



# Infomat

## A Weekly Review

Friday, June 23, 2000

### OVERVIEW

#### ◆ Gasoline prices still pushing up annual inflation rate

In May, consumers paid 2.4% more than they did a year earlier for the goods and services included in the Consumer Price Index. Energy price hikes—especially gasoline prices—were again the major factor.

#### ◆ Shipments stumble following a strong advance

The value of manufacturers' shipments fell 2.8% in April, following a strong advance in March. The decline was led by the motor vehicle, refined petroleum and coal industries.

#### ◆ Motor vehicle sales down again

In April, the number of new vehicles sold dropped 1.1% from March, the third decline in the first four months of the year. Truck sales have been stalled since last summer.

#### ◆ Consumers favouring poultry, rice and soft drinks

During the 1990s, consumers increased their consumption of poultry, cheese, wheat flour and rice, low-fat milk and soft drinks.

#### ◆ Income taxes higher in Canada than in the United States

Canadian families saw higher effective income tax rates on average in 1997 than did American families. However, each country's rates for families with similar incomes varied considerably.

#### ◆ Average family income highest in a decade

In 1998, average family income rebounded to its highest level in a decade (\$49,626). However, income taxes rose faster than income, not all family types shared in the gains and income inequality widened.

### Gasoline prices still pushing up annual inflation rate

In May, consumers paid 2.4% more than they did a year earlier for the goods and services included in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). This annual inflation rate was higher than the 2.1% rate in April, but below the five-year high of 3.0% seen in March.

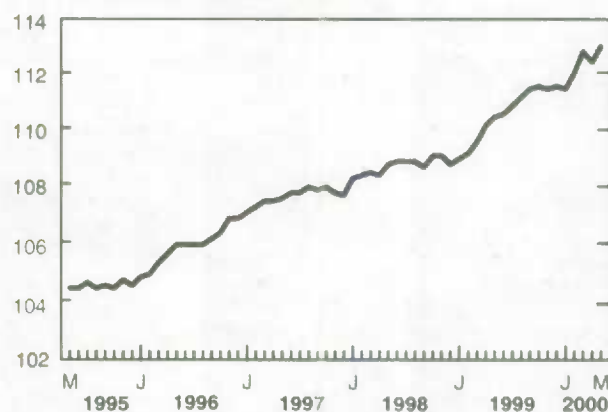
Energy price hikes remained the largest contributors to the CPI's annual increase. Excluding energy, the CPI rose 1.3%, within the range the annual rates (1.0% to 1.6%) it has shown since January 1998. Higher gasoline prices had the greatest impact: compared with May 1999, gasoline prices this May were up 20.8%. However, this increase was notably smaller than the annual increases measured each month from December 1999 to March 2000.

Higher mortgage interest and higher tuition fees also exerted upward pressure on the CPI's annual inflation rate in May, but to a lesser extent. The upward price pressure was moderated by price declines on an annual basis for fresh fruit, computer equipment and supplies, and motor vehicles.

From April to May, the CPI increased by 0.5%. In particular, prices for traveller accommodation climbed 10.0%, mainly owing

#### Consumer Price Index

Index (1992=100), unadjusted data



(continued on page 2)



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### ... Gasoline prices still pushing up annual inflation rate

to stronger demand, notably in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. This monthly increase corresponded with the pattern seen in previous years. As well, an increase in mortgage interest cost in May (+0.6%) was the ninth consecutive month of increase.

Fresh fruit and vegetable prices increased 5.3% overall in May. The rise in vegetable prices (+6.5%) was partly due to poor

weather conditions, which led to temporary shortages for various California crops. In addition, some vegetables such as potatoes were priced higher because a transition from storage supplies to new crops was occurring. Fresh fruit prices rose 3.7%. Higher fruit prices are normal at this time of the year because the stock in storage is diminished.

Gasoline prices climbed 1.9% from April to May. Prices were up in most provinces. The exceptions were New Brunswick and the Prairie provinces. Natural gas prices jumped from April to May by 2.6%. This resulted from price hikes of 13.8% in Alberta and 2.2% in Quebec.

Those increases were countered in part by monthly price declines for clothing and automobile insurance premiums. The decrease in clothing prices was due to lower prices for women's (-2.0%) and children's (-1.0%) clothing. The lower vehicle insurance premiums (-0.5%) resulted from a 1.0% decrease in the Ontario provincial sales tax for this service. The Ontario government announced in its budget that it was phasing out the retail sales tax on motor vehicle insurance by 1.0% per year until it is eliminated in 2004.

The May 2000 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](mailto:infounit@statcan.ca)), Prices Division. See also "Current trends" on page 8.

### Consumer Price Index, May 2000

% change, previous year, not seasonally adjusted

|                      | All items  | Food       | Shelter    | Transportation | Energy      |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------|-------------|
| <b>Canada</b>        | <b>2.4</b> | <b>0.9</b> | <b>3.1</b> | <b>4.7</b>     | <b>14.1</b> |
| Newfoundland         | 1.9        | -1.3       | 5.2        | 5.7            | 16.1        |
| Prince Edward Island | 4.8        | 0.6        | 9.4        | 8.9            | 34.8        |
| Nova Scotia          | 3.3        | 0.8        | 6.6        | 5.7            | 18.3        |
| New Brunswick        | 2.7        | 0.2        | 5.2        | 5.1            | 14.6        |
| Quebec               | 2.0        | 2.1        | 2.8        | 4.2            | 11.8        |
| Ontario              | 2.5        | 0.4        | 2.8        | 5.3            | 15.3        |
| Manitoba             | 1.9        | 1.8        | 2.2        | 2.1            | 5.4         |
| Saskatchewan         | 2.1        | 0.6        | 3.7        | 3.6            | 10.0        |
| Alberta              | 3.2        | 2.4        | 5.7        | 4.8            | 17.7        |
| British Columbia     | 1.5        | -0.6       | 0.9        | 4.0            | 13.6        |
| Whitehorse           | 1.9        | -1.5       | 4.1        | 4.1            | 16.5        |
| Yellowknife          | 2.0        | 1.4        | 3.2        | 1.4            | 16.1        |

## Shipments stumble following a strong advance

**M**anufacturers' shipments fell 2.8% in April to \$43.5 billion. The decline was led by the motor vehicle, refined petroleum and coal industries.

April's decrease—the second large decline this year—followed a strong showing by virtually all industries in March. The volatility of the last three months has curbed the strong upward trend in shipments that began in August 1998. Manufacturers' shipments have increased 0.3% since the beginning of 2000, and were 9.3% higher in April than in April 1999.

### Manufacturers' shipments, April 2000

Seasonally adjusted

|  | \$ millions   | % change, previous month |
|--|---------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Canada</b>                            | <b>43,476</b> | <b>-2.8</b>              |
| Newfoundland                             | 167           | 5.4                      |
| Prince Edward Island                     | 79            | -9.1                     |
| Nova Scotia                              | 677           | -6.2                     |
| New Brunswick                            | 898           | 2.6                      |
| Quebec                                   | 10,466        | 0.0                      |
| Ontario                                  | 23,188        | -3.3                     |
| Manitoba                                 | 903           | 1.5                      |
| Saskatchewan                             | 577           | -3.8                     |
| Alberta                                  | 3,206         | -7.3                     |
| British Columbia                         | 3,309         | -4.7                     |
| Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut | 4             | -2.4                     |

### Note to readers

Unfilled orders are often considered a key determinant of future shipments, assuming orders are not cancelled. New orders are orders received, whether shipped in the current month or not. They are measured as the sum of shipments for the current month plus the change in unfilled orders. Interpreting new orders as leading to future demand is inappropriate because new orders include orders already shipped. The month-to-month change in new orders may be volatile, particularly if the previous month's change in unfilled orders was large in relation to the current month's change. Not all orders translate into Canadian factory shipments because some large orders may have a component that is subcontracted out to other countries.

In April, the value of manufacturers' shipments fell in 15 of the 22 major industry groups, representing 72.2% of the total value of shipments. The value of shipments in the motor vehicle industry dropped 6.8%, as manufacturers cut back on overtime. A 12.7% drop in the value of refined petroleum and coal shipments was mainly due to a 5.8% decrease in prices following April's agreement by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to ease the oil production cutbacks.

More moderate decreases in shipment values were observed in the wood (-6.4%), chemical products (-4.2%), and motor vehicles and parts (-3.8%) industries. The largest increase occurred in electrical and electronic products (+3.8%). This was concentrated in the telecommunications, computer and peripheral equipment industries.

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### ... Shipments stumble following a strong advance

Manufacturers' backlog of unfilled orders edged down 0.1% in April to \$53.7 billion. Unfilled orders peaked in December, just shy of \$55 billion, and have declined in each of the subsequent four months. The largest drop occurred in the machinery industry (-1.7%).

The value of manufacturers' inventories rose 0.9% in April to \$57.9 billion—the fifteenth consecutive month of buildup. In order of magnitude, the industries that contributed most to April's increase were electrical and electronic products (+2.4%), railway rolling stock (+8.0%) and wood (+2.6%). The greatest decrease in inventories was in the aircraft and parts industry (-1.4%).

The inventory-to-shipments ratio jumped from 1.28 in March to 1.33 in April. The ratio in April was the highest since November 1998.

The April 2000 issue of *Monthly survey of manufacturing* (31-001-XPB, \$20/\$196) presents the full report. Detailed data on shipments by province are available on request. For further information, contact Craig Kuntz (613-951-7092; kuncrai@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. See also "Current trends" on page 8.

## Motor vehicle sales down again

In April, the number of new motor vehicles sold dropped 1.1% from March, the third decline in the first four months of the year. April's decrease followed very strong sales in March (+6.4%). A total of 133,188 new vehicles were sold in April, 1,444 fewer than in March. (All figures are seasonally adjusted unless otherwise stated).

The number of trucks sold declined from March to April by 1.3%. This confirmed that truck sales have been stalled since the summer of 1999. The strong rise in gasoline prices since last summer may be hampering sales. (Trucks include minivans, sport-utility vehicles, light and heavy trucks, vans, coaches and buses.) Car sales, which have been slowing since the end of last year, also declined in April (-0.8%).

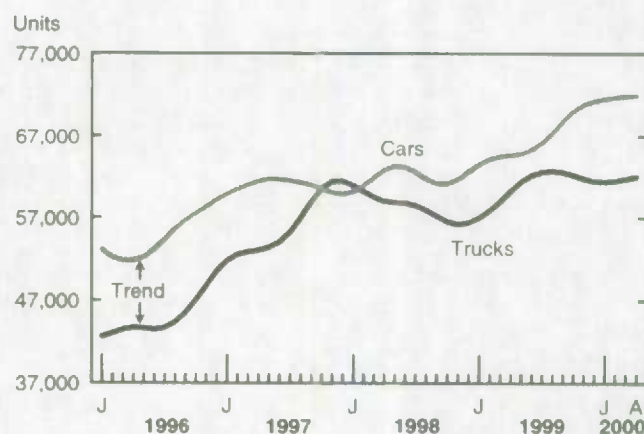
Unadjusted for seasonality, revenue from new car sales climbed from April 1999 to April 2000 by 13.3%, but revenue from new trucks fell 0.6%. Although trucks accounted for 44.1% of the number of new vehicles sold in April, they accounted for 53.1% of the \$4.4 billion in sales revenue. On a year-over-year basis, the average dollar unit value of cars rose 7.1% in April to \$24,874; the value of new trucks decreased 0.9% to \$35,640. (Average unit dollar value for cars and trucks is affected by price changes, shifts in models purchased and changes in standard equipment and options selected.)

### Motor vehicle registrations

In 1999, a total of 21.5 million motor vehicles of all types were registered in Canada. Of this total, 16.5 million (77%) were cars and light vehicles such as pickup trucks and minivans. The rest consisted of 73,000 buses, 275,000 motorcycles and mopeds, 1.7 million farm and off-road construction vehicles, and 2.9 million (14%) trucks (weighing at least 4 500 kg) and truck tractors.

Provincial data on vehicle registrations are available, as are detailed data for about 8,000 localities across the country. These data are not comparable with figures from previous years due to changes in statistical methods. For more information on vehicle registrations, contact Robert Larocque (613-951-2486; larocque@statcan.ca), Transportation Division.

### Sales of new trucks and cars



By province, sales of new vehicles varied considerably in April. Alberta recorded the strongest advance in the number of vehicles sold compared with March (+10.1%). In Alberta, vehicle sales have been rising since the start of 1999. All the Western provinces recorded higher monthly sales except Manitoba (-0.9%).

New Brunswick recorded the steepest decline (-11.7%). In the Atlantic region, monthly sales varied considerably province to province. Increases were recorded in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. However, despite Prince Edward Island's strong April results (+8.9%), there has been little evidence of sales growth there in recent years.

On the national level, the decline in sales was due largely to the results in Quebec (-5.9%) and Ontario (-2.9%), the provinces that account for two-thirds of all sales.

The April 2000 issue of *New motor vehicle sales* (online at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca): 63-007-X1B, \$13/\$124) presents the full report. To order data, or for general information, contact Client Services (613-951-3549, 1 877 421-3067, [retailinfo@statcan.ca](mailto:retailinfo@statcan.ca)). For analytical information, contact Cl rance Kimanyi (613-951-6363, [kimacle@statcan.ca](mailto:kimacle@statcan.ca)), Distributive Trades Division.

## Consumers favouring poultry, rice and soft drinks

Consumers increased their consumption of poultry, cheese, wheat flour and rice, low-fat milk and soft drinks during the 1990s. At the same time, they drank less high-fat milk, and moved away from butter and eggs. However, it appears that the shift from butter and eggs has moderated during the past couple of years.

In 1999, each Canadian consumed an average of 33.2 kg of poultry, up significantly from 28.1 kg in 1990. This increase was stimulated in part by a wider variety of convenient fresh and processed chicken products targeted at time-conscious consumers. Per-person consumption of poultry was superior to that of both beef (31.0 kg) and pork (27.4 kg) last year. The consumption of beef was nearly 9% below the level in 1990, whereas pork consumption per person climbed almost 5%.

Looking at milk consumption last year, each person consumed an average of 87.5 litres, down from 95.4 litres in 1990. This decline can be explained by several factors: strong competition from other beverages (soft drinks, juices, bottled water and soy-based products); fewer children; an ageing population; and an increasingly diverse ethnic population that drinks little or no milk. Nevertheless, the market share of lower-fat varieties such as skim milk and 1% milk continued to grow, increasing from almost 13% of all milk consumed at the start of the decade to just over 28% in 1999.

Consumers have not, however, entirely abandoned higher-fat products. Cheese consumption closed the decade at 11.9 kg per person, up from 11.0 kg in 1990. Cream also enjoyed a surge in popularity, rising from 5.2 litres per person to 6.3 litres.

As for soft drinks, each consumer drank an average of almost 117 litres last year, up significantly from 1990, when consumption was about 96 litres per person.

### Note to readers

*These data represent food that is available for consumption, not the actual quantities of food consumed in Canada. This is because the data do not allow for losses in stores, households, private institutions or restaurants.*

By the end of the 1990s, consumption of cereal products per person had climbed slightly more than 23% since the beginning of the decade. The increasing popularity of pasta, specialty bread products (such as pita, tortilla shells, bagels and croissants) and cereal-based snacks has been an important factor in this growth.

Consumers have also increasingly turned to such items as rice cakes and rice noodles, and they are using rice as a substitute for potatoes. In 1999, per-person consumption of rice was almost 8.0 kg, a 60% increase compared with the quantity consumed at the beginning of the decade (4.9 kg).

Egg consumption, which fell to a low of 14.4 dozen per person in 1995, has exceeded 15.0 dozen eggs per person for the past three years. Butter consumption closed the decade at 2.8 kg per person, down from 3.3 kg in 1990 but above the record low of 2.6 kg in 1997.

*Historical consumption data (1985 to 1999) for dairy products, beverages, eggs, pulses and nuts, sugars and syrups, cereals, meats and poultry will be available shortly in **Food consumption in Canada, part I** (print: 32-229-XPB, \$35; online at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca): 32-229-XIB, \$26), as will detailed information on production, stocks, international trade and supplies used by manufacturers. Data for 1999 on per-person consumption of fruits and vegetables, oils and fats, and fish will be released in October. For more information, contact Debbie Dupuis (1 800 465-1991; 613-951-2553; fax: 613-951-3868) or Patricia Chandler (613-951-2506), Agriculture Division.*

## Income taxes higher in Canada than in the United States

Canadian families saw higher effective income tax rates on average in 1997 than did U.S. families. However, each country's rates for families with similar incomes varied considerably. This reflected variations in family circumstances other than income, as well as the myriad provisions of tax systems over and above the structure of nominal tax rates.

In 1997, Canada had proportionally fewer families with an annual income of \$150,000 or more, and proportionally fewer with annual income under \$10,000. About 11% of families in the United States had incomes of less than \$10,000, compared with just over 7% in Canada. In contrast, the United States had about three times as many families with an annual income of \$150,000 or more. (All income data are in Canadian dollars.)

American families who had incomes of \$150,000 or more paid 5.2% less of their total income in income taxes and payroll taxes in 1997 than did comparable Canadian families. The results were similar for other income groups. The only families in both countries who were taxed similarly in 1997 were those with incomes of \$10,000 to \$24,999.

### Note to readers

*This article summarizes a new study published in the Summer 2000 issue of Perspectives on labour and income. The study, titled "Income taxes in Canada and the United States", compares the effective tax rates of the two countries. Because the income tax systems of both countries are generally progressive, with higher-income families paying tax at higher average rates, this study divides families on either side of the border into groups with similar incomes. The U.S. incomes were adjusted to reflect purchasing power parities. In 1997, US\$79 spent by an American household was equivalent in purchasing power to C\$100 spent in Canada.*

*This analysis uses the most recent detailed sample data from both countries. For Canada, data are from Statistics Canada's 1997 Survey of Consumer Finances, with imputed payroll taxes added. For the United States, the data are from the microdata file of the Census Bureau's March 1997 supplement to the Current Population Survey.*

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### ... Income taxes higher in Canada than in the United States

Specifically, a Canadian family with income of \$40,000 paid about \$6,900 in income tax on average in 1997, compared with \$5,200 for an American family. Similarly, a Canadian family with income of \$70,000 paid an average \$17,000, compared with \$13,300 south of the border.

Effective tax rates vary within income groups, and both countries have many provisions intended to adjust taxes to particular circumstances. As a result, in both countries, at least one-quarter of all families in the group with incomes between \$10,000 and \$24,999 paid no income tax at all. By contrast, 95% of families with incomes of \$150,000 or more paid taxes amounting to at least 21% of their income in Canada. In the United States, 95% of families in this income group paid at least 18% of their income in taxes.

The Summer 2000 issue of *Perspectives on labour and income* (75-001-XPE, \$18/\$58) is now available. For further information, contact Michael Wolfson (613-951-8216; wolfson@statcan.ca) or Brian Murphy (613-951-3769; murphy@statcan.ca), Social and Economic Studies Division.

### Effective tax rates of families by income in Canadian dollars, 1997

|                        | Proportion of families |               | Average effective tax rate |               |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|
|                        | Canada                 | United States | Canada                     | United States |
|                        | %                      |               |                            |               |
| <b>All families</b>    | <b>100.0</b>           | <b>100.0</b>  | <b>16.4</b>                | <b>13.8</b>   |
| Less than \$10,000     | 7.3                    | 10.9          | 1.0                        | 2.3           |
| \$10,000 to \$24,999   | 24.8                   | 21.1          | 6.2                        | 6.2           |
| \$25,000 to \$49,999   | 30.4                   | 27.3          | 17.3                       | 12.9          |
| \$50,000 to \$99,999   | 29.9                   | 26.5          | 24.3                       | 19.0          |
| \$100,000 to \$149,999 | 5.9                    | 8.6           | 27.9                       | 24.1          |
| \$150,000 or more      | 1.8                    | 5.7           | 32.8                       | 27.6          |

## Average family income highest in a decade

Average family income rebounded to its highest level in a decade in 1998, as Canadians made up for ground lost during the lean years of the 1990s. In 1998, the average family had estimated after-tax income of \$49,626, up 3.7% from the previous year after adjusting for inflation. It was the strongest annual increase since 1989.

Average after-tax income in 1998 was 1.7% higher than the pre-recession peak of \$48,807 (1989). Unattached individuals also gained ground. Their 1998 average after-tax income was \$21,067 (+2.4% from 1997). For couples with children under 18, after-tax income in 1998 was \$55,074 (+4.7%).

The major source of these changes was market income—earnings from employment, private retirement pensions and investments. The average market income of unattached individuals increased 4.5% from the previous year, to \$20,758. For families,

it jumped 4.7% to \$55,224—the highest since 1989. For couples with children under 18, market income was \$65,766 (+5.6%). Lone-parent families saw a 10.8% increase in 1998 to \$22,290.

Average market income also grew in every province in 1998—a first for the decade. The largest gains, about 6.0% each, occurred in Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and Ontario. Over the longer term, Alberta and Prince Edward Island have shown the strongest growth, surpassing their 1989 levels by 9.9% and 8.8% respectively. Three provinces were still below their 1989 levels: Ontario (-2.2%), Nova Scotia (-4.7%) and Newfoundland (-5.3%). In Quebec, market income in 1998 was virtually the same as in 1989. Market income was highest in 1998 in Ontario (\$62,688 on average), followed by Alberta (\$60,392).

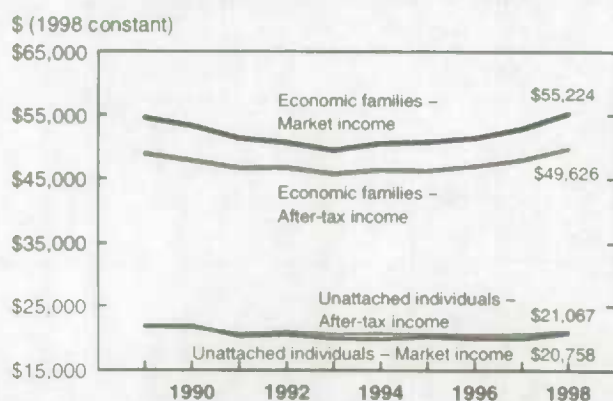
The 1998 growth in market income mainly resulted from improved labour-market conditions. The number of working people increased nearly 2.0%. Full-year, full-time employment rose 3.1%, as did real gross domestic product.

With market income up, Canadians paid more in income taxes, whereas average transfer payments to families from governments remained virtually unchanged from 1997 (at \$6,892). Income taxes per family in 1998 averaged \$12,489, up 5.7% from 1997. Unattached individuals paid \$4,718 on average, up 7.5%. Families paid 20.1% of their total income in taxes, slightly higher than in 1997 (19.8%). Unattached individuals paid 18.3% of their total income in taxes, up from 17.6%.

Like market income, average after-tax income rose in every province. However, three provinces have not yet surpassed their 1989 levels: Quebec (-1.8%), Nova Scotia (-3.7%) and Newfoundland (-6.1%). The largest increases in after-tax income, relative to 1989, occurred in Alberta (+7.1%) and British Columbia (+7.0%).

Not all family types shared in the 1998 income gains. Families headed by seniors had average after-tax income of \$36,051 in 1998, essentially unchanged from the previous year and 7.7% below the 1989 peak.

### Average market income and after-tax income



(continued on page 6)

### ... Average family income highest in a decade

Income inequality after tax is widening among families as well: In 1998, the top 20% received \$5.40 for every \$1 that went to the bottom 20%, compared with \$4.80 for every \$1 in 1994. In 1998, families in the top 20% received \$11 in market income for every \$1 earned by families in the lowest 20% in 1989. By 1998, this ratio had increased to \$14 to \$1.

In 1998, an estimated 752,000 families were in low income—living below the low-income cutoff for their family size and community size—down from 852,000 in 1997. That decline pulled the after-tax low-income rate down from 10.3% to 9.1%—the lowest rate since 1990 (8.5%).

As well, the proportion of unattached individuals in low income dropped to 30.3%, down from 32.0% in 1997. The number of unattached individuals in low income was about 1,288,000 in 1998. The total number of persons in low income also declined, down to 3.7 million persons or 12.2% of all Canadians. The rate peaked in 1996 at 14.2%. In 1998, an estimated 1,004,000 children under age 18 were living in low income, a drop of 14% from 1,168,000 in 1997. The low-income rate for children fell from 16.5% to 14.2% in 1998.

Despite the general reduction in low income in 1998, many people did drop below the low-income cutoff that year. Of those in low income in 1998, 26.2% had not been there the year before. Between 1993 and 1998, 24.2% of Canadians experienced low

#### Note to readers

The data in this article came from two household surveys: the Survey of Consumer Finances and the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics. To factor in inflation, all the income data are expressed in 1998 constant dollars.

The analysis features the after-tax low-income information. Although low-income cutoffs are often referred to as poverty lines, they have no official status as such. For further information, refer to the "Feature article on poverty and low income" posted at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca). Look under "Concepts, definitions and methods", followed by "Discussion papers or new surveys".

income at some time. Of the total population, 8.0% were in low income for one of those six years, and 4.8% were there for two years. At the other extreme, 3.3% of the population were in low income throughout the full six years.

**Income in Canada, 1998** (print: 75-202-XPE, \$45; online at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca): 75-202-XIE, \$45) is now available. Additional detailed data on income and earnings are also available, free of charge, on Statistics Canada's Web site ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)). Go to the "Canadian statistics" page and look under "The people". For more information, contact Client Services (1 888 297-7355; 613-951-7355; [income@statcan.ca](mailto:income@statcan.ca)), Income Statistics Division.

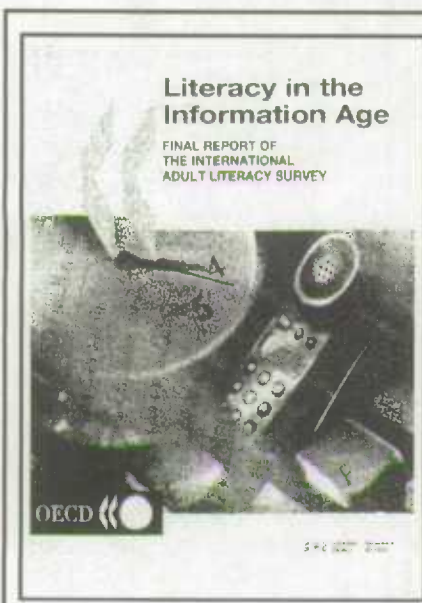
## New from Statistics Canada

### Literacy in the information age

*Literacy in the information age*, the final report from the International Adult Literacy Survey, is a comparative study of literacy skills in 20 countries including the United States and Canada. It is released jointly by Statistics Canada and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

This study provides the world's first reliable and comparable estimates of the distribution of levels of literacy skills in the adult population. It offers new insights into the factors that influence the development of adult skills at home and at work. It is a useful tool for analyzing policy and for drafting policies for lifelong learning that can contribute to economic and social progress.

The report *Literacy in the information age* is now available. To order, go to the OECD Online Bookshop at <http://electrade.gfi.fr/cgi-bin/OECDBookshop.storefront/>. For more information, contact T. Scott Murray (613-951-9035), Centre for Education Statistics.





## New from Statistics Canada

### Schooling, literacy and individual earning

1994

The new monograph *Schooling, literacy and individual earning*, based on the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey, examines the validity of comparing average literacy scores across jurisdictions. It also sets bounds on the proportion of the individual benefit of education that can be explained by level of literacy.

The author, Lars Osberg of Dalhousie University's Department of Economics, focuses on the methodology behind measures of skills such as literacy and, in so doing, opens an important methodological debate.

*Schooling, literacy and individual earning* (89-552-MPE, \$10) is now available. It can be downloaded from Statistics Canada's Web site ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)). A paper summarizing the findings, *Highlights for schooling, literacy and individual earning* (online at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca): 89F0120XIE, no charge) is also available. For more information, contact T. Scott Murray (613-951-9035), Centre for Education Statistics.

### Grain trade of Canada

1998/99

This report presents an overview of the 1998/99 crop year, as well as tables on Canadian and world grain supply and demand, prices, trade, domestic processing, and storage and movement of grain.

The 1998/99 issue of *Grain trade of Canada* (22-201-XPB, \$44) is on sale now. For more information, contact Karen Gray (204-983-2856; [karen.gray@statcan.ca](mailto:karen.gray@statcan.ca)), or Susan Anderson (613-951-3859; [sue.anderson@statcan.ca](mailto:sue.anderson@statcan.ca)), Agriculture Division.

### The non-profit sector: publicly available data resources

This brief report, one of a series on voluntary activity, provides an inventory of data and information pertaining to the non-profit sector. It is designed to assist the research community and to help identify information needs. The inventory revealed a surprising scarcity of reliable statistical material.

In Canada, there are only five principal sources of statistical information on the non-profit sector. Virtually nothing is known about the great majority of non-profits that are not registered charities. Two national surveys conducted by Statistics Canada in 1987 and 1997 provide data on volunteers. The 1997 survey also provided information regarding charitable donating and participation in civic affairs.

The details are presented in the new report *Publicly available data resources on the non-profit sector in Canada* (75F0033MIE, no charge), which is now available on Statistics Canada's Web site ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)). Look under "Products and services". For more information, contact Paul Reed (613-951-8217; [reedpau@statcan.ca](mailto:reedpau@statcan.ca)), Statistics Canada.

### Insights on...

Summer 2000

The feature article in the latest issue of *Insights on...* is titled "Frequently asked questions on small business". Also included is information on new Statistics Canada products and services that pertain to business and industry.

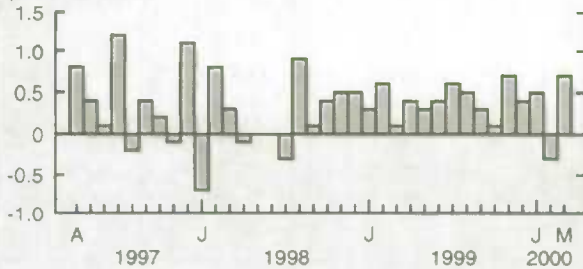
*Insights on...* is a free newsletter that reports on emerging trends in business and trade. It documents developments in Canadian industry and examines how businesses are responding to new challenges and opportunities.

The Summer 2000 (vol. 4, no. 1) issue of *Insights on...* (online at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca): 61F0019XIE, no charge; print: 61F0019XPE, \$40/\$100) is now available. To order, or for more information, contact Jamie Brunet (613-951-6684; [jamie.brunet@statcan.ca](mailto:jamie.brunet@statcan.ca)), Small Business and Special Surveys Division.

## Current trends

### Gross domestic product

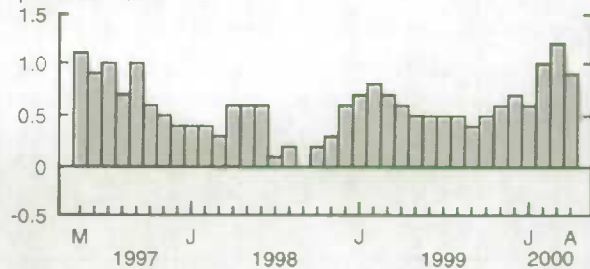
% change,  
previous month



After receding in February, economic activity surged 0.7% in March. The advance marked a return to the solid growth path.

### Composite Index

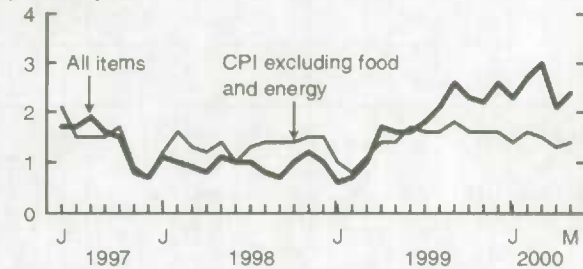
% change,  
previous month



The growth of the leading indicator slowed from 1.2% in March to 0.9% in April. Household demand lost some of its vigour and financial markets slowed.

### Consumer Price Index

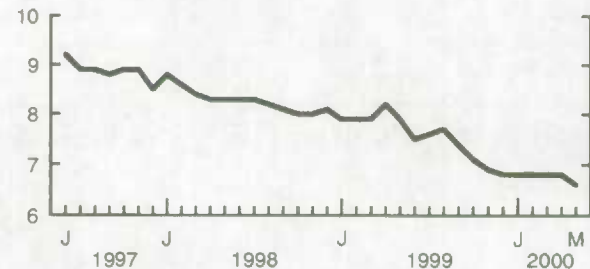
% change,  
previous year



Consumer prices for goods and services were 2.4% higher in May 2000 than they were a year earlier. Excluding food and energy, prices rose 1.4%.

### Unemployment rate

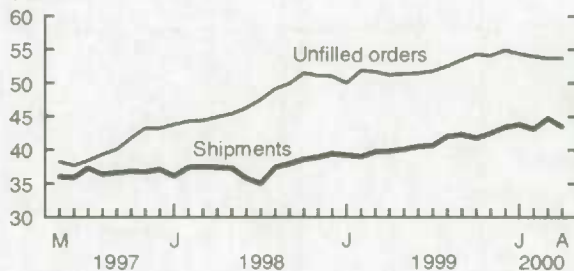
%



In May, the unemployment rate fell 0.2 percentage points to 6.6%, the lowest since March 1976.

### Manufacturing

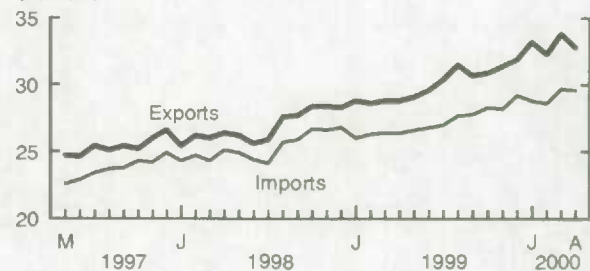
\$ billions



Manufacturers' shipments fell 2.8% in April to \$43.5 billion. The backlog of unfilled orders decreased a slight 0.1% to \$53.7 billion.

### Merchandise trade

\$ billions



In April, the value of merchandise exports dropped 3.0% from March to \$32.8 billion. Imports were off 0.3% to \$29.6 billion.

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



## Latest statistics

|   | Period  | Level  | Change,<br>previous period | Change,<br>previous year |
|---|---------|--------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>GENERAL</b>  |         |        |                            |                          |
| Gross domestic product (\$ billion, 1992)             | March   | 774.3  | 0.7%                       | 4.7%                     |
| Composite Index (1992=100)                            | April   | 161.6  | 0.9%                       | 8.2%                     |
| Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billion)         | Q1 2000 | 53.3   | 12.3%                      | 37.5%                    |
| Capacity utilization (%)                              | Q1 2000 | 87.6   | 1.1†                       | 4.3†                     |
| <b>DOMESTIC DEMAND</b>                                |         |        |                            |                          |
| Retail trade (\$ billion)                             | April*  | 22.6   | -1.2%                      | 5.7%                     |
| Department store sales (\$ billions)                  | April   | 1.50   | 1.4%                       | 3.9%                     |
| New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)           | April   | 133.2  | -1.1%                      | 4.2%                     |
| Wholesale trade (\$ billion)                          | April*  | 31.6   | -0.2%                      | 8.5%                     |
| <b>LABOUR</b>   |         |        |                            |                          |
| Employment (millions)                                 | May     | 14.91  | 0.3%                       | 2.8%                     |
| Unemployment rate (%)                                 | May     | 6.6    | -0.2†                      | -1.3†                    |
| Participation rate (%)                                | May     | 65.8   | 0.0†                       | 0.0†                     |
| Average weekly earnings (\$)                          | March   | 624.11 | 0.3%                       | 3.0%                     |
| Help-wanted Index (1996=100)                          | May     | 169    | 1.2%                       | 7.0%                     |
| <b>INTERNATIONAL TRADE</b>                            |         |        |                            |                          |
| Merchandise exports (\$ billion)                      | April*  | 32.8   | -3.0%                      | 14.0%                    |
| Merchandise imports (\$ billion)                      | April*  | 29.6   | -0.3%                      | 12.6%                    |
| Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion) | April*  | 3.2    | -0.9                       | 0.8                      |
| <b>MANUFACTURING</b>                                  |         |        |                            |                          |
| Shipments (\$ billion)                                | April*  | 43.5   | -2.8%                      | 9.3%                     |
| New orders (\$ billion)                               | April*  | 43.4   | -2.3%                      | 10.7%                    |
| Unfilled orders (\$ billion)                          | April*  | 53.7   | -0.1%                      | 4.9%                     |
| Inventory/shipments ratio                             | April*  | 1.33   | 0.05                       | 0.02                     |
| <b>PRICES</b>   |         |        |                            |                          |
| Consumer Price Index (1992=100)                       | May*    | 110.4  | 0.5%                       | 2.4%                     |
| Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100)             | April   | 126.8  | 0.0%                       | 5.6%                     |
| Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100)                  | April   | 134.1  | -6.0%                      | 19.7%                    |
| New Housing Price Index (1992=100)                    | April   | 102.7  | 0.2%                       | 2.1%                     |

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

\* new this week

† percentage point

## Infomat

### A weekly review

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Published by the Official Release Unit, Communications Division,  
Statistics Canada, 10th floor, R.H. Coats Bldg., Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0T6.

Price per issue: paper, \$4; online at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca), \$3. Annual subscription: paper, \$145; online, \$109. All prices are in Canadian dollars and exclude applicable sales taxes. Shipping charges will be added for delivery outside Canada.

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| International travel, vol. 16, no. 4: advance information       | April 2000    | 66-001-PIB       | 6/55                            |
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| Paper   |               | 57-601-UPB       | 387                             |
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| The consumer price index  | May 2000      | 62-001-XPB       | 11/103                          |
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| Cable television  | 1998          | 56-205-XIB       | 30                              |
| Science statistics service bulletin, vol. 24, no. 2:            |               |                  |                                 |
| Biotechnology research and development in Canadian industry     | 1997          | 88-001-XIB       | 6/59                            |
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