

# Fastest Growing Industries: Construction

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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## 1. Overview of the Construction Industry

### Introduction

B.C. has seen strong growth in Construction industry employment, expanding from about 200,000 in 2015 to the current level of almost 240,000. This large workforce moves from project to project and is facing a steady flow of new projects over the 2019-2029 period.

Over the first few years of the forecast, there will be a temporary surge in demand coming from LNG Canada and other major construction projects, but this surge in demand is expected to tail off by the middle of the decade. As a result, by 2029, the workforce is projected to have expanded by a modest 3,600 job openings due to economic growth. At the same time, strong demand for new construction trades workers will be driven by the need to replace retiring workers, with 55,800 replacement job openings being forecast.

### Detailed Construction Industry Outlook | B.C. | 2019-2029

Industry	Employment	Employment Growth (compound annual growth rate)			Expansion	Replacement	Total Job Openings
		2019 - 2024	2024 - 2029	2019 - 2029			
Construction	239,500	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	3,600	55,800	59,300

Source: B.C.'S Labour Market Outlook: 2019 Edition

<https://www.workbc.ca/Labour-Market-Industry/Labour-Market-Outlook.aspx>

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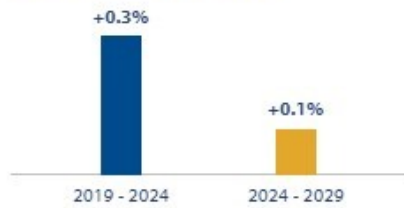
## A guide for newcomers to British Columbia

### Employment outlook

	2019	2024	2029
Forecasted employment	239,500	242,800	244,100

Source: B.C. Labour Market Outlook

#### Forecasted average annual employment growth rate



Source: B.C. Labour Market Outlook

#### Forecasted industry share of total employment



Source: B.C. Labour Market Outlook

### Earnings

#### Average hourly wages in this industry

##### Men



Source: 2019 Labour Force Survey

##### Women



Source: 2019 Labour Force Survey

Charts: <https://www.workbc.ca/industry-profile/construction>

**BUILDFORCE CANADA**

**CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE LOOKING FORWARD**

**BRITISH COLUMBIA**  
 British Columbia's expansion set to resume

**HIGHLIGHTS 2021-2030**

A rise in major engineering and public-sector projects partly offsets declines in residential and other private-sector investment in 2020, interrupting the strong expansion over the latter half of the previous decade.

The slowdown in activity provided a reprieve from some of the chronic recruitment challenges felt across most markets in 2019, but challenges are expected to return as growth resumes in 2021 and builds to an anticipated non-residential peak in 2022.

British Columbia's construction employment is expected to recover and continue rising to 2024, increasing by 12,446 workers (+7%). Growth is driven by the stacking of major heavy industrial, public transit, education, health care, highway, and bridge projects, as well as a recovery in new housing, renovation work, and commercial building construction.

As current major projects peak and wind down, non-residential construction is expected to cycle down, but is projected to return to growth by 2027. Following an expected decline in 2021, residential employment rises at a moderate pace across the 2021-2030 scenario period. Over the decade, construction industry employment should grow by 17,800 workers – an approximate 10% rise over 2020 levels.

Industry faces the added challenge of replacing an aging labour force with the expected retirement of more than 41,000 workers, or 22% of the current labour force, over the next decade.

**DISTRIBUTION OF CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT IN 2021, BRITISH COLUMBIA**

Category	Percentage
New Housing	33%
Residential Renovation and Maintenance	22%
Industrial, Commercial, Institutional (ICI)	13%
Engineering	22%
Non-Residential Maintenance	10%

**2021**

**10-YEAR WORKFORCE OUTLOOK FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA**

Category	Value
Retirements	41,000
New Entrants	35,100
Employment Change	17,800 (+10.1%)

**2030**

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Non-residential employment is expected to be propelled higher by 11,439 workers (+16%) in just two years between 2020 and 2022.
- Housing starts are anticipated to recover in 2022 and rise back above 40,000 units by 2024.
- The recent slowdown has not alleviated the expected retirement of 41,000 workers over the scenario period. Accounting for retirements and expansion demand, industry will need to recruit close to 59,650 workers over the coming decade.

Source: Buildforce Canada

<https://www.buildforce.ca/en/lmi/forecast-summary-reports>

The industry includes both residential (housing) and non-residential construction.

Sectors with strong demand for construction workers include:

- Transportation systems
- Renewable electricity generation and transmission projects
- LNG terminals
- Pipelines

Over the period 2021-2030, industry growth increases the labour force by more than 18,600 workers – up 10% compared to 2020. Industry must also address the need to replace an aging workforce, with an estimated 41,000 workers, or 22% of the current labour force, expected to retire. Combining retirement and expansion demands, the construction industry will need to recruit close to 59,650 workers over the coming decade. This demand may be partially met by up to 35,150 new entrants under the age of 30 available locally, but a significant portion of remaining demand will need to be drawn from other industries or other provinces

Source: Buildforce Canada

<https://www.buildforce.ca/en/lmi/forecast-summary-reports>

The industry has responded by developing a number of programs to attract newcomers. These include:

- initiatives to attract newcomers to remote locations of the province
- corporate efforts to encourage diversity in the workplace
- strategies for streamlining foreign-credential recognition

One initiative is the **ITA's Immigrants in Trades Training** program, which helps skilled immigrants who are unemployed, or employed and low-skilled, overcome barriers to entering the trades, including jobs in aviation and aerospace.

More information:

<https://skilledtradesbc.ca/get-certified/newcomers-international-tradespersons>

The BC Construction Association has created a programs for new Canadians:

- **British Columbia Construction Association's Integrating Newcomers** (BCCA-IN) is a program that helps newcomers enter the construction workforce in British Columbia  
<https://bccassn.com/skilled-workforce/bcca-integrating-newcomers/>

The Federal Government is also recognizing the importance of new immigrants in the construction sector. Opportunities offered through the **Temporary Foreign Worker Program** help fill short-term job gaps within Canada's construction industry.

- More information:  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers.html>

For more information on the construction sector see:

- **Construction Forecast Reports. Buildforce Canada**  
<https://www.buildforce.ca/en/lmi/forecast-summary-reports>
- **Skilled Trades Employment Program – BC Construction Association**  
<https://bccassn.com/skilled-workforce/#step>
- **WorkBC Industry Outlook Profile: Construction**  
<https://www.workbc.ca/industry-profile/construction>

## 2. Occupations in the Construction Sector

The construction sector is made of up numerous occupations. Each career has its own unique set of experience and training requirements. While new workers are needed for most occupations, some careers are in greater demand than others.

The top fifteen trades in projected job openings across BC over the next 10 years includes these from the Construction Industry

- Carpenters
- Construction trades helpers & labourers
- Painters & decorators (except interior decorators)
- Construction electricians
- Construction millwrights
- Plumbers

Source: B.C.'S Labour Market Outlook: 2019 Edition

<https://www.workbc.ca/Labour-Market-Industry/Labour-Market-Outlook.aspx>

Labour Market Outlook 2018 - Top Trades Occupations	Job Openings 2018-2028
Cooks	11,490
Automotive Service Technicians, Truck & Bus Mechanics and Mechanical Repairers	6,380
Carpenters	5,260
Hairstylists and Barbers	4,970
Construction Trades Helpers and Labourers	4,300
Heavy Equipment Operators (except crane)	3,330
Construction Millwrights and Industrial Mechanics	3,010
Welders and Related Machine Operators	2,450
Electricians (except industrial and power system)	2,380

Source: <https://www.workbc.ca/Labour-Market-Industry/Top-Demand-Trades.aspx>



For detailed information on occupations in the construction sector, including job description, educational requirements for working in BC, salary, and more see:

- **Careers in Construction**  
<https://www.careersinconstruction.ca/>
- **WorkBC Career Profiles**  
<https://www.workbc.ca/plan-career/explore-careers> [search by job title]
- **Buildforce Canada**  
<https://www.buildforce.ca/>

### **3. Hiring Forecast by Region**

The majority of construction jobs are in Metro Vancouver (Mainland/Southwest region of the province). Job prospects may be very good if you are willing to relocate to other regions of the province.

#### ***Lower Mainland Construction Outlook***

The Lower Mainland construction market experienced a sharp decline in residential and commercial activity in 2020. New housing was hit hardest, as housing starts retreated by one-quarter (-25%) from the highs reached in 2019, but sector employment was shielded from big declines by ongoing construction of the large number of apartment and condo projects already under construction.

Overall, non-residential market demands recorded a small rise, as construction on several major projects in the region either started or ramped up in 2020. These projects included hospitals, schools, the Pattullo Bridge replacement, and Millennium Line (Broadway).

Residential construction, which accounted for more than two-thirds of total employment in 2020, will continue to dominate industry employment in the Lower



Mainland over the coming decade. Total construction employment is projected to rise to a peak in 2024

### ***Vancouver Island Construction Outlook***

The Vancouver Island region experienced a modest slowdown in construction activity in 2020. Although a recovery in commercial activity is expected to shore up demands over 2021, a material rise in construction activity is not expected until 2022, when a recovery in new-home construction coincides with the expected start of major health care and education projects.

Total construction employment is expected to grow by 13% between 2021 and 2024 before receding moderately in line with weaker housing demands. Between 2020 and 2030, construction employment is projected to rise by 1,600 workers (+6%). Growing demands are exacerbated by the need to replace an estimated 7,845 workers expected to retire from the regional construction labour force over the decade.

Source: Buildforce Canada

<https://www.buildforce.ca/en/lmi/forecast-summary-reports>

Additional information on construction activities in specific regions can be found at:

- **2024 Construction and Maintenance Looking Forward Highlights Reports**  
<https://www.constructionforecasts.ca/en/highlights>

## **4. Finding Jobs**

### ***Online Job Postings***

- **Construction Job Centre**  
<https://www.constructionjobcentre.ca/>
- **ConstructConnect**  
<https://www.constructconnect.com/careers>

- **Vancouver Regional Construction Association VRCA**

<https://www.vrca.ca/jobs-careers/>

- **Construction Canada Job Board**

<https://www.constructioncanada.net/jobboard/>

- **Indeed.com**

[https://ca.indeed.com/advanced\\_search](https://ca.indeed.com/advanced_search)

Find jobs posted on a multitude of company career sites and job boards.

### ***Trade Journals***

Industry journals provide information about trends and careers in the industry.

- **Journal of Commerce**

<https://canada.constructconnect.com/joc>

- **Construction Canada**

Available at the Central Library, 692.05 S74

or online at <https://www.constructioncanada.net/archives/digital-editions/>

### ***Creating a List of Potential Employers***

You can use directories to produce lists of employers in the construction industry in British Columbia. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **Home Builders Association of Vancouver - Directory**

<https://havan.ca/membership/>

[https://havan.ca/find-a-professional/?fwp\\_filter\\_by\\_sector=builders](https://havan.ca/find-a-professional/?fwp_filter_by_sector=builders)

- **Daily Commercial News – Construction Directory**

<https://canada.constructconnect.com/dcn/construction-directory>

- **Northern Regional Construction Association Directory**

<https://www.nrca.ca/directory/>

- **Vancouver Island Construction Association Member Directory**

<https://www.vicabc.ca/membership/directory/>

## 5. Additional Resources

Still looking for more information? Try looking at the following resources:

- **Buildforce Canada**  
<https://www.buildforce.ca/en>
- **Skilled Trades Employment Program (STEP)**  
<https://stepbc.ca/>
- **Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants Program**  
<https://www.welcomebc.ca/Work-or-Study-in-B-C/Work-in-B-C/Employment-Language-Programs>
- **WelcomeBC Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants**  
<https://www.welcomebc.ca/Work-in-B-C/Career-Paths-for-Skilled-Immigrants>
- **Skilled Trades BC**  
<https://skilledtradesbc.ca/>

**Questions? Please ask the Information Staff at the Central Library or telephone 604-331-3603.**

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <https://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>.

