LABOUR MARKET INSIGHTS

A monthly review of labour market indicators

December 2024

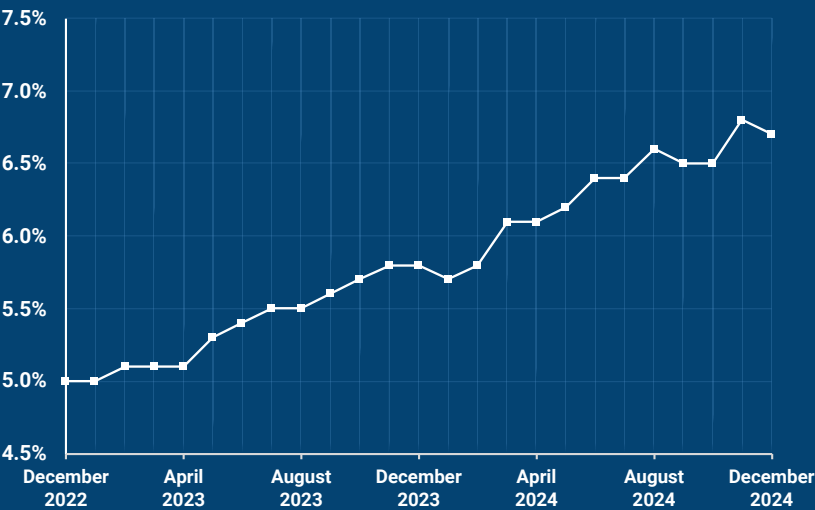UNIFOR
theUnion | lesyndicat

January 10, 2025

National Statistics

Canada's labour market ended the year on a positive note as the economy added close to 91,000 jobs (+0.4%) in December, while the unemployment rate declined slightly, to 6.7% (-0.1). With the participation rate remaining level at 65.1%, December's job growth translated into the first monthly increase in the employment rate since January 2023, from 60.6% to 60.8%. Nevertheless, the employment rate remains substantially lower on a year-over-year basis and is down by 0.9 percentage points since December 2023. Moreover, the bulk of employment gained last month was among the 55 and older age cohort (+62,000) which will likely prove to be a short-lived trend.

Average hourly wages were up by 0.3% in December, with the annual rate of wage growth slowing to 3.8%. Wage growth continues to fall after hovering around the 5% range for much of 2023, with real wage growth (adjusted for inflation) now sitting at just under 2%, year-over-year.

	December 2018–22 average	December 2023	November 2024	December 2024	Year-over-year (Y/Y) change	Monthly (M/M) change
Total employment (#)[1]	19,205,280	20,312,600	20,647,400	20,738,300	425,700 2.1%	90,900 0.4%
Unemployment rate (%)[2]	6.2	5.8	6.8	6.7	0.9	-0.1
Participation rate (%)[3]	65.6	65.4	65.1	65.1	-0.3	0.0
Union coverage (%)[4]	30.4	30.5	30.4	30.8	0.3	0.4
Average hourly wage ($)[5]	$30.11	$34.45	$35.68	$35.77	3.8%	0.3%
Real average hourly wage ($)[6]	$33.87	$34.45	$35.02	$35.11	1.9%	0.3%

Unemployment Rate


Real Average Hourly Wage
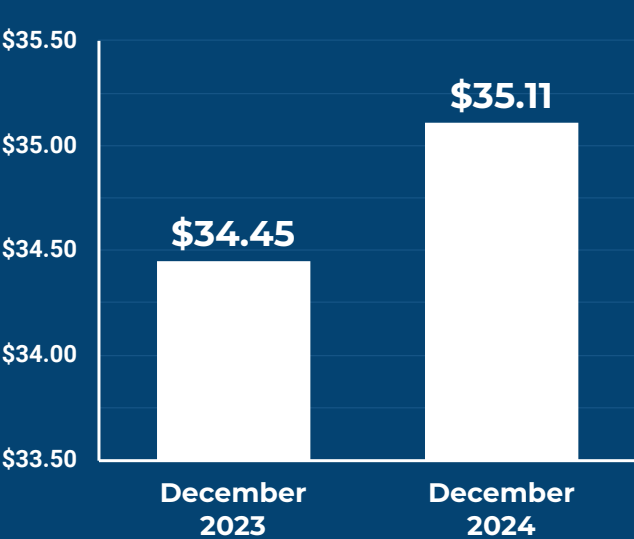
National Precarity Indicators

Substantial jobs growth in December contributed to a fall in several of Unifor's precarity indicators, including the underemployment rate (-0.2), the proportion of multiple job holders (-0.1) and the proportion of involuntary part-timers (-0.5). Year-over-year, however, all three indicators remain markedly higher, suggesting that workers continue to confront greater precarity in the job market. StatCan's supplemental survey data on workers who rely on digital platforms to earn an income reveals that there was a slight increase in the number of workers traditionally considered part of the gig economy. This growth was mainly due to a significantly higher number of gig workers providing personal transport services in 2024 (154,000; +14.1%), while the number of delivery service workers fell (266,000; -4.4%).

	Dec. 2023	Nov. 2024	Dec. 2024	Y/Y change	M/M change
Part-time rate (%)[7]	18.8	18.6	18.8	0.0	0.2
Involuntary part-time (%)[8]	38.6	40.2	39.7	1.1	-0.5
Underutilization (R8) rate (%)[9]	7.3	8.5	8.3	1.0	-0.2
Underemployment rate (%)[10]	13.8	15.1	14.9	1.1	-0.2
Multiple job holders (%)[11]	5.7	5.7	5.6	-0.1	-0.1
Temporary job holders (%)[12]	10.8	10.4	10.8	0.0	0.4
Casual/other (%)	3.3	3.2	3.5	0.2	0.3
Temporary/contract (%)	6.0	5.9	5.8	-0.2	-0.1
Seasonal (%)	1.4	1.3	1.4	0.0	0.1
Low wage incidence (%)[13]	19.5	20.6	20.9	1.4	0.3
Gender wage gap[14]	$4.93	$4.78	$4.85	-1.6%	1.3%
NEETs (x1,000)[15]	789.7	869.8	860.8	9.0%	-1.0%

Underemployment Rate
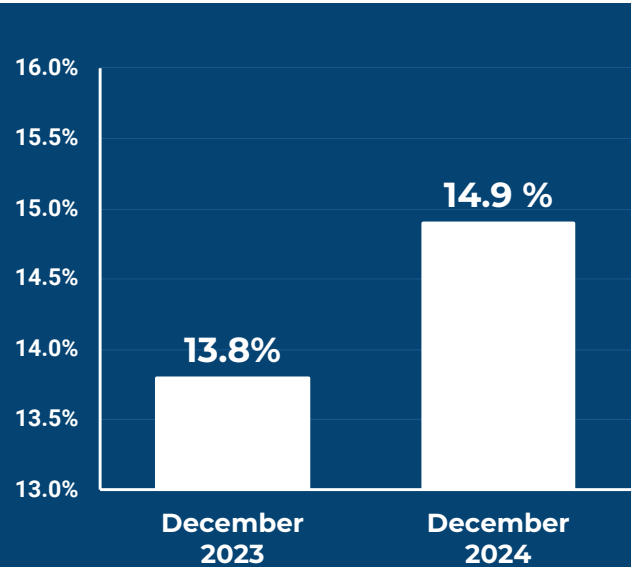
Number of Gig Economy Workers
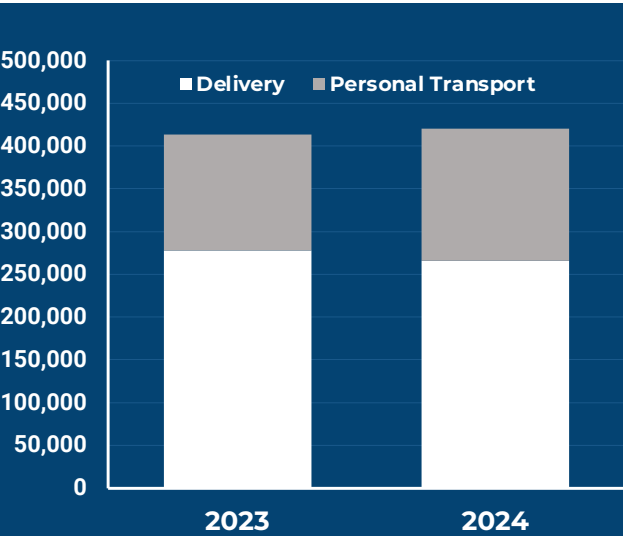
Regional Statistics

Employment growth in December was observed throughout the country, with the Prairie region seeing the greatest percentage increase in jobs (+32,000; +0.8%), followed by Atlantic Canada (+7,000; +0.6%) and British Columbia (+14,100; +0.5%). Ontario (+23,400) and Quebec (+14,400) recorded an employment growth of 0.3%, respectively.

Despite overall employment gains, regional unemployment rates showed significant divergence, with a surge in labour force participation in the Atlantic region (61.1%; +0.5) contributing to a 0.3 percentage point rise in the unemployment rate, to 7.8%. A similar trend was observed in B.C. where the participation rate rose by 0.3 percentage points (65.7%) and the unemployment rate climbed to 6.0% (+0.2). Elsewhere, the unemployment rate fell substantially in the Prairies (6.5%; -0.4) and Quebec (5.6%; -0.3), and declined marginally in Ontario (7.5%; -0.1).

Regional hourly wage growth was highest in B.C. (+1.0%), followed by the Atlantic region (+0.8%), and Quebec (+0.6%), while there was a marginal decline in Ontario (-0.1%) and the Prairies (-0.1%). On an annualized basis, Atlantic Canada (+4.9%) and Ontario (4.6%) continue to record the highest rates of wage growth.

Regional Statistics Continued

Atlantic

	Dec. 2023	Dec. 2024	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	1,228,400	1,257,000	28,600 2.3%	7,000 0.6%
Unemployment rate (%)	7.3	7.8	0.5	0.3
Participation rate (%)	61.0	61.1	0.1	0.5
Union coverage (%)	32.5	33.8	1.3	0.6
Average hourly wage ($)	$30.05	$31.53	4.9%	0.8%
Real avg. hourly wage ($)	$30.05	$30.94	3.0%	0.8%

Quebec

	Dec. 2023	Dec. 2024	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	4,529,400	4,585,000	55,600 1.2%	14,400 0.3%
Unemployment rate (%)	4.7	5.6	0.9	-0.3
Participation rate (%)	64.9	64.6	-0.3	-0.1
Union coverage (%)	38.9	40.0	1.1	0.1
Average hourly wage ($)	$33.02	$34.27	3.8%	0.6%
Real avg. hourly wage ($)	$33.02	$33.64	1.9%	0.6%

Ontario

	Dec. 2023	Dec. 2024	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	7,904,400	8,118,800	214,400 2.7%	23,400 0.3%
Unemployment rate (%)	6.3	7.5	1.3	-0.1
Participation rate (%)	64.8	64.9	0.1	0.0
Union coverage (%)	26.3	26.6	0.3	0.3
Average hourly wage ($)	$35.72	$37.36	4.6%	-0.1%
Real avg. hourly wage ($)	$35.72	$36.67	2.7%	-0.1%

Regional Statistics Continued

Prairies

	Dec. 2023	Dec. 2024	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	3,813,400	3,932,800	119,400	32,000
			3.1%	0.8%
Unemployment rate (%)	5.7	6.5	0.8	-0.4
Participation rate (%)	68.9	68.7	-0.2	0.1
Union coverage (%)	28.5	28.1	-0.4	1.4
Average hourly wage ($)	$34.10	$35.00	2.6%	-0.1%
Real avg. hourly wage ($)	$34.10	$34.35	0.7%	-0.1%

British Columbia

	Dec. 2023	Dec. 2024	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	2,837,000	2,844,800	7,800	14,100
			0.3%	0.5%
Unemployment rate (%)	5.6	6.0	0.4	0.2
Participation rate (%)	65.7	63.9	-1.7	0.3
Union coverage (%)	30.5	30.7	0.2	0.4
Average hourly wage ($)	$35.72	$36.77	2.9%	1.0%
Real avg. hourly wage ($)	$35.72	$36.09	1.0%	1.0%

Average Hourly Wages by Industry

Nominal vs. Inflation-Adjusted Wage Growth

| Industry	December 2023	December 2024	Y/Y change	Y/Y inflation-adjusted change
Agriculture	$23.36	$27.19	16.4%	8.3%
Forestry	$35.25	$35.98	2.1%	0.2%
Mining, oil and gas	$49.88	$53.13	6.5%	4.3%
Utilities	$51.41	$54.37	5.8%	3.7%
Construction	$36.60	$37.31	2.0%	0.1%
Manufacturing: durables	$34.99	$35.88	2.5%	0.6%
Manufacturing: non-durables	$33.25	$33.51	0.8%	-1.1%
Wholesale Trade	$37.66	$36.00	-4.4%	-6.6%
Retail Trade	$23.40	$24.24	3.6%	1.6%
Transportation and Warehousing	$32.85	$34.61	5.4%	3.3%
Finance and Insurance	$44.04	$45.22	2.7%	0.8%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	$35.97	$33.34	-7.3%	-9.9%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	$45.45	$47.93	5.5%	3.4%
Business, building and other support	$26.19	$27.93	6.6%	4.5%
Educational Services	$38.76	$40.90	5.5%	3.4%
Health Care and Social Assistance	$32.79	$34.36	4.8%	2.8%
Information, Culture and Recreation	$31.56	$34.13	8.1%	5.8%
Accommodation and Food Services	$20.59	$20.95	1.7%	-0.2%
Other Services	$29.46	$31.52	7.0%	4.8%
Public Administration	$43.82	$45.28	3.3%	1.4%

The overall slowdown in annualized wage growth was reflected in a number of key industries including non-durables manufacturing (+0.8%), accommodation and food services (+1.7%) and construction (+2.0%). Adjusted for inflation, both the non-durables manufacturing and accommodation and food services industries recorded a fall in real wages last month.

In terms of employment, the services-producing sector accounted for the majority of jobs gained in December (+68,400), although employment growth in the goods-producing sector was similarly robust (+22,500). Public sector job gains in educational services (+17,400) and health care and social assistance (+15,500) were substantial, while manufacturing (+13,100) recorded significant growth.

Monthly Employment Gains and Losses by Industry and Sector

Employment Change by Industry/Sector, November to December 2024

Industry/Sector	Employment Change
GOODS-PRODUCING SECTOR	22,500
Agriculture	900
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	-7,400
Utilities	9,800
Construction	6,100
Manufacturing	13,100
SERVICES PRODUCING SECTOR	68,400
Wholesale and retail trade	-7,800
Transportation and warehousing	16,600
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	15,900
Professional, scientific and technical services	-11,200
Business, building and other support services	11,100
Educational services	17,400
Health care and social assistance	15,500
Information, culture and recreation	1,100
Accommodation and food services	9,000
Other services (except public administration)	3,600
Public administration	-2,700
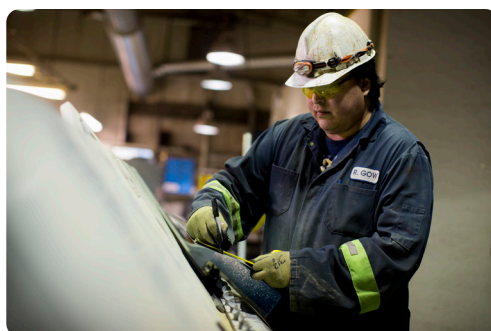
NOTES

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