

UNIFOR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

LABOUR MARKET INSIGHTS

A monthly review of labour market indicators

March 2025



UNIFOR
theUnion | lesyndicat

April 4, 2025

National Statistics

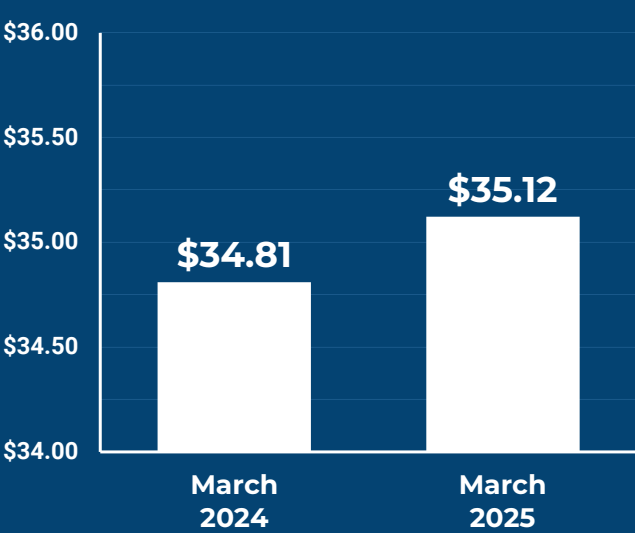
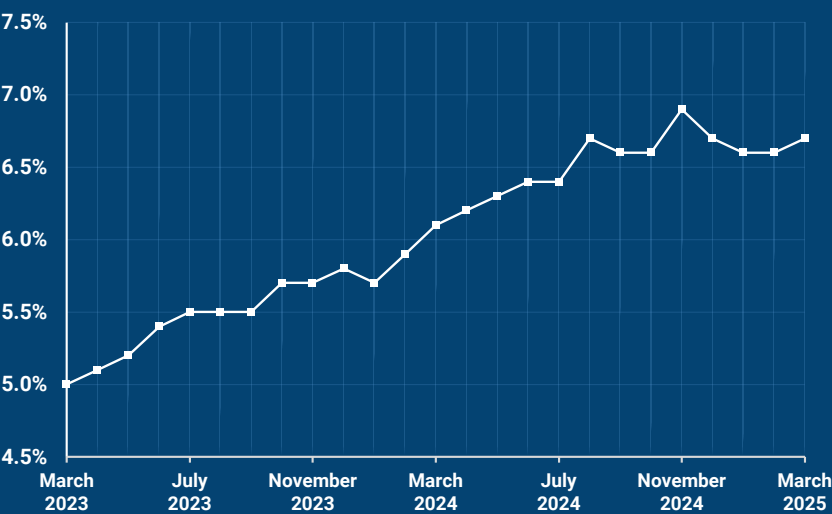
Conditions in the labour market decisively worsened in March as Canada shed nearly 33,000 jobs (-0.2%), which was the worst monthly decline since January 2022. The unemployment rate rose by 0.1 percentage to 6.7%, although the rise was partially offset by a 0.1 percentage point decline in the participation rate to 65.2% as some jobseekers left the labour force. On a year-over-year basis, the participation rate is now 0.4 percentage points lower than March 2024. With the figures reflecting only a partial implementation of the full range of U.S. tariffs imposed on Canada by the Trump administration, Canada’s labour market numbers will likely worsen in the coming months.

Average hourly wages continued to level off in March, falling by 0.2% from February and recording an increase of 3.6% since March 2024. Adjusted for inflation, year-over-year real wage growth now sits at just 0.9%

	March 2019–23 average	March 2024	February 2025	March 2025	Year-over-year (Y/Y) change	Monthly (M/M) change
Total employment (#) ¹	19,374,500	20,614,500	20,994,500	20,961,900	347,400 1.7%	-32,600 -0.2%
Unemployment rate (%) ²	5.9	6.1	6.6	6.7	0.6	0.1
Participation rate (%) ³	65.7	65.6	65.3	65.2	-0.4	-0.1
Union coverage (%) ⁴	30.4	30.2	31.0	31.1	0.8	0.1
Average hourly wage (\$) ⁵	\$30.46	\$34.81	\$36.14	\$36.05	3.6%	-0.2%
Real average hourly wage (\$) ⁶	\$34.00	\$34.81	\$35.58	\$35.12	0.9%	-1.3%

Unemployment Rate

Real Average Hourly Wage



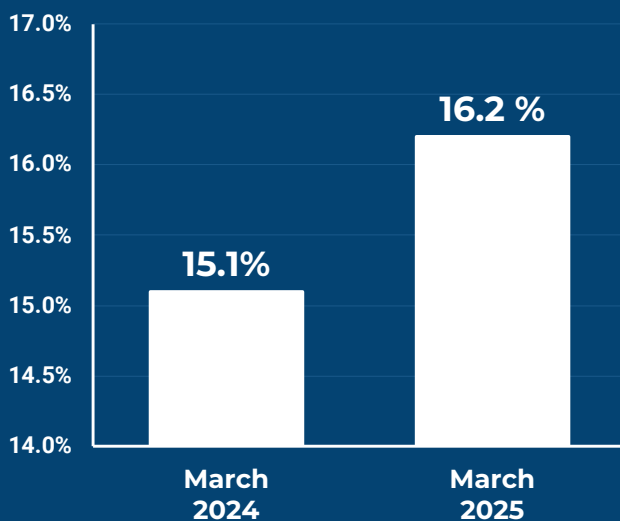
National Precarity Indicators

Worsening labour market conditions were reflected in a number of precarity indicators, including the underutilization rate, which increased 0.4 percentage points to 9.5%, as well as the underemployment rate, which rose by 0.1 percentage point to 16.2%. Taken together, these numbers suggest a growing proportion of Canadians who want full-time employment but are unable to find appropriate work due to labour market conditions. This trend aligns with a recent ramp up of part-time work, which has grown by 123,000

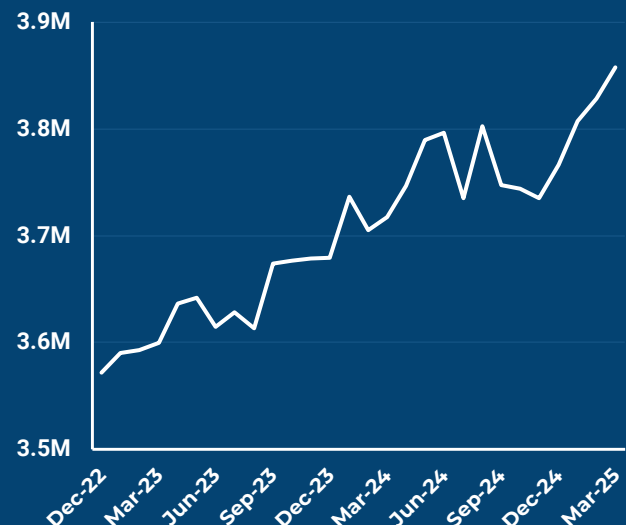
positions since November 2024 (+3.3%) compared to an increase of just 12,600 full-time jobs over the same period of time (+0.1%). The proportion of temporary job holders also rose by 0.2 percentage points to 10.7%, with the increase mainly caused by growing temporary and contract work.

	Mar. 2024	Feb. 2025	Mar. 2025	Y/Y change	M/M change
Part-time rate (%) ⁷	18.8	19.2	19.3	0.5	0.1
Involuntary part-time (%) ⁸	40.3	42.4	41.5	1.2	-0.9
Underutilization (R8) rate (%) ⁹	8.8	9.1	9.5	0.7	0.4
Underemployment rate (%) ¹⁰	15.1	16.1	16.2	1.1	0.1
Multiple job holders (%) ¹¹	5.6	6.0	5.8	0.2	-0.2
Temporary job holders (%) ¹²	10.3	10.5	10.7	0.4	0.2
Casual/other (%)	3.1	3.4	3.4	0.3	0.0
Temporary/contract (%)	6.1	6.1	6.3	0.2	0.2
Seasonal (%)	1.0	1.0	0.9	-0.1	-0.1
Low wage incidence (%) ¹³	22.3	20.6	20.6	-1.7	0.0
Gender wage gap ¹⁴	\$4.91	\$4.98	\$5.16	5.2%	3.7%
NEETs (x1,000) ¹⁵	852.7	892.8	902.9	5.9%	1.1%

Underemployment Rate



Part-time Employment



Regional Statistics

Job losses during the month of March were concentrated in Ontario (-27,500; -0.3%) and the Prairie region (-9,900; -0.3%), while Quebec observed a marginal employment decline of 0.1% (-4,900). In contrast, there was relatively substantial employment growth in the Atlantic region (+3,900; +0.3%) and British Columbia (+5,700; +0.2%).

The unemployment rate rose in all regions except for the Atlantic (-0.5; 7.3%), with Quebec recording the sharpest rise (+0.4) as the unemployment rate hit 5.7%. The unemployment rate in Ontario increased by 0.2 percentage points to 7.5%, matching the level observed last December, while the rate increased by 0.1 percentage point in both the Prairies (6.5%) and British Columbia (6.1%). Notably, Ontario has repeatedly traded places with Atlantic Canada for the highest regional unemployment rate in the country over the past few months.

Average hourly wages declined significantly in B.C. (-0.7%), Quebec (-0.5%) and Ontario (-0.3%) on a monthly basis, with year-over-year real wage growth in Quebec barely surpassing inflation (+0.2%). Wages were higher, however, in the Atlantic (+0.5%) and the Prairies (+0.3%).



Regional Statistics Continued

Atlantic

	Mar. 2024	Mar. 2025	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	1,254,500	1,264,700	10,200 0.8%	3,900 0.3%
Unemployment rate (%)	7.7	7.3	-0.5	-0.5
Participation rate (%)	61.4	60.5	-0.9	-0.2
Union coverage (%)	32.4	34.4	2.0	0.7
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$30.49	\$31.96	4.8%	0.5%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$30.49	\$31.14	2.1%	-0.5%



Quebec

	Mar. 2024	Mar. 2025	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	4,539,000	4,627,300	88,300 1.9%	-4,900 -0.1%
Unemployment rate (%)	4.9	5.7	0.8	0.4
Participation rate (%)	64.7	65.0	0.2	0.1
Union coverage (%)	39.9	40.2	0.3	-0.2
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$33.57	\$34.54	2.9%	-0.5%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$33.57	\$33.65	0.2%	-1.5%



Ontario

	Mar. 2024	Mar. 2025	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	8,095,500	8,229,800	134,300 1.7%	-27,500 -0.3%
Unemployment rate (%)	6.7	7.5	0.8	0.2
Participation rate (%)	65.4	65.1	-0.3	-0.2
Union coverage (%)	25.9	27.0	1.1	0.0
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$35.81	\$37.28	4.1%	-0.3%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$35.81	\$36.32	1.4%	-1.3%



Regional Statistics Continued

Prairies

	Mar. 2024	Mar. 2025	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	3,808,300	3,895,200	86,900 2.3%	-9,900 -0.3%
Unemployment rate (%)	6.1	6.5	0.4	0.1
Participation rate (%)	68.4	67.8	-0.7	-0.2
Union coverage (%)	27.4	27.6	0.2	0.1
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$34.41	\$35.48	3.1%	0.3%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$34.41	\$34.57	0.4%	-0.8%



British Columbia

	Mar. 2024	Mar. 2025	Y/Y change	M/M change
Total employment (#)	2,917,200	2,944,900	27,700 0.9%	5,700 0.2%
Unemployment rate (%)	5.5	6.1	0.5	0.1
Participation rate (%)	65.9	65.0	-0.9	0.1
Union coverage (%)	29.7	30.6	0.9	-0.1
Average hourly wage (\$)	\$36.52	\$37.63	3.1%	-0.7%
Real avg. hourly wage (\$)	\$36.52	\$36.66	0.4%	-1.7%



Average Hourly Wages by Industry

Nominal vs. Inflation-Adjusted Wage Growth

Industry	March 2024	March 2025	Y/Y change	Y/Y inflation-adjusted change
Agriculture	\$23.97	\$26.24	9.5%	4.0%
Forestry	\$36.77	\$36.27	-1.4%	-4.1%
Mining, oil and gas	\$52.55	\$53.51	1.8%	-0.8%
Utilities	\$50.48	\$57.42	13.7%	9.8%
Construction	\$36.68	\$38.07	3.8%	1.1%
Manufacturing: durables	\$35.13	\$36.02	2.5%	-0.1%
Manufacturing: non-durables	\$33.28	\$33.69	1.2%	-1.4%
Wholesale Trade	\$35.85	\$36.14	0.8%	-1.8%
Retail Trade	\$23.77	\$24.29	2.2%	-0.4%
Transportation and Warehousing	\$32.73	\$34.12	4.2%	1.5%
Finance and Insurance	\$43.96	\$44.77	1.8%	-0.8%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$36.04	\$33.97	-5.7%	-8.9%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	\$46.32	\$47.03	1.5%	-1.1%
Business, building and other support	\$26.11	\$28.27	8.3%	5.2%
Educational Services	\$39.23	\$41.40	5.5%	2.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$33.04	\$34.70	5.0%	2.3%
Information, Culture and Recreation	\$31.55	\$34.90	10.6%	7.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	\$20.50	\$20.97	2.3%	-0.3%
Other Services	\$29.87	\$31.05	4.0%	1.3%
Public Administration	\$44.66	\$46.77	4.7%	2.0%

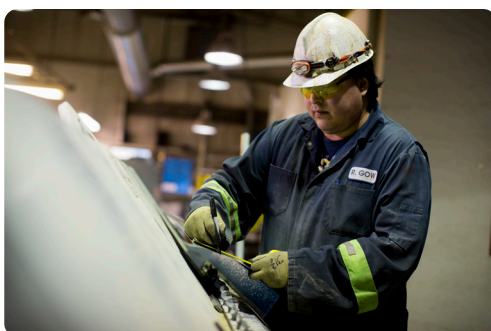
With the continuing slowdown in wage growth and higher than expected inflation in February, a number of key industries are starting to see inflation surpass annual wage growth. These include non-durables manufacturing (-1.4%); professional, scientific and technical services (-1.1%); mining, oil and gas (-0.8%); retail trade (-0.4%); and accommodation and food services (-0.3%).

Job losses during March were split between the services-producing sector (-20,900) and the goods-producing sector (-11,700) with the largest losses occurring in wholesale and retail trade (-28,500) and information, culture and recreation (-20,300), while the manufacturing industry recorded a substantial decline of 7,100 jobs.

Monthly Employment Gains and Losses by Industry and Sector

Employment Change by Industry/Sector, February to March 2025

GOODS-PRODUCING SECTOR		-11,700	
Agriculture		-9,300	
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas			4,400
Utilities			4,200
Construction		-3,800	
Manufacturing		-7,100	
SERVICES PRODUCING SECTOR		-20,900	
Wholesale and retail trade		-28,500	
Transportation and warehousing			10,100
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing			6,300
Professional, scientific and technical services			9,600
Business, building and other support services		-10,300	
Educational services		-3,500	
Health care and social assistance		-600	
Information, culture and recreation		-20,300	
Accommodation and food services		-1,800	
Other services (except public administration)			11,600
Public administration			6,300



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