
Labour Force Statistics ♦ February 2000

HIGHLIGHTS

- **B.C.'s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell to 7.0 per cent in February from 7.3 per cent in January and remains at its lowest monthly level since August, 1981.** The number of unemployed persons fell by 3,700 in February following a 11,600 drop in January.
- **B.C. employment rose for the fourth consecutive month, growing in February by 0.7 per cent.** This net gain of 15,000 represented almost half of Canada's net employment gain in February.
- **Just over half of the B.C. employment gains in February from January were accounted by increases in full-time work (up by 7,500) while part-time work accounted for a gain of 7,100.** Employment gains in February were concentrated in transportation, accommodation and food, information, culture and recreation, and well construction.
- **The proportion of persons aged 15 and older who are employed (employment rate) rose to 60.6 per cent in February.** This is the highest monthly rate in B.C. since September 1995.

Selected Statistics (SA)*	Feb 2000	Jan 2000	Feb 1999
B.C. Unemployment Rate	7.0%	7.3%	8.3%
Canada Unemployment Rate	6.8%	6.8%	7.9%
B.C. Help Wanted Index (1996=100)	148.0	142.0	121.0
B.C. Employment - Monthly Change	0.7%	0.4%	-
B.C. Labour Force - Monthly Change	0.5%	-0.2%	-
B.C. Participation Rate	65.1%	64.9%	65.3%

* Unless otherwise indicated, all labour force variables are seasonally adjusted.

Labour Force Statistics is a joint compilation and review by BC STATS of the Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations and the Research, Evaluation and Accountability Branch of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology of the results of the monthly Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics Canada. For more information, call BC STATS (250) 387-0327 or R,E&A (250) 952-6776.

B.C. Educational Attainment and Labour Market Outcomes of Persons Aged 25-54

Introduction . . . The Labour Force Survey includes questions that determine the educational attainment of survey respondents. This information allows examination of labour force characteristics for persons of various educational attainment.

From 1975 to 1989 educational attainment was based on years of schooling and categorized as:

- 0 to 8 years
- High school (9 to 13 years)
- Some post-secondary
- Post-secondary certificate or diploma
- University degree

From 1990 to present educational attainment categories are:

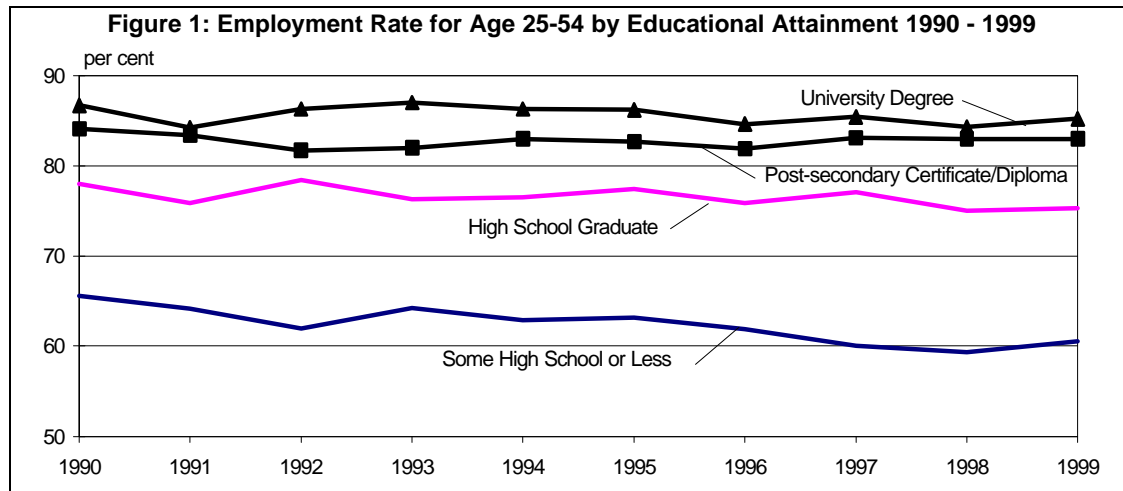
- 0 to 8 years
- Some high school education
- Graduated from high school
- Some post-secondary
- Post-secondary certificate or diploma (includes trades certificate)
- University degree

Beginning in January 1990 the categories used by the Labour Force Survey were changed substantially causing a break in the data series. Until December 1989, the data on primary and secondary education reflected the number of years of school attainment. Beginning in January 1990

the information is collected on the highest grade of elementary or high school completed. This change was made to obtain a more consistent measure for those who accelerated or repeated a grade. A question was also added on high school graduation.

The questions on post-secondary education were also modified. In the past it was assumed that high school graduation was a prerequisite to any post-secondary participation or completion (including trades certification). With the new questions, any education that could be counted towards a post-secondary degree, certificate or diploma is taken as post-secondary education. To determine the type of post-secondary education, a more precise question focusing on the highest degree, certificate or diploma obtained was adopted. This allows the survey to collect more detailed data on the type of post-secondary education completed. Because of these substantial differences, the two historical series cannot be directly compared.

This article focuses upon a core age group of adults aged 25 to 54. While some individuals in this group may still be in school or have returned to education or training, the majority have attained their highest level of schooling and make up the core of the B.C. labour force.



Employment Rate by Educational

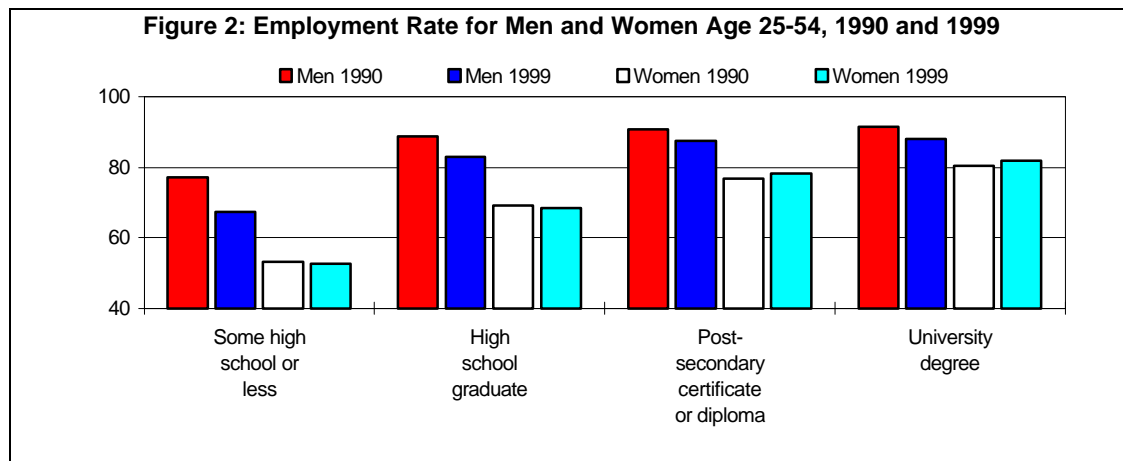
Attainment . . . Figure 1 above shows the employment rate (employment/population ratio) of individuals in B.C. aged 25 to 54 by highest level of schooling from 1990 to 1999. The likelihood that an individual will be employed rises with each level of education attained. Those with university degrees continue to have the highest employment rate (85.2 per cent in 1999) compared with an employment rate of just over 60 per cent for those with some high school or less. The category of those with some post-secondary education has been excluded here as it includes those currently engaged in studies and those who did not complete their post-secondary

studies. Interpretation of labour market outcomes for this heterogeneous group is difficult.

Those with post-secondary education completion have maintained their relatively high employment rates since 1990. Employment rates for those with high school completion have declined in the late 1990's. The most marked decrease in employment rates during the 1990's is for those with some high school education or less. Their employment rate fell by five percentage points from 1990 to 1999.

Employment Rate of Men and Women . . .

Figure 2 compares the employment rate of men and women by level of schooling for the years 1990 and 1999. Despite a relatively short time span there were some interesting changes during the 1990's.



Comparing 1990 and 1999, employment rates for men dropped for all levels of educational attainment while employment rates for women remained unchanged or increased slightly.

For men, the drop in employment rate was most dramatic for those with the least education or training, dropping from 77.1 per cent in 1990 to 67.3 per cent in 1999. In part this likely reflects a relative decline in lesser skilled job openings during the 1990's. Women in this category have an extremely low employment rate, just over 50 per cent. Jobs for women with little education also appear difficult to find. However, many

women in this age group are not in the paid labour force at all, but may be occupied in the care of children or engaged in other unpaid activities. Yet clearly, this continues to appear less the case for women with post-secondary education.

The gap in employment rate between men and women narrows as their level of education increases. This gap has also shrunk over the 1990's. Women with university degrees saw their employment rate increase slightly to 82 per cent in 1999, compared to 88 per cent for men in 1999.

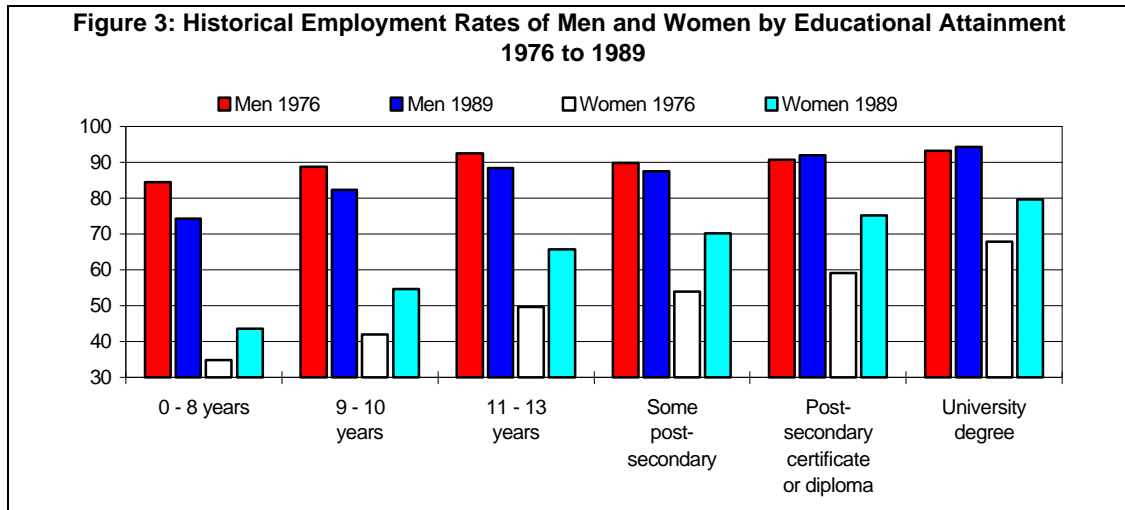
Historical Educational Attainment . . .

Figure 3 below shows employment rates of men and women by educational attainment comparing 1976 to 1989. As noted at the outset, the data for this time frame is not readily comparable to the data for the 1990's.

Between 1976 and 1989 there was a dramatic increase in employment rates for B.C. women for every level of schooling. In part this reflected societal change where large numbers of women entered the paid labour force. While women's

employment rates rose in the 1970's and 1980's, by 1989 they still remained lower than men's at every level of educational attainment.

In contrast, the employment rates for men in 1976 were all relatively close in magnitude (84 per cent to 93 per cent) between all levels of schooling attained. By 1989 there was a significant decline in employment rates for men who did not complete high school and a slight decline for men with 11 to 13 years of education and those with some post-secondary education. Men with post-secondary completion fared better, seeing employment rates rise slightly to over 90 per cent.



Unemployment Rates During the 1990s . . .

Figure 4 shows unemployment rates for persons aged 25 to 54 in B.C. during the 1990's. Those with the lowest level of schooling have seen the highest unemployment rates ranging between 13 and 17 per cent compared 5 per cent for those with university degrees when

viewed over the decade. Those with a post-secondary diploma or certificate have only slightly higher unemployment rates than university graduates. High school graduates have seen a gradual increase in unemployment rates in recent years, reflecting their decline in employment rates seen over the same time period.

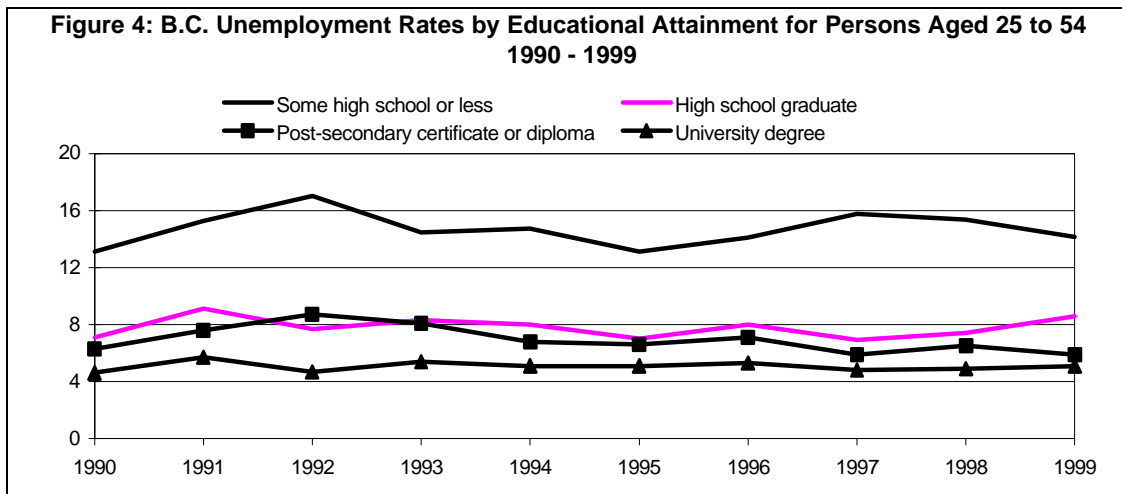
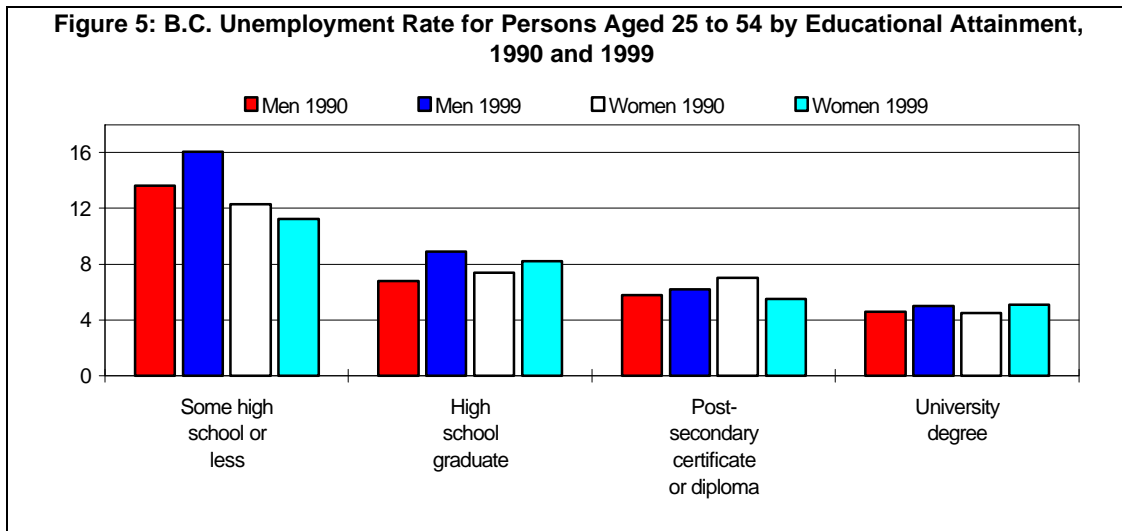


Figure 5 shows the unemployment rate of B.C. men and women by educational attainment comparing 1990 to 1999. For men, the unemployment rate has risen for those in all educational categories but the largest increases were for those with some high school or less (13 per cent to 16 per cent) and for high school graduates (up from 6.8 per cent to 8.9 per cent). For women, unemployment rates have dropped

for those with some high school and those with a post-secondary certificate or diploma. However, the drop for women with less than high school should not be viewed as any real improvement as the labour force participation rate and employment rate also fell for women in this group between 1990 and 1999.



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