

UNIFOR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

LABOUR MARKET INSIGHTS

A monthly review of labour market indicators

February 2024



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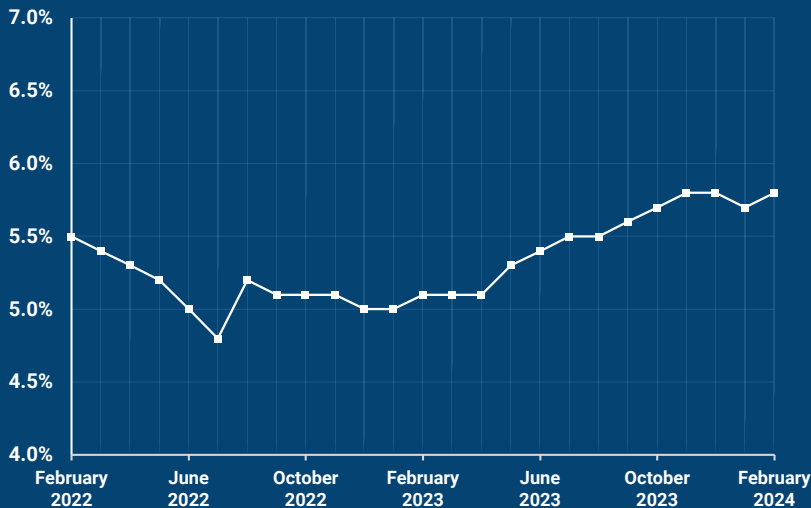
National Statistics

On pace with January, Canada's labour market added another 40,700 jobs in February, an employment increase of 0.2%. However, with the working age population continuing to grow at a faster rate, the unemployment rate rose by 0.1 percentage point to reach 5.8%, after a slight decline in January. Notably, last month's employment growth consisted mainly of increases in self-employed workers, with the overall figure rising by 38,300. The number of public sector employees also grew by 18,800 although this increase was offset by a decline in private sector workers of 16,400.

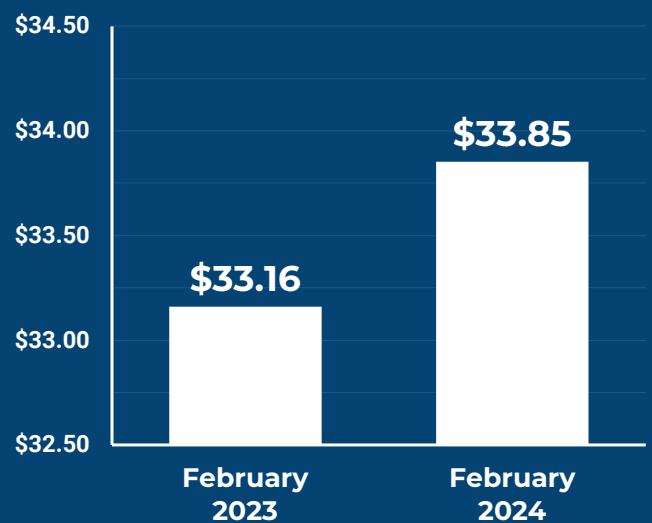
Following a 0.9% increase in January, wage growth slowed down in February, increasing by 0.2%. On a year-over-year basis, wages were up by 5.0%, although this amounted to a 2.1% increase when adjusted for inflation. The percentage of workers covered by a collective agreement fell slightly in February (-0.2) and now sits at 30.3% nationally.

	February 2018–22 average	February 2023	January 2024	February 2024	Year-over-year (Y/Y) change	Monthly (M/M) change
Total employment (#) ¹	19,010,560	20,034,900	20,362,200	20,402,900	368,000 1.8%	40,700 0.2%
Unemployment rate (%) ²	6.3	5.1	5.7	5.8	0.7	0.1
Participation rate (%) ³	65.7	65.7	65.3	65.3	-0.4	0.0
Union coverage (%) ⁴	30.5	31.0	30.5	30.3	-0.7	-0.2
Average hourly wage (\$) ⁵	\$29.38	\$33.16	\$34.75	\$34.82	5.0%	0.2%
Real average hourly wage (\$) ⁶	\$32.96	\$33.16	\$33.78	\$33.85	2.1%	n/a

Unemployment Rate



Real Average Hourly Wage



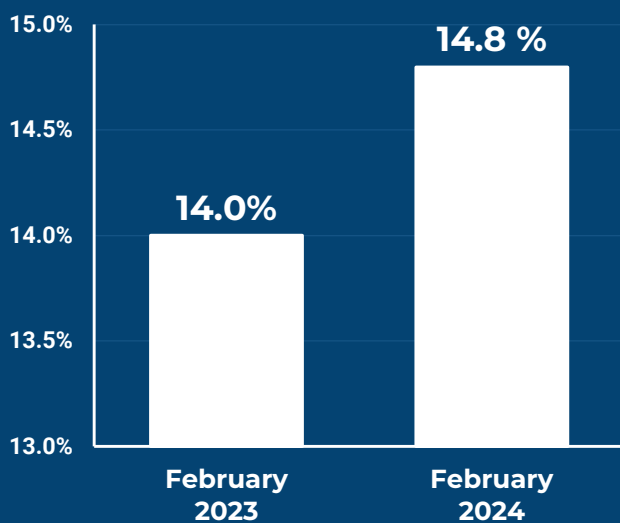
National Precarity Indicators

Many of Unifor's precarity indicators held steady in February, with no change in the rates of underutilization, underemployment and multiple job holders, while there was only a slight increase in the proportion of temporary job holders (+0.1). However, these figures do not adequately reflect the continuing gendered impacts of weakening labour market conditions. Overall, women have seen a steady decrease in their employment rate since early 2023, from 58.8% to 57.8% last month (see chart below). Women also

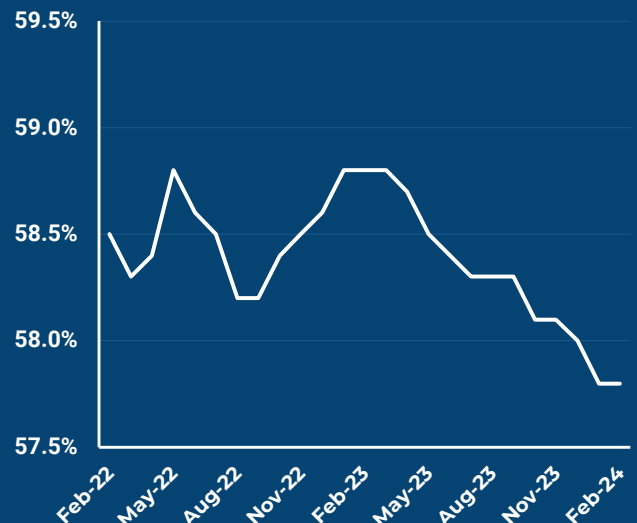
continue to experience a significantly higher underemployment rate of 17.0%, compared to 12.8% for men. Finally, after having fallen slightly in the first half of 2023, the gender wage gap has grown and is nearing the high-water mark of \$4.96 observed last February.

	Feb. 2023	Jan. 2024	Feb. 2024	Y/Y change	M/M change
Part-time rate (%) ⁷	18.9	19.1	19.0	0.1	-0.1
Involuntary part-time (%) ⁸	39.9	38.9	39.6	-0.3	0.7
Underutilization (R8) rate (%) ⁹	7.3	8.4	8.4	1.1	0.0
Underemployment rate (%) ¹⁰	14.0	14.8	14.8	0.8	0.0
Multiple job holders (%) ¹¹	5.7	5.4	5.4	-0.3	0.0
Temporary job holders (%) ¹²	10.6	10.1	10.2	-0.4	0.1
Casual/other (%)	3.1	3.2	3.2	0.1	0.0
Temporary/contract (%)	6.3	5.7	5.9	-0.4	0.2
Seasonal (%)	1.1	1.2	1.1	0.0	-0.1
Low wage incidence (%) ¹³	18.9	19.4	22.5	3.6	3.1
Gender wage gap ¹⁴	\$4.96	\$4.69	\$4.78	-3.6%	2.0%
NEETs (x1,000) ¹⁵	687.4	843.2	761.2	10.7%	-9.7%

Underemployment Rate



Women's Employment Rate



Regional Statistics

Employment gains were spread out across the country in February, with every region experiencing jobs growth. In terms of percentage increases, the Prairie and Atlantic regions led the way with an increase of 0.4%, followed by Quebec and B.C. at 0.2%, and finally, Ontario with a marginal increase of 0.1%. Year-over-year, the Atlantic and Prairie regions have observed the largest percentage increases in employment, at 3.7% and 3.6%, respectively, followed by British Columbia at 2.6%. Ontario and Quebec have lagged behind, with increases of 1.0% and 0.9%, respectively.

There were divergent trends with respect to regional unemployment rates, reflecting differences in working age population growth and changes in labour force participation. Ontario saw the largest increase in the unemployment rate, which rose 0.3 percentage points to reach 6.5% in February. Ontario now has the highest regional unemployment rate in the country after Atlantic Canada, which saw its unemployment rate fall by 0.3 percentage points to 7.2%.

Hourly wages increased in every region with the exception of Ontario where wages fell by 0.3% in February. Wage growth was greatest in the Prairies at 0.8%, followed by B.C. at 0.6%.



Regional Statistics Continued

Atlantic

	Feb. 2023	Feb. 2024	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	1,202,000	1,246,200	44,200 3.7%	5,000 0.4%
Unemployment rate (%)	6.9	7.2	0.3	-0.3
Participation rate (%)	60.8	61.5	0.7	-0.1
Union coverage (%)	33.2	32.7	-0.5	0.2
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$28.92	\$30.50	5.5%	0.2%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$28.92	\$29.65	2.5%	n/a



Quebec

	Feb. 2023	Feb. 2024	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	4,492,900	4,533,200	40,300 0.9%	8,800 0.2%
Unemployment rate (%)	4.1	4.7	0.6	0.2
Participation rate (%)	65.0	64.7	-0.3	0.2
Union coverage (%)	39.5	38.9	-0.6	-0.4
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$32.38	\$33.45	3.3%	0.4%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$32.38	\$32.52	0.4%	n/a



Ontario

	Feb. 2023	Feb. 2024	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	7,863,800	7,944,400	80,600 1.0%	6,700 0.1%
Unemployment rate (%)	5.2	6.5	1.3	0.3
Participation rate (%)	65.6	64.9	-0.7	0.1
Union coverage (%)	26.9	26.0	-0.9	-0.1
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$34.00	\$36.03	6.0%	-0.3%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$34.00	\$35.03	3.0%	n/a



Regional Statistics Continued

Prairies

	Feb. 2023	Feb. 2024	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	3,706,000	3,837,900	131,900 3.6%	14,400 0.4%
Unemployment rate (%)	5.4	5.7	0.3	0.1
Participation rate (%)	69.0	68.8	-0.2	0.1
Union coverage (%)	28.7	27.6	-1.1	-0.6
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$33.07	\$34.22	3.5%	0.8%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$33.07	\$33.26	0.6%	n/a



British Columbia

	Feb. 2023	Feb. 2024	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	2,770,300	2,841,200	70,900 2.6%	5,900 0.2%
Unemployment rate (%)	5.0	5.2	0.2	-0.3
Participation rate (%)	65.4	65.0	-0.4	-0.2
Union coverage (%)	31.0	30.8	-0.2	0.0
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$34.12	\$36.46	6.9%	0.6%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$34.12	\$35.45	3.9%	n/a



Average Hourly Wages by Industry

Nominal vs. Inflation-Adjusted Wage Growth

Industry	February 2023	February 2024	Y/Y change	Y/Y inflation-adjusted change
Agriculture	\$22.86	\$24.71	8.1%	3.1%
Forestry	\$32.89	\$34.77	5.7%	2.7%
Mining, oil and gas	\$49.94	\$49.74	-0.4%	-3.3%
Utilities	\$48.95	\$51.66	5.5%	2.5%
Construction	\$35.06	\$36.91	5.3%	2.3%
Manufacturing: durables	\$33.58	\$34.78	3.6%	0.7%
Manufacturing: non-durables	\$32.08	\$34.08	6.3%	3.2%
Wholesale Trade	\$34.66	\$36.41	5.0%	2.1%
Retail Trade	\$22.93	\$23.82	3.9%	1.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	\$31.25	\$32.48	3.9%	1.0%
Finance and Insurance	\$42.08	\$43.79	4.1%	1.2%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$32.85	\$35.98	9.5%	6.1%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	\$43.68	\$46.24	5.8%	2.8%
Business, building and other support	\$25.80	\$27.12	5.1%	2.2%
Educational Services	\$38.18	\$39.06	2.3%	-0.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$31.14	\$33.27	6.8%	3.7%
Information, Culture and Recreation	\$31.73	\$31.47	-0.8%	-3.7%
Accommodation and Food Services	\$19.32	\$20.70	7.1%	4.0%
Other Services	\$28.13	\$29.60	5.2%	2.2%
Public Administration	\$42.21	\$44.55	5.5%	2.5%

With a decline in inflation last month, real wage growth across a number of industries was substantially positive in February. Adjusted for inflation, real wages are now 4% higher in accommodation and food services, although wages in the industry continue to be the lowest across the economy. Other low-wage industries such as retail trade (+1.0) and agriculture (+3.1%) also observed positive year-over-year real wage growth.

In terms of employment growth, jobs gains in February were concentrated in the services-producing sector (+46,900), particularly within accommodation and food services (+26,200). These gains were slightly offset by declines in the goods-producing sector (-6,300), including manufacturing (-13,900).

Monthly Employment Gains and Losses by Industry and Sector

Employment Change by Industry/Sector, Jan. 2024 to Feb. 2024

GOODS-PRODUCING SECTOR	-6,300	
Agriculture	-6,000	
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas		3,900
Utilities	-700	
Construction		10,500
Manufacturing	-13,900	
SERVICES PRODUCING SECTOR		46,900
Wholesale and retail trade	-16,800	
Transportation and warehousing		9,400
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing		3,200
Professional, scientific and technical services		17,900
Business, building and other support services	-13,200	
Educational services	-17,000	
Health care and social assistance		8,200
Information, culture and recreation		9,400
Accommodation and food services		26,200
Other services (except public administration)		10,800
Public administration		8,800



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.





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