



# The Daily

Statistics Canada

Wednesday, February 18, 1998

For release at 8:30 a.m.

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## MAJOR RELEASES

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- **Wholesale trade, 1997 and December 1997**

Wholesalers had strong sales in December, continuing the upward movement that began in January 1996. Due to high demand in both domestic and foreign markets, wholesalers sold 13.1% more goods and services in 1997 than in the previous year.

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- **Prison population and costs, 1996/97**

The number of adults behind bars or on some form of community supervision fell for the third straight year in 1996/97, after nearly a decade of rapid growth.

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## OTHER RELEASES

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- "RRSP contributions and withdrawals: An update" and "Tapping unused RRSP room", 1991 to 1996

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- Sales of natural gas, December 1997

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### "RRSP contributions and withdrawals: An update" and "Tapping unused RRSP room"

1991 to 1996

Today, Statistics Canada releases two articles, "RRSP contributions and withdrawals: An update", and "Tapping unused RRSP room." These articles examine the most recent data available on registered retirement savings plan contributions, withdrawals and unused room. These articles, available by fax immediately, will be published in the Spring 1998 issue of *Perspectives on labour and income* (75-001-XPE, \$18/\$58) in March.

"RRSP contributions and withdrawals: An update" examines factors behind the rapid growth in RRSP contributions since 1991 and explains how and why the composition of contributions has changed. It also provides data on regional differences in RRSP participation and traces pre-retirement withdrawals from the plan in recent years.

"Tapping unused RRSP room" examines how much room has accumulated since 1991, who uses this room, and the possible effects of changing demographics on future room.

For further information on contributions and withdrawals, contact Ernest B. Akyeampong (613-951-4624). For information on tapping unused RRSP room, contact Hubert Frenken (613-828-4581). To order the articles by fax (\$40), contact Jeannine Usalcas (613-951-4628), Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division.



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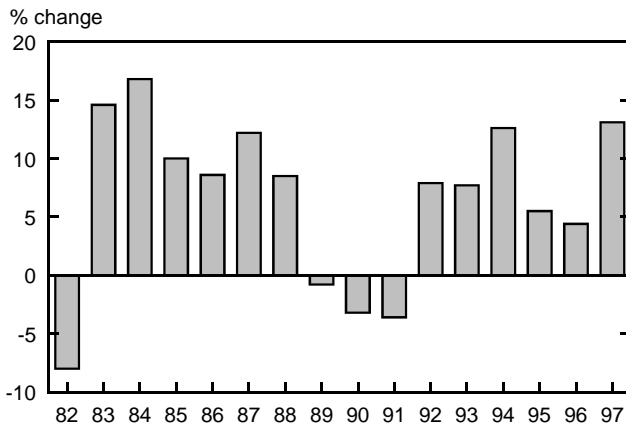
## MAJOR RELEASES

### Wholesale trade

1997 (annual) and December 1997 (preliminary)

Wholesalers had strong sales in December, continuing the upward movement that began in January 1996. Due to high demand in both domestic and foreign markets, wholesalers sold 13.1% more goods and services in 1997 than in the previous year.

#### Wholesalers increased their sales by 13.1% in 1997

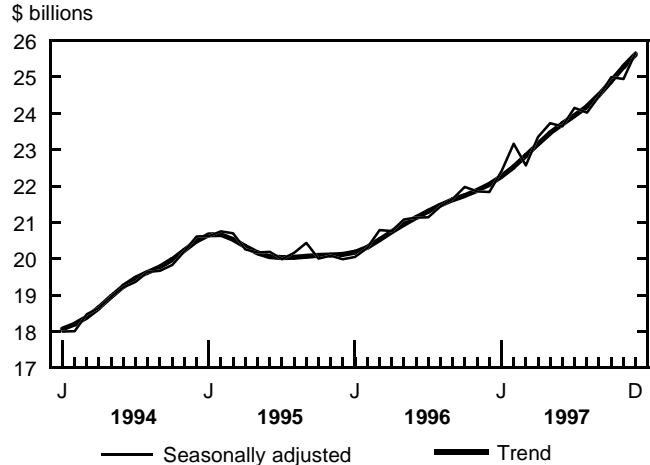


Total sales by wholesalers increased 2.9% in December to \$25.7 billion. Inventories reached \$35.9 billion in December, up 0.8% from November. Except for a 0.2% decline in March 1997, inventories have been continuously increasing since August 1996, keeping pace with increasing sales. In December, stronger sales pushed down the inventories-to-sales ratio to 1.40 from 1.43 in November.

#### Wholesalers registered their best year since 1984

Annual sales by wholesalers amounted to \$287.1 billion in 1997, up 13.1% from 1996. This was the largest annual increase since 1984 (+16.8%). However, the 1997 annual jump in sales was just above the 12.6% annual increase recorded by wholesalers in 1994. Wholesalers, which are part of the distribution chain between manufacturers, retailers and international markets, were very busy in 1997 due to high growth in each of these economic sectors.

#### Sales by wholesalers climbed 28.0% since January 1996



#### Wholesale trade grew considerably in all trade groups in 1997

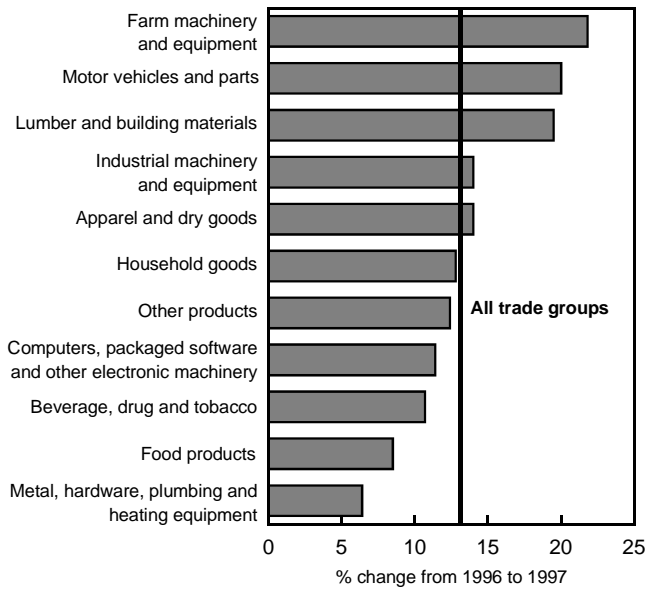
Even with lower sales during the last few months of 1997, wholesalers of farm machinery and equipment reported an increase of 21.8% in annual sales. Since 1991, wholesale sales of farm machinery and equipment grew by more than 10% each year. Most of the strength in 1997 happened at the beginning of the year. A lump sum payment to grain farmers in the second half of 1996 and low interest rates, especially in the first half of 1997, made the purchase of new equipment more attractive. The Prairies, where most of wholesale sales of farm machinery and equipment take place, also had a very low unemployment rate in 1997.

Wholesale sales of motor vehicles and parts (+20.0%) and lumber and building materials (+19.5%) were also very strong in 1997, due to low interest rates and higher consumer confidence. In comparison, these two sectors reported an annual increase of about 3% in 1996. In 1997, the auto industry was stimulated by several new purchase incentive programs offered by dealers and by the arrival on the market of new sport utility vehicles. The number of new motor vehicles sold by dealers in 1997 rose 18.2% over 1996. Wholesalers of lumber and building materials profited from a 18.7% rise in the number of housing starts in 1997.

The metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment trade group (+6.4%) had the lowest annual increase of 1997. Wholesale sales of metals represent

approximately 50% of all sales in that trade group. Wholesalers of metals were particularly affected by an oversupply on international markets and by lower demand from Asia in the last few months of 1997. Nevertheless, the 1997 increase was much better than the 1.7% advance registered in 1996. The high level of activity in residential construction for 1997 could have helped the hardware, plumbing and heating equipment component of the trade group.

**Farm machinery and equipment led the way in 1997**



**Wholesalers in the Prairies outperformed others**

Record sales increases were reported by wholesalers in Saskatchewan (+26.3%), Alberta (+25.7%) and Manitoba (+22.1%) in 1997. The Prairies had the lowest unemployment rates in Canada during 1997. The agricultural sector played a major role in the good performance of wholesalers in all three provinces. The demise of grain transportation subsidies pushed farmers to grow crops of greater demand, which ultimately provided them with higher revenues. Wholesalers in Alberta benefited particularly from a booming oil industry.

**Available on CANSIM: matrices 59, 61, 648 and 649.**

The December 1997 issue of *Wholesale trade* (63-008-XPB, \$19/\$186) will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For further information on this release, contact Paul Gratton (613-951-3541; Internet: [gratpau@statcan.ca](mailto:gratpau@statcan.ca)) or Ruth Neveu (613-951-7375), Wholesale Trade Section, Distributive Trades Division. □

Wholesale merchants' sales and inventories

	Dec. 1996	Sept. 1997 <sup>r</sup>	Oct. 1997 <sup>r</sup>	Nov. 1997 <sup>r</sup>	Dec. 1997 <sup>p</sup>	Nov. to Dec. 1997	Dec. 1996 to Dec. 1997
seasonally adjusted							
	\$ millions					% change	
<b>Sales, all trade groups</b>	<b>21,839</b>	<b>24,479</b>	<b>24,999</b>	<b>24,945</b>	<b>25,673</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>17.6</b>
Food products	3,719	4,043	4,131	4,184	4,267	2.0	14.7
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,315	1,541	1,567	1,568	1,620	3.3	23.2
Apparel and dry goods	466	521	565	542	553	2.0	18.7
Household goods	706	762	793	766	838	9.5	18.7
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	2,382	2,820	3,030	3,048	3,023	-0.8	26.9
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	1,671	1,784	1,804	1,795	1,854	3.3	11.0
Lumber and building materials	1,918	2,158	2,176	2,156	2,350	9.0	22.5
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	688	834	813	771	776	0.6	12.8
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	3,284	3,798	3,783	3,773	3,930	4.2	19.7
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,139	2,369	2,451	2,508	2,561	2.1	19.7
Other products	3,551	3,849	3,885	3,834	3,901	1.7	9.9
Newfoundland	183	194	194	192	203	5.9	11.0
Prince Edward Island	46	50	49	43	46	5.3	-0.1
Nova Scotia	492	510	535	530	525	-0.9	6.7
New Brunswick	285	316	328	326	334	2.5	17.0
Quebec	4,737	4,966	5,108	5,051	5,096	0.9	7.6
Ontario	9,552	11,032	11,228	11,151	11,584	3.9	21.3
Manitoba	835	977	986	1,099	1,087	-1.0	30.2
Saskatchewan	760	878	901	843	883	4.8	16.2
Alberta	2,198	2,641	2,687	2,720	2,931	7.8	33.3
British Columbia	2,728	2,888	2,953	2,964	2,955	-0.3	8.4
Yukon	10	13	11	12	12	-3.3	16.3
Northwest Territories	13	17	18	15	17	11.2	27.3
<b>Inventories, all trade groups</b>	<b>32,196</b>	<b>34,597</b>	<b>35,156</b>	<b>35,623</b>	<b>35,911</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>11.5</b>
Food products	2,475	2,582	2,598	2,593	2,614	0.8	5.6
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,652	1,815	1,833	1,901	1,927	1.4	16.7
Apparel and dry goods	1,055	1,112	1,127	1,142	1,154	1.1	9.3
Household goods	1,367	1,504	1,520	1,551	1,554	0.2	13.7
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	3,864	4,255	4,304	4,325	4,300	-0.6	11.3
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	2,762	3,075	3,151	3,155	3,219	2.0	16.6
Lumber and building materials	3,090	3,327	3,358	3,418	3,430	0.3	11.0
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	1,783	2,065	2,068	2,062	2,100	1.9	17.8
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	7,213	7,755	7,946	8,152	8,280	1.6	14.8
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,078	2,141	2,218	2,281	2,284	0.1	9.9
Other products	4,857	4,966	5,032	5,043	5,049	0.1	3.9

<sup>r</sup> Revised figures.

<sup>p</sup> Preliminary figures.

**Total annual wholesale sales**

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1994 to 1995	1995 to 1996	1996 to 1997
	\$ millions				% change		
<b>Sales, all trade groups</b>	<b>230,601</b>	<b>243,347</b>	<b>253,987</b>	<b>287,137</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>13.1</b>
Food products	42,504	42,807	44,424	48,184	0.7	3.8	8.5
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	13,176	14,195	15,903	17,611	7.7	12.0	10.7
Apparel and dry goods	5,534	5,334	5,444	6,209	-3.6	2.1	14.1
Household goods	7,393	7,654	7,984	9,002	3.5	4.3	12.8
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	26,493	26,635	27,490	32,995	0.5	3.2	20.0
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	17,729	19,334	19,655	20,910	9.1	1.7	6.4
Lumber and building materials	21,047	20,656	21,381	25,544	-1.9	3.5	19.5
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	5,364	6,015	7,607	9,268	12.1	26.5	21.8
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	35,402	37,229	38,237	43,608	5.2	2.7	14.0
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	18,367	21,015	24,624	27,440	14.4	17.2	11.4
Other products	37,592	42,473	41,238	46,366	13.0	-2.9	12.4
Newfoundland	2,186	2,233	2,240	2,298	2.2	0.3	2.6
Prince Edward Island	553	528	567	576	-4.5	7.4	1.6
Nova Scotia	4,975	5,372	5,807	6,081	8.0	8.1	4.7
New Brunswick	3,164	3,462	3,578	3,734	9.4	3.4	4.4
Quebec	52,517	54,529	55,769	59,403	3.8	2.3	6.5
Ontario	97,273	105,909	110,719	127,255	8.9	4.5	14.9
Manitoba	7,625	8,156	9,290	11,346	7.0	13.9	22.1
Saskatchewan	7,171	8,121	8,203	10,362	13.2	1.0	26.3
Alberta	22,210	22,729	24,401	30,665	2.3	7.4	25.7
British Columbia	32,671	32,015	33,116	35,098	-2.0	3.4	6.0
Yukon	110	126	133	138	14.5	5.6	3.8
Northwest Territories	148	167	164	182	12.8	-1.8	11.0



## Prison population and costs

1996/97

The number of adults behind bars or on some form of community supervision fell for the third straight year in 1996/97 after nearly a decade of rapid growth.

Overall, an average of 151,850 individuals were either in a federal or provincial/territorial institution or on probation or parole in 1996/97, down 1.5% from the previous year. However, this average daily caseload was still 38% higher than it was a decade ago. Since peaking in 1993/94, it has dropped 1.7%.

On any given day, about 34,167 adults were behind bars in Canada, an increase of 382 people, or about 1% over the previous year. While the population in custody remained virtually the same, the cost of holding an inmate for a year rose 3% from 1995/96 to an average of \$43,643 per inmate.

### Most offenders serve time in the community

In the last decade, about three out of four offenders served sentences on some type of community supervision program (mostly probation or parole), accounting for 12% of Canada's total corrections budget in 1996/97. In 1996/97, a monthly average of 117,683 adults were supervised in the community. About 84% were on probation and the rest on parole or statutory release. This total represented a 3% decrease from the previous year and was the third straight annual decline. During the previous 10 years, the number of offenders supervised in the community increased at twice the rate of the prison population.

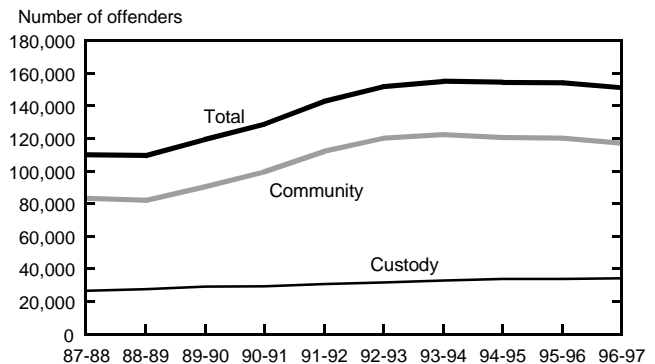
#### Note to readers

Many factors can determine the size of Canada's correctional population, including changes in the demographic profile of the population, legislative changes, police enforcement practices, changes in the crime rate, sentencing practices and early release policies.

In the fall of 1996, Bill C-41 was proclaimed into law to reform the sentencing system in Canada. An important provision of the Bill was the creation of a new type of community-based alternative to imprisonment called a conditional sentence. A judge can sentence to a conditional term of imprisonment an offender who would otherwise have been sent to prison. Only persons sentenced to prison terms of less than two years are eligible to receive a conditional sentence. Conditional sentences permit an offender to serve custodial terms in the community under supervision. The objective is to provide less serious offenders with effective, less costly, community-based alternatives while using limited resources for the incarceration and treatment of more serious offenders.

Any decline in the inmate population as a result of the new disposition would be seen in the provincial/territorial and not the federal population (sentences of two years or more). Since the new conditional sentence was only in use for the last six months of the 1996/97 reporting year, it is too soon to know what impact it has on provincial/territorial prison populations.

### Most offenders serve time in the community



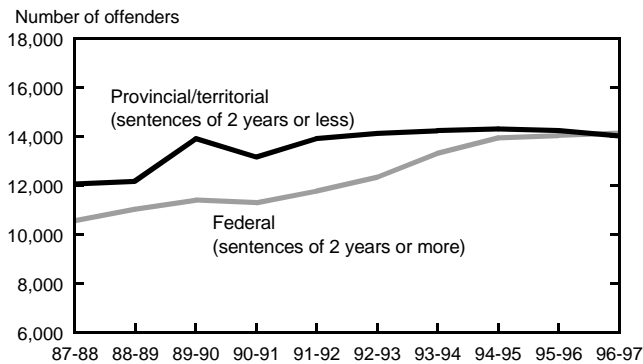
### Provincial inmate population down, federal population up

An average of 20,024 adults were in provincial/territorial jails at any time during 1996/97, down nearly 2% from the previous year. About 70% of these inmates were serving a sentence (14,031).

The remaining 30% were either detained in custody awaiting a court disposition or were held on temporary detention.

The number of offenders in federal penitentiaries increased almost 1% over the same period to 14,143. However, over the last 10 years, the number of offenders in provincial/territorial institutions rose 25% while the number of federal inmates increased an even more substantial 34%.

**Number of federal sentenced offenders in custody continues to rise**



The length of time served in prison by provincial/territorial inmates in 1996/97 was unchanged from the previous year — a median of 31 days. This means that half the inmates served more than 31 days and half served less. This median has changed little over the past five years.

Inmates in federal penitentiaries served an average sentence of 43 months in 1996/97, down from 46 months a year earlier. The federal terms reflect the more serious offences punishable by longer sentences.

The percentage of offenders sentenced to life terms of imprisonment, while still small, is growing. Admissions for life terms rose from 3% of all admissions in 1992/93 to 5% in 1996/97. In terms of numbers, this means an increase from 173 lifers admitted in 1992/93 to 210 in 1996/97.

Aboriginal Peoples were over represented in correctional institutions relative to their population. While they represented 3% of the general population, they accounted for 15% of federal admissions in 1996/97, up from 11% five years earlier. Similarly,

Aboriginal Peoples made up 16% of the total provincial/territorial admissions in 1996/97.

Aboriginal Peoples accounted for 74% of admissions to custody in Saskatchewan, almost seven times their share of the province's population. Aboriginal Peoples also accounted for 65% of admissions in the Yukon, over three times their share of the territory's population, and 39% of admissions in Alberta, almost eight times their share of the population in that province.

**Cost of jailing offenders rose**

In 1996/97, federal, provincial and territorial governments spent \$1.97 billion on the corrections system compared with \$1.88 billion five years earlier. Adjusting for inflation, total operating expenses increased a marginal 1% in 1996/97 from a year earlier.

Provincial/territorial governments spent an average \$40,165 a year on each inmate in their jail systems in 1996/97, up 2% from the previous year. The average cost per inmate in federal penitentiaries rose 5% to \$48,468. When adjusted for inflation, the average federal costs over the past five years increased 2% while provincial/territorial costs fell 7%.

Federal expenditures in 1996/97 reached \$970 million, a 13% increase since 1992/93 and up 7% when adjusted for inflation. Provincial/territorial expenditures dropped 2% to \$998 million over the same five years, a decline of 8% when adjusted for inflation.

**Average daily count of provincial/territorial and federal offenders**

	Custody	Community	Total
1987-88	26,634	83,318	109,952
1988-89	27,466	81,859	109,325
1989-90	29,150	90,314	119,464
1990-91	29,233	99,658	128,891
1991-92	30,723	111,682	142,405
1992-93	31,709	120,116	151,825
1993-94	32,803	121,650	154,453
1994-95	33,759	120,542	154,301
1995-96	33,785	120,411	154,196
1996-97	34,167	117,683	151,850

**Available on CANSIM: tables 00180701, 0018073-00180706.**

*Juristat: Adult correctional services in Canada, 1996/97, Vol. 18, no. 3 (85-002-XPE, \$10/\$93) is now available. See How to order publications.*



For further information on this release, (1 800 387-2231; 613-951-9023; fax: 613-951-6615),  
contact Information and Client Services Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. ■

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## OTHER RELEASES

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### "RRSP contributions and withdrawals: An update" and "Tapping unused RRSP room"

1991 to 1996

Annual contributions to registered retirement savings plans rose steadily from about \$15 billion in 1991 to more than \$26 billion in 1996, a 74% increase. Over the same period, the number of contributors increased 28% from 4.7 million to almost 6 million.

Among the factors responsible for this growth were changes to the Income Tax Act in 1990, which increased RRSP contribution opportunities for most taxpayers, as well as improvements in the economy, notably employment growth since 1993. Growing concerns about the future of the Canada and Quebec Pension Plan and the Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement programs also encouraged greater RRSP participation. In addition, lower participation in employer-sponsored registered pension plans in recent years and growth in group RRSPs likely played a role.

RRSP contributions varied widely among provinces and territories. In 1995, more than 90% of taxpayers in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories were eligible to contribute to an RRSP, the highest rate in Canada and well above the national average of 80%. Among the provinces, eligibility rates ranged from highs of 84% in Alberta and 83% in Prince Edward Island to a low of 77% in Manitoba.

However, in terms of participation, only 35% of all eligible taxpayers in Canada actually made a contribution in 1995. Participation was highest in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, where almost 4 of every 10 eligible people contributed. Participation was well below the national average in each of the four Atlantic provinces and in the territories.

Taxpayers in the two territories set aside much more money than their counterparts in the rest of Canada in 1995. The average normal contribution was \$4,632 in the Northwest Territories and \$4,065 in the Yukon. Taxpayers in British Columbia (\$3,875) and Ontario (\$3,749) contributed the highest amounts among the provinces.

Pre-retirement withdrawals from RRSPs rose from \$3.2 billion to \$4.4 billion between 1991 and 1996. Similarly, the number of persons making withdrawals increased from 604,000 to 851,000. Most of this

increase occurred during the lean economic period between 1991 and 1994. Between 1991 and 1994, Canadians cashed in one dollar of RRSP savings for every \$5 contributed. In 1996, 85 cents was cashed in for every \$5.

From 1991 to 1997, the number of taxpayers with RRSP room increased a third to 19 million. Meanwhile the amount of RRSP room grew nearly five-fold from \$45 billion to more than \$216 billion — largely because of unused room in one year being carried forward to the next. (RRSP room represents the deduction limit or maximum RRSP contribution amount Canadians can claim in a given year.)

There are indications that at least some of the accumulated room is being used up by a growing number of taxpayers. The proportion of total room used decreased annually from 1991 to 1995, but levelled off at 12% in 1996. One reason for this standstill in 1996 was the reduction of the maximum dollar amount of new room credited to taxpayers that year, from \$14,500 to \$13,500.

A large proportion of unused RRSP room is held by taxpayers under the age of 45 and by those with low incomes. Taxpayers who use their room, on the other hand, tend to be 45 to 64 and have an income of \$40,000 and over.

The first members of the baby boom generation have recently entered the ages where usage of RRSP room is greatest and will be followed by many more for some time. Whether this will result in a substantial depletion of accumulated RRSP room with consequent tax implications remains to be seen.

The articles "RRSP contributions and withdrawals: An update" and "Tapping unused RRSP room" will be published in the Spring 1998 issue of *Perspectives on labour and income* (75-001-XPE, \$18/\$58), which will be available in March. The articles are available by fax (\$40) immediately.

For further information on the article "RRSP contributions and withdrawals: An update", contact Ernest B. Akyeampong (613-951-4624), Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division. For information on "Tapping unused RRSP room", contact Hubert Frenken (613-828-4581). To obtain copies of the articles, contact Jeannine Usalcas (613-951-4628), Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division. □

**Normal RRSP eligibility, participation rates and average contributions, by province/territory  
1995**

	All taxfilers	Eligible taxfilers	Eligibility rate <sup>1</sup>	Contributors	Participation <sup>2</sup> rate	Average amount contributed
	'000		%	'000	%	\$
<b>Canada</b>	<b>20,028</b>	<b>16,047</b>	<b>80.1</b>	<b>5,650</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>3,537</b>
Newfoundland	380	305	80.4	63	20.8	2,948
Prince Edward Island	93	77	83.0	19	24.6	3,113
Nova Scotia	632	502	79.4	135	27.0	3,101
New Brunswick	528	417	79.0	102	24.5	3,192
Quebec	4,995	3,948	79.0	1,323	33.5	3,174
Ontario	7,490	6,020	80.4	2,213	36.8	3,749
Manitoba	778	601	77.2	216	35.9	2,997
Saskatchewan	655	521	79.5	200	38.3	3,311
Alberta	1,824	1,534	84.1	583	38.0	3,597
British Columbia	2,577	2,060	79.9	777	37.7	3,875
Yukon	18	17	91.6	5	30.1	4,065
Northwest Territories	36	33	92.1	11	31.8	4,632

<sup>1</sup> Proportion of taxfilers with normal contribution room.

<sup>2</sup> Contributors to normal RRSPs as a percentage of eligible taxfilers.

**Sales of natural gas**

December 1997 (preliminary)

Natural gas sales totalled 7 159 million cubic metres in December, down 8.7% from December 1996. Warmer than normal weather conditions throughout most of the country resulted in sharply lower sales to the residential (-15.8%) and commercial (-20.7%) sectors. Sales to the industrial sector (including direct sales) increased 1.8% from the same period of 1996.

Year-to-date sales were up 0.3% from the same period in 1996. Sales decreased to the residential (-4.7%) and commercial (-6.7%) sectors because of milder weather during the 1997 heating season. Sales to the industrial sector (including direct sales) continued strong growth, posting a 5.1% increase from the same period last year.

**Available on CANSIM: matrices 1052-1055.**

The December 1997 issue of *Gas utilities* (55-002-XPB, \$17/\$165) will be available in March. See *How to order publications*.

**Sales of natural gas**

	Dec. 1997 <sup>P</sup>	Dec. 1996	Dec. 1996 to Dec. 1997
	thousands of cubic metres		% change
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 158 535</b>	<b>7 844 320</b>	<b>-8.7</b>
Residential	2 076 837	2 466 350	-15.8
Commercial	1 391 503	1 754 369	-20.7
Industrial	2 096 560	2 336 035	1.8
Direct	1 593 635	1 287 566	
	1997 <sup>P</sup>	1996	1996 to 1997
	thousands of cubic metres		% change
Natural gas sales	67 312 861	67 095 572	0.3
Residential	16 638 895	17 466 422	-4.7
Commercial	11 717 836	12 558 341	-6.7
Industrial	24 310 888	24 525 747	5.1
Direct	14 645 242	12 545 062	

<sup>P</sup> Preliminary figures.

For further information on this release, contact Gary Smalldridge (613-951-3567; Internet: [smalgar@statcan.ca](mailto:smalgar@statcan.ca)), Energy Section, Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division.

## Farm taxation data

1996 (final data)

Average net operating income (before depreciation) of farm businesses increased 1.8% to \$23,977 per farm in 1996. Average operating revenues rose 5.0% to \$145,837 and average operating expenses increased 5.8% to \$121,860.

The average net operating income of potato farms was \$58,607 in 1996, about the same as in 1995 (\$58,560). However, combination livestock farms posted the best results, with average net operating income of \$73,238, up 28.2% over 1995. Hog farms reported the largest rise in average net operating income (+49.2%).

Grain and oilseed farms, which accounted for 45.1% of all farms in 1996, underperformed most other farm types in terms of average operating revenues. The lower average net operating income of grain and oilseed farms, relative to several other farm types, can be attributed to lower average operating revenues rather than to low operating margins.

Producers in Prince Edward Island posted the highest average net operating income (\$28,976 per farm). However, this was 17.2% lower than in 1995 when net income totalled \$35,003 (the decline was primarily due to a 38% drop in average net operating income of potato farms). Quebec and Alberta followed Prince Edward Island, with average net operating income of \$27,142 and \$24,717 respectively.

The relatively high average net operating income of Quebec producers can be partly explained by the high operating margin of dairy farms (24.0 cents per dollar of revenue), which accounted for 34.2% of farms in the province in 1996. Quebec ranked third in terms of operating margins (15.7 cents per dollar of revenue), after Alberta and Saskatchewan. In Alberta, the average net operating income increased by 14.9% — the highest rise among the provinces. Producers in Saskatchewan had the highest operating margin (22.3 cents per dollar of revenue).

In 1996, New Brunswick farmers benefited from significant growth (+13.8%) in their average net operating income. This increase was partly due to higher average operating revenues (+1.9%), as operating expenses were virtually unchanged.

**Note:** The estimates cover unincorporated farms with gross operating revenues of \$10,000 and more, and incorporated farms with total farm sales of \$25,000 and over. Agricultural activities on these farms must account for 51% or more of sales. The estimates also include communal farming organizations. Net

operating income refers to the profit (or loss) from farm operations based on total operating revenues including all program payments less total operating expenses before depreciation. Operating margin is defined as one dollar less operating expenses per dollar of revenue. For tax purposes, farmers may deduct any amount up to the maximum after the calculation of the allowable depreciation. Depreciation data obtained from income tax returns are considered inappropriate for estimating actual depreciation expenses. For this reason, the net operating income is reported before depreciation. These estimates maintain their relevance only when compared with other statistics produced using the same definitions and concepts.

### Average net operating income per farm (before depreciation) and operating margins

Type of farm	Average net operating income 1996	1995 to 1996	Operating margins
	dollars	% change	cents
Livestock combination	73,238	28.2	23.0
Potato	58,607	0.0	15.0
Tobacco	53,018	-12.2	23.5
Dairy	46,085	-5.1	23.0
Poultry and eggs	44,337	-16.2	7.8
Hogs	41,497	49.2	11.2
Greenhouse and nursery	39,556	-5.4	10.7
Grain and oilseed	26,192	5.7	23.9
Fruit and vegetable	19,850	-7.0	14.1
Other farm types	9,635	-17.7	11.5
Cattle	8,019	-8.6	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,977</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>16.4</b>

For further information, contact Gaétan St-Louis (613-951-8722), Agriculture Division. ■

## Trends in the business population

Fourth quarter 1997

The fourth quarter of 1997 saw a record high number of Canadian employer businesses. This business population count increased by 0.51% from the third quarter to 951,918.

The seasonally adjusted number of Remitting Payroll Deduction Accounts recorded gains in all provinces and territories except for the Northwest Territories (-0.10%). The largest gains were in Alberta (+1.05%), Nova Scotia (+0.78%) and Prince Edward Island (+0.72%).

**Available on CANSIM: matrix 1420.**

For further information on this release, contact Des Beckstead (613-951-6199; fax: 613-951-6274; Internet: [beckste@statcan.ca](mailto:beckste@statcan.ca)), Business Register Division. ■

**Construction Union Wage Rate Index**

January 1998

In January, the Construction Union Wage Rate Index (including supplements) remained unchanged from December at 110.9 (1992=100). On a year-over-year basis, the index increased by 3.2% compared with the January 1997 index.

**Note:** Union wage rates are published for 16 trades in 20 metropolitan areas for both the basic rates and rates including selected supplementary payments. Indexes on a 1992=100 time base are calculated for the same metropolitan areas and are published for those where a majority of trades are covered by current collective agreements.

**Available on CANSIM: matrices 956, 958 and 9922-9927.**

Matrices 2033 to 2038 on a 1986=100 time base have been terminated with the release of December 1997 indexes.

The fourth quarter 1997 issue of *Construction price statistics* (62-007-XPB, \$24/\$79) will be available in March. See *How to order publications*.

For further information on this release, contact Elvira Marinelli (613-951-3350, Internet: [infounit@statcan.ca](mailto:infounit@statcan.ca), fax: 613-951-2848) Client Services Unit, Prices Division. ■

**Selected financial indexes**

January 1998

January 1998 figures are now available for the selected financial indexes on a 1992=100 time base.

**Available on CANSIM: matrix 9928.**

Matrix 2031 on a 1986=100 time base has been terminated with the release of December 1997 indexes.

The fourth quarter 1997 issue of *Construction price statistics* (62-007-XPB, \$24/\$79), will be available in March. See *How to order publications*.

For further information on this release, contact Elvira Marinelli (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-2848; Internet: [infounit@statcan.ca](mailto:infounit@statcan.ca)), Client Services Unit, Prices Division. ■

**Construction type plywood**

December 1997

Firms produced 147 334 cubic metres of construction type plywood during December 1997 up 5.5% from the 139 689 cubic metres produced during December 1996.

January-to-December 1997 production totalled 1 828 354 cubic metres, up 0.8% from the 1 814 103 cubic metres produced during the same period in 1996.

**Available on CANSIM: matrix 122 (level 1).**

The December 1997 issue of the *Construction type plywood* (35-001-XPB, \$6/\$60) will be available shortly. See *How to order publication*.

For more information on this release, contact Ted Brown (604-666-3694), Pacific Region. ■

**Stocks of frozen poultry meat**

February 1, 1998 (preliminary)

Data for stocks of frozen poultry meat in cold storage as of February 1, 1998, are now available.

**Available on CANSIM: matrices 5675-5677.**

For further information on this release, contact Sandra Gielfeldt (613-951-2505), Livestock and Animal Products Section, Agriculture Division. ■

**Consumer Price Index weights**

Updated Consumer Price Index (CPI) weights based on the 1996 Family Expenditure Survey are now available. These weights will be used for the first time in the construction of the January 1998 CPI to be released February 27, 1998.

For further information, contact Sandra Shadlock (613-951-9606; fax: (613-951-2848; Internet: [infounit@statcan.ca](mailto:infounit@statcan.ca)), Prices Division. ■

## PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

**Pulpwood and wood residue statistics,**

December 1997

**Catalogue number 25-001-XPB**

(Canada: \$8/\$73; outside Canada: US\$8/US\$73).

**Monthly Survey of Manufacturing,** December 1997

**Catalogue number 31-001-XPB**

(Canada: \$20/\$196; outside Canada: US\$20/US\$196).

**Oils and fats,** December 1997

**Catalogue number 32-006-XPB**

(Canada: \$7/\$62; outside Canada: US\$7/US\$62).

**Footwear statistics,** quarter ended December 1997

**Catalogue number 33-002-XPB**

(Canada: \$8/\$25; outside Canada: US\$8/US\$25).

**Rubber and plastic products industries,** 1995

**Catalogue number 33-250-XPB**

(Canada: \$40; outside Canada: US\$40).

**Particleboard, oriented strandboard and**

**fibreboard,** December 1997

**Catalogue number 36-003-XPB**

(Canada: \$7/\$62; outside Canada: US\$7/US\$62).

**Primary iron and steel,** December 1997

**Catalogue number 41-001-XPB**

(Canada: \$7/\$62; outside Canada: US\$7/US\$62).

**Refined petroleum products,** November 1997

**Catalogue number 45-004-XPB**

(Canada: \$21/\$206; outside Canada: US\$21/US\$206).

**Energy statistics handbook,** February 1998

**Catalogue number 57-601-UPB**

(Canada: \$387; outside Canada: US\$387).

**Industry price indexes,** December 1997

**Catalogue number 62-011-XPB**

(Canada: \$22/\$217; outside Canada: US\$22/US\$217).

**Touriscope,** International travel: Advance information,  
Vol. 13, no. 12

**Catalogue number 66-001-PPB**

(Canada: \$8/\$73; outside Canada: US\$8/US\$73).

**Juristat,** Adult correctional services in Canada, 1996/  
97, Vol. 18, no. 3

**Catalogue number 85-002-XPE**

(Canada: \$10/\$93; outside Canada: US\$10/US\$93).

**Juristat,** Adult correctional services in Canada, 1996/  
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- **Productivity, hourly compensation and unit labour cost, 1996** 4  
Growth in productivity among Canadian businesses was notably weak again in 1996 accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow nominal growth during the year.

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