

# Economic Indicators

## Full-time employment continues to grow

June 7, 2019

Employment in the **Edmonton** Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) fell by 1,100 positions between April and May 2019. These were largely part-time positions, as full-time employment gained positions in May 2019. Gains in trade, logistics, and business and building support services were more than offset by reductions in accommodation and food services, educational services and other personal services.

Edmonton's unemployment rate moved down to 6.8 per cent in May 2019 from 6.9 per cent in April, as the number of individuals withdrawing from the labour force exceeded the reduction in employment. Solid employment gains in the **Calgary CMA** outpaced labour force growth, bringing the unemployment rate down to seven per cent in May 2019 from 7.6 per cent in April.

**Labour Force Survey Results—Edmonton CMA<sup>1</sup>**  
Three-month moving average—seasonally adjusted

	May 2018	Apr 2019	May 2019	Apr 2019 to May 2019	May 2018 to May 2019	Apr 2019 to May 2019	May 2018 to May 2019
	(000)	(000)	(000)	(000)	(000)	%	%
Population (15 years and older)	1,154.8	1,177.1	<b>1,179.4</b>	2.3	24.6	0.2	2.1
Labour force	822.9	856.3	<b>854.8</b>	-1.5	31.9	-0.2	3.9
Employment	769.0	797.5	<b>796.4</b>	-1.1	27.4	-0.1	3.6
Unemployment	54.0	58.8	<b>58.4</b>	-0.4	4.4	-0.7	8.1
Unemployment rate (%)	6.6	6.9	<b>6.8</b>	-0.1	0.2	...	...
Participation rate (%)	71.3	72.7	<b>72.5</b>	-0.2	1.2	...	...
Employment rate (%)	66.6	67.8	<b>67.5</b>	-0.3	0.9	...	...

Source: Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0294-01

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada revised the Labour Force Survey seasonally-adjusted estimates for 2016 to 2018 using the latest seasonal factors.

Employment in **Alberta** took a step back in May 2019, with 2,200 fewer positions than in April. Solid employment gains in trade and logistics were more than offset by declines in business, building and other support services and accommodation and food services. Alberta's unemployment rate held steady at 6.7 per cent in May 2019<sup>2</sup> as the number of individuals seeking employment in the province declined.

**Canada's** overall employment in May 2019 moved up with a month-over-month increase of almost 28,000 positions. Gains were concentrated in full-time positions as part-time employment was unchanged in May 2019. Canada's unemployment rate lowered to 5.4 per cent in May 2019 from 5.7 per cent in April. The national unemployment rate in May 2019 was at the lowest level since comparable data became available.

### **Significance**

Despite a month-over-month decline in May 2019, the underlying trend in Edmonton's labour market remains positive, with continued growth in full-time employment. Average weekly wages continued to rise, with a 3.6 per cent year-over-year gain in May 2019. With consumer-based inflation expected to remain above the two per cent range in the coming months in the Edmonton region, this means the average employed person will see gains in their real spending power, which will sustain consumer spending in the first half of 2019.

For the first half of 2019, employment in Edmonton should see growth in the professional services, health and trade sectors. However, the unemployment rate is unlikely to move much lower than its current level, as future employment gains are likely to be met by growth in the labour force.

Growth in the working-age population, up year-over-year by 2.3 per cent in May 2019, will be a key factor in addressing labour and skill shortages that may emerge in Edmonton as the local economy continues to recover and the labour market tightens.

### **Limitations**

Employment trends, particularly in the full-time category, tend to lag behind developments in overall economic activity. Because of this, they 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 values for the Edmonton region, an approach that sometimes results in the number of reported jobs lagging behind developments in the Edmonton region's economy.

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<sup>2</sup> For direct comparability to the CMA unemployment rates, the three-month moving average for Alberta's unemployment rate moved lower to 6.7 per cent in May 2019 from 6.9 per cent in April.