



The Daily

Statistics Canada

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MAJOR RELEASES

- **Preparedness of firms for the Year 2000: Initial findings from follow-up survey**

Businesses are stepping up efforts to avoid anticipated computer problems when the calendar hits January 1, 2000, according to a follow-up survey conducted in May this year.

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- **Monthly Survey of Large Retailers, January 1997 to April 1998**

Sales for a selected group of Canada's largest retailers reached \$5.4 billion in April, 13.2% higher than the same month last year, according to the first data from the new Monthly Survey of Large Retailers. In 1997, this group of large retailers had total sales of \$62.9 billion or 36% of total annual retail sales, excluding recreational and motor vehicle dealers.

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PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Annual estimates of employment, earnings and hours

1985 to 1997

The Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours has just released *Annual estimates of employment, earnings and hours, 1985 to 1997* in electronic format.

Accessing employment, earnings and hours data is simple with the easy-to-load, user-friendly Adobe Acrobat software. Users can browse the information on screen and print any or all pages, import the data into the spreadsheet of their choice or download the product immediately from the Internet.

Annual estimates of employment, earnings and hours, 1985 to 1997 contains data tables for over 280 industries at the national, provincial and territorial levels, with information such as employment, average weekly and hourly earnings, average weekly hours and total weekly payrolls. Also included is the Help-wanted Index, 1981 to 1997 supplement.

Annual estimates of employment, earnings and hours 1985-1997 (disk: 72F0002XDB, \$120; Internet: 72F0002XIB, \$113; disk and paper: 10-3000XKB, \$150;) is now available. For further information on this electronic product, or to order, contact the Client Services Section (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; labour@statcan.ca or order@statcan.ca), Labour Division.

MAJOR RELEASES

Preparedness of firms for the Year 2000: Initial findings from follow-up survey

Businesses are stepping up efforts to avoid anticipated computer problems when the calendar hits January 1, 2000, according to a follow-up survey conducted in May this year.

Virtually all firms (99%) reported being aware of the so-called "millennium bug" and more than two-thirds (70%) said they had taken steps to prepare their systems for it. This compares favourably with a similar survey conducted last October, which found that less than half (45%) of firms had taken any action, with about 1 in 10 not even knowing about the issue.

These improvements mainly reflect changes among small businesses (6 to 50 employees), where the overall proportion of firms taking action jumped from 39% to 66%, and among medium-sized firms (51 to 250 employees), where there was an increase from 70% to 94%.

The proportion of large businesses (more than 250 employees) taking action remained virtually unchanged, from 93% last October to 94% in May. However, more large businesses appear to be tackling the problem in a more systematic manner, with 67% now reporting that they have a formal plan with a multi-phased approach to solving the problem. This compares with 48% last October.

For the purposes of the survey, a formal plan must include an assessment of all computer systems followed by conversion and testing phases. It is a potential area of concern that a full third of large firms still have no such plan, given that these businesses are likely to have more complex computer systems, and a greater reliance on computer chips embedded in machinery and equipment.

As with the survey conducted last October, the May survey was representative of all businesses in Canada with more than five employees, excluding government offices, and health and educational institutions. The surveys were conducted for Task Force Year 2000, established by Industry Minister John Manley. Some 2,700 companies responded to the follow-up survey.

Unless computers are updated, in most cases a time-consuming process, they will assume that the day following December 31, 1999, is actually January 1, 1900. This has the potential to disrupt many computerized systems and essential business operations.

Another potential problem is that significant proportions of businesses (though they are taking action) said they did not expect to achieve Year 2000 readiness until after June 1999. Some 15% of large businesses expected to achieve preparedness in the last half of 1999. This compares with 5% and 8% for small- and medium-sized firms respectively. The expected timeframes for these firms may be too late as preparing and testing can take longer than planned in the best of circumstances.

The survey also suggests that firms may be overly optimistic about their ability to weather the Year 2000 problem, despite their own systems' preparedness. First, there is the issue of the risk of legal challenges resulting from Year 2000 problems. While most firms (74%) said they believed some businesses could be exposed to lawsuits due to Year 2000 disruptions, only 21% thought they themselves could be exposed to litigation in the event that a lack of preparedness on their own part should disrupt their customers, suppliers or service providers. Awareness of legal issues increases with firm size, with 19% of small businesses, 37% of medium and 51% of large businesses reporting that they believed they could be exposed to lawsuits as a result of Year 2000 problems.

Second, the survey showed that only 28% of businesses had taken steps to determine the preparedness of their suppliers, customers or service providers. In so doing, these firms are assessing the potential for interruptions in the delivery of the externally-provided goods and services that they require to operate. More than one-third of large businesses, almost two-thirds of medium firms, and three-quarters of small businesses had not taken such action as of May.

Drop in the proportion of small businesses taking no action

Despite these concerns, the business sector appears to have made significant strides in initiating action since the Fall.

Last October, almost two-thirds (61%) of all small companies said they had not done anything to prepare their systems. By May, this had dropped to one-third (34%) of small firms.

These firms provided a range of reasons as to why they had not acted. Some 12% of small business managers had still not acted because they did not feel the millennium bug is an issue for their business as they use computer systems only minimally. An additional

6% said they were not worried yet or that they were planning to address the problem later.

Only 3% of all small businesses said that the primary reason for not acting is that they did not know how to approach the problem, or did not have the resources to deal with it.

Proportion of companies taking action improved in all industrial sectors

The proportion of firms taking action to correct their systems has improved significantly in all industrial sectors between October and May.

Firms in the finance and insurance sector still led the way in tackling the Year 2000 issue in the follow-up survey. However, companies in trade and other services, along with primary sector firms, indicated the greatest change toward action.

About 79% of firms in the finance and insurance sector reported that they were taking action in May, compared with 66% six months earlier. The proportion of firms in trade and other services increased from 42% to 68%, while the percentage in the primary sector, such as agriculture, fishing, logging and mining, rose from 33% to 58%.

Seven out of ten firms in manufacturing, transportation, communications and utilities sectors had taken steps to address the millennium bug as of May.

Growing proportions of large firms in all sectors have formal plans

The tendency for more medium and large firms to have formal plans was also prevalent in most sectors. This was especially true for firms in the primary industries, where two-thirds of large businesses reported having formal plans in May — a marked increase from 23% in October.

Lesser, but nonetheless significant improvements were observed in the manufacturing, transportation, communications and utilities, and trade and other services categories.

Among large firms in finance and insurance, there was no meaningful change in the reporting of formal plans. These firms had, however, already established a leadership position in this area in October, which was maintained in May.

Small businesses say they are ready more often than large firms

How well are firms' actions leading to an eventual preparedness for the Year 2000? Just under one-third (32%) of small businesses indicated they had taken action to prepare their systems and said they had confirmed that these systems were ready for 2000 as of May. The proportion of small firms that are ready is expected to increase to 42% by the end of this year, and then to 53% by July 1999. Finally, by the end of 1999, some 58% of small businesses expect to be ready, leaving 42% that either had not taken action up until May of this year or had taken action but did not know when they expect to achieve preparedness.

For medium and large firms, fewer said they were ready as of May and the timetables for those that were not are somewhat later.

Some 15% of large firms reported they were Year 2000 ready as of May. An additional 27% expect to be ready some time in the last half of 1998, some 34% during the first half of 1999, and 15% during the last half of 1999. This leaves about 9% of large firms that were either not taking steps as of May or were taking steps and did not know when they would be ready.

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

How is industry dealing with the Year 2000 issue?

	Taking action			Formal plan		
	Oct. 1997	May 1998	Oct. 1997 to May 1998	Oct. 1997	May 1998	Oct. 1997 to May 1998
	% of businesses		% point change	% of businesses		% point change
All industries	45	70	25	9	18	9
Small	39	66	27	6	15	9
Medium	70	94	24	20	37	17
Large	93	94	1	48	67	19
Primary	33	58	25	3	11	8
Small	28	55	27	2	9	7
Medium	55	80	25	7	14	7
Large	92	92	0	23	66	43
Manufacturing	50	71	21	10	22	12
Small	40	65	25	4	14	10
Medium	76	93	17	21	43	22
Large	89	98	9	53	64	11
Transportation, communication and utilities	48	70	22	6	25	19
Small	41	63	22	4	19	15
Medium	67	98	31	5	44	39
Large	97	100	3	50	74	24
Retail, wholesale and other services	42	68	26	8	17	9
Small	37	66	29	6	14	8
Medium	68	95	27	20	36	16
Large	92	89	-3	40	67	27
Finance and insurance	66	79	13	16	35	19
Small	60	76	16	8	33	25
Medium	81	92	11	30	38	8
Large	97	100	3	76	75	-1

What proportions of businesses are approaching suppliers, customers or service providers to determine their readiness for 2000?

	Oct. 1997	May 1998	Oct. 1997 to May 1998
	% of businesses		% point change
All businesses	13	28	15
Small (6-50 employees)	11	27	16
Medium (51-250)	16	36	20
Large (More than 250)	32	62	30
Primary	6	11	5
Manufacturing	6	23	17
Transportation, communication and utilities	8	24	16
Retail, wholesale and other services	14	29	15
Finance and Insurance	20	49	29

When do firms say their systems will be ready for the Year 2000?¹

	Ready now	Last half of 1998	First half of 1999	Last half of 1999	Do not know	Not taking action as of May 1998 ²
	% of businesses					
All industries	31	13	13	5	8³	30
Small	32	10	11	5	8 ³	34
Medium	19	37	21	8	8	6
Large	15	27	34	15	3	6
Primary	29	11	10	4	4³	42
Small	29	9	9	3	5 ³	45
Medium	25	35	14	3	3	20
Large	12	17	44	18	1	8
Manufacturing	28	15	14	9	4	29
Small	29	13	10	8	5	35
Medium	29	23	26	12	4	7
Large	12	29	41	14	1	2
Transportation, communication and utilities	27	13	17	6	6	30
Small	26	9	15	5	7	37
Medium	33	29	23	9	4 ³	2
Large	10	30	43	16	1	0
Retail, wholesale and other services	32	12	12	5	6	32
Small	34	9	11	4	8 ³	34
Medium	11	44	20	7	13	5
Large	20	22	27	17	3	11
Finance and insurance	30	25	18	4	1	21
Small	30	22	17	4	3 ³	24
Medium	33	36	19	4	1	8
Large	7	47	28	10	7	0

¹ For each row, the sum of all columns should add to 100, but minor differences may exist due to rounding error.

² Only firms having taken formal or informal action as of May 1998 were asked when they expected to be ready. Therefore, the survey does not provide statistical information regarding the expected preparedness timetables of firms not taking action.

³ Revised figure.

How are large businesses dealing with the issue and when do they expect to be ready?¹

	Taking action	Formal plan	Ready now	Last half of 1998	First half of 1999	Last half of 1999	Do not know	Not taking action as of May 1998 ²
	% of large businesses							
All industries	94	67	15	27	34	15	3	6
Primary	92	66	12	17	44	18	1	8
Manufacturing	98	64	12	29	41	14	1	2
Transportation	100	65	11	31	44	14	1	0
Communication	100	82	15	36	28	21	0	0
Utilities	100	95	0	16	60	24	0	0
Wholesalers	100	81	14	31	41	13	1	0
Retailers	97	67	9	37	42	7	3	3
Finance and insurance	100	75	7	47	28	10	7	0
Service industries not elsewhere classified	85	64	24	17	21	19	4	15

¹ In each row, columns 3 through 8 should add to 100, but minor differences may exist due to rounding errors.

² Only firms taking formal or informal action were asked when they expected to be ready. Therefore, the survey does not provide statistical information regarding the preparedness timetables of businesses not taking action.



Monthly Survey of Large Retailers

January 1997 to April 1998

Sales for a selected group of Canada's largest retailers reached \$5.4 billion in April, 13.2% higher than the same month last year, according to the first data from the new Monthly Survey of Large Retailers.

In 1997, this group of large retailers had total sales of \$62.9 billion, the largest proportion of which were sales of food and beverage commodities.

Sales reach \$62.9 billion in 1997

In 1997, food retailers accounted for 38.4% of the \$62.9 billion in sales for the group of large retailers. Department stores accounted for 25.3%, while other non-food retailers captured 36.3%.

These proportions varied from month-to-month. For example, department store sales ranged from a low of 19.2% of total sales in January 1997 to a high of 32.6% in December 1997.

In terms of commodities, food and beverages accounted for the largest share of sales among this group of large retailers in 1997 at \$23.0 billion, or just over one-third (36.6%) of total sales.

Sales of clothing and accessories, including footwear, jewellery and luggage, represented 20.4% of the total, the second highest level, followed by sales of home furnishings and electronics at 13.5%.

Food retailers sold 85.4% of all the food and beverage commodities among these large companies. The remaining 14.6% was purchased by consumers at the non-food retail stores.

Sales of women's clothing and accessories accounted for almost half (46.1%) of the \$12.8 billion in clothing and accessories sold by large retailers in 1997. This was almost double the proportion (26.6%) spent on men's clothing and accessories. Department stores accounted for 45% of all the clothing and accessories sold by the group of large retailers.

A new monthly survey

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

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

The data released today cover each month from January 1997 through April 1998. None of the data have been seasonally adjusted. Effective immediately, commodity sales data will be available from Distributive Trades Division at the time of each monthly release in The Daily. A list of those retail companies involved in the survey is available by contacting the Distributive Trades Division.

Monthly retail trade data will continue to be released in The Daily as scheduled. In addition, The Daily will still contain a monthly release on department store sales, but it will provide only provincial data.

An early spring and Easter weekend boosted sales in April 1998

An early spring and the Easter holiday weekend were significant factors behind the 13.2% year-over-year increase in sales by large retailers in April.

Consumers spent 69.9% more on lawn and garden products in April 1998 compared with the same month last year, as well as 19.7% more on sporting and leisure-related goods, and 18.1% more on clothing and accessories.

Although sales of food and beverage products were up only 11.6% from April 1997, consumers spent 25.6% more on fresh seafood, 16.0% more on fresh produce, and 23.9% more on candy and snacks. Sales of home furnishings and electronics increased the least of any commodity (+2.6%).

Data from the Monthly Survey of Large Retailers are available on commodity sales from January 1997 through April 1998. However, none of the data have been seasonally adjusted. Consequently, month-to-month comparisons should be made with caution.

For more information about the off-the-shelf products available, or for the list of retailers included in the panel, or for any information on this release, contact

Veronica Utovac (613-951-0669), Retail Commodity Section, Distributive Trades Division.

Annual sales of large retailers by commodity, 1997

	Food retailers	Non-food retailers	All
\$ thousands			
Total sales			
Commodities			
Food and beverages (excluding pet food)	19,662,804	3,356,260	23,019,065
Health and personal care products	1,620,603	2,511,345	4,131,949
Housewares	828,343	1,883,021	2,711,364
Clothing and accessories	x	x	12 819,173
Home furnishings and electronics	x	x	8,505,942
Hardware and lawn and garden products	108,310	2,185,678	2,293,988
Sporting and leisure goods	x	x	3,001,410
All other goods and services	x	x	6,439,979
Total	24,137,444	38,785,424	62,922,869
%			
Industry shares within the group			
Commodities			
Food and beverages (excluding pet food)	85.4	14.6	100.0
Health and personal care products	39.2	60.8	100.0
Housewares	30.6	69.4	100.0
Clothing and accessories	x	x	100.0
Home furnishings and electronics	x	x	100.0
Hardware and lawn and garden products	4.7	95.3	100.0
Sporting and leisure goods	x	x	100.0
All other goods and services	x	x	100.0
Total	38.4	61.6	100.0
%			
Commodity shares within the group			
Commodities			
Food and beverages (exc. pet food)	81.5	8.7	36.6
Health and personal care products	6.7	6.5	6.6
Housewares	3.4	4.9	4.3
Clothing and accessories	x	x	20.4
Home furnishings and electronics	x	x	13.5
Hardware and lawn and garden products	0.4	5.6	3.6
Sporting and leisure goods	x	x	4.8
All other goods and services	x	x	10.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

^x Data have been suppressed for reasons of confidentiality.

Annual sales of large retailers by commodity, April 1998

	April 1997	April 1998	% change
	\$ thousands		
Commodities			
Food and beverages (excluding pet food)	1,788,543	1,995,806	11.6
Health and personal care products	310,751	357,402	15.0
Housewares	207,687	230,100	10.8
Clothing and accessories	938,450	1,107,962	18.1
Home furnishings and electronics	597,195	612,680	2.6
Hardware and lawn and garden products	202,981	277,215	36.6
Sporting and leisure goods	206,510	247,181	19.7
All other goods and services	497,820	550,876	10.7
Total	4,749,937	5,379,223	13.2



OTHER RELEASES

Estimates of labour income

April 1998 (preliminary)

Labour income and wages and salaries rose 0.5% in April, the fifth consecutive monthly increase. Compared with one year earlier, labour income grew by 4.2% to \$38.5 billion.

Strong growth in wages and salaries in April was recorded in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario. Gains in average weekly earnings and average weekly hours contributed to the increases in these provinces. In contrast, wages and salaries declined in Alberta, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

Industrially, the largest growth rates in April occurred in construction, finance, insurance and real estate, mining, quarrying and oil wells, and logging and forestry. The strength in these industries stemmed primarily from growth in average earnings paid to employees. The only declines in wages and salaries were noted in transport, storage and communications, and education and related services.

Note: Labour income consists of wages and salaries (88%), plus supplementary labour income (12%). Wages and salaries include items such as bonuses, gratuities, taxable allowances and retroactive wage payments. Supplementary labour income is employers contributions to employee welfare, pension workers compensation and Employment Insurance plans. Labour income accounts for about 52% of gross domestic product. Users of the labour income data should note that the seasonally adjusted data are revised back to January 1998.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 6597-6624.

For further information on this release, contact Jean Lambert (613-951-4051; fax: 613-951-3618), Income and Expenditure Accounts Division.

Wages and salaries and supplementary labour income

	March 1998 ^r	April 1998 ^p	March to April 1998
seasonally adjusted			
	\$ millions		%
			change
Agriculture, fishing and trapping	283.2	287.5	1.5
Logging and Forestry	230.0	234.4	1.9
Mining, quarrying and oil wells	752.2	761.3	1.2
Manufacturing	6,427.1	6,476.3	0.8
Construction	1,806.6	1,852.9	2.6
Other Utilities	593.2	594.5	0.2
Transportation, storage, communications	2,507.8	2,489.3	-0.7
Trade	4,829.4	4,834.2	0.1
Finance, insurance and real estate	2,905.5	2,944.0	1.3
Commercial and personal services	5,375.9	5,392.7	0.3
Educational and related services	2,742.9	2,734.6	-0.3
Health and social services	2,736.2	2,751.3	0.6
Federal administration and other government services	847.3	847.4	0.0
Provincial administration	683.3	684.8	0.2
Local administration	652.1	656.5	0.7
Military	236.1	236.0	0.0
Total wages and salaries	3,3608.7	33,777.7	0.5
Supplementary labour income	4,674.9	4,687.5	0.3
Labour income	3,8283.7	38,465.2	0.5

^r Revised figures.

^p Preliminary figures.

Local government finance — Assets and liabilities

December 31, 1995 (estimates), December 31, 1994 (actual)

Local government net debt (which is defined as the excess of liabilities over financial assets) was estimated at \$22.3 billion as of December 31, 1995, down \$0.5 billion (-2.3%) from December 31, 1994. These data were prepared using the Financial Management System (FMS), which standardizes individual government accounts to provide comparable data. Thus, FMS statistics may differ from the figures published in government financial statements. Actual balance sheet data of local governments by province, as of December 31, 1994, are also available.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 3241-3253 (Local government balance sheet).

For further information on this release, contact A.J. Gareau (613-951-1826), Public Institutions Division.

Data are available through custom and special tabulations. For more information, or general inquiries

on the products or services of the Public Institutions Division, contact Viola Jabbour (613-951-0767; jabbvio@statcan.ca). ■

Steel pipe and tubing

May 1998

Steel pipe and tubing production for May totalled 196 407 tonnes, down 7.0% from 211 203 tonnes a year earlier.

Year-to-date production to the end of May 1998 totalled 1 088 196 tonnes, up 13.9% from 955 124 tonnes during the same period in 1997.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 35.

The May 1998 issue of *Steel pipe and tubing* (41-011-XPB, \$7/\$62) will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For further information on this release, contact Andy Shinnan (613-951-3515; shinand@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

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

Catalogue number 10-3000XKB

(Canada: \$150; outside Canada: US\$150).

Cement, May 1998

Catalogue number 44-001-XPB

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

Rail in Canada, 1996

Catalogue number 52-216-XPB

(Canada: \$52; outside Canada: US\$52).

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

Catalogue number 72F0002XDB

(Canada: \$120; outside Canada: US\$120).

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

Catalogue number 72F0002XIB

(Canada: \$113; outside Canada: US\$113).

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MAJOR RELEASES

- **Urban transit, 1995** 2
Despite the emphasis on taking urban transit, Canadians are using it less and less. In 1995, each Canadian took an average of about 60 trips on some form of urban transit, the lowest level in the past 25 years.
- **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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