

## Edmonton's employment drops in April

May 8, 2020

Employment in the **Edmonton** census metropolitan area (CMA) fell by 44,700 positions in April 2020 compared to March. Employment losses were for both full- and part-time positions with broad losses across industries. Job losses were more pronounced in the services-producing sector, which includes accommodation and food services, as well as wholesale and retail trade.

The unemployment rate in Edmonton jumped to 10 per cent in April 2020 compared to 7.9 per cent in March. The increase was due to the employment losses outpacing a decline in the region's labour force. The region's labour force estimate includes those who are employed, as well as those who are unemployed but are actively looking for work.

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

	Apr 2019	Mar 2020	<b>Apr 2020</b>	Mar 2020 to Apr 2020	Apr 2019 to Apr 2020	Mar 2020 to Apr 2020	Apr 2019 to Apr 2020
	(000)	(000)	<b>(000)</b>	(000)	(000)	%	%
Population (15 years and older)	1,177.1	1,203.0	<b>1,204.9</b>	1.9	27.8	0.2	2.4
Labour force	855.5	834.4	<b>803.6</b>	-30.8	-51.90	-3.7	-6.1
Employment	796.1	768.3	<b>723.6</b>	-44.7	-72.5	-5.8	-9.1
Unemployment	59.3	66.1	<b>80.0</b>	13.9	20.7	21.0	34.9
Unemployment rate (%)	6.9	7.9	<b>10.0</b>	2.1	3.1	...	...
Participation rate (%)	72.7	69.4	<b>66.7</b>	-2.7	-6.0	...	...
Employment rate (%)	67.6	63.9	<b>60.1</b>	-3.8	-7.5	...	...

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

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada revised the Labour Force Survey seasonally-adjusted estimates for 2017 to 2019 using the latest seasonal factors.

The **Calgary CMA** unemployment rate rose to 10.8 per cent in April 2020 from 8.6 per cent in March. Like what was observed in Edmonton, Calgary's month-over-month employment loss was greater than the region's labour force reduction, which raised the unemployment rate.

Employment in **Alberta** fell by 243,800 positions from March to April 2020. Almost all industries saw a month-over-month decline in employment in April except for the information, culture and recreation industry which gained 2,000 positions. Alberta's unemployment rate jumped to 13.4 per cent in April from 8.7 per cent in March 2020<sup>2</sup>.

**Canada's** labour market continued to weaken in April 2020 with a month-over-month loss of almost two million positions. April's month-over-month employment loss follows a drop of over one million positions in March. The monthly decline in April now represents the largest loss in employment since comparable data became available in 1976. The unemployment rate increased to 13 per cent in April, which is the second highest rate recorded since comparable data became available in 1976.

### **Significance**

Edmonton's labour market, like many labour markets globally, is being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Limited economic activity has resulted in significant job losses, as well as large numbers of persons discouraged from participating in the labour market altogether. The upward trend in the region's unemployment rate over the past two months is one indication of how the pandemic is impacting the region's labour market. The employment loss in April replaces March 2020 as having the largest monthly decline since comparable data became available in 2001. Given these unprecedented and ever evolving economic circumstances, it remains too soon to assess the pandemic's full impact on Edmonton's economy, let alone when the economy will begin its recovery. The provincial strategy to phase the re-opening of businesses starting in May will be a start. Moving forward, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Edmonton's labour market will become clearer as more data are released, including data on employment insurance claims.

### **Limitations**

Employment trends 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 estimates 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 jumped to 9.6 per cent in April from 7.7 per cent in March.