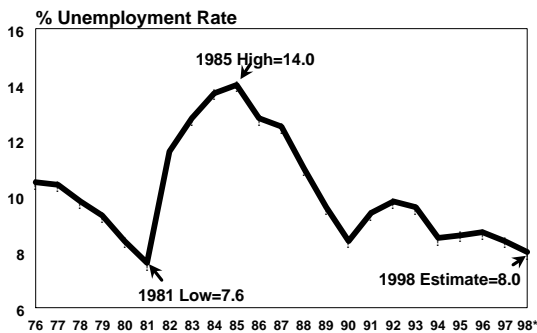


Earnings and Employment Trends ♦ September 1998

BC Women Posted a Strong Labour Market Performance in 1998

For women, employment levels have increased by more than 3 per cent in 1998 compared to the previous year. This has resulted in a drop in their unemployment rate by almost one-half a percentage point from 8.4 per cent (which was already a relatively low unemployment rate for women) to 8.0 per cent.

BC Women's Unemployment Rate is at its Lowest In 17 Years

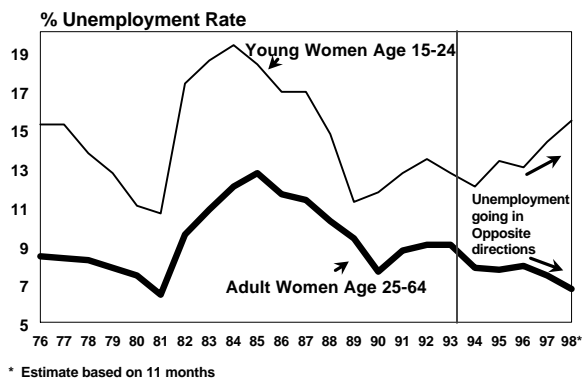


This improvement has occurred alongside a deterioration in the labour market status of men. Between 1997 and 1998, employment levels for men declined causing their unemployment rate to increase by close to a full percentage point.

Not all women improved their labour market circumstances this year. Adult women, those age 25 – 64, have done very well. Their current unemployment rate (6.7%) is close to its lowest level since data became available in 1976. In the last two years, it has declined more

than a percentage point from 7.9 to 6.7 per cent.

Since 1994, the Unemployment Rate Gap Between Young and Adult Women Has Increased

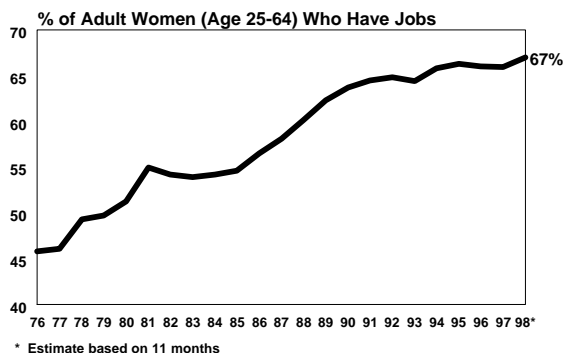


However, young women have not done as well. Their unemployment rate has been increasing since 1993. The 1998 level is estimated at over 15 per cent, a level not seen for 10 years.

Furthermore, for the past four years, the situation for young women has been at odds with that of adult women, a pattern that has not been seen before. Why this divergence is occurring is difficult to explain. Adult women have always had significantly lower unemployment rates than young women, but the two rates would generally move in the same direction and track each other fairly consistently. For many years, the norm was for young women to have an unemployment rate about 1.5 times that of adult woman. But since 1994 that relationship has changed, and is currently running at more than double the rate.

It can be seen from the chart below that adult women (age 25-64) have not only shown improvement in their unemployment numbers but also in their employment rates (percent of adult women with jobs).

The Employment Rate of Adult Women Continues to Climb



Prior to 1990, the upward trend in their employment rate was due to an increasing number of adult women who wanted to work (increasing participation rates). Since then, the participation rate for this group has stabilised. What is now causing the employment rate to rise is that, among those who want to work, more are able to find work (fewer are unemployed). Today, two thirds of all women in this age group have a job, the highest level since 1976 when data first became available.

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