

Labour Force Statistics ♦ April 2006

HIGHLIGHTS

All labour force statistics are seasonally adjusted, unless otherwise indicated

BC's unemployment rate virtually unchanged in April, now second-lowest in the country

British Columbia's unemployment rate was virtually unchanged at 4.5% in April, only marginally higher than the 30-year-low reached in March. The 0.1 percentage point increase occurred as the labour force expanded by 4,900 people, while the number of jobs rose by 3,800 between March and April.

Despite the marginal increase in the unemployment rate, BC's position relative to the other provinces improved slightly in April, as Alberta (3.5%) was the only province with a lower jobless rate last month. This was the first time in twelve years that BC has had the second-lowest unemployment rate in the country. During most of the last decade, BC has usually ranked fifth or sixth among the provinces in terms of its jobless rate, but its relative position started to improve last fall, as the unemployment rate began to approach the five percent mark.

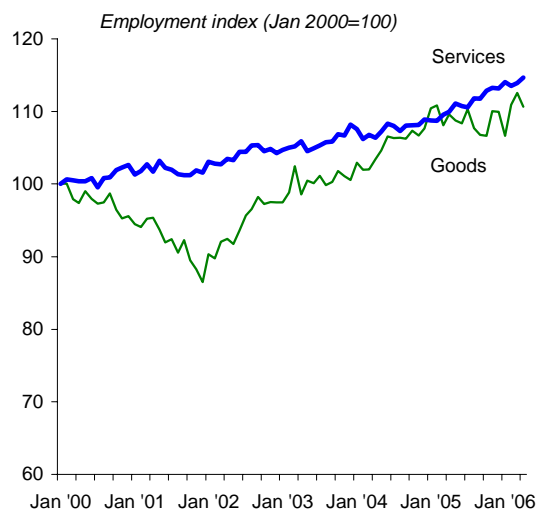
More jobs in service industries; fewer workers in the goods sector

The 0.2% increase in employment last month was largely due to growth in the service sector, where the number of jobs expanded 0.7%. There were 1.7% fewer jobs in the goods sector, as employment shrank or job growth stalled in every major industry. In the construction industry, which saw significant job gains in February and March, employment was virtually unchanged, inching up just 0.1%. There were 8.3% fewer jobs in the utilities industry, where there has been an almost uninterrupted decline in employment since last summer.

Manufacturing (-2.9%) and primary industries such as forestry, fishing & mining (-2.0%) also shed jobs in April after taking on more workers in the previous month.

In the service sector, there were more jobs in professional, scientific & technical services (+3.2%), accommodation & food (+3.1%), information, culture & recreation services (+2.1%) and trade (+1.8%), with more modest increases occurring in management services (+0.8%) and public administration (+0.5%). However, there were fewer jobs in five of the service industries, with finance, insurance, real estate & leasing (-2.4%) and other services (-2.4%) posting the largest declines.

Employment growth in the service sector has been steady while the goods industries are more volatile

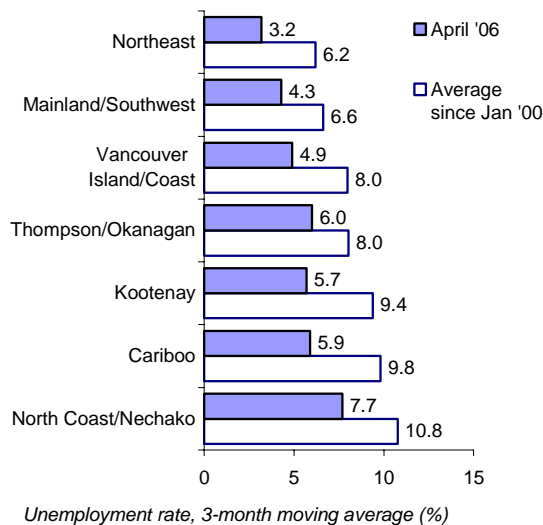


Generally speaking, the service industries have seen relatively steady growth during the last five years, while employment in the goods sector has been more volatile. The number of jobs

Selected Statistics	Apr-06	Mar-06	Apr-05
BC Unemployment Rate (%)	4.5	4.4	6.1
Canadian Unemployment Rate (%)	6.4	6.3	6.8
BC Employment ('000)	2,193	2,189	2,117
BC Labour Force Participation Rate (%)	65.6	65.6	65.7
April % change in employment relative to:	-	0.2	3.6
April % change in labour force relative to:	-	0.2	1.8

in goods industries fell sharply during the first two years of the decade, but has since recovered, and over the longer run, job growth in the goods industries has been only marginally lower than in the service sector. With eight out of ten jobs in the province in service industries, the relatively stable job growth in this sector helps keep employment in the province on an even keel.

Regional job markets continue to improve

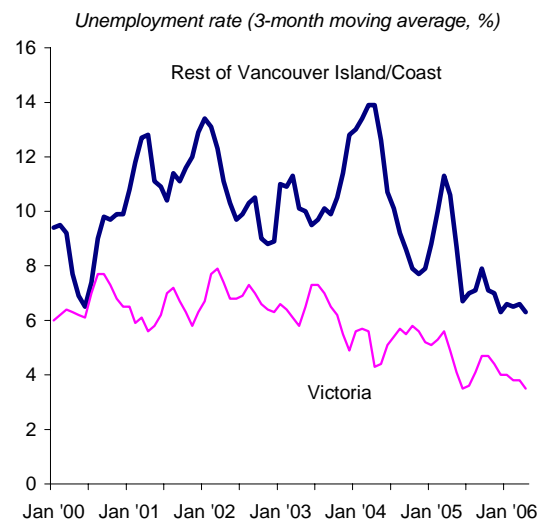


Regional unemployment rates ranged from 3.2%¹ (3-month moving average) in Northeast to 7.7% in North Coast/Nechako. Although employment continued to decline in Northeast (-6.5%, year-over-year), North Coast/Nechako (-4.1%) and Kootenay (-3.1%) the labour force in these regions shrank even more. It is possible that there has been some migration of workers from these regions to other parts of the province, as well as to Alberta, which has been a net recipient of inter-provincial migrants from the province in recent months.

¹ BC Stats estimates for Northeast and Vancouver Island/Coast excluding Victoria are based on data supplied by Statistics Canada

Jobless rates in all regions of the province are below the levels at the beginning of the decade, and considerably lower than the average for the period since January 2000. Cariboo, Kootenay, North Coast/Nechako and Vancouver Island/Coast have seen particularly large declines in unemployment rates. However, not all workers in these regions have fared equally well. At present, Victoria has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country but jobless rates in the rest of Vancouver Island/Coast are significantly higher, and have been so throughout most of the period since January 2000.

The job market in Victoria is more robust and less volatile than in the rest of the region



The Nation

Canada's unemployment rate inched up to 6.4% in April, as both the labour force and employment expanded 0.1%.