



Labour market steadies in March after successive months of job loss

Canada's labour market held steady in March after shedding jobs for successive months pointing to at least a temporary period of stability despite broader uncertainty with the war in the Middle East. After declining 109k people in January and February, total employment nudged higher by 14k or 0.1 per cent, to lift year-over-year growth to 0.4 per cent from 0.2 per cent in February. This is a welcome gain, but employment was still at some of the lowest levels since September. Canada's unemployment rate was unchanged at 6.7 per cent and in line with range seen since October, albeit tempered by low population growth. There was no change in either labour force participation or employment rates. Wage growth accelerated to 4.7 per cent from 3.9 per cent, but we are not reading too much into this just yet as could owe to compositional and base year impacts.

There wasn't much that was newsworthy under the surface. By age group, there was little change. Employment nudged up 0.1 per cent for prime-aged individuals (aged 25 to 54) and rose 0.5 per cent for those aged 15 to 24 which helped to reduce youth unemployment rate to below 14 per cent. A mild decline was seen for older workers. Employment growth was led by part-time work (up 15.2k or 0.4 per cent), as full-time employment was essentially flat. Both private- and public- sector employment rose at a pace consistent with the headline increase of 0.1 per cent, with self-employment down by 0.2 per cent.

At an industry- level, there were a few highlights. Goods- sector employment gained by 12.5k people or 0.3 per cent, driven by a large increase (10.3k or 3.0 per cent) in the resource sector to the highest level since October 2024 with Alberta leading that increase. Both construction and manufacturing edged up but remained lower than a year ago, with the latter down 2.4 per cent on a 12-month basis. Among services, employment was unchanged over the month. On the upside, information/culture/recreation services rose 8.8k or 1.0 per cent, with miscellaneous private services up 15.1k or 1.9 per cent. In contrast, this was offset by substantial declines in the finance/insurance/real estate (-11.2k or 0.8 per cent), and business support services (-9.5k or 1.4 per cent).

Among the provinces, there were some obvious highlights and sore spots in March. On the upside, the Prairie provinces added traction with higher employment. Manitoba employment surged with a 10.8k or 1.5 per cent increase led by its construction sector, while Saskatchewan rose 0.9 per cent, and Alberta employment nudged higher by 0.2 per cent. Both Ontario and Quebec held steady, with higher growth parts of the Atlantic. B.C. was Canada's sore spot, yet again. Echoing February, employment fell by 19.2k people or 0.7 per cent. March losses were driven largely by severe declines in services sectors, such as wholesale trade, transportation and warehousing, and financial and professional services. B.C. has waffled between gains in losses over the past year, but declines have intensified. Year-over-year declines were sharpest among provinces (-1.2 per cent) and if it keeps up, we may be talking recession in Canada's most western province.

The national unemployment rate was steady at 6.7 per cent, but patterns were mixed among provinces. B.C. recorded a sharp increase from 6.1 per cent to 6.7 per cent during the month reflecting sharp job losses. Ontario was unchanged at 7.6 per cent, and Alberta nudged higher to 6.5 per cent. Newfoundland Labrador rose to 0.3 pp to 9.5 per cent and was the highest in the country. In contrast, Saskatchewan fell from 5.6 per cent to 5.0 per cent, while Quebec also declined 0.5 pp to 5.4 per cent.

Headline labour market patterns were steady in March, and below the surface there was little change. That said, there are clear differences in patterns among provinces, with B.C. now trailing the pack, with the Prairies and Atlantic provinces leading the way. There was little here in our view to influence the Bank of Canada's next rate decision later this month except for the robust wage gain. We still expect the Bank to hold given inflation risks from the war. That said, there remain headwinds from CUSMA trade negotiations, low population growth, and uncertainties around the war on the global economy.

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Mar-2026		Canada Labour Force Survey (LFS) Summary						
Indicator	Latest	prior month	m/m person ch	m/m ch.	prior m/m ch	y/y ch.	prior y/y ch.	YTD ch.
	Persons, 000s			Per Cent				
Employed	21,051.4	21,037.3	14.1	0.1	-0.4	0.4	0.2	0.4
Full-time	17,215.1	17,216.2	-1.1	0.0	-0.6	0.6	0.3	0.6
Part-time	3,836.3	3,821.1	15.2	0.4	0.6	-0.4	-0.2	-0.3
Labour Force	22,566.6	22,551.5	15.1	0.1	-0.1	0.4	0.4	0.4
Working age population	34,746.7	34,735.5	11.2	0.0	0.0	0.9	1.0	1.0
	Per Cent			Per Cent				
Unemployment Rate	6.7	6.7		0.0	0.2	-0.1	0.1	-0.1
Employment Rate	60.6	60.6		0.0	-0.2	-0.3	-0.4	-0.3
Participation Rate	64.9	64.9		0.0	-0.1	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4
Average wage (\$)	37.7	37.6		0.5	1.0	4.7	3.9	4.0

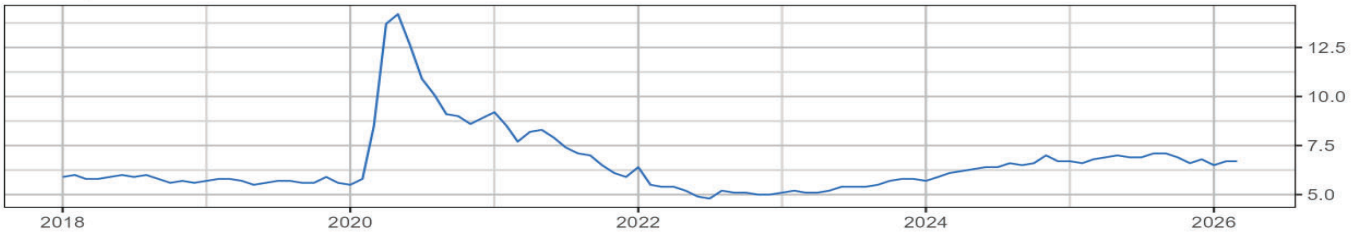
Canada Employment by Industry				
Industry	Employed, 000s	Monthly change	Monthly % change	12- month % change
Total	21,051.4	14.1	0.1	0.4
Goods	4,209.0	12.5	0.3	-0.4
Agriculture	232.3	-5.0	-2.1	1.4
Primary resources	350.3	10.3	3.0	2.9
Utilities	176.9	0.8	0.5	15.3
Construction	1,632.1	4.0	0.2	-0.5
Manufacturing	1,817.4	2.5	0.1	-2.4
Services	16,842.4	1.7	0.0	0.6
Wholesale/Retail Trade	2,970.6	-6.7	-0.2	-0.1
Transportation/Warehousing	1,099.9	1.6	0.1	2.0
Finance/Insurance/RE	1,472.6	-11.2	-0.8	0.1
Professional/Scientific/Technical Service	1,998.8	12.1	0.6	0.0
Business Support	671.7	-9.5	-1.4	-5.7
Education	1,570.5	-7.2	-0.5	-1.7
Healthcare/Social Assistance	2,971.1	5.0	0.2	3.3
Information/Culture/Recreation	879.1	8.8	1.0	4.9
Accommodation/Foodservices	1,159.3	-10.0	-0.9	-1.3
Other Private Service	792.2	15.1	1.9	2.4
Public Administration	1,256.7	3.6	0.3	1.1
Employment by Class				
Private-Sector	13,771.5	15.4	0.1	0.6
Public-Sector	4,584.5	4.6	0.1	1.2
Self Employed	2,695.4	-5.8	-0.2	-1.6

Labour Market Summary by Province					
Province	Employed, 000s	m/m % change	y/y % change	Unemployment Rate	Participation Rate
CAN	21,051.4	0.1	0.4	6.7	64.9
BC	2,908.2	-0.7	-1.2	6.7	64.4
AB	2,655.6	0.2	4.0	6.5	68.9
SK	623.9	0.9	1.4	5.0	67.2
MB	750.9	1.5	2.5	5.6	67.1
ON	8,205.5	-0.1	-0.2	7.6	64.6
QC	4,622.3	0.2	-0.2	5.4	64.4
NB	411.3	0.5	2.2	7.0	60.9
NS	528.0	0.7	0.9	6.6	61.4
PEI	96.0	-0.2	2.8	7.3	66.5
NL	249.6	0.1	2.0	9.5	58.3

Canada Labour Market Conditions

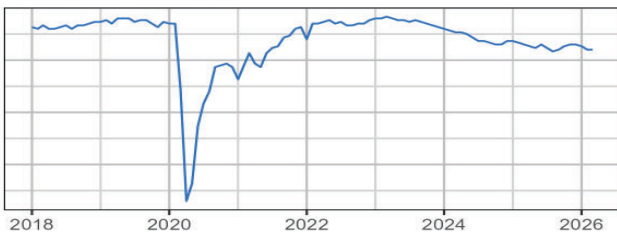
Unemployment Rate (%)

Last data point: 2026-03-01



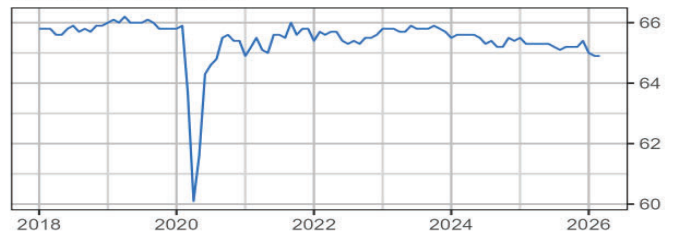
Employment Rate

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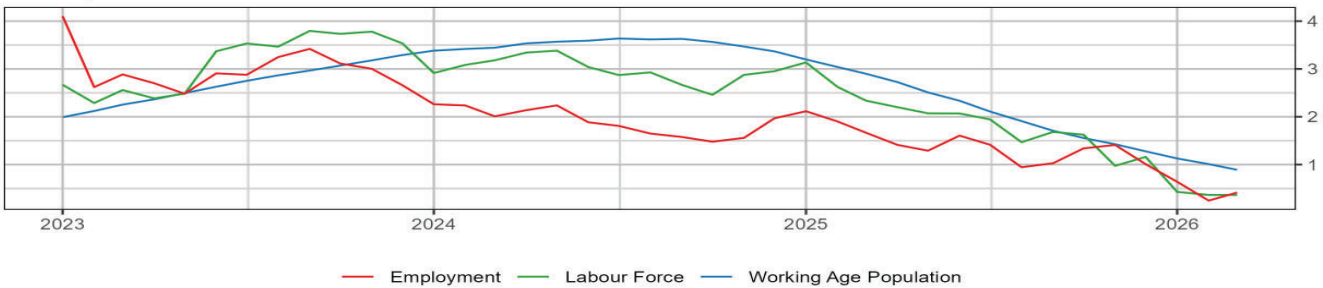
Participation Rate

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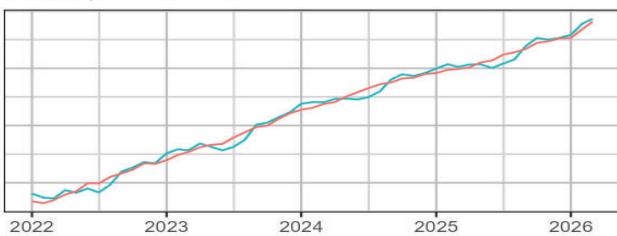
Labour Indicators, 12-month % ch

Last data point: 2026-03-01



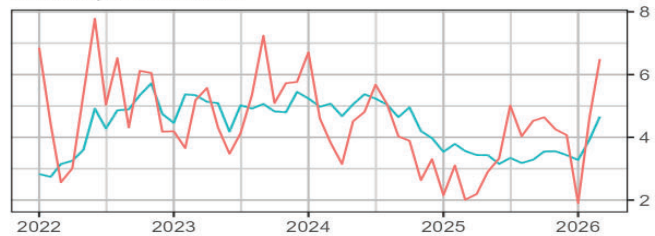
Average hourly wage

Last data point: 2026-03-01



Average hourly wage growth (%)

Last data point: 2026-03-01



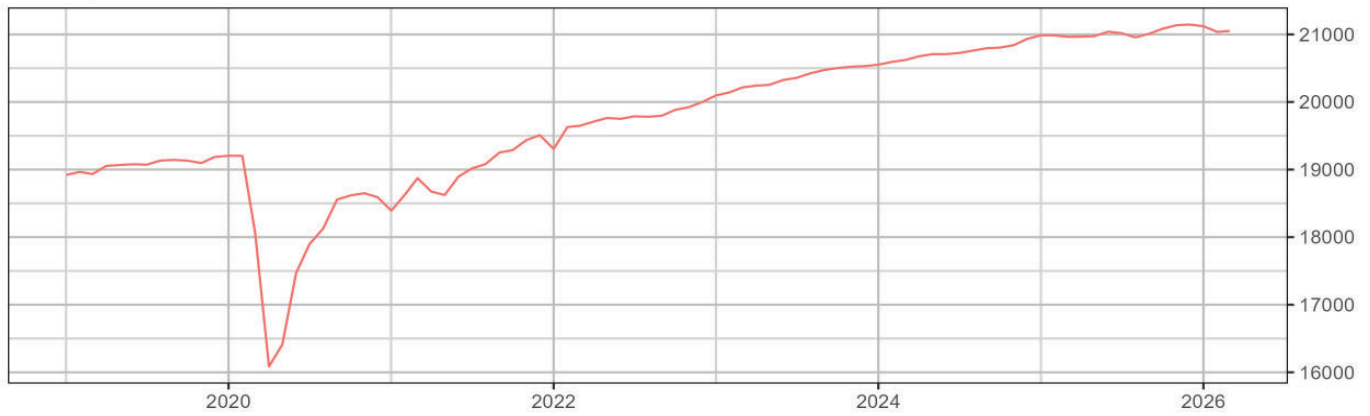
— seasonally adjusted — unadjusted

— 3m ann ch — y/y change

Canada LFS Employment

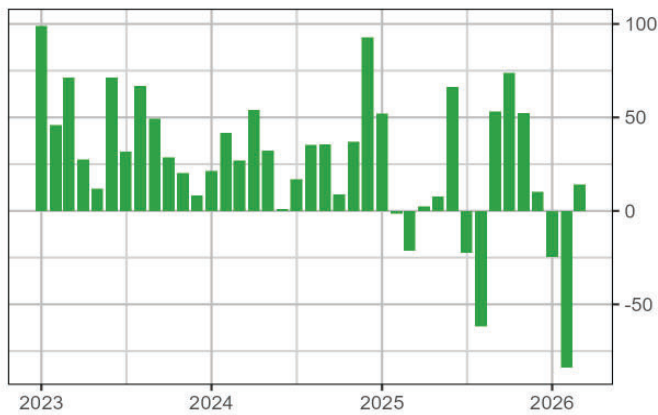
Employment, 000s

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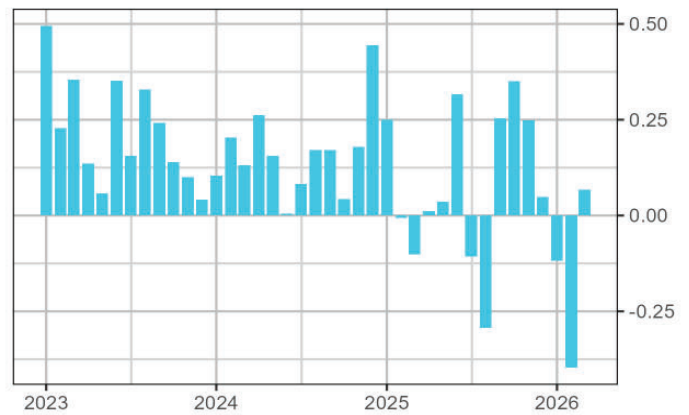
Monthly ch 000s

Last data point: 2026-03-01



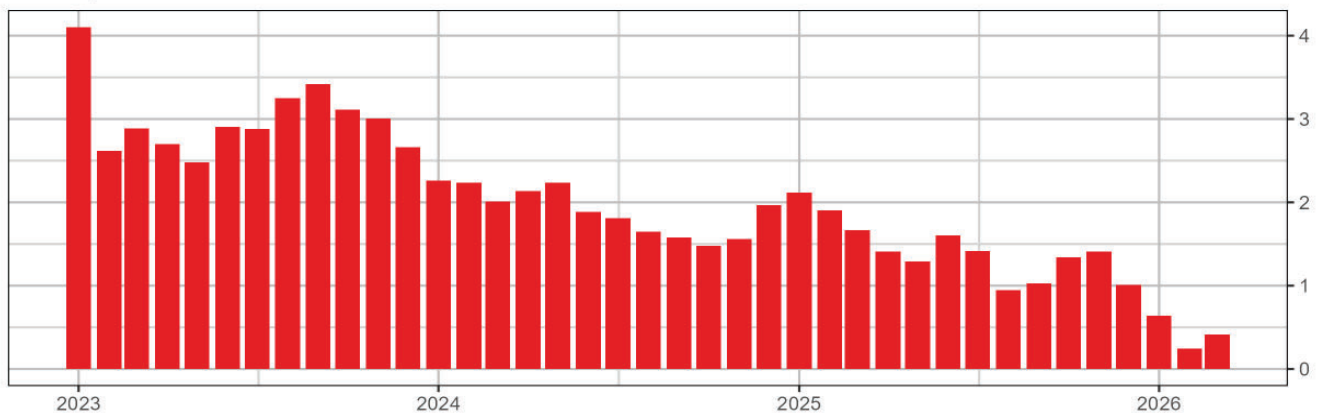
Monthly ch (%)

Last data point: 2026-03-01



12- month ch (%)

Last data point: 2026-03-01

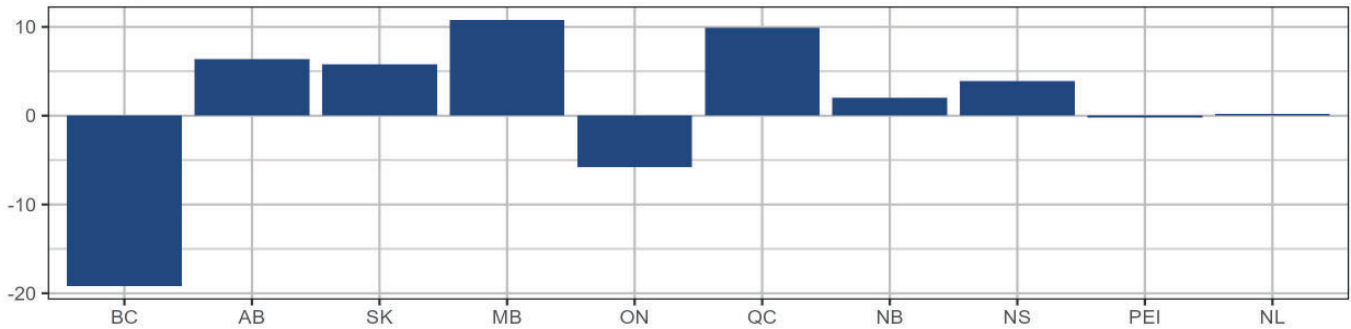


Statistics Canada, Central 1

Provincial Labour Market Highlights

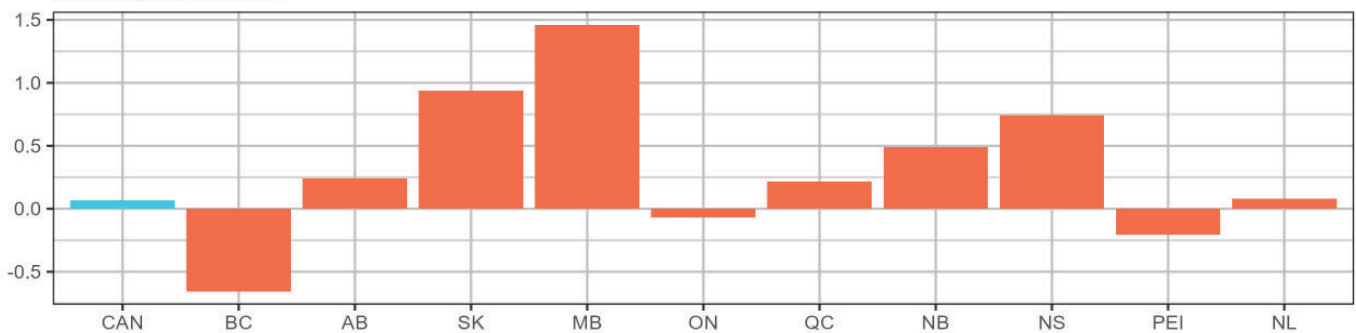
Employment by Province, m/m ch (000s)

Last data point: 2026-03-01



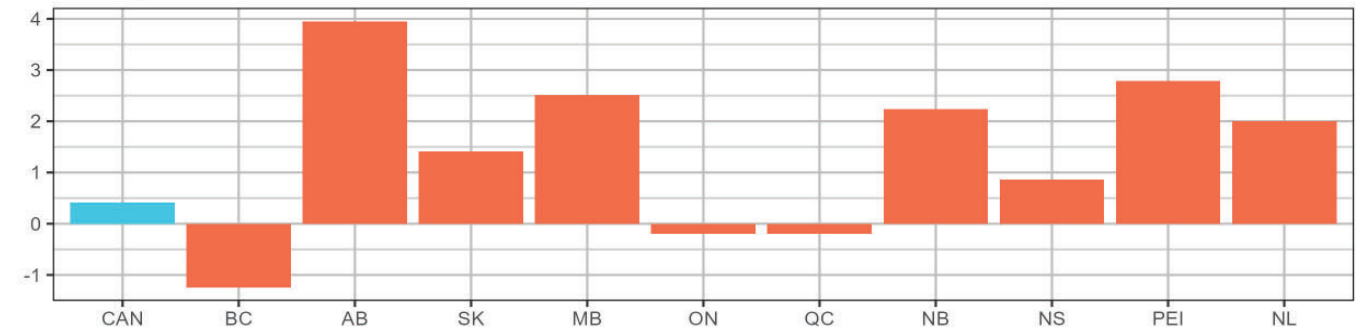
Employment by Province, m/m % ch

Last data point: 2026-03-01



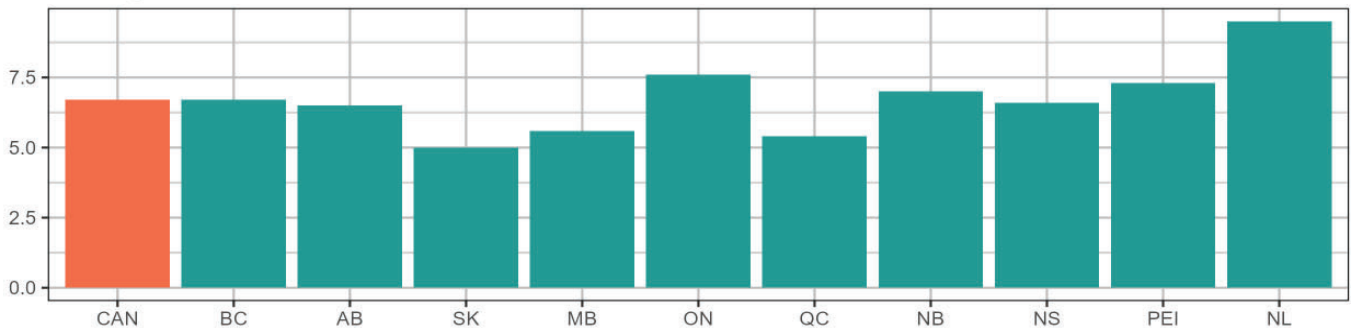
Employment by Province, y/y % ch

Last data point: 2026-03-01



Unemployment Rate by Province, %

Last data point: 2026-03-01



Statistics Canada, Central 1