

Economy adds 19,400 jobs, unemployment rate edges higher

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Canada's labour market pumped out another 19,400 net jobs last month – and the vast majority of the new work was full-time.

However, Statistics Canada's job survey Friday also showed the bulk of those new positions were created in the more precarious category of self-employment, which can include people working for a family business without pay.

The report found that while 95 per cent of the new jobs created last month were full-time, 95 per cent of them were also self-employed positions.

The agency says the country's unemployment rate crept up in March to 6.7 per cent from 6.6 per cent because more people were looking for work.

The increase in the headline jobs number suggests the country's upward trend continued for a fourth consecutive month. But the gains in February and March were low enough that the agency deems them statistically insignificant.

Compared to a year earlier, the categories of full-time and part-time work have each increased 1.5 per cent.

The country lost 2,400 positions in the services sector last month, but added 21,800 factory jobs thanks to the biggest month-to-month surge in manufacturing work since 2002.

The manufacturing sector added 24,400 positions – mostly in Ontario and to a lesser degree in Alberta – to climb back up to the same level it was 12 months earlier.

Still, compared to its peak in the early 2000s, the manufacturing sector has about 630,000 fewer jobs, a drop of 27 per cent, Statistics Canada said.

Alberta easily saw the biggest overall job boost among provinces, adding 20,700 full-time jobs last month. At the other end of the spectrum, Quebec shed 17,800 full-time positions.

The number of private-sector jobs rose 13,700 between February and March, while public-sector positions dropped by 12,700.

A consensus of economists had expected job gains of 5,000 last month and for the unemployment rate to increase to 6.7 per cent, according to Thomson Reuters.