



The Daily

Statistics Canada

Wednesday, May 11, 2005

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Major releases

- **Canadian international merchandise trade, March 2005**

Canada's merchandise trade with the world remained relatively stable in March as imports stayed flat and declines in automotive products and industrial goods and materials dampened export growth. The merchandise trade surplus edged up \$80 million from February's revised figure to \$4.2 billion.

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 - **Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, 2003**

The challenge to improve literacy performance among Canadians is far from over, according to the first round of a major new survey. As in 1994, a significant number of Canadian adults have low-level literacy skills which may have an impact on their participation in the economy and in society.

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Major releases

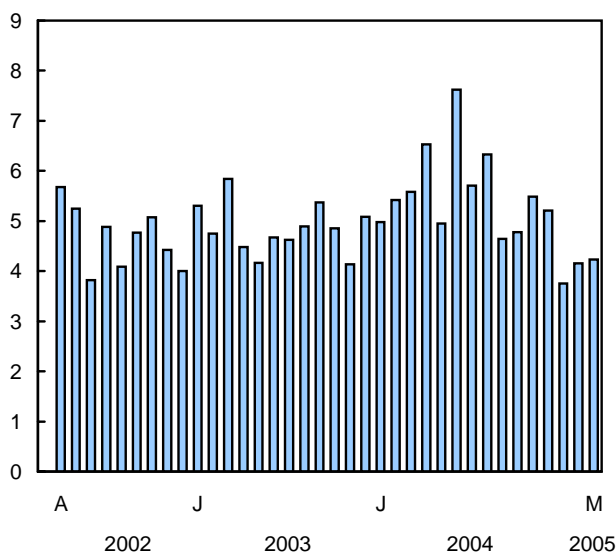
Canadian international merchandise trade

March 2005

Canada's merchandise trade with the world remained relatively stable in March as imports stayed flat and declines in automotive products and industrial goods and materials dampened export growth.

Trade balance

\$ billions



Exports managed a marginal 0.2% increase to \$35.8 billion, led by gains in energy products and machinery and equipment. Imports remained unchanged at just over \$31.5 billion.

As a result, the nation's merchandise trade surplus edged up \$80 million from February's revised figure to \$4.2 billion.

Trade slipped on both fronts with the United States, while it rose slightly with the rest of the world. The trade surplus with the United States held steady at \$8.1 billion, and the trade deficit with all other trading partners remained at \$3.9 billion.

Both exports and imports of automotive products fell in March, as soaring gasoline prices apparently slowed consumer traffic in showrooms across North America.

Exports of automotive products fell 7.6% to \$6.9 billion while imports of automotive products

Note to readers

Merchandise trade is one component of the current account of Canada's balance of payments, which also includes trade in services.

Revisions

In general, merchandise trade data are revised on an ongoing basis for each month of the current year. Customs basis data are revised for the previous data year each quarter.

Factors influencing revisions include late receipt of import and export documentation, incorrect information on customs forms, replacement of estimates with actual figures, changes in classification of merchandise based on more current information, and changes to seasonal adjustment factors.

Revised data are available in the appropriate CANSIM tables.

declined 4.0% to \$6.1 billion. Both of these values were the lowest since January 2004, and export levels were the third lowest since August 1998.

Big gain in energy exports

Energy exports recorded their biggest gain in three months in March. Exports of energy products increased 10.6% to \$6.2 billion, driven by an 11.6% rise in natural gas as well as gains in crude petroleum (+7.5%) and other energy products (+13.6%).

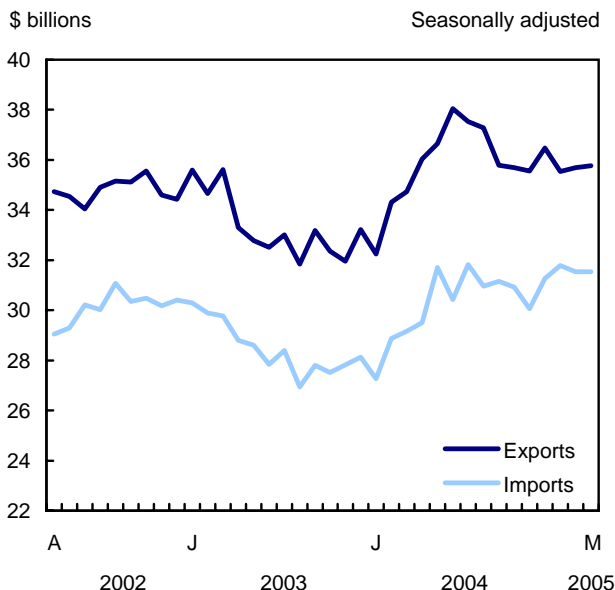
An increase in volumes accounted for the gain in crude petroleum exports while an equal mix of higher volumes and higher prices explained the jump in natural gas exports. Exports of petroleum and coal grew 13.3% to \$1.1 billion as coal prices moved upward.

Machinery and equipment exports advanced 3.6% in March, the third consecutive monthly increase. After falling during the latter half of 2004, this sector has regained ground, returning to August 2004 levels of \$7.9 billion.

A 10.0% decline in wheat exports led the drop in exports of agricultural and fishing products, which dropped 2.3% to \$2.4 billion. Falling prices accounted for approximately two-thirds of the wheat decrease.

Exports of industrial goods and materials fell from February's record-high of \$6.9 billion to \$6.7 billion. Chemicals, plastics and fertilizers and metal ores were the main contributors to the drop.

Exports of metals and alloys went against the grain, rising 1.1% in March. Exports of nickel and alloys as well as zinc and alloys rose considerably, primarily as a result of China's growing demand for these materials.

Exports and imports**Rising business investment fuelling imports of machinery and equipment**

A combination of higher corporate profits and low interest rates has fuelled business investment in recent months. Machinery and equipment imports, which reached \$9.0 billion in March, have risen for four consecutive months. Imports in the machinery and equipment sector are 7.5% higher than March 2004.

Growth in the oil and gas industry coupled with expansion in other mining activities in Canada has meant much higher imports of other industrial machinery and excavating machinery, in particular.

Imports of other industrial machinery have been strong in the first three months of 2005, hitting \$1.4 billion in March, 14.6% higher than a year ago. Excavating machinery imports have been on the rise since September, with the exception of a slight dip in March.

Imports of industrial goods and materials recorded a 0.8% increase over February, led by gains in metals and metal ores. Imports of metals and metal ores hit a record-high in March, climbing to \$2.1 billion. All commodity groups in this sub-sector contributed to the growth, with the exception of other iron and steel products, which fell 2.8% from their February high.

Higher imports of crude petroleum (+7.9%) and other energy products (+14.7%) contributed to rising imports of energy products.

Imports of agricultural and fishing products fell 2.1% to \$1.8 billion, \$38 million below January's high. Out of 16 major groups, 11 declined. Imports of fresh vegetables were up in February and March (+17.5% combined) as grocery retailers plumped up their offerings.

As of January 1, 2005, the 10-year implementation period of the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing came to a close.

In the first quarter of 2005, imports of textile fabricated materials, which include broad woven fabric, yarns, and threads, were up only slightly over the first three months of 2004. Textile imports in 2005 were below those recorded in 2003.

Imports of apparel and apparel accessories edged up 0.3% in March, following a 9.7% increase in February. First quarter 2005 imports were up 14.7% over the first three months of 2004.

For more information on the textile and clothing industries, consult the article *Stretching or Shrinking? The Textile and Clothing Industries in Canada* that is available free online (11-621-MIE2005022).

Available on CANSIM: tables 228-0001 to 228-0003 and 228-0033 to 228-0046.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers, including related surveys, 2201, 2202 and 2203.

The March 2005 issue of *Canadian International Merchandise Trade*, Vol. 59, no. 3 (65-001-XIB, \$15/\$151) is now available. See *How to order products*. The publication includes tables by commodity and country on a customs basis. Current account data (which incorporate merchandise trade statistics, service transactions, investment income and transfers) are available quarterly in *Canada's Balance of International Payments* (67-001-XIE, \$32/\$100).

Merchandise trade data are available in PDF format on the morning of release.

For more information on products and services, contact Anne Couillard, (1-800-294-5583; 613-951-6867). To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Diana Wyman (613-951-3116), International Trade Division.

□

Merchandise trade

	February 2005 ^r	March 2005	February to March 2005	March 2004 to March 2005	January to March 2004	January to March 2005	January - March 2004 to January - March 2005
seasonally adjusted, \$ current							
	\$ millions		% change		\$ millions		% change
Principal trading partners							
Exports							
United States	29,246	29,070	-0.6	2.3	82,720	87,401	5.7
Japan	852	837	-1.8	4.4	2,381	2,460	3.3
European Union	2,206	2,208	0.1	12.1	6,232	6,627	6.3
Other OECD countries ¹	1,011	1,233	22.0	-5.7	3,486	3,344	-4.1
All other countries	2,370	2,416	1.9	7.2	6,467	7,165	10.8
Total	35,684	35,763	0.2	2.9	101,287	106,995	5.6
Imports							
United States	21,192	20,979	-1.0	3.3	59,582	63,593	6.7
Japan	850	922	8.5	15.1	2,454	2,824	15.1
European Union	3,084	3,324	7.8	10.0	8,442	9,627	14.0
Other OECD countries ¹	1,970	1,819	-7.7	8.2	5,145	5,643	9.7
All other countries	4,433	4,484	1.2	34.5	9,680	13,164	36.0
Total	31,528	31,528	0.0	8.1	85,302	94,851	11.2
Balance							
United States	8,054	8,091	...	...	23,138	23,808	...
Japan	2	-85	...	...	-73	-364	...
European Union	-878	-1,116	...	...	-2,210	-3,000	...
Other OECD countries ¹	-959	-586	...	...	-1,659	-2,299	...
All other countries	-2,063	-2,068	...	...	-3,213	-5,999	...
Total	4,156	4,235	...	...	15,985	12,144	...
Principal commodity groupings							
Exports							
Agricultural and fishing products	2,436	2,380	-2.3	-6.6	7,457	7,218	-3.2
Energy products	5,560	6,150	10.6	22.3	15,246	17,320	13.6
Forestry products	3,166	3,156	-0.3	-3.0	9,179	9,420	2.6
Industrial goods and materials	6,947	6,732	-3.1	9.4	18,015	20,534	14.0
Machinery and equipment	7,622	7,896	3.6	3.1	22,229	23,073	3.8
Automotive products	7,438	6,872	-7.6	-10.3	21,844	21,724	-0.5
Other consumer goods	1,463	1,424	-2.7	-2.9	4,285	4,339	1.3
Special transactions trade ²	663	663	0.0	3.0	1,850	2,004	8.3
Other balance of payments adjustments	389	490	26.0	51.2	1,182	1,361	15.1
Imports							
Agricultural and fishing products	1,826	1,788	-2.1	0.1	5,224	5,517	5.6
Energy products	2,507	2,764	10.3	48.0	5,171	7,864	52.1
Forestry products	269	261	-3.0	3.6	727	793	9.1
Industrial goods and materials	6,416	6,466	0.8	13.3	16,737	19,461	16.3
Machinery and equipment	8,963	8,976	0.1	7.5	24,711	26,733	8.2
Automotive products	6,352	6,098	-4.0	-4.2	18,470	19,065	3.2
Other consumer goods	4,125	4,128	0.1	7.1	11,420	12,286	7.6
Special transactions trade ²	464	449	-3.2	-2.6	1,282	1,321	3.0
Other balance of payments adjustments	604	598	-1.0	15.9	1,562	1,807	15.7

^r Revised figures.

1. Includes Australia, Canada, Iceland, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, Switzerland and Turkey.

2. These are mainly low valued transactions, value of repairs to equipment, and goods returned to country of origin.

... Figures not appropriate or not applicable.

Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey

2003

The challenge to improve literacy performance among Canadians is far from over, according to the first round of a major new survey that measured literacy skills among individuals aged 16 to 65 in Canada and six other countries in 2003.

As in 1994, a significant number of Canadian adults had low-level literacy skills which may have had an impact on their participation in society and in the economy.

The Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey tested more than 23,000 Canadians in 2003 on their skills proficiency in four scales: prose, document, numeracy and problem-solving. Skills were rated on the basis of levels one to five, that is, lowest to highest. This report presents an initial set of findings covering Canada, Bermuda, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, the United States and the Mexican State of Nuevo Leon.

It found that the average literacy score for Canadians had not changed significantly during the nine-year period since the last major survey was conducted in 1994.

However, there was a noticeable positive change in average scores among the 5% of adults with the lowest literacy scores. Overall, the survey found a slight decline in the inequality gap between adults with the lowest literacy levels, and those with the highest.

In Canada, about 58% of adults aged 16 to 65 possessed skills in the top three literacy levels on the prose scale, indicating that they could meet most everyday reading requirements.

This result was in line with the findings of the International Adult Literacy Survey conducted in 1994. The two surveys employed the same general methodology. The prose scale tested the ability of participants to understand and use information contained in various types of written material.

At the same time, some 15% of Canadians, about one out of every seven, scored in level one, the lowest performance level. This was down slightly from 17% in 1994. Regardless of the statistical significance associated with this drop, it still means that a large number of adults, well over three million Canadians aged 16 to 65, have problems dealing with printed materials and most likely identify themselves as people who have difficulty reading.

Among the countries that chose to participate in the 2003 survey, Canada ranked roughly in the middle. On the prose scale, residents of only two countries (Norway and Bermuda) performed better than Canada. Adults in the United States performed slightly less well than Canadians on all scales. Norway performed highest on all four scales. The importance of literacy and other skills are demonstrated when we notice

Note to readers

The Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALL) study is a joint project of the Government of Canada, the US National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The ALL survey builds on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), the world's first internationally comparative survey of adult skills. IALS was undertaken in three rounds of data collection between 1994 and 1998. This new study presents the international results of the first round of data collection in the ALL survey. A Canadian National report that will present provincial results and specific national findings will be released in the Fall of 2005.

Participating countries were responsible for domestic implementation, adherence to international standards and guidelines, domestic analysis and dissemination. They also contributed financially to offset costs of implementing the study at the international level.

As the international coordinator of the project, Statistics Canada was responsible for overall management and quality assurance and, in co-operation with the OECD and various other international organizations, for analysis and dissemination of the study findings at the international level.

The ALL survey measured skills in four domains. Two of them, prose (continuous text such as the type found in books and newspaper articles) and document literacy (such as graphs, charts and other written information of a discontinuous nature), were defined and measured in the same manner as in the IALS survey.

The ALL survey added two new domains. The first was numeracy, which expanded the quantitative measure of the 1994 IALS by adding mathematical concepts and, in some instances, removing the textual aspect of the measure. The second was problem-solving, or analytical reasoning.

Skills were rated on a continuous scale from 0 to 500 points and were reported on the basis of five cognitive levels. Due to a lack of respondents scoring at level 5, levels 4 and 5 appear together for the prose, document and numeracy scale. The new problem-solving domain has four theoretical levels, so the regrouping was not required.

In all four domains, level one contains respondents displaying the lowest level of ability, while level 4/5 (or level 4 for problem solving) contains those with the highest level of ability.

that, in all participating countries, the study found a significant wage return for higher skill levels.

In Canada, the survey also showed that in general young people perform better than older Canadians. However, after their parents' education was taken into account, the survey seemed to show an apparent decline in literacy scores among young people aged 16 to 25 between 1994 and 2003. This is particularly evident among young people whose parents had low levels of education.

Canada in the middle of the pack

Results from the 2003 survey confirmed findings from the earlier IALS that many adults have difficulty coping with the unfamiliar literacy and numeracy demands of modern life and work. Although relative

proportions varied, there were significant numbers of adults with low skills in all nations surveyed.

Depending on the country, between one-third and two-thirds of adult populations did not attain the third of five skill levels. This is considered by many experts as a suitable minimum level for coping with the increasing demands of our knowledge society and information economy.

In general, the average performance of Canadian adults was in the middle of the pack on all four scales. In the prose scale, Canadians were third behind Norway and Bermuda; in document comprehension (reading graphs and charts), second only to Norway; in numeracy, third behind Switzerland and Norway; and in problem-solving, third behind Norway and Switzerland.

Norway was the only country to have 60% or more of its adult population performing at the three highest levels on each of the prose, document and numeracy scales. In contrast, about 58% of Canadians performed at these levels on the prose and document scales, and only 50% of Canadians reached level 3 on the numeracy scale.

Both Canadians and Americans performed relatively better in prose and document skills than they did in numeracy. The numeracy scale encompassed a broad range of mathematical problems, from simple counting to integrating multiple types of mathematical information.

Good literacy skills pay off

Literacy skills had a large impact on earnings in all participating countries. However, the extent to which economic rewards were attributable to either skill or education was mixed, and it varied from country to country.

In Bermuda and Italy, the returns to literacy skills overshadowed the impact of education. After accounting for individual skills, wage returns to education were either zero or negative. This suggests that adults with additional years of schooling who do not display a commensurate level of skill are not rewarded for their additional schooling in the labour market.

In Canada and the United States, it appeared that the labour market rewarded both the skills measured in the ALL survey and additional schooling separately.

Finally, in Norway, the findings indicated that both education and skills are valued, but there was a higher relative return accruing to skills. In fact, the labour market returns to numeracy skills overshadowed the return to education. Hence, if well-educated adults were lacking in numeracy skills, they derived no benefit from any additional years of schooling

In all participating countries (except Bermuda where unemployment is virtually non-existent), among adults who experience unemployment, those who score at higher levels on the document literacy scale had a higher likelihood of re-entering employment sooner.

For example, after 16 weeks of unemployment, people who scored at Levels 3 and Levels 4/5, that is, the highest levels, had a 60% chance of exiting unemployment. This increased to 70% after 48 weeks of unemployment.

In contrast, adults who scored at the lowest levels, 1 and 2, only had a 50% chance of finding a job, even after 52 weeks of unemployment. The results were similar for all the skill domains measured in the ALL survey.

Apparent decline in literacy scores among Canadian youth

The 2003 survey found that the parents' level of education had a significant impact on the literacy scores of their children. This was true in all countries, and the study shows that it has significant implications for the skills distribution of youth everywhere.

In Canada, young people whose parents had completed 12 years of schooling scored 24 points higher than young people whose parents only completed eight years. In contrast, the difference was only 13 points in Norway, which was most successful at reducing the disadvantages in skills typically associated with low levels of parental education.

It should be noted that not all young people whose parents had low levels of education had low literacy scores. In some countries, there were many youth who scored at the highest levels of literacy despite their parents' relatively low levels of education. This was especially the case in Canada and Norway.

At the same time, survey results suggest that Canadian youth aged 16 to 25 who had parents with little or no education scored lower on average in 2003 than similar youth in 1994. Nevertheless, since there are fewer youth with low educated parents today than there were nine years ago, the overall performance of youth in Canada as a whole is relatively stable.

In contrast, in Norway and the United States, there was little change in the performance of young people during the nine-year period regardless of parental education. Norway had the least inequality in literacy skills among young people with different parental backgrounds, while the United States had the largest.

Literacy gap between technology users and non-users

In general, literacy is becoming increasingly important as more information is transmitted and shared through information and communications technologies than ever before.

The 2003 survey found that people who use computers consistently scored higher on average on the prose literacy scale than those who didn't. This "literacy gap" occurred in all seven nations.

The distribution of different profiles in literacy and computer use differs from nation to nation. For example, in Italy, Switzerland and the United States, the largest group is comprised of adults with a combined profile of low literacy and low-intensity computer use.

Conversely, in Canada, Norway and Bermuda, the largest group consists of users with medium to high literacy skills and low-intensity computer use.

The smallest group in all countries except Italy consists of individuals with high computer use and low literacy skills.

The survey also found that individuals with combined high literacy skills and computer use were more likely to have high earnings.

In Canada, respondents who had medium to high literacy skills, and who were high-intensity computer users, were five times more likely to be in the top 25% of personal income earners than respondents who had low literacy levels and used computers infrequently.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 4406.

The report *Learning a Living: First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, 2003* (89-603-XWE, free) is now available online. From the *Our products and services* page, under *Browse our Internet publications*, choose *Free*, then *Education*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Client Services (1-800-307-3382; 613-951-7608; fax: 613-951-9040; educationstats@statcan.ca), Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics. ■

Other releases

Biotechnology spending by the federal government

2003/04

The federal government spent \$746 million on biotechnology in the fiscal year 2003/04, half of which went to the higher education sector.

This federal spending was up 10.1% from \$678 million in the previous year. Spending on biotechnology represented 8% of all federal spending on science and technology (S&T).

The vast majority (96%) of biotechnology spending was devoted to research and development.

In 2003/04, 67% of biotechnology S&T activities were performed outside the federal government. The largest recipient was the higher education sector, which got \$379 million, or 50% of the total.

A total of 1,708 full-time equivalent person-years were devoted to biotechnology S&T activities in 2003/04 in the federal government. This represented 5% of the total federal S&T full-time equivalent.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 4212.

The service bulletin *Science Statistics: Biotechnology Scientific Activities in Federal Government Departments and Agencies, 2003/04*, Vol. 29, no. 3 (88-001-XIE, \$7/\$64) is now available. See *How to order products*.

For more information, or to enquire about the methods, concepts or data quality of this release, contact Lloyd Lizotte, (613-951-2188; lloyd.lizotte@statcan.ca) or Antoine Rose (613-951-9919; antoine.rose@statcan.ca), Science, Innovation and Electronic Information Division. ■

Export and import price indexes

March 2005

Current- and fixed-weighted export and import price indexes (1997=100) on a balance of payments basis are now available. Price indexes are listed from January 1997 to March 2005 for the five commodity sections and the major commodity groups (62 exports and 61 imports).

Current- and fixed-weighted US price indexes (1997=100) are also available on a customs basis. Price indexes are listed from January 1997 to March 2005. Included with the US commodity indexes are the 10 all-countries and US-only Standard International Trade Classification section indexes.

Indexes for the five commodity sections and the major commodity groups are also available now on a customs basis.

Available on CANSIM: tables 228-0001 to 228-0003 and 228-0033 to 228-0046.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers, including related surveys, 2201, 2202 and 2203.

The March 2005 issue of *Canadian International Merchandise Trade*, Vol. 59, no. 3 (65-001-XIB, \$15/\$151) 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 Anne Couillard (1-800-294-5583; 613-951-9647), International Trade Division. ■

Commercial Software Price Index

March 2005

The Commercial Software Price Index (CSPI) is a monthly series measuring the change in the purchase price of pre-packaged software typically bought by businesses and governments. The CSPI (2001=100) for March was 77.2, down 0.8% from February.

This index is available at the Canada level only.

Available on CANSIM: table 331-0003.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 5068.

For more information on these indexes, contact Client Services (1-866-230-2248; 613-951-9606; infounit@statcan.ca). To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Fred Barzyk (613-951-2493; fred.barzyk@statcan.ca), Prices Division. ■

New products

Canadian International Merchandise Trade,
March 2005, Vol. 59, no. 3
Catalogue number **65-001-XIB** (\$15/\$151).

All prices are in Canadian dollars and exclude sales tax. Additional shipping charges apply for delivery outside Canada.

Science Statistics, Vol. 29, no. 3
Catalogue number **88-001-XIE** (\$7/\$64).

Catalogue numbers with an -XWE, -XIB or an -XIE extension are Internet versions; those with -XMB or -XME are microfiche; -XPB or -XPE are paper versions; -XDB or -XDE are electronic versions on diskette and -XCB or -XCE are electronic versions on compact disc.

Learning a Living: First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, 2003
Catalogue number **89-603-XWE**
(free).

How to order products

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
MAJOR RELEASES

- **Urban transit, 1995** 2
Change the statistics on taking urban transit, Canadians are using it less and less. In 1995, each Canadian took an average of about 40 trips on some form of urban transit, the lowest level in the past 25 years.
- **Productivity, hourly compensation and unit labour cost, 1995** 4
Growth in productivity among Canadian businesses was noticeably weak again in 1995, accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow economic growth during the year.

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- **Short-term Economic Survey** 3
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PUBLICATIONS RELEASED 11

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Statistics Canada's official release bulletin

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