
Labour Force Statistics ♦ November 1998

HIGHLIGHTS

- **The unemployment rate for B.C. fell to 7.9 per cent in November from 8.0 per cent in October, it's lowest monthly level since July 1990.** Seasonally adjusted employment in November rose by 20,000 (up 1.1 per cent) from October's estimate.
- **Full-time seasonally adjusted employment on a three month moving average basis, rose by 9,900 (up 0.7 per cent) in November from October, while part-time employment increased by 3,200 (up 0.8 per cent).** Youth and women aged 25+ accounted for most of the gains in full-time work.
- **Actual average B.C. employment levels for November 1998 compared to November 1997 were up 62,600.** Net gains in full-time work of 28,400 combined with net gains of 34,200 in part-time employment.
- **Seasonally adjusted employment in November for Canada increased by 0.7 per cent from October led by gains of one per cent or greater in the four western provinces and New Brunswick.** The number of unemployed persons declined only in Ontario and the 4 Western provinces.

	Nov 1998	Oct 1998	Nov 1997
B.C. Unemployment Rate	7.9%	8.0%	8.9%
Canada Unemployment Rate	8.0%	8.1%	9.0%
B.C. Help Wanted Index (1996=100)	117.0	120.0	123.0
B.C. Employment - Monthly Change	1.1%	0.4%	- - -
B.C. Labour Force - Monthly Change	0.9%	0.1%	- - -
B.C. Participation Rate	65.3%	64.8%	64.9%

- 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 Trends by “Type”

1. Introduction . . . Last month’s article reviewed data from Statistics Canada’s Labour Force Survey that captured post-secondary education participation in programs for credit. This household survey data includes estimates of participation in post-secondary programs that include university level programs, college level trade/vocational and career/technical programs, and other career programs, including students both at public or private post-secondary institutions. This article expands upon the overall trends noted in last month’s article, by providing further breakdowns of categories or types of post-secondary participants between provinces. All the historical data reviewed below covers the 4th quarter period from 1976 to 1997, and focuses on individuals aged 18 to 24.

2. Challenges in Interpreting Categories of Post-Secondary Education from the Labour Force Survey . . . Statistics Canada provides three main categories of post-secondary participants - “university”, “college/CEGEP” and “other”. Based on responses to two key questions in the survey on the type of program they are undertaking and the name of the institution they are attending, a respondent who is engaged in a post-secondary program for credit is placed in one of these 3 categories. For the first two categories this is fairly self-evident. For example, a person in the 2nd year of a bachelor degree program at U.B.C. would fall under “university”, while someone in a two year business diploma program at a community college would fall under “college/CEGEP”.

The “other” category is more challenging to interpret and is defined by Statistics Canada to include those in secretarial schools, barber schools, hairdressing schools, and computer training, mainly at private post-secondary providers. However, this does lead to instances where this categorization could be a challenge for coding purposes and subsequent interpretation. In some cases the categorization depends to a large extent upon the discretion of the interviewer and respondent, and is sensitive

to inconsistencies in either interpreting responses or the degree of detail in the responses. Based on discussions with Statistics Canada, it was determined that, ideally, those in private post-secondary programs not covered by those in the “other” category are included in the totals for the “college/CEGEP” category. For example, those in an accounting program at a private post-secondary business administration college should appear in the “college/CEGEP” group. This article does not examine the participation and enrolments associated with this “other” category, chiefly because it is relatively small and our key purpose is to provide some comparisons between provinces for the “college/CEGEP” and “university” categories.

An important consideration in comparing college or university participation by persons aged 18 to 24 between provinces is acknowledgment of systemic differences in post-secondary systems between provinces. For example, in B.C. there are three main flexible avenues through which a university degree can be earned. First, a student can earn their undergraduate degree at a university from start to finish. Alternatively, most of the community colleges and university-colleges offer university transfer programs, where students can complete the first one or two years of a bachelor degree, and then transfer the credits to a university for completion. More recently, students have a third option of earning a degree entirely from a provincial university-college. Such students, it can be argued, are in a practical sense university-level students taking university-level programs outside of a university. Turning to data from the Labour Force Survey on post-secondary education participation, students in this third group and possibly some university transfer students may be appearing in Statistics Canada’s “university” category.”

In Ontario, for the most part, the college and university sectors are considered two separate entities, with community colleges being seen as distinct alternatives to universities, resulting in

little in the way of a formal relationship between the two. In contrast, colleges and universities in B.C. have embraced the benefits to students of laddering and strong articulation of credits.

Finally, it should be noted the college system in Quebec is unique within Canada, with a relatively large proportion of high-school graduates attending “colleges d’enseignement general et professionnel” (CEGEP’s). This has the impact of resulting in relatively high “college/CEGEP” participation rates for Quebec relative to other provinces. After completing high school in grade 11, students in Quebec enroll in CEGEP’s for one or two years prior to entering either university or the labour force. CEGEP’s are very different from the public community colleges in other provinces which primarily offer post-secondary programs.

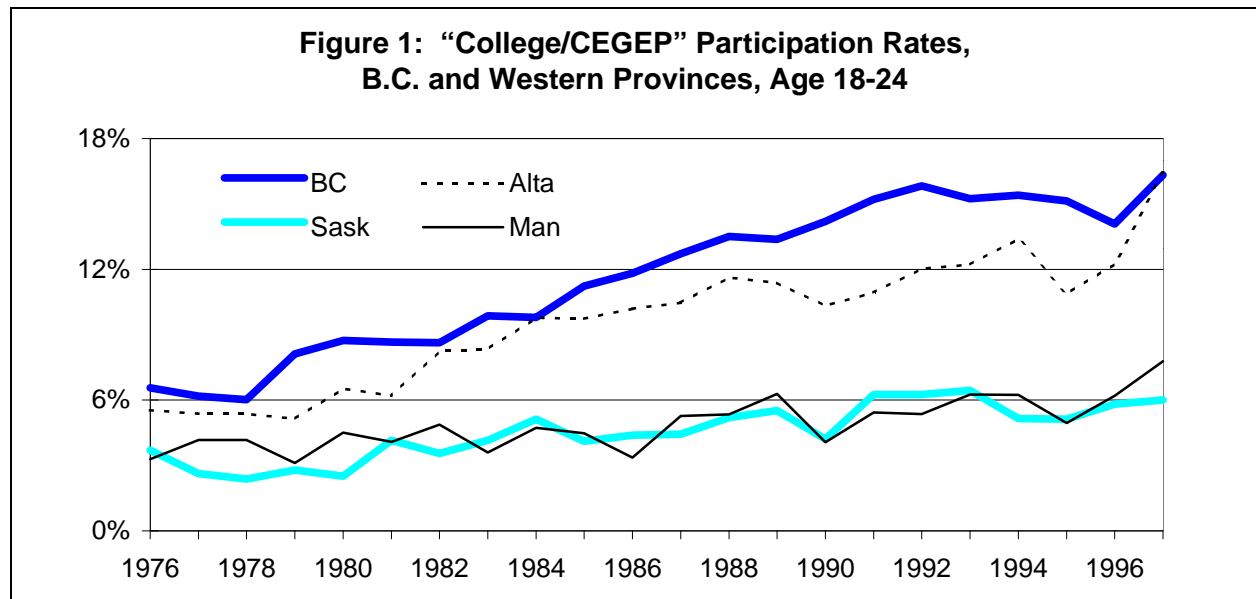
3. “College/CEGEP” Participation Rates . . .

In looking at inter-provincial differences in post-secondary participation rates, it is interesting to

look separately at the “university” and “college/CEGEP” categories provided by Statistics Canada. However, when examining the household survey data it is important to keep the nuances for these defined categories in mind.

Other than B.C., the only other provinces to offer what is considered by Statistics Canada to be university transfer programs (in any significant numbers) are Alberta and Quebec.

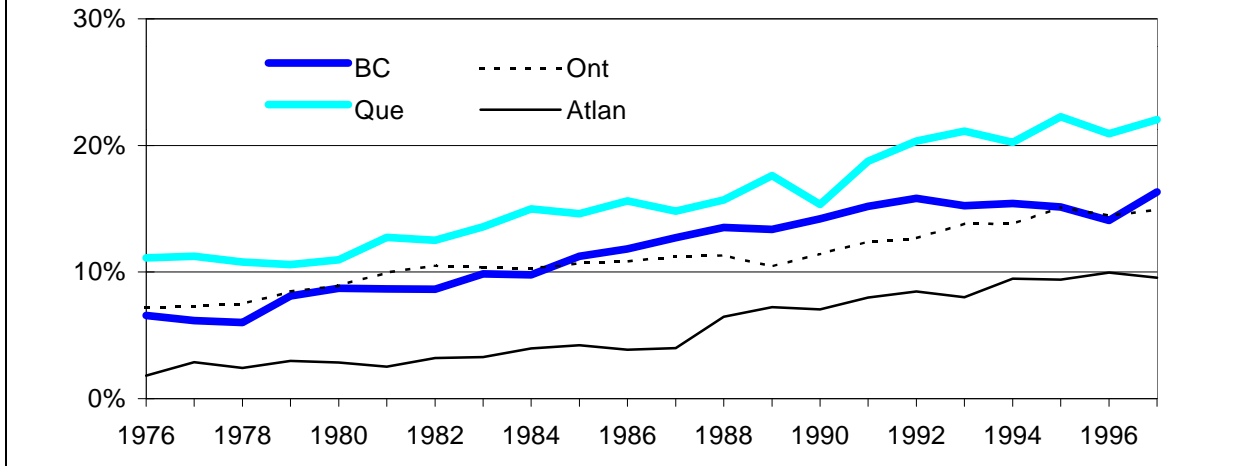
In Figure 1, “college/CEGEP” participation rates for those aged 18 to 24 are presented for B.C. and the other 3 western provinces. The most apparent trend is the widening gap between both B.C. and Alberta rates and the rates of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Both B.C. and Alberta experienced steady and significant growth in their “college” participation rates between 1976 and 1997, while Manitoba and Saskatchewan experienced only slight increases in participation.



Similar to the comparison with the western provinces, B.C. stands out in Figure 2 as having seen higher than average “college” participation rates compared to Atlantic provinces or Ontario, but remain lower than in Quebec. “College” participation rate movements in B.C. relative to the eastern provinces are less dramatic and have

grown at about the same rate since 1976. In Figure 2 we see that B.C.’s participation rate for those aged 18 to 24 compares favourably with Ontario’s, exceeding it since 1984 with only one exception in 1996. The college participation rate in the Atlantic provinces has continued to remain well below that in B.C.

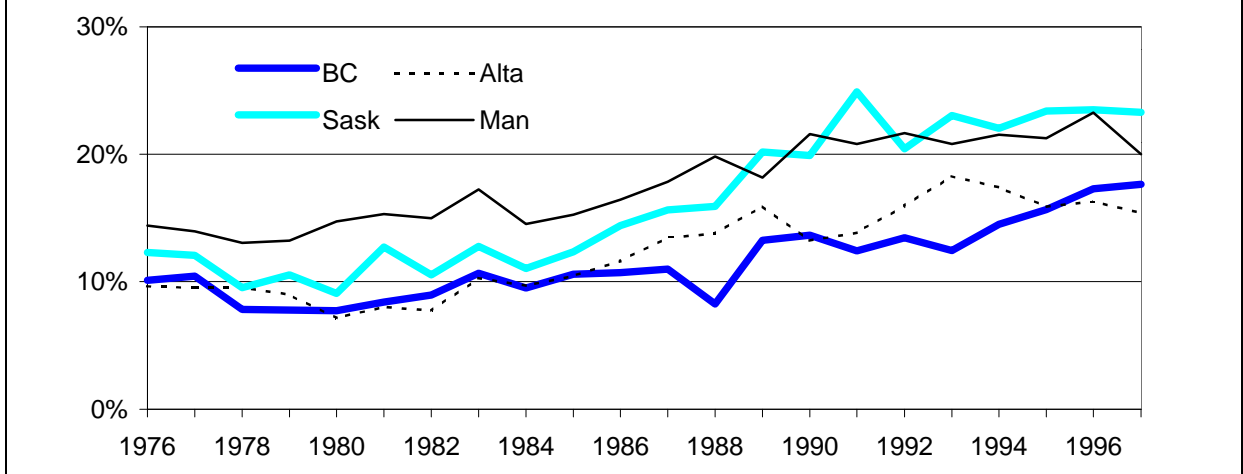
Figure 2: "College/CEGEP" Participation Rates, B.C. and Eastern Provinces, Age 18-24.



"University" Participation Rates. . . Unlike college participation, B.C. has generally been lower in "university" participation rates for persons aged 18 to 24 compared to the other three western provinces, with rates consistently below those of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. More recently, B.C. compares closely with

Alberta in "university" participation based on the Labour Force Survey estimates reviewed here by Statistics Canada. Note that since 1993, participation rates for the other three western provinces leveled off or declined while B.C.'s "university" participation rate continued to increase.

Figure 3: "University" Participation Rates, B.C. and Western Provinces, Age 18-24

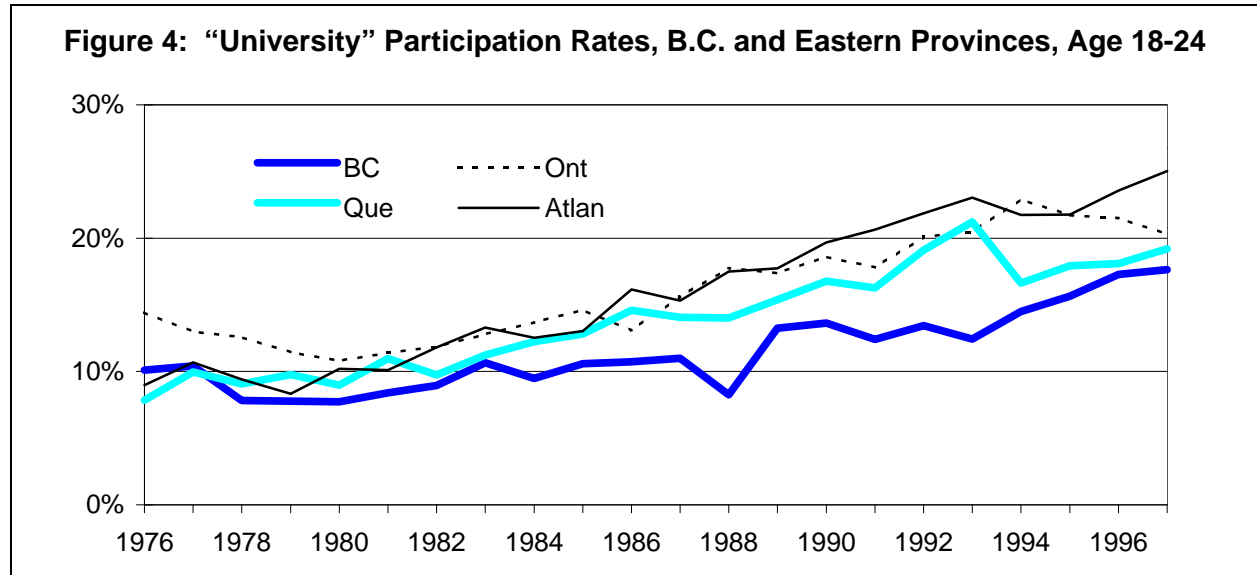


In Figure 4, university participation rates for those aged 18 to 24 in B.C. are compared with the eastern provinces. During the last half of the 1980's and early 1990's, B.C. had considerably lower university participation rates than the eastern provinces. However, with the more

recent decline in university participation rates in Ontario and the leveling off of rates in Quebec, this gap has narrowed between Canada's three largest provinces by 1997.

In the Atlantic provinces, university participation rates increased at a relatively rapid pace compared with B.C. and the other eastern provinces, with particularly strong growth from 1983 to 1993. The Atlantic provinces have a

relatively less developed community college system than most other provinces. This contrasts to their relatively large university system (especially in Nova Scotia) in relation to their population base.



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