

Edmonton sees renewed job growth

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Employment in the **Edmonton** Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) edged higher by about 400 positions between March and April 2019. This modest gain marks a turnaround after several months of declining employment in the region. The gain was concentrated in full-time positions as part-time employment saw a reduction. Solid job gains in energy, manufacturing, and business services offset losses in the health care, education, public administration and professional services sectors.

Edmonton's unemployment rate moved down to 6.9 per cent in April 2019 from 7.1 per cent in March as employment rose and some individuals withdrew from the active labour force. The unemployment rate for the **Calgary CMA** also moved down to 7.6 per cent in April 2019 from 7.7 per cent in March as labour force growth almost matched very good employment gains.

Labour Force Survey Results—Edmonton CMA¹
Three-month moving average—seasonally adjusted

	Apr 2018	Mar 2019	Apr 2019	Mar 2019 to Apr 2019	Apr 2018 to Mar 2019	Mar 2019 to Apr 2019	Apr 2018 to Apr 2019
	(000)	(000)	(000)	(000)	(000)	%	%
Population (15 years and older)	1,152.8	1,175.2	1,177.1	1.9	24.3	0.2	2.1
Labour force	818.1	857.7	856.3	-1.4	38.2	-0.2	4.7
Employment	764.2	797.1	797.5	0.4	33.3	0.1	4.4
Unemployment	53.9	60.7	58.8	-1.9	4.9	-3.1	9.1
Unemployment rate (%)	6.6	7.1	6.9	-0.2	0.3
Participation rate (%)	71.0	73.0	72.7	-0.3	1.7
Employment rate (%)	66.3	67.8	67.8	0.0	1.5

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

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

Employment in **Alberta** was also up in April 2019 from the employment level recorded in March. Job gains were broadly based with notable growth in manufacturing, retail and wholesale trade and healthcare. Alberta's unemployment rate moved down from 6.9 per cent in March 2019 to 6.7 per cent in April² as the number of individuals seeking employment in Alberta rose significantly, limiting the impact of job gains on the number of unemployed.

Canada's overall employment in April 2019 moved up very smartly with a month-over-month gain of about 107,000 positions. The largest gains were recorded largely in full-time positions. Canada's unemployment rate moved lower from 5.8 per cent in March 2019 to 5.7 per cent in April. The national unemployment rate remains very low by historical standards.

Significance

While April's net job gain was very modest, the underlying trends in employment are quite positive. The month-over-month increase in April 2019 has boosted the level of full-time employment in the Edmonton region which is also higher on a year-over-year basis. Growth in average weekly wages continues to build momentum, picking up to a remarkable 3.7 per cent on a year-over-year basis in April 2019. With consumer-based inflation expected to remain above two per cent range in the coming months in the Edmonton region, this means the average employed person will see good 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 renewed growth in the professional services, health care and education sectors. However, the unemployment rate is unlikely to move much lower than 6.9 per cent as individuals who were discouraged by less favourable employment conditions in the first quarter of 2019 return to the active labour force.

Growth in the working-age population, up by 2.1 per cent from April 2018 to April 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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² For direct comparability to the CMA unemployment rates, the three-month moving average for Alberta's unemployment rate moved lower to 6.9 per cent in April 2019 from seven per cent in March.