

Labour Force Statistics ♦ December 2003

HIGHLIGHTS

All labour force statistics in this Highlights article are seasonally adjusted, unless otherwise indicated

- **Employment in B.C. in December 2003 rose by 23,600 from November, all of the gain was in full-time work.** Employment growth was led by construction, health and social services, and management, administrative and other services.
- During 2003, as measured from December 2002 to December 2003, employment in B.C. expanded by 76,900 or 3.9%. This growth in employment in B.C. since December 2002 led all provinces, followed by PEI (up 3.4%) and Alberta (up 2.6%).
- **The B.C. unemployment rate fell to 6.8% in December, down from 7.6% in November.** The B.C. unemployment rate for youth, aged 15-24, held steady at 12.8% in December 2003 from a month earlier, but well down from the level of 15.0% in December 2002.
- **On an actual annual average basis, employment from 2002 to 2003 grew in B.C. by 2.5% (up 50,000), compared to 2.2% for Canada overall.** On this annual average basis, Alberta led the country with employment growth of 2.9% in 2003.
- **Regionally, on an actual annual average basis, employment from 2002 to 2003 saw the strongest growth in the Thompson-Okanagan (up 4.9%), followed by the Mainland-Southwest region (up 3.0%).** The Kootenay and Northeast regions saw more moderate job gains, while the Cariboo and North Coast & Nechako regions saw little change in employment in 2003 from 2002's annual average level. The Vancouver Island/Coast region outside of the Victoria area, saw an employment decrease in 2003.

Selected Statistics	Dec. 2003	Nov. 2003	Dec. 2002
B.C. Unemployment Rate	6.8%	7.6%	8.4%
Canada Unemployment Rate	7.4%	7.5%	7.5%
B.C. Employment – Change from prev. mo.	1.2%	0.0%	—
B.C. Labour Force – Change from prev. mo.	0.3%	-0.2%	—
B.C. Labour Force Participation Rate	65.6%	65.5%	65.1%

Labour Force Statistics is a joint compilation and review by BC STATS of the Ministry of Management Services and the Planning and Data Management Branch of the Ministry of Advanced Education, reflecting the results of the monthly Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics Canada. For more information, call BC STATS (250) 387-0327 or the Planning and Data Management Branch (250) 952-6111.

The B.C. Labour Market in 2003

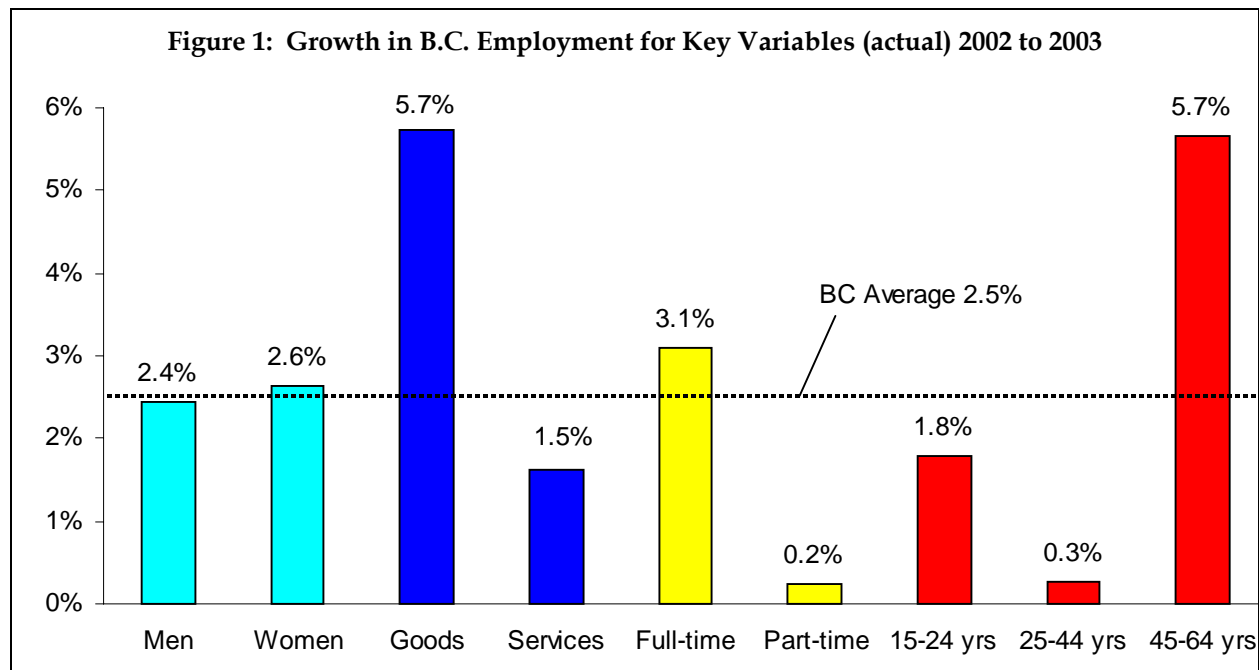
Employment . . . In 2003, B.C. employment increased by 50,000 or 2.5 per cent from 2002 on an annual average basis. With the exception of 2001, employment in B.C. has increased in every year since 1983.

Employment in the goods sector increased by 5.7 per cent or 22,900 in 2003. All industries in the goods sector saw job gains in 2003 from 2002, with the strongest growth in agriculture, manufacturing, and other primary goods (forestry, fishing, mining, oil and gas).

Employment in the services sector grew 1.5 per cent or 25,400 in 2003. Notable growth was seen in finance and related services,

education services, transportation, and professional, scientific and technical services. Nearly all of B.C.'s employment increase in 2003 was in full-time employment, with about three-quarters of these gains being among men. Women saw growth of 3.9 per cent in part-time employment, while part-time employment for men fell.

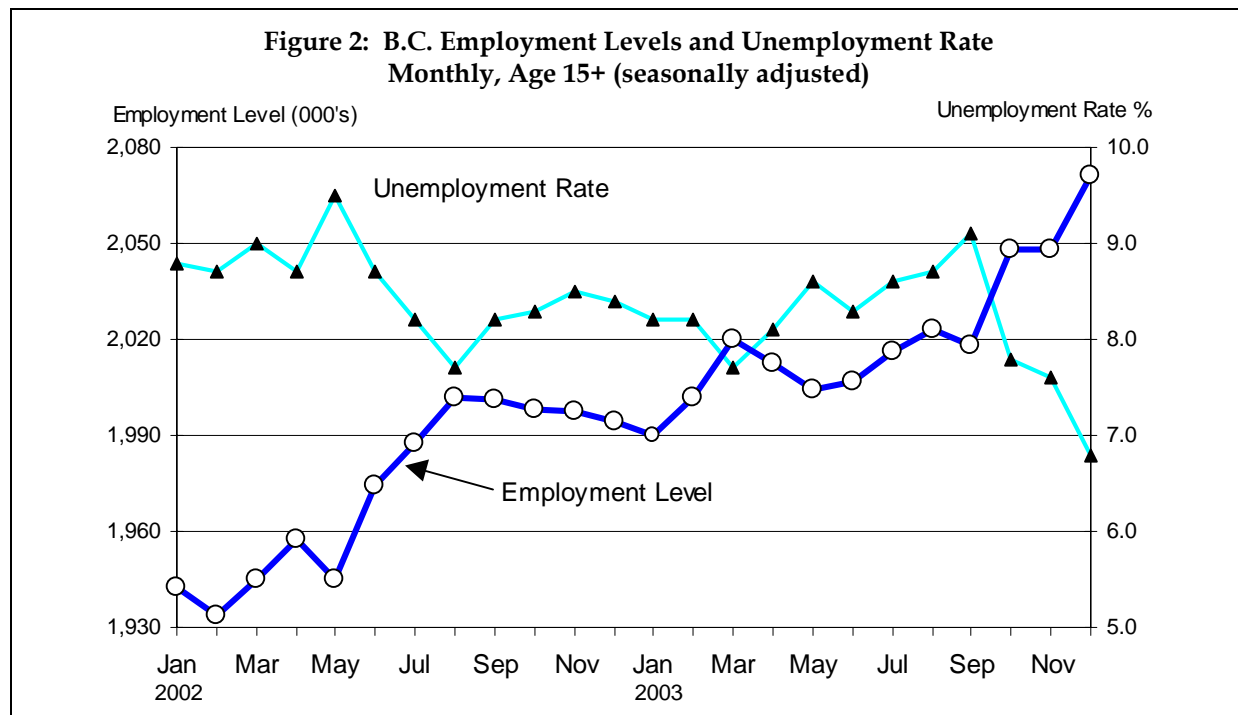
Employment growth of 5.7 per cent for persons aged 45 to 64 was bolstered in part by demographics, as the number of baby boomers entering this cohort strongly exceeded pre-baby boomers leaving the cohort. Youth aged 15 to 24 saw employment growth (up 1.8 per cent). Those 25 to 44 years of age saw their employment levels increase by 0.3 per cent.



Employment and Unemployment Rates During 2003 . . . Figure 2 shows B.C. employment increased throughout most of 2003, with considerable gains seen over the last three months of 2003. Employment gains during 2003 for B.C. added to the overall gains seen during 2002. Perhaps the most encouraging note was the resumption of sustained job gains over the course of 2003, following the modest employment

decreases seen in the last six months of 2002.

The unemployment rate in 2003 fell to a low in December of 6.8 per cent, its lowest monthly level seen since May 2001. For the last three months of 2003, the B.C. unemployment rate remained below the 8 per cent level.



Unemployment Changes in 2003 . . . The provincial annual average unemployment rate fell to 8.1 per cent in 2003 from 8.5 per cent in 2002, which represents a fall of 5,600 in the number of unemployed individuals. With the exception of Quebec and New Brunswick, annual average provincial unemployment rates across Canada were down in 2003.

The annual average unemployment rate in 2003 fell for B.C. men, but was unchanged for B.C. women. The unemployment rate for men fell to 8.3 per cent in 2003, down from 9.1 per cent in 2002. Women saw their unemployment rate in 2003 unchanged from 2002, at 7.9 per cent.

The unemployment rate for B.C. youth (aged 15–24) fell to 14.4 per cent in 2003 from 14.9 per cent in 2002. In 2003, the unemployment rate for female youth was 12.6% vs. 16.2% for male youth. Over the last ten years the labour force participation rate for women aged 15–24 in B.C. has held constant, but has dropped for men aged 15–24. Despite that change, unemployment rates for male youth remain 3 to 4 percentage points higher than for female youth. For male youth compared to female youth, lower scores on standardized secondary school tests, lower post-secondary participation rates, and poorer labour market results, may to be inter-related.