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Statistics Canada

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MAJOR RELEASES

OTHER RELEASES

(continued on page 2)

Perspectives on Labour and Income
April 2004 online issue

The April 2004 online issue of *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, released today, contains two articles. The first article, "Sidelined in the labour market," traces long-term unemployment in Canada between 1976 and 2003 and describes those most affected. The other article, "Low income among immigrants and visible minorities," looks at the financial situation of these two groups relative to the Canadian-born.

The April 2004 online issue of *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, Vol. 5, no. 4 (75-001-XIE, $6/$52) is now available. See *How to order products*.

For more information, contact Henry Pold (613-951-4608; *henry.pold@statcan.ca*), Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division.

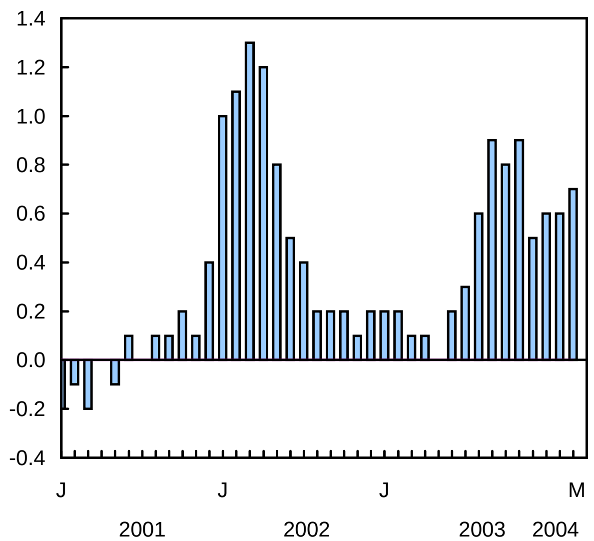
MAJOR RELEASES

Leading indicators
March 2004

The composite leading index rose by 0.7% in March, after upward revised gains of 0.6% in January and February and 0.5% in December. This upturn is attributable to an increase in the number of components expanding to 7 out of 10, one more than in February and two more than in January. The housing component swung from negative to positive territory in March. Manufacturing and the US leading indicator continued to drive overall growth for the third straight month.

Composite index

Smoothed % change



Housing regained its position at the head of household demand as a result of gains for both new and existing housing. The increases spread to Ontario and western Canada, after Quebec dominated growth last year. In Ontario, housing starts have jumped 40% since January as vacancy rates fell, notably for multiple units in Toronto. At the same time, existing home sales hit record highs in Toronto, as well as Vancouver and Calgary.

The US leading indicator posted its 10th straight increase. This upturn was finally reflected in jobs, an encouraging sign for continued growth in household demand and for our exports. Increased export demand already was a factor in new orders for manufactured goods posting their largest advance since the summer of 2000.

Demand for labour was the principal source of weakness in Canada, contributing to two of the three components that fell. Manufacturers continued to trim the average work week, which fell to its lowest level since May 1999. Meanwhile, services employment fell for the first time since August 2003, led by declines for temporary help agencies in March.

Available on CANSIM: table 377-0003.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 1601.

A more detailed analysis of the components is available online. From the *Canadian statistics* page, choose *Economic conditions*, then click on the banner ad for *Canadian Economic Observer*. From that page, choose *Issues of CEO*, then *Composite Index*. For more information on the economy, consult the April 2004 issue of *Canadian Economic Observer*, Vol. 17, no. 4 (11-010-XIB, $19/$182; 11-010-XPB, $25/$243), available tomorrow Thursday, April 22.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Francine Roy (613-951-3627; *ceo@statcan.ca*), Current Economic Analysis Group. □

Leading indicators

	October 2003	November 2003	December 2003	January 2004	February 2004	March 2004	Last month of data available
Data used in the composite index calculation for:							% change
Composite leading indicator (1992=100)	**185.8**	**187.4**	**188.4**	**189.6**	**190.7**	**192.0**	**0.7**
Housing index (1992=100)[1]	143.0	143.3	141.1	137.7	135.7	137.2	1.1
Business and personal services employment ('000)	2,626	2,627	2,633	2,633	2,633	2,629	-0.2
S&P/TSX stock price index (1975=1,000)	7,389	7,564	7,757	7,959	8,232	8,395	2.0
Money supply, M1 ($ millions, 1992)[2]	117,793	118,068	117,985	117,966	118,489	119,579	0.9
US composite leading indicator (1992=100)[3]	111.9	112.3	112.8	113.1	113.5	113.9	0.4
Manufacturing							
Average work week (hours)	38.8	38.8	38.7	38.7	38.7	38.6	-0.3
New orders, durables ($ millions, 1992)[4]	19,771	20,213	20,400	20,586	20,908	21,505	2.9
Shipments/inventories of finished goods[4]	1.67	1.68	1.70	1.72	1.74	1.77	0.03[5]
Retail trade							
Furniture and appliance sales ($ millions, 1992)[4]	1,919	1,940	1,951	1,964	1,983	1,997	0.7
Other durable goods sales ($ millions, 1992)[4]	7,779	7,793	7,764	7,718	7,587	7,459	-1.7
Unsmoothed composite leading indicator	**188.4**	**190.6**	**189.4**	**191.3**	**193.9**	**195.0**	**0.6**

1 *Composite index of housing starts (units) and house sales (multiple listing service).*
2 *Deflated by the Consumer Price Index for all items.*
3 *The figures in this row reflect data published in the month indicated, but the figures themselves refer to data for the month immediately preceding.*
4 *The figures in this row reflect data published in the month indicated, but the figures themselves refer to data for the second preceding month.*
5 *Difference from previous month.*

■

Quarterly Retail Commodity Survey

2003 and fourth quarter 2003

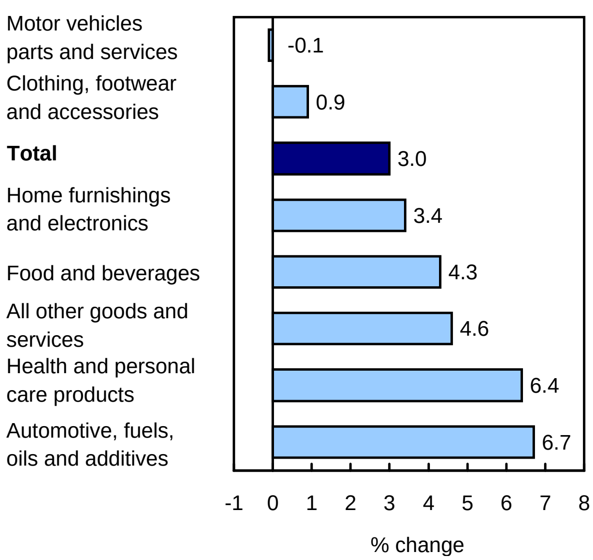
Sales growth in retail stores in 2003 was roughly half the rate observed in 2002 as motor vehicle sales slowed. However, all other major commodity groups advanced in 2003 compared with 2002. Sales of automotive fuels, oils and additives, as well as health and personal care products, posted the largest increases.

In total, consumers spent $317.1 billion in retail stores in 2003, up 3.0% from 2002. This was only half the 6.1% gain in 2002.

Sharp drop in used car sales lowers sales of motor vehicles, parts and services

Despite continued incentives and low interest rates, consumers spent $89.9 billion on motor vehicles, parts and services (excluding gas and oil), down 0.1% from 2002. Although marginal, this was the only annual decline since the Quarterly Retail Commodity Survey started collecting data in 1997. This contrasted with a stellar 7.5% gain in the previous year. A drop of 7.0% in sales of used vehicles and a 2.3% decline in sales of new cars in 2003 were partially offset by an increase of 6.3% in sales of automotive parts and services. As well, sales of new trucks, vans and sport utility vehicles rose 1.9%.

Motor vehicles, parts and services is the only commodity with a marginal decline in sales, 2003



Consumers spent over one-third of their retail budget ($114.1 billion) on motor vehicles and related products and services. Part of this spending included purchases of gasoline and oil which rose 6.7%, the largest increase of all the major commodity groupings. Prices at the pump were up 6.4% in 2003 as the result of significant price hikes in the first quarter of that year.

Note to readers

The Quarterly Retail Commodity Survey collects national level retail sales by commodity, from a subsample of businesses in the Monthly Retail Trade Survey. Quarterly data have not been adjusted for seasonality. All percentage changes are year-over-year. Beginning with the first quarter of 2004, the data will be released using the North American Industrial Classification System and hence will not be comparable to previously published estimates.

Health and personal care products post second strongest growth

Consumer spending on health and personal care products increased 6.4% in 2003. However, this was the weakest year-over-year growth in three years. It followed gains of more than 9% in 2001 and 2002. Almost half (46%) of the spending in this category was on prescription drugs, which was up 7.8%, the lowest growth since the start of the survey. Sales of over-the-counter drugs and vitamins rose 6.1%.

Gains in sales of home furnishings and electronics weaker than in 2002

Consumers spent $25.3 billion on home furnishings and electronics (including furniture) in 2003, up 3.4% over 2002. This gain was much lower than the 8.1% increase in 2002. Low borrowing costs, continued strength in the housing market as well as growth in the number of new or expanded home furnishings and electronics stores helped to sustain growth in this commodity group. Half of the overall gain was a result of a 5.1% increase in sales of home electronics. Home electronics include televisions, cameras, computers and related equipment, as well as software and telephones.

Clothing, footwear and accessories showed the weakest gains since the start of the survey

Annual sales of clothing, footwear and accessories amounted to $27.5 billion in 2003, up 0.9% from 2002, the weakest gain since the start of the survey. Within this group, spending on women's clothing advanced 1.3% while spending on men's and children's clothing was essentially flat. Consumers spent 55 cents of every clothing dollar on women's clothing with only 29 cents on men's clothing and 13 cents on children's.

Fourth quarter 2003: Weakest year-over-year sales growth since the start of the survey

Consumer spending increased for all major commodity groups except two in the fourth quarter of 2003. The strongest year-over-year increase was in health and personal care products.

Consumers spent $84.0 billion, up 1.5% from the same quarter the previous year. This was the weakest year-over-year growth since the start of the survey.

Contributing to the weak sales growth was a 3.0% decline in motor vehicles parts and services compared with the fourth quarter of 2002, and a 3.8% drop in automotive fuels, oils and additives. Prices at the pump fell 3.2% during the same period. As well, year-over-year clothing sales rose a lacklustre 1.4% in the fourth quarter of 2003.

Year-over-year sales of health and personal care products were up 7.1% in the fourth quarter. This was the strongest growth of the major commodity groupings. Within this category, sales of prescription drugs advanced 7.5% and over-the-counter drugs and vitamins were up 5.7%.

Sales of home furnishings and electronics advanced 3.8% in the fourth quarter of 2003. Half of this increase was because of sales of electronics, which were up 5.6%. Sales of cameras (digital and still) were strong, up 11.0%, likely boosted by the increased popularity of digital cameras for Christmas. Indoor furniture sales showed an increase of 4.4%. After strong growth in the previous quarter, sales of major appliances increased moderately, up 4.9% over the fourth quarter of 2002. Sales in the home furnishings subcategory (floor coverings, draperies, bedding and home decorating products) were up 1.6%.

Available on CANSIM: table 080-0010.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 2008.

For general information or to order data, contact Client Services (1-877-421-3067; 613-951-3549; *retailinfo@statcan.ca*). To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Ruth Barnes (613-951-6190), Distributive Trades Division.

□

Annual sales by commodity, all retail stores

	2001	2002	2003	2001 to 2002	2002 to 2003
	$ millions			% change	
Commodity					
Food and beverages	64,026	66,425	69,306	3.7	4.3
Health and personal care products	21,152	23,132	24,615	9.4	6.4
Clothing, footwear and accessories	26,722	27,229	27,462	1.9	0.9
Home furnishings and electronics	22,667	24,501	25,338	8.1	3.4
Motor vehicles, parts and services	83,735	89,979	89,879	7.5	-0.1
Automotive fuels, oils and additives	22,028	22,680	24,206	3.0	6.7
All other goods and services	49,826	53,768	56,257	7.9	4.6
Total	**290,155**	**307,714**	**317,063**	**6.1**	**3.0**

Quarterly sales by commodity, all retail stores

	Fourth quarter 2002[r]	Third quarter 2003[r]	Fourth quarter 2003[p]	Fourth quarter 2002 to fourth quarter 2003
	unadjusted			
	$ millions			% change
Commodity				
Food and beverages	17,645	17,797	18,364	4.1
Health and personal care products	6,294	6,100	6,739	7.1
Clothing, footwear and accessories	8,924	6,688	9,052	1.4
Home furnishings and electronics	7,755	6,366	8,048	3.8
Motor vehicles, parts and services	21,070	23,741	20,433	-3.0
Automotive fuels, oils and additives	6,024	6,425	5,798	-3.8
All other goods and services	14,984	14,559	15,532	3.7
Total	**82,697**	**81,677**	**83,966**	**1.5**

r *Revised data.*
p *Preliminary data.*

■

OTHER RELEASES

Study: Long-term unemployment
1976 to 2003

According to a new study, long-term unemployment—52 consecutive weeks or more without work—surged during the recessions of the early 1980s and 1990s, but has since fallen significantly.

Long-term unemployment peaked in 1994 when one of every six unemployed individuals, roughly 17% of Canada's jobless, went a year or longer without working. By 2003, the incidence had receded considerably. Still, 10% of the nation's unemployed hadn't worked in at least a year.

The groups most likely to be affected by long-term unemployment were men, older workers, people with less education, and individuals living in Quebec and British Columbia.

Almost 13% of the unemployed in British Columbia and 12% in Quebec were hit by long-term unemployment in 2003.

Older workers, those aged 45 and over, posted the highest incidence. In 2003, 17% of the unemployed in this age group hadn't worked in a year or more, compared with 10% of people aged 25 to 44 and only 3% of those aged 15 to 24.

The incidence for men in 2003 was 11%, compared with 8% for women. This gap may be due in part to the greater participation of men in the labour market, but may also be the result of differences in industries and types of work. For example, the turnover rate is greater for women.

Long-term unemployment generally remains high for several years during economic recoveries, even though the unemployment rate rapidly adjusts downward. For example, after the recession of the early 1990s, Canada's unemployment rate peaked in 1993 at 11.4%, while long-term unemployment didn't peak until a year later.

This suggests that the last workers to be laid off are generally the first to return to work when the economic situation improves. In contrast, people who have been unemployed for some time, along with less-skilled workers, tend to represent a larger proportion of the unemployed population.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3701.

The article entitled "Sidelined in the labour market" is available in the April 2004 online issue of *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, Vol. 5, no. 4 (75-001-XIE, $6/$52). See *How to order products*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Vincent Dubé (613-951-7031; *vincent.dubé@statcan.ca*), Transportation Division. ■

Stocks of frozen poultry meat
April 1, 2004 (preliminary)

Stocks of frozen poultry meat in cold storage on April 1 totalled 47 998 metric tonnes, down 10.4% from April 1, 2003.

Available on CANSIM: tables 003-0023 and 003-0024.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3425.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Sandy Gielfeldt (613-951-2505; *Sandy.Gielfeldt@statcan.ca*), Agriculture Division. ■

Primary Iron and Steel
February 2004

Data on primary iron and steel for February are now available.

Available on CANSIM: table 303-0010.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers, including related surveys, 2106, 2116 and 2184.

The February 2004 issue of *Primary Iron and Steel*, Vol. 59, no. 2 (41-001-XIB, $6/$51) is now available. See *How to order products*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact the dissemination officer (1-866-873-8789; 613-951-9497; *manufact@statcan.ca*), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

2001 Census topic-based tabulations

An additional topic-based tabulation for the "Canada's Workforce: Paid Work" topic at the Canada, provinces, territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations levels of geography, is available online at no cost.

From the *Census* page, choose *Data*, then *Topic-based Tabulations*.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3901.

For more information, contact the nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre. ■

NEW PRODUCTS

Primary Iron and Steel, February 2004, Vol. 59, no. 2
Catalogue number 41-001-XIB ($6/$51).

Imports by Commodity, February 2004, Vol. 61, no. 2
Catalogue number 65-007-XMB ($40/$387).

Imports by Commodity, February 2004, Vol. 61, no. 2
Catalogue number 65-007-XPB ($84/$828).

Perspectives on Labour and Income, April 2004, Vol. 5, no. 4
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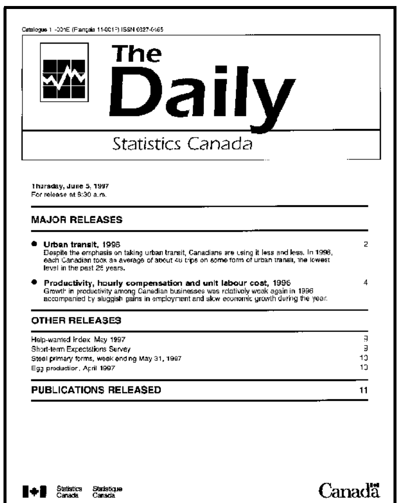
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Thursday, June 5, 1997
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MAJOR RELEASES

- **Urban transit, 1996** 2
Despite the emphasis on taking urban transit, Canadians are using it less and less. In 1996, each Canadian took an average of about 46 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 relatively weak again in 1996 accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow economic growth during the year.

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