



# Infomat

## A Weekly Review

Friday, August 6, 1999

### OVERVIEW

◆ **GDP still advancing at a brisk pace**

In May, the gross domestic product advanced 0.3%. This extends the economy's expansion to 10 consecutive months following the strike-induced slowdown in mid-1998.

◆ **Industrial product prices show little change**

In June, industrial product prices showed little change from their May level and were 0.8% higher than a year earlier. The significant price increases were for softwood lumber and pulp. These were mostly offset by price declines for non-ferrous primary metal products and petroleum products.

◆ **Run-up in raw material prices eases**

After three months of relatively strong increases, raw material prices eased back in June. However, raw material prices were above their June 1998 level by 5.4%—the largest yearly advance in more than two years.

◆ **Average weekly earnings barely budge**

In May, the average weekly earnings of employees were virtually unchanged from April and about the same as in May 1998. Since the start of this year, the annual growth rate of average weekly earnings has been less than the annual inflation rate of consumer prices.

◆ **Number of EI recipients rises**

In May, the number of Canadians receiving employment insurance benefits rose for only the second time in 10 months. The number of jobless claims, meanwhile, climbed 6.6%.

◆ **Bus industry on a roll**

The first half of 1998 produced financial improvements for the bus industry. In particular, the revenues of sightseeing bus companies grew significantly. Increased passenger numbers were seen in some segments of the industry.

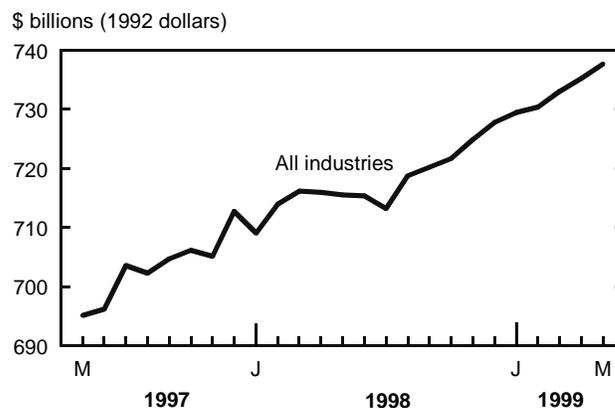
### GDP still advancing at a brisk pace

In May, the economy's expansion extended to 10 consecutive months, as the gross domestic product advanced 0.3%. A number of service industries saw increases in output as growth continued in specific areas of wholesaling, retailing, real estate, communications and business services. Growth in the goods-producing industries was mostly centred in primary goods. The mining industry made a notable gain, whereas the construction industry only advanced marginally. Manufacturing output was virtually unchanged.

Wholesaling activity rose in May by 1.0%, extending the remarkable growth that has characterized this industry for more than a year—due mainly to very strong computer sales. In May, wholesalers also benefited from higher demand for lumber and hardware. Retail sales edged up 0.2% as a second consecutive drop in auto sales dampened overall retailing activity.

The other services generally shone in May. In the communications sector (+1.1%), fierce competition in the market for long distance and cellular services continued to lift demand for telephone services. Providers of business services also continued to be busier (+0.9%), spurred by greater demand for accounting and legal services. Computer service firms, meanwhile, got an extra

Gross domestic product at factor cost



(continued on page 2)



### ... GDP still advancing at a brisk pace

boost from the Year 2000 deadline. Transportation services (+0.3%) were lifted by clearing grain backlogs and by higher shipments of automotive goods. House sales picked up in May, boosting the activity of real estate agents (+0.4%) for a fourth consecutive month.

Mining production increased for a second consecutive month, rising 1.0%. Diamond production surpassed expected levels, while the output of oil was buoyed by the Hibernia offshore oil field and natural gas production was generally strong. Construction activity edged up 0.2%, the seventh consecutive monthly advance. Increased homebuilding was largely negated by a decline in non-residential construction.

As for manufacturing, total factory output was virtually unchanged in May. This marked only the second month that this industrial sector has not advanced since the mid-1998 strike-induced slump. Lower production in the paper and allied products, fabricated metals, primary metals and printing and publishing industries was offset by higher output of transportation equipment and food products.

The output of paper and allied products was at its lowest level in six months. Output of newsprint and pulp both fell as several mills took downtime to pare back inventory gluts. Fabricated metal producers cut output by 1.3%, in part because production in the metal stampings industry was hit by lower demand. May's output of primary metal products fell 1.8%, as production of steel fell back and as iron foundries and other smelters and refiners also

reported weaker production. Manufacturing of aluminum products also edged down. In the printing and publishing industry, factories recorded their fifth month of lower production in seven months. Commercial printers and plate makers both curtailed output. These developments were compounded by a strike in the publishing industry.

Makers of transportation equipment raised output 1.5% in May. Production of cars and parts rose 1.7%, whereas production of small recreational vehicles reached a multi-year low due to weak demand. Food processing plants were busier in May. Meat packers and frozen fruit and vegetable factories helped to boost total food production by 1.0%. Output of wood products was also up in May (+1.4%).

Electric power utilities got a boost from warmer-than-average weather in Eastern Canada. The finance and insurance industries were virtually unchanged. Consumers shied away from the stock market and mutual funds in May, pulling down the output of other financial intermediaries. Government services were lifted by Department of Defence activity related to the crisis in Kosovo.

**Available on CANSIM: matrices 4677-4681.**

*The May 1999 issue of **Gross domestic product by industry** (15-001-XPB, \$15/\$145) presents the full report. To purchase data, contact Kim Lauzon (1 800 877-IMAD; IMAD@statcan.ca). For further analytical information, contact Richard Evans (613-951-9145; evanric@statcan.ca), Industry Measures and Analysis Division. See also "Current trends" on page 7.*

## Industrial product prices show little change

In June, industrial product prices showed little change from their May level and were 0.8% higher than a year earlier. The significant price increases were for softwood lumber and pulp. These were mostly offset by price declines for non-ferrous primary metal products and petroleum products. If the Canada-U.S. exchange rate had held constant in June, the yearly change in industrial prices would have been 1.0%—the sixth consecutive month of increase.

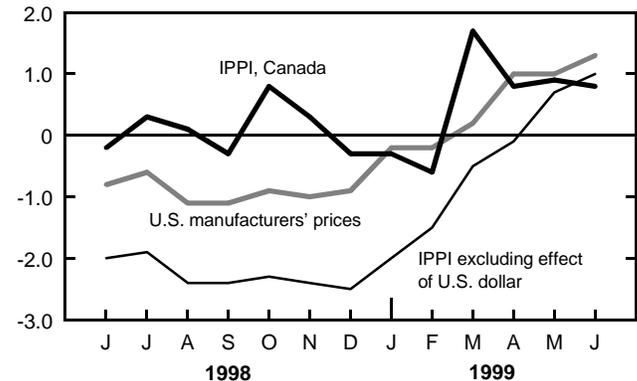
Softwood lumber prices were up from May by 5.2%, as prices increased across the country. The largest increases occurred in the interior of British Columbia. However, on the B.C. Coast, prices continued downward for western red cedar. Domestic prices for softwood lumber increased 4.0%, while export prices rose 5.7%. In the United States, softwood lumber prices were up 4.5%. These price increases occurred despite June's decline in U.S. housing starts to their lowest annual level since May 1998. In Canada, by contrast, housing starts were up in June by 5.0%, rising to their highest level since March 1998.

Pulp prices climbed an average 3.1%. The price of exported bleached sulphate wood pulp was up a significant 3.7%, whereas the domestic price was up 1.4%. (Bleached sulphate wood pulp makes up about four-fifths of Canadian pulp production, most of which is exported.) In the United States, average pulp prices were up 2.9%. During the March through June period, pulp prices recovered somewhat as market conditions strengthened.

Among the non-ferrous primary metal products, price declines were fairly general. The most significant were for primary copper products (-10.9%) and nickel products (-3.9%). Fund managers contributed to the former by short-selling copper in world markets, and they may have contributed to the latter by profit taking. Other declines included primary aluminum products, refined zinc, primary lead, gold and silver and platinum. The price declines for gold and gold-alloy products reflected the drop in gold prices that followed the decision of the Swiss and British banks to sell part of their reserves.

### Industrial Product Price Index

% change, 12 months



(continued on page 3)

### ... Industrial product prices show little change

In the petroleum products industry, prices edged down in June by 1.3%. This followed a 19.5% price advance from March through May. June's decline occurred despite the ongoing rise in crude oil prices, which were up in June by 0.9%. At the retail level, gasoline prices fell in June after three consecutive monthly increases, dropping 1.5%. Competition in Ontario and Quebec contributed to this decline.

*Available on CANSIM: matrices 1870-1878.*

*The June 1999 issue of **Industry price indexes** (62-011-XPB, \$22/\$217) will be available at the end of the month. For further information, contact Client Services (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-1539; [infounit@statcan.ca](mailto:infounit@statcan.ca)), Prices Division.*

## Run-up in raw material prices eases

**A**fter three months of relatively strong price increases, the Raw Materials Price Index eased back in June (-0.5%). Non-ferrous metal and animal product prices accounted for most of the decline. Offsetting increases were seen in marginally higher crude oil and wood prices. Despite the overall flatness, June's raw material prices were above their June 1998 level by 5.4%—the largest yearly advance in more than two years.

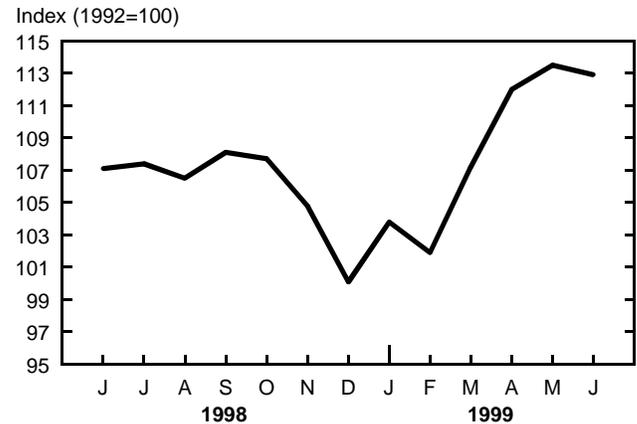
Because of its weight in the Raw Materials Price Index, the mineral fuels category (90% of which is crude oil) exerts considerable influence over total prices. If mineral fuels were excluded from the index, raw material prices for June would have fallen 1.1%—that is more than twice the actual decline (-0.5%). This impact was even more pronounced on a yearly basis: a decline of 2.5%, not the 5.4% advance.

Non-ferrous metal prices weakened 4.4% in June on widespread price declines for these metals. Copper fell 11.1% to its lowest price in over a decade. Copper prices have been falling since their peak in January 1995, leaving June's level below this high by 52.2%. Expanded output by low-cost producers has kept inventories high, while demand from East Asian economies has been weak for a couple of years. Nickel and zinc concentrate prices both lost ground in June, falling 4.4% and 4.6% respectively. Zinc concentrate prices were also down on a yearly basis (-3.4%), whereas nickel prices have risen considerably over the past year (+18.2%). And gold prices fell 5.7% to 20-year lows on news of plans by British and Swiss banks to sell significant holdings just as the International Monetary Fund proposed its own sales to fund a debt-relief program.

After rising for two months, animal product prices edged down 1.4%. Lower cattle (-1.3%) and hog (-5.6%) prices were largely responsible, whereas hog prices alone were behind a 2.0% yearly decline in animal product prices. Hog prices were unable to sustain the 36.2% increase realised in April and May after reports of a larger-than-expected herd in the United States. This news prompted farmers to sell hogs to avoid the potential of further price decreases. Despite gains in 1999, hog prices remained 18.1% lower than in June 1998. As for cattle, there is also a larger-than-expected herd on feedlots. June's cattle prices were the lowest of 1999. Even so, they remained higher than a year earlier by 2.9%.

Mineral fuel prices edged up in June (+0.9%) on higher prices for crude oil (+0.9%) and coal (+2.4%). Crude prices gained ground as vacation driving spurred demand, bringing about the

### Raw Materials Price Index



fourth consecutive monthly increase. A strike threat by oil workers in Venezuela (OPEC's third largest producer) also influenced prices. After rising 46.5% from February to April, crude oil prices stabilised during May and June. However, on a yearly basis, the increase in crude prices in June was quite robust at 33.0%.

There were other significant price movements in June. Wood prices rose for a fifth month (+0.6%). The solid U.S. housing market was largely responsible for ongoing strength in the log market (+0.5% monthly, +10.2% yearly). As a group, vegetable product prices slipped 0.2% as lower canola and soybean prices were partly offset by increases for wheat and unrefined sugar. It appears there will be another bumper crop in the United States of soybeans, so prices stood at their lowest level in over six years and down 27.9% on a yearly basis. Similarly, canola prices fell to their lowest level in over five years, dropping 23.2% on a yearly basis. In contrast, wheat prices gained 2.2% on reports of heavy buying and wet weather that delayed spring planting. June's wheat prices remained 7.1% below those of June 1998 and 47.2% below the peak of May 1996. Among the ferrous metals, iron ore prices were down 8.9% on a yearly basis, while iron and steel scrap prices tumbled 22.2%.

*Available on CANSIM: matrix 1879.*

*The June 1999 issue of **Industry price indexes** (62-011-XPB, \$22/\$217) will be available at the end of this month. For further information, contact Client Services (613-951-3350; fax (613-951-1539; [infounit@statcan.ca](mailto:infounit@statcan.ca)), Prices Division.*

## Average weekly earnings barely budge

In May, the average weekly earnings of employees amounted to \$607.39, virtually unchanged from April and about the same as in May 1998. Since the start of 1999, the annual growth rate of average weekly earnings has been less than 1.0%—in other words, below the annual inflation rate of consumer prices.

Compared with May 1998, average weekly earnings were virtually unchanged this May in almost all the major industries. One exception was business services, where the yearly increase was a strong 2.0%. That industry's growth in average weekly earnings has been particularly strong in the past 12 months in computer and related services and in management consulting services.

Looking at all industries, employees paid by the hour worked an average 31.4 hours per week (includes overtime), virtually unchanged from April. Average overtime hours for hourly rated employees were unchanged from April.

Payroll employment remained virtually unchanged in May. The return to work of striking employees in the manufacturing and telecommunications sectors was offset by employment losses in construction, retail trade and miscellaneous services.

*Available on CANSIM: matrices 4285-4466, 9438-9452, 9639-9664 and 9899-9911.*

*The May 1999 issue of **Employment, earnings and hours** (72-002-XPB, \$32/\$320) presents the month's industry data and other labour market indicators in detail. Annual averages for*

### Average weekly earnings, all industries, May 1999 Seasonally adjusted

	\$	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
<b>All industries</b>	<b>607.39</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.5</b>
Logging and forestry	776.75	2.4	0.8
Mining, quarrying and oil wells	1,088.07	-1.3	-1.3
Manufacturing	749.20	0.4	-1.2
Construction	689.45	-1.3	-1.3
Transportation and storage	740.14	-0.1	1.5
Communications and other utilities	816.32	0.0	0.7
Wholesale trade	660.70	0.1	-0.1
Retail trade	368.64	-0.4	1.8
Finance and insurance	803.11	0.0	-0.6
Real estate and insurance agencies	644.65	-0.7	3.7
Business services	694.14	-0.2	2.0
Education-related services	657.83	-2.0	-1.7
Health and social services	525.90	0.1	1.9
Accommodation, food and beverage	231.80	-1.3	1.1
Public administration	745.77	1.3	-0.2
Miscellaneous services	412.17	0.8	1.5

*1998 are now available from CANSIM, on diskette, in CD-ROM format, via the Internet at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca), and through custom tabulations prepared on demand. For further information, contact Robert Frindt (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; [labour@statcan.ca](mailto:labour@statcan.ca)), Labour Division.*

## Number of EI recipients rises

In May, 521,440 Canadians were receiving employment insurance benefits (the regular type of benefits). That was up from April by 0.5%. It was also only the second increase in recipient numbers in 10 months.

The number of jobless making claims for EI insurance climbed from April by 6.6% to 230,500. The amount paid as regular benefits increased by 4.8% in May to reach \$698.2 million.

Note that the number of beneficiaries is a measure of all persons who received employment insurance benefits for the week containing the 15th day of the month. Regular benefit payments is the total of all monies received by individuals for the entire month. These different reference periods must be considered when making data comparisons.

The Employment Insurance Act allows each province or administrative region of Human Resources Development Canada some autonomy in the way renewal claims are handled. Thus, changes from month to month in claims levels may be affected by these differences in provincial/regional administrative procedures.

*Available on CANSIM: matrices 26 (series 1.6), 5700-5717 and 5735-5736.*

### EI beneficiaries receiving regular benefits, May 1999 Seasonally adjusted

	Beneficiaries	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
<b>Canada</b>	<b>521,440</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>-4.7</b>
Newfoundland	34,310	-2.4	5.3
Prince Edward Island	8,160	0.7	-7.6
Nova Scotia	26,950	-0.3	-8.4
New Brunswick	34,150	-0.5	-5.5
Quebec	176,470	0.6	-8.3
Ontario	106,430	1.1	-14.2
Manitoba	13,160	-1.3	6.7
Saskatchewan	13,870	5.8	38.8
Alberta	41,790	3.7	39.5
British Columbia	66,020	0.2	-3.6
Yukon	1,070	2.2	-20.3
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	1,290	2.8	14.1

*For more information, contact Gilles Groleau (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; [labour@statcan.ca](mailto:labour@statcan.ca)), Labour Division.*

## Bus industry on a roll

The bus industry's total revenues excluding subsidies in the first half of 1998 (\$1.58 billion) grew from the first half of 1997 (\$1.48 billion) by 6.6%. At the same time, the industry was able to reduce expenses by 1.4%, from \$2.42 billion in 1997 to \$2.39 billion in 1998. The revenue gains were made in almost all sectors of the industry. For example, shuttle bus companies expanded their revenues by 34% from \$15 million to \$20 million, whereas charter bus carriers maintained their revenues at about \$123 million.

Sightseeing bus companies, in particular, saw their revenues swell—from \$2.7 million in 1997 to \$6.8 million in 1998. This segment of the industry has been growing significantly since 1995, when it earned \$1 million. Much of the 1998 increase stemmed from new sightseeing company start-ups (primarily in Ontario and British Columbia), an indicator of the ongoing growth in sightseeing.

Passenger numbers on scheduled inter-city buses showed virtually no change between the first halves of 1997 and 1998 (6.9 million passengers). From 1995 to 1997, passenger numbers were rising each year by about 4.5%. Nevertheless, the number of inter-city passengers has dropped significantly over the long term, from about 30 million in the early 1980s. Whether that long-term decline has stabilised or not is still unclear.

Urban transit companies carried 714 million passengers in the first half of 1998, an increase from the first half of 1997 (699 million) of 2.1%. Urban transit ridership in the first half of 1996 totalled 688 million passengers, indicating that urban transit

### Note to readers

All data in this article are based on the first two quarters of the calendar year. The information comes from quarterly surveys of 101 urban transit companies and approximately 575 other bus companies that earn at least \$200,000 annually. The 575 companies provide scheduled inter-city passenger, charter, school bus, shuttle and sightseeing services. The data, which are subject to revision, exclude all school bus companies with annual revenues less than \$2 million. A recent article in *Infomat* (June 18) analysed the 1997 data.

companies have been able to attract more riders, at least on a national basis, for three consecutive years.

At the same time, the urban transit companies were able to increase their revenues (excluding subsidies), from \$879 million in the first half of 1997 to \$906 million in 1998. As with the number of passengers, the revenue gains have been steady since 1995, when their revenues totalled \$774 million. Their operating expenses compared with the first half of 1997 rose 1.4% to \$1.74 billion.

**Available on CANSIM: matrices 346 and 347.**

To order data on the passenger bus industry, contact Robert Larocque (613-951-2486; [larocque@statcan.ca](mailto:larocque@statcan.ca)). For further analytical information, contact Harold Kohn, (613-951-0162; [kohnhar@statcan.ca](mailto:kohnhar@statcan.ca)), Transportation Division.

## New from Statistics Canada



### Canada's international transactions in services 1998

The latest annual details of Canada's trade in services are now available in *Canada's international transactions in services, 1998*. This publication covers transactions in travel, transportation, and commercial and government services to Canada's trading partners.

Trade series have been newly expanded to show summary estimates from 1990 to 1997 for 44 individual trading partners in addition to the usual breakdowns for the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan. All tables are revised from 1995.

The paper version of *Canada's international transactions in services, 1998* (67-203-XPB, \$40) is now available. An Internet version will be available shortly at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca) (67-203-XIB). For further information, contact Hugh Henderson (613-951-9049, [hendhug@statcan.ca](mailto:hendhug@statcan.ca)), Balance of Payments and Financial Flows Division.

## New from Statistics Canada

### Historical statistics of Canada (second edition)

Due to great demand from researchers, the out-of-print compendium *Historical statistics of Canada—second edition* is now available online. This unique reference volume (the first edition was published in 1965) uses short texts and extensive statistical tables to depict the growth and development of Canada from Confederation in 1867 up to the modern era. The original content of the publication is all there without any alterations to the original text and data.

The compendium was first published jointly by the Social Science Federation of Canada and Statistics Canada to provide professionals and students with an important statistical source for historical research and analysis. In addition to time series on employment, housing, health care, education and the national accounts, it includes descriptions designed to aid interpretation and use of the data. It also draws together references to the many original sources.

*The electronic version of **Historical statistics of Canada—second edition** (11-516-XIE, no charge) can now be accessed online at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca), either as HTML (text) and csv files (tables) or as Adobe Acrobat files. For further information, contact Linda McCormick (613-951-6478), Dissemination Division.*

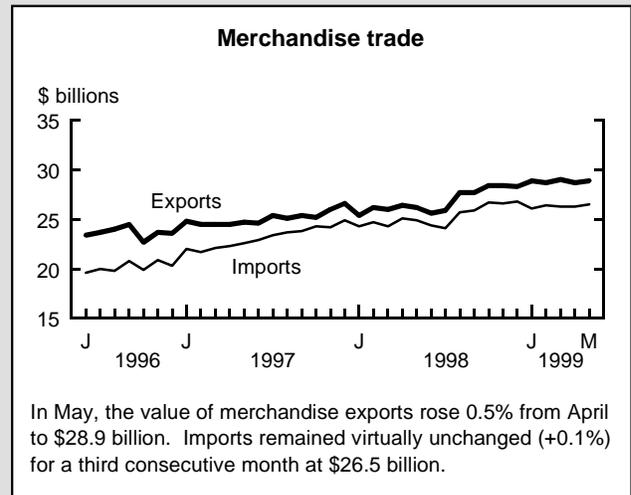
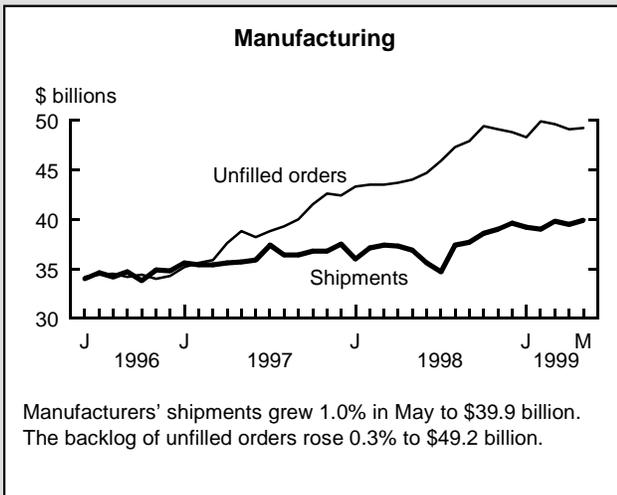
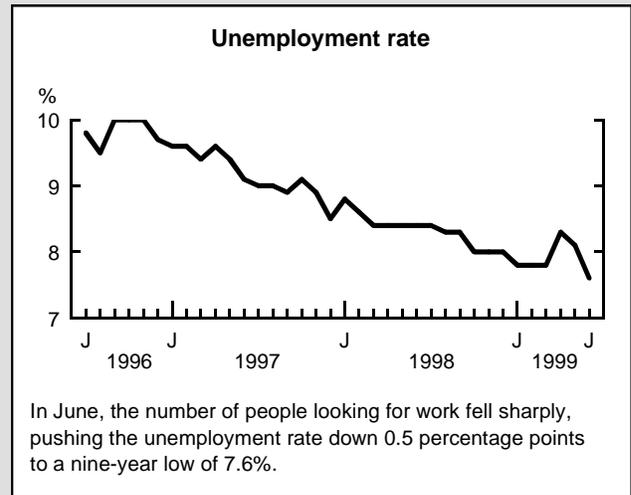
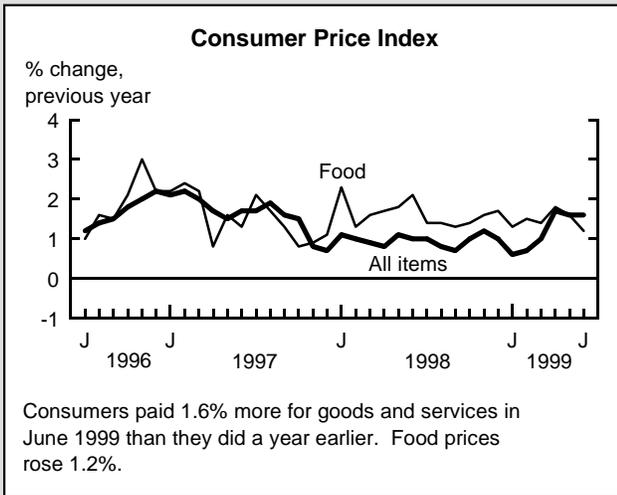
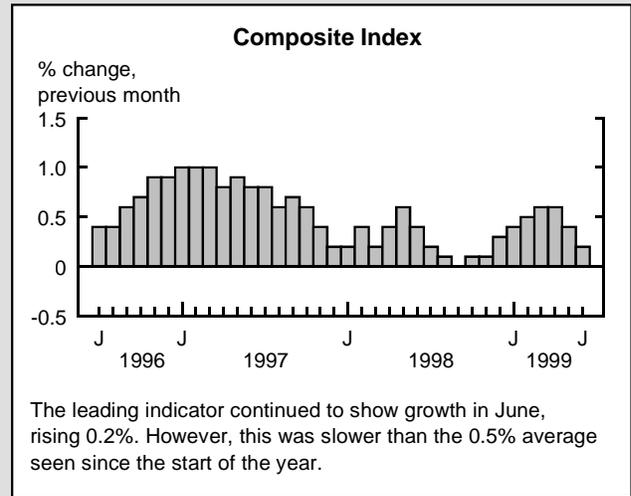
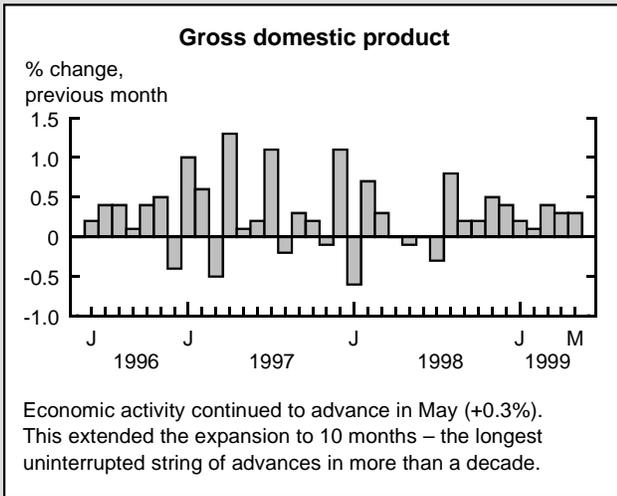
### Innovation analysis bulletin

Statistics Canada has just launched the first bulletin in a series that will profile trends in science, technology and the information society. The new *Innovation analysis bulletin* includes updates on government science and technology activities, industrial research and development, intellectual property commercialization, advanced technologies and innovation, biotechnology and technology use, connectedness, telecommunications and broadcasting, and electronic commerce.

This first issue contains seven articles. The topics cover a new framework to measure science and technology knowledge, an assessment of Canadian contributions to scientific journals, a snapshot of market share and performance in telecommunications, the rise in patents and licensed products at universities, and getting connected on the Internet.

*The new online publication, **Innovation analysis bulletin** (88-003-XIE, no charge), is now available at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca). Look under "Products and services", followed by "Downloadable publications (free)". For further information, contact Michael Bordt (613-951-8585; fax: 613-951-9920; [michael.bordt@statcan.ca](mailto:michael.bordt@statcan.ca)), Science, Innovation and Electronic Information Division.*

## Current trends



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

## Latest statistics

	Period	Level	Change, previous period	Change, previous year
<b>GENERAL</b>				
Gross domestic product (\$ billion, 1992)	May*	737.6	0.3%	3.1%
Composite Index (1981=100)	June	214.5	0.2%	3.8%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billion)	Q1 1999	36.3	4.7%	..
Capacity utilization (%)	Q1 1999	83.1	0.5†	- 0.3†
<b>DOMESTIC DEMAND</b>				
Retail trade (\$ billion)	May	21.3	0.4%	3.4%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	May	122.7	- 3.8%	- 2.4%
Wholesale trade (\$ billion)	May	29.8	1.8%	5.7%
<b>LABOUR</b>				
Employment (millions)	June	14.64	0.0%	2.7%
Unemployment rate (%)	June	7.6	- 0.5†	- 0.8†
Participation rate (%)	June	65.3	- 0.4†	0.4†
Average weekly earnings (\$)	May	607.39	0.0%	0.5%
Help-wanted Index (1996=100)	July*	160	0.6%	11.9%
<b>INTERNATIONAL TRADE</b>				
Merchandise exports (\$ billion)	May	28.9	0.5%	10.1%
Merchandise imports (\$ billion)	May	26.5	0.1%	6.1%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion)	May	2.4	0.1	1.1
<b>MANUFACTURING</b>				
Shipments (\$ billion)	May	39.9	1.0%	8.1%
New orders (\$ billion)	May	40.1	2.8%	7.7%
Unfilled orders (\$ billion)	May	49.2	0.3%	12.0%
Inventory/shipments ratio	May	1.26	- 0.01	- 0.06
<b>PRICES</b>				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	June	110.5	0.1%	1.6%
Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100)	June*	120.2	0.1%	0.8%
Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100)	June*	112.9	- 0.5%	5.4%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	May	100.6	0.0%	0.6%

*Note: All series are seasonally adjusted with the exception of the price indexes.*

\* new this week

† percentage point

.. figures not available yet due to a survey redesign

# Infomat

## A weekly review

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Editor: Tim Prichard (613) 951-1197; prictim@statcan.ca  
Head of Official Release: Chantal Prévost (613) 951-1088; prevcha@statcan.ca

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The first (official) release of all statistical information produced by Statistics Canada occurs in *The Daily* ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)), available at 8:30 a.m. *The Daily* presents highlights from new data releases, along with sources, links and contacts for further information. It also contains schedules of upcoming major news releases and announces the Agency's new products and services.

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## Publications released from July 29 to August 4, 1999

Division/Title of publication	Period	Catalogue number	Price: Issue/Subscription	
			Canada (C\$)	Outside Canada (US\$)
<b>BALANCE OF PAYMENTS AND FINANCIAL FLOWS</b>				
Canada's international transactions in services	1998	67-203-XIB	30	
<b>CULTURE, TOURISM AND THE CENTRE FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS</b>				
Education quarterly review, vol. 5, no. 4	1999			
Internet		81-003-XIB	16/51	
Paper		81-003-XPB	21/68	21/68
<b>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS</b>				
National income and expenditure accounts	First quarter 1999	13-001-XPB	44/145	44/145
<b>INDUSTRY MEASURES AND ANALYSIS</b>				
Gross domestic product by industry	April 1999	15-001-XPB	15/145	15/145
<b>MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY</b>				
Asphalt roofing	June 1999	45-001-XIB	5/47	
Natural gas transportation and distribution	April 1999	55-002-XPB	17/165	17/165
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