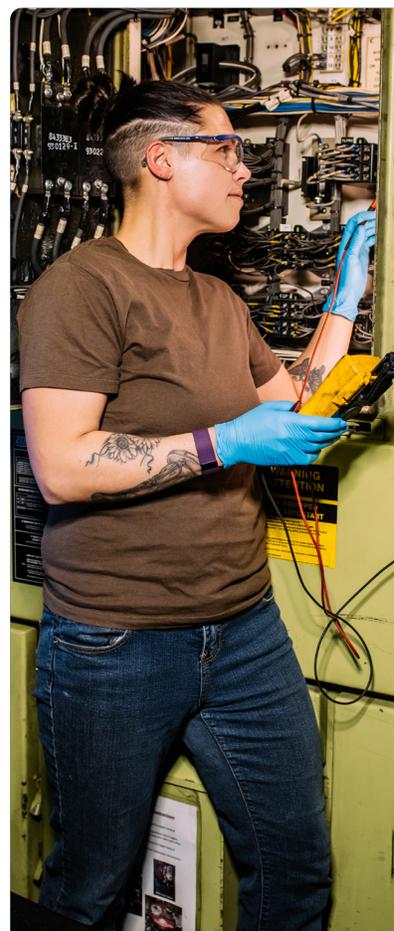


UNIFOR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

# LABOUR MARKET INSIGHTS

*A monthly review of labour market indicators*

February 2026



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# National Statistics

Against consensus predictions that the labour market would see minor growth in February, Canada lost nearly 84,000 jobs last month as employment fell by 0.4%. The participation rate also continued to decline as jobseekers left the labour force, falling to 64.9% (-0.1), which is substantially below pre-pandemic levels. Falling labour market participation offset some of the rise in the unemployment rate, which increased by 0.2 percentage points to 6.7%.

Similar to dynamics observed during the peak of the pandemic, wages saw a larger than usual increase last month (+1.0%), suggesting that job losses disproportionately affected lower wage earners, resulting in a higher average hourly wage. On a year-over-year basis, real wages are 1.6% higher after adjusting for the effects of inflation.

Statistic	February 2020–24 average	February 2025	January 2026	February 2026	Year-over-year (Y/Y) change	Monthly (M/M) change
Total employment (#) <sup>1</sup>	19,640,200	20,985,500	21,121,200	21,037,300	51,800 0.2%	-83,900 -0.4%
Unemployment rate (%) <sup>2</sup>	6.2	6.6	6.5	6.7	0.1	0.2
Participation rate (%) <sup>3</sup>	65.6	65.3	65.0	64.9	-0.4	-0.1
Union coverage (%) <sup>4</sup>	30.8	31.0	31.3	31.3	0.3	0.0
Average hourly wage (\$) <sup>5</sup>	\$31.84	\$36.14	\$37.17	\$37.56	3.9%	1.0%
Real average hourly wage (\$) <sup>6</sup>	\$35.05	\$36.14	\$36.34	\$36.72	1.6%	1.0%

## Unemployment Rate



## Real Average Hourly Wage



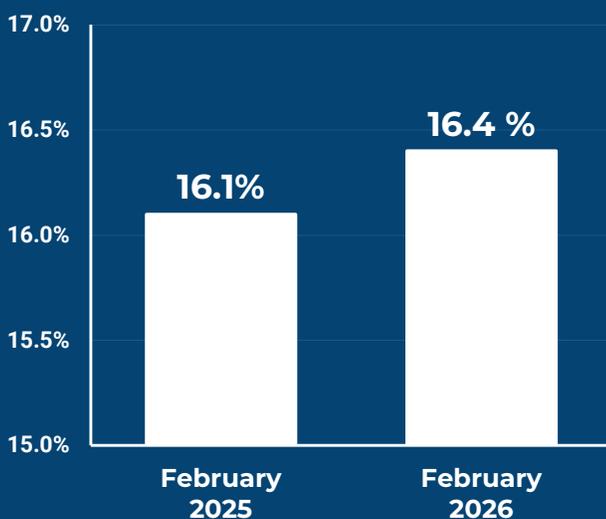
# National Precarity Indicators

A number of precarity indicators showed year-over-year increases in February, reflecting a decline in labour market conditions after nearly one year of the U.S. trade war on Canada. The underemployment rate was 0.3 percentage points higher last month compared to February 2025, while the proportion of temporary job holders similarly increased by 0.3 percentage points, due to a higher proportion of casual employees (+0.2). However, these figures fail to reveal the devastating

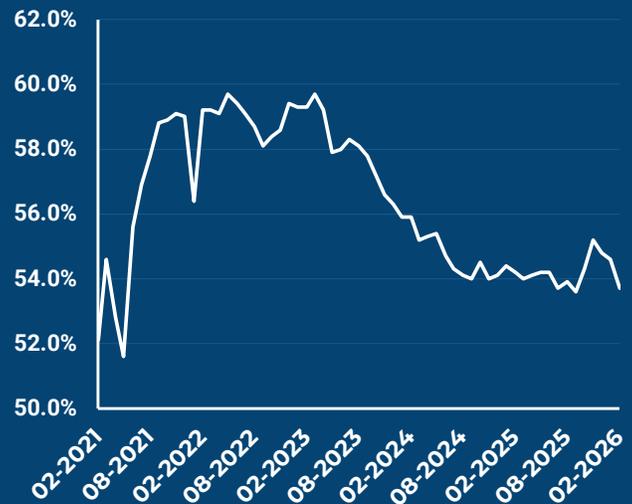
impact of current labour market conditions on youth, whose employment rate plummeted back to 53.7% in February (see chart below). The continuing collapse in youth employment and labour force participation since 2023 indicates that young jobseekers have been facing structural barriers to employment for some time now.

Indicator	Feb. 2025	Jan. 2026	Feb. 2026	Y/Y change	M/M change
Part-time rate (%) <sup>7</sup>	19.2	18.7	19.1	-0.1	0.4
Involuntary part-time (%) <sup>8</sup>	42.4	41.9	42.5	0.1	0.6
Underutilization (R8) rate (%) <sup>9</sup>	9.1	9.1	9.5	0.4	0.4
Underemployment rate (%) <sup>10</sup>	16.1	15.8	16.4	0.3	0.6
Multiple job holders (%) <sup>11</sup>	6.0	5.4	5.8	-0.2	0.4
Temporary job holders (%) <sup>12</sup>	10.5	10.7	10.8	0.3	0.1
Casual/other (%)	3.4	3.4	3.6	0.2	0.2
Temporary/contract (%)	6.1	6.2	6.1	0.0	-0.1
Seasonal (%)	1.0	1.1	1.0	0.0	-0.1
Low wage incidence (%) <sup>13</sup>	20.6	21.2	21.2	0.6	0.0
Gender wage gap <sup>14</sup>	\$4.98	\$4.73	\$4.87	-2.2%	3.0%
NEETs (x1,000) <sup>15</sup>	892.8	859.1	846.3	-5.2%	-1.5%

## Underemployment Rate



## Youth Employment Rate



# Regional Statistics

Employment losses during the month of February were concentrated in Quebec (-57,000; -1.2%), the Prairie region (-11,000; -0.3%), and British Columbia (-20,000; -0.7%). Despite the relatively steep jobs decline in these three regions, sharp falls in the participation rate kept the unemployment rate level in B.C. (6.1%), while the rate actually declined in the Prairies (6.1%; -0.1). Quebec's unemployment rate climbed by a notable 0.7 percentage points to 5.9%, although this increase would have been even more substantial without a 0.3 percentage point fall in the region's participation rate to 64.5%.

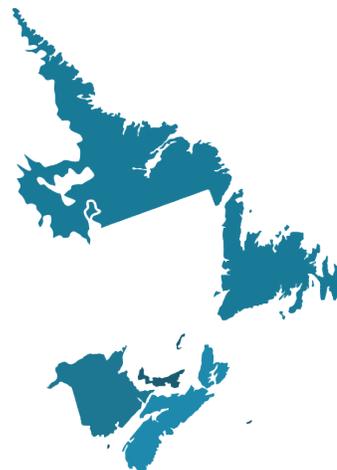
The employment level in Ontario was essentially unchanged (+3,000; 0.0%), although an influx of jobseekers into the labour market led to a 0.3 percentage point jump in the unemployment rate to 7.6% – the highest regional rate in the country. Atlantic Canada followed with an unemployment rate of 7.5% (+0.2). Despite a slight increase in the participation rate to 60.8% (+0.1), labour force participation in the Atlantic region continues to lag significantly behind the national average (64.9%).



# Regional Statistics Continued

## Atlantic

Statistic	Feb. 2025	Feb. 2026	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	1,260,400	1,279,000	18,600 1.5%	1,900 0.1%
Unemployment rate (%)	7.8	7.5	-0.3	0.2
Participation rate (%)	60.7	60.8	0.1	0.1
Union coverage (%)	33.7	34.2	0.5	-0.2
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$31.80	\$33.06	4.0%	0.1%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$31.80	\$32.32	1.6%	0.1%



## Quebec

Statistic	Feb. 2025	Feb. 2026	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	4,633,000	4,612,400	-20,600 -0.4%	-57,300 -1.2%
Unemployment rate (%)	5.4	5.9	0.5	0.7
Participation rate (%)	64.9	64.5	-0.4	-0.3
Union coverage (%)	40.4	41.1	0.7	0.0
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$34.69	\$36.45	5.1%	0.5%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$34.69	\$35.63	2.7%	0.5%



## Ontario

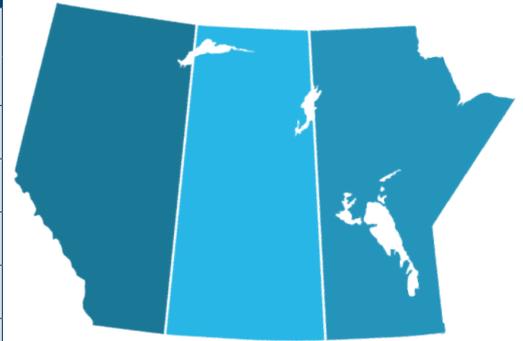
Statistic	Feb. 2025	Feb. 2026	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	8,245,700	8,211,300	-34,400 -0.4%	3,300 0.0%
Unemployment rate (%)	7.4	7.6	0.2	0.3
Participation rate (%)	65.2	64.6	-0.6	0.2
Union coverage (%)	27.0	27.2	0.2	0.3
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$37.39	\$38.97	4.2%	1.2%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$37.39	\$38.10	1.9%	1.2%



# Regional Statistics Continued

## Prairies

Statistic	Feb. 2025	Feb. 2026	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	3,906,100	4,007,400	101,300 2.6%	-11,300 -0.3%
Unemployment rate (%)	6.5	6.1	-0.4	-0.1
Participation rate (%)	68.0	68.0	0.0	-0.4
Union coverage (%)	27.5	28.0	0.5	-0.3
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$35.38	\$36.50	3.2%	1.2%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$35.38	\$35.68	0.8%	1.2%



## British Columbia

Statistic	Feb. 2025	Feb. 2026	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	2,940,400	2,927,400	-13,000 -0.4%	-20,200 -0.7%
Unemployment rate (%)	6.0	6.1	0.1	0.0
Participation rate (%)	65.0	64.4	-0.6	-0.4
Union coverage (%)	30.7	30.4	-0.3	0.0
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$37.89	\$38.92	2.7%	1.6%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$37.89	\$38.05	0.4%	1.6%



# Average Hourly Wages by Industry

## Nominal vs. Inflation-Adjusted Wage Growth

Industry	February 2025	February 2026	Y/Y change	Y/Y inflation-adjusted change
Agriculture	\$27.14	\$27.27	0.5%	-1.8%
Forestry	\$37.12	\$37.81	1.9%	-0.4%
Mining, oil and gas	\$54.09	\$56.26	4.0%	1.7%
Utilities	\$56.06	\$55.02	-1.9%	-4.2%
Construction	\$37.90	\$38.79	2.3%	0.1%
Manufacturing: durables	\$36.07	\$37.79	4.8%	2.4%
Manufacturing: non-durables	\$33.52	\$34.59	3.2%	0.9%
Wholesale Trade	\$35.93	\$39.93	11.1%	8.0%
Retail Trade	\$24.50	\$25.56	4.3%	2.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	\$33.65	\$35.05	4.2%	1.8%
Finance and Insurance	\$45.41	\$48.71	7.3%	4.6%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$33.97	\$36.84	8.4%	5.7%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	\$47.62	\$49.76	4.5%	2.1%
Business, building and other support	\$28.85	\$28.84	0.0%	-2.3%
Educational Services	\$41.36	\$43.01	4.0%	1.6%
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$34.60	\$35.31	2.1%	-0.2%
Information, Culture and Recreation	\$34.84	\$35.41	1.6%	-0.6%
Accommodation and Food Services	\$21.21	\$21.11	-0.5%	-2.8%
Other Services	\$31.38	\$33.26	6.0%	3.5%
Public Administration	\$46.67	\$48.38	3.7%	1.3%

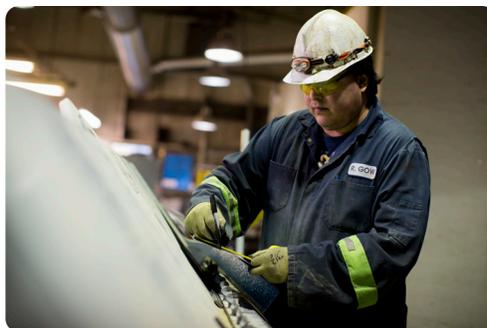
The decline in employment in February affected all sectors, with the services-producing sector recording a decline of 56,000 jobs while the goods-producing sector lost close to 28,000 jobs. Just three industries observed employment growth last month, with transportation and warehousing leading the way at a gain of 10,000 jobs, followed by public administration (+8,000) and utilities (+2,000).

Within the services sector, substantial losses were recorded in a number of demand-sensitive industries, including wholesale and retail trade (-18,000) and accommodation and food services (-9,000). In the goods-producing sector, construction lost 12,000 jobs, followed by manufacturing with a loss of 9,000 jobs. Since February 2025, manufacturing has lost 52,000 jobs (-2.8%), which leads all industries.

# Monthly Employment Gains and Losses by Industry and Sector

Employment Change by Industry/Sector, January to February 2026

<b>GOODS-PRODUCING SECTOR</b>	<b>-27,900</b>	
Agriculture	-5,100	
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	-3,600	
Utilities		1,800
Construction	-11,800	
Manufacturing	-9,200	
<b>SERVICES PRODUCING SECTOR</b>	<b>-56,200</b>	
Wholesale and retail trade	-17,900	
Transportation and warehousing		10,300
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	-8,700	
Professional, scientific and technical services	-100	
Business, building and other support services	-4,400	
Educational services	-8,500	
Health care and social assistance	-200	
Information, culture and recreation	-12,000	
Accommodation and food services	-8,700	
Other services (except public administration)	-13,900	
Public administration		8,100



# 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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