

## highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

### *The Economy*

- **The number of consumer bankruptcies in BC rose 14.5% in May, year-over-year, the fifth straight month to see an increase.** There were 892 bankruptcies in the province, compared with 779 registered twelve months previously. Across the country, consumer bankruptcies rose in seven provinces. The only places to see declines were Prince Edward Island (-50.0%), Alberta (-16.1%), and Manitoba (-2.8%). In total, 7,199 consumers across Canada filed for bankruptcy in May, up 384 or 5.6% over the same month last year.  
*Source: Industry Canada*

- **Business bankruptcies in the province fell 10.0% year-over-year in May.** Along with Quebec (-12.1%) and Saskatchewan (-5.6%), BC was one of only three provinces to record a decline. The number of Canadian businesses overall filing bankruptcy papers increased 5.0%. In total, 942 businesses in Canada, and 90 in BC filed papers in May.  
*Source: Industry Canada*

- **Average weekly earnings in British Columbia increased 19.6% between 1991 and 2000.** The typical BC worker earned \$550.68 a week in 1991, compared to \$658.35 in 2000. Last year, the highest paid workers were employed in the mining, oil and gas extraction industries, where average earnings were \$1,168.94. By contrast, the lowest weekly earnings went to those working in the retail trade sector (\$461.92).

BC's workers earned slightly more per week than the national average of \$653.55 in 2000. However, earnings were higher in Northwest Territories and Nunavut (\$850.78), Yukon (\$743.43), Ontario (\$697.92) and Alberta (\$665.05). The lowest paid employees in the country were found in PEI, where the average weekly earnings were \$519.22.

*Source: SC Catalogue 72F0023XIB*

### *Public Sector Employment*

- **There were 365,172 public sector employees in BC in the first quarter of 2001, up 1.8% on the same quarter of 2000.** The number of general government jobs rose at both the federal (+3.8%) and provincial (+3.5%) levels. Employment in BC's universities and colleges (+5.4%) also increased, as did the number employed by school boards (+2.7%) and in local general government (+1.5%). Fewer jobs, however, were seen in the province's crown corporations (-1.7%), and health and social service institutions (-0.9%).

Public sector employment rose in most parts of the country compared to the first quarter of 2000, increasing 1.1% in Canada overall. The largest rises were seen in Nunavut (+15.5%), Northwest Territories (+3.8%) and PEI (+2.5%). The only provinces in which public sector employment decreased during the quarter were Nova Scotia (-2.0%) and Newfoundland (-1.5%).

*Source: Statistics Canada, Public Institutions Division*

### *Housing*

- **The number of housing starts in British Columbia increased for the third straight month in June, rising 8.6% (seasonally adjusted).** Gains were posted in all but two of the country's provinces: PEI (-20.0%) and Newfoundland (-5.9%). The largest increase occurred in Saskatchewan, where the number of housing starts jumped 69.2% following two months of declines. Nationally, the number of starts rose 13.7%.

*Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation*

- **New housing prices in Vancouver rose in May this year for the first time since May 1994 (year-over-year).** The new housing price index in the city crept up 0.1% to 83.5 (1992=100) between April and May. The increase occurred as

**Did you know...**

**The median age of private rental accommodation in BC is 31 years, and most (61.3%) were built between 1951 and 1980.**

the cost of contractor's selling prices for housing rose (+0.1%). Land prices in the city remained unchanged. New housing in Victoria also increased (+0.4%) for the third consecutive month, as a decrease in land prices (-1.5%) was more than offset by a rise in house prices (+1.5%).

Of the 21 urban centres surveyed in Canada, only 2 saw a fall in the cost of new housing in May. The largest decrease was in the Sudbury-Thunder Bay area (-1.7%), followed by Windsor (-0.1%). The largest increase occurred in Ottawa-Hull (+15.2%). Nationally, the cost of new housing rose 2.6% compared to the previous year. *Source: Statistics Canada*

### **Private Education**

- **The proportion of students enrolled in private elementary and secondary schools in BC is increasing.** In 1987/88 7.0% of children attended private schools (including those affiliated with religious or linguistic groups, or specialising in education to the learning disabled or gifted). By 1998/99 the percentage had risen to 8.8%. BC had the second highest proportion of all provinces and territories, behind Quebec, where 9.2% attended private schools in 1998/99. Over the 12-year period between 1987/88 and 1998/99, the percentage of children in private education increased in most provinces. Only New Brunswick and Saskatchewan saw a decline during this time. Nationally, 4.6% of children attended private schools in 1987/88, rising to 5.6% in 1998/99.

*Source: Statistics Canada*

### **Television Viewing**

- **BC's younger children watch less TV than those in the rest of the country.** Children aged 2-11 in the province watched an average of 13.1 hours of television per week in the fall of 1999, less than in any other province. Children in PEI spent the longest time in front of the TV, watching an average 5.9 more hours per week than children in BC. Nationally, the average was 15.5 hours. BC's teenagers (ages 12-17) spent 14.5 hours per week watching television: 1.4 more hours per week than their younger brothers and sisters. Overall, viewers of all ages in BC watched 20.7 hours of television per week, less than the Canadian average of 21.6, but more than Alberta (19.6), Manitoba (20.3) and Ontario (20.5). *Source: SC, Catalogue 87-004*

### **Alcohol Sales**

- **British Columbians (aged 15 and over) bought an average of 99.3 litres of alcoholic beverages each in 1999/2000.** Most alcohol was bought in the form of beer (77.8 litres), with only 13.9 litres of wine, and 7.3 litres of spirits purchased on average, per-capita. Drinkers in the province bought more wine and spirits than the national averages of 11.7 and 6.3 litres, respectively. However, per capita sales of beer in BC were 7.7 litres below the national average of 85.5 litres.

The average amount that drinkers in the province spent on alcoholic beverages in a year increased 0.7% between 1998/99 and 1999/00 from \$543.60 to \$547.30. In both years, this was more than the national average of \$509.00 in 1998/99 and \$529.80 in 1999/00. The highest per capita spending in 1999/00 occurred in Yukon (\$924.80), followed by Northwest Territories (\$754.60) and Newfoundland (\$604.10).

*Source: SC Catalogue63-202*

### **Internet Use**

- **British Columbian men are more likely to use the internet than males anywhere else in the country.** A total of 65.7% of men, aged 15 and over in the province, were internet users last year, compared to a national average of 56.1%. More than half of BC's women also logged on (56.8%), a greater proportion than in all other provinces except Alberta, where 57.3% of females used the internet. Not surprisingly, internet use was highest among BC's younger crowd, with 91.6% of 15-24 year olds connecting to the net. The proportion of users also decreased with age. Only 27.5% of users were aged 55 and over. *Source: SC Catalogue 56-505-XIE*

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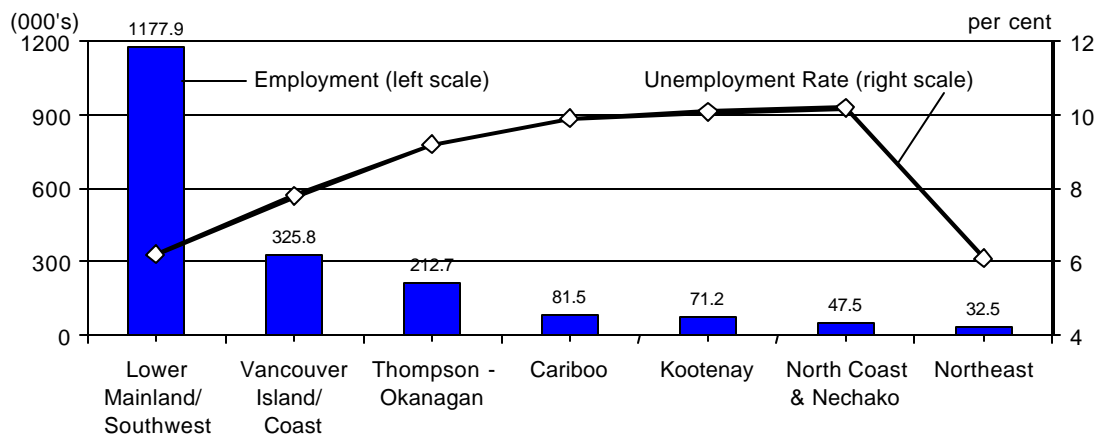
## B.C. Regional Labour Market Trends — 1995 to 2000

**Introduction . . .** Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) uses economic regions to report subprovincial labour force data. In 1995 they were revised to match B.C.'s development regions used by the province for administrative and statistical purposes. B.C. has eight regions ranging from the Lower Mainland/Southwest region where 59.2 per cent of B.C.'s population resides, to the Northeast region which, while large in area, contains only 1.5 per cent of the province's population. For LFS reporting, the regions of North Coast and Nechako have been combined and are reported together.

Unemployment rates in 2000 were generally the lowest in the most populous regions of Lower Mainland/Southwest and Vancouver Island/Coast and were highest in the more rural and northerly regions of B.C. The exception is the Northeast region, which had the lowest unemployment rate in the province. The Northeast region historically has had below average unemployment rates, partly reflecting their diversity of industry sectors within goods, as well as services.

**Regional Employment Growth . . .** Figure 2 shows employment growth over the period 1995 to 2000 and also a one-year comparison from 1999 to 2000. Over the five-year period, the Lower Mainland/Southwest, Thompson-Okanagan and Vancouver Island/Coast regions had the fastest employment growth, while the rest of the provincial regions had flat or declining employment. Looking at the one-year change from 1999 to 2000, there is recent evidence of continuing strong employment growth in the Lower Mainland/Southwest and Thompson-Okanagan, but a drop in employment in the Vancouver Island/Coast region. The Northeast, North Coast & Nechako and Kootenay regions showed positive employment growth between 1999 and 2000 and, in the case of the first two regions, reversed declines in previous years. The Cariboo region continues to show further employment level declines that started in 1996.

**Figure 1: Employment Levels and Unemployment Rates in B.C. Development Regions—2000**



**Figure 2: B.C. Regional Employment Growth and Employment Rate**

	<i>Employment Change (%)</i>		<i>Employment/Population Ratio (%)</i>		
	<i>1995-2000</i>	<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>
Vancouver Island/Coast	5.1	-1.0	57.5	58.7	57.9
Lower Mainland/Southwest	11.6	3.3	62.2	60.7	61.5
Thompson-Okanagan	9.2	2.7	55.4	55.1	56.0
Kootenay	2.2	2.4	59.3	56.7	57.8
Cariboo	1.4	-1.7	63.8	62.2	60.7
North Coast & Nechako	-3.3	1.7	65.9	62.2	63.7
Northeast	-0.6	5.5	71.4	64.6	67.8
<b>British Columbia</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>60.7</b>	<b>59.7</b>	<b>60.2</b>

Figure 2 also shows employment/population ratios (employment rate) for 1995, 1999 and 2000. Comparing 1995 to 2000, employment rates have declined in all but one development region in B.C. Despite these declines since 1995, the year 2000 showed some improvement with employment rates rising from 1999 in all but two regions. In 2000, the highest employment rates were in the northern regions and the Lower Mainland/Southwest region.

**Regional Unemployment Rates . . .** Figure 3 shows unemployment rates by region for 1995, 1999 and 2000. Between 1995 and 1999, unemployment rates declined in the three most urban regions of Lower Mainland/Southwest, Vancouver Island/Coast and Thompson-Okanagan, but increased in the rural and northern regions. In 2000, a nota-

ble reversal occurred in the Cariboo and Northeast regions which show a marked decrease in unemployment rates between 1999 and 2000 of some 2 percentage points. Yet in the case of the Cariboo, this change partly resulted from a drop in labour force participation.

Figure 3 shows that labour force participation between 1995 and 2000 declined in every region of B.C. Much of this decline relates to youth whose increased participation in schooling has pulled back aggregate labour force participation rates. Comparing 2000 to 1999, labour force participation increased in four of the regions.

**Regional Employment by Industry . . .** Overall, employment in both the goods and services sectors of B.C. increased between 1995 and 2000. While services-sector em-

**Figure 3: B.C. Regional Unemployment Rates and LF Participation Rates**

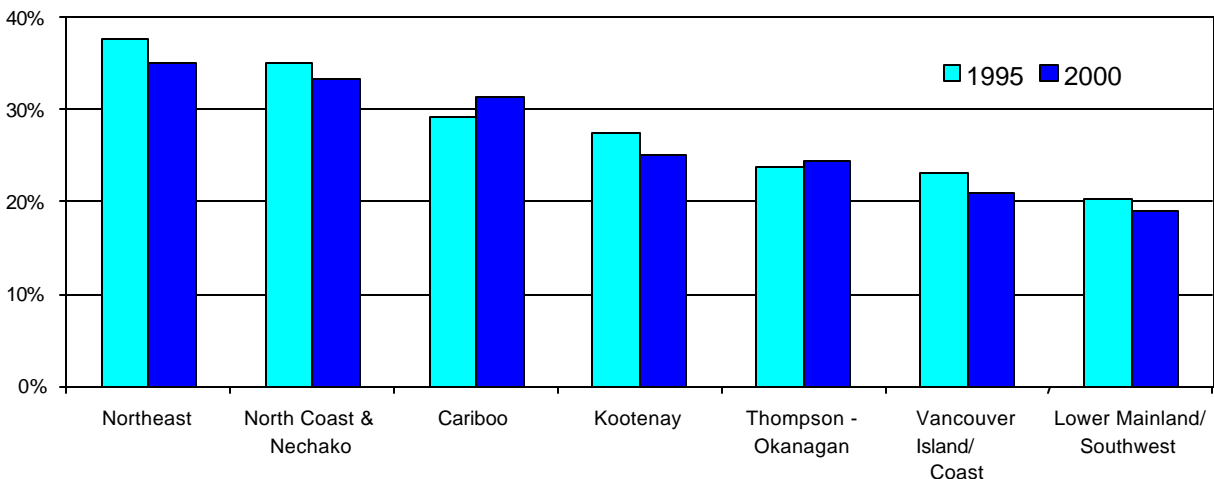
	<i>Unemployment Rate (%)</i>			<i>Labour Force Participation Rate (%)</i>		
	<i>1995</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>
Vancouver Island/Coast	9.2	8.0	7.8	63.3	63.8	62.8
Lower Mainland/Southwest	7.9	7.8	6.2	67.6	65.9	65.6
Thompson-Okanagan	10.2	9.7	9.2	61.7	61.1	61.6
Kootenay	8.0	9.0	10.1	64.5	62.3	64.3
Cariboo	9.7	11.6	9.9	70.6	70.5	67.4
North Coast & Nechako	8.2	8.8	10.2	71.7	68.2	70.9
Northeast	6.6	8.9	6.1	76.4	70.9	72.2
<b>British Columbia</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>66.3</b>	<b>65.1</b>	<b>64.9</b>

ployment grew or held steady in six out of seven regions over that period, goods-sector employment grew in only three regions: Lower Mainland/ Southwest, Thompson-Okanagan and the Cariboo.

Figure 4 shows that the share of goods-sector employment to total employment declined in five regions between 1995 and 2000. The Northeast region has the largest share of goods-sector employment at 35.1 per cent in 2000 down from 37.6 per cent. In

the Cariboo region, increases in employment in primary goods and agriculture boosted the share of goods-sector employment to over 30 per cent. In the Thompson-Okanagan region, employment in manufacturing increased the region's overall goods-sector employment share. The Lower Mainland/Southwest region had the smallest share of goods-sector employment at just 18.9 per cent of total employment in 2000, reflecting the diverse and very large services sector in Greater Vancouver.

**Figure 4: Goods Sector Employment as a Share of Total Employment by Development Region, 1995 and 2000**



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

BC at a glance . . .		
<b>POPULATION (thousands)</b>		% change on one year ago
	Apr 1/01	
BC	4,087.2	0.8
Canada	30,949.9	0.9
<b>GDP and INCOME</b>		% change on one year ago
<i>(BC - at market prices)</i>	1999	
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
<b>TRADE (\$ millions)</b>		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Dec	3,155	-4.9
Merchandise Exports (raw) Apr	3,330	27.3
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Apr	3,072	4.6
<b>CONSUMER PRICE INDEX</b>		% change on one year ago
<i>(all items - 1992=100)</i>	May '01	
BC	115.6	2.5
Canada	117.4	3.9
<b>LABOUR FORCE (thousands)</b>		% change on one year ago
<i>(seasonally adjusted)</i>	Jun '01	
Labour Force - BC	2,105	0.6
Employed - BC	1,957	0.4
Unemployed - BC	148	3.9
		Jun '00
Unemployment Rate - BC (percent)	7.0	6.8
Unemployment Rate - Canada (percent)	7.0	6.6
<b>INTEREST RATES (percent)</b>	July 11/01	July 12/00
Prime Business Rate	6.25	7.50
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.70	7.90
- 5 year	7.75	8.25
<b>US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE</b>	July 11/01	July 12/00
<i>(avg. noon spot rate)</i> Cdn \$	1.5248	1.4810
US \$ <i>(reciprocal of the closing rate)</i>	0.6556	0.6755
<b>AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE</b>		% change on one year ago
<i>(industrial aggregate - dollars)</i>	Jun '01	
BC	649.40	2.8
Canada	634.36	3.8
<b>SOURCES:</b>		
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 <a href="http://www.bank-banque-canada.ca/english/wfsgen.htm">www.bank-banque-canada.ca/english/wfsgen.htm</a>		

## Email service

Thank you to all who have submitted requests for conversion to electronic delivery. Our current schedule is to have the service activated in the second half of August. Please be patient.

### Released this week by BC STATS

- Labour Force Statistics, June 2001

### Next week

- No subscription releases