



# Labour Market Bulletin

British Columbia

August 2017



This Labour Market Bulletin provides an analysis of Labour Force Survey results for the province of British Columbia (BC), including the regions of Northern BC, Vancouver Island and Coast, Lower Mainland, Thompson-Okanagan and the Kootenays.

## OVERVIEW

As a result of the wildfires threatening the province's central interior and Cariboo region, the Government of BC declared a state of emergency on July 7 and extended it for a fourth time on September 1. As of August 31st, there are still evacuation orders in place for areas in the Cariboo and Thompson-Nicola regional districts.

BC is facing its worst wildfire season on record. Up to 46,000 people have been displaced this season due to evacuation orders and alerts and over one million hectares of land have been burned.<sup>1</sup> The full extent of the economic impact caused by the fires has yet to be determined.

Statistics Canada was unable to collect Labour Force Survey data in a small number of communities in BC in August due to the wildfires. The impact on estimates for Canada, the province and the economic region of Cariboo is minimal.<sup>2</sup>

The Conference Board of Canada confirms while job creation and consumer demand remain robust in BC housing, forestry and energy are forecast to weaken the province's growth in the near future.<sup>3</sup> BC's economic performance is expected to slow down in 2017, reflecting a cooling in its housing market. Real GDP is forecast to grow 2.7% in 2017, one percentage point less than 2016.<sup>4</sup>

According to Statistics Canada, earnings have been on a long-term upward trend in the province. Year over year, BC's average weekly earnings increased 1.8% in June to \$945 (the most recent data available).

The month of August brought very little change to employment in BC, down 1,200 to 2.48 million (-0.05%). Full-time employment edged down (-28,600) mostly offset by a rise in part-time employment (+27,400). Despite

slight decreases in the last two months, BC’s employment rose 3.9% year over year — almost twice the national level.

There was a slight decrease in both public sector (-3,300) and private sector employees (-6,700) in August. These declines were offset by self-employment which is on the rise in BC, increasing for the fourth month in a row to 451,600 (+8,700). Compared to August 2016, there are 35,200 more self-employed people in the province (+8.5%). At 18.2%, BC had the highest percentage of self-employed workers of all provinces for the month of August.<sup>5</sup>

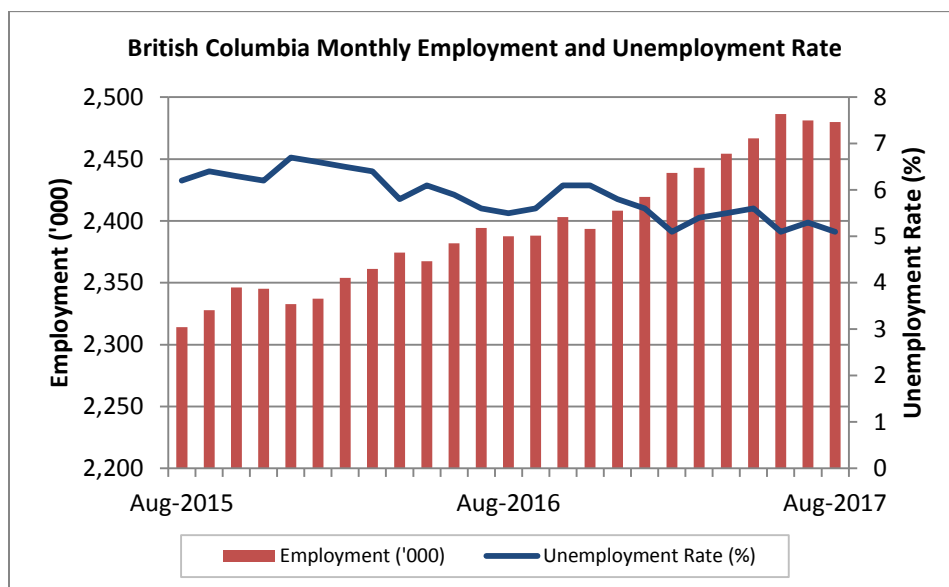
BC’s unemployment dipped to 5.1% in August, over one full percentage point lower than the national average. This represents the second lowest unemployment rate among provinces, following closely behind Manitoba (4.9%).

**British Columbia Monthly Labour Force Statistics**

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	August 2017	July 2017	August 2016	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
<b>Population 15 + ('000)</b>	3,988.1	3,983.8	3,939.5	4.3	0.1	48.6	1.2
<b>Labour Force ('000)</b>	2,612.1	2,620.5	2,527.2	-8.4	-0.3	84.9	3.4
<b>Employment ('000)</b>	2,480.0	2,481.2	2,387.7	-1.2	0.0	92.3	3.9
Full-Time ('000)	1,930.0	1,958.6	1,881.8	-28.6	-1.5	48.2	2.6
Part-Time ('000)	550.0	522.6	505.9	27.4	5.2	44.1	8.7
<b>Unemployment ('000)</b>	132.1	139.3	139.5	-7.2	-5.2	-7.4	-5.3
<b>Unemployment Rate (%)</b>	5.1	5.3	5.5	-0.2	-	-0.4	-
<b>Participation Rate (%)</b>	65.5	65.8	64.2	-0.3	-	1.3	-
<b>Employment Rate (%)</b>	62.2	62.3	60.6	-0.1	-	1.6	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – CANSIM Table 282-0087



Looking at labour force results for age and gender groupings, the unemployment rate for youth aged 15 to 24 rose by 1.6 percentage points to 9.8% due to the significant spike in unemployment among female youth (+3.4 percentage points to 8.9%). At 10.7%, male youth continue to have the highest unemployment rate in BC for the tenth consecutive month.

### British Columbia Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally Adjusted Data	August 2017 (%)	July 2017 (%)	August 2016 (%)	Monthly Variation	Yearly Variation
				(% points)	(% points)
<b>Total</b>	5.1	5.3	5.5	-0.2	-0.4
<b>25 years and over</b>	4.2	4.8	5.3	-0.6	-1.1
Men - 25 years and over	4.1	4.5	5.8	-0.4	-1.7
Women - 25 years and over	4.4	5.1	4.8	-0.7	-0.4
<b>15 to 24 years</b>	9.8	8.2	6.7	1.6	3.1
Men - 15 to 24 years	10.7	10.9	6.2	-0.2	4.5
Women - 15 to 24 years	8.9	5.5	7.2	3.4	1.7

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – CANSIM Table 282-0087

## EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Compared to July 2017, employment in BC's goods-producing sector contracted (-1,600) in August while employment in the services-producing sector increased slightly (+300). Year over year, employment in both sectors is up significantly; the goods-producing sector is up 30,200 (+6.5%) and the services-producing sector increased by 62,100 (+3.2%).

Looking more closely at the province's goods-producing sector, employment in BC's resource extraction industry (forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying and oil and gas) dropped to 49,800 in August — a decrease of 2.0% compared to the previous month and a 1.6% dip year over year.

According to the Government of BC, this summer's wildfires have burned an estimated 53 million cubic metres of timber. It is expected to take BC's forest industry at least five years to recover from the loss. The Province has established a new recovery unit to oversee and co-ordinate government's cross-ministry response. Short-term plans are underway to salvage any wood that can still be sold and there are long-term plans for reforestation to support industry sustainability.<sup>6</sup>

The supply of lumber in BC has been affected by the pine beetle over the last decade and now the wildfires have burned through large expanses of forest located primarily in the Cariboo region. Road closures caused by evacuation orders and alerts in effect throughout central BC have also halted log harvesting operations. The dwindling supply of raw timber forced Tolko to curtail operations at their Quest Wood operation in Quesnel on July 20 until such time as "the fire situation subsides" — the mill employs approximately 200 people.<sup>7</sup>

BC's three largest forestry companies (Canfor Corp., West Fraser Timber and Interfor Corp.) all posted strong earnings for the first half of 2017 showing resilience despite the cost of preliminary countervailing and

antidumping fees imposed on softwood lumber imports to the U.S.<sup>8</sup> Strong lumber prices have helped producers weather the new tariffs.<sup>9</sup>

On August 28, the United States Department of Commerce announced they are postponing the final determination in the antidumping and countervailing duties on imports of softwood lumber from Canada until no later than November 14, 2017.<sup>10</sup> The duties had temporarily been imposed by the U.S. and ended on August 26. Lumber companies are left with the much lower preliminary antidumping fees until the end of September at which point there will be a reprieve until the U.S. makes a final determination.<sup>11</sup>

Earlier this year, the Conference Board of Canada forecast there will be 2,200 fewer jobs in the wood products industry and about \$700 million less in exports by 2018. The report estimates US trade restrictions on softwood lumber will reduce industry pre-tax profits from \$1.8 billion in 2016 to \$1.4 billion this year and \$1.1 billion in 2018.<sup>12</sup> Canada's share of the U.S. softwood lumber market has fallen significantly. In July 2017, Canada had a 23% share compared to 32% it had in September 2015.<sup>13</sup>

The agriculture industry in BC has been greatly impacted by this year's wildfires. Approximately 2,000 people work in the agriculture industry in BC's Cariboo region which has been hardest hit by the fires.<sup>14</sup> The BC Ministry of Agriculture estimates up to 23,800 cattle are living in fire affected regions of the province.<sup>15</sup> In addition to ranchers losing their homes and buildings, cattle have died or have been injured with some long-term health effects. Cattle that have smoke inhalation damage will have to be sold at a discount, and many more will be euthanized.<sup>16</sup> There are approximately 4,086 ranches housing about 545,000 head of cattle in BC, which accounts for approximately 5 percent of the national cow herd.<sup>17</sup> In an effort to help the industry, the provincial and federal governments have joined hands in the 2017 Canada-British Columbia Wildfires Recovery Initiative to provide up to \$20 million in assistance to agricultural producers experiencing losses associated with this year's wildfires.<sup>18</sup>

Within BC's goods-producing sector, construction is one industry that has seen a significant growth in employment over the last year. There were 20,300 more people working in the construction industry in BC in August 2017 compared to August 2016 (+9.6%). Construction employs the highest number of people in BC's goods-producing sector comprising over 46% of all those employed in this sector.

According to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), BC and Alberta are the two main contributors in Canada's current upward trend in housing construction.<sup>19</sup> In June, investment in new housing construction in BC surpassed \$1 billion — up 6.0% year over year.<sup>20</sup>

Turning to the services-producing sector, there were 155,700 people employed in the finance, insurance, real estate and leasing industry in August 2017, a 13.4% increase year over year. The real estate industry has been the engine behind BC's robust economic growth over the last few years and revenue generated by BC's strong real estate market has been a significant contributor to the Province. Last fiscal year, a 32% increase in Property Transfer Tax revenue translated to approximately \$2 billion in income for the Government of BC.<sup>21</sup>

This year the BC housing market is trending downwards and the Conference Board of Canada forecasts housing starts will drop 12.4% in 2017 and 5.0% in 2018. Consequently reduced growth is expected in the finance, insurance and real estate industry.<sup>22</sup>

## British Columbia Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	August 2017	July 2017	August 2016	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
<b>Total employed, all industries</b>	2,480.0	2,481.2	2,387.7	-1.2	0.0	92.3	3.9
<b>Goods-producing sector</b>	497.9	499.5	467.7	-1.6	-0.3	30.2	6.5
Agriculture	27.4	24.5	24.3	2.9	11.8	3.1	12.8
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	49.8	50.8	50.6	-1.0	-2.0	-0.8	-1.6
Utilities	12.9	12.2	13.2	0.7	5.7	-0.3	-2.3
Construction	231.1	232.8	210.8	-1.7	-0.7	20.3	9.6
Manufacturing	176.7	179.2	168.8	-2.5	-1.4	7.9	4.7
<b>Services-producing sector</b>	1,982.1	1,981.8	1,920.0	0.3	0.0	62.1	3.2
Trade	378.4	373.3	362.7	5.1	1.4	15.7	4.3
Transportation and warehousing	139.5	142.9	139.4	-3.4	-2.4	0.1	0.1
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	155.7	156.2	137.3	-0.5	-0.3	18.4	13.4
Professional, scientific and technical services	205.9	199.9	198.7	6.0	3.0	7.2	3.6
Business, building and other support services	101.3	101.1	110.9	0.2	0.2	-9.6	-8.7
Educational services	163.7	162.5	161.0	1.2	0.7	2.7	1.7
Health care and social assistance	307.9	302.8	290.1	5.1	1.7	17.8	6.1
Information, culture and recreation	138.2	141.5	130.6	-3.3	-2.3	7.6	5.8
Accommodation and food services	179.5	186.3	179.4	-6.8	-3.7	0.1	0.1
Other services	113.8	114.9	104.3	-1.1	-1.0	9.5	9.1
Public administration	98.2	100.4	105.6	-2.2	-2.2	-7.4	-7.0

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – CANSIM Table 282-0088

## REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Year over year, employment increased in most regions in BC. Only North Coast and Nechako as well as the Northeast saw a decrease in employment. The Lower Mainland-Southwest had the lowest unemployment rate in the province in August (4.7%), while the Kootenay region had the highest rate for the fourth consecutive month (7.7%).

In August 2017, there were 145,600 people employed in construction in BC's most populated economic region, the Lower Mainland-Southwest. This number represents over 60% of all those employed in the construction industry in BC. The region had 16,000 more people working in the construction industry in August 2017 compared to the previous year (+12.4%).<sup>23</sup>

According to CMHC, a total of 2,398 housing starts were recorded in Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) in July 2017. This represents an increase of 13% year over year. Burnaby, New Westminster and Coquitlam had the largest increase in construction activity in this region. The majority of housing starts in the Vancouver CMA were for attached properties, satisfying consumer demand for more affordable housing such as apartments and townhomes.<sup>24</sup> According to Statistics Canada, the census metropolitan area (CMA) of Vancouver issued \$562.2 million in building permits for multi-family dwellings in July 2017, up 17.4% from June

2017 and the highest value on record.<sup>25</sup> A year after the 15% foreign-buyers' tax was introduced in Vancouver, the most significant shift is that demand for condominiums and townhouses has outpaced single family dwellings.<sup>26</sup>

Although employment in North Coast and Nechako has been trending upward since May, the region had a 3% decline in employment between August 2016 and August 2017. The region will undoubtedly benefit from the \$200 million expansion of the Fairview Container Terminal at the Port of Prince Rupert which was completed on August 29. The improvements have increased the Port's container-handling capacity from 850,000 to 1.35 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) annually making it the second largest container terminal in Canada.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the Port of Prince Rupert can now accommodate the largest shipping vessels in the world.<sup>28</sup> The terminal is strategically located, offering the shortest sailing distance to Asia of any terminal on the west coast and having direct access to the CN Rail network. Over 200 new jobs are expected to be created at the terminal as container volumes increase following the expansion. Currently, more than 3,000 people across northern BC are directly employed in the logistics of transporting goods through the Port of Prince Rupert.<sup>29</sup>

### British Columbia Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	August 017 ( '000)	August 2016 ( '000)	Yearly Variation (%)	August 2017 (%)	August 2016 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
<b>British Columbia</b>	2,514.9	2,416.8	4.1	5.1	5.8	-0.7
<b>Economic Regions</b>						
Vancouver Island and Coast	393.6	368.7	6.8	5.1	5.0	0.1
Lower Mainland-Southwest	1,617.3	1,566.7	3.2	4.7	5.4	-0.7
Thompson-Okanagan	267.9	253.3	5.8	6.4	6.8	-0.4
Kootenay	71.9	64.7	11.1	7.7	8.0	-0.3
Cariboo	82.8	79.8	3.8	6.5	7.7	-1.2
North Coast and Nechako	43.2	44.5	-2.9	5.5	7.5	-2.0
Northeast	38.1	39.2	-2.8	5.2	8.6	-3.4

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – CANSIM Table 282-0122

The Cariboo region currently employs approximately 82,800 people, many of these people have had their employment impacted due to road closures, evacuation orders and alerts caused by the wildfires this summer. This region has been the hardest hit by this summer's wildfires with many evacuations forcing tourism cancellations. Five summer festivals in the Cariboo region were cancelled this summer due to wildfires. Festival cancellations have a far reaching economic impact on hosting communities, affecting small businesses that rely on tourism as well as local artists. Refunding tickets can mean a big loss that may stop festivals from returning for years to follow.<sup>30</sup> The Government of BC recently committed up to \$200,000 to the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association in order to mitigate tourism-related impacts from the wildfires. Most of the region's tourism industry survives based on the peak summer season and over 95% of tourism businesses in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast are small businesses.<sup>31</sup> The Province is also offering a \$1,500 emergency grant to all eligible small businesses in BC affected by the fires— as of August 21, 2017, 1,289 applications for the grant were received.<sup>32</sup>

According to Destination BC, businesses in regions not directly impacted by the fires such as the Thompson-Okanagan and the Kootenays have also seen a drop in visitors.<sup>33</sup> The tourism industry employs 127,000 people in BC and supports approximately 19,000 tourism-related businesses.<sup>34</sup>

**Note:** In preparing this document, the authors have taken care to provide clients with labour market information that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since this document was published. Users are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect official policies of Employment and Social Development Canada.

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**For information on the Labour Force Survey,** please visit the Statistics Canada Web site at: [www.statcan.gc.ca](http://www.statcan.gc.ca)

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<sup>1</sup> Soundcloud BC Government (August 23, 2017). BC Wildfire Update – August 23, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://soundcloud.com/bcgov/bc-wildfire-update-august-23-2017>

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