Labour Force Statistics Highlights

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The unemployment rate increased 2.2 percentage points to 7.2%.
The participation rate decreased 2.1 percentage points to 62.4%.
The employment rate decreased 3.3 percentage points to 57.9%.

B.C. Highlights

The unemployment rate in British Columbia was 7.2% in March, up 2.2 percentage points from February and 2.5 percentage points higher than 12 months ago. Overall in March, the labour force contracted (-80,400), while the number of jobs decreased (-132,400). Compared to March 2019, there were 151,000 fewer positions and 90,100 fewer individuals in the labour force.

In March, there were 56,900 fewer full-time jobs and 75,500 fewer part-time jobs. There were full-time job losses across all age groups, with those aged 25 to 54 (-31,700 or -2.3%), 55 and over (-17,100 or -4.1%), and 15 to 24 (-8,100 or -4.6%) all affected. A large number of part-time jobs lost were among those aged 15 to 24 (-42,300 or -25.6%), with fewer positions as well for those aged 25 to 54 (-20,100 or -8.9%) and 55 and over (-13,300 or -8.7%).

The private sector (-134,000) saw a large decrease in employment in March. There were fewer public sector positions (-5,700) as well, while the number of self-employed individuals increased (+7,400) compared to February.

Provincial Comparisons

At 7.2%, British Columbia’s unemployment rate was the second lowest in Canada for the month of March, trailing only Manitoba (6.4%). The next lowest unemployment rate was in Saskatchewan (7.3%) and Ontario (7.6%). Alberta (8.7%) had the seventh lowest rate.

National Highlights

Across Canada, employment decreased, with 1,010,700 fewer positions in March. The unemployment rate was 7.8% in March, up from 5.6% in February and 5.7% twelve months ago.

Gender

In March, employment in British Columbia for men (aged 25 years and over) decreased by 31,300, while the size of the labour force contracted (-22,100).

Note: All labour force statistics are seasonally adjusted, unless otherwise indicated.
Accordingly, the unemployment rate for men was up from 4.3% in February to 5.1%.

For women (aged 25 years and over), there were 50,800 fewer jobs in March, while there were 29,900 fewer individuals in the labour force. As a result, the unemployment rate for women was 6.6%, an increase from 4.5% in February.

Compared to March 2019, the unemployment rate for men was up 1.6 percentage points to 5.1%, while the rate for women increased 2.5 percentage points to 6.6%. Jobs for men decreased by 27,700 (-2.4%) from twelve months ago, while employment for women decreased by 64,300 (-6.1%).

**Youth Aged 15 to 24 Years**

The unemployment rate for youth aged 15 to 24 years was 16.1% in March, up from 9.1% the previous month. Total employment decreased by 50,300, while 28,400 individuals left the labour force. There fewer full-time (-8,100) and part-time (-42,300) positions.

Compared to March 2019, the unemployment rate for youth was up 6.1 percentage points to 16.1%.

**Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs)**

In March, Vancouver (-117,300 or -8.0%), Victoria (-8,400 or -4.2%), Kelowna (-4,300 or -4.2%), and Abbotsford-Mission (-2,500 or -2.5%) all saw decreases in employment from February. Employment in the areas outside the CMAs (+100 or +0.0%) was relatively unchanged.

**Industry**

Employment in the goods-producing sector was up (+500 or +0.1%) in March. The job gains in agriculture (+3,800 or +14.1%), manufacturing (+2,700 or +1.7%), and utilities (+700 or +4.7%) offset losses in the construction (-6,200 or -2.6%) and forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas (-500 or -1.3%) industries. In the twelve months to March, employment in the goods-producing sector declined by 6,900 (-1.4%).

In March, overall employment for the services-producing sector declined (-133,000 or -6.5%) from the previous month. Among the service industries, wholesale and retail trade (-40,100 or -9.9%) posted the largest decrease, followed by accommodation and food services (-36,400 or -18.7%), information, culture and recreation (-16,800 or -14.2%), and business, building and other support services (-10,800 or -9.8%). Public administration (+1,600 or +1.4%) was the only industry to add positions in March. On a year over year basis, there were 144,200 (-7.0%) fewer services-producing sector positions.

[Visit the Labour Market Statistics page](#) for detailed data tables and other resources.

**Did You Know?**

The March release of the Labour Force Survey is the first in which the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak is clearly visible. The data in this release correspond to the reference period of March 15 to 21. In March, to ensure the safety of both interviewers and respondents, all interviews were conducted over the phone or with an electronic questionnaire.

From April 3 to 16, Statistics Canada is collecting data on the impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians. All Canadians living in the 10 provinces and 3 territories can participate by completing a short online questionnaire. To find out more and to participate, visit the [online platform](#).
British Columbia Unemployment Rates
March 2020 - Unadjusted, 3 Month Moving Average

British Columbia 5.9%
(7.2% SA, Monthly)

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey