



Infomat

A Weekly Review

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OVERVIEW

◆ GDP advances, but at a slower pace

The economy advanced marginally in February. Gross domestic product grew 0.1% on weaker demand for Canadian produced goods.

◆ Crude oil prices rebound

Driven by a spike in crude oil prices, the Raw Materials Price Index gained 5.5% in March. That was the index's largest monthly increase in almost nine years.

◆ Stronger U.S. dollar lifts manufacturers' prices

Manufacturers' prices were up 0.8% in March. Overall, the Canada-U.S. exchange rate lifted prices significantly as the U.S. dollar strengthened.

◆ Growth in weekly earnings differs markedly by industry

In February, the annual growth in average weekly earnings differed markedly by industry. The earnings growth was strongest for employees working for real estate and insurance agencies.

◆ Number of EI recipients edges up

After six months of decline, the number of Canadians receiving employment insurance benefits edged up in February by 1.0%.

◆ Employer pension plans reflect declining stock prices

In the third quarter of 1998, the market value of the assets in trustee pension funds fell nearly 9%. This was the largest quarterly decline in the six years that this information has been available.

◆ Internet use by households growing rapidly

Canadians have been making much more use of the Internet as a means of communication, whether it is from a computer in the home, workplace, school or library.

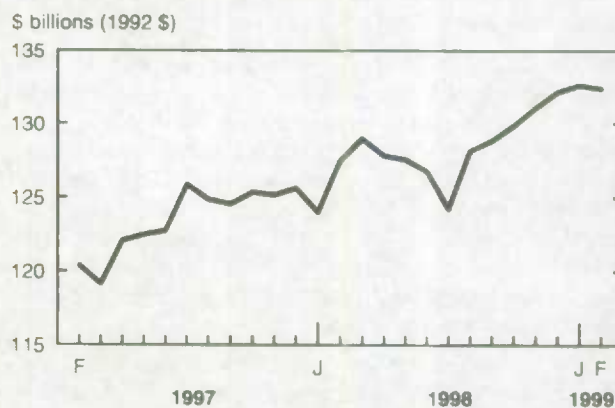
GDP advances, but at a slower pace

The economy advanced marginally in February. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew 0.1% on weaker demand for Canadian produced goods. The weaker demand was due to lower merchandise exports and a modest decline in retail sales.

After seven months of steady gains, manufacturing output slipped 0.2% in February. Declines in manufacturing were led by a 2.1% drop in the production of motor vehicles, in part due to a temporary slowdown at Ford assembly plants. This setback still left the output level nearly 20% higher than it was in February 1998, reflecting the new production capacity that was introduced in the fourth quarter.

A 1.8% cut in the fabrication of wood products can be attributed to the end of the 1998-99 quota period. Many sawmills had reached their tariff-free limits for shipments to the United States. Reduced output in the forestry industry (-2.3%) and a drop in residential building construction (-1.2%) also contributed to February's weakness. Output of the forestry industry fell mainly due to unusually heavy snowfall in British Columbia, which hampered logging operations. The decline in residential building was offset by gains in non-residential and engineering construction (+0.7%), so that the overall construction industry inched ahead 0.1%.

Manufacturing output



... GDP advances, but at a slower pace

Cutbacks in the production of food, beverages, tobacco, clothing, textiles and rubber products also contributed to the decline. The manufacturing of machinery, however, was up sharply (+2.6%) after plummeting in January. Despite this gain, output levels remained down from the February 1998 level by about 15%.

Following months of lacklustre performance due to weak commodity prices, significant gains were made in February at both metal (+1.0%) and non-metal mines (+11.7%). All types of metal mines advanced except for iron mining, which was outflanked by imports of low-cost iron products. The jump in non-metal mining was due to a surge in potash production (+15.6%), as well as to the developing diamond mines in the Northwest Territories. Production of crude oil and natural gas declined 1.2%, meanwhile, as crude oil exports to the United States fell. Mining services, which include drilling and rigging, fell 3.4% after three consecutive monthly increases.

The service industries provided the lift to GDP in February. Communications services advanced 1.3%, spurred by the ongoing growth in long distance and cell phone use. This segment's monthly gain of 1.6% left February output 17% higher than a year earlier. Business services continued to expand, advancing 0.7%. As in previous months, computer services (+2.1%) accounted for most of the increase. Compared with February 1998, the output of this service industry was up more than 20%.

Wholesale trade, which slumped in January, eased back with a gain of 0.8%. The strength was concentrated in higher sales of

Note to readers

The gross domestic product (GDP) of an industry is the value added when labour and capital transform inputs purchased from other producers into outputs. Monthly GDP by industry is valued at 1992 prices. The estimates presented here are seasonally adjusted at annual rates.

computer equipment (+2.6%). Retail sales, after a post-Christmas shopping spree, slipped in February by 0.3%, with the largest sales decline posted by department stores (-2.4%). Auto dealers, however, had a good month in February. Sales were up 1.5%, bolstered by company incentives to improve market share.

After slipping in January, the output of financial services declined 0.5%. This weakness is largely due to a reduced volume of activity in securities trading. Rotating strikes by more than 13,000 federal public servants and work stoppages in various medical facilities in British Columbia contributed to a 0.2% drop in the GDP of the non-business sector.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 4677-4681.

The February 1999 issue of *Gross domestic product by industry* (15-001-XPB, \$15/\$145) will be released shortly. For analytical information, contact Richard Evans (613-951-9145; evanric@statcan.ca). For information about purchasing data, contact Kim Lauzon (613-951-9417; IMAD@statcan.ca), Industry Measures and Analysis Division.

Crude oil prices rebound

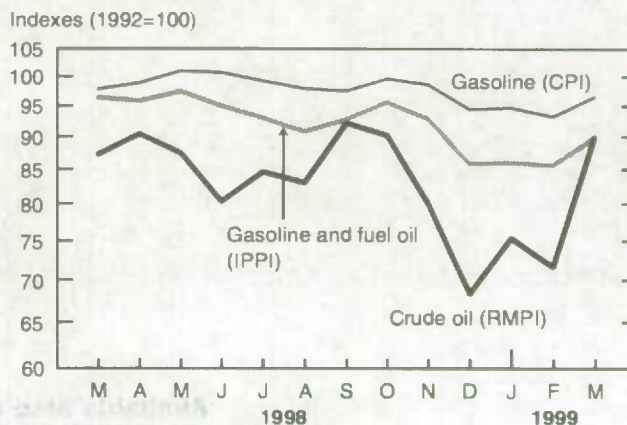
Driven by a spike in crude oil prices, the Raw Materials Price Index gained 5.5% in March. That was the index's largest monthly increase in almost nine years. Higher prices for crude oil, wood and vegetable products were marginally offset by lower prices for animal products, ferrous materials and non-ferrous metals. Despite March's upturn, raw material prices remained 2.9% lower than a year earlier. If mineral fuels (90% of which is crude oil) were excluded from the index, raw material prices would have risen only 0.3% in March, and the 12-month change would have been -5.3%.

Mineral fuel prices jumped 22.3% in March, the result of a 25.6% spike in crude oil prices. Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil producer, promised to reduce supply by 12.0% in April. This helped to legitimise attempts by oil producers to reduce output by 2.7%. March's price spike brought about the first positive 12-month change in crude oil prices (+3.1%) in two years. By contrast, coal prices fell in March by 3.4%, whereas natural gas prices remained unchanged. Overall, in the 12 months to March, mineral fuel prices grew 4.0%, natural gas prices climbed 21.0% and coal prices remained unchanged.

Meanwhile, the robust housing market in the United States boosted wood prices in March by 1.6%. Prices advanced for both logs (+2.0%) and pulpwood (+0.3). On a yearly basis, wood prices remained 1.6% lower than in March 1998, with log prices and pulpwood prices down 1.5% and 2.0% respectively. The lumber industry has suffered from Asia's economic downturn, and quotas have limited exports to the United States.

Vegetable product prices gained 1.4%, mainly on the strength of canola (+6.9%), soybeans (+5.6%) and corn (+1.4%). Prices of canola and soybeans both found support in the growing export markets, while corn prices rose as farmers held back inventories. Wheat prices increased 0.5% due to talk of dry weather in U.S. growing regions, news of large purchases that were recently completed, and new wheat deals in the offing. Unrefined sugar prices did not fare as well in March, dropping 3.9%. Larger Brazilian exports of sugar, smaller Russian imports, and new import duties from India all put downward pressure on sugar prices. In contrast to the monthly picture, vegetable product

Crude oil, gasoline and fuel oil prices



(continued on page 3)

... Crude oil prices rebound

prices dropped 13.4% on a yearly basis. The overall price drop was attributable to ideal growing conditions and subsiding demand. Prices declined for coffee, canola, corn, soybeans, unrefined sugar and wheat.

The non-ferrous metals slipped in price by 0.1%. Copper concentrate prices dropped 5.1% on news of stagnant demand in Japan. A substantial buildup of copper inventories worldwide is a reflection of the economic troubles in Asia. Aluminum material prices fell in March for a sixth straight month. The 1.2% decline was attributed to rising inventories and to Brazil's economic downturn. By contrast, nickel prices climbed higher for a third consecutive month in March (+11.9%). The rise was attributed to two factors: uncertainty over the startup of an Australian nickel project and concern over plans for extended summer shutdowns in Sudbury. Gold prices rose 2.0% as a stronger yen motivated Japanese buyers of the ore. On a yearly basis, non-ferrous metal prices dropped 10.0%, mainly due to weaker prices for copper concentrates and aluminum materials.

Animal product prices edged down in March by 0.7%. This reflected lower hog prices. Hog prices, which tumbled 66.9% in the second half of 1998, were staging a recovery in January and February. This did not continue into March, however, as prices dropped 9.5%. Overall, the lower hog prices were somewhat dampened by higher prices for cattle (+2.7%) and sheep (+11.0%). Compared with March 1998, animal product prices were down 1.3%. The major contributor was hog prices, which were 21.4% below their March 1998 level.

Ferrous material prices declined 1.4% in March, as higher iron ore prices were undercut by lower prices for iron and steel scrap. On a yearly basis, ferrous metal prices dropped 10.5% in March on account of iron and steel scrap (-21.2%). Iron ore prices remained 5.7% above March 1998 levels.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 1879.

The March 1999 issue of *Industry price indexes* (62-011-XPB, \$22/\$217) will be available at the end of this month. For further information, contact Client Services (613-951-3350; fax (613-951-1539; infounit@statcan.ca), Prices Division.

Stronger U.S. dollar lifts manufacturers' prices

Manufacturers' prices were up 0.8% in March to stand 1.4% above their level of a year earlier. Overall, the Canada-U.S. exchange rate lifted prices significantly in March, as the U.S. dollar strengthened from C\$1.49 in mid-February to C\$1.53 in mid-March. The most notable price increases were for motor vehicles, refined petroleum products, pulp and pulp products, and wood products. The prices of pork products declined significantly.

Exchange-rate effect on industrial prices, March 1999

	12-month change	Excluding exchange-rate effect
		%
Manufacturers' prices		
All goods	1.4	-0.8
Intermediate goods ¹	-0.2	-2.0
First-stage goods ²	-4.0	-6.3
Second-stage goods ³	0.4	-1.3
Finished goods ⁴	3.9	0.0
Food and feeds	1.7	1.5
Capital goods	5.1	1.1
Other finished goods	4.4	0.7
Other prices		
Raw material prices (RMPI)	-2.9	..
Retail prices (CPI)		
Food bought at stores	1.2	..
Goods except food bought at stores	0.6	..
U.S. manufacturers' prices	0.2	..

¹ Used as inputs into industry.

² Used as inputs into basic industries.

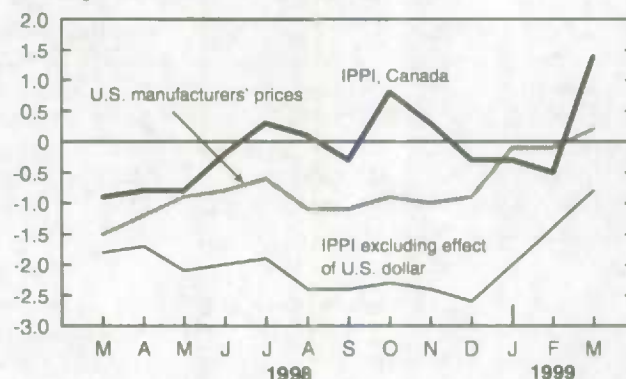
³ Used as inputs into other industries.

⁴ Used for immediate consumption or for capital investment.

.. Figures not available.

Industrial Product Price Index

% change, 12 months



Motor vehicle prices were up 2.1% in March. Chiefly, the increase was due to the rise in the value of the U.S. dollar because about 90% of the vehicles made in Canada are exported, mostly to the United States. Export prices were up for both cars and trucks by 2.2%. Domestic prices declined 0.7% for cars but edged up 0.3% for trucks, as automakers adjusted their incentive programs.

Refined petroleum product prices rose 4.4%. Prices had edged down 0.8% in February. After February's decline, crude oil prices paid by manufacturers jumped 25.6%. At the same time, as shown by the Consumer Price Index, consumers paid 3.5% more for gasoline in March; gasoline prices had declined slightly in February.

Overall, prices for pulp and its products rose 1.5%, mainly due to price increases for pulp (+3.0%) and paper products (+1.7%). Close to half the price rise for pulp was due to the U.S. dollar's rise. By contrast, the U.S. dollar played almost no role in higher paper product prices—mostly boxes, bags and other paper containers.

(continued on page 4)

... Stronger U.S. dollar lifts manufacturers' prices

Wood products generally rose in price from February (+1.6%), with the rise in the value of the U.S. dollar accounting for about half the increase. Notable hikes were seen in prices for softwood lumber (+1.4%), softwood veneer and plywood, (+3.3%) and particleboard and waferboard (+13.9%).

Meat producers saw pork prices drop 11.6% in March. This followed increases in January and February. In February, pork prices were 21.0% above their December 1998 low. March also saw hog prices fall 9.5%.

Among Canada's major trading partners, manufacturers in the United States saw prices edge up 0.2% in March to stand 0.2% higher than they were in March 1998. This was the first time in 18 months that the 12-month change there was positive.

Meanwhile, in Japan, the 12-month change in domestic wholesale prices rose in March to -1.9%. The European Union (EU) is an even larger export market for Canada than Japan. Four G7 members dominate that market. For these countries, the most recent figures for the 12-month change in industrial prices were -1.8% in Italy (February), -2.3% in Germany (March), -3.0% in France (February), and +0.5%, or -0.5% excluding excise taxes, in the United Kingdom (March).

Available on CANSIM: matrices 1870-1878.

The March 1999 issue of Industry price indexes (62-011-XPB, \$22/\$217) will be available at the end of the month. For further information, contact Client Services (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-1539; info@statcan.ca), Prices Division.

Growth in weekly earnings differs markedly by industry

In February, the annual growth in average weekly earnings differed markedly by industry. The earnings growth was strongest for employees working for real estate and insurance agencies (+3.4% since February 1998). This 3.4% increase reflected higher earnings for salaried employees as well as for commissioned salespersons. February's largest annual declines in average weekly earnings were in education (-2.5%) and construction (-3.2%). In the construction industry, the decrease was due to lower hourly wage rates for hourly paid employees, especially in special trade contracting. In February, average weekly earnings in the country as a whole increased by \$1.35 to \$607.97, leaving earnings virtually unchanged from February 1998.

In February, hourly rated employees in all industries worked an average of 31.3 hours per week (including overtime hours). This was unchanged from January. Compared with 12 months earlier, the average hourly earnings of these employees rose by \$0.25 (+1.7%) to \$15.24.

Employment increased in February as employers added 40,000 additional workers to their payrolls. The gains in payroll employment were strongest in the durable goods manufacturing and wholesale trade industries.

Since May 1998, these data on employment, payrolls and hours have been derived from administrative records, which may show a different seasonal pattern than the previous survey data. So it is recommended that these data, particularly the employment data, be used in the context of longer time periods for detailed industry distributions.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 4285-4466, 9438-9452, 9639-9664 and 9899-9911.

The February 1999 issue of Employment, earnings and hours (72-002-XPB, \$32/\$320) presents the month's industry data and other labour market indicators in detail. Custom tabulations of the data are available on demand. For further information, contact Jean Leduc (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; labour@statcan.ca), Labour Division.

Average weekly earnings, all industries, February 1999
Seasonally adjusted

	\$	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
All industries	607.97	0.2	0.1
Logging and forestry	761.30	2.3	-0.9
Mining, quarrying and oil wells	1,123.64	2.9	0.4
Manufacturing	751.67	-0.6	-0.4
Construction	703.86	0.4	-3.2
Transportation and storage	740.51	-0.3	0.8
Communications and other utilities	801.11	-0.3	-0.8
Wholesale trade	658.99	-0.4	-1.1
Retail trade	372.42	0.6	1.9
Finance and insurance	793.36	-0.8	1.3
Real estate and insurance agencies	654.20	0.8	3.4
Business services	694.60	-0.3	2.8
Education-related services	657.66	0.5	-2.5
Health and social services	521.77	0.4	1.0
Accommodation, food and beverage	239.02	0.9	2.8
Public administration	731.46	0.1	-1.1
Miscellaneous services	411.64	0.4	0.7

Number of EI recipients edges up

In February, 528,420 Canadians received the regular benefits of employment insurance, up from January by 1.0%. Increases in the number of beneficiaries in Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Newfoundland were partially offset by decreases in the Yukon, Prince Edward Island, Ontario and Nova Scotia.

From January to February, the total amount paid out as regular benefits increased 1.8% to \$680.4 million. Meanwhile, the number of unemployed persons filing claims fell slightly (-0.9%) to an estimated 231,900.

The number of beneficiaries is a measure of all persons who received employment insurance benefits for the week containing the 15th day of the month. Regular benefit payments is the total of all monies received by individuals for the entire month. These different reference periods must be considered when making data comparisons.

The Employment Insurance Act allows each province or administrative region of Human Resources Development Canada some autonomy in the way renewal claims are handled. Thus, changes from month to month in claims levels may be affected by these differences in provincial/regional administrative procedures.

EI beneficiaries receiving regular benefits, February 1999
Seasonally adjusted

	Beneficiaries	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
Canada	528,420	1.0	-3.7
Newfoundland	34,130	1.4	3.3
Prince Edward Island	8,510	-2.5	-3.9
Nova Scotia	28,090	-1.6	-3.3
New Brunswick	33,820	-1.0	-7.5
Quebec	178,280	0.7	-7.1
Ontario	111,410	-1.6	-14.8
Manitoba	13,620	-0.3	6.7
Saskatchewan	12,780	3.4	36.2
Alberta	38,130	3.2	44.9
British Columbia	66,320	2.3	-0.9
Yukon	1,170	-3.0	-3.3
Northwest Territories	1,220	-0.2	10.1

Available on CANSIM: matrices 26 (series 1.6), 5700-5717 and 5735-5736.

For more information, contact Gilles Groleau (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; labour@statcan.ca), Labour Division.

Employer pension plans reflect declining stock prices

In the third quarter of 1998, the market value of the assets in trustee pension funds fell nearly 9% to \$460 billion, mainly because of declining stock prices. This was the largest quarterly decline in the six years that this information has been available.

However, over the longer term, the value of trustee pension fund assets has grown considerably: Since the third quarter of 1993, their value has climbed 49% after eliminating the effects of inflation. This growth was due to new investment, which stemmed from contributions and re-invested earnings, as well as to gains made in the market value of assets.

In the third quarter, the market value of the funds' stock holdings was down nearly 19%. This drop mirrored the 24% drop in the TSE 300 Composite Index. Stocks currently account for about 40% of the total market value of trustee fund assets. As a result, fluctuations in the stock markets can have a significant effect on the funds' worth. By contrast, the market value of the funds' bond holdings in the third quarter rose marginally (+1%). About 41% of the funds' portfolio is invested in bonds.

Close to 19% of the assets held by trustee pension funds are invested outside Canada. The value of the foreign component of the funds' portfolio fell to \$85 billion, down from the second quarter by 11%. The value of assets invested in Canada declined too, but by only 8% (to \$375 billion). A much larger proportion of foreign assets than Canadian assets are invested in stocks, making the foreign component more vulnerable to market shifts.

Note to readers

Trustee pension funds are a key source of retirement income for many Canadians. These funds hold about two-thirds of the monies in all employer pension plans (also called Registered Pension Plans or RPPs). The remaining third is held in some of the federal or provincial government funds (such as the pension plan for federal public servants) or under insurance company contracts. About 4 million employees or close to four-fifths of all RPP members participate in trustee pension funds.

Fund revenues (contributions plus earnings on investments) were down 35% from the second quarter to \$11.2 billion. This was chiefly due to reduced investment earnings from the sale of stocks. Expenditures were up 26%, to \$7.8 billion. Net income, therefore, was much reduced compared with the previous quarter, tumbling 69% to \$3.5 billion. Large cash withdrawals and losses on the sale of stocks were largely responsible for the increase in expenditures. The main component of expenditures is payments to beneficiaries, which, in the third quarter, amounted to \$4.7 billion.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 5749.

The third quarter of 1998 issue of Quarterly estimates of trustee pension funds (74-001-XPB, \$19/\$62) is now available. For further information, contact Client Services (613-951-7355), Income Statistics Division.

Internet use by households growing rapidly

Canadians have been making much more use of the Internet as a means of communication, whether it is from a computer in the home, workplace, school or library. In 1998, there were 4,272,000 households with at least one member using computer communications from one location or another in a typical month—up 25% from 1997. These households accounted for 36% of all households in 1998, compared with 29% the year before.

Communication by computer still occurs primarily from the workplace, followed by homes and schools. However, from 1997 to 1998, the increase in computer communication from homes was so large that the gap between home use and work use was virtually eliminated.

In 1998, there were 2,689,000 households with at least one person who used the Internet as a vehicle for communicating from home—an annual growth spurt of 44%. These homes accounted for 23% of all households. Virtually the same proportion of households had at least one member who used computer communications from the workplace. By contrast, about 16% of households communicated by computer from home in 1997, compared with about 20% from the workplace.

Communication from schools was a distant third. Of course, not all households have members in school. About 12% of all households had someone who used the Internet from school in 1998, up from 9% in 1997.

Between 1997 and 1998, the proportion of households regularly using computer communications, from any location, grew in every province. The growth was strongest in Alberta, where 45% of all households used computers for communication in 1998. British Columbia followed this at 42%. Quebec had the lowest proportion of any province at 26%. However, this represented a significant increase from only 20% a year earlier.

Overall, among households that have a member who regularly uses the Internet from home, there were no significant changes in the proportion using the Internet from home for a work-related

Note to readers

These data came from the Household Internet Use Survey, which was conducted in October 1998 and which surveyed 38,030 households in all 10 provinces. It was a follow-up to the same survey conducted in October 1997, the first to collect detailed data on how Canadian households use computer communications.

task. In 1998, about 32% of regular home users communicated by computer from home for an employer-related purpose; 23% did so for self-employment. Of course, the vast majority of these households do not use the Internet solely for business purposes: 95% of regular home-use households reported using the Internet for personal (non-business) reasons. These proportions were almost the same in 1997.

Among the available services, e-mail was used by 86% of home-user households, while general browsing was done by 78% of regular home-user households. As for duration of use, there was no single computer communication service, including e-mail or surfing the web, where more than 80% of regular home-user households spent even half their total home-use time. Proportions of households from all points of use continued to show differences with respect to income group, family type, and the age and education level of the household head. However, the various inter-relationships among these factors require more analysis.

*A more detailed breakdown of these and other data on Internet use and duration of use will be published in an analytical article in the next issue of **Services indicators** (paper: 63-016-XPB, \$35/\$116; Internet: 63-016-XIB, \$26/\$87), which is scheduled for release in mid-July.*

*To purchase the micro-data from the **1998 Household Internet Use Survey** (56M0002GPE) or from the **1997 Household Internet Use Survey** (56M0002GPE), or to order customized data, contact Client Services (613-951-7355, 1 888 297-7355; fax 613-951-3012; income@statcan.ca), Special Surveys Division. For further information, contact Jonathan Ellison (613-951-5882; ellison@statcan.ca), Science, Innovation and Electronic Information Division.*

New from Statistics Canada



Health reports

Spring 1999

The Spring 1999 issue of *Health reports* features the following articles: "Disparities in prescription drug insurance coverage," "Living with heart disease—the working-age population," "Health care consequences of falls for seniors," "Birth outcome, the social environment and child health" and "The National Population Health Survey—its longitudinal nature."

Each quarter, *Health reports* provides comprehensive and timely analysis of national and provincial health information, as well as the vital statistics derived from surveys and administrative data. It is designed to reach a broad audience that includes health professionals, researchers, policy makers, educators and students.

The Spring 1999 issue of **Health reports** (paper: 82-003-XPB, \$35/\$116; Internet: 82-003-XIE, \$26/\$87) is now available. For further information, contact Mary Sue Devereaux (613-951-4381; devemar@statcan.ca). Health Statistics Division.

Low income among children

For children, a divorce or marriage in the family and the related change in the families' economic position can have a substantial impact on whether they move into or out of a low-income situation. Similarly, a change in a parent's job status, such as an increase or a decrease in wages or hours, may also have a bearing on low income for a child.

This new study—titled “Why do children move into and out of low income: changing labour market conditions, or marriage and divorce?”—investigates whether the movement of children into and out of low income is associated primarily with changes in the parents’ labour market status or the parents’ marital status. The study used longitudinal data from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics. The target population consisted of about 35,000 individuals of all ages who were selected in 1993 and interviewed in 1994, 1995 and 1996 to gather information on their demographic characteristics, family income and labour market activities.

*The Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper No. 132 titled **Why do children move into and out of low income: Changing labour market conditions or marriage and divorce?** is now available. To obtain a copy, contact H  l  ne Lamadeleine (613-951-5231). The paper is also available at no charge at www.statcan.ca. Look under "Products and services". For further analytical information, contact Garnett Picot (613-951-8214; fax: 613-951-5403), Business and Labour Market Analysis Division.*

1996 Census dictionary
Final edition

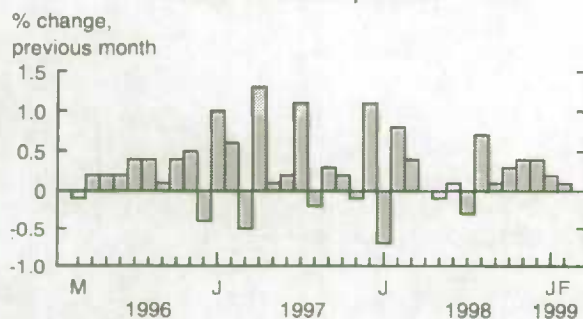
The final edition of the *1996 Census dictionary* has been released. The dictionary explains the concepts, terms, variables, and geography elements associated with the 1996 Census. It also includes a set of appendices dealing with topics such as census questions used since Confederation, as well as comparisons of various data with previous censuses. Seven of the 17 appendices have been updated.

In the dictionary, terms and variables are organized according to population, family, household, and dwelling universes. Each entry includes a definition, as well as the censuses in which the variable was used, the population for which data are reported and other remarks of interest. In the final edition, new definitions have been added to the section on population universe, including concepts relating to mobility, persons living as a couple, and visible minorities.

The final edition of the **1996 Census dictionary (92-351-UIE)** is now available at no charge as a downloadable publication on the Statistics Canada Web site (www.statcan.ca). Look under "Products and services". A printed version will be available at a later date. For further information, contact your nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre.

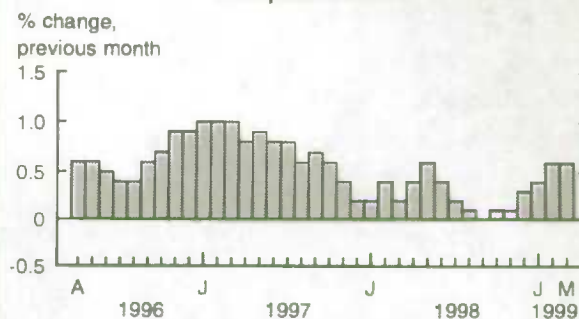
Current trends

Gross domestic product



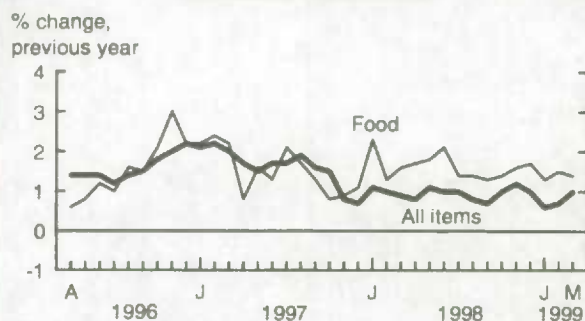
Economic activity advanced a marginal 0.1% in February, the seventh consecutive month of growth.

Composite Index



The leading indicator continued its steady advance in March, rising 0.6%, the same as its upward-revised gain in February.

Consumer Price Index



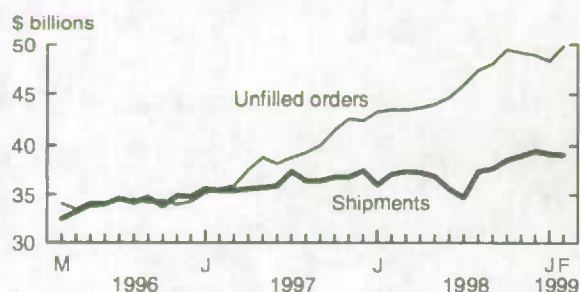
Consumers paid 1.0% more for goods and services in March 1999 than they did a year earlier. Food prices rose 1.4%.

Unemployment rate



In March, the unemployment rate stayed at 7.8% – its lowest point since June 1990.

Manufacturing



Manufacturers' shipments slipped 0.4% in February to \$39.1 billion. The backlog of unfilled orders climbed 3.2% to \$49.8 billion.

Merchandise trade



In February, the value of merchandise exports fell 0.9% from January to \$28.7 billion. Imports declined a slight 0.5% to \$26.1 billion.

Note: All series are seasonally adjusted except the Consumer Price Index.

Latest statistics

	Period	Level	Change, previous period	Change, previous year
GENERAL				
Gross domestic product (\$ billion, 1992)	February*	730.6	0.1%	2.4%
Composite Index (1981=100)	March	212.1	0.6%	4.1%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billion)	Q4 1998	28.7	15.1%	- 1.0%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q4 1998	82.5	0.7†	- 0.9†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade (\$ billion)	February	21.0	- 0.4%	3.8%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	February	117.1	- 4.1%	6.4%
Wholesale trade (\$ billion)	February	28.7	0.0%	3.3%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	March	14.64	- 0.2%	2.9%
Unemployment rate (%)	March	7.8	0.0†	- 0.6†
Participation rate (%)	March	65.6	- 0.2†	0.7†
Labour income (\$ billion)	January	39.3	- 0.2%	2.6%
Average weekly earnings (\$)	February*	607.97	0.2%	0.1%
Help-wanted Index (1996=100)	April*	150	5.6%	1.4%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billion)	February	28.7	- 0.9%	8.4%
Merchandise imports (\$ billion)	February	26.1	- 0.5%	6.0%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion)	February	2.6	- 0.1	0.8
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billion)	February	39.1	- 0.4%	5.3%
New orders (\$ billion)	February	40.6	5.0%	9.0%
Unfilled orders (\$ billion)	February	49.8	3.2%	14.5%
Inventory/shipments ratio	February	1.27	0.01	- 0.03
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	March	110.7	0.4%	1.0%
Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100)	March	119.7	0.8%	1.4%
Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100)	March	107.0	5.5%	- 2.9%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	February	100.3	0.0%	0.5%

Note: All series are seasonally adjusted with the exception of the price indexes.

* new this week

† percentage point

Infomat

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