



Infommat

A Weekly Review

Friday, September 12, 1997

OVERVIEW

◆ Employment continues to grow

Employment rose again in August, for the sixth consecutive monthly increase. Ontario accounted for most of the job growth.

◆ Industrial capacity use rising steadily

Industries increased their use of capacity in the second quarter of 1997, marking a full year of steadily rising rates.

◆ Residential construction remains strong

Residential construction projects rebounded in July, offsetting a sharp drop in the non-residential sector. Despite slowing slightly in recent months, activity in the residential sector remained buoyant.

◆ New housing prices steady

The New Housing Price Index remained unchanged between June and July. It was the first time in nine months that the index did not show a monthly increase.

◆ Help-wanted Index unchanged

The Help-wanted Index remained unchanged in August. Despite the lack of movement, the index remained at its highest level since early 1991.

◆ Travel account deficit down

Although Canada's international travel account balance improved in the second quarter of 1997, it remained in a deficit position.

◆ Farmers face higher costs in second quarter

Farmers paid more to do business in the second quarter of 1997 compared with the same period in 1996. However, the annual increase was the lowest in almost five years.

Employment continues to grow

In August, employment rose by an estimated 55,000, the sixth consecutive monthly increase. Since February, when employment growth gained momentum, the number of employed has increased by 277,000. The growth in employment in August was accompanied by a similar increase in the labour force, leaving the number of persons looking for work little changed and the unemployment rate at 9.0%.

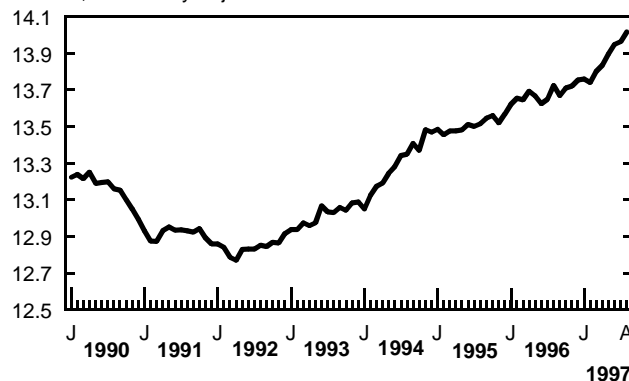
Employment among adults has been strengthening for several months. Between February and August, gains totalled 127,000 for men and 112,000 for women. For youths, August marked the third consecutive month of growth, with gains totalling 52,000 since May. For students aged 20 to 24, labour market conditions improved over the summer compared with last year. Most summer jobs went to this group of students. By contrast, younger students, especially those aged 15 and 16, faced poorer labour market conditions compared with the summer of 1996.

Employment growth in August was equally split between full- and part-time jobs. Between February and August, the growth rate of part-time employment (+3.5%) was twice that of full-time employment (+1.7%). The proportion of workers with part-time hours rose from 19.1% in February to 19.4% in August.

(continued on page 2)

Employment

Millions, seasonally adjusted



... Employment continues to grow

Private sector employment grew by an estimated 87,000 in August, with both paid employees (+51,000) and the self-employed (+35,000) contributing to the growth. In the public sector, however, employment fell by 32,000. All of the employment gains since February have been in the private sector.

The increase in employment in August was concentrated in business and personal services; transportation, storage and communications; and manufacturing. These three industries had above-average growth over the first eight months of 1997, and they accounted for almost all of the recent surge in employment. Elsewhere, employment in retail trade edged down slightly in August following strong growth in July.

Ontario, which posted employment growth of 33,000 in August, accounted for two-thirds of August's overall job growth. Since last February, gains total 156,000. Growth over this period has been in the manufacturing industries and the service sector. In Quebec, employment was unchanged in August, leaving gains since last November at 66,000.

In the West, growth was dominated by Alberta, where employment increased by 11,000 in August—the seventh straight month of growth. In Manitoba, employment increased by 4,000, partly offsetting July's decline. Employment in Saskatchewan was little changed for the third consecutive month. British Columbia posted little change as well, leaving gains since March at 38,000.

In Newfoundland, employment rose by 5,000 in August, offsetting the small monthly declines recorded over the previous six months. There was little employment change in the other Atlantic provinces.

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

Labour force information for the week ending August 16, 1997 (71-001-PPB, \$11/\$103; fax version: 71-001-PFB, \$300 annually) 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 8.)

Industrial capacity use rising steadily

In the second quarter of 1997, industries increased their use of capacity to 84.8%. This increase marks a full year of steadily rising rates. The upsurge in household spending and strong business investment in plant and equipment were the major contributing factors to increased production and the resulting rise in rates of capacity use. In response, industries in the manufacturing and construction sectors stepped up production.

In manufacturing, capacity use rose 0.8 percentage points to 85.7% in the second quarter. Sixteen of the twenty-two industry groups raised their level of capacity use. In response to more construction activity, producers of metallic structures increased output. This led to a rate of 85.7% in the fabricated metal products industry, a level not seen since the early 1980s.

The second quarter was upbeat for all types of construction, especially home building and renovating and industrial projects. The rate of capacity use in construction industries increased 1.9 percentage points to 81.8%.

Capacity use rose in most non-manufacturing industries, with the exception of logging and forestry. In the mining, quarrying and oil wells sector, increased capacity use (+0.6 percentage points) was entirely due to a rise in mining and quarrying that was mostly attributable to a huge surge in drilling activity. The rate of capacity use for producers of crude oil and natural gas (–2.0 percentage points) almost completely offset the gain in mining and quarrying.

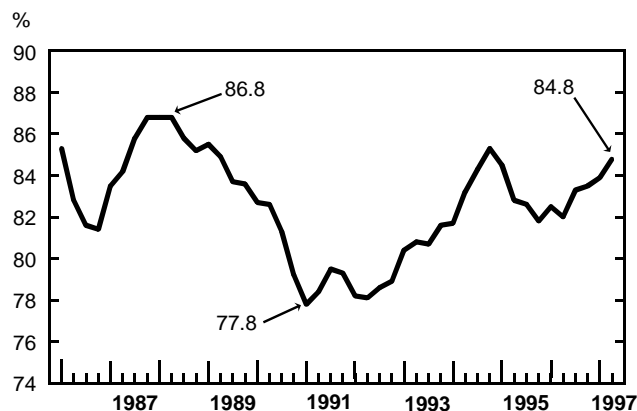
Available on CANSIM: matrix 3140.

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. Since 1987, Statistics Canada has also 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 they reflect such changes.

Industrial capacity utilization rate



(continued on page 3)

... Industrial capacity use rising steadily

Industrial capacity utilization rates

Industry	Q2 1996	Q1 1997	Q2 1997	Q2 1996 to Q2 1997	Q1 1997 to Q2 1997
	%			percentage point change	
Total, non-farm goods-producing	82.0	83.9	84.8	2.8	0.9
Logging and forestry	79.5	78.0	74.0	- 5.5	- 4.0
Mining (including milling), quarrying and oil wells	83.7	86.0	86.6	2.9	0.6
Manufacturing	82.7	84.9	85.7	3.0	0.8
Durable goods	82.5	84.0	85.4	2.9	1.4
Non-durable goods	83.1	86.1	86.0	2.9	- 0.1
Construction	77.4	79.9	81.8	4.4	1.9
Electric power and gas distribution systems	83.2	82.3	83.2	0.0	0.9

Residential construction remains strong

Residential construction projects rebounded (+7.2%) in July following a decline the previous month. Municipalities issued \$1.6 billion in building permits for housing. This increase offset the sharp 8.9% drop in the non-residential sector, which fell to \$1.0 billion in July after a strong showing in June. As a result, the total value of building permits rose a slight 0.2% to \$2.6 billion, the second consecutive monthly increase.

Both residential components contributed to the monthly increase in permits in July, with the multi-family component (+15.5% to \$428 million) performing slightly better than the single-family component (+4.3% to \$1.1 billion).

Despite slowing slightly in recent months, activity in the residential sector remained buoyant. Between January and July 1997, the value of building permits issued by municipalities was up 20.9% over the same period of 1996. This reflects the increase in consumer confidence in the second quarter as measured by the Conference Board of Canada. Recent job gains and low interest rates have added to this optimism.

There were other indications of strength in the housing market. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation announced that the number of housing starts rose 2.7% to 144,700. In addition, according to the Canadian Real Estate Association, resales were 16.6% higher in the first seven months of 1997 than in the same period of 1996. Resales were at their highest point in the past 10 years.

The total value of building permits for non-residential construction was the third highest this year despite the decline in July. All three components (industrial, commercial and institutional) contributed to July's decline, but the biggest drop was in commercial projects (-8.3% to \$512 million). The slowdown was mainly due to decreases in the value of large projects.

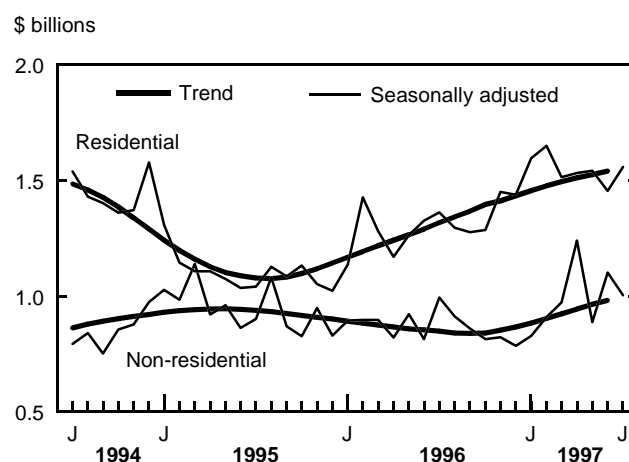
Note to readers

The monthly Building and Demolitions Permits Survey covers 2,400 municipalities representing 93% of the population. It provides an early indication of building activity. The communities representing the other 7% of the population are very small, and their levels of building activity have little impact on the total.

The value of planned construction activities excludes engineering projects (e.g., waterworks, sewers, culverts) and the cost of land.

The annual rate is a monthly figure that has been seasonally adjusted and multiplied by 12 to reflect annual levels. Unless otherwise stated, seasonally adjusted data are presented.

Construction activity



(continued on page 4)

... Residential construction remains strong

Between January and July 1997, the cumulative value of non-residential building intentions totalled \$6.9 billion, up 11.3% over the same period in 1996. The industrial component outperformed the two other components.

In July, housing intentions went up the most in Ontario, followed by Alberta and Saskatchewan. By contrast, significant declines were registered in British Columbia, Quebec and New Brunswick.

In the non-residential sector, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia registered the largest increases.

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

The July 1997 issue of **Building permits** (64-001-XPB, \$25/\$248) is now available. For further information, contact Sylvain Cloutier (613-951-2025; Internet: clousyl@statcan.ca), Investment and Capital Stock Division.

Building permits,¹ July 1997 Seasonally adjusted

	Total		Residential		Non-residential	
	\$ millions	% change, previous month	\$ millions	% change, previous month	\$ millions	% change, previous month
Canada	2,563	0.2	1,559	7.2	1,004	– 8.9
Newfoundland	15	– 32.1	9	– 13.5	6	– 48.9
Prince Edward Island	9	– 31.3	5	– 11.2	4	– 47.1
Nova Scotia	52	3.0	37	1.7	15	6.2
New Brunswick	35	18.1	18	– 7.4	17	68.3
Quebec	411	– 6.7	234	– 2.0	177	– 12.2
Ontario	1,127	10.6	689	16.1	438	3.0
Manitoba	55	– 8.7	27	4.8	28	– 18.9
Saskatchewan	59	– 0.0	24	52.3	36	– 18.6
Alberta	303	– 7.1	199	10.5	104	– 28.9
British Columbia	487	– 5.3	314	– 3.6	173	– 8.3
Yukon	4	– 17.0	2	– 17.0	2	– 17.1
Northwest Territories	6	– 67.4	0	8.7	6	– 68.6

1. Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

New housing prices steady

Between June and July, the New Housing Price Index remained unchanged, maintaining its level at 132.9. This was the first time in nine months that the index did not show a monthly increase. On an annual basis, the index grew 1.1% in July compared with the same month in 1996.

With the improved market for new houses, a number of cities in Ontario and the Prairie provinces registered modest monthly advances. This improvement was mostly attributable to higher consumer confidence and favourable interest rates. However, the increases were counterbalanced by a significant monthly decline in Vancouver (–0.6%). Contractors attributed this drop to very competitive market conditions and a general slowdown of sales activity in the summer.

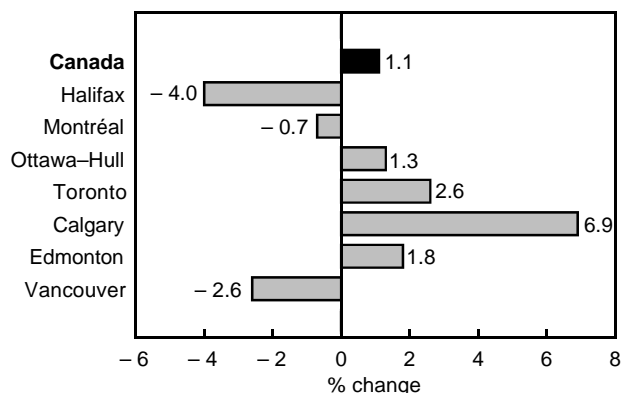
Available on CANSIM: matrix 2032.

The third quarter 1997 issue of **Construction price statistics** (62-007-XPB, \$24/\$79) will be available in December. For further information, contact Paul-Roméo Danis (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-2848; Internet: danipau@statcan.ca), Prices Division.

Note to readers

On April 1, 1997, the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) came into effect in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. In April, the New Housing Price Index, which is a contractors' selling price index, showed monthly declines in all cities surveyed in these provinces. It would appear that a majority of sample builders have not yet fully reflected the HST's impact on the prices of new houses.

New housing price indexes, July 1996 to July 1997



Help-wanted Index unchanged

In August, the Help-wanted Index remained unchanged from July, at 124. This was the first time in 12 months that an increase was not recorded. Since August 1996, the index has

Help-wanted Index, August 1997
(1996=100), seasonally adjusted

	Level	% change, previous year	% change, previous month
Canada	124	24.0	0.0
Newfoundland	116	13.7	3.6
Prince Edward Island	129	25.2	-2.3
Nova Scotia	117	14.7	1.7
New Brunswick	130	34.0	6.6
Quebec	111	11.0	0.9
Ontario	128	26.7	1.6
Manitoba	133	31.7	1.5
Saskatchewan	128	24.3	0.8
Alberta	151	48.0	0.6
British Columbia	119	19.0	0.8

Note to readers

The Help-wanted Index is compiled from the number of help-wanted advertisements published in 22 newspapers in 20 major metropolitan areas. The index measures the intention of companies to hire new workers. These indices have been seasonally adjusted and smoothed to ease month-to-month comparisons.

increased by approximately 24%.

Despite the lack of movement in August, the index remained at its highest level since early 1991. Recent movements in the index are in line with improvements in other economic indicators—especially employment growth.

Between July and August, Ontario (+1.6%), Manitoba (+1.5%) and the Atlantic provinces (+2.5%) recorded the largest gains. The indexes in the other provinces remained stable. British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Quebec all posted increases of less than 1%.

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

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

Travel account deficit down

Although Canada's international travel account balance improved in the second quarter of 1997, it remained in a deficit position. Foreign visitors spent almost \$3.1 billion in Canada in the second quarter, practically unchanged from the previous quarter. Meanwhile, the \$3.8 billion Canadian travellers spent abroad between April and June was 1.4% lower than the first quarter. Consequently, the international travel account deficit dropped 8.5%, from \$761 million in the first quarter to \$696 million in the second.

Americans spent \$1.7 billion while travelling in Canada in the second quarter, a record 2.6% more than the first quarter. At the same time, Canadians spent \$2.5 billion in the United States, practically unchanged from each of the previous two quarters. The travel account deficit with the United States (the difference between receipts and payments) reached \$770 million for the second quarter.

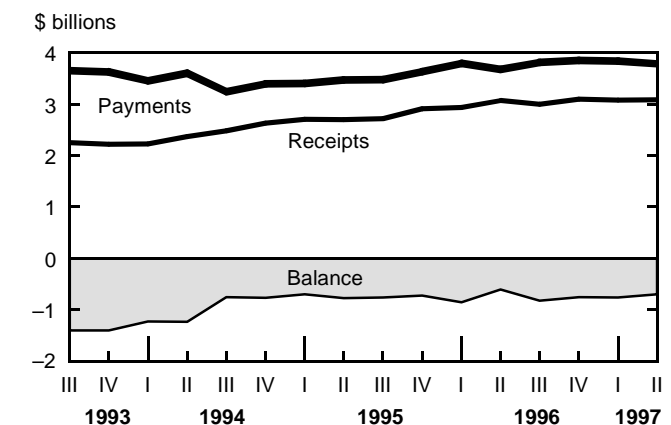
In the second quarter of 1997, the travel account with countries other than the United States showed a surplus (\$74 million) for an eighth consecutive quarter, up 12.1% over the first quarter. Many European currencies have recently lost value compared with the Canadian dollar. Overseas residents made fewer trips to Canada in the second quarter than they did in the first quarter. They spent \$1.4 billion, down 2.4%. It was the second decrease since peaking in the last quarter of 1996. Meanwhile, Canadians spent \$1.3 billion (-3.1%) in countries other than the United States.

For further information, contact Luc Dubois (613-951-1674; fax: 613-951-2909; Internet: duboluc@statcan.ca), Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics.

Note to readers

Unless otherwise stated, quarterly data are seasonally adjusted. Amounts are in Canadian dollars and are not adjusted for inflation. Receipts represent spending by foreigners travelling in Canada. Payments represent spending by Canadians travelling abroad. Canada's international travel account balance is the difference between receipts and payments.

International travel account deficit



Farmers face higher costs in second quarter

Farmers paid 1.3% more to do business in the second quarter of 1997 compared with the same period in 1996. This annual increase was the lowest in almost five years. Farm input prices for western farmers rose 2.1% on a year-over-year basis, and prices in the East increased marginally (+0.5%).

Prices rose in six of the nine input categories, with the 5.8% increase for animal production contributing most to the annual increase. Although producers paid more for feeder cattle and turkey poults, they paid much less for grain feed. Farmers also paid more for machinery and motor vehicles, farm wages, lumber and plywood, and supplies and services. Those increases were offset by lower interest costs and lower prices for potatoes and phosphoric fertilizers.

For the second consecutive quarter, feeder cattle prices were the biggest contributors to the year-over-year increase in the West. Western farmers paid more for cattle (+41.7%), weanling

pigs (+14.3%) and poultry (+2.4%). They also faced higher costs for hired farm labour and for building and fencing. They did, however, benefit from lower prices for crop production. In the East, farmers also paid more for cattle (+36.2%) compared with the second quarter of 1996. This increase was offset by much lower prices for grain feed, along with lower costs for weanling pigs and poultry.

Nationally, farm input prices rose 1.8% between the first and second quarters of 1997. Input prices rose 2.2% in Western Canada between the quarters, compared with 1.4% in Eastern Canada. Higher cattle prices (+14.2%) drove the quarterly increase. Farmers also faced higher prices for prepared feed, potatoes, and herbicides. Marginal price increases for farm wages and building and fencing were offset by lower prices for machinery and motor vehicles and supplies and services. Farmers continued to benefit from lower interest costs, which fell 3.0% from the first to second quarter.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 550–582 (level 7) and 2050–2063.

*The second quarter 1997 issue of **Farm input price indexes** (62-004-XPB, \$25/\$83) is now available. For further information, contact the Client Services Unit (613-951-9606), Prices Division.*

Farm input price indexes (1996=100)

	Q1 1997	Q2 1997	Q1 1997 to Q2 1997	Q2 1996 to Q2 1997
			% change	
Canada, total farm input	128.4	130.7	1.8	1.3
Building and fencing	135.7	136.0	0.2	5.0
Machinery and motor vehicles	139.1	138.3	-0.6	2.4
Crop production	128.8	132.8	3.1	-0.8
Animal production	122.7	129.9	5.9	5.8
Supplies and services	132.9	131.3	-1.2	0.9
Hired farm labour	145.7	146.2	0.3	2.4
Property taxes	148.9	148.9	0.0	3.6
Interest	89.4	86.7	-3.0	-15.9
Farm rent	142.8	142.8	0.0	-1.8
Western Canada, total farm input	125.9	128.7	2.2	2.1
Eastern Canada, total farm input	131.5	133.3	1.4	0.5

New from Statistics Canada



Perspectives on labour and income Autumn 1997

The Autumn 1997 issue of *Perspectives on labour and income* features five articles. The first provides an in-depth examination of trends and developments in the labour market during the first half of 1997. The second studies non-permanent paid work and compares wages, hours, benefits and work schedules of permanent and non-permanent jobs. Another piece looks at trends in adult full-time education from 1976 to 1996 and examines who goes back to school. A brief overview of a conference on "Intergenerational equity in Canada" also appears in this issue. The final article examines whether job instability and job loss have increased in the 1990s. The "Key labour and income facts" section provides charts and analysis on work hours of the self-employed.

The Autumn 1997 issue of *Perspectives on labour and income* (75-001-XPE, \$18/\$58) is now available. For further information, contact Jeffrey Smith (613-951-6894) or Jeannine Usalcas (613-951-4628), Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division.

Health indicators 1997

Health indicators, 1997 an electronic database on diskette, combines summary information on workplace injuries, notifiable diseases, national health expenditures, and vital events such as births, stillbirths and deaths. The database also provides information from the Survey of Consumer Finances on elderly individuals with incomes below the low income cut-offs. As well, the new edition contains more indicators from the National Population Health Survey; for example, job satisfaction and perceived health status.

Health indicators is designed to meet the needs of market researchers, educators, students, special interest groups, policy makers and program managers. Users can examine the health status of Canadians, as well as health care use and performance. Close to 2 million data points are available for analysis.

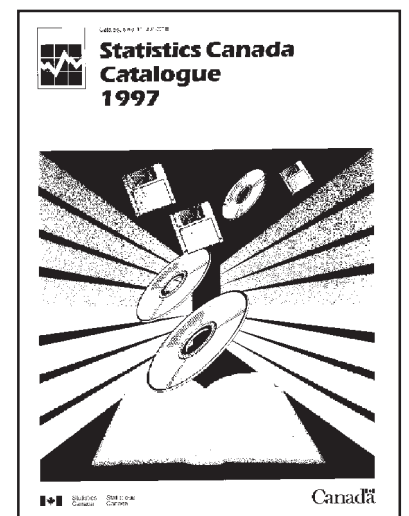
The 1997 edition of the *Health indicators* database (82-221-XDE, \$250) is now available. For further information, contact Deirdre Gillieson (613-951-1635; fax: 613-951-0792), Health Statistics Division.

Statistics Canada catalogue 1997

The *Statistics Canada catalogue, 1997* describes all official print publications available from the Agency as of March 31, 1997, and indicates those that are also available in other formats. The 1997 edition features a single title and subject index that lists all of the articles for five of Statistics Canada's flagship publications, from January 1994 to the end of March 1997. A list of all 1991 Census print products and the *1996 Census preview of products and services* are also included. (The *1996 Census catalogue*, to be released in October, will provide the detailed listing of all census products and services.)

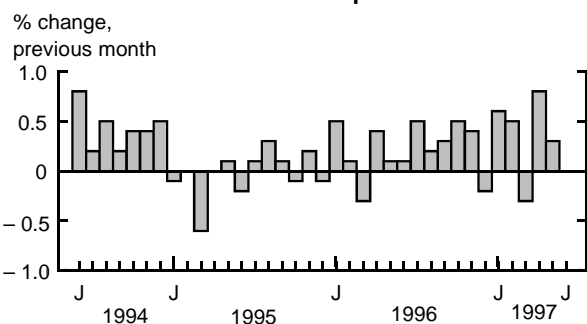
The *Statistics Canada catalogue, 1997* also features a listing of discontinued titles, a section explaining Statistics Canada's numbering system, information on ordering publications, and listings of retail distributors and full depository libraries.

The *Statistics Canada catalogue, 1997* (11-204-XPE, \$16) is now available. For further information, contact Tony Moren (613-951-0951; fax: 613-951-0939; Internet: moreton@statcan.ca), Statistics Canada Library and Information Centre.



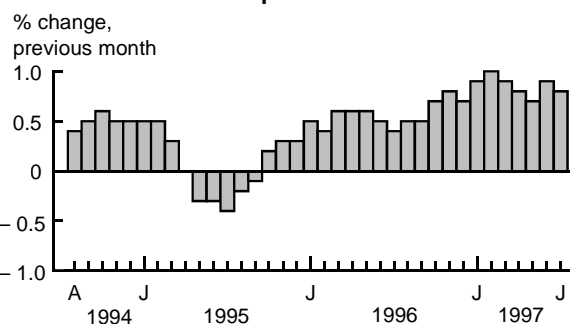
Current trends

Gross domestic product



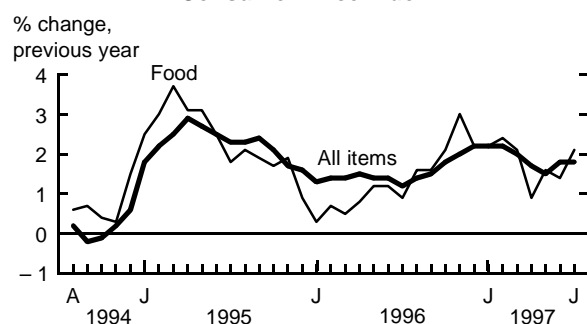
Real gross domestic product at factor cost was flat in June (-0.0%), as economic growth paused.

Composite Index



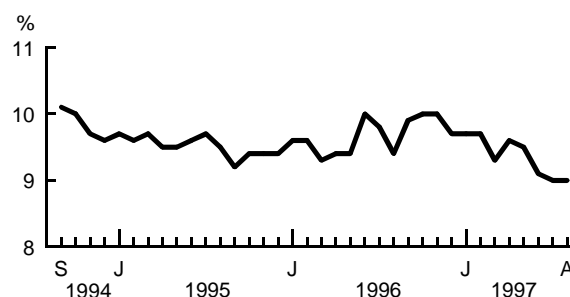
The Composite Index grew by 0.8% in July.

Consumer Price Index



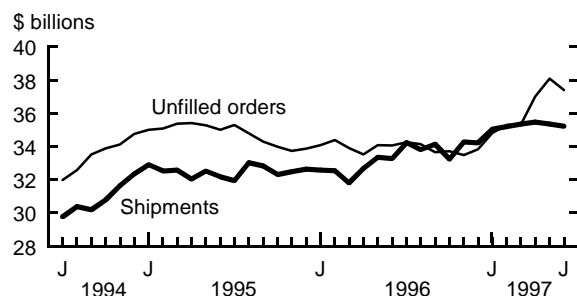
Consumers paid 1.8% more for goods and services in July 1997 than the year before. Food prices rose by 2.1%.

Unemployment rate



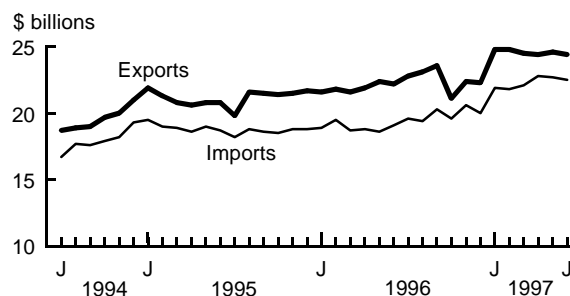
In August, the unemployment rate held at 9.0%.

Manufacturing



Manufacturers' shipments fell 0.1% in June to \$35.2 billion. The level of unfilled orders decreased 1.8% to \$37.4 billion.

Merchandise trade



In June, the value of merchandise exports decreased 1.1% from May to \$24.4 billion. Imports fell 1.0% to \$22.5 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, 1986)	June	569.8	0.0%	3.8%
Composite Index (1981=100)	July	197.2	0.8%	10.3%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billion)	Q2 1997	26.5	0.5%	13.9%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q2 1997*	84.8	0.9†	2.8†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade (\$ billion)	June	19.3	- 0.2%	7.1%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	June	112.9	- 1.5%	12.4%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	August*	14.0	0.4%	2.1%
Unemployment rate (%)	August*	9.0	0.0†	- 0.5†
Participation rate (%)	August*	64.9	0.2†	0.1†
Labour income (\$ billion)	June	37.32	0.1%	3.9%
Average weekly earnings (\$)	June	599.55	- 0.5%	1.8%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billion)	June	24.4	- 1.1%	5.1%
Merchandise imports (\$ billion)	June	22.5	- 1.0%	15.0%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion)	June	1.9	0.0	- 1.7
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billion)	June	35.2	- 0.1%	5.9%
New orders (\$ billion)	June	34.5	- 4.6%	3.8%
Unfilled orders (\$ billion)	June	37.4	- 1.8%	9.8%
Inventory/shipments ratio	June	1.32	0.01	- 0.02
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1986=100)	July	135.6	0.0%	1.8%
Industrial Product Price Index (1986=100)	July	130.1	- 0.2%	1.0%
Raw Materials Price Index (1986=100)	July	133.4	- 0.4%	- 1.8%
New Housing Price Index (1986=100)	July*	132.9	0.0%	1.1%

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 September 5 to 11, 1997

Division/Title of publication	Period	Catalogue number	Price: Issue/Subscription	
			Canada (C\$)	Outside Canada (US\$)
AGRICULTURE				
Cereals and oilseeds review	June 1997	22-007-XPB	15/149	15/149
Field crop reporting series no. 6: Stocks of Canadian grain	July 31, 1997	22-002-XPB	15/88	15/88
BALANCE OF PAYMENTS				
Canada’s international transactions in securities	June 1997	67-002-XPB	18/176	18/176
HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS				
Labour force information	week ending August 16, 1997	71-001-PPB	11/103	11/103
INDUSTRY MEASURES AND ANALYSIS				
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