

UNIFOR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

LABOUR MARKET INSIGHTS

A monthly review of labour market indicators

April 2026



UNIFOR
theUnion | lesyndicat

May 8, 2026

If you require a different version of this report for accessibility purposes, please email research@unifor.org

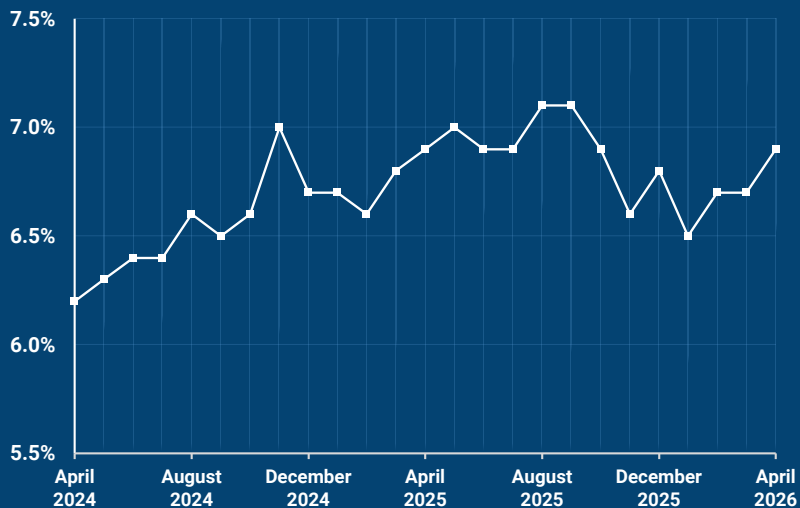
National Statistics

The labour market declined by close to 18,000 jobs in April as Canada's economy continued to contend with the impacts of U.S. tariffs on trade, while the Strait of Hormuz crisis added additional economic pressures in the form of higher global energy, chemical feedstock and fertilizer prices and an increasingly uncertain business outlook. The combination of job losses and an increase in the number of jobseekers as the participation rate rose to 65.0% (+0.1) caused the unemployment rate to increase by 0.2 percentage points to 6.9%.

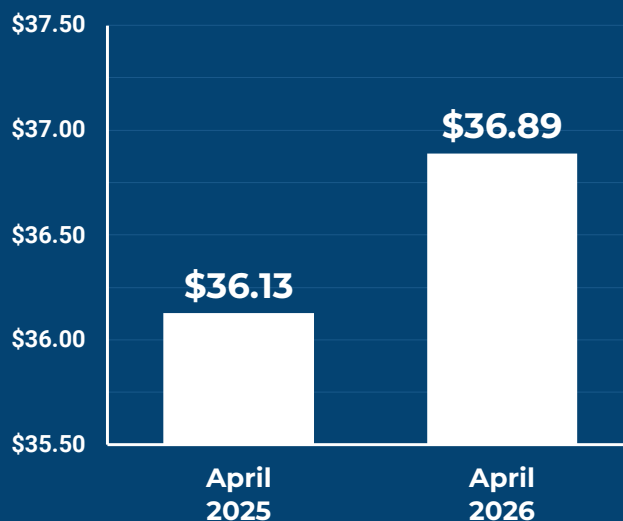
Average hourly wages grew by just 0.1% in April, although the year-over-year increase was notably strong at 4.5%. Statistics Canada notes, however, that much of this increase reflects a shift in the composition of employment away from short-term jobs. With job tenure held constant, annual wage increases would have amounted to 3.4% in April, in line with average increases during 2025.

Statistic	April 2020–24 average	April 2025	March 2026	April 2026	Year-over-year (Y/Y) change	Monthly (M/M) change
Total employment (#) ¹	19,077,260	20,966,700	21,051,400	21,033,700	67,000 0.3%	-17,700 -0.1%
Unemployment rate (%) ²	7.7	6.9	6.7	6.9	0.0	0.2
Participation rate (%) ³	64.4	65.3	64.9	65.0	-0.3	0.1
Union coverage (%) ⁴	31.1	30.9	31.2	31.1	0.2	-0.1
Average hourly wage (\$) ⁵	\$32.38	\$36.13	\$37.73	\$37.77	4.5%	0.1%
Real average hourly wage (\$) ⁶	\$35.80	\$36.13	\$37.18	\$36.89	2.1%	-0.8%

Unemployment Rate



Real Average Hourly Wage



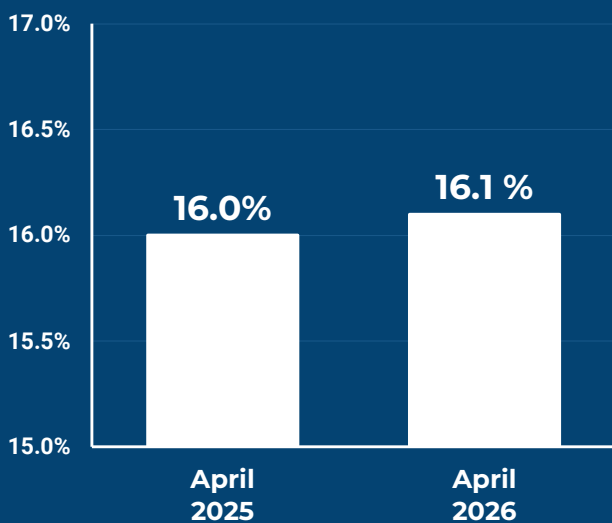
National Precarity Indicators

Unifor's seasonally unadjusted precarity indicators largely fell during the month of April, although some measures such as the underemployment, underutilization and multiple job holder rates remain slightly elevated on a year-over-year basis. Notably, in line with the shifting composition of employment away from short-term employment, there was a 0.2 percentage point decline in the proportion of temporary and contract job holders last month. In a worrying sign, however, the improved

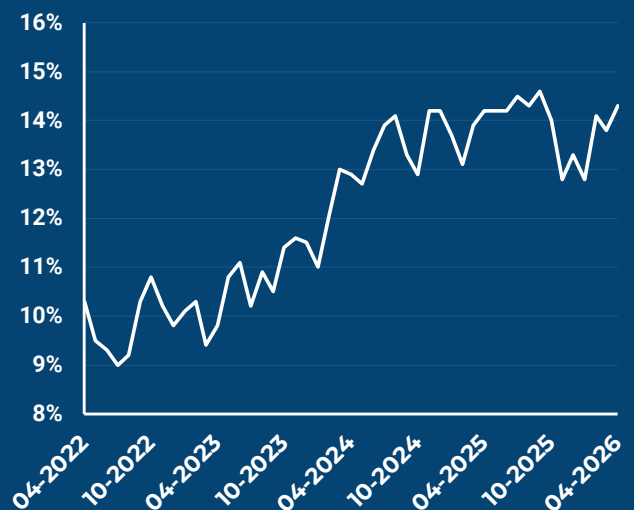
Indicator	April 2025	March 2026	April 2026	Y/Y change	M/M change
Part-time rate (%) ⁷	18.9	19.2	19.0	0.1	-0.2
Involuntary part-time (%) ⁸	42.3	42.4	42.3	0.0	-0.1
Underutilization (R8) rate (%) ⁹	9.2	9.6	9.4	0.2	-0.2
Underemployment rate (%) ¹⁰	16.0	16.3	16.1	0.1	-0.2
Multiple job holders (%) ¹¹	5.7	5.9	5.8	0.1	-0.1
Temporary job holders (%) ¹²	11.2	11.0	11.2	0.0	0.2
Casual/other (%)	3.5	3.6	3.6	0.1	0.0
Temporary/contract (%)	6.4	6.3	6.1	-0.3	-0.2
Seasonal (%)	1.3	1.1	1.4	0.1	0.3
Low wage incidence (%) ¹³	20.6	20.8	20.6	0.0	-0.2
Gender wage gap ¹⁴	\$4.60	\$4.87	\$4.87	5.9%	0.0%
NEETs (x1,000) ¹⁵	869.1	856.6	826.0	-5.0%	-3.6%

outlook for young jobseekers that was observed towards the end of 2025 has almost entirely reversed itself over the past few months, with the youth unemployment rate rising to 14.3% in April (+0.5; see chart below) while the youth employment rate dipped back below the 54% level (53.9%). Persistent barriers to youth employment continue to underscore the weakness of Canada's labour market.

Underemployment Rate



Youth Unemployment Rate



Regional Statistics

The employment outlook diverged across Unifor's five geographical regions in April, with substantial job losses recorded in Quebec (-43,300; -0.9%) and the Atlantic region (-7,700; -0.6%). While a decline in the participation rate in Atlantic Canada (-0.2) helped to limit the rise in the unemployment rate to just 0.1 percentage point (to 7.5%), the unemployment rate in Quebec surged by 0.8 percentage points to 6.2%.

Elsewhere, marginal employment declines were observed in the Prairie region (-4,600; -0.1%) and British Columbia (-4,300; 0.1%). In line with the national figure, the unemployment rate in the Prairies was on par with April 2025, at 6.4%. In B.C., however, the unemployment rate recorded a year-over-year increase of 0.6 percentage points, underscoring the relatively sharp decline in labour market conditions there.

Ontario stood out as the one region that resisted the overall trend, posting an employment gain of 42,400 (+0.5%), while the unemployment rate declined to 7.5% (-0.1) and the participation rate increased to 64.8% (+0.2). Job gains in Ontario were most pronounced in the services-producing sector (+39,800), particularly in health care and social assistance (+17,000).



Regional Statistics Continued

Atlantic

Statistic	Apr. 2025	Apr. 2026	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	1,258,700	1,277,200	18,500 1.5%	-7,700 -0.6%
Unemployment rate (%)	7.6	7.5	-0.1	0.1
Participation rate (%)	60.4	60.6	0.2	-0.2
Union coverage (%)	33.6	34.2	0.6	0.1
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$32.02	\$33.12	3.4%	-0.1%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$32.02	\$32.35	1.0%	-1.0%



Quebec

Statistic	Apr. 2025	Apr. 2026	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	4,643,800	4,579,000	-64,800 -1.4%	-43,300 -0.9%
Unemployment rate (%)	6.0	6.2	0.2	0.8
Participation rate (%)	65.3	64.4	-0.9	0.0
Union coverage (%)	40.0	40.2	0.2	-0.2
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$34.68	\$36.73	5.9%	0.0%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$34.68	\$35.87	3.4%	-0.9%



Ontario

Statistic	Apr. 2025	Apr. 2026	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	8,193,600	8,247,900	54,300 0.7%	42,400 0.5%
Unemployment rate (%)	7.8	7.5	-0.3	-0.1
Participation rate (%)	64.9	64.8	-0.1	0.2
Union coverage (%)	26.7	27.1	0.4	0.1
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$37.36	\$38.93	4.2%	-0.4%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$37.36	\$38.02	1.8%	-1.3%



Regional Statistics Continued

Prairies

Statistic	Apr. 2025	Apr. 2026	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	3,922,000	4,025,800	103,800 2.6%	-4,600 -0.1%
Unemployment rate (%)	6.4	6.4	0.0	0.3
Participation rate (%)	67.9	68.4	0.5	0.1
Union coverage (%)	27.8	27.9	0.1	0.0
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$35.15	\$37.12	5.6%	1.3%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$35.15	\$36.26	3.2%	0.4%



British Columbia

Statistic	Apr. 2025	Apr. 2026	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	2,948,600	2,903,900	-44,700 -1.5%	-4,300 -0.1%
Unemployment rate (%)	6.2	6.8	0.6	0.1
Participation rate (%)	65.1	64.4	-0.7	0.0
Union coverage (%)	31.0	31.1	0.1	-0.3
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$38.24	\$39.19	2.5%	0.3%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$38.24	\$38.28	0.1%	-0.6%



Average Hourly Wages by Industry

Nominal vs. Inflation-Adjusted Wage Growth

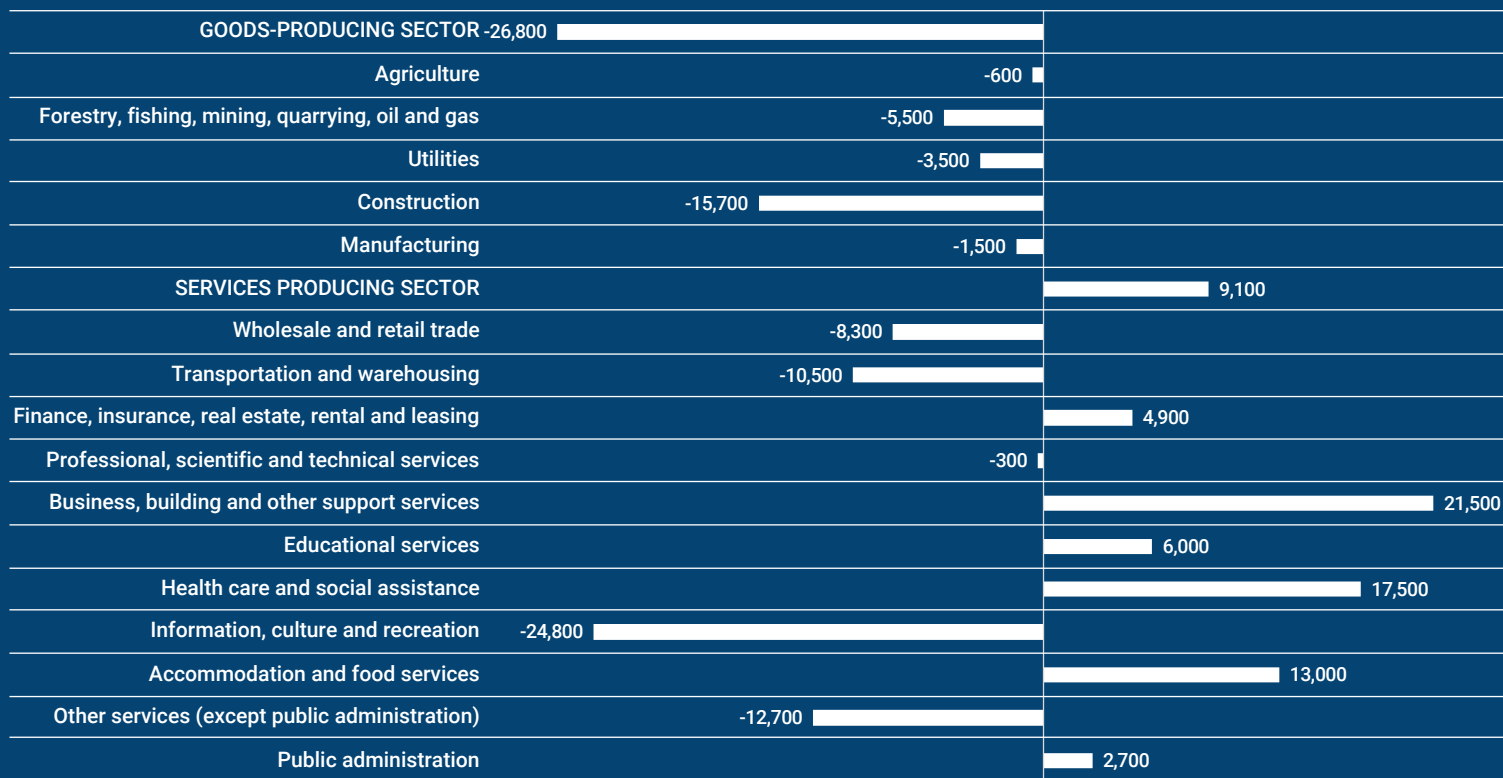
Industry	April 2025	April 2026	Y/Y change	Y/Y inflation-adjusted change
Agriculture	\$26.40	\$26.30	-0.4%	-2.8%
Forestry	\$36.91	\$38.91	5.4%	2.9%
Mining, oil and gas	\$54.57	\$56.29	3.2%	0.7%
Utilities	\$55.72	\$54.64	-1.9%	-4.4%
Construction	\$38.54	\$38.55	0.0%	-2.4%
Manufacturing: durables	\$36.24	\$38.24	5.5%	3.0%
Manufacturing: non-durables	\$33.55	\$34.80	3.7%	1.3%
Wholesale Trade	\$36.65	\$41.27	12.6%	9.1%
Retail Trade	\$24.29	\$25.46	4.8%	2.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	\$34.18	\$34.22	0.1%	-2.3%
Finance and Insurance	\$45.82	\$49.04	7.0%	4.3%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$34.54	\$38.67	12.0%	8.6%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	\$47.14	\$50.50	7.1%	4.4%
Business, building and other support	\$28.30	\$28.91	2.2%	-0.2%
Educational Services	\$41.74	\$43.05	3.1%	0.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$34.62	\$35.58	2.8%	0.4%
Information, Culture and Recreation	\$34.49	\$36.64	6.2%	3.6%
Accommodation and Food Services	\$20.88	\$21.49	2.9%	0.5%
Other Services	\$30.88	\$33.43	8.3%	5.4%
Public Administration	\$46.15	\$48.49	5.1%	2.6%

Wage growth was strong in a number key industries including durables manufacturing (+5.5%), retail trade (+4.8%) and non-durables manufacturing (+3.7%). There was similarly robust wage growth in the public administration sector (+5.1%), which may reflect a shifting composition of wage-earners due to recent layoffs in the public service.

Employment growth was concentrated in the services-producing sector in April (+9,100), including health care and social services (+17,500), while other service sector industries recorded major losses, among them transportation and warehousing (-10,500). The goods-producing sector recorded significant losses (-26,800), led by construction (-15,700).

Monthly Employment Gains and Losses by Industry and Sector

Employment Change by Industry/Sector, March to April 2026



NOTES

1. Total employment counts all working age individuals (15 years old and above) who are currently employed. Seasonally adjusted.
2. The unemployment rate expresses the percentage of working age people who are unemployed and actively seeking work. It does not include unemployed individuals who are not currently searching for jobs or who are permanently without work, and who are therefore considered to fall outside the labour market. Seasonally adjusted.
3. The participation rate expresses the percentage of all working age people who are participating in the labour market, including both employed and unemployed (actively job-seeking) individuals. Seasonally adjusted.
4. Union coverage includes workers who are union members as well as those who are non-unionized but covered by the terms of a collective agreement.
5. The average hourly wage is calculated using usual wages or salaries reported by employees for their main job.
6. The real average hourly wage adjusts wages to account for the impact of inflation and is reported in dollars from the corresponding month of the previous year. Since CPI data is unavailable for the current month prior to the release of the Labour Force Survey, the previous month's CPI level is used to estimate real wages for the current period.
7. The part-time rate measures the percentage of all employed workers who are working part-time hours.
8. The involuntary part-time rate measures the percentage of part-time workers who wanted full-time employment.
9. The underutilization rate, or R8, is used by Statistics Canada to measure underutilized labour. It adds to the unemployment rate those who are waiting for recall or replies, long-term future starts, discouraged workers (those who did not search because they believed no jobs were available) and a portion of involuntary part-time workers.
10. The underemployment rate measures the percentage of people who want work but cannot find suitable employment or who do not have adequate support systems in place that would allow them to engage in job-seeking. It therefore measures the true extent of labour underutilization in Canada. The underemployment rate adds to the unemployment rate all involuntary part-time workers and the marginally attached (i.e. those who wanted to work but who were not able to actively search for jobs due to extenuating circumstances).
11. The multiple job holder rate measures the percentage of employed workers who hold two or more jobs.
12. The temporary job holder rate measures the percentage of employed workers whose jobs are temporary in tenure.
13. Low wage incidence is expressed as the percentage of hourly wage earners earning less than two-thirds of the median hourly wage. This measure is a widely accepted standard for determining the low pay threshold.
14. The gender pay gap measures the average difference in income between men and women who earn hourly wages. A positive gap indicates that men earn, on average, more than women.
15. The NEET category measures the number of people aged 15 to 29 who are not in employment, education or training.





unifor
theUnion | lesyndicat

www.unifor.org