

Labour Force Statistics ♦ October 1998

HIGHLIGHTS

- **The unemployment rate for B.C. fell to 8.0 per cent in October from 8.3 per cent in September, it's lowest monthly level since January 1997.** Seasonally adjusted employment in October rose by 7,500 (up 0.4 per cent) from September's estimate, adding to the rise of 11,600 (up 0.6 per cent) in September.
- **Actual employment level increases for the first 10 months of 1998 over the same period in 1997 have been led by Business services (up 19,000), and Retail trade (up 17,000).** These net gains contrast with, but more than offset, the net decrease of 8,000 in the "other primary" sectors (logging, mining and fishing) over the same period.
- **Full-time seasonally adjusted employment on a three month moving average basis, rose by 8,400 (up 0.6 per cent) in October from September, while part-time employment increased by 1,300 (up 0.3 per cent).** Women saw most of the gains in full-time work, while men netted all the gains in part-time work.
- **Seasonally adjusted employment in October increased for Canada overall led by gains in Ontario (up 0.6 per cent) and the Atlantic provinces combined (up 1.6 per cent).** Employment in October fell by 11,000 in Alberta following a drop of 4,000 in September.

	Oct 1998	Sept 1998	Sept 1997
B.C. Unemployment Rate	8.0%	8.3%	9.0%
Canada Unemployment Rate	8.1%	8.3%	9.1%
B.C. Help Wanted Index (1996=100)	120.0	122.0	121.0
B.C. Employment - Monthly Change	0.4%	0.6%	---
B.C. Labour Force - Monthly Change	0.1%	0.2%	---
B.C. Participation Rate	64.8%	64.7%	64.7%

* 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) 952-6111.

Post-Secondary Education Participation in B.C. by Persons Aged 18-29

1. Introduction . . . Post-secondary education (PSE) participation rates have often been calculated using administrative enrolment data. Unfortunately, these administrative data are not always consistent between provinces and often do not include those attending vocational programs or private post-secondary institutions. This article uses Labour Force Survey data from Statistics Canada which captures education participation in PSE programs for credit including those in trade/vocational programs and private training institutions. All data used here covers the 4th quarter period from 1976 to 1997. This article focuses on individuals aged 18 to 29, with further breakdowns of those aged 18 to 24 and aged 25 to 29.

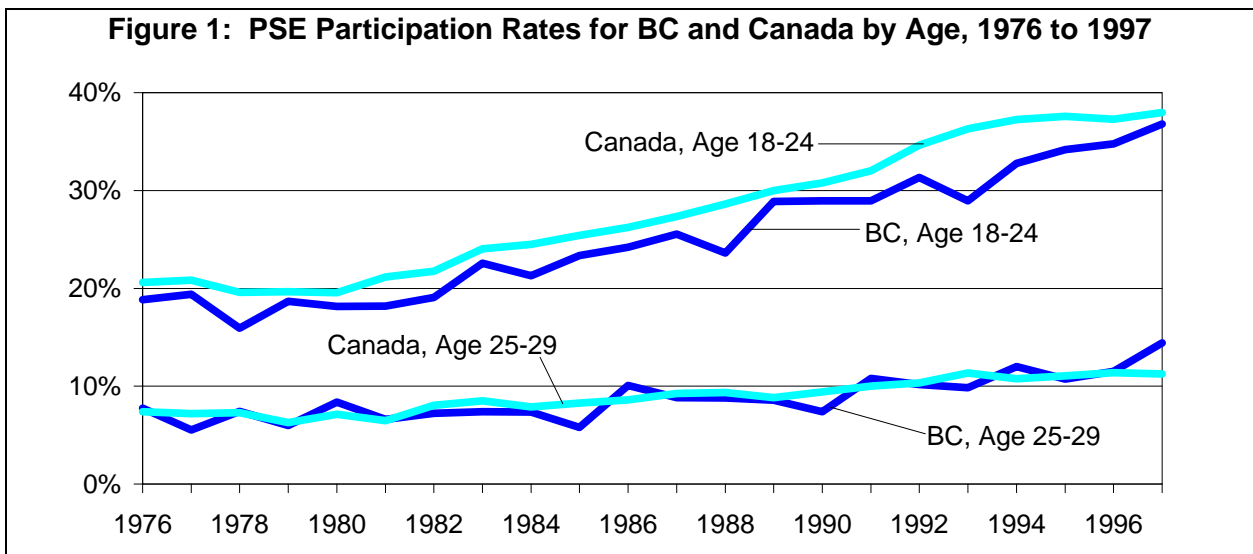
2. PSE Participation Rates in B.C. and Canada . . . Estimates from the Labour Force Survey indicate that there were over 1.2 million persons aged 18 to 29 in Canada participating in full and part-time post-secondary programs in 1997. Between 1976 to 1997, the PSE participation rate in B.C. for persons aged 18 to 29 increased from 14 per cent to 27 per cent, compared with an increase from 15 per cent to 26 per cent for Canada.

For the first time since 1976, the PSE participation rate for B.C. surpassed that of Canada in 1997. In B.C., the ongoing tuition freeze at public PSE institutions along with a more developed private PSE sector relative to other provinces are likely contributing factors.

Figure 1 shows PSE participation rates split between those aged 18 to 24 and 25 to 29 for B.C. and Canada. In Canada between 1976 and 1997, the proportion of those aged 18 to 24 attending PSE programs almost doubled, increasing from 21 per cent in 1976, to 38 per cent in 1997.

The PSE participation rate in B.C. for those aged 18 to 24 has remained slightly below the Canadian average, though increasing from 19 per cent to 37 per cent by 1997. The notable gap in participation rates between Canada and B.C. in 1993 and 1994 has closed considerably by 1997.

For individuals aged 25 to 29, there is a substantially lower rate of post-secondary attendance than for those aged 18 to 24. Nonetheless, both B.C. and Canada experienced a slow but steady increase in participation, from 7 per cent in 1976 to 11 per cent in 1997.



Growth in B.C.'s PSE participation rate for those aged 25 to 29 has generally kept pace with the rest of Canada over the last 20 years, but jumped ahead of the Canadian average in 1997 to 14 per cent.

3. Inter-Provincial Comparison of PSE Participation Rates . . . Figure 2 compares PSE participation rates broken down by age group in Canada and selected provinces for the years 1976 and 1997. As would be expected, for both years and in all regions of Canada, participation rates were higher for those aged 18 to 24 than those aged 25 to 29.

PSE participation rates vary from province to province, with Quebec continuing to have the highest rate for those aged 18 to 24. This is due in large part to their unique CEGEP college system.

In 1997, B.C. and Ontario together saw the second highest PSE participation rate at 37 per cent for 18 to 24 year olds.

For those aged 25 to 29, B.C. saw the highest PSE participation rate in 1997, rising to over 14 per cent from 8 per cent in 1976. The province with the smallest increase in PSE participation for this older group over the past 21 years was Alberta, remaining fairly steady at just under 10 per cent.

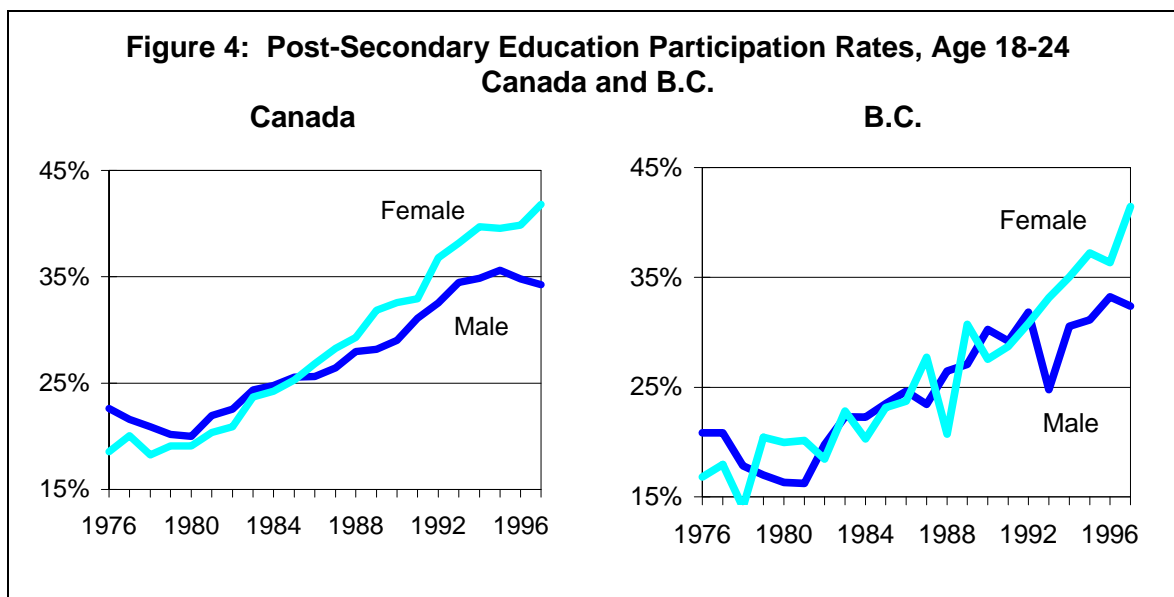
Figure 2: PSE Participation Rates by Age, Canada and Provinces						
	1976			1997		
	Age 18-24	Age 25-29	Age 18-29	Age 18-24	Age 25-29	Age 18-29
Canada	20.6%	7.4%	15.4%	38.0%	11.2%	26.3%
B.C.	18.8%	7.7%	14.3%	36.8%	14.4%	26.8%
Alberta	17.0%	9.6%	14.1%	32.8%	9.7%	22.8%
Sask.	17.6%	5.0%	13.1%	31.9%	8.3%	22.6%
Manitoba	20.9%	6.1%	15.2%	29.8%	9.9%	21.3%
Ontario	23.3%	8.5%	17.4%	36.8%	11.5%	25.4%
Quebec	21.1%	6.7%	15.4%	45.2%	11.5%	31.1%
Atlantic	15.5%	5.4%	11.6%	36.3%	8.9%	24.6%

4. Participation by Women and Men . . . Figure 3 breaks down PSE participation by men and women aged 18 to 24 for Canada and B.C. from 1976 to 1997. Notably there has been a trend towards higher participation rates for women, relative to men, yet both have been trending upward. In Canada, up until 1985, the participation rate for men was higher than for women. However, beginning in 1986, the PSE participation rate for women surpassed that of men. Since 1995, the gap has widened notably, as male participation fell slightly

and female participation has continued to increase.

In B.C., changes have been similar to that of Canada with a general ongoing rise in PSE participation by 18 to 24 year olds. Since 1993, participation in post-secondary education by women aged 18 to 24 has increased faster than for men in B.C. By 1997, the PSE participation rate for B.C. women aged 18 to 24 was 41 per cent, compared to 32 per cent for B.C. men. PSE participation by B.C. women is similar to the Canadian average for women, but B.C. men trail the average for Canadian men.

**Figure 4: Post-Secondary Education Participation Rates, Age 18-24
Canada and B.C.**



Over the past 20 years there has been a growing public preference by Canadians for more post-secondary learning opportunities. In response there have been increased investments to expand post-secondary education and training spaces by many provincial governments, including B.C. The growth in PSE participation has likely occurred for both labour market and personal reasons.

Most would agree that employment demand for university and college graduates is growing faster than the demand for workers with only high school completion. In part this relates to the growth in technology and increased knowledge requirements by workers. Overall, better job prospects and higher salaries appear to have been signals to which young persons (and their parents) have responded. In particular, women appear to have seen the fastest growth in

PSE participation. Societal changes and more choices available to women have enabled considerable gains in their PSE participation in both B.C. and Canada. Considerable evidence suggests that women improve their career choices and earning power when have higher education.

Why then has PSE participation by men risen slower and now trails that of women? In part this may relate to the fact that earnings in the goods industries for jobs not requiring post-secondary learning continue to remain higher than lesser skilled jobs in services. Since the goods sector still predominately employs men, it may be that these kinds of work offer more of an incentive to some younger men rather than immediately attending post-secondary education or training following secondary school.

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