



Infommat

A Weekly Review

JUL 23 1999

Friday, July 23, 1999

OVERVIEW

◆ Inflation rate remains unchanged

In June, the annual increase in consumer prices was 1.6%. This annual rate of inflation is virtually unchanged from the rates seen in April and May, and it approaches the average annual rates for 1997 and 1996.

◆ Composite index's advance slows

The leading indicator continued to advance in June, rising 0.2%. However, this was slower than the 0.4% gain in May and the 0.5% average since the start of the year.

◆ Car and truck sales both decline

In May, consumers purchased fewer new cars and trucks. Nevertheless, the upward sales trend for new motor vehicles is continuing.

◆ Canadians travel mostly for pleasure

Last year, as the dollar stayed weak relative to the U.S. dollar and as economic conditions here remained favourable, Canadians travelled far more within their own country. Mostly, people travelled within their own province, especially for pleasure or to visit family and friends.

◆ Internet use rises substantially with income and education

The higher the household income, the more likely that Canadians use the Internet in their homes or workplaces. Use of computer communications also increases substantially with the education level of the household head. All age groups are becoming more connected.

Inflation rate remains unchanged

In June, consumers paid 1.6% more than they did a year earlier for the goods and services in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket. This follows annual inflation rates of 1.7% in April and 1.6% in May. Since April, the annual rates have approached the average annual inflation rates for 1997 and 1996.

Transportation price increases (on an annual basis) most affected the consumer budget in June. Consumers continued to benefit from lower prices for computer equipment and telephone services. However, those lower prices were not sufficient to offset the upward price pressure on the CPI.

Higher airfares for North American flights were a factor behind both May's and June's annual increase in transportation costs. After rising 16.7% in May, the annual increase in air transportation prices slowed slightly in June to 16.2%. In addition, following annual increases of 5.9% in April and 5.0% in May, the price of gasoline rose in June by just 3.7%. Primarily, these increases were due to higher world prices for crude oil and to lower supplies of petroleum products on the North American market.

From May to June, the increase in consumer prices slowed to 0.1%. The monthly increase was primarily due to higher traveller accommodation costs (+10.6%)—fuelled by the usual strong demand of summer vacationers—and to higher prices for some

Consumer Price Index, June 1999

% change from previous year, not seasonally adjusted

	All-items	Food	Shelter	Transportation	Energy
Canada	1.6	1.2	1.2	2.5	2.4
Newfoundland	1.7	1.5	1.3	2.0	1.2
Prince Edward Island	1.0	0.1	0.6	0.7	-2.6
Nova Scotia	1.5	0.6	0.7	2.4	0.6
New Brunswick	1.6	1.6	0.7	3.2	3.2
Quebec	1.3	0.7	0.9	2.7	2.6
Ontario	1.9	2.5	1.6	2.0	1.3
Manitoba	1.9	0.5	2.2	3.5	4.6
Saskatchewan	1.2	-1.3	2.3	2.4	3.8
Alberta	1.8	0.3	2.1	2.8	2.9
British Columbia	1.0	0.2	-0.7	3.6	5.2
Whitehorse	0.8	-1.8	-1.1	4.2	-3.9
Yellowknife	0.6	-1.7	-0.4	4.5	0.9

(continued on page 2)

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Canada

... Inflation rate remains unchanged

food items (+0.4%). The rise in food prices was mostly attributable to fresh vegetables (+5.6%), confectionery items (+5.2%) and beef (+1.6%). The most significant contributors to the higher fresh vegetable prices were potatoes (+19.4%) and "other" fresh vegetables (+3.7%). The seasonal depletion of domestic potato stocks forced retailers to replenish their stocks with higher-priced new crops from the United States. Beef prices rose because of stronger demand during the barbecue season, together with a decline in the supply of beef available on the market.

Lower prices for gasoline, men's clothing and fresh fruit helped to mitigate the overall increase in June's CPI. After rising for three months, the price of gasoline fell in June by 1.5%. The increase in the price of crude oil was limited to 0.9% in May, after jumping 46.5% between February and April. (It usually takes about one month before changes in the price of crude oil reach motorists.) Competition also added to the downward pressure on gasoline prices, notably in Ontario and Quebec. Meanwhile,

prices for men's clothing dropped in June by 3.0%. Consumers buying men's clothes enjoyed lower prices for a wide range of items. As well, fresh fruit prices were down 1.3%, as local crops became available.

Compared with June 1998, Ontarians and Manitobans faced the strongest increase in consumer prices this June (+1.9%). Consumers in Prince Edward Island and British Columbia faced the smallest increase (+1.0%). Between May and June, the CPIs for Prince Edward Island and British Columbia led the increases among provinces (both at +0.4%). Residents of New Brunswick and Saskatchewan benefited from a 0.2% decline in consumer prices.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 9940-9970.

The June 1999 issue of *The Consumer Price Index* (62-001-XPB, \$11/\$103) is now available. For further information, contact Client Services (613-951-9606; fax: 613-951-1539; infounit@statcan.ca), Prices Division. See also "Current trends" on page 6.

Composite index's advance slows

The leading indicator continued to advance in June, rising 0.2%. However, this was slower than the 0.4% gain in May and the 0.5% average since the start of the year. Domestic demand has recently lost some of its vigour. Even so, 7 of the index's 10 components continued to advance, the same as in May.

New orders posted a ninth straight increase, although their growth was the slowest in a year. Partly, the slowdown originated in investment-related industries, in line with a second consecutive drop in non-residential building permits. The consumer goods industries also turned down. Still, the ratio of shipments to inventories of finished goods rose at the same pace it has maintained since the start of the year. Manufacturers have kept inventories firmly under control.

The housing index continued to climb briskly, up 2.1%. Meanwhile, household demand lost some of its recent vigour. Income growth has been slow and employment has levelled off. The slack in demand was felt by the service sector, where employment fell 0.4%—its largest drop since 1992.

The U.S. leading indicator has shown no signs of slowing in recent months. Only 1 of the 10 components in June's index was down. This, together with rising commodity prices, is encouraging news for Canadian exporters.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 191.

The July 1999 issue of *Canadian economic observer* (11-010-XPB, \$23/\$227) is now available. For further information, contact Francine Roy (613-951-3627), Current Economic Analysis Group. See also "Current trends" on page 6.

Car and truck sales both decline

In May, consumers purchased fewer new motor vehicles. After increasing in March (+6.7%) and in April (+1.1%), the number of new vehicles sold in May totalled 122,652, down from April by 4,852 units (-3.8%). More than two-thirds of May's sales drop was attributable to cars. Nevertheless, the upward sales trend for new motor vehicles that began in November 1998 is continuing.

Car sales fell in May by 4.8% to 63,974 units. The decline in May came after consecutive monthly increases in March (+2.9%) and April (+3.9%). An upward trend in car sales has been sustained since the fall of 1998. In May, after rising for two consecutive months, sales of North American-built cars fell 6.5%. Sales of imported cars rose 0.8% following April's jump of 16.3%. Sales of imported cars have been advancing since the spring of 1997.

Note to readers

Cars include those used for personal and commercial purposes (such as taxis or rental cars). Trucks include minivans, sport-utility vehicles, light and heavy trucks, vans, coaches and buses.

New vehicles built in North America include those made or assembled in Canada, the United States or Mexico. All other new motor vehicles are considered imports (manufactured overseas).

For reasons of confidentiality, data for the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut are included with the British Columbia data. Unless otherwise noted, all data are seasonally adjusted.

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... Car and truck sales both decline

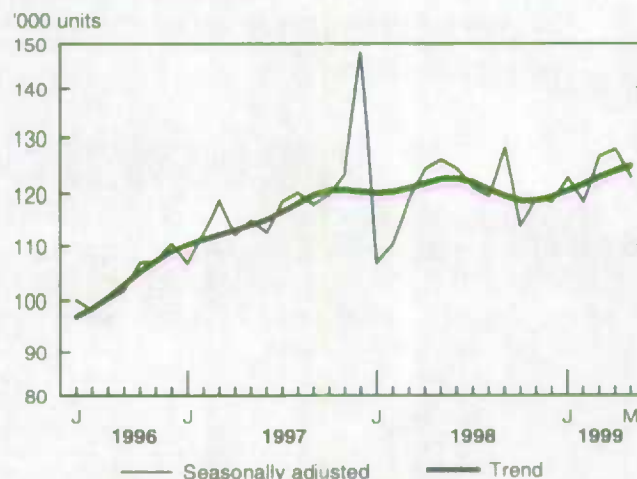
Truck sales in May declined 2.6% to 58,678 units. This followed a decline in April of 1.9%. These two declines came after a sizeable sales gain in March (+11.0%), which was strong enough to sustain the upward trend that began early this year. Truck dealers experienced declining sales throughout much of 1998. Consequently, truck sales this May were 5.1% lower than their level in May 1998.

North American-built vehicles accounted for 84.8% of all the new vehicles sold in May, compared with 87.1% in May 1998 (data not adjusted for seasonality). Over that period, the share of sales captured by North American-built cars fell sharply from 82.6% to 77.8%, whereas the share for North American-built trucks rose from 92.3% to 93.1%.

Vehicle dealers in some provinces posted higher sales in May (data not adjusted for seasonality). At the national level, unadjusted sales decreased 3.2% in May from the same month a year earlier. Year-over-year sales increases were posted by dealers in British Columbia (+3.0%), Newfoundland (+2.0%), Ontario (+0.6%) and New Brunswick (+0.1%). Dealers in the Prairie provinces recorded May's largest sales decline (-15.8%). Lower sales were also seen in Prince Edward Island (-6.5%), Quebec (-3.6%) and Nova Scotia (-3.1%).

Available on CANSIM: matrix 64.

Sales of new motor vehicles



The May 1999 issue of *New motor vehicle sales* (63-007-XIB, \$13/\$124) can be downloaded from the Internet at www.statcan.ca. To order data, or for general information, contact Client Services (613-951-3549; 1 877 421-3067; retailinfo@statcan.ca), Distributive Trades Division. For analytical information, contact Cl rance Kimanyi (613-951-3592; kimacle@statcan.ca), Distributive Trades Division.

Canadians travel mostly for pleasure

Last year, as the dollar stayed weak relative to the U.S. dollar and as economic conditions here remained favourable, Canadians travelled far more within their own country. Domestic travel within Canada increased from 1997 by 12.5% to 144.3 million trips. At the same time, the number of trips taken by Canadians to the United States dropped 16% to 42.8 million.

Contrary to previous years, when travel to visit family and friends was paramount, Canadians travelled within the country mostly for pleasure in 1998. Last year, Canadians took 53.8 million pleasure trips (+17%) as opposed to 52.0 million trips to visit families and friends (+10.6%). In addition, 20.0 million business and convention trips (+8.6%) and 18.5 million personal trips (+10.3%) were taken.

Of the 144.3 million domestic trips taken in 1998, about 126.1 million (87%) were made by individuals travelling in their own province (intra-provincial). The remainder (18.2 million) were trips to other provinces (inter-provincial). Intra-provincial travel was up 12.7% from 1997, while inter-provincial travel increased 11.2%. Although inter-provincial trips represented only 13% of total domestic travel, spending on them totalled \$7.7 billion in 1998, or more than 40% of the total. This was an increase over 1997 of 17.3%. On intra-provincial travel, Canadians spent \$11.2 billion, up 14.1%.

More than half (56%) of all domestic trips were taken either in Ontario (51.4 million) or Quebec (30.1 million). These numbers were bolstered by the large proportion of people travelling within

Note to readers

Domestic travel is defined as any trip involving 80 kilometres or more one way taken by a Canadian resident and having a Canadian destination. The number of travellers is measured in person-trips. The total number of person-trips for a population is the count of the number of persons on each trip taken by the population. The number of nights is measured in person-nights. For example, a Canadian resident who takes a trip involving three nights away from home has a count of three person-nights.

their own province. As well, Ontario and Quebec were the destinations of more than 40% of all inter-provincial travellers. British Columbia and Alberta accounted for almost a quarter of the domestic trips made in 1998.

Spending on domestic travel in 1998 totalled \$18.9 billion, up 15.4% from the year before, making Canada its own largest tourism market. Adjusted to account for higher travel prices, the real increase was 12.4%. Spending by Canadian travellers in Canada accounted for 70% of all tourism spending in 1998.

Last year, the major part of travel spending went to cover transportation costs. However, there were double-digit spending increases in every travel spending category, likely because Canadians were in better financial circumstances in 1998 than in 1997. (Personal disposable income per person was up 3% in 1998, and average weekly earnings were up 1%. In addition,

(continued on page 4)

... Canadians travel mostly for pleasure

employment grew 3%.) The biggest spending increase was a 20.2% jump in costs associated with accommodation. A large number of stays in commercial establishments accompanied by an average price hike of 3.8% (CPI for accommodation) played a role in that jump.

Various statistical profiles and micro-data files are available on demand. To order data, contact Diane Turpin (613-951-6321; fax: 613-951-2909; diane.turpin@statcan.ca). For further analytical information, contact Lizette Gervais-Simard (613-951-1672; fax: 613-951-2909; gervliz@statcan.ca). Tourism Statistics Program. For additional context and perspective on the tourism industry, contact John Olsthoorn (613-957-9220; fax: 613-276-2841; olsthoorn.john@ic.gc.ca), Canadian Tourism Commission.

Domestic travel spending

	1997	1998	Distribution of spending for 1998	1997 to 1998
	\$ millions		%	% change
Total spending	16,413	18,939	100.0	15.4
Transportation	6,627	7,354	38.8	11.0
Food and beverage	3,779	4,490	23.7	18.8
Accommodation	2,818	3,388	17.9	20.2
Recreation and entertainment	1,051	1,179	6.2	12.2
Other spending	2,138	2,528	13.4	18.2

Internet use rises substantially with income and education

The higher the household income, the more likely that Canadians use the Internet in their homes or workplaces. Use of computer communications also increases substantially with the education level of the household head. In 1998, 4.3 million households used computer communications from one location or another, up 24.6% from 3.4 million in 1997. These connected households accounted for 35.9% of all households in 1998, compared with 29.4% the year before.

Households increased their use of computer communications from various locations last year. The most notable increase was in use from home. In 1998, 22.6% of all households included someone using the Internet from home in a typical month, up from 16.0% in 1997. This narrowed the gap between use from home and use from work. Work use still ranked first at 23.3%, while connectedness through school ranked third at 12.1%.

There is a strong relationship between income and Internet use. Overall, in 1998, individuals in highest-income households were nearly five times more likely than those in lowest-income households to regularly use computer communications. The largest disparity between highest- and lowest-income households occurs in the workplace. In 1998, about half (50.4%) of highest-income households included someone who regularly used the Internet at work, over 12 times the level for lowest-income households (4.1%). In general, lower-income persons who are employed may work in occupations that do not require the use of computer communications.

Disparities in usage are much smaller at schools and public libraries. In 1998, highest-income households were two to three times more likely than lowest-income households to be using the Internet at these locations.

Internet use rises substantially with education level. In 1998, the rate of connectedness for households where the head has a university degree (68.1%) was over five times higher than the rate for households where the head did not complete high school (12.6%).

Note to readers

This article updates previous findings on how Canadian households are using computer communications. The data are from the Household Internet Use Survey, which was conducted in October 1998 and which surveyed over 38,000 households. It was a follow-up to the same survey conducted in October 1997, the first to collect such detailed data.

Computer communications occur when someone connects a computer to a communications network to access information on the Internet, to send and receive e-mail, or to use electronic banking services.

More than half (52.5%) of households headed by someone with a university degree used computer communications in the workplace, compared with 5.6% of households with less than high school. Similarly, 46.7% of households headed by someone with a university degree used the Internet at home, compared with 6.6% of those headed by an individual with less than high school.

Last year, the rates of connectedness rose for all age groups, however, older groups still remained relatively less connected. In 1998, the 35-to-54 age group was most likely to use the Internet (46.9%), while the usage rate for the under-35 group was a close second (45.3%). Connectedness was substantially lower for households headed by someone aged 55 to 64 (27.5%), and lower still for the group aged 65 and over (7.2%).

Single family households with unmarried children under the age of 18 are more likely than other households to use the Internet. About 47.6% of these households were connected in 1998, up substantially from 38.2% the year before.

The first quarter 1999 issue of Services indicators (paper: 63-016-XPB, \$35/\$116; Internet at www.statcan.ca: 63-016-XIB, \$26/\$87) is now available. For further information, contact Jonathan Ellison (613-951-5882). Science, Innovation and Electronic Information Division.

New from Statistics Canada



Services indicators First quarter 1999

This latest edition of *Services indicators* features two articles: "Getting connected: Internet use by households" and "Challenges facing Canada's Internet service providers (ISPs): A snapshot from a survey of ISPs". The second feature article focuses on the characteristics of firms reporting that 50% or more of their revenues come from ISP activities. It examines the challenges that ISPs face, including barriers to growth, competition, complaints and practices regarding offensive content and conduct, as well as the providers' perceptions of what is important to their customers.

Services indicators is a quarterly publication that profiles Canada's service industries. Besides the two feature articles, it carries tables and charts showing output, financial, employment and remuneration figures for various service industries over the past eight quarters.

The first quarter 1999 issue of *Services indicators* (paper: 63-016-XPB, \$35/\$116; Internet at www.statcan.ca: 63-016-XIB, \$26/\$87) is now available. For information about the article on Internet service providers, contact Norah Hillary (613-951-8711). For more information about the publication, contact Don Little (613-951-6739), Service Industries Division.

Employment insurance coverage 1998

This report presents results from the Employment Insurance Coverage Survey, which Statistics Canada conducted for Human Resources Development Canada. A sample of about 8,000 unemployed individuals was surveyed by telephone in 1997 and 1998, with reference weeks in March, June, October and December. The survey results give insights into the characteristics of the unemployed, particularly those who do not collect EI benefits. It also provides a more meaningful picture of access to EI benefits than the beneficiary/unemployed ratio.

Report of the main results of the Employment Insurance Coverage Survey, 1998 (73F0008XIE, no charge) is now available on the Internet at www.statcan.ca. Look under "Products and services", then "Downloadable publications, free". For further information, contact Client Services (1 888 297-7355 or 613-951-7355; income@statcan.ca), Special Surveys Division.

Work absence rates 1987 to 1998

This new report, *Work absence rates, 1987 to 1998*, looks at absences from work for personal reasons (illness or disability) and personal or family responsibilities (excluding maternity leave). The report is based on data from the Labour Force Survey, and it uses the recently implemented 1991 Standard Occupational Classification system, the new North American Industry Classification System, and the redefined public/private sectors.

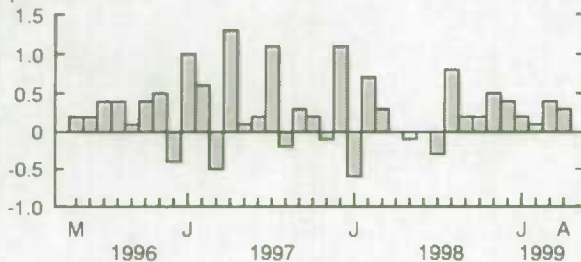
A brief analytical summary of the data highlights is presented, along with a series of tables on work absence rates for men and women classified by age, education, and presence of children. Data are also tabulated by industry and occupational group, by public versus private sector, by union coverage, workplace size, job tenure and job permanency, and by province, region and census metropolitan area.

Work absence rates, 1987 to 1998 (71-535-MPB, no. 10, \$50) is now available. For further information, contact Ernest B. Akyeampong (613-951-4624; fax: 613-951-4179; akyearn@statcan.ca), Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division.

Current trends

Gross domestic product

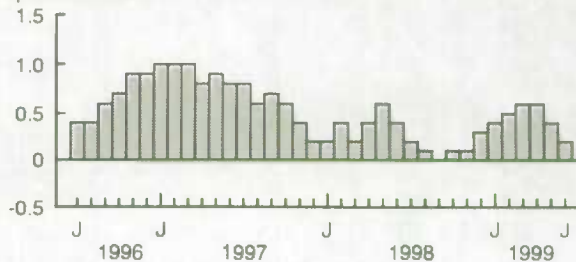
% change,
previous month



Economic activity continued to advance in April (+0.3%). This extended the expansion to nine months – the longest uninterrupted string of advances in more than a decade.

Composite Index

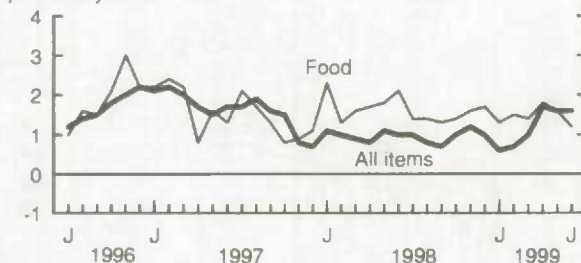
% change,
previous month



The leading indicator continued to show growth in June, rising 0.2%. However, this was slower than the 0.5% average seen since the start of the year.

Consumer Price Index

% change,
previous year



Consumers paid 1.6% more for goods and services in June 1999 than they did a year earlier. Food prices rose 1.2%.

Unemployment rate

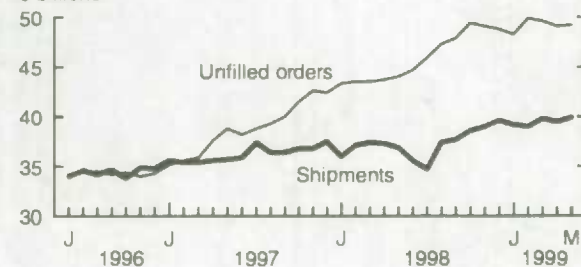
%



In June, the number of people looking for work fell sharply, pushing the unemployment rate down 0.5 percentage points to a nine-year low of 7.6%.

Manufacturing

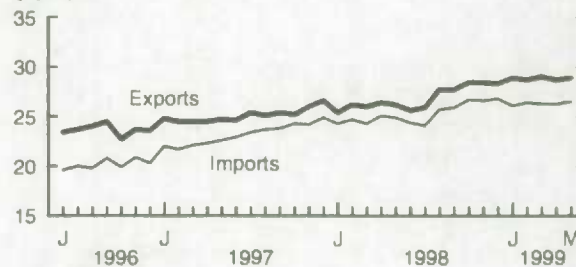
\$ billions



Manufacturers' shipments grew 1.0% in May to \$39.9 billion. The backlog of unfilled orders rose 0.3% to \$49.2 billion.

Merchandise trade

\$ billions



In May, the value of merchandise exports rose 0.5% from April to \$28.9 billion. Imports remained virtually unchanged (+0.1%) for a third consecutive month at \$26.5 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)	April	735.5	0.3%	2.7%
Composite Index (1981=100)	June*	214.5	0.2%	3.8%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billion)	Q1 1999	36.3	4.7%	..
Capacity utilization (%)	Q1 1999	83.1	0.5†	- 0.3†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade (\$ billion)	May*	21.3	0.4%	3.4%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	May*	122.7	- 3.8%	- 2.4%
Wholesale trade (\$ billion)	May*	29.8	1.8%	5.7%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	June	14.64	0.0%	2.7%
Unemployment rate (%)	June	7.6	- 0.5†	- 0.8†
Participation rate (%)	June	65.3	- 0.4†	0.4†
Average weekly earnings (\$)	April	607.42	0.2%	- 0.1%
Help-wanted Index (1996=100)	June	159	1.3%	11.2%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billion)	May*	28.9	0.5%	10.1%
Merchandise imports (\$ billion)	May*	26.5	0.1%	6.1%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion)	May*	2.4	0.1	1.1
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billion)	May*	39.9	1.0%	8.1%
New orders (\$ billion)	May*	40.1	2.8%	7.7%
Unfilled orders (\$ billion)	May*	49.2	0.3%	12.0%
Inventory/shipments ratio	May*	1.26	- 0.01	- 0.06
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	June*	110.5	0.1%	1.6%
Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100)	May	119.9	- 0.1%	0.8%
Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100)	May	113.5	1.4%	2.6%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	May	100.6	0.0%	0.6%

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

* new this week

† percentage point

.. figures not available yet due to a survey redesign

Infomat

A weekly review

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Juristat: Crime statistics in Canada	1998			
Internet		85-002-XIE	8/70	
Paper		85-002-XPE	10/93	10/93
DEMOGRAPHY				
Quarterly demographic statistics	Jan.-March 1999			
Internet		91-002-XIB	8/25	
Paper		91-002-XPB	10/33	10/33
DISTRIBUTIVE TRADES				
New motor vehicle sales	May 1999	63-007-XIB	13/124	
INCOME STATISTICS				
Homeowner repair and renovation expenditure	1997			
Internet		62-201-XIB	23	
Paper		62-201-XPB	31	31
LABOUR AND HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS ANALYSIS				
Work absence rates	1987 to 1998	71-535-MPB	50	50
MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY				
Construction-type plywood	May 1999	35-001-XIB	5/47	
Electric power generation, transmission and distribution	1997	57-202-XPB	30	30
Particleboard, oriented strandboard and fibreboard	May 1999	36-003-XIB	5/47	
Primary iron and steel	May 1999	41-001-XIB	5/47	
Refined petroleum products	March 1999	45-004-XPB	21/206	21/206
PRICES				
Consumer price index	June 1999	62-001-XPB	11/103	11/103
Industry price indexes	May 1999	62-011-XPB	22/217	22/217
SERVICE INDUSTRIES				
Services indicators	First quarter 1999			
Internet		63-016-XIB	26/87	
Paper		63-016-XPB	35/116	35/116

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