



Labour Market Bulletin

British Columbia

August 2022



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

OVERVIEW

British Columbia's economy slowed as the summer progressed, with employment declining in August (-28,100 or -1.0%) compared to July. However, the Government of British Columbia posted a \$1.3B surplus for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, surpassing expectations set in April 2021 for a large deficit.¹ Government revenues were driven by strong economic growth across the province as it recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The provincial economy still faces workforce challenges, however. B.C.'s largest public sector union, representing 33,000 workers, began a strike action on August 15, though the strike ended on August 30 and the sides reached an agreement on September 7.^{2 3 4} However, other sectors have begun to push for job action as inflation raises the cost of living. In response to renewed worries of a fall COVID-19 wave, the Government of British Columbia announced the roll-out of a new COVID-19 booster program for all British Columbians aged five and older.⁵

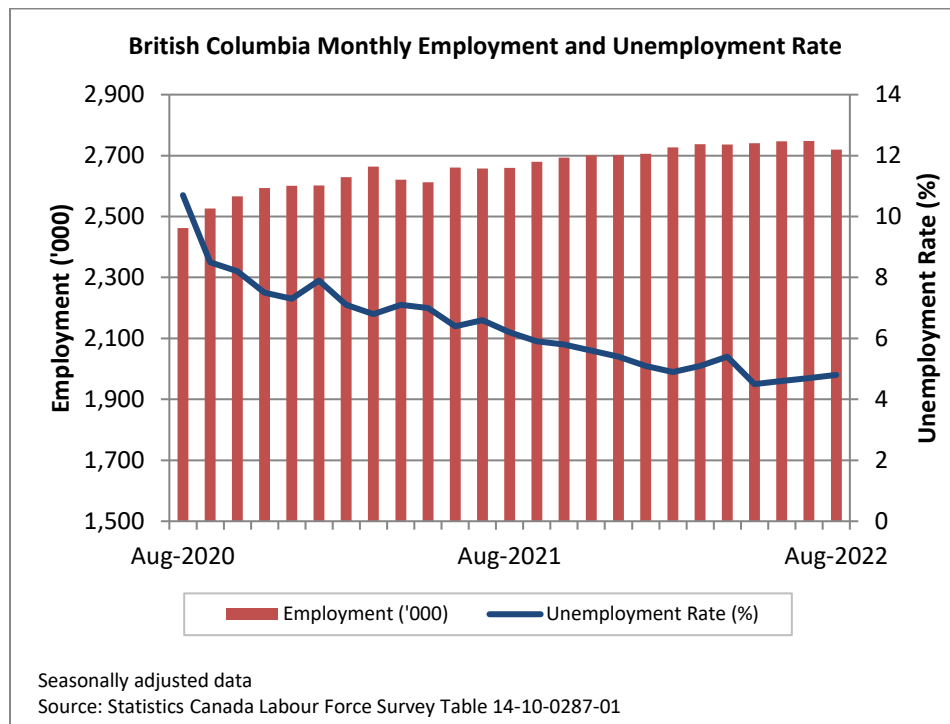
British Columbia Monthly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	August 2022	July 2022	August 2021	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	4,435.0	4,430.1	4,357.6	4.9	0.1	77.4	1.8
Labour Force ('000)	2,856.7	2,884.3	2,835.4	-27.6	-1.0	21.3	0.8
Employment ('000)	2,719.4	2,747.5	2,659.5	-28.1	-1.0	59.9	2.3
Full-Time ('000)	2,162.6	2,194.5	2,069.3	-31.9	-1.5	93.3	4.5
Part-Time ('000)	556.8	553.1	590.2	3.7	0.7	-33.4	-5.7
Unemployment ('000)	137.4	136.8	175.9	0.6	0.4	-38.5	-21.9
Unemployment Rate (%)	4.8	4.7	6.2	0.1	-	-1.4	-
Participation Rate (%)	64.4	65.1	65.1	-0.7	-	-0.7	-
Employment Rate (%)	61.3	62.0	61.0	-0.7	-	0.3	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287, formerly CANSIM 282-0087

Job losses were exclusively in full-time employment (-1.5% or -31,900 positions), which erased gains in part-time employment (0.7% or 3,700 positions). Meanwhile, the province’s unemployment rate increased 0.1 percentage points from the previous month to 4.8%, marking the fourth month of increases. The rate remains, however, below the national average.



The youth unemployment rate increased 1.2 percentage points from the previous month but remained 1.3 percentage points below last year’s rate. Month-over-month, the unemployment rate for men in the 15-24 age category increased 1.4 percentage points while the rate was up 1 percentage point for women 15-24. Year-over-year, unemployment rates remain improved by 1.8 percentage points for women and 0.6 points for men. The larger decrease in the unemployment rate for women over the year signals a return to normalcy post-pandemic as this demographic was particularly affected by layoffs at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

British Columbia Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally Adjusted Data	August 2022 (%)	July 2022 (%)	August 2021 (%)	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	4.8	4.7	6.2	0.1	-1.4
25 years and over	4.1	4.2	5.5	-0.1	-1.4
Men - 25 years and over	3.9	4.1	5.6	-0.2	-1.7
Women - 25 years and over	4.3	4.3	5.3	0.0	-1.0
15 to 24 years	9.4	8.2	10.7	1.2	-1.3
Men - 15 to 24 years	11.1	9.7	11.7	1.4	-0.6
Women - 15 to 24 years	7.8	6.8	9.6	1.0	-1.8

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287, formerly CANSIM 282-0087

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Though employment decreased month-over-month (-28,100), year-over-year employment growth was positive at 2.3% (59,900). Monthly employment fell in the **goods producing sector** by 2,400 (-0.5%) and in the **services producing sector** by 25,700 (-1.1%).

British Columbia Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	August 2022	July 2022	August 2021	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	2,719.4	2,747.5	2,659.5	-28.1	-1.0	59.9	2.3
Goods-producing sector	498.1	500.5	482.9	-2.4	-0.5	15.2	3.1
Agriculture	28.4	27.7	18.1	0.7	2.5	10.3	56.9
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	45.7	48.9	49.0	-3.2	-6.5	-3.3	-6.7
Utilities	15.7	16.2	17.8	-0.5	-3.1	-2.1	-11.8
Construction	236.4	234.1	216.2	2.3	1.0	20.2	9.3
Manufacturing	171.9	173.6	181.8	-1.7	-1.0	-9.9	-5.4
Services-producing sector	2,221.3	2,247.0	2,176.6	-25.7	-1.1	44.7	2.1
Trade	412.6	427.6	402.1	-15.0	-3.5	10.5	2.6
Transportation and warehousing	138.9	141.0	139.1	-2.1	-1.5	-0.2	-0.1
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	161.4	160.8	170.3	0.6	0.4	-8.9	-5.2
Professional, scientific and technical services	262.2	262.7	256.8	-0.5	-0.2	5.4	2.1
Business, building and other support services	96.1	102.6	106.9	-6.5	-6.3	-10.8	-10.1
Educational services	196.6	201.8	177.1	-5.2	-2.6	19.5	11.0
Health care and social assistance	373.4	375.0	372.4	-1.6	-0.4	1.0	0.3
Information, culture and recreation	152.1	152.9	126.5	-0.8	-0.5	25.6	20.2
Accommodation and food services	175.7	176.2	183.6	-0.5	-0.3	-7.9	-4.3
Other services	113.4	107.9	107.8	5.5	5.1	5.6	5.2
Public administration	138.9	138.5	134.0	0.4	0.3	4.9	3.7

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0355, formerly CANSIM 282-0088

Employment in the province's **goods-producing sector** fell by 0.5% (-2,400) in August. There was job growth over the month in **construction** (2,300 or 1.0%) and **agriculture** (700 or 2.5%); however, this growth was offset by job losses in **forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas** (-3,200 or -6.5%) and **manufacturing** (-1,700 or -1.0%).

Employment in the province's **construction** industry continued to grow on a monthly basis in August (2,300 or 1%) and increased by 20,200 workers or 9.3% year over year. Housing activity in the province fell in July after rebounding in June, with the number of housing starts declining 13.8% month-over-month; housing starts are down 2.0% compared to last year.⁶ Looking ahead, building permits signal potential upcoming construction activity; however, July 2022 data indicates that this will potentially be slowing as building permits issued in the province dipped by 12.2% compared to June in addition to being down 10.2% year-over-year.⁷ To support job creation and alleviate shortages in skilled trades, the Government of Canada is providing \$21M in funding for the

Construction Industry Apprenticeship Program. The program will target the hiring of 2,100 apprentices by small and medium sized businesses in eligible trades.

Forestry is a key economic driver in many B.C. communities. Employment in **forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas** decreased (-3,200 or 6.5%) over the month, pushing August employment in these industries down 6.7% (-3,300) year-over-year. BC's forestry sector continued to adapt to the ongoing challenges of a shrinking timber supply, insect infestations and wildfires, and U.S. trade tariffs. In the longer term, logging in BC will be further limited by measures to protect caribou habitat and old-growth forest areas. This time of year historically sees the lowest prices on wood products, and after lumber prices remained flat for most of August, they then dipped 11%. Demand continued to be low, with sawmills still curtailing production in response. Prices are expected to remain low from now until late November, unless there is increased demand from the construction industry.

Curtailments in the industry have increased with a number of companies prolonging existing curtailments until fall or announcing new production slow downs. In August, West Fraser announced that it would be cutting 147 jobs from three of its sawmills located in Fraser Lake, Williams Lake and Quesnel. The layoffs are expected to take place in the fourth quarter and will reduce the company's production by around 255 million board feet.⁸ Conifex Timber announced that it would be reducing production capacity at its Mackenzie sawmill for six weeks. The company cited continuing transportation issues for the curtailment.⁹

Employment in the province's **services-producing sector** declined over the month (-25,700 positions or -1.1%) but was still up over the year (44,700 or 2.1%). There were monthly employment drops within **business, building and other support services** (-6.3%), **wholesale and retail trade** (-3.5%) and **educational services** (-2.6%). However, there were still employment gains in some sub sectors: **other services** (+5.1%), **finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing** (+0.4%) and **public administration** (+0.3%).

Employment in the **wholesale and retail trade** sector fell significantly (-15,000 or -3.5%) as Canadians reduced spending in response to rising prices. The sector temporarily lost a significant amount of employment due to job action by the B.C. General Employees' Union, which shut down product supply to cannabis stores across the province. Dozens of private cannabis retailers temporarily shut their doors and laid off staff as their inventories fell.¹⁰ Employment in this sector should rebound as BCGEU paused their job action to resume talks, allowing cannabis distribution to resume.¹¹

Employment in **healthcare and social assistance** decreased in August (-0.4% or -1,600 positions), although the industry still employs approximately 1,000 (0.3%) more workers now than at the same time a year ago. Staff shortages continued to be a constant issue in the province with some facilities still facing temporary closures. The focus on B.C.'s family doctor shortage increased in August with renewed calls for the provincial and federal governments to address the issue by opening a new medical school in the province.¹² The sector has seemingly avoided a significant job action, with the Hospital Employees' Union (representing 60,000 BC healthcare workers) signing a tentative deal with the Province.¹³

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

While overall month-to-month employment in British Columbia decreased, there was year-over-year improvement in the majority of the province's economic regions. Job growth remained strong, especially in B.C.'s metropolitan regions. The unemployment rate declined in all of the province's economic regions except for the **Cariboo**, which remained unchanged. The largest improvements were reported in the **North Coast and Nechako** (-3.8 percentage points), **Lower Mainland and Southwest** (-2.2 percentage points) and **Kootenay** (-1.6 percentage points) economic regions.

Please note that the statistics for the economic regions are not seasonally adjusted and should only be compared on a year-over-year basis. Employment is sometimes influenced by seasonal and calendar effects occurring at the same time and with the same magnitude every year, which can bring about changes in the data that make monthly comparisons difficult.

British Columbia Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	August 2022 ('000)	August 2021 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	August 2022 (%)	August 2021 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
British Columbia	2,772.6	2,692.6	3.0	5.0	6.7	-1.7
Economic Regions						
Vancouver Island and Coast	439.8	417.9	5.2	4.3	5.1	-0.8
Lower Mainland - Southwest	1,768.1	1,727.5	2.4	5.1	7.3	-2.2
Thompson - Okanagan	314.1	302.0	4.0	5.0	5.4	-0.4
Kootenay	81.6	79.9	2.1	5.1	6.7	-1.6
Cariboo	89.6	86.8	3.2	6.2	6.2	0.0
North Coast and Nechako	41.4	42.4	-2.4	5.0	8.8	-3.8
Northeast	37.9	35.9	5.6	3.8	4.8	-1.0

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0387, formerly CANSIM 282-0122

The **Vancouver Island and Coast** economic region remained resilient despite a general slowdown in the BC economy. Employment in the region rose 21,900 (5.2%) this month over the same time last year, while the unemployment rate decreased 0.8 percentage points to 4.3% over the same period. The region's economy will be boosted in the long term by a new \$98M post-secondary campus in Langford, hosting four BC institutions. The campus is expected to open for over 600 students in fall 2024, and by 2035-36, it is expected to serve an estimated 1,300 full-time students.¹⁴ In addition, Vancouver Island University has received \$3.3M from the provincial government to upgrade facilities and infrastructure on its campuses in Nanaimo, Cowichan, and Powell River.¹⁵

Employment in the **Lower Mainland – Southwest** region continued to rise. Year-over-year, more than 40,600 jobs (2.4%) were added in the region, and the unemployment rate declined 2.2 percentage points to 5.1%. The Metro Vancouver region, as the economic center of the province, draws a diverse set of industries and is welcoming new job growth with the addition of a number of new operations. Professional, scientific and technical services are often headquartered or have their division offices in the region and drive a significant portion of job growth. Cytiva, a life sciences company, opened a 126k sq. ft. biotech plant in Burnaby, following

its acquisition of B.C.-founded Vanrx Pharmsystems Inc. Since the 2021 acquisition, Cytiva has added an additional 100 workers to the area, raising its total head count to around 200 workers.¹⁶ Metro Vancouver has also been a hub for video game development in Canada, with BC-based game developer SkyBox Labs opening two new studio office locations in Burnaby. This expansion is expected to create over 250 jobs in 2022, with positions for engineers, designers, producers, and artists.¹⁷

The region has not been immune to recent economic disruptions in the technology sector. A number of businesses announced layoffs as the growth of the tech sector during the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed. Three B.C. based companies, Hootsuite, Unbounce and Article, announced significant cuts to their workforces in August.^{18,19,20} E-commerce businesses that had grown during the COVID-19 pandemic are being forced to restructure and reassess as shoppers return to traditional brick and mortar stores post-pandemic.²¹

Employment in the **Thompson – Okanagan** economic region rose 12,100 (4.0%) over the year, while the unemployment rate improved by 1.6 percentage points to 5.1% over the same period. Agriculture in the region is facing the challenges of the province's changing climate. The yearlong drought that had affected the region was declared over in August thanks to a cooler and wetter start to the summer. However, drier conditions in August could see a return of drought conditions.²² Fruit harvests in the region are underway; despite delays due to abnormally cool conditions, fruit health this season remains strong.²³

Year-over-year employment was up 1,700 (2.1%) in the **Kootenay** region. With these gains, the region's unemployment rate was down 1.6 percentage points to 5.9%. In positive news, the newly renovated \$5.54M Kootenay Lake ferry terminal has opened to passengers, improving an essential transit connection in the region.²⁴ As well, the City of Nelson has approved a \$2.4M transit exchange for BC Transit busses to improve public transit in the community.²⁵

Employment in the **Northeast** region grew slightly year-over-year in August (2,000 or 5.6%), while the unemployment rate decreased 1.0 percentage point to 3.6%. The economy of the region continued to be bolstered by the \$16B Site C project, which set a new record for employment in July, employing 5,414 workers. The project is now around two thirds of the way to completion.²⁶

Employment in the **North Coast and Nechako** region dropped 1,000 (-2.4%) compared to August 2021. However, the unemployment rate fell by 3.8 percentage points over the same period to 5.0%. The region is benefiting from projects that will further reconciliation and economic development for Indigenous peoples. Cheslatta Carrier Nation and Rio Tinto have partnered on a \$2.8M Indigenous-led archaeological research initiative, which aims to better understand the history of Indigenous communities and human migrations within Cheslatta Territory.²⁷ In addition, Fort Babine will receive \$2.3M in funding for improved cellular coverage through the Connecting British Columbia program. Funding will aid in connecting the Lake Babine First Nations, with work expected to be complete in 2024.²⁸

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- ¹ CBC News (August 30, 2022) [B.C. posts \\$1.3B budget surplus for 2021-22, in contrast to earlier forecast of large deficit](#)
 - ² CBC News (August 15, 2022) [Picket lines go up at B.C. liquor distribution centres as BCGEU strike notice expires](#)
 - ³ CBC News (August 30, 2022) [BCGEU ending strike in 'good faith' after progress in contract negotiations](#)
 - ⁴ CBC News (September 7, 2022) [BCGEU reaches tentative agreement with province after weeks-long strike](#)
 - ⁵ CBC News (September 6, 2022) [B.C.'s COVID-19 fall booster program begins rolling out next week. Here's what you need to know](#)
 - ⁶ Statistics Canada. [Table 34-10-0156-01 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, housing starts in all centres 10,000 and over, Canada, provinces, and census metropolitan areas, seasonally adjusted at annual rates, monthly \(x 1,000\)](#)
 - ⁷ Statistics Canada. [Table 34-10-0066-01 Building permits, by type of structure and type of work \(x 1,000\)](#)
 - ⁸ Toronto Star. (August 10, 2022) [West Fraser cuts production, mill shifts in B.C. for loss of 147 jobs](#)
 - ⁹ Wood Business. (August 23, 2022) [Conifex reduces operations at B.C. sawmill](#)
 - ¹⁰ CBC News. (August 26, 2022) [B.C. cannabis stores close, lay off staff as job action prevents pot deliveries](#)
 - ¹¹ Vancouver Sun. (September 05, 2022) [Cannabis stores, restaurants and bars in B.C. slowly start to receive inventory](#)
 - ¹² Times Colonist. (August 17, 2022) [Doctor shortage puts pressure on NDP to fulfil promise of a second B.C. medical school](#)
 - ¹³ Global News. (September 2, 2022) [Tentative deal reached for more than 60,000 B.C. health-care workers](#)
 - ¹⁴ Government of British Columbia. (August 3, 2022) [Post-secondary education expanding for students on the Westshore](#)
 - ¹⁵ Government of British Columbia. (August 29, 2022) [Provincial funding improves access to learning for VIU students](#)
 - ¹⁶ Business in Vancouver. (July 28, 2022) [Cytiva opens robotics-backed biotech plant in Burnaby](#)
 - ¹⁷ Daily Hive. (August 16, 2022) [Halo maker SkyBox Labs opens 3 studio offices in Burnaby and Victoria](#)
 - ¹⁸ CBC News. (August 05, 2022) [Canadian online furniture company Article laying off 216 people — 17% of staff](#)
 - ¹⁹ Daily Hive. (August 03, 2022) ["Excruciating decision": Vancouver tech company Unbounce announces layoffs](#)
 - ²⁰ CTV News (August 09, 2022) [Hootsuite to lay off 30 per cent of staff, begin global restructuring](#)
 - ²¹ CBC News (August 08, 2022) [Global tech slump leads to growing number of layoffs in Vancouver](#)
 - ²² Castanet. (August 15, 2022) [Drought lasting more than a year declared over in Thompson-Okanagan](#)
 - ²³ Castanet (August 26, 2022) [South Okanagan fruit harvest continuing later than normal amidst other challenges](#)
 - ²⁴ Castlegar News. (August 25, 2022) [Renovated Kootenay Lake ferry terminals open, receive mixed reviews](#)
 - ²⁵ The Nelson Daily. (August 15, 2022) [Downtown transit exchange project receives nod of approval from city](#)
 - ²⁶ Dawson Creek Mirror. (September 5, 2022) [Record 5,414 Site C workers](#)
 - ²⁷ Haida Gwaii Observer. (August 29, 2022) [Cheslatta Carrier Nation and Rio Tinto partner on archaeological project in British Columbia](#)
 - ²⁸ Government of British Columbia. (August 15, 2022) [Expanded cell coverage improves connectivity in Fort Babine](#)
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