



Labour Market Bulletin

British Columbia

2017 (Annual Edition)



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

BC's strong labour market supported continued economic growth for the province in 2017. Indeed, employment in BC has been trending upward since 2010, reaching 2,466,800 in 2017. Full-time employment grew consistently in this period and is responsible for the majority of annual employment gains in the province. There were 87,300 new positions in BC in 2017, most of which were in the private sector (+60,100). While employment in the public sector grew by 9,900, the number of self-employed individuals increased by 17,300.¹

BC's economy continued to expand in 2017 — the Conference Board of Canada forecast BC's economy would outpace all other provinces in 2017 with an estimated growth in GDP of 2.7%.² However, during this period of economic growth, the province faced its worst fire season on record. On July 7, 2017 the Government of BC declared a state of emergency that lasted 70 days as a result of wildfires threatening the province's central interior and Cariboo region. The wildfires burned over 1.2 million hectares of land and cost more than \$568 million to suppress. An estimated 65,000 people were evacuated affecting several industries in the province including tourism, agriculture and forestry.³ The Province has launched an independent review with a report expected by the end of April 2018.

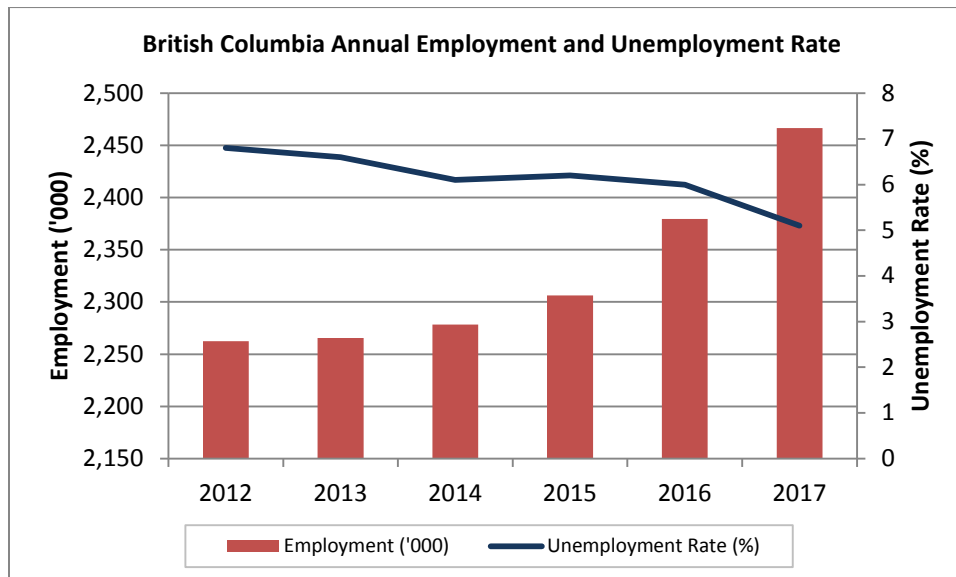
British Columbia Annual Labour Force Statistics

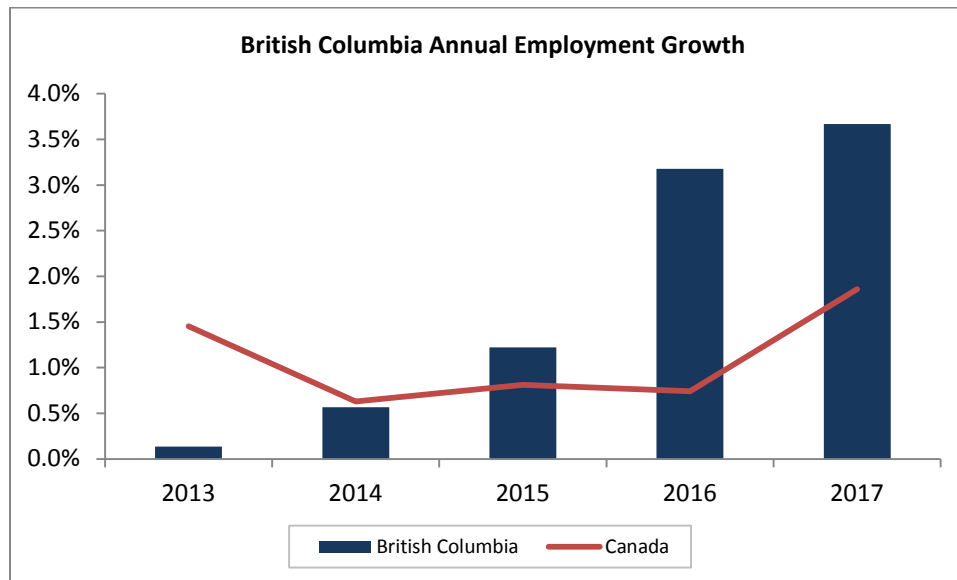
Labour Force Survey Estimates	2017	2016	2015	2016 to 2017		2015 to 2016	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	3,979.7	3,930.7	3,877.1	49.0	1.2	53.6	1.4
Labour Force ('000)	2,600.7	2,532.3	2,457.6	68.4	2.7	74.7	3.0
Employment ('000)	2,466.8	2,379.5	2,306.2	87.3	3.7	73.3	3.2
Full-Time ('000)	1,934.6	1,862.5	1,824.0	72.1	3.9	38.5	2.1
Part-Time ('000)	532.1	517.0	482.2	15.1	2.9	34.8	7.2
Unemployment ('000)	133.9	152.8	151.4	-18.9	-12.4	1.4	0.9
Unemployment Rate (%)	5.1	6.0	6.2	-0.9	-	-0.2	-
Participation Rate (%)	65.3	64.4	63.4	0.9	-	1.0	-
Employment Rate (%)	62.0	60.5	59.5	1.5	-	1.0	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey Estimates – CANSIM Table 282-0002

Despite the impact of the 2017 wildfires, the number of unemployed individuals in the province decreased substantially, shrinking over 12% compared to 2016 levels. At 5.1%, BC's unemployment rate for 2017 was the lowest in the country for the second consecutive year and 1.2 percentage points below the national average.





The unemployment rate in BC for youth (15 to 24) was 8.6% in 2017, almost twice the rate for those aged 25 and over (4.5%). The youth unemployment rate in BC for both men and women has been trending downward since 2011. The rate for young women shrank from 12.2% in 2011 to 6.8% in 2017. The unemployment rate for young men decreased from 16.7% in 2011 to 10.4% in 2017. Although the unemployment rate for young men continues to be the highest of any demographic group in BC, it is lower than for young men in any other province for the second consecutive year.

British Columbia Annual Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Labour Force Survey Estimates	2017	2016	2015	2016 to 2017	2015 to 2016
				(% points)	(% points)
Total	5.1	6.0	6.2	-0.9	-0.2
25 years and over	4.5	5.3	5.2	-0.8	0.1
Men - 25 years and over	4.7	5.7	5.5	-1.0	0.2
Women - 25 years and over	4.4	4.8	4.8	-0.4	0.0
15 to 24 years	8.6	10.3	11.7	-1.7	-1.4
Men - 15 to 24 years	10.4	11.2	13.7	-0.8	-2.5
Women - 15 to 24 years	6.8	9.3	9.5	-2.5	-0.2

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey Estimates – CANSIM Table 282-0002

Labour market indicators for Indigenous people

In 2017, the average total population aged 15+ in BC was around 4 million. The Indigenous population living off-reserve accounted for 4.1% of that, or 164,400 people. Employment among the Indigenous population in BC stood at 103,900 representing an increase of 5,800 (+5.9%) from a year earlier (2016). A significant increase in full-time positions (+6,800 or +9.3%) was partially offset by a decrease in part-time positions (-1,000 or -4.0%).

The average unemployment rate among Indigenous people was 11.0% in 2017, remaining unchanged from the previous year. The unemployment rate among the non-Indigenous population was 4.9%, down 0.9 percentage points from 2016. In 2017, the participation rate of Indigenous people was 71.0% (+1.7 percentage points from 2016) while among non-Indigenous population, it was 65.1% — up 0.9 percentage points from 2016. The employment rate for Indigenous people increased year-over-year to 63.2% (+1.5 percentage points) and the non-Indigenous population also saw an increase to 61.9% (+1.4 percentage points) from 2016.

British Columbia - Labour Market Indicators for Indigenous People

Annual averages Seasonally unadjusted data	Indigenous		Yearly variation (Indigenous)		Non-Indigenous		Yearly variation (non-Indigenous)	
	2017	2016	number	%	2017	2016	number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	164.4	158.9	5.5	3.5	3,815.4	3,771.8	43.6	1.2
Labour Force ('000)	116.7	110.2	6.5	5.9	2,483.6	2,421.6	62.0	2.6
Employment ('000)	103.9	98.1	5.8	5.9	2,361.7	2,280.6	81.1	3.6
Full-Time ('000)	80.0	73.2	6.8	9.3	1,853.7	1,788.8	64.9	3.6
Part-Time ('000)	23.9	24.9	-1.0	-4.0	508.0	491.8	16.2	3.3
Unemployment ('000)	12.8	12.1	0.7	5.8	121.9	141.0	-19.1	-13.5
Unemployment Rate (%)	11.0	11.0	0.0	-	4.9	5.8	-0.9	-
Participation Rate (%)	71.0	69.3	1.7	-	65.1	64.2	0.9	-
Employment Rate (%)	63.2	61.7	1.5	-	61.9	60.5	1.4	-

Notes: The Labour Force Survey excludes those living on-reserve.

Estimates are based on annual averages.

Totals may not add due to rounding.

Totals may be different from other tables due to adjustments done to indigenous statistics in the Labour Force Survey.

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – ESDC custom table

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Since the global economic crisis of 2008-09, employment has trended upward in BC from 2,241,900 in 2008 to 2,466,800 in 2017. On an annual basis, BC's goods-producing sector gained 21,600 positions in 2017, while the province's services-producing sector employed 65,700 more people.

In 2017, the construction industry was the largest employer in the goods-producing sector (228,600). Indeed, construction has been the third largest employer of any industry in the province since 2008. There is also evidence of growing employment demands in this industry. In 2017, there was a 50% increase in the number of people working in non-residential construction in BC.⁴ Looking ahead, according to BuildForce Canada's recent construction and maintenance forecast for BC, the need for non-residential construction workers will rise by 20% in the next four years.⁵ This trend is being driven by growing demand for residential and commercial real property.⁶ In BC's Budget 2017, the provincial government committed to spend \$14.6 billion on infrastructure projects for transportation, education, health and BC Housing.⁷

The resource extraction industry (forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, and oil and gas) was the only goods-producing industry in BC that shed positions in 2017 (-1,000). Resource extraction which accounts for over 10%

of employment in BC's goods-producing sector edged down 2% in 2017. The forestry industry in particular was hard hit in 2017, not only by the continued effects of the mountain pine beetle but also with wildfires burning 53 million cubic meters of timber in BC; the equivalent of an entire year's harvest for the interior.⁸ Fortunately, the price of lumber remained high throughout 2017 while the Canadian dollar remained low, mitigating damage to BC's forestry industry.⁹

The forestry industry also became the subject of a trade dispute in 2017. The United States Department of Commerce issued its final determination for punitive duties against Canadian lumber shipments entering the United States (US).¹⁰ Combined duties of 20.83% will be applied to the majority of Canadian softwood lumber shipments entering the US. In response to this decision, the Canadian government formally requested World Trade Organization consultations with the US regarding the imposed softwood lumber duties. Canada has also challenged the duties under Chapter 19 of the North American Free Trade Agreement.¹¹

In other resource extraction industries, weak global commodity prices and an uncertain outlook for natural gas prices over the medium term have led to Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) infrastructure project cancellations in 2017. Two major LNG infrastructure projects destined for BC's northwest coast were cancelled in 2017; Petronas' Pacific NorthWest LNG and CNOOC's Aurora LNG.¹² There still remains one major project in the province; the \$40 billion Royal Dutch Shell project in Kitimat which has a final investment decision due by the end of 2018.¹³

There is also uncertainty regarding major pipeline development in BC. The provincial government recently proposed new legislation to restrict shipments of oil sands crude in pipelines and on railway cars in BC.¹⁴ These protective environmental regulations will have the effect of stalling any pipeline project development within the province such as the \$7.4 billion Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. This proposed pipeline would ship oil from Alberta to Burnaby and triple the volume of Alberta crude available for export to Asian markets. The project received federal approval in 2016 and had been expected to break ground in 2017.¹⁵

Turning to industries within the services-producing sector, employment in the finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing industry increased 14.9% in 2017 — up substantially from the 5.7% increase in 2016 and outpacing all other industries. Year over year, this industry had the largest employment growth in BC (+20,300). Most of these employment gains were specifically in real estate and rental and leasing (+12,900) which increased an astounding 28.7% year over year.

Employment in BC's wholesale and retail trade industry grew for the second consecutive year and remains the largest employer of any individual industry in BC. In 2017, over 370,000 people were employed in BC's trade industry and three quarters of these people worked in retail trade. The growing presence of e-commerce has been changing the face of retail in Canada. Indeed, retail e-commerce sales were up 25.5% annually in November 2017 however; these sales still only account for 3.5% of total retail trade in Canada.¹⁶

In 2017, Sears Canada was arguably an e-commerce casualty closing all of its locations and affecting over 14,000 employees across the country and hundreds in BC alone.¹⁷ Wholesale Sports was another Canadian brick-and-mortar retailer forced to close their 12 stores in Western Canada, affecting over 500 employees.¹⁸

The shift to online shopping also brings alternative employment opportunities for BC. In 2017, high-tech giant Amazon.com announced plans to bring 1,000 new jobs to BC by 2020 effectively doubling its BC-based professional workforce. Over 100,000 people are employed in BC's growing the high-tech industry.^{19,20}

Employment in educational services edged up in 2017, an increase undoubtedly fueled by the November 2016 Supreme Court ruling to restore class size and composition language under the agreement with the British Columbia Teacher's Federation (BCTF).²¹ As a result of the ruling, the Government of BC allocated \$355 million in funding for all 60 school districts in the province. Funding to continue hiring over 3,000 new full-time teachers and specialists was distributed to the districts in the fall of 2017.^{22,23}

Despite recruitment efforts, the Province has been unable to hire the required number of teachers resulting in a province-wide teacher shortage — as of November 2017 there were 396 unfilled positions in BC school districts.²⁴ In December 2017 the Minister's Task Force on Immediate Recruitment and Retention Challenges presented a report advising on the extent of BC's educator workforce challenge and recommendations for immediate action to address the problem. The Province has responded to the recommendations by committing over \$570,000 to create over 100 additional spaces in teacher education programs.²⁵

Employment in a second public sector industry, health care and social assistance, has been steadily trending upward since 2014 reaching 303,500 in 2017 (+12.5%). Indeed, there were over 11,000 more positions in this industry in 2017. Early in the year, the Government of BC committed \$16 million to increase addiction treatment services in an attempt to address BC's opioid crisis. Several measures have been implemented by the provincial government to address the crisis since the public health emergency was declared in April 2016.²⁶ In 2017, there were 1,422 illicit-drug overdose deaths in BC, up 52% from 2016.^{27,28}

British Columbia Annual Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Labour Force Survey Employment Estimates ('000)	2017	2016	2015	2016 to 2017		2015 to 2016	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employment, all industries	2,466.8	2,379.5	2,306.2	87.3	3.7	73.3	3.2
Goods-producing sector	491.7	470.1	459.1	21.6	4.6	11.0	2.4
Agriculture	26.2	24.4	22.2	1.8	7.4	2.2	9.9
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	49.8	50.8	48.3	-1.0	-2.0	2.5	5.2
Utilities	12.9	13.5	14.5	-0.6	-4.4	-1.0	-6.9
Construction	228.6	211.3	201.5	17.3	8.2	9.8	4.9
Manufacturing	174.2	170.1	172.5	4.1	2.4	-2.4	-1.4
Services-producing sector	1,975.1	1,909.4	1,847.2	65.7	3.4	62.2	3.4
Wholesale and retail trade	374.0	369.9	352.9	4.1	1.1	17.0	4.8
Transportation and warehousing	139.4	137.9	140.0	1.5	1.1	-2.1	-1.5
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	156.2	135.9	128.6	20.3	14.9	7.3	5.7
Professional, scientific and technical services	197.2	195.5	188.1	1.7	0.9	7.4	3.9
Business, building and other support services	102.5	104.7	93.5	-2.2	-2.1	11.2	12.0
Educational services	166.6	165.0	163.4	1.6	1.0	1.6	1.0
Health care and social assistance	303.5	291.6	287.4	11.9	4.1	4.2	1.5
Information, culture and recreation	136.8	126.6	114.5	10.2	8.1	12.1	10.6
Accommodation and food services	182.6	174.2	177.5	8.4	4.8	-3.3	-1.9
Other services (except public administration)	114.4	104.6	105.1	9.8	9.4	-0.5	-0.5
Public administration	101.9	103.7	96.1	-1.8	-1.7	7.6	7.9

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey Estimates – CANSIM Table 282-0008

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Six out of BC's seven economic regions registered annual employment growth in 2017. Home to the largest concentration of population in BC, the Lower Mainland-Southwest led the province in employment gains (+49,200) and registered the lowest unemployment rate in the province (4.6%).

In 2017, both the Lower Mainland-Southwest and the Thompson-Okanagan economic region had employment gains led by finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing as well as construction. The real estate industry has been the engine behind BC's robust economic growth for the past few years and almost three quarters of all those employed in the finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing industry in BC were employed in the Lower Mainland-Southwest economic region in 2017 (115,700).²⁹ Although the provincial and federal government took measures to slow down home sale price increases in 2016, by April 2017 home prices hit a new high in Greater Vancouver and in September 2017 property sales in the region were up 25 percent year over year.³⁰

Average property assessments for most regions in the province experienced a substantial increase in 2017, however, many in BC's northern regions did not.³¹ BC's northern economic regions are highly dependent on resource extraction industries as well as agriculture. The 2014 downturn in commodity prices significantly affected BC's northern economy. However, according to the State of the North Report, BC's Northern economy has now stabilized.³²

Within BC's northern regions, the Northeast is the only economic region in BC that registered a decline in employment numbers in 2017. Despite these losses, the region's unemployment rate dropped from 9.7% in 2016 to 5.9% in 2017. There are several projects underway that bode well for future employment growth in the region. For instance, in December 2017, the Government of BC announced it will go ahead with plans to complete the construction of the \$10.7 billion Site C hydroelectric dam project located near Fort St-John.³³ Furthermore, development of the Montney gas reserve continues and natural gas demand from the US is forecast to be strong in the coming years.³⁴ In 2017, Encana started up three new liquids processing plants in the Montney region.³⁵ Finally, three metallurgical coal mines re-opened in Tumbler Ridge in 2016 and in 2017, the Murray River Mining project gained federal approval.³⁶

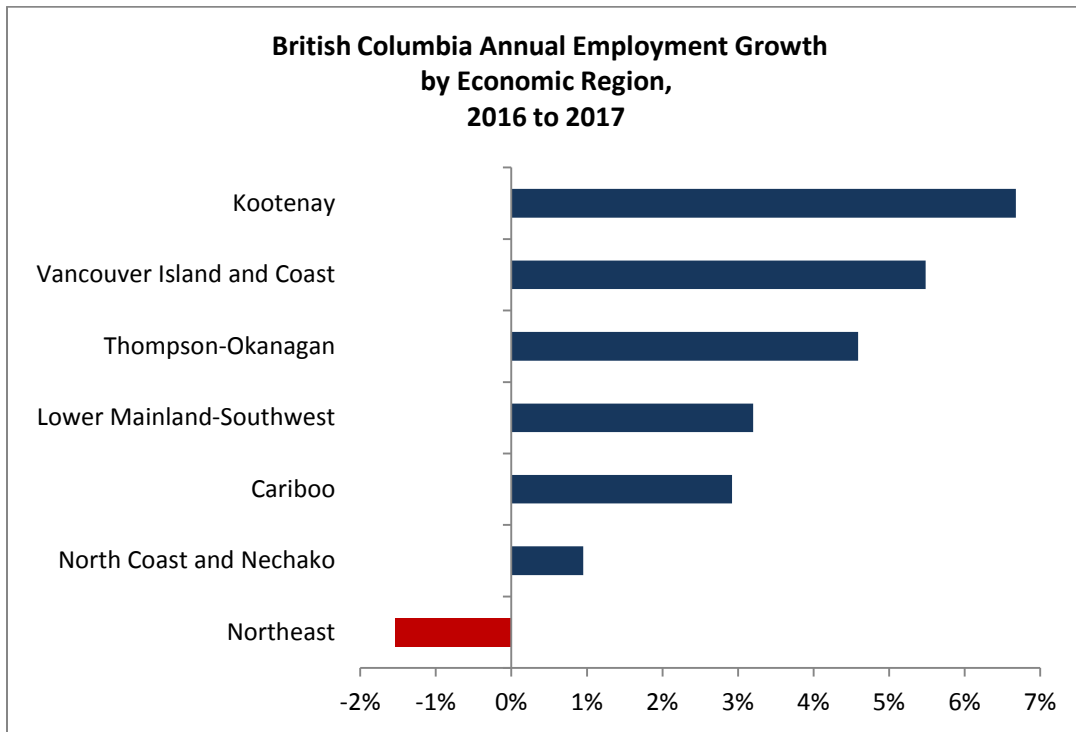
The Cariboo economic region had 2.9% employment growth in 2017 and the region's annual unemployment rate remained the same as in 2016 (7.4%). The wildfires affected many people's employment in 2017 because of evacuations and road closures. Year over year, the most significant employment losses by industry in the region were in the resource extraction industry where there was a 20% drop in employment (6,600 in 2016 to 5,300 in 2017).³⁷

British Columbia Annual Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

Labour Force Survey Estimates: Employment ('000)	2017	2016	2015	2016 to 2017		2015 to 2016	
				Number	%	Number	%
British Columbia	2,466.8	2,379.5	2,306.2	87.3	3.7	73.3	3.2
Economic Regions							
Vancouver Island and Coast	386.6	366.5	357.3	20.1	5.5	9.2	2.6
Lower Mainland-Southwest	1,586.5	1,537.3	1,468.2	49.2	3.2	69.1	4.7
Thompson-Okanagan	259.7	248.3	250.0	11.4	4.6	-1.7	-0.7
Kootenay	71.9	67.4	69.0	4.5	6.7	-1.6	-2.3
Cariboo	81.1	78.8	79.4	2.3	2.9	-0.6	-0.8
North Coast and Nechako	42.5	42.1	42.2	0.4	1.0	-0.1	-0.2
Northeast	38.5	39.1	40.1	-0.6	-1.5	-1.0	-2.5

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – CANSIM Table 282-0123



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.

Prepared by: Labour Market Information (LMI) Directorate, Service Canada, British Columbia

For further information, please contact the LMI team at: http://www.esdc.gc.ca/cqi-bin/contact/edsc-esdc/eng/contact_us.aspx?section=lmi

For information on the Labour Force Survey, please visit the Statistics Canada Web site at: www.statcan.gc.ca

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