BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS Infoline

tel (250) 387-0327
fax (250) 387-0329

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Private and Public Investment

- **Investment in the province is expected to grow 2.6% this year, as private sector companies add to their stock of plant and equipment.** At the same time, it is anticipated that public sector investment will pull back from the very high increases seen in 1999. Overall, private sector investment is expected to rise 3.7%, but spending by the public sector is forecast to shrink 1.5%.

  The increase in investment is expected to result from more spending on structures (+5.8%). Construction by the private sector is forecast to grow 8.2%, but public sector spending on buildings and infrastructure is expected to fall 1.2%. An anticipated turn-around in the housing sector (+1.8%) is one of the main factors contributing to the improvement in the private sector. Residential investment had fallen more than 13% in both 1998 and 1999.

  Both private (-2.6%) and public (-2.5%) sector establishments expect to invest less in machinery and equipment this year than in 1999.

  Source: Statistics Canada

- **After lagging behind most other provinces in 1999, investment in BC (+2.6%) is expected to increase at twice the national rate (+1.3%) in 2000.** Alberta (+3.6%), Ontario (+3.6%), PEI (+8.0%) and NWT (+10.0%) are forecast to lead the country in terms of investment growth. At the other end of the spectrum, investment is expected to fall in six regions, with Nova Scotia (-21.4%) and Saskatchewan (-9.2%) being hardest hit.

  Source: Statistics Canada

Prices

- **British Columbia's consumer price index (CPI) was 1.3% higher in January than in the same month last year.** The increase in the CPI was largely due to rising transportation costs, which were up 6.4% from January 1999. Consumers in the province paid 32.3% more at the gas pump, and 6.0% more for intercity transportation (mainly airfares), than in the first month of 1999.

  BC residents found some price relief at the checkstand as the cost of food (-1.1%) and alcohol and tobacco (-0.3%) was lower than in January 1999. In addition, shelter costs were unchanged from a year earlier, as a continued decline in the cost of owned accommodation (-1.7%) helped mitigate the effect of large price increases for fuel oil (+21.4%) and piped gas (+18.4%). The cost of supplies, services and furnishings related to household operation changed only marginally (-0.2%). However, consumers paid more for clothing (+1.7%), health and personal care (+1.3%) and recreation, education and reading (+1.6%). Excluding the effect of higher energy costs, BC's overall price level would have been virtually unchanged (+0.1%) from January 1999.

  Source: Statistics Canada

- **Canada's CPI was up 2.3% in January, also reflecting the effect of higher energy costs.** Unlike BC, where the effects of a weak housing market helped deflect the upward movement of the CPI, the Canadian price level was affected by a 2.1% increase in shelter costs as well as higher transportation costs. Excluding energy prices, Canada's inflation rate would have been 1.1%.

  BC (+1.3%) and NWT (+1.3%) had the lowest inflation rates in the country. Saskatchewan (+1.5%) and Yukon (+1.7%) were the only other regions where the CPI increased less than 2%. In the rest of Canada, inflation rates ranged from 2.0% in Quebec to 3.5% in Nova Scotia. Among metropolitan areas, Victoria (+1.1%) and Vancou-

Report **The working arrangements of couples**

Did you know...
BC farmers produced $66 million worth of mushrooms (not the magic kind) in 1998, accounting for about a quarter of total Canadian production. Broccoli production totalled just $3 million.

ver (+1.3%) had the lowest inflation rates in the country. In other cities, increases in the CPI ranged from 1.6% in both Regina and Saskatoon to 3.3% in Saint John. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Immigration

- **A total of 8,559 immigrants landed in BC during the last three months of 1999.** This was 16.4% more than in the same quarter of 1998. BC received 18% of all Canadian immigrants, but a much larger share of those in the investor (36%), entrepreneur (28%) and self-employed (25%) classes. Five percent of refugees coming to Canada in the fourth quarter of 1999 came to British Columbia. *Source: BC STATS*

The Economy

- **On a *seasonally adjusted* basis, exports of BC products were marginally higher (+0.4%) in December than in the previous month.** A 4.0% jump in forest product shipments and a 0.7% increase in agriculture, fish and food product exports were the main reasons for the increase. However, exports of mining (-11.5%) and other (-1.5%) BC products dropped below November levels. *Source: BC STATS*
- **US-bound exports were off 6.2% in December.** Forest products, which made up nearly half (49%) of our exports to the US, fell 3.1%, while shipments of other processed products, accounting for 41% of the total, were down 5.1%. Agriculture, fishing and food product exports also dropped (-3.1%), but US-bound shipments of mineral products were up 4.8% in December. Exports headed to destinations other than the US rose sharply (+16.4%), more than compensating for the downturn in US shipments. Forestry (+30.8%), agriculture, fishing and food (+25.7%) and other processed products (+13.9%) all posted substantial gains. However, mineral product exports bound for overseas destinations fell 25.4% in December. *Source: BC STATS*
- **Retail sales in the province increased 1.8% during 1999, following a 2.0% decline in the previous year.** Sales by automotive retailers (-0.1%) were flat, but all other groups saw sales improve last year. Drug and patent medicine stores posted the biggest increase (+6.4%), while sales by general merchandise (+5.2%), clothing (+3.6%) and furniture (+3.1%) retailers also rebounded from a poor showing in 1998. Food (+1.6%) and other merchandise (+1.7%) retailers also increased their sales.

  Despite the improvement, BC and Saskatchewan (+1.5%) were the only provinces where retail sales rose only modestly last year. Nationally, they were up 5.8%, reflecting strong gains in Ontario (+7.8%), Quebec (+6.0%) and Atlantic Canada (+7.0%). Sales increased more moderately in Alberta (+4.5%) and Manitoba (+3.0%). *Source: Statistics Canada*
- **Wholesalers in the province also made gains during 1999, with sales rising 2.8% after falling 1.6% in the previous year.** However, sales in BC and the prairies were generally weak compared to other parts of the country. Nationally, sales were up 7.8%, reflecting strong growth in Atlantic Canada (+12.3%), Quebec (+10.6%) and Ontario (+9.9%). The pattern of weaker sales in western Canada and stronger growth in the rest of the country continues a trend that began in 1998. *Source: Statistics Canada*
- **In December, 56,740 British Columbians received regular employment insurance (EI) benefits, 3.5% less (seasonally adjusted) than in November.** The number of EI beneficiaries was down in all but two regions, falling 2.4% nationally. Saskatchewan (+1.4%) and Newfoundland (+2.9%) were the only provinces where more people got EI benefits in December than in the previous month. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Agriculture

- **BC farm cash receipts were up 7.4% in 1999 as both crop (+8.6%) and livestock (+6.1%) sales increased.** Producers of berries and grapes (+12.9%) and floriculture and nursery (+9.3%) products did particularly well. However, sales of apples (-7.0%) and other tree fruits (-16.0%) dropped below 1998 levels. Sales of chickens and hens (+5.2%), cattle (+4.5%), turkeys+2.2%) and diary products (+2.0%) increased, but receipts from egg sales fell 0.2%. *Source: Statistics Canada*

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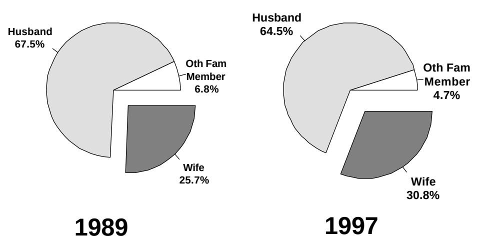
Infoline Report: The working arrangements of couples: changes in the 90s

Contact: Anne Kittredge / (250) 387-0374

Originally published in December 1999 issue, *Earnings & Employment Trends.* Annual subscription: $60 + GST

Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances shows that earnings of BC women continue to grow in importance as a source of family income. This is a continuation of the trend that started in the 1950s when women began moving out of the home and into the workplace.

The Wife's Contribution to Family Earnings has increased from 26% to 31%



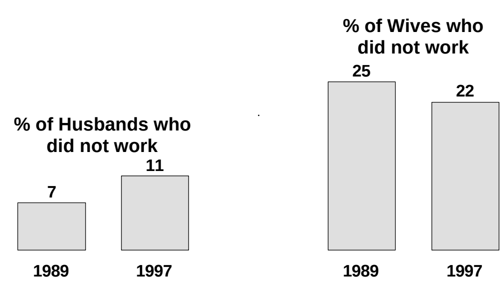
However, women's increasing contribution to family earnings during the most recent decade is not the result of the same societal shift that revolutionized family life in the previous quarter century. Gone are the days when most labour market and income distribution changes can be explained by women's increased labour market participation—the participation of BC women in the workforce has been stable since 1989.

To explore the reasons for the more recent trend, this article looks at the changes that occurred between 1989 and 1997 in how couples shared in the earning of family income. That is, who worked in the workplace, how much did each work and how much did each earn, vis a vis their partner. The analysis includes only those families where both the husband and wife are under the age of 65.

As is well documented, women's hourly earnings have been climbing relative to men's, as women continue to make in-roads into the higher paid occupations. This holds true for comparative wages between husbands and wives, as well. For example, in 1989, among couples who both worked full-time/full-year, wives earned only 59 per cent of what their husbands earned. By 1997, wives' wages had increased by 51 per cent compared to only a 28 per cent increase for their husbands. This meant that wives had gained on their husbands by 11 percentage points. By 1997, wives working full-time/full-year were earning 70 per cent of what their husbands were earning. This relative improvement of women's wages is the first factor that has increased wives direct contribution to family earnings.

The second factor is the evolving working arrangements between husbands and wives. This is primarily a trend towards fewer wives and more husbands taking a full year off work.

The incidence of husbands not working increased while that for wives, decreased.



The chart above shows that in 1997 wives were still more than twice as likely to be out of the workforce for the whole year as their husbands. However, the gap has narrowed considerably since 1989, from an 18 percentage point difference to an 11 percentage point difference. The most interesting reason for this shift is that husbands, in the prime of their working lives (age 25-54), are now more inclined to take time off work.

The proportion of husband/wife dual earner couples, where both the husband and wife worked at least part of the year, is 73 per cent, virtually unchanged between 1989 and 1997. As well,

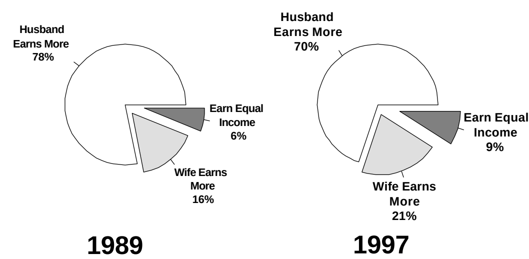
BC STATS, Min. of Finance & Corporate Relations, Box 9410 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, BC V8W 9V1
Tel: (250) 387-0327 Fax: (250) 387-0329 Web: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca E-mail: BC.Stats@gems8.gov.bc.ca

the combinations among the dual earner couple as to which spouse worked full-year/full-time or part-year/part-time has remained amazingly stable, with only a slight increase in wives working full-time while their husbands worked part-time. The table below shows the different combinations of husband/wife working arrangements for 1989 and 1997

Husband & Wife Working Arrangements	1989	1997
Both husband and wife working full-time/full-year.	30%	30%
Husband working full-year/full-time and wife working part-year or part-time.	28%	28%
Wife working full-year/full-time and husband working part-year or part-time.	6%	8%
Both husband & wife working part-year or part-time	8%	8%
Sub-total: both husband and wife working	**72%**	**73%**
Husband working, wife not working	21%	16%
Wife working, husband not working	3%	5%
Neither working	4%	6%
Total Husband-Wife Families	**100%**	**100%**

In earlier times when women moved into the workforce, husbands did not appear to adjust their workforce behaviour in response to their wives' new-found earning capacity—the number of dual earner couples just kept increasing. It now appears this upward trend has finally stabilized and couples are slowly moving towards a more equal sharing of the workload of earning income.

By 1997, 1 in 5 wives earned more than their husbands



These two factors, the narrowing male-female wage gap and the more equitable sharing between husband and wife in workplace activity, has meant that the distinction as to which spouse is the primary bread winner in the family is gradually becoming less gender specific.

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Kris Ovens Tel: (250) 387-0359 FAX: (250) 387-0380 or email Kris.Ovens@gems7.gov.bc.c

Infoline

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also on the Internet at www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Oct 1/99	% change on one year ago
BC	4,037.2	0.8
Canada	30,572.5	0.8
GDP and INCOME		% change on
(BC - at market prices)	1998	one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	110,948	-0.2
GDP *($ 1992 millions)*	99,708	0.2
GDP *($ 1992 per Capita)*	24,908	-0.8
Personal Disposable Income *($ 1992 per Capita)*	15,969	-1.6
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Dec	3,286	10.4
Merchandise Exports (raw) Dec	2,369	6.7
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Dec	2,933	6.6
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change on
(all items - 1992=100)	Jan '00	one year ago
BC	111.3	1.3
Canada	111.4	2.3
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on
(seasonally adjusted)	Jan '00	one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,088	0.6
Employed - BC	1,936	1.8
Unemployed - BC	152	-12.2
		Jan '99
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	7.3	8.3
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	6.8	7.9
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Feb 23/00	Feb 24/99
Prime Business Rate	6.75	6.75
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	7.60	6.40
- 5 year	8.55	6.90
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Feb 23/00	Feb 24/99
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.4644	1.4986
US $ *(reciprocal of the closing rate)*	0.6844	0.6668
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Jan '00	one year ago
BC	627.97	0.8
Canada	607.04	3.8

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Wage Rate } Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

For latest Weekly Financial Statistics see www.bank-banque-canada.ca/english/wfsgen.htm

Web site changes

We've made some very obvious changes to the look of our site at the topmost levels. We've also made some not so obvious changes to content, navigation and interface. Both sets of changes are designed to respond to user feedback. We are hoping you experience greater ease in moving around the site, and finding the tables and papers that you remember seeing . . . but just where were they?

Please let us know whether you like the changes and how we could further improve the site. Keep in mind there are four main ways to find items on our site:

Search a top banner tab for keyword searching.

Subjects a top banner tab for a broad subject area listing. A link to our **detailed** ___ of subjects appears in the lower right portion of the Subjects screen.

________________ found as above or under on our home. This is a jumping off point for most

on our site.

Regions
data with a geographic dimension. Where possible the view detailed maps link will take to to a map that you can

Released this week by BC STATS

- Consumer Price Index, January 2000
- Business Indicators, February 2000
- Current Statistics, February 2000
- Earnings & Employment Trends, January 2000
- Immigration Highlights, Fourth Quarter 1999

Next week

- Exports, December 1999

BC STATS, Min. of Finance & Corporate Relations, Box 9410 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9V1
Tel: (250) 387-0327 Fax: (250) 387-0329 Web: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca E-mail: BC.Stats@gems8.gov.bc.ca