

- Unemployment rate reaches 7.4% in March
- Building permits soar 86.5% in February
- Housing starts in the province down 13.0% in March

Labour Force

- **British Columbia's jobless rate reached 7.4% (seasonally adjusted) in March, the highest it has been in nearly five years (June 2004).** The increase in the unemployment rate was brought about as a result of a seventh consecutive monthly decrease (-1.0%) in the number of people employed.

Nationally, unemployment rose to 8.0%, its highest point in seven years. Employment fell in most provinces, ranging from a slight 0.1% dip in Quebec to a much sharper 1.0% drop in British Columbia. Only Newfoundland & Labrador (+0.9%) and Prince Edward Island (+0.1%) saw employment increase in March.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **More than 21,000 jobs were shed from the goods sectors in British Columbia, as construction (-7.9%), manufacturing (-3.9%) and forestry, fishing & mining (-2.6%) all reduced the size of their workforces.** Service sector employment was off only 0.1% with significant job losses in the finance, real estate & insurance (-5.7%) and information, culture & recreation (-4.5%) industries. These losses were nearly offset by gains in transportation (+3.1%) and accommodation & food service (+4.5%).

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Regional employment continued to wane in March sending unemployment rates higher.** Northeast had the lowest jobless rate in the province despite rising 1.9 percentage points to 6.5% (3-month moving average, unadjusted). Vancouver Island/Coast's labour force remained

virtually unchanged. However, employment in the region fell (-1.0%), putting the unemployment rate at 6.8%. In Mainland/Southwest, the number of people looking for work expanded (+0.3%) while the number of available jobs shrank (-0.5%) pushing joblessness to 6.6%.

Cariboo saw its largest recorded monthly decrease in employment (-4.4%) while North Coast/Nechako posted its seventh consecutive monthly drop in employment (-2.5%). Kootenay's unemployment inched up to 8.9% and in Thompson/Okanagan the jobless rate increased to 9.1%.

Joblessness continued to increase in the province's largest urban centres with both Vancouver (6.3%) and Victoria (5.5%) registering higher unemployment rates (3-month moving average, unadjusted).

Data Source: Statistics Canada

The Economy

- **The value of BC exports rose 7.1% (seasonally adjusted) in February, the highest month-over-month growth since May of last year.** Exports to the US inched up 0.6%, ending a downturn that began last November. The increase in US-bound exports was fuelled by strength in forestry (+4.0%), agriculture & fish (+2.3%) and industrial & consumer (+2.0%) products. Shipments to other countries jumped 15.2% February, with double-digit gains in energy (+42.8%).

Canadian exports climbed 5.2% in February, as most principal commodity groups posted

Did you know...

In 2008, an average of 3.2 million hens laid 66 million dozen eggs in British Columbia.

Source: Statistics Canada

gains, most notably among machinery & equipment (+8.4%) and automotive (+19.8%) products.

Data Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats

- **Housing starts in the province fell 13.0% (seasonally adjusted) in March, marking the sixth consecutive month of declines.** Starts of single-detached dwellings in urban areas of the province were down moderately (-3.1%), while there was a more notable decline (-13.5%) in multiple-unit construction.

Nationally, housing starts were up (+13.7%) for the first time since August of 2008. Ontario (+32.7%), Quebec (+17.7%) and parts of Atlantic Canada posted substantial growth in new building activity, but starts remained weak in Western Canada.

Data Source: CMHC

- **New housing prices continued to fall in BC's largest metropolitan areas in February.** In Victoria, the New Housing Price Index was 5.8% lower compared to the same month of 2008 as both housing (-8.8%) and land (-0.4%) costs declined. A slight increase in land prices (+0.4%) in Vancouver was not enough to offset a double-digit slip in the cost of building (-10.4%) as new housing prices dropped 6.1% overall.

Nationally, new housing prices were off 1.8%, reflecting substantive declines in BC and Alberta. Most metropolitan areas in other provinces experienced higher new housing prices in February, with St. John's (+20.5%), Regina (+14.7%) and Quebec (+8.0%) leading the pack.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **The value of building permits issued by BC municipalities soared (+86.5% seasonally adjusted) in February, a significant turnaround from January's pace (-7.2%) and the first monthly increase since August.** Permits for residential projects jumped 78.9%, while permits for other types of buildings were even higher (+95.0%). Planned spending on institutional projects surged (+167.6%) and permits for commercial (+88.3%) and industrial (+52.5%) buildings also grew. The value

of permits nearly quadrupled in Victoria (+261.0%) and more than doubled in Vancouver (+137.0%), where most of the province's building activity occurs. Abbotsford (+60.3%) also saw permits rise, but building intentions in Kelowna (-46.5%) eased.

The national picture was not as promising, as permits declined by 15.9%, pulled down substantially by slowdowns in Ontario (-38.2%) and Quebec (-18.0%). Permits also slipped in Saskatchewan (-43.5%), Alberta (-11.2%) and Nova Scotia (-3.8%), while planned spending was up in many other parts of the country, including Manitoba (+7.6%) and the remaining Atlantic provinces.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **During the first two months of 2009, the value of building permits issued in the province dropped 45.9% below the level in the same period of last year.** Investment intentions were down in every region, including Mainland/Southwest (-49.6%), where planned spending on residential (-62.4%), industrial (-28.2%) and commercial (-18.7%) projects plummeted. Overall permits also declined substantially in Vancouver Island/Coast (-16.3%), albeit not as significantly as other regions, such as North Coast (-81.1%), Nechako (-78.1%) and Northeast (-68.0%).

The Nation

- **In 2008, foreign direct investment in Canada edged up 3.0%, while Canadian direct investment abroad increased (+24.0%).** Foreign investment in Canadian securities hovered around the half-trillion mark (\$504.9 billion) last year, up \$13.6 billion from 2007. The weakening Canadian dollar raised the value of existing investments abroad, causing Canadian investment in foreign securities to jump (+\$82.8 billion to \$637.3 billion). On a year-over-year basis, the Canadian dollar lost ground against the US dollar (-19%) and to a slightly lesser extent, the Euro (-15%).

Data Source: Statistics Canada

Infoline Issue: 09-14
April 9th, 2009

Labour Market Participation of Persons with Disabilities

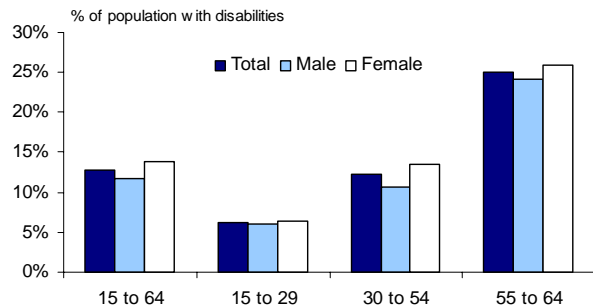
Introduction

Statistics Canada recently released the results of the Participation and Activity Limitations Survey (PALS) 2006. PALS is a post-censal survey that uses the 2006 Census to identify adults and children in the population who have a disability, that is, those who experience limitations in everyday activities because of a condition or health problem. PALS also has additional filter questions to confirm the respondent's disability status. This article will look at the prevalence of disability for the BC's working age population (15 to 64), the types and severity of disabilities experienced and the labour market outcomes of these individuals. For selected measures, comparisons will also be made to the 2001 PALS survey. As there were some minor changes to the sampling methodology in 2006, where comparisons occur, the 2006 results will use the 2001 sample frame.

Prevalence of Disability in BC

In 2006, 12.8% (or 355,430 persons) of the working age population in BC indicated they had a disability. It is apparent that disabilities become more common with age, ranging from a low of 6.3% of those between the ages of 15 and 29 to a high of 25.1% among those aged 55 to 64. Intuitively, this makes sense since most disabilities will last for the rest of a person's life, and more of each age group will develop disabilities as they age. As well, women report higher rates of disability than men both overall and within each age category.

Women report higher rates of disability than men

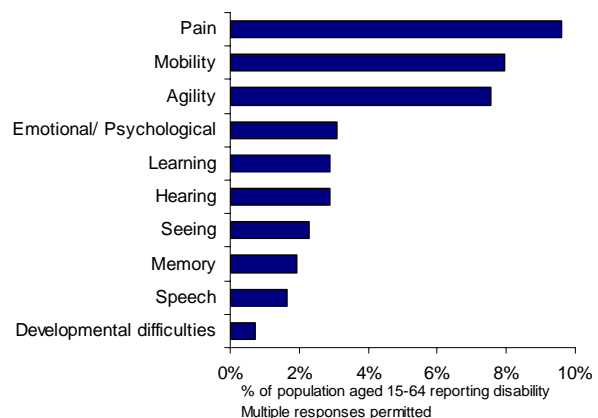


Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006

Types of Disabilities

The most common types of disabilities among the working age population were those related to mobility/activity limitations, including pain (9.6%), mobility (8.0%) and agility (7.5%). Psychological, learning and hearing difficulties were the next most prevalent disabilities. Many of those who have disabilities often experience more than one type of limitation.

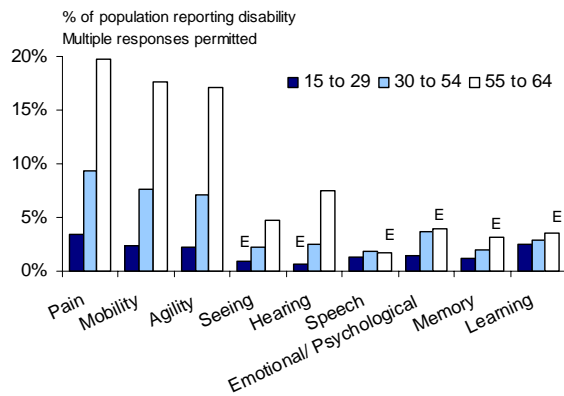
Mobility and activity limitations are the most common disabilities



Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006

Not only does the rate of disability increase with age, almost all types of disability also increase with age. The only exception is developmental disabilities, which by definition should be identified early in life and remain unchanged unless undiagnosed. Disabilities associated with prolonged use of the body increase sharply with age and most were more prevalent among women than men—the exceptions were hearing and learning disabilities being more common among men aged 15 to 64 than among women.

Almost all disabilities investigated increase with age¹



Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006

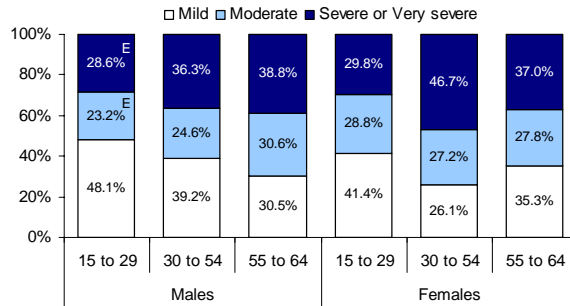
Severity of Disability

The level of severity for disabilities is a calculated measure based on the average level of severity for individual disabilities. The severity of an individual disability is based upon the frequency and intensity of the limitation. Thus, the overall severity is increased by the presence of multiple disabilities of varying severities or one very limiting disability.

More than one-third (33.9%) of those with disabilities experienced mild limitations, while 39.0% indicated they had a severe or

very severe limitation. Men more often reported mild disabilities compared to women (37.3% vs. 31.1%, respectively); however, the life-stage pattern varies considerably between men and women.

Mild disabilities are more common among men than women



Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006

While men in each age category reported lower rates of disability compared to women, those with disabilities more often also reported they had a mild disability compared to women, although as age increases more and more men reported a greater severity of disability. On the other hand, women indicated significantly fewer mild disabilities among those aged 30 to 54 compared to both the older and younger cohorts, with virtually all of the difference occurring at the highest levels of severity.

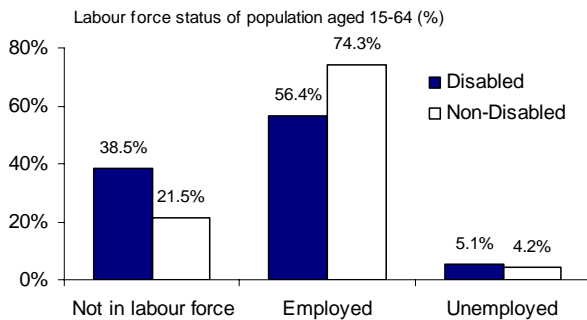
Labour Market Outcomes

It is important to note that the age distribution of disabled persons is very different compared to the non-disabled population, with disabled persons being significantly older on average. Consequently, the labour force characteristics of these two groups will be different; therefore, all rates presented for the population with disabilities have been age standardized to the age distribution of the non-disabled population.

¹ Note: E—Use with caution, F—Too unreliable to publish, X—Suppressed to protect confidentiality

In 2006², there were 355,430 disabled persons between 15 and 64 years of age in BC, of which 136,720 were not in the labour force and 18,060 were unemployed. Disabled persons were significantly more often not in the labour force compared to those without disabilities (38.5% vs. 21.5%, respectively).

Disabled persons are more often not taking part in the labour market compared to the non-disabled



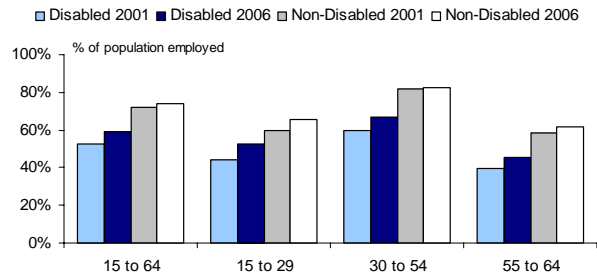
Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006

Employment Rate

The employment rate of persons with a disability was significantly lower than the rate for those without a disability in both 2001 (52.6% vs. 72.0%, respectively) and 2006 (59.1% vs. 74.3%, respectively), especially when looked at by age. The gap between disabled and non-disabled persons widens as age increases, despite the employment rate declining for the oldest age category for both groups. However, between 2001 and 2006 the gap between disabled and non-disabled persons has narrowed for each age category. This reflects an increasing proportion of the disabled population participating in the labour force, which is in line with the increase seen for the non-disabled population in recent years.

² Using 2001 sample frame

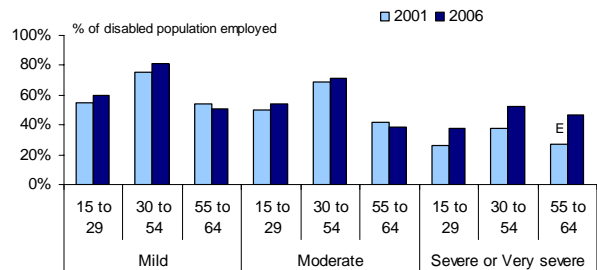
A gap in the employment rate widens between disabled and non-disabled persons as they age; however, the gap has narrowed since 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006 and 2001

The employment rate for those with severe or very severe disabilities increased the most compared to the other severities of disabilities between 2001 and 2006. Interestingly, although the employment rate for those between the ages of 55 and 64 with a severe or very severe disability increased the most compared to the other age and severity groupings, this was the only age group to experience a decline in employment for the other levels of severity.

Between 2001 and 2006 those with severe or very severe disabilities made the greatest strides in employment

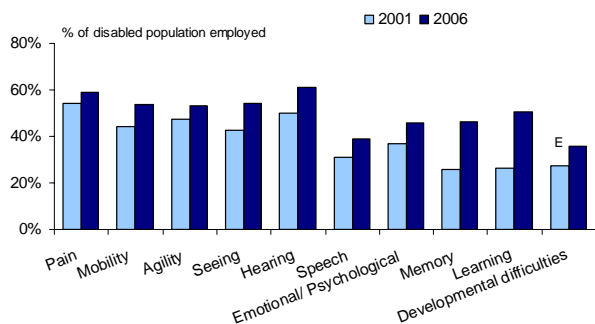


Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006 and 2001

When the employment rate is examined by the type of disability it becomes apparent that it has improved greatly for some and not for others. Perhaps because of increasing availability of assistive technologies and with the advent of computer software and hardware price decreases those with learning and memory disabilities experienced the largest increases in the employment rate.

Persons with developmental difficulties and speech limitations were the furthest below the average employment rate.

Increases in employment between 2001 and 2006 vary considerably for some disabilities



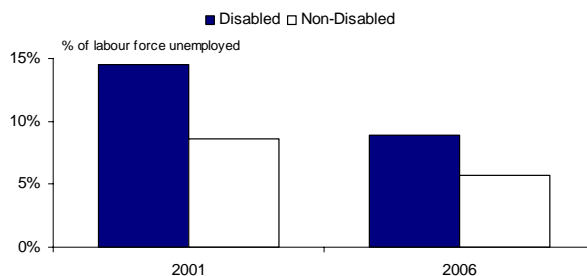
Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006 and 2001

Unemployment Rate

Although the proportion who were unemployed among the disabled and non-disabled population were relatively similar (5.1% vs. 4.2%, respectively), this does not show the proportion of those actively working or seeking work who are unable to find employment.

The unemployment rate fell between 2001 and 2006 both overall and for persons with disabilities. More importantly, the gap narrowed between those with and without disabilities by approximately half. The decline among persons with disabilities was not due to these persons dropping out of the labour force, as the proportion not in the labour force also declined from 41.2% to 38.5%.

The unemployment rate gap between disabled and non-disabled persons nearly halved since 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, PALS 2006 and 2001

Looking to the Future

The employment rate is useful for revealing the proportion of the population of interest that is working and the unemployment rate looks at those who are willing to participate but unable to find work. These rates cannot adequately profile those who are unable to work because of their limitation. Unfortunately, this aspect of labour market outcomes is beyond the scope of this article.

However, BC Stats has ordered custom data from the 2001 and 2006 Participation and Activity Limitations Surveys and is commencing work on a more comprehensive profile of persons with disabilities in BC, with comparisons to Canada and the western provinces. Beyond an in-depth look at those with disabilities and their labour market outcomes contrasted to those without disabilities, the profile aims to shed some light on the reasons persons with disabilities have differing labour market outcomes compared to those without disabilities. Some of the issues that will be explored in detail include educational attainment, limitations and barriers to employment, training in the workplace, workplace accommodations that are required for labour force participation, and accommodations that have been provided by employers among the employed.

