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Quality of Employment in Canada

Job tenure, 1976 to 2021

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Job tenure, 1976 to 2021

Overview

Job tenure is the length of time a worker has been working with the same employer or at the same business. While the length of tenure is strongly related to the age of workers, other characteristics matter too. In 2021, Indigenous people living off reserve and landed immigrants tended to have shorter job tenure. Industries with the highest proportion of workers with short tenure included business, building and other support services and accommodation and food services.

The duration of job tenure is an indicator of the degree of job stability within the labour market. A declining proportion of workers with longer tenure may indicate that employment conditions are less stable and that workers do not stay in their jobs for longer durations. Shorter-term employment may increase financial insecurity, and in turn, affect the well-being of workers. However, during recessions, there may be a lower proportion of workers with shorter tenure as a result of reduced hiring. Under such circumstances, an increase in the proportion of employed persons with longer tenure is not necessarily an indicator of greater employment stability.

The indicator examines the proportion of employed persons in Canada who have been with the same employer or worked at the same business for less than 1 year, 1 to less than 5 years, 5 years to less than 10 years, and 10 years or more, using annual averages from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Unless otherwise specified, the analysis focuses on workers aged 25 and over.

Historical trends, 1976 to 2021

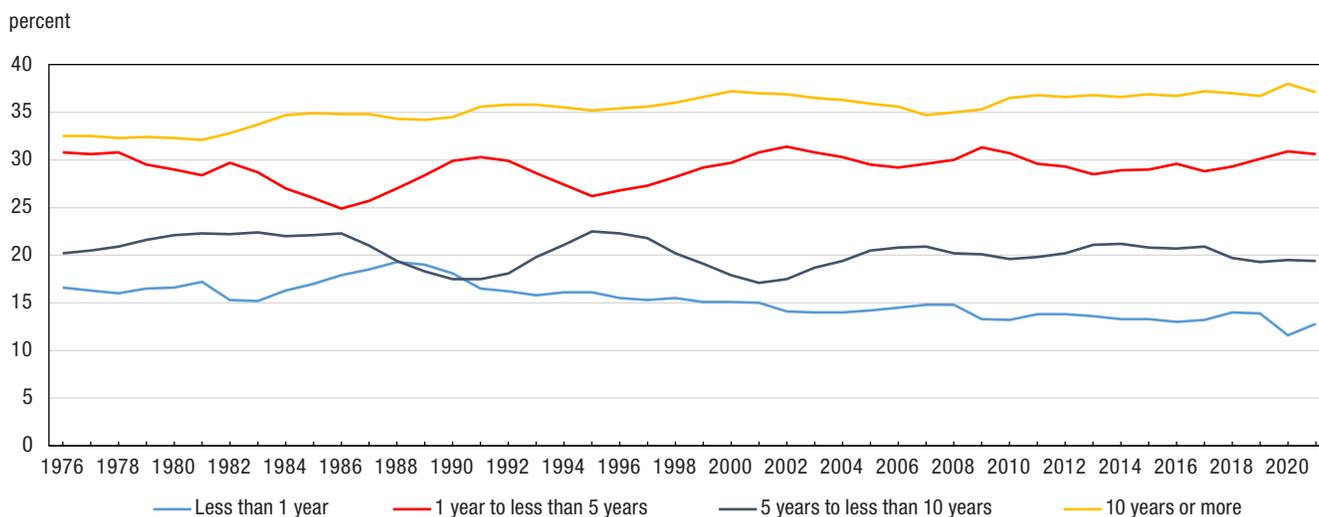
Excluding economic downturns, there have been two long-term shifts in the distribution of employed Canadians across different job tenure durations since 1976. The proportion of workers aged 25 and over who remained with the same employer or worked at the same business for 10 years or more grew 4.2 percentage points to 36.7% from 1976 to 2019. Over the same period, the share of workers with a tenure of less than a year gradually declined from 16.6% to 13.9%.

Partly as a result of reduced hiring, the proportion of short-tenured workers tends to decrease more sharply during economic downturns. During the 2008/09 economic downturn, the share of workers with a tenure of less than 1 year fell 1.5 percentage points to 13.3% in 2009. In 2020, measures taken to reduce the spread of COVID-19 resulted in wide-spread job losses and a decline in labour demand. In this context, the proportion of workers who had been working at their job or business for less than 1 year decreased by 2.3 percentage points to 11.6%. In contrast, workers with a tenure of 10 years or more (+1.3 percentage points to 38.0%) and between 1 and less than 5 years (+0.8 percentage points to 30.9%) increased their share of overall employment.

As employment continued to recover in 2021, the number of workers who had been in their job or business for less than 1 year increased by 270,000 (+14.7%). As a result, the proportion of workers with a tenure of less than 1 year increased by 1.2 percentage points to 12.8%, and the share of workers with 10 or more years of tenure decreased by 0.9 percentage points to 37.1%.

Chart 1

Distribution of employed persons 25 years and over by duration of job tenure, Canada, 1976 to 2021



Note: Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, custom tabulation.

A recent snapshot

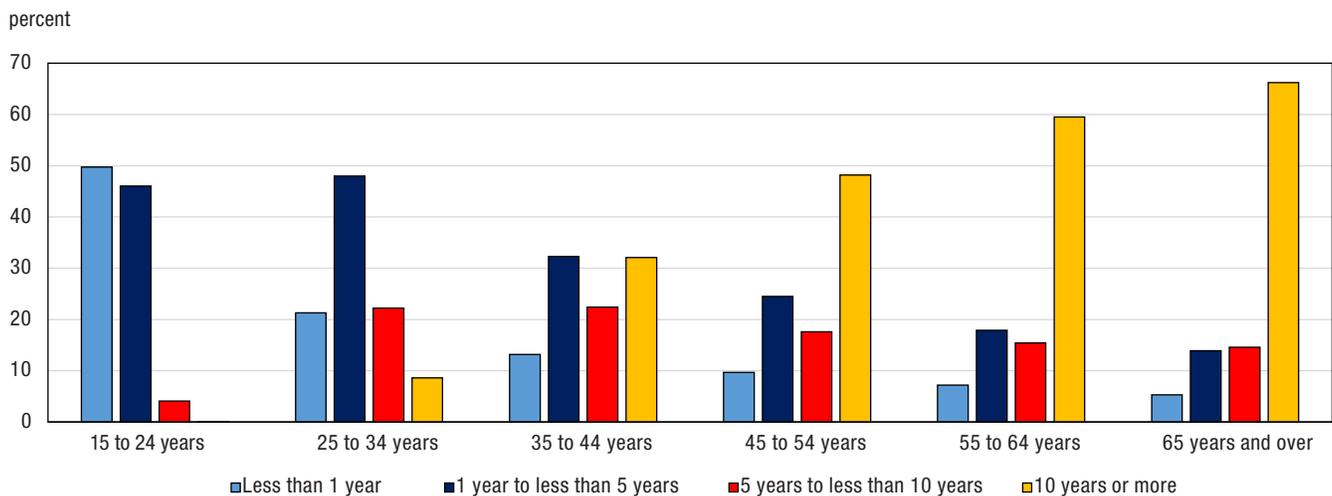
Despite the changes recorded in the share of different tenure groups during the COVID-19 pandemic, key differences between demographic and labour market groups have remained the same.

Job tenure has a strong association with age. Younger workers enter the labour market at different ages and have a more limited amount of time to build up tenure. In 2021, 8.6% of workers aged 25 to 34 had been with the same employer or worked at the same business for 10 years or more. In contrast, this proportion was 59.5% for 55-to-64 year-olds and 66.2% for workers 65 years of age and over.

The proportion of workers with a tenure greater than 10 years was slightly higher among men (37.4%) compared with women (36.8%). The difference is partly explained by the fact that male workers aged 25 and over were slightly older on average than their female counterparts (45.1 compared with 44.4).

Chart 2

Distribution of employed persons 15 years and over by age group and duration of job tenure, Canada, 2021



Note: Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, custom tabulation.

In line with long-term trends, self-employed workers aged 25 and over were more likely to have long tenure than employees. In 2021, 47.5% of self-employed workers had a tenure of 10 years or more, and 7.5% had a tenure of less than 1 year. In comparison, 35.2% of employees had worked at the same job for 10 years or more, while 13.8% had been doing so for less than a year. Among workers 25 and over, the average age of self-employed workers was 49.6, compared with 43.9 for paid employees.

In addition, the proportion of employed people with a tenure of 10 years or more was smaller among Indigenous workers (32.0%) than among non-Indigenous workers (37.3%).

Despite being older on average, employed landed immigrants were less likely to have kept the same job for 10 years or more than were workers born in Canada (31.3% compared with 40.3%). As many landed immigrants arrive in Canada at an age when the Canadian-born population has already entered the labour market, immigrants have less time to build up tenure with the same employer or at the same business.

A larger proportion of workers with short tenure may be an indication that an industry experiences higher turnover.

While the proportion of workers with a tenure of less than 1 year was highest in accommodation and food services in 2019 at 22.5%, the industry was among the hardest-hit by public health restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic and by 2021, the share of workers with short tenure had declined by 4.7 percentage points to 17.8%. Business, building and other support services had the second-highest proportion of workers with a tenure of less than 1 year in 2019 (20.1%) and this share was relatively similar in 2021 (19.5%).

In 2021, utilities (7.6%) and agriculture (7.8%) had among the lowest proportions of workers with tenures of less than 1 year. At the same time, tenures of 10 years or more were most common in agriculture (60.9%) and least common in accommodation and food services (25.7%) and business, building and other support services (26.8%).

In terms of occupation, the highest proportion of workers with a tenure of 10 years or more was in management (48.9%). Workers in management had the highest average age across all broad occupational categories in 2021.

Information on the indicator

Description or definition

The **job tenure** indicator is the number of employed persons with job tenures of less than 1 year, 1 year to less than 5 years, 5 years to less than 10 years, and 10 years or more, expressed as a proportion of all employed persons.

Source

Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 1976 to 2021.

Information for interpretation

For more information on the Labour Force Survey (LFS) methodology and population coverage, please consult the [Guide to the Labour Force Survey, 2020](#).

The LFS estimates are based on a sample and are therefore subject to sampling variability. The analysis focuses on differences between estimates that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.

Occupations are coded according to the National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2016, while industry coding is based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 2017.

Job tenure is defined as the number of consecutive months or years that a person has worked for their current employer or at their current business. For employees, the person may have worked in one or more occupations, one or more locations, or have experienced periods of temporary layoff with recall and still be considered to have continuous tenure if their employer has not changed.

In the LFS, the concept of Indigenous group includes persons who reported being an Indigenous person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit), or those who reported more than one identity. Excluded from the survey's coverage are persons living on reserves and other Indigenous settlements in the provinces as well as those living in the territories.

The concept is distinct from others used in the Census of population and the Aboriginal Peoples Survey because it does not depend on Registered or Treaty Indian status, membership in a First Nation or Indian band, or ancestry. As such, self-identification as belonging to an Indigenous group for the purposes of the LFS is entirely subjective. It is similar to the concept of "Indigenous identity" used in the Census.

Other related information

Additional Statistics Canada data are available on the following subject:

[Job tenure](#)