

Demographics

Youth Employment Opportunities

with Christian Saint Cyr, Publisher, BC Labour Market Report

**BCLMR
ONLINE**

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Youth Employment

What Is Happening in B.C.'s Youth Labour Market?

Economic Perspectives Jun 1, 2026 • Written By Jairo Yunis

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Figure 1 Since 2019, B.C.'s youth population surged while employment declined

B.C. youth population and employment, ages 15 to 24
thousands, 12-month moving average, 1977-2026

Year	Population (thousands)	Employment (thousands)
December 2019	607k	370k
March 2026 (Projected)	673k	349k

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Figure 2 Most young British Columbians who left employment stopped looking for work entirely

Change in B.C. youth by labour force status, ages 15 to 24
thousands, January 2019 – March 2026

Labour Force Status	Change (thousands)
Population	+58k
Employment	-51k
Unemployment	+23k
Not in labour force	+85k

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Figure 3 Youth participation has fallen to its lowest level in a quarter century

B.C. youth labour force participation rates, ages 15 to 24
per cent, 12-month moving average, 1977-2026

Year	Participation Rate (per cent)
1977	~67
1984	~70
1991	75
1998	~62
December 2001	60
2005	~63
2012	~63
2019	~65
2026	60

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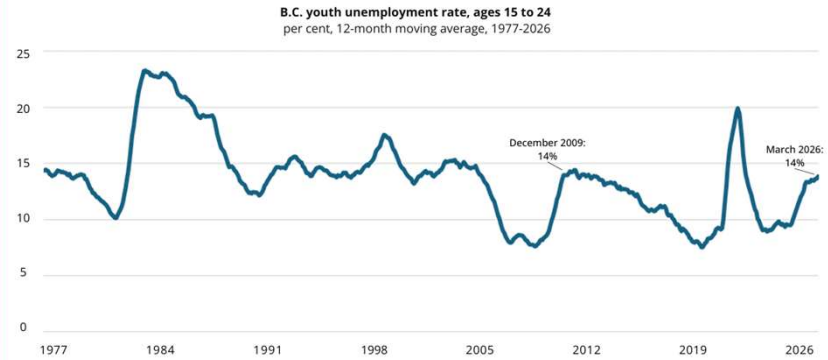
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Figure 4 Outside of the pandemic, youth unemployment has climbed to levels not seen since the global financial crisis



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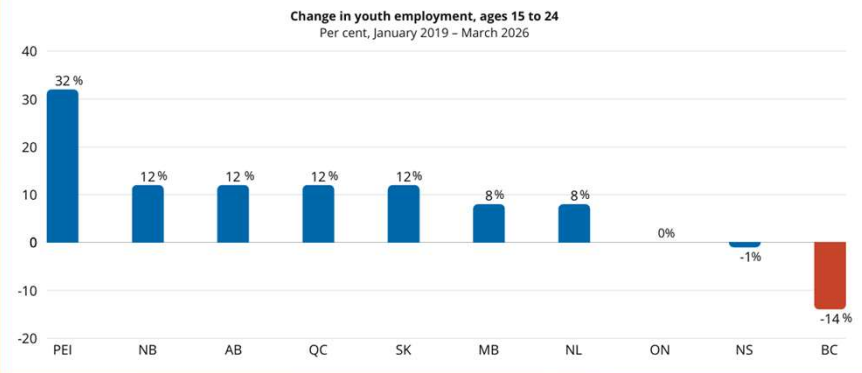
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Figure 5 Youth employment increased in every province except in B.C. and Nova Scotia



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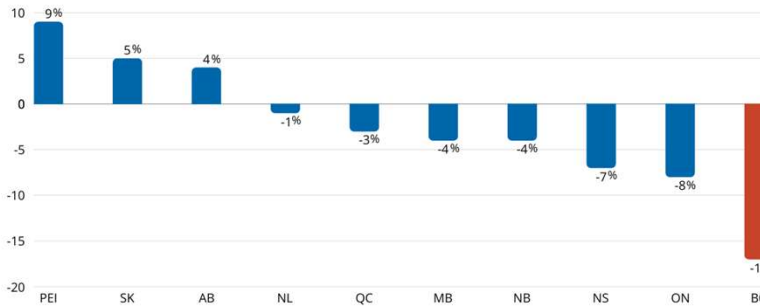


Figure 6 B.C. saw the largest decline in youth retail and accommodation employment of any province

Change in youth employment in retail and accommodation and food services, ages 15 to 24
Per cent, 2019 – 2025



Province	Change in youth employment (Per cent, 2019 – 2025)
PEI	9%
SK	5%
AB	4%
NL	-1%
QC	-3%
MB	-4%
NB	-4%
NS	-7%
ON	-8%
BC	-17%

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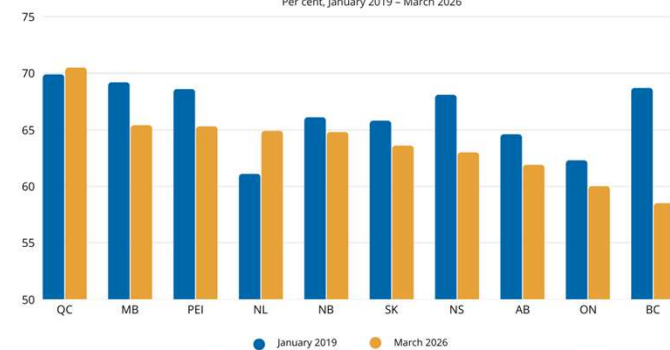


Figure 7 B.C.'s youth participation rate fell the most of any province

Youth labour force participation rate by province, ages 15 to 24
Per cent, January 2019 – March 2026



Province	January 2019 (%)	March 2026 (%)
QC	70	71
MB	69	65
PEI	68	65
NL	61	65
NB	66	65
SK	66	64
NS	68	63
AB	65	62
ON	63	60
BC	68	58

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What do you think is hampering youth employment?