



Labour Market Bulletin

Alberta

April 2021



This Labour Market Bulletin provides an analysis of Labour Force Survey results for the province of Alberta, including the regions of Calgary, Edmonton, Central Alberta and Mountain Parks, Southern Alberta, and Northern Alberta.

OVERVIEW

Employment in Alberta fell slightly (-0.6%) between March and April. Even still, employment levels were up 15% (+290,500) from April 2020, owing to the significant economic recovery that has taken place over the past year. Full-time employment was up +1.4% percent on the month, and +10.8% on the year. Meanwhile, part-time employment fell by -8.7% on a monthly basis, following a tightening of public health restrictions in early April. Part-time employment (+38.6%) improved far more than full-time employment (+10.8%) year-over-year due to the significant part-time job losses that occurred in April 2020 when public health restrictions first went into effect.

However, new public health restrictions have been introduced recently as the province grapples with record-high active cases and hospitalizations. On May 5, the Alberta government applied regionally targeted restrictions for areas with at least 50 cases per 100,000 people and 30 active cases. In addition, on May 4, Alberta announced additional province-wide restrictions, which included moving all students to online learning until May 25, reducing capacity in retail stores, and closing all personal service businesses.¹ Data on the labour market impacts of these latest restrictions will not be available until the release of the May Labour Force Survey results in June.

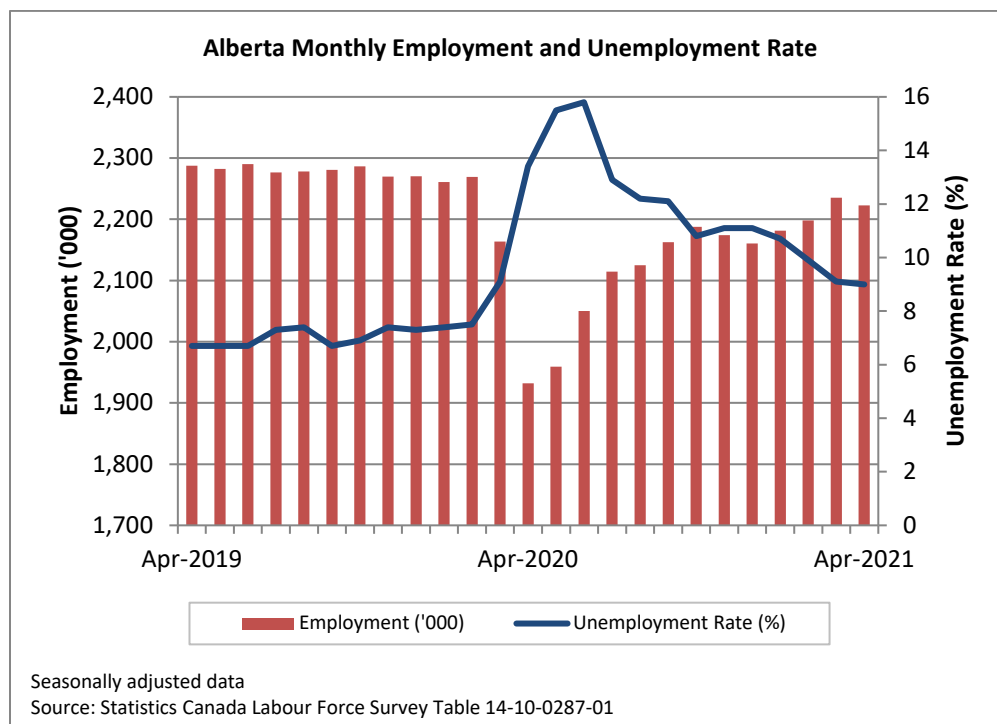
Alberta Monthly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	April 2021	March 2021	April 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	3,535.3	3,533.5	3,499.2	1.8	0.1	36.1	1.0
Labour Force ('000)	2,441.5	2,458.7	2,231.5	-17.2	-0.7	210.0	9.4
Employment ('000)	2,222.7	2,235.3	1,932.2	-12.6	-0.6	290.5	15.0
Full-Time ('000)	1,818.8	1,792.9	1,640.8	25.9	1.4	178.0	10.8
Part-Time ('000)	404.0	442.4	291.4	-38.4	-8.7	112.6	38.6
Unemployment ('000)	218.8	223.4	299.3	-4.6	-2.1	-80.5	-26.9
Unemployment Rate (%)	9.0	9.1	13.4	-0.1	-	-4.4	-
Participation Rate (%)	69.1	69.6	63.8	-0.5	-	5.3	-
Employment Rate (%)	62.9	63.3	55.2	-0.4	-	7.7	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287, formerly CANSIM 282-0087

The number of people who were unemployed fell by -4,600 (-2.1%) on a monthly basis in April, and the unemployment rate fell (-0.1) for the fourth consecutive month. Though the unemployment rate was down by -4.4 percentage points from April 2020, it was still the second highest nationally, behind only Newfoundland and Labrador, and equal to Ontario.²



The unemployment rate for men was unchanged in April compared with March, though it fell by 3.5 percentage points year-over-year. Women, meanwhile, saw a slight (-0.3 percentage points) improvement in their unemployment rate between March and April, and a significant (-5.6 percentage points) improvement year-over-year. The size of the improvement points to the large impact that public health restrictions had in April 2020 on the accommodation and food, and retail trade industries, which have a disproportionate amount of female workers.

Unemployment rates for people aged 15 to 24 rose in April, partly due to increased restrictions on businesses (restaurants and retail stores) that employ many young people. Young women (aged 15 to 24) had the best year-over-year improvement in the unemployment rate, with a -16.8 percentage point decrease. This rebound shows the significant recovery this group has experienced since the early months of the pandemic. However, it is not all good news for young women, as they continue to have a higher unemployment rate than women over age 25.

While young women had the highest unemployment rate at the start of the pandemic in April 2020, young men had the highest unemployment rate in April 2021. At 17.1%, the unemployment rate for men aged 15 to 24 was more than double that of men aged 25 and older. Unemployment rates for both men and women aged 25 and over fell between March and April.

Alberta Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally Adjusted Data	April 2021 (%)	March 2021 (%)	April 2020 (%)	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	9.0	9.1	13.4	-0.1	-4.4
25 years and over	7.9	8.2	11.4	-0.3	-3.5
Men - 25 years and over	7.8	8.1	10.7	-0.3	-2.9
Women - 25 years and over	7.9	8.5	12.2	-0.6	-4.3
15 to 24 years	16.1	14.7	29.0	1.4	-12.9
Men - 15 to 24 years	17.1	15.1	26.4	2.0	-9.3
Women - 15 to 24 years	15.1	14.3	31.9	0.8	-16.8

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287, formerly CANSIM 282-0087

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Employment gains in the goods-producing sector (+1,400) were offset by losses in the services-producing sector (-13,900), which was led by declines in transportation and warehousing. Meanwhile, the manufacturing industry grew the most, adding 7,100 jobs (+5.9%) in April.

Alberta Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	April 2021	March 2021	April 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	2,222.7	2,235.3	1,932.2	-12.6	-0.6	290.5	15.0
Goods-producing sector	554.5	553.1	506.2	1.4	0.3	48.3	9.5
Agriculture	37.1	39.8	43.5	-2.7	-6.8	-6.4	-14.7
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	137.6	140.0	128.8	-2.4	-1.7	8.8	6.8
Utilities	25.0	24.9	23.2	0.1	0.4	1.8	7.8
Construction	226.8	227.5	193.0	-0.7	-0.3	33.8	17.5
Manufacturing	128.0	120.9	117.7	7.1	5.9	10.3	8.8
Services-producing sector	1,668.2	1,682.1	1,426.0	-13.9	-0.8	242.2	17.0
Trade	332.9	339.3	259.6	-6.4	-1.9	73.3	28.2
Transportation and warehousing	123.2	130.6	104.2	-7.4	-5.7	19.0	18.2
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	113.9	109.1	98.4	4.8	4.4	15.5	15.8
Professional, scientific and technical services	183.8	181.8	163.9	2.0	1.1	19.9	12.1
Business, building and other support services	74.1	73.8	66.1	0.3	0.4	8.0	12.1
Educational services	168.1	172.9	143.7	-4.8	-2.8	24.4	17.0
Health care and social assistance	308.9	310.3	266.3	-1.4	-0.5	42.6	16.0
Information, culture and recreation	62.3	61.1	63.5	1.2	2.0	-1.2	-1.9
Accommodation and food services	100.4	104.3	76.5	-3.9	-3.7	23.9	31.2
Other services	102.0	99.5	79.1	2.5	2.5	22.9	29.0
Public administration	98.8	99.4	104.6	-0.6	-0.6	-5.8	-5.5

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0355, formerly CANSIM 282-0088

Goods-producing industries

Many industries and businesses in the goods-producing sector were deemed essential and permitted to continue operating through the peak of the pandemic. Nevertheless, weak economic activity and persistent uncertainty have weighed heavily on the sector.

The **resource extraction** industries (forestry, mining, and oil and gas) shed 2,400 (-1.7%) jobs between March and April, but employment was still up +6.8% from April 2020. The price of Western Canadian Select fell slightly for the first time since October, averaging \$50.41 in April, down from \$51.39 in March.³ Nevertheless, global oil prices have generally improved in 2021 as countries increase their economic output.⁴ Total oil production in Alberta has also been steadily increasing since the low point in May 2020, and in March 2021 (the most recent data available) it was up roughly 1.2% from production levels one year ago.⁵

Employment in **construction** fell very slightly (-700 or -0.3%) in April. Nonetheless, year-over-year employment remained up by 33,800 or +17.5%. In positive news, the City of Calgary is investing \$265M this year to complete a number of critical infrastructure projects that are expected to create more than 2,100 jobs. Major construction spending by the Government of Alberta will also benefit the industry, with \$21B over three years expected to support roughly 90,000 new jobs.⁶

Manufacturing had the highest monthly employment gains, with 7,100 jobs added in April. Employment was +8.8% (+10,300 jobs) above its April 2020 level. In a piece of significant news for the industry, Inter Pipeline is receiving \$408M in cash grants for its \$4B Heartland Petrochemical Complex under the Alberta Petrochemicals Incentive Program. The grant will be spread out over three years once the facility, which will employ over 300 people, becomes operational.⁷

Services-producing industries

The services-producing sector includes labour-intensive and public-facing industries such as wholesale and retail trade, and food and accommodation. These industries were initially among the most impacted during the height of COVID-19 related closures. Employment has recovered significantly since hitting its lowest point during the pandemic in April 2020 but remains below pre-pandemic (February 2020) levels.

Employment in **wholesale and retail trade** decreased by 6,400 (-1.9%) in April but was up by 73,300 jobs (+28.2%) compared to last year. Restrictions on retail stores and shopping malls were tightened in April, with a limit of 15% of fire code occupancy in effect province-wide, except in high case regions, where the limit is 10%.⁸

Accommodation and food services continue to be among the industries most impacted by COVID-19. Employment fell by 3,900 (-3.7%) in April, as indoor dining has been prohibited in the province since April 9, and as of May 9, outdoor patio service is also prohibited. Restaurants may offer takeout and delivery services only.⁹ Accommodation and food services had the largest year-over-year percentage increase among all the industries (+31.2%) because it was one of the most negatively impacted by the public health restrictions that were in effect last April.

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

The statistics for the economic regions are not seasonally adjusted and should only be compared on a year-over-year basis. Employment is sometimes influenced by seasonal and calendar effects occurring at the same time and with the same magnitude every year, which can bring about changes in the data that make monthly comparisons difficult.

In April, employment was up in every economic region except Lethbridge – Medicine Hat and Camrose – Drumheller, which saw decreases of -2.5% and -6.5%, respectively. Meanwhile, Edmonton had the largest gains in employment, with a +8.1% increase.

Alberta Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	April 2021 ('000)	April 2020 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	April 2021 (%)	April 2020 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Alberta	2,193.7	2,099.6	4.5	9.9	10.4	-0.5
Economic Regions						
Lethbridge - Medicine Hat	131.0	134.3	-2.5	8.7	6.9	1.8
Camrose - Drumheller	92.1	98.5	-6.5	7.6	9.2	-1.6
Calgary	838.1	803.3	4.3	9.7	11.0	-1.3
Banff - Jasper - Rocky Mountain House and Athabasca - Grand Prairie - Peace River	178.6	173.2	3.1	9.8	10.3	-0.5
Red Deer	108.4	103.3	4.9	10.6	11.6	-1.0
Edmonton	774.7	716.6	8.1	10.6	10.4	0.2
Wood Buffalo - Cold Lake	70.9	70.5	0.6	7.8	8.1	-0.3

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0387, formerly CANSIM 282-0122

In April, employment in **Lethbridge-Medicine Hat** was 131,000 (-2.5%) and the unemployment rate was 8.7%, up 1.8 percentage points from last year. The decline in employment was led by the accommodation and food services sector, where on-and-off public health restrictions have resulted in business closures and layoffs over the past year. Employment also declined significantly in agriculture, where a reduced supply of temporary foreign workers due to COVID-19 resulted in labour shortages.¹⁰ Still, there is positive news for the region's agricultural and manufacturing sectors: Rogers Sugar extended its agreement with Alberta Sugar Beet Growers for two years, covering the 2021 and 2022 crops. Rogers' sugar beet processing facility in Taber provides 135 full-time jobs, and around 240 seasonal jobs.¹¹

Employment in **Camrose – Drumheller** fell by approximately 6,400 in April to 92,100 (-6.5%). Construction and transportation saw the largest year-over-year employment declines among all the sectors. The cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline in January 2021 has had a significant negative impact on construction, and transportation to a lesser extent. However, the region's unemployment rate was still the lowest in the province, at 7.6%. Renewable energy projects are a bright spot in the region: BluEarth Renewables is starting construction on a \$200M-plus wind farm northeast of Drumheller later this year, and Claresholm Solar Project, a solar farm in the Municipal District of Willow Creek, is operational as of April 19.¹²

In April, employment in **Banff – Jasper – Rocky Mountain House and Athabasca – Grande Prairie – Peace River** was up 3.1% from last year, at approximately 178,600. The unemployment rate fell by -0.5 percentage points and would have declined farther were it not for the 5,000 people who entered the labour force since last year. In more good news for the region, the Government of Canada, the Pauw Foundation, and the Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission are jointly funding a \$5.5M pedestrian-cyclist bridge over the Bow River in Banff.¹³

Employment in the **Red Deer** region was approximately 108,400 in April, up 4.9% from one year ago. The unemployment rate was 10.6%, down one percentage point from April 2020 but still tied with Edmonton for the highest in the province. Demolition of empty buildings on the Michener Centre North site in Red Deer started in April. The work is expected to cost \$15M to \$20M, create 85 to 100 jobs, and be complete in mid-2022.¹⁴

To the northeast, **Wood Buffalo – Cold Lake** added 400 jobs (+0.6%) on a year-over-year basis, bringing total employment to 70,900. The unemployment rate decreased by -0.3 percentage points to 7.8%. However, it's not all good news for the region. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo was hit especially hard by COVID-19 at the end of April, disrupting multiple oil sands producers' plans for annual maintenance work. Due to COVID-19 outbreaks at their facilities, Suncor delayed the maintenance turnaround on its U2 upgrader by at least a month, while Syncrude reduced the size of its maintenance workforce onsite.¹⁵

Year-over-year employment in the **Calgary** region was up by 4.3%, bringing the total number of jobs to 838,100. The unemployment rate was 9.7%, down 1.3 percentage points from last year. Calgary continues to prove itself an attractive location for tech companies, several of which announced hiring plans in April. Absorb Software expects to accelerate its product development and hire 100 to 150 people, the majority in Calgary, within the next year.¹⁶ Harvest Builders is launching two new financial technology companies, One Wealth and Propra, which are expected to hire up to 300 people over the next three years. Harvest Builders also backs Neo Financial, which grew from 70 to 250 employees within the last six months and reported in early April it was continuing to hire roughly 20 people per week.¹⁷

In **Edmonton**, approximately 774,700 people were employed in April, up significantly (+8.1%) from one year ago. However, the region also had the highest unemployment rate in the province, tied with Red Deer at 10.6%. The region's agricultural sector will soon benefit from North America's largest hemp-processing facility, which is currently under construction in Bruderheim, northeast of Edmonton. Canadian Rockies Hemp Corporation's new facility, which is expected to be completed this summer, will process hemp grown by local producers.¹⁸

***Note:** In preparing this document, the authors have taken care to provide clients with labour market information that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since this document was published. Users are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect official policies of Employment and Social Development Canada.*

Prepared by: Labour Market Information (LMI) Directorate, Service Canada, Alberta

For further information, please contact the LMI team at: http://www.esdc.gc.ca/cqi-bin/contact/edsc-esdc/eng/contact_us.aspx?section=lmi

For information on the Labour Force Survey, please visit the Statistics Canada Web site at: www.statcan.gc.ca

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