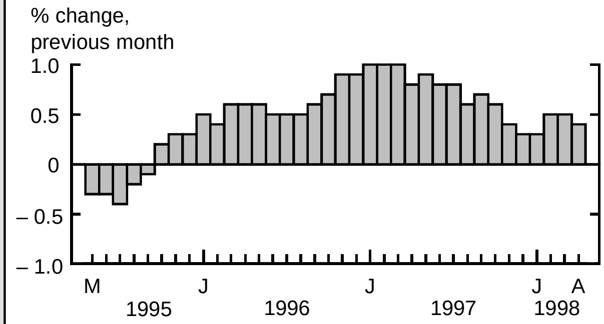
Current trends

Gross domestic product



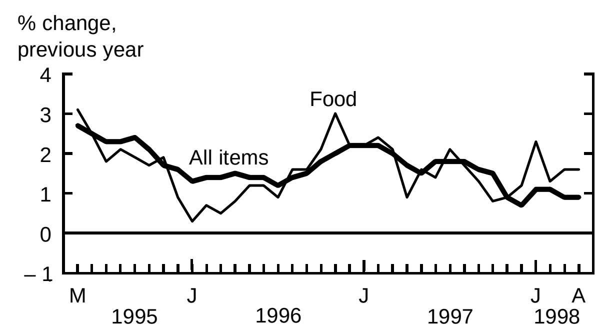
Real gross domestic product at factor cost grew 0.4% in March.

Composite Index



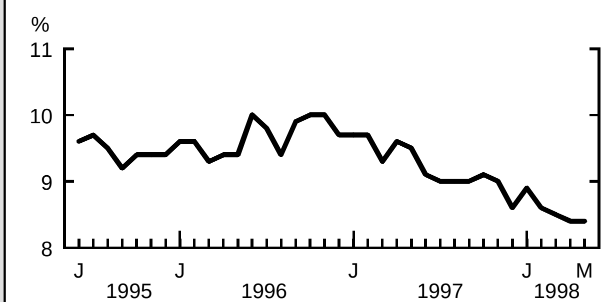
The Composite Index grew by 0.4% in April.

Consumer Price Index



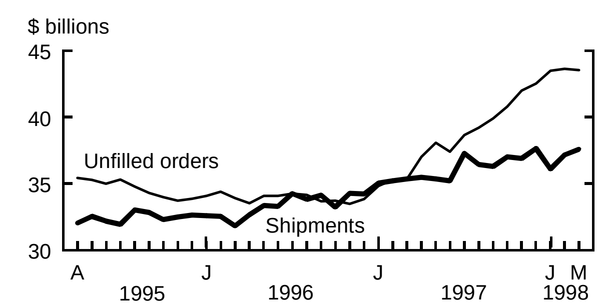
Consumers paid 0.8% more for goods and services in April 1998 than the year before. Food prices rose by 1.7%.

Unemployment rate



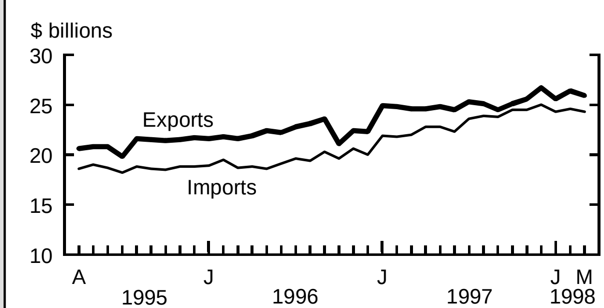
In May, the unemployment rate remained stable at 8.4%.

Manufacturing



Manufacturers' shipments rose 0.9% in March to $37.6 billion. The level of unfilled orders increased 0.2% to $43.5 billion.

Merchandise trade



In March, the value of merchandise exports dropped 2.1% from February to $25.9 billion. Imports decreased 1.2% to $24.3 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, 1992)	March	711.0	0.4%	4.4%
Composite Index (1981=100)	April	205.2	0.4%	6.8%
Operating profits of enterprises ($ billion)	Q1 1998	27.3	– 6.0%	2.6%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q1 1998*	86.0	0.3†	2.6†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade ($ billion)	March	20.1	0.2%	6.0%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	April*	124.8	5.9%	10.8%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	May*	14.3	– 0.1%	2.8%
Unemployment rate (%)	May*	8.4	0.0†	– 1.0†
Participation rate (%)	May*	65.1	0.0†	0.2†
Labour income ($ billion)	March	38.2	0.0%	3.9%
Average weekly earnings ($)	March	607.76	0.0%	1.9%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports ($ billion)	February	26.4	2.2%	6.9%
Merchandise imports ($ billion)	February	24.5	0.9%	12.5%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in $ billion)	February	1.8	0.3	– 1.0
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments ($ billion)	March	37.6	0.9%	5.4%
New orders ($ billion)	March	37.7	0.6%	4.9%
Unfilled orders ($ billion)	March	43.5	0.2%	21.2%
Inventory/shipments ratio	March	1.28	– 0.02	– 0.01
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	April	108.3	– 0.1%	0.8%
Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100)	April	119.0	0.7%	– 0.8%
Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100)	April	111.6	1.4%	– 12.4%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	March	99.9	0.1	1.0%

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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Publications released from June 12 to 18, 1998

Division/Title of publication	Period	Catalogue number	Price: Issue/Subscription Canada (C$)	Price: Issue/Subscription Outside Canada (US$)
CULTURE, TOURISM AND THE CENTRE FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS				
Touriscope—International travel, advance information	April 1998	66-001-PPB	8/73	8/73
CURRENT ECONOMIC ANALYSIS				
Canadian economic observer	June 1998	11-010-XPB	23/227	23/227
DISTRIBUTIVE TRADES				
New motor vehicle sales	March 1998	63-007-XIB	13/124	13/124
Retail trade	February 1998	63-005-XPB	21/206	21/206
Retail trade	March 1998	63-005-XPB	21/206	21/206
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Exports by country	Q1 1998			
Microfiche		65-003-XMB	62/206	62/206
Paper		65-003-XPB	124/412	124/412
MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY				
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