

5.4.3 Work stoppages

Statistical information on strikes and lockouts in Canada is compiled by Labour Canada on the basis of reports from employment centres, provincial labour departments and other sources. There were 64 major work stoppages in 1987, involving 532,659 workers and 2,402,662 person-days lost. A major work stoppage is defined as one involving 500 workers or more. Corresponding figures for 1986 were 88 work stoppages, 429,401 workers and 5,651,700 person-days lost. As a percentage of the total working time of non-agricultural paid workers, this sharp decline has meant a corresponding decline in the time lost due to work stoppages from 0.22% in 1986 to 0.09% in 1987.

5.5 The labour force

5.5.1 Monthly labour force surveys

Statistics relating to employment and unemployment at national and provincial levels are provided through a Statistics Canada labour force survey, carried out monthly.

The survey sample represents all persons 15 years of age and over residing in Canada except: residents of Northwest Territories and Yukon, persons living on Indian reserves, inmates of institutions and full-time members of the armed forces. Interviews are carried out in approximately 48,000 households chosen by area sampling methods across the country. Estimates of employment, unemployment and non-labour force activity generated from the survey refer to a specific week each month, normally the week containing the 15th day. The labour force is composed of members of the civilian non-institutional population 15 years of age and over who, during reference week, were employed or unemployed.

The employed are defined as all persons who, in the reference week, did any work for pay or profit, either paid work in an employer-employee relationship or self-employment. Included is unpaid family work contributing to the operation of a farm, business or professional practice owned or operated by a related member of the household. It also includes persons who had jobs but were not at work due to illness or disability, personal or family responsibilities, bad weather, labour disputes or other reasons.

The unemployed are those who, in the reference week, were without work, had actively looked for work in the past four weeks and were available for work; had not actively looked for work in the past four weeks but had been on layoff, with

expectation of returning to work, and were available for work; or had a new job to start in four weeks or less and were available for work. Persons not in the labour force are those defined as neither employed nor unemployed.

Recent labour market developments. The Canadian labour force went through a period of significant change from 1981 to 1987. The economy experienced its most severe recession since the 1930s during the period from mid-1981 until the end of 1982. This was followed by a span of continuous recovery throughout the remainder of the 1981-87 period.

In the decade preceding the recession, the labour force grew at a robust rate of about 3.8% per year. The number of women in the labour force increased by 63% during that period; the number of men rose by only 24%. While the number in the labour force rose in all major age/sex categories, the increase was most significant for women aged 25 and over (73.4%). As a result, the difference in the participation rates for men and women (the percentage of persons in the population taking part in the labour force) narrowed from 37.9% in 1971 to 26.7% by 1981.

During the economic downturn in 1981-82, the overall size of the labour force remained virtually unchanged, with an increase of 1.5% for women being offset by a decline of 0.3% among men. Employment levels dropped sharply (-3.3%) from 11,006,000 in 1981 to 10,644,000 in 1982. This decrease of 362,000 persons employed came as the result of a decline of 409,000 in the number of persons working full-time while part-time employment rose moderately (47,000). There were employment declines in all sectors with the exception of finance, insurance and real estate and community, business and personal services. The most severely affected industries were the primary industries other than agriculture (-16.1%), manufacturing (-9.0%), and construction (-8.3%).

The recovery, which began in early 1983, continued throughout the period up to 1987. While average employment in 1983 rose only 90,000 (0.8%) over the level in 1982, it maintained a more substantial growth of about 2.8% during the subsequent four years of the recovery. However, some aspects of the recovery have been less than uniform.

Employment increases in service-producing industries have averaged 2.9% per year during the five years of recovery while the goods-producing sectors averaged a more modest 1.4% growth. Construction was the only goods-producing industry that achieved its pre-recession peak by 1987, although only one of the service