
Business Indicators ♦ August 2008

B.C.'s Occupational Mix: Changes Since 2001

Introduction

There are many factors that affect the types of jobs that British Columbians hold. Both local and global economic conditions affect the structure of our economy, which in turn affects the demand for workers in particular occupations. Everything from the age structure of our population to international trade agreements can influence the occupational mix in our province.

Although the Labour Force Survey (LFS) is conducted monthly and is the official source of labour market information in British Columbia, the Census is more comprehensive and is a useful source of detailed occupational information. This article provides information from the 2006 Census, with comparisons to the 2001 Census where appropriate.

Throughout this article, calculations are based on the number of persons in the experienced labour force. The labour force includes those who were either employed or unemployed (but looking for work) during the week prior to enumeration. The experienced labour force excludes labour force participants who have never worked or who have been unemployed since January 1, 2005.

The National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S) coding system

In the 2006 Census, respondents were asked to provide their work or occupation and to describe the main activities in their job.¹ Census coders used this information to assign an occupation code from the National Occupational Classification for Statistics 2006 (NOC-S 2006).

The NOC-S 2006 is a minor update of the NOC-S 2001 used to classify occupational data from the 2001 Census. No structural changes were made, and data based on the NOC-S 2006 are directly comparable with 2001 Census data based on the NOC-S 2001.²

Both the NOC-S 2006 and NOC-S 2001 classify occupations into 10 broad categories, 47 major groups, 140 minor groups, and 520 detailed occupations.

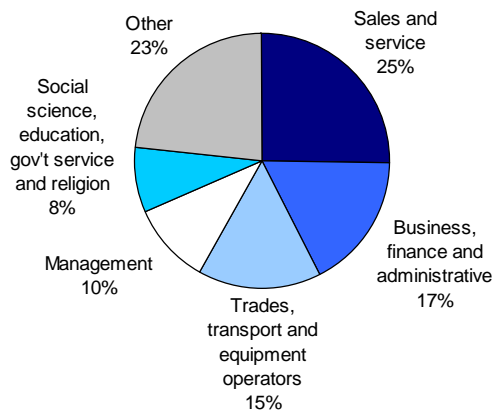
¹ Those not employed during the week prior to enumeration were assigned to the occupation in which they had worked the longest since January 2005.

²<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/reference/dictionary/pop102a.cfm>

Most Common Occupational Groups

In 2006, the largest occupational group in B.C. was sales and service occupations, accounting for one-quarter of all persons in the experienced labour force. Business, finance and administrative occupations (17%) and trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations (15%) also accounted for significant proportions of the B.C.'s labour force.

One-quarter of the experienced labour force worked in sales and service occupations in 2006



Source: 2006 Census, Statistics Canada

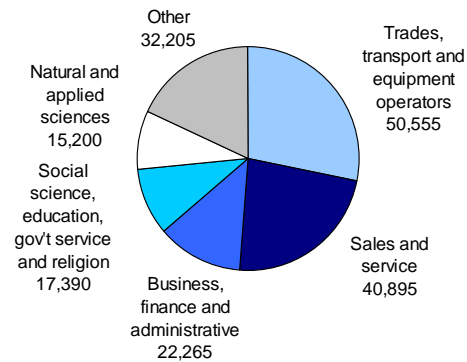
Changes in the Occupational Mix: 2001–2006

In the past 5 years, trades, transport and equipment operators was the fastest growing occupational group. The experienced labour force in this occupational group grew by 17% or 50,555 workers between 2001 and 2006.

Sales and service occupations (+40,895 workers) and business finance, and administrative occupations (+22,265 workers) also accounted for significant proportions of the total increase in B.C.'s experienced labour force between 2001 and 2006. However, the growth rates for these occupational groups were slightly below the overall economy. Health occupations and occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport recorded the 2nd and 3rd highest growth

rates among occupational groups during the 5-year period.

Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations accounted for a large proportion of total growth between 2001 and 2006



Source: 2006 & 2001 Censuses, Statistics Canada

Occupations unique to the primary industry grew much slower (+2%) than the overall experienced labour force (+9%). The number of persons in occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities actually experienced a decline, falling by 5% since 2001.

Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities declined between 2001 and 2006

Occupational group	% Change
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related	17%
Health	14%
Art, culture, recreation and sport	14%
Natural and applied sciences and related	12%
Social science, education, gov't service and religion	11%
Sales and service	8%
Business, finance and admin	6%
Management	5%
Unique to primary industry	2%
Unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities	-5%
All occupations	9%

Source: 2006 & 2001 Censuses, Statistics Canada

A Closer Look: Notable Changes within Occupational Groups

In the fastest growing occupational group (trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations), most of the increase in the labour force was in construction trades and related occupations. Occupations with notable increases included construction trades helpers and labourers (+10,950), carpenters (+7,920), truck drivers (+5,485), and material handlers (+5,315).

Health occupations saw some interesting changes, with the largest increases in registered nurses (+6,445), nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates (+3,875), and specialist physicians (+1,250). Despite the increase in the number of registered nurses, the number of licensed practical nurses (-1,260) fell quite substantially.

Among those occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport, the most notable changes were in the number of program leaders and instructors in recreation, sport and fitness³ (+2,980) and graphic designers and illustrators (+1,575).

In natural and applied sciences and related occupations, there were sizeable increases in the number of information systems analysts and consultants (+3,855) and user support technicians (+2,450). Like other forestry workers in primary and processing occupations, forestry technologists and technicians (-1,185) experienced a decline.

In the social science, education, government service and religion occupations, the most notable increases were in education. The number of university professors (+2,340) and post-secondary teaching and research assistants (+3,485) increased markedly between 2001 and 2006. The number of college and other vocational instructors (+2,180) also increased. However, the number of secondary school teachers (-1,780) declined.

In occupations unique to the primary industry, landscaping and grounds maintenance workers (+4,515) experienced a sizeable increase, while chain saw and skid operators (-1,555), logging and forestry labourers (-1,445), and silviculture and forestry workers (-1,335) experienced declines.

Many of the losses in occupations unique to processing, manufacturing, and utilities were also attributable to forestry-related occupations. Labourers in wood, pulp and paper processing (-5,095), lumber graders and other wood processing inspectors and graders (-945), and sawmill machine operators (-680) experienced the largest declines.

Most Prevalent Occupations

In 2006, the most prevalent occupations for men in B.C. were retail salespersons and sales clerks, truck drivers, and retail trade managers. Although the top three occupations for men remained unchanged since 2001, B.C.'s booming construction industry moved carpenters from 5th place in 2001 to 4th place in 2006. Construction trades helpers and labourers also moved into the top five occupations for men in 2006, increasing from 13th place in 2001 to 5th place in 2006.

³ The words "and Fitness" were added to this occupational title in the NOC-S 2006. Personal trainers were moved into this category in the NOC-S 2006.

In 2006, some of the most prevalent occupations for men were in retail trade and the construction industry

Top 5 Occupations, Males	Experienced Labour Force
Retail salespersons and sales clerks	39,470
Truck drivers	35,715
Retail trade managers	28,355
Carpenters	27,775
Construction trades helpers and labourers	22,270

Source: 2006 Census, Statistics Canada

The most prevalent occupations for women in B.C. also changed between 2001 and 2006. Although the most prevalent occupation (retail salespersons and salesclerks) remained unchanged, cashiers replaced general office clerks as the 2nd most prevalent occupation. Secretaries fell out of the top five occupations in 2006, while registered nurses moved from 7th place in 2001 to 5th place in 2006, reflecting B.C.'s aging population and increasing demand for health care professionals.

Registered nurses became one of the 5 most common occupations for women in 2006

Top 5 Occupations, Females	Experienced Labour Force
Retail salespersons and sales clerks	60,950
Cashiers	35,030
General office clerks	32,595
Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related occupations	32,305
Registered nurses	31,215

Source: 2006 Census, Statistics Canada

Differences between the Census and the Labour Force Survey

As noted above, the Labour Force Survey is conducted more frequently and is the official source of labour market information for B.C., while the Census is more comprehensive and serves as a useful source of detailed labour market information.

For example, the Census provides very detailed information on different occupations, and also provides information for very small geographic areas.

In the Census, the labour force refers to persons aged 15 and over who were either employed or unemployed during the week prior to Census Day (May 16, 2006). In the Labour Force Survey (LFS), information is collected for the week containing the 15th day of the month.

Both the Census and the LFS use the National Occupational Classification for Statistics coding system (although, while the Census uses the updated version for 2006 at present, the LFS still uses the 2001 version). However, the Census is a self-completed survey whereas the LFS is conducted using trained interviewers who understand occupational descriptions and can probe for further information.