

LMI SOURCES

Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours

WHAT IS IT?

The Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (SEPH) is a survey conducted by Statistics Canada that provides a monthly picture of earning amounts, as well as the number of jobs and hours worked by detailed industry categories at the national, provincial and territorial levels. Monthly estimates are produced by a combination of a census of payroll deductions provided by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and the Business Payrolls Survey (BPS), which collects data from a sample of 15,000 businesses across Canada. Excluded are businesses that are primarily involved in agriculture, fishing and trapping, private household services, religious organizations, international and extraterritorial public administration and military personnel of defense services. Data from SEPH have been collected for provinces, territories and the country since 2001 and you will normally find new data from SEPH released during the last week of each month.

REASONS TO USE (STRENGTHS)

- **Higher quality data** – Since SEPH data is based on a combination of both survey and administrative data, it has higher reliability and greater representation than a survey alone.
- **Detailed estimates for indicators** – This survey's greater reach means that data on a wide range of industries are possible. Likewise, earnings can be summarized from the survey as both hourly and weekly earnings. Other indicators able to be collected from SEPH include: type of employee (fixed salary and paid by the hour), average weekly hours, standard work week, and enterprise size. Most importantly, because data related to earnings is collected monthly, SEPH provides some of the most current and in depth data possible related to earnings (across the country and by industry).
- **Variety of user-friendly tools and products** – SEPH data are made available through a number of different formats, including customizable data tables, easy-to-read charts, and a monthly news release providing commentary on the latest data available.

AREAS OF CAUTION (WEAKNESSES)

- **Timeliness** – Although SEPH provides one of the most current data sources on industry earnings possible, data is staggered such that data for a given month is not made available until three months later. For example, data for January 2021 did not become available until the end of March 2021. This means data for the present month are not available in real time (i.e. the month following its collection).
- **Limited availability of some forms of data** – While SEPH provides comprehensive data in a number of areas, there are still some topic areas not available through the survey. For example, regional data and occupational data are not collected through SEPH. Likewise, as mentioned, there are a few industries where SEPH employment data can be challenging for you to obtain due to smaller response levels (in which case Statistics Canada will suppress data and not make it publically available).
- **Snapshot of the labour market** – Data for SEPH are based on a combination of administrative and survey data specific to a given month. Like other sources based on specific reference periods, it is challenging to capture changes in the labour market due to factors such as seasonality or unique circumstances which affect the labour market outside of when data is actually collected (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic).

RELATED LINKS

- **Guide to the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (most recent and archived)** - <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/72-203-G>
- **Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours data tables** - <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210330/dq210330a-cansim-eng.htm>
- **Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours, and Job Vacancies news release (type “Payroll” into search bar for latest release version)** - <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/dai-quo/ssi/homepage/rel-com/theme14-eng.htm>
- **Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours release schedule** - <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/dai-quo/cal1-eng.htm?sk=3555>