



The Daily

Statistics Canada

Thursday, May 18, 2000

For release at 8:30 a.m.

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 The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 2.1% between April 1999 and April 2000. The increase was notably lower than the 3.0% advance registered in March 2000, and the lowest since August 1999.
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 Retail sales bounced back in March to a record high, advancing 2.1% from February.
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MAJOR RELEASES

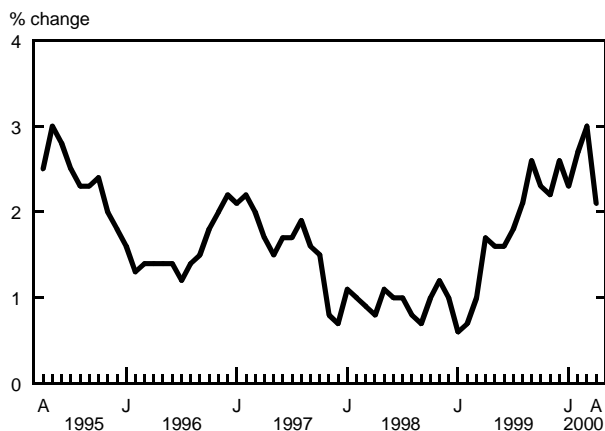
The Consumer Price Index

April 2000

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 2.1% between April 1999 and April 2000. The increase was notably lower than the 3.0% advance registered in March 2000, and the lowest since August 1999. Most of the slowdown in the rate of increase of the CPI was due to smaller rises in the energy index. While energy prices fell during April 2000, they remained well above where they were prior to last year's upward spiral, and still accounted for roughly half of the 12-month increase in the CPI. Excluding the effects of energy, the CPI increased by 1.1% in April, down slightly from the 1.4% increase in March.

In addition to energy but to a much lesser extent, mortgage interest cost and food purchased from restaurants contributed to the increase in the All-items CPI. Lower prices for fresh fruit, computer equipment and supplies, fresh vegetables, and automotive vehicles exerted downward pressure on the index.

Percentage change in the Consumer Price Index from the same month of the previous year

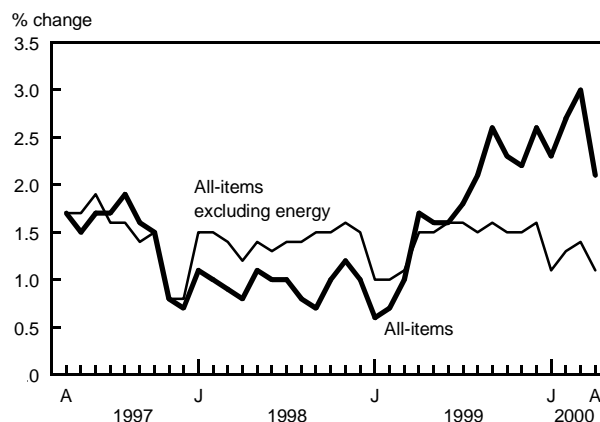


Slight monthly drop in the CPI

From March to April, the CPI fell by 0.4%. The decline in the All-items index was largely attributable to the 3.8% decrease in energy prices (the All-items excluding energy index was unchanged from March). Other contributors to the drop in the All-items index were lower prices for women's clothing and automotive

vehicles. These declines were moderated by rises in the price of homeowners' maintenance and repairs, fresh or frozen beef, and mortgage interest.

Annual change in the CPI and in the CPI excluding energy



In April, gasoline and fuel oil prices were the energy components that exerted the greatest downward pressure on the All-items index. The OPEC agreement in late March to increase oil production relieved the upward pressure on crude oil prices and allowed the Canadian wholesale prices for gasoline to ease downward. The 5.6% fall in gasoline prices in April contrasts with the 8.8% rise in March, and marks the largest price decrease since February 1991. Fuel oil prices dropped by 7.8%, making April the second month of price declines after 11 consecutive months of increases.

The index for women's clothing fell by 3.3% in April. This drop was due to widespread sales in most categories of women's clothing. Price decreases are not unusual for these commodities in April.

The index for the purchase of automotive vehicles fell by 0.9% in April. The decrease in price was attributable to dealer discounts and manufacturer rebates more than offsetting a few increases in manufacturer's suggested retail prices and freight costs for certain models of automotive vehicles.

The index for homeowners' maintenance and repairs increased 1.7% between March and April, the largest rise since September 1999. The advance was due mainly to returns to regular prices from special sale

prices and to a combination of higher manufacturer and wholesaler prices.

From March to April, the index for fresh or frozen beef rose 2.9%, the largest monthly rise since March 1988 (+3.2%). The increase in price was partly due to reduced supplies of beef, which is the result of the ongoing liquidation of cattle herds, and to increased foreign demand.

Mortgage interest cost went up 0.5% in April, the same rate of increase as in March, and the eighth consecutive month of rises.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 9940-9956.

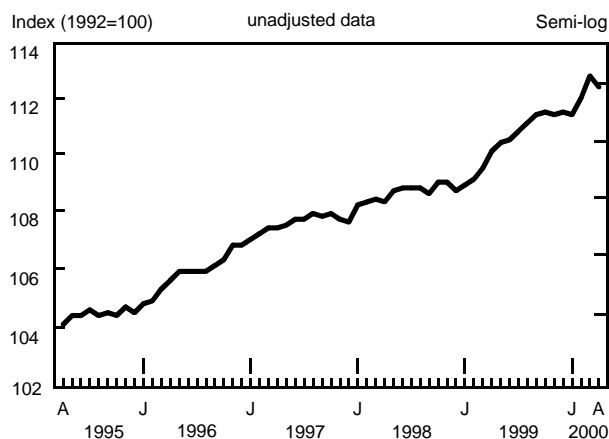
Data are available at 7 a.m. on Statistics Canada's Web site (www.statcan.ca).

The April 2000 issue of the *Consumer Price Index* (62-001-XPB, \$11/\$103) is now available. See *How to order publications*.

The May 2000 Consumer Price Index will be released on June 16.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact (613-951-9606; fax: 613-951-1539; infounit@statcan.ca), Prices Division. □

Consumer Price Index



Consumer Price Index and its major components 1992=100

	April 2000	March 2000	April 1999	March to April 2000	April 1999 to April 2000
not seasonally adjusted					
	% change				
All-items	112.4	112.8	110.1	-0.4	2.1
Food	111.3	111.1	110.9	0.2	0.4
Shelter	107.5	107.5	104.8	0.0	2.6
Household operations and furnishings	109.5	109.7	108.8	-0.2	0.6
Clothing and footwear	105.1	106.5	105.8	-1.3	-0.7
Transportation	129.2	131.1	123.6	-1.4	4.5
Health and personal care	111.5	111.0	110.0	0.5	1.4
Recreation, education and reading	121.0	120.8	117.7	0.2	2.8
Alcoholic beverages and tobacco products	96.8	96.7	94.0	0.1	3.0
Goods	109.8	110.9	107.4	-1.0	2.2
Services	115.6	115.1	113.2	0.4	2.1
All-items excluding food and energy	111.6	111.6	110.2	0.0	1.3
Energy	122.2	127.0	107.6	-3.8	13.6
Purchasing power of the consumer dollar expressed in cents, compared to 1992	89.0	88.7	90.8		
All-items (1986=100)	144.0				

Consumer Price Index for the provinces, Whitehorse and Yellowknife 1992=100

	April 2000	March 2000	April 1999	March to April 2000	April 1999 to April 2000
not seasonally adjusted					
	% change				
Newfoundland	112.3	113.0	109.4	-0.6	2.7
Prince Edward Island	110.7	110.3	106.4	0.4	4.0
Nova Scotia	113.1	113.5	109.7	-0.4	3.1
New Brunswick	112.1	112.2	108.8	-0.1	3.0
Quebec	109.6	110.0	107.8	-0.4	1.7
Ontario	113.0	113.7	110.6	-0.6	2.2
Manitoba	117.3	117.4	114.6	-0.1	2.4
Saskatchewan	115.9	115.8	113.2	0.1	2.4
Alberta	115.9	115.8	112.2	0.1	3.3
British Columbia	112.4	112.3	111.0	0.1	1.3
Whitehorse	113.7	113.3	111.4	0.4	2.1
Yellowknife	110.8	110.4	108.5	0.4	2.1

Retailers in the furniture sector (+2.9%) continued to enjoy advancing sales in the first quarter of 2000. Furniture stores have posted strong quarterly sales results since the third quarter of 1996. Advantageous financing incentives and consumer confidence have helped keep furniture sales rising over the last four years.

Strong first quarter for territories and Prairie provinces

Retail sales in each of the territories and Prairie provinces advanced by at least 2.5% in the first quarter of 2000 compared with the last quarter of 1999. After posting the weakest annual gains of 1999, retail sales in the Prairie provinces have picked up considerably in the first quarter of this year. Higher consumer spending in most retail sectors contributed to this increase.

Sustained consumer demand continued to push sales up in Newfoundland (+2.2%), Quebec (+2.1%), Ontario (+1.9%) and British Columbia (+1.7%) in the first quarter. Retail sales have been generally rising since early 1996 in Ontario, and since mid-1998 in Newfoundland, Quebec and British Columbia.

Despite the 0.2% decline in retail sales in Nova Scotia in the first quarter, retailers in that province have generally enjoyed advancing sales since the spring of 1997.

Related indicators for April

In April, total employment was unchanged from the previous month, and the number of housing starts dropped for a second consecutive month (-5.4%).

Available on CANSIM: matrix 2399 and 2400 (main matrices), 2299, 2397, 2398, 2401-2416 and 2418-2420.

The March 2000 issue of *Retail trade* (63-005-XPB, \$21/\$206; 63-005-XIB, \$16/\$155) will be available soon. See *How to order publications*.

Retail sales estimates for April will be released on June 21.

To order data, or for general information, contact the Client Services Unit (613-951-3549; 1-877-421-3067; retailinfo@statcan.ca). For analytical information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Paul Gratton (613-951-3541; gratpau@statcan.ca), Distributive Trades Division. □

Retail sales

	March 1999	Dec. 1999	Jan. 2000 ^r	Feb. 2000 ^r	March 2000 ^p	Feb. to March 2000	March 1999 to March 2000
seasonally adjusted							
	\$ millions				% change		
Food	4,882	5,038	4,863	4,973	4,994	0.4	2.3
Supermarkets and grocery stores	4,512	4,664	4,493	4,601	4,620	0.4	2.4
All other food stores	370	374	370	372	374	0.5	1.1
Drug and patent medicine stores	1,109	1,118	1,120	1,110	1,108	-0.1	-0.1
Clothing	1,194	1,207	1,240	1,228	1,263	2.9	5.8
Shoe stores	140	137	138	139	148	6.4	5.3
Men's clothing stores	129	128	128	130	131	0.5	1.5
Women's clothing stores	375	380	388	379	393	3.5	4.8
Other clothing stores	550	562	586	579	592	2.1	7.6
Furniture	1,098	1,193	1,222	1,214	1,235	1.7	12.5
Household furniture and appliance stores	891	971	997	986	1,008	2.2	13.2
Household furnishings stores	207	222	225	228	227	-0.7	9.4
Automotive	8,333	9,111	9,116	8,890	9,274	4.3	11.3
Motor and recreational vehicle dealers	5,742	6,108	6,162	5,832	6,138	5.2	6.9
Gasoline service stations	1,371	1,691	1,674	1,787	1,816	1.6	32.4
Automotive parts, accessories and services	1,220	1,312	1,279	1,272	1,320	3.8	8.2
General merchandise stores	2,441	2,482	2,597	2,544	2,534	-0.4	3.8
Retail stores not elsewhere classified	2,340	2,370	2,420	2,399	2,418	0.8	3.4
Other semi-durable goods stores	715	685	745	704	721	2.4	0.8
Other durable goods stores	597	596	609	616	611	-0.8	2.3
All other retail stores not elsewhere classified	1,028	1,089	1,066	1,079	1,087	0.7	5.7
Total, retail sales	21,397	22,518	22,578	22,358	22,826	2.1	6.7
Total excluding motor and recreational vehicle dealers	15,655	16,411	16,416	16,526	16,688	1.0	6.6
Provinces and territories							
Newfoundland	357	360	365	361	371	2.6	3.9
Prince Edward Island	92	102	100	102	100	-1.3	8.7
Nova Scotia	669	705	675	698	708	1.4	5.9
New Brunswick	537	571	568	555	583	5.1	8.5
Quebec	5,071	5,199	5,248	5,128	5,306	3.5	4.6
Ontario	8,060	8,548	8,624	8,520	8,693	2.0	7.9
Manitoba	755	778	771	777	783	0.8	3.8
Saskatchewan	633	674	668	667	678	1.7	7.2
Alberta	2,390	2,577	2,584	2,571	2,610	1.5	9.2
British Columbia	2,760	2,928	2,900	2,903	2,915	0.4	5.6
Yukon	27	28	28	28	29	2.5	9.3
Northwest Territories	32	33	32	32	34	3.7	5.8
Nunavut	14	14	15	15	16	5.4	8.2

^r Revised figures.

^p Preliminary figures.

Retail sales

	March 1999	Feb. 2000 ^r	March 2000 ^p	March 1999 to March 2000
unadjusted				
	\$ millions			% change
Food	4,630	4,514	4,951	6.9
Supermarkets and grocery stores	4,283	4,182	4,593	7.3
All other food stores	347	333	357	2.8
Drug and patent medicine stores	1,089	1,043	1,103	1.3
Clothing	973	825	1,068	9.7
Shoe stores	109	83	120	10.3
Men's clothing stores	96	84	101	6.0
Women's clothing stores	308	264	335	8.6
Other clothing stores	461	394	512	11.1
Furniture	984	977	1,122	13.9
Household furniture and appliance stores	791	792	910	15.0
Household furnishings stores	193	186	211	9.5
Automotive	8,483	7,420	9,523	12.3
Motor and recreational vehicle dealers	6,095	4,854	6,578	7.9
Gasoline service stations	1,300	1,579	1,748	34.5
Automotive parts, accessories and services	1,089	986	1,196	9.9
General merchandise stores	2,113	1,886	2,218	5.0
Retail stores not elsewhere classified	1,897	1,797	2,024	6.7
Other semi-durable goods stores	556	504	561	1.0
Other durable goods stores	470	456	497	5.6
All other retail stores not elsewhere classified	871	838	966	11.0
Total, retail sales	20,170	18,464	22,008	9.1
Total excluding motor and recreational vehicle dealers	14,075	13,609	15,430	9.6
Provinces and territories				
Newfoundland	329	285	355	7.9
Prince Edward Island	79	78	87	9.4
Nova Scotia	613	577	666	8.6
New Brunswick	493	444	547	10.9
Quebec	4,785	4,184	5,186	8.4
Ontario	7,551	7,014	8,323	10.2
Manitoba	716	649	765	6.9
Saskatchewan	585	549	635	8.5
Alberta	2,288	2,124	2,531	10.6
British Columbia	2,660	2,497	2,836	6.6
Yukon	25	21	27	9.8
Northwest Territories	31	28	35	10.9
Nunavut	14	13	16	9.0

^r Revised figures.

^p Preliminary figures.



OTHER RELEASES

Wholesale trade errata

March 2000

The May 17, 2000 issue of *The Daily* reported incorrectly that wholesalers in March 2000 sold \$31.6 million in goods. The correct figure is \$31.6 billion.

For more information on wholesale trade, contact Greg Parsons (613-951-0062; parsons@statcan.ca), Distributive Trades Division. ■

Steel primary forms

Week ending May 13, 2000 (preliminary)

Steel primary forms production for the week ending May 13 totalled 319 730 tonnes, up 7.7% from 296 843 tonnes a week earlier and up 3.2% from 309 937 tonnes a year earlier. The year-to-date total at the end of the reference week was 6 171 374 tonnes, a 6.9% increase compared with 5 771 314 tonnes produced in the same period in 1999.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Greg Milsom (613-951-7093; milsomg@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Construction Union Wage Rate Index

April 2000

The Construction Union Wage Rate Index (including supplements) for Canada remained unchanged in April from March at 114.8 (1992=100). The composite index rose 2.3% compared with April 1999.

Union wage rates are published for 16 trades in 20 metropolitan areas for both the basic rates and rates including selected supplementary payments. Indexes (1992=100) 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.

The second quarter 2000 issue of *Construction price statistics* (62-007-XPB, \$24/\$79) will be available in September. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Denise Potvin (613-951-3350; infounit@statcan.ca, fax: 613-951-1539), Prices Division. ■

Selected financial indexes

April 2000

April figures are now available for selected financial indexes (1992=100), including conventional mortgage rates, prime business lending rates, provincial bond yield averages and exchange rates.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 9928.

These indexes will appear in the second quarter 2000 issue of *Construction price statistics* (62-007-XPB, \$24/\$79), which will be available in September. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Denise Potvin (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-1539; infounit@statcan.ca), Prices Division. ■

Annual estimates of employment, earnings and hours

1983-1999

The Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours has released its most recent *Annual estimates of employment, earnings and hours 1983-1999* in electronic format.

The new CD-ROM makes use of the Beyond 20/20 Professional Browser, which enables users to manipulate, visualize and quickly understand the data and its associated trends. The CD-ROM also contains a preformatted publication covering the years 1987 to 1999, which can be printed using Adobe Acrobat.

Annual estimates of employment, earnings and hours 1983-1999 contains data tables for more than 200 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 1981-1999* supplement.

Annual estimates of employment, earnings and hours 1983-1999 (CD-ROM: 72F0002XCB, \$150; CD-ROM and paper: 10-3009XKB, \$185) is now available. For more 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 Statistics Division. ■

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Statistics Canada	
Thursday, June 5, 1997 For release at 9:30 a.m.	
MAJOR RELEASES	
• Urban transit, 1995 Despite the difficulties in taking urban transit, Canadians are using it less and less. In 1995, most Canadians took an average of about 40 trips on some form of urban transit, the lowest level in the past 25 years.	2
• Productivity, hourly compensation and unit labour cost, 1995 Growth in productivity among Canadian businesses was relatively weak in 1995, accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow economic growth during the year.	4
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