Edmonton employment gains in March, further narrowing shortfall from pre-pandemic level

April 9, 2021

Employment in the Edmonton census metropolitan area (CMA) rose by 17,800 individuals (or growth of 2.4 per cent) in March 2021 from February on a seasonally adjusted basis. Employment growth outpaced growth in the region’s labour force, resulting in the unemployment rate inching lower to 11.2 per cent in March from 11.6 per cent in February. Unadjusted employment estimates in March indicated improvements in both full- and part-time work.

Source: Statistics Canada, seasonally adjusted data series ending March 2021
Notes: Employment data are charted on the left vertical axis (LHS), whereas unemployment rates are charted on the right vertical axis (RHS). Historical data were revised by Statistics Canada due to the rebasing of populations to reflect counts from the 2016 Census. Revised data are available going back to 2006 for the Edmonton CMA.

Provincial employment continued to increase in March, adding 37,100 persons to payrolls from February. The increase was in both full- and part-time work, though the gain in part-time work was more pronounced. The monthly employment gain was broad-based, with most sectors
recording increases in March from February. However, compared to the province’s pre-pandemic employment level, shortfalls remained significant for the accommodation and food services, and information, culture and recreation sectors. Alberta’s unemployment rate decreased to 9.1\(^1\) per cent in March from 9.9 per cent in February.

Seasonally adjusted employment in Canada increased by 303,100 persons in March 2021 from February, bringing the national employment level within 1.5 per cent (or 296,000 fewer individuals) of its pre-pandemic level. Employment gains were recorded for both full- and part-time work. Industries most affected by public health restrictions, including retail trade and accommodation and food services, continued to recover, contributing to the impressive monthly employment gain in March, alongside increases in health care and social assistance, educational services, and construction. The national unemployment rate was 7.5 per cent in March, down from 8.2 per cent in February.

**Significance**

Employment in the Edmonton region has made impressive progress in its recovery to its pre-pandemic level. March’s monthly employment gain brought the employment shortfall down to 6,200 fewer individuals from the region’s February 2020 estimate. Despite this, it is important to note that the number of unemployed persons remains significantly higher, and it is expected to still take some time to bring the unemployment rate closer to its pre-pandemic level (7.8 per cent). Unadjusted employment data indicate uneven recovery paces across sectors. For the trade and transportation and warehousing sectors, employment has seen remarkable improvements and March estimates indicate a year-over-year gain. However, for others, like accommodation and food services, employment levels remain significantly lower on a year-over-year basis.

**Labour Force Survey Results—Edmonton CMA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three-month moving average—seasonally adjusted</th>
<th>Mar 2020</th>
<th>Feb 2021</th>
<th>Mar 2021</th>
<th>Month-over-month</th>
<th>Year-over-year</th>
<th>Month-over-month</th>
<th>Year-over-year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (15 years and older)</td>
<td>1,176.8</td>
<td>1,194.7</td>
<td>1,196.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour force</td>
<td>814.4</td>
<td>840.1</td>
<td>856.3</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>747.3</td>
<td>743.0</td>
<td>760.8</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate (%)</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation rate (%)</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment rate (%)</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0380-01*

**Limitations**

Employment trends tend to lag developments in overall economic activity. Because of this, they…

---

\(^1\) For direct comparability to the CMA unemployment rates, the three-month moving average for Alberta’s unemployment rate was 9.9 per cent in March 2021 from 10.6 per cent in February.
are a better indicator of past, rather than current, conditions in the economy. However, employment trends are still useful predictors of future changes in incomes and consumer spending. Statistics Canada publishes a three-month moving average of all labour force estimates for the Edmonton region, which sometimes results in the number of reported jobs lagging behind developments in the Edmonton region’s economy.

Contact
Felicia Mutheardy
Chief Economist (acting), Financial and Corporate Services
780-496-6144

Contact for media inquiries
Matt Pretty
Communications Advisor
780-886-7552
matt.pretty@edmonton.ca