



Infomat

A Weekly Review

Friday, August 7, 1998

OVERVIEW

◆ Economic growth pauses for second month in a row

For the first time in more than two years, the economy has failed to grow for two consecutive months.

◆ Industrial prices edge up

In June, industrial prices edged up 0.1% from the previous month. However, for a fourth consecutive month, the 12-month change in prices continued to be negative.

◆ Raw material prices continue to drop

Manufacturers saw prices for most key raw materials continue to drop in June.

◆ Weekly earnings declined in May

From April to May, wage earners saw average weekly earnings decline. Compared with June 1997, their earnings have shown annual growth of less than 2%.

◆ Rise in number of EI recipients

The number of individuals receiving regular Employment Insurance benefits rose in May.

◆ Half a million received home care in 1994/95

Although arthritis/rheumatism are the most prevalent chronic conditions among home care recipients, cancer and stroke are the two most strongly linked to receiving home care. Low income and living alone are also linked to home care.

Economic growth pauses for second month in a row

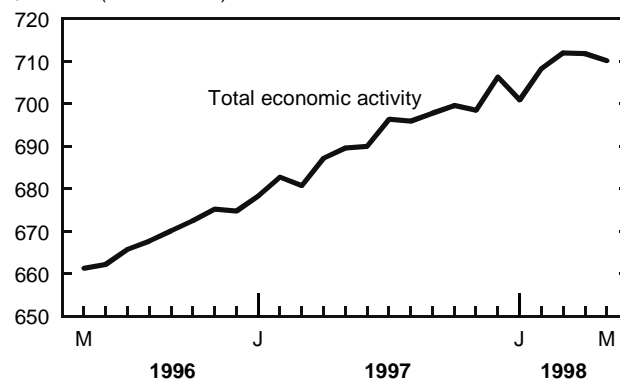
The economy paused for a second consecutive month in May, after growing strongly in February and March. Total economic activity (GDP) edged down 0.2% in May, following a flat performance in April. The weakness in May was fairly widespread, with the most significant declines occurring in the finance, manufacturing, mining, construction and transportation services industries. The real estate industry advanced, while retailers and wholesalers had a flat month.

The economy's listless performance in April and May, combined with the anticipated negative effects in June of labour unrest in the auto, pulp and paper, and construction industries, point to growth that is more moderate but still positive in the second quarter. After performing solidly since the middle of 1996, the economy began to slow in late 1997, largely due to strikes by teachers and postal workers, before being hit by the January ice storm in the first quarter of this year.

Quieter markets were a drag on the financial sector in May. The finance industries (banks, credit unions and other financial institutions) fell 1.7% as the volume of shares traded through brokerages and securities dealers fell substantially. However, the sharp decline in volumes traded in May was reversed in June.

Gross domestic product at factor cost

\$ billions (1992 dollars)



(continued on page 2)

... Economic growth pauses for second month in a row

Manufacturing continued to slide as output slipped 0.3% after a 0.9% drop in April. Output of transportation equipment, wood and primary metal products receded again in May, while production of electrical and electronic products fell back after April's unsustainable surge. These declines were partly offset by increased activity of makers of paper and allied products, machinery, and beverages. In total, declines in GDP were recorded in 13 of the 22 major industry groups, accounting for about 60% of total manufacturing production.

The transportation equipment industry's second consecutive contraction was led by auto makers and producers of other transportation equipment, which both had back-to-back declines. Makers of automotive parts, however, recorded a slight increase in May. May's drop in vehicle production was attributed to a retooling-related shutdown. A rebound in this industry is not likely in the next two months because of the GM strike in the United States, which paralysed most of the company's Canadian operations by the end of June, and which caused serious disruptions for many suppliers as well. These developments will have a significant impact on the Canadian industry in June and July. In 1997, almost one in four motor vehicles assembled in Canada was built in GM plants.

Wood production tumbled 2.8% in May, reflecting weaker Asian demand, export constraints imposed by the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber agreement, and lower housing starts in the United States. Furthermore, a burgeoning strike in the construction industry in Southern Ontario may also have eroded domestic demand in May. Output of sawn lumber, plywood and particleboard showed the sharpest declines in the month.

Output in the electronics industry fell back 1.0% in May after soaring to an all-time high in April. The telecommunications equipment industry fell the most, after a record performance in April, with producers of communications equipment also reporting a significant decline. Makers of electronic parts and components rebounded from a dip in April, while the office and business machine industry forged ahead with a fourth consecutive increase. Despite the current weakness in the industry as a whole, production remained 16.1% higher than in May 1997.

Makers of paper and allied products, buoyed by the return to production in mid-April of strike-idled mills, increased production 2.3% in May, the largest gain in more than 18 months. Output of newsprint surged in May, while producers of paperboard, building board and other paper products also fared well. However, the industry faces more labour turmoil from a work stoppage that hit the industry in June.

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. Estimates are seasonally adjusted at annual rates.

The mining sector has been beset by weak demand. Activity in the sector fell 1.4% in May, despite a moderate rebound in the output of metal and non-metal mines. It was the fourth decline in five months. Producers of both crude oil and natural gas reported lower output; producers of heavy oil were particularly affected. Meanwhile, drilling and rigging services contracted for a sixth consecutive month, as oil and gas producers continued to pare back exploration activities. These declines were partly offset by a widespread increase in the output of metal mines in May. Gold production, however, shrank for a sixth time in seven months. Production of both potash and salt was stepped up.

Residential and non-residential construction parted ways as strike actions slowed residential building projects in Ontario. Total construction activity fell 0.8% in May despite the fact that the non-residential side recorded its eighth gain in nine months. Residential construction fell 2.9% as a strike by drywallers and trim carpenters slowed construction of single-detached homes. Home-building in Toronto was particularly affected.

In the transportation, pipeline and storage services industry, falling demand for wheat was instrumental in triggering a decline of 1.0%. Railway carloadings of wheat and other grains were off almost 30% in the month, while grain elevators and other storage sites reported significant declines in business. Exports of wheat to destinations in the Pacific Rim also faltered in May.

The real estate services industry grew 0.3% as sales of existing homes advanced for a third consecutive month. Activity in the business services industries rose 0.2% in May, partly recovering from the unusual 0.6% decline in April. Gas distribution services declined in May as temperatures reached unseasonable highs. Domestic production of electric power surged, partly to make up for a drop in imports.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 4677-4681.

*The May 1998 issue of **Gross domestic product by industry** (15-001-XPB, \$15/\$145) will be available shortly. For analytical information, contact Richard Evans (613-951-9145, evanric@statcan.ca). To purchase data, contact Kim Lauzon (613-951-9417, lauzonk@statcan.ca), Industry Measures and Analysis Division.*

Industrial prices edge up

In June, industrial prices edged up 0.1% compared with May. However, for a fourth consecutive month, the 12-month change in prices continued to be negative (-0.3%). The Industrial Product Price Index in June was 119.1 (1992=100), up from 119.0 in May but down from 119.4 in June 1997.

The most significant price increases this June were for exported motor vehicles, pulp and newsprint. Despite the significant influence of exchange rates in June, particularly for the products just listed, Canada's industrial prices continued to show little change as the value of the dollar declined against the U.S. dollar. The rise in exported motor vehicle prices was due to the decline in value of the dollar. Export prices for both automobiles and trucks

(continued on page 3)

... Industrial prices edge up

were up 1.6%. The dollar's decline also contributed noticeably to lifting the prices of both pulp (+3.8%) and newsprint (+1.6%). Domestically, the price of bleached sulphate woodpulp (which accounts for roughly four-fifths of Canadian production) was up 1.8%, whereas the export price advanced 3.1%. Similarly, the export price for newsprint was up 1.8%, while the domestic price fell 0.6%. However, newsprint prices were significantly higher than a year earlier on both the export (+11.0%) and domestic (+7.8%) markets. Newsprint prices have been tending to recover since early 1997.

The most significant price declines in the month were for refined petroleum products and most non-ferrous metal products. Refined petroleum product prices (-3.0%) continued to reflect the lower crude oil prices. Weak global demand for non-ferrous metals was evident in the general price declines. Compared with May, prices were down for nickel products (-9.9%), copper and copper alloy products (-3.3%), refined zinc (-4.6%), and aluminum (-0.7%) products. Prices were also down for refined precious metals and their alloys. On a 12-month basis, the price decline has been particularly sharp for products made from nickel (-31.4%) and from copper and copper alloys (-30.4%). Shipments of primary metal products are down somewhat from the end of 1997, but remain above the June 1997 level.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 1870-1878.

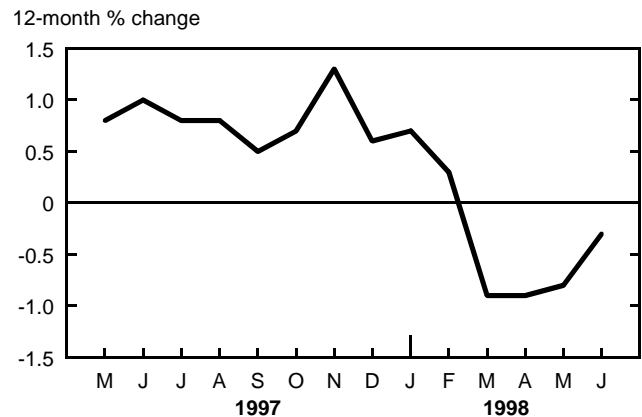
The June 1998 issue of *Industry price indexes* (62-011-XPB, \$22/\$217) will be available at the end of August. For further information, contact the Client Services Unit (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-2848; infounit@statcan.ca), Prices Division.

Note to readers

The Industrial Product Price Index (IPPI) reflects the prices that producers in Canada receive as goods leave their plants. It does not reflect what consumers pay. Unlike the Consumer Price Index, the IPPI excludes indirect taxes and all costs (including transportation, wholesale and retail costs) occurring between the time when a good leaves a plant and when a final user takes possession.

In Canada, only about half of what the consumer pays goes to manufacturers. The rest is divided among retailers, wholesalers, indirect taxes and transportation charges. Manufacturers' prices are, therefore, only one of several influences on consumer prices at the retail level. Imports, and fluctuations in the value of the Canadian dollar on the price of imports, are another.

Industrial Product Price Index



Raw material prices continue to drop

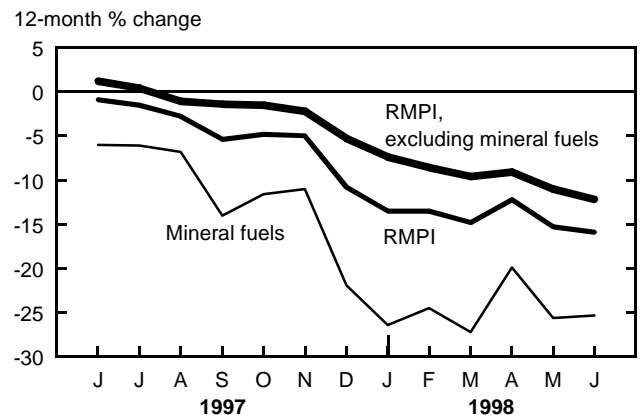
Manufacturers paid 3.2% less for raw materials in June than they did in May. In June, lower prices for crude oil, copper concentrates, aluminum materials, unrefined sugar, coffee, wheat, and cattle and calves for slaughter were marginally offset by higher prices for soybeans, oats, fish and iron ore concentrates. The Raw Materials Price Index was 107.0 in June (1992=100), down from 110.5 (revised downward) in May. Excluding the volatile prices of mineral fuels (this category is more than 90% crude oil), raw material prices would have shown a monthly decline of only 1.7% in June.

Compared with 12-months earlier, raw material prices were down 15.9%. Again, if mineral fuels (-25.3% from June 1997) were excluded, raw material prices would have been down 12.2%. This was the 11th consecutive month where the 12-month change for raw material prices excluding mineral fuels was negative. Compared with June 1997, lower prices for crude oil, logs, copper and nickel concentrates, aluminum materials, coffee, grains, unrefined sugar and hogs were marginally dampened by higher prices for natural gas, potatoes (+45.1%), canola, cattle for slaughter, ferrous materials, silver and platinum.

Note to readers

The Raw Materials Price Index (RMPI) reflects prices that manufacturers paid for key raw materials, including some that were not produced in Canada. Prices for many of these commodities are set in world markets.

Raw Materials Price Index



(continued on page 4)

... Raw material prices continue to drop

Crude oil prices fell 8.1% in June and were 27.7% lower than a year earlier. The fall in crude oil prices was due to slack demand and oversupply. The increasing cost of storing crude oil remains a serious problem due to a shortage of storage tanks. Non-ferrous metal prices were down 3.8% in June after falling 4.6% in May. Sharply lower capital investment in Japan has weakened base metal prices, which continued falling in June. The latest fall in copper prices was touched off by signs of cooling in the U.S. economy (i.e., construction spending fell for the first time in six months, and it was the steepest drop since January 1994). As well, inventories of copper were up. A major reason for weak nickel prices was an excess supply of stainless steel in the Far East. Platinum, an exception to the declines, was up 12.7% on the year.

In the animals and animal products group (-1.6% in June and -5.8% from June 1997), hog prices were down greatly (-23.3%) over the year because, according to recent reports, the United States had its biggest herd of hogs this spring since 1980. As well,

demand is soft in the Asian market for hogs and hog bellies. June's 2.7% decrease in vegetable product prices brought the decline over the March-to-June period to 7.6%. Sugar prices were down 14.3% as the recent record sugar harvest in Brazil and slack Asian demand weakened prices. Coffee prices (green coffee, -9.6%) may decline further with the slowing demand for coffee in the United States (the world's largest coffee market) and with the largest coffee harvest in 11 years projected in Brazil. Compared with 12 months earlier, vegetable product prices were down 13.0%.

Although wood prices were off only a marginal 0.4% in June, prices were down 19.4% from a year earlier. In particular, log prices have fallen 24.1% from July 1997 to June of this year. The economic troubles in Asia have wreaked havoc on log prices.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 1879.

*The June 1998 issue of **Industry price indexes** (62-011-XPB, \$22/\$217) will be available at the end of August. For further information, contact the Client Services Unit (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-2848; infounit@statcan.ca), Prices Unit.*

Weekly earnings declined in May

Average weekly earnings declined by \$1.08 in May to \$607.09. However, compared with May 1997, average weekly earnings were 0.8% higher. The annual growth in average earnings has been less than 2% since June 1997. For hourly rated employees, average hourly earnings were up \$0.06 to \$15.17, an increase of 1.3% compared with May 1997.

Workers in Alberta have experienced relatively strong earnings growth over the past 12 months. Average weekly earnings were up 1.8% between May 1997 and May 1998, which is one percentage point above the national average of 0.8%. Durable goods manufacturing, wholesale trade, and finance, insurance and real estate were the three strongest industries for earnings growth in Alberta.

In British Columbia, average weekly earnings declined 0.4% in the last 12 months. In particular, workers in logging and forestry have experienced significant layoffs in the past year, a reflection of weak demand and lower exports of wood products. For construction workers, average earnings were down substantially as well, reflecting weakness in that industry (building permits were down 26% in British Columbia in the last 12 months). Average weekly earnings were down in the finance, insurance and real estate industry due to a substantial decline in the earnings of commissioned salespersons, which reflects a weakening Vancouver Stock Exchange and weak housing resales in the greater Vancouver area.

May was the fourth consecutive month where paid employment was virtually unchanged. All industries and provinces maintained April's employment levels. Moreover, employment remained

Average weekly earnings, all industries, May 1998
Seasonally adjusted

	\$	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
Canada	607.09	-0.2	0.8
Newfoundland	533.36	1.0	0.1
Prince Edward Island	486.93	-0.7	-2.1
Nova Scotia	515.28	0.9	2.7
New Brunswick	525.64	-0.4	-0.5
Quebec	573.16	-0.5	0.7
Ontario	647.00	-0.6	0.7
Manitoba	544.99	1.6	4.0
Saskatchewan	541.28	1.2	2.8
Alberta	612.68	-0.6	1.8
British Columbia	620.00	0.3	-0.4
Yukon	681.26	-0.8	-1.3
Northwest Territories	744.25	1.8	2.4

unchanged from January's levels; however, compared with May 1997, employment grew by 346,000.

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

*The May 1998 issue of **Employment, earnings and hours** (72-002-XPB, \$32/\$320) and the historical publication **Annual estimates of employment, earnings and hours 1984-1996** (diskette: 72F0002XDB, \$120) will be available in August. Custom tabulations of the data are available on demand. For further information, contact Jean Leduc (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; labour@statcan.ca), Labour Division.*

Rise in number of EI recipients

An estimated 543,450 Canadians received regular Employment Insurance (EI) benefits in May, up 1.3% from April. Payments of regular benefits decreased 0.5% to \$676.3 million. Approximately one-third of the beneficiaries reside in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

EI beneficiaries receiving regular benefits, May 1998 Seasonally adjusted

	Beneficiaries	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
Canada	543,450	1.3	-8.2
Newfoundland	32,140	-3.5	-4.1
Prince Edward Island	8,920	-2.6	-2.2
Nova Scotia	28,600	-1.8	-8.5
New Brunswick	36,320	-2.8	0.4
Quebec	192,820	-0.4	-7.9
Ontario	121,910	1.8	-17.3
Manitoba	12,480	2.5	-16.1
Saskatchewan	10,190	10.1	-5.3
Alberta	29,230	3.4	0.1
British Columbia	68,740	-1.0	3.0
Yukon	1,390	2.3	9.4
Northwest Territories	1,100	1.2	-0.9

Note to readers

The discrepancy between the number of regular beneficiaries and the regular payments estimate can be explained in part by differences in their reference periods. The number of beneficiaries is a measure of all persons who were in receipt of 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.

The number of individuals who applied for EI in May was down a slight 0.2% to 222,700. The number of claimants fell in Prince Edward Island (-10.7%), Ontario (-2.8%), Manitoba (-7.3%), Alberta (-0.6%), the Yukon (-15.7%) and the Northwest Territories (-5.5%). Despite some irregular movements, the number of persons submitting EI claims each month has ranged from 219,000 to 250,000 since June 1996.

Compared with May 1997, the number of EI beneficiaries (regular) was down 8.4%, payments were just 0.1% higher, and the number of claims declined 5.4% (seasonally unadjusted data).

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

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

Half a million received home care in 1994/95

More than half a million (523,000) adults, or 2.4% of the population aged 18 and older, received home care in 1994/95. Although home care is not used exclusively by seniors, the majority (64%) or 335,000 were aged 65 and older, almost twice the number of seniors living in institutions or nursing homes (185,600). Half of all people receiving home care reported poor or fair health, while about 28% had been hospitalized for eight nights or longer in 1993/94. This compares with 2% of adults who did not receive home care who were hospitalized for that length of time.

Needing help with personal care or with activities such as preparing meals, shopping and housework is strongly predictive of receiving home care. Nevertheless, more than half of those who reported needing such assistance in 1994/95 were not receiving formal home care. Reasons for this are not clear, but support may have been coming instead from family, friends and private home care services.

Two health problems — cancer and stroke — are most strongly linked to receiving home care. In 1994/95, when the effects of age, general health status and socio-economic factors were taken into account, receiving home care was associated with only two reported conditions: cancer and the effects of stroke. People with either of these conditions had about twice the odds of receiving home care as those without these health problems.

Arthritis/rheumatism, one of the most prevalent chronic conditions in the adult population, was the most common chronic condition among home care recipients in 1994/95, reported by close to 240,000 or 46%. However, arthritis/rheumatism alone does not generate widespread need for home care. Only 8% of

Note to readers

This report is based on an article in the Summer 1998 issue of Health reports. The data are from the 1994/95 National Population Health Survey (NPHS). The findings on home care recipients pertain to 16,291 respondents aged 18 and older. The NPHS defined home care as health care or homemaker services received at home, with the cost being entirely or partially covered by government. Home care recipients were those who had received such services in the previous 12 months.

Depending on the region or province, government-supported home care can include basic nursing and homemaking services, as well as physiotherapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and palliative and acute care. In most jurisdictions, home care users are charged nominal fees depending on their ability to pay.

adults with these conditions reported receiving home care that year. By contrast, just 10% (52,000) of all home care recipients were stroke victims, but over one in four people who had suffered a stroke (26%) received home care.

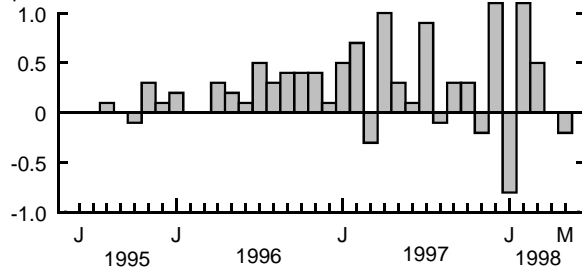
Low income is also associated with receiving home care, even after adjusting for the presence of chronic illness and physical need. One probable reason is that, in general, people with lower income are not as healthy as those with higher income. Not surprisingly, home care is more common among people who live alone.

The Summer 1998 (vol. 10, no. 1) issue of Health reports (paper: 82-003-XPB, \$35/\$116; Internet: 82-003-XIE, \$26/\$87) is now on sale. For more information, contact Kathryn Wilkins (613-951-1769), Health Statistics Division.

Current trends

Gross domestic product

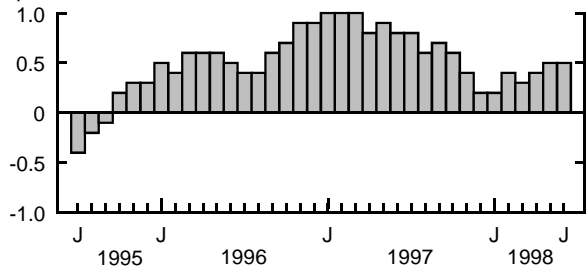
% change,
previous month



Real gross domestic product at factor cost edged down 0.2% in May.

Composite Index

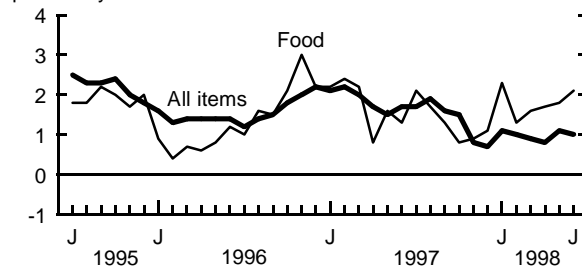
% change,
previous month



The Composite Index grew by 0.5% in June, unchanged from May.

Consumer Price Index

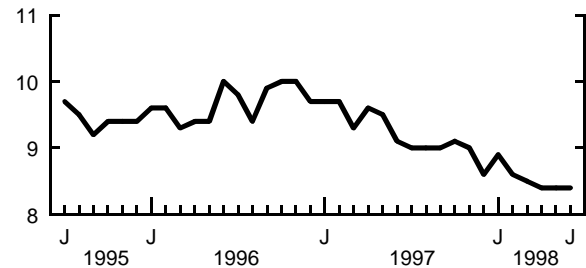
% change,
previous year



Consumers paid 1.0% more for goods and services in June 1998 than they did a year earlier. Food prices rose 2.1%.

Unemployment rate

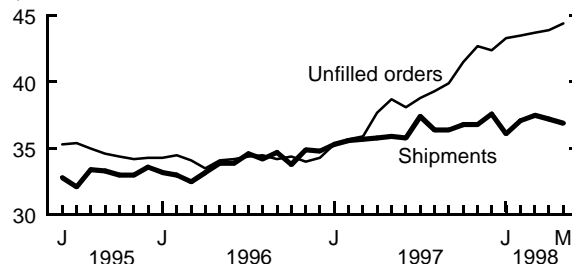
%



In June, the unemployment rate remained stable for a third consecutive month at 8.4%.

Manufacturing

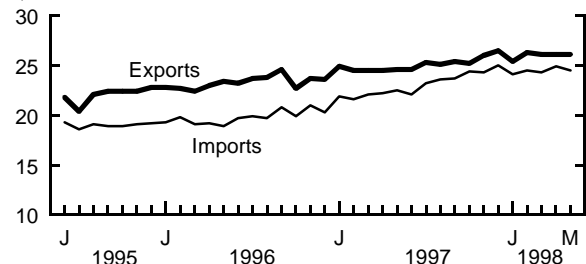
\$ billions



Manufacturers' shipments fell 1.0% in May to \$36.9 billion. The level of unfilled orders increased 1.1% to \$44.4 billion.

Merchandise trade

\$ billions



In May, the value of merchandise exports was unchanged from April at \$26.1 billion. Imports slipped 1.9% to \$24.5 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)	May*	710.0	- 0.2%	3.0%
Composite Index (1981=100)	June	206.7	0.5%	5.7%
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)	May	20.9	0.5%	6.3%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	May	127.2	1.1%	10.3%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	June	14.2	- 0.3%	2.2%
Unemployment rate (%)	June	8.4	0.0†	- 0.7†
Participation rate (%)	June	64.8	- 0.3†	0.0†
Labour income (\$ billion)	April	38.5	0.5%	4.2%
Average weekly earnings (\$)	May	607.09	- 0.2%	0.8%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billion)	May	26.1	0.0%	6.0%
Merchandise imports (\$ billion)	May	24.5	- 1.9%	8.6%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion)	May	1.7	0.4	- 0.3
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billion)	May	36.9	- 1.0%	2.8%
New orders (\$ billion)	May	37.4	- 0.4%	1.1%
Unfilled orders (\$ billion)	May	44.4	1.1%	14.7%
Inventory/shipments ratio	May	1.32	0.02	0.02
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	June	108.8	0.1%	1.0%
Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100)	June	119.1	0.1%	- 0.3%
Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100)	June	107.0	- 3.2%	- 15.9%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	May	100.0	0.1%	0.9%

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 July 30 to August 5, 1998

Division/Title of publication	Period	Catalogue number	Price: Issue/Subscription	
			Canada (C\$)	Outside Canada (US\$)
CULTURE, TOURISM AND THE CENTRE FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS				
Focus on culture	Summer 1998	87-004-XPB	9/27	9/27
HEALTH STATISTICS				
National Population Health Survey overview	1996/97	82-567-XIB	26	26
HOUSEHOLD SURVEY METHODS				
Survey methodology	June 1998	12-001-XPB	47	47
INCOME STATISTICS				
Homeowner repair and renovation expenditure	1996	62-201-XPB	31	31
MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY				
Coal and coke statistics	May 1998	45-002-XPB	12/114	12/114
Crude petroleum and natural gas production	April 1998	26-006-XPB	19/186	19/186
Electric power statistics	May 1998	57-001-XPB	12/114	12/114
Production and disposition of tobacco products	June 1998	32-022-XPB	7/62	7/62
TRANSPORTATION				
Aviation service bulletin	July 1998	51-004-XIB	8/82	8/82

Catalogue numbers with an -XIB or an -XIE extension are Internet versions (B signifies bilingual, E signifies English); those with -XMB or -XME are microfiche; and -XPB or -XPE denote the paper version. XDB means the electronic version on diskette or compact disc.

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