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## Labour Force Statistics ♦ August 1999

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- **Employment increased in BC by 0.6 per cent in August from July, while Canada as a whole saw no change.** Four provinces, including BC, saw employment growth with three quarters of the increase occurring in BC (seasonally adjusted).
- **BC's employment growth was concentrated in part-time employment, which was up 1.7% in August from July.** Full-time employment declined by 0.4 per cent over this period (3-month moving average, seasonally adjusted).
- **The BC labour force also grew in August, by 0.6 per cent, and this prevented any reduction in the unemployment rate.** As a result, the unemployment rate remained at 8.6 per cent in August, maintaining the rate of the past 2 months (seasonally adjusted).
- **On a January to August basis, Vancouver and Victoria had the highest employment growth, up 4.9 per cent and 4.0 per cent, respectively, compared to the same period in 1998.** Growth was also seen in the Kootenays (3.3 per cent), Vancouver Island north of Victoria (3.5 per cent), and the Thompson-Okanagan (0.7 per cent) (3-month moving average, actual).

Selected Statistics (SA)*	Aug. 1999	July 1999	Aug. 1998
BC Unemployment Rate	8.6%	8.6%	8.7%
Canada Unemployment Rate	7.8%	7.7%	8.3%
BC Help Wanted Index (1996=100)	128	127	121
BC Employment - Monthly Change	0.6%	-0.8%	-
BC Labour Force - Monthly Change	0.6%	-0.7%	-
BC Participation Rate	65.0%	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 REAB (250) 387-3620.*

## Labour Market Changes: Women in the 1990s

### Summary

Women continued to experience significant labour market changes in the 1990s in BC. Older women saw the biggest gains in labour force participation rates, while younger women were the only age/gender group to experience a sustained increase in their unemployment rate over the period. Fewer unemployed people qualified for federal employment insurance, with women and youth being the most heavily impacted.

### Labour Force Participation

Labour force participation rates in the 1990s among men and women reveal important differences. Since 1991, the rate for men has trended downward, going from 75.5 per cent in 1991 to an average of 72.0 per cent in 1999 (1999—January to August average). The rate for women has fluctuated around the 59 per cent level since 1991, with the average so far this year being 59.3 per cent, up slightly from 59.1 per cent in 1991. Women's labour force participation rate plateau in the 1990s comes after two decades of steady and strong increases. The decline in the participation rate among men in the 1990s is a continuation of the trend experienced throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

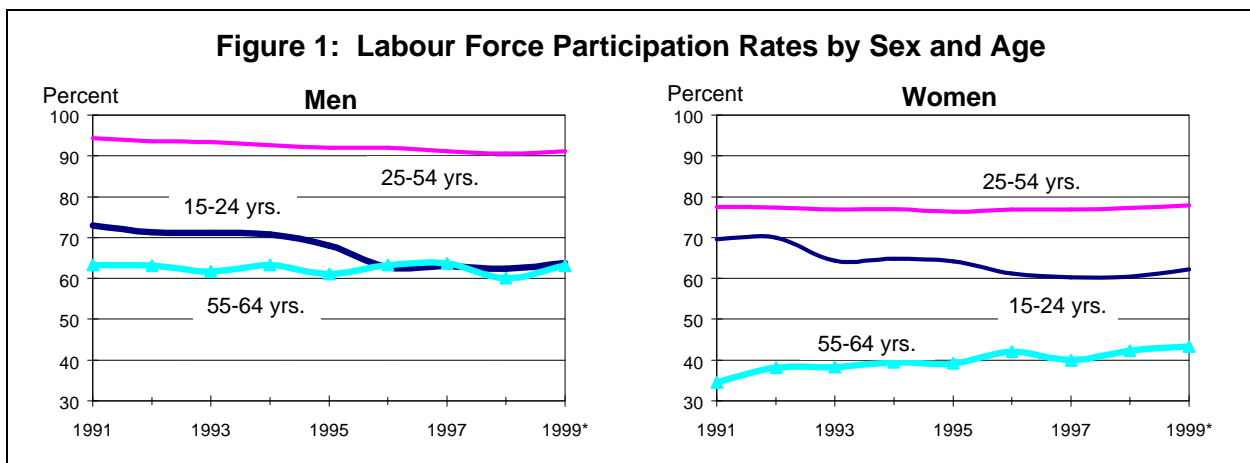
### Labour Force Participation By Age . . .

To understand what has changed in the 1990s between women and men, it's necessary to also look at age groups. (See Figure 1.)

Participation rates remain significantly higher among men than for women of all age groups, except among youth aged 15 to 24. The rate for male youth is only slightly higher than that for females.

Men and women between the ages of 25 to 54 have the highest participation rates of any age group. However, for men the rate has declined steadily in the 1990s, from 94.3 per cent in 1991 to 91.0 per cent in 1999 (1999—January to August average). The rate for women fluctuated only slightly, and for 1999 the average to-date is 77.9 per cent, a rate only slightly above 77.5 per cent in 1991. Women's participation in the labour force remains about 12 percentage points below that of men for this age group.

The participation rate for youth fell from 71.3 per cent in 1991 to 63.0 per cent in 1999 (63.8 per cent for young men aged 15 to 24 and 63.1 per cent for young women, year-to-date 1999). This has increased the difference in rates between youth and those aged 25 to 54.



\*1999 is January to August average

The strongest growth in labour force participation has been by women aged 55 to 64 years. It rose from 34.5 per cent in 1991 to an average year-to-date in 1999 of 43.4 per cent. It remains significantly below that of the 25–54 year age group and below the rate for female youth.

In contrast, the participation rate for men aged 55 to 64 fluctuated slightly over the period but has basically remained flat. It has averaged 63.1 per cent so far in 1999, about the same rate as for male youth, and is only one tenth of a per cent below where it was in 1991.

It is likely that as the baby boom generation moves into the 55 to 64 age group, the participation rate for women in this age group will continue to edge up. How much it will continue to climb is not clear, although demographics suggest it will likely continue to have the strongest growth among the age and sex groups.

**Unemployment**

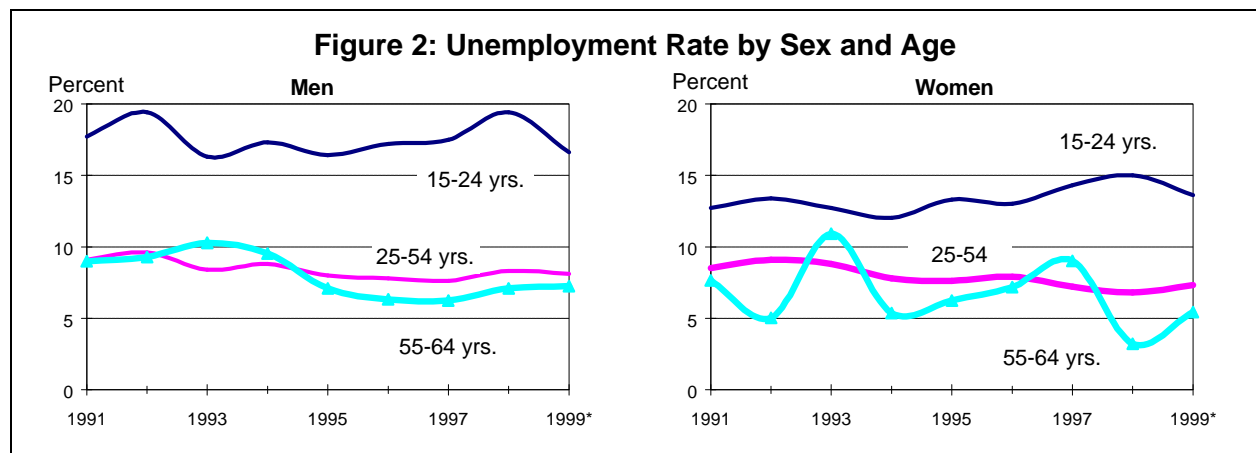
BC’s unemployment rate increased in 1991, 1992 and 1998, but despite this, the trend

edged slowly downward for most of the 1990s for most groups. (See Figure 2.)

Over this period, the rate for women remained below that of men, reflecting the stronger growth of employment in the services sector where proportionately more women are employed. Women’s average unemployment rate January to August in 1999 is 8.2 per cent, about one point below men’s rate at 9.2 per cent over this period.

The unemployment rate for youth is much higher than for other age groups. Women aged 15 to 25 years in particular have not fared as well. They are the only age/gender group that has sustained an unemployment rate increase over this period. Their unemployment rate increased from 12.7 per cent in 1991 to 13.6 per cent year-to-date in 1999.

The unemployment rate among male youth saw some decline over this period. However, at 16.6 per cent for 1999, it remains significantly higher than any other age/gender group.



\*1999 is January to August average

*The Shrinking Unemployment Safety Net . . .* Employment insurance (EI) regulations have been progressively tightened throughout the 1990s. The effect is that fewer people

qualify for benefits and of those who do qualify, their benefits don’t last as long. A “work-ready” Beneficiary to Unemployed ratio (B/U) can be used to measure the

changes. This B/U ratio is the number of “work-ready” EI beneficiaries divided by the number of people unemployed, taken from the Labour Force Survey. For BC, the work-ready B/U ratio dropped from 75.0 per cent in 1991 to 38.0 per cent in 1998.

The changes to EI have impacted women and youth the most. Figure 3 shows the falling B/U ratio for men and women and reveals an increasing gap between the two. In Figure 4, the B/U ratio has been indexed to show the relative decline in the ratio between youth and other workers.

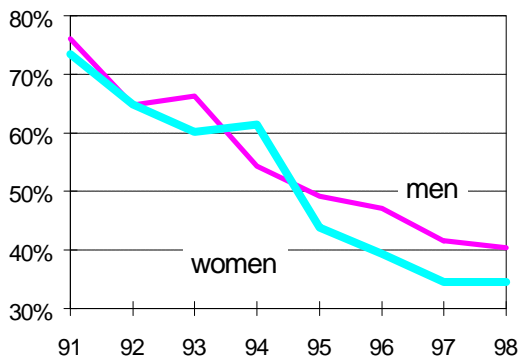
The decline in the B/U ratio is most evident among women and youth because they are more likely to be part-time workers and also more likely to be new entrants to the labour market. Further, more youth experience periods of unemployment than other age groups, which reduces their eligibility for EI benefits. It should be noted that because

there are more new labour market entrants among youth, youth have always been under-represented among employment insurance beneficiaries. The B/U ratio in 1991 was 48.4 per cent for youth, in contrast to 83.8 per cent for those aged 25 to 54.

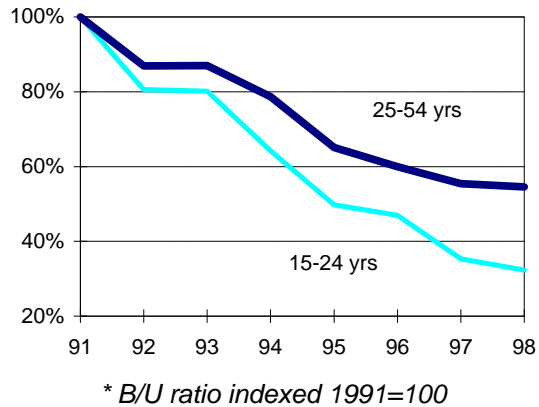
Among youth, women have experienced the biggest drop in EI coverage with the result that their B/U rate dropped to 11.6 per cent in 1998, from 44.1 per cent in 1991. This is the lowest B/U ratio of any group by age/gender for BC.

Among other age groups, it appears that the older workers were the least impacted by the EI changes. The B/U ratio of those aged 55 to 64 years declined to “only” 70.3 per cent in 1998. However, this is still down significantly from 1991, when over 90 per cent of workers in this age group who became unemployed were eligible to receive employment insurance benefits.

**Figure 3: Women’s B/U Ratio Declined More than Men’s**



**Figure 4: Youth Experienced the Greatest Drop in B/U Ratio\***



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## Recent Feature Articles

<b>August 1998</b>	Self-employment in British Columbia: 1976-1997	<b>February 1999</b>	Changes in BC Employment by Industry, Occupation and Class of Workers
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<b>October 1998</b>	Post-Secondary Education Participation in B.C. by Persons Aged 18-29	<b>April 1999</b>	BC Public Sector Employment - 1988 to 1998
<b>November 1998</b>	Post-Secondary Education Participation Trends by "Type"	<b>May 1999</b>	BC Labour Market Update for Youth Aged 15 to 24
<b>December 1998</b>	The BC Labour Market 1998	<b>June 1999</b>	BC Labour Market - Second Quarter 1999
<b>January 1999</b>	Changes to Labour Force Survey Data for Industry, Occupation and Class of Worker	<b>July 1999</b>	British Columbia Summer Student Labour Market - July 1999