



# Infomat

## A Weekly Review

Friday, July 10, 1998

### OVERVIEW

#### ◆ GDP little changed

Economic output declined fractionally in April after a solid showing in February and March.

#### ◆ Firms stepping up preparations for Year 2000

Canada's businesses are stepping up their efforts to avoid computer problems when the calendar hits January 1, 2000.

#### ◆ Computer programming is an urban occupation

Programming jobs in Canada are found mainly in metropolitan areas.

#### ◆ Canadians spending more travelling inside the country

In the first quarter of 1998, spending by Canadians returned as the main source of growth in tourism expenditures.

#### ◆ Decline in planned construction misses the industrial sector

Construction intentions fell in all sectors except the industrial in May.

#### ◆ Hospitalizations continue long-term decline

The rate at which Canadians were hospitalized reached an all-time low in 1995/96.

#### ◆ Help-wanted Index unchanged

Unchanged from May, the Help-wanted Index in June was at its highest level since October 1990.

### GDP little changed

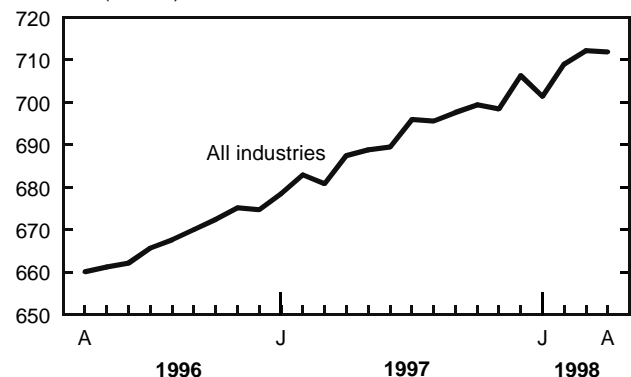
Economic output declined fractionally in April after a solid showing in February and March. Manufacturing output slipped the most (-0.7%), chiefly due to a drop-off in the auto industry. Business services declined for the first time in two years, but the decline was moderate, as were the declines in transportation, forestry and mining. Construction and wholesale trade were stagnant. Retailers, banks and the mutual fund industry maintained their advances.

In the manufacturing sector, auto makers and parts makers both cut output, as did makers of primary metal products, machinery and chemicals. The overall decline occurred despite a rebound by food manufacturers and continued strength among makers of telecommunications equipment. Decreases were observed in 12 of the 22 major industry groupings.

Makers of automobiles and parts both curtailed output. For some models, an oversupply of vehicles actually shut down production; for other models, parts shortages slowed the auto makers down. In addition, auto exports fell in April, partly due to a shortage of the railcars needed to transport them. The transportation group was dragged down 0.5% in the month, not only by the shortage of railcars but by reduced railcar loadings of coal as well.

#### Gross domestic product at factor cost

\$ billions (1992 \$)



(continued on page 2)



### ... GDP little changed

The decrease for primary metal products was the second in four months. Shutdowns were partly to blame. Output of steel has flattened in recent months, following strong gains in the second half of 1997. The decline among machinery producers, the fifth in six months, worsened a downtrend that is reversing 18 months of strong gains.

The first decline in two years for business services (-0.7%) was a broad one. Output fell the most among providers of computer and miscellaneous business services. But the economic activity of architects, engineers, scientists and accountants also declined.

Asia's economic troubles are depressing the mining industries here. For the third time in four months, output in the mining sector fell (-0.4% in April). Metal and non-metal mines did have a rebound — gold production rose after a five-month slump — but it was outweighed by cutbacks in drilling activity and reduced demand for coal. Most Canadian coal is shipped to Japan, and April marked the beginning of a new multi-year contract with Japan that calls for fewer coal deliveries for the next few years.

Despite poor fundamentals in the oil patch (low prices and high inventories), output has held steady in recent months.

#### 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 valued at 1992 prices. The estimates presented here are seasonally adjusted at annual rates.*

However, drilling activity did fall significantly in April as the number of operating days at drilling rigs fell to its lowest level in at least a year. As well, exploration budgets have been trimmed.

Production of electricity increased marginally, but remained substantially below seasonal norms because of unusually warm weather in key markets.

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

For further information, order the April 1998 issue of **Gross domestic product by industry** (15-001-XPB, \$15/\$145), or contact Richard Evans (613-951-9145; [evanric@statcan.ca](mailto:evanric@statcan.ca)), Industry Measures and Analysis Division. To purchase data, contact Kim Lauzon (613-951-9417; [lauzonk@statcan.ca](mailto:lauzonk@statcan.ca)). See also "Current trends on page 8.

## Firms stepping up preparations for Year 2000

Canada's businesses are stepping up efforts to avoid computer problems when the calendar hits January 1, 2000. Virtually all firms (99%) surveyed in May were aware of the so-called millennium bug, and more than two-thirds (70%) have taken steps to prepare for it. Last October, less than half (45%) had taken any action, with about 1 in 10 firms not even knowing about the problem. The proportion of large businesses (more than 250 employees) taking action against the bug remained virtually unchanged at 94%, compared with 93% last October.

The situation has improved mainly among small businesses (6 to 50 employees), where the overall proportion of firms taking action jumped from 39% to 66%, and among medium-sized firms (51 to 250 employees), where the proportion increased from 70% to 94%. Some 12% of small business managers had still not acted because they use computer systems only minimally. An additional 6% were not worried yet or were planning to address the problem later. Only 3% of small businesses said their primary reason for not acting is lack of know-how or lack of resources.

More often than large firms, small businesses say they are ready. As of May, 32% of small businesses had confirmed that their systems are ready for 2000. The proportion of small firms that are ready is expected to climb to 42% at the end of this year and to 53% by July 1999. At the end of 1999, 58% of small businesses expect to be ready. By contrast, 15% of large firms were Year 2000 ready as of May. An additional 27% expect to be ready in the last half of 1998, some 34% in the first half of 1999, and 15% in the last half of 1999. About 9% of large firms were either not taking steps as of May or were taking steps and did not know when they would be ready.

More medium and large businesses appear to be tackling the problem in a systematic manner, however. For example, 67% of large firms now have a formal plan and a multi-phased approach

#### Note to readers

*This article summarizes findings from Preparedness of Firms for the Year 2000: A Follow-up Survey, which was conducted in May. The initial survey was taken in October 1997. Both were representative of all businesses in Canada with more than five employees, excluding government offices, health institutions, and educational institutions. Some 2,700 companies responded to the follow-up survey.*

to solving the problem; this compares with 48% last October. It is troubling that one-third of the large firms still have no such plan. (The survey stipulated that a formal plan must include an assessment of all computer systems followed by conversion and testing phases.)

The proportion of firms taking action to correct their systems improved significantly in all industrial sectors between October and May. Finance and insurance still leads the way, with about 79% of firms taking action as of May, compared with 66% six months earlier. In trade and other services, the proportion has climbed from 42% to 68%, while in the primary sector (agriculture, fishing, logging, mining, etc.), the proportion has risen from 33% to 58%. Seven out of 10 firms in manufacturing, transportation, communications and utilities have taken corrective steps.

Another potential problem is that significant proportions of businesses, though they are taking action, do not expect to be ready for Year 2000 until after June 1999. That expected date might be too optimistic because preparing and testing can take longer than planned in the best of circumstances. Some 15% of large businesses expect to be ready in the last half of 1999. This compares with 5% and 8% for small- and medium-sized firms respectively.

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### ... Firms stepping up preparations for Year 2000

The survey also suggests firms may be overly optimistic about their ability to weather the problem. First, legal cases may result from Year 2000 problems. Although most firms (74%) believe there will be lawsuits due to Year 2000 disruptions, only 21% believe their firm might be exposed to litigation. Awareness of legal issues increases by size of firm: 19% of small businesses, 37% of medium and 51% of large firms believe they could be

exposed to lawsuits as a result of Year 2000 problems. Second, only 28% of businesses have tried to determine the preparedness of their suppliers, customers or service providers. More than one-third of large businesses, almost two-thirds of medium firms, and three-quarters of small businesses had not taken such action as of May.

For further information, contact Jamie Brunet (613-951-6684; brunjam@statcan.ca), Small Business and Special Surveys Division.

## Computer programming is an urban occupation

**P**rogramming jobs in Canada are found mainly in metropolitan areas — especially Ottawa-Hull, Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver, which accounted for 171,000 of 267,000 such jobs in 1997. Ottawa-Hull had the highest concentration of software workers in 1997, representing more than 5% of all employed persons in the Region. Between 1992 and 1997, Ontario added the most programming jobs at 58,000, a growth of 90%. British Columbia had the fastest growth rate, however, at 155%.

The number of self-employed computer programmers and systems analysts almost tripled over the study period, from 17,000 in 1992 to 58,000 in 1997. These 41,000 new “jobs” accounted for just under one-third of the overall growth in the profession. (In 1997, 4 out of 10 programmers and analysts were aged 25 to 34, while 31% worked in organizations with more than 500 employees.)

Between 1992 and 1997, the number of programming and systems analysis jobs almost doubled (+92%), growing from 139,000 to 267,000. This was in the context of 9% employment growth overall. The unemployment rate for computer programmers in 1997 was about 3%, lower than any national unemployment rate since the mid-1960s.

This expanding job market is being attributed to the Internet, the rapid growth of intranets in large organizations and to the Year 2000 problem. Of the total, almost 70% of the 128,000 computer programming jobs created between 1992 and 1997 were in the business services industry, which supports the perception that contracting out has increased.

#### Note to readers

*This article refers to a new study entitled “The booming market for programmers”, which appears in full in the Summer 1998 issue of Perspectives on Labour and Income. The Labour Force Survey supplied most of the data.*

Most of the growth in employment has been among workers old enough to have previous work experience. In 1997, only 20% of newly hired workers (in the job for one year or less) were under 25. Programmers aged 45 and over had the highest increase in employment over the five-year period, at 131% compared with a 66% increase for the 25-to-34 age group. Most new jobs for those 45 and over are thought to be transfers from other jobs within firms.

Contrary to popular belief, programmers are not wealthy workaholics. The growing market for them has not created longer workweeks. Programmers worked an average 38.8 hours a week in 1997, about one hour less than in 1992. Programmers were also no more likely than others to work overtime or to hold a second job. In late 1997, computer programmers and systems analysts earned, on average, about \$300 more per week than workers overall (\$843 compared with \$577). Programmers working for large companies earned more than those in small firms did. Newly hired programmers are more likely to work in small firms.

For further information, order the Summer 1998 issue of *Perspectives on labour and income* (75-001-XPE, \$18/\$58), or contact Dave Gower (613-951-4616) or Marie-Paule Robert (613-951-4628), Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division.

## Canadians spending more travelling inside the country

**S**pending by Canadians returned as the main source of growth in tourism expenditures in the first quarter of 1998. In the fourth quarter of 1997, outlays by non-residents had dominated. Canadians spent 4.8% more (\$7.1 billion total) on tourism in Canada than they did in the first quarter of 1997. Higher outlays for transportation led the spending higher, as spending on air transportation climbed 10%, more because of steeper ticket prices than an increase in passengers.

The total amount spent on tourism in Canada reached \$8.8 billion during the first quarter of 1998, up 4.4% from the same quarter last year. Compared with the first quarter of 1997, spending by foreigners on travel in Canada was weak, as it grew a modest 2.7% to \$1.7 billion, the lowest year-to-year increase since the

#### Note to readers

*Unless otherwise stated, the data are expressed at current prices and are not seasonally adjusted.*

first quarter of 1993. Even so, one out of five dollars spent on tourism in Canada in the first quarter of 1998 came from the 7.9 million foreigners who travelled here from January to March.

The ongoing weakness of the dollar translated into Canadians spending money travelling in Canada instead of to the United States in the first quarter. Indeed, the number of trips that Canadians made to the United States dropped 14% from a year earlier, down to 9.8 million trips. This continued the downward trend that began in the third quarter of 1996.

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### ... Canadians spending more travelling inside the country

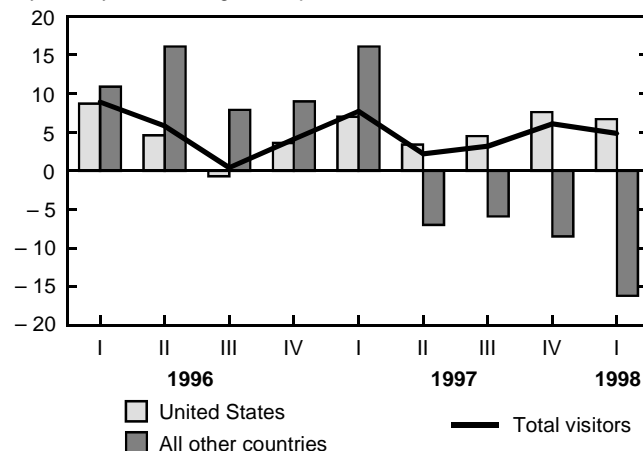
Taking advantage of the low dollar here, travellers from the United States made 5.6 million same-day trips and 1.8 million overnight visits to Canada in the first quarter, up 7.0% and 5.7% respectively from a year earlier. These sixth consecutive quarterly increases marked a return, however, to the situation where the gain in less expensive same-day trips outpaced the increase in overnight stays. These increases were also partly offset by a substantial decline in trips to Canada by visitors from countries other than the United States. Most notably, the number of visitors from the Asia-Pacific region fell more than 30% from the first quarter of 1997.

Employment generated by tourism reached 490,000 in the first quarter of 1998, up 4.7% from a year earlier. The gains were widespread, with a notable increase of 9% in transportation, especially air transport. On a seasonally adjusted basis, the uptrend of the past five quarters continued, with employment rising 1.0% from the fourth quarter of 1997. At this rate, employment is growing at a faster pace in the tourism industry than it is in the business sector overall.

The first quarter 1998 issue of *National tourism indicators* (13-009-XPB, no charge) is now available. For further

### Number of visitors to Canada declines

year-to-year % change, unadjusted data



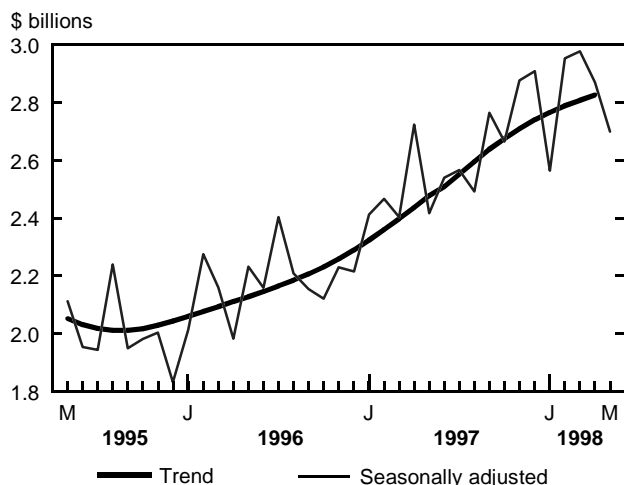
information, contact Jacques Delisle (613-951-3796), Income and Expenditure Accounts Division.

## Decline in planned construction misses the industrial sector

The rising trend in the value of building permits slowed again in May, as the value of permits issued declined for a second consecutive month. Municipalities issued \$2.7 billion in permits, down 5.9% from April. Construction intentions fell in all sectors except the industrial. Despite the declines in April and May, the total value of permits issued from January to May 1998 was still 13.2% higher than in the first five months of 1997.

In May, the residential (housing) sector accounted for about three-quarters of the overall decline, as municipalities issued \$1.4 billion in building permits, down 8.6% from April. Most of the decline resulted from an 18.6% drop (down to \$389 million) in construction intentions for multi-family units. Permits for single-family housing also fell, down 4.1% to \$1.0 billion.

### Value of building permits



### Note to readers

The monthly Building and Demolitions Permits Survey covers 2,600 municipalities and represents 94% of the population. It is an early indicator of building activity. The value of planned construction activities shown in this release excludes engineering projects (waterworks, sewers, culverts, etc.) and land. Unless otherwise stated, the data are seasonally adjusted.

In the housing sector as a whole, the first five months of 1998 compare favourably with 1997, lagging by only 1.7%. The sustained performance of permits for multi-family dwellings has almost balanced most of the negative effects of a slowdown in single-housing projects.

In the non-residential sector, construction intentions declined for a third consecutive month, slipping 2.8% from April to \$1.3 billion. The industrial component, the only component to increase in May, climbed 10.3% to \$381 million, the second straight monthly increase. However, this increase was more than offset by declines in planned institutional (-14.7% to \$266 million) and commercial (-4.1% to \$634 million) projects.

Despite the overall decline in May, the non-residential sector remains strong compared with 1997. The total value of building permits for the January-to-May period was 37.6% higher than for the same period in 1997.

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

For further information, the May 1998 issue of *Building permits* (64-001-XIB, \$19/\$186) will be available in July on the Internet at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca). For further information, contact Joanne Bureau (613-951-9689; [bureaujoa@statcan.ca](mailto:bureaujoa@statcan.ca)). For analytical information, contact Alain Paquet (613-951-2025; [paquala@statcan.ca](mailto:paquala@statcan.ca)), Investment and Capital Stock Division.

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## ... Decline in planned construction misses the industrial sector

### Building permits<sup>1</sup>, May 1998 Seasonally adjusted

	Total		Residential		Non-residential	
	\$ millions	% change, previous month	\$ millions	% change, previous month	\$ millions	% change, previous month
<b>Canada</b>	<b>2,699.0</b>	<b>- 5.9</b>	<b>1,418.0</b>	<b>- 8.6</b>	<b>1,281.1</b>	<b>- 2.8</b>
Newfoundland	14.8	- 5.3	9.3	- 15.1	5.4	17.9
Prince Edward Island	8.0	- 23.3	4.3	- 9.6	3.6	- 35.2
Nova Scotia	60.8	50.1	32.8	65.6	28.0	35.3
New Brunswick	32.6	- 19.1	19.6	- 4.7	13.0	- 34.2
Quebec	401.0	- 8.1	203.0	- 2.5	198.0	- 13.2
Ontario	1,033.4	- 15.7	644.8	- 10.5	388.6	- 23.0
Manitoba	180.0	74.0	25.2	- 36.0	154.9	141.3
Saskatchewan	76.4	12.5	25.0	21.6	51.4	8.6
Alberta	488.1	- 5.1	216.9	- 9.0	271.2	- 1.7
British Columbia	381.2	- 7.0	229.2	- 13.3	152.0	4.2
Yukon	5.1	116.2	1.0	- 13.4	4.1	249.7
Northwest Territories	17.6	495.4	6.8	153.7	10.8	3,687.1

<sup>1</sup> Data may not add to totals due to rounding. Some percentage changes should be interpreted with caution because of the small numbers involved.

## Hospitalizations continue long-term decline

The rate at which Canadians were hospitalized reached an all-time low in 1995/96, as the hospital discharge rate fell for a ninth consecutive year to its lowest level since 1961. The 1995/96 discharge rate was 11,165 per 100,000 population, well below the peak of 16,802 in 1973. This latest decrease follows the general pattern of decline observed since the mid-1970s. The trend toward more frequent use of ambulatory care and day surgery, improved medical technologies and treatments, and new pharmaceuticals may have reduced the need for hospitalization or surgical intervention.

Hospitals reported 3.3 million discharges in 1995/96, 14% of which were related to pregnancy and childbirth. Another 14% involved the circulatory system (for example, heart disease), 11%

### Note to readers

A **hospital discharge** is the release or death of an in-patient (a person admitted to hospital). Discharge data describe and measure the changes in case-flow and workload within hospitals over time, but these data do not indicate the number of unique individuals using hospital services; discharge data also exclude newborns and patients treated on an out-patient basis in, for example, emergency wards or day-surgery programs. The **hospital discharge rate**, a measure of hospital utilization, is expressed as the number of hospital discharges and deaths per 100,000 population.

### Hospital discharges

	1995/96	1994/95 to 1995/96	1995/96	1994/95 to 1995/96
	Number	% change	Rate <sup>1</sup>	% change
<b>Canada</b>	<b>3,320,789</b>	<b>- 3.5</b>	<b>11,165</b>	<b>- 4.7</b>
Newfoundland	70,192	4.6	12,211	5.4
Prince Edward Island	18,593	- 9.7	13,633	- 10.6
Nova Scotia	116,007	- 3.7	12,334	- 4.2
New Brunswick	117,004	- 0.8	15,383	- 1.1
Quebec	776,224	- 4.4	10,548	- 5.1
Ontario	1,185,434	- 2.5	10,623	- 4.0
Manitoba	143,741	- 3.1	12,633	- 3.7
Saskatchewan	159,293	- 3.8	15,638	- 4.3
Alberta	300,417	- 8.5	10,874	- 9.8
British Columbia	423,238	- 2.3	11,151	- 4.6
Yukon	2,843	10.3	9,192	5.5
Northwest Territories	7,803	0.9	11,825	- 0.5

<sup>1</sup> Rates are calculated per 100,000 population.

Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information.

pertained to the digestive system (such as hernias or ulcers) and 9% were related to asthma, pneumonia and other respiratory illnesses. Among male patients, heart diseases accounted for the largest share of discharges in 1995/96, followed by diseases of the digestive system and respiratory system. For female patients, pregnancy and childbirth represented by far the largest proportion of discharges.

Patients are spending far less time in hospital. In 1995/96, the average patient spent 10.7 days in hospital, about a day shorter than a decade earlier. The 3.3 million hospital discharges in 1995/96 represented 35.5 million patient-days, down 5% from a year earlier and 17% lower than a decade earlier. Contributing to this decline is the fact that many services that used to require hospitalization are shifting to out-patient programs. In other instances, patients are having minimally invasive surgery and are discharged sooner after admission. Of the total patient-days in 1995/96, the elderly accounted for 60% or 21.3 million days, although they represented only 12% of the population that year.

Declines in hospital discharge rates, length of hospital stay, and patient-days have been accompanied by a decrease in the number of patients having surgery as part of their hospitalization.

(continued on page 6)

### ... Hospitalizations continue long-term decline

In 1995/96, hospital discharges involving surgery amounted to 1.9 million, down 5% from a year earlier and 16% lower than a decade earlier. Just over half of all hospital discharges involved surgery. Women were considerably more likely than men to undergo surgery, 62% compared with 38%; obstetrical procedures explain most of the difference.

*The 1995/96 data on hospital discharges were collected by the Canadian Institute for Health Information. For further information on the 1995/96 data, contact Sherry Kennedy (416-429-0477, ext. 3532; fax: 416-429-1953), Canadian Institute for Health Information. For further information on trends in hospital discharges, contact Peter Morrison (613-951-1637), Health Statistics Division.*

## Help-wanted Index unchanged

**I**n June, the Help-wanted Index was unchanged from May. The index has risen nearly 46% since March 1996. It is now at its highest level since October 1990. This ascent is in line with other economic indicators, especially employment growth.

The index, which is a measure of companies' intentions to hire new workers, is compiled from the number of help-wanted advertisements published in 22 newspapers in 20 metropolitan areas.

*Available on CANSIM: matrix 105 (levels 8-10).*

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

### Help-wanted Index, June 1998 Seasonally adjusted

	Index, 1996=100	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
<b>Canada</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>16.3</b>
Newfoundland	143	- 2.7	17.2
Prince Edward Island	134	- 3.6	3.9
Nova Scotia	138	1.5	14.0
New Brunswick	147	0.7	13.1
Quebec	142	0.7	27.9
Ontario	146	0.7	15.9
Manitoba	159	0.0	19.5
Saskatchewan	141	0.0	9.3
Alberta	153	- 0.6	4.1
British Columbia	122	1.7	3.4

## New from Statistics Canada

### Monthly Survey of Large Retailers January 1997 to April 1998

The first data have arrived from the new Monthly Survey of Large Retailers. This survey provides a breakdown of sales by commodity at the national level for a group of about 80 large retailers. The retailers, who were chosen for the survey based on their sales, represent just over one-third (36%) of the total annual retail sales in the country, excluding recreational and motor vehicle dealers.

The survey covers only the large food and non-food retailers. The non-food category includes retailers of clothing, home furnishings and electronics, as well as department stores and other non-food retailers. Monthly sales data for more than 100 commodities will be available, split wherever possible by three types of retailer: food stores, department stores, and "other".

*For more information about the survey, the off-the-shelf products available, or for the list of retailers included in the panel, contact Veronica Utovac (613-951-0669), Distributive Trades Division.*

### Annual estimates of employment, earnings and hours 1985 to 1997

The Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours has just released an electronic version of *Annual estimates of employment, earnings and hours, 1985 to 1997*. Accessing these data is now simpler than ever before. Adobe's Acrobat software allows you to browse the information on-screen and quickly print any or all pages, while importing data into a spreadsheet is just as easy.

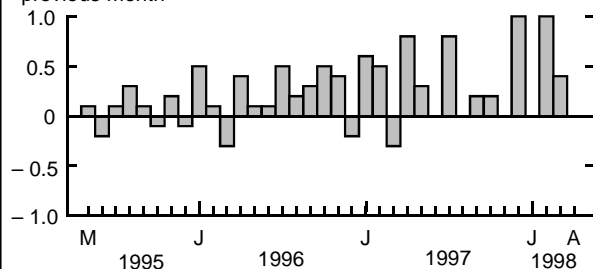
The publication contains data tables for over 280 industries at the national, provincial and territorial levels. Information is tabulated, for example, by employment levels, average weekly and hourly earnings, average weekly hours and total weekly payrolls. Also included is the *Help-wanted Index, 1981 to 1997 Supplement*.

*This electronic publication can now be downloaded directly from the Internet. (72F0002XIB, \$113). It is also available on diskette (72F0002XDB, \$120) and as a package of diskette and paper (10-3000XKB, \$150). For further information, or to order, contact the Client Services Section (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; labour@statcan.ca or order@statcan.ca), Labour Division.*

## Current trends

### Gross domestic product

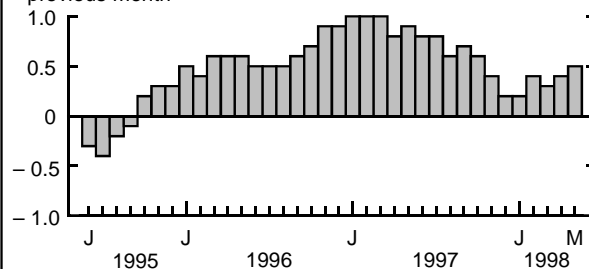
% change,  
previous month



Real gross domestic product at factor cost declined by a slight fraction in April.

### Composite Index

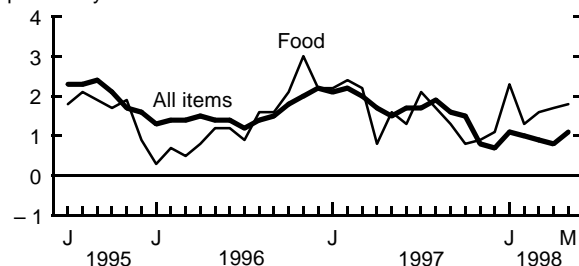
% change,  
previous month



The Composite Index grew by 0.5% in May.

### Consumer Price Index

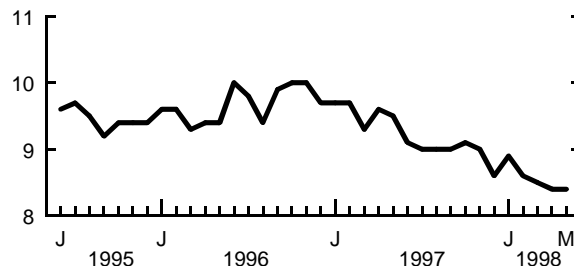
% change,  
previous year



Consumers paid 1.1% more for goods and services in May 1998 than the year before. Food prices rose by 1.8%.

### Unemployment rate

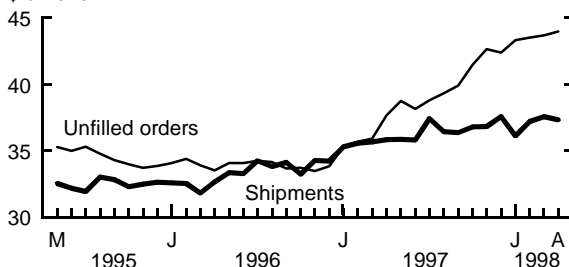
%



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

### Manufacturing

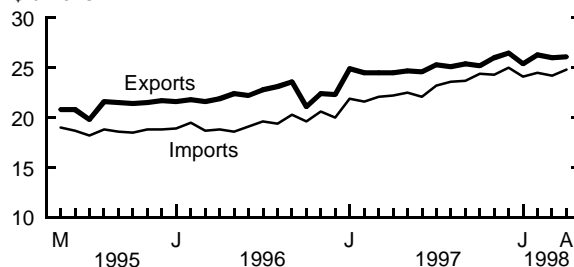
\$ billions



Manufacturers' shipments decreased 0.6% in April to \$37.3 billion. The level of unfilled orders increased 0.7% to just under \$44 billion.

### Merchandise trade

\$ billions



In April, the value of merchandise exports were up a slight 0.1% from March to \$26.1 billion. Imports climbed 2.6% to \$24.8 billion.

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

## Latest monthly statistics

	Period	Level	Change, previous period	Change, previous year
<b>GENERAL</b>				
Gross domestic product (\$ billion, 1992)	April	711.9	0.0%	3.5%
Composite Index (1981=100)	May	205.8	0.5%	6.1%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billion)	Q1 1998	27.3	- 6.0%	2.6%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q1 1998	86.0	0.3†	2.6†
<b>DOMESTIC DEMAND</b>				
Retail trade (\$ billion)	April	20.6	1.0%	5.7%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	April	124.8	5.9%	10.8%
<b>LABOUR</b>				
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)	April*	38.5	0.5%	4.2%
Average weekly earnings (\$)	April	609.49	0.4%	1.6%
<b>INTERNATIONAL TRADE</b>				
Merchandise exports (\$ billion)	April	26.1	0.1%	6.4%
Merchandise imports (\$ billion)	April	24.8	2.6%	11.7%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion)	April	1.3	- 0.5	- 1.0
<b>MANUFACTURING</b>				
Shipments (\$ billion)	April	37.3	- 0.6%	4.2%
New orders (\$ billion)	April	37.6	- 0.3%	0.2%
Unfilled orders (\$ billion)	April	44.0	0.7%	16.8%
Inventory/shipments ratio	April	1.29	0.01	0.00
<b>PRICES</b>				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	May	108.7	0.4%	1.1%
Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100)	May	119.0	0.0%	- 0.8%
Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100)	May	110.7	- 0.7%	- 15.1%
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

Published by the Communications Division, Statistics Canada, 10th floor, R.H. Coats Bldg., Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0T6.

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

Catalogue: 11-002E. Price: Canada: \$4.00 per issue, \$145.00 per year. Outside Canada: US\$4.00 per issue, US\$145.00 per year. All prices exclude sales tax.

To subscribe: Send a money order or cheque payable to the Receiver General of Canada/Statistics Canada, Operations and Integration Division, Circulation Management, 120 Parkdale Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0T6. To order by telephone call (613) 951-7277, or 1 800 700-1033 both in Canada and outside of Canada.

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Cement	May 1998	44-001-XPB	7/62	7/62
Coal and coke statistics	April 1998	45-002-XPB	12/114	12/114
Electric power statistics	April 1998	57-001-XPB	12/114	12/114
Production and disposition of tobacco products	May 1998	32-022-XPB	7/62	7/62
Production and shipments of steel pipe and tubing	May 1998	41-011-XPB	7/62	7/62
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