

highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Labour Force

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate edged down to 6.8% (seasonally adjusted) in May.** The dip in the unemployment rate was due to employment growth (+0.6%) which was more than strong enough to absorb a net addition of 10,900 people (+0.5%) to the labour force.

While BC was one of five provinces where the unemployment rate improved in May, only Newfoundland (-1.7 percentage points) and PEI (-1.4 points) saw significant changes. Canada's unemployment rate, which has hovered around the seven-percent mark since last fall, was unchanged at 7.0% for the third straight month. The jobless rate in Ontario remained at 5.9%, while the percentage of the labour force that was unemployed in Quebec increased (+0.3 percentage points) to 9.0%. Alberta (4.5%) and Manitoba (4.9%) continued to have the lowest jobless rates in the country.

Source: Statistics Canada

- **More women entered the labour force in May.** The number of females in the labour force rose 1.4%, to 986,900, between April and May. At the same time, the number of men who were either working or looking for work fell (-0.2%) to 1,130,600. Women also found more jobs (+1.5%) in May, but the number of men with jobs dropped slightly (-0.1%) in that month. Full-time employment fell 0.7%, while part-time employment increased 5.7%. Self-employment was down 0.3%.

Employment growth in the public sector (+2.7%) was much stronger than in the private sector (+0.3%). This may be partly due to the addition of temporary workers hired to help with the 2001 Census and the provincial election, although the extent to which that was a

factor is unknown.

Source: Statistics Canada

- **Among the regions, Mainland/Southwest (5.7%, 3-month moving average), and Northeast (5.9%) continued to have the lowest unemployment rates.** In the rest of BC, jobless rates in May ranged from 8.4% in both Vancouver Island/Coast and Thompson/Okanagan to 11.9% in North Coast/Nechako. Residents of Victoria (5.6%) and Vancouver (5.6%) experienced unemployment rates that were much lower than in most other parts of BC.

Source: Statistics Canada

Housing

- **The number of housing starts in British Columbia increased again in May, rising 7.4% (seasonally adjusted), after posting a strong gain (+19.0%) in the previous month.** Multiple-unit construction was the main reason for the growth. Newfoundland (+41.7%), BC and New Brunswick (+4.2%) were the only provinces to post gains. Nationally, the number of starts fell 4.3% in May.

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

The Economy

- **The value of building permits issued by BC municipalities rose 21.1% in April (seasonally adjusted) after declining 7.0% in the previous month.** The rise in April was partly due to a 1.9% increase in residential permits, but resulted mostly from a strong (+44.8%) jump in the non-residential sector. The value of institutional permits rose 162.8%, taking them to their highest level since June 1999. The largest component in the non-residential sector, commercial permits, also increased (+43.6%), following a 35.0% decrease in the previous month. However, industrial permits (-46.4%) were down in April. Nationally, the

Did you know...

When British Columbians buy a flavoured home-grown liqueur, it's most likely to taste of nuts. Sales of domestic nut flavoured liqueur reached 121,908 litres in the year ending March 2001. The second most popular flavour was orange (84,149 litres).

value of building permits rose 4.8%, as increases were seen in all provinces and territories except Alberta (-12.8%). The largest rises were in Yukon (+187.5%), NWT (+96.3%) and Nova Scotia (+37.5%). *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Department store sales in BC and the north rose 4.9% in April, compared to the same month in 2000.** This was the sixth consecutive monthly increase. Most other regions also saw sales rise, with the greatest gains posted in Newfoundland/Prince Edward Island (+13.6%), Alberta (+9.4%) and Saskatchewan (+8.2%). The only province to experience a decline was Nova Scotia (-3.1%). Nationally, sales were up 6.7% to \$1.5 billion. *Source: Statistics Canada*
- **The number of consumer bankruptcies in BC rose 8.0% in April, relative to the same month in 2000.** There were 744 bankruptcies in the province, compared to 689 registered twelve months previously. Across the country, consumer bankruptcies increased in all provinces and in Yukon. The number fell in NWT and remained flat in Nunavut. In total, 6,539 consumers filed for bankruptcy in April, up 612 or 10.3% over the same month last year. *Source: Industry Canada*
- **Business bankruptcies in the province rose 31.4% year-over-year in April** The number of Canadian businesses filing bankruptcy papers also increased (+15.5%). In total, 910 businesses in Canada, and 92 in BC filed papers in April. *Source: Industry Canada*
- **BC's help-wanted index (1996=100) fell 1.5% in May (seasonally adjusted and smoothed).** The index, compiled from the number of help wanted ads in 22 newspapers in 20 major metropolitan areas, gives an indication of companies' intentions to hire new workers. Declines were seen in six of the ten provinces, with the largest drops posted in Ontario (-3.8%) and Manitoba (-2.9%). Nationally, the index fell 2.4%. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Alcohol Sales

- **British Columbians are spending more on alcohol.** Sales of alcohol rose 3.4% to \$2.1 billion in the twelve months ending March 2001, compared to the previous twelve-month

period. The largest increase was seen in sales of imported beer, which rose 16.9%. Receipts from sales of spirits (+3.4%) and wine (+3.6%) also grew. The only alcoholic drink to experience a reduction in sales was cider (-1.7%).

Wine drinkers in the province preferred to buy Canadian white table wine but imported reds. Sales of domestic white wine accounted for 56% of total receipts, while red table wine accounted for 55% of total sales of BC imported wine. *Source: BC Liquor Distribution Branch data*

100 Years of Education

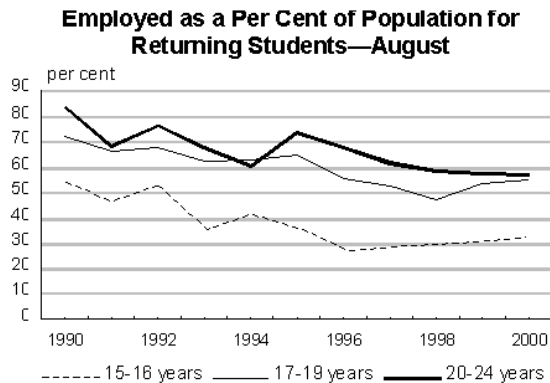
- **In 1901, about 1.1 million children in Canada were enrolled in elementary or secondary schools, but on average, only six out of ten attended on a daily basis.** Fourteen percent of the population could not read or write at all. By 1921, laws had been put in place in all provinces except Quebec making school attendance compulsory. In BC, for example, all children between 7 and 14 were obliged to attend school full-time during the school year. However, it was not uncommon for grade one students to be eight or older when they first enrolled. In 1930, one in three grade one students in Canada was at least eight years old. More than half the Canadian population aged 15 and over had less than a grade 9 education in the early 1950s. About 2% had a university degree. By 1996, the percentage of the population with less than a grade nine education had fallen to about 12%, slightly less than the number with a university degree. *Source: SC, Catalogue 81-003*
- **The first women enrolled at Canadian universities in 1880 and by the turn of the century, they made up 12% of the student body.** By 1989, women outnumbered men at Canadian universities. They now represent about half of all law and medicine graduates, compared to 5% in 1950. However, women are still less likely than men to enroll in engineering, math and sciences. *Source: SC, Catalogue 81-003*

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Summer Work

Each spring students come out of high school, colleges and universities looking for summer jobs. As they flow into the labour force their success in finding suitable work is in part related to their age and plans for the future.

This summer, students will once again be looking for work. Although the employment rates were at their lowest in 1996–1998, the trend has since turned around. The employment-population ratio for 15–24 year-olds in March 2001 is almost a full point above the March 2000 level.



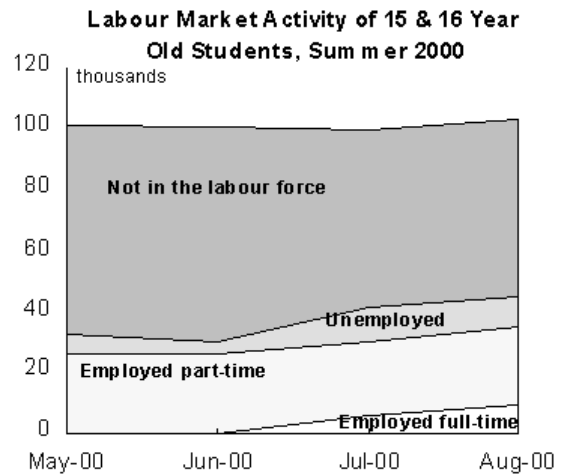
High School Youth

Fifteen and sixteen year-olds are still in school in May, but even at that time of the year a third were in the labour force, either with a job or looking for work. (In the early 1990's closer to one-half of young teenage students were in the labour force.) Almost all students with jobs were working part-time.

By June, participation rates typically decline slightly, but unemployment rates also fall. In 2000, the size of the labour force declined by 1,200 and the number of unemployed

dropped by 1,500, while the number with jobs was essentially unchanged. This movement of the unemployed out of the labour force may be related to the demands of exams.

Participation rates jump in July, typically by more than ten points. However, many of these new entrants into the labour force cannot find work immediately. In 2000, the labour force grew by almost 10,000, but employment was up only 3,500. However, a shift to full-time employment happened for about a fifth of those with jobs.

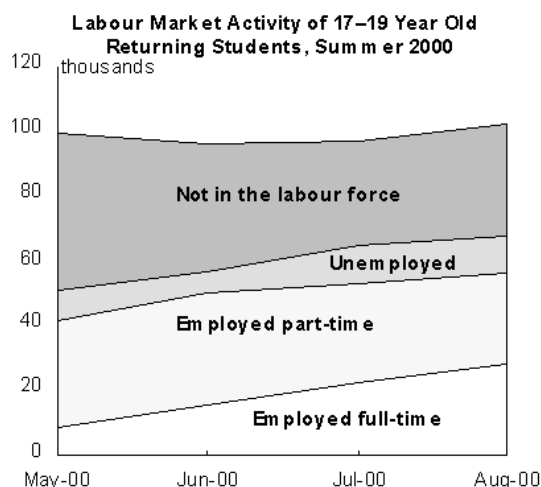


August 2000 saw an increase in employment as another 2,900 found jobs, but unemployment rates remained high.

Transition Youth

Seventeen to nineteen year-olds are in the transition period of either leaving school or going on to post-secondary education. Four-fifths of students in May 2000 indicated they would be returning to school in the fall. More than half of all students in this age range were in the labour force (the recent high was in May 1991, at two-thirds) with 4/5 of those actually working and the balance looking for work. A fifth of those working were in full-time jobs.

The participation rate in May 2000 for those not planning to return to school was about 10 points above that of returning students (62% versus 52%). Unemployment rates were considerably lower—13% for those not going back, compared with 20% for returning students.



The participation rate jumped in June to about 60% for returning students and by July/August, two-thirds were in the labour force. The unemployment rate in May for 17 to 19 year-olds had been similar to that experienced by 15 to 16 year-olds. It also declined in June (11%) but rose in July to 17% and stayed at that level in August. However, there was a significant shift from part-time to full-time employment as the number working full-time rose from 8,400 in May to 27,900 in August, almost equal to the number of those working part-time.

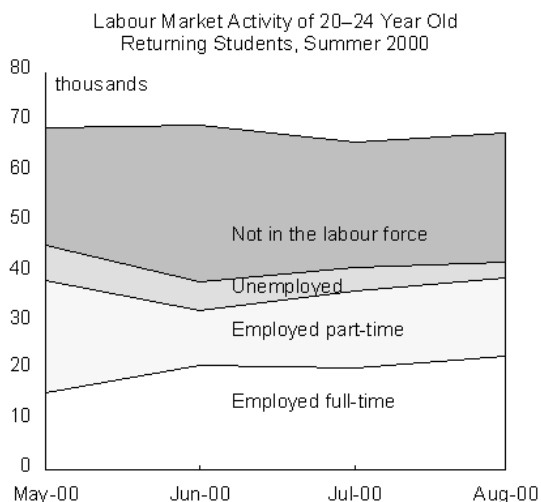
The pattern for seventeen to nineteen year-olds not planning to return to school in the fall was somewhat different. It is unlikely that most students in this group would have completed a post-secondary program. The participation rate for this group was at 62% in May and had reached 80% by August. Unemployment rates were 13% and 12% respectively for May and June, and then jumped to 19% in July as the high school portion of this population came into the labour

market. The rate then fell again in August to 13.2%.

Post Secondary Youth

Older students, from twenty to twenty-four years of age, are most likely to be enrolled in post-secondary programs. Those continuing with their studies in the fall exhibit quite different summer work patterns. Two-thirds of this group were in the labour force in May 2000, but the portion declined to just over one-half in June and settled in July and August to around 62%. Typically, participation rates move less for this group than their younger counterparts or those not returning to school.

Full-time employment accounted for 40% of the total in May and increased to between 55% and 65% through the summer.



Older students not returning to school exhibited the highest summer participation rates but also the highest unemployment rates. High unemployment among this group may be the result of students, having finished their study programs, being more discerning about the jobs they take. Employment among this group was largely full-time.

Source: All data and charts based on information from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey.

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 also on the Internet at <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca>

It's not too late



BC at a glance . . .		
POPULATION (thousands)		
	Jan 1/01	% change on one year ago
BC	4,077.4	0.7
Canada	30,714.7	0.9
GDP and INCOME		
	1999	% change on one year ago
<i>(BC - at market prices)</i>		
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (\$ millions)	118,783	4.2
GDP (\$ 1992 millions)	104,323	2.1
GDP (\$ 1992 per Capita)	25,899	1.3
Personal Disposable Income (\$ 1992 per Capita)	16,700	0.0
TRADE (\$ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Dec	3,155	-4.9
Merchandise Exports (raw) Mar	2,973	9.5
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Mar	3,099	5.8
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		
<i>(all items - 1992=100)</i>	Apr '01	% change on one year ago
BC	115.0	2.3
Canada	116.4	3.6
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		
<i>(seasonally adjusted)</i>	May '01	% change on one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,118	1.0
Employed - BC	1,974	1.2
Unemployed - BC	144	-0.7
	May '00	
Unemployment Rate - BC (percent)	6.8	6.9
Unemployment Rate - Canada (percent)	7.0	6.7
INTEREST RATES (percent)	June 6/01	June 7/00
Prime Business Rate	6.25	7.50
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.70	8.10
- 5 year	7.75	8.45
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	June 6/01	June 7/00
<i>(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn \$</i>	1.5246	1.4784
<i>US \$ (reciprocal of the closing rate)</i>	0.6554	0.6761
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE		
<i>(industrial aggregate - dollars)</i>	May '01	% change on one year ago
BC	649.78	2.2
Canada	635.08	3.8
SOURCES:		
Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Wage Rate	} Statistics	
	} Canada	
Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics		
For latest Weekly Financial Statistics see www.bank-banque-canada.ca/english/wfsngen.htm		

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